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War Cries. By Diane Glancy. Duluth, Minnesota: Holy Cow Press, 1997. 339 pages. \$16.95 paper .

This collection of nine plays by novelist and poet Diane Glancy presents the reader with a wide variety of dramatic explorations and experiments. The earliest play dates to 1984, and though the collection represents more than a decade of work, each of the plays shares the themes of reconciliation and a search for identity. At the heart of each of the plays is a wound which her writing both exposes and attempts to heal.

The majority of the collection's plays are presented in a social-realistic way. In these plays the talents of Glancy, a gifted novelist, are most obviously demonstrated. Her sensitivity, eye, and ear for her characters, all of whom are Native American, is almost unerring. Her dialogue captures the cadence and poetry in everyday language, revealing not only the complexity of emotions underneath her characters, but also the geography of the place they inhabit. The words of Glancy's characters are windows into a greater social, cultural, and spiritual predicament, at once ordinary and familiar, yet simultaneously voicing loss and searching.

"Weejob" is the first and earliest play in the collection, and the most beholdingly Western dramaturgy. The play is a character-driven exploration of friendship, love, and acceptance. It is the story of Weejob and his friend, Pick-Up, who, as the play reveals, falls in love with Weejob's daughter, Sweet Potato. Weejob is the older of the two men and a traditional leader more concerned with the spiritual than the day-to-day. Weejob is a man of visions and feelings yet marginalized by a society more concerned with the material. He responds to his predicament by painting and posting signs of prophecy and understanding, for it is his responsibility to tell what he knows. When Weejob discovers that his daughter and Pick-Up want to marry, it is for Weejob not only a family crisis of rude awakening, but a spiritual one as well. Pick-Up is twenty years older than Sweet Potato, but the difficulty for Weejob is not only the age difference, but also a betrayal of trust and understanding. It is not until Weejob has a vision that he accepts the marriage. His acceptance is also an acceptance of self; in so doing he reconciles himself, bringing his spiritual belief into practice. Like many of the collection's characters, Sweet Potato, Pick-Up, and Weejob are misfits trying to find a way to fit their lives together.

Other plays written in a social-realistic vein are "Stickhorse" and "Bull Star." "Stickhorse" deals with the problems of alcoholism and the loss of self, community, and spirit-familiar and well-trodden themes, but in this play given a vitality by Glancy who provocatively looks at alcoholism from a traditional perspective. In the play Eli, a 35-year-old Cherokee man, staggers through life trying to find out who he is. The stickhorse, like a child's horse, is a substitute for the real thing, in this case a spirit horse. Eli, with the help of Jake, a friend and medicine man, finds a part of himself by finding the perspective of his tradition. Four spirit-dancers swirl around Eli throughout the play. Ambiguous and symbolic, the spirit dancers portray a variety of characters including rodeo clowns with masks and cowboy hats. They are part of alcoholic delusions until Eli realizes that they are but a reflection of himself and

his self-image. At the end, the stickhorse becomes a spirit house when he discovers the power to heal himself.

In "Bull Star" the author constructs the rodeo setting and imagery to make some very incisive observations, namely that Natives have become clowns in a white man's show. As in "Stickman," "Bull Star's" protagonist, Jack, seeks redemption and reconciliation with his tradition and ancestors. Unlike "Stickman," "Bull Star" is theatrical, applying a much surer hand and integrated use of stage imagery and device. For instance, Jack's wife, Cree, has two cardboard babies strapped to her chest and a cardboard box tied to her waist by a string. It is her twin babies and her first-born son symbolized. "Bull Star" is successful in its attempt to bring to light the character's struggle of living in two worlds. It is a poetic play with some wonderfully evocative language that is ordinary yet unsuspectingly transports the characters and situation to an eternal time and place. Jack rides the bull for his identity and in so doing gains its power, transporting him to the old ways and to a lost part of himself.

The most experimental and promising exploration of form is the play "Halfact." The action is centered around the death of Coyote Girl's Mother, the baker of bread and metaphor for the We-giver. In this play, written as a dramatic poem, Glancy shows the full flowering of her ability as a writer. The play is about Coyote Boy and Coyote Girl who, with the help of a Narrator, move in and out of time eulogizing the loss of Mother. In "Halfact" as with other plays in the collection, Glancy melds and juxtaposes traditional with modern images and ideas. The ambiguity of character, time, and space that this blending creates works in the play's favor, elevating the play to the mythological and poetic.

Though the most thought-provoking play in the collection, "Halfact" is more a poem than a drama, meant more for reading or recitation. In "Halfact," as in other plays, Glancy struggles with making her fine poetic skills, insight, and sense of character gel in a way that demands dramatization. The action is in the word rather than in the characters.

"The Truth Teller" is her least successful play. Written as a conversation between an Indian Man and Woman, circa 1800, the play does not get beyond its premise. The Indian Man has been exposed to the white man, and their conversation is about how the ways of the past, embodied by the Indian Woman (who has had no white contact), will be challenged and lost. As in "Halfact," "The Truth Teller" suffers from a lack of dramatic action, sounding more like a history lesson that we have heard before. There is not much beyond the obvious in "Truth Teller." As it stands it is like a quaint artifact from the era of the romanticized Indian.

"Segwohi" intermixes legend with a modern situation but lacks any but the most rudimentary dramatic action. It is essentially storytelling. Theater and performance have different rules, contexts, and objectives. Setting words into dialogue form do not a play make. At times Glancy over-writes and over-explains without realizing that what drives theater and performance is what is implied by situation and action. Her action too often depends on explanation and words.

"Bull Star" is the most successful in its blending of traditional and Western dramaturgical styles. It is also the best developed in terms of character, plot, and structure. However, the choice of Western dramaturgical elements and expectations is ironic and revealing of a larger issue confronting attempts at creating Native American or indigenous theater. Glancy

wrestles throughout the collection for an appropriate voice and style. However, for lack of an alternative model she leans heavily on Western dramaturgical structure and expression. This struggle is not unique to her. For Native Americans, theater is an adopted and ad hoc expression. For Native America, with a myriad of complex and developed performance traditions, Western theater is alien and at best an awkward form. A comparison in contrast would be like a group of non-- Natives adopting powwow dances to express themselves. Form and technique might be imitated, but the context, pretext, and objectives would be inorganic and perhaps impossible to apprehend fully. In a sense, while adopting theater as a medium of expression, Native America is trying to speak about itself by learning another language.

The dramatic efforts by Native American and other indigenous peoples have been dominated by the structure and expression of Western theater, which (along with the overwhelming influence of Western films and television) have developed around conflict (social, political, and individual) and its resolution. Conflict resolution was a necessary tool for Western cultural expansionism and migratory adaptations. Traditional Native American and indigenous performance (ritual and ceremony) developed out of the need to assert balance for a community of place. What constituted place was the animals, elements, spirits, ancestors, and humans who participated in a system organic to a specific location. Place was the origin and referent of tribal cosmologies. Western theater, to the contrary, is centered and overwhelmingly concerned with the human-world interactions, asserting the value and ideas that propagate its human-centered reality. At the end of the twentieth century, Native America finds itself in two worlds, the Western and the indigenous, and as a consequence an expression of its world in performance is a struggle between two very different realities, objectives, and expressions. In some ways, the Western dramaturgical form is limited and inadequate to express the integrated and comprehensive perspectives that are at the heart of Native America.

Glancy is to be commended for this collection. She is brave, creative, and persistent in her search and attempts to shape a performance medium that best expresses Native America. It is no easy task to reconcile the traditional, spiritual, and homogeneity of community of place while simultaneously dealing with issues of displacement, identity, and being a part of a larger and alien social, economic, and political community. Glancy only succeeds in flashes and spurts in her attempt to find a dramatic expression for many important issues facing Native America. But her attempt demands attention, for where she makes mistakes, she teaches others.

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