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Bigsby, C.W.E. *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama*. Vol. 2


---. *The Sum of Winter*. (unpublished manuscript)

---. Salvage (unpublished manuscript)

---. *Writings on the Process of Writing Native Theatre*. (unpublished manuscript)


---. *The Sum of Winter*. (unpublished manuscript)


Shanley, Kathryn Winona. "The Paradox of Native American Indian Intellectualism and


---“The Ruins of Representation: Shadow Survivance and the Literature of Dominance”.


(Appendix) An Interview with Diane Glancy

1. Is there a social message in your plays, or do you write to convey a social message?

I write to convey a story with a heart and a range of human emotion. Personal responsibility is a message, but not the whole story. It’s more of an undercurrent. For a long time, native plays idealized the Native American as the noble savage, such as Sacajawea in STONE HEART, who seemed know more than Lewis & Clark, with whom she traveled on their 2004-06 Corps of Discovery. Often native plays blamed the white culture for their mishaps, loss, alcoholism and poverty. Then the plays began taking responsibility, such as SALVAGE, when Wolf realizes he is at fault and must be responsible for his own actions. The third stage in the development of native playwriting is the native play that hardly looks native. Currently, I’m working on a new play, THE BIRD HOUSE, which is
about a minister in a dwindling church in Ropesville, Texas. The church is a form of the reservation. The diminishing returns, loss of congregation and revenue Reverend Hawk experiences are familiar to the Native American.

2. Do you think that the use of the trickster figure with its fluidity and supernatural qualities was more enabling in conveying a social message?

No, because to me a social message is more rigid. It says, this is the way it should be. There is little relativity or changeability in a social message that is an ear-mark of the trickster. I think the trickster seems anti-social. He’s more for the trickster than others.

3. How would you differentiate between your heritage and your culture?

To me heritage is something that comes from parents, grandparents, etc. Culture is what I have chosen from myself. In my case, my culture is hybrid, coming from several sources. It is a combination I have made on my own. My heritage is European (mother) and Native American (father). My heritage is the work ethic. We are middle-of-the-road people, my mother would say, therefore don’t-rock-the-boat. My parents came from farm life. Their parents were poor. My mother and father came to Kansas City, Missouri, from Kansas and Arkansas in the late 1920’s. They met, married, achieved and maintained a middle-class life style. We had a house and a car. I was educated and was expected to carry on their
values, which I have done to some extent, but my life went beyond what they imagined for me. Neither of them lived to see me become a professor and published writer. My life hasn’t been as middle-of-the-road as theirs, though I am basically a conservative and have many of their values. Now, in my later years, more so.

My culture, on the other hand, is my work, which has centered around education, books, writing, travel for research, and more work. My children are 47 and 43. I have four grandchildren. I am at a time in my life where things are certainly easier.

4. You mention ‘the empty space between heritages’ – in *Claiming Breath*. Do you think that cultural compromises have to happen while moving between two heritages and that which one to pick and which one to drop is decided by a person’s underlying spiritual framework? Would it mean that spirituality is more fundamental than culture?

There is a great difference between my two cultures. The empty space between them is still there, but it’s one I’ve filled through writing. I just published my fifth collection of nonfiction, *THE DREAM OF A BROKEN FIELD*, and it is still about the space between two cultures. The dream of a broken field, by the way, is to bear crops. That’s why the topsoil of a field is broken. I’ve written mostly about my native heritage, but the responsibility, goal-oriented, workaholic white culture is there too.
Yes, compromises have to be made. I cannot live as a traditional Native American because I wasn’t raised with the tradition. Neither can I be white because I have native blood. The land, spiritual values, importance of family and language are through the native side.

5. In handling cultures in your plays and the movement between them, have you had to portray through your characters that one was better than the other?

Do you mean the European and the Native American? Both cultures have their strength and weaknesses. Surely, from my mother, who was of German and English descent, I received purpose and groundedness, punctuality and reliability. I’ve been going through some of my old papers to clean up a bit, and I was looking at some old report cards that said, “Diane hasn’t missed a day of school.” My mother was very insistent of regular attendance. Somewhere I wrote, “We weren’t allowed to get sick.” My mother was directed toward a goal. I have some of that same determination. My father, on the other hand, was tidy and responsible also, but he thought more of the reasoning and process of achievement, rather than the finished task as the achievement itself. That was my mother. What we were underneath didn’t matter, as long as we were moving forward. I could have been dying inside, but as long as I was in my seat in the classroom, that was all that mattered.

Or do you mean, when I write pan-Indian plays, I write across native tribes and cultures, from Crow to Cherokee to Mohawk, etc., is one better than the other?
No. The tribes are vastly different in language root, custom, religion, world-view etc.

6. To what extent do you see the interconnectedness of cultures as the means of survival?

In my case, it has been important because I had to find the stepping stones between two different cultures to make sense of them both. It has been a long occupation.

7. You have once stated in an interview that you find the traditional definitions of feminism quite limiting. How do your women characters break the confines of such limitations?

I can’t remember the context. But maybe it was that definitions are very limiting. If I am a feminist, I have to follow the feminist rules. But to be a whole person, true to one’s inner landscape, I have to find my own interiority that determines direction, and not some outward definition put on one’s behavior from the outside.

8. How useful do you find your concept of ‘she-donism’ to portray the empowerment of women in your plays?

I find it useful. It’s strange—the paradox of strength/weakness. I’ve relied on both. It is helpful as a Christian to know that Christ paid the price for my
salvation by his death on the cross. I am weak but he is strong, is a child’s song sung in Sunday school. Yet, I have been on my own after a divorce 30 years ago, and I am not afraid of much anymore. I have had difficulties of facing the hard, economically-driven world, especially in the early days when I first began making my way on my own with two children to support.

9. Your empowered women characters derive their identity and empowerment from their spiritual fabric and use it to deal with their conflicts and transitions. Do you believe that spiritually grounded women generate more enabling and fulfilling empowerment in other women?

Yes, I do. I think life is hard and it takes faith to survive with quality. Christianity is much derided in America, especially in academic circles. But I knew that life was up against something bigger than I was, and I needed outside help, which my faith has provided.

10. How is history integrated into your plays? Why and how is it significant and crucial for your drama?

I’ve always like to write about historical voices that did not have a chance to speak. So history is important. I integrate history in all the genres I write, from Sacajawea in STONE HEART to Kateri Tekakwitha in THE REASON FOR CROWS, both of which are plays written from novels.

11. Do you consider your whole process of writing plays as akin to a Native American ceremony, something like a Sweat Lodge for example?
Yes, writing is a ceremony. One that is rigorous. A sweat lodge requires discomfort, endurance, and a suffering of sort for a certain end. It is a spiritual pilgrimage to find both myself and the characters I’m writing about.

12. In the introduction to the Salt Companion, James Mackay has stated that the thread of Christian faith which runs in your work is presented in its most evangelical form. How would your respond to this with reference to your plays?

I think he’s right. In SALVAGE, Memela has a strong faith. In THE REASON FOR CROWS, Kateri’s whole concern is her faith.

13. In your plays, which literary elements lend themselves better than others in portraying spiritual conflicts and cultural transitions?

I think it takes all of them because oral tradition basically incorporates all the elements— the fiction of myth and story, the imagistic way of native speaking with the poetry of language, the drama of the speaking voice during story-telling, the nonfiction of personal experience. A native play still bears the residue of oral tradition, which was the ancestor’s plays.

13. In the later plays, especially those like The Collector of a Three-Cornered Postage Stamp, I sense that you are trying to break the confines of stage, structure and narrative, by making voice as the primary agent which carries the narrative.
What has been the impact of such a narrative as far as production has been concerned, especially since it defies the traditional construction of drama?

Native Voices at the Autry, which has produced three of my plays, JUMP KISS, STONE HEART and SALVAGE has steered me away from the voice alone. I’m now working on a fourth play with them, THE BIRDHOUSE, and it’s the same story. I hear them say, Get the characters working on stage in an interchange of emotion and dialogue that carries the play forward. The western standard of playwriting prevails for them. I use my experimental work for other venues, such as the & Now Writing Conference where I presented TOOTH last fall.

14. What are some of the innovations which you are considering for your future plays?

I tried to experiment with form, but the words on the page are not important. A play is an oral presentation. The written script is a blueprint for what happens on the stage. That is what is primary. I wrote the REASON FOR CROWS in two panels: I had Kateri’s words on one side of the page and the priests on the other to show the two separate worlds in which they lived. But it had no influence on the way the play was performed on stage. It seemed a waste of time. I decided to use innovation with form in my fiction and nonfiction where the reader could see the experimentation.

In a recent short piece, TOOTH, that I mentioned above, I used clay figures in a video presentation while I read the words. It is an imaginary piece
about my voice and another voice that rode on mine. I wrote it when I was at the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage. Another voice seemed to enter my thoughts telling their story about the early days in Alaska and the arrival of the missionaries.