Chapter 3

Patterns of Spiritual Negotiation

The Sweat Lodge ceremony proves to be a useful metaphor, while studying the spiritual aspect of Glancy’s plays - the turbulence in the sociocultural context prompts her characters to move towards the idea of personal sovereignty. In a traditional Sweat Lodge Ceremony the purpose was to cleanse and heal the individual of all the impurities both in the body and the soul. While the fire worked as a purifying agent, intense sweating was supposed to have a cathartic effect, whereby the individual recognizes the impurities in his soul and cleanses them. Of particular significance is the fact that the community is at the center of such a ceremony.

At a metaphorical level, the description of a Sweat Lodge perfectly fits in with the spiritual negotiations in Glancy’s plays. Apart from the community of actors, the audience are also participants in the ceremony. Their presence is typified by their status as witnesses and sometimes co-creators of meaning, especially when Glancy provides avenues for her audience to enter the text. Further, the tensional location of the characters which is characterized by sociocultural collisions and negotiations corresponds to the intense sweating which finally engenders that required healing.

When we study Glancy’s plays from this perspective, there are two implications. Though her plays are not “scripted religious ceremonies”, the integration of spiritual perspectives happens as an extension of the crises arising from sociocultural encounters.¹ This ensures that the choice of selecting and reflecting elements of Native traditions

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becomes an act of negotiation. In such a context, characters often find that the movement towards survival becomes contingent on exercising one’s sense of personal sovereignty.

Paula Gunn Allen identifies healing as the main purpose of a Native American ceremony. The disease afflicting the individual has its source in the disconnect that he or she perceives between himself and his universe. (The Sacred Hoop 60) The ceremony functions to restore him to a conscious harmony with the universe. It can be established that, for Glancy’s characters, survival is engendered by some kind of a ritualistic procedure, the purpose of which is to arrive at a sense of healing which in turn, enables them to move towards a position of survival. In some plays ceremonies function in a removed context and sometimes in a metaphoric context rather than the literal. Therefore, the emphasis seems to be on capturing an idea of ceremony rather than the specifics of such processes.

The idea of “survivance”, as conceived by Vizenor, implies that the process of negotiation is not a one-time effort, but an endeavour that is in constant motion thereby ensuring that it becomes “a standpoint, a worldview, and a presence” (Vizenor, Postindian Conversations 93). This can be further elaborated by including the three conceptual strands of motion – the mythic, the material and the visionary – all of which work towards achieving a personal sense of sovereignty. In Vizenor’s conception, personal sovereignty includes the concept of national sovereignty to address the individual’s realization and the will to self-governance, opportunity to establish self-representation, and choice to select or reflect elements of Native traditions within the ever-changing context of one’s personal life.
From Stanlake’s point of view, visionary motion provides for the blending of the conceptual strands of mythic and material motion with the discourse of storying and the concept of worlds of existence. Hence, visionary sovereignty makes it possible for the creation of an in-between world from where the characters are able to access both the material and spiritual aspects of their life. Vizenor uses the term ‘transmotion’ to describe a key aspect of such visionary sovereignty. He says in *Fugitive Poses*, “Native transmotion is an original natural union in the stories of emergence and migration that relate humans to an environment and to the spiritual and political significance of animals and other creations” (183). Hence transmotion enables the creation of connections between the individual and his sociocultural location through agencies like stories, rituals, ceremonies or artifacts, thereby investing personal sovereignty with a visionary status. In Glancy’s plays such a position is characterized by the attempts of the individual to transform the personal into the spiritual. While Vizenor’s enunciation of the concept of visionary motion allows for people to first imagine and then realize their personal sovereignty, Glancy’s characters often arrive at that location through a turbulence infused with the personal, the political and the spiritual.

There is an interesting dialectic between Native American tenets of spirituality and the enforced ideas of Christianity which characterize the turbulence faced by Glancy’s characters. Though Glancy intensely identifies herself with her Cherokee antecedents, an aspect that is obvious in her plays, she remains “unenrolled”. The spatial location of her creative endeavours not only functions as a source of marginalization, but adds an advantage to her location, because, as she puts it in *Firesticks* (1993), she is “not a card-carrying Indian. Not a card-carrying White either.” (14) In her plays, such a
marginalization actually works as an advantage because Glancy, by the virtue of being in two places and also not in either place, is able to use such a tension as both a rending and a binding force across her plays. Such an aspect of her work is mostly discernible in the conflicts between Native Ancestry and Christian beliefs. The resulting tensions are manifest especially when her characters deliberate on questions regarding the sacred and the spiritual with reference to the collisions arising out of their encounters with Christianity.

The strong element of Christianity which comes across in her works can be attributed to the fact that she lived in the Bible belt region of the southern part of Oklahoma where it happens to be the primary religion. She says, “Because I didn’t have a road, because I was in the process of a journey, I still didn’t know why I was between two cultures. I still had to jump-start an image of my broken self. The Bible is full of journeys. It’s why I think it is home” (The Cold and the Hunger Dance 29). This statement reveals a significant aspect of characterization in her plays. Most of her characters have the strain of mixed blood heritage which acts as a signifier of the cultural collisions and issues of marginalised identity. This has a due impact on their interpretations of religion and spirituality.

Glancy’s plays reveal another aspect of marginalization, especially in her women characters. It can be seen that for them, issues of identity are intrinsically linked to socio-economic concerns, a strain that can be traced back to Glancy’s status as a single woman divorced at the age of 40. For example, while confronting her imaginary tormentor in the Church soup kitchen, the Girl in The Woman Who was a Red Deer narrates about her being falsely accused of pilferage. She says:
I know it was you who lost the key to the storeroom, and I had to pay for the locksmith to change the lock. They kept nearly my whole check. I couldn’t pay my rent. I only got four payments left on my truck. I’m not losing it. (8)

On being forced to choose between her domicile and her car, she chooses the latter since it affords her greater mobility and a sense of ownership. Such a choice can also be read as the Girl’s way of revolting against a system which would confine her to the limits of a domicile. Also operating in this conflict is the fact that with four more payments, the Girl can stake a claim to what she considers to be rightfully hers. Further, where the Grandmother considers the maple leaves to be the signifiers of her vision quest, the Girl is convinced that it is her truck which will lead her to her promised vision of love. Unfortunately, the sense of irony strongly operates, especially when the truck becomes the vehicle for picking “dudes” on the highway, who function within a limited idea of love.

Similarly, the women in *The Women Who Loved House Trailers* tend to align themselves against the image of a house trailer because it affords them greater mobility. Their living space, which is being denied to them because of their inability to pay rent, becomes a signifier of mobility and control. Also the women are able to transfer these attributes to the construct of house trailer, thereby suggesting that living spaces are a signifier of a fragmented sense of identity which these women share. Such a move may also suggest some form of dissociation with the land which belonged to them earlier, and which still forms a significant aspect of their lives.
In such a context, the movement towards survival becomes contingent on achieving a sense of personal sovereignty. Glancy’s characters try to achieve this by exercising the third aspect of personal sovereignty - choice to select or reflect elements of Native traditions within the ever changing context of one’s personal life. This explains the strong Native presence in terms of cultural references to ceremonies and rituals. Glancy conceives of ceremony as a ritual that is used over and over again until it becomes a structure that is followed (Conversation 5). She also integrates an element of subversion when she highlights the tensional operation of the cultural contact zones and their impact on the various rituals and ceremonies of life. To analyse such a complex and intense movement towards survival, transculturation proves to be a useful model of analysis. While focusing on the individual, transculturation combines attributes of acculturation, deculturation and neoculturation as phases in the process of the movement toward survivance, though not specifically identifying the attributes of such movement.

In Glancy’s plays, conflict resolution often assumes the pattern of finding modes of survival within a “tribal-centric” context rather than complete acculturation or deculturation. Hence, transculturation as a phenomenon of the contact zone, often lies in the intersection between the Native American conception of spirituality and a post-colonial perspective of life. When such an idea is correlated to the author’s location, we find that Glancy’s marginalised perspective is not of violent resistance or mute acceptance, but of a tensional negotiation. From a ceremonial perspective, her plays can also be considered as the relocated enactments of the Sweat Lodge ceremony since they are suggestive of the necessary tension and the operation of healing through a conscious identification within a larger conception of spirituality.
However, in Glancy’s plays, transculturation is not limited to Pratt’s definition of the term. The movement towards the idea of healing often borders on theorizing the marginal space between the cultural zones which leads to possibilities for contact, and the discovery of new paths of connection and relatedness between stories and cultures. For example, the Native American myth of Selu, the Corn Woman can be compared with Christ’s crucifixion. While the pattern of violence and the annihilation of life forms the common thread, the suggestive import of both signifies the power of compassion. The gap, however, comes across in the conception of spirituality. While the crucifixion is suggestive of sins and redemption, the myth of Selu imparts a sociocultural compatibility by bringing into focus the role of the woman.

Glancy’s characters often turn to culture and religion to negotiate such gaps in their cultural and spiritual profile. Hence, the process of claiming a transcultural space to negotiate the upheavals caused by sociocultural encounters is not random. It assumes the parameters of a tensional negotiation between the received ancestry and contact culture, revealing the points of contact and the gaps in both. Transculturation works in three different modes in Glancy’s plays – mode of a vision-quest, mode of a ceremony, and the mediational mode.

Paula Gunn Allen says, “…Native American cultures reveal evidence of direct vision as central to religious practice, ritual and literature. In most societies, the vision is actively pursued and brought back to the people as a gift of power and guidance” (The Sacred Hoop 107). The requirements of a vision quest are a supernatural experience in which an individual interacts with a guardian spirit. These guardian spirits, usually some form of morphed animals or birds, performed the role of the spiritual advisors, directing
the individual on a path towards his or her self-discovery. In the traditional context, this usually indicated the direction that one is supposed to take in later life. Elisabeth Tooker quotes Leonard Bloomfield’s records of the Menomini Puberty Fast:

Long ago in the ancient time our ancestors, the Indians of old, used to have supernatural power, for the spirits took pity on them and blessed them, giving them their help. This was the rite they always performed: They fasted, afflicting their own souls. They ate nothing and drank nothing. Parents made their children fast so that they might therefrom gain a continuance of mortal life. This was what the faster was to get as a blessing from the spirits; this was the thing: He was to see an evil vision or else to see a good vision; this was what the faster gained, if he was really helped by the spirits. And it was through this that a person succeeded in prolonging and assuring his life (sic). (84)

As further outlined by the texts compiled, there are some aspects of such a fast which have parallels in Glancy’s plays. First of all, the faster occupies a liminal position. According to the ancestral culture, young boys going through their puberty had to embark on such a fast so that they can find their guardian spirits and seek their help in their journey towards a fulfilling life.

Glancy’s characters occupy a liminal status in the sense that they are located in between two religions and emerge as complex amalgams of both. She says in The Cold and the Hunger Dance, “I have always wondered how it was possible to combine both religions. The down-home Bible-belt Christianity. The Indian no-boundaried magical. But I had to do it. To make a dry ground in the midst of the uncertainty of my own life
and my belief system or spirituality” (43). Located in the space of uncertainty and doubt, Glancy’s characters are engaged in the process of creating a “dry ground” of meaning amidst conflicting religious faiths.

Further, if under the original sociocultural circumstances, the fasters appealed to their guardian spirits more as a form of a socially sanctioned ritual, Glancy’s characters have to make the necessary connections to the idea of ritual and appeal to the spirits in order to survive the present conflation of conflicting perspectives. Sometimes, out of sheer frustration they also realize that the spirits may choose to be silent, especially if the connection to the spiritual world is broken. Hence the process of making connections is tensional, and in some situations, a compulsive act.

Also significant is the fact that the guardian spirit or the tutelary may inform the faster about the “medicine bundle” – token objects of some special shape or quality – which become the possession of the faster. These bundles symbolize human relationship or encounter with supernatural beings. Hence, they represent a person’s connection with the supernatural. (Fowler 169) Most often, the components of the medicine bundle are visualized in a dream or a vision and the bundle itself serves as a link between the natural and the spiritual worlds. (Waldman 229) In Glancy’s plays, new meanings are assigned to such tokens of power – they function as dynamic constructs, furthering the fractured narratives of the plays.

It can be observed that the three aspects of the vision quest discussed above – the liminal location of the characters, the involvement of a tutelary and the receipt of medicine bundles – are representative of a transcultural movement towards survival. In the process, an adequate space is created for a tensional negotiation of the received and
the contact culture. For example Weebjob is located in a liminal position between his 
boarding school experiences of Christianity, which have left a firm imprint on his 
memory, and his Native American yearning for a vision of the Thunder Hawk. Hence he 
lives in an ambiguous location – educated in the ways of the Bible and yet holding on to 
the visionary experiences of his inherited culture. This ambiguity colours his behavioural 
responses as well. He expects Pick-Up to formally ask for his daughter’s hand in 
marrage, as was the Native American custom. However, as opposed to Native American 
customs, he chooses to leave his fertile land fallow because he considers it to be his 
“Canaan”, the place where he would ultimately have his vision. His act of fasting, though 
a requirement of the vision quest, appears to be contrived since it is forced by the 
unexplained absence of his wife. Similarly, his attempts to put up fence signs of 
translocated Biblical sayings represent an effort to model himself after the Biblical 
character Job, who was beset with difficulties. Though he is mentally prepared to face 
obstacles on par with Job, it is obvious that he has subscribed to this idea more out of a 
need to negotiate his conflicting stance between Christianity and his Native American 
idea of a vision quest. While his dialogues are punctuated with Christian tenets, they 
appear in a translocated interpersonal context. For example, he says while praying:

Humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering. (WEEBJOB IS ON HIS 
KNEES PRAYING) Forbearing one another, forgiving one another. (HE 
MAKES A FIST TOWARD HEAVEN.) Could you make this any harder? 
(49)

While subscribing to the Christian mode of prayer, Weebjob breaks the mould 
and enters into a direct conversation, simultaneously shedding the affected speech
patterns. This is representative of his attempt to connect to the spirit world, because from his perspective, once he makes the connection, the sense of order in his family will be restored. Here, the process of making the connection is characterized by an initial sense of disconnect, which is further exacerbated by a domestic crisis.

The third aspect of medicine bundle manifests in a translocated context in the form of his fence signs, which represent the direction of his life. When the New Age Turtle Island myth is recreated, he senses that as the vision which he had been waiting for. And in keeping with the idea of fragmented identity, the vision only helps him negotiate the ambiguities that are at the source of his chaos, rather than provide any prescriptive solutions.

Seen from the perspective of creation of meaning, it can be seen that the myth operates in the margin between the two worlds, which can also serve as a reference point for two cultures. The process of creation of land can approximate to the creation of meaning, or in the case of Weebjob, negotiating the conflicts which are sourced in his spiritual ambiguity. As Glancy puts it in Claiming Breath, he needs to “pull some mud, put it on a turtle’s back” (59). Such a process essentially involves translocating a cultural belief to the present sociocultural condition and arriving at a reworked meaning which would enable him to move towards survival. Therefore, instead of a token object which would function as a medicine bundle, Weebjob gets a reworked version of the myth as a vision. In a scene that is entirely composed of a visualization of stage action, Weebjob has a vision of the Thunder Hawk, but not in the traditional sense of vision. His vision is “something like a moving stained-glass window in a cathedral,” (71) indicating the extreme polarities that engender his spiritual ambiguity. Since his vision is a “new-age”
vision, it is punctuated by local references, and instead of a turtle, it is a tow-truck that pulls the land out of ‘cayos.’ The sign “WEEBJOB HAS A MAP” works as a medicine bundle, implying that he has found a way to move towards survivance. The wedding scene, which follows the vision indicates that by assenting to Sweet Potato’s wedding with Pick Up, he would not only be able to connect his spiritual world with the physical, but also come out from his sense of confusion into a location of understanding.

In Bull Star, the idea of liminality functions in a very subversive context, because the characters like Jack and Cree are pushed into such a zone more due to ambiguities arising from their socio-economic location. Jack wants to pursue his dream of attaining fame through rodeoing, even though it implies that he has to abandon his family. His wife Cree finds it difficult to reconcile her role of a young mother with her expectations of life. When her father, the Chief decides to disinherit her from her rightful share in the sale of their property, the concept of inheritance creates the necessary disturbance for the characters to explore the modes for survival, because the idea itself is alien to Native American social systems. Therein lies the justification for stripping the sanctity assigned to concepts like “voices” and “spirits”. Instead, Jack and his friends decide to manufacture a vision for the Chief so that he is convinced into sharing the proceeds of the sale of his property with his daughter. Such an act is justified with statements like “Truth is something you got to live with once the stories have their turn”; “Truth is something you create with your stories”; and “Truth in an empty jack-o-lantern” (163).

The implication of such statements is that the relativity of truth is caused by filling in one’s voice in its interpretation. Therein lies the justification for convincing
Lody to deceive the Old Chief into believing that he has heard the voices of the Spirit.
The following exchange between Cicero and Lody reveals this aspect.

LODY. I don’t like to speak for the Great Father.

CICERO. They want you to Lody. Tell the old man that you think he should share the depot with Cree. Do you think he should share?

LODY. Yes.

CICERO. Then you’ll be speaking for yourself. That won’t be hard, will it? (171)

The fundamental idea of this deception is to convince the Old Chief that his attitude in the physical world (denying his daughter the right to the proceeds of the railroad station) will have an impact on his life in the heavens. Therefore, the process of making connections also operates in a subversive context characterized by machinations and intrigues.

In such a context, Wovoka’s vision and the idea of Ghost Dance function as a relative construct which can be suitably and sometimes syncretically transcultured to support the movement towards survival. The differing versions of Wovoka’s vision, which appear at various significant points in the text, while reinforcing the sense of liminality, also serve to highlight the fact that truth functions as a “creative connection” (Vizenor, Postindian Conversations 166), dependant on interpretation for much of its content. While the play refrains from an actual performance of the Ghost Dance, the vision of deliverance, as interpreted and reinterpreted by the characters indicates the syncretic aspect of the vision. The vision itself functions as a medicine bundle, because it holds the message of deliverance. In his first narrative of the vision, Cicero says that the
Great Spirit would take all the Indians into the safe mountains only if they continue
dancing. After the deluge, only the Indians and the game would remain on the land.
Dancing here essentially corresponds to the Christian idea of faith because Cicero states
clearly, “The Indian who didn’t dance would go up just a few feet, not to the mountains”
(147). Cicero’s second version of the vision bears correspondence with the story of
Noah’s Ark. The only twist in the tale happens when the man sees a great pile of bones
after the deluge and realizes that the ghosts of the people drowned had been dancing. This
can be interpreted as a questioning of faith, especially when it seems to have had such
violent results such as the annihilation of the entire tribes of people.

The third version of the vision, as narrated by Cicero has the Great Father playing
the role of the creator. Instead of leaving behind a trail of destruction, the Great Father
creates new land with sweet grass and spotted ponies. In this version of the vision also, it
is only the dancing and the praying Indians who will experience the benefits of faith,
while the white men with their strange ways will be buried.

Asserting her position as the moral centre of the play, Lody has her own vision
which is partly sourced from her exposure to Christianity. She integrates elements like
the stars which guided the Three Wise Men to Bethlehem and the suffering of Christ. In a
sense, hers is a translocated vision which combines aspects of the Native American vision
quest and the Christian idea of deliverance.

In *The Woman Who Was a Red Deer*, the pattern of a vision quest operates
initially in the denial mode. When the visions have been denied in the traditional sense, it
is up to the characters to conjure the visions in a manner which are crucial to their
survival, just like how the Grandmother in the play is able to assign a visionary meaning
for the deer dress. She describes it as follows, “My deer dress is the way I felt, transformed by the power of ceremony” (14). The implication is that the process of making connections between the physical and the spiritual world is a conscious act, which is crucial for arriving at a location of survival. The Grandmother looks at natural objects like the maple leaves for visualizing the potential for spiritual fulfillment. Her description of the process of the changing colours of the maple leaves poignantly parallels the processes of a vision quest. She says:

The leaves only get to be red for a moment. Just a moment, and then the tree grieves all winter until the leaves come back. But they’re green through the summer. The maple waits for the leaves to turn red. All it takes is a few cold mornings. A few days left out of the warmth. Then the maple tree has red leaves for a short while. (11)

The Grandmother recognizes that survival lies in reworked myth of the Ah’wuste, the spirit deer, which functions as a tutelary enabling connection between the physical world and the spiritual world. This reworked myth would turn out to be an amalgam of her received cultural and spiritual knowledge, personal engagement with the myth, and her location in the midst of the contact culture. Though constricting circumstances sometimes enforced the silence of the spirits (17), the vision was still important because recollecting it was an act of survival that bestowed some sense of personal sovereignty. The vision could be suitably altered, something the Girl realizes as her initial resistance gives way to an acceptance of the operation of the myth in her daily life. She moves towards a location from where she declares, “I’m sewing my own red-deer dress. It’s different than my grandma’s. Mine is a dress of words. I see Ahw’uste also” (18).
Towards the end of the play, the Grandmother addressing her dead ancestors says, “My relatives – I’m making medicine from your songs. Sometimes I feel it. But mostly I have to know it’s there without seeing” (17). The stories and the myths of the ancestors function as medicine songs, aiding the process of healing. The vision of the Ah’wuste operates as a medicine bundle as per the requirement of the vision quest. Aided by the tutelary Ahw’uste, the myth provides for dynamic interpretations and reinterpretations which are crucial to a sense of survival. For example, while the Grandmother offers increasingly fluid accounts on how she had actually sighted the spirit deer, the differing narratives enable the Girl to recognize that she could have heard whatever she had wanted. By extension, the deer dress and the deer dance symbolize dynamic concepts which would enable the Girl to move towards survival. This is signified by her statement at a job interview which indicates that she has arrived at a working understanding of the myth of the Ahw’uste. She tells at her fourth interview: “My grandmother was a deer. I could see her change before my eyes. She caused stories to happen. That’s how I knew she was a deer” (18). The Grandmother also functions as a mythically relative construct, more in the nature of a tutelary spirit who takes upon the role of guiding the Girl towards a location from where she can hope to exercise her personal sovereignty.

The fundamental perception of the Native American sense of spirituality is characterized by what Paula Gunn Allen would define as a “position of unity within a larger Self”; the larger Self comprises the individual and the All Spirit. Hence, she defines disease as a “condition of division and separation from the whole” (60). The emphasis of the ceremonies and the rituals was to restore the individual to a sense of unity with the whole so that he or she may resume the mystical connection with what has
been often described as “supernatural” but remains “spiritual” for the Native Americans. Therefore, the general purpose of a ceremony is to “integrate: to fuse the individual with his or her fellows…the person sheds the isolated, individual personality and is restored to conscious harmony with the universe” (62). While clarifying that the Native American tribes do not celebrate the individual’s ability to feel emotion, she states that ceremonial literature works by redirecting private emotion and integrating the energy generated by emotion within a cosmic framework. To achieve this, the Native American ceremonies work towards moving the individual beyond the dualistic terms of “natural” and “supernatural”. From this perspective, Native American ceremonial literature has a therapeutic value, the disease being the separation from a sense of conscious harmony with Nature and by extension the spiritual. The cure is obtained through the ceremony which restores the sense of conscious harmony.

Though Glancy’s plays can be classified as contemporary works of American Indian literature, some aspects of ceremonial literature can be discerned in her plays. The first is the shedding of the individual personality and the second is the restoration to conscious harmony with the universe. However, the process of restoration is complex and sometimes even problematic because of the post colonial location of her characters, which is characterized by sociocultural tensions. In fact, the sense of alienation which many of her characters experience is sourced in the assimilated idea that the natural and the supernatural are two different worlds. Their attempts to move beyond a sense of duality and create connections between the material and the spiritual world are often characterized by complexity and tension. While the transcultural space is located in the
midst of such tensional negotiations, the aspect of survivance is manifest in the layered perspectives which emerge as an outcome of the ceremonial processes.

There is an element of subversion in the appropriation of the traditional elements of oral narrative strategies, chants, symbols and dance, which are integral elements of a Native American ceremony. For example, the fox trot is used in a rather ironic manner in *The Lesser Wars* (1999). While the circular motion of the dance may signal its alliance with the Native American Hoop Dance, its orderly movement in tandem with a partner succinctly captures the role complications engendered by a social encounter in the Bel–Rae ballroom. If the Native Hoop Dance captured the sense of limitless identity of the Native American by remaining focused on the circular aspect of life, Tecoyo realizes that to stay alive in the circular fox trot, she has to shed her individual identity, and along with it, the aspect of childbearing which assigned the status of a woman to her. As the fox trot reaches its final movement in the play, she symbolically guillotines herself to integrate herself with Coytoe so that she can find meaning in her relationship with him.

It is obvious that the names Coytoe and Tecoyo are actually reversals/distortions of Coyote – the trickster. Just like the traditional trickster tale in which the Trickster’s right arm struggles with the left, the play witnesses Coytoe and Tecoyo struggling for self-definition. However the two aspects of the trickster function as two separate entities. Moreover, the annihilation, initiated by Tecoyo indicates that it is the woman more than the man, who gives up a part of herself (145). While conceiving the trickster as an androgynous entity, Glancy manages to separate the individual aspects, only to lead on to one aspect confronting the other.
In Glancy’s plays, the restoration of ‘conscious harmony’ starts with the redirection of private emotion. In the face of sociocultural encounters, her characters reflect upon myths, symbols, stories and memories to arrive at a vantage position which enables the recognition of the conflation of perspectives that characterize their life. While trying to relocate the myth, symbol or story, they move towards a transcultural space of negotiation. Since the focus is not on achieving a static or a singular position of resolution but a journey towards survivance, the tensional alliances between Native American cultural traditions and the received knowledge of Christianity becomes the perfect springboard for Glancy’s characters to move towards a continuum of survival rather than a fixated sociocultural location.

It can be conjectured that healing is engendered when her characters try to bridge the gap between the material and the spiritual aspects of life. In such a context, myths, stories, symbols and memories function as tensional objective correlatives, characterized by their constantly shifting implications. This generates a conflation of perspectives for the characters from which they move towards making connections between the personal and the spiritual. For the purpose of this analysis, the pattern of the ceremony can be seen as operating in the following manner: through relocated rituals, myths and artifacts and through the processes of mediation.

In *Stick Horse* (1999), as conflicting forces try to subdue and take control of Eli’s life, it becomes clear that his “spooks” are literal manifestations of his insecurities arising out of his cultural dislocation. They are the result of his attempts to envision a world beyond the present one. He says:
You don’t know what it’s like having them in your head where no gun can get to them. Each night they crawl up the road with their headlight eyes.

They go right into you and there’s nothing you can do. (117)

Jake believes in the presence of a Great Spirit which possesses the power to deliver Eli from the “spooks”. In his opinion, the spirit of magic may have changed since the past, but the idea of spiritual peace that was associated with it remains intact. He says:

I feel the spirit of peace – I felt it long ago when I was with my father in our ceremonies. The medicine men argued over which way to sit in the lodge. They argued over the old ways – they didn’t want to change. My father said our lives had changed – our magic also would change – and it would still be magic. He would keep our medicine – it didn’t matter by which ritual. It was faith in the magic that kept it going. I remember sitting by my father in the lodge. I felt his spirit press into me. I feel his spirit of peace to this day. (122-123)

While Eli is the “Cherokee man and an alcoholic”, his friend Jake is the “medicine man who helps Eli in the Indian way” (84). Since Jake decides to heal Eli in the Indian manner, he adopts the route of a ceremony. The key to the healing lies in Eli’s recognition of his connection to the spirit world.

The purpose of the traditional Eetowah Fire ceremony is to get rid of something from the past, so that an element of newness is introduced into the life. The procedures involve lighting a smaller fire in the cabin from a large campfire and burning sweet grass, tobacco or sage. The symbolism lies in the literal burning of the past and the introduction of the newness. However, the Fire Ceremony in Stick Horse is located in an ironical
context. In Jake’s version of the fire ceremony a smoking pipe is good enough to start the ritual rather than the traditional fire.

Eli’s trysts with the Spirits seem to have no simple solutions. During these trysts, he is able to visualize himself as a “Stick Horse” – a lifeless creature, with its complement, the Spirit Horse hovering above. While this visualization fulfils his idea of a rodeo clown which had been his pinnacle of achievement, ironically, it is through this visualization that he is pulled towards the seductive spirits who are keen on gaining control on him. As he spills between the world of spirits and the world that Jake is trying to keep him in, he feels the agony of being torn apart. This is literally manifest in the game of Hang Man, which is a visualization of his actual physical disintegration. He says:

They gnaw my fingers. Eat my knuckles. My wrists. Up my ARMS! O GOD!! The stick horse grazes my chest like grass. My heart. LUNGS!! My spine is open to the sky. My blood runs over the grease paint on my rodeo clown face (sic). (133)

This process of tearing apart has its own ceremonial import. It should result in Eli becoming an “Indian who plows”, not a “rodeo clown who drinks”. Since the community is present in the form of Quannah and Virgene, the ceremony must have had the intended impact – curing Eli from the influence of the spirits (pun intended). In fact, Glancy’s original intention had been for Eli to make it. However, though Jake gives the pipe to Eli, the Spirit Dancers pass the pipe to Quannah and Virgene and roll Eli away. This can be read as Eli succumbing to the addiction rather than subsuming it.⁶
The success of the ceremony in Glancy’s plays lies in the recognition of duality and attempts to resolve the same. However, when considering the fact that Eli’s problem was a deep-seated one having its origins in social and cultural dislocation, total recovery remains a theoretical possibility. Instead, it is the movement towards a sense of survival which can be construed as a movement towards recovery. Such a movement is characterized by a transcultural point of view, in which the characters are able to negotiate their tensional sociocultural location. The following declaration by Eli supports such a conclusion. He says:

I’m still nowhere, but I make a corral for my stick-horse. I fill the black hole with sawdust. I will talk to the metal tumbleweed and say ‘peace’ to the uprisings in my head. I will sing the songs our old healer, the Stone Man gave us. (135)

These lines indicate that Eli has found a way to culturally negotiate his past and his present which indicates his movement towards survival. Within the context of his diseased status, he would still return to his native past, albeit in a relocated context.

In Segwohi (1999), the question that engenders the sense of alienation for all the three characters is the one which Sereh asks about Peyto and his generation: “What should Peyto do when the Indian way of life is gone for him?” (215) The phrase “Indian way of life” is used in a wholistic sense to refer to the operation of traditions, rituals and ceremonies.

While describing the setting for the play Glancy says, “The clothesline in the backyard resembles a ship’s rigging where sheets pound on the line as though sails. Truly, there is the feeling of being in the middle of the vast sea” (207). This is precisely
the manner in which the characters in the play experience their sense of dislocation and alienation. Though the name Segwohi means “Two Become Together”, Segwohi finds it difficult to reconcile his past and his present. As a medicine man, he had been engaged with traditions and winter counts. But in the present, he has to contend with ideas such as divorce, inheritance of property and the commercialization of traditional myths and chants. As a result of his ensuring frustration, he becomes alienated from his son, Peyto who is twice married and his sister Sereh, who has been twice married. Though he feels that he can hear the voices of his ancestors, he resists the recognition of the complexity of a sociocultural world in which Native American beliefs and artifacts are commodified. This frustration is directly manifest in the numerous arguments that he has with Peyto.

Peyto recognizes the complexity of his sociocultural location, but has limited means to negotiate the pressures of his life. He is aware that he is seeking for peace in a world where he is not at home, but he has to contend with the demands of his family life and an incommunicative father for whom he remains a “jazz man”. This sense of disconnect is poignantly captured in his inability to hear the voices of his dead ancestors. In his search for elusive peace, he perceives a disconnect between his material and spiritual life.

Sereh lives in two worlds, though not simultaneously. In her numerous conversations with her brother and nephew, she remains the sister and the aunt who had been condemned to a life of loneliness. Though she had been married twice, as the playwright puts it, she would not want to remember either time (204). However, in her world of art, she recognizes her true self. While her act of moulding clay into surreal pottery seems to approximate to an attempt to break away from the realities of her life, it
is also representative of the attempt to find a connection between the material and the spiritual aspects of her life. Though her skill at making pots ensures that there is food on the table, more importantly, it infuses a sense of belonging and helps her to discover herself. She is able to make useful forms out of the dark fears in her head. She says about her work, “My life is bound up in my work. It’s my pow wow dance. My sweat lodge ceremony. It’s where I find soothing. (sic) It’s where I am whole” (218).

She describes her work as her “pow wow dance” or “sweat lodge” ceremony, because she feels empowered and restored to a sense of conscious harmony with her universe. Things seem to be happening her way in her world of art because the act of moulding clay helps her to connect to herself. By the virtue of this sense of harmony, she is able to have a better perspective on the conflict between the father and the son. Where the father sees a wasted life, she is able to see visions of the “medicine man” and so, she is also able to sense that harmony can be restored between the warring father and the defiant son only through the power of a ceremony.

While art becomes the platform to release the pent up fury and memories for both the father and the son, to start afresh, the feelings that they had for each other need to be objectified through a ceremonial process. When Segwohi attempts to record an act of destruction by Peyto as a winter count, Sereh initially flares up and calls him a “hateful, old inciter” (239). However, her act of gluing the pieces of her broken bowl enables him to recognize the inherent fragmentation in their lives and in the process, moves him closer onto Peyto’s wavelength. This also enables him to understand the ceremonial import of Sereh and Peyto’s work. Most of all, it enables him to see that he is a human, not a Great Spirit in judgment. On the other hand, the process of making winter counts
enables Peyto to objectify the carelessness of his life, and move towards a better location of survival. They become the personalized recollections of the past, characterized by empathy and understanding.

The patterns of a ceremony are used in a similar context in *American Gypsy*, especially when Glancy tries to capture the spiritual ambiguities experienced by the narrative voice in the play. When she describes the play itself as a “gypsy” she is in effect capturing the rootlessness and the migration that most of the Native Americans experience in a dislocated context. Relocation into a reservation context also meant that people experienced a significant disconnect from their Native past, as described in the play. Such a disconnect is raised to the spiritual terms when we recognize that the characters are trying to connect the personal with the spiritual, since the material does not offer a solution to their crisis.

Frennie’s reasoning about the transformation of Indians into chickens is reflective of a transcultural negotiation of the crises that troubles Peri and Titomo. She reasons that Indians become chickens when they turn white and forget their ways. She says: “You know the story of Indians when they turn white – when they forget their ways, they grow feathers and become chickens” (72). Strangely enough, it is Frennie who approximates as the “wise woman” when she offers an explanation as to why Peri and herself are ‘gypsies’ and a justification for their loss of land. It is because they will not be bound to a place and will be ready to leave earth when the time comes. She says: “That’s why we are gypsies. That’s why we lost our land. So we won’t be stuck here. So we can be ready to leave this earth” (79).
Titomo’s break from his traditional past is indicated through three aspects in the play. Firstly, his refusal to engage in any useful employment is uncharacteristic of a traditional Native American man. However, as an outcome of the reservation life, Titomo is highly influenced by his peer group of biker friends in whose company, he is always in search of employment. Secondly, there is a lack of level space for communication between Titomo and his wife Peri, which is most obvious in his refusal to allow her to access his dead mother’s Native American traditional recipes, though his attitude towards his mother’s past seems to be characterized by a lack of interest. His deeper confusion about his sociocultural location within the framework of his family is indicated in the following statement in the introduction, “He’s still in love with his wife, though he’s not able to understand her at the moment” (44). The third and the more serious departure from tradition is in the act of violence that Titomo engages in. Hunting for fun is an idea imposed by the peer culture, which is in clear opposition to the Native American spirit of hunting for survival. Titomo aims at a bird, but in a manner indicative of poetic justice, he shoots himself.

To move to a location of survival, the characters have to adopt the migratory nature of the gypsies to come to terms with their cultural and spiritual crisis. When land becomes an amorphous and an unsteady construct, it is through stories and artifacts that a transcultural negotiation becomes possible. Peri says to the dead women in the grave, “Thurlene – Is the unraveling of this life our punishment? Ocholee – We do good and bad all our lives – and can’t help that either. Or is there neither good or bad, but everything is relative? – as the Indian religion says?” (60)
To recognize such relativity, a sense of connection to the past becomes crucial for reinterpretations and relocations. Such a possibility is provided by the recipes of Titomo’s mother. For Peri, survival is contingent on her rediscovering her past traditions through the recipes of her mother-in-law. In addition to acting as a source of empowerment, the recipes would help her connect to her past, and in the process, negotiate the operation of relativity in life. By shedding her individual personality and locating herself as a participant in the preservation of her Native American traditional cuisine, Peri would move closer towards survival. Further, the recipes also infuse Peri with a feeling of empowerment, as the following exchange illustrates:

NEVILLE. What’re you doing in there Peri?

PERI. (From the kitchen) Trying to serve something other than grease.

NEVILLE. This is my café. You don’t have Ti behind you anymore.

Peri walks into the café, throws the menus into the air. They hit the floor with a clunk. (77)

While the recipes connect her to a past in which she had not been a participant, they also provide a sense of empowerment, since she can now open her own café. Given the fact that she is a “mixed-blood woman nearing forty” (44), the recipes would function as conduits through which she would be able to discover herself, albeit without the defining presence of Titomo. Hence, in a defining gesture, she is able to walk out from Neville’s café.

The pattern of ceremony operates in yet another category of plays which work through mediation between the Native American and the Christian tenets of spirituality. Instead of resistance or acceptance, the characters position themselves as participants in
both the Native American religious traditions and Christianity. While exploring the meeting points between their Native American heritage and the Christian idea of forgiveness and compassion, complex meanings are assigned to metaphors, symbols and stories. These in turn act as the crucial agents which move the characters towards a transcultural space of survival. Hence the process of restoration to a conscious harmony with the universe happens through a conscious ascribing of meanings to stories, symbols and artefacts.

In *Jumpkiss*, the concern of the dramatic voice is to attempt at a definition of self against a fragmented context of religious beliefs and sociocultural encounters. Hence, the pattern of ceremony operates through transcultural mediation, especially in the storying mode, as the narrative voice remembers those significant life experiences which were instrumental in bridging the gap between the material and the spiritual.

The impact of the sociocultural penetration of Native American lives is clearly seen in crossfire of the family dynamics, as exemplified through the names of the characters – Father North, Mother South, Brother East and Sister West. While the father’s “anger and repression” are contained in the meat that he brings home (89), the mother’s hatred for messes and insistence for the “sterility of afterlife while they lived” (90) only serve to make the family dynamics dispassionate and cold. There is a clear cultural dislocation at work because the father had migrated from Arkansas to the stockyards in Kansas City whereas the mother came from the farm with a “cedar chest and orange blossoms” (90). The father wishes that he had a job that would keep him away from home at least for a hundred years and the mother ensures that the father serves his time whenever he is at home.
The idea of faith becomes complicated because the characters are made to believe that Christ had suffered for the sins they had committed and the sins which they were going to commit. For example, the girl believes that Christ had been poked with nails because she had been mean to her younger brother by stealing his nickel. In such a context, love is stripped of all its finer sentiments and becomes more of a biological necessity as evinced by the narrator in the section titled “Galoshes”. In the story, the trout had spat out Jeremy Fisher because of the rubbery taste of the mackintosh that he wore. Nevertheless, it swallowed the rubbery galoshes. The narrator equates this idea to non-fulfillment of love. But nevertheless, the wounds sustained during the process of love are left behind as scars.

It is in this context that the story of the Cherokee Strawberry Legend becomes very significant. Unfortunately the story has limited use for the woman in the play who doesn’t miss her husband in spite of being married for twenty years, thereby creating a gap in her spiritual conception of her single status. The story of the Cherokee Strawberry Legend Woman remains only a cultural legend for her – a reminder of her antecedents but not any refreshing idea of love. On the other hand, it is Christianity which gives her the message of “jump-kissing” precisely through those acts which are suggestive of the violence that had marred the narrator’s life. These include the childhood incident of getting burnt at the fire, separation from her husband at a later stage, and the pain of witnessing her son battle a life-threatening surgery.

The ceremonial aspect of the play operates through the narrative voice relocating to a position from where she is able to see beyond what is visible. A sample of this understanding can be seen in the section “A Place Between Two Trees” where through a
complex process of association, the sister is able to invest a common object like a photograph with the power of the sacred, especially through arriving at points of connection between the food served on the table and the memory of her father as an arrested vision in a photograph. She says:

When she put dinner on the table, I thought it was a photo on my plate. An old photo of a man with a hat pushed back on his head, in overalls and a white shirt and tie, as if a foreman inspecting the trees come to see if they were doing their job of shading. (130)

This is in stark contrast to the Brother who conceives of the “sacred” as a silent construct and concludes, “You can’t hear a photograph. That’s what’s holy about it” (130). He sees no way in which connection can be established between the sacred and the mundane. However, the sister says, “I can hear it. I’m cutting the photo with my knife and fork. Yes, I am eating the photograph. My father inspector and my mother invisible because she’s the one taking the photograph” (130). It can be observed that the Sister has been able to bridge the distance between the known and the unknown, the seen and the unseen, through a conscious effort at ascribing meanings to objects and memories. This also indicates that the sister has been able to bridge the gap between her Native American orientation and her acquired sense of Christianity by moving on to a location from where she can see beyond the visible and attach religious and spiritual significance to mundane objects and legends. While the sightings of the deer remind the narrator about the tutelary spirits who guide the Native Americans (139), the idea of Christ ascending the Heaven on the third day implies that there has to be some kind of purgation for a rebirth to happen. Therefore, the act of “jumpkissing” involves the process of annihilating the individual
self and seeing oneself in the context of the larger sense of the universe. By extension, such an act involves not only reopening of the old wounds, but also the ability to compassionately face the past and the present. The mediatory aspect of the play lies in the narrator’s continuous movement between the Native American cultural legends and Christianity, both of which are consciously relocated within the sociocultural location of the characters.

A similar pattern can also be observed in *Salvage* wherein Memela’s spiritual crisis vis-à-vis her religious affiliation acquires a mediatory aspect. In fact, Memela’s spiritual crisis is sourced in her belief in a God whom she doesn’t understand. She says: “I taped the page Wolfert ripped from my Bible – *I did not come to bring peace, but a sword*. Matthew 10:34. I am in the right religion. I choose to believe – though I don’t understand – What kind of God is this?” (48)

While reflecting on her allegiance to her religion, Memela realizes that the very hybridity of her beliefs gives a perspective to her spiritual crisis. When she attempts to translocate a Biblical message to her location⁹, she understands that a great deal of faith would be required to resurrect her relationship with her husband Wolf. Memela says: “What does that mean? What is it like to be lifted on a cross like a serpent? What little cramped heart can believe that? Look at you peering at us from your cross – Do you take only the hurt ones on your war path? Christ – I am bitten by your love” (50).

The silent voice of the dead Mrs Stover becomes empowered in a dream sequence, when Memela receives her message of forgiveness – “Forgiveness comes through understanding the ones who harmed you” (55). The key to understanding in turn lies in an act of “Jumpkiss” – an exercise in faith, a belief in a greater controlling power
that would ensure the balance and alignment of everything in life. For Memela, the key to survivance does not lie in an isolated zone of either Christianity or her inherited Native American ancestry, but through a mediation between both. This is symbolized by the white cross that Memela places at the accident site. For her, the Cross combines attributes of violence, and healing as well. While it signifies truce and peace on the literal level, it is also reminiscent of not just the horror of crucifixion, but also the violence unleashed in the name of religious conversion. Memela explains to Wolfert the rationale of placing the cross at the accident site. She says, “The scarred place was there – the land remembers – it still carries the thump of the impact” (45). While giving due respect to land and the memories it encloses, we find that she is consciously trying to assign a meaning to the metaphor of the cross, something which would help her negotiate her present tensional location.

This perspective, against the larger implication of Mrs Stover’s message on forgiveness lends clarity to the final image of the play – the figure who is wearing a white cardigan covered with pearl buttons could very well be Memela – the Cherokee Strawberry Legend Woman retracing her steps towards her husband, Wolf. Her movement toward survivance is contingent on constantly debating her religious beliefs and questioning the very basis of faith.

Mediation works in the allegorical mode in The Collector of a Three-Cornered Stamp. Glancy fosters points of connection between the Biblical creation story and the Native American connection to the Great Spirit, thereby setting the context for mediation between both. In the process, the narrative voice uses the concept of war, and parallels it against the process of creation so that war emerges as an event that defines the responses
of the narrator to the various tensional sociocultural situations captured in the play. In the first section, the Vietnam War functions as a haunting presence, literally destroying the marriage of the narrator, whereas in the second section, it is the Iraqi War which destroys the natural environment. In the process of making such connections, the personal becomes not just global, but sometimes archetypal as well, as illustrated by the third war in the play. The idea of war and the destruction of nature on a global scale function as correlatives to the destruction of the individual soul at a personal level. Paralleling the Biblical process of creation, the individual stamp, perceiving itself to be a part of the eternal spirit, acquires the ability to think. From here, rebellion was but a step away, since the stamp was now perfectly capable of misconceiving itself as the creator. This is personified through the image of the stamp, which after acquiring a mind of its own, decides to separate from the Spirit. The stamps encapsulate the idea of the human being, the three corners being representative of the jagged edges of the human heart.

The confusion arising out of war and destruction is sourced in the incapability of the human heart to perceive its connection to the Greater Spirit. Therefore, though a sense of survival is necessary for fostering connections, such a process happens in a tensional manner, represented by the comparison of the human to the jagged edges of a stamp. Such an image integrates a transcultural perspective of spirituality achieved through the process of mediation.

From the above discussion, it can be observed that in the mode of the vision quest, there is an integration of Native American and the Christian elements into the consciousness of the characters which is characterized by tensional negotiation between received and inherited religious traditions against a complex sociocultural environment.
As a result, it also becomes possible to trace strains of resistance in such plays. For example in *Weebjob*, patterns of resistance are manifest in the complex visions of the Thunder Hawk, which manifest during times of turmoil. This is Weebjob’s chosen method of making sense of everything, since his saviour has a form which subscribes to the Native American belief of the Thunder Hawk. His hunger for the Indian ways assumes the pattern of resistance when he visualizes the Thunder Hawk in a cathedral, an experience, which for him, approximated to a Sweat Lodge ceremony (71).

While the process of transculturation operates in the mode of a ceremony, it can be observed that the plays have limited sourcing in the tensional negotiations between the Native American religion and Christianity. For example, though the idea of crucifixion and the regeneration of life are hinted at through the game of Hangman in *Stick Horse*, Glancy’s engagement is with the spiritual harmony characterized by a sense of unity with one’s family or friends. In such plays, it is often found that the Christian element works from the background, operating in terms of a residual memory of the colonial impact. For example in *Segwohi*, the idea that traditional hymns, chants and art could be commodified is sourced in the post colonial location of the characters. While transcultural visualization of the sense of alienation is the outcome of the vision quest, transcultural objectification is the outcome of the ceremony.

At a conceptual level, a concept like mediation enables Glancy to explore the connections between cultures and religions – an idea that is crucial to her theory of interlocking cultures. She says with reference to *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, “The house trailers are cultures of several continents, which is another addition to the multi-dimensional aspect of new-wave oral tradition I’m trying to create, which is
interlocking cultures” (20). In *The Best Fancy Dancer*, we find that the final pow-wow that the characters engage in is more in the nature of a mediation between the imposed sociocultural norms and the inherited Native American heritage. Jess says, “Maybe a little bit of New Wave. Or Gertrude’s K-Mart hard country rock! See the oceans beating against the New World shore. We don’t know where we’re going. But we’re going anyway” (333).

The process of exploring the connections assumes the aspect of survivance, as Glancy’s characters are pushed towards recognizing the correlations between history, culture and religion on a continuous basis. Glancy’s position is not that of outright rejection of other cultures and possibilities, but that of exploration of the connections between them. In her plays, such a transcultural exploration for points of connection represents the spirit of survival.

In the midst of such explorations, it can be seen that the voice of Glancy’s woman characters often emerges to be empowered. They are located in the midst of intense spiritual experiences either as catalysts or facilitators who explore the connection between the sacred and the mundane aspects of life. They perform a key role – they function as agents engendering survival precisely through their ability to connect their everyday realities with the sacred and the spiritual. Placing women at the centre of intense spiritual experiences also becomes the route through which Glancy’s feminist concerns are located within the context of her plays, an aspect which will be discussed in the next chapter.
Notes

1. Typified in the intense moments when Glancy provides for the intertwining of the physical and the spiritual worlds wherein her characters cross the borders between both Eg. Weebjob, Lody.

2. Transculturation is a term originally coined by the Cuban anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz in the 1940. Mary Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* describes transculturation as a phenomenon of the contact zone. ‘Contact zone’, as used by Pratt, refers to the space of colonial encounters, in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict (6).

3. In this Cherokee myth, Selu is the Corn Woman who is accused of being a witch by her own sons. While being put to death, she gives instructions for growing corn to her sons, so that the provision of food was guaranteed for them. In *The West Pole*, Glancy compares this myth to the Christian sense of new life coming from the blood of Christ (22).

4. James Ruppert defines mediation as an artistic and conceptual standpoint, constantly flexible, which uses the epistemological frameworks of Native American and
Western cultural traditions to illuminate and enrich each other (Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction 3).

5. According to the turtle island creation myth, the animals used to live on the rock sky. When the rock sky fell down to the water, it formed mud out of which land grew. Though the versions differ in various tribes as to who was responsible for pulling up a bit of mud, it was the turtle which bore the weight of the land, and hence the name, the Turtle Island Creation Myth. In a section titled ‘On Boards and Broken Pieces of the Ship’ (The Cold and the Hunger Dance) Glancy makes a reference to the turtle island myth.

6. Based on feedback provided by an actor during a presentation by the Borderlands Theatre in Tuscon, Glancy altered Eli’s recovery to a “left-to-the-reader interpretation”.

7. Winter Counts are historical calendars in which events are recorded in pictures.

8. In the Cherokee Strawberry Legend, it was through an intended stratagem executed by the Sun God that the woman begins her return journey towards the man. The man and the woman quarrel with each other and the woman chooses to move ahead steadily without looking back. The man follows her for some distance but gives up. That is when the Sun God intervenes and evokes the memories of the man in the woman by planting strawberries all along her way. These memories persuade the woman to return.

9. The message that emerges is: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up”. The implication is that a great deal of faith would be required to resurrect this relationship.
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