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Book Review: In-between Places

Brewster E. Fitz

Oklahoma State University

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In-between Places. By Diane Glancy. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005. 119 pp. \$35.00.

The title of this collection of eleven essays comes from Glancy's paraphrase of William Heyen's definition of poetry as "language of things that can't be gotten to. It lives in the in-between places." The title also refers to Glancy's moving in between places on the Great Plains and to her writing as a mixed-blood. Glancy's style is personal, elusive, allusive, parodying, and fragmentary. It's a style that requires patience and an open mind, a style she attributes to "patterns" of the structure of the Cherokee language that remain in her.

Glancy daubs and braids and quilts, mixing genres (poetry, theory, midrash, theology) and metaphors. The metaphor of writing as a pot holder, having been introduced in the first essay, recurs, holding together the essays, which are informed by two central questions: "What is Native American Literature?" and "Whence evil?" Glancy's treatment of these questions is like her description of teaching at Bread Loaf in

New Mexico: "away from unity" and "non-closed." In "Mud Ponies" she likens her writing to a mud dauber building a nest and to the mythic Pawnee boy creating ponies from mud. In this extended metaphor, the earth is language, while the spirit/song of the Pawnee pony, the instinct of the mud dauber, and Glancy's need to write become one with the Holy Spirit, giving life to these essays. In "Indian Guide," the memory of places in Missouri devastated by strip-mining is so hot it can only be held with writing. In "Hog Barn," Glancy places her reader in one of the industrialized hog farms found across the Great Plains. Assuming the perspective of a pig in a cage, she weaves quotations from canonical Western writers and thinkers, the Bible, and contemporary ecologists and pig farmers together with porcine musings designed to cure one's taste for pork chops. Near the end of the essay the pig's voice conflates and parodies the words of Jehovah (Exod. 3:14) and Descartes' *cogito*: "I am pig therefore I am."

Jehovah's "I am that I am" shows up again in "Slowly Turning Nature," transmogrified as the third-impersonal voice of nature: "It is *that*, that is." Driving across the Great Plains, visiting the sites of packing houses where her father worked, teaching in New Mexico, visiting the terra cotta army in China, Glancy moves in between textual places and geographical places, in between a naive animism and a deeply felt Christianity. This dauber's nest of fragmentary essays challenges the reader to think imaginatively about nature, the land, and Glancy's mixed cultural heritage.

BREWSTER E. FITZ
Department of English
Oklahoma State University