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Review of *The Dream of a Broken Field* by Diane Glancy

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The Dream of a Broken Field. By Diane Glancy. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011. xii + 206 pp. \$30.00 paper.

In her latest book, Diane Glancy, professor emerita at Macalester College, Minnesota, and author of numerous novels, short story collections, and essay collections, returns to the topics that have always been the focus of her work: the importance of space, of landscape, and of travel; reflections on (nonfiction) writing and what she calls “geographies of language” in *The Dream of a Broken Field*; the difficulties of bridging Native American and European heritages (Glancy has Cherokee, English, and German ancestry); the uneasy combination of Christianity and Indigeneity; and her personal emotional and family history. Like her previous work, especially *Claiming Breath* (1992), the book reflects her private and academic journeys on the roads of the Great Plains and adjacent territory (from Minnesota to Iowa, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Arkansas) and beyond, presenting the reader with an update of Glancy’s life, her retirement and move to Kansas City, her continuing professional activities, and her life as a grandmother. *The Dream of a Broken Field* mixes various nonfictional forms: autobiography, diary writing and the confessional, prose poetry, the essay, and history.

Glancy divides the work into five books: “The Old Geography Lessons of Language,” in which she introduces the metaphor of the paper doll (with reverberations of disguise, transformation, surfaces); “Geographies of a Realigned Language,” focusing on Native American literature and creative writing theory; the title-giving “Dream of a Broken Field,” relating her transition from the “Academic Front” to retirement life; “Geographies of Language,” on “The Act and Question of Nonfiction” (so

the subtitle); and finally “One Who Wears Moths,” which continues the book’s focus on Christianity and travel.

Glancy explores childhood spaces—from the family home to “Outlets” of freedom (such as vacant lots) to boarding schools (“Black House,” for instance), the Great Plains as a landscape of hidden histories and unheard voices (which she ventriloquizes in novels such as *Stone Heart: A Novel of Sacajawea* of 2003)—but also the space of America, from its early exploration to the founding fathers and its more recent imperial history and wars. In *The Dream of a Broken Field*, Glancy continues to be Glancy: for readers familiar with her work, there are few surprises here and quite a few repetitions that would have benefitted from more editorial effort. In addition, some of her interpretations of history and religion, especially of the Holocaust—areas that she does not usually emphasize in her work—are highly problematical (see p. 28), and sharper editing could also have contributed to less pathos and overdrawn tone, and more emphasis on the strengths of her reflections: her thinking-together of the incommensurable: Christian and Native, travel and home, the static and the dynamic, place and migration, the “*unboundaried*.”

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