

## The Portrayal of Spatial Experiences in Selected Native American Women's Writings

### Fasih ur Rehman

Lecturer, Department of English,  
Khushal Khan Khattak University,  
Karak, KP, Pakistan.

Email: [fasihrrkk@gmail.com](mailto:fasihrrkk@gmail.com)

(Corresponding Author)

### Asma Iqbal

Assistant Professor, Department of  
English, National University of Modern  
Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

### Hazrat Bilal

Lecturer, Department of English,  
Gandahara University, Peshawar, KP,  
Pakistan.

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**Abstract:** *The theme of space and place is pivotal to Native American women's writing. The present study aims to explore the representation of spatial experiences in selected Native American writers' works. The present study occurs at the crossroad of diverse fields such as literature, gender, geography, space, and place. Hence, the consequent theoretical framework is a juxtaposition of interdisciplinary theories ranging from literary theories to spatial studies, and gender theories to geographical concepts. The foundations of the present study are erected upon Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, Diane Glancy's *The Reason for Crows*, and Polingaysi Qoyawayma's *No Turning Back*. The reinterpretations and re-readings reinforce the notion that Native American woman has experienced a certain spatial subjugation throughout history that has resulted in a fractured and destabilized spatial identity.*

**Key Words:** Native American Woman, Spatiality, Identity, Experience of In-Placeness, Experience of Out-of-Placeness

## Introduction

To decode this interdisciplinary theoretical model, the present study engages a methodological framework that caters to diverse yet interlinked methodological formulations. The methodological structure of the present study is founded upon Cresswell's theorization of the notion of the spatial experience of in-placeness, out-of-placeness, normative geography, out-of-place action, and transgression which is further reinforced and complemented

through engagements of Paul Rodaway's notion of sensuous geography, Pamela Moss and Isabel Dyck's conception of the spatiality of disable body, Doreen Massey's proposition of economic space, and Edward C. Ralph's concept of existential insiderness and outsiderness. With these multifaceted approaches to understanding the spatiality of the Native American woman, the present chapter draws a detailed research methodological framework of the present study.

The present study is a rereading of selected Native American women's writings to understand the ways in which the selected writers have depicted the issues related to space and place as confronted by the Native American woman. The study is founded upon a fundamental premise that space and place are two avenues that work as a platform for the exercise of power. The insinuations of the notion of power make space and place political entities. Therefore, to understand the political implications of a spatial event, it is pertinent to understand its ideological insinuations. Hence, within the Native American context, the power to dictate spatiality resides in the hands of the Native American and Euro-American patriarchy. Therefore, ideologically the two patriarchies control Native American woman's spatiality.

## Literature Review

In this section, the discussion includes a survey of contemporary literature associated with the socio-spatial inquiry of diverse Native American literary works. The literature review offers a critical assessment of the literature associated with Native American works in general, and selected female fiction writers' work in particular. This includes deliberations pertaining to the representation of issues confronted by the Native American women connected to land, space, place, Euro-American spatial incursion, and other socio-cultural facets. Aiming at identifying the portrayal of Native American normative geography, the section recognizes unnoticed associations between Native American woman's experience of space and place.

Laura Frances Klein, [1995](#), and Lillian Alice Ackerman claim that colonial literature

presents Native American women either as savage squaw or in a much-romanticized image of an Indian princess (5). The squaw is represented as a woman who has no contribution to the social progression, is subordinated to the authority of man, and is powerless to take decisions in life like marriage, and family. On the other hand, the princess image is developed upon the Eurocentric ideal of ladyship, love, and romance. The stereotypical image that results from the two differing views about Native American women is that of either a disgraced drudge who is subservient or is trapped in the degenerating traditions of their cultures or a picturesque lady who "took on the virtues of upper-middle-class European society and left Native American traditions behind them" (6).

However, in Klein and Ackerman's collections of essays related to gender roles in different Native American societies, multiple writers have highlighted the broad differences between male and female gender roles and the existence of a gendered labor division. For instance, Lee Guempl in her description of the Inuit society claims that although at a socio-cultural level men and women of an Inuit, society has "relatively equal status, power and prestige", however, the social roles are assigned through "the division of labor" (27). Similarly, Henry S. Sharp claims that Chipewyan society is a male-dominated society with frequent abuse of females (49). Joy Bilharz, [1995](#), in her portrayal of Iroquois society points towards a gendered socio-cultural imbalance between men's and women's roles. According to Bilharz, the Iroquois men occupied the "forest" which is the domain of warriors, hunters, and diplomats, on the other hand,

women were restricted to “clearing” which is the sphere of women, farmers, and clan matrons (103). Alice B. Kehoe, [1995](#), in her description of the Blackfoot societies of the Plain argues that these societies espoused a socio-cultural setup that supports “personal autonomy” (122). However, the location of this personal autonomy existed in specific domains for men and women, and Blackfoot women were expected to exercise their autonomy through their “innate powers of homemaking and child care” (122). Likewise, the gender roles in Pomo society as described by Victorian D. Patterson attest that the Pomo people cherished “complementary” relations between sexes (126). The complementary relationship, although promised “necessary and equally valued roles”, nonetheless did not guarantee the division of spheres for men and women. Pomo societies will all harmonize relationships between sexes and have specified activities for men and women within a specific realm (Patterson 129). This division barred Pomo women from achieving “personal prestige” as men gathered within the Pomo tribes (Patterson 141).

In addition, Martha C. Knack’s account of the Great Basin culture reveals that women in these tribes were also subject to subordinated tasks. These cultures propagated “gender-segregated work groups” with distinct territories for men and women (Knack 149). Mary Shepardson’s study of Navajo socio-cultural patterning reveals that Navajo culture offers certain rights to women, but the society primarily functions on the sexual division of labor (165). Therefore, when a man engages in a woman’s work, he is labeled as a “transvestite, or *nádlée*” which means the man has lost his

superior position (Shepardson 166). The works, although, elaborately define the roles and positions of Native American women, within that paradigm, they also point towards the existence of exclusive spaces for men and women. The instances presented above attest to the fact that the Native American ethnographers assert a clear division between the masculine and feminine spaces in Native American society. Klein and Ackerman point out the biased portrayal of Native American women in the colonial literature, however, an in-depth analysis of Native American ethnographer’s works reveals that Native American women were subjected to a lower socio-cultural position by the Native American patriarchy.

This marginalized socio-cultural position, subsequently, influenced Native American woman’s spatial position within the Native American normative geographic structures. Similarly, delineating the Cherokee’s metaphors for masculinity or femininity, Theda Perdue, [2001](#), asserts that throughout history Native American women have been portrayed as sifters whereas men have been compared to a bow. This metaphoric division is not only a literal dimension of the sociocultural patterning of Native America but it is deeply rooted in the socio-economic paradigms as well. The announcement of either bow or sifter at a child’s birth initiates the division of space and place for Native American men and women within a Native American socio-cultural context. This initial spatial division is further augmented by raising male and female children in different ways and educating them in gender-specific skills and labor.

The theme of space and place constitutes

the essential thematic paradigm of Native American literature. An immense body of literary research on Native American women's writings deals with the issues of space and place and discusses the multifaceted ways in which Native American writers and characters respond to the notion of space and place. Literary researchers have invested their energies in deciphering the portrayal of the Native American landscape and Native Americans' relationship with the land as represented and reconstructed in the Native American women's writings. For instance, Padraig Kirwan [2017](#), in his essay *The Emergent Land: Nature and Ecology in Native American Expressive Forms* discuss the portrayal of the indigenous landscape, natural environment, and the co-dependency between the Native Americans and ecology in the works of different Native American writers. In *Place, Vision, and Identity in Native American Literatures*, Robert M. Nelson discusses the extraordinary respect that Native American writers give to place and landscape in their writings. Lee Schwenger in *Listening to the Land* talks about the Native American writers' sensitivity and the articulation of their intricate relationship with the earth. Helen May Dennis in her work offers a critique of the representation of cultural spaces, and identity crisis caused by displacement and homelessness in the works of Paula Gunn Allen, Marmon Silko, and Linda Hogan. Elizabeth Leigh Wilkinson, in her dissertation, discusses selected Native American women's use of rhetoric as a means to protest land theft and reclaim territories forcibly occupied by the United States government.

## Theoretical Framework

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The present study is founded upon two distinctive yet parallel aspects of spatiality, namely the spatial experience of a particular place, and common-sense assumptions about behavior in a particular place. With this presupposition, the present study is an attempt to comprehend Native American woman's spatial experience of the normative geography of Native America as illustrated in the selected works, on one hand. While on the other hand, the study elucidates Native American woman's response to the assumptions of commonsense behavior within these normative geographies. In the following section, the study dwells on the premises of spatial experience and assumptions about spatial behavior, respectively.

The overarching subject matter of the present study is to evaluate Native American woman's spatial experience of in-placeness and out-of-placeness within the Native American normative geographies. These spatial experiences are not isolated events or occurrences related to particular spaces, rather they are intricately weaved into the socio-spatial fabric of the Native American society. However, before the study indulges in devising the methodological structure for understanding Native American woman's experience of in-placeness and out-of-placeness, it is pertinent to understand the engagement of the ideas of 'experience' and the terms 'in-placeness' and 'out-of-placeness'.

It is pertinent to mention here that there are two parallel thoughts that the notion of the spatial experience of in-placeness and out-of-placeness comprises. Firstly, the

notion of the experience within a spatial paradigm, and secondly the ideas of in-placeness and out-of-placeness. The concept of 'experience', as deliberated in the present study, is founded upon Yi-fu Tuan's (1977) theorization of the experiential perspective of spatiality. Tuan takes experience as an idea that encompasses numerous "modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality" (8). These modes range from the "direct and intimate" engagement with a place to the "indirect and conceptual" orientation of place to the experience of place "mediated by symbols" (Tuan, 1977, 6). In other words, places are experienced through direct and intimate interaction that is subject to physical presence or location at a particular place. The indirect or conceptual modes are evoked when places are experienced through "active visual perception" (Tuan 8). Whereas, symbolization occurs when places are experienced through their meaningfulness. Accordingly, the present study employs these variant modes of experience of space and place in its estimation of the notion of experience.

The second idea concerns the conceptualization of the philosophies of in-placeness and out-of-placeness. The present study engages Cresswell's formulation of the two premises. Cresswell constitutes the conception of spatial experiences of in-placeness and out-of-placeness upon the notion of belonging to a particular place (2004, 13). The notion of the spatial experience of in-placeness and out-of-placeness is developed when an individual either belongs to or does not belong to a particular place. Nevertheless, the sense of belongingness to a place itself is a complex

orientation of spatiality since it includes multifaceted aspects of the place within its realm. On one hand, the notion of belonging incorporates the sense of ownership and connection towards a place (Cresswell, 2004, 1), while on the other hand, it also encompasses connections between place, identity, and power (Cresswell, 2004, 14). In addition, Cresswell also uses the notion of belongingness as a synonym for the notion of a sense of place, which refers to the subjective and emotional attachment that an individual has towards a particular place (2004, 8). The subsequent complex of spatial experiences of in-placeness and out-of-placeness embraces all these varied notions of belongingness. The present study in its estimation of the notion of the spatial experience of in-placeness and out-of-placeness also uses these varied coordinates of the notion of belonging. Furthermore, the experiences of in-placeness and out-of-placeness are triggered by certain socio-cultural paradigms. The focus of the present study is to explore Native American woman's experience of in-placeness and out-of-placeness within Native American normative geographies. Therefore, the study encompasses a detailed analysis of the socio-spatial organization of the selected Native American societies. With this dissection of the sociocultural, socio-economic, and socio-spatial framework, the study approaches Native American woman's experience of in-placeness and out-of-placeness, and her response to spatial marginalization within Native American normative geographies.

In addition, our spatial experiences constitute our fundamental response to the notion of space as a social construct, therefore, space is experienced in multifaceted forms. Commenting on the

social construction of space and place, Cresswell maintains that the idea of space and place as social constructs means that they are not “natural”, but rather result from some human activity (2004, 30). In other words, space and place are called socially constructed when their meaning and materiality are constructed by society. In view of the fact that society engages in a continual cycle of definition and drawing limitations of the meanings and materiality, therefore, the process of creation of space and place remains open for constant reconfiguration and reevaluation. Against this backdrop, the study employs the notion of the spatial experience of in-placeness and out-of-placeness to review the social construction of space and place within Native American geography. The study considers the ever-changing meaning and materiality of space and place and its impact on the Native American woman’s experience of in-placeness and out-of-placeness.

The second part of the research engages Cresswell’s notions of normative geography, out-of-place actions, and transgression. These spatial notions are engaged to understand the construction and illustration of Native American normative geographies within the historical context and as projected in the selected works, understanding of the female protagonists’ engagements in out-of-place actions and their transgression of the normative geographic structures of Native America. In other words, this part of the research undertakes the project to interpret the connection between the common-sense assumptions about a particular place and the normative judgment of behavior.

To achieve the said purpose, the study draws blueprints of the normative geography

of the selected Native American tribes as depicted by the selected women writers in their selected works. By explanation, the study develops the contours of common-sense assumptions about appropriate behaviors within a particular geographic space and place. These normative geographies are developed by drawing references from cultural and historical perspectives. On one hand, the historico-cultural framework allows the reader to imagine the normative geographic landscape of the selected Native American tribes, while on the other hand, it enables the reader to understand and comprehend the notion of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors within the normative landscapes of the selected Native American tribes.

## **Analysis**

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At the very outset of the study, the present research attempts to establish the fact that Native American normative geographies are ambivalent since the prehistoric initiation of Native American cultures. Surprisingly, the same continued during the pre-and post-contact era of Native American cultural progression. The historico-cultural review of the prehistoric Native American hunting tribes reveals that the pre-historic Native American tribes migrated from Asia through the Bering pass and brought the Asiatic socio-spatial model to be implemented in Native America. The prehistoric Native American cultures delegated spatially marginalized positions. The prehistoric Native American tribes maintained gender-specific roles and the gendered division of labor. Subsequently, it developed into a spatial ambivalence in the pre-contact Native American societies. The normative

geographies of the pre-contact era were primarily defined by the Native American patriarchy and thus it institutionalized the spatial marginalization of the Native American woman. A review of historical literature ascertains the establishment of Native American pre-contact normative geographies upon the gender divide. With the arrival of the Euro-Americans, the Native American normative geography slowly and gradually changed for the worse. In the post-contact era, this study maintains, Native American women became spatially double marginalized. A rereading of historical and cultural literature maintains that Euro-Americans reconfigured the Native American normative geography in the post-contact era upon the Eurocentric socio-cultural and socio-spatial models. An appraisal of Native American historical and cultural studies reveals that Euro-Americans through their religious, assimilation, acculturation policies and land treatise further compromised the ambivalence of the Native American normative geographies. Subsequently, these socio-political and socio-spatial maneuvers resulted in the double spatial marginalization of the Native American woman. Within this double spatial marginalized position, the Native American woman's approach toward normative geography, and her experience of spatiality changed drastically.

The selected women's writings narrate life histories, real and imagined, of Native American women who have been victims of the spatial incursions of Native American and Euro-American patriarchies. However, the selected women writers recount the events of their protagonists' lives when they challenge their spatial marginalization within the normative geographies and attempt to

recreate their own spaces. The present study examines different situations and events where the commonsensical assumptions of appropriate behavior are being thwarted by the protagonist's engagement in out-of-place actions and subsequent transgression of the normative geographic structures at different places. These places occur at their geographical locations and have no significance until they are highlighted by out-of-place action or transgression. Within this paradigm, the research methodology illustrates the relationship between place and behavior by examining behaviors that are judged as inappropriate within a particular geographic location and normative geography. Since inappropriate actions are fundamental actions out-of-place, hence, the study also evaluates the causes and reasons for the out-of-place actions and transgressions.

Within the prototypical framework of out-of-place actions and transgression, the research identifies three different paradigms of out-of-place actions and transgression. *Firstly*, the study explores the experience of space and place from the perspective of the material body and its positionality within a geographic paradigm. The study maintains that the Native American normative geography is constituted upon the notion of an abled body; hence it allocates spatially marginalized positions to a disabled body. The research maintains that Diane Glancy's [2009](#), protagonist in *the Reason for Crows* experiences a marginalized location due to her physical disability. The protagonist of Glancy's novel experiences out-of-placeness within the Mohawk normative geography due to her disabled body. However, this

experience of bodily marginalization is subverted through actions that are considered out-of-place. The protagonist, Kateri's use of human senses and the creation of sensuous geography are out-of-place actions that allow her to transgress the normative abled-body geography of Native America. Diane Glancy's protagonist employs her senses not only to map her location within the normative geography but also constitute her place and thus commits transgression from the normative geography of Mohawk tribes.

Secondly, the present research argues that Native American woman also experiences marginalization within the economic spaces of Native America. Native American economic spaces are constituted upon the gender division of labor, where women are located in a financially subordinated position. The study maintains that the normative economic spaces of Native America are constructed upon gender bias, and labor is divided upon gender inequality where Native American women are made dependent upon Native patriarchy for their economic survival. The study reviews Polingaysi Qoyawayma's, 1964, *No Turning Back* to understand the ways in which a Hopi girl experiences out-of-placeness within normative Hopi economic spaces. To contest her out-of-placeness, Qoyawayma engages in out-of-place actions by taking a job as a government-certified teacher and thus transgressing the normative economic spaces by subverting traditional Hopi and Euro-American gender roles and division of labor.

Thirdly, the study maintains that Native American women have an existential experience of space and place. Analyzing the spatial experience of space and place of

Louise Erdrich's, 1987, protagonist in *Tracks*, the study offers a rereading of the existential spatial outsidership caused by the Dawes Act of 1887. The study maintains that the Act not only caused spatial dislocation and disintegration of Native American societies but also caused an existential crisis among the Native Americans. The study asserts that the Act of 1887 insinuated existential outsidership in Fleur Pillager, the protagonist of the novel, and she tries to re-experience existential insidership through different means. Fleur's engagement in wage labor at Kozka's Meat is instance of her engagement in out-of-place actions and transgression from the normative Ojibwe socio-cultural and socio-spatial structures. These three distinctive lines of investigation form the critical paradigm of the present study.

Within the paradigm of out-of-place actions and transgression, the study analyzes Diane Glancy's *the Reasons for Crows*. In *the Reason for Crows*, Diane Glancy narrates the life journey of Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk girl. It is a biographical novel that depicts the life history of Kateri, The Lily of Mohawks. Kateri is the narrator of the novel and recounts the perils and persecutions that she endures due to her physical disability. In order to avoid her physical oppression Kateri undertakes a voyage to Sault St. Frances from her village Caughnawaga. The novel also recounts Kateri's spiritual journey from her traditional Native American religion to Christianity. The story revolves around Kateri's association with her land, mission, and spiritual crisis. The biographical novel reconstructs seventeenth-century geographical locations like Kateri's village Caughnawaga, and the route to Sault Saint. Frances, and Sault St. Francis.



The study argues that Glancy's protagonist's experience of out-of-placeness within the Mohawk normative geography through the lens of chronic illness and positionality of the material body is propounded by Pamela Moss and Isabel Dyck. Moss and Dyck (1999) draw their methodological framework of the positionality of the material body on the notion of the spatiality of disability (231). Within the spatial and marginalized body structure, they investigate the ways in which individuals "embody" the process of marginalization (Moss & Dyck 231). In the context of spatial marginalization of the disabled body, the present research studies Kateri's spatiality from three different paradigms. Firstly, the study revisits Kateri's struggle with the notion of destabilized identity as a consequence of her realization of her disabled body. Moss and Dyck assert that the diagnosis of some chronic illnesses causes "uncertainty and variability" (233). The uncertain and capricious attitude towards identity causes a breakdown of association with space and place. Secondly, a woman's material body becomes destabilized as a consequence of some chronic illness. Kateri's difficulty in negotiating the day-to-day affairs of life is an exemplum of what Moss and Dyck term "fluctuating transitory symptoms" (233). In other words, a destabilized material body does not allow Kateri to actively structure the social environment. Thirdly, since the social environment is constructed upon the notion of the "able body", for a disabled woman the social organization becomes a site of exclusion (Moss & Dyck, 1999, 234). Within such exclusionary geographies, disabled bodies experience an alienated positionality,

which is further augmented by disruption of the sociocultural and socioeconomic hierarchies within a normative geographic structure. According to Moss and Dyck, the complexity of "negotiating social and material spaces" by disabled women influences their positionality within the labor force (233). In addition, Moss and Dyck also assert that individuals with disabilities and chronic illnesses engage in a new set of experiences by repositioning themselves at the sites of struggle (234). Defining sites of struggle, Moss and Dyck maintain that these are places where disabled-bodied individuals are "forced to contest" their disability (234). The present study revisits these sites of struggles to understand Kateri's redefinition of her disability within the Mohawk normative geography. In *the Reason for Crows*, Kateri experiences an acute sense of out-of-placeness due to her disability, which further compromises her sociocultural positionality within the cultural hierarchies. The study employs these three dimensions of disabled body spatiality to establish Kateri's spatial marginalization and experience of out-of-placeness within the normative geography of the Mohawk tribes. To overcome this experience of out-of-placeness, Kateri engages in "material practices" that reconfigure spaces and places as the site of struggle (Moss & Dyck 234). These spatial experiences and experiences of disability fabricate a woman's identity. Since these relocations of sites of struggle and the notion of disability are in constant flux, the subsequent identity continues to change form. Paradoxically, this does not end in the creation of an end product, rather it poses itself in a series of interim stages of identity formation (Moss & Dyck 234). Nevertheless,

the present study maintains that the material practices also allow experiencing space and placement differently. At this stage of the discussion, the study inserts Paul Rodaway's notion of sensuous geography to understand Kateri's engagement in material practices that constitutes her spatial experiences.

Kateri's disability undermines her experiences of in-placeness within the Mohawk normative geographies. However, Glancy constructs a complete complex of material practices through which Kateri experiences spatiality. These material practices evoke Kateri's experience of in-placeness through the construction of the sensuous geographic structure. It is pertinent to mention here that the notion of spatial experience encompasses the experience of space and place through the senses as well. Within the sensuous paradigm, our senses not only help us establish a relationship with the world but also structure the geographic world to be experienced. Pivotal to the spatial experiences, our senses help us in understanding the geographic structures that surround us. It is pertinent to note here, that our geographical experiences are not shaped by a singular sense, rather a juxtaposition of multiple senses lets us orient our spatial positionality within geographic spaces. Indeed, a hierarchical relationship exists between the senses that Tuan, Westphal, and Rodaway have discussed, but a holistic experience is an amalgamation of multiple sensuous stimuli. Keeping in view the experiential hierarchy of human senses, it is pertinent to mention here that our understanding of the geographic world is constituted upon the working of passive and active use of senses.

According to Roadway, the human body

is an "essential part" of a sensuous geographic experience (31). Our body is the primary medium through which we mediate between space and spatial experience. Since the body is both a physical entity and a cultural object, therefore, it carries sensations and meanings simultaneously (Rodaway 1994). The present study takes the material aspect of the body to study how sensations are documented onto the material body and thus evoke a spatial experience of a particular geographic space. According to Rodaway, our senses, in combination, offer significant media through which geography is experienced and understood. Such an understanding contributes to an individual's experience in-placeness of a particular spatial location. Within this archetypal structure of sensuous experience, the study attempts to understand Glancy's portrayal of sensuous geographies as avenues for the protagonist's experience of in-placeness. Glancy creates haptic and auditory geographies through which the protagonist of *the Reason for Crows* experiences her spatial positionality. Using Rodaway's methodological framework of the working of senses as "a relationship to the world and the senses as in themselves a kind of structuring of space and defining of place" (4), the study claims that Glancy's protagonist's engagement in material practices to subvert her spatial marginalization counters her spatial out-of-placeness and engagement in out-of-place actions constitute her transgression. In other words, a physically disabled Native American woman experiences space and place through her senses, responds to the experience of out-of-placeness, and attempts to experience in-placeness.

Furthermore, the arrival of the Euro-

Americans altogether changed the socio-economic structures of the Native American societies. Employing Doreen Massey's notion of economic space, the current study develops the contours of the Native American economic spaces in the prehistoric, pre-contact, and post-contact eras. Economic spaces are the spaces that are produced at the intersection of social and economic relations (Massey 1). The location of economic activity and its socio-cultural implications are the central focus of any study of economic space. In other words, the notion of economic space encompasses the socio-spatial framework of any society. Within this socio-spatial framework, the economic space considers the division of labor and gender roles. The notion of gender roles is studied in conjunction with the location of that economic activity by individuals of a particular gender. Thus the overarching economic space caters to the study of the "dominance and subordination" of gender within the socio-spatial organization of economic activity (Massey 1).

Since the construction of the Native American normative geography is established upon the ambivalent spatial division of Native American genders, this section of the study explores the Native American woman's experience of marginalization, out-of-placeness, and her attempt to create her own spaces within the economic spaces of Native America. The study offers a rereading of Polingaysi Qoyawayma's *No Turning Back* to understand the spatial marginalization of the woman in the Hopi economic spaces, her attempt to engage in out-of-place actions by opting for a government job, and her transgression of the Hopi gender division of labor and gender-specific roles. *No Turning*

*Back* is the life story of a Hopi woman, Polingaysi Qoyawayma, who leaves her native village at an early age with the passion to learn the ways and explore the world of the White Man. This autobiographical work documents different stages of Polingaysi Qoyawayma's life. Polingaysi tells the story from her early childhood and then moves on to narrate the events that took place from her first visit to school until her retirement as a schoolteacher. This work recounts Qoyawayma's struggle to bridge the gap between the worlds of her people and the Whites (2). This autobiographical work is set in different geographical locations, but Qoyawayma's village Oribie is the central location of the work. In this way, the writer establishes the notion of spatiality as the central premise of the autobiography.

At the outset of the discussion on *No Turning Back*, the study maintains that the development of Hopi economic spaces, division of labor, and gender roles through different historical epochs is gender biased. Historical and cultural documents ascertain the fact that the creation of Hopi economic spaces is modeled upon the Hopi patriarchal preferences. Within these biased economic spaces, Qoyawayma, the protagonist of *No Turning Back*, experiences out-of-placeness. To overcome the spatial ambivalence in the Hopi economic spaces, Qoyawayma steps out of the Hopi gender roles by going to school and learning the White man's ways (3). However, the protagonist soon realizes that the Hopi and White Man ways are the same, as they both do not wish that Native American women may become financially stable, hence the only training they offer at the educational institutes are those that make women skillful at the domestic chores.

The study offers a critique of the educational policies that the Euro-Americans adopted in the assimilation and acculturation programs. The educational policies aimed at making the male Native Americans proficient in fields that would produce cheap labor, whereas, Native American women were trained in homemaking and domesticity. The study delineates Qoyawayma's experience of social out-of-placeness due to her compromised financial positionality within the normative economic spaces of the Native Americans. The study argues that Qoyawayma's struggle to subvert the gender-specific roles as prescribed by the Native and Euro-American patriarchies. Therefore, she engages in acts that appear out-of-place but ultimately culminate in her transgression of the traditional gender roles and division of labor.

In his seminal work, *Place, and Placelessness*, Ralph asserts, "to be human is to have and know *your place*" (italicized in the original 3). The statement refers to two fundamental propositions related to the notion of place. The first proposition of 'have' signifies the ownership of a particular piece of land or space. The second proposition of 'know' indicates the knowledge and understanding of its meaningfulness to an individual's existence. Nevertheless, these evocations dictate the existential implications of the phenomenon of place and space. In other words, our experiences of space and place are not only socially oriented, rather they are fixed into the very geography of the world that we live in. Our knowledge of a place comes from our direct experience and consciousness of particular geographical entities (Ralph 1976). The phenomenological base for the understanding of the notions of

space and place comes from these two distinctive, yet parallel, propositions. Ralph maintains that our estimation of our location in the physical world is dependent upon "direct experience, memory, fantasy, present circumstances, and future purposes" related to a particular space and place (4). These multifaceted dimensions of our location constitute the foundations of human existence. The premise of the third section of the present study is founded upon such an existential experience of space and place.

The present study maintains that the Dawes Act of 1887 had an existential implication on the Native Americans in general and women in particular. The in-depth analysis of the causes that lead to the legislation of the Dawes Act reveals that the Act aimed at installing the Eurocentric socio-spatial models in Native America. The study presents a review of acculturation policies and looks into the issues of Native American relocations at different reservations. The Dawes Act of 1887 caused huge socio-cultural and socio-political disintegration of the Native American society. The study analyzes multiple sources to understand the socio-cultural and socio-political impact of the Act. In addition, the study maintains that the Act further depreciated the socio-spatial organization of Native American society. Within the background of the Dawes Act of 1887, this section offers a reinterpretation of Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*. *Tracks* is the third novel in a four-novel series, set in North Dakota. The Novel delineates Fleur Pillager's, the protagonist of the novel, struggle for saving her ancestral lands. The novel depicts the life history of the protagonist as seen through the eyes of Nanapush, an elder trickster, and Pauline Puyat, a young nun,

narrators of the novel. The novel has received extraordinary acclaim for its compelling plot and idiosyncratic narratological method. The novel is set in a fictional reservation that is modeled by Louise Erdrich on her own Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota. The novel spans over eighteen years that begin in the spring of 1912 to 1928 autumn.

The study focuses on the allocations of lands, as per the mandate of the Dawes Act of 1887, and its implications on the existential experiences of the Native American woman. The present research maintains that the Act disturbed an individual's experience of existential insideness since it lost its meaning. Fleur Pillager, the protagonist of *Tracks*, experiences existential insideness and is disturbed when the Dawes Act of 1887 changed the meaning of the place. The meanings of a place are rooted in "the physical setting and objects and activities", and when these changes or alteration occurs to these, the meanings of the place change (Ralph 1976). The study investigates the ways in which the Dawes Act alters the setting and activities of the reservations and thus reshapes Native Americans' experiences of the places that were once owned by them. Fleur Pillager's experience of existential insideness is impeded when she confronts the risk of losing her lands for nonpayment of allotment fees on her lands. In order to save her lands, Fleur embarks on a journey to earn money. The study, from a phenomenological perspective, interprets Fleur's visit to Argus, a white city, and attempts to comprehend her experience of existential outsidership at her workplace, Kozka's Meat. In re-reading the phenomenological aspects of the protagonist's experiences of space and place at different geographical locations, the study

maintains that existential experiences are intricately connected to our direct experiences of the land. In short, the notion of spatial experience is viewed from the corporal i.e., material body, the experience of space and place, from the socio-economic perspective, and lastly from the existential experience of geography. These three dimensions of documenting spatial experience constitute the framework of the research methodology of the present study.

## Conclusion

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Throughout history, Native American woman has been spatially marginalized. In the prehistoric and precontact eras, this spatial marginalization was dictated by the Native American patriarchy, whereas, the Euro-Americans doubled the spatial marginalization of Native American women in the post-contact era. The Native American woman has always contested the configuration of Native American normative geographies on gendered bases. Therefore, since prehistoric times, she has been actively engaged in resisting her spatial marginalization. In addition, with the arrival of Europeans to the Native American lands, and the beginning of colonization, Native American woman's resistance to her double spatial marginalization has taken a new form. Contemporary Native American woman is at the forefront of the resistance movements against the contemporary United State government's objective spatial violence and attempts to reconfigure Native American geographies. Native American woman's resistance had pitched at multiple dimensions, including, but not limited to, political, literary, and social resistance to the United States' spatial exigencies. Whether it

be the occupation of Alcatraz Island, or reclamation attempts of Mount Rushmore, or celebration of National Day of Mourning, the arrival of the Trails of Broken Treaties caravan to Washington, D. C. or the opening

of Survival Schools, or the Wounded Knee siege, Native American woman has been at the forefront of these spatial and resistance movements.

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