

Native American Woman's Phenomenological Experience of Space and Place in Erdrich's *Tracks*

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Abstract *This study discusses Native American woman's experience of existential outsidership, which is caused by the Euro-American legislative act as represented by Louise Erdrich in her novel Tracks. This research analyzes the role of the Dawes Act of 1887 in triggering the experience of existential outsidership among the Native Americans in general and Native American women in particular. Through Edward Casey Ralph's phenomenological perspective on the notion of spatiality, the study reinterprets the representation of space and place in Louise Erdrich's Tracks. The study offers a spatial reading of a Native American woman's life to explicate how she confronts the issues related to the confiscation of her ancestral lands that trigger her experience of existential outsidership to her land. The study concludes that Euro-American policies of acculturation and assimilation thwarted spatio-existential experiences of Native American women.*

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Introduction

The present study discusses the notion of experience of space and place from a phenomenological perspective. The study explores Fleur Pillager's, the protagonist of Louise Erdrich's novel *Tracks*, existential experiences of spatiality. The discussion in this study is founded upon Edward Casey Ralph's notion of the phenomenological experience of spatiality. It analyzes two distinctive yet conjoined issues that primarily constitute the phenomenological experience of the protagonist of *Tracks*. Firstly, the discussion in the following study maintains that apart from the socio-cultural predicaments caused by the Dawes Act of 1887, the act also triggered a phenomenological crisis of spatiality among the Native Americans in general and women in particular. The discussion in the present study explores Fleur's socio-economic and spatio-cultural responses, within the phenomenological paradigm, to the threat of her land being lost due to the nonpayment of the allotment fee on her ancestral lands. The study offers a detailed discussion of the Dawes Act of

1887 and explores the multifaceted impacts of the allotment act that transformed the socio-cultural and socio-spatial structures of Native Americans in general and women in particular. Secondly, within the backdrop of the Dawes Act, the study revisits the novel and offers a phenomenological reading of the story. In this section, the study concentrates on exploring Fleur Pillager's phenomenological experience of spatiality at different geographical spaces. These geographical places include her family cabin, Lake Matchimanito, the city of Argus, and reservation. In addition, the study offers a spatio-phenomenological interpretation of different events that take place at these geographical locations. The overarching argument of the study deals with Fleur's experience of existential insiderness and outsidership within the geographical spaces portrayed in the novel. The present study maintains that the Dawes Act of 1887 caused immense disintegration to the constitution of the existential experiences of the protagonist. The places, which once provided a

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sense of security, belongingness, and existential insideness became sites of existential crisis where the protagonist experiences existential outsidership. In addition, the study also argues that the Dawes Act of 1887 is a manifestation of Euro-American spatial supremacy. The act was designed to reconfigure the normative geographic structure of Native America. In addition, the act caused a spatial crisis that was experienced by Native Americans at an existential level. Hence, in *Tracks*, Erdrich portrays the existential experience of the Native American woman and her efforts to contest the Euro-American spatial supremacy. The novel ends on a tragic note, where the protagonist loses her lands to the lumbering company due to the nonpayment of allotment fees on her land. However, it records Native American woman's determination to spatially emancipate from the spatial hegemony of the Euro-Americans.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the idea of Native American's assimilation and appropriation project through the reservation system failed miserably (Calloway, 2016). In the wake of the failure of the reservation system, attempts were made to break up the reservations (Calloway, 2016). Consequently, then-president Grover Cleveland enacted the General Allotment Act of 1887, also famous as the Dawes Act of 1887. The General Allotment Act was prepared by Massachusetts Senator Henry Dawes. The Dawes Act of 1887 exhibits a radical change in the United States government policy towards Native Americans. The act aimed at the dismantling of the reservations by allotting lands to individuals. The act fostered ownership of private property and discarded the communal proprietorship of reservation lands among the Native Americans. According to the Dawes Act of 1887, 160 acres of land was allotted to the heads of the families. Indians were required to select lands for themselves, or else agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs would designate any fraction of land. One of the provisions of the act maintained the US government's entitlement to the lands in trust for twenty-five years to prevent its sale until the allottees may treat it as real estate. The act bestowed citizenship to Native Americans who would abandon their traditional ways by becoming civilized in the Eurocentric standards. The act allowed Native Americans the sale of any surplus land (Calloway, 2016).

The Dawes Act of 1887 became a crucial juncture in Native American socio-cultural

history. Traditionally, Native American society espoused nuclear family setups that were founded upon kinship organizations (Perdue, 2001). The loss of land further compromised the agriculture industry, which was now the only way of production of sustenance. By 1933 a staggering 96% of Native Americans earned less than \$ 200 per year (Hauptman, 2001). These figures represent the economic destabilization of the Native American tribes on the reservation. It further complemented the division of labor and gender disparities within the Native American normative structures. According to Donald Fixico (2006), the Act "failed to deal adequately" with the Indian issue (p.33). The act was used as a means to shape the Native American society upon Eurocentric mode of socio-cultural orientations. However, the act failed to integrate the European socio-cultural values and standards in Native Americans. Apart from the lack of provisions for sustenance and socio-cultural disintegration, the reservations system and the Dawes Act of 1887 caused spatial disorientation of the Native Americans.

According to Joy Porter (2005), the misrepresentation of Native Americans in "conventional histories" (p.39) is due to the focus of conventional histories was either on "the history of Indian policy or frontier conflicts, or, (...) to tribal histories with narratives that ended before 1900" (p.39). However, the Native American literature, on the other hand, has "voiced a different relationship to historical "facts" and a different consciousness of the past itself" (p.39). In these conventional histories, Native American woman has either been glorified or demonized simultaneously. Annette Van Dyke (1992) argues that Native American women writers have long resisted, through their writing, the stereotypical presentation of women as "princess" or "squaw" in the popular culture (p.85). Louise Erdrich, through the symbiosis of symbolism and spatiality, not only challenges Native American woman's stereotypical portrayal but also "contest(s)" (Stirrup, 2010, p.85) her marginalized territorialization. According to James Flavin, Erdrich is able to "resist" (Stirrup, 2010, p.76) the stereotypical representation of the Native American woman through making her novel more of a "performance" (p.2). The performance is enacted in the Indian territory, which Erdrich presents as "the place of safety and nurturance" (Rayson, 1991, p.32).

Analysis

Apart from the socio-cultural and socio-economic devastations that the Dawes Act of 1887 caused, it also disturbed Native Americans' existential experience of space and place. The phenomenological experience of spaces is constituted upon the experience of insideness and outsideness at a particular space and place. The notions of spatial insideness and outsideness are constituted upon the concept of identifying with/or against a particular place. According to [Ralph \(1976\)](#), being inside a place means that an individual "belong(s) to" and/or "identif(ies) with" a particular place, whereas the reverse is being outside (p.49). In other words, an individual's belongingness to and identification with a place determines his/her relationship with a place. Therefore, the deeper the experience of insideness, the strengthened is the identity with a particular place. In an inside experience, a place is experienced from within, and an individual becomes a part of the whole of a particular place. On the other hand, an outside experience observes place from a detached positionality. Thus, the notion of insideness and outsideness represents a spatial dualism that is fundamental to an individual's experience of the lived space (p.49).

In addition, the insideness in and outsideness of a particular space and/or place is manifested manifold. According to Ralph, there are multiple manifestations of inside and outside (p.49). In other words, the experience of insideness and/or outsideness is not limited to geographical limits or physical objects; rather, it can be extrapolated at a metaphorical level when phrases such as 'in town' or 'out of town' are expressed. This dualism may appear vague at first; however, at a deeper and more critical level, the notion of inside and/or outside becomes more visible in the spatial experience of an individual. Furthermore, Ralph notes that the notion of insideness and outsideness is not only dependent upon the geographic positionality but also on the intentionality of an individual (p.50). In other words, the spatial experience of inside and outside is also constituted upon focusing on the intentions and focus of the individual.

According to Ralph, existential insideness is the "complete and unselfconscious commitment to a place" (p.50). In such a spatial experience, the character develops a profound emotional attachment to a particular place. In other words,

the association is not engineered, rather experienced as a natural outcome of a human-space interaction. On the other hand, existential outsideness "involves a profound alienation" from a particular geographic space (p.50). A spatial experience of existential outsideness is primarily devoid of any sort of linkage with a particular geographical space.

In Erdrich's *Tracks*, the protagonist goes from an initial experience of existential insideness at the reservation to an existential outsideness caused by the Dawes Act of 1887. Erdrich portrays different places in *Tracks* that include the family cabin of the protagonist, Matchimanito Lake, the city of Argus, and the reservation. However, it is only at the family cabin and Matchimanito Lake that Fleur experiences a genuine sense of insideness that is later on disturbed by the notion of loss of ancestral lands. According to Ralph, "the most fundamental form of insideness is that in which a place is experienced without deliberate and self-conscious reflection yet is full with significance" (p.50). In *Tracks*, Fleur experiences existential insideness at her family cabin located near Matchimanito Lake. The family cabin is surrounded by oak trees and located near Matchimanito Lake and is inhabited by ghosts and roamed by the Pillagers ([Erdrich, 1987, p.2](#)). Her family cabin is the first place mentioned in the novel, and it is the place where Nanapush discovers the feverish and sick Fleur "huddled against the cold wood range, staring and shaking" ([Erdrich, 1987, p.3](#)). However, as soon as she discovers some unknown people trespassing forcefully entering her cabin, she becomes "wild as a filthy wolf" and falls into "sudden bursts of strength and snarling" ([Erdrich, 1987, p.3](#)). However, when Nanapush tries to shift her from her family cabin, Fleur closes her eyes pants and toss her head side to side and tries to grab Nanapush's neck. She is not willing to leave her family cabin, where she experiences a natural and unselfconscious insideness. At Nanapush's cabin, Fleur fails to achieve that insideness and becomes "half windigo" ([Erdrich, 1987, p.6](#)). Fleur does not develop any attachment to Nanapush's cabin and remains uninvolved in the place. At Nanapush's cabin, she remains awake, sits in the dark without any movement, and does not lit any fire for cooking. She experiences a sort of emotional detachment from the place and constantly thinks about going back to her family cabin. After her recovery, she informs Nanapush

about her plans to go and settle at her family cabin. Nanapush warns her about the government's plans to confiscate all those lands whose holders failed to pay the allotment fee. However, she refuses the offer, returns to Matchimanito, and stays there alone ([Erdrich, 1987, p.8](#)).

Furthermore, [Ralph \(1976\)](#) maintains that such an experience is an existential experience because the individual becomes unified with the place. He claims that "existential insideness characterizes belonging to a place and the deep and complete identity with a place (p.50). In *Tracks*, Fleur Pillager establishes belongingness to Matchimanito Lake, and thus, her identity also transforms. Her use of medicinal powers and magical prowess to save her lands from the lumbering company and land agents exhibit her sense of connection to the lands. In addition, Matchimanito Lake and the area become a part of Fleur's personality. Ralph asserts that in an existential insideness, an attitude is developed where an individual feels place as a part of his/her persona, and he/she becomes a manifestation of the place (p.54). Erdrich illustrates this by assigning the same characteristics to Fleur, her family cabin, and Matchimanito Lake. Fleur experience existential insideness in these places because she experiences her lands as part of her and herself as part of the lands. Fleur shares the essence of mystery and supernatural characteristics of the Matchimanito Lake and her family cabin. For instance, her family cabin is famed for a host to the ghosts and spirits of the Pillagers. Therefore, when Pukwan tries to burn the house, he fails several times. At one point, the logs catch fire, but it goes out in puffs of smoke ([Erdrich, 1987, p.3](#)).

Communion with lands is not only developed through acquiring its characteristics or making it part of a person but also protecting it from foreign insurgencies. The Dawes Act Of 1887 brought an unimaginable increase in the settlers' appetite for the Native Lands. As stated earlier, the settlers used different tactics to deprive Native Americans of their properties that ultimately disturbed individual's relationship with their lands and experience of space. According to [Ralph \(1976\)](#), in an existential insideness, an individual establishes "a strong and profound bond" with the place (p.55). In *Tracks*, Erdrich illustrates the nature of Fleur's association with her lands through her

passion for saving her lands. Fleur refuses to give away her lands to either the lumbering company or the government. She is determined to save her lands through her magical powers, and when they appear inadequate, she decides to leave the reservation and earn enough money to pay the allotment fee. Her visit to Argus, a nearby white city, came in the wake of her eagerness to protect her lands.

Fleur's departure from the reservation to the white city is a significant event of the plot. Firstly, the departure demonstrates Fleur's transgression of gender roles. Fleur contests the Ojibwe spatial division of labor that is based on gender, and hence by transgressing the boundaries of private and public, she establishes her own identity, an identity that is molded upon the politics of space and place. It is pertinent to mention here that Fleur's transgression comes in the wake of her fear of losing ancestral lands. *Tracks* are set in the backdrop of the Dawes Allotment Act 1887 when tracts of arable land were allotted to individual tribal members ([Stookey, 1999](#)); the purpose of the Dawes act was to encourage Native Americans "to abandon their traditional hunting and gathering practices in favor of finding ways to use their land for profitable enterprise" ([Stookey, p.72](#)). Stookey establishes an intertwining connection between land ownership and the loss of traditional values and argues that "the characters who resist assimilation, who refuse complicity in the exploitation of their land, are left with insufficient means to pay the fees or taxes they are told that they owe" (p.72). Fleur is one such character, who is a female, resist assimilation into the Euro-American culture; however, to do so, she needs to keep her lands and pay the annual allotment fee. In other words, her transgression is stimulated by her desire to retain her lands, which otherwise would go to the lumbering company. Fleur does not espouse any revolutionary ambitions; rather, she transgresses conventional gender roles and boundaries to be able to pay the allotment fee on her lands. Besides, Fleur not only crosses the geographical boundaries of the reservation but also the conventional Ojibwe boundaries. She gets a job at Kozka Meats for her "strength" ([Erdrich, 1987, p.16](#)). At Kozka Meats, Fleur engages in labor that is different from the traditional Ojibwe labor. According to [Buffalohead \(n.d\)](#), in traditional Ojibwe tribes, "women's labor figured prominently in the process of transforming raw

food and other resources into valued goods. The women butchered, roasted, and dried the game, waterfowl, and fish” (Erdrich, 1987, p.239). These tasks require less strength and more skills, but the tasks that Fleur takes require more strength and physical power. Her job includes lifting the haunch pole of sausages and carrying heavy packages to the lockers that she does without stumbling (Erdrich, 1987, p.16).

Secondly, the departure registers Fleur’s existential outsidership in the city of Argus. The white city is located a few miles south of the reservation. Although the city is relatively smaller in size in comparison to other white cities, however, it is a hub of economic activities and is fully functional. The six streets of the cities are gridded on either side of the railroad depot. Argus is a true version of the Euro-American model of Native American spaces. The city has two large stores and three different churches. Argus is a foreign land for Fleur, and therefore, her attitude towards Argus is existential outsidership. Fleur’s experience of existential outsidership stems from multiple reasons.

Fleur does not involve in the place unselfconsciously. Her primary goal is to visit the white city and find some sort of job so that she may be able to pay the allotment fee on her lands. She is not impressed by the development of the Argus in comparison to that of her reservation. Pauline describes Fleur’s visit to Argus in detail; however, she does not mention Fleur’s emotional or sentimental linkage with the city. Fleur does not show any concerns about the economic activities that are in progress at the two stores. The three churches that fight for the souls of the people are of no interest to Fleur Pillager. According to Ralph (1976), an existential outsidership involves a “self-conscious and reflective uninvolvedness” in the place (p.51). In other words, an individual does not undertake any effort to consciously appreciate the dynamics of the place. In such an attitude, individuals remain uninvolved in the overarching natural occurrence of the place. They fail to develop an emotional connection with the place, and thus, places appear flat and emotionally barren.

At her arrival, Fleur visits the Catholic church. She sees the steeple rise of the church from a distance and enters the priest’s house in search of some work. She gets work at Kozka’s Meat, but she remains alienated from the place while working at the butchery. The place itself is

not attractive and is devoid of any aesthetics that may draw or trigger some emotional stimulus. It serves farmers for a fifty-mile radius and is a modern facility to slaughter animals, cure, and store meat. It also has a storage locker where ice blocks are transported from the deepest end of Matchimanito (Erdrich, 1987, p.16). Kozka’s meat employs Lily Vedder, Tor Grunewald, and Dutch James, husband of Pauline’s aunt, Pauline, her cousin Russell, step-son of James, and Fritzie, a lean blond girl who is a chain smoker but handles the razor-edged knives with nerveless precision. Kozka, a religious man who reads the New Testament, hires Fleur for her strength and does her work at the slaughterhouse. Fleur, along with Fritzie, works in the afternoon; they wrap and store the cuts in the locker. Although, Pauline describes Fleur as an individual who sways people, sots them, makes them curious about her habits, draws them close with careless ease, and casts them off with an indifferent attitude (Erdrich, 1987, p.15). However, at the Kozka’s meat, Fleur remained quiet and didn’t mix with the people. People at Kozka’s Meat are drawn towards her for her physique and flesh (Erdrich, 1987, p.18). Therefore, Fleur develops an indifferent attitude towards the people and places which causes her experience of existential outsidership at Kozka’s Meat. According to Ralph (1976), an attitude of existential outsidership is experienced when an individual develops “alienation from people and places” (p.51). Fleur also develops an estranged attitude towards the place and people.

According to Ralph, an attitude of existential outsidership is also provoked from an individual’s experience of homelessness in a particular space and place (p.51). In such a situation, the individual does not receive feelings that are prerequisites of a homely experience of space. In *Tracks*, Kozka’s Meat does not offer Fleur a sense of home. According to Warf (2006), home is both a “material place” and “a space in which identities and meanings are constructed” (p.225). Kozka’s meat is a material place but one that is not constituted upon the foundations of the home. As a material place, Kozka’s Meat is a place that does not offer the comfort of a home. Fleur baths in the slaughtering tub sleep in the unused brick smokehouse behind the lockers, which is a windowless place tarred on the inside with scorched fats which makes her smell rich and woody, and slightly burnt (Erdrich, 1987, p.22). Since it does not create or establish any

meaning for the people who are living in it. Although Fleur works at Kozka's Meat only for earning wages, however, the place also fails to offer a sense of home to her. She fails to identify with Kozka's Meat, and the place also betrays to be meaningful to her in any way possible. Besides, the place disappoints to engender "feelings of security and belonging" that is mandatory to experiences a sense of home in any place (Warf, 2006, p.226). Fleur is unable to develop a sense of belongingness to Kozka's meat, and the attempted rape disturbs her sense of security at the place as well. The three men, Lily, James, and Dutch, after losing a dollar to Fleur, drink, steep in the whiskeys fire, and plan with their eyes things they cannot say aloud, attack Fleur and rape her at Kozka's Meat (Erdrich, 1987, p.24). The attempted rape creates fear in her, and she escapes the place. These feelings engender a sense of homelessness in Fleur that adds to her experience of existential outsidership at Argus.

These events trigger a sense of not belongingness to the reservation, which ultimately escalates her experience of existential outsidership on the reservation. According to Ralph, the notion of "not belonging" and "unreality of the world" are major causes of an experience of existential outsidership. Fleur's pregnancy also fosters these feelings of unbelongingness and unreality of the world. Pregnancy is seen as an abnormality and disorder in western culture since, in dominant cultures, pregnancy is allotted a specific space. Pregnant bodies are considered alien and abnormal; they are also seen as a threat to the "social system that requires them to remain largely confined to private space during pregnancy" (Longhurst, 2010, p.33). In other words, pregnant bodies are not allowed to appear in public spaces and are confined to the private space of the home. Pregnant bodies are marginalized due to their nonconformity to the norms of public spaces. Longhurst (2010) argues that pregnant bodies occur at the peripheries and "can be seen to occupy borderlines state as they disturb identity, system, and order by not respecting border, positions and rules" (p.33). Longhurst, in her study, notes a steady decrease in outdoor activities of pregnant women, which suggests, "pregnant women become increasingly confined to the home" (p.37). Confinement to home, or the private space, is seen as a departure from the public sphere that is resulted from a sense of out

of placeness in the public space. Pregnant women engender a sense of un-belonging to the public space because their physical limitations become a hindrance in establishing an emotional attachment to public spaces. While discussing the reasons for withdrawal from public spaces and confinement to private spaces, Longhurst asserts that it is not the "physical discomfort" in public spaces but the "power relations" that cause pregnant women to become confined to private spaces (p.37). The statement suggests that pregnant women do not leave public spaces due to their physical condition or the physical problems that they encounter in public spaces; rather, it is the discourse that the patriarchal society establishes around the issue of pregnancy. Indeed, pregnant women are subject to the constant gaze, both by men and non-pregnant women, which make pregnancy an act of transgression or deviation. Longhurst further asserts that the idea to restrict pregnant women's withdrawal to physicality would be a mere simplification of the whole argument. She agrees that the "material body" of pregnant women is different from a non-pregnant; however, it does not mean that her decision of withdrawal "from public space is due to physical, material, corporeal demands of pregnancy" (p.37). Longhurst claims, "it is not the weighty, material body in discomfort or health, not simply biological bedrock that can explain pregnant women's withdrawal from public space", rather it is the constantly "constructed" and "inscribed" dominant discourse that compels pregnant women to undergo confinement (p.37).

Also, Fleur not only experiences existential outsidership at Kozka's Meat but also at her reservation upon her return from Argus. Fleur's rape at Kozka's Meat is emotionally devastating to her. In comparison to her dramatic departure to Argus, Fleur's arrival at the reservation is seemingly "quiet" (Erdrich, 1987, p.31). The rape incident at Kozka's Meat compels Fleur to leave Argus and return to Matchimanito. She lives quietly with her boat on her ancestral lands, but in reality, her quiet arrival stirs a host of discussion and gossips. People on the reservation are not only curious about her quiet arrival, but her eccentric demeanor also escalated suspicion. The story of Fleur's rape reaches reservation before her arrival; however, as Pauline puts it, the story "comes up different every time, and has no end, no beginning. They get the middle wrong too. They only know they

don't know anything" (Erdrich, 1987, p.31). This allowed people to concoct it according to their sweet will. Nanapush is the first one to witness Fleur walking back onto the reservation, and observes something "small, split down the back and strained across the front" hid in a green rag of a dress (Erdrich, 1987, p.34). He, too, is not sure as to whether Fleur is hiding money in the dress or her child. Nanapush does not think of "wilder things" and claims that Fleur does not appear that her feet "have slid through blood, or that she's forced a grown man to dance with a pig" (Erdrich, 1987, p.34). Fleur does not answer Nanapush's invitation and walks on, glancing at nobody else, to her ancestral lands (Erdrich, 1987, p.34). Fleur's arrival not only stirs the stagnant reservation life but generates fabricated stories "things hidden were free to walk. The surprised young ghost of Jean Hat limped out of the bushes around the place his horse had spooked" (Erdrich, 1987, p.35). Some claim that her arrival has made the lake man retreat to the deepest rocks and that she has "controlled" (Erdrich, 1987, p.35) the monster of Matchimanito. Some people claim that Fleur has set a commotion in the waters of the lake and "disturbed" the area around Matchimanito (Erdrich, 1987, p.35). People have become afraid of going into these woods because of their loneliness, and they do not want to confront Fleur. On the reservation, people speculated about her marriage with the waterman, Misshepeshu. Some claimed that "she lives in shame with white men or windigos, or that she's killed them all" (Erdrich, 1987, p.31). People on reservation speculate about the money Fleur brings with her, claiming that Fleur has married some white man in Argus, but the man has given her "money to leave and never come around again" (Erdrich, 1987, p.39) still, other claims that Fleur has "stolen it from the man" (Erdrich, 1987, p.39). People come to know about her money and her plans to stay at her lands when she pays "the annual fee on every Pillager allotment she

inherited" and lay in a "store of supplies that would last through winter" (Erdrich, 1987, p.36). Although Nanapush claims, "it was the money itself, the coins and bills, that made more talk", but the news of Fleur's pregnancy also awakes the reservation. People speculate about her child also, since the father of the child is unknown. Pauline claims that the child's green eyes and skin color made more talk since "no one can decide if the child is mixed blood or what, fathered in a smokehouse, or by a man with brass scales, or by the lake" (Erdrich, 1987, p.31). Margaret thinks that the child would "turn out cleft, fork-footed like a pig, with straw for hair. Its eyes would glow blue; its skin shines dead white" (Erdrich, p. 55). However, when the child is born, it is a "bold" and "smiling" girl who "knows what people wonder, as if she hears the old men talk, turning the story over" (Erdrich, 1987, p.31).

Conclusion

According to [Ralph \(1976\)](#), from an outside existential perspective, places cannot be significant centers of existence but are at best backgrounds to activities that are without sense, mere chimaeras and at worst voids" (p.51). The city of Argus and reservation becomes mere background to Fleur's life. They do not prompt any emotional or existential insideness, while on the other hand, they augment the sense of alienation. They become meaningless for their uninvolvedness in the overarching complex of events. However, this experience of existential outsidersness of a place is not unique to textual characters; rather, the contemporary Native American woman is still experiencing these issues. The recent protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) and Native American woman's role in the protest is an exemplum of the ways in which the American government is spatially marginalizing Native American communities.

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