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Spatiality Across Traditions: A Comparative Study of the Greek Adventure Novel of Ordeal and Selected Native American Novels

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Abstract:

The present study offers a comparative analysis of the Greek adventure novel of ordeal and selected Native American novels in order to investigate the representation of space and place in the chosen works. It explores the spatial dynamics of plot structure and the human experience of spatiality. The study employs the Bakhtinian notion of the chronotope to examine the orientation of space and place in the Greek adventure novel of ordeal and selected Native American texts. It also utilizes Alan McKee's methodological framework of textual analysis to understand the metaphorical, symbolic, and imaginary representations of space and place in the selected works. The findings suggest that the two genres represent space and place differently. The Greek adventure novel of ordeal portrays space as abstract, isolated, and devoid of socio-cultural integration, whereas the spaces in the selected Native American texts are grounded in the real spaces of reservations, with autobiographical and cultural orientations, thereby rendering Native American spaces and spatial experiences more authentic.

Keywords: Native American Novels, Space and Place, Tracks, Chronotope, Topos

Introduction:

Space is integral to the Native American social experience and constitutes an important theme within the literary canvas of Native American writing. Native American writers have consistently highlighted diverse modes of spatial orientation, including precolonial spatiality, colonized space, reservation spatiality, and contemporary Native American spatial configurations. In other words, space and place are fundamental components of Native American cultural identity. Although space remains an essential element of every literary tradition, regardless of its age or geographical location, significant differences exist in the ways space and spatiality are represented across traditions. The current research investigates the spatial orientation of selected Native American texts in relation to the spatial dynamics of the Greek adventure novel of ordeal, as discussed and theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin. Through this comparative framework, the study seeks to examine how distinct literary traditions construct, negotiate, and symbolize space in ways that reflect their unique cultural worldviews and narrative structures.

This present study explores the spatial dynamics of the Greek adventure novel of ordeal (ANO) and selected Native American novels. The study investigates the construction of textual spaces and how

the spatial aspect of the plot affects the story, what it means to the culture, and how people experience the place and space within these textual worlds. The study is going to look at how the land is used in both the Greek adventure story and the Native American novels. It wants to find out the similarities and the differences between the land and the way people experience these spatialities. The study also wants to learn more about how the land is shown in some Native American novels. It will do this by looking at how the land is used in a literary, cultural, and symbolic way. The present study attempts to answer questions related to the role spatiality plays in shaping the narrative and the experiences of the character. In doing so, the present research establishes the links between the spatial orientation of the two distinct genres, i.e. the Greek adventure novel of ordeal and selected Native American texts. The study also wants to know how Native American novels show an understanding of the land, the place, and the Native American novels. The study is looking at the American novels and the Greek adventure novel of ordeal to see what they say about the land and the people who live there. The American novels are an important part of this study because they show a different way of thinking about the land and the place.

Research Objectives:

The present study centers on the following research objectives:

- i. To investigate the parallels and dissimilarities in the representation of spatiality in the Greek adventure novel of ordeal and selected Native American novels.
- ii. To develop the contours of space in selected Native American novels.

Research Questions:

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the topographical dynamics of the Greek adventure novel of ordeal and the selected Native American novels?
- ii. How is topography presented in the selected Native American novels?

Literature Review:

Maria Samaridou (2018), in her study *Reclaiming the land: Space and Ethnic Identity in Louise Erdrich's Tracks* explores how both the spiritual and physical space in the novel is crucial to the indigenous cultural identity of Native Americans in the early 90's. The researcher investigates how the selected text represents the situation of the native population who are experiencing colonialization, acculturation, and assimilation. The researcher further examined the impact of the loss of native land on the sociocultural life practices and identity of the Native American population. The researcher explores an answer to the question of how space works as a medium by means of which the social and cultural identity of modern Americans is created. The main purpose of the researcher is to explore the impact of colonial rule and land disposition on indigenous people. The researcher employed Nancy J Peterson, Anna- Grace Scullion, and Jill Jepson's article as a theoretical lens of the study. The study adopted qualitative textual analysis as a research methodology to closely examine the character, symbols, narrative technique, and plot structure of the proposed text. Samaridou (2018) argues that space is not just a geographical location but a fundamental aspect of social and cultural identity. In conclusion, the study rejects the Western concept of land control and possession by emphasizing the significance of land in maintaining sociocultural identity.

Farrukh Munawar and Qasim Shafiq (2023) explore how the selected text by Diane Glancy reflects the lived spatial practices and realities of indigenous "red women" within the boundaries of the Western geographical system. The researcher examined how space is socially constructed and influenced by social, cultural, gender, and ideological factors. The study also investigated why the native red woman is often represented as displaced in the hegemonic Eurocentric landscapes. The central question guiding this study is how the selected text of Glancy depicts the spatial exclusion of indigenous women inside

the American geographical space. And how does the character make sense of the place through their sensory perception? The researcher aims to explore the construction and portrayal of space in *Reason for Crows*. The researcher employs Tim Cresswell's notion of out-of-placeness and transgression as a theoretical lens of the study to explore how powerful authority identifies the inclusion and exclusion of the people within a specific territory. The study adopted qualitative textual analysis as a research methodology to analyze the representation of geographical location, sensory imagery, and setting of the novel. The researchers, Munawar and Shafiq (2023), argue that the Native American red women are regarded as out of place in the powerful American geographical structure. The study concluded that spatial dimension in the novel is socially and culturally constructed by the dominant patriarchal order, which determines belonging and exclusion.

Anthony Piccolo (2011), in his study, explores the spatial, cultural, and historical effects of the colonial system, primarily the Dawes Act of 1887, on the Indian Ojibwe society in *Tracks*. The researcher examined how these effects are articulated through two opposing narrators, Nanapush and Pauline. The study further investigates how the two conflicting narrators portray alternative representations of reality, expressing the notions of truth, memory, territorial loss, identity, and social survival. The researcher also examined whether the deployment of polyvocal narration and the selected text produces true narrative diversity or merely deception of it. The primary question guiding the research is how the selected text of Louise Erdrich portrays the historical and socioeconomic impact of the Dawes Act on the Ojibwe community, geography, and identity. The main aim of the researcher is to explore the academic debate on narrative plurality in Louise Erdrich's *Track*. The study employs Jeanne Rosier Smith and David Treuer's theory of narratology as a theoretical lens to analyze scholarly discourse on Polyvocality. The study also utilized historical documents of the Dawes Act as a theoretical standpoint to explore the relationship between archival records and textual reinterpretation. The study adopted qualitative textual analysis and narrative analysis as a research methodology. The researcher, Piccolo (2011) argues that *Tracks* create history by conflicting narratives rather than a monolithic historical narrative. The study concluded that historical facts within the colonial dimension are essentially fragmented, and the cultural persistence relies on negotiating this fragmentation instead of resolving it.

Theoretical Framework:

The present study employs the theoretical underpinnings of Michale Bakhtin. The present research seeks to draw parallels and contrasts between the spatial dimensions of the Greek adventure novel of ordeal, as analyzed by Bakhtin in his essay *Forms of Time and of the chronotope*, and selected Native American novels. According to Bakhtin (1981), a chronotope is the temporal and spatial axis on which a plot is structured. Bakhtin describes it as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). The Chronotope is an integral part of the literary canvas and has "intrinsic generic significance" (84-85). This significance is drawn from Bakhtin's claim that any distinction of a genre from another genre is constituted on the pivot of the chronotope. The present study investigates the spatiality of the Greek adventure novel of ordeal and its similarity with the selected Native American novels. It is pertinent to mention here that the term "chronotope" was not originally coined by Bakhtin; rather, he borrowed it from A. A. Ukhtomsky, a biologist of his philosophical circle (Dentith, 49).

The present study conducts a textual analysis of the Greek adventure novel of ordeal topography, as elucidated by Bakhtin, and draws parallels with the topography presented in selected Native American novels. The research takes Allen McKey's (2002) formulation of textual analysis. According to McKey, textual analysis is the study of the text, metaphor, similes, action, and symbols to understand how the writer juxtaposes all these different ingredients of a plot to give the meaning. Alan McKee's concept of

textual analysis provides a highly suitable methodological framework for the present study because it enables the researcher to examine how literary texts produce meanings through their representation of space, place, and topography. For McKee (2002), textual analysis is a qualitative method through which researchers make “educated guesses” about the most likely interpretations of a text within its cultural and generic contexts. Applied to this research, the framework facilitates a close reading of the Greek adventure novel of ordeal and selected Native American novels in order to investigate how spatiality is narratively structured and symbolically charged. Rather than treating topography as mere background, McKee’s (2002) approach allows the study to interpret landscapes, movement, boundaries, and locations as culturally meaningful textual signs. This is really important when we look at the challenging worlds in Greek adventure stories and compare them to the spaces in Native American stories that are connected to a specific place and culture. By looking at things this way, we can see the similarities and differences. Find out what these spaces really mean in terms of the ideas and values that are behind them. The physical space in a story really helps us understand how the story is told. It shows us who the characters are and how they see the world. The physical space in a story affects the characters and the story. We can see this in adventure stories and American stories.

The space in a story shapes the plot structure and experiences of the characters in the Greek ANO and selected Native American texts.

Analysis:

Bakhtin (1981) claims that to execute the adventure-time in an ANO, “one must have an *abstract* expanse of space” (Bakhtin,1981, p. 99). The abstractness of space is characterized by its size and variety. He claims that the chronotopes developed in an ANO lack the organic unity of time and space since both are arranged in “technical (and mechanical) nature” (Bakhtin,1981, p. 99). In other words, Bakhtin suggests that to grow, the adventure in an ANO needs plenty of space. The reasons for such a huge space lie in the fact that the events of these novels are governed by contingencies “inseparably tied up with space” (Bakhtin,1981, p. 99). Since these novels require immense and varied spaces for individual adventures, space in these novels is measured by “*distance* on the one hand and by *proximity* on the other” (Bakhtin,1981, p. 99). On the other hand, the biographical and adventure times in the selected fiction do not require large expanses of space; the action of these plots is limited to specified, real places. The actions of these selected works unfold in particular reservations or adjoining towns; therefore, the events of the novel are essentially tied to particular details of individual places. Indeed, there is always an admixture of *real* and *fictional* places in the selected works; however, the representation of fictional places is delimited and only used in dire situations. These novels are written with agendas to enlighten the readers about the importance of land and space to the Native Americans; therefore, they offer distinctive details of socio-political structures, culture, and history, which work as determining factors in a given “spatial locus” (Bakhtin,1981, p. 100). Unlike an ANO, the nature of place in the selected fiction becomes a character and a “component in the event” (Bakhtin,1981, p. 100) that makes space a real and functional entity.

The abstractness of space in the ANO is characterized by “interchangeability of space” that suggests, “what happens in Babylon could just as well happen in Egypt or Byzantium and vice versa” (Bakhtin,1981, p. 100). Bakhtin also maintains that in an ANO, individual adventures are also “interchangeable in time, for adventure-time leaves no defining traces and is therefore in essence reversible (Bakhtin,1981, p. 100). In short, according to Bakhtin's concept of ANO, chronotope is “characterized by a *technical, abstract connection between space and time*, by the *reversibility* of moments in a temporal sequence, and by their *interchangeability* in space” (italics in original Bakhtin 100). However, the space in the selected fiction is uninterchangeable for the reasons that whatever

happens at a particular reservation cannot be possible to take place at any other reservation. For instance, the reservation in *Tracks*, modeled upon Erdrich's own Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation (Beidler and Barton, 1999, p. 10), may not be substituted for any other reservation for several reasons. Firstly, the author invests her imagination to map the reservation in its totality to bring to the surface the kind of natural and man-made disasters these reservations receive over the period. Secondly, the geographical locations and physical characteristics of the places in the selected fiction make these places uninterchangeable. For instance, the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation of *Tracks* cannot be replaced with any other Indian reservation, for Anishinaabe families, who have their own culture, populate it, and the kind of socio-political threads woven around this reservation are un-interchangeable. The protagonist in the *Tracks* is confronted with the dilemma as to whether to save her lands from the settlers or succumb to the monetary temptations offered by the lumbering company. Furthermore, the individual adventures in selected fiction do not take place in isolation; therefore, they are also uninterchangeable and irreversible. Fleur's drowning in the Matchimanito Lake is irreversible because it becomes her character. Similarly, the events at Argus that led to Fleur's rape cannot be reversed in time, for they are imprinted on her life, and she is feared and despised by all. Margaret's betrayal cannot be reversed in time, for it has caused Fleur the loss of her ancestral lands. Therefore, I claim that the selected fiction espouses an organic and real connection between time and space, which is characterized by the irreversibility of time and uninterchangeability of space.

The "initiative and power" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 100) in the selected fiction belongs to space and place; therefore, it is described as real and concrete. The degree of the realness and concreteness of the space is necessary to develop a character's sense of placeness. This sense of place comes from "subjective and emotional attachment" (Cresswell, 1996, p. 7) to place. The protagonist of ANO chronotope does not feel connected with the land(s) during the adventure time, for those places do not hold any significant emotional appeal to him. The protagonist is there only because by some sheer chance he happens to be at that place, where he would never have wished to be in the first place. On the other hand, the protagonists in the selected fiction are very much involved in the places they inhabit, so that these places become their identities, and being removed from or being away from these places puts them in an identity crisis. This sort of concretization and realness of space introduces "its own *rule-generating force, its own order, its inevitable ties to human life*" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 100). In *Tracks*, places like Fleur's ancestral cabin, Matchimanito Lake, and Kozka's Meats exert certain powers over the characters and manipulate the lives of those who inhabit them or trespass. Bakhtin asserts that the movements of adventure cannot be "organically localized" in the ANO, for it would "limit the power of chance" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 100), whereas in the selected literary works, the localization would mean the strengthening of ties between space and characters. In addition, the Native female writers also inherit a certain psychological rootedness with the land; therefore, when they pen down indigenous spaces, it becomes unavoidable for them to leave the specificity and concreteness of the spaces in the selected fiction.

The abstractness of the world depicted in ANO makes it an "alien" world, where everything in it is "indefinite, unknown, foreign" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 101). Whereas the world portrayed in selected fiction is always a Native world, the people who inhabit these lands have inherited these lands from their ancestors, and they feel a sense of obligation to protect them from foreign infringements. The inhabitants of these worlds celebrate their "organic ties and relationship" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 101) with these spaces, and the laws governing these spaces become the very part of the characters. *Tracks* delineate the story of a people who "stumbled toward the government bait, never looking down, never noticing how the land was snatched" from under their feet. Subsequently, the loss of land brought

“unrest and curse of trouble” (Erdrich, 1987, p. 4). Although Fleur realizes that “the land will go. The land will be sold and measured, she is desperate to hold on to her lands and to raise enough money to buy back her land, or “at least pay a tax and refuse the lumbering money that would sweep the marks” of her existence (Erdrich, 1987, p. 8). Therefore, when the protagonists leave their places and inhabit any other place in these selected fictions, the sense of out-of-placeness overwhelms the character, which ultimately influences her actions. Cresswell (1996) identifies a sense of out-of-placeness as the lack of a sense of belonging to a certain place (6). The protagonists develop this sense of out-of-placeness when they are confronted with the “otherness” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 101) of a certain place. In the selected fiction, the authors deliberately emphasize the ‘otherness’ of the foreign places, hence justifying the ambivalent attitude of the character. We see Fleur visit Argus and stay there for a few months; however, she fails to develop any sort of emotional attachment to the place. In addition, she develops skills that are considered unbecoming of an Anishinabe woman. She plays cards with men, and when they rape her, she brings a tornado to the Kozka’s Meats. In her rage, she builds a cry “faint at first, a whistle and then a shrill scream that tore through the walls and gathered around”, and then, through her magical prowess, makes Pauline and Russell slide the thick iron bar “along the wall and fall across the hasp and lock” the three men in the locker (Erdrich, 1987, p. 28). Similarly, in *The Reason for Crows*, Kateri fails to develop any emotional attachment to Sault St. Louis. In the *No Turning Back*, Polingaysi is unable to emotionally involve herself with the White cities, and ultimately builds her dream house at her village, Oriebi. In addition, if the plot has any reference to any foreign place, the author adroitly constructs a textual Native world that extenuates the *otherness* of the imaginary White place. In *Tracks*, Erdrich refers to two towns near the reservation, these are the fictional towns of Theobald, Hoopdance, and Argus. There are no details about Theobald and Hoopdance in *Tracks*; however, we see a complete section dedicated to the town of Argus. Beidler and Barton call Argus the geographically “most problematic” fictional town in Erdrich’s writings. David Stirrup calls Argus “the most complex, luminous place” and points to its location in North Dakota; however, he also fails to give a precise location of Argus. Erdrich offers varying locations of the fictional town that make it difficult to map; however, the town is “always depicted as being fairly close to the reservation, but like the site of the reservation itself, its location shifts” (Beidler & Barton, 1999, p. 11). In *Tracks*, we are told about the direction of the town on the “south” (Erdrich, 1987, p. 12), but we are not informed about the distance between the reservation and Argus. A few instances are present in the novel, but they are insufficient to comprehend the actual distance of the town. The supposed nearness of the town can be deduced from the facts that after the incident in Argus, Fleur walks from Argus to the reservation (Erdrich, 1987, p. 34) and Bernadette and Napoleon Morrissey come “down to Argus one day in a fine green wagon” (Erdrich, 1987, p. 63). Argus is also mentioned in *The Beat Queen*, and it is depicted as “up north, near the site of the Turtle Mountain Reservation” (Beidler and Barton, 1999, p. 11). However, the issue becomes complicated when we come to know about yet another location of Argus, “to the north of Fargo along I-29” (Beidler and Barton, 1999, p. 11) in *The Beat Queen*. This location is further reinforced in *Tales of Burning Love*, which suggests that the town of Argus is modeled “after the real town of Argusville, just fifteen miles or so due north of Fargo. Like the fictional Argus, Argusville is on a railway line and is connected by a short link with I-29” (Beidler and Barton, 1999, p. 11). According to Beidler and Barton Argus’s presumed location in *The Beat Queen* and *Tales of Burning Love* “reinforces the idea of an alternate location for the reservation (Beidler and Barton, 1999, p. 11). However, it is not the “indeterminate location” (Beidler and Barton, 1999, p. 11) of Argus that makes the plot move, rather the force and charge in the place that furthers the plot movement and bring dramatic changes in the lives of different characters. Argus is the *Other* to Fleur, where she does not feel a sense of belonging, and this sense of not-belonging is further augmented by the events that take place at

Kozka's Meats. Erdrich emphasizes the "alien quality" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 101) of Argus by situating it in contrast to the geography, people, and culture of Fleur's ancestral home.

The worlds depicted in the selected works are *real* and *native* worlds; here, native is used in opposition to *alien*, and it does not appear as Other to the people who inhabit it. Therefore, the unavoidable forces of space and place perpetuate all the events that occur in this world. Furthermore, the description of different places is invested with imaginative artistry in order to make them appear organically united and dynamic. The places in the selected fiction are enriched with the socio-political and cultural dynamism of the era and are portrayed with possession of potentials to mold the lives of different characters. Furthermore, these worlds are depicted in isolation, and by isolation, I maintain that every single novel depicts one reservation and some adjacent towns. These reservations are depicted as a whole, with their idiosyncratic distinctiveness, with the physical textures that differentiate them from the adjacent towns; however, they are always depicted as "isolated" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 101) entities. The reasons for such an *isolated* depiction vary from the individual author to the demographics of the reservation. However, what seems most pertinent in this case is the inherent spatial dynamism of the selected literary works. These spaces are rich enough in their isolated capacities to move the plot and their influences upon the characters, and readers are able to appreciate them "without any connection to an encompassing whole" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 102). However, this isolation does not permeate the lives of the people who inhabit them; these spaces hold people together, and when they are lost, the whole community disperses into isolated fragments without any identity or existence. They are not depicted in groups; rather, every reservation is sufficient unto itself (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 102). Therefore, in the selected works, isolated spaces are filled with a composite whole of people and places that are connected to each other.

Conclusion:

In addition, the real world in adventure and biographical time possesses its own individualistic stability and harmonized unity. It bears its own idiosyncratic logic that explains its eccentric attributes. Although its particularized motifs, if taken discretely, may not appear novel and redundant in their usage in other genres of Native American literature. However, their unconventional amalgamation in these literary works develops into "ineluctable logic" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 102) and thus achieves entirely new implications and extraordinary character.

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