

THE CYCLE OF REMOVAL AND RETURN: A SYMBOLIC GEOGRAPHY OF INDIGENOUS LITERATURE

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Abstract / Résumé

This essay offers a model for understanding the evolving narrative patterns that chart the literal and figurative movements of characters and plots in Indigenous literature. Specifically, I build on an approach derived from African-American literary critic Robert B. Stepto to identify a cyclical pattern of physical and psychic movement in Indigenous literature, manifested in what I call narratives of removal and narratives of return. The following symbolic geography of Indigenous narrative situates Indigenous experience within two poles, the *Symbolic Center* and the *Symbolic City*, which are mediated by a third space, the *Symbolic Reservation*.

L'article présente un modèle de compréhension des formes narratives en évolution qui tracent les mouvements littéraires et figuratifs des personnages et des intrigues dans la littérature autochtone. Plus particulièrement, l'auteur s'appuie sur une approche dérivée des travaux du critique littéraire afro-américain Robert B. Stepto pour définir un profil cyclique du mouvement physique et psychique dans la littérature autochtone, qui se manifeste dans ce que l'auteur appelle des récits d'enlèvement et récits de retour. La géographie symbolique des récits autochtones situe l'expérience autochtone entre deux pôles, soit le *centre symbolique* et la *ville symbolique*, accompagnés d'un troisième espace, la *réserve symbolique*, qui sert d'intermédiaire entre les deux.

Recent Indigenous literary criticism has largely, and properly, centered on deriving critical models from Indigenous experience, oral and written. But as Indigenous critical studies continues to broaden its reach, scholars can also benefit from a dialogue with other multicultural critical discussions while remaining “Indigenous-centered.” This essay offers a model for understanding the evolving narrative patterns that chart the literal and figurative movements of characters and plots in Indigenous literature. Specifically, I will build on an approach derived from African-American literary critic Robert B. Stepto to identify a cyclical pattern of physical and psychic movement in Indigenous literature manifested in what I call narratives of removal and narratives of return. The following symbolic geography of Indigenous narrative situates Indigenous experience within two poles, the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City, which are mediated by a third space, the Symbolic Reservation. The quest for an individual and communal voice that is in conversation with both Indigenous traditions and Western modernity is developed through negotiating this symbolic geography, which illuminates fundamental issues in contemporary Indigenous experience.

My approach to symbolic geography responds to the paradigm laid out in Stepto’s important 1979 text, *Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative*. Emphasizing that African-American literary practices are shaped in response to the realities of Black history, Stepto places the dialectic of slavery and freedom at the center of his model of African-American narrative history. Stepto’s paradigm, further elaborated by Craig Hansen Werner, Farrah Jasmine Griffin, Hazel Carby, Edward M. Pavlic, and Paul Gilroy, is built around a tension between what he identifies as the symbolic South and the symbolic North (167). The symbolic South is the source of African-American history and culture. As either a literal place or psychic space, it may exist anywhere an African-American community comes together under conditions of oppression, from Mississippi to Harlem. While it is a source of familial and cultural solidarity and belonging, the South is also the place of maximum enslavement for African-Americans within an historically White supremacist culture. Poverty, crime, and social dysfunction are part of life in the symbolic South, where institutional power is controlled by Euro-Americans. The symbolic North offers “the least oppressive social structure afforded by the world of the narrative” (167). Its relative safety, economic opportunity, and social mobility are attractive, but they come at the cost of African-American community.

Stepto’s analysis of Afro-American oral culture and slave narratives “generates two central patterns: the narrative of ascent, in which the protagonist progresses toward literacy and freedom (usually in the North),

and the narrative of immersion, in which the protagonist returns to his/her cultural roots and reintegration with the community (usually in the South)" (Werner 29). The questing hero of the ascent narrative leaves the symbolic South as an enslaved (either metaphorically or literally), semi-literate figure for whom the North holds the promise of greater freedom. Using terms I will adapt later, Stepto calls the protagonist of the ascent narrative the "articulate survivor." The articulate survivor has gained access to the relative freedom of the symbolic North through the acquisition of "literacy," which involves the ability to read not only words, but the signs and rules of power which are embedded, often without explicit recognition, in the culture and society of the symbolic North. The ascent narrative creates an isolated or alienated existence in the North that motivates the articulate survivor to return to the symbolic South in search of his/her family, community, history, culture, and roots. The articulate survivor who returns to the symbolic South and becomes conversant in its ways once again acquiring "tribal literacy" is identified by Stepto as an "articulate kinsman" (167).

In adapting Stepto's method to the particulars of Indigenous experience, I identify three symbolic geographical locations which play a central role in numerous Indigenous texts: the Symbolic Center, the Symbolic City, and the Symbolic Reservation. In what follows I will define characteristics of each of these locations and track the relationships between them, identifying two paradigms analogous to Stepto's narratives of ascent and immersion: the narrative of removal and the narrative of return. In doing so, I will refer to a broad range of contemporary and canonical Indigenous narratives. I am advancing this symbolic geography not as a reductive template, but to offer a vocabulary that will afford deeper readings into the complexities of Indigenous texts and to present a framework with which we may study how cultural narratives develop in a "contrapuntal" and "dialectical" relationship, what Stepto characterized as "calls" and "responses" between and among texts in both narrative forms and content (x). My own model is not the first to note the importance of recurring geographical locations in Indigenous texts; William Bevis, Robert Dale Parker, Michael D. Wilson, and Sean Kicummah Teuton provide their own theories concerning place and the movement of Indigenous characters. The symbolic geography I propose conceptualizes the ways Indigenous narratives mutually shape each other, contributing to our understanding of not just Indigenous literature, but Indigenous experience as well.

The Symbolic Center, the Symbolic City, and the Symbolic Reservation

Just as the symbolic South and the symbolic North are mutually defined by their relationship to the history of African-American slavery, the Symbolic Reservation and the Symbolic City exist in a dialectical relationship shaped by the impact of Western colonialism in North America. The discussion of the symbolic geography of Indigenous literatures should begin with an acknowledgment of the Symbolic Center. An Indigenous nation's Symbolic Center is both a literal place and psychic space. Literally, it is the place—the landscape or range of landscapes—which a people uses to define its place of origin. In psychic terms, it is the space from which a people originate and continue to self-define through culturally specific patterns of thought. The Center is where myth is tied to place; where the patterns of cultural meaning form; where tradition as an unending link between past and present lives. In the Symbolic Center, the laws of society and creation are knowable, the cultural traditions account for change and growth, and the experiences of day-to-day life and patterns of cultural and individual development are understandable, wholesome, and have meaning. The Symbolic Center is a matrix of cultural processes which collectively describe a tribal critical tradition that may account for the growth, change, and continuity of a community within specific environments and places.

In contrast to the majority of depictions of traditional Indigenous life in popular culture, contemporary Indigenous literatures do not portray the Symbolic Center in a culturally “pure” or unmitigated form. Indigenous cultures change through time, and as Choctaw scholar Michael D. Wilson argues in his work regarding Pueblo thought, the center was never static, but a “stable, yet changing center of value” (136). As a dynamic process of human consciousness that may be referenced in physical reality through places, spiritual artifacts, or stories, the Symbolic Center in Indigenous literature is represented in myriad forms. In *Black Elk Speaks*, the “nation's hoop,” as a symbol of the political, cultural, and spiritual solidarity of the Oglala Sioux, is the Symbolic Center. In N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, the actual site of Rainy Mountain and the lessons learned in the process of the Kiowa migration is the Symbolic Center. In Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, the kiva is the Symbolic Center, while in Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer* the powwow itself is a moving Symbolic Center. For Maria in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, the Symbolic Center is accessed through conversations with her Cheechum; for Lisa in Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*, it is contacted through a trickster cedar spirit. As the dominant

source of a culture's Indigeneity, the Symbolic Center's presence or absence is an irreducible force in Indigenous literature.

The second central location in the symbolic geography of Indigenous literature is the Symbolic City, the literal and/or figurative cosmopolitan space in which the dominant values of Western colonial culture are manifested and privileged. Images of the Symbolic City in Indigenous literature are structured around large historical patterns; the concern is more to present a clear sense of the forces at work than to delve into the internal complications and nuances of Western tradition. As a product of modernity, the Symbolic City embraces a progressive notion of history as discontinuous with the past. Its religion is Christianity, a religion of the Book. In keeping with its textual traditions, its secular knowledge and authority are accessed through words on the page and is dominated by scientific thought. The Symbolic City is the site of *homo economicus*, and as such is energized by the acquisitive consumerism, reification of individualistic values, and colonialist political expediences of late capitalism. In its manifestation as an actual urban space, it exists as Abel's Los Angeles in Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*; as Maria's Vancouver in Campbell's *Halfbreed*; as Simon's Minneapolis in David Treuer's *The Hiawatha*; as Larry's Fort Simmer in Richard Van Camp's *The Lesser Blessed*; and as Seattle in Sherman Alexie's fiction. The Symbolic City is not limited to the actual urban space. It is transportable through characters and institutions and manifests wherever the values of the Symbolic City take root. In the narrative worlds of Indigenous literature, the Symbolic City is expressed whenever and wherever characters engage the colonialism of the West and its supporting values of modernity. In Silko's *Ceremony*, the Symbolic City is represented by the open wound of the uranium mine shaft on the Cebolleta land grant, as well as the dangerous Western values the Laguna WWII veterans bring home to the pueblo. George Jim in Harry Robinson's story "An Okanagan Indian Becomes a Captive Circus Showpiece in England" never escapes the Symbolic City in England. It destroys the innocence and perverts the faith of Jeremiah and Gabriel at the Birch Lake Indian Residential School in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. The influence of the Symbolic City drives Deer Clan Chief Bud Tunny violently insane in Eric Gansworth's *Smoke Dancing*, as it does Choctaw Chief Redford McAlester in LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker*.

The third of the central symbolic locations, the Symbolic Reservation, is an Indigenous crossroads space in which the historical relationships between the drive of Western colonialism and the assertions of Indigenous cultural sovereignty play out in the everyday experiences and lives of its community members. The Symbolic Reservation is not

limited to a literal place, the reserve or reservation as defined by the political systems in which Indigenous peoples exist. Rather, it is a site where Indigenous and Western cultural values contest each other in an Indigenous communal context. The term “reservation” serves as a political marker for what the community of the Symbolic Reservation struggles against: a history of political and cultural oppression manifesting in the loss of traditional territory and the restriction of movement, both literal and figurative, and the attack on tribal values. The communities of the Symbolic Reservation negotiate a tension between living according to the values of the Symbolic Center and dealing with the Symbolic City in order to survive. The Symbolic Reservation is, thus, not a “pure” Indigenous cultural or political space, but one in which characters feel simultaneously their sense of Indigeneity most supported by community and attacked by colonialist and internalized colonial pressures.

On the Symbolic Reservation the tensions between Indigenous traditional values and modernity are often figured in paradoxes. While it is a site of general economic impoverishment, it is also a place of relative freedom from the imperatives of Western consumer culture. While oral traditions are valued on the Symbolic Reservation, the space is subject to Western colonial written law. Characters on the Symbolic Reservation value kinship, but their movement is constrained by family, clan, and religious responsibilities. Its members practice either traditional or Christian spiritual practices, or a syncretic blend of beliefs. Characters assert their cultural and national sovereignty on the Symbolic Reservation, but they are challenged relentlessly by the agents of colonial governments. These paradoxes are a part of the lived reality of the Symbolic Reservation. The Symbolic Reservation privileges tradition as a continuous link between the past and present understood experientially through oral traditions, kinship, and spirituality. These very values are repeatedly threatened and undermined, however, by the struggle with colonialism and modernity within its physical and psychic territory.

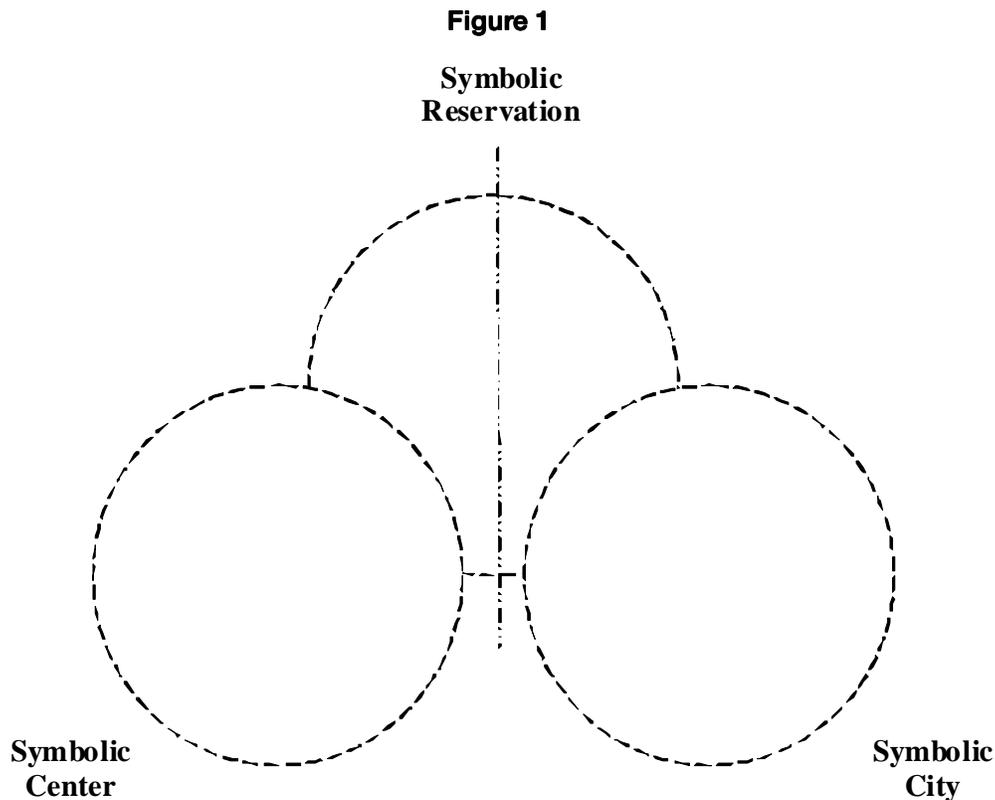
North America itself is a site of the Symbolic Reservation, as it is comprised of Indigenous land differentiated only by the degree to which its title is contested by colonial and Indigenous national governments. Both Indigenous title to territories and Indigenous ways of life in these spaces are under colonial threat on currently held Indigenous lands, which is why the Symbolic Reservation exists most obviously on reserves, reservations, and tribal lands in Indigenous literature. However, as it travels in the consciousness of characters and institutions within the narrative worlds of Indigenous literature it exists in pockets of tribally specific and inter-tribal communities in urban areas; in the inter-tribal and itiner-

ant powwow community; in the pan- and inter-tribal religious organization communities; and in the communities of professional organizations, to name but a few examples. As a site of cultural and political mediation between the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City, the Symbolic Reservation provides the most common symbolic geographical context for Indigenous narratives. Gabriel and Jeremiah in Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* struggle to carve out a meaningful existence through art within the Symbolic Reservation in Winnipeg and Toronto. In James Welch's *The Heart Song of Charging Elk*, Charging Elk lives in the Symbolic Reservation of Marseilles. In *Dead Voices*, Gerald Vizenor explores new possibilities of Indigenous life in Bagese's experiences of the Symbolic Reservation of Oakland, California, as does Winona LaDuke on the White Earth Reservation in *Last Standing Woman*.

The interactions between the Symbolic Center, the Symbolic City, and the Symbolic Reservation can be imagined in relation to the dialectical model of "double-consciousness" first articulated by African-American scholar W.E.B. DuBois in his 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*. DuBois positions the Euro-American and African-American in dialectical opposition separated by a "veil." The veil is comprised of discourses dominated by Euro-American narratives which define and categorize African-Americans in racist, sexist, and primitivist terms. The challenge is to identify and understand the narratives which support these discourses of injustice, and then replace the veil with alternative narratives that subvert or, as DuBois phrased it, transcend them. This formulation lies at the foundation of Stepto's symbolic geography, which is organized around the binary opposition of the symbolic North and symbolic South. In Indigenous literature, the situation is complicated by the presence of the third space. One could imagine the tension of the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City in DuBoisean terms, but the presence of the Symbolic Reservation disrupts the binary relationship. The dialectic between the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City is mediated within the Symbolic Reservation, wherein dominant narratives of colonialism and modernity originating from the Symbolic City are countered, subverted, and re-figured by the worldviews of the Symbolic Center.

The interaction between symbolic geographical locations is structured by the dialectic between the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City. In the narrative worlds of Indigenous literature, the Symbolic Center is most often characterized as temporarily de-centered by the effects of Western colonialism and modernity upon its characters and communities. Colonialism wholly destroyed Indigenous national governments or placed tribal nations in suzerainty. Modernity, with its teleological history and faith in capitalism, created a schism between the

Indigenous past and present, initiating a replacement of cultural tradition with a progressive history, the imposition of Western individualistic values, and the reification of rational scientific explanation over holistic relationships with nature. Communication must be established between the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City for the development of alternative discourses. The health of the Symbolic Center depends upon subverting Western discourses which undercut the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and denigrate their worldviews. Ironically, the Symbolic City's survival depends upon recovering a sense of humanity that understands the interrelatedness of all life, a goal in which a relationship with the Symbolic Center may be beneficial. In this way, the establishment of relationships between the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City is crucial to both.



As a crossroads space, the Symbolic Reservation mediates between the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City (fig. 1). While it draws cultural strength from the Center, its need to deal with the Symbolic City in

order to assure the survival of the Reservation often causes tensions with the values of the Center. Similarly, the Symbolic City influences the Symbolic Reservation through its economics, politics, and popular culture, which the Symbolic Reservation both partakes of and re-figures in asserting its sovereignty. It is within the Symbolic Reservation that new, alternative narratives to the discourses of colonial dominance and Western modernity may be imagined and put to use. For those narratives to develop, characters need to become fluent in the languages of both the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City, moving back and forth between cultural locations and vocabularies. As I will demonstrate, the narratives of removal and return represent the ways in which the knowledge of the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City are brought into conversation through the experience of individuals as they move between the Symbolic City and the Symbolic Reservation.

Narratives of Removal and Return

The symbolic geography of Indigenous literature maps through the literal and psychic movements of characters within and between the Symbolic Center, the Symbolic Reservation, and the Symbolic City as they succeed or fail in acquiring a “voice,” or stable cultural viewpoint from which one may speak the world into being. Most frequently, this voice represents an attempt to assert the values of the Symbolic Center in a world which is structured by the values of the Symbolic City. Not simply a repudiation of modernity, the voice seeks to disentangle the potentially useful aspects of the Symbolic City and put them to work in the service of individual and communal needs. Whereas DuBois’s veil inhibits sight, the veil in Indigenous literature inhibits sound, impairing characters from hearing and speaking each other’s language, either literally or metaphorically. Narratives of removal and return utilize the concept of articulation, figured by the trope of voice, as a means of representing a character’s fluency in the prevailing languages of specific symbolic geographical locations. A character’s acquisition of a voice ensures his/her survival and is dependent upon his/her learning how to communicate using the words, signs, and rules of power native to a place. This is no easy matter, for as Louis Owens explains of Indigenous literature, “conflict is epitomized through conflicting discourses, through breakdowns in communication and understanding, failures in articulation. Confronted with the authoritative, privileged voice of European America, the Indian resorts to subversion or often falls silent” (8). The protagonist of both the narrative of removal and of the narrative of return must negotiate the veil of discourse to which Owens’ quotation speaks. Drawing on and adapting from Stepto, characters who become

articulate in the language of the Symbolic City are termed “Articulate Survivors,” while those who lose their voice are “Inarticulate Survivors.” Characters who gain fluency in the discourses of the Symbolic Reservation become “Articulate Kinsmen/women,” while those who fail to negotiate its languages become “Inarticulate Kinsmen/women.” Studying the patterns of the narrative cycle of removal and return allows us to better understand the choices characters have and make as they negotiate the tensions between the Symbolic City, the Symbolic Reservation, and the Symbolic Center.

The North American colonial history of “removing” or “relocating” Indigenous people from their traditional homelands through warfare, ethnic cleansing, mandatory boarding school indoctrination, and legislative policies designed to erase tribal identity provides the context for narratives of removal. With each story of leaving the Symbolic Reservation, Indigenous characters repeat individually and symbolically what communities of people have been subjected to since colonization. The protagonist of the narrative of removal leaves the Symbolic Reservation, either as a result of external forces or by personal choice (which is never entirely divorced from those forces). Characters leave for economic reasons such as the lack of jobs at home; the need to escape an embattled reservation life; the desire to achieve a Western education; and the psychological and cultural compulsion to live away from home initiated by boarding school experiences. Within the logic of the quest the protagonist of the narrative of removal travels to the Symbolic City in order to gain knowledge that is important to both the development of his/her sense of self and to his/her home community of the Symbolic Reservation. The removal narrative is never an unambiguously positive movement. The price for leaving the Symbolic Reservation is the loss of cultural and political solidarity with one’s home community.

The narrative of return derives its structure from both traditional Indigenous mythic quests and the historical reality of separations and reunions that Indigenous individuals and communities have experienced as a condition of colonialism. The protagonist of the journey of return leaves the Symbolic City (sometimes voluntarily, sometimes by necessity) in a quest to escape an existence which, to invoke the language Stepto uses to describe the articulate survivor in the symbolic North, is “at best, one of solitude; at worst, one of alienation” (167). His/her quest is to bring back knowledge of the Symbolic City and to become literally and/or symbolically re-united with the community of the Symbolic Reservation, which has lost members to the Symbolic City. The journey is initiated most often through a spiritual awakening, a political awakening, or a newfound recognition of the history of one’s people, family, and

self. It may also be ventured by compulsion, most often to escape legal trouble. The journey itself may take any number of forms: physical, spiritual, psychological, or political. Often, it is all of these at once. While the narrative of return is an inherently hopeful quest, its outcomes are uncertain. The success or failure of the quest depends upon a character's ability to learn the language of the Symbolic Center and to effectively balance the influences of his/her knowledge gained in the Symbolic City with his/her newfound Symbolic Center experiences. The successful hero of the narrative of return sacrifices his/her relative freedom as a cultural isolate for the subjectivity of a member of a tribe and community with culture, tradition, history, and political commitments.

Survivor to Kinsman/Woman: Inarticulate to Articulate

Indigenous narratives may begin at any point in the cycle of removal and return. Some narratives begin with a character who has learned, at least provisionally, to balance the opposing worldviews of the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City. Others focus on characters who have not attained this balance. As a result, narratives of removal and return follow several different trajectories. The narrative of removal follows an Inarticulate Kinsman/woman to the Symbolic City, where he/she may either learn and speak the language of the Symbolic City and become an Articulate Survivor, or refuse, and exist on its margins as an Inarticulate Survivor. If the quest is completed, an Articulate Survivor or Inarticulate Survivor returns to the Symbolic Reservation to begin the process of learning to speak its language and share what he/she has to offer, which is usually his/her knowledge of the Symbolic City. Whether the quest succeeds or fails depends upon the character's acquisition of the knowledge needed to understand the importance of supporting the Symbolic Center, and what his/her role will be in that endeavor.

The Inarticulate Kinsman/woman is incapable of negotiating the influences of the Symbolic Center and Symbolic City in the Symbolic Reservation and through his/her imbalance, confusion, uncertainty, and volatility threatens to disrupt the community. The challenge for characters living in this space is to learn how and why the Symbolic Reservation paradoxes exist; to come to an understanding that they are conditions of colonialism, not markers of weakness reflecting the inherent inferiority of Indigenous worldviews and communities. His/her cognitive dissonance manifests through misunderstandings of the Symbolic Center and trouble with the legal system, which is associated with the Symbolic City. Living within the Symbolic Reservation but deracinated, the Inarticulate Kinsman/woman is potentially dangerous for the Symbolic Reservation community. Characters such as Abel in *House Made of Dawn*,

Tayo in *Ceremony*, and Bud Tunny in *Smoke Dancing* misread traditions of their community's Symbolic Center and act violently, as well as illegally.

The Inarticulate Kinsman/woman is marked off in the text most clearly by a paralyzing lack of voice, which is a metaphor for the lack of a stable cultural viewpoint from which to speak the world into being. D'Arcy McNickle writes in the opening pages of *The Surrounded*, "They sat in silence for some time. It was useless to speak of fiddle-playing, and for a while Archilde could think of nothing that was not equally useless. When you came home to your Indian mother you had to remember that it was a different world. Anyhow you had not come to show your money and talk about yourself" (3). In *Ceremony*, Tayo speaks of himself, telling the military doctor treating him, "...'He can't talk to you. He is invisible. His words are formed with an invisible tongue, they have no sound'" (14). Momaday writes of Abel in *House Made of Dawn*, "Had he been able to say it, anything of his own language—even the commonplace formula of greeting 'Where are you going'—which had no being beyond sound, no visible substance, would once again have shown him whole to himself; but he was dumb. Not dumb—silence was the older and better part of custom still—but *inarticulate*" (53). Like Rocky in *Ceremony*, who claims that Laguna traditional knowledge is nothing but superstition, the Inarticulate Kinsman/woman that removes to the Symbolic City has come to believe in the West's judgment regarding Indigenous thought as backwards and irrational. In *Black Elk Speaks*, Black Elk offers his motivation for his removal to the Symbolic City:

I looked back on the past and recalled my people's old ways, but they were not living that way any more. They were traveling the black road, everybody for himself and with little rules of his own, as in my vision. I was in despair, and I even thought that if the Wasichus had a better way, then maybe my people should live that way. I know now that this was foolish, but I was young and in despair. (Neihardt 215)

As the hero of the narrative of removal, the Inarticulate Kinsman/woman seeks self-knowledge through a greater understanding of the social, cultural, and political forces that emanate from the Symbolic City to shape the community of the Symbolic Reservation.

The conditions for leaving the Symbolic Reservation are complex, conflicting, and rarely clear to the character removing. Often, the apparent motivation for removal masks a deeper reason that has spiritual and political implications. An important marker in the development of the hero of the narrative of removal is, in fact, his/her coming to understand the deeper context for the removal. On the surface, characters remove

to join the military, as in *Ceremony* or *House Made of Dawn*. They remove to gain a Western education, as in Janet Campbell Hale's *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture*. They remove for the promise of new opportunities and a cosmopolitan experience in the city, as in Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues*. Or they remove themselves in order to gain the economic power to help their families, as in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*. Only after experiencing life in the Symbolic City do characters gain the critical perspective needed to understand the forces of colonialism and modernity on their thinking, and on the life of the community of the Symbolic Reservation. In Campbell's *Halfbreed*, Maria wanted both a "better" life in economic terms from the one she lived with her people on the road allowances, and she wished to keep her brothers and sisters together and away from provincial authorities who sought guardianship over them. Once she removes to the Symbolic City she comes to understand how she defined a "better" life by the consumerist terms of Western society. Becoming articulate in the ways of the Symbolic City un-masks its truths as theories, its judgments as biases, its compassion as paternalism.

The choices a character makes in navigating this new world and learning its language determines whether he/she becomes an articulate survivor with a voice and, thus, power, or an inarticulate, powerless survivor. To call the protagonist of the narrative of removal a "hero" is somewhat a contradiction, for he/she is no such thing in the stereotypical notions of the hero which continue to play a central role in popular culture. He/she lacks the standard qualities of heroism—martial bravery, courage, and self-sacrifice for the sake of the greater good of his/her community. Instead, to become literate in the Symbolic City, the hero of the narrative of removal must (often temporarily, sometimes permanently) sacrifice his/her values drawn from the Symbolic Center for the ways of the Symbolic City. Thus, Abel in *House Made of Dawn*, the narrator of James Welch's *Winter in the Blood*, and Mason Rollins in Gansworth's *Smoke Dancing* are more aptly understood as anti-heroes. Before returning to the Symbolic Reservation and in the midst of the quest the hero of the narrative of removal is selfish and individualistic as he/she lives within the value system of the Symbolic City. As Ben Benally, perhaps the most clearly depicted Articulate Survivor, reflects in "The Night Chanter" section of *House Made of Dawn*, there are reasons to want to become part of the Symbolic City:

They have a lot of *words*, and you know they mean something, but you don't know what, and your own words are no good because they're not the same; they're different, and they're the only words you've got. Everything is different,

and you don't know how to get used to it. You see the way it is, how everything is going on without you, and you start to worry about it. You wonder how you can get yourself into the swing of it, you know? And you don't know how, but you've got to do it because there's nothing else. And you *want* to do it, because you can see how good it is. It's better than anything you've ever had; it's money and clothes and having plans and going someplace fast. (139)

For Ben, returning to the Symbolic Reservation is not an option. He may consider it while drinking, "But the next day you know it's no use; you know that if you went home there would be nothing there, just the empty land and a lot of old people, going no place and dying off" (140). While Ben seeks to find a Symbolic Reservation community in the City, he teeters between isolation and alienation, Stepto's two alternatives for the Articulate Survivor.

The Articulate Survivor has become literate in the language, codes, and laws of the Symbolic City. He/she may fully embrace modernity and the relative freedom it offers by assimilating into mainstream society. In the extreme case, the character consciously or unconsciously passes as non-Indigenous. More often, the character lives a divided life, consciously constructing a culturally non-Indigenous public persona and an Indigenous cultural self expressed in private life. The Articulate Survivor takes pride in having learned how to live in the Symbolic City, but is haunted by the prospect of having learned the rules so well as to become a compliant subject of the Symbolic City's power. He/she continually faces the prospect of having sacrificed his/her sense of Indigeneity through complicity with the values of the City. Knowing this, he/she masks the true reasons why others fail to survive in the City. In *House Made of Dawn*, Ben explains Abel's inability to get by in Los Angeles by saying he was "unlucky" (139).

If the Articulate Survivor has become fluent in the language of the Symbolic City, the Inarticulate Survivor becomes voiceless and, consequently, powerless in the City. The Inarticulate Survivor in Indigenous literature may have learned the language of the Symbolic City, but for various reasons is unwilling to speak it. Often, the character will learn its ways, and for a time will survive in a precarious way. But the cultural trade-offs and the demands of the Symbolic City to sacrifice so much—family, community, time, self-respect, one's politics, one's beliefs, one's dignity—for "success" on its terms becomes too much to bear; the character's cognitive dissonance is figured as the loss of a coherent voice. For characters such as Helen Jean in *Ceremony*, the shame of what has been lost may trap one in the Symbolic City in perpetuity. The

voiceless character may survive in the margins of the Symbolic City, living off the streets and along the wharfs, as the character Jackson Jackson does in Sherman Alexie's story "What You Pawn I Will Redeem," crazy and self-medicating. Cut off from a nurturing sense of community, the Inarticulate Survivor either languishes in the City or, just as often in Indigenous literature, begins the narrative of return toward the communal life of the Symbolic Reservation and its moral and critical source, the Symbolic Center.

The narrative of return is structured as both an individual quest to unify a character's divided self and a communal quest to strengthen and re-unite a people through affirming the ability of their traditions to resist the Symbolic City. Once the hero of the narrative of removal has been immersed in the Symbolic City, a choice must be made: will he/she stay in the City, or return to the Symbolic Reservation? It is possible for an Articulate Survivor to simply assimilate and be absorbed in the Symbolic City. However, a permanent movement away from any Symbolic Reservation community is rare in Indigenous literature. As is the case with removal, the practical reasons for returning to the Symbolic Reservation mask more profound concerns. Like Lena in LeAnne Howe's *Miko Kings: An Indian Baseball Story*, a character may be called home by the ancestors, which in itself may be an affront to the sensibilities of an Articulate Survivor who shuns traditional beliefs. In Louis Owens' *Bone Game*, Cole McCurtain's unwilling engagement with the spirit world becomes the narrative through which he decides to remain an Articulate Survivor or become an Articulate Kinsman. For either the Articulate or Inarticulate Survivor, a return to the Symbolic Reservation initiates a transformation of self in which the character must both share and utilize his/her knowledge of the Symbolic City while (re)learning the ways of the Symbolic Center.

A successful return requires the protagonist properly adjudicate between useful and harmful knowledge that he/she may bring to the Symbolic Reservation through his/her experiences in the Symbolic City. The successful re-integration of a character back into the Symbolic Reservation depends upon his/her ability to shed the individualistic values of the Symbolic City, as well as its narratives of declination regarding the Symbolic Reservation and Symbolic Center. Often, a character's assumptions regarding the cultural power and spiritual efficacy of the Symbolic Center are refracted through knowledge gained in the Symbolic City. Characters like Tayo in *Ceremony* or Lisa in *Monkey Beach* doubt the reality of their experiences with the spirit world. Or, like the narrator in Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, the character must learn to balance the oral and written representations of his/her commu-

nity by suppressing the primacy of texts, a hallmark of the City, and elevating oral traditions. The abstract and theoretical engagement with reality that marks the Symbolic City is balanced with knowledge gained experientially. Ultimately, however, there is no formula for balancing the influences of the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City; each return requires different things from a character and his/her community. In *The Death of Jim Loney*, James Welch offers a portrait of an Inarticulate Survivor who cannot integrate into the Symbolic Reservation community of his upbringing. David Treuer's *The Hiawatha* charts a cycle of removal and return that likewise fails. The myriad ways characters either succeed or fail in this endeavor is partly what makes narratives of return compelling.

Indigenous texts portray the Articulate Kinsman/woman as a character who is so well grounded in the language of his/her Symbolic Center that he/she may engage and learn about the Western world of the Symbolic City without the fear of losing his/her voice. Like Betonie in *Ceremony*, the Articulate Kinsman/woman is a cultural mediator who understands both the critical frameworks of the Symbolic Center and the Symbolic City, and how they play out on the Symbolic Reservation. As Betonie states of the necessity to change tribal rituals to address a changing world, "I have made changes in the rituals. The people mistrust this greatly, but only this growth keeps the ceremonies strong" (116). William Listener in Ray A. Young Bear's *Remnants of the First Earth* provides a model of the Articulate Kinsman/woman through speaking the languages of the Symbolic Center, Symbolic Reservation, and Symbolic City:

When he wasn't praying, he was singing and drumming. When he wasn't running a complicated earthlodge ceremony, he was reading minutes at the Black Child Tribal Council meeting or installing plumbing in town. William was the first person to aptly demonstrate that one could educate himself in both worlds by first having a thorough command of their diverse languages. Possessing a shrewd, analytical but traditional outlook was also helpful. (116, original italics)

As Betonie and Listener model, in the narrative worlds of Indigenous literature the social, cultural, and political changes colonialism and modernity have brought to Indigenous communities must be accounted for if the Symbolic Center is to survive. In order for this accounting of modernity and colonialism to continue, knowledge of the Symbolic City must be learned and brought back to the Indigenous community struggling with these forces on the Symbolic Reservation. The critical processes and values of the Symbolic Center thus depend on the knowl-

edge and experiences of the protagonist of the narrative of return. Without this knowledge, the community of the Symbolic Reservation risks losing its cultural and political sovereignty. Its tribal traditions may lose their efficacy in countering colonialism and modernity. By returning, the protagonist affirms the need of the Symbolic Reservation community and the power of the Symbolic Center.

Symbolic Geographies and Indigenous Experience

The symbolic geographical framework I propose in this essay offers Indigenous critical studies a template that should be complicated, questioned, and elaborated to reflect the richness and diversity of Indigenous discourses. If we recognize the narratives of removal and return, it may be, in part, because they are familiar to us in our daily lives. Literary patterns are often modeled on real life. Many of us, our families and friends are engaged in everyday negotiation of the Symbolic Center, Symbolic Reservation, and Symbolic City. We may shuttle between these existences, strengthening each other with community-building, enlarging our worlds with knowledge, and finding our centers with tradition. Or, we may be at another point on the cycle of removal and return, weighing our choices, testing our voices. In either case, the choices Indigenous characters make offer guidance.

Like Articulate Kinsmen/women, scholars of Indigenous literature have been drawing on multiple critical sources, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. We mediate the different languages of our experience in order to create critical models and theories that will, we hope, provide both our Symbolic Reservation readers and those of the Symbolic City the critical tools they need to hear and speak to each other across the veil. Trickster theory, Indigenous feminism, literary nationalisms, and tribal-centric critical approaches all serve as examples of this endeavor. Indigenous Symbolic Centers grow and change; that is their strength. And as they do so, they must take full account of the world that an Indigenous community is experiencing, embracing tribal experience in all its richness.

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