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家和身份：美国印第安文学的归家路

Home and Identity: Homecoming in Native American
Literature

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Abstract

Since ancient times, the Native Americans share a special bond with home in which they reconstruct their identity and gain the sense of belonging. The Native Americans always experience the similar life pattern—leaving their home, being positioned as social minorities and making efforts to homecoming, a sense of belonging and the reconstruction of identity. The narrative of homecoming has obviously dominated contemporary Native American writing.

This thesis explores recurrent theme of homecoming in the Native American literature in-depth. In addition, this thesis aims to explore the reasons why homecoming is so necessary and prevalent in Native American literature and the different forms and profound influence it can exert on identity-construction. Through homecoming, the Native Americans find their mutual self on which they reestablish the cultural identity and on which they depend for survival and development.

Consisting of four chapters, the thesis begins with an introduction to the notion of home for the Native Americans, evidenced by comparing leaving home and relocation in the mainstream culture with coming home in the traditional oral stories and emphasis of home in Native American literature.

Chapter One provides literature review about homecoming in the Native American literature and the theoretical framework, introducing the development and mainframe of post-colonialism with a focus on the “mimicry,” “the third space” and “hybridity.”

Chapter Two analyzes the forms and manifestations of homecoming. In early “bringing-them-home” fiction, a rootless Native man rediscovers his tribal identity by learning from Keeper and returns as a hero. Then in the second stage, homecoming traditions are more complex since life is a matter of cross-cultural tensions, conflicts and adjustments. The representatives of the stories of a young man’s troubled

homecoming include *Winter in the Blood*, *House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony*. In the third stage, Native American writers not only follow the traditional homecoming plots, but also develop into the hybrid style, the combination of the oral and written words, past and present, local and western elements. Louise Erdrich takes the tensions further and his *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* mark a break with the narrative of homecoming pattern, emphasizing the ambiguity and cultural tensions of homecoming.

Chapter Three explores the significance of this experience to Native American and investigates the reconstruction of identity through homecoming. Firstly, on the basis of Native American's Land Ethnic, we will discuss the phenomenon of disconnection with reservation and then points out homecoming as a way to get closer to family and homeland as healing place, which is instructive to weaken their sense of alienation. Secondly, this thesis focuses on the loss of Native language and cultural heritage by presenting the Native's attitude toward time. Hence, coming home through oral traditional stories helps strengthen the relationship between history and cultural identity. Thirdly, we tend to demonstrate the function of ritual and ceremony and figure out religious crisis and racial discrimination the Native Americans are confronted with. By returning home, the Natives can also get rituals and ceremonies which are traditionally used as healing technique. Finally, the significance of hybridity and the Native American's creation of cultural reconciliation are explored. Embracing hybridity is not only the inevitable consequence of white colonialism but also is the best way to preserve a sense of cultural difference. Adoption of hybridity can be found in two aspects: accepting the advanced industrialization, using multiple narrative perspective and linguistic pluralism to achieve narrative hybridization and using literary presentation to achieve religious hybridization.

The thesis ends with the conclusion that on the basis of the Native Americans' notion of land, time and religion, the Indians are encountered with the disconnection with family and reservation, loss of language and culture, the religious crisis and racial discrimination after they leave home or live in bicultural world. Hence, the Native Americans can rebuild the link with land, history and community and then

construct their identity through homecoming and reclaim their subjectivity through the hybridity of both cultures.

Key Words: Native American literature; homecoming; Identity-construction

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摘要

在美国印第安文学中，家是一个具有完整体系的复杂概念，与美国印第安人的身份构建及归属感息息相关。美国印第安人普遍经历着“离家—遭遇身份危机，踏上归家路—获取归属感并构建身份”的回归模式。归家成为当代印第安英语小说的常见主题。

本文深入探讨印第安文学中的归家主题，并分析典型小说中人物的归家经历。除此之外，本文通过研究归家主题的必要性及其表现形式，揭露归家对于印第安人身份建立的重要意义。通过踏上归家的路途，印第安人回到了原始的部落，重拾印第安文化和传统，为个体文化身份的建构、生存及发展奠定了稳固的基础。

本论文共分四个部分。引论简要介绍印第安文化中“归家”的概念及西方文化中的“离家”，并论述研究目的及研究意义。

第一章由两部分组成。第一部分阐述国内外关于归家主题的研究概述。第二部分探讨将美国印第安文学归于后殖民理论的合理性以及霍米巴巴“模仿”、“第三空间”、“杂糅性”三大概念。

第二章分析印第安文学的归家模式。早期的“回家”小说讲述主人公向长者们学习，作为英雄凯旋归来的故事。在第二个阶段，归家日趋复杂，阻碍重重。这一时期的代表作有《日诞之屋》、《血中冬季》、《典仪》。在第三个阶段，印第安作家不仅继承传统“归家”的叙述，而且发展成为口头与书面、过去与现在、本土与西方的杂糅性归家。厄德里克更加注重对冲突的刻画，其代表作《爱药》、《痕迹》都展现了新型的跨越中心及边缘界限的归家模式。

第三章挖掘归家对于印第安人的重要性及其对自我身份建构的意义。首先，根据印第安人具有独有的土地伦理观，探讨印第安人流离失所，无家可归的现象。归家重建印第安人与土地、家庭的联系，使印第安人获取归属感。其次，由于印第安人的时间观，归家改善印第安人语言及文化的流失，重建其文化身份及与其历史的关系。再者，鉴于宗教和典仪在印第安社会中发挥重要作用，归家缓和宗教冲突和基督教的影响，使印第安人获得洗礼，重拾过去的记忆。最后，探讨归家过程中杂糅性的重要性以及北美印第安人所创造的文化妥协。杂糅性是白人文化影响下的明智选择，也是保留自身文化特色的最佳途径。归家的杂糅性体现在

两个方面：使用多样性视角及语言多元化实现叙述性杂糅，利用语言表达实现宗教杂糅性。

最后部分是对前几章内容的归纳和总结，并得出结论：印第安人具有独特的土地观、时间观、宗教观，一旦印第安人远离故土，面临白人文化的冲击，他们将切断与土地及部落、语言和文化传统、宗教及礼仪的关系。因此，归家有助于印第安人恢复与土地、历史、部落的联系，建立印第安身份，并通过跨越两种文化的杂糅性为当今印第安部落提供新的希望。

关键词： 印第安文学 归家 身份构建

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Introduction

1.1 The Notion of Homecoming in West Culture and Native American Culture

Homecoming has been a common topic in both western culture and Native American culture. William Bevis, who has published many works about the history of Native American literature, points out that the movement or relocation in American literature is the distinctive feature that contrasts with homecoming in Native American literature. Typical western novels are characterized by the leaving plots, mostly individual escaping from family and community to seek freedom, independence and success. Native American literature embraces the prevalent theme of homecoming plots, with the protagonist achieving spiritual growth and value of life. Bevis hence argues that among these stories, homing stands contrast with the stories and values in White culture.

1.1.1 Leaving Home in American Literature

Leaving home has been an external theme in western literature which can be traced back to Bible in which the God expels Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. It typically refers to a story that a group of “new Americans” left their home in Europe and began a new journey to the new continent. This action lies in the westerner’s desire to leave and go on a long journey to explore the world. Daniel J. Boorstin discusses this characteristic in his work *The Americans: The National Experience*. “An movement to a single direction, a continuing, random, nondirectional movement with unsure directions and in cycles is one of the characteristics of American experience” (Daniel 148). He compares Americans to a new kind of Bedouins who hold that the freedom of migration is more significant than anything else and desire to find what they want in the movement. Belden C. Lane, the professor of American religion and history of spirituality at Saint Louis University, also characterizes

American culture as “mobility” and “placelessness” and explains their attitude toward space and the specific place (Belden 218).

In addition to simple leaving home plots, the mobile life is greatly appreciated and eulogized in American culture. American poet, Walt Whitman extols this spirit in his great poem *Song of the Open Road*.^① This poem celebrates the spirit of out-of-doors and people who are on the road, taken by everyone, rich or poor. The journey on the road associates people together. A great number of American “classics,” such as *Moby Dick*, *Portrait of a Lady*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Sister Carrie* and *The Great Gatsby*, all tell protagonists’ leaving home to pursue a better future or find one’s fate farther away.

The meaning of mobility has changed In the 1920s as some American no longer left and went out full of hope. Leaving becomes a way to escape from the harsh reality. The works of the Beat Generation reflect that people might no longer return to their previous comfortable home. They escape to the outside world, discarding their home, avoiding responsibility and daily routine of the community. In Gary Snyder “I Went into the Maverick Bar”^②, the protagonist becomes delighted only after the short stay during the journey. When he comes back to the real life, he hates stability and feels overwhelmed and does not know what to do. The Americans in modern life are more accustomed to the mobile life.

The mobile experience is related to the self. Living in an ever-changing world, people do not have the fixed location and social status. When they feel restricted in the society, the initial thought is to leave away and find a new place. Hence, people may be confused about “where I come from” and “where I am,” and they cannot have a clear understanding of themselves. A considerable number of white traditions lie behind those plots, associated with four centuries of colonial expansion. The story of

^① “Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road, Healthy, free, the world before me, The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose...I inhale great draughts of space, The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine...I am larger, better than I thought, I did not know I held so much goodness.” (Whitman 1)

^② “We left—onto the freeway shoulders, under the tough old stars. In the shadow of bluffs, I came back to myself. To the real work, to What is to be done.” (Synder 346)

development and growth of young man, or called Bildungsroman, became popular in American, focusing on the theme of the story of a young man or woman leaving home for a glorious future in a new land. In *Letters from an American Farmer*, de Crevecoeur depicts Americans as people who leave the old to conquer a newer land. “He is an American, who, leaving behind all his ancient prejudices and manners, takes new ones from the mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds” (Crevecoeur 3). The home they leave is not only a place; it is the old days, the history, the set of values and parents in an ancient regime.

“Leaving plots” not only belongs to picaresque novels which are told in a series of loosely connected adventures, but also represents the idea of individualism that is the very core of American culture and the main value in America. This concept can be traced back to the period of Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation and is further enhanced and promoted in the period of immigration and Westward movement. “The individual is the ultimate reality; hence individual consciousness is the medium, repository, and arbiter of knowledge” (Swann, 582). Robert M. Nelson, an American critic who studies the function of landscape in Native American fiction, points out that the arbitrariness toward nature and land, embodied in the American mainstream culture, leads to worthlessness and insignificance of the physical world. This stands strongly contrast with the sense of community stemming from the Native American literature.

1.1.2 The Prevalent Theme of Homecoming in Native American Literature

In marked contrast, the theme of homecoming has obviously dominated contemporary Native American writing. Most Native American novels are “not eccentric centrifugal, diverging, expanding,” but “centripetal, converging, contracting” (Swann and Krupat 582). Homecoming is the chorus experience of most of characters in the Native American Literature. Some leave their homeland for a big ambition and desire to gain fame and reputation, such as Nector Kashpaw, June Morrissey, Alveritine Johnson, King Kashpaw. In “Coming Home through Stories,” Neal McLeod begins with the meaning of “to be home” in his essay. Coming home means “to dwell within the

landscape of familiar, collective memories, as opposed to being in exile” (McLeod 51). Being home means “to be a nation, to have access to land, to be able to raise your own children and to have political control” (McLeod 51). For Native Americans, collective memory stems from home, spatially and temporally, with strong relation with land, ceremony, songs, languages and stories.

Some Native Americans^① despise the bitter experience in the native land and are forced to leave due to some reasons, which finds expression in the following novels. In D’Arcy McNickle’s *The Surrounded*, Archikld comes back home from Portland—where he “can always get a job now any time” and play the fiddle in “a show house” (D’Arcy, *The Surrounded* 2). Then he returns to the Salish and Kootenai (“Flathead”) reservation in Western Montana. The plot of *The Surrounded* is typical. In *Wind from an Enemy Sky* and other famous novels, a young boy is kidnapped by a white to a Mission school. When he returns to his tribe and meets his grandfather after four years, he becomes an outsider. The novel shows the tribe’s attempt to recover from the white control and authority and the young boy’s persistent effort to “bring back our medicine, our power” (D’Arcy, *Wind from an Enemy Sky* 18). James’s Welch’s *Winter in the Blood* begins with description that “coming home was not easy anymore” (Welch 1). It describes an Indian in his thirties who quits his job in an Oregon hospital and goes back to the ranch in northern Montana. He finally goes home, holds the funeral for his grandfather, and throws a traditional tobacco pouch into his grave. N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* also handles a wander in the white world coming home. Albel, an Indian serviceman, is confronted with troubled homecoming. He fights in World War II, wanders and drifts in Los Angeles, and finally returns to pueblo to hold his grandfather’s funeral and takes an active part in healing race. Leslie Marnon Silko’s *Ceremony* depicts the homecoming plots of several Indian veterans to the Laguna Reservation. An Indian serviceman returns from Japan to the Southwest Laguan tribe, and gets rid of drinking and madness to

^① In *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*, “American Indian” and “Native American” are both used to describe this group equally. “American Indian literature” is the same as “Native American literature” in many works. Hence, “American Indian” and “Native American,” “American Indian literature” and “Native American literature,” are used interchangeably in my thesis.

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