Global Social Sciences Review (GSSR)
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2021(VI-III).01

DOI: 10.31703/gssr.2021(VI-III).01

Experience of Out-of-Placeness in Diane Glancy's *The Reason for Crows*

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Abstract *With the theory of Moss and Dyck, this study discusses Diane Glancy's The Reason for Crows to understand the insinuations of sensuous geography. This study maintains how in the wake of out-of-place identity within Native American space, Glancy uses sensory experiences as material practices to counter a sense of out-of-placeness. Such multisensory experiences help her native characters locate themselves in both the textual and Native American space. This study explores Diane Glancy's The Reason for Crows not only to find out the reasons due to which the Native Americans develop an acute sense of out-of-placeness within Native American spaces but also the geographies of illness and disability to investigate how Native Americans create and contest their space and place.*

- Vol. VI, No. III (Summer 2021)
- Pages: 1 – 8
- p- ISSN: 2520-0348
- e-ISSN: 2616-793X
- ISSN-L: 2520-0348

Key Words: Body, Diane Glance, Native American Woman, Place, Space

Introduction

The experience of space and place is fundamentally sensuous. Human Beings are bestowed with five senses, and an individual's experience of the world is constituted through the working of different senses in juxtaposition. Furthermore, our sensuous experience of space and place may be a juxtaposition of different senses; however, it should not obfuscate the idea that all senses have an equal contribution to a particular spatial experience. Human senses work on a sensuous hierarchy that may be culturally different and diversified. Senses can be categorized into active and passive modes, but it must be remembered that our sensuous experiences are drawn from their combination. The categorization is itself complex since, at times, our active senses become passive and passive senses become actively engaged in our spatial experiences. Rodaway (1994) identifies four distinctive functions of the body concerning our experiences of space and place. Firstly, he claims that our body "gives us an orientation in the world through its physical structure and its sensory capacities" (p.31). The statement suggests that the human body is uniquely designed to receive spatial information without any hindrance through the sensory receptors located on and in the human body. In this regard, the structure of the human body and the idiosyncratic characters of our senses play a vital role in giving shape to our body. Secondly, our body "gives us a measure of the world that forms a basic yardstick by which we appreciate space, distance, and scale" (p.31). Rodaway claims that the very processes of mapping our environment take place through our bodily structure. It is the human body, based on which we map the location of other beings and objects. Our sense of nearness and farness, closeness and openness, relatedness, and un-relatedness are developed through the location of our body in opposition to particular objects. Thirdly, Rodaway asserts, "the locomotion of the body and its parts offers us the potential to explore and evaluate our environment and to change our location to satisfy our needs" (p.31). The argument suggests that the mobile nature of the human body gives it the freedom to locate itself in more conducive spaces. Mobility helps in documenting new spatial experiences and interprets the

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Citation: Rehman, F. u., Ifzal, M. O., & Sadiq, R. A. (2021). Experience of Out-of-Placeness in Diane Glancy's *The Reason for Crows. Global Social Sciences Review, VI*(III), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2021(VI-III).01

consequences of old ones. Fourthly, "the body as a coherent system helps to integrate and coordinate the sensuous experience generated by the various sense modes" (p.31). Since individual sense acquires a kind of spatial data that is uniquely distinctive from the other, therefore, there was a need for a system that would synthesize the diverse data into one coherent whole. The human body offers such a system that not only juxtaposes the distinctive sensuous data but also interprets it, thus giving coherence to our spatial experiences. In short, our body's multidimensional role enriches our spatial experiences, and we can relate ourselves in space and place with the help of our body and senses.

Literature Review

Paul Rodaway (1994) claims that there exists a significant "inter-relationship between the senses and the multidimensional nature of geographical experience" (p.25). The statement further consolidates the idea that the mapping of space and place is incomplete without the geographical data that we receive through our senses. Our immediate environment is fully loaded with geographical data, and any change in this data is instantly recorded by our senses. This data recording and an individual's subsequent reactions to geographical stimuli are both conscious and unconscious. The point is further elaborated in Yi-Fu Tuan's (1977) claim, according to which an individual's sensuous sensitivity contributes to a particular "spatial experience" (p.14). In other words, our senses mould our experiences of our environment. Regarding our experiences of space, Tuan further claims, "sensory organs and experiences enable human beings to have their strong feeling for space and spatial qualities" (p.12). The statement suggests that individuals structure the impression of space and place through sensuous activities. Like Tuan and Rodaway, Westphal (1984) also claims that "gaze" exercises supremacy over other sensory experiences (p.132). Although in the hierarchy of our senses, gaze occupies the esteemed position, it is the juxtaposition of all senses that create the meaning of a text. Westphal further asserts that such a structure is not "culturally universal" (p.133), which suggests that every culture has a distinctive hierarchy of senses.

Theoretical Framework

An individual, when diagnosed with some chronic illness, develops "uncertainty" and "variability" (Moss & Dyck, 1999, p.233). This means that the individual becomes confused about whether his/her body will function normally or it has to bear the burden of an abnormal body. With the passage of time, the individual realizes the abnormality of its body, although this realization comes from both its inability to perform day-to-day activities and through people who do not accommodate such an individual. Kateri's bad eyesight is her greatest disability; she looks "into the woods and sees snow that is not there", and she sees the "shapes of the trees are blurred" (Glancy, 2009, p.4). The children who "laugh" at her and boys who turn away their faces constantly make her aware of her pathetic situation (Glancy, 2009, p.3). This situation scares her, and she starts searching for a "sanctuary" at a very young age (Glancy, 2009, p.3). This search for a sanctuary and the growing awareness of having a disabled body nurtures a sense of disabled identity in Kateri.

Furthermore, Moss and Dyck (1999) claim that a destabilized material body "invariably complicates women's daily lives" (p.233). Kateri's disability influences her social activities and routine. Although she picks corn with her uncle's wife, carries small bundles of firewood from the forest, carries water in small buckets, and pounds corn, she is unable to "do the work of other girls and women" (Glancy, 2009, p.6). Kateri is unable to do domestic chores like cooking, sewing clothes, sweeping and mopping floors, and managing games. Although she does bead that also with a lot of difficulties since she is unable to see, she rather feels her way through the bone needle and sinew (Glancy, 2009, p.6).

Glancy contests the construction of the organizational structure of Native American society on "working body" and an "able body" (Moss & Dyck, 1999, p.233); therefore, Kateri feels out of place because of her disabled body. It is not her disabled body alone but also the disease, Smallpox, that ruptures "the flow of daily life socially and signals a move toward a new set of experiences" (Moss & Dyck, 1999, p.234). The Small Pox leaves Kateri with a poked face, which she hides from people by covering her face with a blanket (Glancy, 2009, p.7). Her concealment of the face due to the disease is yet another experience of social exclusion that

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comes with the illness. Although Kateri is the daughter of the Mohawk chief, her illness does not allow her to hold an elevated position in the social hierarchy. Apart from a socially marginalized position, she even becomes dependent on her sister for her own safety when the enemies attack her village. In this sense, her village becomes a "site of struggle" (Moss & Dyck, 1999, p.234), where she constantly engages in the redefinition of her identity as a body. When Kateri recovers from her illness, she feels "strange" (Glancy, 2009, p.60) among her people.

Similarly, the emotional traumas that Kateri suffers from due to her illness engender a sense of alienation in her. This alienation further augments her sense of out-of-placeness in a place that was once her true abode. Kateri engages in two sites of struggle simultaneously, one her body and the other her village, and at both sites of struggle, she is marginalized and excluded. She has to contest the definition of her body as a disabled body, while on the other hand, she needs to counter her socio-spatial exclusion due to her disability. In short, these two sites of struggle, body space and social space, constitute her identity as a disabled *being*, and it is this challenge that she undertakes in the novel.

Moss and Dyck (1999) claim that in "attempts to negotiate the uncertainty, indeterminacy, and unpredictability" of their illness and body, disabled and ill women "engage in specific material practices" (p.234). This involvement in material practices is aimed at the reconfiguration of the site of struggle. Now the question arises as to how Kateri contests this marginalization, exclusion and reconfiguration of the sites of struggle to create her own place.

Analysis

In *the Reason for Crows*, Kateri is not able to see, and therefore it is difficult for her to make sense of the world. However, Diane Glancy (2009) gives Kateri an acute sense of touch to receive information about her surroundings. Kateri has a passive sense of sight; therefore, she actively uses the touch senses. Kateri is unable to see her scarred face, but she feels the pits on her face with her fingers (p. 3). According to Rodaway (1994), touch is "a highly significant dimension of the human experience, both in person-person and person-environment relationship" (p.41). Kateri fails to establish any relationship with the blurred images of trees, people, and earth through her sense of sight, but with her touch sense, all these images become clear. Her affiliation with her mother is also documented through her sense of touch; although Kateri can see when her mother gives her the holy bath, it is through the touch of her mother's hand on her head that she internalizes that experience and it becomes her "first memory" (Glancy, 2009, p.20). She establishes a bond with these different entities and receives the experience of belongingness. In *the Reason for Crows*, Glancy makes excellent use of the "often overlooked" (Rodaway, 1994, p.42) tactile experiences in developing a character's sense of place. The touch sense enables Kateri to visualize the world around her. When she beads, she feels her way with the bone needle and sinew; she cannot see the beads and needle; rather, she remembers the patterns of the beads through her fingers, and it is through the touch that she sees the beads (Glancy, 2009, p. 6). Kateri is unable to make sense of the woods through her poor eyesight, and she goes bumping into trees, but later she manages to travel the distance and 'feel' her way with a stick (Glancy, 2009, p.12).

Moreover, Glancy, through different instances, tries to establish that Kateri makes sense of place through the touch senses. Since our skin "mediates between the body and the surrounding environment" (Rodaway, 1994, p.43), therefore, the information we receive regarding spaces and places through our touch senses becomes the most reliable and realistic. It is based on this information catalog that a blind individual makes sense of place. At the Onnonhouarori festival, when Kateri is disturbed by this split in her thoughts about whether to follow the Jesuits or dance in the dream fests, she is unable to decide where to go until the tree comes and holds her hand (Glancy, 2009, p.33). The instance shows that Kateri develops her spiritual relationship through the sense of touch that is to say that her relationship with the imagined space is also developed through a sense of touch.

Likewise, Glancy (2009) delineates Kateri's spiritual confusions and misgivings about hell and heaven through haptic geography. Kateri visualizes hell through her sense of touch. She considers hell as burning villages by the French soldiers, Smallpox is burning from hell, and hell is separation from God (p.39). It is pertinent to

note that all these metaphors are spatial; however, their spatiality is not documented through the sense of sight but through the sense of touch. In other words, Kateri is unable to map hell through the geography of vision; rather, she maps it through haptic geography. For Kateri, a physical map is meaningless because she is unable to see the patterns in it. Therefore, when she sees a map that Jesuits had followed, she fails to "read" it (p.43). She feels the map with her fingers in the mission, and it appears to her a mere parchment. The priests move her fingers on the parchment to make her understand the route; she feels the map "pitted", and remembers it with her finger (p.43). The instance shows that Glancy believes that maps can not only be visualized but also felt. In other words, we do not see and remember a map only, but through our touch senses, we can feel a map and remember it also.

According to Bachelard (1994), individuals often build their relationships with intimate spaces in a multisensorial way. In this regard, Bachelard documents a child's experiences of space and place in his childhood house. In a daydream, adults remember intimate spaces of their childhood house by re-living the memories of that place. Amidst these memories, adults also remember the touch of doorknobs and the "feel of a latch in a long-forsaken childhood home" (Stilgoe vii). Similarly, at Sault St. Louis, Kateri suffers self-inflicted pain as a reparation for the sins of her people. She takes off her beads and eel-skin ribbons and scourges herself. She eats less, fasts mostly, and punishes herself by keeping a "candle-mould in the snow" in her mat on her feet at night (Glancy, 2009, p.49). These instances show that Kateri does not feel at home in Sault St. Louis, and she longs for her home and people. The distance of nearly two hundred miles fails to erase the memories of her land and people from her subconscious. It is the memory of a place, which holds her identity that makes her feel the enormity of the place and compels her to pray "for the land. For the unknown distances" (Glancy, 2009, p.50). Through her sense of touch, Kateri "articulates another kind of complex world" (Tuan, 1977, p.11). This world is constructed through images of places and spaces, which are created through haptic and tactile senses. This world is far different from the physical world that Kateri inhabits since this world is constructed by using touch sense, whereas the physical world of the Mohawk tribe is constructed through visualizing the places and spaces. In this way, Glancy offers two worlds within one text, both real to the extent that the readers unconsciously decipher the spaces and places portrayed in it.

Another point, which is also pertinent to this discussion of the two worlds presented in *the Reason for Crows*, is that the overlapping of the imagined and real-world makes it difficult for the reader to distinguish one from the other. As a reader, one knows that the village, the church, Sault St. Louis, all these places are real places with exact locations; however, the ways Kateri lives in these places, it becomes difficult for the reader to believe in their real existence. Since the reader receives information about these places through Kateri's felt experiences, the reader is unable to recapitulate the same experience.

Furthermore, Glancy also complicates the whole map of the book by intentionally juxtaposing the real and the abstract world. For instance, in the episode where Kateri travels to Sault St. Louis through the river, the description of the landscape becomes intricate to discern. The reader is confused as to whether the landscape being described is a real landscape or just a fragment of Kateri's imagination. For instance, the identity of the two places is complex since both the place of departure and the destination have the same name, Caughnawaga. Glancy (2009) further elaborates and says that Kateri leaves "Caughnawaga by the rapids of the Mohawk River" and goes to "Caughnawaga by St. Lawrence" (p.41). The intricacies of the journey further complicate when we study both locations from a religious perspective. It becomes difficult to identify whether it is the spiritual journey from traditional Mohawk religion to Christianity or whether it is a physical journey from the Mohawk village to St. Lawrence. Such complexities hinder the readers in identifying the true nature of these journeys. Surprisingly, the complex juxtaposition of the abstract and real-world confuses not only the readers but also the protagonist. Kateri herself is unaware and doubtful of the journey she undertakes to Sault St. Louis. Therefore, she constantly questions the reality of her journey, as to whether she is outside of her village or travelling to some new land. The idea of "new land" puzzles her, and all of a sudden, she wants to be surrounded by the walls of her village and the longhouse (p.41). The geographical confusion mounts into a spiritual confusion, and the idea of abandoning the journey to the new

land surface deep down in her heart. The questions that trouble her physical journey give rise to doubts about her spiritual journey, which then further leads her to fall prey to disappointment and fear of the darkness.

Tuan (1997) argues, "touching and articulating things with hands yields a world of objects – objects that retain their constancy of shape and size" (p.12). Kateri cannot see the darkness but feels its expansiveness. She feels that she has entered into the realm of the evil who scouts his territory, and she can hear his steps (Glancy, 2009, p.42). Kateri feels an acute sense of out-of-placeness, but this sense of out-of-placeness is not rooted in real space rather in an imagined space. Kateri does not feel a sense of belonging to the abstract world and feels "suspended" (Glancy, 2009, p.42) between the real and abstract world. Glancy's use of geographical metaphors to portray the shape and size of evil and space exhibits her understanding of the deep-rootedness of Native Americans in the land.

Such instances further testify that the portrayal of bodies, spaces, and places through hepatic geographies helps a visually impaired individual make sense of the world around him. Now the question arises as to how a reader would differentiate between real spaces and imagined spaces. Glancy (2009) provides clues to her readers at different episodes of the novel to enable the readers to distinguish between real spaces the abstract ones. One such clue is that the episodes where Kateri sees objects, people, and trees are the ones that represent abstract spaces. Since we know that in real places, Kateri is unable to see things clearly, she just has a vague idea and blurred images of things, people, and trees. For instance, in her village, she visualizes blurred images of trees; the earth is real because it appears blurred to her, she cannot distinguish the priest from the darkness when he enters her longhouse, and she trips over benches in the church (p.4). Therefore, the village, the earth, the longhouse, and the church are real spaces that have some physical existence, and they are internalized through haptic geography. On the other hand, she sees snow-covered woods, sees the evil that lurks in the trees, during her journey through the Mohawk River, she sees the forests, she sees the lion with a mane of light at Sault St. Louis and sees hell and heaven. All these places are imaginary objects that belong to abstract spaces that occur in her mind and have no physical existence at all.

At this stage, I would like to discuss yet another point that is pertinent when we study spaces and places made meaningful through haptic perceptual systems. As Rodaway (1994) claims, "touch literary concerns contact between person and world" (p.44); we observe that Kateri establishes a link with her world through the exchange of tactile information between her and the objects. However, this relationship does not exist merely at a physical level but also develops into an emotional bond between the character and the world. Kateri develops an emotional bond with her longhouse, village, woods, church, and lands through the sense of touch. The longhouse offers her rest and peace from Smallpox, the village serves as a symbol of safety and protection from the enemies, the woods guard her against the invasions, the church offers her sanctuary from evil, and the lands give her identity. Her relationship with these places is developed through her tactile association with these places. When the French destroy Kateri's villages, she is unable to see the destruction through her eyes; rather she feels it with her feet (Glancy, 2009, p.10). Through her sense of touch, she develops the haptic geography of the destroyed village and imagines how the smoke rises from the ruins of the bark longhouse and the crops burned by the French. Her deep association with the land can be deduced from the fact that she, although physically handicapped, helps in building the village again after the attack. Although during work, she injures herself and has to be confined to the longhouse (Glancy, 2009, p.13). It is Kateri's strong relation to her longhouse, village, and woods that she is not comfortable with the idea of leaving her village. The journey seems to be useless to her since she wants to go back to the longhouse, mats, and baskets (Glancy, 2009, p.41). Nevertheless, she is content with the idea that she will "put the new land together with (…) the old" (Glancy, 2009, p.45). This shows her deep emotional attachment to her old land. Her efforts to pay reparation for the evils of her people are triggered by her deep sense of cleansing the old land. At Sault St. Louis, the memories of her old land do not allow her to experience the vision she desires most. Kateri does not find solace in the Church at St. Louis and thinks of praying to the Algonquin sun woman (Glancy, 2009, p.49). Kateri makes every

effort to make the Maker happy and to have her vision, but her restlessness grows over time at St. Louis. She daydreams about her village since St. Louis does not give her the "warmth" that she longs for (Glancy, 2009, p.49).

According to Bachelard (1994), when we daydream of the places we have lived in our childhood, "we participate in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the material paradise. This is the environment in which the protective beings live" (p.7). For Kateri, the most protected place is her village, with which she has developed a relationship that she fails to develop with St. Louis. At St. Louis, in her daydreams, she remembers the sun on her head when she sat by the Mohawk River. She recalls the songs of fish and her red eel-skin ribbons that she loved most. She misses the fun of beading and thimbles making and wishes to hide her ugly skin in beads (Glancy, 2009, p.49). Kateri is incapable of developing a sense of place in St. Louis because she has not yet been freed from the memories of the old village. As stated earlier, since the places portrayed in the second half of the chapter, particularly Kateri's journey and stay at St. Louis, are constructed in abstract spaces, therefore, they do not hold any attraction for Kateri. Secondly, the frequency of use of the sense of touch and hearing decreases in the later parts of the novel as compared to the first half. The majority of the incidents and places are portrayed through mental maps that Kateri develops in her vision of Christ and the Maker.

Nevertheless, Kateri does not make sense of the world only through her sense of touch; she also uses her auditory senses to locate herself in Native American space. In other words, the auditory experiences together with the tactile experiences constitute her idea of space and place. Native American culture is an oral culture, primarily auditory than visual. Under the influence of the oral tradition, the Native American vocabulary is full of metaphors that appeal to auditory experiences. Native Americans have a celebrated oral tradition that preserves the history of Native culture in oral form. In their stories, Native Americans have immortalized their history from the beginning of the Native American race. Native American oral tradition accommodates stories of the creation of the earth, ceremonies, medicinal techniques, biographies of famous Native American legends, and myths. Since Native Americans had no literary tradition, therefore, the stories and legends were passed on to the next generations through oral tradition. The oral tradition has not only contributed to Native American writers' themes but has also influenced their literary techniques to a great extent; therefore, Andrew Wiget argues that the writer of stature "could not be effectively understood without reference to the oral traditions which served as their artistic resource" (p. xiii).

To comprehend Native American writers' use of auditory geographies, it is pertinent to understand the Native American oral tradition. This will also help understand how Native American writers have created auditory geographies in their writings. However, the term auditory geography is not as simple as it appears to be and bears complexities in its nomenclature. Therefore, before I dwell on describing how the protagonist of Diane Glancy's *The Reason for Crows* experiences auditory geography and makes sense of the world through the sense of hearing, I feel it pertinent to inform the reader about the functioning of auditory geography. Rodaway (1994) distinguishes between two sets of geographies within the paradigm of auditory geography, the oral and the aural. Oral geography, according to Rodaway, refers to "a geographical knowledge spoken in the same way as oral history is related" (p.83). On the other hand, aural geography represents "sensuous geography derived from the ears" (p.84). Rodaway focuses on the sensuous experience and claims that both hearing and listening play their role in the formulation of auditory geography, where hearing has a passive role and listening possesses an active part in the whole process. Rodaway uses the term auditory geography for the reason that "it relates specifically to the sensuous experience of sounds in the environment and the acoustic properties of that environment through the employment of the auditory perceptual system" (p.84). In this auditory perceptual system, the human ear is the main sense organ, but it encompasses other elements as well. Rodaway claims that since our geographical experiences are multisensorial, therefore, we not only 'hear' through our ears but "with more than our ears and the context, or environment itself, plays a key role in what or how we hear" (p.84).

Diane Glancy (2009), in *the Reason for Crows,* creates auditory geographies, and her characters make sense of place through these geographies. Glancy retells the life history of a

Mohawk girl who, during the Smallpox epidemic, receives pits on her face and bad eyesight. She is unable to see clearly, and at times difficult to distinguish between people and trees; however, she has acute auditory powers to rely on. Since Kateri is unable to use her visual faculties, she makes excellent use of her sense of touch and hearing to navigate about her village, woods, and church. Rodaway (1994) asserts that people with some sort of blindness "find their auditory capacity strongly influenced by the context of hearing" (p.97). The statement suggests that the environment in which auditory experiences are experienced structures them and thus makes auditory experiences dependent on geographic location. The kind of environment portrayed in *the Reason for Crows* suggests that Kateri lives in a place that is located at the south bank of the Mohawk River and surrounded by forest and mountains on the north side.

Kateri develops an auditory relationship with the place where she lives with her tribe. She listens to the forests, listens to the noise of the birds as they call one another, listens to the winds through the leaves, the water in the rivulets, and the river (Glancy, 2009, p.5). Here Glancy draws a large soundscape that bears sound events of trees, birds, wind, and river. Kateri finds herself within the soundscape and feels one with these objects in the auditory geography. However, this is not limited to Kateri's auditory sense and her participation in the process; she claims that she sees sound (Glancy, 2009, p.5). This becomes problematic since we are not aware of the physical shape of sound, neither does Glancy inform her readers about the visualization of the sound. However, in this way, Kateri transforms from an auditory world to a visual world. Kateri establishes an emotional relationship with her geographic location, but this emotional attachment does not yield from the scenic beauty of the place. Rodaway (1994) claims that our experience of sound is not merely physical but emotional also (p.95); therefore, the present study maintains that Kateri develops an emotional relationship with her location through her auditory senses. Kateri hears the forest's "moan" (Glancy, 2009, p.8) and thinks that the forest is diseased like her and her tribe. The auditory geography that Glancy creates through sound metaphors helps her characters identify their location within the space. Kateri cannot detach herself from this auditory experience she receives in the forest; therefore, she has this feeling of closeness to the forest where she thinks of the forest as an entity that is a part of their tribe. For Kateri, the forest has the disease, and it suffers as she suffers and is marked as she is marked. She associates feeling with the forest and believes that she is one with it (Glancy, 2009, p.8).

Conclusion

Since Kateri has poor eyesight, she relies more on haptic and auditory experiences to navigate in space and relate her to places. Among the two, the haptic experience is a "continuous body-contact geography" as compared to auditory, which is "more extended or distant geography, an experience of wider spaces and the relationship between places" (Rodaway, 1994, p.101). Kateri makes use of both experiences in locating her position in her village. For instance, when the French soldiers attack her village, she hears the screams and noises of her people. Glancy creates a soundscape of indiscernible noises. Kateri, located at the center of the soundscape, tries to distinguish between different sound events and realizes that she is present in a location that is under attack by some enemies (Glancy, 2009, p.9). This idea of being in a place filled with enemies triggers her sense of out-of-placeness (Cresswell, 1996, p.19). Subsequently, she runs with her sisters towards the woods to escape the attack and to a place where she feels a sense of belonging. In another attack by the Machicans, Kateri is taken into the world by the auditory geography Glancy creates. The attack is defended well by the warriors from Kateri's tribe, and they bring Machicans captives to torture (Glancy, 2009, p.15). Kateri cannot visualize the captives being torture, but she is actively engaged in the soundscape produced by the cries of the captives. The sound events are taking place within the premises of her village, but she dissociates herself from the whole event. This whole episode is retold to invite readers to explore Kateri's subjective position in that particular geographic location. Kateri is unable to make sense of place within this auditory geography because here, she does not feel that she belongs to this place.

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