

江苏省教育厅哲学社会科学基金项目

(项目编号 06SJB750005)

后殖民理论视角下的美国 印第安英语文学研究

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吉林大学出版社

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

后殖民理论视角下的美国印第安英语文学研究/邹惠玲著. —长春:吉林大学出版社,2008.3
ISBN 978-7-5601-3813-8

I. 后… II. 邹… III. 英语—文学—文学研究—美国—近代 IV. I712.064

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2008)第 030639 号

书 名:后殖民理论视角下的美国印第安英语文学研究
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责任编辑、责任校对:徐佳
吉林大学出版社出版、发行
开本:787×960 毫米 1/16
印张:15.75 字数:283 千字
ISBN 978-7-5601-3813-8

封面设计:水木时代(北京)图书中心
北京广达印刷有限公司 印刷
2008 年 3 月 第 1 版
2008 年 3 月 第 1 次印刷
定价:25.00 元

版权所有 翻印必究
社址:长春市明德路 421 号 邮编:130021
发行部电话:0431-88499826
网址: <http://www.jlup.com.cn>
E-mail: jlup@mail.jlu.edu.cn

A Postcolonial Study of American Indian Literature Written in English

Zou Huiling

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序 言

郭继德

印第安人是北美大陆最早的居民，印第安文学是美国文学的一个重要组成部分。作为北美大陆上的原住族，印第安人早在欧洲殖民者抵达北美之前便以口头形式在这片土地上创造出丰富多彩的部族文学，但是，在近几年百年间白人殖民霸权的高压之下，印第安口头文学渐渐走向了消亡，而萌芽于 18 世纪的印第安英语文学在经历了长期的边缘化状态之后，于 20 世纪六七十年代异军突起，迅速发展成为美国文坛上一支不容忽视的力量，对印第安英语文学的研究也随之成为当代美国少数族裔文学研究的热点之一。然而，在我国外国文学研究界，黑人文学、亚裔文学等美国少数族裔文学的研究都已经取得丰硕成果，惟独对印第安文学的研究尚未形成系统，近一二十年来国内所发表的学术著作中，专门论述美国印第安英语文学的寥寥无几，学术期刊上有关印第安英语文学的文章也是屈指可数。从这一点上说，邹惠玲的这部著作——《后殖民理论视角下的美国印第安英语文学研究》——完成了一项具有开创性的工作。作为她的导师，我为她所取得的成就而感到由衷的高兴和骄傲。

《后殖民理论视角下的美国印第安英语文学研究》以霍米·巴巴、艾勒克·博埃默、比尔·阿什克罗夫特、海伦·蒂芬、爱德华·萨义德等后殖民理论家的批评理论为依据，从后殖民视角出发研究美国印第安英语文学的发展轨迹，通过对印第安英语文学代表作品的分析、解读，探讨印第安英语文学在不同发展阶段所表现出的不同后殖民特征。这部著作首先追溯了印第安英语文学的渊源——各印第安部族普遍遵奉的传统信仰与价值观念，而后以后殖民理论对欧美殖民扩张的批评为依据，分析了美国内部殖民主义统治对印第安人及其文化所造成的灾难性后果，重点论述了印第安传统的被边缘化和白人文学对早期印第安英语文学的影响。在此基础上，这部著作以后殖民理论家们就后殖民文学所作的定义和分期标准为依据，论证美国印第安英语文学的后殖民性，并将美国印第安英语文学的发展界定为三个阶段——同化阶段、回归传统阶段和文化杂糅阶段，通过详尽的文本分析，逐一深入阐释这三个发展阶段各自的代表性特征。在论述印第安英语文学的同化阶段时，这部著作以博卡根、伊斯特曼和马修斯等人的作品为研究文本，论证他们在创作中所表

述的对白人文化价值观念的认同和融入白人主流社会的渴望,同时也揭示了促使他们作出这种表述的主要原因。在论述印第安英语文学的回归传统阶段时,这部著作以印第安文艺复兴代表人物斯科特·莫曼迪和汉纳·吉奥加玛的作品为例,通过详尽的文本分析,阐释了这一阶段印第安作家笔下以恢复印第安传统为目标的后殖民旅程。在论述印第安英语文学的文化杂糅阶段时,这部著作把对后殖民理论的深入阐释与从后殖民视角出发对这一阶段代表作品所进行的文本分析有机结合,论证了这一阶段印第安作家在创作中对殖民话语的颠覆,对边缘与中心之文化界限的消解与跨越,对印第安传统的重新构建和对北美印第安历史的重新书写。

在借助于丰富而翔实的资料对美国印第安英语文学从同化、回归到杂糅三个发展阶段进行缜密分析和深入探讨的基础上,这部著作最后得出了具有创新意义的结论——在美国印第安英语文学的发展进程中,印第安作家把白人殖民者的写作形式挪用于自己对种族/文化身份的诉求,尤其是在第三阶段,他们试图跨越边缘与中心的文化界限,将印第安传统融入主流文化。在这种跨越与融入的努力之中,他们表达了对文化调和的认可,摧毁了二元权力结构,在文化杂糅之上重新构建起印第安文化身份。在这一意义上,他们以复兴印第安传统,使之融入当今多元世界为目的的写作证明了后殖民理论的一个基本观点:属下可以讲话,本土的声音可以恢复。

《后殖民理论视角下的美国印第安英语文学研究》第一次从后殖民理论视角出发,系统地研究了美国印第安英语文学的发展过程以及各个发展阶段所呈现的后殖民特征,因而可以毫不夸张地说,这部著作填补了我国印第安文学研究的一个空白。惠玲的这部作品是在她的博士论文基础上撰写而成的。她的博士论文不仅具有创新性,而且语言流畅规范,思路清晰,论述周密严谨,因而得到论文评阅专家和答辩委员会的一致好评,以全优通过。当然,这与惠玲长期以来积累的扎实的英语语言基础、深厚的理论积淀和文学研究功底是分不开的。惠玲是恢复高考制度后第一届英语专业本科生,毕业后一直从事高校英语专业教学,后来考入山东大学攻读英语语言文学硕士学位,她的硕士论文《爱德华·阿尔比——一位深陷俄底浦斯情结的社会批评家》也是以全优的成绩通过评审与答辩的。此后,她在徐州师大一边教学一边潜心研究美国戏剧,在教学和科研上都取得了令人瞩目的成就,获得过江苏省高等教育教学成果奖,出版过多部教材、译著,也在核心期刊上发表了优秀论文。2002年,惠玲已经晋升教授、并且担任徐州师范大学外语学院副院长,但她作出了一个重要决定——重返山东大学校园读博士。而且,她放弃了自己已经驾轻就熟的美国戏剧研究,转而选择印第安英语文学作为自己博士论文的研究内

容。面对这个具有挑战性的课题,她毅然辞去行政职务,远离家庭的温暖,全身心投入研究和论文的撰写。她的辛勤努力收获了丰硕的成果。在山东大学的三年间,她不仅撰写出高质量的博士学位论文,还在《外国文学评论》《外国文学研究》等权威和核心期刊上发表了多篇有关美国印第安文学的研究论文,在我国美国文学研究界产生了一定的影响。特别是她发表在《外国文学评论》上的《〈绿绿的草,流动的水〉印第安历史的重构》一文,先后获得中国高等教育学会外国文学专业委员会颁发的“全国高校第三届外国文学优秀教学科研成果奖”和全国美国文学研究会颁发的首届“全国美国文学研究会优秀学术成果奖”。从山东大学毕业返回徐州师范大学后,惠玲虽然又为繁重的行政工作所缠身,但她依然孜孜不倦地继续着印第安英语文学的研究,并且不断有学术成果发表。我相信,在不久的将来,她将会有更成熟、更全面、更深入的印第安文学研究著作问世。

2007年10月于山东大学

ABSTRACT

As the title suggests, this dissertation is an attempt to study American Indian literature written in English from the perspective of postcolonial criticism. As is known, there are two kinds of American Indian literatures, traditional oral literatures in numerous tribal languages and American Indian literature written in English. Since the arrival of European colonists in North America, American Indian oral literatures had been under the siege of white colonial domination and as a result of the cultural genocide inflicted on Indian people by Euro-American colonial rule, American Indian oral literatures were dismissed and overwhelmed as historical relics. As early as the 18th century, some American Indians who were educated in the English language began to write and publish literary texts in English, but up to the middle of the 20th century, none of the works produced by Indian authors had got accepted into the American canon. During the political upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, a new generation of American Indian writers began to re-claim the Indian voice that had been systematically silenced by white colonialist discourse. Focusing their writing on resistance and survival, these writers contributed collectively to the emergence of a new era of American Indian literature written in English—Native American Renaissance. In the recent decades, American Indian literature developed into another new stage at which American Indian writers strived to write back from the periphery to the center, to assert the historical existence of Indian people to mainstream culture and to recuperate American Indians' status and power to speak in contemporary society.

Since Native American Renaissance, mainstream literary criticism in America has increasingly examined a variety of American Indian literary texts, and critics, scholars and writers of Indian descent have also published their criticism and commentaries on the literary texts by Indian authors. Of all the critical works, either by Indians or non-Indians, only a few make reference to postcolonial criticism and none of them definitely conceptualizes A-

merican Indian literature as postcolonial. In China, American Indian literature has met with slight critical attention and among the handful scholars and academics that do research on American Indian literary texts, very few examine American Indian literature from the postcolonial perspective.

Although there are various definitions of postcolonial literature, it is generally held that postcolonial literature emerges out of the experience of colonization, and covers the entire colonial process from the moment of colonization to the present day, developing from the early postcolonial writing under imperial licence, through the imaginary re-creation of the cultural past, to the final stage of border-crossing and hybridity. Even though postcolonial theorists and critics tend to exclude American Indian literature from their discussion of postcolonial literature, we may see that American Indian literature written in English falls in with the postcolonial characteristic features defined by postcolonial criticism if we locate it on the postcolonial theoretical plane. Based on the understanding of the postcolonial nature displayed by American Indian literature, and also in consideration of the neglect of such a nature on the part of postcolonial criticism, this dissertation presents a postcolonial study of American Indian literature written in English.

As American Indian literature written in English is rooted in American Indian ancestral heritages and hence understanding it requires knowledge of the basic beliefs and values passed on orally from generation to generation, this dissertation begins with a brief survey of American Indian cultural and spiritual traditions with focus on the following unique worldviews shared by American Indian tribes. Indian people worship an impersonal supreme being whose name varies from one tribal language to another, believing in the reciprocity between this impersonal supreme being and all natural things in the world. To American Indians, the supreme being exists in all natural things and all natural things not only participate in but also contribute to the coalescence of the former. In connection with their belief in this impersonal supreme being, American Indians hold that creation is accomplished not by a single being but through the joint efforts of the supreme being and other natural things; subsequently, American Indians possess a sense of relatedness that extends to the entire cosmos, encompassing all forms and forces of the natural world and regard all things, whether animate or inanimate, as inter-related in a wholeness. Because of this, they usually begin or end their ritu-

als or ceremonies with the phrase “all my relations.” Yet, in the Indian sense, the core of “all my relations” is the relationship within the tribal community. Proceeding from this view, American Indians hold it their first and foremost responsibility to act upon their tribal values, to help and support each other with all their might and to remain unified with their tribal community both physically and spiritually. Besides, American Indians have a deep attachment for the land inhabited by their ancestors as they view it as an essential part of their tribal community.

Chapter I of this dissertation also discusses American Indians’ belief in the sacred hoop. In American Indian cultures, time is cyclical, space is spherical and the universe is moving continuously. According to American Indian understanding, creation is not just an event in the distant past; it is occurring and reoccurring endlessly in cyclical fashion and makes up an integral part of the present time; and subsequently, the universe is a never-ending continuance made up of countless circles of all forms and patterns in the universe. More important, American Indians not only recognize countless circles in the universe, but also believe in the power of the sacred hoop which is the ultimate center representing the supreme being. To American Indians, all the power and vitality of their cultural traditions come from the sacred hoop; therefore, as long as the sacred hoop is not broken, their cultures will flourish. In accordance with their belief in the sacred hoop, American Indians view the harmonious condition of a unified universe as the ideal state. From their worldviews, the universe exists in the ideal equilibrium of harmony, balance and unity, but being precarious, this ideal equilibrium might be broken down by infinite ways and means. Therefore, they enact ceremonies on which they perform rites, tell myths and stories, sing and chant, etc. so as to maintain or restore the harmony, balance and unity of the universe. In this sense, ceremonies, myths, stories, chants and other genres of traditional American Indian literatures are not only motivated by American Indian concern with the wholeness of the universe, but also epitomize Indian people’s reverential perception of the ideal equilibrium in the universe. In the Navajo Indian cultures, the ideal equilibrium is termed as “hozho,” a word that is usually translated into “beauty” but encompasses a much broader concept, standing for the beautiful perfection which sustains all beings and all

forms of the universe in harmony, balance and unity.

Chapter II establishes the historical context of US internal colonialism which inflicts a genocidal suppression upon Indian people and their traditions. After presenting a brief review of how European Christian whites invaded North America, this chapter traces the Indian policy adopted by the US government as well as its devastating effects on American Indians and their cultures in the light of postcolonial critique of Euro-American colonial and imperial expansion. In historical sequence, this chapter discusses the total removal of all the Eastern Indian tribes to the West early in the 19th century, the afterwards dispossession of Indian lands and resources in the West, the blatant violation of the several hundred treaties by the US government, the Indian Wars that lasted from 1860 to 1890 and eventually crushed the collective resistance of Indian tribes, the large-scale allotment of Indian lands following the Indian Wars, the termination of the federal status of Indian tribes and white America's acculturation of American Indians by means of terminating the federal status of Indian tribes and dislocating Indians from their ancestral lands. Based on concrete historical facts, this chapter not only reveals how Euro-American colonists expropriated Indian lands and physically marginalized Indian people, but also accentuates the more disastrous consequences brought about by the US Indian policy—when Indians were wrenched away from their ancestral lands, their tribal ties were broken up, their religious, social and political structures were undermined, and the sacred hoop of their tribal heritages was destroyed.

Having presented US colonial extermination and expropriation of American Indians in a couple of centuries, this chapter turns to examine the cultural genocide that results in the subjugation and marginalization of Indian cultures. Also proceeding from the angle of vision of postcolonial criticism, the discussion here focuses on two major issues. One is the principal ways and means with which Euro-American colonists managed to establish the colonial status quo—the boarding school English education system, Christian missionization, the suppression of Indian ancestral traditions, the banning of Indian rituals and ceremonies, etc. The other is the essential role played by white social science and white literature in the spiritual marginalization of Indian people. Illustrating the argument with white social scientists' misrepr-

resentation of Indian history and cultures, and with the stereotypical Indian images invented by white literary masters such as Cooper, Melville and Mark Twain, this chapter concludes with the statement that by imposing the colonial dichotomy of civilized/savage and dominator/dominated upon American Indians, white social science and white literature not only contribute to the US colonial order, but also help dissolve the cultural identity of American Indians and force them to accept the subaltern status assigned by the colonizer.

Chapter III is an attempt to explore American Indian literature written in English within the theoretical framework of postcolonial theory and criticism. Given the fact that American Indians had been undergoing about five centuries' genocidal colonization in the hands of Euro-American colonists and are now living in a postcolonial multicultural society, it is quite evident that their literature is formed out of their resistance and survival under white colonial rule, and develops in relation to, and as their reactions against, US internal colonialism. And as such, American Indian literary texts not only have affinities with the postcolonial literatures of the world, but also perform the task which parallels that of the postcolonial literatures elsewhere. Proceeding from this understanding of the postcolonial nature of American Indian literature, and with reference to the definition and categorization put forth by influential postcolonial theorists, this chapter proposes to divide the development of American Indian literature written in English into three stages—the stage of assimilation, the stage of return to traditions, and the stage of hybridity.

On the basis of the above argument, this chapter turns to explore the three developmental stages of American Indian literature both on the postcolonial theoretical plane and by the discussion of the representative features of each stage. To begin with, it analyzes the assimilationistic theme of the first developmental stage with a great deal of textual evidence taken from the works by the major American Indian authors such as Simon Pokagon, John Milton Oskison, Charles Alexander Eastman, and John Joseph Mathews. By way of a critical interpretation of their works, this chapter not only indicates how they voice their desire to get assimilated into white society, but also reveals the major causes that motivate them to do so.

Then, this chapter moves to the second developmental stage, beginning the discussion by tracing its historical background. During the Red Power movement in the 1960s and 1970s, political and militant Indian activities catalyzed drastic social changes which generated large numbers of ethnically conscious Indians and eventually directed contemporary Indian life towards decolonization. It is against such a social and cultural background that Native American Renaissance came into being with the emergence of a new generation of American Indian writers who took up writing as a weapon of political liberation, proclaiming their dismissal of assimilation and articulating the desire to identify with their ancestral heritages. In doing so, they center their works in the interrelated themes of resistance against white colonial domination and return to ancestral land and traditions.

Finally, this chapter examines the third developmental stage from the perspective of postcolonial theory of hybridity. In order to frame the examination within postcolonial theory and criticism, it presents and discusses the basic viewpoints concerning postcolonial hybridity and syncretism with citations from Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* and *The Location of Culture*, Elleke Boehmer's *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, *The Empire Writes Back* by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, and other postcolonial critical works. On this basis, this chapter turns to deal with the hybrid nature displayed by the third developmental stage of American Indian literature, arguing that although the writers at this stage still follow the pattern of return to traditions in their writing, they are not simply advocating the recovery of the past heritages of Indian people, but exploring how American Indians can find their place and thereby survive in mainstream America through the affirmation of their cultural and spiritual traditions as well as the integration of their traditions into mainstream culture.

Chapter IV deals with the characteristic features of the second developmental stage of American Indian literature written in English through a critical examination of the works by N. Scott Momaday and Hanay Geiogamah, two great pioneers of Native American Renaissance. Through a detailed critical discussion of the major works by Momaday and Geiogamah, this chapter explores how the Indian writers at this stage partake in a postcolonial journey aimed for the retrieval of Indian heritages. In *House Made of Dawn*,

Momaday devotes the first three parts to the narrative about the protagonist's deracination from his tribal landscape. By disclosing the protagonist's estrangement as well as the physical and spiritual sufferings resulting from it, he illustrates the disastrousness of one's severance of the links with his cultural roots. In this way, Momaday voices his protest against the US government's relocation policy and reveals the root cause of the spiritual decline of contemporary Indians from the angle of Indian vision. Only in the last part of the novel does he turn to delineate the protagonist's regeneration, presenting how he renews himself by returning to his ancestral land and participating in the tribal rituals. In dealing with the issue of return to traditions, Geiogamah takes a tack somewhat similar to that of Momaday. In *Body Indian* (1972), he displays the hopeless situation of deracinated Indians and projects the devastating effects ensuing from the termination of Indian reservations and the relocation of the Indian population from reservations to urban areas in the process of US internal colonialism. In *Foghorn* (1973), he takes up the trickster's maneuver drawn from Indian oral traditions as the major strategy to satirize the bias and prejudice imposed upon Indian people by white society, turning inside out Euro-American colonial myth and holding it up to ridicule in a series of hilarious parodies. And with *49* (1975), his third play, he turns to present a positive drama of tribal assertion. In this play, he not only utilizes various Indian ceremonial performing arts such as chanting, dancing, drumming, masking and pantomime, but also structures the entire performance within Kiowa ceremonies held on the Kiowa ceremonial ground, centering its dramatic development in how Indian youths re-embrace Indian heritages and resolve to maintain them through their participation in the sacred ceremony within the sacred ceremonial circle.

On the basis of the discussion about the major works of Momaday and Geiogamah, Chapter IV summarizes the representative thematic concerns of the second developmental stage of American Indian Literature written in English. On the one hand, the writers of this stage present a satiric critique of the distortion and misrepresentation of Indian people and their cultures by white colonialist discourse, and attribute the hopeless existence of urbanized Indians to their forced deracination from their tribal land and community.

On the other hand, they accentuate the Indian vision that Indian ancestral land and ceremonies are of paramount importance to the recovery of Indian identity. With the stories in which detribalized Indians re-build their cultural linkage with their tribal heritages by returning to their tribal land and participating in their tribal ceremonies, these writers demonstrate their imaginary solution to the hopeless existence of deracinated Indians—Indian people can only liberate and revive themselves through the re-affirmation of American Indian traditions.

Chapter V focuses on the hybrid nature of the third developmental stage of American Indian literature written in English by presenting a critical interpretation of Thomas King's major works. After elaborating King's position on the pan-Indian identity of his own, this dissertation proceeds to discuss the themes of subversion and reconstruction in his works. In *Medicine River*, King makes use of both the trickster character and the trickster's strategy as a subversive weapon to undermine white culture's stereotyping of American Indians. At the same time, he re-affirms American Indian identity through the protagonist's homecoming journey, but also explores the possibility of representing Indian people with Euro-American forms and techniques, thus adding a touch of cultural syncretism to the text. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, King expands the tendency towards hybridity to a more extensive and complicated postcolonial articulation. Drawing on both American Indian oral storytelling conventions and Euro-American literary tradition for the composition of this novel, King designs two juxtapositional but closely related narratives, the subversion of colonialist discourse and the reconstruction of American Indian ethnic heritages, by means of which he challenges the colonizer/colonized dichotomy and attempts to reconstruct American Indian cultures in the context of cross-culturality. In the narrative of subversion, by skillfully integrating postcolonial counter-discourse with the Indian trickster's strategy, King relates the stories in which Coyote, First Woman, Changing Woman and other figures from Indian myths revise and resist the Christian Bible and Euro-American canonical texts, thus enabling Indian myths to replace the cultural framework of Christianity which is constructed by colonialist discourse for the subjugation of Indian people. In the narrative of reconstruction, King develops the plot mainly along the

process in which the above mythical figures, by way of the cyclical time and space, enter the present as old Indians to set the world right, and tells the story about how these mythical figures succeed in dissolving the restraint and control exerted by white cultural hegemony on the mode of thinking of contemporary American Indians and in leading them to re-affirm their identity and to reconstruct American Indian heritages. In this way, King stresses the importance of hybridity to contemporary society—only when heterogeneous cultures which have been marginalized by colonial conquest and domination are allowed to incorporate and co-exist with white culture can this society survive and prosper.

After discussing King's exploration of subversion and reconstruction in his fictional works, Chapter V points out that King's writing represents the trajectory of the third developmental stage of American Indian literature written in English—cultural hybrid of Indigenous and Western. With the development of multiculturalism, American Indian writers at this stage gradually replace the theme of return to the purity of Indian traditions with the reconstruction of Indian heritages on cultural reconciliation. In their writing, they employ the Indian trickster character and the Indian trickster's strategy, and integrate them into the Western form of writing to present a postcolonial counter-discourse with which they subvert and undermine white colonialist discourse. Concurrently, they occupy themselves not only in recovering Indian heritages but also in re-writing Native North American history from the angle of Indian vision, in re-building the pan-Indian heritage and in merging it into contemporary multicultural plurality. In the process of such rewriting and reconstructing, they erase the subaltern sign in the historical memory of Indian people, and recuperate their status and power to speak in the multi-coexistence of North American society.

In conclusion, this dissertation asserts that all through the three developmental stages of American Indian literature written in English, American Indian writers appropriate the white form of the colonizer for their quest of racial/cultural identity. Especially at the third developmental stage, American Indian writers cross the cultural boundary between the center and the margin to weave American Indian cultural and spiritual traditions into mainstream culture. Thus, they express their admission of cultural reconcilia-

tion, destroy the binary structure of power and reconstruct a cultural identity on the postcolonial hybridized view of contemporary society. In this way, their act of reviving American Indian heritages and adapting them to the present multi-cultural world illustrates a primary postcolonial standpoint that the subaltern people can speak and that a native voice can be recovered.

In brief, this dissertation endeavors to present convincing argumentation for the following original views. First, different from the foregoing studies and researches on American Indian literature, this dissertation focuses on its postcoloniality. On the basis of the examination of the historical displacement of Indian people by Euro-American colonists and the cultural genocidal imposed upon American Indian heritages during the process of US internal colonialism, it conceptualizes American Indian literature written in English as postcolonial, classifies its development into three stages—assimilation, return to traditions and hybridity, and explores the postcolonial features respectively displayed by each stage on the postcolonial theoretical plane.

Second, in accordance with the postcolonial view which holds that at the more political phase of decolonization, postcolonial writers tend to involve themselves in the political liberation of their people and therefore their writing features a desire to return home and to retrieve past traditions, this dissertation delves into the major works of two representative figures of Native American Renaissance, and by way of an analytical discussion, attempts to demonstrate how the writing at the second developmental stage explores the interrelated themes of resistance and return through the homecoming journey of detribalized characters, arguing for the overall tendency among the American Indian writers at this stage to enlist themselves in the decolonizing struggle against US internal colonialism and to re-embrace American Indian heritages.

Third, taking up King's fictional works as textual evidence, this dissertation contests the hybrid nature of the third developmental stage of American Indian literature written in English. Through a critical interpretation of King's narratives of subversion and reconstruction, it explores how the American Indian writers of this stage subvert white colonialist discourse, dismantle and cross the cultural boundary between the center and the mar-