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Remapping Place and Narrative in Native American Literature: David Treuer's *The Hiawatha*

PADRAIG KIRWAN

> *[Narrative] is simply there like life itself . . . international, transhistorical, transcultural.*
>
> —Roland Barthes[1]

> *[Native American] literature comes from and aims toward a different "map of the mind."*
>
> —Louis Owens (Choctaw-Cherokee-Irish)[2]

"Simon, lost somewhere in between." Or so Ojibwe author David Treuer refers to his central protagonist near the beginning of his novel *The Hiawatha* (1997).[3] It is to contextualize his narrative schema that Treuer introduces the leitmotif at an early stage. Centering on images of place and placelessness, this leitmotif—like the novel itself—carries pertinence for current understandings of the Native American novel as a literary form and for critical analyses of tribal fiction. For Simon—who at the novel's opening has just been released from prison having served a sentence for fratricide—the physical and emotional sense of placelessness is a burden that will be endured until the closing scene. Most importantly, the narrative closure at the end of the novel does not offer the customary image of "the return of the Native," an image that is often read as a panacea to the trials of colonization and is often now expected by readers of tribal fiction.[4] Instead *Hiawatha*—its ending and the narrative as a whole—confounds undemanding and comfortable notions of indigenous "return." In this way, the novel engages the stylistic convention of

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the return, both as this return has appeared in Native fiction and as readers have interpreted it. Through a reexamination of the indigene's relationship to place in his novel, Treuer appears to question the extent to which certain images of place and notions of home have become conventional to the understanding of Native American literature.[5] The novel also questions whether works of indigenous fiction have come to "thematize" home in a way that is no longer pertinent either to the production of fiction or to tribal experiences in the contemporary moment. In this way, his text questions if non-Native readers are more properly responsible for schematizing the notion of the return by favoring particular and specific literary conventions or books over more complex and challenging ones, ones that feature quite different structural compositions.[6] As such, *Hiawatha* engages the traditional literary strategies employed by Native American writing, compares those strategies to earlier narratives (Native American and canonically American), offers a reassessment of indigenous novelistic structures, engages critical responses to tribal fiction, and does so in response to current discursive debate within the field of Native American literary studies. My objective here is to explicate Treuer's use of that style and how this usage facilitates a fresh sense of space within Native American fiction. Most particularly, this essay will examine a sense of space that makes palpable the potential directions open to tribal literatures and attendant criticism while remapping existing images of place and subverting notions of homecoming.

During the mid-1990s, exoticized notions of homecoming within literary criticism were increasingly inflecting the hermeneutic possibilities of tribal writing. Consider, for instance, Susan Roberson's thesis:

> Native American novels are structurally "incentric, centripetal, converging, contracting" (Bevis 582) allowing [the] author . . . to "come full circle" (Woodard 146). This homing pattern, almost ubiquitous in modern Native novels, is perhaps crucial to finding tribal and individual roots after centuries of forced relocation and deracination.[7]

Most troubling about the repeated and shallow application of a theory of "homing" to the study of literature is the contention that contraction and ubiquity are the paratextual cues that most readily identify the Native American novel. By tying "tribal and individual roots" to fictional images of place that must *always* involve a journey home, this argument improbably creates a modality of reading that identifies "homing-in" as the single narrative convention (structural or otherwise) that identifies the novel as an "essentially Indian form of writing" and does so in a way that appears to make one reliant upon the other.[8] Iconic homing-in of this nature is the very thing that the characters in *Hiawatha* cannot relate to, for one reason or another, a fact that suggests there is something increasingly clichéd and jaded about the accepted wisdom that frames critical discussion concerning the role of place in tribal writing.[9] There are many reasons why *Hiawatha* might engage that wisdom. Belief in a single structural or thematic device centered on a return to tribal and individual roots overlooks the obvious fact that countless Native authors have always had and continue to hold unassailable connections with their tribal lands and community.[10] The implication that indigenous fiction appeals to its audience mainly because it is different from mainstream American writing assumes that the exoticism of the text is enough and underrates the literary and imaginative powers of indigenous authors. Similarly, the notion that a "homing pattern" is an automatic, enforced, and singular means to achieve relocation and deracination results in Native literatures being disallowed sufficient room to develop a narrative schema that speaks of life in the urban centers or elsewhere. In reality, the drama of the journey suggested by Roberson is deflated through the simple reality that "there are a lot of Indians who go off the reserve, who come back to the reserve, who work, who go off the reserve again, who keep going back and forth, and they manage."[11]

To limit the definition of the Native American novel as Roberson does, either by insisting that these works adhere to one particular structure or rigid aesthetic convention, prevents what Duane Niatum (Klallam) calls "free play between reader and writer" and replaces artistic and cultural freedom with "conventional and prescriptive response[s]" instead.[12] Confining the Native American novel, the author, and the reader to specific zones of production (both imaginative and critical) in this way, these conventional and prescriptive responses prevent an evolving sense of contemporary Native American writing as a fictional form, disserve the vitality of the various tribal contexts that this writing comes from, and establish a critical binary that posits traditional (and therefore "real") Native American protagonists on the reservation and in the past. Meanwhile, novels that fail to communicate easy images of Indianness are viewed as being somehow less Indian. Lamentably, in this particular context both text and perspective are somehow reduced to being, on the one hand, little more than artifacts caught in time and, on the other hand, less than truly Native. A "paradoxical injunction entailed by the figure of the American Indian" is evident here, through which arises the idea that modernity and traditionalism are mutually exclusive. This contradiction results in a binary that rationalizes the status of tribal peoples today under the following terms: "if Indian, then not contemporary; hence, if contemporary, then not Indian."[13] Restricting tribal presence, or at the very least dividing and differentiating between past and present, in this way has vast ramifications for both the hermeneutic possibilities inherent to the novel form and indigenous autonomy.[14] My focus in this article is upon the means by which *Hiawatha* achieves such revision and deconstruction of particular, recurrent themes.

Reaching an understanding of tribal spaces that is understood only in terms of home and homecoming, can result, I would suggest, in a confining and narrow sense not only of tribal fiction but also of the abilities of the indigenous author, the literary images employed, and indigenous communities. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Cree-Crow-Sioux) argues that it is "issues of identity, authenticity, and purpose," which "concern . . . the dominant culture," that often lead to such limited understandings of Native presence.[15] Cook-Lynn appears to hold the opinion that Native literature must be greeted with a type of critical reasoning that allows the form the right to originate in tribal centers, be read as literature in its own right, and viewed as an evolving genre that escapes critical binaries. She writes:

> Literary art [must be] examined as the fabric holding a people together, *not* as the fundamental difference *or* similarity that either *embraces* or *denies* its colonization, or as a danger or threat to[,] or collaborator in[,] the eminence and aesthetic autonomy of American canonical thought.[16]

Her point is that the concern should not be with the tired question of how Native writing conforms to (or subverts) Western aesthetic principles but instead with how Native fiction employs widely held literary aesthetics to create works of fiction that are, as Robert Dale Parker believes, "as good as the best other writing."[17] Central to this is the conviction that Native American writing is special not because it is separate and particular but because it is artistically nuanced and emerges from an immense and rich creative heritage that is distinct to the tribal peoples of the Americas.[18] Reorientation of the approach taken to tribal literatures will, Cook-Lynn insists, reflect the "ongoing literary and intellectual life" of Native peoples and thereby maintain a literary genre that celebrates rather than "defames" Native traditions. Meanwhile, Parker notes that this reorganization of critical paradigms asks more of author, text, and reader. Within this new critical framework the novel is afforded greater agency, while both author and reader accept the responsibility that accompanies this new complexity. Here narrative forms must not be lazily read as "Indian" nor should easy critical binaries be allowed to dominate discussion of those forms.

Each of the opinions mentioned have profound consequences for the manner in which we read images of home in the Native American novel and in *Hiawatha*. Most often, the act of going home is interpreted as a metaphor for the recovery of tradition and values that demarcate the novel in question as Indian. Yet this image of homing is one that is omnipresent throughout literature in general. For this reason, mistaking the act of homing as a peculiarly Indian trait is to exoticize the act unnecessarily, undermine the importance of home for tribal communities by reading it as a mere trope, and confuse a common mythical characteristic for an especially Native American one—thereby deemphasizing the other ways in which the novel in question *does* form a Native aesthetic. Pointing toward the "reluctance of [both] creators and commentators to treat [Native American literature] as a literature that exists within the field of other literatures," Treuer notes of Tayo, the protagonist in Leslie Marmon Silko's (Laguna Pueblo) *Ceremony*: "[he] functions much like Odysseus; Tayo is Odysseus—questing for home. He is much less Trickster than he is a Homeric figure."[19] What Treuer emphasizes here is his belief that the shared structural device, the "quest . . . for home," does not undermine the literary value of Leslie Silko's work but instead enables readers to move further in recognizing the inherent richness of Native writing as a narrative form. Recognition of this type allows the reader to focus on other aspects of the text, as well as valuing the manner in which Silko expresses humanistic traits within her novel. Through this approach to indigenous fiction it becomes possible to examine how and why Silko's expression is unique to, emergent from, and developmental of Laguna Pueblo art and literature. Within this new critical paradigm, Treuer suggests, Native American fiction is equivalent to the canonical works of American or European writing—they share narrative and formal structures—not because it is different but rather because it is a rich genre.

Recognizing the similarity of these structural principles and the thematic breadth of tribal writing "doesn't make *Ceremony* a weak book," Treuer concludes. On the contrary, recognizing that Native characters are "culturally, socially [and] historically, identifiable Indian" yet inhabit the same literary spaces as those populated by all other literary characters makes Native fiction stronger because it allows the Native author the free play that non-Native writers are accorded.[20] Associating these points within indigenous literary aesthetics, cleverly allows a reevaluation of the specific images of place and structural patterns of "homing" that appear within Native fiction. Addressing the idea that the structural schema of Silko's *Ceremony* is markedly Native American, Treuer warns how the act of "tying [*Ceremony*'s] structure to being Indian will not necessarily describe what other Indian literature is or prescribe what it should be."[21] What is most nuanced and helpful about this endeavor to understand Native literature is that it leads not to a binary or hybridization but to similarity and difference. When reading Native American narratives Parker explains that he "found many of the same pleasures I found in canonical writing, and plenty of other pleasures too, for Indian writers often write about different worlds."[22] The operative words here are *same*, *other*, and *often*. Indigenous fiction is not marked out by its difference per se, but it does have other qualities. Most importantly, the critic notes just how the authors of these works often write of Native themes, which implies that they also often write about other themes and places too, a move that makes their work no less (or no more) Indian.

In light of these assertions, we can see that Roberson's assumption that causal relations necessarily culminate in a journey home risks confining critical approaches to Native fiction and indigenous narrative forms. Effectively, her essay reduces the forms, images, structures, and artistry of Native writers to certain spaces at best and to the search for identity, authenticity, and purpose at worst. In this context, tribal lands can become mere receptacles for broken Indian protagonists, and Native characters can appear to be quarantined to the reservation. The ultimate effect of this misreading of place and agency is that indigenous novels are effectively forced to inhabit a particular area within world literatures just as Native characters are forced to inhabit particular spaces within Native American fiction. The failure by literary critics to broaden processes of reading has led to a grave inability to treat indigenous novels as anything more than expressions of cultural angst played out against typical backgrounds. More problematically, it has led to an inability to read these texts as multifaceted literary narratives. Such treatments of the genre narrows, and risks halting, a syntagmatic mining of the surfeit of interpretations that should quite easily—and quite rightly—accompany

Native literatures. For these reasons, Native American fiction has become caught within a triad of critical preconceptions: Namely, that the tribal novel must always tell the story of "dispossession" rather than one of sovereignty; the Indian protagonist must journey home to find his/her "inborn Indian consciousness"; and Native writers are "recovering" Indians.[23] Treuer adopts the realistic style of writing found in *Hiawatha* as a means to overturn such preconceptions.

Exercising a particular form of nuance concerning indigenous writing—while conducting processes of subversion—the action of *Hiawatha* is described by Treuer as being predominately concerned with a search for "respite and grace."[24] The story that is told in the novel, which is set against the backdrop of the Twin Cities and the reservation "up north," is one of familial difficulties and personal sufferings (36). The death of Betty's husband Jacob in the early 1950s brings the family to Minneapolis under the New Deal championed by Eisenhower. There her life revolves around a series of low-income jobs and her family's well-being. Any hope of a new life in the city is shattered, however, when one of her four children, Simon, murders his brother Lester. Occurring in a moment of drunken rage, this act of fratricide overshadows the lives of those who continue living in the wake of Lester's death. The dead teenager's son, Lincoln, is one of those whose life is blighted by the murder. Unborn at the time of his father's death, he is raised by Betty after being given up by his mother, Vera, the daughter of Polish emigrants. These figures—along with One-Two, a Native construction worker who has long since loved Betty from afar—are the central characters of the novel.

Most important to note, however, is that Simon's fratricidal act becomes an unspoken, repressed familial memory that is not directly communicated by the focalizers of the narrative but is instead tangentially and incompletely offered. In this way Lester's death becomes the praxis that underpins the text's structure, with each of the narrative strands that Treuer follows leading either toward or away from this central point. As a consequence, this moment is a seminal one and acts as the novel's dramatic fulcrum and is crucial to any understanding of Treuer's novel in terms of the story or mythos. The story told is concerned with the lives of this dysfunctional family circle, the desires that inspire them, and the decisions that often come to haunt their lives. The action that regulates the family's experiences—the "dark gossip of Simon's crime"—is retold by the unnamed third-person narrator but never spoken of directly. A layered narrative structure within the text is established as a result, one that emblematizes an expressive vacuum within the lives of the characters. What follows is the story of their attempts to circumnavigate the spaces in which the accounts of the past reside.

In this way, the most enduring and significant images in the novel are found in Treuer's attempt to confound preconceived notions concerning the Native's "natural" relationship with place and the subsequent expectation that "setting [has] the status of a character" in Native American fiction.[25] As a means to achieve this subversion the Ojibwe author parallels and compares archetypal images of Indianness with the stark realities that face Native communities in contemporary America, both in the city and on the reservation. In the opening chapter, the iconic vision of America's first inhabitants as lost and nomadic begins in earnest, with the narrator drawing upon the image of a deer misplaced and wandering aimlessly amid the city's dirty streets. As the scene develops, Simon attempts to form a bond with the deer by drawing his hand slowly across the animal's hide. His action, intended to pacify the lost creature and connect Simon to nature, is a dramatic one, but its effects are entirely unintended and upsetting for the protagonist. Simon's touch startles the wild creature rather than establishing a natural symbiosis, causing it to flee into oncoming traffic on the highway:

> The first car clips its legs from under it and it flies into the air, rolled up the ramp of the windshield. The yearling lands on the hood of the second and the men hear the bone mulch. Again, for what seems an eternity, it is sent toward the leaded sky. The legs mill on broken joints, a gout of blood erupts from between the pages of its ribs. The deer is lofted once more before it falls limp on the litter-strewn shoulder, its head among the brown winter weeds where black garbage bags have caught fast and flutter like crows. (4–5)

By the scene's end the deer is dead, a loss that could be interpreted as the demise of nature in the city and also the death of innocence. As such, the striking opening scene of *Hiawatha* appears, at least initially, to be in keeping with "early [textual] representation[s of] town and city spaces [that] are, for Indian people, places of risk, separation, disillusion, and dissolution."[26] The attempt to commune with the deer arises from Simon's own misassumptions, however, most particularly his belief that as an Indian he should have a special relationship to the wild beast that appears in the metropolis. His conviction ends in nothing other than death, and the representation of the protagonist's flawed assumption is, on at least some level, parodic. Moreover, the deer's demise may suggest that it should never have chosen to travel to Minneapolis. Simon's yearning for a connection with the natural order appears to replicate the spiritual journeys undertaken by an earlier generation of Native American literary protagonists, whose function most often is to "to go home from" the city as a means of saving their own lives and those of the community around them (57). The idea of an idealized home, a space in which needless deaths—Lester's and then the deer's—draw a second level of symbiosis between Simon and the animal. Both would appear as being "unmoored" and threatened in the city, and in need of a "redemptive return" or spiritual atonement, without which terrible events will transpire.[27] As it happens, those events do come to pass. This is not because of Simon's inability or failure to go home, however, but is rather—and ironically—a result of his expectations concerning what it means to be Indian, what it means to be at "home." Underlying this reality is the fact that a later foray into Indian Country in chapter 20 leaves Simon as bewildered as his time in Minneapolis does. The reservation remains entirely unknown to Treuer's protagonist, appearing to him as a foreign country, the area of which he cannot map his life against. Simon explains how "he'd checked out every atlas in the library and searched them for a detailed map of the reservation, but it always appeared as an undifferentiated shape, mildly square, sometimes colored gray, other times pink" (190). In this way *Hiawatha* thwarts typical fictional representations of Native place that tie the literary protagonist to specific places and the imaginative and critical zones that surround tribal literatures.

The discursive function of *Hiawatha* is, then, to create a new form of literary realism within the Native American novel, one that paradigmatically reforms but also refracts the fictional narratives that precede this work: Treuer states, "What I was really interested in was how to make use of everyone else's starting points in their assumptions about Indian fiction."[28] The assumptions that Treuer refers to have been humorously dealt with in the words of Sherman Alexie's (Spokane/Coeur D'Alene) fictional alter ego, Seymour Polatkin. In the movie *The Business of Fancydancing* Polatkin reminds us that "in the great American Indian novel . . . [all] of the Indians must have tragic features; tragic eyes, arms, their hands and fingers must be tragic when they reach for tragic food."[29] Like Alexie, who consciously engages images that have long since been reduced to the status of narratorial platitudes to fine parodic effect, Treuer directly challenges passé notions of Native presence, regardless of whether these notions are evident within literary works themselves or are found in the discursive spaces that surround Native American fiction. He mimetically communicates his belief that the assumptions that surround Native writing have come to stymie creative and critical processes.[30] In so doing, he has called upon authors and critics alike to begin the process of tackling those postulations where possible. The late Louis Owens called for similar action, highlighting the Native American author's ability to create a narrative space in which tribal writing may be politically instructional and hermeneutically rich:

> It is [the] responsibility, [of Native] writers and teachers, to make sure that [their] texts and . . . classrooms are not "safe" spaces from which a reader or a student may return unchanged or unthreatened . . . a fictional territory—a safe, unthreatening space inhabited by cuddly, colorful Natives. . . . Literary terrorism is preferable to literary tourism.[31]

Treuer would appear to identify with the potential for literary terrorism that arises each and every time the Native author creates a fictional territory. Referring to the manner in which works of Native American literature "are by far overshadowed by a legacy of our imagined presence in American literature," Treuer argues that "there's nothing we can do about it except admit that fact and then engage in more guerilla type warfare." This guerilla-type warfare becomes the means by which the novel tackles the notion that the Native American novel is inherently tragic and rigidly adheres to a pattern of homecoming.[32]

The potential means of redress open to the characters in *Hiawatha* comes through the shared story of Lester's death, a story that they fall short of enunciating across the length of the narrative, when stories are often "kept apart and down."[33] The fundamental need to distribute the very plot lines of their experiences, coupled with their failure to do so, points toward a stark and troubling reality within the novel's framework. Unable to overcome the disruption that arises from the "terrible silence" between them, Betty and Simon tend toward locations that they erroneously believe are "safe, unthreatening space[s]." Their struggle, as a result, is to overcome the tendency to substitute knowledge of place for a narrative space in which they can "create new realities."[34] What occurs in *Hiawatha* is, then, a form of narrative dislocation as opposed to a physical one. Initially substituting their narrative potential for circumscribed and delineated relationships to place, Treuer's characters reflect not only the typical structural principles found in Native fiction but also the ways in which those same principles stall indigenous expression.

In this way, the text specifically addresses the ability of the Native novel to reexamine and remap the narrative spaces inhabited by Indian protagonists, all the while subverting typical and conventional images of Native homing. Within this narrative structure we can see that each of the family members in *Hiawatha* is affected by the unbalanced nature of the relationship between place and story: "[Lincoln] is inquisitive but afraid to ask questions. Betty is the opposite: content to let things be, but hungry for a resolution that necessitates asking the unaskable" (100). So too is Simon unwilling to admit the truth concerning Lester's death. Vera, Lester's lover, tells Simon in the immediate aftermath of the murder what he has done: "You killed your brother," to which he replies simply, plaintively, "Did I?" (276). The novel's other characters reinforce this level of obduracy and omission:

> Boo, Ned, and the others studiously avoided talking about the past, about the dark gossip of Simon's crime. They knew the balance between Simon and Betty was delicate, and since Lincoln was living there too they didn't want to mishandle the secret, more for his sake than anyone else's. (201)

Always trying to locate himself on either side of the palpable gap that exists between storied and geographical spaces—between those spaces and the silences that greet his daily existence—Simon becomes, and remains, lost. Adhering to what are effectively predetermined notions of home, place, and Native fiction, Treuer's character initially forces himself to choose between these two locations, rather than blending them in a way that may ultimately free him. This absence of free play relates not only to this particular protagonist's inability "to claim the right to say" but also to the genre's confinement within forms of cultural typecasting that fix and limit Native American literature and its characters. Consumed with the need to fasten his own knowledge to something or other—either the current moment or a remembered past, the city or the reservation, his family or himself—Simon foregoes that blending. Instead he tends toward limited, binary positions and, as a consequence, struggles in his search for "grace." More often than not, this search, richly associated with notions of homing, fails miserably to shelter the novel's central figures from the events that befall them. As a result, the leitmotif "lost somewhere in between" is a constant in Treuer's second novel. Here stories are withheld and the comforting images of place that are so typical within Native American fiction fail to bring any succor to the family. Forming a very specific relationship among the family, story, and place, *Hiawatha* quite possibly comments on—and modifies—the themes found in earlier works of tribal literature while suggesting new and greater epistemologies of reading. By creating textured and complicated characters that have great syntagmatic depth, the narrative eschews the preconceptions or assumptions that currently bedevil the commentary to which Cook-Lynn scathingly refers.[35] To these ends, there is an unassailable associative link between narrative and space that is metaphorically drawn within the novel, a link that resonates richly with both Owens's idea of a fictional territory and Niatum's sense of free play between reader and author.

Initially, Treuer's characters do not tend toward the space in which expressive possibility and narratorial freedom are distinct possibilities. Instead, the reader learns at the outset of the action that it is to the safe spaces that Treuer's protagonists are primarily drawn. There they seek to replace the troubled narratives of their personal lives with general and vague senses of place, either their own place in the city or on the reservation. Failing to add any form of deep reasoning or communicative layer and thereby negating any attempt at "memory mapping," Betty and Simon retreat into "full but silent" spaces (10, 145). Tending toward these simplified locations the characters seek to avoid the complex, expressive sites where the full resonances of Lester's death can be fully engaged or expressed. These complex locations (locations that are simultaneously expressive and physical, literary and literal) are demarcated in *Hiawatha* either through an individual character's unwillingness to engage them (as in the case of Simon and Betty) or their hunger to enter them (as in the case of Lincoln and, at least to some extent, his father). The chasm that exists between very generalized and one-dimensional associations with place, on the one hand, and a relationship with place in which language, experience, and expressive potential is possible, on the other hand, subsequently lies at the very heart of the novel.

"I'd best get on, Ma" (14). This is Simon's reaction on discovering that he is unable to speak to his mother about Lester's death. Evoked as a parting remark toward the end of his first visit to the "no-numbered house" where the murderous act took place, Simon's words signal a need for some form of movement, to "get on" (66). As such, his announcement suggests a restlessness or displacement that requires a process of recovery. This pattern of movement and the concomitant sense of being unmoored are evident within the text from the outset. The narrator explains Simon's belief that movement is the only answer to his malaise: "He felt that if he stopped, if he stood still for too long he would root, send down taps through the concrete into the rubble of previous versions of the city" (187). In this way, the theme of *Hiawatha* initially appears to reflect the theme of dispossession found in earlier works of Native literature. Yet it is crucial to note that there is an alternate motivation behind and effect to Simon's dislocation and subsequent need to keep moving. His desire to get on does not arise from the family's physical displacement in the city nor is it the result of a spiritual or peculiarly Indian sense of personal fracture. It is owing to his simple human error. As Treuer explains, "[the family] are not damned simply because they don't choose their culture. Just as they are not damned because they don't choose the city," but are "damned because Simon one rainy day . . . killed his brother." Accentuated here is the fact that Treuer draws a cast of Native characters whose lives are blighted by a single fatal deed and not because they are Indian. Emphasizing this fact, the Ojibwe author insists that their mistakes are the result of "personal failings, *not* cultural ones."[36] The faults witnessed come not as a result of these characters' residency in the city per se. Nor can a visit to the reservation wipe away their difficulties. The inescapable truth of Lester's death is not, in any way, mitigated or overwritten through the journey home. By consciously evoking the theme of dispossession—the starting point that he believes everybody else begins with—Treuer not only moves to engage the prescriptive responses to Native fiction but also reorients the directional flow of the novel form as indigenous artists create it. Simon's dislocation, although reflecting many similarities to the difficulties experienced by Tayo and Abel, is part of a very different narrative arc to those found in earlier Native American novels. For him, as for Betty and Lincoln, the archetypal association between traditional home and the recovered self is far too insufficient to carry the family story or bring them "respite." On the contrary, Simon finds himself unmoored because he mistakenly believes that a firm knowledge of place can somehow correct his wrongdoings and repair the family nucleus. While he is "lost somewhere in between," Betty is "immobile" and static, all because they cannot share the story of their family's past (286):

> [They] sat in silence. . . . Talk of smaller things . . . [was] of no use, [was] too small, to plug the cracks through which loomed a terrible silence. They sat caught between a history entirely too large to admit and a present too small to mention, and were unable to call forth the in-between, could not strike a balance that would rock them into each other as *woman and man, as mother and son.* (13, emphasis added)

Between the silences of the older generation stands Lincoln, caught "right in the middle of all of it" (39). Extending the spatial metaphor and the act of speech and knowing, the young boy is named after the midwestern town "cause Lincoln, Nebraska, is smack dab in the middle of the whole damn country" (40). Lincoln's presence signifies the chasm in expression that exists within the novel. The child is forced to exist within the silences that are constructed by Simon and Betty and as such is displaced: "After living for ten years without knowing . . . [Lincoln] wants to claim the right to say, *This is what happened.* See?" (12). In an attempt to make sense out of his life Lincoln "desperately wants to know" and replaces the silence of his grandmother's house with "unsatisfactory stories he pins . . . on other people and the decrepit houses that line his walk from school."[37] Most notably, he cannot map out the series of events on any specific place without redress to the complete story of his father's death at Simon's hands. A third of the way through the novel Betty brings her grandchild "up north" in the hope that the trip will not only "get Lincoln out of the city" but also that it will be an opportunity "to start again on the reservation" (153–54). Yet this is not the type of movement the young boy needs. The narrator informs the reader, just in case the point goes unnoticed, that Lincoln "has nothing to attach himself to up north, . . . no anchor" (249). Nor does a subsequent return to the Twin Cities toward the novel's dramatic climax help him. He is "AIMless" in the Twin Cities, and his "feeling of displacement becomes more acute" the deeper he journeys into the urban site that was once his home (257–58). Ultimately, Lincoln, like Simon and Betty, inhabits a fictional territory that overemphasizes the role of place within the Native American novel, leaving him uncertain and lost. So too is Lincoln's friend Burt lost in between two worlds, because his "father lives in the Cities and his mother back on the reservation." Burt "shuttles between the two of them, doing everything wrong so they decide that a change of scenery will help, will kick him from bad habits towards new ones" (254). The description here is a veiled metaphor for the historical relocation. In its new form, Burt's parents believe that a change of location is what their son requires, a belief that mimics the failed ideologies once peddled by the US administration. These parents assume that Burt's physical relocation can be substituted for their communication with him, an assumption that is misplaced owing to the complexity of Burt's character.

The relationship between child and parent here reiterates the point that a changed relationship with specific places—be it the reservation or the city—does not always improve relationships within tribal families or communities nor does it offer a balm to the experiences suffered by indigenous peoples. By the same token, the reservation cannot be figured as a healing site without other, mainly expressive, measures being taken. These measures relate largely to the community's ability to interact with one another on a fundamental level, without redress to the stereotypical expectation that they do so in a specifically Indian way. Burt and his parents—like Betty, Simon, and Lincoln—are basically unable to interrelate. As a result of this inability to find voice, Burt (mis)applies certain affectations that he believes may be expected of a Native child: "He moves in these different worlds, from trail to street, and imparts the wrong walk, the affectations of the city on the reservation, a wildness to his city self. Up north he saunters with a pimp-daddy limp." Most troubling about this reaction is that "he does this on purpose . . . create[s] a studied craziness for himself" (254). Adhering to the binary positions and adopting stances that are often extreme, Burt internalizes the assumptions that others make about him. As with Lincoln, Burt's response easily relates to the current status of Native fiction and that genre's figuring of images of place. While Lincoln longs for other stories and possible narratives, Burt plays to the gallery of non-Native onlookers. Rather than engaging in a form of guerilla-type warfare, his actions emblematize what Cook-Lynn calls a certain self-loathing that is increasingly evident within the work of several Native authors. Neither response frees these characters from their assigned spaces. Lending added emphasis to what might be termed a narratorial atrium within the novel, Lincoln's existence underlines the structural design of the novel, wherein the gap in expression becomes a central feature of the text, is associated with specific places, and constantly draws the reader's attention.

Chapter 2 expands on events delineated in the opening chapter and recalls an incident from Simon's past. Coming in the immediate wake of the deer's death, chapter 2 could easily have been offered as a panacea to the tragic events in the city; the starkness of the urban landscape giving way to the balanced, natural space of the reservation. Mirroring the action that opens the novel, this chapter finds Simon tracking a deer in the northern Minnesota woods, a rural space that stands in contradistinction to Minneapolis-St. Paul. Initially, this scene appears to draw on the suggestion of such a contradistinction, with the protagonist approaching this earlier deer with a greater level of sensitivity and communion: "[he] wandered down the [animal's] tracks, knowing that with each step he was moving forward in the life of the deer, moving closer to its present" (6). At first this may appear to be a form of symbiosis between the natural world and the protagonist, a moment of narratorial reverie that stands in stark relief to the image of the first deer's mulched and broken bones earlier caused by the protagonist's "anti-healing touch" (210). Treuer quickly deflates any such appearance. Spiritual union with nature eludes Simon once again, a conclusion that forbids not only his own communion with the deer but also denies the reader entry into the deer's domain or the reservation's wider natural expanses.[38]

In the final instance, the reality is that the second deer is dying in as gory a manner as the deer in the opening pages of *Hiawatha*. Shot and maimed, running scared through the woods, this animal is about to meet essentially the same ends as the one mown down by the traffic on the interstate. Just as important as the shared situation experienced by the deer in death is the fact that Simon does not know the second deer to any greater extent than he knows the doe that he encounters in the city. Unable to follow it to its final resting place "somewhere in the woods," he is hindered by nature, the route being "impassable . . . because of the snow" (6). Simon is kept at a distance from the landscape the Native protagonist is so often presumed to be at one with. Subsequently, he fails to get any closer to the deer of his childhood than the one that is shattered on the highway in the Twin Cities. The presentation of this comparison at the very beginning of the novel is crucial in terms of both theme and symbol, for it frustrates the objective correlation most often associated with works of Native American fiction. Rather than presenting an idealized image of the protagonist in his natural or preurban state, versus the horrors of life in the Twin Cities, *Hiawatha* offers comparable scenes in which Simon's vulnerability is obvious regardless of the setting against which it comes to light. The dramatic effect of this authorial strategy is to replace a form of literary romanticism that concerns Native protagonists with a more naturalistically fashioned image of the reservation. Most significantly, this naturalistic move divests the notion that the reservation is an "unthreatening space," one in which the indigenous protagonist is easily understood by his/her Indianness. Simon's past experiences on the reservation, when expressed in terms of narrative realism, are no less disorientating or discomforting than those actions that have occurred in the city. What is established here is an equality of space and comprehension of setting that serves not to diminish the importance of physical sovereignty within Native letters but conceives of the reservation as a location that has agency through and because of the authors and communities who live there. By immediately flanking the novel's opening scene with one set on the reservation and by giving both scenes what are, ultimately, matching outcomes, the author forms a duality of image intended to show the reader that for Simon, and the deer he attempts to commune with, "the reservation is *as* dangerous as the city."[39] This link frustrates any allegorical placement in which Simon's naturalized past stands resplendent against the tarnished façade of his postcolonial self. The reservation is not represented as a safe space to which Simon can withdraw, either in the past or his memory of the past. Even his childhood reverie is punctured by reality.

Nowhere in the novel is this more evident that in chapter 22, when the adult Simon is "lost" on the reservation up north. Back on the reservation for the first time since he left as a child, Simon now finds that there is "no revelation, no recognition" that strikes him when he crosses into Indian Territory. One especially pointed scene finds him on the run from state game wardens attempting to halt illegal fishing. While up north, as in the city, Simon embraces ingrained stereotypes and notes in his mind that the officers chasing him are like "mounted cowboys" (207). On the face of it, Simon's imagination has him appear within the traditional role of the savage Indian. But once again this associative parallel breaks down. Fleeing the wardens—the imagined cavalry that is chasing him—Treuer's central character is unable to orientate himself in the lands of his ancestors and fails in his attempt to vanish into the woods as his literary antecedents once did.[40] Nor is he able to become one with his newfound environment as Tayo and Abel ultimately do. On the contrary, Simon searched for a road, but could not find one. For him, the idealized, perceived images—whether disseminated from Native or non-Native sources—prove empty and unfounded. Instead his choices in life, his murdering Lester and fleeing not only the city and the reservation but also the stories that he could share with Betty and Lincoln, result in his homelessness, both in the city and on the reservation. In this wilderness, he finds "no ruts or tracks, [only] junk [that] offered no clues or answers to how it got there, reluctant in its rot to show the only thing that it could dare to claim: an origin" (213). In a continuation of the motif of the deer and the relationship that exists between the protagonist and these wild animals right from the opening scene, Simon meets a herd of deer midway through this chapter. These deer do not run away from him as the earlier, ill-fated doe in chapter 1. Instead, and pointedly, they "judged him and found him missing and wrong," all the while showing him as a figure who lacks all association with their "community of fur and animal stink" and thereby the natural world (217). Appearing as "a cripple among the elegant . . . [a] hunchback at a ball," Simon is the displaced once again; he is eternally out of step with the animals he wishes he could commune with, regardless of whether the encounter takes place in Minneapolis or on the reservation.

Symmetrically and emphatically, this scene is positioned so as to reemphasize the lack of symbiosis between the central character and the deer.

The entire point of this elaborately constructed and sustained motif is to corroborate the novel's reorientation of the images of place and home as they appear in Native fiction. There should not be, Treuer would appear to suggest, any simple or easily accessible critical definition of tribal writing as a cultural artifact or a "found thing" that the Native author happens across almost accidentally.[41] Rather, Native American fiction as a genre is an aesthetic and artistic construct that requires considerable skill to create and a wealth of critical tools to comprehend. And so it is for Simon and his relationship to place: "If he applied himself, like anything these are learned skills, they are not innate. He thinks he can access them, but he can't, unless he really situates himself."[42] In the final instance, Simon appears as a crazed version of Shakespeare's King Lear, resplendent with a bird's nest on his head when a passing truck driver finally—and comically—picks him up. Continuous with its concern to deflate non-Native notions of Indianness, the narrative presents an intercultural exchange that is based profoundly on misunderstanding, mainly on the part of the truck driver:

> "I don't want to get in your business . . . but is that a fuckin bird's nest you got tied to your head?"
>
> "Yeah," says Simon.
>
> "I thought so, but I didn't want to say nothin. I mean, it could be some kinda Indian thing."
>
> "I lost my hat, that's all." (223)

What appears to the untrained eye as "some kinda Indian thing" is nothing more than the character's poorly informed attempt to shelter in the woods of which he knows so little.

Following this subsequent foray onto the reservation, Simon attempts once more to find a home in the city. He attempts to become fully cognizant of the geographical map of the Twin Cities, mainly in the hope that this map will help him to "get on." The spaces that he charts are the streets and buildings, urban sites that allow him to know the specific places and the stories that are associated with them:

> Simon tells her the history of [the city]. He explains to her what used to stand at the corner of Grant and Fourth Avenue, when all she saw was the gray cement and two hookers in matching electric blue shoes slugging a drunk with their purses. She comes back tired and Simon explains the different histories she drove over that day, the ruined monuments. (239)

The "her" mentioned in this passage is Irene, a Caucasian girlfriend the central protagonist meets in the second half of the novel. The relationship that Simon and Irene have as lovers is greatly—if not entirely—based upon Simon's hunger for spatial identification and self-definition through his connection to space and place. In an initial exchange that occurs between the two, Simon illustrates his need to form this association with place by becoming extremely agitated when he is unable to plot his whereabouts on the city's streets:

> "Where are we?" [Simon] shouts.
> "My place. Just my place. Take it easy."
> "No. No. Where in the city? What street?"
> "Does it matter?"
> "Where? What building?"

His irrational fear of being lost, not only in the Twin Cities but also in life, is overcome only when Irene reorients him, and he can identify where he is:

> "I can hear I-94 now."
> "Shhh."
> "I can hear all those cars, those people. I know where we are." (235)

Although Irene facilitates this location of self in the first instance, it is ultimately the interstate, I-94, that allows Simon to map his whereabouts in the city. Interestingly, in this instance the female character enables the male character's own self-definition. This relationship mimics earlier works of Native fiction in which the questing male protagonist has numerous relationships with female characters who are facilitators and lack agency somewhat. At this point in *Hiawatha*, it is only through a process of projecting his whereabouts onto very precise locations that the narrative—quite literally the stories—of his life can be accorded any real value or garner true significance, or so Simon thinks.

Throughout the narrative the central protagonist believes that by substantially placing himself on the urban map he can "trace his life" (211). Perhaps the single most notable instance of the attempt to locate himself in this way is symbolized through Simon's relationship with the IDS Building, a skyscraper in Minneapolis that he helped build: "The further up [the tower] they got, the more relaxed Simon appeared to be. He seemed at home in the bare structure of what was going to be the tallest building in Minneapolis, the second tallest in the Midwest" (126). This identification with the building symbolizes Simon's constant mapping of his way in the world, largely through an association with a particular place. He appears at home above the city's "smooth and easy" streets, more at home than he appears at any other time in the narrative. The city holds no fear for him; its structures never overawe or diminish his stature. Instead, the buildings and their locations are something that can be read, balanced, and understood: "when Simon looks at objects bigger than himself, he seeks out their center, calculating what it would take to balance them spinning through the air" (7). Within the urban context, and through his mistaken belief that the IDS holds the secret to his place in the world or can communicate the story of Lester's death, Simon gains a false confidence. Fooling himself into believing that the tragedies that have befallen the family can be made right owing to an intimate knowledge of the city, he believes—albeit briefly—that his life can somehow be validated through his relationship to place: "I can make the whole street new. *I can fix all that*" (245, emphasis added). Despite this initial bravado, he continues to feel lost. Toward the novel's end, when Simon "is done with all of [the fixing of Irene's home] and is left with nothing to do," he realizes that he "cannot fix her" as her drug addiction is in no way connected to the house they share (279). In the wake of this realization, Simon decisively realizes that the voids that afflict his life cannot be filled by any mere knowledge of place. "He realizes that the signs and billboards, placards, street names, even the cornerstones on the more important sites, never told him much of anything. The IDS itself would never be known as the place that changed his life" (296).

Through this direct evocation of the imagery of place and selfhood within Native American literature it becomes clear that *Hiawatha*'s subversion of the image of homing is intended to deconstruct what Niatum calls the "prescriptive response" to symbols of place within contemporary criticism of Native American literature. So too is this evocation aimed toward offering alternate realities for this genre of writing. Challenging narrative convention, which most often finds the Native protagonist unmoored in the city but entirely at home on the reserve, Simon inhabits a different and new narrative space. Treuer explains, "there's an attempt in Native American literature to equate Indian home with . . . a certain kind of timelessness. It's always home, no matter where you are, that's where your spirit's going to go."[43] The insinuation here is that any prescribed notion of timelessness, whether adhered to by Native authors or read into Native American fictional forms by literary critics, hinders the development or expression of an ongoing literary and intellectual life among indigenous communities. That notion does so by offering a singular image of Native presences and narrative expression within fiction. It is with the objective of moving away from this singularity of theme that Treuer "wanted to really cut Simon free from all of those anchors." The bid to cut Simon free, above all else, results in Treuer's leitmotif of the protagonist's being "lost somewhere in between." Ultimately, Simon sees that "it isn't enough just to have lived, to hold certain places, specific moments, close to one's private heart" (296).

The syntagmatic relevancies of these images of mapping and narrative are many in the scenes described in the preceding text, but there are three especially striking aspects of Treuer's consideration of the images of place within Native American fiction. First, Simon's affinity with Minneapolis is an obvious inversion of the notion that indigenous relationships to place are figured through tribal ways of knowing spiritual places on the reservation. Second, beyond the mimetic evocation of the indigene's relationship to a prescribed sense of home in Native writing, Treuer advances a notion that the places that Native protagonists can commune with are greater in number than Roberson and others have allowed. There is in *Hiawatha* the impression that Simon's "home in the city isn't much of a home at all . . . [and his] home on the reservation hasn't been much of a home either." Endeavoring to make a better home through his relationship with the city, he is deeply erudite about the buildings and his surroundings: “he has never been lost in the Cities” (228). Third, this knowledge is useless in the search for “respite and grace.”[44] Despite knowing what balances the buildings around him, Simon remains unable to break the silence that imprisons him and Betty. Treuer constantly points to this salient but wholly destructive truth in the text. The narrative attempts to make use of the theme of homing-in and, in the first instance, appears to be—to some extent—parodic. Ultimately, however, *Hiawatha* reorients and, most importantly, develops a fictional variation on that same theme. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than it is in the novel’s closing scene.

The climax of *Hiawatha* evokes the final scene from Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn.* There, Abel’s actions, his following of the tribal runners in traditional ceremony, can be read as homecoming; when Abel’s chest and legs burn he has finally become cojoined with his heritage, tribe, and spirituality. Even though Simon is running, there is a fundamental difference between these journeys and the spaces that Treuer and Momaday’s characters aim for. In the final analysis, the image of being “freighted” with cultural significance succinctly relates to the manner in which Treuer perceives Native American literature and indigenous expressive voice. Here, the image of an entire people’s cultural well-being as a weight that is laboriously borne by Native fiction coincides with the image of indigenous movement along a set of rigid, well-worn train tracks that map personal and cultural experience. Crucially, the tracks can come to have alternate meanings. Alongside their direct and unyielding connection to the past, they also stretch out into the future and, most importantly, connect both past times and places to future locations. Placing Simon amid these linear dimensions effectively allows Treuer to summon forth for his protagonist the dramatically elusive “in-between.” To some other extent, Simon becomes the Hiawatha; he is the train making its journey between sites.[45] The final pages of *Hiawatha* consequently find Simon in a complex but fresh narrative space in Native American literature. Located in a site where “the sky [is] crusted with yet another dawn” Treuer hopes to signal in Simon’s reconvened patterns of movement a new beginning or departure—quite literally another dawn for indigenous literatures: “the ground on which he runs will hold no print. His passing will never be marked into the earth” (310).

Simon’s progression, beginning with a single notion of dispossession and working toward a more expansive sense of the possible presences within indigenous fiction, reflects a sense of what Cook-Lynn calls an “ongoing literary and intellectual life.” It may also explain the realistic style co-opted to tell the story, itself a result of the author’s frustration with the romanticized images of the reservation and novelistic representations of “a dismal and hopeless postcolonial history.”[46] Similarly, Treuer’s choice of literary realism veers away from characterizations that “end up functioning as types . . . stock characters, whose job it is to ‘set the record straight’ or to ‘truth tell’ about cultural issues.”[47] To these ends, Burt’s characterization does veer toward metafiction or, perhaps more properly, the meta-author with the presence of this figure pointing toward the masquerades employed by other Native authors of the same generation as Treuer. In tandem with these developments, the act of progression found in

Hiawatha rejects processes of critical confinement that would serve to establish an unnecessary divide between "essentialized" and "hybridized" narrative spaces, as well as rejecting *in toto* expectations that the Native American novel rigidly adheres to defined cultural and thematic structures. What becomes crucial in all of this is the author's description of the family's struggle for grace. They struggle, unsuccessfully, through the act of locating (or more specifically, relocating) themselves in the first instance, but their attempt to relocate themselves through narrative in the second instance brings a pervasive impression of hope and progress to the novel's end. Ultimately, story, not place, brings movement to the family. Although "lost somewhere in between," Simon is capable of achieving the liberation that will come from "call[ing] forth the in-between," as explained by the novel's omniscient narrator (9, 14). This hyphenated "in-between"—the space inhabited by a Native American novel free from certain expectations—is an altogether more storied landscape than the literal spaces in which the characters initially try to find answers. Although the leitmotif discussed previously adroitly insinuates that Simon is caught between charting out physical versus narrative spaces, that second phrase, "in-between," is suggestive of an altogether different literary territory. Tending against the binaries that see the Native novel as "structurally 'incentric, centripetal, converging, contracting,'" this in-between space is a territory in which Native fiction is read "*not* [in the study of] . . . the fundamental difference *or* similarity" between tribal literatures and other literary genres but rather is read on its own terms and for its own merits. Our function, as literary critics, is to recognize those terms and merits above all else.

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NOTES

1. Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 79.

2. Louis Owens, *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 10.

3. David Treuer, *The Hiawatha* (New York: Picador, 1999), 9. Further references are to this edition and page numbers will be cited parenthetically in the text.

4. Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

5. My point is that works of contemporary fiction, which suggest alternate senses of place, have yet to receive the wealth of attention afforded earlier novels. This reading does not serve to devalue the image of homecoming found in those earlier works, of which N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (New York: Viking Press, 1977) are perhaps the most well known. Nor am I suggesting that recent works of indigenous literature concerned with images of homelands or life in Indian Country should be ignored or somehow do not deserve attention. Robert M. Nelson's, *Place and Vision: The Function of Landscape in Native American Fiction* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1993), Susan Scarberry Garcia's *Landmarks of Healing: A Study of House Made of Dawn* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), and Keith Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996) are but a few of the studies that dealt with these issues in a way that greatly informed and continues to inform literary scholarship and Native American Studies. "Homing" is, therefore, justly recognized as an important part of ongoing processes of decolonization and cultural continuance. My argument is, instead, that the decision to incessantly adapt earlier patterns of reading to newer works unquestioningly or to reread *House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony* time and again results in limited ideas of both the novel and Native presence today. Similarly, the fact that a narrow body of work has become representative of Native American fiction as a whole is problematic. The late Vine Deloria Jr. once reminded researchers of the "need to eliminate useless or repetitive research and focus on actual community needs" simply because "it is both unethical and wasteful to plow familiar ground continually" (*American Indian Quarterly* 15, no. 4 [1991]: 467). By searching for particular images of Indian presence and probing those images in isolation, we risk reducing or cannibalizing this great literature until we are left with the mere signs of a general and broad Indianness that means little or nothing, except to those who want to read the book as a cultural textbook; the Indianness that Louis Owens believed dealt only in "signifiers of essentialist discourse . . . [within] the realm of Native American literature" (*Mixedblood Messages*, 12).

6. David Treuer in discussion with author, February 2006. Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) also makes this point in his essay "Seeing (and Reading) Red," where he intimates that instead of serving as a compliment to the authors or texts in question, this popularity amounts to what is effectively a "tokenization" and "privileging" of certain Native writers, an act that effectively "reinforce[s] the overculture's assertion that Indians are generally alike" (Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming and Empowering Communities* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004], 105). Referring to a small band of tribal authors ("The Noble Nine") whose writing has garnered an abundance of interest from readers, Justice also points out that it is the case that certain novels by these authors are prioritized to the exclusion of their other novels. His comment, similar to Treuer's, underlines the fact that a wealth of literary images by tribal writers often goes unexplored because they fail to satisfy certain expectations surrounding indigenous writing and peoples. My intention, in response, is to engage Treuer's motivations and strategies in countering the situation whereby a very small number of well-known Native novels have become representative, eclipsing other works, and are perhaps used to support ingrained stereotypes concerning home and place.

7. Susan L. Roberson, "Translocations and Transformations: Identity in N. Scott Momaday's *The Ancient Child*," *American Indian Quarterly* 22, nos. 1/2 (1998): 31–45.

8. William Bevis, "Native American Novels: Homing In," *Recovering the Word: Essays in Native American Literature*, eds. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 580–619. "Homing," Thomas King (Cherokee) has noted, is "a common enough theme." He also reminds us, however, that critical readings of tribal narratives that fail to appreciate what exists *beyond* this easily accessed theme ignore the more "complicate[d]" aspects of the text and reflect only "the assumptions [of] the White world" (*The Truth about Stories*, 108–10). Robert Allen Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 117.

9. Bevis, "Native American Novels: Homing In," 580–619.

10. Louise Erdrich, Jim Northrop, Kimberly Blaeser, Simon Otto, Winona LaDuke, and Gerald Vizenor, to name but a few Ojibwe authors, are among those who hold such connections, as do Native writers from several other tribes.

11. Thomas King, ed., *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 150.

12. Duane Niatum, "On Stereotypes," in *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American History*, eds. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 554.

13. Jana Sequoya Magdaleno, "How (!) Is an Indian? A Contest of Stories, Round 2," *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race Ethnicity, and Literature*, ed. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000), 279–99.

14. Arnold Krupat adheres to this binary in his readings of indigenous literatures. Referring to the "homing pattern" witnessed in earlier works of tribal writing he argues—rather insidiously—that "tribalism and nationalism" are "largely synonymous," and that these "essentialized categories" present "an obstacle to real critical work" in the field of literary studies (*The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996], 9, 41). Contending that indigenous nationalism arises from a "'nostalgia for *Roots*," he reduces the connection to indigenous homelands to sheer melancholy (42). Within this argument the Indian nationalist contra-distinctly opposes the cosmopolitan Native author who, being "cultural[ly] hybridiz[ed]," is concerned with literary aesthetics rather than issues pertaining to the reservation. Most troubling is that within Krupat's critical paradigm, these two camps are starkly delineated, and the Native protagonist must either go home or accept hybridization.

To be fair to Krupat he has reoriented his approach somewhat in *Red Matters: Native American Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). There he closed the gap between cosmopolitan and nationalist positions slightly. Nevertheless, there have been others who followed or continue to follow his reasoning that it is impossible to pretend "Columbus's three little boats sank shortly after setting out," and that indigenous authors in the Americas must accept their "hybridized" identities and are creators of an "invented tradition" (*The Turn to the Native*, 18, 37). Dee Horne makes a similar argument in *Contemporary American Indian Writing: Unsettling Literature* but crucially attempts to form a less exclusionary approach. She argues that Native authors are “subversive mimics” who “invent[. . .] a new form and alter[. . .] the oral storytelling traditions that inform [their] work” (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 13, 30. The difficulty with this reading is the allusion to an “invented tradition.” Here Native literatures appear again as diluted instead of evolutionary, fractured instead of continuous. Maureen Konkle, in a bid to balance the effect of these claims, reminds us that Krupat “make[s] assertions about Native American consciousness, [and] Indians’ ‘typical’ or ‘traditional’ characteristics, based on the knowledge produced by the discipline of anthropology” (“Indian Literacy, U.S. Colonialism, and Literary Criticism,” in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race Ethnicity, and Literature*, eds. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt [Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000]). Konkle’s essay underlines the reality that there exists no “typical” trait that can be reified as “Indian” nor was there a stable moment of Indianness that has been lost, either pre- or postcontact. All cultures—like their art forms—evolve and defy stasis. This is not the “invent[ion] of tradition” nor is it “subversive mimic[ry].”

15. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekeya’s Earth* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 36.

16. Ibid., 41, emphasis added.

17. Robert Dale Parker, *The Invention of Native American Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 8.

18. Horne explains in the introduction to *Contemporary American Indian Writing* that “the question is not whether there is such a body of literature which is distinctive, but rather *who* defines it as such and why.” To focus on a scholarly definition of the novel form is to fail to recognize and understand just how the Native American novel contains complex literary signs that have an array of meanings, “signs” that are, according to Treuer, “at play in the field of signs—not in the field of culture” (in discussion with the author, February 2006). Dale Parker subtly but necessarily reorientates the approach taken to tribal writing by Krupat, Horne, and others by focusing on the literature rather than on those who would attempt to define it. He subsequently constructs a sense of what indigenous fiction achieves and acknowledges its differences with literature from other cultural traditions. My point here is that Louis Owens was most likely correct when he pointed out that scholars must be less worried about *where* we read from and more concerned with *what* and *how* we read (*Mixedblood Messages*, 19).

19. David Treuer, “Reading Culture,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 14, no. 1 (2002): 51; in discussion with the author, February 2006.

20. Treuer in discussion with the author, February 2006. In her work *Native American Literature: Towards a Spatialized Reading* (London: Routledge, 2007) Helen May Dennis notes that “even though the bare bones of [*Ceremony*’s] plot fit [William] Bevis’ homing in paradigm, the narrative strategies of [the novel] complicate the static, over-simplified, bipolar model of homing in, back to the tribal identification that he proposes” (144). The intention behind Dennis’s work is to recover *Ceremony* from the reductive and limited readings that it has often received. As such, this is a necessary move, and it is one that Dennis’s work successfully makes. This success is, to some extent, augmented by her reading of Louis Owens’s *Dark River* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999) as a deconstruction of Silko’s 1976 novel. One difficulty I have with Dennis’s outlook in *Native American Literature,* however, is her propensity to construct divisive positions on a number of levels. In the first instance

she all too starkly differentiates between the ideological positions taken by tribalist and mixed-blood Native American authors/critics.

Likewise, she delineates between protagonists who go "home" and those who cannot or refuse to make that journey without suggesting a solution to the opposing spaces that appear within or between certain texts (2). To my mind this critical approach is, at least in part, a return to the binaries suggested by Krupat. Similarly, her sense that a European "sympathetic, foreign engagement" with tribal fiction can—or must—exist separately from "Native literary criticism" of the works examined, reaccentuates, perhaps unhelpfully, the critical distance between indigenous scholars, non-Native readers, and tribal communities.

As Malea Powell (Miami) explains, "when scholars convince themselves that they cannot study Indians (i.e., others) from the basis of Indian experience and existence" they "distance their work from Indian 'reality'" ("Blood and Scholarship: One Mixed Blood's Story," in *Race, Rhetoric, and Composition*, ed. Keith Gilyard [Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1999], 5). It is also important that indigenists do not shut down the possibility that literary critics can comment on tribal fiction in a way that does begin to construct zones of understanding.

21. Parker, *Inventing Native American Literature*, 11.

22. Ibid., 8.

23. Konkle, "Indian Literacy, U.S. Colonialism, and Literary Criticism," 152.

24. Treuer in discussion with the author, February 2006.

25. John Perry, "Cross-Dressing and Time-Traveling," review of *The Hiawatha*, by David Treuer. *San Francisco Chronicle* (accessed 18 July 1999).

26. Carol Miller, "Telling the Indian Urban: Representations in American Indian Fiction," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 22, no. 4 (1998): 46.

27. S. K. Aithal, "The Redemptive Return: Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*," *North Dakota Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1985): 160–72.

28. Treuer in discussion with the author, February 2006.

29. *The Business of Fancydancing*, directed by Sherman Alexie (2002; WellSprings, 2003).

30. Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism*, 41

31. Owens, *Mixedblood Messages*, 46.

32. David Treuer in discussion with the author, October 2000.

33. David Treuer, *Little* (New York: Picador, 1996), 246. This image of divided and limited narrative is one that recurs in Treuer's novels.

34. David Treuer, "Reading Culture," 62.

35. As noted in the preceding text, Cook-Lynn, Mihesuah, and others quite rightly level searing criticism at methodology that has perpetuated those assumptions. The goal of this essay is to argue that it is not literary criticism that is at fault but rather certain approaches within the discipline.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.; *The Hiawatha*, 40.

38. This denial of entry is similar to the concealment of certain spaces that David Stirrup describes in his essay "Life after Death in Poverty: David Treuer's *Little*," *American Indian Quarterly* 29, no. 3/4 (2005): 651–72. In this piece Stirrup argues that Treuer "teases" the reader with certain amounts of culturally specific information. Although I agree that Treuer disallows the reader entry into a particular site (that of

Ojibwe cultural knowledge), I would argue that in the case of *Hiawatha* it is necessary to recognize that the site in question is *as* alien to Simon as it is to the reader.

39. Treuer in discussion with the author, October 2000.

40. Such actions are evident in an array of canonical narratives such as James Fennimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans.*

41. David Treuer, "Native American Writing," (lecture, American Indian Workshop, University of Wales, Swansea, UK, 29 March 2006).

42. Treuer in discussion with the author, October 2000.

43. Ibid.

44. Treuer in discussion with the author, February 2006.

45. In a conversation with Alan Trachtenberg he suggested that in many ways Simon becomes the train, metaphorically speaking, at the novel's end. I am indebted to him for allowing me to repeat this notion here.

46. Cook-Lynn, *Anti-Indianism*, 12.

47. Treuer in discussion with the author, February 2006.