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The Im/possibility of Recovery in Native North American Literatures

by

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Dedication

To Aloys Neil Mark Fleischmann, for love, cats, dinners

and questions,

always the questions.

Abstract

Recovery is a ubiquitous theme in Native North American literature, as well as a repeated topic in the criticism on this literature, but the particulars of its meaning, mechanics, and ideological implications have yet to be explored by critics in any detail. Other than natural/ized telos, what precisely *is* recovery as it is constructed in Native literature? How might we describe the recovered subject(s) of this literature? To what ends is recovery, as both literary genre and discourse of Native identity, enacted and re-enacted? *The Im/possibility of Recovery in Native North American Literatures* explores classic and counter recovery narratives, a genre the study coins, and highlights how recovery, defined as "homecoming" by the genre, is characteristically im/possible. Providing in depth readings of four representative recovery narratives, Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*, Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*, Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*, as well as an overall survey of the recovery narrative tradition, *Im/possibility* argues that recovery is re-formulated through its melancholic introjection of those for whom recovery is impossible. The study is divided into four main sections: the first explores the historical production of recovery as literary tradition in the late 1960s and 70s in the wake of termination and relocation policies in Canada and the United States. The second section brings together trauma theory rooted in Holocaust Studies with indigenous literary articulations of the trauma of displacement to argue that recovery narratives craft a distinctly Native North American understanding of trauma as "trans/historical." The third section turns to the question of agency,

re-evaluating the subversive potential of colonial discourses of subjection.

Rather than continuing to perceive such discourses as repressive of "authentic"

Native identities, *Im/possibility* uses poststructuralist analyses of subject

formation to focus on the productive aspects of subjectification. The final

section fleshes out recovery's mechanics, the way recovery *works*—that is, both

operates and succeeds—returning via a psychoanalytic analysis of discourse to

theorize its melancholic composition.

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Introduction: The Im/possibility of Recovery in Native North American Literatures

One of many, a compelling scene of return and recovery exists in Richard Wagamese's *Keeper 'N Me*. The novel tells the story of a young Ojibway man, Garnet Raven, who comes home to his land, community, and indigenous identity after having been fostered out to a series of white families and thus displaced, physically and psychically. Removed from his family at three years old, Garnet leaves the foster care system at sixteen and ends up living on the streets, alienated from his Ojibway heritage. The scene in question sees Garnet travel past the borders of the White Dog reserve, to which he has returned at the novel's beginning, to an even more autochthonous homeland, the trapline on which he and his family lived before they were displaced by a hydroelectric dam, their land flooded. Containing traces of this past, the land is now home to the remains of his grandfather's cabin and its non-human inhabitants. While this return home is, for Garnet, a fulfilling one which helps restore his connection to ancestral land, community, and traditions, the dilapidated cabin underscores the impossibility of his quest; as Garnet attempts to move ever-closer to the origin of his indigenous identity—to authenticity—the novel confronts us with its absence. The possibility of a return to the origin appears phantasmatic, dependent on the shutting out of an outside world omnipresent in the cabin's remains. However, at the same time as the cabin marks the profound loss suffered by Garnet and his community, its decomposition signifies the return of the land to its natural state and, hence, the possibility of recovering a space ostensibly before the trauma of displacement. And yet, ironically, this recovery is inseparable from the very trauma it seeks to

overcome; indeed, the cabin remains, and its *remains* are a part of the land's return to its indigenous identity. Metaphorized in the cabin's "skeleton," as Garnet calls it, loss remains at the heart of recovery.

The scene is reminiscent of other, similar moments of return in indigenous literatures, where a sense of something missing is inextricable from the protagonist's homecoming. An archetypal example of this sense of loss in an American Indian literary context is Abel's return from World War II to the Jemez Pueblo in N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968), and in a Native Canadian context, Maria Campbell's homecoming in *Halfbreed* (1976).[1] At the beginning of her autobiography, Campbell tells of revisiting her Métis homeland in Saskatchewan, full of hope that there she would "'find again the happiness and beauty' she had known as a child" (Campbell qtd. in Damm 107). But Maria too comes home, in part, to an absence—"the land had changed, my people were gone, and if I was to know peace I would have to search within myself," she concludes (2). As does Wagamese's Garnet, Maria finds the buildings of her childhood vacant and rundown, their decay signalling both the "defeat" of the people and, paradoxically, with the removal of the implements of (post)colonial culture, the indigenizing of their land. While not all recovery narratives contain such a compact image of recovery's im/possibility—that is, its simultaneous possibility and impossibility—all contain traces of this tension to varying extents. To understand this tension and trace its articulation in a range of Native North American literary texts is the primary focus of my work. Powerfully, the above images convey this productive paradox, the loss that hauntingly sustains the

recovery project of much Native literature, and specifically, the genre I have coined the recovery narrative. Metaphorized in various ways within the recovery tradition, whether through crumbling homes, lost limbs, or lost lives, such loss is a crucial part of the mechanics of recovery, the way in which recovery *works*—that is, both operates and succeeds.

Recovery is a ubiquitous trope in Native North American literature, as well as a repeated topic in the criticism on this literature, but the particulars of its meaning, mechanics, and ideological implications have yet to be unpacked by critics in any detail. What precisely *is* recovery as it is constructed in Native literature?[2] How might we describe the recovered subject(s) of this literature? To what ends is recovery, as a discourse of Native identity, enacted and re-enacted? In the introduction to *Other Destinies*, a seminal study of the development of the Native American novel, Choctaw-Cherokee-Irish author Louis Owens argues that recovery "is at the center of American Indian fiction"—specifically, the recovery of indigenous identity (5). "What is an Indian?" (3), one of the fundamental questions of this fiction and its criticism, "comprehends centuries of colonial and postcolonial displacement," he explains (4). In the context of such displacement, he continues, "for writers who identify as Native American, the novel represents a process of reconstruction, of self-discovery and cultural recovery" (5). This process of recovery and rearticulation is "dependent upon a rediscovered sense of place as well as community" and is, Owens stresses, "a truly enormous undertaking."

The present study explores this truly enormous undertaking, the literary project of recovery, as it is articulated in a representative sample of recovery narratives from both Canada and the United States, focusing on classic recovery narratives, in particular Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* (1985) and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2005), as well as counter recovery narratives, in particular Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996) and Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998). Importantly, my use of the terms "classic" and "counter" to characterize differences in the recovery narrative tradition is necessarily artificial, as will become clear, in that both sides of this staged dichotomy are indebted to the same literary tradition and express, to varying extents, recovery's inherent tensions. Provisional and problematic as the terms are, they remain useful for how they gesture toward a very basic difference within the genre: classic recovery narratives subscribe strongly to the notion of recovery's possibility, outlining a program for healing from displacement through homecoming, while counter recovery narratives, self-consciously aware of the genre's features and assumptions, overtly attempt to problematize the possibility of recovery for those who cannot or do not want to go home.

Following from Owens, my project conceptualizes recovery as a creative process, a performative act, and a sociocultural project, which responds to the trans/historical trauma of displacement experienced by Native peoples. This displacement takes many forms, both geographic and psychic. I focus expressly on literature that comprehends, in a variety of tribally-specific contexts, the forced removal of indigenous peoples from their traditional territories, where "territory"

is not defined solely in geographic terms, but encompasses community, culture, and identity. Recognizing the inseparability of the geographic and the psychic, these works, as a whole, underscore the psychosocial effects of removal from one's community and land, highlighting also the psychic deracination inherent in enforced and hegemonic assimilationist doctrines. All four of the major texts under consideration, as well as many of those surveyed more briefly, depict the removal of Native children from their indigenous communities and their relocation either in residential schools, other foreign "educational" systems, foster homes, or with white adoptive families. Both Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and Boyden's *Three Day Road* explore the effects of the Canadian residential school system on Native children sexually abused there; Alexie's *Indian Killer* examines the psychological repercussions on a Native child of being stolen from his birth family, radically estranged from his tribal roots, and relocated in a white adoptive family; and Armstrong's *Slash* illuminates the deracination attendant on assimilationist governmental policies, including the education of Native children in non-reserve, "white" schools.

Focused on contemporary literature from the mid-1980s to the early twenty-first century, the scope of my study nevertheless extends over a wide historical and geographic territory. Geographically, I examine literature whose settings range from James Bay Cree land in Northern Ontario (Boyden) to Okanagan territory in British Columbia (Armstrong), and include the homelands of the Northern Manitoba Cree (Highway), the Anishnabe of Northern Ontario (Wagamese; Slipperjack), the Métis of Saskatchewan (Campbell), and Seattle, the

home of Alexie's urban Indians. Through the theory of trans/historicity, which I develop in chapter two, my work looks to the ways in which historically discrete traumas of displacement, linked to specific locales and understood as the product of distinct neo-colonial policies, reiterate a range of prior colonial traumas, themselves historically dis/located. In this way, my project elucidates, for example, the connections drawn in *Slash* between the forced removal of the Cherokee from their homelands in 1838 and the "itchy feet" of an Okanagan political activist in the 1970s. Such an analysis is both tribally-specific and pan-Indian, or, to invoke Renya Ramirez's term, "trans/national"; it sketches out connections between Native groups on the basis of shared, overlapping experiences, while attending, crucially, to the historical and cultural specificities of these experiences. Recovery, as a literary genre and a discourse of Native identity, is similarly trans/national, which is to say that it is locally rooted in both the tribal and literary particulars of a text, as well as being a cross-tribal cultural form, indicative of broader indigenous concerns.

My analysis concentrates largely on novels, and in particular on *Slash*, *Indian Killer*, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, and *Three Day Road*, with the exception of a few representative autobiographical recovery narratives, which take a minor role. Differentiating between the two genres in any depth is beyond the scope of this study. By way of introduction, however, it is important to acknowledge basic differences between the two, particularly in light of the truth claims of autobiographical recovery narratives. Even though autobiographical theory has complicated the expectation readers have of autobiographies to tell the "truth,"

highlighting the "fiction" of any life writing, to conflate autobiographical and literary representations of recovery is to risk obfuscating the personal stakes involved in autobiographical tellings of recovery. It is also to risk ignoring the creative limits genre imposes on recovery's narrative re-enactment. With this in mind, I proceed from my observation of the oftentimes similar construction of recovery in fictional and autobiographical texts, as my opening reading of *Halfbreed* in the context of *Keeper 'N Me* suggests. This similarity owes itself to a cross-genre discursive pollination with roots in the Native American Renaissance, many of whose most cherished novels of the late 1960s and 1970s were the first recovery narratives written. Fictional representations of recovery in the early works of Momaday (*House Made of Dawn*), Silko (*Ceremony*), and Welch (*Winter in the Blood*), all of which explore the tension between recovery and its impossibility, have shaped not only subsequent fictions, but also autobiographical texts. While this is not to suggest that Campbell's autobiography, published in 1973, was influenced by renaissance texts (many of which were published concurrently or later), one can safely assume the influence of this movement on *Halfbreed*'s criticism, as well as on later autobiographies such as Janet Campbell Hale's *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter*. In turn, such autobiographies and criticism on them have influenced the discourse of recovery as it is imagined by current fiction writers such as Boyden and Highway. There is, in sum, a shared discourse of recovery that moves back and forth across generic boundaries, the larger implication of which is two-fold: first, that in studying recovery narratives, one must attend to the often trans/historical, material

conditions of their production, and second, that fiction shapes the discourses through which people write their recovery, as well as their trauma.

One of the major contributions of my study is thus its attention to the historical, cultural, political, and literary conditions of recovery's production as both narrative genre and discourse of identity. My intellectual curiosity about the subject of recovery is rooted in the previous lack of critical attention paid to this subject (as both topic and discursive person) as a sociocultural project. There is no book length study on recovery in the Native literary context; articles with recovery as a central concern exist aplenty, but their function is generally descriptive, rather than investigative. They detail the "fact" of recovery in a given text, tracing, for example, the road to recovery taken by a particular character, but they stop short of exploring in any depth the discursive composition and ideological implications of this "fact": what recovery *is*, but more importantly what it is *not*, what it risks excluding, and what versions of indigenous identity it both permits and prohibits are questions the existing criticism leaves largely unaddressed. Yet the goal of recovery, aligned with decolonization and healing from (neo)colonial trauma and displacement, remains one of the base assumptions from which much Native literary criticism proceeds. In a representative essay, Susan Roberson asserts of N. Scott Momaday's *The Ancient Child* that "like other Native American narratives, [it] is a narrative about healing. It comes 'full circle' to bring its protagonist back to himself and his origins" (40). Padraig Kirwan, who critiques Roberson, explains that "the customary image of 'the return of the Native,' an image that is often read as a panacea to the trials of colonization . . . is

now often expected by readers of tribal fiction" (1). Therefore, although

"recovery" is omnipresent in the criticism on Native North American literature,

most critics have either assumed its meaning to be transparent, thereby rendering

it opaque, or reified a very particular meaning, which attaches recovery to

homecoming, itself an ideologically loaded concept. In light of claims like

Roberson's, my argument is not that recovery is without shape, but rather, that it

has assumed a specific shape which begs exploration, most of all from recovery

narratives themselves, which present a far more complex and nuanced

understanding of recovery than has yet been recognized.

     To describe recovery as "project," as I do above, is strategic, calling up as

it does Judith Butler's analysis of gender as a project or act performed under

social duress—specifically, the pressure to be socially recognizable within and

through the repeated re-enactment of certain circumscribed narratives of

identity—here, Native identity.[3] Conceptualizing recovery as an act, and

specifically a *literary* act, I work to denaturalize its definition as telos and

emphasize its repeated discursive re-enactment, a process of iteration that

underlines the threat of loss and failure that drives its haunted articulations.

Reading recovery's production, I draw on poststructuralist theories of discourse

and subjectivity (Butler, Foucault), which intersect productively with indigenous

theories of language as "bringing into being" (Owens, Silko, Momaday), to

advance an analysis of the recovered subjects brought into being by literary

articulations and critical analyses of recovery.

I propose that narratives of recovery, both literary and scholarly, are politically invested in producing the recovered subject as connected to his or her tribal homeland; removed from the assimilatory, "contaminating" influence of the city; closer to "tradition," defined not as pre-colonial, but ancestral; and re/united with his or her indigenous relations. Even in those works I have called "counter" recovery narratives, there exists a characteristic tension between the desire for recovery so imagined and the problematization of this definition for its exclusionary effect. Further included in this discourse is the notion that through the recovery process one heals from loss, recovery's natural/ized opposite—in other words, that recovery counters rather than creates loss. Given the cultural trauma and historical displacements experienced by Native peoples, it is, I argue, politically and psychologically cogent to constitute recovery in this way, to remove from its constitution the losses by which it is paradoxically compelled. The shorthand I use to refer to this discourse, which I unpack in detail in chapter one, is "recovery-as-homing" or healing return. In the work of William Bevis, as well as those who have followed his critical lead for over twenty years, recovery in Native literature is so perceived, as the work of both Roberson and Kirwan makes clear. In a further representative vein, Sean Teuton, in his article on *Winter in the Blood*, argues that throughout the course of the novel, Welch's narrator "closes [the] distance" he feels "from himself, from his Blackfeet culture, from his homelands . . . and comes home, personally, culturally, and geographically. Among American Indians," Teuton continues, "the decolonization of communities as well as of individuals often involves a process of recovery, a

conscious act of reclaiming knowledge of a tribal self, knowledge that has been

distorted by centuries of European and American oppression" (626). Teuton's

analysis is important for the way in which it underscores not only the persistent

discourse of recovery as homing, but also the equally familiar notion of recovery

as authenticity, that is, as the achievement or reclamation of an authentic

indigenous identity.[4]

In an anticipated critical manoeuvre, Teuton goes on to problematize

essentialist understandings of indigenous identity for their restrictiveness and,

quoting Robert Warrior, their "ossifying of American Indian experience" (qtd.

628). Decoupling authenticity from essentialism, he advances a flexible notion of

authentic indigenous identity rooted in the recognition of change and the

"continued development of persons and communities" (682). At the same time,

the language he employs rehearses the familiar discourse of recovery as

decolonization, understood as the "conscious" act of reclaiming the tribal from its

colonial "distortion." Recovery is regularly produced in such a manner: the

discourse recognizes the mutability of indigenous identity, while it simultaneously

conveys the idea of indigeneity's "truth"—that which can be knowingly un- and

re-covered from the distortion of colonial discourses of indigeneity. Often, this

truth is recognized as mutability itself: Native identity is in constant transmotion,

to use Gerald Vizenor's term. Other times, mutability and authenticity exist in

tension, an uncomfortable yet politically salient partnership fundamental to

recovery's current configuration. While seemingly incongruous, such

constructions of Native identity are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they co-exist

in the discourse of recovery. Reading recovery necessitates an understanding of the political import of these constructions, but it also requires an evaluation of their ideological implications. What are the effects of separating colonial discourse from the practice of decolonization, of saying that to recover is to uncover identity outside "distortion"? That is to say, what is lost and *re-covered*—in other words, covered over—in the literary act of recovering Native identity? What is the fate of articulations of Nativeness that do not fit neatly into recovery's parameters, and how do these Native "others" sustain the discourse of recovery itself? Recovery narratives invite us not only to read "for" the recovered subject, arriving at an understanding of what recovery entails, but also to read against its grain, perceiving the losses in relation to which recovery is accomplished, in a performative sense.

No one in the field has yet theorized recovery's relationship with loss, and this is, therefore, where my study makes its most crucial intervention. To focus solely on recovery's recuperative dimensions, or to use the concept transparently, as a synonym for healing, as previous scholars have done, is certainly a much safer critical move. Recovery is an empowering discourse. It galvanizes nationalist politics, resists Native victimry, counters the discourse of the vanishing Indian, and strengthens individuals and communities in the face of an overwhelming history of colonial oppression. As such, it has tremendous currency in the field of Native North American literatures, as it should. My intention is neither to undercut the discourse of recovery, nor to pinpoint where it "fails." Rather, my study is motivated by the desire to understand better just how

recovery works, and in so doing, to leave the door open to alternative readings of recovery's possibilities. I am surely critical of recovery, particularly when it is understood in a narrow manner only as healing return, but to engage in such deconstructive work, to paraphrase Gayatri Spivak, is to critique a "conceptual structure that one cannot not inhabit" (Bracken par. 8). Recovery, quite simply, is necessary. In the context of Native North American literature, it is a fundamental structuring trope, productive of narratives of Native identity, many of which are empowering, enduring, and politically persuasive. The concern recovery narratives themselves have led me to pinpoint, however, is that the valorization of recovery-as-homing, while containing a range of possibilities for articulating Native identity, necessarily pushes other articulations of Nativeness underground—and often quite literally, as recovery narratives regularly conclude with the death or disability of a character who cannot or does not want to go "home," in both literal and figurative senses. Recovery is always complicated, then, by its im/possibility, a complexity indicated in the title of my study.

Chapter one studies the recovery narrative genre, unpacking its construction of "home" as the seat of recovery. What are the implications of imagining recovery in relation to home, I ask, specifically when "home" is understood as a particular land-base, often a reservation, reserve, or other ancestral ground? What does this imply for the recovery of those who cannot or do not want to go home? The chapter sets the stage for a more in depth analysis of recovery's im/possibility in later chapters by surveying a wide range of recovery narratives, focusing specifically on the discourse of recovery-as-homing

and its enactment in works by N. Scott Momaday, Richard Wagamese, Ruby Slipperjack, Maria Campbell, Janet Campbell Hale and others. I historicize the narrative pattern of departure, journey and return in Native literatures, concentrating on oral traditions as the ground in which recovery narratives, as more recent narrative responses to the dislocation and urbanization of the post-Termination and White Paper Era, are rooted. In conversation with previous work on homecoming in Native North American literature by William Bevis and others, I analyze the importance of place to identity and ask what motivates the attachment of Native identity and healing to particular landscapes in the recovery narrative tradition. The chapter has three main sections: first, I interrogate existing scholarship on homing as "regression" and assert, in response, the complexity of homing temporality. Next, I discuss mobility as an indigenous tradition, which is articulated through the requisite journey of any recovery narrative. Understanding the historical heft of migration in an indigenous context is key, I argue, to an analysis of the recovery narrative genre as a performative reiteration of historic displacements, geocultural customs, and literary traditions. And finally, I historicize the genre and its homecoming aesthetic—in particular, the genre's emergence in the wake of the Termination and Relocation Era of the 1950s and 60s and its continuance in the context of a growing urban Indian population. In the context of systemic displacement, recovery narratives can be understood, as a nationalist project, to recuperate the importance of the rural/reserve as ancestral land to Native identity, survivance, and sovereignty.

Chapter two continues the work of historicizing the recovery project, theorizing what I have called the "trans/historicity" of Native North American trauma, specifically the trauma of displacement. The chapter pairs an archetypal classic recovery narrative, Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* (1985), with a more recent counter recovery narrative, Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996), both of which explore the psychosocial ramifications of displacement, albeit in different sociopolitical contexts: Armstrong's novel tells the story of a young Okanagan man's geographic and psychic displacement from his family and community, which is the result of community fractures produced by the assimilationist agenda of the White Paper period (late 1960s) in Canada. Alexie's novel tells of a young man stolen from his indigenous family as a child and adopted out to a white family during the late 1960s in the United States. Alexie's protagonist is thus radically deracinated, even from the most basic knowledge of his tribal identity. Whereas Armstrong's novel celebrates the possibility of recovery-as-homecoming (although not without complication) and Alexie's critiques it, the novels are united by their interest in the trans/historicity of these traumas—in other words, by the way in which historically specific traumas also carry and reiterate "prior" displacements in indigenous history. Both novels critique the assumption that trauma, and specifically colonial trauma, exists as an "event" of the past by showing how neocolonial traumas of the present reiterate these "past" wounds. In my exploration of trans/historicity, I am informed not only by the theories of indigenous temporality discussed in the first chapter, but also by a predominantly Euroamerican body of trauma theory, much of which is rooted in the field of

Holocaust Studies. One of the chapter's central aims is to think through how contemporary theory of a non-indigenous nature can be brought to bear on indigenous texts so that each can illuminate and interrogate the other, an aim present in the remainder of the study's chapters. Reading Armstrong and Alexie in conjunction with poststructuralist trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub opens up both sides of the equation, highlighting the need for trauma theory to consider indigenous perspectives in its formulation of trauma's temporality. The chapter revisits the notion of recovery's im/possibility in the context of the ongoing "event" of indigenous trauma.

Stemming from this analysis of trauma, chapter three turns to the question of agency. My focus here is on the trauma of sexual abuse and its connection to the trauma of colonial discourse in the context of the Canadian residential school system. Through my reading of Tomson Highway's counter recovery narrative *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998), which depicts the sexual abuse of two young Cree boys by their residential school priest, I explore the relationship between corporeal and discursive trauma, asking how recovery narratives formulate "agency" for the subjects of this trauma. How is discourse traumatic, and what discursive forms can recovery and survivance take in the context of such a trauma, I ask. By way of response, I draw on poststructuralist theories of discourse, subjectivity, and power, specifically those of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, whose work on subjection resonates with Highway's controversial take on the role of abuse in the formation of subjectivity. In the field of Native literatures, discourses of subjection, such as the well-worn discourse of Native

savagery, are generally assumed to be antithetical to indigenous agency and recovery, as demonstrated in Sean Teuton's analysis of the "distortion" of colonial discourse. Such exegeses of internalized oppression often turn to decolonization, defined as the unlearning of colonial discourse and the relearning of indigenous narrative, as the necessary next step in Aboriginal healing, the assumption being that colonial discourses of indigenous identity are erroneous and must be discarded in favour of more accurate discourses. Highway resists this interpretation of colonial discourse as only and always repressive, showing through the "savage" sexuality of one his protagonists, Gabriel Okimasis, the ways in which a passionate attachment to a discourse of subjection, forged in a traumatic encounter, can nevertheless generate empowering articulations of indigenous identity. The chapter concludes by tracing the tension in Highway's text between the desire for recovery and recognition of its im/possibility. Through Gabriel's death, and the "salvation" of his brother Jeremiah through this "sacrifice," Highway ends the novel by raising the question of the relationship between loss, recovery, and recovery's constitutive lost other.

Framed by this question, the refrain that links all four chapters, the final chapter analyzes Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* (2001), a classic recovery narrative resonant with Highway's novel in its depiction of the effects of residential school on two Cree boys, one of whom is sexually abused by a nun at the school. My choice of this particular text is motivated by a number of factors, one of which is that, as a classic recovery narrative published recently, it highlights the continuing popularity of the recovery genre in the context of a

burgeoning urban Indian population, as noted in chapter one. In addition, like *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Boyden's novel is structured around the relationship between two brothers, one of whom must die in order that the other may recover. Because of this, it invites an exploration of the implications of death as a feature of the recovery narrative genre, a feature I have noted in relation to all of the major narratives under discussion in this study. Death, I argue, has a constitutive, productive function in relation to recovery and the recovered subject: the character that dies represents the traumatic effects of assimilation on indigenous identity, and the remaining subject's recovery is contingent on the "burial" of this "other other"—the constitutive underside of recovery's accomplishment. The novel thus illustrates what I have labelled the fundamental melancholia of recovery—that is, the way in which recovery, as a discourse of Native identity, is formulated through the introjection of its lost other: the assimilated subject. A discourse that both expels and preserves its losses, recovery is fundamentally intersubjective, which is to say that it houses articulations of indigenous identity that it must also expel in its continuing performative accomplishment. Drawing from Freud and, more recently, from the work of Judith Butler on the melancholia of gender and Anne Anlin Cheng on the melancholia of race, my theory recognizes the multiple identifications through which recovery is accomplished, destabilized, and rendered open to revision. The chapter focuses on recovery's articulation in the assimilationist context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Canada, specifically the Great War and its psychic aftermath, but my analysis gestures outward to illustrate more generally the mechanics of recovery's

functioning as both narrative genre and discourse of identity. As such, I conclude

by bringing the study full circle, back to the observations with which this

introduction began on the loss that resides at the heart of recovery.

Notes

[1] While the scope of the current project is limited to Native North American literature, my preliminary research suggests that similar depictions of recovery can be found in Australian Aboriginal literature, although differences in continental context obviously shape the ways in which recovery is articulated. A recent example can be found in Larissa Behrendt's novel *Home*, where the protagonist stands on the ground of her late grandmother's birthplace, now a grass field containing few signs of human life, and comes home, in a sense, to her ancestors. This moment becomes a catalyst for the stories we as readers get to hear about her grandmother and extended family. Tellingly, however, while we are privy to these stories, Behrendt's protagonist isn't; because of her grandmother's forced removal from home at a young age, her later death, and the subsequent removal of her own children to residential school, the family has been irremediably estranged, their stories lost to each other.

[2] Given the colonial history of renaming indigenous groups and individuals, anglicizing or prohibiting tribal names, and collapsing tribal differences under the homogenous label "Indian," terminology is a vital and fraught concern in indigenous studies. Because my project looks at literature from both sides of the (post)colonial border, I have chosen to use the terms "Native North American" and "Native" to refer to the indigenous peoples of North America as a group. I also use the term "indigenous," which generally has a global resonance, with the codicil that it refers to people from the North American land-base. Recognizing the problematics of such broad designations, I use the indigenous names for specific groups whenever relevant, following the authors whose work I study. Therefore, while the Ojibway are now often referred to as "Anishnabe" (their name for themselves), when working with Wagamese's texts, I use the term "Ojibway" because it is what the author himself uses. The same is true for "Indian" in my discussions of Jeannette Armstrong and Sherman Alexie. Importantly, because my project discusses recovery as a pan-Native literary genre and discourse, it is sometimes more appropriate to use the more general "Native" as opposed to tribally specific designations. Further, because my work is concerned with the function of colonial discourse in Native texts, I often use "Native" rather than "indigenous" because the former term more strongly carries a sense of the colonial legacy. It is for this reason, one assumes, that the term is quickly falling into disrepute in both scholarly and popular contexts; yet, it is for this reason that I rehabilitate it here, in the context of recovery, to stress the productive function of colonial discourse *as* indigenous discourse. "Native American" or "American Indian" are used interchangeably to refer to Native authors and texts from the United States, whereas "Aboriginal" and "First Nations" are specific to the Canadian context.

[3] See Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" and *The Psychic Life of Power*.

[4] Teuton's argument regarding recovery is more complex than I can address here, but it is important to summarize it in brief. Responding to his concern over the transparency of recovery in the field, Teuton, like me, calls for a "convincing explanation of the recovery of American Indian identity" (627). He argues for the necessity of devising a way "to distinguish distorted (colonialist) constructions from more accurate constructions [of tribal identity], in order to offer a flexible, though 'objective' account of the real lives of American Indian today" (630). Employing what he calls a "realist" approach, Teuton proposes the "notion of a cultural center" that would "free[] Native persons from demands that they become 'real' or 'authentic' and allow[] them instead to strive simply to be better tribal members, based on the normative idea of the ways a Native person should live, as represented in a flexible, though centered and centering, core of beliefs" (639).

Chapter 1: Locating Recovery: Home, Dis/placement, and Identity in Recovery Narratives

> Perhaps I will die from this land sickness, this
> never-ending orphanage from Maine's shore. . . .
> In one tight fist will they find a single drop
> of salt, a tear that began in the surf of home.
>
> > "Land Sickness,"
> > Carol Snow Moon Bachofner
>
> I see the crows and ravens of this vast land yapping
> up a storm. I hear the frog and cricket quartet, and the
> acres and acres of freedom. Yes, writing about it makes
> me miss the land.
>
> > "The Many Homes of an Odawa Orphan,"
> > Gloria May Eshkibok

Of indigenous peoples, Sto:lo author Lee Maracle writes, "Home is for us origin, the shell of nurturance, our first fire and the harbinger of our relationship to the world. . . . Home is our first stone; the stone from which humans shape relationship" (i). Sandra Laronde affirms that home is "something that is carried with us everywhere, like the shell of a turtle. Home is at the centre of our lives. It is about people, land, culture, and what we dream" (iii). Clearly, home in an indigenous context signifies widely: it is not only a particular geographic location, but a set of reciprocal relations shaped by the land and forged between multiple life forms and persons, both human and non. "Home refers both to a physical place and a network of belonging and history," Jill Jepson concurs (26). When the connection of home is severed through relocation and displacement, Bachofner's poem indicates, the result is sadness, sickness, and possibly even death. As first stone, home is not only figured of the natural world, but naturalized as the location of authentic indigenous identity: it is origin. In this

sense, as "Land Sickness" suggests, the homeland is akin to a parent, and to be separated from this site of familial relations is to live as though without kin in a "never-ending orphanage." This diction resonates with the removal of Native children from their birth parents and extended kinship networks and their subsequent dis/placement in residential schools, orphanages, and non-Native foster and adoptive homes. To leave one's land, the poem thus intimates, is to experience in some way the assimilationist agenda engineered to divorce Native children from their parents and homelands, and therefore from their Native identities. By extension, then, to return home or to stay connected to one's homeland is to ward off the dangers of assimilation and the attendant loss of cultural identities and traditions; it is to recover. Yet, home also moves as the subject moves—a part of identity that can be "carried with us everywhere," like the tear from the salty surf of Maine or the turtle's shell, which not only defends but cradles.[1]

Gesturing toward the necessity of preserving home in both ideological and ecological terms, these meditations are a microcosm of the ways in which "home" is variously configured by Native writers as a particular land-base, a point of origin to which one longs to return, and a portable relationship or a form of "transmotion," to recall Gerald Vizenor's neologism. The productive cohabitation of these multiple constructions of home characterizes what I call the recovery narrative genre, which reveals home's flexibility, while insisting on its permanence. Understanding the cultural weight of home in an indigenous context is vital to my exploration in this chapter of the way in which specific places—

ancestral homelands, reservations, small towns, and cities—are sites of

attachment to particular histories, kinship relations, cultural traditions, and

discourses of Native identity. As sites of attachment—that is, locations to which

indigenous peoples are attached and locations to which they have been attached,

or bound, by the dominant culture—these places are necessary to the continued

survivance of these peoples.[2] Recovery narratives, I argue, participate in the

geocultural, spatial politics of survivance, shaping this project through their own

performative attachments—to specific sites as locations of Native identity. The

recovery narrative, I argue, is *the* genre of healing and cultural reclamation in the

Native North American literary tradition. But what motivates the intertwining of

Native identity and healing to a specific landscape in the recovery narrative

tradition? And further, what are the implications of imagining recovery in

relation to home, where "recovery" is the healing return to traditional practices

and identities, and "home" is a particular land-base and/or the ground in which

one's ancestors and family reside?

"I don't write back, I write home," Maracle asserts (qtd. in Shackleton

155). Laronde similarly highlights the way in which home is performatively

reenacted through writing, memory, and dreams, maintaining that "[t]he way in

which we remember 'home' is crucial. How we dig for forgotten or buried

memories of home is equally significant" (iii). Home here is an autobiographical

construction and an archaeological find, something to be excavated. In this, there

is an interesting tension between the present-tense of home's re-membering and

the past tense of its burial; that is, home in this context is both an artifact of the

past and a creative process in the present, and as such, both a discovery and a

creation. Gloria Eshibok's poem "The Many Homes of an Odawa Orphan"

further nuances the idea of home as cultural construction: "Yes," says the speaker,

"writing about it makes me miss the land" (143). In addition to rehearsing the

more familiar idea that writing recreates its subject—here, land—and thus has the

power to bring its author "home" in a sense, Eshkibok explores the possibility that

writing creates or recreates the loss it mourns; indeed, it is writing itself that

makes the speaker "miss the land." While many creative and critical Native

writers, such as Luci Tapahanso and Neal McLeod, have commented on the

importance of "coming home through stories," Eshkibok underscores a vital

counter-discourse concerning the relationship between writing and loss, one

which is much present in Native literatures, but virtually unrepresented in the

criticism.[3] Writing about dislocation and the loss of home/land is a mode of

recovery, I argue, but one that cannot help but reiterate the wound from which it

works to recover. The wound that exists at the heart of home, and the loss that

haunts and informs home's construction, is an ideological feature of the recovery

narrative genre. Classic recovery narratives, like Ruby Slipperjack's *Silent Words*

and Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*, for example, deploy the trope of the

wound quite literally, underscoring the violence of dislocation and prompting a

consideration of the interrelationship between trauma and recovery in the

recovery genre, a question I take up further in chapter two.[4]

　　　If, as Laronde stresses, "[t]he way in which we remember 'home' is

crucial" (iii), then one must ask, "*How* is home re/membered—that is, both

memorialized and performatively enacted," and "*Why* is it re/membered in this particular way?" Specifically, through a pattern of departure and return, recovery narratives characteristically write the reservation (or non-reserve rural territory) as home, the fundamental site of Native identities and traditions, thus contradistinguishing "home" from the city, the site of alienation and loss. Referring to this pattern, in 1987 critic William Bevis coined the term "homing plot," a critical paradigm that continues to shape discussions of homecoming in Native literature over twenty years later. Homing plots are characterized by the departure and return of the protagonist to his or her homeland and, thus, according to Bevis, "to a previous status quo" (22): the protagonist "ends **where** as well as **when** he began" (24), ultimately "find[ing] his identity by staying" (18). Bevis sets Native American homing plots against the "leaving" or wandering plots of white Americans, which he says "embody quite clearly the basic premise of success in our mobile society. The individual advances, sometimes at all costs, with little or no regard for family, society, past, or place" (16). Homing plots are not "'eccentric,' centrifugal, diverging, expanding, but 'incentric,' centripetal, converging, contracting. The hero comes home. . . . In Native American novels, coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call 'regressing' to a place, is a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good" (16).[5] This narrative structure, Bevis argues, is part of a distinctly Native American—and more specifically, a tribal—aesthetic (15).[6] While I draw from the theoretical groundwork laid by Bevis and followed by others, my work aims to shift the terms of the critical discussion, refocusing the conversation away from the

racialized divide between white wandering and Native homing, which not only reifies essentialist constructions of racial identity, but also obscures the indigeneity of wandering. I look to the storied traditions in which the journey as a narrative feature is rooted, concentrating on long-held oral traditions as the ground in which more recent narrative responses to the dislocation and urbanization of the post-Termination Era, termed "recovery narratives," are rooted. In discussing these recovery narratives as such, I hope to draw attention to the impetus of recovery behind the tribal aesthetic of homing—in other words, my aim is to historicize the narrative feature of journeying and return in multiple instances of Native literary expression. My reading of recovery narratives discerns the implications of articulating recovery from displacement through homecoming, observing the way in which literary homing writes particular notions of recovery and, hence, valorizes particular expressions of Nativeness.

Part of my overarching thesis is that narratives of recovery can be ideologically narrow, although they need not be, in that if they link decolonization with a particular landscape, they can be seen to exclude different and more comprehensive approaches to recovery and "authenticity." Richard Wagamese's autobiographical recovery narrative *For Joshua* expresses such an alternative approach, attempting as it does to unhinge psychic journey from *specific* geography. This is not to suggest that Wagamese, and others like him, are interested in separating identity from land—the body of Wagamese's work is, in fact, strongly invested in the connection of humans with non-human persons and the natural world. However, in *For Joshua*, Wagamese's journey of self-

discovery does not depend on arriving at a *particular* geographical destination.

As the account of someone adopted out to non-Native parents, Wagamese's book

considers the implications of tying home, recovery, and identity to a pre-

determined national territory for those who might not be able to return to such a

territory, or for that matter, be interested in such a pursuit. Sherman Alexie's

novel *Indian Killer* also explores these implications through the plight of its

central character, John Smith, who is also adopted out by white parents and

separated from an indigenous community. As I discuss in my second chapter,

John's inability to know himself as a "real Indian" is not primarily the product of

his adoption, but of his subjection to the idea of a "real Indian" in the first place, a

mythic figure who clearly does not encompass his experience as an adopted-out

Native person from an unknown tribal background. John's sense of dislocation is

painful. His attempt to "return home" by travelling to various reservations outside

Seattle, looking for traces of himself in those he meets, illustrates the traumatic

affect of dislocation and reveals deeper truths about the im/possibility of returning

home.

     If "home," defined in many cases as a reservation-based indigenous

community, is something outside of one's experience or beyond one's grasp, how

can one return there? And if return is impossible, then what of recovery, which is

so intimately bound up with home? This is just one of many series of questions

that my project asks in relation to recovery narratives and that the genre can be

seen to ask of itself. Another: what if one does, in fact, have such a home to

return to, but this home is the site of economic hardship, abuse, or danger; in other

words, what if home isn't and has never been the safe space described by Maracle and Laronde? Or what if "home" is urban? Are there uniquely Native traditions in urban spaces, and if so, might urban areas be considered sites of recovery to which Native people might return and revitalize their cultural identities and traditions? In fact, as I will argue of recovery narratives, "home" exists in the journey between the urban and the rural, both as the journey itself and as the indigenous counterpoint to urban displacement. Situating my analysis of recovery-as-homing in conversation with previous work on homecoming in Native North American literature, I ask what motivates the intertwining of Native identity and healing to specific landscapes, both fluid and fixed, in the recovery narrative tradition, advancing three interrelated arguments: first, I complicate the imbrication of tradition and regression that undergirds prior analyses of homecoming, exploring the complexity of homing temporality, its implications for recovery, and the way in which recovery narratives re/locate the "origins" of tribal identity. Secondly, I discuss mobility as an indigenous tradition articulated in the recovery genre through its requisite journey, which I argue is integral, rather than prior, to the work of recovery. And finally, I historicize the genre and its homecoming aesthetic—in particular, the genre's emergence in the 1960s and 70s in the post-Termination and Relocation Era, and its continuance in the context of a growing urban Indian population.

"Regressing" to the Reservation?: Temporality, Geography, Recovery

On January 15th, 2008 Statistics Canada released its most recent data on the Aboriginal population in Canada, including information on the growth of this

population, which has gone up forty-five percent in the last decade; details on the

impact of increasing self-identification and cultural pride on the population's

growth, with more people than ever claiming their Aboriginal heritage; and

statistics on the demographics of Aboriginal residence, including the percentage

of urban versus reserve residence. Up from fifty percent in 1996, in 2006 fifty-

four percent of Aboriginal people lived in urban areas. Yet these statistics do not

tell the whole story, for as *Globe and Mail* reporter Brodie Fenlon reports,

"Aboriginal people were once again under-counted" (par. 52). Twenty-two

reserves were incompletely enumerated ("Aboriginal Peoples" par. 9), and two

resisted inclusion in the census, claiming their status as sovereign peoples, rather

than Canadian citizens.[7] While it is therefore problematic to rely on census

information, the conclusions arrived at through this method nevertheless indicate

the growth of the urban Indian population in Canada. In America too, as Renya

Ramirez documents, "the majority of Native Americans live in cities" (1). The

reality of urban Indian dwelling forms the backdrop against which I read the rise,

production, and continuing popularity of recovery narratives.

The longevity and continuing strength of the genre might at first appear

curious in light of this context, or so it seemed to me. My initial assumption was

that in response to an increasingly urban population, Native authors would write

texts focused on exploring and celebrating urban experience and identity. This

they have certainly done, yet the turn to recovery-as-homing remains a strong

current in Native literature. Markus M. Müller likewise notes that "[a]lthough the

urban Native has begun to boom in literary debates, much in recent writing

dealing with Native communities in Canada is about both returning to and

reclaiming the reservations as real homes, transforming them into sites where

traditional and modern modes of life should, ideally, be made to harmonize

instead of constantly clashing with each other" (par. 2). Recovery narratives

return their protagonists to "tradition with a difference," but they nevertheless

sediment the idea of the urban as alienating, a function that seems curious given

current demographics. Stories of recovery begin with the displacement and

alienation of their protagonist from his or her homeland and kin, and then trace

the protagonist's journey, often to an urban centre, where he or she attempts to

navigate his or her losses, while simultaneously re-instilling them. In the end, the

protagonist returns home, recovering his or her sense of tradition, community, and

indigenous identity. Louis Owens comments on the traditional roots of this (post)

colonial narrative structure: "Fragmentation in Native American mythology," he

suggests, "is not necessarily a bad thing. . . . For the traditional culture hero, the

necessary annihilation of the self that prefigures healing and wholeness and a

return to the tribal community often takes the form of physical fragmentation,

bodily as well as psychic deconstruction" ("Erdrich" 56). Following this pattern,

recovery narratives often depict urban experience, or time spent away from the

reservation, as an experience of fragmentation. In reference to Momaday and

Silko's classic narratives of recovery, Owens avers that "[b]oth Momaday's

protagonist Abel in *House Made of Dawn* and Silko's Tayo in *Ceremony* . . .

make circular journeys in the archetypal pattern of the culture hero, from

community into the external, dangerous world [which is, in these narratives, an

urban world] and back to community" (*Mixedblood* 158). The journey home, as a process of discovery, is also a process of recovery, which leads the protagonist to understand her identity as rooted in a network of relations attached to a specific homeland—often a land-base, but also a psychic territory—to which she thus returns. In the context of an increasingly urban Aboriginal population, one might ask what function this narrative structure performs for urban—and reservation/rural—peoples: is the form a response, in part, to the realities of urban living and identities, and how does the form continue to shape the ways in which these identities are apprehended?

Flexible definitions of "urban" and "reserve" consider mobility between urban centre and reserve as a mode or pattern of residence, an argument Renya Ramirez convincingly advances in *Native Hubs*. Such definitions take into account more than census criteria, or where an individual dwells "at a set date or at a specific point in time," which assume a purely *residential* relationship to geography ("Aboriginal Population" par. 1). They also consider the relationships and affiliations one has with various communities. By definition, as stories that describe the experience of living away from home, recovery narratives explore the way in which home can be somewhere other than where one currently resides, thereby underscoring an understanding of home and homeland as *relational*, as opposed to strictly residential. But recovery narratives also reify the identity categories of "urban" and "reserve" that they complicate. As my later analysis of urban relocation's effect on the production of the genre will show, recovery narratives are intimately bound up with urban experience and the distinctly

aboriginal movement between reserve and city, but the genre also marks off the

dislocation of urban experience from the rootedness of home-as-reservation.

According to Gerald McMaster, "[f]or Indian people, historically, urban living

renders attachment urgent. They continue to greet each other by asking: Where

are you from? It is no longer embarrassing to say that one is from a place that is

not a reserve, although this may be prefaced by pointing out a parent's specific

tribal territory" (20). As Renate Eigenbrod notes, "It is often stated by Indigenous

peoples that one needs to know where one comes from in order to know at all"

(79), and as Apache philosopher Viola Cordova asserts, "The Native American

gives notice of not only who he is but where he is 'coming from'" (qtd. in

Eigenbrod 79). In response to the ubiquitous question of roots, recovery

narratives continue to construct the "origins" of tribal identity, reenacting the

form of discursive attachment McMaster notes is constituted by (and constitutive

of) the urban experience.

But what are the "origins" to which recovery narratives return their

protagonists? Following from Bevis' terminology, Helen May Dennis assumes

that homing is a form of "regression," the negative counterpoint to the "lighting

out" and "moving on" she sees as characteristic of texts like Janet Campbell

Hale's *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* and Betty Louise Bell's *Faces in the Moon*.

Others, like Mark Shackleton or Robert Silberman, take the more representative

route of reading the "regression" of homing positively, yet they too assume that

homing protagonists end "**where** as well as **when** [they] began" (Bevis 24).

Homecoming in such a reading is a coming back rather than a moving forward, a

conclusion based on the inherently progressivist logic characteristic of non-Native

criticism on homing and the development of the genre.[8] Acknowledging the

problematics of recovery as "regression," with all of the connotations of cultural

staticity such a characterization permits, I suggest an analysis of recovery

narratives that recognizes the flexibility of indigenous temporality. Within this

framework, the recovery of tradition is never only a return to the past, but a

reiteration of the past made present. "What sets Native American fiction apart,"

Owens observes, "is among other qualities an insistence upon the informing role

of the past within the present" (*Mixedblood* 22). Homing, while surely concerned

with recovering past traditions and ancestral locations, does not necessitate or

even desire an approach to the past and its traditions as static and unchanged by

contemporary factors. The historical "now" simultaneously extends back into the

past and forward into the future, complicating historically Euroamerican notions

of chronology and the linearity of history and time. To cite Jace Weaver, "It is

not an 'immemorial . . . and static' character that has been the strength of Native

culture and community but, rather, its lability—its 'persistence [and] vivacity' as

Natives themselves change but remain Native nevertheless" (*That* 43). It would

therefore be a mistake to assume that the desire to recover tradition is

synonymous with a desire to recapture or return to a certain period fixed in time,

for tradition is, by pan-Native definition, always in conversation with and shaped

in response to present realities. "[R]ecovery means that we transform ourselves,"

as Beth Brant says (46).

Native writers often locate the flexibility of indigenous temporality in the oral tradition, which understands and produces knowledge in a constant state of revision so that it reflects the needs and realities of multiple historical contexts. In Okanagan storytelling, for example, as Jeannette Armstrong observes, "There must be no doubt that the story is about the present and the future and the past, and that the story was going on for a long time and is going on continuously, and that the words are only mirror-imaging it having happened and while it is happening" ("Land" 194). Carolyn Dunn represents the storyteller's responsibility as itself a transformative journey of departure and return, in this way spatializing the temporal complexity of storytelling in a tribal context: "As the storyteller must go into the wilderness and bring back a story, she reforms it, gives it life, and regenerates the spiritual life of the people. She takes a story from the traditions, the spiritual center, and reforms it to suit a modern context and a modern tribe" (200). The storyteller "must face the wilderness," Dunn adds, "and . . . return a whole tribe to its traditions." While Dunn maintains tradition as a center or origin to be modernized, Gerald Vizenor follows both tribal and poststructuralist logics to dis- and re-place such a center, commenting, "Creation myths are not time bound, the creation takes place in the telling, in present-tense metaphors" (*Earthdivers* xii). Greg Sarris's analysis of orality in the stories of Pomo storyteller Mabel McKay resonates with Vizenor's perspective, revealing the constantly evolving territory of the oral tradition, a territory that forms a connective temporal tissue between generations, as well as within them: "[I]n oral discourse the context of orality covers the personal territory of those involved in

the exchange, and because that territory is so wide, extending through two or more personal, and often cultural, worlds, no one party has access to the whole of the exchange," he explains (40). "Basically," he continues, "in whatever form or manner we deal with oral texts, whether orally or literally, we continue their life in very specific ways." In the recovery narrative context, this comment can be applied to tradition more generally, as the genre continues its life in "very specific ways" and extends its location in multiple worlds—interpretive, temporal, and geographic.

Yet in a novel such as N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, it seems true that the protagonist Abel "ends **where** as well as **when** he began," as Bevis says, for the novel literally begins with the same scene with which it finishes—that of Abel running in the traditional Dawn Run subsequent to his final return home. Abel is thus always-already home in the present-tense of the novel's narration. Variations on this cyclical structure are typical of recovery narratives and are indebted to the recursive style of much oral tradition, as well as the regenerative rhythms of the natural world, what Vizenor calls "the clever turns of the seasons" (*Fugitive* 157).   But "regeneration" is the operative concept here. Return is not, in fact, "what *we*"—a white we—"call 'regressing' to a place," as Bevis postulates (16 emphasis added), for regression takes on a different meaning in the context of an indigenous temporality that resituates the past as always-already a part of the present. This is not to suggest that return is "progressive," at least not in the liberalist sense, for narratives of tribal reintegration and return stand in tension with wandering plots and their progressivist ethos, as Bevis

rightly observes. While wandering is as indigenous as homing, as I will explore, it is wandering of a different sort. Rooted in "four centuries of colonial expansion," wandering plots as Bevis defines them valorize the individual and his pioneering endeavors, telling of "leaving one's home for better opportunities in a newer land" (16). "[M]otion," Owens concurs, "is the real American dream. To be on the road indefinitely, free of roots and responsibilities to family, community, or the earth itself, is the oldest and most destructive of all American metanarratives" (*Mixedblood* 161-162). "It is not difficult," he goes on, "to see why the American Dream is one of motion, for after all that is how every European colonist came to this continent and how every new generation succeeded in further displacing the indigenous inhabitants" (163). Recovery narratives operate within a cultural schema different from that assumed by the linear temporal movement of progress and regression, and they thus trouble any effort to fix the "when" of "where" their protagonists both begin and end.

Recovery narratives contemporize tradition, thereby demonstrating the ongoing relevance and life of ancestral ways, and they often favorably depict the hybridization of the "modern" and the "traditional," but they appear to do so mainly within the context of a rural/reservation space. Thus, although "traditional" and "modern" ways of life are harmonized in the genre, as Müller has suggested, the location of their harmonization remains aligned with the "traditional." And the city, aligned with the "modern," is most often depicted as an alienating, assimilative space. In Richard Wagamese's *Keeper 'N Me*, for example, the protagonist Garnet Raven denies his indigenous heritage and

assumes a series of alternative identities, including that of a black hipster, in an

attempt to fit into the city. "[S]wallowed up in the influence of the outside"

(129)—an urban outside, not coincidentally—Garnet's hyperbolic performances

(indeed, the way in which he performs identity verges on the cartoonish) bespeak

the alienation and loss of identity he has experienced as someone fostered-out of

his indigenous community as a child. The novel tells the story of Garnet's return

home to the White Dog reservation in Ontario, where his birth mother and

extended family live, and the subsequent journey he takes on the "red road" to

discover/recover his identity as an Ojibway man (307): "It's been five years since

I came home along that bumpy as hell gravel road," Garnet reflects at the novel's

end, "and I'm still a tourist. Got a good guide though. Got a good guide," he

says, referring to Keeper, the Elder who continues to instruct him in the ways of

his people. "We spend a lotta time going over those old teachings . . . and it's

funny because there's always this feeling coming up inside me . . . that

somewhere, sometime I heard it all before. Like it's not so much being taught to

me as reawakened. Rekindled. Like I sat by that fire before. . . . Firekeepers.

Tourists. All of us" (308). In this passage, Wagamese recalls the idea of

trans/historical cultural memory, what N. Scott Momaday has famously called

"memory in the blood," at the same time as he suggests, as does the novel's Chief

Issac, that being a traditional Indian requires "workin' hard at bein' one" (298).

Identity in Wagamese's novel is both indelible and in the process of becoming: it

is the fire that remains and the kindling necessary to its continuance.

Shackleton describes Wagamese's novel as "programmatic," citing it as an example of the "simplest level" of "'bringing-them-home' fiction" (159), but my analysis shows the novel's depiction of recovery to be much more complex. In a passage depicting the feast held in honour of his spiritual growth, Garnet is gifted a traditional Ojibway ribbon shirt made out of the "balloon-sleeved yellow shirt [he] had on the day [he] arrived at White Dog. The sleeves were cut back regular, the long pointed collar was gone and the ribbons ran across the chest and back and down the arms" (301). He is also given "a tanned buckskin jacket with really beautiful flowered beadwork across the back," which is lined with the "lime green trousers [he'd] worn with that yellow shirt" (302). The shirt and trousers are remnants of Garnet's disco-era urban hipster days, when he wore his hair in a "sixty buck permed Afro" and "adopt[ed] . . . the strut and mannerisms" of his "downtown brown" friend Lonnie (34). His mother explains the rationale behind the gifts: "Our way got built onto the way you had to grow up. Where you come from is always gonna be part of where you go now. See?" (301). Affirming his indigenous belonging, she says, "You're one of us now. Always gonna be no matter what or where you might go. . . . Them twenty years? Gone now. You're home in our hearts" (300). Wagamese here weaves a nexus of ideas concerning identity and belonging. Ojibway tradition, metaphorized in the gifts Garnet receives, is hybridized with the "modern" past of his experience, and identity and belonging are figured as geographically mobile, something carried throughout the rest of life's journeys. Whether we interpret "where [Garnet] come[s] from" to be the city, or White Dog, or both, Wagamese suggests that Ojibway identity is a

complex of influences, both past and present. Interestingly, Garnet's past, albeit only the shallow past of his individual experience, is an urban experience, which is then tailored by the "present" of tradition—which is simultaneously a deep, cultural past. This subversion of temporal location not only stresses the contemporariness of tradition, but also lends a certain historical depth and weight to what we might assume is the superficiality of Garnet's "contemporary," urban experience. In the same literary moment, however, there exists the possibility that the twenty plus years of this experience can be erased—that those twenty-plus years are "gone now," as his mother says. While the point being made in this moment is, quite plainly, that there is no distance between Garnet and his mother, that the years of their separation are naught to the closeness they now share, there remains a productive tension in the novel between the enduring impact of displacement and its expunction. In addition, while Wagamese's work is committed to the idea that Nativeness is geographically mobile, an idea his autobiographical recovery narrative *For Joshua* revisits, *Keeper 'N Me* nonetheless sustains the idea that the *place* to which Garnet returns is indispensable to the recovery of his Ojibway identity.

In its emphasis on the importance of place to identity, Wagamese's novel typifies the central concern of recovery narratives, be they traditional, in Owen's sense, realist or postmodern. Neal McLeod elucidates the centrality of land to culture: "[C]ollective memory emerges from a specific location, spatially and temporally, and includes such things as . . . ceremonies, language, and stories" (qtd. in Shackleton 157). Land, Mark Shackleton explains of Mcleod's argument,

is both "a specific location and . . . a resource from which communal values . . . spring" (157). While the connection between Native peoples and places is a ubiquitous assumption in the criticism of Native literature—so much so, in fact, that the idea of indigenous peoples as intimately connected to their natural surroundings has become facile and stereotypic—it is not uncommon for critics to assume that postmodern and poststructuralist Native writers such as Vizenor, Alexie, or Thomas King are invested in exploring "identity" and "culture" over land issues. In the performatively enacted split between "cosmopolitanist" and "nationalist" perspectives, critics position Native writers of the former group, which includes the postmodernist writers above, as less concerned with home in its geopolitical dimension, and more concerned with the linguistic and cultural aspects of Native identity. An example can be found in Shackleton's analysis of "spatial diaspora" and "ideological diaspora," concepts coined by McLeod to refer, respectively, to "the removal of an Indigenous group from their land" and the "alienation from one's own stories" (Shackleton 157). "Certainly," Shackleton advances, "the physical removal from the land (spatial diaspora) has been the historical experience of all Native North Americans, but today most Native writers would appear to be primarily concerned with ideological diaspora, often implicitly with the preservation of cultural traditions, rather than with spatial diaspora in the sense of longing to return to a particular tribal homeland" (157). But the separation of spatial and ideological diaspora such criticism encourages ignores the interdependence of land and culture, rehearsing the very split between the two that nationalist thinkers such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn have critiqued for

obfuscating indigenous title to the land. In my view, the field's articulation of the land/culture split in relation to the nationalist/cosmopolitanist binary is not indicative of indigenous concerns *per se*. Rather, this split is the product of a predominantly white critical fascination and comfort with problematizing indigenous identity specifically as it relates to colonial paradigms, and a discomfort with analyzing the geopolitics of Native literature, perhaps because it might trouble their—our—attachment to the North American land base. Recovery narratives of all literary types are united by a fundamental concern with land and the relationship between place and indigenous identity. "Issues of sovereignty," Inés Hernandez-Avila makes clear, "are intimately interwoven with issues pertaining to the land(base) of each people," and "[e]ven when native . . . activists no longer reside on their ancestral landbases, and many still do, they continue to defend the tribal sovereignty of their own communities as well as the communities of other indigenous peoples" (172).

"Transmotion": Indigenous Histories of Journeying and Return

In *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter*, Janet Campbell Hale remembers as curious a non-Native student who thought it "'unfair' that Indians had to live on reservations" (xix). It took her a few minutes, she reflects, "to figure out that the student thought Indians were forced to live on reservations the same way that people in South Africa had been." After dismissing the parallel (ironically, considering that the apartheid system was in fact modeled on the North American reservation system [McMaster 19]), she pauses to consider: "And that is sort of the way it was in the beginning. Indians had to give up buffalo

hunting and root gathering and all the rest and stay put" on the reservation. Now, however, "[t]he government would like nothing better . . . than to abolish the reservations and get all our tribes to disband, to get rid of us. Only the reservation is our landbase, our home, and we don't want to let go of it" (xx). Hale's observation that the reservation system was a means of making Indians "stay put" resonates with countless parallels made in Native North American writing between the reservation and the prison, the title of Howard Adams' seminal *Prison of Grass* being one obvious example. "Although it may be difficult to view these places as prisons," as Hale's initial surprise at such a characterization indicates, "at one time Indian people [in Canada] needed special passes to leave the reserve boundaries" (McMaster 19), and in the United States, Gerald Vizenor notes, "federal *indian* agents authorized natives to travel outside the reservations" (*Fugitive* 198). Hale's observation also resonates verbatim with Bevis' analysis of the way in which homing plots valorize "staying put," a congruence that underscores the historical conditions through which homing, as expressed in recovery narratives, takes shape as a desire to return to the reservation—rather than, say, a wider or more migratory ancestral homeland. While, for Bevis, the "primary good" of "staying put" is a cultural trait of Native writing, juxtaposing his analysis with Hale's reveals the geopolitical conditions productive of this "trait," thus disrupting an essentialist reading. As a home space, the reservation is replete with ambiguous meaning: it is home, the seat of recovery, at the same time as it carries in its borders the history of containment, displacement, and the cession of traditional territories. Gerald McMaster, curator of the art exhibit

Reservation X, elucidates the productivity of this tension: "For most contemporary aboriginal peoples the reserve is, was or will be home. It is a negotiated space set aside for Indian people by oppressive colonial governments to isolate them, to extricate them from their cultural habits, and to save them from the vices of the outside world. Paradoxically," he continues, "isolation helped maintain aboriginal languages and many other traditional practices. The reserve continues to be an affirming presence despite being plagued by many historical uncertainties" (19).

In his analysis of the reservation in recent Native Canadian literature, Müller observes that "for the vast majority of these [First Nations] peoples, a (semi-) nomadic lifestyle would have been the norm originally. . . . [T]he fixed space/habitat of the reservation was or is quite unnatural" (1). Traditionally, indigenous communities "learned to exploit the seasonal diversity of their environment by practicing mobility: their communities characteristically *refused to stay put*. English fixity sought to replace Indian mobility" (Cronon qtd. in Vizenor *Fugitive* 184 emphasis added). Quoting Cronon, Vizenor elaborates, "Natives moved from 'habitat to habitat to find maximum abundance through minimal work, and so reduce impact on the land,'" while the "English lived in permanent settlements and 'improved' the land. 'The struggle,'" Cronon concludes, "'was over two ways of living and using the seasons of the year, and it expressed itself in how two peoples conceived of property, wealth, and boundaries on the landscape'" (qtd. in Vizenor 184). "Home" for such a mobile population was just that—mobile, and in the sense not only of an expansive geographic

location, but also a conceptual flexibility—the absence of "settlement," at least in the European sense. While recovery narratives convey the legacy of the reservation through their protagonists' return *home* to a territorially specific locale (most often the reservation), the genre's requisite journey carries, in translated form, the history of mobility as a mode of residence. Whereas Bevis argues that "mobility in time and space" is the purview of whites and is an indication that they have "left their past behind" (21), mobility in recovery narratives is fundamental to the recovery of Native tradition. Mobility is as distinctly "Native" as coming home—indeed, the two movements cannot really be separated. Mobility is not necessarily indicative of an increasing distance from one's past; in fact, it is a means of approaching and re-tracing the footsteps of the past. Homing, then, to borrow Gerald Vizenor's language, is the "remembrance of motion and sovereignty" (*Fugitive* 185).

Given the historical reality of (semi-) nomadism for many Native communities, there is something of the traditional past represented in the series of migrations, departures, and returns characteristic of recovery narratives. Clearly, not all indigenous peoples were nomadic; many southwestern groups were farmers. Yet even within the agricultural settlement system of the Pueblo people, for example, the population was relatively mobile, having not only permanent villages but seasonal sites.[9] Other nations have diverse histories of hunting, gathering, and trapping, (pre-contact) practices of seasonal circulation that responded in various ways to the exigencies of colonial settlement and, in many cases, have continued into the present-day. "Most of our [Anishnabe] history's

about fishing, hunting and trapping on accounta that's what we do," explains Wagamese's Garnet Raven. "Or at least that's what we did before 'the settlement of North America' as the books say. Nowadays," he continues, "there's still a lotta that happening but no one's making a living off it anymore" (*Keeper* 8). Providing another example of the shifting patterns of semi-nomadic living in relation to European settlement, Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* explores the fur trade system of the James Bay area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, illustrating the changes wrought by a mercantilist economy to the James Bay Cree. Living in small hunting camps over the winter, the Cree of this area traditionally reunited for the summer in temporary villages and festival grounds, where they "[told] each other stories about their life in the bush during the winter" (Bird 176). In the fur trade era, however, the trading post functioned as the hub of exchange around which the Cree settled in permanent townships like Moose Factory, the setting for part of Boyden's novel.[10]

The impact of fur trade economics on indigenous locomotion is also explored in the novels of Ruby Slipperjack, all of which take place in the northern Ontario Ojibway communities that cropped up around the Canadian National Railway (CNR). The CNR functions as a character in Slipperjack's works. All four novels, *Honour the Sun*, *Silent Words*, *Little Voice*, and *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones*, are emplotted in relation to the multiple journeys of their protagonists, and trains are the means through which the departures and returns of these characters take place. In *Little Voice*, trains are an ironic mode of transportation by way of which the protagonist journeys away from her ostensible

home in town and back to her true—although not her first—home, which is in the bush with her Grandmother.[11] Trains in *Honour the Sun*, Slipperjack's first novel, signify both the corruption of the community—via the alcohol and other implements of white culture thereby brought into the community—and the impending unknown of the residential school experience. Although the train brings the protagonist Owl home at the novel's conclusion, it is only for a visit, and earlier in the novel, it is the mechanism through which she is taken away to residential school and then moves to the city. Trains in this novel threaten Native lives, literally. Bespeaking her desire to replace the mechanical movement of industrial society with autochthonous mobility, Owl meditates, "The railway line and alcohol-related accidents take so many lives. . . . I think dully that I should straighten the cross on Tony's grave . . . but my feet won't move me forward. Tony died trying to jump on a moving freight train last year. I want to run" (209). In *Silent Words*, the protagonist Danny's train travel away from familial abuse, associated with town living, is eventually replaced by other, more traditional modes of travel—canoeing, portaging, and bush travel—which metaphorize and compliment his "return home" to a more traditional life in the bush.[12] As Renate Eigenbrod comments of the train in this novel, "If it cannot be seen or heard, it can be smelled. Associated with the need for money, with the absence of home-cooked meals, with the police, and with the fear of getting caught, it serves as a constant reminder of Danny's homelessness, of his search and longing for his mother, in short, of his trauma. . . . The fear and despair that Danny experiences on his train rides," she concludes, "give way to feelings of belonging, trust, and

safety in his camping trip with 'a grandfather' who teaches him how to survive the Native way" (86). Importantly, however, in *Honour the Sun*, the tracks form the lifeline of the community, a moving center through which the community takes shape, for better or for worse, and Owl stays connected to her homeland.

The complexity of the train in Slipperjack's oeuvre, as a signifier of European settlement and a means of indigenous community, reflects the history of the CNR and its impact on the Ojibway people of northwestern Ontario, who migrated from their more northern reserves to live near the rail-lines and founded "numerous non-reserve Native settlements . . . between Long Lac and Sioux Lookout" (Hedican 16). Edward J. Hedican elaborates the history of this migration: soon after "[t]he Canadian National Railway (CNR) was completed through northern Ontario in 1911 . . . a series of stores and trading posts were established at various rail-line locations." By the 1940s,

> Indian trappers from such places as Fort Hope, Ogoki, and Landsdowne
> were bringing their furs down to trade at rail-line stores in increasingly
> large numbers. . . . Churches were constructed at a number of these rail-
> line locations which, along with the store and railway crews, provided a
> nexus for the incipient non-reserve settlement. Schools were eventually
> built in the early 1960's [the time in which *Honour the Sun* is set] and
> many families constructed log cabins along the line, moving back and
> forth between these cabins and their trap lines. (16)

The Ojibway were later unable to return to their original reserve lands "for various reasons, the most important of which is that these reserves themselves

[were] already overcrowded" (22). New communities and homelands (technically on Crown land, making the people "squatters") grew up around the CNR, which became the "only full time source of employment for the community" (19). The ambivalent relationship Slipperjack constructs between the Ojibway and the CNR, in which the railway is the source of home and simultaneously the site of its loss, metaphorizes the way in which the CNR functioned both to displace and re-root/route northern Ontario Ojibway peoples in/to new communities. The movements of Slipperjack's protagonists via the rail-line mimic and recall the migrations of their ancestors both away from and towards diverse home spaces.

The above examples demonstrate that "indigenous motion," to cite Owens on mobility as a mode of indigenous being (*Mixedblood* 164), continues in the (post) reservation era, continuously reformulated in relation to mercantilist economies that both depend on the "trappings" of nomadic living and attempt to curtail this mode of existence. It is much too simple to argue for an artificial distinction between "pre" and "post" contact and/or reservation forms of indigenous motion, and yet, it remains important to strike this distinction strategically to emphasize the geopolitical restrictions Euroamericans have forced upon Native peoples. Whether characterized by nomadic or agricultural subsistence economies, when unhindered by colonial strictures, the indigenous peoples of the Americas surely enjoyed a liberty of movement far greater than they were "allowed" in the post-contact period, a period which has been and continues to be characterized by various forms of geopolitical restriction and imprisonment—slavery; the division, allotment, and loss of communal land; the

reservation system; enforced agriculturalism; residential schools; and incarceration. To make this argument is not to obfuscate the ways in which indigenous peoples "settled"—or, more accurately, left their own kind of mark on—the land, to recall Owens' important discussion of the subject in *Mixedblood Messages* (218-236): "No one who is not exceptionally naïve," he argues, "would argue that the Pre-Columbian inhabitants of this continent left no imprint upon their environment" (223). Nor is it to romanticize, through a liberalist notion of individual freedom, indigenous migrations, many of which were linked to the vagaries and hardships of community subsistence living, and some of which were the result of violent displacement at the hands of other indigenous groups.[13] Given such contexts, it is important to recognize the inherent sovereignty—the transmotion and tragic wisdom, as Gerald Vizenor would say—to be found or recovered in histories of displacement. Even my too-brief reading of Slipperjack's novels looks to such continuing indigenous movement in the context of displacement. The historical weight of migration in an indigenous context, as an agential act tied to ancestral movements, yet equally bound up with colonial strictures, is key to an analysis of the recovery narrative genre as a performative reiteration of historic displacements, geocultural customs, and literary/mythological traditions. While the journey in a recovery narrative surely takes the protagonist away from home, displacing him or her from the seat of recovery and rehearsing prior and coterminous collective displacement, it is also a facet of this recovery. This is so not only in that going away is necessary to coming back, but also in that the journey is itself a homecoming of sorts, an echo

of the movements of the ancestral past, be they subsistence-based, traumatic, historic, or literary, as well as a supplement.

My contextualization of the homing journey in Slipperjack's oeuvre gestures toward the need for a comprehensive study of the way in which recovery literature reflects and re-historicizes the forced relocations and diasporas of indigenous communities in the context of Euroamerican settlement. Chapter two further pursues the work I begin here, analyzing the protagonist's individual journey, in *Slash* (Jeannette Armstrong) and *Indian Killer* (Sherman Alexie), as a repetition compulsion of sorts, a traumatic and performative reiteration of collective historic displacements. The journeys taken in recovery texts are never free from the deep sense of pain, loss, and alienation that propels their chronic occurrence. Recovery protagonists are lost—alienated or displaced from their home/land and community—and their journeys are complex metaphorizations of their attempts to negotiate this loss, while often paradoxically reinscribing it. Representing the *a priori* displacement of (post) colonial indigenous peoples in an always-already occupied homeland, these protagonists sometimes find themselves removed from "home" without, in fact, ever having been there. This is the case in *Keeper 'N Me* and *Indian Killer*, novels that depict the removal of children from homes they never knew—and, in *Indian Killer*, will never know. It is also the case in Slipperjack's *Little Voice*, where the protagonist's true home in the bush is, in fact, a home she never knew before returning there.

Native North American history is, of course, replete with compulsory relocations, and these relocations inform the stories of loss conveyed in recovery

narratives: the Trail of Tears, which I take up in chapter two, is an archetypal example of such a relocation, while others, like the Green Lake Métis dispersal in Saskatchewan, are less well known. Maria Campbell explains to Hartmut Lutz that, in 1948, Métis people living on road allowance land near Regina, Saskatchewan were told "that they had to move . . . because the government was giving them land in Green Lake. . . . There were five farms set aside in Saskatchewan in the 1940s, and the people were told it was a land settlement for them" (44). Describing the dehumanizing conditions the people were made to endure during the move, she relates, "[A] train came with box cars, actually cattle cars, and the people were loaded up . . . [and] as the train pulled out, their village was burned behind them." She adds: "They were not allowed off the train that whole trip, and there were no facilities for them, or anything. And it was November, so it was cold." Promises made to the people regarding provisions turned out, in the end, to be lies: "And they were told that there would be houses when they arrived, but there were no houses. And so, a lot of people lived in tents all winter, with their families. . . . A lot of people got sick and died, just from flu, and pneumonia, and other diseases" (44-45). Campbell writes of these events in "The Road Allowance People," a script for a four-part television series (44-45), and along with other, similar displacements in Métis history, the dispersal also finds expression, I would argue, in her autobiography *Halfbreed*. *Halfbreed* echoes the plight of cultural ancestors forced to move with their families under government pressure, for it chronicles Campbell's attempt to save her brothers and sisters from government "protection" (that is, from being removed from their

home) by getting married and moving away. Eventually losing her siblings, she moves with her abusive husband to Vancouver, where she falls into a life of addiction and must temporarily give up her own children. The journeys are taken for different reasons, but the results of leaving home are roughly the same: the Green Lake people, Campbell tells us, were "scattered" and "never the same," relocating back home in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to rebuild their communities (Lutz 45). Maria, too, ends up scattered, both psychologically and geographically, coming home only to realize that home no longer exists as it once did—the people are "gone," the shops "torn down," the "land . . . changed" (*Halfbreed* 1-2). Interestingly, such descriptions of the land can be read to return it, in a way, to its "natural state," and as Campbell invokes the discourse of the vanishing Indian through her diction, she renders the impact of settlement simultaneously less and more visible. In one sense, then, she recovers the land, and thus her home, as it was prior to the Northwest Rebellion, which the text marks as an end point in her people's "roaming, free life" (7). This reading underscores not only the inextricability of recovery and loss, but also the way in which the story of an individual's displacement is, in a recovery narrative, the story of her community's displacement. Campbell herself says as much, explaining that the script for "The Road Allowance People" took "the oral stories of all the people, and all the dispersals, and [gave] it to one community, and one particular family" (Lutz 45). The same is true for her autobiographical text.[14]

 While maintaining my analysis of the journey as an attempt to escape from and resolve the trauma of dislocation, a dislocation reiterated through the

protagonist's leave-taking, I would like to revisit the idea that recovery narratives

contain the trace of ancestral migrations. The spiritual quests and mythic journeys

of Native North American peoples and literary traditions are informed by

conditions other, in addition to, and more complex than colonial displacement

alone. Like Wagamese's *Keeper 'N Me*, whose narrative structure is modeled on

the traditional Ojibway spiritual practice of the vision quest, which its protagonist

undertakes within the novel, Tomson Highway's novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

reiterates the plot of the Cree-Ojibway hero myth "Son of Ayash." The myth is

retold in the novel both as a story passed on from a Cree father to his sons,

Jeremiah and Gabriel Okimasis, and as a play-text later written by Jeremiah and

performed by his brother. Significantly, in the world outside the novel, *Son of

Ayash* was a dramatic production mounted by the Toronto-based theatre company

Native Earth Performing Arts Inc. in its 1990/91 season, when Highway was

artistic director. "[A]dapted from the oral storytelling tradition of the Cree-

Ojibway," the play, Jennifer Preston explains, "was originally to have been

directed by Rene Highway [Tomson's brother], who had died in October 1990.

Son of Ayash was presented as a tribute to him" (153). Commonly recognized as

semi-autobiographical, *Kiss*, in its inclusion of the myth, can be read as a further

form of tribute. *Son of Ayash* is a story of travel, which tells of "a young man

who falls into disfavor with his father and is sent out into the wilderness. He

enters the spirit world and encounters various monsters and anti-heros, all of

whom he defeats with physical strength and magical power" (Preston 153-54).

Thus participating in the oral tradition, Highway invokes this myth in his novel as

a narrative framework through which to tell the story of Jeremiah and Gabriel, who, like the Son of Ayash, must encounter "monsters"—in this context, disguised as residential school priests—in the metaphorical "wilderness" of the colonial spaces to which they travel. Highway here indigenizes a story of colonial displacement by telling it through the framework of a traditional narrative, and, as Greg Sarris might say, he thereby "continue[s] [the] life" (40) of this narrative in a way reflective of the material conditions of its (continued) telling. He also, in a sense, keeps his brother alive to see the play staged, an important symbolic act evidencing the strength of his brother (and Gabriel), even though they both die of AIDS-related causes. Not all recovery narratives contain within them stories of the migrations or spiritual journeys they themselves continue, but I would suggest considering the informing presence of such ancestral journeys even in texts where they are not explicitly embedded. To do so is to acknowledge the continuing influence of the ancestral past on the present moment, an important critical act, for as Owens has reminded us, "What sets Native American fiction apart is among other qualities an insistence upon the informing role of the past within the present" (*Mixedblood* 22).

Many indigenous spiritual and literary traditions are structured according to the pattern of departure, journey, and return that continues to inform the production of contemporary recovery narratives. Recovery narratives are performative in this sense, in that they both replay ancestral traditions and, through this reiteration, call these traditions into continued, ever-changing being. In addition to those offered via Wagamese's and Highway's novels, there are

many examples of a Native literary tradition of journeying, "Beyond Yonder," an Anishnabe legend told and translated by Basil Johnston, being one such example. Because the narrative is in a book of "myths and legends," and because it contains markers of previous tellings, such as "I once came upon a story" (13) and "it's said" (14), I assume it to be part of the oral tradition. Yet in traditional fashion, it is also a contemporary story with a message for contemporary peoples. Not only does the legend illustrate the centrality of land to indigenous identity, but it is both a precedent for and a part of the contemporary recovery tradition: it simultaneously precedes the genre, partakes of it, and re-traditionalizes the genre by reading it back into the form of a legend, thus prompting us to revisit the complexity of homing temporality. The legend tells of two Anishnabe men who, because they "despised the district where they lived," convince the rest of their community to migrate with them to the "absolutely beautiful" land beyond, to the west (13). Although they travel to a vast number of territories, all look "wretched" (14), and they fail to find the "remarkably pleasing" land for which they have been searching (16). They finally encounter Nanabush, the Anishnabe culture-hero, who tells them that the land of plenty which they seek is, in fact, the land they left behind. "That being the case," the narrator concludes, "they came back, these people, and when they were once more at home they saw that what Nanabush had said was indeed true. It might seem that it was for nothing that they had wandered so far abroad, but it is said that not until they returned to it did they cherish their own land" (17). The legend's conclusion constructs the meaning of its introductory narrative frame: "The following does not apply to just

one Anishinaubae," the narrator begins, "but to all, every single one. There is no question that it is necessary for them to return to the way that they used to worship, to again take up their ancient way of believing. At that time they will survive; they will prosper" (13). What is this "ancient way," one is led to ask. It exists on two levels, the first being the legend itself, an "ancient way" that espouses another: the return home to a particular land-base. However, the prescription of home as the seat of tradition to which one must return is complicated by the fact that Ojibway history is a history of migrations and dispersals. In fact, according to Edward Benton-Banai's version of the Ojibway creation story, vast migrations have been a part of Ojibway existence since its very beginning. This is so both in the many storied travels of Nanabush and in the migrations of the Ojibway people "from their original homeland on the eastern shores of North America" (Benton-Banai 1), near the St. Lawrence Sea Way, west to what is now Northern Michigan, Northern Wisconsin, Northern Minnesota, Southern Ontario, and further west to Manitoba and Northern Montana (Fortier par. 3). The notion of an originary homeland to which one might return is thus endlessly complicated, and to this complexity, Johnston's legend adds another layer, for it depicts wandering as useful *in and of itself*. It is not, as the legend insists, "for nothing" (17); instead, it is a mode of recovery, both in the sense that it attends a return home and in the sense that it *is* that return, a tracing of ancestral migrations. The tradition to be recovered, then, in the context of pre-colonial migrations and post-colonial homelands, is the necessarily bifurcated tradition of

homing *and* wandering, a tradition productively torn between "staying put" and "lighting out," to use Bevis' designations.

In an Okanagan context, to cite another salient example of the Native literary tradition of journeying, stories about the travels of the trickster figure Coyote are "a record of the natural laws our [Okanagan] people learned in order to survive" (Maracle et al. *We* 1). Narratives about migration therefore educate the people about the customs and codes of their society, and they carry the history of the people's survival, providing a map for continued cultural survivance. Reflecting the movement of storied entities like Coyote, traditional Okanagan storytellers "moved around from community to community and family to family. They were travelers," relates Jeannette Armstrong, who creates one such storyteller in Tommy Kelasket, the protagonist of her novel *Slash*. "I guess you could say they studied life and all the goings-on of people," Armstrong adds. "They mixed with people, listened to them, continuously. . . . The last storyteller that we had, Harry Robinson, moved around continuously. He observed all the goings-on of his community, all the thinking of the people, in all different kinds of contexts" (qtd. in Freeman 14). Armstrong's comments illustrate the way in which travel is of benefit to thought and story, for it widens the conceptual ground in which theories can be tested, and it reveals the geocultural landscapes in which these ideas take root. Travel here is also a mode of understanding community.

Laverne Roberts approaches the necessity and productivity of indigenous movement from a different viewpoint, that of an urban Paiute Indian activist and organizer, but her perspective is similar to Armstrong's in its recognition of tribal

community as conceptualized, knit, and strengthened, in part, through travel.

Summarizing comments made by Roberts in a personal interview, Renya Ramirez

remarks that "Indian people travel great distances to learn from each other,"

adding that travel "can be a purposeful, exciting way to transmit culture, create

community, and maintain identity" (2). For Roberts, "a traveler is a carrier of

knowledge who catalyzes change by weaving networks of relationships across

great distances" (Ramirez 2). The locus of this change, for Ramirez, is the city,

which Roberts defines "as a collecting center, a hub of Indian peoples' new ideas,

information, culture, community and imagination that when shared back 'home'

on the reservation can impact thousands of Native Americans." Rather than

losing their cultures and communities through what some have erroneously

assumed is a "*one-way* trip" to the city (200), urban Indians *maintain* their tribal

identities, Ramirez argues, through the "unbounded network[s] of culture and

relationships" Roberts coins "hubs" (22). In this argument, the city, as hub,

becomes a *new center* in relation to which tribal "spokes"—that is, "homes"—are

maintained rather than de-centered, an argument that seems to me uniquely

indigenous. For, rather than deconstructing home, dis/locating its meaning in

difference and deferral, this argument sustains and elaborates home through (and

in) multiple centers or points of origin. Home is elaborated, not undone.

Along with Vizenor and Owens, Ramirez participates in an indigenous

intellectual tradition in which motion is a mode of Native identity and community,

a tradition that extends forward into the past. For Vizenor, the homeland seems to

inhere in the journey, rather than in relation to it, while for Ramirez, the journey

fortifies one's relationship to multiple homelands. Vizenor's concept of

transmotion is difficult to pin down, and this is the point. Through his

poststructuralist speech acts, in which meaning is constantly on the move, Vizenor

enacts the process of transmotion—"the ability and the vision to move in

imagination" (*Fugitive* 182)—through which he understands tribal sovereignty,

survivance, oral tradition, and indigenous relationships with the land. In contrast

to the "monotheistic, territorial sovereignty" of Euroamerican peoples, who

attempt to control land and peoples by marking up territory and setting out

boundaries, both geographic and discursive, transmotion as "*sui generis*

sovereignty" is a kind of différance, signifying up and down a chain of places, a

mode of identity that is relational, and "a reciprocal use of nature" (15)—a

partnership rather than an abusive relationship. "Native sovereignty is the right of

motion" (182), Vizenor emphasizes: "Sovereignty as transmotion is not the same

as the notions of indigenous treaty sovereignty; transmotion can be scorned and

denied, but motion is never granted by a government. Motion is a natural human

right that is not bound by borders. Sovereignty as transmotion is tacit, inherent,

and not the common provisions of treaties with other governments" (189).

Importantly, however, in a constitutional democracy, the right of transmotion has

been encoded in treaty sovereignty, which thus remains vital to the protection of

indigenous rights in a Euroamerican legal context. While treaties were "strategic,

national documents . . . transacted to remove natives at the close of colonial

dominance" (189), they contain a trace of native transmotion, which, in the face

of removal, proliferates native presence, opening and exceeding the treaties'

borders. In Vizenor, as in Owens, there is no "original" territorial referent in which to locate Native sovereignty; rather, sovereignty is a practice in motion, moving where and as the subject moves. Owens appropriates the concept of the "frontier," understood as an "always changing zone of multifaceted contact" (*Mixedblood* 26), to discuss the ways in which Native peoples resist the containment imposed by (discursive) "territory" and "insist upon the freedom to reimagine themselves within a fluid, always shifting frontier space" (27). For mixedbloods, the "hybridized, polyglot, transcultural frontier is quite clearly internalized," that is, constitutive of the subject.[15] Yet, "territory remains a constant threat, an essential fiction of the colonial mind. . . . From the very beginnings of European relations with indigenous Americans," Owens explains, "the goal of the colonizer has been to inhabit and erase an ever-moving frontier while shifting 'Indian' to static and containable 'territory'" (27), both tropical and geographic. "Today," he continues, "Euramerica remains involved in an unceasing ideological struggle to confine Native Americans within an essentialized territory defined by the authoritative utterance 'Indian'" (27), but "the Indian continues to 'light out' from the territory ahead of the rest toward new self-imaginings, continual fluidity, and rebirth" (28).

Owens is focused here on discursive territory, but his conclusions resonate with the relationship of Native peoples to fixed geographical territories. Appreciating his commitment to border-crossing as a mode of being-as-resistance, I am led to ask how his position squares, if it does, with the recovery narrative tradition, in which, even if we understand the journey as a mode of ancestral

continuance, it remains politically important to return to a *particular* ancestral

territory. For, as Vizenor's work implies, indigenous rights are bound up in the

very treaties and territories that work to contain and fix these rights and the people

to whom they are attached. Addressing the question of homing in his analysis of

Silko's *Ceremony*, Owens argues that "Tayo's reintegration into a coherent,

centered Pueblo world that is very carefully bounded by sacred demarcations

within the landscape suggests provocatively that . . . the Euramerican notion of a

fixed, known 'territory' imagined to contain Indians has been appropriated and

inverted" (35). "Territory" becomes, in this analysis, "a richly hybridized frontier

space" (36). Owens reads colonial territoriality back into an indigenous

framework in which the land is demarcated according to sacred functions, a

provocative maneuver that allows him, as he says, to invert and thus transgress the

"fixed, known 'territory' imagined to contain Indians" (35). This is a radical

reading, but to it I would add an analysis that takes into account Janet Campbell

Hale's understanding of the reservation as homeland and, therefore, the political

imperative of "known" territories. I would argue that it is vital to acknowledge

(colonial) territories as indigenous traditions, and to consider that attachments to

these territories (as the site of traditional identities) become increasingly

passionate in the context of colonial policies designed to sever these attachments.

In this section, I have attempted to historicize the recovery narrative genre in the

context of an extensive indigenous tradition of transmotion; in the next, I further

historicize the genre through an exploration of the neocolonial policies of

termination and relocation in relation to which the genre, as an act of political

resistance to the abrogation of Native treaty rights, arose in the 1960s and 70s.

Historicizing Recovery in the Context of Termination and Relocation

The recovery narrative genre has developed out of a Native literary

tradition of migration and homecoming that extends in multiple directions, both

temporal and territorial. This tradition can be seen in sources as wide-ranging as

select creation stories and American Indian Zionist polemic (in the work of

William Apess, for example), and is informed not only by the historical realities

of migration and subsistence nomadism, but also by the repeated trauma of

displacement. Critics have focused mainly on the aesthetic and cultural

dimensions of Native literary homing. Overlooking ancestral precedents and

limiting their study to examples of homing from the 1930s onwards, they have but

gestured toward the historical conditions productive of homing's varied

articulations. It is this task that I take up here, specifically in relation to the

recovery narrative genre. During the late 1960s, in the wake of termination and

relocation policies, the notion of recovery as homing finds particular expression

through this genre, which responds to the material conditions of the time. Then as

now, the genre inspires and promotes a nationalist agenda, voicing an "eloquent

argument against de-reservation and assimilation," as Bevis notes of homing plots

(43). Thus, while loss, alienation, and displacement are integral features of the

genre, equally integral is the trope of the recovering Native subject. A powerful

act of political resistance to assimilationist ideology, this trope came to the fore as

part of the cultural revitalization movement and the Native American Renaissance

of the late 1960s and 1970s, and is seen in classic recovery narratives of the time, such as N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, as well as later examples.[16]

My analysis of the historical conditions of the genre's development is by no means exhaustive, and each recovery narrative under consideration has its own specific conditions of production, which I will attend to, albeit in a necessarily limited fashion, in my readings of individual texts.[17] There is, however, an entrenched North American sociopolitical condition in relation to which the rise of the genre and its continued popularity make good ideological sense: displacement. As I explore in chapter two, the trauma of dislocation is trans/historical, which means, in part, that it is performatively re-enacted through and throughout different epochs, the Termination Era being one of these. The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* acknowledges dislocation as a trans/historical occurrence, commenting that contemporary government relocation of Aboriginal peoples for development or administrative purposes "must be seen as part of a broader process of dispossession and displacement, a process with lingering effects on the cultural, spiritual, social, economic and political aspects of people's lives" (Vol. 1, 412). My focus here is on the Termination Era, for dislocation in the post-war years is, in part, a function of the urbanization of Native peoples, and recovery-as-homing is inextricably bound up with the alienation of urban experience. This era carries and thus extends the trans/historical weight of prior displacements, but it is characterized specifically by the movement of Native peoples away from the reservation and towards the

city, a movement in relation to which, I propose, recovery narratives recuperate the importance of the rural/reservation, as ancestral land, to Native identity, survivance, and sovereignty.

In the United States and Canada, respectively, the period of the 1950s and 60s witnessed systemic, legislative attempts to terminate Native sovereignty, treaty rights, and communal land title, and, in the States, to remove Native peoples to the city in order to assimilate them more fully into Euroamerican society. "Ever since Indians began to be shunted to reservations," notes Vine Deloria Jr., "it has been assumed by both Indians and whites that the eventual destiny of the Indian people was to silently merge into the mainstream of American society and disappear" (*Custer* 244). In Canada, termination was proposed, but never legislated, in the White Paper of 1969, and in the United States, it was codified in 1953 as House Concurrent Resolution 108 (HCR 108). The ostensible goal of termination was the incorporation of Native peoples as equal citizens under the law of the nation; the desired outcome was different. In the American context, Deloria avers, termination functioned for Congress as "a new weapon in the ancient battle for Indian land" (55), a weapon that also served to "cut government expenditures" through the "withdrawal of federal services" (74). C.E.S. Franks concurs, emphasizing the consistency of termination with past policy: "In most of its features the termination policy embodied the hidden but real land-grab motives of the earlier allotment policy while, again like allotment, professing the more noble motives of economic advancement and

assimilation" (233). Commonly known as the Termination Act, HCR 108

declared:

> [It is] the policy of Congress, as rapidly as possible, to make the Indians
>
> within the territorial limits of the United States subject to the same laws
>
> and entitled to the same privileges and responsibilities as are applicable to
>
> other citizens of the United States, to end their status as wards of the
>
> United States and to grant them all the rights and prerogatives pertaining
>
> to American citizenship. (qtd. in Reyhner 235)

Describing the political climate of the Termination Era, Jon Reyhner and Jeanne

Eder explain that "at the end of World War II there was a renewed call to 'set the

American Indian free'" (232). The conservative Congress of the time "found that

the Indian Reorganization Act [of 1934] was forcing on the Indians a collectivist

system with bigger doses of paternalism and regimentation" (232), and "the 'final

solution' [they] came up with for the 'Indian problem' was to let the Indians

become 'free' by terminating their reservations. With termination," Reyhner and

Eder continue, "the federal trust status of the reservation would be ended and the

tribe's land and other assets would be divided up and distributed to the tribal

members" (235).[18] Stephen Cornell summarizes the agenda: "Break up the tribal

domains, . . . remove the protective arm of government, and cast the Indian into

the melting pot and the marketplace. Everyone would benefit" (qtd. in Franks

232). However, while the act "declared the intention of Congress to terminate

federal supervision" of the tribes, "supervision," as Deloria comments acerbically,

"meant services only" (*Custer* 62). And as for the shimmering promise of

citizenship, "the Citizenship Act of 1924 gave all Indians full citizenship without affecting any of their rights as Indian people. So the argument of second-class citizenship as a justification of termination is spurious from start to finish" (76).[19]

Reyhner and Eder's use of the term "final solution" aligns U.S. termination with the genocidal policies of Nazi Germany, and in so doing, calls up the Cold War rhetoric used to justify liberating Native Americans through "ethnic integration," a euphemism for termination. Surely, the irony of using the rhetoric of freedom (from genocide) to justify another genocidal policy was not lost on Native peoples. "The discourse of termination," Paul Rosier argues, "was that of the Cold War—the avowed goal was to 'liberate' the enslaved peoples of the world, who, according to American cold warriors, included Indians 'confined' in 'concentration camps' or 'socialistic environments'" (1301). In the context of a "Cold War consensus that made difference un-American," the "influential terminationist Sen. Arthur Watkins, a Republican from Utah, championed his 'Indian freedom program' with an emphatic call for liberating Native Americans from their reservation prisons" (1302). Ironically, it was Dillon Myer, the same individual who was in charge of Japanese internment camps in World War II, who "started the bureau [of Indian Affairs] on the termination trail . . . in 1950" (Deloria *Custer* 61). And so the reservation was recast by the culture that produced it as an oppressive site from which the oppressors, transformed into liberators, could—indeed, were ethically required to—"liberate" their captives. The logic of liberation was not new. It had underpinned earlier arguments for the "civilization" of Native peoples through the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887

(commonly known as the Allotment Act), which dismantled tribally-held lands by allotting them to Native individuals and then selling off the surplus to white prospectors. It also justified the missionary work of groups such as the Woman's National Indian Association, who "encroach[ed] on Native American homes and tribal communities with a 'christianization' ostensibly designed to 'hasten' Native American 'civilization . . . and enfranchisement'" (Sherer Mathes qtd. in Zackodnik 8). Dressed up as liberal inclusion in the nation-state, termination was another instance of the white man taking up his "burden": it perpetuated a version of the very oppression from which it promised freedom. This promise was, of course, equal only to the insidious promise to decollectivize tribal assets; to anti-termination resisters, termination "unilaterally stripped individual tribes of their sovereignty, without Native Americans' consent" (Rosier 1301). The law was repealed on August 24, 1970, but not before three percent of the total Indian population was terminated (Lambert 285).

A year earlier, in Canada, the Trudeau government's now infamous White Paper "proposed termination of all special treatment for Indians, including the Indian Act" (Franks 242)—indeed, the goal was to phase out the Department of Indian Affairs within five years (243). Mirroring the alleged goal of its U.S. equivalent, the White Paper "argued that equality, or nondiscrimination, would be the key to the solution of Indian problems and that special rights had been a major cause of these problems" (242). In fact, according to Temagami scholar Dale Turner, the Paper's proposals "were a calculated attempt by the federal government to 'get out of the Indian business' and level the political landscape by

unilaterally legislating Indians into extinction—and to do so as an act of justice"

(12). In his explanation of White Paper "justice," Franks argues that the proposal

signaled "a drastic shift to liberal individualism and a radical denial of group

rights . . . consistent with Prime Minister Trudeau's own political philosophy and

approach to linguistic and cultural diversity in Canada" (243). In the liberal

democratic state, where the rights of the individual were and continue to be

valued above all else, the rights of the group—in this case, specific treaty rights

and/or the rights accruing to Indian status—are not only subordinated to the rule

of the individual, but cast as the nemesis of equality; herein lies the oppressive

crux of termination. To impose the assumptions of liberal individualism (what

Turner calls "White Paper liberalism") on collectively-oriented tribal nations was

to abrogate their inherent rights and the nation-to-nation relationships through

which these rights were codified in treaties. Liberal individualism disregarded

indigenous epistemologies of community, in particular, notions of community as

inclusive of both human and non-human persons autochthonous to a particular

land base, as well as indigenous perspectives on the collective character of the

individual. In *God is Red*, Vine Deloria Jr. addresses this character, stating, "The

possibility of conceiving of an individual alone in a tribal religious sense is

ridiculous. The very complexity of tribal life and the interdependence of people

on one another makes this conception improbable at best, a terrifying loss of

identity at worst" (203). Recovery narratives can be seen as a timely response to

the annihilation of Native rights and the epistemic violence inherent in

termination: these narratives illustrate and re/imagine the necessity of community

to the recovery and continued survivance of individual Native people, and they stress the *location* of this community, that is, its situatedness in relation to the particular land of which it is a part.

Relocation was another genocidal U.S. government policy designed to do away with the "Indian problem"—namely, Indian peoples. In their Report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, an organization devoted to child and family welfare, the National Urban Indian Family Coalition (NUIFC) summarizes the history of Native American relocation and urbanization:

> Native people have resided in cities and similar settlements for hundreds of years (some before contact with Europeans), but the process of urbanization for many Native people was accelerated by the federal Indian termination and relocation policy in the 1950s and beyond. This policy led to the termination of many Indian tribes and the relocation of almost 200,000 Native people from reservations to cities and was specifically designed to end the "Indian problem" and reduce the need for the federal government to fund services for reservation-based Native people. The policy provided transportation for Native people who agreed to participate (often in the form of a one-way bus ticket) to a city that was generally a long way from their reservation. The stated goal of the relocation policy was to ensure that Native people who agreed to be relocated would build new lives in the cities. The result of the policy was that many Native people (and their descendants) never returned to their home reservation

and their sense of specific tribal identity was significantly diminished.
(12)

Reyhner and Eder echo the NUIFC's findings in one sense, noting that "Philleo

Nash, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1961 to 1966, described relocation as

'essentially a one-way bus ticket from rural to urban poverty,'" but they present a

slightly different perspective on the relationship between relocation and return,

proposing that "relocated Indians often had great difficulty adjusting to urban life

and frequently returned home" (236). Urban living, in both cases, is positioned as

antithetical to the maintenance, and surely the cultivation, of tribal identity and

custom.

Although there was no federally mandated effort to relocate Native people

in Canada, as there was for twenty years in the States, urban relocation due to

various economic and social pressures was a transnational Native experience.

Joan Weibel-Orlando calls the transition of Native peoples from rural to urban

spaces a "truly . . . North American phenomenon" (493). In Canada of the 1960s,

Nancy Janovicek notes, "settlement patterns of First Nations peoples . . . began to

change radically. In 1966, 80 percent of the Aboriginal population still lived on

reserve, but by 1991, 49.5 percent of the Aboriginal population lived in towns and

cities" (548). The year 1966 was, in fact, a significant one in Canadian Indian

policy, with the release of the precursor to the White Paper, the Hawthorn Report,

which was, according to Neu and Therrien, "a blueprint for rendering Native

people indistinguishable from their non-Native counterparts" (123). Significantly,

one of the explicit assumptions of this blueprint for "constructing the economic

viability of the Indigenous community" was "the natural goodness of industrial

urbanization and the destined demise of reserve life." The solution to the

"economic ill health of the reserves," the Hawthorn Commission reported, was

"vocational training and job placement services on a massive scale . . . [and]

special assistance [that is, 'financial and other support'] to those who choose to

work off reserve" (Hawthorn Report qtd. in Neu and Therrien 124). Although in

Canada, as the Report itself notes, "there is no law or regulation . . . which can

force Indians to leave their reserve community" (124), the push to leave and the

supports to do so were clearly in evidence, and as in the United States, the push

was motivated by settler economics: "The more civilized they [the Native peoples

of Canada] became, the less they would cost the government" (Neu and Therrien

112).

       While termination and relocation served settler aims, the way in which

these policies were viewed by Native people at the time was far from uniform.

Indeed, some Native Americans backed termination and relocation—or, perhaps

more accurately, deemed them pragmatic—because of the dire economic

conditions on many reservations: "According to the Navajo Tribal Council

member Sam Gorman, who supported relocation in 1953, there was 'no hope of

making a decent living under any conditions' on the reservation" (Reyhner 238).

From the perspective of pro-termination advocates, Valerie Lambert explains, it

was hoped that termination would provide "immediate economic relief" to the

people (288). Choctaw scholar Clara Sue Kidwell elucidates the "enticement" of

termination: "Tribal members found individual advantage in the per capita

payment [that would result from the decollectivization of their tribe's wealth] . . . and it seems that individualism . . . supplanted the notion of communal property" (qtd. in Reyhner 289). Tribal support of termination, Lambert emphasizes, was defined by Congress "as a near requirement for termination" (289), but as Deloria clarifies, "consent" was often "forced" (*Custer* 63). In sum, any discussion of the ills of termination and relocation must recognize indigenous agency and its intersection with the majority culture's aims, for to acknowledge the complex material conditions undergirding Native responses to these policies is to nuance one's understanding of Native peoples as their "victims."

Whether or not Native individuals and families returned to the reservation after urban relocation, it is clear that the alienation of relocation and displacement in an urban setting precipitated, in many cases, the desire for return—and the enactment of this return, either literally or literarily. In suggesting this, I am not proposing a psychobiographical approach to recovery narratives. Whether or not a given recovery narrative author had the experience of urban alienation, the then-contemporary equation of the city with a loss of tribal identity, and the contextualization of urban relocation in a larger history of colonial displacement, inevitably informed the shape and ideological aspirations of the writing these authors produced. The urban experience of Native peoples, both during relocation and in the present, carries the historical weight of neo/colonial displacement, and the homing impulse, whether expressed in practice or on paper, necessarily resists and rewrites the goal of such displacement: assimilation, defined specifically as the erasure of difference.

Recovery narratives rewrite the "solution" of individualism as an experience of extreme alienation and emphasize the necessity of the collective and its land to Native survivance. To write homing as necessary to recovery is to make an inviolable case for the necessity of specific lands to the survivance of Native peoples physically, culturally, and nationally, as distinct and sovereign peoples. Conversely, to write the urban experience—or, more broadly, time away from home—as not only alienating, but a form of cultural genocide, is to provide a deeply persuasive analysis of the devastation wrought by termination and relocation. Taking up the responsibility of Indian writers, which, according to Simon Ortiz, is to "advocate [via literature] for their people's self-government, sovereignty, and control of land and natural resources" (qtd. in Holm 248), recovery narratives advance a sophisticated nationalist position regularly concerned with the issues Ortiz enumerates. These narratives are "communitist," to use Jace Weaver's neologism, which combines the words "community" and "activism," in that they have "a proactive commitment to Native community, including what I term the 'wider community' of Creation itself," Weaver explains. "[T]o promote communitist values," he continues, "means to participate in the healing of the grief and sense of exile felt by Native communities and the pained individuals in them" (*That* xiii). Communitism depends upon an appreciation of the "linkage of land and people within the concept of community," a linkage foregrounded in recovery narratives, which "reflect[s] the spatial orientation of Native peoples." He describes the trauma of displacement: "When Natives are removed from their traditional lands, they are robbed of more than territory; they

are deprived of numinous landscapes that are central to their faith and identity, lands populated by their relations, ancestors, animals and beings both physical and mythological. A kind of psychic homicide is committed" (38). Recovery discourse is, as an expression of communitism, both a form of discursive resistance to neocolonial policy and a means of restoring the relational nexus in which Native identities take particular shape.

Recovery as a (literary) discourse and movement was rooted in the larger hotbed of political activism and nationalist "identity-sharpening" of the 1960s and 70s. In a context of conformity and anticommunism, as Paul Rosier avers, American Indians were "attacked in the name of . . . a Cold War consensus that made difference un-American" (1302). They responded by "sharpen[ing] their identities," emphasizing rather than downplaying their differences from the majority society, both as geopolitical bodies and as cultures. Among innumerable factors that informed the nationalism and cultural revitalization of the period was the passing in 1968 of the Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA), which "imposed on tribal governments many of the Bill of Rights provisions and other limitations as well" (Robertson par. 4).[20] Congruent with termination-era liberalism, this statute prioritized individual civil rights, thus severely limiting the scope and power of tribal sovereignty in America—specifically, tribal governments—and continuing to implement, in principle if not in fact, the goals of termination. It is, therefore, no surprise that by the early 1970s, as Vine Deloria relates, the emerging Indian activism of the mid-1960s exploded into "a tidal wave of protest," commonly known through its most popular grassroots expression, the American Indian

Movement (AIM). AIM, as Peter Matthiessen claims, was a "direct result of the termination and relocation policies" (53). Burgeoning in the wake of the American Civil Rights Movement, and "at the height of anticolonial insurrection around the globe" (Miner 4), AIM "developed in tandem" with Black nationalism (7), and like other "power groups," to cite Donna Hightower Langston's term for radical anti-colonial groups in the United States (qtd. 10), it focused "not on the notion of individual civil rights, but rather on collective communal empowerment" (13). As the influence of Black Power was felt in the Black Arts Movement of the time, so its Red counterpart was felt in the Native American Renaissance, and particularly, I would argue, in the development of the recovery genre.

Victoria Bomberry discusses the "strain of Native American nationalism that . . . grew out of the American Indian movement in the 1960s" (29), observing that "[t]here was a massive push in the language of the Red Power movement to go home again, to reclaim tribal purity and a return to original law" (30). The literary trope of homing figuratively transliterates the push Bomberry describes. Following Cheryl Suzack, who argues that analyses of the American Indian Movement must consider "the field of literary production, . . . [which] represents an important realm of cultural practice, one that might even be said to have been fostered by the influence of AIM" (18), I argue that our appreciation of the nationalist geopolitics of the time is enhanced by an analysis of recovery narratives as a part of these politics, which were largely concerned with "the reclamation of space and cultural identity" (Miner 12). In Canada too, in the

1970s, the "Native movement embraced Indigenous cultures in defiance of the DIA's [Department of Indian Affairs'] policy of assimilation. The movement, which focused on traditional practices that were being rapidly eroded, sustained Aboriginal cultures by organizing ceremonies, seeking out guidance from elders, and learning their languages" (Janovicek 552). As Janovicek observes of the Canadian context, "The traditional movement was salient particularly in urban settings where Aboriginal people were removed from elders and ceremonies" (552). She thus implies that cultural difference takes on especial prominence— and, I would add, comes into a uniquely politicized being—in a context that desires to terminate this difference. "Urban life," agrees Nancy Shoemaker, "presented a new environment, with new problems but also new solutions. As Indians residing away from reservations, urban Indians risked losing their ethnic identity. Legally, they risked being removed from tribal rolls, and emotionally," she continues, "they risked losing the security and fellowship of their communities. Establishing Indian organizations in the city helped reservation emigrants maintain their tribal identities while expanding their ethnic identity to include a larger circle of people" (446). Urban relocation cultivated pan-Indian connections, re/constructed tribally specific identities, and spurred the activist movement.

It is ironic, then, yet thoroughly canny, that the movement "denied . . . vast migrations and mixings and located Indianness in authenticating spaces on reserves and reservations" (Bomberry 30). Indeed, as an urban movement begun to aid urban Indians, AIM was itself the product of such "migrations and

mixings," founded after Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt were released from prison, where they had met, rediscovered their cultural pride, and radicalized it into an activist agenda. But again, as Bomberry records the contradiction, "[T]here was little room [in the movement] for those of us who lived outside [the] reality [of the reservation]," and the nationalists, in their desire to stress the importance of going home to the reservation, "ignored or perhaps could not see the new mapping taking place that had its foundations in an earlier version of Indian nationalism that laid claim to the power of a dynamic world. Still," Bomberry concludes, "home tugged at the heart" (30). Therefore, despite the mixings and migrations that complicate "home" and its location, the notion of home-as-reservation remains strong—not only despite these mixings, but as I have argued, because of them as well. Present-day nationalists such as Craig Womack, who appear to embrace the earlier nationalism of which Bomberry speaks, have made clear that these mixings and migrations are *indigenous*, rather than indicative of the inherent hybridity—read: assimilation—of Native peoples, an assumption made by scholars like Elvira Pulitano, whom Womack critiques.[21] This is not to conflate Womack's nationalism with that of the American Indian Movement; instead, it is to stress the multiple ways in which mixings and migrations are part of nationalist politics, whether they are embraced, excluded, or both. Paul Chaat Smith, for example, whose ideas about AIM clearly differ from Bomberry's, explains that AIM "activism was, like [the Indian occupation of] Alcatraz, democratic, perhaps to a fault; usually it was made up of people from many different tribes and from both cities and reservations" (36).

Recovery narratives mirror and express the tensions Bomberry outlines, for they are thoroughly bound up with the urban experience at the same time as they work to distance themselves—quite literally—from its (presumably assimilatory) influence. The unintended irony of the tradition is that in resisting displacement through the discourse of return, locations outside of the sphere of return are confirmed as seats of alienation; in this sense, the discourse of homing, as constitutive of belonging, seems to work against its ostensible purposes, reinforcing the city as an assimilatory space, rather than, say, the re/location of vibrant Native communities and identities. However, to recognize that journeying is an indigenous reality and thus a mode of homecoming complicates the distinction between "home" and "away," thereby working to "home" or indigenize the city.

As we have seen, the cultural revitalization movement of which recovery narratives were a part and product was itself a part and, in part, a product of the urbanization of Native peoples. One might assume that such an argument risks collapsing cultural revitalization and nationalist politics into the oppressive policies these movements resist—in other words, that such an argument positions indigenous movements as only and always a reaction to colonial frameworks, thus swallowing them up within these frameworks. There is a subtle difference, however, between the idea that recovery narratives *respond* to particular assimilationist policies and the assumption that they are only *a response* to these policies. Recovery narratives, while they serve a nationalist agenda, should also be recognized as a pan-Native phenomenon; these categories are not

incompatible. Following Jace Weaver, I maintain that alongside the "localized

national literature" of each tribal nation, there exists the "separate national/local

literature" of Native Americans ("Splitting" 40). Recognizing the "disrepute" of

the term pan-Indian, Weaver nevertheless "use[s] it consciously" (49). He recalls

Simon Ortiz's description of the "saint's day ceremonial at Acoma, 'It is

Acqumeh *and* Indian,'" to contend that "a more pan-Indian approach," such as his

own or Robert Warrior's, is as "equally 'nationalistic'" as the more "tribally

specific manner" of Craig Womack or Daniel Heath Justice (49-50). Weaver

locates the genesis of pan-Indian identity in "the very moment of colonization,"

and, confirming the consolidating force of assimilationist policy, traces it through

to what he calls its "final culmination during Termination and Relocation" (40).

While the idea of a pan-Indian nationalism gets at the cultural work performed by

the recovery genre to a certain extent, this work can more profitably be described

through Renya Ramirez's concept of "transnationalism." Not only does this

concept avoid the homogenizing "loss of tribal differences" commonly attached to

pan-Indianism (Ramirez 13), but it more complexly addresses the concurrence of

tribal specificity and cross-tribal unity that, in my view, characterizes the brand of

nationalism enacted by the recovery tradition. My use of the term thus extends

the way in which Ramirez productively uses it to describe the inherent mobility

and multiple-centeredness of urban Indian identities, which are often cultivated

and sustained in and through the movement between rural/reservation and urban

locales. The recovery genre shares the inherent tension of Ramirez's

trans/nationalism (a tension I emphasize orthographically) in that it is a cultural

form shared across national differences, which is simultaneously interested in maintaining specific national differences (as well as the difference between "urban" and "reservation"). It is, to emphasize the paradox, a cross-border literary form used to strengthen malleable borders, both geographic and cultural.

Therefore, while recovery narratives perfectly articulate the desire Bomberry locates in the "new nationalism" of the AIM era to go home-as-origin and there restore authenticity, they also formulate identity through what she calls a "dynamic mapping," which she locates in an earlier form of nationalism. I have discussed a like dynamism—a constant metamorphosis and transmotion of identity—in terms of the contemporariness of tradition (and traditional identities) in recovery narratives. Through such dynamic mapping, recovery narratives fundamentally dis/locate any restrictive "origin" one might assume for tradition and culture, and they underscore the cultural difference of Native identities and peoples. In this context, "cultural difference" is understood, not as "simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition," but, as Homi Bhabha argues in relation to minority identities more generally, as "the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project—at once a vision and a construction that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political *conditions* of the present" (*Location* 3).[22] Recovery narratives participate with deep complexity in the trans/nationalist struggle: they write home as a public and, to use Bhabha's language, community as a "project." This last word is crucial, for it gestures toward Judith Butler's

notion of performative accomplishment and the social duress under which this accomplishment finds both fruition and failure.

Contemporary recovery narratives continue this project and its tradition, and they carry its historical weight. I postulate that these narratives resonate in the present because their form is equipped to respond to and combat the continuing condition of displacement, be it geographical, cultural, or psychological. The conventions of the genre carry a historically sustained argument for the necessity of land preservation, in the sense of aboriginal title and environmental protection, to the continued health and survivance of sovereign peoples. Yet they also carry the memory of urban alienation, and they reinvoke (while complicating) the divide between the urban and the reservation in relation to which their argument took its initial shape. The relationship between recovery and the reservation is a historically-sedimented discourse codified in the recovery narrative genre, and therefore, current incarnations of the genre performatively reenact and sustain distinctions, which continue to be politically persuasive, between urban and reservation experience; alienation and rootedness; sickness and health; and deracinated, culturally impoverished identities and authentic ones. At the same time, however, and in keeping with the interconnectedness of the urban and the reservation that supported its production, the genre troubles the above divisions: it does so by representing home as relational, rather than strictly residential; by contemporizing tradition, linking wandering to rootedness, and depicting the loss at the heart of recovery and the dislocation at the heart of return—in other words, the im/possibility of coming home. In the remaining

chapters I further these insights, exploring the ways in which "home" is always-already haunted by and founded in the losses it attempts to recover (from). The recovery project, I argue, is characterized by a productive tension between the drive to recuperate home as the ground of authentic identity and the articulation of home as the product of such recuperative efforts.

Notes

[1] In her discussion of home and the body in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, Jill Jepson similarly observes the way in which homing is written on the body as wellness, and displacement as sickness: "Homing is mirrored in physical strength, health, and vitality; and forces for displacement are reflected in disease and infirmity" (34).

[2] A neologism with French etymological roots coined by Gerald Vizenor, "survivance" is the "condition of not being a victim," as opposed to "a reaction, a response," which, according to Vizenor, is implied by the word "survival" (qtd. in Isernhagen 129). In his discussion of Métis history in the late 19th century, Darren R. Prefontaine notes that "French Canadians . . . passed on [an] important legacy to the Métis—the concept of *la survivance*—or the passionate desire that language, faith and culture must be protected at all costs" (2). While Gerald Vizenor's concept of survivance has not been explicitly linked, as far as I am aware, to a specifically French Canadian/ Métis history, a strong case can be made for doing so. Vizenor, from the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota, has discussed the impact of the French on his community (Isernhagen 86-87), and Melissa L. Meyer notes that "French-Canadian and metis [sic] descendants of fur trade society . . . came to White Earth during the earliest migrations in 1868" (313), bringing with them their cultural traditions, one of which would presumably have been the concept of *la survivance*.

[3] See Neal McLeod's "Coming Home Through Stories," published first as an article (1998) and then as a chapter in his recent monograph, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (2007).

[4] In *Silent Words*, the trauma of Danny's abusive upbringing is metaphorized in his father's crippled leg, the result of Danny shooting at his father in a moment of PTSD-inspired fear. Perhaps uncoincidentally, the wound in Boyden is also of the leg—specifically, Xavier's amputated leg, which metaphorizes the loss of his friend Elijah, whom he kills.

[5] In *The Turn to the Native*, Arnold Krupat advances a similar argument, suggesting that stories of return such as Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Silko's *Ceremony* "insist on the possibility of a recuperation of the traditional" (44). In Silko's novel, for example, the structure of which is "circular and reintegrative," one "can go home again . . . for the traditional world of the Pueblos is available still" (41).

[6] Tribalism, for Bevis, is defined by the following three components: "the assumption . . . that the individual is completed only in relation to others" (19-20); "respect for the past" (20); and recognition of the importance of place (24).

[7] Personal communication with Chris Andersen.

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[8] Shackleton advances a three-tiered model of homecoming fiction, which includes "troubled" and "ironic" homecoming traditions in advance of the "simplest level" of "'bringing-them-home' fiction, like Richard Wagamese's *Keeper 'n Me*" (159).

[9] See *Seasonal Circulation and Migration in the Pueblo Southwest* by Robert W. Preucel, Jr.

[10] Importantly, however, even during the fur trade era, the James Bay Cree maintained their traditional living patterns, living in "small groups of closely related families" over the winter, and then "gravitat[ing] towards the coastal area. The movement toward the coastal trading post was motivated by a number of factors," as Victor Lytwyn notes: "They came to trade extra furs and hides procured in the winter; to renew social relationships with other coastal Cree and the European fur traders; and to give and receive gifts, thereby continuing to renew bonds of friendship and alliance" (16).

[11] The complexity of home in *Little Voice* is addressed again in this chapter on page 51.

[12] Dee Horne also discusses Danny's journey away from home as precipitated by his alienation from his family and community (52).

[13] Richard White's *The Middle Ground*, for example, studies the mid-seventeenth century Iroquois wars in the *pays d'en haut* and the ensuing diaspora of diverse Algonquian peoples who were made to band together in refugee camps far from their original homelands: "Whatever distinct homelands these villages had once possessed," White explains, "the diaspora provoked by the Iroquois had made irrelevant" (17).

[14] Of course, members of Campbell's community may not agree that Campbell's narratives are representative of their stories or their community's story.

[15] "Mixedblood" is Owens' preferred name for the mutable identities of Native peoples, not a designation based on blood quantum.

[16] My focus in this project is on recovery narratives published since the mid-1980s. My consideration of earlier recovery narratives such as Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Silko's *Ceremony* is thus necessarily limited.

[17] There are innumerable factors that have influenced the development of the recovery narrative genre. I make no claim to address, or even to approach, the full spectrum of historical, cultural, political, and literary conditions in relation to which recovery as homing has become one of the most recognizable tropes of Native North American literature and criticism, but, with the codicil that my

research in this regard remains exploratory, my historicizing of the genre submits a few of these conditions for future scholarly consideration.

[18] See Deloria (*Custer*) for an indigenous view supportive of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA). More on the connection between the IRA and Termination can be found in Philp's "Termination: A Legacy of the Indian New Deal," and the "failure of the Indian Reorganization Act . . . to extend even the act's limited benefits to the majority of Indians" (293) is explored in Kelly's "The Indian Reorganization Act: The Dream and the Reality."

[19] Speaking against those who argued that Termination would eliminate second-class citizenship for Indian peoples, Deloria notes that the Citizenship Act of 1924 gave full citizenship to Natives without removing their rights as Indians. Termination advocates, therefore were doubly duplicitous--or deluded--in that, first, they did not recognize that Indians were already full citizens without termination, and secondly, that, as pointed out by Walter Benn Michaels, the granting of citizenship was in the end "irrelevan[t] . . . to the Indian's predicament" (31).

[20] For more information on the Indian Civil Rights Act, see Deloria (*Custer* 238), as well as Lindsay G. Robertson's "Native Americans and the Law: Native Americans Under Current United States Law."

[21] See Warrior, Weaver and Womack's *American Indian Nationalism*, as well as Pulitano's *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*.

[22] For Bhabha on cultural difference, see *The Location of Culture*, in which he writes, "The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (2). Cultural difference, he adds, should be understood as "the production of minority identities that 'split'—are estranged unto themselves—in the act of being articulated into a collective body. . . . Social differences are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project—at once a vision and a construction—that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political *conditions* of the present" (3). See also "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha."

Chapter 2: The Trans/historicity of Trauma in Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* and Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*

> We're carrying a pain that is 400 years old.
>   Alanis Obomsawin

Continuing the work of historicizing the recovery project, this chapter theorizes what I call the trans/historicity of Native North American trauma, specifically the trauma of displacement.[1] As the wound in relation to which recovery articulates itself as narrative genre and discourse of identity, trauma is an essential component of the present study, its analysis opening ways in which to understand the im/possibility of recovery as healing return. How is trauma represented by recovery narratives, and how does trauma, as an indigenous reality, both interrupt and intimately inform the aesthetics of recovery? My reading of Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* (1985) and Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996) provides additional context for understanding the production of the recovery genre as discussed in chapter one, for Armstrong and Alexie's recovery narratives are united, in part, by their mutual concern with the trauma of displacements specific to the post-Termination and -White Paper eras in the United States and Canada, respectively. Alexie's novel focuses on the adopting out of Native American children to white parents in the late 1960s, an act of institutionalized racism central to U.S. assimilation efforts prior to 1978, when the Indian Child Welfare Act was passed; Armstrong's novel, which begins shortly before the initial proposal of the White Paper in 1969, concentrates on the community fractures produced by the assimilationist agenda of the period, as well as activist responses to this trauma. While my discussion thus locates indigenous

trauma in terms of historically discrete circumstances productive of particular

recovery efforts, I also argue, following Armstrong and Alexie, for an

understanding of these historically specific traumas as indelibly connected to

"prior" historic displacements. In this, I am informed by the theories of

indigenous temporality explored in the first chapter, as well as the chronologies of

trauma assumed by a predominantly Euroamerican body of trauma theory.

Rooted primarily in Holocaust Studies, this theoretical body is both

complemented and productively interrogated by articulations of trauma in Native

North American recovery narratives.

In her article "Spectacular Suffering: Performing Presence, Absence, and

Witness at U.S. Holocaust Museums," Vivian Patraka examines the cultural

performance of Holocaust history at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in

Washington, D.C. One of the museum's ideological functions, Patraka observes,

is to buttress the assumption of American democracy as a redemptive, liberatory

force—indeed, one of the final exhibits depicts American soldiers liberating the

concentration camps. Patraka explains that part of the "museum's project" is to

"extend our fictions of nationhood by the premise that a democratic state comes to

the aid of those peoples outside its borders subjected to genocide" (143). While

Patraka's argument is specific to the United States it also applies in a Canadian

context, for although histories of democracy in the two countries differ, both

imagine their national communities, in part, in contradistinction to human rights

violations elsewhere. Both real and mediated by North American mythologies,

these violations stand as the counterpoint in relation to which Canadians reify

their identity as peace-keepers and Americans their identity as humanitarian interventionists. But why begin this chapter on trauma and recovery in Native literatures with a meditation on extra-national subjugations and North American democracies? Consider the fact that there is no "Trail of Tears" museum, as Philip Gourevitch notes (qtd. in Patraka 151). Why might this be? Current mainstream representations of Native peoples in both the United States and Canada, sanctioned by the post/colonial state, are generally concerned with depicting the "authentic" Indian in his or her "vanishing" traditional context and/or with documenting the role of Natives as colonial helpmates. Rarely, if ever, do we see monuments that meditate on the trauma of colonial presence in North America—what Ward Churchill rightly calls "the North American holocaust" (*A Little* 157)—and its continuing effect on the indigenous peoples of this land. When oppressions of the past *are* publicly recognized, they are marked as just that—*events of the past*. However, as we have seen with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's refusal to issue a formal apology to survivors of the residential school system until June 11, 2008,[2] the nation continues to avert its responsibility to recognize the traumatic past, and Native people who call attention to this "past" continue to be represented in the national imaginary as "whiny" and/or militant.

To erect a Trail of Tears museum, a Green Lake Métis Dispersal monument, or any other memorial to the centuries-long trauma of attempted extermination and assimilation in the Americas, would be to admit to the truth of this trauma and, more specifically, to Euroamerican culpability for its existence.

While a Holocaust museum can work to cement America's idea of itself, a museum about colonial trauma would threaten this construction. As Geoffrey Hartman observes, however, the "simplification of memory" inherent in some acts of commemoration can lead "toward the closure of forgetful ritualization" (10). Of official apologies in particular, Jeffrey Olick writes that an "expectation of acknowledgment has become a decisive factor in processes of 'transitional justice,'" the current epoch being characterized by a "politics of regret" in which "[n]ew regimes seek ways to 'settle' the residues of their predecessors" (333). Still, along with Patraka, whose statements I again translate into a broader North American context, I would maintain that "[o]ur democratic discourse[s] must repress highly visible representations of any genocide that occurred within our own national borders. . . . [I]n order to sustain its fictions of nationhood and its imagined community, it must produce yet another set of highly visible representations of what it marks as a genocide occurring 'elsewhere'" (151). Arguably, current North American constructions of Arab "freedom fighters" as "terrorists" and, in a U.S. context, "Islamofascists" similarly functions to bolster the notion of North American democracies as emancipatory, while obscuring their imperialist actions. Euroamerica's construction of itself as a liberatory power cannot exist alongside the truth its persecutory politics. The obfuscation of cultural trauma "here" is accomplished, in part, by underlining this kind of trauma as it occurs or has occurred "elsewhere," and the North American construction of "genocide" as synonymous with the activities of our national Others becomes one way in which the colonial conquest of the Americas is rendered invisible *as*

genocide or *historical trauma.* "[D]enial of that genocide is paramount," Ward Churchill argues in his comparative contextualization of the Native North American holocaust (*A Little* 136). But "[d]enial, as Freud pointed out, is still a form of acknowledgment: with denial, the fact remains in the public eye, it does not disappear into oblivion or indifference" (Hartman 10).

Prime Minister Harper's apology might seem to redress the denial to which Churchill refers and recognize the trauma of Canadian residential schools. Indeed, while I will unpack its more problematic implications, the apology remains an important political act requested and endorsed by the Assembly of First Nations, amongst other representative groups. It remains necessary, though, to theorize not only how the apology might reach toward an amnesiac closure, à la Hartman, but also how it isolates the "event" of residential school trauma from the larger context of (neo)colonial trauma in which this event takes place. Analyzing the text of Harper's speech reveals its construction of the residential school era as a historical period with reverberating effects in the present. I don't wish to challenge this construction *per se*, but I would like to draw attention to how it redirects and discourages an understanding of the residential school system as embedded in a (neo)colonial context that extends into the past and continues in the present-day. Calling the "treatment of children in Indian residential schools . . . a sad chapter in our history" (CTV "Text" par. 2), the implication being that this chapter is now at a close, or at the very least, that it is one day capable of being closed, Harper goes on to "recognize[] that the consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a

lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage and language" (par.

11). He further acknowledges that "the legacy of Indian residential schools has

contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today"

(par. 12). By recognizing the current effects of the residential school experience,

but failing to acknowledge the trans/historical context of occupation in which

such effects are rooted, the apology obfuscates colonial history. But more to the

point of my work in this chapter, it also applies the model of historical trauma, in

which traumatic events can be located in the past, to a situation more properly

understood, I argue, as one of trans/historical trauma.

The ongoing domestic colonization of North America has a specifically

"traumatic" impact on the Native peoples of this land, but what is the "event" or

referent to which such an effect can be traced? Is it possible to locate the

traumatic event of a (post)colonial history that is, as Alanis Obomsawin makes

clear in the epigraph to this chapter, centuries old and, I would add, nations wide?

Or, as this chapter argues, does the *trans/historicity* of Native trauma challenge

the very assumption of trauma as rooted in event, where "event" is defined, as it

most commonly is, as a singular, recognizable, and chronologically-bounded

incident? These questions highlight the problematics engendered by recent

attempts to theorize the intergenerational colonial subjection of Native North

American peoples through the lens of trauma theory—especially that which

focuses on individual psychic trauma. Cumulative, collective, intergenerational,

and intersubjective, the trauma of Native peoples, when understood as

trans/historical, exceeds any attempt to fix its location or define its event, even as

it demands our attention to historically specific atrocities. To define this trauma as trans/historical is to acknowledge its location in particular historical moments while at the same time redefining these moments as temporally palimpsestic. In order to explore the trans/historicity of trauma and, in particular, its unique articulation in recovery narratives, this chapter situates two such narratives, *Slash* and *Indian Killer*, within the nascent conversation between trauma theory and Native experience. In relation to my study as a whole, this conversation reframes the ways in which we might analyze the im/possibility of recovery: how, where, and when does one recover from "a pain that is 400 years old"? How might the function and functioning of recovery as a generative discursive response to trans/historical trauma be described?

By using the word "trans/historical" to describe the trauma crafted in *Slash* and *Indian Killer*, I run the risk of reinstating, through my own diction, the idea of trauma as transcendent of historical conditions and material realities; indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "transhistorical" as "(Having significance) that transcends the historical; universal or eternal." As a descriptor of the intergenerational trauma of Native communities, the word "trans/historical" thus fails to do justice to the complexity of this trauma. Still, I will maintain and nuance it here because of the way in which it gestures toward a trauma that takes place and is repeated in multiple epochs and, in this sense, exceeds its historicity, conventionally understood as its singular location in the past. Also, in its very failure to approach this excess as something other than transcendent or outside of the historical, the word "trans/historical" reminds us that the English language

circumscribes the way in which we might think about and refer to a traumatic event-which-is-not-one.

As literary texts, *Slash* and *Indian Killer* both express and craft a distinct understanding of "traumatic temporality," a term coined by Cathy Caruth ("Interview" 78). Rooted in a psychoanalytic and poststructuralist methodology, this term refers to the way in which traumatic events, because they cannot be known or integrated by the survivor as they occur, are indirectly accessible only as symptom—that is, in their belated return to the survivor as repetitive dreams, flashbacks, and reenactments of the event. Caruth's notion of traumatic temporality famously challenges the assumption that the history of trauma involves a one-to-one correspondence of reference and event and ushers in a performative theory of trauma, which understands trauma as dis-located in its reiterative return rather than in its origin—an origin that therefore remains elusive at best. The trans/historicity of Native trauma, as constituted in the work of Armstrong and Alexie, nuances this theory, prompting an exploration of the temporal and spatial dis/location of a trauma that is centuries old and nations wide.

A note of clarification is necessary before I proceed: this chapter analyzes the specifically literary cultivation of trauma as trans/historical and thus contributes to Jeffrey C. Alexander's approach to trauma as a performative reality rather than a natural occurrence.[3] Along with looking to how literary constructions of trauma can advance the purview of trauma theory, I also argue that trauma theory, along with the recent sociological application of this theory to

the post-contact experience of Native peoples, can instigate crucial dialogue in the field of Native literatures. One of my functions as literary critic is to recognize the "fact" of trauma in Native literature (with all the attendant benefits and dangers of such a move) by using the lexicon of trauma as a way to make sense of the constructions of history, woundedness, recovery, and temporality that I see expressed within this literature. There is, at present, little literary criticism that approaches Native literature as trauma narrative; in fact, while individual traumas suffered by individual characters might be referred to as such, there is next to no literary-critical work that theorizes collective Native trauma *per se* or that uses "trauma" as anything other than a transparent synonym for "oppression." As Deborah Madsen has recently made mention, "Native American literature can be distinguished from African-American writing (to take one fairly arbitrary example of American 'minority' literature) in that Native writers have avoided 'trauma narrative' as a designation for their work, and critics of Native American literature have tended to follow this lead" (112).[4] Because of this dearth of critical work, the reasons for which I will explore momentarily, it is necessary for me to delve first into the vicissitudes of contemporary trauma theory and its sociological application to Native peoples. This contextualization will show, on the one hand, that the study of Native literatures would benefit from an encounter with trauma theory–an encounter I then actualize through my reading of *Slash* and *Indian Killer*–and on the other hand, that trauma theory has much to learn from the trans/historicity of trauma articulated in these novels.

The Meeting Place: Trauma Theory and Native North American Peoples

Researchers who have investigated the topic of trauma in relation to Native communities will know that this field of study is still relatively new, and while words like "oppression," "colonization," "subjugation," and "violation" are commonly used to explain the post-contact experiences of Native peoples in North America (and elsewhere), "trauma" is not. It is only in "recent years," as Waldram noted in 2004, that "the notions of trauma and PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] have entered the Aboriginal mental health discourse" (212). Sociologists Robert W. Robin, Barbara Chester, and David Goldman acknowledge that there is "little representation of Native Americans among the . . . populations studied for PTSD" (243) and that "traumatic . . . factors specific to many American Indian communities . . . have rarely been studied" (244), a conclusion echoed by Spero Manson et al., who assert that "despite the relative ease with which this construct [PTSD] has found a place in local [indigenous] lexicons, little systematic study of trauma, and PTSD in particular, has been conducted in these communities" (256). Although the need for such study is great, Robin, Chester and Goldman stress that the category of PTSD, which diagnoses the effects of individual psychic trauma, actually "fails to describe the nature and impact of severe, multiple, repeated, and cumulative aspects of trauma common to many [Native] communities" (246). They argue that a distinction needs to be made between long-term, cumulative trauma and "specific" trauma within the context of cumulative trauma.

A number of crucial insights arise from these findings. First, the increasingly popular language of trauma resonates with Native peoples and within Native communities. The deployment of this language provides communities with a means through which they can give expression to their collective and individual pain and do so through linguistic and diagnostic categories that because they are sanctioned within the dominant culture, hold out the hope of having this pain recognized, legitimated, and compensated for. "Just as DSM's [the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*'][5] PTSD became a mechanism legitimizing the suffering of Vietnam veterans," Waldram remarks, "so too has it become a means of legitimizing Aboriginal experiences, history, and suffering" (236).[6] Secondly, the lack of sociological or psychological research on Native trauma, along with the scarcity of the term itself in other fields related to indigenous peoples (the study of Native literature, for example), reveals an institutional complicity in larger, nationwide attempts to forget the trauma of Native peoples. This repression ameliorates white guilt for the theft of the North American land base and obfuscates the need for Euroamericans to take responsibility for privileges that continue to accrue from this theft—and its denial. Yet the paucity of research on Native trauma also reveals a necessary political resistance to the potential revictimization of Native peoples through the nomenclature of trauma–or, in other words, to the reification of Native victimhood and the pathologizing of Native communities through the imposition of yet another Euroamerican framework designed to "figure out" and "fix" Native peoples.

As Waldram suggests in his book-chapter on the epistemological construction of "The Traumatized Aboriginal" in the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, "It is hard to escape the feeling that many researchers harbor a firm conviction that there must be extensive PTSD among the Aboriginal population" (220)—in other words, and "even when available data suggests the contrary," researchers are apt to assume trauma (as a pathology endemic in indigenous communities) before proving it, paying "little attention . . . to existing social and cultural mechanisms for coping with difficult circumstances" (212). Perceptively, Waldram asks: "[A]re North American Aboriginal peoples simply victims, passively accepting their fate as colonized beings, internalizing pathology to the point where it becomes the norm in families and communities?" (227), to which he then responds, "I think in the attempt to establish the history of oppression and the damage done, and to have this legitimated in the eyes of the larger society, a victim persona has emerged" (228). While often well-intended, psychosocial studies of alcoholism and other afflictions symptomatic of indigenous trauma, like that of Kayleen M. Hazlehurst, demonstrate all too clearly the victim persona Waldram describes, using language not only heavy with pathos but verging on the fetishistic. Hazlehurst introduces her book as one of "hope," but proceeds to draw a picture of indigenous communities in Australia that would lead one to believe in their utter devastation. The following depiction is not anomalous: "The afflictions which beset indigenous people—poverty, alcoholism, poor health, unemployment, and despair—are the ills of a dispirited and conquered people. For a collective to lose its spirit is the greatest of calamities,"

she asserts, continuing, "The struggle for survival becomes a habitual state of siege and opposition. . . . Views of worthlessness become assimilated into the individual persona. Helplessness grips the soul of the people" (5). The danger of institutionalizing the fact of trauma in Native communities is the danger of such revictimization.

Scholars like Ward Churchill have argued for the importance of maintaining the "victim status" of colonized peoples, following Deborah Lipstadt's contention, in reference to the Shoah, that "[t]he general public tends to accord victims of genocide a certain moral authority. . . . If you devictimize a people you strip them of their moral authority" (qtd. in Churchill *A Little* 11). On the other hand, in "Literature and the Commodification of American Indians," Churchill advances that, in the literary industry, there is an entrenched desire to produce the Native as victim in order to justify the legitimacy of colonial conquest. Drawing on the work of Albert Memmi, who argues that "[i]n order for the legitimacy [of the colonial project] to be complete, it is not enough for the colonized to be a slave, he must also accept his role" (qtd. 14), Churchill asserts that support for the epistemological reproduction of Native victimry can be found in "publishers, a massive reading audience, and the academic community as a whole" (14), because of the way in which this reproduction reifies the oppressor/victim binary central to the naturalization and propagation of unequal colonial relations. Somewhat ironically, in Churchill's work the victim position that generates the moral authority of the colonized also legitimizes that victim's subjugation, and authority, as a form of agency, would seem compromised by the

victim status to which it is tied. Others, like Gerald Vizenor, have laid bare the imperialist nostalgia that can be seen to fuel Euroamerican constructions of Native victimry, arguing that "the manifest manners of colonialism, a form of dominance, invite victimry rather than the stories of a tragic wisdom. In other words," he clarifies, "here are people whose voice is one of survivance among themselves—good humor, play, and tragic wisdom in spite of adversity—but we seldom hear that. What do we hear? The long suffering, the trail of tears, the victimry, because this satisfies the pleasures of a Western audience" (qtd. in Isernhagen 130-131). From this perspective, Euroamericans perpetuate constructions of Native victimry in order to mourn the losses they themselves thus create, thereby consolidating not only Memmi's colonizer/colonized binary, but their *own* moral authority.

Is it, then, in light of Vizenor's comments, a form of imperialist nostalgia to bring trauma theory to a discussion of Native experience and the construction of this experience in literature? Does an analysis of indigenous trauma, as such, indulge the Euroamerican critic/witness in a victimry that is of her own making— both in the sense that colonial acts have traumatic effects and in the sense that a reading of Native experience through the lens of trauma theory is constitutive of these effects as traumatic? This is, indeed, one of the dangers inherent in the work this chapter performs, but it is a danger that exists in productive and irresolvable tension with the following caution, advanced by Australian Aboriginal trauma theorist Judy Atkinson: "To deny that some people have been, and continue to feel, victimized, negates the extent of their suffering and denies

the right of people to be heard, and to understand *the layers of their oppression*"

(76 emphasis added). For Atkinson, to frame indigenous experience through the

language of trauma is not a pathologizing gesture, but rather a normalizing one,

which permits one's recognition—and the idea of recognition is key here—of the

trauma of oppression as productive of certain expected responses.[7] "The feelings

and behaviours that come from traumatisation," she avers, "are the natural and

predictable reactions of normal people to abnormal experiences" (52). This

chapter, in its analysis of the trans/historicity of Native trauma, focuses precisely

on the historical *layers* of oppression to which Atkinson refers. Therefore, while

there is no easy safeguard against the danger of victimry, I would advance that

with a heightened awareness of the possible pitfalls, it is necessary to recognize

the traumas of post-contact Native experience, recognizing also that there is a

crucial difference between reifying victimry and acknowledging what Vizenor

calls the "tragic wisdom" of adversity. The indigenous theory of trans/historical

trauma advanced in the works of Armstrong and Alexie is an expression of such

tragic wisdom, an expression that must be heeded. Further, as an articulation of

survivance born of this wisdom, the project of healing in recovery narratives, as

Waldram says of trauma narratives more generally, "detail[s] not simply the

trauma but the ways in which the individual dealt with and also opposed it.

Otherwise, the individual remains a 'passive recipient and damaged product of

oppression, thus entrapping her in a narrative of decline and terminal change'"

(Wade qtd. 228)—or, as Vizenor would say, a narrative of terminal creeds.

Recognizing the fact of trauma does not deny agency, although it may require its reimagination.

The Trans/historicity of Native Trauma

In addition to the above dangers, the now pervasive language of individual trauma has established the traumatic event as an extraordinary occurrence, an assumption particularly troubling when invoked in relation to the trans/historical trauma of Native communities. "DSM," Waldram explains, "remains committed to the idea of a single, traumatic event as the catalyst, with an emotional or somatic response commencing soon after" (222). As a discrete event outside of the norm, trauma, in the popularly-held view, shocks and frightens the individual who experiences it, causing the splitting off or dissociation of the memory of the event from the regular stream of consciousness, where events become integrated and narrativized through preexisting interpretive categories (van der Kolk and van der Hart 170-172). The intergenerational trauma of Native peoples raises serious questions about the assumption of trauma as rooted in event, where "event" is understood to refer to a distinct experience that happens in one specific location and time. Cumulative and collective, this trauma is more properly understood as both "insidious," in Maria P. P. Root's formulation of a trauma as the status quo of a particular group (240), and trans/historical.

Feminist theorist Laura S. Brown observes that the DSM III-R's narrow definition of trauma as "an event that is outside the range of human experience" (qtd. 100)[8] obscures the existence as such of long-term "repetitive" traumas (100), such as those sustained by incest survivors or battered women, to cite her

examples, or by (post)colonial cultural, racial, and national groups. Judy

Atkinson, in her study of the transgenerational effects of trauma in indigenous

Australia, concurs, noting that the "*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* does not

highlight the chronic, ongoing stress of particular situations or where stressors are

cumulative over time. It is therefore inadequate as a diagnostic tool when

considering colonial conditions and cumulative traumatic stress situations" (51).

This obfuscation, Brown argues, permits the construction of a "mythical norm of

human experience" (111) and reifies a form of trauma in which members of the

dominant culture "participate [only] as a victim rather than as the perpetrator or

etiologist of the trauma" (102). In other words, the assumption of trauma as an

"event outside the norm" allows the "norm" itself to go unrecognized as the site

of multiple traumas, an oversight that in relation to the systemic oppression of

Native North Americans, justifies the status quo of domestic colonialism.

The related notion of trauma as (the effect of) a discrete event assumes an

(un)knowable traumatic origin, which is then reflected in current posttraumatic

behaviors. As with the presumption of trauma's uniqueness, the supposition of its

temporal location in the past functions to obscure and perpetuate a status quo that

abnegates responsibility for traumatic events of the past through their very

location in the past. The commonplace notion that the wounds of colonization

were inflicted in the past (a perception that does not automatically deny the idea

that the effects of these wounds may reverberate in the present) precludes the

recognition of a trans/historical trauma that exceeds–yet is grounded in–its

articulation and repetition in a multiplicity of historical events and locations and,

as such, demands a different kind of witness, response, and accountabililty in and for the present.

Using models of individual psychic trauma such as PTSD—or, drawing on Freud, what we might call the "accident model" of trauma[9]—to examine the effects of colonial oppression on Native communities is obviously fraught with difficulties; yet these models have been put to exactly this purpose. Briefly, I would like to review one such recent sociological attempt to show how its approach to collective trauma, albeit motivated by important political goals, locates colonial trauma in the forgotten event of post-contact epidemics and thus accomplishes the temporal removal critiqued for its obfuscation of the enduring trauma of Native peoples. In their report for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, *Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing*, Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Magdalena Smolewski introduce the concept of Historic Trauma Transmission (HTT), arguing that the disease pandemics and depopulation of the Americas from 1493 to 1520 formed a "nucleus of traumatic memory" (10) that is "buried deep within [the] collective psyche" of Aboriginal peoples (24), who have continued to suffer from the return of this "dark nucleus" in subsequent generations, including the present one (23). Taking the form of a PTSD flashback of massive proportions and resonating with the concept of the "soul wound" developed by Duran et al., this nucleus of unresolved grief returns to haunt contemporary Native peoples through its repetition in current posttraumatic behaviors, in themselves "new pathogens" that infect the younger generation (32).[10]

By calling up PTSD to make sense of the collective trauma of Native peoples, Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski are clearly working within a recognizable lexicon to secure funding and attention for a variety of recovery projects in Native communities, a vital task indeed. But the difficulty lies in their location of colonial trauma at a safe remove from Euroamerican culpability for the extension of this trauma in the present, a move that could be seen as strategic in terms of garnering Euroamerican support for their project but which is problematic nevertheless. True, the model proposes the ongoing repetition of a traumatic origin and, in this sense, locates trauma in the present moment as well as the past, thereby complicating its assumption that colonial trauma originates in the past. But the model's adherence to the accident model of trauma and its suggestion that the current trauma of Native peoples is located not in a situation of ongoing domestic colonization but in an indigenous rehearsal of the forgotten past make for a model that functions to displace and assuage Euroamerican guilt for the existent colonial situation in North America. Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski cite Cecil White Hat on the crucial difference between PTSD and HTR (Historic Trauma Response, the precursor to HTT), but their model appears to obscure—while paradoxically embracing—his observations: "PTSD happens around an event, an event with a beginning and end. For Native people, the trauma continues. There hasn't been an end" (White Hat qtd. in Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski 55). White Hat's trans/historical trauma, especially as it is expressed and cultivated in much Native fiction, not only demands

recognition of but also ethical response to current conditions of neocolonial oppression.

Redefining Trauma, History, and Event: Jeannette Armstrong and Sherman Alexie

My appellation of Native trauma and its reconstruction in Native literature as trans/historical might at first appear ironic, especially in light of the political necessity of history in much of this literature, including the work of Okanagan author Jeannette Armstrong and Coeur d'Alene/Spokane novelist, poet, and screenwriter Sherman Alexie. As a whole, Native literature is often characterized by its concern with counterhegemonic historical narratives. Critics commonly refer to Armstrong's first novel *Slash* (1985) as a historical novel with a didactic function, and rightly so, for its genesis was part of a curriculum project designed to produce pedagogical materials reflective of Native realities (Lutz 14). "My real quest," Armstrong says about writing the novel, "was to present a picture of that time" (14) because, in the 1980s, "there were no books available about [the Indian movement in] . . . the 1960s and 1970s" (20). The story of Tommy Kelasket (a.k.a. Slash)—a young Okanagan Indian[11] who journeys across North America and experiences the rage, protest, and militant action of the movement but who ultimately returns home to practice the traditional ways of his people—*Slash* narrates the often foreclosed history of political resistance to the "two options" given Native peoples by the majority culture: "Assimilate or get lost." "A lot of us are lost," Mardi, Tommy's lover and political inspiration, explains. "We need to make a third choice. That's what Red Patrol is about" (70).

The journey to enact this "third choice," aligned in Mardi's words with militant responses to colonial trauma such as Red Patrol in Canada or, more famously, the American Indian Movement (A.I.M.), makes for much of the book's content, begging further investigation of the undertheorized relationship among trauma, militarism (or the desire for "action," as Tommy says [76, 107, 125, 143]), and rage. The Indian on the "warpath," while surely a stereotype, is also a discourse harnessed by Native peoples in response to colonial trauma, and although the idea of militant rage as a response to trauma might appear, to some, to muddy the victim status of the person who has been traumatized by complicating the division between "victim" and "aggressor," it is for this very reason that rage needs to be theorized as both an effect of and a method of resistance to trauma. (S)lashing out with rage, the text proposes, is one response to being slashed or wounded–in either a psychological or a physical sense. Judy Atkinson agrees that "[o]ne aspect of traumatisation that is rarely discussed in depth is the feelings of deep anger or rage. Anger," she asserts, "usually masks a hurt and is a normal human response to any loss, boundary violation, or unmet need" (79). Tommy's barroom brawl, during which his attacker "thought to carve a few lines on [his] shoulder" and Tommy responds by "slashing around and yelling, 'I'll slash the nuts off anybody that tries that again!'" (59), metaphorizes the way in which trauma (here, a literal wound) engenders rage, itself another or further wounding. While Armstrong shows the third choice of anger and action to be necessary to Tommy's development, Tommy finally comes to feel "a need to stand for more than being just a mad Indian" (182) and realizes the truth of his

cousin Chuck's premonitory words: "Anger, when it is uncontrolled and directed towards anything and everything, is dangerous even to itself" (141). Tommy's repeated emotional and physical exhaustion and self-inflicted abuse through alcohol and drugs bear witness to this danger.

Generally speaking, critics have analyzed the third choice in *Slash* as non-teleological, and this analysis makes sense given the novel's commitment to multiple perspectives and modes of resistance within the pan-Indian community.[12] I would argue, however, that the dialogic structure of Armstrong's novel stands in tension with its traditional homing structure, the latter of which leads Tommy, and the reader along with him, through a number of intrinsically flawed ideological positions (away from home, and then back again) to an inherently healthy and empowering conclusion on the importance of tradition through praxis. This tension is relevant to my discussion of recovery and its relationship to loss because it illustrates the in/compatibility, in Armstrong's text, of discordant modes of approaching Native issues and identities; the novel lays the inexorable logic of its fundamental position alongside of and in dialogue with other positions that it would like to preserve—and does, in a sense—at the same time as it must lose the full possibility of these positions in order to stake its own claims. I would never call *Slash* monologic, representative only of Tommy's position, for it clearly aims to accomplish something multivocal; as Tommy says to his old childhood friend Jimmy, "[W]e can all support each other on whatever position each of us takes. It doesn't mean each has to take the same position. The government weakens us by making us fight each other to take one position, as

each one wants their position to win out. Each position is important and each has

the right to try for it. We should all back each other up. That's what I think"

(235). But the novel does hold out and affirm a clear goal: the return home and

recovery of inherent indigenous ways and rights. "Them ain't the only choices,"

Joe, one of Tommy's spiritual advisors in a dry-out center, says about the "two

choices" of assimilation or termination: "There is another way. It's always been

there" (198). At a conference on Indian religion, Tommy is reminded of the

importance of "returning to the medicine ways of [his] people. . . . The young

people were urged [by the Medicine men] to continue their struggle in finding

their *true identity*" (190 emphasis added). Authentic Indianness is aligned here

with the pursuit of tradition; indeed, it is the difference between *action* as protest

(positioned against and thus always in relation to the colonizer) and *practice* as

preservation (of indigenous ways existing before colonial influence) that Tommy

learns through his journey, which repeatedly takes him both away from and back

toward his home in British Columbia. Tommy ultimately finds his way(s),

learning to follow a spiritual path that returns him to his rightful cultural

inheritance, instead of continuing to pursue the roads, both material and

metaphorical, that only took him further from home (201). As an alternative to

(s)lashing out with rage, Tommy learns to turn his attention inward, to his people,

and to cultivate and reenact the indigenous ways that have "always been there and

had never gone anywhere" (202): "We just ha[ve] to do it," Tommy comes to

realize. "[T]hat's what culture is" (211).

Alexie's *Indian Killer* holds out no such hope for a return to roots, but it does bear resemblance to *Slash*–and to much Native literature–in its contextualization of the plight of its characters within a particular era of Native/non-Native relations in North America. The novel begins in the late 1960s, well before the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978. The story of John Smith, a Native individual taken away from his mother at birth and forcibly relocated to the Seattle home of a white, upper-middle class couple, Daniel and Olivia Smith, provides fodder for Alexie's satiric indictment of cultural appropriation and paternalistic racism. Alexie thus situates his novel in the context of the American counterpart to the Canadian Sixties Scoop, an "[u]nwarranted" and "epidemic" removal of Native children from their birth families (Bensen 13) known, "in Bertram Hirsch's phrase, [as] the 'gray market' for Indian children, which developed under the pressure on local welfare agencies to provide Indian children for adoption" (12).

With the passing of the ICWA, the theft, removal, and relocation of Indian children would come to be recognized as a neocolonial assault on one of the "most valuable natural resource[s]" of Native communities–their children (Hollinger 456). The effect of this assault on John Smith, a synecdochic representation of these children, can be witnessed in his alienation from his tribal roots (which are unknown) and his repeated feeling of being less than "real" (17).[13] In an interview with Tomson Highway, Alexie himself notes that John "gently goes mad during the course of the book," and critics have elaborated upon this point, analyzing John's ostensible schizophrenia as a metaphor for the kind of

fragmented and tortured subjectivity inculcated by deracination.[14] But John's

madness also takes the form of an insatiable anger resonant with Slash's rage. In

the same interview, Alexie explains that the "identity crisis" of this "lost bird," a

term used to refer to "Indians adopted out by non-Indian families," was the "germ

of the novel." Alexie notes that even before he realized that the book was going

to be a murder mystery, he knew that he "wanted to write a book about a character

like that to get this [information] out into the public" ("Spokane Words"). John's

invisibility—his inability to see and recognize himself as a "real" Indian—propels

him to search for and reenact authenticity through a complex of colonial

discourses of Indianness instilled in him by his adoptive parents and his mentor,

the Spokane Jesuit Father Duncan, whose own Indianness is constituted in

conflicted relation to his Catholic faith. Through their performative reiteration,

these discourses function to reinstall authentic Indianness as not only

unrecoverable but also unachievable and, consequently, to fuel John's murderous

rage at a society that has refused him not only his roots but even his own pain

(411). Alexie's insight into the affective response constituted by the discourse of

the "real Indian" echoes Theresa O'Nell's conclusion, in her study of depression

on the Flathead reservation, that the community's "elaborate lament" of what she

calls the "empty center"—that is, the loss of "real Indians"—"culminates in a

message that contemporary Flathead Indian identity is, in essence, inauthentic"

(55). Even John's rage, which finds partial expression in his failed attempt to

inhabit a traditional warrior identity, is bound up with his reiteration of a colonial

script of Native identity—the discourse of Native savagery to which he is

introduced at the North American Chapel of Martyrs in the stained glass portrait of Indian "savages" killing "innocent" white men (13-16). John's rage is, therefore, a result both of his being appropriated and of his appropriation of an available discourse of Nativeness and, as such, begs a series of questions consonant with those articulated by Armstrong's text: how is rage related to trauma, how might this feeling be discursively constituted and reified, and what are the implications of articulating resistance through colonial discourse?

The profundity of John's rage prompts him to decide that he "need[s] to kill a white man" (25) in order to redress "everything that had gone wrong" (27); a "real Indian," in his estimation, would be able to kill a white man (24). "That's what I need to see," he meditates, "that's what will feed me. . . . Fear in blue eyes." Imagining the delectability of such fear, John daydreams that he is holding his boss, a construction foreman, over the edge of the last skyscraper in Seattle: "He would hold onto the foreman as long as possible and stare down into those terrified blue eyes. Then he'd let him fall" (25). At the novel's close, it is of course John himself who ends up "falling" from the skyscraper, a disturbing act of "taking back his pain" that points again to the im/possibility of claiming authenticity. John's jump echoes and fulfills his earlier desire to fall from the helicopter, "past the skyscrapers" and back to his indigenous mother, as he is being transported to his adoptive parents in Seattle (7). In this sense, it is the ultimate return to roots, albeit a tragic and paradoxically unfulfilled return, which rehearses the discourse of the "vanishing Indian." Citing Patricia Penn Hilden, Arnold Krupat notes that John's final act can be read to align John with the

novel's infamous Indian Killer (138)–quite simply because he kills himself, an Indian, despite the fact that he never kills a white man. As an aside, it is noteworthy that John's inability to fulfill the warrior/savage script by killing a white man is, in one sense, a further comment on authenticity as always-already unachievable at the same time as it is yet another attempt at achieving the authentic. Indeed, John ends up being unable to kill Wilson, the white man he brings to the skyscraper for this purpose, a statement of character that reenacts Father Duncan's earlier lesson that ("real") Indians "didn't have the heart" to kill all of the colonists who invaded their lands (14).

Clearly, John is not the Indian Killer, sought after in the story for murdering a series of white Seattle men and kidnapping an affluent white boy. Not only can John not kill a white man, but also such a character cannot be so singularly defined. The very name, which can be read as either "killer of Indians" (like Custer, the most notorious "Indian Killer") or "killer Indian," or both, invokes the interimplication of colonial genocide and Native vengeance, and suggests that this character encompasses a history larger than its individual parts. Krupat and James R. Giles have compared the traits and activities of the killer with those of the novel's main characters (John Smith, Marie Polatkin, her cousin Reggie, and even the wannabe Indian murder mystery writer Jack Wilson) in order to select or rule out these characters as potential Indian Killers. This exercise has proven both futile and telling, futile in the sense that the characters do not quite match the descriptions we have of the Indian Killer, telling in the sense that they do. Alexie does indeed construct strategic parallels between the

killer and each main character. For example, in a passage describing the killer's

first murder, we are told that "[t]he killer saw the fear in the white man's blue

eyes. The man's fear inspired the killer's confidence" (52), a description that

clearly resonates with John Smith's desire to see fear in blue eyes. But rather than

pointing to Alexie's perfection of the "false clues" characteristic of detective

fiction (135), as Giles suggests, I want to argue that these parallels, when

combined, underscore how the Indian Killer is all yet none of the novel's Indian

characters. The killer, also referred to as "it" (323)–a genderless pronoun that

allows this character to inhabit multiple bodies in the reader's imagination–gives

an ineffable form to the pain and rage felt by Alexie's Indian characters as

individuals at the same time as it gives shape to a collective trauma that is larger

than any one of them. While Euroamerican literary constructions of the "mad

Indian / unpredictable / on the war path" (Dumont 12-14) have most often

functioned to "turn [the native] into an animal" (Frantz Fanon, qtd. in Goldie 95)

by situating his or her rage not as a "human response . . . to oppression," but

rather as "an expression of [indigenous] nature" (95), Alexie critiques this

maneuver through his construction of "warriors" like John Smith and the Indian

Killer who illustrate the traumatic historical conditions constitutive of a collective,

intergenerational anger. "The United States *is* a colony," Alexie emphasizes,

"and I'm always going to write like one who is colonized, and that's with a lot of

anger" ("Seeing Red" par. 15).

　　　In the field of Native literary studies, Armstrong and Alexie are not often

mentioned in the same critical breath, owing mainly to the fact that the political

projects of their literatures seem—and in some ways are—very different. Alexie is a postmodern satirist whose work challenges authenticity and highlights social issues. Because of this, he has been criticized by nationalist critics for participating in what Gloria Bird calls, in the title of her 1995 article, "The Exaggeration of Despair" and what Elizabeth Cook-Lynn refers to as the "deficit model of Indian reservation life" (68)—in other words, for portraying Native people as (stereotypical) victims rather than foregrounding a commitment to Native sovereignty.[15] Armstrong, by contrast, is a realist writer interested in just such a commitment. Her work revolves around the project to recover, restore, heal, and return to a kind of Native identity that is land-based, traditional, nationalist, and tribally-specific. If there exists a continuum in Native literature between traditionalist/nationalist and postmodern/cosmopolitan perspectives (a false dichotomy but one that is nevertheless employed in much criticism), Armstrong would be poised at one end and Alexie at the other, although Alexie's explicit commitment to sovereignty complicates this simplification.[16] Despite the ostensible gulf separating Armstrong from Alexie, however, these authors share a deep concern with trans/historicizing the traumatic experiences of Native peoples–specifically, the trauma of dislocation and rootlessness. Both *Slash* and *Indian Killer* are structured around a crucial tension in which the collective, cumulative trauma of dislocation, a trauma that exceeds historical specificity, is in fact grounded in specific historical articulations. I would argue that the tension between these two concepts is best seen as productive, as opposed to irreconcilable, and that the novels' trans/historicist approach to trauma should not

be thought of as an attempt to fix or recover the (post)colonial trauma of Native peoples in any one time and place. Recently, a historicist approach to trauma has been critiqued by postcolonial trauma theorist Sam Durrant, who "argu[es] for the centrality of a deconstructive, anti-historicist ethics of remembrance" (7). Durrant's argument that postcolonial trauma exceeds representation is indispensable to my current analysis, as is his related assertion that the "immoderate grief" of individual postcolonial literary characters "needs to be recognized as a precisely proportionate response to history, a way of bearing witness to losses that exceed the proportions of the individual subject" (11); it is the excess of this loss that disables its representation. As allegorical and/or synecdochic characters, both Tommy Kelasket and John Smith bear witness to a trauma–specifically, the trauma of dislocation and rootlessness–that exceeds their individual experiences of this wound; in their respective narratives, these characters testify to a collective, intergenerational trauma that exceeds–yet informs–its unique articulations.

Indigenous conceptions of temporality, such as I discussed at length in chapter one, nuance this analysis, suggesting that trans/historicity is not only or primarily a function of trauma, but also an indigenous approach to reality. Armstrong, in her article "Keepers of the Earth," discusses the approach to time and space constructed by her native language, Okanagan, which describes "moving pieces of an ongoing reality that stretches away from the speaker. The active reality could be thought of as a sphere sliced into many circles," she explains. "A circle could be thought of as a physical plane surrounding the

speaker; this could be called 'the present.' Moving above and below the speaker," she adds, "the surrounding sphere may be thought of as the 'past' or the 'future,' with everything always connected to the present reality of the speaker" (318-319). Importantly, "[t]he Okanagan language creates links by connecting active pieces of reality rather than isolating them," and so "we might perceive my meaning better," Armstrong appends, "if we leave the designations for 'past,' 'present,' and 'future' aside and think instead of a vast thing that is continuing, in which we are immersed" (319).

In *Slash*, a long history of traumatic removals and relocations haunts and propels Tommy's separation from his Okanagan community. The something "missing" (84, 160, 180, 185) that Tommy tries to locate through his travels is, in this reading, the symptom of a larger trans/historical loss as well as its contemporary expression. Tommy's movement from place to place—his "itchy feet" (168)—quite literally follows in the footsteps of pan-Indian ancestors removed from their land due to assimilationist policies and attempts to terminate their communities, and his inability to forget the trauma of this dislocation is marked in actions that can be seen as somatic manifestations of "'unrepresented pasts' [that] haunt the present" (Bhabha qtd. in Durrant 13). For example, during his participation in the Caravan of Broken Treaties, a nation-wide march culminating in the occupation of the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) offices in Washington, DC, Tommy and his fellow AIMers "cross historic sites where large massacres of Indian people occurred" (93). They "retrace the route called the 'Trail of Tears.' This was the route taken in 1838 when Tribes in the southeastern

U.S.A. were uprooted to give place to white settlers" (95). Even though Tommy

says that he "hadn't even heard of [the Trail of Tears]" before his participation in

the Caravan and, significantly, that his own people "weren't pushed out of [their]

land into another part of the country . . . like some of the people here were" (95),

his actions demonstrate that he, like his girlfriend Elise, "cannot forget" (96).

Elise explains: "what they did burns in our hearts. . . . Some would like to forget

and some try, but most of us don't forget ever." In *Spider Women's*

Granddaughters, Paula Gunn Allen advances a similar theory of intergenerational

collective memory, proffering that "[t]he workings of racial memory are truly

mysterious. No Cherokee can forget the Trail of Tears" (qtd. in Weaver *That* 7).

Lest one conclude that Gunn Allen, or N. Scott Momaday, from whom she

borrows the term "racial memory," is here proposing what Arnold Krupat has

called an "absurdly racist" theory, Jace Weaver explains otherwise: "One can

acknowledge the truth of Allen's statement—and Momaday's," he says, "without

being 'absurdly racist.' The Cherokee can never forget the Trail of Tears—not

because of some genetic determinism but because its importance to heritage and

identity are passed down through story from generation to generation. . . . I would

contend," he elaborates, "that what writers like Momaday and Allen mean is the

multiplicity of cultural codes that are learned and go toward shaping one's

identity. . . . Such cultural coding exists finally beyond conscious remembering,

so deeply engrained and psychologically embedded that one can describe it as

being 'in the blood'" (7). Cecelia Fire Thunder offers a like analysis: "We also

have to remember and understand," she cautions, "that we carry the pain of our

grandmothers, mothers, and the generation that came before us. We carry in our heart the pain of all our ancestors and we carry in our hearts the unresolved grief [and] the loss of our way of life" (qtd. in Smith 63). In her discussion of the transgenerational transmission of trauma and, of particular interest to my argument, the way in which individual experience partakes of and contributes to the collective's trauma, Judy Atkinson relays the story of an Australian Aboriginal trauma workshop participant whose "'psychotic' episodes appeared to have links to the traumatic experiences of previous family members, which he said at the time he had not previously known about. At times," she observes, "he appeared to be acting out other people's trauma, or *other people's trauma enmeshed with his own*. Aboriginal traditional healers who were present at one episode said he was living 'too much in the past . . . he's back with the old people and he's got to come back here'" (183 emphasis added).

Tommy's Okanagan people do not carry the trauma of dislocation in the same way as other Native communities do, to be sure, but they experience a psychic dislocation, a relocation of their sense of Native identity and place resonant with the dislocation suffered by communities physically removed from their lands. Armstrong constructs the dislocation in Tommy's community as a morally-encoded "split" (110) between the traditionalists (embodied in Tommy's relations, who live "up" [16, 26] on the ranch and pursue traditional ways) and the assimilationists (embodied in Tommy's friend Jimmy, who lives "down" [16] in the village and whose anger and desire to acculturate are, as Cheryl Suzack argues, "constitutive effects of economic impoverishment and racism" [120]).

Leaving Tommy divided and confused, the split in his community is an effect of the colonial effort to divest Native peoples of their sovereignty, not only through sustained conditions of economic and social oppression but also, Armstrong reveals, through the bitterly ironic promise that "equal rights" through "inclusion" or, more properly, assimilation will rectify these conditions. Armstrong situates various characters in relation to this assimilationist ideology of "equal rights" in order to trace its divisive effect and historical development in a Canadian context, from its expression in enfranchisement (18), the enforced education of Okanagan children in white schools (23), the legalization of alcohol on reserve land (43), and the termination of reserves and indigenous rights proposed in the White Paper of 1969 (60) to its complex articulation in the inclusion of Aboriginal rights in the 1982 Canadian Constitution. Although the fight to have Aboriginal rights enshrined in the Constitution was fueled by an anti-assimilationist agenda, for Tommy, the actualization of this goal participates in yet another—albeit more deceptive—attempt at absorbing Native peoples into a neocolonial society intent on robbing them of their inherent rights (238-51).[17] Through this ideological tracing, Armstrong shows the insidious process through which Native sovereignty is established as productive of inequality for Native people in Canada, a process instrumental to the continued land theft and cultural genocide of these peoples.

In this context, Tommy's constant movement is indicative of a psychological search for the traditional home or Native identity lost to him through a trans/historical dislocation that because it exists in advance of his experience of it, is constitutive of the very kind of home and identity he seeks.

His search for a space "before" the violent dislocation that in fact precedes him bespeaks a repetition compulsion of sorts that is reflective of the trans/historical trauma of dislocation that unites Native peoples across tribes and nations. While the repetitive (or cyclical) structure and content of *Slash* is often thought to reflect traditional oral narrative conventions, I would argue that Tommy's recurring departure from and return home is also an "acting out" or return to the site of an intergenerational, intertribal trauma as well as an attempt to move beyond—or , more accurately, before—this trauma. This movement is both a behavioral symptom and a performative reiteration that, in an attempt to master the trauma, not only recites and reinforces it, but also repeats and thus relocates it in a particular time and community.

The trans/historical trauma of violent separation and dislocation can be witnessed in Tommy's repeated homecomings throughout the novel and not only in his frequent departures. A reading of Tommy's returns—especially his final return, which marks the recovery of his traditional Native identity—as indicative not only of recovery but also (paradoxically) of a continued traumatization complicates any reading of the novel that understands its conclusion as a straightforward expression of recovery's possibility. Tommy's attempt to return to the moment before the violent split and dislocation of his community (his attempt to return to what was always there) is, in this sense, an attempt to repress the very trans/historical trauma of dislocation that renders such a return both impossible and desirable. But with each departure, the repressed returns; indeed, it is this psychic strategy of repression and return whose mechanisms the novel

lays bare in its concluding pages: the death of Tommy's wife Maeg can be read as the necessary foreclosure on which the im/possibility—that is, the simultaneous possibility and impossibility—of Tommy's recovery and return is based. A traditional Okanagan woman, Maeg is committed to preserving the aboriginal rights of her family, her community, and the generations of her people to come (236). She, along with many others both fictive and historical, decides that the best and only way to guarantee the protection of these rights is to have them built into the Canadian Constitution, and she thus becomes a tireless representative of the struggle to enshrine treaty rights, nation-to-nation relations, and "special status" within a liberal democratic state that would by definition prefer all individuals to stand, *as individuals*, in "equal"—that is, "the same"—relation to the law (243). While, as *Slash* makes clear, this struggle was controversial both within and outside of the larger Aboriginal community, the achievement of its goals was no small feat for Aboriginal peoples, and it forever changed their relationship with the state, whether for good or ill; it remains a monumental achievement and a testament to the material effects of grassroots political activism.[18]

By the novel's conclusion, Maeg comes to represent the ways in which traditional identities, rights, and ways of living are compromised—or perhaps "done in," to draw from the metaphor of her death—by such attempts to work within, or with, the system, a euphemism in this context for assimilation. Literally, Maeg dies in a car accident while returning home from a celebration of her people's long-fought-for victory, but her death takes on allegorical

significance in the context of Tommy's earlier warnings about the disaster

attendant on the inclusion of aboriginal rights in the Constitution. For Tommy,

Maeg's political commitments serve to illustrate with painful accuracy the effects

of internalized oppression, an insidious process through which his people come to

assume as their own what is in fact the *colonizer's* desire for their assimilation to

the neocolonial state—assimilation dressed up, from Tommy's perspective, as the

state's recognition of aboriginal difference: "I feared for our [people's] future

then," Tommy comments after the constitutional amendment was passed in

Parliament. "I saw some dark days ahead. I knew, finally, our *real defeat could*

be just around the corner" (248 emphasis added). By using a travel metaphor to

convey Tommy's apprehension about the effects of constitutional inclusion, and

then having Maeg die on the road, Armstrong positions Maeg's death to

metaphorize these effects: having inadvertently fought for an assimilation of sorts,

Maeg "vanishes," just like Tommy expects his people's land, rights, and identity

to vanish: "Nothing much would remain after that to fight for. . . . We would no

longer know freedom as a people. We would be in bondage to a society that

neither loved us nor wanted us to be a part of it. We would truly be second class

citizens instead of first class Indians" (249). The lesson Maeg's death illustrates

is that inclusion in the Canadian state is tantamount to losing one's Indianness—

and this conclusion makes perfect sense given the government of Canada's long

history of attempting to rob Native people of their Indian status through

citizenship, and specifically enfranchisement.[19] Reflecting the terminal danger of

fighting for inclusion in the neocolonial state, Maeg's death consolidates

Tommy's perspective, since the challenge her position poses to his is symbolically removed in this way. Her erasure is thus the mechanism through which Tommy's recovery is simultaneously secured and undone, for this erasure operates metonymically both to emphasize and excise the trans/historical trauma of dislocation, articulated in this context as a split between the assimilationists and the traditionalists. *Slash* thus provides a "precocious testimony" (21), to borrow Shoshana Felman's term, to the way in which recovery demands its own violent removals.

On one level, Maeg's death highlights the infinite obstacles that Tommy must continue to overcome in his pursuit of recovery, and in this way, Armstrong defines recovery as process rather than telos. She also suggests that recovery is intergenerational, as we are led to believe that Tommy and Maeg's son, a clear symbol of cultural rebirth and renewal, will learn from and continue his father's journey: "My despair was complete," Tommy comments at Maeg's funeral. "Yet I could hear, from somewhere from [sic] out there a little boy's voice that whispered, 'Papa, I'm a Little Chief.' Somewhere from out there something pulled at me and I had to wake up to what was real. I wondered how I would make it to get up one more time. I was so tired" (251). Get up he does, the novel's epilogue assures, although the "everyday reality" of his "pain" underscores the incompleteness of his recovery, as does the "town . . . creeping incessantly up the hillsides" (253), which he observes from his seat atop Flint Rock. As the seat of assimilation throughout the novel, the town looms metaphorically large, encroaching on the place of Tommy's people, the natural

world 'up there,' which has been the seat of his traditions, embodied in his kin, throughout the novel.[20] If Maeg's death functions ideologically to insist upon the incompatibility of her approach to Aboriginal rights with Tommy's more traditional approach, which understands Aboriginal rights as inherent and given by the Creator as opposed to recognized—or worse, granted—by the state, then the encroachment of the town signals the text's counter-insistence on the inevitability of other ways of living and understanding oneself as a Native person and/or community. Armstrong's depiction of recovery, understood as the achievement and enactment of traditional rights and lifeways, is thus anything but straightforward, and I would argue that in *Slash*, recovery is haunted by a deep sense of loss—personified in Maeg but representative of the "thousands of lights" emanating from the town (253): identities, approaches, ideas, and traditions "outside" of yet integral, in the sense of a defining remainder, to the recovery Tommy seeks. Recovery in *Slash* is haunted yet propelled by the losses it seeks to overcome.

For Sam Durrant, the forgetting or primary repression of the Other through which the European subject is consolidated renders impossible the historical representation of such Forgetting, where "representation" is understood as a "recovery" of the past: "To recover a history of the Holocaust [for example] as an event that took place during the Nazi era is to ignore the fact that this Forgetting does not take place in historical time. . . . Such a history would . . . not be capable of remembering the Forgetting of Jewish humanity that is foundational to the construction of European identity" (6). History, in this view, is the territory of the

European subject. While I am sympathetic to Durrant's argument that the forgetting of the Other's humanity is the precondition of the European subject, I question both his location of this forgetting outside history and his assumption that a historicist approach to postcolonial trauma necessarily involves the "fantasy of recovering or retrieving the past" (8). Rather, I would argue that the challenge is to redefine the historicity of (post)colonial trauma as something other than its singular location in time and space. From my reading of *Slash* and *Indian Killer*, traumatic events locatable in specific historical eras, such as the adopting-out of Native children, can be seen as material incarnations of a repetitive trauma that takes place trans/historically or in multiple historical times instead of outside or as a sublime break with historical time. In this view, the removal of Native children is a traumatic calling up of other historic removals, a reenactment that nevertheless has its own historicity, understood here as a material specificity and temporal/spatial location. This approach complicates any easy assumption of the historical location of trauma, but it does not necessarily do away with this location; rather, it redefines it. Understanding (post)colonial trauma as trans/historical eschews a conventional historicist approach that assumes the possibility of fixing history or recuperating the lost other through representation and thus insists that postcolonial narratives "[bear] witness to the way in which the 'unrepresented pasts' haunt the present" (13). At the same time, a trans/historical ethics of remembrance (to borrow and modify Durrant's "antihistoricist ethics of remembrance") insists that we consider the material location of traumatic events even as it complicates the singularity of such a

location. This is not to argue for the possibility of overcoming trauma by narrativizing or locating it within a historical chronology; instead, it is to suggest that trans/historical trauma, because of its very trans/historicity, renders im/possible such a recovery.

In this way, the trans/historical trauma of Native literatures also complicates the distinctions made by Dominick LaCapra between "historical" and "transhistorical" trauma and historical "loss" and transhistorical "absence." Although LaCapra does not specifically posit the application of these distinctions to an analysis of Native texts, his work, while rooted in the field of Holocaust historiography, intimates that the categories he uses to think about trauma are widely and cross-culturally applicable. Native literature suggests otherwise. For LaCapra, much scholarship on trauma (and Durrant's work would be a prime example of this) conflates the notion of traumatic "loss," which in his view is the result of a particular event of the past, with that of traumatic "absence." Loss is a feature of historical trauma—for example, we might think of any number of losses associated with a historical trauma such as the Holocaust: the loss of home, family, community, property, etc. Absence, on the other hand, is a feature of transhistorical trauma—what LaCapra calls "structural" trauma or the constitutive, metaphysical trauma, the absence of/at the origin, familiar from psychoanalytic and poststructuralist analyses. Transhistorical absence, LaCapra explains, "is not an event [or derived from an event] and does not imply tenses (past, present, future). By contrast, the historical past is the scene of losses that may be narrated" (49). "When [historical] loss is converted into . . . [constitutive,

metaphysical] absence," he cautions, "one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed" (46). In short, LaCapra's argument is that the conversion of loss into absence obscures the historical, material, and potentially *recuperable* losses of historical trauma and encourages an endless grief in the survivors of this trauma. Further, the reverse conflation of metaphysical absence into historic loss obscures the foundational, unrecoverable nature of this metaphysical absence. LaCapra cites the biblical narrative of the Fall and loss of innocence as an example of absence converted into loss through narrativization.

Native literatures such as *Slash* share with LaCapra a concern for the dangers inherent in endless mourning, committed as they are to the telos of recovery and the process of "working through." Where they differ, however, is in their formulation of the temporal dis/location—that is, the simultaneous location and dislocation—of historical trauma. *Slash* and *Indian Killer* challenge the notion that historical trauma is temporally situated in the *past* and, as such, can be worked through as "past" through narrativization in the present; indeed, one of LaCapra's key assertions is that "[t]hrough memory work, and especially the socially engaged memory work involved in working through, one is able to *distinguish between past and present* and to recognize something as having happened to one (or one's people) back then which is related to, but not identical with, here and now" (66 emphasis added). The trans/historical losses of (post)colonial trauma are not easily or only situated in the past, and the

intergenerational, insidious, and ongoing nature of this trauma, a trauma that is both "then" and "now" simultaneously, poses serious questions to LaCapra's traumatic chronology, setting forth a theory of *historical trauma as*—rather than as distinct from—*trans/historical trauma*.

The first chapter of *Indian Killer*, "Mythology," provides an apt example of the historical dis/location of trans/historical trauma. "Mythology" is the first in a series of fantasies, ascribed to John but related indirectly by the third-person narrator (a further, strategic dislocation), in which John imagines his life had he not been taken away from his indigenous community. In this first fantasy, John recreates the scene of his birth and thus returns to the trauma of his kidnapping, reconstructing it as such rather than accepting its reconstruction as an adoption. Alexie's language condemns the criminal treatment of John and his mother by the multiple authorities that facilitate his removal: the remains of the placenta are referred to as "the evidence"; John's mother is "bleeding profusely" and "screaming in pain" (5); her "legs [are] tied in stirrups" and "[t]he white doctor has his hands inside her" (4). This is the scene of a crime—a rape and murder— accordant with the historic invasion of Native lands, the conquering of Native women as territory, and the imprisonment and genocide of Native peoples. After the delivery, John is taken away in a helicopter (a removal that parallels extra-tribal adoption and transnational baby-lifting,[21] as well as parodying the rescue/apprehension scenes of popular crime movies), and "[s]uddenly this is a war," complete with shells exploding from the aircraft: "Indians hit the ground, drive their cars off roads, dive under flimsy kitchen tables. A few Indians . . .

continue their slow walk down the reservation road, unperturbed by the gunfire.

They have been through much worse" (6). As Krupat observes, the war staged

here not only calls up the Vietnam war, whose allusive presence underlines

America's parallel treatment of indigenous people everywhere, but it also

foregrounds the war waged daily on the Native peoples of North America (98)—a

trauma that has become so thoroughly the status quo that some, as Alexie's

narrator comments with bitter irony, remain "unperturbed" by it.

In its construction of a phantasmatic space in which the traumatic story of

John's birth is overtly fictionalized, the scene alludes to the familiar tenet that

trauma can only be known or represented indirectly through its narrativization.

Fiction, the scene further implies, is a crucial space in which to articulate the

trans/historicity of historical traumas, for it is the condensation of multiple

historical events and resonances in the relatively small world of the fictional text

that invites us to theorize the interimplication of such events in the world outside

the text. In "Mythology," the story of John's origins is the "origin story"—or

mythology—of the trauma of (his) removal while, at the same time, it questions

the very assumption of "origins" as accessible and singular. The simultaneous

universality and historical particularity of this removal is accentuated through

Alexie's inconsistent usage of determiners. For example, although the first

sentence, "The sheets are dirty" (3), employs a definite article, pointing to a

specific set of sheets, other sentences in the scene use either indefinite determiners

or none at all: "An Indian Health Service hospital in the late sixties. On this

reservation or that reservation. Any reservation, a particular reservation. . . .

Linoleum floors swabbed with gray water. Mop smelling like old sex. . . . Old

Indian woman in a wheelchair. . ." (3). Alexie's diction reinforces the point: this

could be any number of Indian Health Service hospitals in the late 1960s; John's

situation is not unique. However, the scene also lends historical specificity to

what it has revealed as the larger, trans/historical trauma of removal and

relocation—it demonstrates that baby-lifting is the most recent act of removal in a

long chain of historic removals and war crimes, and it reinforces this point

through the occasional specificity of its articles: although "John's mother is

Navajo or Lakota. She is Apache or Seminole. She is Yakama or Spokane," she

is "*[t]he* Indian woman" (4 emphasis added), not "an" Indian woman, not any

Indian woman. The text inscribes specificity at the same time as it marks its loss,

a partial marking of specificity that functions not only to locate John's trauma

within its larger historical narrative but also to underscore how this trauma, as the

trauma of dislocation, severs the possibility of historical location: as Shandra

Spears says of the experience of being adopted-out, "There is no future and no

past, only a long, isolated now / I am not connected to past relations / I am not

connected to future generations / I am pulled from the flow of time" (1-4).

Carrying the Weight of the People: Final Thoughts

In describing the traumatic event-which-is-not-one as such, I return to the

insights that have grounded this chapter: first, that the event of a trans/historical

trauma is not an "event," where "event" is defined as a discrete occurrence in time

and space; and, second, that this event is not singular but is repeated over or

across time and space and is thus cumulative, proliferating, and unhinged from the

assumed verifiability or specificity of history. To theorize the trans/historicity of such an event-which-is-not-one is to focus on the way in which the prefix "trans" attaches to the historicity of trauma a sense of moving across or through—rather than beyond—history.

Felman, Dori Laub, and Caruth have similarly problematized commonplace understandings of the event, origin, and history of trauma by arguing for a "traumatic temporality" (Caruth "Interview" 78) in which traumatic events, located as they are in a delayed psychic return in the present, explode any easy supposition of their temporal fixity. Based, at least in part, on the medical model of trauma, as well as in a poststructuralist approach to referentiality, these theorists hold in common the idea that an individual's inability to apprehend trauma as it occurs causes its reiterative—and performative—reenactment in the present. While critical of Caruth's work, Ruth Leys nevertheless provides an accurate summary of the medical model on which a Caruthian approach relies: "massive trauma precludes all representation because the ordinary mechanisms of consciousness and memory are temporarily destroyed. Instead, there occurs an undistorted, material, and—[Caruth's] key term—*literal* registration of the traumatic event that, dissociated from normal mental processes of cognition, cannot be known or represented but returns belatedly in the form of 'flashbacks,' traumatic nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (266). Caruth herself asserts, "What returns to haunt the victim . . . is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known" (*Unclaimed* 6). Laub adds, "Trauma survivors live not with memories of

the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect" (69). The "impact of the traumatic event," Caruth elaborates, "lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" ("Introduction" 9).

In this view, trauma exists through its performative citation in the present rather than its fixity in the past and, as such, is a return to an unrepresentable past made present through its reiteration—in my argument, both within the Native text and as the Native text. In the same way that, for poststructuralist linguistics, there is no *a priori* referent to language (or for Caruth, following de Man, that reference must be rethought in nonrepresentational terms), there is, from the perspective of a poststructuralist trauma theory, no traumatic event prior to the subject's unwitting repetition of traumatic symptoms in the present. More accurately, Caruth maintains that traumatic symptoms interrupt representation; their return marks the unrepresentability of the traumatic past: they do not represent the past; they refer to it. Although poststructuralist theories of performativity and referentiality are crucial to my reading of traumatic temporality in Armstrong and Alexie, my argument, grounded as it is in the historical specificities of Native trauma, necessarily differs from them. In part because of its indebtedness to the accident model of traumatic effects, Caruth's version of traumatic temporality remains insufficient to describe the historical perpetuity or endurance of the trauma of Native peoples. The currency (or present-tense) of Caruthian trauma

inheres in the incomprehensibility of this trauma in the past—its extraordinariness—whereas in Alexie and Armstrong, the currency of trans/historical trauma testifies not only to the possession of the present by "unrepresentable pasts" but also to continuing traumatic conditions. This is not to ignore that, for Caruth, trauma survivors experience their trauma as continuing in the present, but it is to suggest that, for Armstrong and Alexie, present-tense traumatic conditions exist outside of their repetition in symptom. Trans/historical trauma exceeds its temporal location not only because it psychically haunts its survivor in the present but also because it accumulates and repeats, across time, the residue of diverse historical circumstances.

Trans/historical trauma might be seen as closer in kind to Dori Laub's "second holocaust," especially given that the focus of Laub's model is on collective rather than individual trauma, but I would emphasize that the difference between this model and that articulated in Armstrong and Alexie is parallel to that which differentiates their model from Caruth's. Detailing the intergenerational repetition compulsion central to his concept, Laub explains that the trauma of the Holocaust is inherited by the children of Holocaust survivors, whose lives unwittingly bear witness to the trauma their parents are "attempting to repress and to forget" (67). In one particular case study, "[b]oth the father and the daughter shied away from *knowing* and from grieving, a loss they could henceforth only *relive* as haunting memory in real life, at once through the actual return of the trauma and through its inadvertent repetition, or transmission, from one generation to another." Laub continues: "Through its uncanny reoccurrence, the

trauma of the second holocaust bears witness not just to a history that has not ended, but, specifically, to the historical occurrence of an event that, in effect, *does not end*." The Holocaust, as constructed in Laub's analysis and, indeed, in most of its representations, is similar in traumatic effect to Freud's train accident; understood as an "event outside the norm," the Holocaust defies all comprehension and thus returns to haunt its survivor–and its survivor's heirs–in an ongoing historic present. Marianne Hirsch's concept of "post-memory," which forwards that the second generation of Holocaust survivors is connected to the first through "compulsive and traumatic repetition," relies on a similar assumption, suggesting that the post-memory of the second generation "consists not of events but of representations" (8). Laub's analysis owes much to a psychoanalytic model of individual trauma and its psychic belatedness, and although Laub works to problematize historical location, it is the very method of this problematization that serves to reinstill the Holocaust as a discrete and therefore bounded event. While the accident model constructs the Holocaust as ongoing in psychic life, it does not ask us to see the Holocaust as an ongoing material circumstance. (This is not to ignore the material dimension of psychic life; instead, it is to suggest that a distinction needs to be made between the materiality of cumulative psychological trauma and that of the trauma of sustained political and economic oppression.) Laub's language bears witness to a certain fixation of the trauma of the Holocaust in the past: trauma in the above case study might possess the present, but it is possessed or owned by the past; indeed, it is the parent's trauma that returns. Therefore, while Laub's model might appear

amenable to a study of Native North American trauma, it is in fact quite different from that cultivated by Native authors, for as these authors suggest, the trauma of colonization is present not only in its psychic return but also in its continuation in everyday, material conditions.

The concept of trans/historical trauma has the potential to make a crucial intervention in trauma theory, invested as this concept is in an "event" that refuses historical location at the same time as it insists on being multiply lodged. In *Indian Killer* as well as in *Slash*, the trauma of dislocation and homelessness, along with the rage this trauma engenders, is an event of the present as well as of the past: it originates in distinct historical periods and events and is tied to diverse locales. While its present citation calls up its past rehearsals, it is not only-ever a repetition of the past but instead has its own materiality, its own conditions of production, its own traumatic effects.

From his decision to entitle individual "race wars" between white and Native characters with the names of historic-sounding battles, such as "The Battle of Queen Anne" (211) and "The Aurora Avenue Massacre" (255), to his novel's repeated alignment of the Indian Killer and the killer's acts of vengeance with the nineteenth-century Ghost Dance—an "act of warfare against white people" designed to "destroy the white men and bring back the buffalo" (185)—Sherman Alexie calls attention to the trans/historicity of Native North American trauma. "So maybe this Indian Killer is a product of the Ghost Dance," Marie Polatkin speculates. "Maybe ten Indians are Ghost Dancing. Maybe a hundred. It's just a theory. How many Indians would have to dance to create the Indian Killer?"

(313). "Indians are dancing now," she later adds, "and I don't think they're going to stop" (418). The novel reinforces this point through its final depiction of the killer, who "sings and dances for hours, days. Other Indians arrive and quickly learn the song. . . . The killer knows this dance is over five hundred years old. . . . The killer plans on dancing forever" (420). Both a product and a part of the Ghost Dance, the Indian Killer is a present-tense expression of a trans/historic accumulation; he is "all those badass Indians rolled up into one," as a homeless Indian explains to John's father: "This Indian Killer, you see, he's got Crazy Horse's magic. He's got Chief Joseph's brains. He's got Geronimo's heart. He's got Wovoka's vision" (219). Daniel's response, "But who is he?" disregards the man's insight, thus betraying the refusal of (post)colonial society to acknowledge the trans/historicity of Native trauma. But the Indian man will not be deterred: "It's me," he laughs (220). The trauma of homelessness, alienation, and dislocation—suffered in different ways not only by Crazy Horse, Chief Joseph, and Geronimo but also by John Smith, Marie and Reggie Polatkin, the homeless Indian man, and of course, Tommy Kelasket—is a trans/historical trauma located in the removals and relocations of the nineteenth-century reservation period as well as in the contemporary conditions and consequences of extra-tribal adoption, assimilationist policies, urban relocation, and the identity politics of authentic Nativeness. It is a "pain," Alanis Obomsawin reminds us, that is over "four hundred years old," a pain that is "carried" by the people. As Jeannette Armstrong, through Tommy, makes clear,

I learned that, being an Indian, I could never be a person only to myself. I was part of all the rest of the people. . . . What I was affected everyone around me, both then and far into the future, through me and my descendants. They would carry whatever I left them. I was important as one person but more important as a part of everything else. That being so, I realized, I carried the weight of all of my people as we each did. (202-03)

Chapter three continues to unpack this traumatic weight, exploring the relationship between corporeal and discursive trauma in the context of the Canadian residential school system and asking how recovery narratives formulate "agency" for the subjects of this trauma.

Notes

[1] A shorter version of this chapter has been published. Van Styvendale, Nancy. *Studies in the Novel* 40.1-2 (2008): 203-223.

[2] For a history of reparation efforts undertaken in relation to Canadian residential schools, see Castellano, Archibald, and Degagné, whom I quote here at length for the purpose of context: "The RCAP [*Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*] recommendation in 1996 for a public inquiry to examine the origins, purposes, and effects of residential school policies, to identify abuses, to recommend remedial measures, and to begin the process of healing has taken over a decade to come to realization. A start was made with the federal government's *Statement of Reconciliation* in 1998 including an apology for physical and sexual abuse in the schools and the establishment of a fund to support community healing" (2). The *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement*, they further explain, "is a court-ordered settlement endorsed by Survivors' legal representatives, churches, and the federal government in 2006 and implemented as of September 2007. The *Settlement Agreement* provided for a cash payment to Survivors living in 2005 or their estates if deceased, as well as providing an individual assessment process for adjudication of cases of more serious abuse, the creation of memorials, a five-year extension of funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to support community healing initiatives, and the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission with a five-year mandate consistent with many of the recommendations of RCAP" (3). In light of this chapter's opening remarks regarding memorialization, it will be interesting to see what kinds of residential school "memorials" are created.

[3] See Alexander et al., especially chapter 1. To propose that trauma is "not something naturally existing" (2) is not to suggest that it is not somehow grounded in material realities; rather, it is to maintain that "[t]rauma is a socially-mediated attribution," which may be made "as an event unfolds . . . before the event occurs . . . or after the event has concluded" (8).

[4] See also Isernhagen's "'They Have Stories, Don't They?' Some Doubts Regarding an Overused Theorem."

[5] Published by the American Psychiatric Association and currently in its 4th edition, the "*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*) is the standard classification of mental disorders used by mental health professionals in the United States [and in other countries, including Canada]. It is intended to be applicable in a wide array of contexts and used by clinicians and researchers of many different orientations" ("Diagnostic and Statistical Manual").

[6] For a similar analysis of the way in which the institutionalization of trauma functions to necessitate collective responsibility and compensation, see Hacking, who discusses the cultivation of PTSD in the wake of the Vietnam War, as well as

Young, who notes that "[i]ndividuals 'choose' PTSD . . . because it is a widely known and ready-made construct, it is sanctioned by the highest medical authority, it is said to originate in external circumstances rather than personal flaws or weakness, and (in some situations) it earns compensation" (97-8).

[7] Brian Rice and Anna Snyder advance a similar argument, suggesting that "[v]ictims or victimized groups, collectively, must feel that their suffering has been recognized and acknowledged. . . . For many victims, justice means revalidating oneself and affirming the sense that 'you are right, you were damaged, and it was wrong'" (Gobodo-Madikizela qtd. 47).

[8] The DSM III-R (1987) is the revised version of the DSM III (1980). The definition of a traumatic stressor underwent changes in the DSM IV (1994). While "criterion A for post-traumatic stress disorder will no longer require that an event be infrequent, unusual, or outside of a mythical human norm of experience, . . . [t]he DSM IV revision has failed to provide us with a diagnosis to describe the effects of exposure to repetitive interpersonal violence and victimization" (Brown 111). Even though the DSM definition has changed, I would advance that the earlier definition prevails in popular and academic discussions of trauma.

[9] I use Freud's "accident model" as shorthand for the theory of trauma as a discrete event outside the norm. Elaborated upon in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the accident model extrapolates from the symptoms of train-crash survivors to general principles of traumatic neurosis (see Section II).

[10] See also Abadian.

[11] "Indian" is Armstrong's term, as well as Alexie's.

[12] Critical readings of the "third choice" can be found in Godard 217-18; Emberley ("History") 136-37; Green; and Fee 174-75.

[13] For more information on the ICWA and the conditions leading up to its passage, see Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, Hollinger, and Mannes. See also Fanshel for a revealing look inside the BIA's Indian Adoption Project, which, in conjunction with the Child Welfare League of America, began in 1958 to promote the adoption of Indian children by non-Indian families.

[14] See, for example, Stuart Christie's "Renaissance Man: The Tribal 'Schizophrenic' in Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*," in which John is described as "mentally ill," as well as Diane Krumrey's "Subverting the Tonto Stereotype," in which it is argued that John "los[es] his mind, having never had a clear sense of his identity" (166). While Stephen F. Evans' article does not focus specifically on *Indian Killer* or schizophrenia *per se*, it similarly describes Alexie's characters as having "fragmented, often alienated 'bicultural' lives" (46).

[15] See also Louis Owens (*Mixedblood* 77).

[16] See Alexie qtd. in Moore 298.

[17] For Tommy, to fight to have Aboriginal rights included in the Constitution is to overlook the fact that inherent, pre-existing Aboriginal rights given by the Creator and upheld through practice cannot be "granted" by the Canadian nation. Granted rights are contingent rights, subject to possible redefinition outside the control of Aboriginal peoples. The split between those who desire to protect their rights through inclusion and those who understand these rights as non-negotiable replays, on a grand scale, the split between assimilationists and traditionalists in Tommy's community.

[18] See Borrows and Cairns for more on Aboriginal participation in the Canadian state both in relation to the *Constitution Act,1982* and more generally, and Hawkes and Zlotkin for material on Aboriginal peoples and constitutional reform, post-1982.

[19] See Darlene Johnston for more on the history of citizenship as a means of Aboriginal disenfranchisement.

[20] For more on orientational metaphors, particularly "up" and "down," see chapter four of Lakoff and Johnson.

[21] In her discussion of the ICWA, which includes a section on *Indian Killer*, Pauline Turner Strong coins the term "extra-tribal" adoption (rather than using "transracial" adoption) to "refer to the placement of an Indian child with adoptive parents who are not members of the tribe to which the child belongs." Extra-tribal adoption, she argues, "shares . . . the issues of sovereignty and citizenship with transnational adoption" (470).

Chapter 3: Recovering Agency and Subjection: Reading the Cannibal Subject in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

"In the old days, the children were always told: when the sun starts to go down, make sure you go home, because this old lady will come with a great big basket on her back. She'll come and get you. Th'oʹwx̱eya, they call her" (1).[1] So begins the Sto:lo legend "The Story of Th'oʹwx̱eya, Mosquito Woman." The story opens Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Crey's *Stolen From Our Embrace* (1997), a study of the traumatic effects of residential schools and the child welfare system on First Nations communities, and a program for healing those affected by the most notorious of these effects, sexual abuse. Belonging to Dolly Felix, "Th'oʹwx̱eya" was passed on in 1981 to Felix's granddaughter Gwendolyn Point, who later shared the story with Fournier and Crey and gave them her family's permission to use it in *Stolen From Our Embrace*, where it functions as a narrative framework for the study that follows. On one level, Point observes, the story issues a warning to Native children to go home at dusk unless they want "a wild crone" to come and "spirit [them] away" (7). As a characteristic part of the indigenous narrative tradition of journeying and return discussed in chapter one, its central message is that it is best to stay close to home, and if one must leave, to be very, very careful of the dangers that lie in wait. "Mosquito Woman, the stalking sly thief of children, is every parent's nightmare," Fournier explains (7). She is a cannibal figure, desirous of the flesh of the innocent children whom she captures, and her story metaphorizes colonial invasion not only as a brutal theft, but also as the attempted dismemberment and consumption—that is, the cultural cannibalization—of Native North American peoples. In this sense, the legend is a

register of colonial trauma: according to Point, Fournier summarizes, "the cannibal woman represents the predatory European society that swept into long-held First Nations territory to steal land, culture, souls and children. . . . The cannibal woman snatched children away for four, five, six generations: residential schools, tuberculosis hospitals, foster homes" (7-8).

But this narrative is not only a record of colonial invasion, for as the introduction to *Stolen From Our Embrace* insists, the tale must also be understood as the pre-colonial "prophesy" of this invasion (8), as well as the ancient myth of a supernatural being, a *stl'alequem*, who has "inhabit[ed] the dense rainforests and steep mountainsides of British Columbia's Fraser River Valley . . . since time immemorial" (7). Fournier and Crey, through their insistence on these multiple interpretive registers—and, more specifically, through their decision to re-read a record of colonial trauma *back* into a traditional, pre-colonial framework—mark their project as committed to the recovery of a traditional ground of sorts, a Native location "outside" or "before" the trauma of which it remains cognizant. The necessity of this recovery is made clear in the story's conclusion, in which the children escape from Th'o′wxeya's clutches, returning home to a spiritual healer who "used his power to make sure [they] wouldn't get sick from their experience" (4). Given the colonizers' "split[ting] apart" and "deliberate dismantling" of Native communities (20), the images of homecoming, reunion, and healing with which the narrative concludes articulate a political imperative for recovery from colonial subjection: it is necessary, in this context, to recuperate a stable sense of the Native subject—a subject who is not "sick," a subject healed and thus whole.

"It has only been a few hundred years," Point reflects, "four or five generations, since our children were stolen away, and now they're coming home: to the longhouse, to winter dances, to the sweat-lodges, to the big drum and the powwow—to heal" (8).

"The Story of Th'o′wx̲eya" draws an equation between European contact and Native illness—remember, the children risk "getting sick" because of their experience—while it simultaneously insists that the infection of invasion can be treated or, more accurately, escaped altogether; that is, the narrative understands colonial invasion as disease, a contamination of those contacted, yet it also refuses this infection—indeed, the children are *prevented* from falling ill. The equation between contact and disease is surely an important one, especially because it invokes the smallpox and tuberculosis epidemics that functioned, often strategically, as tools of colonial conquest, yet this equation is also problematic, for in depicting Native peoples as diseased, it would seem to call up and reinforce the myth of the vanishing Indian. Through this paradox, one witnesses the tension inherent in the politically urgent construction of an indigenous subject who is both deeply affected and untouched by the trauma to which s/he is subjected, a tension that characterizes Fournier and Crey's study in its entirety. For them, Native people are "contaminated" (63), even consumed, by the cannibalistic "cancer" of colonial abuse (142), while at the same time, Native people are not only ready but able to "put the past behind them" (72), to "eradicat[e]" (142) the "poison" (157) that has been "shoved down [their] throat[s]" (120). The assumption here is that

subjection, which both consumes and is forcibly consumed by those affected, can somehow be expelled.

Intriguingly, "The Story of Th'o′wx̱eya" can be read to complicate its own belief in the project and possibility of recovery, defined in this instance as the happy removal of the Native subject from the feared impact of colonial contact. In fact, as I argue, the children who encounter in Th'o′wx̱eya the threat of savage dismemberment effect their escape from her through a subversive rehearsal and redirection of this very threat, and in so doing, prompt the series of questions with which this chapter grapples: is it possible to understand survivance and agency as existing in inextricable relation to colonial discourses of Native identity, such as the discourse of savagery, which has historically worked to perpetuate the continuing subjugation of Native peoples? In other words, can indigenous agency and "authentically" Native identities occur at the discursive site of subjection?[2] If so, how might Nativeness—that is, states and expressions of indigenous being and identity—be rethought in relation to such performative reiterations of colonial discourse?

The cannibal is a familiar figure of colonial discourse and has long been used to naturalize the construction of Native peoples as savage and thereby "justify" the so-called EuroAmerican civilization of this savagery. "Cannibalism is the ultimate charge," Maggie Kilgour explains: "call a group 'cannibals,' and you not only *prove* that they are savages but authorize their extermination" ("Foreword" vii). In the "Story of Th'o′wx̱eya," the cannibal figure, who joins together a traditional Sto:lo figure with a colonial myth of indigeneity, is deployed

so as to re/member—in the multiple sense of both recollection and
reconstitution—the discourse of savagery. In other words, the story takes an
indigenous narrative, uses it to metaphorize colonial trauma, and in so doing
appropriates and reverses the colonial fiction of Native savagery. In its depiction
of the cannibal as colonizer, the narrative recasts the supposed bearer of
civilization as he who is truly savage, and laid bare in this moment is the way in
which colonial power both feeds and sanctions its own ravenous desires by
displacing and projecting them onto the peoples it wishes to incorporate and
dismember. The Sto:lo legend is provocative, however, not only in its insistence
that colonial power be made to inhabit its own savage script and thereby undo its
own "civilized" veneer, but also for the way in which it repositions its Native
subjects within this very same discourse of savagery. Indeed, "Th'o′wxeya is
finally vanquished when the children push her into the fire," where she "burst[s]
into pieces" and becomes a "swarm of mosquitoes, small whining beings that bite
and annoy but have no real power" (8). It is, in other words, through a "savage"
dismemberment of sorts that the children ensure their survival. In this way,
"Th'o′wxeya" troubles the project of recovery, asking not only if Native subjects
can be un- or re-covered from dominant discourses of subjection, but also, if
subversive possibilities for the re/constitution of agential indigenous being might
exist within such discourses.

Even though Th'o′wxeya is "transformed . . . into nothing but a cloud of
mosquitoes" (9), and even though, as Point maintains, "social workers and
churches will never swallow up our children again. . . . The priests and social

workers who preyed on our parents, grandparents, our great-grandparents, have

burst into pieces just like Th'oʹwx̱eya" (8), the mosquitoes into which Th'oʹwx̱eya

is metamorphosized carry a palpable reminder of the continuing threat of colonial

presence—dismantled and disempowered by Native resistance, but hungry for

blood nevertheless. As Point herself cautions, "[I]n the evening, when the

mosquitoes are the thickest, when you can hear that whine of the Th'oʹwx̱eya

singing, come back to your people because you never know, there can always be

another Th'oʹwx̱eya out there" (9). Conveying the ubiquity of colonial presence,

mosquitoes metaphorize and thus underscore the already-established threat of this

presence as disease. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was, in

fact, thought possible that mosquitoes were carriers of smallpox, a presumably

terrorizing prospect for indigenous peoples on the Northwest Coast, who were

decimated by the disease in the epidemics of the eighteenth century, and again in

the mid-1820s.[3] Although the error of this scientific hypothesis has since been

established, the Sto:lo story, an earlier version of which would have circulated at

the time the theory was first proposed, contains a trace of the anxiety Native

peoples would have had concerning the diseases brought by Europeans and spread

rapidly throughout their homelands. It follows, then, that Th'oʹwx̱eya, as

representative of colonial contact and the attendant trauma of its impact, must, at

the legend's end, be "vanquished," as Fournier says, at the same time as she

remains a chronic condition. This paradox illustrates one of trauma's central

characteristics, which is its metonymic return, its articulation in displacement. It

also revisits the thorny issue of agency, which is crucial to any discussion of

trauma in general, and, in particular, to my discussion in this chapter of the trauma of sexual abuse as colonial savagery in the context of the Indian residential school system in Canada. What discursive forms can recovery and survivance take in the context of such a trauma? What articulations of indigenous agency are possible at the site of a subjection that, while (and *because*) dismembered in the fire of resistance, persists in transmutations newly forged? Performative, discursive agency, I will suggest, addresses the conundrum of victimry that trauma is often seen to pose to individual and cultural empowerment.

Trauma, Subjection, and the Question of Agency

In 2010, the question of agency raised by Fournier and Crey's study remains an urgent concern in both literary criticism and government-related discussions of the traumatic legacy of the Indian residential school system, operative in Canada from 1831 until the 1990s.[4] Illustrative of this concern is Brian Rice and Anna Snyder's contribution to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's recent collection of essays on Canadian residential schools entitled *From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools* (2008). The collection provides recommendations and historical context for the newly-appointed commissioners of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission (IRSTRC), as well as information for a broader reading public. Pursuant to the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement*, the IRSTRC is a federal restorative justice initiative that responds, albeit over a decade later, to the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996), which called for a "public inquiry to examine the origins, purposes, and

effects of residential school policies, to identify abuses, to recommend remedial measures, and to begin the process of healing" (Castellano *et al.*, "Introduction" 2). Rice and Snyder's article delineates the process of healing and recovery for indigenous peoples in the wake of the "cognitive imperialism" of the schools. As defined by Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste, this term refers to "the last stage of imperialism wherein the imperialist seeks to whitewash the tribal mind and soul and to create doubt" (qtd. in Rice & Snyder 55). Cognitive imperialism, Rice and Snyder further contend, "occurs when people from traditional societies begin to believe the versions of their culture and history set down by the colonizers and live out the roles set forth for them by the dominant society" (55). Often this process is referred to as internalized oppression; Alfred Arteago calls it autocolonialism, and Kim Anderson, referring specifically to negative constructions of Native womanhood, forges the same connection between contact and illness made by Fournier and Crey, arguing that these negative images are "like a disease that has spread through both the Native and non-Native mind-set" (100).

Exegeses of the mechanics of internalized oppression have often turned to decolonization, defined as the unlearning of colonial discourse and the relearning of indigenous narrative, as the necessary next step in Aboriginal healing, the assumption being that colonial discourses of indigenous identity are erroneous and must be discarded in favour of the more accurate discourses, often coded as "traditional," generated by Native peoples themselves. In this context, I would argue, the concept of agency is bound, albeit not without complication, to the

liberal humanist notion of the subject as a unified, self-conscious individual fully

cognizant and in control of his or her own destiny—and identity. In a

decolonizing context, this is a subject who rejects oppressive discourses,

understood as stereotypes, and chooses empowering ones, understood as truths.

This subject, then, is informed by the liberal humanist "vision of the individual as

separate from the wider community" (Vint 13), yet equally informed by the pan-

Indian vision of tribal identities as formed in community narratives. Retaining its

Enlightenment currency well into the contemporary era, the liberal humanist

subject can be said to have shaped the model of the citizen imposed upon

Aboriginal peoples, in part, through the residential school system. In Canada, this

model was imposed politically, in terms of the pressure put on former students to

enfranchise and thus give up their tribal identity and rights, as well as

psychologically, in the sense that it naturalized a non-collective self as the

guarantor of freedom and equality for Native individuals under the Canadian

state.[5] "Liberalism," Hugh Shewell explains of its infliction on First Nations,

"involved more than a new economic order; it was a way of thinking and

behaving rooted in new ideas about individualism, property, the politics of free

choice" (17). To suggest that the liberal humanist subject is a discourse of

colonial subjection is, however, not to suggest that liberal humanism is not now

an indigenous tradition, or that this tradition works only to the oppressive ends to

which it was originally intended. Discourses of recovery in the context of the

residential school system, which contain the free choice of the liberal humanist

subject, combined provocatively with a communitist ethos, clearly suggest

otherwise. It is ironic, though, yet perfectly in keeping with the thesis of this chapter, that the liberal humanist subject, as a colonial discourse of subjection, has become a primary discourse through which to express recovery from the cognitive imperialism of the residential schools.

This chapter proposes, however, that there are *other* traditions of agency articulated in recovery narratives, traditions obfuscated through an approach to recovery that would emphasize only the repressive function of discourse, to the exclusion of its constitutive, productive, and empowering dimensions. Or, to put it differently, there are traditions that explore the proliferating edge of dominant discourse rather than its homogeneity, the way in which its repetition spawns its reimagination, a performative resistance to its own oppressive ends. My preference for the term "discourse," rather than "stereotype," to describe the collective cultural narratives through which individual subjects negotiate social and psychic being reflects a Foucaultian approach, in which discourse is understood as the convergence of multiple, often contradictory "statements"— here, about identity. Stereotype is too thin a term to describe this complexity, calling up as it does notions of the static and the false—the "fictional," in its most pejorative definition. Far from turning my back on the concept of the stereotype and its devastating effects on Native peoples, or proposing that stereotypes are "true" descriptions of Native identities, I focus much-needed attention on the range of constitutive effects stereotypes have. Other work on internalized oppression focuses on the falsity of the stereotype in order to maintain that stereotype does not describe an a priori indigenous reality. This focus is useful,

but limited, for it calls up the "truth" against which this falsity must be framed—

who defines this truth, and what of those whose identities exceed or differ from it?

In light of this distinction, it is useful to reframe what one usually thinks of as

"internalized oppression," in which false statements are imposed on authentic

identities, as "(re)constitutive subjection," in which statements, as historically

specific colonial simulacra, have a constitutive impact on indigenous identities,

and which, through reiteration and in dialogic combination with other statements,

continuously reformulate not only these identities, but the statements through

which they take shape. Agency here is not, as Joan Scott has critiqued, an

"inherent attribute of individuals" (202), but rather a product of discursive

context. Importantly, the intertextual, intersubjective composition of the subject

in this context, a subject ushered into being through community narratives, bears

closer resemblance to pan-Indian understandings of the self-in-community than to

the liberal humanist subject of internalized oppression.

A residential school recovery narrative, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* by Tomson

Highway (Cree) recognizes the oppressive design and function of colonial

discourse, yet insists, as does "The Story of Th'o′wxeya," on plumbing the

possibilities for becoming that are open to the indigenous subject inf(l)ected by

such discourse. Highway's brothers, Jeremiah and Gabriel Okimasis, grow up in

Northern Manitoba. Gabriel is sexually abused by an authority figure at a

residential school which both brothers are forced to attend. Having thus made

contact with a version of the cannibal figure from Cree and Anishnabe tradition,

the Weetigo, Gabriel "turns weetigo," assuming the figure's ravenous—and

contagious—desire for flesh. Gabriel's desires are sexual, and through his turn to weetigo madness, Highway theorizes the intractable, constitutive "infection" of the subject by the colonial discourse of savagery, an infection metaphorized—and metamorphosized—through the Weetigo. Interestingly, this character is not only weetigo, but also a version of Weesageechak, the Cree Trickster, making him an unusual combination of nemesis and culture-hero. Gabriel is also explicitly Christ-like, in the sense that he becomes the sacrifice whereby his brother and double, Jeremiah, might live to recover from the trauma he (too) has experienced. Gabriel dies, consumed by his weetigo ways, while his brother lives; in so doing, he raises the question of the relationship between loss, recovery, and recovery's constitutive lost other, a question to which I will return in chapter 4 as I consider Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*, which bears an important relationship to Highway's *Kiss*. In this chapter, I discuss how the Weetigo facilitates an exploration of the relationship between corporeal trauma—the bodily trauma inflicted on characters in both novels through sexual abuse—and discursive trauma, or the trauma of colonial discourse. A rich concept-metaphor, the Weetigo expresses the way in which corporeal trauma is rendered through discourse, and the way in which performative rehearsals of this very discourse open up discursive agency in the realm of trauma.

Constitutive Consumptions in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

Native to the Brochet Reserve in northwestern Manitoba, Cree playwright and novelist Tomson Highway "went through the entire Indian residential school system—nine years at the Guy Hill Indian Residential School near The Pas,

Manitoba—and the entire white foster home cycle, through three years of high

school in Winnipeg, where," as he himself notes, "I was one of two Indians in a

middle-class high school of approximately two thousand mostly Anglo-Saxon

students" ("Foreword" viii). These experiences, minus those had in foster homes,

are recreated in the author's first and only novel to date, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*,

commonly designated as (semi-) autobiographical, but described by Highway as a

fiction—and most emphatically too.[6] Highway's insistence on the fictitiousness

of his work might be read in a number of ways, including as a mischievous irony,

a protection of personal privacy, a thin disguise (Wasserman 35), and a theoretical

statement on the differences between history and fiction. But above all, in my

reading, it stands as a reminder of the universality (where the universal connotes

ubiquity, not uniformity) of residential school trauma for Native communities in

Canada. The story the novel tells of Jeremiah and Gabriel's residential school

experience is, indeed, historically specific, situated in the late 1950s, when

attendance at the schools was mandated by law, and at a Catholic school run by

the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (*Kiss* 287), who presided over Highway's own

education at Guy Hill.[7] In his article on Highway's earlier play, *Dry Lips Oughta*

Move to Kapuskasing, Jerry Wasserman notes that this particular order of Oblates

were known for their suppression of both traditional healing and Native dancing

(35), an injunction that surely informs Highway's project in *Kiss*, committed as

the novel is to reviving and celebrating both of these cultural forms. In fact, the

two are brought together through Jeremiah and Gabriel's theatrical collaborations,

in which the retelling of Cree myths through music and dance give expression to

the brothers' indigenous traditions, as well as to their experience of residential

school abuse. This experience, however, while historically specific, is hardly

unique. Testimonial literature, government-sponsored reports, literary criticism,

news stories, and historical scholarship all attest to the systemic abuse of

indigenous children at the schools: the attempted extermination of their languages,

cultures and identities through religious indoctrination; the infliction of physical,

psychological, and sexual abuse on their persons; and the dismantling of their

communities through separation and relocation. Far from de-historicizing the

residential school experience, Highway's insistence on his story as a fiction

makes room for an analysis of the lateral trans/historicity of residential school

trauma—that is, the way in which this trauma, while tied to differences in

denomination, location, family culture, community traditions, and individual

psychology, has had similarly profound effects on Native peoples throughout

Canada.[8]

Literary analyses of *Kiss* have constellated around the concept of

residential school trauma. Most claim that Highway "focuses directly on the

agonies of Native characters and the damage done to their culture by the Church,

but . . . eschews the tragic vision," as Jerry Wasserman argues of *Dry Lips*, the

first of Highway's works to broach the residential school legacy (33). Published

in 1989, at the end of the decade in which Aboriginal people made the first large-

scale public disclosures of sexual abuse at the schools, *Dry Lips* was one of the

first two Canadian plays to address the residential school legacy, however

obliquely (23). It helped to usher in, in the early 1990s, "a small flood of plays by

Native writers foregrounding the significance of Catholicism and residential schools in their lives" (25). Reading Highway's work as an engagement with trauma, but an engagement that eschews tragedy, has a political purpose for scholars who appreciate the danger of (re)installing a people's victimry through the appellation of trauma. Given trauma's indelibility, recuperating an agential subject for and in *Kiss*—a subject of survivance, rather than victimry—has become a central scholarly motivation; critics depict recovery in the novel as a triumph over internalized oppression, defined as discursive power over a pre-existing indigenous subject. Sam McKegney and Deena Rymhs illustrate this trend, in which decolonization is framed as the "emptying out" of dominant discourse from the subject of trauma, to borrow from Rymhs, and the discovery or revitalization of traditional discourses of Native identity, specifically those found in Cree oral stories such as the *Son of Ayash*, of which McKegney provides an in-depth reading. "By controlling the self-image and imaginatively reinventing viable ways of being Native through narrative," McKegney argues, "postindian warriors defy the impositions of the dominant culture and, most importantly, define their identities for themselves: 'touch' themselves 'into being with words'" (Vizenor qtd. 81).

For McKegney, Highway's novel provides an intervention into legacy discourse—that is, "the existing body of public discourse on the residential school legacy" (84)—which, he argues, has been "largely dominated by government and church interests" and characterized by the "strategic evasion" of these institutions' pecuniary responsibilities to Aboriginal peoples (84). Legacy discourse has

functioned since the 1980s to displace current government and church culpability

by focusing attention on the damage to Aboriginal communities wrought by the

residential school system: objects of the healing industry, Aboriginal communities

have been framed by legacy discourse as victims of (and in) the past, the "truth"

of whose injuries is to be proven through "historical studies and testimonials"

(84).[9] In McKegney's analysis, Highway redirects the terms of the discussion,

focusing not on victimry or recorded history, but turning, instead, to an

exploration of the ways in which the recovery of traditional Cree stories can,

through their reiteration in a contemporary context, carry and work through the

pain of the residential school experience, while preserving the very traditions this

experience aimed to eradicate. Yet working to procure for *Kiss* an agential

subject who defies discursive strictures and "triumph[s] over [the] traumatic past"

(85), such a reading occludes a complex analysis of subjection and loss in the

novel. Indeed, Gabriel's death from AIDS is never mentioned by the critic, and

one is left with the feeling that his article is haunted—not simply by the silence

around Gabriel's death, but by the persistence of subjection articulated through

this death.

Rymhs argues that the novel "empties out" dominant discourse,

"assert[ing] an independent consciousness that defies the residential school's

control" (85). Allegorizing this argument, Rymhs cleverly borrows from the

novel a traditional Cree story in which the Weetigo is destroyed by

Weesageechak, the Trickster, who crawls up the cannibal's anus and "chews[s]

the Weetigo's entrails to smithereens from the inside out" (*Kiss* 120). Initially

representative of "the priest and the priest's predation of the boys" (Rymhs 106),

the Weetigo is figured by Rymhs as Bakhtin's "'authoritative word,' a type of

discourse fused 'with political power, an institution'" (101). Over the course of

the novel, she argues, the Weetigo is evacuated of its power; Weesageechak,

representative of traditional Cree culture, "supplants the Weetigo, a spectre of the

penetrating culture" (106), and thus the boys' "language can emerge from out

behind the dominant discourse, renewed and transformed" (108). What goes

unsaid in this analysis is that, like the children in the "Story of Th'o′wx̱eya,"

Weesageechak destroys the Weetigo by himself "going weetigo"—cannibalizing

the cannibal, raping him, in fact. Identifying with the aggressor, he assumes the

aggressor's power. Subversive potential exists in this moment at the site of

subjection; it is inextricable, rather than separable, from the discourses of power

through which agency takes shape. Therefore, while critics are right to emphasize

the novel's "celebration" of the "survival and . . . healing powers" of "Native

spirituality" and storytelling (Howells 87),[10] their commitment to analyses that

avoid victimry end up obscuring the complexity of Highway's work. By

championing "traditional discourse" as separable from the "contamination" of

colonial discourse, they not only overlook *Kiss*'s analysis of subjectification, but

they miss the way in which colonial discourse in Highway's novel is always-

already indigenous. The Weetigo, as "savage," illustrates this point.

Highway's Weetigo functions to metaphorize colonial savagery in the

form of Father LaFleur, the boys' residential school priest: as a synecdochic arm

of colonial invasion, Father LaFleur is revealed as the true savage. He physically,

psychologically, and sexually abuses Champion and Ooneemeetoo Okimasis, who are renamed Jeremiah and Gabriel by the Church, taken from Eemanapiteepitat, the Northern Manitoba Cree community of their family, and forced by law to attend Birch Lake Residential School. Like Th'o′wxeya, the Weetigo is an indigenous figure deployed to carry and reposition the weight of colonial discourse. Highway constructs his theory of colonial cannibalism by describing the clerics in a language that performatively enacts their bestial desires: with his "white teeth glint[ing]" (37), Father Eustace speaks in a voice that "slice[s] through the smoky air as through a bleeding thigh of caribou" (37); Brother Stumbo wields his "sharp-toothed" hair clippers (52); and, "like some large, furry animal," (54) Father LaFleur hisses (66, 73), purrs (54, 65, 70), scratches (61), and grunts (69), his eyebrows two "furry caterpillars arching for a meal" (65), his "tongue dart[ing] out and lick[ing] his lower lip" (66). In a further extension of its linguistic colonial beast, the novel describes the aircraft in which Jeremiah and Gabriel are taken to residential school, a clear signifier of imperialist expansion, as "swallowing – or, better, spewing out" the Native children (47).

But Highway's equation of colonial conquest with cannibal desire finds its most telling expression in Father LaFleur's sexual abuse of young Gabriel. From Jeremiah's perspective, we are compelled to witness the priest's brutality:

> Gabriel was not alone. A dark hulking figure hovered over him, like a crow. Visible only in silhouette, for all Jeremiah knew it might have been a bear devouring a honey-comb, or the Weetigo feasting on human flesh.

> As [Jeremiah] stood half-asleep, he thought he could hear the
> smacking of lips, mastication. Thinking he might still be tucked in his bed
> dreaming, he blinked, opened his eyes as wide as they would go. He
> wanted—needed—to see more clearly. . . .
>
> When the beast reared its head, it came face to face, not four feet
> away, with that of Jeremiah Okimasis. The whites of the beast's eyes
> grew large, blinked once. Jeremiah stared. . . . Had this really happened
> before? Or had it not? But some chamber deep inside his mind slammed
> permanently shut. It had happened to nobody. He had not seen what he
> was seeing. (79-80)

This scene narrativizes a Catholic priest's violation of a young Cree boy—an

individual violation that functions synecdochically to represent the Church's rape

of indigenous communities.[11] Through this narrativization, Highway mobilizes

fiction as a mode of witness to historically silenced atrocities. But because

Jeremiah is un/able to witness his brother's abuse, Highway's reader is also

constrained, which begs the following questions: what kind of witnessing does

fiction, as a genre of representation, permit? What kind of witnessing does

Highway's fiction, in particular, facilitate? How does witnessing rely upon, yet

"exceed," as Shoshana Felman advances, our established "frames of reference"

(5)? The above scene fascinates, for at the very moment in which the reader is

called, along with Jeremiah, to *see more clearly*, her ability to witness is

compromised. The passage begins with an image of illumination—the image of a

crescent moon, "the fingernail of a giant index finger . . . , pointing into

uncurtained windows to *reveal* sleeping children" (77 emphasis added)—but its subsequent diction is obfuscatory; in fact, while the moon reveals, as a crescent moon, it only partially reveals and is, itself, only partially revealed. In the hazy state of partial dreaming, a state itself telling, Jeremiah sees only a silhouette, a shadowy outline that *might be* some sort of vulturine creature—a crow, a bear, or perhaps even the Weetigo; he *thinks* he can hear the smacking of lips, but then *thinks* he *might* still be dreaming. What does such modalizing language indicate? Jerry Wasserman offers a psychobiographical reading of Highway's representations of trauma in *Dry Lips* and *Kiss*. In *Dry Lips*, he observes, "the legacies of the residential school are latent and the details of the experience for Highway remain unspeakable" (33), and "only after a full decade in which details of the schools' abuses had been widely publicized could Highway write of them explicitly in a thinly disguised autobiographical fiction" (35). In light of this reading, one might analyze the modalizing language as indicative of a remaining "reluctance" on Highway's part "to speak directly of residential school trauma" or as the residue of an earlier "fear and shame" (34).

Reading Highway's work as scriptotherapy is potentially useful, but I would argue, instead, that the author's use of modalizing language enacts the theory of trauma as a rupture in representation; ironically, it represents the way in which "massive trauma precludes its registration," as Dori Laub advances (57). "[T]he observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction," Laub explains. "The victim's narrative—the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma," he continues, "does indeed begin

with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence." Highway's language, as a testimony to residential school abuse, discursively produces the victim's narrative as itself a form of testimony, highlighting the productive function of testimony to express the unthinkable— indeed, to performatively enact the unthinkable into understanding. "What the testimony does not offer," Shoshana Felman notes, "is . . . a completed statement, a totalizable account of those events. In the testimony, language is in process and in trial, it does not possess itself as a conclusion, as the constatation of a verdict or the self-transparency of knowledge" (5). Enacting both rupture and testimony, the scene also narrativizes trauma through the indigenous trope of the Weetigo. It therefore points to the way in which trauma can be known through metaphor and metonymy—through condensation and displacement, as a Freudian reading of repression would advance—and through established narratological epistemologies. Literary language is the representational system through which trauma can be known, Highway implies, and known only as a possibility, a possibility and condition of language.

As his mind slams "permanently shut," Jeremiah is unable to recognize that which he both can and cannot see: "*It* had happened to *nobody*," he reflects in a moment of classic repression. "He had not seen what he was seeing" (80 emphases mine). Highway employs the pronoun "it" here, a pronoun for which he omits a referent, in order to underscore Jeremiah's inability to comprehend the assault on his brother, which mirrors the assault we later learn he too has been

forced to suffer: seeing himself in his brother, Jeremiah is returned to the scene of his own abuse and represses both traumas. Within a community of individuals who have suffered like trauma, Highway suggests, witness can precipitate a form of traumatic return. This complicates the view of witnessing advanced by Felman, in which the witness, as one who listens to another's wound, "[w]hile overlapping, to a degree, with the experience of the victim . . . nonetheless does not become the victim—he preserves his own separate place, position and perspective" (58). As both witness and victim, Jeremiah has no "independent frame of reference," the prerequisite to witnessing (Laub 81), through which he might view the traumatic event. As Laub says of the Holocaust, "There was no longer an other to which one could say 'Thou' in the hope of being heard, of being recognized as a subject, of being answered," and "when one cannot turn to a 'you' one cannot say 'thou' even to oneself," one "*[cannot] bear witness to oneself*" (82).

At the same time as he represents a trauma without witness, Highway calls upon the reader to witness this trauma through the series of narrative frames he constructs. "Cathy Caruth," Marianne Hirsch explains in a similar vein, "suggests that trauma is an encounter with another, an act of telling and listening, a listening to another's wound, recognizable in its intersubjective relation. Trauma," she continues, "may also be a way of seeing through another's eyes, of remembering another's memories through the experience of their effects" (12). As witness, the reader "sees" Gabriel's abuse through the narrator's representation of Jeremiah's in/ability to see. There are three pairs of eyes in this moment: the reader's, the

narrator's, and Jeremiah's. Through this triple vision, Highway underscores the

way in which witnessing is accomplished through collaboration, refraction, and

the presence of a 'Thou.' To witness trauma is, therefore, to know it indirectly,

through another's fiction—here, through the interpretive framework of the

weetigo. One is asked to see Jeremiah's abuse through one less pair of eyes,

making the "truth" of his wound less accessible than Gabriel's, but even so, it too

is in/accessible through story, itself an act of telling and listening. Highway will

make this point again, with more force, later in the novel, when Jeremiah comes

to witness more fully his own and his brother's trauma through their theatrical

collaborations, which elaborate upon the narrative frameworks of their youth.

Inherent in the scene of witnessing, interpretive uncertainty increases

when one turns to the painfully uncomfortable scene in which Gabriel's erotic

desire for consumption, where "consumption" refers both to the act of consuming

and the experience of being consumed, is formulated during the very moment of

his sexual abuse:

> Father Lafleur bent, closer and closer, until the crucifix that dangled from
>
> his neck came to rest on Gabriel's face. The subtly throbbing motion of
>
> the priest's upper body made the naked Jesus Christ . . . rub his body
>
> against the child's lips, over and over and over again. Gabriel had no
>
> strength left. The pleasure in his centre welled so deep that he was about
>
> to open his mouth and swallow whole the living flesh—in his half-dream
>
> state, this man nailed to the cross was a living, breathing man, tasting like
>
> Gabriel's most favourite food, warm honey. . . . (78-79)

Highway invites multiple and controversial readings of Gabriel's abuse, thus

creating the space in which an analysis of subjection as both imprisoning and

inaugurating the subject can be formulated. The language of subjection in my

analysis is derived from Judith Butler, whose philosophy of discursive agency

through resignification is shared, I would contend, with Highway's novel.

Following Foucault, she defines subjection as "both the subordination and

becoming of the subject," explaining that in this "formulation . . . power is, as

subordination, a set of conditions that precedes the subject, effecting and

subordinating the subject from the outside" (*Psychic* 13). There is, from this

perspective, "no subject prior to this effect" (13). The above passage from *Kiss*

articulates the idea of colonial power as a condition in which the subject is

pressed and *repressed* (or *re*-pressed), a process which simultaneously informs

the shape of the subject's desires. A Butlerian reading might observe the failure

of grammar to convey my argument (as, in English, it must), constructing not a

subject of power, but an *a priori* subject effected by power; the latter subject is, of

course, the subject of internalized oppression. While carrying and reinstalling the

liberal humanist subject, however, the structures of the English language, because

they assume a pre-existing subject, can actually be seen to stress the paradox

whereby, as Butler asserts, "[p]ower not only *acts on* but, in a transitive sense,

enacts the subject into being" (13). One need not read the pre-existing

grammatical subject as denoting an essential subject, a subject prior to power.

Rather, one might read this subject as an effect-in-process of multiple,

historically-rooted discursive registers, a subject who extends temporally into the

past, at the same time as s/he is a nexus of constant becoming. To say that the priest and his crucifix are metonyms for an institutional power that forces itself on the Native subject is, therefore, not to propose that the subject exists as "Native" only before he is pressed upon by the priest, but it is to insist, and importantly so, that a prior Native subject exists, albeit not as an essential self, but as a series of prior constitutive enactments.

The priest's Eucharistic consumption of Gabriel's 'body and blood' points once again to the fundamental savagery of the Church, metaphorized in its central ritual: "Christianity asks people to eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood—," Gabriel later comments. "[S]hit, Jeremiah, eating human flesh, that's cannibalism. What could be more savage?" (184). Consumption in the scene of Gabriel's abuse functions in multiple ways, for not only is Gabriel he who is ingested, but he who ingests, an observation which suggests that Gabriel becomes a version of the consumptive subject—the Weetigo—by whom he is ravaged: isn't his desire to *swallow whole the living flesh*? Marlene Goldman analyzes traditional Weetigo stories as "disaster narratives that register the impact of imperialism and colonization" (167), observing that the "victim who walks out alive [from an encounter with the Weetigo] becomes a cannibal" (177). This suggestion incites a series of questions: what kind of Native subject is scripted here, in the moment of subjection? How might we describe the power and discursive matrix that both constrains and constitutes Gabriel in the moment of his abuse? What is it that presses on Gabriel and, in this pressing, informs the shape of his desire?

In a very "real," material sense, it is the weight of the priest's body that forces itself on the Cree child: the materiality of colonial oppression is embodied in the violence of sexual abuse. Highway insists, however, that what is a discrete event of material injury be further understood for the way in which it is indissolubly linked to a larger web of colonial discourse and a longer history of material abuses. That which presses on Gabriel in the moment of his abuse is not only a powerful institutional and physical body, but also those discourses of power through which the possibility of this abuse is both prefigured and sustained.[12] I would suggest that it is a discursive inheritance of both savagery and submission—an inheritance that is *not* of Gabriel's own choosing or design— which the priest forces Gabriel to internalize, quite literally. The language of internalization is persuasive in this context, but only if it is understood to refer to a constitutive process as well as a repressive one; again, this allows for the ambiguity of the enacted subject's historicity. That Gabriel is subjected to the particular discursive inheritance of savagery and submission is made clear through the Christ figure pressed on his lips. Christ functions metaphorically here, giving a highly resonant and recognizable form to the discursive matrix of sacrifice and savagery through which Gabriel is forced to understand himself as a Native subject.

Gabriel's alignment with Christ is multiple: as a figure who resisted Roman colonial power and occupation, Christ parallels Native resistance to assimilation; as a figure deemed "savage" by those who accused him of "perverting the nation" (Luke 23.2), Christ embodies an alterity similar to that

forced on Native peoples; and, as a figure of willing sacrifice who offers up his body for consumption, Christ gives shape to the sort of submission—a submission to bodily injury and criminalized otherness—demanded of Native peoples. It is *this* complex discursive inheritance that Gabriel both incorporates and is incorporated—that is, established—by; it is *this* inheritance that then delimits, in part, the shape of his social intelligibility, the ways he is given through which to "make sense" as a Native subject. In a later scene, Gabriel and his schoolmates act out the crucifixion, the ultimate punishment of Christ's 'criminal' resistance to Roman assimilation. This scene is juxtaposed with a flashback in which Gabriel is punished, much like Christ, for his "savage" character: he is brutally "lashed and lashed" by Father Lafleur for the "crime" of speaking his "savage" tongue and thus refusing to assimilate (85). But during this moment of resistance, we can hear Gabriel's internal voice plead, "Yes, Father, please! Make me bleed! Please, please make me bleed!" (85). Uttered numerous times throughout the novel, this exclamation expresses Gabriel's Christ-like submission to the consumptive, cannibal power against which he certainly rails but to which he appears "passionately attached." Wendy Brown and Judith Butler use the concept of passionate attachment to describe the subject's deep-seated attachment to discourses that feed his or her subjection while sustaining his or her social being. As an important caution, it should be noted that it is a grievous error to assume that *responsibility* for the subject's subordinated status lies with the subject him or herself; rather, as Butler emphasizes, the attachment to subjection is a psychic effect of power, "one of the most insidious of its operations" (*Psychic* 6).

Through the evocative image of a crucifix whose full discursive weight rests on Gabriel as Native subject, Highway provides us with a visual key through which to conceptualize both the repressive and productive functions of power. As theories of internalized oppression make clear, "[w]e are used to thinking about power as what presses on the subject from the outside, as what subordinates, sets underneath, and relegates to a lower order" (Butler, *Psychic* 2). This theory of power as *always and only* an "organ of repression," to quote Foucault (90), is linked to the liberal humanist assumption that the subject's agency is "always and only opposed to power," as Butler elucidates (*Psychic* 17). For poststructuralist theory, to conceptualize power solely as repressive is to embrace a naive but well-intentioned form of political optimism: "To underscore the abuses of power as real, not the creation or fantasy of the subject," Butler clarifies, "power is often cast as unequivocally external to the subject, something imposed against the subject's will" (20). While the scene of Gabriel's abuse surely suggests a theory of power as that which weighs on and represses the subject, it also suggests that the subject is re/produced through power, and that these two functions are not mutually exclusive: subjection in *Kiss* not only subordinates but scripts its subject, cultivating his desires and sustaining his social intelligibility. Again, this is not to say that Gabriel does not exist as a Native subject prior to his subjection at the hands of Father LaFleur, but rather, it is to suggest that power is not separate from the subject it continuously informs. "[I]f, following Foucault," Butler contends, "we understand power as *forming* the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply

what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are" (2). Subjection, she continues, "consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency" (2).[13]

Is discourse thus traumatic, and if so, what are the implications for the subject of this trauma? For Highway to suggest that Gabriel is not only acted on by the discourse of savagery, but enacted through it is a bold and controversial move, but does he thereby imply that Native subjects are reducible to the discursive trauma they suffer, that they are only and always a mechanical replaying of scripts not their own, scripts that reproduce their subjection? What of agency? To approach the effects of colonial discourses of subjection through the lens of trauma theory is useful, underscoring as it does the (re)formation of the subject through repetition and return—here, to a discursive attachment. Trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth have used poststructuralist understandings of language to understand the workings of trauma. My inquiry expands upon this work, focusing here not on trauma as a crisis of representation, but on the traumatic impact of discourse, as representation, itself. By "traumatic impact," I mean to suggest the way in which discourse, as trauma, is psychically iterated, albeit as an attachment promising social being, to invoke the performative, rather than a biochemically-determined dissociative state, as trauma theory following van der Kolk proposes. Traumatic iteration not only marks its subject's return to an unknowable discursive "origin," but in so doing, marks the subject's "departure" from and deconstruction of this origin (as origin at all), as Caruth says

of trauma in another context. By articulating corporeal trauma through the trope of the Weetigo, Highway invites an exploration of the intersections between the sexual trauma Gabriel experiences and the discourse of savagery through which the perpetration of this abuse is made possible in the first place. Formulated and reformulated in reiteration, discursive trauma, in the context of Gabriel's abuse, contains a powerful and radically political theory: it allows one to maintain the event of Gabriel's trauma as an "origin" point in the formulation of his identity as an indigenous subject, at the same time as it insists on the productive failure of this trauma to determine Gabriel as subject. Traumatic discourse is un/known only ever in a new context of iteration, a discursive re/situation through which the subject can thus "take flight" from that which grounds him.

And what of Gabriel's desire? What of his pleasure, the pleasure experienced in and through subjection, the pleasure that "wells deep" in his centre as he contemplates the consumption of "living flesh" (78)? By linking Gabriel's experience of abuse not only to the production of his social intelligibility, but to the production of his desire—specifically, his homosexual desire—Highway provocatively challenges the conventional model of victimization in which abuse is figured as only and always suppressive. Is it possible to understand Gabriel's desire as shifting or subverting the discourses of subjection through which it is engendered? *Kiss*, I would argue, proposes that the discourses of savagery and submission through whose re/citation Gabriel is re/constituted are the discourses that inform the *trajectories*, as Butler would say, of his sexual desire. The web of discourse in which Gabriel is caught and constituted is the web through which this

character comes into being as a "savage" sexual subject whose pleasure is linked to consumption—to the desire to consume and be consumed.

These assertions recall the primary scene of abuse in which Gabriel is cannibalized and, in the moment of being consumed, becomes he who cannibalizes. For the remainder of the novel, Gabriel continues to enact both sides of this inherited discursive dichotomy: he is both cannibal and cannibalized, invader and invaded, savage and sacrifice. In a death-bed reverie, for example, he is simultaneously the "hunter" of sexual flesh and the "meat" that is hunted (299-300), and in multiple instances, he both *pierces* and is *pierced by* the men with whom he has sexual encounters. In one such scene, which takes place in downtown Winnipeg at the Bell Hotel, its name changed to "The Hell Hotel" by the "mechanical malfunction" of its neon sign, Gabriel hooks up with a fellow bar-mate whose eyes he "pierce[s]" with his own before "bath[ing] in the surge of power that shot through him" (131). Following the man into a series of dark alleyways behind the bar, a sure descent into the labyrinthine "hell" of his sexual desires, as well as an allusion to anal sex, Gabriel's "maleness" is "flailed," the "cold November air . . . like a spike rammed through the hand" (132). Such moments make clear that Gabriel's sexual desires, identities, and encounters are always-already haunted with the scene of his initial abuse and, moreover, that they re/member and re/cite the discursive matrix of savagery and submission through which he has been and continues to be informed.

As Gabriel's first consensual sexual encounter, the alleyway scene leads Highway's reader into the pleasures of "hell," as instituted by the Church, and

into the "dark passageways" of Gabriel's psyche, the hellish site of his initial

violation. Significantly, at the same time as Gabriel is sexually "crucified," a

Northern Cree woman, Madeline Jeanette Lavoix, is raped in the alley with a

screwdriver. She is the second Cree woman in the book who is violated and then

murdered in this fashion: the first is Evelyn Rose McCrae, who was "found in a

ditch on the city's outskirts, a shattered beer bottle lying gently, like a rose, deep

inside her crimson-soaked sex" (107). A reoccurring trope in the novel, Cree

female victims function as figures of innocence—indeed, the third one is depicted

as "the Madonna of North Main" (216)—vulnerability, and gross violation to

which both Gabriel and Jeremiah have a connection, forged through

identification. The graphic abuse of the women clearly echoes and acknowledges

the real-life rape and murder of Helen Betty Osborne, a Cree woman from The

Pas, Manitoba, who attended the same residential school as Highway, and the

connection between the women and the brothers provides historical context for

Osborne's death by showing the legacy of sexual abuse that made her death

possible.[14] Through the reoccurring image of puncture, Highway aligns the

violations inflicted upon the Cree women, both of whom have moved from the

North to the city, and the boys, whose abuse took place at residential school: both

are victims of dislocation and racist patriarchal violence. Underscoring this

connection, Highway makes clear that the Church endorses violence against

indigenous women. The boys' father, Abraham, for instance, himself a staunch

Christian, obeys Father Bouchard's order that he disown his younger sister,

Black-eyed Susan Magipom, for leaving her physically abusive husband: "the

priest advised the hunter that associating with the woman gave approval to her sin until she had returned to her rightful husband and repented" (129).

In the alleyway, with a partially repressed vision similar to that of his brother during the scene of his own abuse, Gabriel "thought he saw—to his dying day, he could not be sure—a mass of bodies, men, he thought, young men with baseball caps standing in a tight circle around . . . around what?" (131). He hears, "from within the ring, female whimpering, moaning, the northern Manitoba Cree unmistakable in the rising and falling of her English" (131-32); he "thought he caught the flash of a woman's leg, bare, jeans a crumple at the ankle, a naked posterior—male—humping. And then Gabriel and his plaid-coated friend were around a corner, and a second, and in another black passageway" (132). He is un/able to penetrate the "tight circle" in which her violation, aligned here with that he suffered as a child, takes place, and he, like Jeremiah, is un/able to bear witness to himself—and additionally, to the feminized victim with whom he identifies and onto whom, it would seem, his abuse is displaced. Like his brother's, Gabriel's abuse remains repressed behind a "padlocked door" in his psyche (126). In a later scene in which Jeremiah derogatorily labels one of their classmates a "fag," and then proceeds to confront Gabriel about the secrecy he maintains around his social life, it becomes clear that as mirror-images of one another, the door in Jeremiah is the same as that in Gabriel: "Glaring at each other was like glaring into a mirror, their eyes, their rage, identical," the narrator relates. They were "siblings battling each other, wrestling with the darkness that had come scratching at their door" (161).

The exploitation Jeremiah suffers is also displaced onto and articulated through the women he both desires and is unable to protect. Corporeally repressed, Jeremiah is further than Gabriel from an encounter with the fact of his abuse, and his relationship with the women, unlike Gabriel's, is mediated through text: while both brothers are un/able to "see" their own and the women's abuse, Jeremiah learns about their violation through the newspaper, as he later comes to know his own violation through the production of dramatic texts. Gabriel, the dancer, circles closer—that is, he is more physically proximate—to an encounter with the traumatic core of his abuse, as is illustrated in the alleyway scene. The slippage I have made in the first sentence of this paragraph between Jeremiah's desire *for* and his desire *to protect* the women is telling, for while he is enraged by the violence against women of which he hears, he achieves a certain "relief" from his impotence (sexual and sociopolitical) by watching "misogynistic violence," albeit of a fictional nature (260). In a motel room with Amanda Clear Sky after an unsuccessful sexual encounter, Jeremiah asks her to replay a videotape of a soap opera episode in which she, as one of the soap's characters, is beaten up by her lover. Jeremiah's assumption of the male gaze allows him to identify with a version of the aggressor who abused him and his brother, and thus to gain a modicum of his abuser's power. Through an increasingly mediated relationship to violence against women, Jeremiah attempts to shore up his "masculine identity" in opposition to the women's victim status as well as his brother's homosexuality, both of which he reads for their connection to sexual abuse and thus as connected to his own sexual identity; indeed, he is as enraged by his

brother's sexuality, at least initially, as he is by the murders.

Highway obviously doesn't shy away from the controversial, depicting the sexual and gender identities of both brothers as formed in subjection, yet his politics insist upon the recognition of the naturalness of such identities, particularly homosexuality, which has been persecuted for its supposed unnaturalness. During a telling encounter in which the younger Okimasis brother's "orifices are punctured and repunctured as with nails" (169), an act alluding again to a passive Christ and the novel's female victims, Gabriel feels a silver cross in the "farthest reaches of his senses, . . . ooz[ing] in and out, in and out, the naked body pressing on his lips, positioning itself for entry. Until, upon the buds that lined his tongue, warm honey flowed like river water over granite" (169). Homosexual desires are figured here as natural, an interpretation secured through "natural" images of water, rock, and elsewhere, pink fireweed, the plant of Gabriel's indigenous homeland. In a scene from Gabriel's childhood, a spray of fireweed is, in fact, humorously described as "flaming" (93). At the same time, the novel insists that these desires be considered as inextricably bound to the priest's savage, yet undeniably erotic or "honeyed," consumption of Gabriel's body. This is not to suggest, as does Terry Goldie, that the priest's abuse instigates the "necessary awakening" of Gabriel's homosexual identity (210), or that this abuse "cannot easily be divided from [Gabriel's] resulting *recognition* of his sexual identity" (213 emphasis added), for the grounding assumption of such statements is that homosexuality is an innate core of sorts, a stable sexual self waiting to be recognized and awakened. Highway's novel, I would argue, issues

a challenge to just such an essentialist understanding of homosexual desire, proposing instead that the naturalness of this desire be understood as infused with the discourses of power through which it is cultivated, in part. *Kiss* thus maintains the indigeneity of homosexuality while inviting its reader to denaturalize such "nativeness" by considering how it is bound, from the start, to signification.

Kiss of the Fur Queen poses difficult questions that push at the boundaries of conventional assumptions about trauma, recovery, and subject formation: how is sexual abuse linked to the sexual desire of s/he who is abused? How does abuse haunt and inform desire, and how might this desire exceed and challenge the abusive structures through which it is produced? *Kiss* searches for a way to understand subjection as the seat of subversion, and it asks, as does "The Story of Th'o'wxeya," how we might conceptualize agency within a theory of power that might seem to deny it. In her work, Judith Butler explores a similar set of questions and asserts the following theory in response: "If in acting, the subject retains the conditions of its emergence, this does not imply that all of its agency remains tethered to those conditions. . . . Where conditions of subordination make possible the assumption of power," she continues, "the power assumed remains tied to those conditions, but in an ambivalent way; in fact, the power assumed may at once retain and resist that subordination" (*Psychic* 13). If the subject is "repeatedly constituted in subjection, [then] it is in the possibility of a *repetition that repeats against its origin* that subjection might be understood to draw its inadvertently enabling power" (94 emphasis added). These insights resonate with

those Highway advances in relation to the question of agency, for although

Gabriel's desires remain tethered to the abusive origins and discursive conditions

of their production, they do not merely or mechanically reinscribe these

conditions. Later in life, for example, when Gabriel is pressured by his brother to

attend Church, he seduces the local priest, becoming an agential instrument of the

power, discursive and carnal, that subordinated him as a child. Performatively

enacting the "savagery" inculcated in him by the Church, Gabriel inverts the

power relationship between himself and the institution, positioning himself as

aggressor and the Priest as victim. The discourse of savagery through which he

and his people have been oppressed thus becomes the means through which

Gabriel reveals the hypocrisy of the oppressor and his "uncontrollable" carnal

appetites, projected onto Native peoples in order to justify their assimilation to the

Church's ways. The irony of this assimilation, as an assimilation to a ravenous

sexual appetite, is illustrated through Gabriel's resignification of savagery. This

time, it is Gabriel, not the priest, who cannibalizes the object of his desire:

"Gabriel's gaze *raked* its way up the belly, chest, and neck to the face, where he

knew he had induced a flashing spasm in the holy man's gaze. The Cree youth

curled his full upper lip—and watched with glee as celibacy-by-law drove mortal

flesh to the brink" (181 emphasis added). Highway here uses a definite article

("the belly," etc.) rather than a personal pronoun ("his belly," etc.) to describe the

priest's body and thus enact its linguistic dismemberment.

 Kiss re/members the discursive inheritance of savagery and submission for

its production of pleasure, desire, and sexual identity, and the subversive potential

of the novel lies in its creation of an indigenous subject whose desire both recalls

and reconstitutes the oppressive aims of colonial discourse. Perhaps the strongest

example of this claim is Gabriel's relationship with Robin Beatty, his final sexual

relationship and, ironically, his "healthiest," the irony being that it is while with

Robin that Gabriel discovers he has HIV and later dies of AIDS-related

pneumonia. While one might assume that it is through this relationship that

Gabriel finally breaks free from the legacy of sadomasochism left him by Father

LaFleur, and therefore, that as an agential subject of the liberal humanist order, he

can rise above the trauma to which he was subjected, Highway implies otherwise.

That a genuinely loving and egalitarian relationship exists between Gabriel and

Robin is proof that the script of savage desire can be turned against its ostensible

ends—in other words, that it can be reiterated in tension with the hierarchy of

power and pain it carries—but this does not mean that Gabriel, as desiring-

subject, is liberated from the script; indeed, the script is productive of his desire

for Robin in the first place. Robin, like his prior sexual conquests, recalls

Gabriel's traumatic encounter with the Weetigo: "wild-haired" and "snarl[ing]"

into the microphone," Robin is described as "growl[ing]" (276) and "bark[ing]" in

the bar where he first meets Gabriel (277). His "half-closed eyes" are described

as having "hung fixed" on Gabriel (276)—a clear allusion to Christ's hanging on

the cross, which has functioned throughout the novel to signify sexual submission.

In a later encounter, Robin's laugh is depicted as a "meaty, wet chortle," while

Gabriel finds himself drawn to Robin's "[s]lightly crooked teeth" (283). These

two descriptions are suggestive of the Weetigo's obsession with flesh and

mastication, and they are reminiscent of Father LaFleur's own "meaty breath"

(109). How can the love between these two men, the novel asks, resignify the

relations of power, discursive scripts, and relational patterns to which it is

tethered?

Highway complicates the possibility of recovery from sexual and

discursive trauma in such a way as to invite alternative, agential expressions of

Native identity, expressions not necessarily "cleansed" of the "contamination" of

colonial contact. In maintaining the notion of contamination—Gabriel's

contraction of HIV as a result of his "savage" sexuality is itself a product of his

abuse by the Church—Highway illustrates contact as disease, a trope with which

we are familiar from the "Story of Th'o′wx̱eya." The implications are

problematic: Gabriel is made "sick" by his sexual proclivities, and his recovery

from this illness is im/possible only through his demise. One might read

Gabriel's death, as Mark Shackleton has, as "symptomatic on the individual level

of the effect of the Christian Church on the lives of Aboriginals worldwide"

(161)—the *deadly* effect, I would add. Yet, one must also consider that Gabriel's

death simultaneously precipitates his recovery—that is, his "return home" to a

psycho-spiritual place beyond the grasp of the Weetigo; in fact, according to Cree

and Ojibway oral traditions, Weetigos were often expunged from society through

the murder of their victims. In this context, it is unsurprising that Gabriel's death

would function as an exorcism of the effects of Christian abuse on indigenous

peoples in the person of the Weetigo. It is through the mechanism of exorcism

that Gabriel is released "to his spiritual home," the location to which he departs

with the Fur Queen at the novel's close (Shackleton 160). But does Highway thereby eschew the theory of power and agency his novel has formulated? Does he imply that a liberal humanist "power over" the Weetigo and all he represents is possible—indeed, necessary—to the indigenous subject's "health," yet clearly impossible, most obviously because this subject, Gabriel, dies? Or does the novel's conclusion further complicate the assumptions of recovery discourse, drawing attention to the ways in which a contamination theory of indigenous identity can lead only to erasure—and yes, death—for those deemed so "contaminated"?

As the younger Okimasis brother lies bed-ridden in the hospital, his position of physical powerlessness reminiscent of his residential school experience, his mother, Mariesis, arrives from northern Manitoba, followed by the novel's spiritual centre and traditional medicine woman, Ann-Adele Ghostrider. "Mariesis's rosary," the narrator relates, "lay entwined in Gabriel's fingers. Ann-Adele Ghostrider's old, brown hand removed the beads and replaced them with an eagle feather. . . . About to throw the rosary into the trash can, she hung it, instead, on a Ken doll sporting cowboy hat and white-tasselled skirt. The medicine woman lit a braid of sweetgrass and washed the patient in its smoke" (303). In condensed fashion, this scene engages the novel's playful sacrilege, its refusal to separate post/colonial from traditional elements of Native identity, and its embrace of alternative—and/as traditional!—genders, embodied here in the hyper-masculine drag queen. Revealingly, Gabriel is made to hold the feather, an obvious signifier of his traditional identity, while the rosary and the Ken doll are

put off to the side, removed from his body, as though a process of identity

separation were in motion. In tension with this division, however, is the fact that

the post/colonial in this moment *is* the traditional, for as Highway makes clear in

"A Note on the Trickster," which prefaces *Kiss*, "the central hero figure from our

[Cree] mythology . . . is theoretically neither exclusively male nor exclusively

female, or is both simultaneously" (n.p.).

Still, the removal of the post/colonial from the traditional continues when

the family bars the door to hospital officials who insist that they stop burning

sweetgrass, as well as when Jeremiah and Amanda refuse entry to the Priest

whom Mariesis has brought to give Gabriel his last rites. Called to the hospital

because of the burning sweetgrass, which has set off the fire alarm, the fire chief

begs Jeremiah to let him in, to which Jeremiah responds,

> "There's a man dying in here!" . . . "We're Indians! We have a
>
> right to conduct our own religious ceremonies, just like everyone else!"
>
> He slammed the door again.
>
> "Jeremiah!" Mariesis wailed behind the great wall of fireman.
>
> "Let this priest in or I'll kill you!"
>
> Jeremiah yanked the door, reached under the fire chief's armpit,
>
> shoved the midget priest away, pulled Mariesis inside, and slammed the
>
> door a third time. (305)

Indicative of his own road to recovery, Jeremiah's trinity of obstructions

underscores his ability, at last, to protect his brother and himself from the priest's

attempted invasion of their most private, sacred space. As Shackleton concurs,

"In the final chapter of *Kiss*, Jeremiah [also] 'comes home' to his cultural roots at the death bed of his brother, Gabriel, when he initiates the sweetgrass purification ceremonies of the Cree and slams the door in the Catholic priest's face" (160). Yet the brothers' homecoming, their desire for recovery, is articulated at the precise moment that recuperation is, at least for Gabriel, quite literally im/possible: the weetigo priest is prohibited access to Gabriel's body at the same time as he consumes it utterly; he is in the bed, a virus inside Gabriel, at the same time as his presence is barred from the room. He is described as a "midget," easy to overpower physically, at the same time as he is omnipresent, having colonized Gabriel's body.

Exorcism functions doubly in this scene, for not only is the priest exorcised so that Gabriel might find peace, but Gabriel himself, as the "contaminated" mirror image of Jeremiah, is exorcised so that Jeremiah might, in a sense, "do away with"—if not recover from—the weetigo in himself that Gabriel represents. As Christ figure, Gabriel is "crucified" so that Jeremiah might live to recover from the abuses both brothers have suffered: he is the sacrificial lamb who takes on the sins of the world so that his brother might be saved. To theorize recovery in the novel thus means considering the role that Gabriel's death plays in relation to this recuperation, as well as the function of death in recovery narratives more generally. First noted in chapter two in relation to *Slash*'s Maeg, death as a generic feature signaling the interrelationship of recovery and loss will be further unpacked in the following chapter, which analyzes Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road*. Like *Kiss*, Boyden's novel is structured around the relationship

between two brothers, one of whom must die for the other's recovery. It thus follows Highway in highlighting the productive function of loss and its constitutive relationship to recovery, what in the next chapter I call the melancholia of the recovered subject.

Gabriel is not only lost other to Jeremiah's im/possible recovery; he is, as Shackleton has reminded us, a subject on the road to his own recovery—indeed, as the novel utters its last words, Gabriel is described as "rising from his body," his own lost other, leaving it behind as the Trickster takes his hand and together they "float[] off into the swirling mist" (306). As a scene from the beginning of the novel haunts its conclusion, Gabriel becomes a version of his deceased father, driving eight grey huskies across the tundra of his mind. In this echo of the race for which his father won the Millington Cup World Championship Dog Derby, Gabriel, the narrator comments, "could see, or thought he could, the finish line a mile ahead. . . . And he was so tired, his dogs beyond tired, so tired they would have collapsed, right there, if he was to relent. 'Mush!' was the only word left that could feed them, dogs and master both, with the will to travel on" (303). *Go, Go forward*, the novel calls. *Journey on*, the finish line forever just ahead. Recalling the observations of chapter one, homecoming here is in the journey, the migration, the movement forward; trans/historical, it is the journey of the ancestors as well as the present generation. Even though Gabriel dies in an urban center far from the land of his people, a land already complicated by the novel as indigenous origin or site of belonging, by metaphorizing the journey in geographic terms, Highway imagines the im/possibility of Gabriel's return to this

homeland. He thus adheres to conventions of the recovery genre, asserting the

importance of tribal territory, while questioning the implications of tying recovery

to homecoming for those who cannot return home. In his re-imagination of home,

agency, and indigenous identity in the context of residential school trauma and

discursive subjection, Highway expands the ideological parameters of the genre,

suggesting alternative and more comprehensive approaches to recovery and

"authenticity." His novel embraces the im/possibility of recovery and

homecoming, situating its characters at the very nexus of this paradox.

Notes

[1] The phonetic pronunciation of Th'o′wx̱eya is "Thohk-way-ya."

[2] I wish to preserve the word "authentic" to describe Native identities, but I do not wish to use it uncritically. My choice of words here is derived precisely from the word's political inflections and not despite them. One of the aims of my study is to open the definition of the "authentic" by questioning its constitutive exclusions, yet I would also argue that preserving the term for its political force, in a strategic essentialism of sorts, remains crucial.

[3] See Larry Cebula for a synopsis of the smallpox epidemics and their devastating effect on the Plateau Indians of the Northwest Coast (72-75). See also *New York Times* articles "Mosquitoes May Spread Smallpox" and "Mosquitoes and the Smallpox Epidemic."

[4] See "A Condensed Timeline of Events" in the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's *From Truth to Reconciliation*, as well as Castellano, Archibald and DeGagné's "Introduction" to the same volume. While the introduction indicates that residential schooling in Canada began in 1831 (2), the timeline supplements this information, noting that the first missionary-operated school was established near Quebec city in 1620-1629 (64).

[5] In the late 19th-century United States, as in Canada, the residential school system was being implemented on a large scale. With reference to the American context, George E. Tinker makes clear the connection between the imposition of U.S. citizenship and the "inculcation of individualism among native peoples" through the residential schools, where they were "'educated' to hold eurowestern beliefs" (xvii).

[6] See the novel's Acknowledgments page, where Highway writes, "This book, of course, is a novel—all the characters and what happens to them are fictitious . . . As a certain philosopher of ancient Greece once put it, the difference between the historian and the poet/storyteller is that where the historian relates what happened, the storyteller tells us how it might have come about" (*Kiss* n.p.).

[7] Beginning in 1920, as Beverley Jacobs and Andrea J. Williams explain, it was illegal for parents to keep their children out of residential school (126).

[8] Wendy Pearson describes the novel's "genre crossings," noting that the "shadowy photograph of the dancer Rene Highway on the cover" indicates the novel's "hybridization of fiction and (auto)biography" (180). (Note: not all printings of the edition have the same cover; my copy depicts a Cree hunter and his dog-sled team on a northern Manitoba landscape.) See Diana Brydon for more on the novel's genre (23).

[9] As McKegney notes, this framework "presumes a disjuncture between an historical Canadian government responsible, in part, for residential school transgressions and the current government purportedly committed to dealing with their effects" (85). Legacy discourse is problematic, then, because it "delimit[s] discussion of the residential school legacy while fixing Indigenous experiences in either the simulated past of recorded history or the simulated present of calculable neuroses" (85).

[10] See also McKegney, Rymhs, and Sugars.

[11] Highway is well known for this synecdochic representation (see his *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, in which one character rapes another with a crucifix).

[12] See Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* (especially chapter 1) for a discussion of materiality as thoroughly "bound up with signification from the start" (30). This chapter is especially useful for its problematization of the widely-held assumption that "nothing *matters*" for or in poststructuralist theory, the assumption, that is, that theories of matter as discursive function to erase "real" bodies and bodily injury.

[13] This theory is indebted to the work of Michel Foucault, especially his "Two Lectures," where he resists the idea of power as only "an organ of repression" (90) and turns instead to the idea that "the individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle" (98).

[14] For a brief biographical sketch of Helen Betty Osborne, see Stephanie Pyne's "Profile of Helen Betty Osborne."

**Chapter 4: Recovery's Melancholia: The Subject of Loss in Joseph
Boyden's *Three Day Road***

Penned by Anishnabe/Métis/Irish/Scottish writer Joseph Boyden, *Three

Day Road* (2005) is most obviously a historical fiction about World War I, but it

is also a residential school recovery narrative much like Highway's *Kiss of the

Fur Queen*. In fact, Boyden's novel pays tribute to Highway's, its characters and

content bearing a striking resemblance to the earlier text. Both novels tell the

story of Cree brothers: Boyden's, Xavier Bird and Elijah Whiskeyjack, grow up in

Mushkegowuk, in and around Moose Factory, Ontario. Both feature protagonists,

Gabriel in *Kiss* and Elijah in *Three Day Road*, who are sexually abused during

their compulsory stay at residential school and who, having thus made contact

with a cannibal, "go windigo" (as the cannibal figure is called in Boyden's

novel).[1] Whereas Gabriel's "savage" desires are sexual, Elijah's are martial. As

in Highway's novel, in which the savagery impressed upon Gabriel, both in deed

and in discourse, becomes a passionate attachment through whose discursive

rehearsal the character enacts his (sexual) identity, in *Three Day Road*, "savagery"

is a colonial discourse of subjectification. It is such both in the sense that it

subjects Elijah to definition within the terms of a Euroamerican discourse of

indigeneity, which is, of course, more properly descriptive of Euroamericans

themselves, and in the sense that it renders him a warrior subject—that is, it opens

a discursive path to an indigenous identity, that of the "savage," a version of

which was denied Elijah by the very culture that, ironically, assumed he was

nothing but. But like Gabriel, Elijah is not only windigo, but Weesageechak. He

is also Christ-like, the sacrifice upon which the possibility of his brother's

recovery is founded, and in dying at the novel's end, he returns us to the question of recovery's constitutive lost other—that is, the question of recovery's fundamental melancholia. *Three Day Road* takes up where Highway's novel leaves off, explicitly engaging the relationship between the lost other and the recovering subject and exploring the ways in which this subject's recovery is predicated on the introjection of the windigo other. The recovered subject cannot help but become his lost other, to a certain extent, at the same time as he must exorcise this other in order to consolidate his own identity and the im/possibility of its wholeness. In the present chapter, I analyze this subject's articulation in the assimilationist context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Canada, and more specifically, its articulation as a contemporary narrative response to the trauma of the residential school system of this period. This analysis gestures beyond its historical particularity to further illustrate the mechanics of recovery as a narrative genre and a discursive project, highlighting the way in which recovery as such is made up of its losses.

Melancholic Subjects and the Discourse of Recovery

Given that the residential school experience meant, for many Native people, the loss of traditional practices of grieving and communal ceremonies, decolonization in this context, according to Brian Rice and Anna Snyder, involves the "rediscovery and recovery of language, culture, and identity. Rediscovery and recovery," they claim, borrowing from the thinking of Hawaiian scholar Poka Laenui, "is often followed by a process of mourning" (58). From this perspective, mourning, it would seem, is not so much a process that insures recovery, but a

process that accompanies or informs it. Likewise, rather than fixing recovery as the telos of mourning and "working through," *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and *Three Day Road* explore loss for its constitutive function in relation to indigenous subjects of residential school trauma and recovery. Following Rice and Snyder, whose work inverts the expected chronology in which recovery follows mourning and posits, instead, the paradoxical occasion of mourning's (re)birth in recovery, I want to argue that recovery, as a discourse of Native identity, is haunted and constituted by the losses it attempts to overcome, as is the recovered subject, who is similarly haunted. In Boyden and Highway's fiction, recovery is melancholic, a discourse that, in expelling and preserving its losses, provides a complex mode of intersubjective survivance for the subject who has been traumatized.

In his seminal article "Mourning and Melancholia" (1918), Sigmund Freud theorizes the effect of loss on the psyche, expressed either as mourning, which he then understood as the natural/ized response to grief, or melancholia, the pathologic response. [2] "Mourning," he claims, "is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on. In some people the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning" (243). [3] In the initial stage of mourning, the "existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged" (245) by virtue of the mourner's inability to accept the "reality" that "the loved object no longer exists" (244). "Normally, respect for reality gains the day," Freud is quick to add (244): "Each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up and hypercathected, and

detachment of the libido [from the object] is accomplished in respect of [this process]" (245). We mourn the loss of someone or something we love, in other words, through the painful process of detachment and release, a process of "moving on" that today remains the desired response to loss.

Melancholia, like mourning, is "a reaction to the real loss of a loved object" (250). Unlike mourning, however, melancholia is defined by the ego's inability to withdraw—and further, to recognize (245)—its attachment to the lost object. Love for the object, which "cannot be given up though the object itself is given up" (251), takes the form of narcissistic identification with the object, and "by taking flight into the ego love escapes extinction" (257). Identification is indispensable to Freud's analysis of melancholia; indeed, he suggests that "free libido" (or psychic energy), which exists after the withdrawal of the libido from the lost object, is "not displaced on to another object," as would happen after mourning, but rather, is "withdrawn into the ego," where it "serve[s] to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object" (249). This type of narcissistic identification with the object represents "a *regression* from one type of object-choice to original narcissism" (249). In this preliminary stage of object-choice, from which melancholia "borrows some of its features" (250), the "ego wants to incorporate [an] object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it" (249-250).

In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud alters his thinking on melancholia, ushering in the possibility of melancholia's constitutive, non-pathologic

relationship to ego formation. This possibility has proved influential for

contemporary theorizations of gender, race, the nation, and the subject as

constituted through the introjection of lost "others." According to Judith Butler

and Anne Anlin Cheng, "in developing the role of melancholic identification

Freud was in fact laying the groundwork for what he came to believe was a

fundamental process of ego formation" (Cheng 178).[4] In "Mourning and

Melancholia," Freud makes clear, "[w]e succeeded in explaining the painful

disorder of melancholia by supposing that [in those with the 'disorder'] an object

which was lost has been set up again inside the ego—that is, that an object-

cathexis has been replaced by an identification" (18). He adds: "At that time,

however, we did not appreciate the full significance of the process and did not

know how common and how typical it is. Since then we have come to understand

that this kind of substitution has a great share in determining the form taken by the

ego and that it makes an essential contribution towards building up what is called

its 'character'" (18). Introjection, he hypothesizes, may be "the sole condition

under which the id can give up its objects. At any rate the process, especially in

the early phases of development, is a very frequent one, and it makes it possible to

suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes

and that it contains the history of those object-choices" (19). There is more than

enough modalizing language in these statements for us to assume that Freud

remained uncertain, while writing *The Ego and the Id*, about the constitutive

function of loss for the ego, yet what remains clear is that he had moved from

thinking about melancholia as a pathological response to loss to thinking about it

as a fundamental process of ego formation.

My approach to melancholia follows that of Butler and Cheng in their respective analyses of the melancholia of gender and race. Melancholia provides a sophisticated language of loss and its constitutive, consolidating function in relation to "identity," and it can thus describe the performative accomplishment of recovery and the recovered subject, as a particular articulation of "Native identity," in the context of losses that would seem to undo this very accomplishment. "Identification," as Cheng notes, "is crucially *not* the same as identity, although it is what secures for the latter its mythology of integrity. Identification organizes and instantiates identity. It is a fluid and repetitive process that in a sense completely opposes the certitude of identity, providing an origin of identity that identity would just as soon forget in order to maintain its own immediacy and wholeness" (177). Understood through the terms of melancholia, identities are informed, and sometimes haunted, by the losses they incorporate out of love and resentment—that is, out of a desire to preserve, digest, *and* destroy their attachment to the other, as we shall see in *Three Day Road*. The effect of this introjection, as Cheng reveals above, is an identity whose phantasmatic unity is both reified and undone by its foundational multiplicity—in other words, by the inherent "otherness" of its composition. In light of the dialogism of subjectivity as cultivated in many Native texts, I am compelled by Butler and Cheng's insistence on the sociohistorical aspect of the psyche and psychoanalysis, in contradistinction to critiques of psychoanalysis as ahistorical, universalist, and individualistic: "social relations *live* at the heart of psychical

dynamics," Cheng argues (173). The historicity of Freud's melancholic ego

provides Cheng with a framework through which to describe the constitutive

haunting of American racial-national identity by "a series of multiple 'presences'

that flicker and vanish but do not wholly depart." This, along with her

theorization of melancholic ambivalence as expressing not "the lack of position

but . . . the sustainment of multiple conflictual positions" (192), echoes the

construction of identity as intersubjective and defined by difference in Native

texts such as Highway's and Boyden's.

Cheng utilizes the language of psychoanalysis to describe sociocultural

processes of identity and subject formation, rather than to address specifically the

psychic processes of ego instantiation. Her task in *The Melancholy of Race* is to

analyze racial melancholia as a "structure of identification played out in the

sociohistorical realm of race relations" (179), and to show how the terms of

melancholia as a psychic routine—"compensation and loss, love and its inverse,

subject and object, incorporation and rejection"—when "played out as

sociohistorical relations, . . . leave devastating, material effects on the lost or

denied 'object,' the racial other" (179). Cheng's interest lies in this "object,"

which she sees as both an "other" to the American ideal and a melancholic subject

in its own right. One of her most important contributions lies in her attention to

the "ruthless exclusion of the object" from Freud's study of melancholia (9) and

her exploration of exclusion and rejection as architects of loss, upon which the

"dominant, standard, white national ideal" is founded (10). Cheng considers the

racialized other as the lost object of the Euroamerican subject and posits that

"[d]ominant white identity in America operates melancholically—as an elaborate identificatory system based on psychical and social consumption-and-denial" (11). But how, she asks, "does recognizing this melancholic dilemma underlying dominant power *help* those who have been buried and then resuscitated only as serviceable ghosts?" (13). By way of response she proposes that "racial melancholia affects both dominant white culture and racial others," whose "racialized identity is imaginatively reinforced through the introjection of a lost, never-possible perfection, an inarticulable loss that comes to inform the individual's sense of his or her own subjectivity" (xi). The 'lost object' in this context "is the myth of an integral, inviolable self" (175).

Exploring the relationship between grief and grievance, Cheng unpacks the a/effect of racial melancholia on the racialized subject, suggesting that "political agency for those already operating within a deficit is likely to mean the assumption of oppressive authority" (176). In other words, because this subject suffers "from injunctive comparison to and rejection by the implicit standard of whiteness," s/he is likely, in looking to transform him or herself "from an object of denigration to a speaking subject of grievance," to repeat "the same logic of comparison and rejection" (176). S/he will create "an other other . . . in order to repeat the violent form of that othering from which [s/]he suffers" (176). In this scenario, the racial, cultural and national identity of the disenfranchised is consolidated "the way that whiteness has historically consolidated itself: in counterdistinction to a racialized other" (176). This situation lays bare the issues at stake in current scholarly discussions about the effects of internalized

oppression, the political solvency of mimicry, and the question of agency in the context of performative reiteration—or, as Cheng puts it, "what it means for the voiceless to acquire voice *within* the existing system of power" (175). Emphasizing process rather than solution, Cheng's study problematizes "the hope that grievance . . . can adequately do the work of mourning," and suggests that "there is no simple 'moving on'" for those whose grief (173), "the thing left over after grievance has had its say" (172), remains "unallowable and inexpressible" in the current juridico-political system (174), as well as "incommensurable and unquantifiable" (175). Cheng's theories will prove problematic for those who submit that to focus on the process of grief is to deny the agency of the racialized subject and to reify "a cult of victimization" (175),[5] but her examination of the process of racialization and the losses on which this process is founded remains crucial for those who desire, as she does, to rethink "the term 'agency' in relation to forms of racial grief, to broaden the term beyond the assumption of a pure sovereign subject to other manifestations, forms, tonalities, and gradations of governance" (15).

My project shares a number of concerns with Cheng's. Interested as I am in the constitutive, productive function of death in relation to recovery and the recovered subject in Highway and Boyden's residential school recovery narratives, I share with Cheng a desire to explore the "other other"—the lost objects, the buried subjects, and the constitutive undersides of recovery's accomplishment. Like the racial-national identities of Cheng's America, the recovered subject in Highway and Boyden, as a particular articulation of Native

identity, is a haunted subject formed in relationship with certain losses and exclusions. Typically melancholic, the recovered subject is constituted *as recovered* through these losses and exclusions, which are simultaneously indicative of the subject's ontological instability. While Cheng's analysis of the racialized other as melancholic subject can be read to depend always in advance on the logic of consolidation that informs the majority melancholic subject, my work complicates the prioritization of this subject by emphasizing multiple approaches to subject formation in Native texts, not all of which engage the relationship between "Euroamerican" and "Native" as a *primary* constitutive relationship.

"This is simply what this place and these conditions have done to him":
Windigo Madness in *Three Day Road*

> The inhumanity of the Indians towards their prisoners has been heightened since the intrusion of the whites. . . . They go forth to battle smarting with injuries and indignities which they have individually suffered from the injustice and the arrogance of white men, and they are driven to madness and despair, by the wide-spreading desolation and the overwhelming ruin of our warfare. We then set them an example of violence, by burning their villages, and laying waste their slender means of subsistence; and then wonder that savages will not show moderation and magnanimity towards men, who have left them nothing but mere existence and wretchedness.
>
> William Apess (Pequot), *A Son of the Forest* (1829)

The first novel to be translated into Cree, Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* tells the story of two James Bay Cree men, Xavier Bird and Elijah Weesageechak (a.k.a. "Whiskeyjack"), who serve in Canada's Second Division during the First World War. In all but the biological sense, Xavier and Elijah are "[l]ike brothers" (370): they first meet in residential school where they are placed after losing their mothers, one to alcohol, the other to tuberculosis, respectively.

After Xavier is removed from the school by his Oji-Cree Aunt Niska, who lives a

traditional Woodland Cree life in the bush, the boys hunt together during the

summers when Elijah is free to leave the school. Once Elijah turns of age and is

released, he moves in with Xavier and Niska and becomes an integral part of their

family, learning the skills needed for life in the bush from Xavier, a talented

marksman and hunter. The brothers join the Second Division at Elijah's request,

travel to Belgium and France, and see action in some of the "Western Front's

most atrocious battles," including Passchendaele and Vimy Ridge (Boyden "A

Converation" par. 7). Both are snipers, but when they work as a pair, which is

often, Xavier scouts, while Elijah snipes.

The novel combines Xavier's reminiscences about the horrors of war with

Niska's stories about the "quiet war being fought at home" (Boyden "Pushing"

224) during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when, as a part of the aggressive

assimilation policies of the time, "Native people were being forced on to

reservations" and their children "taken away to residential school" (*Three* 221).

Descriptions of life inside the residential school are few in Boyden's novel, and

details about the school's name and religious denomination are absent, yet the text

tracks two generations of residential school survivors—that of Niska and her

sister, Xavier's mother Rabbit, and that of Xavier and Elijah.[6] Rescued by

relatives, both Niska and Xavier are forced to stay at the school for only a short

period of time, thereby managing to remain connected to their indigenous

traditions. Xavier's mother and Elijah, on the other hand, reside there for the

duration of their youth and end up permanently altered as a result. The residential

school is the traumatic absence at the center of the novel, its horrors represented obliquely, through reminiscences and reverberations. During the war, while Xavier is disturbed by his actions on the battlefield, Elijah, as a casualty of the residential school system, "goes windigo" and ends up reveling in not only the murder, but the scalping and apparent cannibalization of his victims: "Xavier ends up hating what he does, being a soldier and having to hunt other men, basically, whereas Elijah learns to love it," Boyden comments. "I was worried at times that it was almost too simplistic to set up that kind of dichotomy," he continues, "but at the same time there's a certain natural power in that kind of conflict" ("Pushing" 231). While conflict between the brothers structures the novel, their relationship is symbiotic, and like Jeremiah and Gabriel, their dichotomous reactions to the war are indicative not so much of their difference from each other, but their interdependence and intersubjectivity; they are facets of a larger whole. The novel concludes with Xavier returning home to Niska, but not before he kills Elijah, as windigo, on the battlefield. This conclusion leads to the question of how and to what ends Xavier's "recovery" is bound up with the loss of his brother, as a particular articulation of Native identity made mad by the residential school experience. Elijah's death, I argue, can be read as indicative of recovery's melancholia—that is, its intersubjective composition. Returning to the genre analysis of chapter one and recalling earlier analyses of the ideological function of death in other recovery narratives, the larger implication here is that recovery— and narratives of recovery—are bound to histories of assimilation against which they must fight—and fight *to the death*—not merely by definition, but by political

necessity. Does the recovery genre then signal a necessarily terminal end for the subject of colonial trauma—or more specifically, for articulations of Nativeness through colonial discourse—or does the form preserve this subject? Understanding recovery and recovery narratives as structurally melancholic allows for an analysis of the discursive home they make for those subjects they must also displace.

Boyden's novel is a tribute to the contributions of First Nations men in overseas battle, and as such, it is the Canadian companion to Native American novels about World War II, most notably N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1969) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977). Native participation in both the Canadian and U.S. military has a much longer history than this, however; for example, the epigraph from Pequot William Apess is part of the "earliest written account we have from a Native veteran of the U.S. military" (Carroll 91). Published in 1829, it prefigures a long history of Native writers' critique of indigenous participation in "foreign" wars: "I could not think why I should risk life and limb in fighting for the white man," Apess muses (qtd. in Carroll 91). But risk life and limb many Native soldiers did. "Native soldiers are not recognized for their accomplishments," Boyden states. "When you look at the number of native soldiers that actually volunteered for World War I and World War II, it is an incredibly high rate. Oftentimes full reserves were cleared of eligible aged men" (qtd. in Nurse par. 13). The *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* supports this claim, stating that "well over 3,500 status Indians . . . serve[d] in the First World War. Non-status Indians and Métis who

enlisted were not counted, but many served, often with distinction" (Vol. 1, 551).

Boyden's novel offers a corrective to the underrepresentation of Native soldiers in

literatures both fictional and non; in fact, as Donna Coates relates, "no other

writer has examined Aboriginal participation in the Great War in fiction" (par. 1).

In its juxtaposition of an overseas war in which Native people fought for "their

nation"—or, more accurately, for the British[7]—with an internal war in which they

were the rejected yet assimilated other of this nation, *Three Day Road* contributes

to a tradition blazed by Silko's novel and followed by writers such as Woody

Kipp, whose autobiography *Viet Cong at Wounded Knee* (2004) illustrates the

harsh irony of coming to realize that one is an enemy to the country one has

defended with one's life.

For Boyden, the novel also pays tribute to familial and communal

traditions: "It's like a historical memory for me. I come from a long line of

soldiers," he says (qtd. in Nurse par. 23), referring to his maternal grandfather and

an uncle from his father's side, both of whom fought in WWI, as well as his

father, Raymond Wilfred Boyden, the British Empire's most highly decorated

medical officer in the Second World War (par. 3-4 Boyden *From* 18). The

character of Elijah was inspired by the famous Anishnabe sniper from Parry

Island, Ontario, Francis Pegahmagabow, whose family Boyden knows, but Peggy

himself, as Francis was known, also makes a cameo appearance in the novel. The

real life Pegahmagabow killed at least three hundred and seventy-eight men

during the war and, for this feat, was awarded the prestigious Military Medal plus

two bars, "one of only 39 men in the entire Canadian Expeditionary Force to be so

awarded" (Steckley and Cummins 37).[8] His achievement is mirrored in the

number of German soldiers Elijah kills, a number well over three hundred. As

historical fiction, the novel examines the significance of the Great War and stands

alongside "some of the 20th century's finest novels," notes Donna Bailey Nurse:

"Sebastian Faulks's *Birdsong*, Pat Barker's *Regeneration*, Erich Maria

Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and Timothy Findley's *The Wars*.

As a unifying national tragedy and the event that marked our coming of age in the

western world, the conflict has provided contextual backdrop for scores of

Canadian novels" (par. 12).

Speaking of WWI for its role in the consolidation of the Canadian nation,

Daniel Coleman explains that "[a]lthough Canada founded its own legislature in

1867, [it] did not become an independent state with the right to sign international

trade agreements with other independent states until after the First World War"

(n.p.). Internally, he continues, "the effort to become independent . . . meant a

campaign to establish universal legislative and juridical powers within its own

territories—including a universally applied Indian Act that would conclusively

override . . . Indigenous claims for sovereignty or self-determination." He then

outlines two pieces of legislation that "played significant roles in the stepped-up

interventionism that took place after the poet Duncan Campbell Scott was

appointed Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1913": the Soldiers'

Resettlement Act of 1917, which "granted land to returning veterans," often

parcels of reserve land surrendered in response to government pressure and

legislative amendments; and Bill 14, put forward by Scott in 1920 as "an

amendment to the Indian Act to enfranchise Native people . . . without their consent."[9] Backed by "a one-size-fits-all model of internal equality," such assimilationist policies, Coleman notes, were "fuelled by Canada's anxiety at the time to establish itself as an internationally recognized nation-state." The irony of First Nations participation in the war is that the relative equality fostered between comrades during the war was lost when, once at home, ostensibly "inclusive" governmental policies threatened to assimilate Native peoples into the Canadian nation and appropriate their land.[10] Suspect at best, the promise of equality was a euphemism for assimilation, which was, in fact, in no way realized: upon their return to Canada, Native soldiers found themselves second-class citizens in a country that promised first-class citizenship as a means to abrogate their rights as Aboriginal peoples.[11]

Even during the war, however, as Boyden's novel highlights, Native soldiers were never actually equal to their white counterparts, for although they "historically had far better treatment in the military than other nonwhites," this treatment was "a result of the awe, or at least respect, inspired by notions of 'savagery' that their presumed military prowess gave them" (Carroll 105). Subject to racist barbs and more serious discrimination at the hands of their superiors and fellow servicemen, Xavier and Elijah are "respected" as Indians for their presumably war-like character and natural combat skills. And while it is true that Xavier and Elijah are better marksmen than most, they are such because of training, not blood. Boyden both embraces and challenges the stereotypes in circulation at the time: "In the darkness," Xavier meditates, "I feel that Elijah and

I are owls or wolves. We have done many night hunts over the years. McCaan reports our talent to Lieutenant Breech. Elijah tells me Breech says that it is our Indian blood, that our blood is closer to that of an animal than that of a man" (101). Any respect garnered by Aboriginal soldiers for their ostensible savagery was, however, clearly as deep as the skin upon which it was based. "Although Boyden's Xavier continues to demonstrate his leadership skills and becomes a dedicated and superb fighter," Coates argues, "he is denied promotion because he is Aboriginal. The prejudice against Native soldiers has a basis in historical fact," she continues, "for according to Brock Pitawanakwat, the Canadian Armed Forces displayed 'little respect for their fighting or leadership abilities' and thus refused such soldiers a commission. Elijah does receive a promotion, but primarily because he speaks 'better English than the English' and attempts to downplay his indigenous heritage" (par. 4). Indeed, Aboriginal "savagery" was initially used to bar Aboriginal participation in the war, as John Moses outlines:

> Soon after the outbreak of the war, . . . the question was raised as to the desirability of enlisting Aboriginals. In the minds of many Europeans, conditioned by reading authors such as James Fenimore Cooper at best and names easily (and best) forgotten at worst, "Red Indians" were associated with torture and scalping—practices quite unacceptable under the rules of war as laid out in the Geneva Convention ratified by all the major European powers in 1906. Consequently, it was decided in Ottawa not to accept Native volunteers on the grounds that "while British troops [Canadians were still "British" in 1914] would be proud to be associated

with their fellow subjects, yet Germans might refuse to extend to them the

privileges of civilized warfare." (Canadian Minister of Militia and

Defence, Sam Hughes, qtd. in Moses 62; original square brackets)

The irony of this decision, which had little effect and was repealed in 1915, is that

the savagery associated with indigenous warfare was, in part, a projection of

Europeans' own savage warfare. That Boyden's brothers understand there to be a

difference between indigenous and Euroamerican warfare is in evidence when

Xavier asks Elijah, "Are they going to teach us to fight their way or will they just

send us over there?" (59). While "animist warfare," as Graham Harvey defines

much traditional indigenous warfare, is "predicated on the full personhood of

warrior and enemy," modern Western warfare trains soldiers to "become 'killing

machines' and to dehumanize their enemies" (162), a tension visible in Elijah's

vacillating perception of those he kills as either subjects or objects. Exemplifying

the dehumanization of Western warfare, Xavier narrates: "I stare at the enemy for

the first time. No faces, just a line of mounds behind barbed wire. I hear the

bullet whip past my temple before I even hear the *crack* of a rifle. . . . All of this is

suddenly very real. The other side wants to kill me, and I've never even seen

their faces" (*Three* 32-33).

The assimilationist climate to which Native soldiers returned after the war

was, of course, an extension of that which pre-dated the war, and the liberal

humanist subject undergirding this climate was a version of the subject inculcated

in the residential school system, which both pre- and post-dated the war. Both

institutions, the "educational" and the military, worked in tandem in an effort to

incorporate Native peoples into the state, preserving Native "difference," in the

pejorative sense of the word, but attempting to destroy Native rights. The number

of children forced to attend the schools in Canada "rose steadily during the years

of World War I" (Churchill, *Kill* 43). Significantly, many Native men were

recruited to military service *because* of their residential school tenure, not only in

the sense that there was "[a]ctive recruiting at the residential schools" (*Report*

550), but also because the authoritarian environment of the schools was similar to

that of the military, for which Native individuals were thus "prepared." The

similarities between the schools and the military are striking: those indoctrinated

were, as Tinker says of the school experience, "drilled to regimental order," along

with being "chronically malnourished and overworked" (xviii). Hunger was a

pervasive feature of the children's lives, and starvation was often used as a

punishment, as Boyden's novel makes clear: "When I was caught speaking my

tongue," Niska, Xavier's Aunt, remembers, "they'd force lye soap into my mouth

and not give me anything else to eat for days" (92). Speaking one's Native

language in the military, while not expressly punished, was certainly frowned

upon, according to the novel: "Lieutenant Breech—Bastard Breech—he doesn't

like me speaking my language at all," Xavier relates (78). School inmates, like

their military counterparts, had "their heads shorn, military-style," a policy

enacted to "destroy their sense of themselves as Indians" (Churchill, *Kill* 19), and

their "clothing and personal items . . . were taken away from them. In exchange,

they were issued uniforms expressly intended to separate them from the

'excessive individualism' of their own traditions by reducing them 'to sameness,

to regularity, to order'" (19).[12] It is difficult to overlook the irony of such intentions, given that the same institutions were designed to inculcate in Native peoples a version of the Euroamerican "individual," complete with his preference for individual over communal rights and property. With many similarities, however, the military and the residential school system had but one astonishing difference: one's chances of surviving the war were better.[13]

Summarizing the post-war perceptions of "white reformers, philanthropists, and self-styled friends of the Indian," Carroll explicates that "they thought war should be a 'civilizer,' a force for assimilation, a way to 'kill the Indian, save the man'" (87), to cite the infamous purpose behind the American Indian residential school system. The originator of this statement, Captain Richard Henry Pratt, was not only the architect of the schools, but an army officer. His "selection as the founding head of the U.S. effort to 'educate' native children is instructive," Churchill explains, "given that his major qualification for the job could only have been that he'd previously served as warden of the army prison at Fort Marion, Florida, to which those viewed as the most 'recalcitrant' figures among what was left of Native North America's military resistance were sent to be 'broken'" (*Kill* 14). Advocates of assimilation thought that "prolonged contact with a largely white military" would cause Natives "to naturally fall away from their traditional cultures and practices" (Carroll 87)—or, as in the schools, be "broken" of these practices. And indeed, "[s]ome Natives did look upon the military as an avenue toward white notions of civilization for themselves, but these ideas usually came from boarding schools, where Natives had already been

through an extended 'Americanization' effort" (87). Astonishingly, in the United

States, "[v]olunteering turned out to be the greatest, in some cases 100 percent,

among Natives from government boarding schools" (101). While the

regimentation of Native children in Canadian schools was, as Churchill claims,

"less conspicuous. . . , the situation . . . was similar" (*Kill* 24).

Trained in the military-like environment of residential school, Elijah is

prepared to assume the role of the soldier-cum-warrior—both the "civilization"

associated with the role and, paradoxically, the "savagery." Although there are

others, Elijah is the novel's central windigo, the savage other whose "inhuman"

capacity for consumption must be contained and finally excised by Xavier, the

windigo hunter (348): his teeth glint, his eyes flash, he laughs rapaciously. He is

greedy and excessive, characteristics proper to the windigo. He gathers the scalps

of his victims as trophies, "assuring himself" that this form of "counting coup" is

considered "a sign of honour in battle" by "some other Indians" (210), even

though he is first drawn to scalping not in fulfillment of an indigenous tradition,

but on the advice of his French comrades, windigos themselves in Xavier's

estimation, who urge him to prove his killing prowess in this manner. He even

goes so far as to cannibalize his victims, or so Xavier believes. Elijah's adoption

of the role of "savage warrior" should be read in multiple ways—as an indication

of his assimilation to Euroamerican "moral corruption," to use Coates' diction; a

performative appropriation of the colonial discourse of savagery; and a re-

indigenizing of his assimilated identity. On the one hand, then, it is crucial to

read Elijah's savage exploits on the battlefield as symptomatic of his acculturation

to the means and motives of the white man's war. His descent into windigo

madness articulates Boyden's critique of the madness of war, both abroad and

locally, and more specifically, his critique of the effects of this madness on

Elijah's psyche. The windigo, given its cannibalistic ways, becomes in this

context the ultimate allegory for the genocidal workings of assimilationist policy.

At the same time, though, and especially because he articulates this madness

through the Oji-Cree windigo, Boyden indigenizes Elijah's identity, an important

maneuver refusing the "emptying out" of indigeneity from the subject of colonial

discourse. Simply put, the savagery of Elijah's warrior identity takes the

indigenous form of the windigo, even though, and at the same time as, it reflects

the traumatic impact of the Euroamerican savagery to which this character has

been subjected, and through which he has become a "savage" subject.

   "The world is a different place in this new century, Nephew. And we are a

different people," Niska muses aloud. "In my early visions," she explains of her

foreknowledge of the war, "numbers of men, higher than any of us could count,

were cut down. They lived in the mud like rats and lived only to think of new

ways to kill one another. No one is safe in such times," she reasons, "not even the

Cree of Mushkegowuk. War touches everyone, and *windigos* spring from the

earth" (49). Descriptions of the war as windigo are plentiful: "It's as if the war

has moved to another place," Xavier concludes. "It has sucked the life from

Saint-Eloi and left it like this, has moved on in search of more bodies to try and

fill its impossible hunger" (73). References to hunger, both literal and figurative,

overwhelm the novel, as do references to other bodily functions related to

consumption and expulsion, such as vomiting and urination, or the inability to perform these functions, such as constipation. "I watch the raiders slip from the trench and get eaten by the night" (207), Xavier remarks, calling up the fact that the dead are sometimes buried in the trench sides, becoming a part of the dreadful landscape around them (81). After one particular battle, the look of victory on the faces of the men is described as "animal," as the soldiers "pull souvenirs from bodies and peer into darkened holes," and Xavier compares his comrades not to "majestic beasts" but "scurrying . . . rats" (210-211). The geography of the war is incorporated by the brothers, a psychic incorporation to which countless passages attest: "the pattern of the trenches is a part of me," Xavier observes (80). "We . . . weave around the craters like a line of ants, . . . our skulls and uniforms crawling with lice that have become a part of us now" (83).

   Three Day Road confirms what William Apess' epigraph reveals: the "inhumanity" of the warfare of so-called savages, which is illustrated in Elijah's lust for killing and his seeming lack of moral compass, is an inverse reflection of the "injustice and arrogance of white men" towards Elijah and his people. A result of the "injuries and indignities" he has suffered, Elijah's windigo transformation bespeaks the "madness and despair" to which he has been driven by the truly savage. "This is simply what this place and these conditions have done to him," Xavier perceptively concludes, underscoring the material conditions productive of Elijah's madness, which are anything but simple. Elijah, too, recognizes the geography of his response to the war: "'I'm not crazy,' Elijah says. . . . 'You must listen to me, X [Xavier]. This is war. This is not home. What's

mad is them putting us in trenches to begin with. The madness is to tell us to kill and to award those of us who do it well. I only wish to survive'" (350). But while Elijah might not recognize it as such, home, too, is the site of his windigo psychosis: it is the location of his sexual abuse by Sister Magdalene, his residential school "teacher," and therefore, it is the place of his initial infection by the windigo spirit and his instruction in its voracious, flesh-consuming ways.

Speaking of the effects of residential school on those students who survived and managed to return home, Boyden explains, "And in those most vulnerable years, the teen years, those children were sent back home, no longer knowing their language, their religion, their land, their customs, or their parents" (*From* 24). In many ways, Xavier's return at the novel's conclusion echoes the return of these students and the consequences of their cultural alienation: he is wounded, both physically and psychologically; he is addicted to morphine as a means of coping with the trauma he has experienced; and he is disconnected not only from Niska, the only parent he has ever known, but his cultural traditions, ceremonies, and knowledge, which have the power to save his life. Xavier suffers these losses later in life and is protected to a large extent from the ills of residential school by his aunt, but Elijah suffers doubly, from the assimilative effects of both the school and the war: it is Elijah who is sexually abused by Sister Magdalene at the school, Elijah who doesn't know how to hunt until Xavier teaches him, and Elijah, the mimic man, whose "nun's English" (65) is more "English than an Englishman's." It is because of these early losses, Boyden suggests, that Elijah lacks the cultural strength necessary to resist the windigo

spirit of the war to which he becomes assimilated. Coates concurs: "Boyden argues that Elijah has been morally corrupted by his 'education' at residential school," and he "thus makes powerful links between the destructive European war and the cultural genocide of the residential schools" (par. 4). Speaking of his representation of the residential school, Boyden notes,

> I didn't want the residential school to be a huge black cloud over this novel. I wanted to present it in the way it was, as an insidious kind of institution. Xavier ends up getting through the war—not unscathed, by any means, in fact really damaged—but still manages to get through because he has a grounding in who he is and where he comes from, whereas Elijah is raised in the residential school and that in part *feeds into what ends up happening to him and what he ends up doing and, ultimately, into his fate*. He isn't *grounded* in his place or culture, and this ends up being very damaging to him. ("Pushing" 230 emphasis added)

Like the Windigo manitou (spirit being) who "wait[s] in the shadows" and stalks his unsuspecting victim as s/he "leave[s] his or her camp or village and come[s] within reach" (Johnston 223), the residential school divides those who leave home from those who stay, alienating its victims from their community, its teachings, and its codes of conduct. The threat of the windigo is the threat of social disorder, and "[e]very community," as Basil Johnston notes of the Anishnabe, "had its catalog of stories of Weendigoes, of men and women becoming Weendigoes, of the carnage perpetrated by these giant cannibals that ends in the people's destruction" (224-225). A deeply individualistic being, the

windigo infects its victims with its own insatiable greediness, self-centeredness, and profound lack of balance, which manifests itself in an excessive desire for consumption—the windigo is never satiated; its greed begets further greed, its excess further excess. As one imagines Sister Magdalene to have snuck up on and overwhelmed an unsuspecting Elijah, so the windigo approached and devoured his victims; as the religious orders stole Native children away from their kin, indoctrinating them into an alien set of cultural values, so the windigo disordered his victims, instilling in them an individualism incompatible with the communitist ethic of tribal peoples. On the battlefield, Elijah, as windigo, "surprise[s] and massacre[s]" his victims "in the night" (348). The windigo embodies the experience of loneliness and the deleterious effects of separation from the community, for as Niska observes, "[S]adness [is] at the heart of the *windigo*, a sadness so pure that it shrivel[s] the human heart and let[s] something else grow in its place" (*Three* 261). While this description of the windigo's heartlessness resonates with traditional Cree stories of the windigo as possessed of a heart of ice, a metaphor for its callous disregard for human life (Norman 4), it also indicates the importance of loss and melancholia to an understanding of the windigo. Divided from the community, the windigo is hungry for identification with another, an "other" he assimilates through incorporation.

As Sherman Alexie's John Smith is unmoored by his adoption, Elijah is deracinated by his residential school experience; bereft of deep connections with the Cree community, Elijah, like John, desires to "fly away"—indeed, it is he who wants to leave home and join the army in the first place. This desire is equally

suggestive of a need to escape and a longing to return "home" to the site of

traditional Cree practices. Elijah's desire to fly is quite literal, fascinated as he is

with birds, planes, and the act of flying, and these fascinations are indicative of

his aspiration to emulate Xavier, the noted hunter whose last name is, tellingly,

"Bird." But his literal reading of Xavier's avian identity illustrates a profound

lack of cultural grounding, missing as it does the fact that Xavier, as a traditional

Cree, is rooted in the land rather than transcending its laws, a misreading

underscored by Elijah's interest in mechanical flying devices. Looking at the

aeroplanes flying overhead, Elijah longs to join them: "'I wish I could fly like

that,' Elijah says to [Xavier] in Cree. 'I wish I could fly like that, like a bird,' he

repeats, staring up like a little boy. 'Maybe a pilot will take me up sometime.'

'Me,'" Xavier responds, "I'm happy to stay on the ground on my belly in the dirt.

. . . Thinking about falling from up there makes me sick'" (28-29). Significantly,

when Elijah finally has the opportunity to fly, he becomes ill almost immediately

and must quickly deplane. This experience brings home his *a priori* loss of

cultural grounding—his lack of balance—as well as, paradoxically, his indigenous

roots: "I should have never gotten in that aeroplane," he tells Xavier. "I lost

something up there is what it feels like. I need to get it back" (350). The "need to

get it back," where "it" refers to a meaningful connection with Cree tradition, can

be seen to drive and inform Elijah's assimilation to the windigo's ways, while

simultaneously—and sorrowfully—these ways can be seen to distance him from

the connection he seeks.

     Not only is Elijah sexually abused while in residential school, but his

experience there leaves him deprived of traditional knowledge, particularly animal hunting and marksmanship skills. Although he learns these skills later in life and under Xavier's tutelage clearly becomes a proficient hunter, his time in residential school robs him of the deep cultural knowledge inculcated through a childhood in the bush. As Ronald Niezen details, "forest initiation" for Cree boys in the Moose Factory area sometimes involved being "taken out to be left alone in the bush when they were ten, eleven, or twelve years old. . . . When fresh tracks were found in the snow and the more experienced hunters knew a moose was not far off, they told [the initiate] to track and kill the animal on his own" (16). In the novel, Xavier undergoes a like experience when he is even younger—six years old, while Elijah, even by the time he is of age to leave residential school, lacks even the most basic hunting etiquette. As the Cree hunter Elijah can never be, Xavier represents the kind of masculinity denied to Elijah, and it is, perhaps, for this reason that Elijah desires to kill and quite possibly cannibalize Xavier near the novel's conclusion: according to the theory of melancholia, to ingest is to incorporate, and to incorporate is to identify.

Boyden's collocation of sexual abuse and Elijah's lack of training in traditionally masculine activities is not incidental; like Tomson Highway's Jeremiah before him, Elijah is rendered impotent through his abuse, and while in this case the impotency is cultural, it is noteworthy that both sexual identity and desire, especially in relation to Elijah, are virtually imperceptible in the novel. "[F]rom a Native perspective," Boyden suggests, emphasizing loss as constitutive of identity, "I imagine that a lot of . . . young men went off [to war] because it was

a very difficult time for Native people. I think a lot of young Native men felt

almost emasculated, like something important had been taken away from them. . .

. And so this was a chance I think for a lot of Native men to . . . reassert an

identity, and oftentimes that was a warrior identity" ("Pushing" 223). In the

novel, Elijah's warrior identity conveys invulnerability in the context of an army

plagued with racist assumptions about indigenous people: "Better to let them

know you're an angry warrior than some fucking bush Indian," Elijah tells Xavier

(59). But, of course, his people, the Woodland Cree, are "bush Indians," and

therefore historically far less militant than their Plains Cree brothers. Elijah's

assumption of a warrior identity is therefore indicative both of his reassertion of

an indigenous identity, where this identity is pan-Indian at best and stereotypic at

worst, and his loss of a tribally-specific identity. In the context of the World

Wars, discourses of Native "savagery," which relied upon biologically racist

presuppositions about the instinctive fighting abilities of Native peoples, while

surely oppressive, were also instrumental in the revitalization of old warrior

traditions and the initiation of new ones, even for those tribes that "had not

previously had a warrior ethos" (Carroll 88). The assimilationist climate of the

time combined with the existence of traditional warrior cultures as well as the

Euroamerican valorization of Native "savagery" to create a context in which

Native people came together in "acts of cultural solidarity and defiance," which

included "joining warrior societies" (88).

Elijah's windigo savagery, his fetishization of the kill, can also be seen as

a classic example of the Freudian return of the repressed, in which a founding

childhood trauma—here, the nun's sexual abuse—is psychically repressed, only to return in altered form, often as a metonym (understood as a displacement) of the original trauma. The way in which the abuse is represented in the novel as more of an absence than a presence points to its repression, psychologically and textually. Elijah's powerlessness before Sister Magdalene is transformed into a desire for power, a desire that comes to fruition in a war with its own insatiable hunger for enemy elimination. His childhood theft of Sister Magdalene's rifle as a response and mode of resistance to his abuse articulates the connection between his childhood experiences and his later attachment to an extreme version of warrior identity. His fetishization of guns and their purpose—tellingly, he is obsessed with Xavier's German Mauser—is a metonymic return to the trauma of the nun's gun (her sexual power over him) and his emasculation at her hands; he longs for the phallus she wields, which represents the Cree masculinity, epitomized in Xavier, of which he has been robbed. As windigo, Elijah's savagery attempts to take back—indeed, to incorporate—the power of the Father wielded over him by the nun; his "hunting of men" appropriates the nun's savagery, particularly her savaging of his body, as well as a perversely translated version of the hunting skills that her Church took from him. In his assumption of warrior masculinity as savagery, then, Elijah revisits and recites the trauma by which he was emasculated.

A process inextricable from the mechanics of Western warfare, Elijah's othering of his German enemies replicates the violent objectification inflicted upon him as a child, although, as cannibal, he simultaneously complicates the

self/other divide upon which this objectification relies. While Boyden leaves room for the reader to question Elijah's cannibalism, there seems little doubt that this character secretly feasts on his victims: "Elijah kneels in the tall grass, a young German pinned below him," Xavier relates. "Just as I approach from behind, Elijah cuts hard into the soldier's solar plexus with a knife, muttering. I can't make out what he says. The man below him writhes and screams. I watch as Elijah plunges his knife once again into the man. I can see the horror in the eyes turn to the dullness of death as Elijah's hand moves to his own face" (349). Turning to Xavier, Elijah has "[b]lood smeared across his cheeks," and "[h]is eyes are wet with tears" (349), but we do not actually witness him eating the German. Perhaps he is playing a trick. After all, Elijah is not only a windigo, but as his last name reveals, the Cree Trickster Weesageechak, who teaches through trickery, re-establishing the social order through its transgression. Although they are rarely brought together in one character, Weesageechak and the Windigo share many characteristics: they have insatiable appetites, are greedy and self-centered, and teach moderation through the negative example of their excessive ways. They appear to exist at different points on a continuum of ethical behaviour, with the Trickster, who is both inside and outside of the community, working both for and against its social harmony, while the windigo, who must be expelled from the community, embodies the destructive extreme of transgressive behaviour. While provocative, Boyden's combination of these two figures is clearly not unique to contemporary windigo tales, as Highway's Gabriel has shown, and is perhaps a rewriting of traditional Cree stories, such as that of the weasel who cannibalizes

the weetigo by crawling up its anus. Many like stories exist in Cree tradition, where the Trickster destroys the Weetigo by cannibalizing it—usually by eating its heart, an action similar to that we (fail to) see Elijah engage in on the battlefield.[14]

But what is the purpose of blurring the boundaries between cultural hero and nemesis in this way? Perhaps the purpose lies in the blurring itself, for the Windigo also shares with Weesageechak the fundamental ability to cross borders and deconstruct ostensible binary oppositions. In Trickster cosmology, good is inseparable from bad, morality from immorality, female from male, and self from other. The windigo, as cannibal, also complicates the boundaries between self and other, both materially, through his consumption of the other, and psychically, through its introjection. Yet as an outsider, an "other" himself, the Windigo also functions to reify these distinctions. As Jeff Berglund notes of cannibals and their function in literature,

> Defining the Other as a barbaric cannibal, one who may extinguish your life, clearly distinguishes the boundaries between good and evil, between *me* and *you*. However, consumption by another collapses identity boundaries: in being consumed, *You* become *Me*, *I* become *You-Me*. Figuratively, cannibalization threatens one's sense of integrity. Being cannibalized makes one estranged from one's familiar self/selves. In sum, cannibalization makes the familiar unfamiliar. At the same time it threatens to make the unfamiliar familiar. It erases difference through the collapse of boundaries. This fear of losing one's self to another alien

culture is also the force responsible for projecting cannibalistic behavior onto others, in what I have referred to as a classic moment of 'Othering.' (8-9)

In a context where "good" and "evil," "us" and "them," "Tommy" and "Fritz," and "me" and "you" are categories necessary to the war's continued promulgation, the figure of Weesageechak/ Windigo, itself an apparent binary, has the potential to articulate a powerful critique of the dehumanization and objectification of the other on which war depends. Therefore, while Elijah, as Windigo, is the "savage other" who violates the social order and must be expelled for so doing, his actions might also be considered revolutionary and, in fact, profoundly ethical for the way in which they defamiliarize the "natural" divide between self and other. In one telling passage, Elijah "looks down at the soldier he has just dispatched . . . [and] reminds himself that this just as easily could have been him lying there" (210).

As the clearest example of Boyden's interest in complicating the self/other divide, the interdependent relationship between Elijah and Xavier takes shape around a pattern of identification and difference similar to that which structures Gabriel and Jeremiah's relationship in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Elijah is not the only one infected by the windigo; Xavier, too, feels the desires that consume his brother: Elijah "is mad," but "[s]ometimes, though, I feel as if I'm going mad too," Xavier ruminates, acknowledging his culpability in the acts of war both he and his brother have committed (348). "We are all equally guilty," he thinks after throwing his first bomb (77); "I am to blame too" (112). Sitting uneasily

alongside his ethical struggle over being Elijah's "accomplice" (97), Xavier's

resentment at being "invisible" to his peers increases in tandem with his desire for

the social recognition Elijah receives (65): "The others in the battalion have begun

to treat Elijah like he is something more than them," he steams. "I walk beside

him or behind him. . . , and very few seem to notice me at all. . . . How soon they

seem to forget who is the better shot. None of them know that I am the one who

taught Elijah what he knows about hunting" (100). Perceived as little more than

"a brown ghost" by his comrades (65), Xavier wants to be "the one doing and not

the one left behind" (248). He becomes "as obsessed as Elijah" and "adopt[s]

[his] ways," trying to think like the Germans in order to catch them off guard

(113). Xavier is angered at Elijah for not mentioning his role in their "hunting"

trips, and he becomes intent on proving himself to be the better hunter, an

intention illustrated in the passage in which he and the other men spot a lone duck

flying far above them, a welcome possibility for supper. Elijah tries to shoot the

bird, fails, and is followed by Xavier, who succeeds without difficulty: "The men

around us stare at me as I stand up and walk away. Me, I won't let them forget

who I am," he thinks (244).[15]

While such scenes support the argument that Xavier is as committed to the

kill as Elijah, there are moments in which the equation of the brothers' desires is

less tenable, as when Xavier asserts, "According to the others, [Elijah] is the

resident expert, although I am a fine shot too. As fine as Elijah. But I don't have

the killing instinct for men" (138). A telling scene early in the novel depicts

Xavier as he scouts German soldiers, his "stomach grumbl[ing] with hunger," a

physical symptom read figuratively to refer to his windigo hunger for the enemy (88). After he accomplishes his goal, however, "[t]he image of the soldier's head exploding makes [his] stomach churn. [He] retches a little and spit[s] up bile from [his] empty stomach, [his] throat burning and the acrid smell of [his] own insides making [him] retch a bit more" (88). Like the windigo, both Elijah and Xavier come to be disinterested in regular human food: "I lie still by the fire and even the scent of warm bannock does not make me hungry," Xavier realizes upon returning home (25). Although this disinterest is, on one level, a result of the boys' morphine addiction, one understands, on the symbolic plane, that human food no longer satisfies because their appetites lie elsewhere. Significantly, though, Xavier's disinterest in food also signifies the repulsion he feels toward his own actions: "I no longer have the stomach for what I do," he realizes (346). Overall, then, it is the vacillation between hunger and repulsion that characterizes Xavier's relationship to the violent acts he is compelled to commit. This adds to Boyden's earlier assertion that Xavier "ends up hating what he does" the suggestion that alongside this distaste stands Xavier's attraction to and investment in his occupation. When Xavier thinks, "I am made for this [hunting of men]" (86), one cannot help but hear Elijah's earlier comment: "It's in my blood" (75), which itself references the infectiousness of windigo violence, by which Xavier has been stricken.

"Obviously A Huge No-No": Recovery as Introjection of the Windigo Other

As he begins to choke his brother, as windigo, on the battlefield, Xavier says to him, "You have gone mad. There is no coming back from where you've

traveled" (370). Elijah articulates a similar sentiment as he too tries to strangle his brother: "'*We both can't. . . . Leave*,' he mouths, still smiling, his teeth glinting" (368). In these words exists the central wisdom of the novel: in order to return home, Xavier must leave Elijah, as the windigo within, on the battlefield. Elijah recognizes this and, like Gabriel before him, dies for his brother's sins: "My friend lies still," Xavier narrates, depicting Elijah in a classic Christ pose, "[his] arms stretched out from his body as if he welcomes the sky" (370). "Leave," Elijah has commanded Xavier; "go home," one imagines him to add. In *Three Day Road*, Joseph Boyden responds to the assimilationist agenda of the residential schools and the military with a novel that theorizes homecoming as cultural recovery. In Xavier, he creates a character who, although damaged by the war and assimilated, to an extent, to its windigo ways, comes home to his Aunt Niska, who, as the novel's keeper of traditional Cree knowledge and healing practices, helps him to expel what he, as windigo, has taken in. The novel, in this sense, bears striking similarity to *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, staging as it does an exorcism of the windigo other from which the indigenous subject must recover; here, Xavier is subject, Elijah windigo. As in *Kiss*, however, things are not so simple: the novel expresses a desire for homecoming and enacts its occurrence while at the same time complicating its possibility. Boyden has written a novel that brings home the displaced, but homecoming, he suggests, as the restoration of social order and tradition, requires the melancholic loss and introjection of those who transgress the borders of this order.

The first draft of *Three Day Road* was written chronologically, Boyden has noted, but after talking with his wife and editors, he realized that he "was applying a Western style of story-telling to an aboriginal story" ("A Conversation" par. 4). Drawing on the cyclical structure of much Cree and Anishnabe oral tradition, he "decided to begin [the] story near the chronological end and then trace through the circle around to where [he] started." Niska, he says, "knows that the circle can't be broken and fights as hard as she can to keep Xavier alive so that one day he may have his own children and keep the cycle intact. I wanted Xavier to leave home," Boyden concludes, "but I also wanted him to return to Niska" (par. 17). The novel thus employs a traditional homing structure, in which "the hero . . . 'comes home' to the self by coming home to the tribal landscape" (Roberson 31).

Boyden's personal history lends insight into the politics of his novel, especially in terms of its desire for homecoming. In his inaugural lecture for the Henry Kreisel Lecture Series at the University of Alberta, Boyden tells the story of his journey "from Mushkegowuk to New Orleans" and back again—and then back again, to New Orleans, where he currently lives and teaches. Boyden describes his life, and his heart, as "split" between these two locations (21), his "wanderlust" inherited from his father (20) and embodied, I would argue, in Elijah's desire to leave home and join the army. The lecture is structured around multiple journeys—geographical love stories, as Boyden calls them (15)—all of which occur in vehicles of one kind or another: a car in Louisiana, where Boyden and his wife, Amanda, escape being shot (7-10); a Buick Skylark in Toronto,

where Boyden helps birth his son, to whom he gives the middle name "Buick"

(10-12); a Chevy van in which he first crosses the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway

into New Orleans as a roadie for a punk-rock band (12); and a canoe on the

Moose River, a "stretch of water between James Bay and the Onakawana . . .

where [he] bring[s] [his] son when [they] need to reconnect again" (17). Clearly,

for Boyden, movement and place are in the foreground of experience: journeying

functions in his lecture, as it does in *Three Day Road*, as material event and trope,

and individual relationships are inextricably rooted and formed in relation to the

locales in which they take place. "The events of one's life take place, *take place*,"

as N. Scott Momaday has famously said (*The Names* 142).

Boyden describes his life and home as "split" between "two halves" (*From*

25), the urban and the rural, the Buick and the canoe, New Orleans and Northern

Ontario. Yet while these two halves "are extremes, of themselves and to one

another" (18), they are, Boyden argues, strikingly similar (25). "[I]t's the social

similarities of two different populations that is most striking to me, two cultures

that have suffered abuses and been beaten down for years and act surprisingly the

same," he says (25). "Two cultures separated by a continent that share the

endemic problems that stem from abject poverty—violence, substance abuse,

broken families—but who refuse to be defined by them" (26). He notes other

similarities: "a strong sense of racial identity" (25), a "rebellious youth

movement," a "reemergence of cultural identity in youth," and a "grassroots

desire for self-government" (26). By constructing this series of parallels, Boyden

recuperates a unified—yet multiple and trans/geographic—home for himself, thus

preserving yet radically redefining "home," as a particular land-base, as the seat of culture and identity. His comparative geography also functions to strengthen his advocacy of homecoming as a political right. He notes the similarities between the reserve system in Canada and the housing projects of urban America (23), as well as the correspondence between the recurrent flooding in the community of Kashechewan and the disaster of Katrina in New Orleans, along with earlier floods in the area, all of which happened as a result of "poor engineering of levees" (22). Highlighting the ignorance of those who fail to understand that these communities are homes, he mimics the attitude of the majority culture, saying, "Why do you live in a place prone to flooding, to violence and addiction? Why don't you just move?" Responding to these hypothetical queries, he edifies his reader, "As if the simple act of picking up and leaving New Orleans or Kashechwan is a viable option, as if the idea of leaving the place where you were born and that you love despite its problems is an option" (26). For those people who can't go home, whose "homes fill with water that destroys their few possessions" (22-23), the 'right of return' takes on a particular urgency. This right, Boyden's novel shows, is no less urgent in the context of the assimilationist removal of Native people from their traditional territories, Native children from their families, and Native soldiers from their communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

From the stories Niska tells of the period, as well as the mid-nineteenth century when her father, Xavier's grandfather, was still alive, it is clear that the "quiet war" in Canada has a profound effect: if her people do not want to starve in

the bush, they must move into the town of Moose Factory and become "homeguard Indians." Many do. "The Hudson's Bay Company had instilled in the Cree a greed for furs that nearly wiped out the animals, and because of this the time finally came when even the most experienced of the bush men and women were faced with the decision to move to the reserve or die of hunger," Niska explains (90). She herself is one of the few who continue to live in the bush, although as Boyden notes in an interview, Niska is not necessarily "unusual"—to this day there remain individuals who are "alive and well in the bush in northern Ontario" ("Joseph"). Be that as it may, in the novel Niska clearly represents the last bastion against colonial encroachment on James Bay Cree lands. Her life, as her father's before her, is hard: "[l]ong past my father's death," she says, "I remember how they laughed at me, a woman living alone in the bush and trapping animals after all my relations had gone to the reserves" (48).

The harshness of the environmental conditions under which the James Bay Cree lived, particularly in the winter, is exacerbated by the fur trade's excessive consumption of fur-bearing animals in the nineteenth century and is thus productive of a deep windigo hunger.[16] Illustrating the effects of these conditions on the community, Niska tells of the legacy of windigo killing in her family, explaining, "I am second to last in a long line of *windigo* killers. There is still one more" (48). This one, of course, is Xavier. As a young girl, Niska witnesses her father's suffocation of a windigo who was once a woman in their community: during an especially desperate winter, the woman leaves the community with her family in order to search for food, but after finding none, she is compelled to eat

her dead husband's body in order to avoid starvation. She then returns to the community infected by the windigo's desire for human flesh, an untreatable bloodlust that prompts Niska's father, as windigo-killer, to end her life. The woman's geographical displacement and isolation from the community not only mirrors but instigates her ethical displacement from its cultural codes and acceptable behaviours. Her anthropophagy clearly poses a threat to its social and moral order and promises to wreak further havoc if left unchecked. "We are too weak already," say the adults of the community, "and Micah's woman's madness can surely spread in these bad times" (45). "He must kill *windigos* once again," they say of Niska's father. After her father's death at the hands of the Hudson's Bay men who deem him a criminal for his actions, Niska is called upon by her community to take up his role as windigo killer. She later suffocates a man whose windigo "sickness," which is highly contagious, "could spread as surely as the invisible sicknesses of the *wesmistikoshiw* [white man]" (262).

As Boyden explains to Euan Kerr, windigo-killers such as Niska and her father have a social "responsibility" to deal with those individuals who are a "threat to the band" ("Joseph"). In another interview, he tells a story about an Ojibwa shaman whose hunting partner goes mad and decides to eat human flesh. This "is obviously a huge no-no," Boyden stresses. "So the shaman had to deal with him, and the way he dealt with him was by excising him, by literally killing him" ("Pushing" 233). In traditional oral stories like those translated by Howard Norman in *Where The Chill Came From: Cree Windigo Tales and Journeys*, the cannibal figure, who poses a threat to community integrity, both corporeal and

ethical, is invariably removed from the community through an elimination of one kind or another, most often murder. Interestingly, in many of these stories, the human who has been inhabited or possessed by the windigo is returned to his normal state of being after the windigo has been killed. This convention powerfully underscores banishment and exclusion as central to the reification of community norms. Windigo killing is a means of societal regulation, in which impulses and actions dangerous to the community are reaffirmed as such through the expulsion of one who embodies this danger. Yet the windigo helps to consolidate the community and its norms through both exclusion and incorporation: he is incorporated into the community, as a limit-case of ethical behaviour, through his very exclusion from the community. Paradoxically, then, the community's murder of the cannibal can be seen to rehearse the cannibal's own modus operandi—his melancholic introjection of the other.

Like the Ojibwa windigo-killer who must contain the threat of cannibalism by excising its perpetrator, Xavier, as windigo-killer, must kill Elijah: "I must finish this," he concludes. "I have become what you are, Niska" (370). When read as a reflection—or more accurately, a projection—of Xavier's own windigo transgressions on the battlefield, Elijah can be seen to pose a threat to Xavier's recovery and the possibility of his reincorporation into the traditional Cree community; it is for this reason that he must be expelled. Like Elijah, Xavier has violated community norms regarding hunting, warfare, and respect for the land through his participation in the white man's war, which respects nothing in its path. Explaining the "total education" of Omushkego Cree youngsters, and

particularly the emphasis of this education on respect for the environment, Elder

Louis Bird relates, "The elders would teach you about land; how do you respect

the land? Why do you have to respect the land? Total environment: land and

whatever it contains, living or not living or moving. Everything is living, they

say, but some may not move," he emphasizes. "All the living things are supposed

to be understood and respected" (40). The profound violation of the land in

WWI, not to mention the dehumanization of persons, clearly disregards Cree

belief, in which, as Bird elaborates, "Sin against the environment means that you

do something, damage to the land. . . . Also leaving something behind that is dirty.

Or, if you stay in one place . . . you should clean it before you leave, as best you

can. . . . You do not alter the land; you respect the way it is, in all its

environment" (48). Following from this respect for the environment, hunting for

the James Bay Cree is, as Frank Speck observes, "a holy occupation" (qtd. in

Niezen 17). Xavier and Elijah's "hunting" of men, which appropriates this

tradition to unholy ends, surely also violates Cree philosophy. "Whoever

operated a firearm partook in an activity that was permeated by religious and

spiritual importance, harnessing the power of the Thunderbird," the editors of

Bird's stories explain (192). Governed by an "unwritten code of ethics,"

traditional Cree understood "not to kill humans without any good reason, without

a last effort to avoid it. . . . These ideas existed amongst the First Nation people

before the European came," Bird himself elucidates, "because the First Nation

people did not kill for no reason" (46). To do so was considered "savagery,

useless massacre, or total insult." Punishment for the violation of such ethical

codes, according to Bird, could take a number of forms, one of which was "ostracism—that means to be cast out, killed for doing something bad" (48). Windigo-killing metaphorizes this punishment.

Ironically, the traditional justice Xavier imagines himself to enact by murdering Elijah is based on a *misreading*, a breakdown in communication between himself and Niska, who represents the traditions to which he believes himself to adhere; while attempting to follow Cree social order, Xavier ends up re-violating it. During his struggle with Elijah, Xavier recalls his aunt's letter: "*Do what you have to*" it says, or so he thinks (369): "God understands if you must kill Elijah" (318). But because the letter was written for Niska by Joseph Netmaker, whose command of Standard English is poor, its message ends up being quite different from that which Niska intended—that killing, if it is for the purpose of survival, is acceptable in times of war. Joseph's mistranslation brings home a number of points. First, it is the residential school (in the form of Netmaker's poor English) that obscures Xavier's connection with Niska, the repository of Cree values. As do the effects of Elijah's residential school experience, the miscommunication between Xavier and Niska underscores the way in which colonial influence "contaminates" the proper transmission and communication of traditional values and lessons, which are essential in times of need. Even though Xavier, unlike Elijah, was shielded to a large extent from the trauma of the residential school system, he is, Boyden suggests, still deeply affected by this trauma, which has far-reaching implications for his community. Xavier's actions on the battlefield, rather than adhering to Cree epistemology,

thus become something transgressive and unnatural—something eerily close to the excessive consumptions of the windigo: "I desperately want to stop what I've started," he laments, "but something else controls me now" (370). As both windigo-killer and windigo, Xavier simultaneously stabilizes the social order and transgresses it.

Understood within the theoretical framework of racial melancholia, Xavier consolidates his social identity in relation to Elijah, the other other, who is, in fact, a projection of his own constitutive otherness. By pairing Cheng's theory of identification, which emphasizes the exclusionary dimension of melancholia, with a Cree approach to the preservation of community identity through the exclusion of threatening elements, one arrives at an analysis of Elijah's death as necessary to the survival and cohesion of Xavier's personal and communal identity as separate from Elijah and all that he represents—a fundamental loss of tradition, ethics, and community. Elijah metaphorizes not only Xavier's ethical transgressions on the battlefield, but the "infection" of Cree traditions by the assimilative, windigo power of the residential school system. The "huge no-no" that must be excised in this context is the windigo identity—the "savagery"—that arises as a consequence of Elijah's residential school experience. Speaking of the social issues faced by contemporary Cree and Anishnabe communities, Boyden affirms, "Many of [these communities] are actively dealing with and slowly excising the ghosts created by contact with what was often the worst of Western culture. Most often," he concludes, "the source of a lot of Cree and Ojibwa pain comes in the form of residential schools" ("A Conversation" par. 18). In their

excision, however, these ghosts remain to haunt and inform the communal and individual subjects from which they are removed. Elijah represents the losses brought to bear on the boys' community through the residential school and the war, losses that are set up within the community as the constitutive absence against which its identity as a traditional community is consolidated.

Of course, the fundamental irony of the melancholic subject is that it introjects and thus preserves in itself the lost other whom it loathes and desires to banish. And indeed, in the process of ridding himself of the windigo/Elijah, Xavier becomes the windigo, forming an even stronger identification with his brother than before. Xavier's murder of Elijah metaphorizes the exclusion of the lost other central to the formation and consolidation of identity as the proliferation and deferral of difference. By killing Elijah, Xavier banishes the windigo other at the heart of his own identity, called up through the madness of war and impermissible in, yet constitutive of, the traditional context to which he returns; at the same time, typical to melancholic form, his actions preserve this loss. When he is later hospitalized, his leg amputated because of an injury sustained right after his murderous deed, Xavier is mistaken for Elijah and told that his friend, Xavier, has died. Xavier *literally* "becomes" Elijah: "I do not know how to make them understand who I am. To them I am Elijah Whiskeyjack, sniper and scout. . . . It is easier not to tell them anything, easier not to explain at all. I allow myself to believe that I am Elijah. In this way *he is still alive*" (375 emphasis added). It is the assimilated element of himself that Xavier tries to excise by killing Elijah, but since the murder is, in one sense, an expression of the effects of

assimilationist policy, it ultimately underscores the inextricability of the assimilated "other" from the recovered "self."

At the novel's end, the windigo is brought forth by Niska, exorcised from Xavier through a sweat lodge ceremony, a method traditionally used to cure those infected by a windigo. Before entering the lodge, Niska helps Xavier to "remove the *wemistikoshiw* [white man's] clothes that he has worn so long, and wash[es] his body in the cool water" (378). This powerful image of death and rebirth is recalled when the two exit the lodge: "I crawl to the flap, open it and carry Nephew out," Niska relates. "We collapse on the ground. Above us, the sky has settled into the long black of night. It will be a clear morning. My body tingles. My skin is reddened from the steam. I look over the Nephew and see that his is too" (381). After another round in the lodge, she reiterates: "We lie beside one another, our skin as tender as newborns'"(382). The sweat lodge, as Al Carroll relates, was also a traditional means of post-war healing, specifically, in his analysis, for the Lakota, but also, as Boyden's novel demonstrates, for the Cree: "Lakota elder Frank Fools Crow described Lakota veterans being cleansed and renewed through sweats and elders talking to them about their wartime experiences 'for days on end' to try and heal them of the trauma of war" (110).[17]

Of *Three Day Road*, Boyden has expressed his desire for the reader to feel "like a participant in a type of confession, a sharing and cleansing" ("A Conversation" par. 14), an indigenous "talking cure" of sorts. But does this necessarily mean that Xavier, as the recovered subject, returns home cleansed of the windigo other by which he has been intimately informed? As a constitutive

outside, the windigo is an integral part of Cree and Anishnabe cultures; it must be

sustained. And although Xavier is cured by traditional means, he nevertheless

remains wounded—his amputated leg, an indelible signifier of loss, signifies this

productive paradox. One imagines its phantom pain to recall Elijah's presence as

an enduring absence; indeed, during the scene of Xavier's rebirth, in which Niska

describes his skin as being as red as a newborn's, she notices equally his severed

leg: "The cut is clean, but the skin all around it is purple and angry. The scars are

thick and ropy and run up his thigh like lightning bolts" (381). Another layer of

complexity is added to this scene of recovery when Niska has a vision of "two

boys, naked, their brown backs to [her] as they throw little stones in the water.

Their hair is long in the old way and is braided with strips of red cloth. But this

isn't the past," she realizes. "It is what's still to come. They look to be brothers.

Someone else besides me watches them. I sense that he watches to keep them

from danger. . . . I know who he is, and who these boys are too" (381). As one

learns throughout the novel, Niska's visions are prescient. This leaves little doubt

that what Boyden imagines here is a future in which Xavier sires two boys like

himself and Elijah, raising them in the traditional fashion in which he was raised

and protecting them from the dangers to which he and, more specifically, Elijah

were subjected. The trope of the next generation is not unfamiliar to the recovery

genre, as we have seen in Armstrong's use of the child as a symbol of hope, as

well as Alexie's inversion of this trope in John Smith's impossible pregnancy.

Like the future generations of these texts, one "reality," one "fiction," Boyden's

future generation is a possibility, a vision. As such, it encapsulates the defining

characteristic of the recovery narrative genre: im/possibility. Boyden appears to

embrace recovery's im/possibility, leaving its tension in play at the novel's close,

for the last we see of Xavier and Niska they are less than a day's journey from

home. Their arrival there is always-already yet to come.

Notes

[1] "Windigo" and "Weetigo" refer to the same Cree/Ojibway figure. There are a number of other spellings including "Weendigo," used by Basil Johnston. Cultural variations in the figure do exist, but whether or not these correspond with orthography is beyond the scope of this study. One assumes both Boyden and Highway would be influenced by a number of windigo stories and traditions, both Cree and Ojibway (of multiple geographical areas).

[2] In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud notes that "[i]t is really only because we know how to explain [mourning] that [it] does not seem to us pathological" (244).

[3] For indigenous peoples, the loss of country (understood as land) would not be an "abstraction," as Freud proposes. While critics of melancholia have yet to unpack the possible relationship between melancholia and loss of country, it is incumbent upon us to do so, particularly in an indigenous context. This chapter begins this work by theorizing the losses occasioned for Aboriginal peoples by the assimilationist system of residential schools, which was part and parcel of the dispossession and displacement of indigenous peoples from their land.

[4] See Butler's *Psychic Life*. Diana Fuss and Elin Diamond also advance the relevance of melancholia to Freud's later understanding of ego formation (see Cheng 178-179).

[5] See Lily Cho's "Affecting Citizenship: The Materiality of Melancholia" for a critique of the "endlessness of grief" in Cheng.

[6] Based on the time period and location in which the novel is set, one can conclude that the residential school in the novel finds its historical twin in the Bishop Horden Memorial School, an Anglican school in operation from 1855 to 1969 in Moose Factory, Ontario. The school was also referred to as the Moose Factory Indian Residential School and the Moose Fort Indian Residential School.

[7] Canadians were still considered British during WWI. See John Moses, who explains that "Indian enthusiasm was carefully directed by their elders towards Imperial sentiments and the monarch, rather than to Canada, *per se*. . . . In Ontario, Chief F.M. Jacobs of Sarnia, wrote to . . . Duncan Campbell Scott, that his people were willing to provide 'help toward the Mother Country in its present struggle in Europe. The Indian Race as a rule are loyal to England; this loyalty was created by the noblest Queen that ever lived, Queen Victoria'" (62-63).

[8] "It is not just as a soldier that Pegahmagabow has significance for his people," stress Steckley and Cummins. "He was chief of the Parry Island Band from 1921 to 1925, and a band councillor from 1933 to 1936" (38), facts that recall Elijah's

desire to return home from the war and become the Chief of his people (*Three* 332).

[9] See also chapter 12 of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Vol. 1, in which it is explained that "the wartime plan to lease Indian reserve lands to boost agricultural production merged into the post-war plan to obtain outright surrenders of Indian reserve lands for veterans" (552).

[10] This reading is complicated by Al Carroll's observation that, in Canada, "the war brought a very brief and temporary halt to demands for assimilation. In the popular press Indians were seen as patriotic or shown as great soldiers with a mix of surprise and praise that they could 'act like white men'" (106).

[11] Speaking of the complexity of the citizenship issue for Native peoples during WWI, Carroll explains that "the Iroquois especially objected to a question on the draft cards that required one to mark whether one was a British subject by birth or by naturalization. With no other alternative on the card, to most it seemed the cards could be used to set a precedent to deny treaty rights" (104).

[12] See also J.R. Miller's *Shingwauk's Vision* (195).

[13] See Churchill's discussion of the Canadian *Bryce Report* (1907), which "revealed that of the 1,537 children who had attended the sample group of facilities since they'd opened—a period of ten years, on average—42 percent had died of 'consumption or tuberculosis,' either at the schools or shortly after being discharged" (*Kill* 37).

[14] See Norman's *Where the Chill Came From* for examples.

[15] Elijah's inability to shoot the bird once again stresses his lack of traditional hunting skills, as the James Bay Cree are known to hunt waterfowl regularly. See Louis Bird's *Telling Our Stories*, in which it is mentioned that the Omushkegowak could "kill up to three birds with one arrow. . . . However, a fowling piece and shot enabled a proficient hunter to kill more than three times as many birds with one shot" (190).

[16] See Marano *et al*., who explain that the nineteenth century was the period in which Algonquian peoples were faced with the most extreme effects of animal depletion in their territories (393).

[17] See also Ronald Niezen, who notes that "[a]mong the Cree, the practice of throwing water on red-hot stones in the central pit of a dome-shaped tent was used for curing a wide variety of ailments, including tuberculosis, pneumonia and influenza . . . . It also, as one narrator recalled, used to help people with mental illness" (34).

Conclusion: Contributions and Next Steps

Ending chapter four with reference to the conclusion of Boyden's *Three Day Road*, in which Xavier and his Aunt Niska are "less than a day's journey from home," I am reminded of other, similar recovery narrative endings. Throughout this project, I have read the conclusion as the seat of recovery's most pronounced articulation; indeed, it is in this narrative space that recovery's inherent tensions—tensions between return and departure, healing and haunting, and recuperation and loss—are most clearly observable. In Boyden's novel, this tension is enunciated through the image of a journey whose end—the end of recovery—is depicted as complex potential, rather than concrete fact. The famous close of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, which is also the novel's beginning, in which Abel returns home to Jemez Pueblo and participates in the traditional Dawn Run, is another example, an archetypal one, of recovery's potential. Momaday's conclusion suggests that the return to and continuation of ancestral activities is fundamental to healing the wounds of alienation from which Abel suffers throughout the novel. And yet, as in other recovery narratives, Abel's alienation is inextricable from his recovery, and the finish line of his journey remains, like Xavier's, on possibility's edge.

While critics agree that Abel is estranged from the traditions of his people upon returning home from World War II at the beginning of the novel, and then again when he later journeys to the city, they have said little about the fact that, as someone who does not know his paternal origins, Abel has felt alienated since the time of his youth.[1] The absence of Abel's father, who "was a Navajo, they said,

or a Sia, or an Isleta, an outsider anyway," has a profound impact on the young

Abel, making him feel "somehow foreign and strange" (15). By leaving Abel's

relations partially undetermined, an ambiguity of origin one sees in other recovery

narratives (although not always in relation to kinship), Momaday complicates

from the start the notion of an *a priori* ground to which Abel must return,

suggesting instead that recovery is a creative process located in the individual re-

enactment of collective voice.[2] The novel's conclusion sees Abel begin this

process as he repeats words from the Navajo Night Chant healing ceremony,

recited to him in Los Angeles by his Navajo friend Ben Benally. Abel's repetition

of the Night Chant is significant, first, because it re-creates his (uncertain) Navajo

heritage and is, in this sense, a provocative statement on the performativity of

recovery, and second, because it links his recovery to the urban environment from

which he has returned. In this way, Abel's recovery is trans/national, to return to

Renya Ramirez's important theory that indigenous identity in a contemporary

context often lives at the interstices of the urban and the rural, the city and the

reservation. While conventional readings of Momaday's novel stress the

alienation of the urban and the salve of the homeland as tradition,[3] as much

criticism of recovery narratives in general has done, here we see the intertwining

of the urban and the rural, alienation and recovery. In more than one sense,

Abel's experience of tradition in an urban context is thus the root of his uncertain

recovery. Momaday himself has emphasized the *potential* of Abel's recovery,

asking, "Can [Abel] recover his voice? There's no answer to that" (qtd. in Bonetti

141). Like Boyden's, Momaday's novel thus leaves the *fact* of its protagonist's

recovery purposefully unclear, an open-endedness which suggests that the road to recovery in these texts, as in other recovery narratives, is unbounded.

Indeed, all four of the recovery narratives I have examined in detail in this project, be they classic or counter, end by gesturing outward, toward a future journey. *Kiss of the Fur Queen* closes with Gabriel departing to an unknown afterlife, arm-in-arm with the Fur Queen; *Indian Killer* ends similarly, with a deceased John Smith walking off into the desert in search of his mentor, the Spokane Jesuit Priest Father Duncan. There is an obviously terminal character to these conclusions, and yet, in each instance, the possibility exists for the reader to wonder what the protagonist's next step will be, and if the text is pedagogic, what her own next step will be as well. After finishing Armstrong's *Slash*, which ends with the death of Slash's wife and his utter dejection—"I was so tired," he says. "I wondered how I would make it to get up one more time" (251)—students in my recent Honours class queried, first, if Slash would, in fact, "get up one more time" and, second, if his getting up would be the first step in yet another journey *away* from his Okanagan homeland.[4] While my analysis in chapter two suggests that Tommy is home to stay by the novel's conclusion, my students' readings imply otherwise, widening the horizon of the text's interpretive possibilities and pointing, once again, to recovery's im/possibility, in the most productive sense of the term. Coming home, these narratives imply, is one step in a process that is open-ended and thus open to cultivation in the reader's imagination. They end with a sense of uncertainty, yes, but also with a great sense of possibility: what is around the bend? Up the river? Further down the road? Im/possibility is

empowering in this context in that it leaves the contours of home and recovery open to re-imagining in narrative—and other—worlds. As Carol Miller observes of contemporary indigenous narratives, "They provide an important medium not only for sustaining culture but for creating a significant illustrative resource about the pragmatic business of 'going along' in the world, just as the old stories have always done" (44). Indigenous stories, she furthers, have a "serious functionality" (44). The functionality of the im/possible is a productive paradox.

I would like to pick up on this twofold notion of possibility and functionality, asking "what next?" of my project: what does it contribute to the field of Native North American literatures, and what are the "next steps" scholars might take with its initiatives? I have begun with a brief reading of Momaday's novel because it allegorizes much of what I would like to explore in this conclusion. Borrowing from the methodology of indigenous storytelling traditions, in which complex theories are communicated through narrative, this reading provides a storied framework for an exploration of my project's contributions to the field. These contributions can be sorted into the following three main areas of inquiry: first, that of the relationship between urban space and recovery; second, that of the potential connections between indigenous theories of language as "bringing into being" and the Euroamerican theory of performativity, and following from this, what I would like to call the "conversation model" of reading indigenous theory and literature in conjunction with non-Native theory; and third, the relationship between colonial discourse and Native identities. In light of these contributions, I close with an eye to how my reading of recovery

narratives problematizes the strict divisions often erected between nationalist and cosmopolitanist (or hybridist) perspectives on Native North American literatures.

Recovering the Urban

Reading the urban aspect of homecoming in Momaday's novel allows me not only to revisit briefly arguments made in chapter one—namely, that Termination and Relocation policies of the 1950s and 60s propelled a politics of homecoming given literary shape in the recovery narrative genre—but also to gesture outward, toward future research that needs to be done in terms of linking urban experience to indigenous recovery, tradition, and authentic identities. In 1992, Louis Owens proposed that Native literature up to that time had "met with only begrudging and at best slight acceptance into the American canon" because of "the almost singularly urban nature of modernism, the sensibility and obsession dominant during the nascence of Native American written literature" (*Other* 16). Because "modernism was 'an art of the cities,'" he continues, "Native American literature—almost always concerned primarily with rural existence and as far removed from the mechanical concerns of modern life as was possible—simply did not figure" (16). While one might challenge Owens here (for example, on the date of the birth of Native American written literature, as well as the place of the urban in relation to the rural concerns of texts such as Momaday's), his comments point up what is an ongoing perception of Native literature as in large part, if not almost always, nonurban. Urban Indian literature, however, by which I mean Native literature either written by urban Indian authors or dealing with urban themes, as well as an increasing urban Native population, will continue to grow

and draw attention to the authenticity of the urban as indigenous space, as recent collections such as *Genocide of the Mind* illustrate. In its preface, Vine Deloria, Jr. explains that urban settlements in the Americas are not, in fact, a European contribution; in New Mexico, for example, "when the Spanish arrived there were over one hundred thirty towns, or pueblos, scattered all over the Rio Grande valley" (xii). With the encroachment of Spanish settlement, however, as Deloria continues, many pueblos "disappeared or became predominantly Spanish towns," and one "can now find Indian village sites that lie beneath Chicago, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, or a bevy of other cities." Such observations complicate any easy division between urban and ancestral territories, and invite a reading of the urban as always-already indigenous.

As Renya Ramirez's *Native Hubs* demonstrates, the relationship between urban and rural spaces, communities, and identities is becoming an increasing focus of scholarly research. Yet, literary critics have yet to explore in any depth the urban as a site of recovery (as home and location of healing) rather than, or as well as, a site of dispossession. One of my goals throughout this project has been to do just this, highlighting how the discourse of recovery can work to obfuscate the role the urban plays in recovery as practice, discourse, and literary genre. Such obfuscation, I have argued, runs the risk of de-legitimizing the indigeneity of urban Native experience. My reading in chapter one of Garnet Raven's recovery in Richard Wagamese's *Keeper 'N Me* resists this conclusion, providing an example of how the urban can be read back into recovery. Carol Miller provides another example. Her work, however, charts a progressivist path in

which, for Native writers prior to and at the time of the Renaissance, "towns were emblematic of both cultural alienation and physical risk and danger" (45), whereas, in the novels of more recent writers such as Ignatia Broker and Greg Sarris, "the essentializing tendencies of previous urban representations" are countered (58). I would urge critics to continue to rethink the urban not only in the context of contemporary and emergent literatures, but in established narratives as well.

Essential critical work is currently being done to denaturalize "Native perspectives"—that is, to highlight how such perspectives are not wedded to a prescribed set of traits, activities, or locations, but can best be conceptualized as "the perspectives of Native people," to quote Craig Womack (115). Can Native places be denaturalized in a similar fashion? Womack's argument is deceptively simple. His assertion highlights the narrow essentialism and straightjacket authenticity which arise when scholars assume that Native people are no longer *Native people* once affected by colonial influence. The same sort of logic is at work in the assumption that the city is not a Native place, that it is a place where Native people are necessarily distanced from their traditions, lodged elsewhere. Following from Womack, my study suggests that an indigenous place is any place indigenous people live. Crucially, to make such an assertion is neither to overlook the assimilationist agenda of Relocation and its alienating effects, nor to undervalue the criteria of continuous habitation as a marker of indigenous title to ancestral territories. Rather, it is to resist denying authenticity to those for whom the city is home. Critics such as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn have excoriated writers

like Sherman Alexie for their "literature of despair," to use Gloria Bird's term,

particularly such literature's obfuscation of indigenous sovereignty and its focus

on urban Indian angst, but one wonders how a revisiting of the urban as the site of

pan-Indian community in these texts might fortify nationalist projects, those

focused not on tribally-specific issues (as Cook-Lynn is), but on trans/national

concerns. Such interests are not antithetical to nationalism, a movement with

multiple nodes of concern, including not only the tribally specific, but the pan-

Indian. Jace Weaver addresses this multiplicity, explaining that "Womack and

[Daniel Heath] Justice write in a tribally specific manner, for instance, while

Warrior, Howard Adams, Craig Howe, and I [Weaver], although equally

'nationalistic,' tend to take a more pan-Indian approach" ("Splitting" 49). A

critical focus on the urban as site of recovery could contribute, then, to the current

proliferation of nationalist work.

**Exploring the Conversation Model: The "Coercive Power" of Language
Meets Performativity**

For indigenous scholars working in a variety of disciplines, including

English literature, long-standing concerns exist about the appropriation and

re/colonization of Native voices by non-Native scholars, in part through the

application of non-Native theory to Native literature and lifeways. "Having been

immersed in the Western academy which claims theory as thoroughly Western,

which has constructed all the rules by which the indigenous world has been

theorized, indigenous voices have been overwhelmingly silenced" Linda Tuhiwai

Smith explains (29). As a non-Native critic engaged in poststructuralist theory, in

part by chance and in part by choice and passion,[5] I must repeatedly confront the

question Craig Womack raises of his own work: "How might the people we theorize about respond to our theories?" (150). I have no doubt that some critics will find my use of poststructuralist discourse analysis, trauma theory, and psychoanalysis problematic, mainly because of the eurocentricity of such theories, or more accurately, the way in which they often "pass" as universal when, in fact, they are embedded in particular historical contexts. While this is true, these theories can be and are indigenous if and when they are taken up by indigenous people, as is the case with Gerald Vizenor's poststructuralism or Louis Owens' Bakhtinian analyses of trickster discourse. Trauma theory, too, as I discuss in chapter two, is increasingly being employed by Native theorists. Further, to regard such theory as strictly "European" or "Euroamerican" is to fall prey to the assumption that the influences of contact are unidirectional, an assumption which ignores the impact of indigenous peoples on continental and Euroamerican thought.[6] Of course, because these theories can be conceptualized as indigenous does not provide carte blanche to non-Native theorists interested in their application to indigenous texts; the concerns raised by Tuhiwai Smith around the silencing of indigenous voices still apply, and are perhaps even more pressing. Critics, in response, must historicize their theoretical approaches, as Womack stresses (130). In chapter two, I delineate how poststructuralist theories of trauma are rooted in a Holocaust Studies history, as well as a non-indigenous notion of temporality, work which I hope provides a salient example of how non-Native theories can be historicized and set in conversation with the theories cultivated by Native literatures.

My project thus engages what I term a "conversation model" of exchange between non-Native theory and Native literatures and/as theory. Crucially, this is not to sideline non-fictional Native theory, which plays an equally critical role. Recognizing the pitfalls of "applying" theory to literature, an approach which is especially problematic if the theory is non-Native and the literature indigenous, as the former is often privileged over the latter, the conversation model positions literature and theory to communicate reciprocally; it understands Native literature as theory itself (rather than as separate from theory);[7] and it brings together non-Native theory with Native literature and/as theory so as to expand how each is understood. Again, my work in chapter two provides an example of this model, illustrating the ethics of "turn-taking" on which the model relies. Rather than having euro-theory "talk over" indigenous texts, the danger to which Tuhiwai Smith points, the conversation model, in its ideal form, insists on a dialogic approach. As conversation analyst E.A. Schegloff asserts, "For there to be the possibility of responsiveness—of one participant being able to show that what they are saying and doing is responsive to what another party has said and done— one party needs to talk after the other," that is, they have to take turns (qtd. in Gardner, Fitzgerald and Mushin 66-67).[8]

Following from this model, my study can be seen as a starting place for a comparative analysis of indigenous theories of language as "bringing into being" and Euroamerican theories of performativity. The conclusion of *House Made of Dawn*, in which Abel rehearses the Navajo Night Chant, reminds us that the novel "uses the traditional Native American oral concept of language where words

function as a poetic process of creation, transformation, and restoration," as Linda

Hogan writes (103). A poststructuralist understanding of discourse as productive

of social realities resonates provocatively with this concept, which Louis Owens

calls "the coercive power of language in Native oral traditions—that ability to

'bring into being' and thus radically enter into reality" (9). His choice of the word

"coercive" calls to mind Butler's conviction that social actors come into being

under discursive duress, and Foucault's earlier insight that the repressive function

of discourse is simultaneously productive. While Owens here sets written and

oral traditions apart, arguing that "with written literacy, language becomes

descriptive/historic and begins to lose its unique power as creator of reality," I

would stress, as Owens' work itself admits, that Native literatures also recognize

the written as profoundly generative. Referring again to the Navajo Night Chant,

Hogan illustrates this point, explicating that "the purpose of describing health is to

obtain health" (108). Repetition, as a key feature of the oral tradition, necessary

to its dynamism and adaptability, is also a crucial component of Butler's

performativity, particularly its transformative potential, for it is in the reiteration

of discursive "scripts" that social actors are made and re-made. In both traditions,

then, the fluidity of narrative is linked to an ever-evolving social reality. Also in

both traditions, language, as the bearer of communal history, memory and

expectations, is foundational to subjectification, understood as the enduring

process of becoming a subject: individuals (continue to) come into specific being

through their (ongoing) entrance into language, discourse, and story. In "The

Man Made of Words," Momaday attests to the power of language in this sense,

saying, "It seems to me that in a certain sense we are all made of words; that our most essential being exists in language" (162).

My project has begun this comparative study, acknowledging that much more needs to be done in terms of historicizing both sides of the comparison. The kind of analysis I perform in chapter two is necessary also for the connections made between the creative, constitutive function of language in indigenous and Euroamerican theoretical traditions. Researching tribally-specific understandings of language as creative would be important to this endeavour, as would situating performativity in its theoretical lineage, which begins with J.L. Austin's linguistic analysis of performative versus constative statements in the English language.[9] Explanations of the Night Chant as "words the utterance of which is actually the doing of an action" (Sam Gill qtd. in Hogan 111) surely resonate with Austin's notion of the performative, but what are the problematics of comparing indigenous language utterances with those of English? How does a verb-driven language, such as Cree, for example, differ from English in its comprehension of language's power to enact? Answering these and like questions could prove to be the next step in developing a unique comparative approach. In its exploration of the contributions Native literatures and/as theory can make to scholarly interpretations of "non-Native" theory, this approach could stand sympathetically alongside nationalist concerns, defined broadly as a commitment to foregrounding indigenous epistemologies.

Rethinking the Possibilities of Colonial Discourse

Critics in the field have long discussed colonial discourse for its repressive effects, as Eva Gruber expounds: "Much energy [has been] directed towards identifying distorting images of Native people in literature, film, commercials, and so on" (23). Acknowledging the detrimental psychosocial effects of these "distortions," scholars have read Native literatures for their refusal and/or subversion of colonial discourses of Native identity, often referred to as stereotypes. Studies by Gruber, Dee Horne, and others illustrate how subversion in this context is conventionally understood to involve the Native text's strategic inhabitation and ironic reversal of colonial misconceptions. Horne, Gruber summarizes, "contrasts colonial mimicry with the concept of 'subversive mimicry,' which writers from subordinate groups can employ to make use of the dominant group's discourse for their own purposes without actually ever conforming to the dominant group's demand for assimilation" (32). Gruber explains her own project as follows: "Transcending an investigation of the discursive practices employed by the West in processes of subjectification, the analysis explores the ways in which Native writers can *interfere with* these stereotypical processes of representation through the use of humor" (23). Such criticism serves a considerable purpose, particularly in terms of asserting the agency of the Native author, here conceptualized in the terms of liberal humanism as an individual fully in control of the social forces to which s/he is subjected.

My study, in particular chapter three, has drawn attention to the model of subjectivity on which such criticism rests, in addition to emphasizing the

complexities of subjectification, which it overlooks. Gruber herself, drawing on

Homi Bhabha, allows that "the process of subjectification based on stereotypical

representations has yet to be recognized as just as or even more relevant [than the

"identification of images as positive or negative"], and so far has only received

limited attention" (23). But her analysis, which epitomizes the discourse in the

field on colonial representations of Nativeness, hurries over the generative

potential of so-called "colonial discourse," missing the ways in which, while

repressive, such discourse has been taken up by Native authors *as indigenous*

discourse, central to the re-citation of Native identities. Using the same logic

Simon Ortiz employs in his analysis of English as an indigenous language, I

problematize the assumption that discourse is owned and unilaterally imposed,

suggesting instead, following the lead of writers such as Tomson Highway, that

subjection can be the site of subversion—and recovery.[10] Recognizing *as*

indigenous modes of identification that are often thought to distance Native

people from their indigeneity is vital to the cultivation of a politics of recovery

based on inclusivity and the acknowledgment and proliferation of indigenous

difference. In this sense, my work caps off and reorients a conversation about the

"reimagining" of Native identity in the context of colonial discourse that some

feel has not only gone on too long, but has reflected a predominantly non-Native

interest in the "hybridity" of indigenous identities, often to the exclusion of

nationalist concerns. Likely, then, my project marks the end of an era, the last

step of a conclusion already well underway.

But allow me to close by intimating a new direction on the matter. Because of my interest in comparative analysis and the narrative reproduction of indigenous identity in relation to "colonial" discourse, I expect my approach will be categorized by the field as cosmopolitanist—what Craig Womack, referring to the work of Elvira Pulitano and Arnold Krupat, calls "hybridist." A hybridist perspective like Pulitano's is dangerous for its dilution of "Native" as an identity category, as Womack observes: "The central theme of her book is that the intersection of Native and non-Native worlds makes it impossible to claim a Native perspective without acknowledging the inevitable European underpinnings of any Indian claim" (93).[11] If "Native" as a distinct category cannot be said to exist as separate from the colonial, then how, nationalists rightly ask, can Native people maintain their sovereign status and attendant rights? To such debates my study adds another perspective, one that clarifies and complicates the political divisions that exist between these two schools, rather than adhering to one or the other. To argue "for" hybridity, while it can in some cases be limiting, as Pulitano's study illustrates, is not necessarily to argue "against" nationalist concerns, specifically that of maintaining the category of the indigenous. Hybridity is *not*, in my definition, the result of "combining" *a priori* categories of the "colonial" and the "indigenous," as much criticism, both for and contra the theory, assumes. Instead, hybridity actually critiques such identity categories, *understood as static*, insisting instead on identity as process; as such, it does not preclude the assertion of distinct identities, cultural or national—it only insists that such categories be understood as always-already a meeting place of

influences. I suspect that nationalists such as Womack would, in fact, see much in

this version of hybridity compatible with their insistence on the capacity of

"Native" to hold multiple narratives of what indigeneity itself means. This is not

to suggest that nationalists are "multiculturalist[s] in denial," the charge for which

Womack justly castigates Pulitano (105). Rather, it is to suggest that work such

as my own, which *is* interested in the inextricability of the "colonial" and/as the

indigenous, not be dismissed as uninvested in nationalist—that is, *indigenous*—

concerns. Instead of diluting indigeneity, my reading of recovery narratives has

aimed to open its definition, an emphatically different approach from that which

argues that the indigenous is necessarily inf(l)ected by the colonial.

　　　To argue "for" nationalist concerns is not, then, to argue "against" the

flexibility of indigenous identities or their intersubjective composition, a

misunderstanding made by the naïve cosmopolitanist approach. Pulitano, for

instance, accuses Womack of trying in his work "to recover a precolonial purity,

thereby creating some kind of national consciousness entirely independent of the

European colonial enterprise" (94). Womack insists he does no such thing: to be

focused on nationalist concerns is not synonymous with essentialism. "It is

philosophically untenable," he explains, "to assume sovereignty constitutes an

inherent demand for purity, isolation, and authenticity. Since sovereignty, by

definition, has to do with government-to-government relations, it has everything

to do with intersections and exchanges between inside and outside worlds" (111).

Overlooking such insights, a naïve cosmopolitanism insists that nationalists need

to "confess" their inevitable contamination by the (post)colonial world (Womack

165). My work, too, takes up the idea of contamination, but in such a way as to resist the model of identity it prescribes, highlighting the ways in which it privileges certain notions of indigeneity as authentic and renders invisible—indeed, attempts to assimilate—others. Containing the potential to *expand*, rather than limit, understandings of indigeneity, my analysis focuses on how the recovery narrative genre works not only to reify, but also, simultaneously, to question the notion of colonial contamination, thus complimenting a nationalist perspective interested in buttressing a range of articulations of indigeneity.

Without ignoring the distinctiveness of the nationalist agenda, and without appropriating its aims to cosmopolitanist ends, I hope that my project's account of the nationalist trajectories of the recovery narrative tradition, combined with its attention to recovery's trans/nationalist dimensions, will contribute to recovering the intellectual and political ground shared by cosmopolitanist and nationalist concerns. This approach opens the field to the possibilities generated by the best of both discourses, without restricting analysis to the shortcomings of the least. It is an exciting potential.

Notes

[1] See my entry on "Abel" in the *Student's Companion to American Literary Characters*.

[2] Momaday is well-known for the theory of identity as brought into being through language and ritual, on which he elaborates in later texts such as *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Names*.

[3] See, for example, Louis Owens' reading of the novel in the introductory chapter of *Other Destinies*.

[4] Interestingly, many of them felt "tired" as well, and saw in Slash's interminable journeying Armstrong's desire to create this affect in her reader.

[5] The part played by chance in the cultivation of theoretical persuasion (i.e. which courses one takes, with whom one studies, the institution at which one studies, etc.) is not often considered in discussions of methodology. My interest in Judith Butler's theory of performativity, for example, is rooted, in part, in the fact that I studied under someone who had worked with Butler. This experience had a profound effect on me and has been carried in my methodology ever since.

[6] Julia Emberley discusses, for example, the "influence of the Indian confederacies [bordering British colonies] on socialist and feminist thought of the nineteenth century" (*Defamiliarizing* 56).

[7] Here I follow Kimberley Blaeser, who is "alert for critical methods and voices that seem to arise out of the literature itself" (53-54).

[8] This model requires additional research into the cultural specificity of rules around turn-taking, as well as conversational norms more generally.

[9] See Austin's *How To Do Things With Words*.

[10] See Ortiz's "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism" for his discussion of English as an indigenous language.

[11] See Pulitano's *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*.

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