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Cover photo courtesy of Murv Jacob. Cover and interior design by Shirley Thornton and Kimberly Hermsen.

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FROM THE EDITOR

This special issue inaugurates what I hope—and predict—is only the very beginning of a much-needed conversation about the multiple points of intersection between the academic fields of Indigenous and animal studies. Our guest editors, Brian K. Hudson and Dustin Gray, have assembled an impressive team of scholars, storytellers, poets, and artists not only to examine the moral and philosophical complexities of the many kinds of connections that occur among Indigenous human and nonhuman animals, but also to engage the aesthetic possibilities of those same complex connections. Their works of literary analysis, ethical argument, engaged dialogue, and artistic exploration remind us, too, that the investigation and celebration of relationships among human and nonhuman animals, like the investigation and celebration of human and nonhuman relationships to land, water, and sky, have always been central to Native literatures and to Native literary studies.

This special issue inaugurates as well what I hope—and predict—is only the beginning of a new trend for *SAIL* in securing a special work of art for the cover of a special issue. We are especially grateful to Cherokee artist Murv Jacob, interviewed in this issue, for allowing us to reprint his beautiful and evocative painting *Animal Stomp*. And we are grateful to University of Nebraska Press for making this special cover possible.

Chadwick Allen

Special Issue
Animal Studies

GUEST EDITED BY

BRIAN K. HUDSON AND DUSTIN GRAY

Introduction

First Beings in American Indian Literatures

BRIAN K. HUDSON

Narratives concerning the relationships between Indigenous humans and other species are ubiquitous in American Indian literatures. These narratives can be found in everything from oral literature to Indigenous science fiction.[1] Cherokee writer William Sanders provides an excellent example of the latter in his short story "At Ten Wolf Lake." Sanders's story is set in a world where mythical creatures, such as Sasquatch, abound. While I use the term *Sasquatch* to describe these beings, that is not quite accurate per the story. Sasquatch refers to a similar but separate group of beings in Sanders's speculative world. We learn that the term *Hominid American* is too politically correct and awkward. Instead, most beings of this type prefer "Homin or Hom" (Sanders 414). In one episode of the story, we meet a Hom named Charley who belongs to a militant Hom activist group. Sitting beside him in a truck is an Indian man who belongs to a politically analogous human group. A bumper sticker on Charley's truck reads "FIRST BEINGS POWER" with a hairy fist beside it (424). This provocative sticker signifies the possibility that agency (in this case, political agency) is not limited to the human species.[2] Although seemingly a novel notion, many Native ideologies do not define humans as categorically different from or superior to nonhuman animals. Categorical difference and exceptional humanity have, however, been integral to many of the dominant narratives that inform colonial ideologies. Historically these invading ideologies have ignored the political agency of other species, an unfortunate effect of which was a change in Indigenous hunting practices. This change, which is reflected in oral literatures, encouraged near decimation of certain species for economic gain.[3] Although often overlooked, American Indian literatures are ideal

for animal studies scholarship, which can in turn benefit Native studies by helping us investigate our relationships with other animals.

Here I am using the term *other animals* synonymously with what many animal studies scholars label *nonhuman animals*. Richard D. Ryder finds the term *nonhuman* problematic because it assumes the human as the normal example of a species (2). But the term *nonhuman* is helpful in signaling *animal* as a problematic signifier while simultaneously implying the need for more precise language (such as distinguishing by species). I will use the terms *other*, *nonhuman*, and *first beings* somewhat interchangeably when referring to those who are commonly labeled as *animals*. The term *first beings*, however, signals the possibility of shared indigeneity between human and nonhuman animals.

Before I start exploring the line of inquiry that I refer to as the study of first beings—how Indigenous peoples narrate our relationships with other animals—it would be helpful to situate it in the broader field of animal studies. Animal studies as a field of inquiry is about our complex relationships with nonhuman animals. In writing about our relationships with other animals, Peter Singer utilizes the term *speciesism*—which Ryder coined via pamphlets at Oxford in 1970—for his book *Animal Liberation* (1975). In the book Singer defines speciesism as "a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species" (6). He explains that what is needed to combat speciesist systems of thought is for us to give "equal consideration" to the interests of other animals (2). In his inclusion of beings outside humanity, Singer follows Jeremy Bentham's assertion that when thinking about the differences between humans and other species, "[t]he question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?" (283). Redirecting the comparison between humans and nonhumans to the question of suffering forces the discourse into accounting for the ethical logics, or lack thereof, of our complex relationships with other animals.[4] It recognizes nonhuman animals as beings whose interests deserve "equal consideration" in any rational and systematically equitable theory of ethics. Following Bentham, Singer persuasively argues that avoiding suffering is clearly an interest of all sentient animals. A principle of equal consideration brings academic philosophical traditions more closely in line with Indigenous ways of thinking about our relationships with other animals.[5]

In thinking about first beings, we might be tempted to center solely

on the differences between Indian stories and non-Native narratives about nonhuman animals. But focusing merely on differences risks the possibility of homogenizing many distinct tribal cultures. We also run the risk of romanticizing Indigenous relationships with other animals.[6] Worse still, we might unwittingly reify readings that can be seen as subscribing to notions of savagery (the Indian as animalistic). Therefore, it is important to note that the ethical and ontological inclusion of other animals is not absent before the mid-1970s, nor is it restricted to tribal cultures. As Norm Phelps shows, as early as 496 BCE Pythagoras and his followers argued against killing nonhuman animals on the basis that they had souls. As Phelps further explains, the practice of Jainism in India—advocating nonviolence to all living beings—may have existed as far back as the ninth century BCE (19). But these older examples of narratives that give "equal consideration" to nonhuman animals have been unsuccessfully competing with the dominant narratives of their difference and inferiority. Dominant speciesist narratives are firmly entrenched in philosophical and scientific discourses by the time that Charles Darwin provocatively writes that "the mental faculties of man and the lower animals do not differ in kind, although immensely in degree" (149). Even before Darwin, the categorical difference of humans was not a fixed notion for all in the scientific community. In *The Open: Man and Animal* Giorgio Agamben describes how as early as the eighteenth century, Carolus Linnaeus, the father of modern taxonomies, was reluctant to list criteria delineating *homo sapiens* from other closely related species. Linnaeus wrote that he "hardly knows of a distinguishing mark that separates man from the apes" (as cited in Agamben 24). In place of a categorical distinction for all of humanity, Linnaeus writes "nosce te ipsum" or "know thyself." Agamben derives from Linnaeus that the only way humans are categorically different from other sentient creatures is that we narrate ourselves as such—an idea aligned with many Indigenous narratives.

In the last ten years or so, theorists who are often labeled as poststructuralists have started questioning how "immensely in degree" we really differ from other animals. Agamben's *The Open* has already been mentioned above. Three of the late Jacques Derrida's books, having been published posthumously from lectures given in the late 1990s and early 2000s, take the proposed large degree of difference into close consideration—*The Animal That Therefore I Am* and *The Beast and the*

Sovereign I & II. In the former Derrida questions the human/animal binary that he explains is present throughout the canon of continental philosophy from Rene Descartes's assertion of other animals as "automata" to Martin Heidegger's insistence that they are "poor in world" (54, 79). In his latter books Derrida traces the prevalence of animality in the narratives of European political sovereignty. Another theorist, Donna J. Haraway, also gives us tools of inquiry into the topic of our relationships with other animals in *When Species Meet*. She does this through her exploration of "companion species" with whom she argues we share a symbiotic relationship. Haraway denies the common misconception that humans are on the "opposite side of the Great Divide" from other species (11). Her rebuttal to this popular notion, given her concept of companion species, is that humanity is a "spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies" (11). What we see from these poststructuralist theorists, in agreement with Linnaeus, is that our concepts of humanity and animality are contingent on how we narrate the relationships between ourselves and nonhuman animals—narrative acts that are performed in complex and conflicting ways.

Derrida and Haraway have also touched on, if only briefly, Indigenous narratives concerning our complex relationships with nonhuman animals. In the first volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida briefly mentions a version of an Anishinaabeg story in which Manabozho's "next of kin is the wolf" (29). Haraway spends a bit more time on Indigenous concerns by examining the importance of sheep and herding dogs to Navajo history and politics (98–100). It is fitting that these theorists have wandered over toward Native cultures—if only briefly—in their investigations of the relationships between human and nonhuman animals. In many tribal traditions difference between humans and other animals, while certainly present, is less dominant. This type of interrelationship is not exclusive to Native cultures as the previous short history of animal studies illustrates. But in regard to other species, interconnectedness and inclusion appear broadly in oral traditions as well as in Indigenous philosophies, spiritual practices, and literatures. In many of these texts there is a dominant narrative that suggests other animals share indigeneity with us.

Linda Hogan's "First People" provides an excellent place to start inquiring about our relationships with nonhuman animals in oral literatures. Hogan refers to other animals as "first people." She gets this

phrasing from a translation of a Karok story in which a magical species, Ikxareyavs (translated as *first people*), inhabits the earth. She argues that many Indigenous traditions place nonhuman animals as the first beings created. As an example Hogan recounts an Iroquois story about other animals being the primary inhabitants. She writes, "in the beginning, according to an Iroquois creation account, the only people in the world were nonhuman animals. When a divine woman fell from the sky, the animals saved her from drowning" (8). Nonhuman animals not only were here first but also were responsible for human existence. Hogan writes, "According to the people who are from the oldest traditions, the relationship between the animal people and the humans is one of the most significance. And this relationship is defined in story. Story is a power that describes our world, our human being, sets out the rules and intricate laws of human beings in relationship with all the rest" (9). While proclaiming that how we talk (and write) about the world has concrete effects, she simultaneously enacts this power by referring to our stories of other animals as the "oldest traditions." Stories about nonhuman animals as "first people" not only are traditional but are also the earliest of traditional narratives.

Hogan offers a careful articulation of the lack of categorical difference between humans and nonhuman animals. She recounts how other animals are represented broadly in Indigenous cultures through the "constellation of stories, songs, and ceremonies" (10). Hogan argues that "at some times, in some ways, there was no line between the species" (8). Her assertion of species difference, although carefully qualified, at the same time has radical implications. Hogan claims there was "no line" with the qualifier that the blur is contingent on particular times and ways. It is also interesting that she uses the past tense, "was no line." We might take this to mean that a clear line now separates humans and other animals in all instances, whereas there was none before. But this would hinge on the idea of a precontact paradise, which is something that Taiaiake Alfred, among others, warns us against.[7] One way to productively follow Hogan's reasoning is to carefully historicize our analyses of specific texts about nonhuman animals. We should think about how the many different distinctions between us and other animals are contingent on historical and local circumstances.

Hogan describes how holding treaties with other animals is a long-held belief. The existence of such treaties implicitly recognizes non-

human political agency. One of the most common ways these treaties between humans and nonhuman animals are narrated is that other animals willingly give their lives for human nourishment as long as respect is maintained for the species through religious and ecological practices. Many different tribes, Hogan explains, maintain these types of treaties. She writes:

> That we held, and still hold, treaties with the animals and plant species is a known part of tribal culture. The relationship between human people and animals is still alive and resonant in the world, the ancient tellings carried on by a constellation of stories, songs, and ceremonies, all shaped by *lived* knowledge of the world and its many interwoven, unending relationships. These stories and ceremonies keep open the bridge between one kind of intelligence and another, one species and another. (italics in original, 10)

I quote this passage at length because of the importance it has on how we discuss our relationships with other animals and the political implications of that discussion. Hogan chooses to use *human* as an adjective—"human people and animals," consistent with her use of the word *people* to apply to other animals. By using the word *people*, she is placing nonhumans squarely within political discourse. And this recognition of sameness, Hogan shows, is important for how we maintain treaties with others animals and recognize their agency. It is important to note Hogan's assertion that while relationships exist, they are also complex and diffuse. She characterizes them as *many*, *interwoven*, and *unending*. This complexity calls for careful scholarship concerning our relationships with other animals.

All of the contributions to this special issue take up the task of carefully thinking through our relationships with nonhuman animals. Craig Womack takes a strong stance against Native religious justifications for hunting in his readings of D'arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded* and Gerald Vizenor's "October 1957: Death Song to a Small Rodent." Jennifer K. Ladino examines interspecies ethics in Sherman Alexie's latest book of poetry, *Face*. And Maureen Riche shows how maternity crosses the human/animal divide in Louise Erdrich's short story "Father's Milk." Rachel C. Jackson interviews Murv Jacob, who graciously painted *Animal Stomp* specifically for this special issue. Carter Revard explores how our current scientific understanding of the visual capabilities of chick-

ens broadens our understanding of how the species has been represented. Finally, in providing an excellent example of a traditional Cherokee animal story, Geary Hobson shows how recognition of the diversity of Cherokeeness can signal the need to likewise acknowledge the diversity of our stories about first beings.[8]

I would like to close here by suggesting that we should begin our study of nonhuman animals as "first beings" rather than "first people." This will give us an opportunity to theorize how certain texts recognize the agency (or lack thereof) of other animals in Native political and other discourses. This line of inquiry may also lead to different understandings of what it means to be Indigenous. It has the potential for developing formulations of sovereignty that include other animals. An inclusion of nonhuman animals leads the discussion toward the possibility of other types of Indigenous posthumanism.[9] The militant first beings in William Sanders's "At Ten Wolf Lake" along with Hogan's exploration of other animals in oral literatures and the contributions to this special issue compel us to carefully theorize our relationships with first beings by incorporating Indigenous theories that recognize their agency and take their interests into account—including, but not limited to, an interest in avoiding suffering.

NOTES

1. For an insightful introduction to this genre see Grace Dillon. Her section on "Indigenous Science and Sustainability" is particularly relevant.

2. For a good introductory exploration of nonhuman agency see Sarah E. McFarland and Ryan Hediger.

3. See James Mooney, for instance, on the Cherokee story "Origin of Disease and Medicine." For a more current publication on Cherokee oral literature see Chris Teuton et al.

4. There are other ways than a focus on suffering to include nonhuman animals in ethical considerations. For instance, see Martha Nussbaum on an ethic of flourishing.

5. Hastings Shade explains that "the dog chose the Indian," and so we should treat him or her "with respect" (Teuton et al. 139).

6. One of the most pervasive examples of this romantic relationship is between Disney's Pocahontas and Meeko the raccoon.

7. Taiaiake Alfred explains that "in lamenting the loss of a traditional frame of reference, we must be careful not to romanticize the past" (53).

8. I also want to note my appreciation for my coeditor Dustin Gray. He has continually provided vital collaboration on this project since its inception.

9. For a thorough discussion of posthumanism see Cary Wolfe.

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For Gerald Vizenor in appreciation for *Interior Landscapes*.

There Is No Respectful Way to Kill an Animal

CRAIG WOMACK

There was nothing good or clean about the last shot I fired at a doe. We had hunted the foothills the day before on the eastern slopes of the Rockies in southern Alberta. On a hilly bluff it was so windy that we'd laid our rifles down on the ground and leaped giddily in the air, coming down to earth in front of our selves—I thought of Neil Armstrong bouncing around on the moon. When we came back downhill through the draws as the light faded, there was a little snow on the ground but not enough to my liking. In the time I'd lived up there and gotten to know the stories about grizzlies well enough, I'd developed a healthy fear of bears. If it was up to me, I'd prefer hearing them snore in their dens. So I was relieved when we got back down to the prairies, out of bear country.

My hunting buddy ended up shooting a deer in a big wheat field just before dark, and I stood by while he went and got the station wagon he drove. If you shoot a deer in the middle of a thousand acres of wheat stubble as the light is failing, and you successfully track it to where it's fallen, here's a word of advice. Don't the two of you walk back to the car, even when it's close by, because you won't find the deer you shot. I'm ashamed to say we had discovered this some time before the hard way, and I can only hope the wolves got something out of it. We didn't make the same mistake twice, at least. My friend drove over, we gutted the deer, loaded it up, and headed back to Lethbridge, where we'd hang it to cool for about a week in a metal shed in my backyard and then cut it up, wrap it, and put in the freezer. On the way back home we stopped by the Hutterite colony, my friend said hello to people he knew there, and we bought some homemade bread.

It's legal to shoot does in southern Alberta, in case you're wondering, and you should. Deer are plentiful there, and some winters significant

numbers starve due to overpopulation, part of my justification, at the time, for killing them. That and the fact that there simply isn't anything like grilled deer tenderloins.

The next day was my turn to bring something home and use up our allotted tags. And I had a long shot at one in another wheat field. Almost on the edge of being too far but not quite. We'd already crept up on our bellies through the stubble as close as we were going to get. Any minute the wind might shift and scare them off, or they could see us when we came up on some little hump of terrain. So I scoped in the .270 rifle. Got the sights aligned for a chest shot, just behind the shoulder; I wanted to bleed her out. I took a deep breath, held it, waited for the moment when somehow everything pulls into center, and squeezed the trigger. The deer went down immediately. A good clean shot; there wasn't going to be any trailing this one. It wasn't a short walk over. When I got there the doe was not dead. She couldn't gain her feet, but she had two of them splayed in front of her, trying to pull herself up a little rise with her hooves, even if merely inches at a time. Everything in her still wanted to live even after a gunshot that ensured her death. She was so alive, desperate with possibility, dragging herself up a hill to get as far as possible away from me, against impossible odds.

My friend, who had the buck knife in his jacket pocket, cut her throat and ended it. I have some rituals, personal ones, and I did them after he'd walked out of sight to the car to get something. I don't know what I was thinking then, probably not much of anything as far as suffering goes, but I know what I think now, years later. If somebody shoots me with a high-powered rifle, I'm not going to like it no matter how many prayers and ceremonies the guy does before he pulls the trigger. For me there is no longer any respectful way to kill an animal. (Although I'm not an absolutist, and I believe in advocating for the most painless deaths possible for animals if they must be killed, my point is that it will never be a matter of respect—it will be a matter of moderating disrespect.)

The prayers and ceremonies do something for us, not the deer, at the very least not the same thing for the deer, and there is no way to escape the fundamental inequity of the relationship. I would go as far as to say the lack of relationship: she's dead, we're not. If, as some would suggest, a relationship between hunter and prey is realized through respectful rituals, it is hard to get around the fact that one of the most significant aspects of that relationship—its symmetry and equity and power bal-

ance—is ended when one party is dead. This is not to say that prayers and ceremonies are of no value for the person who has no choice but to kill. It *is* to say the deer will always get the worst part of the bargain no matter how carefully it is done, and any hunter who is experienced, and honest, knows that in spite of the most thoughtful efforts to minimize suffering it doesn't always go well. Even with the ceremonies and prayers it's an ugly business.

Some hunters can live with this injustice. I can't. Some I respect (I think of my grandparents growing up in rural Oklahoma in the 1920s, dependent on small game, especially squirrels, to supplement their diet). I haven't shot a deer, or anything else, since then, and it was many years later, but I eventually reached the conclusion that I won't eat meat as long as I have a choice not to. My hope is that this issue of SAIL will concentrate as much on the defense of animals in terms of their physical existence as it will on literary tropes, their meaning in Native philosophy, and metaphysical notions of respect that justify or contribute to killing them.

With these issues in mind—the inescapable fact of disrespect and the need to name it as such, the reality that most of us don't have to hunt for food, and the availability of choice in many cases (admittedly not all)—I want to look at two well-known scenes in Native literature: Archilde Leon's hunting trip in the mountains of Montana a little to the south and west of where I killed the doe, on the other side of the Rockies, in D'arcy McNickle's novel *The Surrounded* and Gerald Vizenor's "October 1957: Death Song to a Red Rodent," in what may well be one of the greatest autobiographies, tribal or otherwise, ever written, *Interior Landscapes*. I do not claim that my interpretations in this essay, nor the broader conclusions I draw about the ethics of killing animals, are the only correct ones or authentic ones, only that they have been personally compelling to me; thus, I present them here in case anyone else might find them convincing. As I've said before in other regards, they are a point on a spectrum of interpretations, not the spectrum itself.

The deer hunt occurs after Archilde seems to settle in after returning home to his Montana reservation after leaving federal boarding school in Oregon and wandering around the Northwest for a time as an itinerant musician, playing the violin. His mother has given him a feast that he at first finds tiresome but reconsiders later, and it "has started him on a new train of thought about not only his mother but all the old peo-

ple" (113). In spite of a burgeoning recognition of his mother's overt and covert leadership in the community, however, when Catherine asks him to go on a deer hunt in the mountains, Archilde feels a sense of dread: "Finally he relented and said he would take her hunting. He knew he should not do it. He had a feeling about it which he could not explain" (115). Little wonder Archilde's lack of enthusiasm, considering what later happens on the trip, the two corpses Archilde and Catherine haul back in the snow, one Arch's brother, the other the game warden's. For our purposes here, however, rather than the much discussed tragedy of the two deaths and the problems they cause for Arch in regard to his ever-narrowing circumstances, I want to focus on the hunting itself and suggest something that may seem more mundane: Archilde hesitates to go on the trip because he has an intuitive resistance to killing deer, a potential understanding for nonviolent relationships with animals that he never quite succeeds in understanding. My basic argument in this essay is that Archilde's failure need not be ours.

When Archilde sights in on a buck watering in "a sandy opening" (120) of a "brush choked stream"(121), he cannot shoot. The narrator says:

> Hunting stories had always excited him, giving him a feeling that he would like to be envied for his good shooting and his hunting sense. But it was clear that he had not understood himself, he had not understood about killing. The excitement was in matching one's wits against animal cunning. The excitement was increased when a man kept himself from starving by his hunting skill. But lying in wait and killing, when no one's living depended on it, there was no excitement in that. Now he understood it. (121)

Archilde indicates he now realizes that he has not understood hunting, himself, or his relationship to killing. It occurs to him that excitement will not result from gratuitous killing when hunger is not at stake. McNickle does not indicate why Archilde comes to this conclusion, and, further, Archilde reacts contrary to its logic many times after this revelation. Like much of the rest of McNickle's novel, it is unconvincing to place Archilde in some kind of linear trajectory that would indicate his increased maturity over time.

Further, though Archilde refuses to shoot the deer, he gauges the act in terms of whether or not it will excite him rather than an evaluation of the morality of killing "game." His view, an anthrocentric one, prioritizes

Archilde's human need for entertainment over animal survival. Hunters, perversely according to my line of reasoning, might refer to hunting as "recreation," and by this term one assumes they don't mean allowing the deer to spend some time outdoors and get a little exercise. While Arch offers an explanation with a great deal of potential, "no one's living depended on it," he still prioritizes humans since "there was no excitement in that." He does not explore the notion that he has a choice that allows him not to hunt and still feed himself (which almost certainly isn't the case for all Salish people living on the Flathead reservation during this time period) rather than fulfill his need for excitement.

Yet I am struck by Archilde's reaction after he fakes a shot and purposefully scares off the deer. His mother tries to lay a guilt trip on him about his failure to prove his mettle as a mature man: "A young man waits for a better shot and hits nothing. An old man makes the best of it and gets his meat" (122). Though his masculinity is questioned, Arch saves face with his countergibe, "When the smoke clears away the women are still talking" (122), and the narrator says, "[h]e knew how to respond to her in style" (122). Arch also holds his own against his macho, swaggering brother who throws down his "meat," and challenges Arch to show his (and it's not entirely out of the question to read a certain amount of phallicism in the passage given the nature of the pissing contest), to which Arch responds, "Couldn't you find a smaller one? That won't make a mouthful for a man like you, and you'll never stretch its hide to make moccasins for such feet" (123). We might not be able to turn Arch's nonviolence at the watering hole into a big epiphany when he lets the deer escape, but we can at least say that Archilde's adroit rhetorical response afterward shows some determination to resist being shamed for refusing to kill.

Arch hardly emerges as an animal rights activist, however. In fact, in the emblematic chapter where Arch journeys through the bone lands and fails to save a starving mare and further endangers her colt by "blast[ing] her into eternity" (242), the chapter begins by commenting on Arch's habit of "picking off" coyotes from a hillside crest after riding out to the horse dumping grounds. Although in cattle country some might provide some justification for the shootings since coyotes kill calves, Arch seems to have no purpose for the killings. His lack of thought about killing them is striking, as is the fact that one of the stories that would eventually make an impression on Arch after hearing

them at the feast is about Coyote and Flint. Arch shows no signs of connecting the literary figure, the protagonist of so many Salish stories, to the animals he guns down, or any other means of making their lives significant. And this, I might add, underscores one of the dangers of Native literature. Even those who do garner a literary respect for animals, and their prominence in discussions of Native philosophy, may do very little to protect their actual well-being in the world, especially in terms of their unnecessary deaths for human pleasures and tastes.

Just before his failed attempt to save the mare, Arch tries to help a blind and deaf woman, and his efforts are grotesque in terms of the utter lack of understanding between would-be benefactor and the person he would like to aid—this theme of failed beneficence is carried into the bonelands. When Archilde tries to help the mare, in a graveyard for abandoned workhorses who have outserved their usefulness to humans in a scene that has strong mythical overtones, Archilde thinks he understands what is best for the recalcitrant animal. In fact, he thinks he understands better than she does: "He had to show her kindness in spite of herself" (240). As he pursues her across the badlands, however, Archilde weakens the mare, whose nursing colt has already drained much of the life out of her, and she refuses to cooperate in the rescue, evidently having a contrary view of what she needs. The very sight of her, and her obstinate refusal to accept help, drives Archilde into a sense of futility, rage, and powerlessness: "The tormentor had become the tormented" (241). Just when there is finally hope for her "improvement," since Archilde has roped the mare and dragged her to water, she lies down and dies: "She groaned aloud, a final note of reproach for the man who had taken it upon himself to improve her condition" (242). Not only has Archilde killed the mare, but he has probably ended the chances of survival of her young colt.

In the chapter after the bonelands fiasco, the novel provides its own interpretation of the failed rescue of the mare in regard to human youngsters, rather than a mare and her colt, and the problem of paternalism that pervades their reservation lives: Archilde recalls, "Mike and Narcisse taught him something—it did no good to make a fuss about things: just go ahead and do what you liked, and ask only to be let alone. They had that in common with the mare in the Badlands" (248). Mike and Narcisse had been tricked into going to the mission school at St. Ignatious, and Archilde has at least learned enough to decide he

will no longer aid and abet those tricking them who think they know what is best for his young Indian nephews. Much could be said about McNickle's own frustration with government paternalism in his years as an administrator in John Collier's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) during the 1930s and 1940s. This also holds true in his independent community work, such as his involvement with the Crownpoint project in the eastern part of Navajo country in the 1950s, where he often chose not to intervene even when he thought it would be in the best interest of the Native people with whom he was working to do so—since the major emphasis of his work there was to allow the community to make its own decisions (Parker 137–67).

Archilde's understanding of the debilitating paternalism of priests, agents, store owners, wardens, sheriffs, and federal policy is stronger than his sense of what constitutes animal rights. What I want to explore in this essay is the notion of nonviolence that Archilde considers in the short but significant phrase "no one's living depended on it" when he makes the decision not to shoot the deer (121). While Archilde later chooses to kill animals instead of refraining from doing so when "no one's living depended on it," I want to raise the possibility that he could have continued to make this nonviolent choice, and it would have constituted a legitimate tribal alternative. "Outside" of literature, in the world we live in today, such a choice might be even more significant since the greatest proportion of our meat supply comes from factory farming, very little if any from our own hunting or even humane farming methods, and the system that creates the food maximizes disrespect of animals instead of moderating it.

Gerald Vizenor's story, "October 1957: Death Song to a Red Rodent," occurs in the time period Vizenor narrates after he was discharged from the army after serving in Japan, started college at New York University, returned to Minnesota after things did not work out in the city, and worked as a counselor at Silver Lake Camp near Minneapolis, which served public welfare mothers and their children. The hunting scene, unlike many other place-specific scenes in the autobiography, does not have a sense of geographical exactitude that might locate it, for example, outside Silver Lake Camp while Vizenor was a counselor there. It only has the time marker in the title that indicates it took place in October 1957, seemingly after Vizenor's departure from the camp and before he'd moved into an apartment near the University of Minnesota shortly

after the birth of his son. Vizenor, whatever the other anti-mimetic features of his writing, often has a strong sense of geographical realism in his stories. I want to consider the implications of this different sense of geography as well as the unusual relation to tragedy, given that Vizenor resists tragedy more often than he accommodates it.

Unlike a possible literary cousin, George Orwell's "nonfiction" essay "Shooting an Elephant,"[1] first published in 1936, the same year as McNickle's novel, Vizenor's story is not a direct reflection on the way in which colonial power structures push both the metropole's authorities and the invented Native into simulated roles (although, surely, these themes are relevant in other parts of the autobiography as well as the whole of Vizenor's work). While there is some discussion of the way in which Vizenor's hunter's pose is an unnatural one, it is not analyzed in terms of colonial relations. More a personal reflection on responsibility than a political analogy, it is all the more striking for the way it turns away from "big game," and the overarching political themes inherent in the Orwell essay, to the smallest of creatures, a rodent, as the title draws our attention to, and the most personal of considerations, the suffering its killer brings upon the animal and, by extension, himself.

I'm struck by the way the story opens with what one might regard as romantic nativism with the emphasis on the inherent skills of the tribal hunter who "must trust his own survival instincts with birds and animals and move with the natural energies of the woodland, trees, and water" (167). In Vizenor's work such a statement is seldom on stable ground, however, and the essay's opening also uses terms that connect hunters with "primal posers," as well as those who "mock the sacred," and, obviously, Vizenor tells a story here that does far more than simply affirm tribal tradition. If Archilde's story is about failing to understand oneself in relation to killing, Vizenor's story is about the painful consequences of such knowledge. If any hope mediates the story's tragic outlook, it might be the possibility of changing behavior based on a very painful lesson; in this way, the story prioritizes action over theorizing. I use the term cautiously, but I think whenever a Vizenor story is largely tragic in orientation, the way "Death of a Rodent" is, we would do well to ask why.

The beginning of the story emphasizes Vizenor's city background, which the squirrels know, and much of the essay is about what squirrels understand: "The squirrels . . . sensed my intentions. I had come from

the cities to kill them with my rifle, to breathe concrete into their souls, to eat their bitter thighs" (167). Yet what begins as a romanticism that pits city against country, real tribal hunters against their simulations, turns increasingly toward the ethics of killing itself.

Rip Van Vizenor falls asleep against a tree with his gun nearby and even dreams, but he seems to wake up much sooner than his Dutch counterpart who'd slept through the American Revolution. Vizenor's will be a much more personal revolution whose place cannot be located in the exact locales of the cities and army camps of much of the rest of his autobiography, nor can the story reach the same level of comedy since the terminal part of Vizenor's terminal creeds receives its fullest, most literal exploration here, maybe more than anywhere else in Vizenor's body of work. In fact, there is more terminal in the story, literally a death, than creed since the devastating power of his description of the details of the shooting far overshadows any kind of abstraction about it.

Powers of imagination and dreaming are important in Vizenor's stories; imagination, in fact, rather than some kind of Indian essence, is claimed as a source of tribal identity. When Vizenor wakes he see the squirrels feeding around him and recalls, "I pretended to run with them: we were the hunted and the hunters" (168). Yet what starts out "as in a dream" (168) quickly turns into the death of a dream as soon as Vizenor fires his rifle. Powers of imagination will prove insufficient to create a respectful relationship, given the imbalance of power that results—the death of the squirrel and the survival of his killer.

I suggest that this story is one of the most tragic works in Vizenor's oeuvre because it is a rare instance in which imagination cannot carry the day since it does not compensate for inequitable violence. This failure of imagination, given Vizenor's faith in it, can only cause grief. The uncertainty of place, withholding the exact location, relates to this failure. If the narrator would not have fired his gun at the squirrel, he would have known where he was at, and there is a close relationship between self-knowledge about one's potential for violence and sense of place in the story. The narrator blasts his sense of location into oblivion. Since *Interior Landscapes* is partially a war autobiography, an analogy can be drawn: some soldiers may not understand the place they are in because of carrying a gun, which alters their relationship to it. The gun blast in Vizenor's story shatters the dream that creates relationship to place. The story is about waking up from a dream, from what a hunter in a bad

dream can do. Sometimes you wake up out of a deep sleep and don't know where you are, sometimes even who you are. The story is about the failure to know yourself—the self that is realized when you look into the eyes of others, in the last blink before the eye shuts permanently.

The first blast leaves one of the squirrel's front legs dangling while he desperately tries to climb up a tree to escape yet falls back down over and over again. Vizenor tries to help his prey through powers of empathetic dreaming, yet he fails because of the physical reality of the squirrel that cannot be overcome through imagination: "I understood his instinct to escape; in a dream we reached up with our right paw, shattered and blood soaked, but it was not there to hold us to the tree" (168). A powerful imagination cannot alter the physical reality of dismemberment. In his conclusion Vizenor will claim that a superior dream would have been never pulling the trigger in the first place.

The strongest image that Vizenor develops in the story has to do with the squirrel's eyes, which will diminish into a single eye, and he explores the eyes in relationship to single and multiple levels of consciousness—what one can know about oneself, what one can know about the other, and what forms mutual understanding might take: He writes, "[t]he squirrel fell down again and watched me with his dark eyes; I watched him and he watched me that autumn" (168). Vizenor's exploration of consciousness has to do with both waking and dreaming forms. Animals present a special challenge in relation to empathy. While it is impossible for us to know their perceptions, this does not change the fact that they perceive things, and, according to the arguments I hope to develop here, there is a compelling case to be made for trying to imagine their perspectives, no matter how fraught the process.

Further, animal studies provides one of the most salient challenges to the directions of cultural theory and the emphasis on the linguistic turn, the way experience, it is insisted, is always mediated through discourse, thus causing social construction to loom so large in our analyses. We have a whole body of knowledge based on a premise that only applies to a very small part of the biosphere: the claim that reality is mediated through language. This, of course, applies to humans but not other species who don't speak—at least not the way we do—or write. A fundamental question is what happens to philosophy when one includes the vast majority of the universe that does not speak or write? We have pretended, rather blindly, that our truths are a universal template, when, actually, they take in very little.

Meanwhile, the squirrel, wounded so severely, still dreams of survival. If dreams are a part of vision, bad dreams are also a possibility since the squirrel "tried to climb the tree again, and again, to escape from me, to escape from my dream" (168). A key question is the degree to which walking into the woods armed, with the intent to kill, creates the bad dream.

In other words, can some bad dreams, unlike the ones we suffer involuntarily, be avoided? If we want to give the narrator agency over his dreams so he chooses better ones instead of being overtaken by nightmares, we might suggest disarmament, a conclusion, in fact, he reaches himself. It is interesting that a major context for *Interior Landscapes* is that it is a war story, connected to the Korean conflict, about a Native veteran, yet it contains no battle scenes. While part of this has to do with the historical fact that the war was ending at almost the same time Vizenor was stationed in Japan, it also relates to the centrality of the hunting experience after the war, to Vizenor's lifelong quest for humane relations in his writings, to the possibility that war stories, even, can be dreamed better.

Vizenor interrupts our focus on the suffering squirrel to point out that "[t]he best urban hunters learned never to let a wounded animal suffer, as if the animal were bound to a moral code of the state ministrants; the animals we wounded must be put out of their miseries, our miseries" (168–69). A cursory reading might interpret the statement to mean that minimizing suffering makes respectful killing possible. The phrase "state ministrants," however, casts the statement in an ironic light, as do the sentences that follow about the Boy Scouts of America and the Izaak Walton League and their "monomercies" (169).Though I would argue that reducing suffering is an important goal, I still don't see how killing can ever be respectful. While humane slaughtering practices, for example, are very important and much needed, even in the best of circumstances butchering animals will never be respectful although in some instances it may be necessary.

While Vizenor quotes a text that seems to defend the hunter's attitudes of "honor" and "awe" for his prey and forms of "ceremonial address" to his victim, as is often the case in Vizenor's writing, the quotation is surrounded by ironies that make any assumptions about the narrator affirming its validity ambiguous, and the sentences that immediately follow undermine the platitudes of the quote, as well as the earlier statement about values learned from Boy Scouts. The reality of putting

an animal out of its misery is seldom like the platitudes; rather, it might turn into a long, time-consuming effort that, in the worst case scenario, may even make the animal suffer more due to factors outside the hunter's control (or, more sinisterly, in factory farming where almost all of our meat comes from now, the animal may suffer for many months). The most powerful paragraph in the story is worth quoting in its entirety:

> I fired one shot at his head when the squirrel tried to climb the tree again, to put him out of his miseries. The bullet tore the flesh and fur away from the top of his skull. He dropped to the ground and turned on the oak leaves. He looked at me. I watched his dark eyes; he was close to death, he wanted to live. I fired a second time at his head. The bullet tore his lower jaw away, his teeth were exposed. He watched me and then moved in the leaves toward the tree. Blood bubbled from his nostrils when he breathed. I fired twice more, the bullets shattered his forehead and burst through his left eye. He held to the base of the tree, his last paw weakened, and he watched me with one eye. His breath was slower, slower, more blood in his nostrils, in his mouth. In his last eye he wanted to live, to run free, not to dare me, to hide from me. I kneeled beside the squirrel, my face close to his blood soaked head, my eye close to his eye, and asked him to forgive me. I begged him to forgive me before he died. I looked around at the trees. My breath was sudden, short. I remembered the moment, nothing more; my hands were strange, alone, distant, isolated in the environment. (169)

The squirrel dreams too. Long after any possible hope of recovery, the squirrel imagines living, "he was close to death, he wanted to live." After the squirrel is reduced to one eye, the severe violence has neither put his body, or his consciousness, "out of their miseries," and he still "wanted to live, to run free, not to dare me, to hide from me" (169). The dare, we might note, had been part of the tribal game when Vizenor had earlier described the tribal hunter in right relationship with his prey: "[t]hat red squirrel had dared me to hunt him; his dare was a response to my silence, as he would respond to the songs of a tribal hunter" (168). Because the story that unfolds, the shot-by-shot account of the squirrel's suffering, is so much more compelling than any of the tribal platitudes, a serious question implied here is whether or not a respectful relationship is even possible in regard to killing an animal.

Vizenor begs the squirrel for forgiveness. It is impossible not to read this against all the clichés about the Native hunter who ritualistically asks for forgiveness, usually after the death of the animal. Does the hunter have such a right? Dare he ask to be forgiven? Is the request reasonable? The narrator's begging becomes more urgent after the squirrel stops breathing, and, perhaps realizing the impossibility of forgiveness, young Vizenor begs the squirrel, instead, to live again, another impossibility because the physical reality, the squirrel's body blasted beyond anything it can survive, outweighs the powers of empathy, imagination, and dreaming. My argument here, of course, is not that we should end empathy, imagination, and dreaming. We should stop shooting animals when we don't have to so that we can save these powers for those circumstances where they can actually do some good.

If we could ask an animal which it would rather have, our empathy or a life reasonably free of suffering, I wonder which it would choose. Is such a question simply maudlin sentimentalizing or essential to understanding who we are as humans? Our life depends on it, you might say, depends on answering these questions. The killing not only shatters Vizenor's relationship with the natural world as he is "isolated in the environment" but also cuts off a relationship with himself, as indicated by the image of his "hands . . . strange, alone, distant." Here hunting is the end of relationships for Vizenor, not the beginning of them. He killed the chance he had of both interacting with the environment and internalizing his interaction, dreaming it. He failed to realize those relationships could be fostered without a gun.

One of the silences with which Vizenor ends the story is deafening. The squirrel, though not breathing, blinks once, and Vizenor continues to beg forgiveness, but no forgiveness comes, and Vizenor recalls "[a]t last my piteous moans were silent" (170). The squirrel's last blink represents loss of potential for both the squirrel and Vizenor—a terminal creed might not be the exact phrase for it, but it is a terminal narrative because it is about the squirrel's termination. The story cannot simply be relegated to the realm of literary trope even though the trope has hope beyond termination (we're still reading, writing, and discussing the story), but this is at the expense of the squirrel. The death requires more than a literary response: "I sold my rifle and never hunted to kill animals or birds again" (170). Analysis, literary or personal, in this case, can only be part of the answer. Changed behavior is what is called for:

"I would defend squirrels and comfort them in death; that would be the natural human response. I would not shoot an animal again unless my life depended on the hunt" (170). Action—here, ending killing—turns into theory of a certain kind, united with practice: "[t]he violent death of a wild animal caused by my weapon was a separation from the natural world, not a reunion" (170).

As far as the ethics of killing animals goes, the protagonist of Vizenor's story, Vizenor himself, demonstrates a much more conscious response than Archilde does in *The Surrounded*; still, Archilde's idea that "no one's living depended on it" carries great weight in both stories as well as potential in the lives of those of us reading the stories today. While Arch's understanding of animals helps him frame a more sophisticated notion of the failures of paternalism as it applies to humans rather than a comprehension of the sufferings of animals, Vizenor stays focused on animals instead of using them as a stepping stone to discuss "more important" matters relating to people. This could be a good direction in Native studies where the physical welfare of animals could be just as much a concern as their representations in Native literature or meanings in Native philosophy.

I won't pretend these arguments have gone over smoothly.

One response I received to the ideas raised in this essay is that I have disregarded an agreement between animals and humans—one person called it a treaty—that allows feeding, to use his exact phrase, of "our kin." I do not know how animals feel about this treaty, of course, or if they would agree that they'd signed it, yet I feel it is valuable to try to contemplate how they might feel about being killed. Animals, not just us humans, have kin, and we would do well to imagine them if we want to take into account all—not some—of our relations.

Since animals have spirits that continue after physical death, one critic reminded me, our killing them does not constitute an infraction. Thus, he argued, I had taken a materialist position rather than a spiritual one since, he claimed, I refused to acknowledge animals live on after providing food. I've never staked out a position on animal mortality or immortality. I have doubts that they like getting shot, afterlife or no, the point of my opening anecdote. I don't see how getting people to rethink hunting and meat eating constitutes a claim that animals lack spirits, the human kind or otherwise, or lack continuance after physical life ends. Suffice it to say that speaking against animal violence is hardly

the same thing as denying the possibility of a spiritual relationship with them; some might argue, as I have here, that it makes one possible.

Other critiques emerged as well. What about tribes reclaiming traditional hunting practices? I can only counter, what about tribes considering nonviolent alternatives? My grandparents all kept gardens; my ninety-five-year-old grandmother, God bless her, still does (I hate to admit it, but she also likes Burger King Whoppers). Still, I can at least think about the fact that my religion, a pretty old one, is called the Green Corn religion, not the breaded and fried pork chop religion. Is hunting the only thing that can make a person Indian? Does every person in the tribe need to become a hunter? How realistic is that? Anyone living in an Indian community, or even away from one, knows not everyone is going to become a hunter. Some members can exercise personal sovereignty and decide against killing.

My arguments reeked of individualism, another critique went, of individual ethical choices, and, to be sure, I'm in favor of people thinking through what might constitute ethical choices for themselves rather than accepting whatever authority figure—traditional or otherwise—that would make those decisions for them. Personally, I don't view thinking as overly individualistic, and we've romanticized community to the point of absurdity, forgetting that a "we" viewpoint is impossible apart from the many "I's" that comprise the "we," always creating an ongoing negotiation between individualism and consensus.

I was also told that I picked bad examples—that neither Gerald Vizenor, the protagonist, if you will, of *Interior Landscapes*, nor Archilde, the protagonist of *The Surrounded*, understands tradition because both of the examples arise out of modernity—this from the same person claiming that modern tribes can and should reclaim hunting, by the way. Neither protagonist understands the meaning of hunting within a "living Native spiritual context," as this person put it. First of all I don't accept this premise—Archilde Leon seems substantially connected to Salish traditions, and Gerald Vizenor to Ojibway ones. Second, I want to make a larger point. One decided not to pull the trigger; the other wished like hell he hadn't after he allowed himself to imagine what the shooting meant to his victim. That's plenty of "living Native spiritual context" for me, all the more so if such acts resist tradition instead of blindly endorsing it.

I have also heard that I haven't done my homework, that I should elu-

cidate my position in relation to Native stories about hunters and their prey. I find this impossible, reducing a huge body of highly variable stories, across hundreds of tribes, to a formula that supports or debunks my position. One such story, for example, "The Hunter and His Dogs," rendered in both Creek and English in *Totkv Mocvse = New Fire: Creek Folktales* (Gouge), is about a pack of loyal dogs that volunteer to rip a guy's wife to shreds after, at least according to the dogs' side of the story, they've discovered her committing adultery; the hunter consents, and his hunting partners, the dogs, kill his wife. I'd be hesitant, to say the least, to draw some reductive moral from this story about hunting relationships. Further, I don't think the validity of my position hangs on whether or not the oral tradition confirms it.

In fact, I'll conclude by thinking "outside" of Indian country, to whatever degree any place is really outside it. The novelist Jonathan Saffran Foer, in his first nonfiction work, *Eating Animals* (2009), opens with a story about his grandmother who escaped the Nazis during World War II by hiding out in European forests and scrounging for food wherever, and from whomever, she could get it. Near the end of the war, a Russian farmer, whom she recalls fondly for his kindness, snuck her a piece of meat when she was closest to starvation. She decided not to eat it, however, because it was pork, thus not kosher. When Foer asked her why she didn't eat it in order to save her life, she replied, "If nothing matters, there is nothing to save" (17). While the story is mind-boggling in terms of the triumph of ideals and beliefs over physical needs and sets a high standard at the beginning of the book, much of Foer's attention is devoted to the rest of us who have less ironclad wills.

A fascinating aspect of Foer's story is the way he approaches tradition in regard to how his vegetarianism has affected family rituals like Passover and Thanksgiving. He concludes that having to reinvent these rituals to accommodate vegetarianism might give us a new relationship to tradition instead of passively resigning ourselves to accept the past without considering its meaning:

> Try to imagine the conversation that would take place [at holiday dinners]. This is why our family celebrates this way. Would such a conversation feel disappointing or inspiring? Would fewer or more values be transmitted? Would the joy be lessened by the hunger to eat that particular animal [turkey]? Imagine your family's Thanks-

> givings after you are gone, when the question is no longer "Why don't we eat this? But the more obvious one: "Why did they ever?" Can the imagined gaze of future generations shame us, in Kafka's sense of the word, into remembering? (251)

I would be a fool to claim that every person has a choice of giving up meat. Who can possibly criticize anyone who eats meat and has no choice to do otherwise? My point is that so many of us do have that choice, a very significant proportion of us, and that it requires a sacrifice that is not easy to make. Thus, done right, it becomes a ceremony. A good one, a meaningful deviation from tradition, as good ceremonies so often are.

In light of all this I think Foer's story of his grandmother makes sense, her refusal to eat meat, "If nothing matters, there is nothing to save." You have to stand for something, the saying goes, or you'll fall for anything. By knowing something about ourselves, by imagining, however fraught the process, the perspectives of animals, and contemplating how we feel about their deaths on our behalf, we can make sure we haven't fired the gun before we even get to the woods.

NOTE

1. One of Orwell's biographers, Bernard Crick, author of *George Orwell: A Life*, has questioned whether Orwell ever shot an elephant since no record of the event exists.

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"Sovereignty of the Self"

Interspecies Ethics in Sherman Alexie's *Face*

JENNIFER K. LADINO

"What is the difference between / Birds and us, between their pain
and our pain?"
—Sherman Alexie, "Avian Nights"

Sherman Alexie is not known for his sincerity. His public readings often sound more like stand-up acts, and his writing, with its ironic ceremonies, simulated origin stories, and ruthless "reservation realism," has sparked controversy.[1] While Alexie remains dedicated to addressing alcoholism, homelessness, poverty, and other provocative subjects, his recent work approaches these issues differently. As one interviewer puts it, his tone has shifted "from angry protests to evocations of love and empathy" (Nygren 142). Alexie credits the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, for inspiring him to rethink his own "fundamentalism," which he defines as "the mistaken belief that one belongs to only one tribe" (Davis and Stevenson 190). In an interview with Maya Jaggi, among others, he explains how September 11th exposed the lethal "end game of tribalism—when you become so identified with only one thing, one tribe, that other people are just metaphors to you" (Jaggi). He has also said that writing about poor and "disadvantaged people" allows him to talk "not about race, region, or country" but instead about people's relative "power or lack thereof" (Harris 130). With its increased attention to multitribal identity categories and its empathetic focus on the ways in which suffering and loss affect all kinds of people, Alexie's post-9/11 writing exhibits what might be called an ideological embrace of humanism, and it is, by all appearances, a sincere one.

His recent book of poems, *Face*, reveals this new course in Alexie's authorial evolution. In her essay on Alexie's *The Summer of Black*

Widows, Nancy J. Peterson describes Alexie's poetry as "employ[ing] a dynamic, creative bricolage in blending Indian realities and traditional Western poetic forms" (135), and the poems in *Face* are no different in that regard. The collection is enlivened by classic Alexie strategies like low-brow humor, witty addresses to readers, and clever formal experimentation, including combining prose and poetry. However, Peterson's argument about the earlier collection—that "as the poems move off the reservation to explore non-Native spaces, forms, and materials, they become ever so firmly rooted in tribalism" (135)—needs to be reconsidered in regard to *Face*. These poems seem less invested in tribalism (even if we define it rather broadly, as Peterson does[2]) and more invested in humanism. More than that, his new poems gesture toward an interspecies ethic, a generous and inclusive worldview guided by "love and empathy" in which Native and non-Native humans, but also nonhuman animals, share affective agency.

Alexie's poetic theorization of the relationships between human and nonhuman animals contributes helpfully to dialogue between American Indian studies and animal studies at a time when both "the human" and "the animal" are under intense scrutiny. My reading of Alexie's recent animal poems responds to Cary Wolfe's call to "locat[e] the animal of animal studies and its challenge to humanist modes of reading, interpretation, and critical thought" (572). As a discursive and ideological framework, humanism has been the target of much deserved criticism. Scholars of animal studies lament, for one thing, how animal rights philosophy in its earlier stages "tacitly extends a model of human subjectivity to animals, who possess our kind of personhood in diminished form" (Wolfe 572). Many scholars advocate moving beyond humanism and toward *posthumanism*, a framework that, to cite Ursula Heise, "considers human consciousness as part of a broad range of different forms of connection among bodies, consciousnesses, and representations" ("Android" 509). Posthumanism wants to leave behind a particular version of humanism: the version that privileges human cognition over other kinds, that cuts off humans (and our bodies) from our environments, and that overestimates the extent to which human agency controls, shapes, and affects the world.

Still, even given these substantial concerns, it seems premature to disavow humanism altogether. As N. Katherine Hayles readily acknowledges, "the posthuman does not mean the end of humanity" (286). Some

scholars, myself included, share Donna Haraway's resistance to the term *posthuman* on the grounds that "urgent work still remains to be done in reference to those who must inhabit the troubled categories of woman and human, properly pluralized, reformulated, and brought into constitutive intersection with other asymmetrical differences" (17). Along these lines, Michael Lundblad's recent essay on "animality studies" calls for a critical perspective that evaluates "various identity categories within the human" as well as the nonhuman (498).[3] Especially since one aim of animal studies is to bring diverse disciplines into dialogue—as this special issue does—it seems important to attend to the ways that identity categories of all kinds, including human ones, are effected by "patterns of relationality" (Haraway 17).

There is, of course, a long history of tracking relationality in both oral and written American Indian literary traditions, especially in terms of acknowledging animals as spiritual partners. The collection *Intimate Nature: The Bond between Women and Animals*, edited by Linda Hogan, Deena Metzger, and Brenda Peterson, is a recent example of work that treats animals not just as "sacred beings in a spiritual relationship dating back to the first petroglyphs and paintings in caves" but also as "cocreators of this world" (xi). In many tribes' creation stories, nonhuman animals are cocreators in more than just an abstract or theoretical sense. While Hogan and others have made invaluable contributions to American Indian studies and to animal studies, Alexie's writing is especially insightful in the contemporary moment because of his complex, often ironic treatment of tribal culture and Indian identity. With its insistence on hybridity and its decidedly realist accounts of the world, Alexie's work is well suited to thinking more carefully about the status of "the human" in animal studies and American Indian studies alike.

Alexie has always been self-conscious and playful in regard to human subjectivity. In his interviews and his published writing, he repeatedly affirms that we are all members of multiple tribes (two of his favorite being "book nerds and basketball players") that are "racially, culturally, economically, and spiritually diverse" (Davis and Stevenson 190). This multitribal conception of self indicates his refusal to essentialize identity, Indian or otherwise. At the same time, his recent work shows a desire to develop broad, humanistic affective and political connections. Alexie's is an unusual humanism in that it does not rely on speciesism; nor does it fall into the ideological traps the posthumanists rightly seek

to avoid. I suggest that his poems model ways to not necessarily think beyond humanism, but instead to explore the possibility for a progressive humanism that eludes anthropocentrism and makes space for nonhuman animals to be sovereign entities in a shared world. I borrow the term "progressive humanism" from David Palumbo-Liu, who, explaining and modeling the need for a "critical multiculturalism" after 9/11, calls for a humanism that is "not mystified or abstract but realist and historical materialist" (127). Alexie's poems suggest that animal studies would benefit from this more progressive understanding of humanism alongside a similarly progressive conception of animality—one that is, like Alexie's work, irreverently non-essentialist and insistently realist.

Alexie's interspecies ethic extends American Indian studies as well, particularly in its treatment of the concept of sovereignty. Alexie's poetry carves out a kind of personal sovereignty, what he calls in the Jaggi interview "sovereignty of the self" (Jaggi). At times, he seems very serious when talking about this issue. For instance, in that same interview he claims that "reservations saved the tribes but killed the individual" (Jaggi)—a sentiment echoed by the poetic speaker in *Face*'s "Tuxedo with Eagle Feathers," who states simply: "My tribe tried to murder me" (80).[4] Peterson helpfully connects Alexie and Craig S. Womack insofar as Alexie "negotiates a desire for Indianness and sovereignty from within contemporary conditions," like Womack does in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Peterson 138). But at other times, Alexie seems to make light of sovereignty. In an NPR interview I often use when I teach his work, "Sherman Alexie, 'Sitcom American,'" he imagines a mock conversation between himself and another Indian that goes: "Hey fellow Indian, how's that fight for sovereignty going?" He follows up with the dismissive claim: "It's never an issue." While this statement often raises my students' hackles—and mine too, I admit—I propose that this bold stance is not necessarily a disavowal of tribal allegiance. Rather, Alexie exposes the constraints of the limiting definition of sovereignty beyond which Womack agrees we should reach when he writes: "Native people can hope for more than the way sovereignty is often limited by courts, that sovereignty can be opened up to other arenas—the personal, artistic, and communal lives of American Indians, for instance—than the legal one" (Womack, "Single" 74). Like Womack, Alexie seems to want to push definitions of sovereignty beyond the strictly legal, into these other arenas.

His poem "Tuxedo with Eagle Feathers"—while referring only peripherally to animals with its titular feathers—provides the most direct reference to sovereignty in *Face*. Alexie writes: "Most Indians use 'sovereignty' to refer to the collective and tribal desire for political, cultural, and economic independence. But I am using it here to mean 'The individual Indian artist's basic right to be an eccentric bastard'" (79). Defining himself explicitly against Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and responding somewhat angrily to her critiques of his work, he refuses to make the "fight for sovereignty" his primary poetic mission—at least, if we define sovereignty in her terms. His privileging of the Indian *artist* here echoes Peterson's insight that Alexie's poems "share Womack's insistence on intellectual and spiritual sovereignty for Native writers" (144). This is certainly one form of sovereignty Alexie defends.

Alexie's poems also illustrate Womack's assertion that referencing non-Native sources does not disable a writer from embracing tribalism (Peterson 139). Alexie recuperates the sonnet form as a way of "reshap[ing the white world] . . . so that Western traditions are remade as Indian ones" (139). Like Harlem Renaissance writer Claude McKay, who seized upon the sonnet form to articulate concerns within a particular historical and racial context, Alexie invites us to think of the sonnet anew: as "an Indigenous form" (Peterson 156). For instance, Alexie claims that using couplets, which resonate with the rhythms and repetitions of tribal songs, allows him to "get [his] nice mix of Western culture and tribal culture" (Woodruff). When he insists in "Tuxedo with Eagle Feathers" that "I claim all of it. Hunger is my crime," he not only claims Western cultural influence as a positive thing in his own life but also reminds us that sovereignty need not be limited to a strictly legal definition. Rather, it is something an individual can reimagine and reclaim.

As I show, Alexie champions a form of individual sovereignty that does not subscribe to a problematic liberal humanist model—in which individual human agents with free will navigate a purportedly even playing field, oblivious to systemic ills and to the presence of other species that may also have agency—but rather one in which individual subjectivity is materially connected to the world, in all its environmental, political, historical, and interspecies complexity. Ultimately, I'd like to suggest that Alexie's breakdown of human-animal borders parallels his breakdown of Native–non-Native borders, and that by describing both breakdowns in terms of sovereignty, Alexie pushes us toward an under-

standing of sovereignty as containing individual—including writerly and other—as well as relational dimensions.

Analysis of literary animals has, until recently, tended to focus on "rescuing endangered species and . . . showing how intelligent, resourceful, beautiful, loving, and spiritually powerful many animals are" (Dekoven 364). Perhaps not surprisingly, given his careful refusal to stereotype Indians as spiritually powerful, Alexie's animals do not fit neatly into these categories. Neither violent predators nor mystical, peaceful role models for humans, his animals are by and large complex, autonomous agents, who certainly feel, probably think, and may even pray. Whether these animal poems can be credited for "excavating and examining our assumptions about who the knowing subject can be" is less straightforward (Wolfe 571). Alexie's explorations of the *feeling* subject are profound, even if only a handful of the poems in *Face* position nonhuman animals as *knowing* subjects.

Still, when these poems blur species boundaries, foreground our interdependence, depict animal practices as self-determined, and encourage humans to empathize with commonplace but often-overlooked species, like mosquitoes, spiders, or crows, they reveal a growing awareness "not just that animals suffer and that their suffering matters, but also that many [animals] are aware of the world, themselves, other animals, and us" (Dekoven 366). Alexie discusses the relationship between suffering and empathy in his interview with Åse Nygren, where he observes that "pain is relative" but also that "everybody's pain is important" (146–49). While his comments seem to confine this importance to humans, the poems in *Face* clearly imagine a broader community of sufferers. Whether imagining what mosquito mourning might look like, speculating about starling joy, or comparing perspectives on the intertwined fates of bees and people, the poems in *Face* extend Alexie's hope that the universality of suffering—and the empathy that could, and should, result from witnessing others' pain—might bridge ethnic, political, as well as *species* divides.

Alexie has not been especially helpful in theorizing his poetic animals. In a recent interview, he claimed: "Even when I'm writing about a crow, or a pigeon, or an ant . . . everything I write about ends up being in some way about my father and who he couldn't be" (Woodruff). These comments do hold true for some of the poems in *Face*. In several, ani-

mals are indeed catalysts for human-centered discovery, prompting meditations about love, grief, mortality and, yes, fathers. "Gentrification," for instance, tells the story of wasps who embody both grief and, potentially, the ghost of a previous resident's father. The "lesson of this poem," which is spelled out and italicized for us, is that "*Grief is as dangerous and unpredictable / As a twenty-pound nest of wasps*" (69). This is not a poem about wasp subjectivity; these insects are the poem's subjects, not autonomous agents. Likewise, "On the Second Anniversary of My Father's Death" treats a bird of unidentified species ("Too big to be a robin, / But still shaped like a robin, / So it might be a robin") as a metaphor for the speaker's "grief and rage" at his dead father (113, 115). This poem implicates the bird directly when it becomes, at least metaphorically, this lost father in a brief series of lines that deduce: "Bird, you must be my father. / Father, you are home." Yet the speaker goes on to "lose [his] faith in transformation" shortly afterward. The poem's final lines speculate "that God delivered unto us this bird to remind us that life is finite and absurd" (115). Even with this too-simple conclusion, the parallels between the bird's pain and anger and the speaker's comparable emotions are strong, and the possibility that the speaker "see[s] [him] self in that bird" hints at common emotional ground (115).

In a similar vein, "When Asked What I Think About Indian Reservations, I Remember a Deer Story" conjoins animal and human suffering, but it does so in a way that more overtly suggests both are equally worthy of compassion. The poem begins with the sound of "a deer scream / After its back legs and spine have been crushed / Beneath the wheels of a logging truck," and then claims "That scream is the sound of our grief / After our failed fathers have been crushed" (130). While this poem, like "On the Second Anniversary . . . ," works through the seemingly bottomless well of grief that threatens to drown the speaker, it adds a different dimension. The logging truck that kills the deer—much like the robin that repeatedly smashes its head into the window—points to the often ironic ways that humans contribute to our own suffering and to that of others. Here, our demand for wood and our exploitation of nonhuman nature (trees) for human use bring unfortunate byproducts: the death of a deer—and by extension, many other species. The poem is ostensibly about finding one's way through the grief caused by "dead daddies"; however, when the poem's "children, *are deer* and crushed,"

and "scream and bleed [their] way along the road," it becomes difficult to draw neat distinctions between human and nonhuman animal pain, or between our various species identities (131, emphasis added).

The poems I've mentioned so far warrant attention for their suggestive boundary blurring and resistance to stable identity categories, even if they primarily treat animals as "mere thematics" (Wolfe 572). Yet there is a second category of poems that more convincingly decenter human consciousness and destabilize our individual and species-specific identities. "Crow Boom" is a representative example. This poem celebrates the physical interactions between species—interactions that are both violent (even deadly) and "holy" (106). After giving "praise" to animals that function as food—that "are killed for me"—the speaker concedes that he, too, "will be food" one day (106). This recognition prompts hopes for a reciprocal form of praise from the other life forms that will feed on his body:

> Nobody's hunter
> But I will be food
> And hope to be praised
> By bacteria,
>
> And honored by flies,
> Beetles, wasps, and mites.
> I hope that my blood
> And flesh fuel the flight
>
> Of crow and robin.
> I hope that I stay
> Alive in the bones
> Of hunter and prey. (107)

Once again Alexie enlists ordinary organisms—"flies, / Beetles, wasps, and mites"—to undermine species hierarchies. Form and content merge in this poem, as the "circle of life" that is the poem's subject is echoed in its rhythms and repetitions. Its final stanzas imply that "Crow Boom" attributes primarily anthropocentric (indeed, perhaps androcentric) value to crows—specifically, "men need crows / To remind us how / To be better men" (108). Still, I'd count this poem as one that leaves readers with a stronger sense of humans and animals as coevolving, codependent species. We are all both "hunter and prey," and we share a mortality that can be "honored" by an awareness of species interdependence.

A third subset of Alexie's poems—the ones that most interest me here—invite us to see other species of animals as not just "Like us" but as sovereign beings themselves (*Face* 62). Mosquitoes, bees, and starlings emerge as protagonists in three of the most striking animal poems in the book, which are grouped in the provocatively titled first section, "War Stories." In these poems nonhuman animals are more than metaphors, or starting points for meditations, or creatures who have "transformed our lives" (Hogan et al. xi–xii). They are agents in their own right, with lives and troubles of their own, who are, at least potentially, capable of responding to those troubles in species-specific ways.

Animal subjects are a strong presence from the first word of the collection: "Starlings" (11). In this opening poem, "Avian Nights," the featured animals are, at first, unwelcome "scavengers": "Rats with wings" who "invaded" the speaker's home and left "shit-soaked nests" in the eaves (11). The only option, the poem's speaker believes, is to "pay to have [them] killed" (11). By the time he tells us that the starlings had been keeping his son awake with their late-night squawking and early-morning cries, the speaker's attitude toward the birds has already softened. In the second stanza we are compelled to witness as *baby* birds are pulled from their nests, "blind and mewling" (11). We hear the "crack-crack-crack" of their little necks as a hardened exterminator kills them "without guilt," "drops their bodies to the driveway / Below," and takes a check as compensation for "these deaths" (11).

The legacy of the deaths is the speaker's increased suffering, a guilt that grows the more he tells the story. Halfway through the poem we begin to see where his empathy comes from as another story emerges to accompany that of the starlings: the story of the speaker's own son, who "almost died" when he "swallowed his own shit" at birth (12). The effect of these parallel stories—joined by provocative couplings in the tenth and thirteenth stanzas—is to undermine speciesism and draw connections between humans and birds. The recurrence of the word *shit* and the foregrounding of the seldom-mentioned occurrence of meconium during childbirth mock the insistent human desire to disavow our own bodies, our own shit, and, by extension, our own mortality. Linking these stories with this bodily function serves as a reminder of how species share an "embodied finitude" that is too frequently elided by the mind-body separation upheld in rational humanist discourse (Wolfe 570).

Alexie uses zoomorphic language to blur species boundaries and show how the human parents vocalize their grief like the animals they are ("*Scree-scree-scree*") and "attack the walls of the ICU / With human wings" (13). Specifically, these mourners *become starlings* at their son's hospital bedside. While I doubt Alexie himself is a Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari fan, his poem brings to mind their theoretical notion of "becoming-animal." This is a notion perhaps better illustrated than explained, but it can be provisionally defined as a humbling process of "exchange and circulation," as "an inversion of signs" by which a human agent recognizes that "what happens to a horse can also happen to [him]" (Deleuze and Guattari 155). "Avian Nights" is in many ways a story of precisely this recognition—indeed, an actualization of the theory in which what happens to a bird (the loss of a child) most certainly can, and nearly does, happen to the speaker. The similarities between human and bird mourning rituals—and the poem's attribution of starling sounds and traits to the human parents—enable this provocative "inversion of signs."

Contrary to the popular belief that animals do not mourn loss—a belief that has been debunked of late[5]—Alexie's birds clearly do mourn, and in very expressive, powerful ways. When the adult starlings return to their empty nest, they "mourn for three nights and three days," and "carry back / Insects like talismans, as if to say / They could bring back the dead with bird magic" (12). Their "panic and loss" manifests in a "terrible noise," about which the speaker observes profoundly: "We have never heard / Such pain from any human" (12). If there is a "war" of grief going on, the birds seem to be winning it. And if mourning is an indicator of subjectivity that humans find compelling, then this poem invites us to consider the starlings as affective agents whose capacity for grief rivals our own.

Indeed, it is the speaker's failure to consider the birds' emotions that has propelled him into his guilty tailspin. His consideration of the starlings' sovereignty comes too late to save them:

> The babies screamed to greet the morning light.
> What could they've been so excited about?
> What is starling joy? When a starling finds
> A shiny button, does it dance and shout?

> Do starlings celebrate their days of birth?
> Do they lust and take each other to bed?
> Are they birds of infinite jest, of mirth
> And merriness? How do they bury their dead?
>
> We will never know how this winged mother
> And father would have buried their children. (12)

Alexie's speaker takes seriously a question many human parents ask about their own early birds: What could they be so excited about? Perhaps realizing the futility of this question now that the birds are gone, he poses a more abstract one: "What is starling joy"? This broader query invites humans who don't happen to be parents to share in the inquiry. What *is* an emotion, bird or human? Is joy a cultural construct, a conditioned response to discovering a treasure, to hearing a joke, or to hosting a birthday celebration? Then again, how could joy be a cultural construct, if it crosses not only cultural but species divides? These questions—while left unanswered in the poem—are notable for how they treat starling culture *as* a distinct culture. They also suggest that emotions, like identities, are both real and contextual, authentic and constructed.

This implied affective sovereignty—the suggestion that other animals suffer and feel in their own particular ways—combined with the poem's vacillation between identifying with the human parents and the bird parents, reveals Alexie's "challenge to humanist modes of reading, interpretation, and critical thought" (Wolfe 572). In case we missed the poem's attempts to erase species differences, Alexie leaves us with a blunt line: "Dumb birds, dumb women, dumb starlings, dumb men." The final two lines rhyme like a couplet (though they are part of a four-line stanza), recalling the sense of completion or resolution accomplished by many sonnets and illustrating Alexie's confidence in the power of couplets to provide "summation" and finality, "like the last beat of a powwow song" (Woodruff). "Avian Nights" casts the birds as "companion species," to invoke Haraway's phrase for seeing nonhuman animals as world-sharing "partners" who "make each other up" as we coevolve (Haraway 16–17). We are yoked together with these birds in our instincts to survive, in our embodiment (including our emotions), and in our mortality.

The separation of "birds" and "starlings" in that final line is intrigu-

ing on at least two levels. First, it seems to signal a rhetorical move akin to Jacques Derrida's push to do away with "the animal" and talk, instead, about specific species whenever possible. Second, and more strikingly, the fact that these birds are *starlings* matters immensely. Among birders, starlings are known as foragers who "compet[e] with native species . . . for food. They drive them out" and, like colonizers, "move in on other birds' territories" (Williams 56). This traumatic tale of empty nest syndrome is not just one family's story. When Alexie insists that their nest, their home, is "gone, missing, absent, destroyed," his language recalls the colonial violence that decimated many indigenous peoples and their homelands. This language situates the parents in the poem as imperialists (11). However, the birds could be considered colonizers, too, since, in the speaker's initial view, they "invaded our home" (11). By having us empathize with this particular species of birds, then, Alexie urges us to consider parallels between this species and human-driven kinds of imperialism. It makes sense, then, that the speaker ultimately takes responsibility for this particular conflict: "We killed their children. We started this war" (13).

In framing the poem—and the whole first section of the book—in terms of conflict, Alexie asks us to face up to our well-honed ability to "grow numb" to the pain of others, to inflict suffering coldly, like the exterminator, because it seems necessary for our comfort (13). What is really necessary, the poem asks, for survival? How do we evaluate the reasons for violence, for causing suffering to others? How do we measure loss? Alexie gestures toward the ways in which humans cause unnecessary suffering not only to one another but also to the nonhuman world, and how both kinds of actions are informed by similar ideological frameworks. As Terry Tempest Williams suspects, "Perhaps we project on to starlings that which we deplore in ourselves: our numbers, our aggression, our greed, and our cruelty" (Williams 56). If we can see human tendencies in these birds and reflect honestly on our motivations for anthropomorphizing them, perhaps we can also see that human-initiated cycles of aggression are often unjustified.

The second poem in *Face*, "Volcano," addresses similar questions of suffering and mourning, but from a child's perspective rather than a parent's. When Mount St. Helen's erupts during an early morning Wiffle ball game, the young speaker is initially alarmed about "What kind of storm was advancing on . . . our little rez" (14). Oddly, what the

speaker recalls most vividly is that the eruption "slaughtered the mosquitoes" (14). By featuring a species that is known almost exclusively as a nuisance to humans, Alexie foregrounds yet another animal that seldom sees the literary limelight. Mosquitoes move quickly from violent antagonists—the speaker is "bloodied so many times" by their bites that he looks "like a smallpox victim"—to sympathetic equals, who, like humans, not only suffer but also, at least hypothetically, combat their suffering through mourning rituals and religious ceremonies.

Anthropomorphizing the insects in particular ways allows Alexie to again blur species boundaries and attribute the capacity for suffering to nonhuman animals. Extending a brief mention in "Avian Nights" of the starlings "scream[ing] to the Bird-God," this poem speculates further about the possibility of religious faith: "What if they sang high-pitched songs / about blood and the memory of blood? / What if one Mosquito rose out of its / ashy tomb and flew into the glorious / sunlight?" (15). The Christian imagery might invite cynical readers to wonder if Alexie is making light of the idea that animals are supposed to be more spiritual than humans by mocking their capacity for faith.[6] However, this reading only works if we ignore the humanization of the insects. The reference to "high-pitched songs" and the reservation setting for the poem point to Indigenous peoples as the humans who are being compared to mosquitoes. Linking Indian and insect histories this way prompts reflection on the suffering of both—reflection that, ideally, instills compassion and raises the issue of sovereignty for both groups.

This poem's last lines are its most powerful: "O, how would your world change if you / knew Mosquitoes believed in resurrection?" (15). Alexie is up to his old tricks: pulling us in with humor—the image of the "brown boy turned white / from the calamine lotion" and the (more darkly funny) comparison of himself to "a smallpox victim"—only to finish with a serious point (15). The final couplet is pithy and punchy (think powwow drums), and its question is presumptuous; that is, it presumes that your world *would*, indeed, change, and that the only question is *how*. These final lines gesture toward the importance of belief in effecting the worlds we share with animals. The word *knew* raises that haunting question: How much do humans really "know" about nonhuman animals?

"In the Matter of Human v. Bee," another poem in the "War Stories" section, presents a startling answer to this question: what we don't know

about nonhuman animals can be devastating for all of us. In the poem's courtroom scenario, the "prosecution" and the "defense" discuss the significance of the decline of bees. The poem's epigraph, "If the bees die, man dies within four years," is noted as "a quote attributed to Albert Einstein, but which was likely created by an anonymous source for political reasons" (21). With doubt cast on the poem before it even begins, we are thrown into a three-way debate in which God, technology, and science constitute the evidence. The first perspective, that of the prosecution, is an anthropocentric one, infused with faith in an all-knowing deity, in an endlessly entrepreneurial scientific community, and in an infinitely adaptable natural world. In this view, the disappearance of bees is a temporary problem—one that will be solved either "With good science / And ambition," or the possibility that "God will / Create more bees, / Or replace them / With something else / Equally good." What matters is that "We will survive"—"We" meaning, of course, human beings (21–22).

The second perspective, that of the defense, is less sanguine, if only slightly less anthropocentric. Rather than promising solutions, technology and religion are here designated as problems, possible sites at which to lay blame. In the end Alexie offers a third voice: the beekeepers. Their insight is simple: "The bees are gone. / We need new bees / Or we are fucked" (24). Of course, the beekeepers are an interested party; they are invested in bees for their livelihood. The "we" might refer to those who rely most directly on the bees—the beekeepers themselves. But given the strategic positioning of this third perspective at the end of the poem—and considering the dramatic use of the "f-bomb" as the poetic capstone—we might wonder if it isn't perhaps all of creation that is, well, fucked.[7] Taken together, the three perspectives foreground that bee identity—like all identities—is material, able to influence the physical world in profound ways, and constructed by discourse, politics, socioeconomic realities, and other contextual factors.

Other than a brief description of bees as "little gods / Who gave us grace / Bloom by bloom," there is little in the poem that encourages us to value bees for their own sake (24). Perhaps this human-centeredness is purposeful, though. When we read the bee poem alongside the others, we can see how Alexie's interspecies ethic comes at us from multiple voices, all of which are unwilling to pin down animal subjectivity. Some readers (parents, perhaps) may respond emotionally to the dead baby birds in "Avian Nights," while others might respond more to the kind

of large-scale, albeit anthropocentric, scare tactic of "Human v. Bee." The "never knowing" is these poems' greatest sadness and their greatest hope. The poems' unresolved wondering opens up possibilities for preempting the kind of guilty grief that results from human-instigated violence toward nonhuman animals. Alterity, Alexie reminds us, does not have to be frightening. If we see ourselves in other animals—and ourselves *as animals*—while understanding all of our sovereign identities as simultaneously hybrid and uncertain, then we are better equipped to see the "patterns of relationality" that constitute our shared world.

Alexie's animal poems express a central tenet of animal studies: in the words of Marianne Dekoven, encouraging humans to "give up the burden of our solipsism and our reign over the planet and take our place among the animals" (368). I am not convinced, though, that we need to do this by way of a "posthuman conjuncture" (368), nor am I comfortable identifying Alexie as a posthumanist. Rather, *Face* suggests that Palumbo-Liu and others may be onto something with the claim "that it is to some notion of humanism that we must turn" to move beyond divisive categories (like "civilization") and toward a more egalitarian world (127). Alexie's collection also resonates with a trend in critical theory—represented by "postpositivist realism" in ethnic studies, most notably—in which "realism" and "objective" experience can exist as long as they remain "theory-mediated" (Mohanty 211). These scholars are turning to a theoretical framework that allows them to make "evaluative claims" that do not depend on essentialism (Teuton 15).[8]

In "Theorizing American Indian Experience," Womack suggests that while postpositivist realists have taken a "step in the right direction" by bringing postmodernism back to a "centrist position" (356–57), their "insistence on a strong antifoundationalism" (355) prevents them from escaping the poststructuralist sand trap of deconstructive relativism. In other words, they continue to see the world as only experienced by way of interpretation. As Womack points out, there are some things that "cannot be fully explained by social construction and/or human mediation"—things like spiritual presences and Native religious ceremonies ("Theorizing" 365). Our own bodies, particularly the inevitability of death, provide just one example of a "non-contingent" reality (368). What Alexie's poems bring us closer to is a more complex kind of material multitribalism, a poetic brand of what Sean Teuton calls "tribal

realism," in which tribe is understood broadly, itself hybridized.[9] Alexie's work shows how "realism" (tribal or otherwise) can exist alongside a skeptical attitude toward "truth" (historical or otherwise) and the sacrosanct myths of authenticity that surround many, but especially Indian, cultures. Alexie's poetic theorization of animals aligns itself with this "realist" stance in the way that his work disavows essentialism, remains anchored in the material world, and in the process attempts to lay out new options for describing sovereign identity—both animal and human.

Of course, Alexie's poems (like this special collection) are mostly concerned with particular humans—Indigenous ones—and with the fact that we can never understand what it means to be human in isolation from other species. Animals and Indians make a unique pairing, as historically vulnerable beings who are frequently viewed with "goofy sentimentalism" in popular cultural representations while, paradoxically, deemed devoid of emotional capacity within humanist discourse (Alexie, *Ten* 11). Maria YellowHorse BraveHeart and Lemyra DeBruyn describe how a "historical view of American Indians as being stoic and savage contributed to a belief on the part of the dominant society that Indian people were incapable of having feelings. This belief system intimates that Indians had no capacity to mourn and, subsequently, no need or right to grieve" (cited in Poupart 89). Consistent with the self-contradictory noble savage stereotype, Indians can be, on one hand, romanticized as uber-emotional—as in the well-known 1970s "crying Indian" PSA—and, on the other hand, deprived of the affectively marked agency traditionally invoked to demarcate the limits of "the human." Likewise, animals are frequently excluded from being cocreators of the world due to their incapacity for emotions.

The poems in *Face* imagine affective responses that are not generated through stereotypes but rather seem to emerge more directly from human and nonhuman animal subjects. I posit that these "real" emotions can combat the constructed ones—the stereotypes—in progressive ways, for instance, as a common ground on which to establish empathy, even while they remain something to continually deconstruct. Alexie's expansion of the concept of sovereignty to all species avoids replicating classic liberal humanist notions of autonomous individuals by pointing out that currently not all "selves" are equally sovereign—and they should be. Drawing on neglected animals, like insects, undermines the notion that human sovereignty is the only or the most important kind.

This approach critiques humanism from within, fragmenting the classical notion of individuality (we are all hybrids, members of various "tribes") while retaining belief in an as yet unrealized universal humanism based in empathetic, ethical valuation of all sovereign, but interdependent, selves, regardless of race or species.

As Susan McHugh puts it, at the heart of animal studies lie "questions of representation and agency" (488). These are also among the most pressing concerns for scholars of American Indian studies. As both interdisciplines continue to engage in healthy conversations about their relationships to broader disciplines—for American Indian studies, American studies; for animal studies, the humanities—it remains crucial to advocate for more ethical relationships between coevolving species. For scholars invested in seeing sovereignty become a reality for all kinds of beings, it is essential to forge "emotional and physical bridges, lifelines between species, that take us to new ways of being human in our shared world" (Hogan, Metzger, and Peterson xv). Alexie's poems point out "new ways of being human" that enlist an anti-essentialist skepticism to build new "lifelines" across species boundaries. Ultimately, *Face* suggests, "the difference between / Birds and us"—or between any two species—is a question that needs to be taken seriously if we are to dismantle the hierarchies that species boundaries too often uphold.

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NOTES

1. Alexie's early work has incurred the most criticism, especially the short story collection *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, which Alexie describes as "reservation realism," and the controversial novel *Indian Killer*, which Alexie has since called "the product of youthful rage" (Jaggi).

2. Peterson suggests Alexie's particular brand of tribalism involves a "mobile worldview" (152) that helps "broaden the term *tribe* in ways that exceed [Craig] Womack's insistence on the writer's specific tribal/national identity" (156). She notes, too, that Alexie's views on tribalism "evolved" after 9/11 and that this evolution "merits further consideration" (158n24).

3. In this essay I am sticking with the more commonly used term *animal studies* rather than *animality studies*, though I am not averse to the name Lundblad favors.

Heise, too, prefers animality studies ("Android" 504). Kimberly Benston suggests "critical animal studies" (550). Perhaps the *animalities* will one day take its place alongside the *humanities*; or perhaps, the humanities should be subsumed under that more inclusive heading.

4. Despite the clearly autobiographical elements of many of these poems, I follow literary studies protocol and refer to the poetic personas as "speakers" rather than equate them with Alexie.

5. Elephants, for instance, are widely acknowledged as having both mourning rituals and communication systems. See Masson and McCarthy, as well as essays by Cynthia Moss and Katherine Payne in the *Intimate Nature* collection (Hogan, Metzger, and Peterson). See Derrida for a list of ways by which humans too often try to distinguish animals from "us" and effectively "refuse the animal such and such a power" (137). His list includes the ability to mourn.

6. Alexie explains that writing stories is a kind of religious practice for him: "The whole world just fades away and it's just me and the story. I do know that that's when I feel closest to God, whatever God is. That's when I feel like I'm praying" (Nygren 152). Perhaps, then, his attribution of agency here is less about prayer or spirituality and more about the ability of animals to write their own stories. Alexie elaborates, "Even animals play, even animals create fiction. Narrative is play and we all practice that" (Nygren 151).

7. Recently a research team of University of Montana entomologists and US Army scientists think they may have identified the causes of Colony Collapse Disorder: a fungus and a virus. One *New York Times* reporter notes: "Human nature and bee nature were interconnected" in this team-powered research (Johnson). However, reports that the Montana scientist involved in the study received funding from Bayer casts doubt on these findings. The company, writes another reporter, "will profit more from a finding that disease, and not pesticides, is harming bees" (Eban). The study does not assess the impact of pesticides, which might weaken bees and make them susceptible to other kinds of diseases. Recent articles continue to track the frightening impacts of declines in bee populations. See Wines.

8. Scholars in other fields are making similar moves and theorizing materiality in exciting ways. For instance, ecocritics have called for "weak constructivism" (Heise, "Hitchhiker's") and "postpositivist ecocentricity" (Myers), both of which attempt to bring poststructuralist insights to bear on "reality." Myers argues that postpositivist ecocentricity reconceives of the self as imbricated with other beings in such a way as to reject "racial *and* species superiority as false in theory and unsustainable in practice" (18, original emphasis).

9. Teuton's conception of "tribal realism" rearticulates postpositivist realism within the context of Native studies. He is motivated to consider this approach because, he says, the formulation of a "trickster position," with its deconstructive impulse, "has promised to liberate Native people from essentialist definitions of Indians, but, disconnected from a distinct culture and land, it ultimately cannot support a coherent Native identity nor protect actual Native territories" (14).

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"Waiting Halfway in Each Other's Bodies"

Kinship and Corporeality in Louise Erdrich's "Father's Milk"

MAUREEN RICHE

According to Thomas King, members of most Indigenous North American cultures believe that humans and animals coexist, not in a hierarchical relationship of dominance and submission, but rather as partners in the more complex network of "all my relations." In an Indigenous worldview all my relations extend "the web of kinship . . . to the animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined" (ix). The Raramuri anthropologist Enrique Salmon termed this a "kincentric ecology" in which "plants, animals, humans, stones, the land, all share the same breath" (1328). How might this kinship, this shared breath, manifest itself in human-animal encounters in Indigenous fiction? Louise Erdrich offers us many examples of interactions across species lines in her writing, perhaps none as powerful as those played out among the ungulate, canine, and human characters of her short story "Father's Milk." Appearing in her collection *The Red Convertible*, and also as the opening chapter of her novel *The Antelope Wife*, "Father's Milk" sets in motion a kinship chain of men, women, children, dogs, and deer, linking them across several generations by the central motif of the nursing maternal figure. The intensely intimate interaction of breastfeeding, and the sharing of breast milk between unlikely subjects, is the tie that binds all the beings that inhabit Erdrich's narrative, dissolving corporeal boundaries between characters and blurring the distinctions of gender and species. Drawing on Ojibwe oral tradition, such as the story of Maengun (original wolf/dog) and Oshkikwe's baby, Erdrich thus creates a fictional and figurative tableau of "all my relations," but it is one that is rooted in the real, lived world of Indigenous knowledge. It is a world where egalitarian and embodied realities, not the disembodied domination of the gaze, define human relations with our nonhuman kin.

David Treuer cautions us to keep in mind that a literary text cannot be considered an Indigenous text simply because it was written by an author of Native American descent. Which Louise Erdrich is: she is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa of North Dakota and is considered a prolific member of the Native American Renaissance in literature. Treuer also endeavors to explode certain common errors of Native American literary criticism, namely that the use of such techniques as polyvocality and nonlinearity necessarily signal that a literary work is Indigenous. Both of which Erdrich does: her work is often characterized as complicated, nonlinear, and intricately interrelated. Nonhuman animals participate in the narrative as often and as actively as the humans, both as characters and as storytellers. Indeed, the stories are told by multiple human and nonhuman narrators, across generations, and in different points in history, moving back and forth from past to present. Many critical guides exist simply to orient readers to the geography, chronology, and cast of characters who inhabit her world. Treuer further seeks to dispel the myth that "Native American literature contains within it links to culturally generated forms of storytelling" (195). Which Erdrich herself claims to achieve: she contends her novel *Love Medicine*, the focus of one of Treuer's essays, embraces "Chippewa storytelling technique" (33). For his part Treuer ultimately crafts a literary criticism manifesto whose central tenet is this: "Native American fiction does not exist" (195). By that he means that the literature should not be patently considered as culture. For her part, Louise Erdrich's "Father's Milk" is clearly informed by, and represents, Indigenous culture and ways of knowing. When Treuer asks "what traditions and habits of thought have been mobilized" in Native American fiction (5), the answer in the case of "Father's Milk" is the lived and embodied experience of "all my relations."

"Father's Milk" begins with the story of Scranton Fox, a US cavalry soldier in the mid-nineteenth century who is involved in a violent raid on an Ojibwe village. After murdering an Ojibwe grandmother, Fox turns to notice a dog with a baby tied to its back, fleeing the battlefield, and he follows it, away from the village and away from the military life. He eventually removes the baby from the dog, and in a key moment, he is able to breastfeed her. He raises this daughter as his own. "Father's Milk" is also the story of this baby's biological mother, the Ojibwe matriarch Ozhaawashkwamashkodeykway (Blue Prairie Woman). Blue Prai-

rie Woman had been warned by the antelope of the imminent raid on the village, and it is she who saves her baby by tying her to the dog. After losing her newborn, Blue Prairie Woman breastfeeds a puppy to relieve the pain in her breasts. Later, she and the dog embark on a quest to relocate the baby, now a preteen girl. Blue Prairie Woman finds the child living with Scranton Fox, and mother, daughter, and dog run away together. "Father's Milk" ends when Blue Prairie Woman dies of a fever, but before doing so she sacrifices the dog she nursed to feed her daughter, and she again appeals to the antelope, arranging for them to raise the child she leaves behind.

Unfolding as it does across an imaginary expanse populated by unusual mothers and children, marked by extraordinary adoptions and breastfeeding, it seems fitting that "Father's Milk" begins with an atypical "birth story." There is a creature who is "bearing" a baby, who has the newborn literally attached to its body and is carrying it across the landscape in an indivisible (for the moment) body-to-body union. This mother figure is a dog, and this dog-baby combination, this two-in-one, encounters a human male, whose task is then to "woo" the pregnant creature and deliver it of the child. What is different here, of course, is that the pregnant being is canine, and it has a baby tied to its back in a traditional Ojibwe cradleboard. Notably, Erdrich here uses the Ojibwe word *tikinaagan* for cradleboard, and without translation. This is only one of a handful of usages of Ojibwe language in the short story. Treuer critiques Erdrich's use of Ojibwe words in his reading of *Love Medicine*, saying that in that instance "Ojibwe words have been lifted out of their own element and hosted in English, and not hosted very well" (61). He claims that the "syntactical concessions" Erdrich makes to wedge such terms into her prose render them mere "ornaments" and not "a working part of the novel's machinery" (61). He further contends that Ojibwe is a language of verbs, while Erdrich tends to pepper her fiction almost exclusively with nouns. This, he concludes, is evidence that the novel is not an example of a cultural text, but rather that it is a text about "cultural longing," about Erdrich's own personal project of "self-recovery and self-discovery" (62). This certainly might be what is happening here, as Erdrich's narrator explicitly states his or her purpose in recounting the story of Scranton Fox: "What happens to him lives on, though fading in the larger memory, and I relate it here in order that it not be lost" (298). The word *tikinaagan* might be read as a cultural token in this

context. However, it also might be read as a linguistic touchstone that connects the author and the reader to Ojibwe pasts, both animal and human. Here is how "Father's Milk" begins:

> Deep in the past during a spectacular cruel raid upon an isolate Ojibwe village mistaken for hostile during the scare over the starving Sioux, a dog bearing upon its back a frame-board tikinaagan enclosing a child in moss, velvet, embroideries of beads, was frightened into the vast carcass of the world west of the Ottertail river. A cavalry soldier, spurred to human response by the sight of the dog, the strapped-on child, both vanishing into the distance, followed and did not return. (298)

It is a mythical and miraculous scene, but one grounded in actual place and volatile time in Indigenous history. The Otter Tail River runs through Minnesota; "starving Sioux" is likely a reference to an 1862 uprising that was precipitated in part by the government's failure to deliver on promises of food. Other elements of the episode are more fantastic yet would not be entirely foreign to readers such as myself, schooled in the Christian, Bible-based worldview. Christians, too, have their birth story, and it too is inhabited by an odd configuration of players. However, instead of a virgin mother, surrogate-carpenter father, and babe in the manger, this story consists of a newborn, a surrogate-soldier father, and a canine mother-figure (for whom, as it was for the biblical Mary, neither intercourse nor gestation were prerequisites for motherhood). "Father's Milk," then, is a creation story, in many senses of the word. As a microtale, it signifies the creation of the families who will populate the novel *The Antelope Wife*. As a macrotale, it resonates with themes gleaned from grander narratives concerning the origins of the Ojibwe people and of the genesis of their world. Indeed, it should be noted, the mating of humans and dogs is not without precedent in Indigenous foundational texts. In one telling, Edward Benton-Benai narrates the Ojibwe creation story, saying:

> In his travels, Original Man began to notice that all the animals came in pairs and they reproduced. And yet, he was alone. He spoke to his Grandfather, the Creator and asked, "Why am I alone? Why are there no other ones like me?" Gitchie Manito answered, "I will send someone to walk, talk and play with you." He sent Ma'en'-gun (the wolf). (7)

Again, in the biblical creation story it is Adam who makes a similar request and receives in return his female companion, Eve. In the story of Original Man, the appearance of the canine on Earth precedes the appearance of most other beings, even a female human. What's more, we can clearly see that this origin story recounting the dog-human bond is instigated by Original Man's yearning for a reproductive mate. Scanning his environment, man is distressed to see every other animal in creation coexists in twos. His better half, as assigned by the great power of Gitchie Manitou, happens to be Wolf. The bond that develops between Original Man and Wolf as they walk the Earth together is said to be the basis of the special relationship that endures to this day between humans and the descendants of Wolf, the dog. Many other such stories exist. The folklorist Maria Leach compiled and commented on Indigenous myths characterized by the presence of a "pre-creation dog." She details "some seventy-odd deities" who are accompanied in their creative work by a canine companion, indicative she says of the "unconscious, almost unthinking taking for granted" of the timeless alliance between dogs and humans (ix).

In other Indigenous stories, a conjugal relationship between original humans and animals is even more explicit. In 1941 Angeline Williams (Ojibwe) recounted the story of a woman who married a dog and had many children, half with dog features and half with human features. Only the females survived, and these *aabita-animoosh* (half-dog beings) continue to live among the Ojibwe today. The dog husband narrative is a common one across many Indigenous cultures (Schwartz 23), and while "Father's Milk" offers a slightly different spin on the traditional motif, Erdrich's version nonetheless points to a world where animals commune with the human figures in an intimate, physical coexistence. And like many Indigenous creation myths, "Father's Milk" shows us a world where animals play a pivotal, not peripheral, role. This is a monumental narrative, an Ojibwe version of the Big Bang, of creation amid tumult, of birth amid chaos. The baby is born out of blood and death, pain and fire, and emerges from this violence safe and complete. It is an epic moment, a heroic moment, but the hero is not the baby, who remains silent and primarily symbolic at this juncture, a prop as it were. Nor is it Scranton Fox. Indeed the first creature we see emerge from this apocalyptic moment, and the first character to appear and be named in this birth story, is the dog. It is the dog who captures the reader's

attention and ethos. It is the dog who defines the mythos of all that is to come. Further, it is this dog who impels the soldier to humanity—Scranton Fox, we are told, is "spurred to human response by the sight of the dog" (298). Alone, he is a murderous, imperialist figure. In communion with the dog, remembering his relations (animal and maternal), he becomes compassionate, life-giving human.

DEATH, EPIPHANY, BIRTH

The cavalry soldier Scranton Fox abandons his war-making project after he becomes suddenly and self-reflexively horrified by his own actions in killing helpless Ojibwe women and children. His epiphany: after ruthlessly stabbing a village grandmother with his bayonet, the two are joined as one for a suspended moment in time, the seconds during which his weapon is inside of her (intimations of rape here) and their eyes meet. The bodies are thus physically connected. And in this moment, Scranton is struck with a vision of his own mother, and pulling his bayonet out, he flees the scene. The narrator then tells us "[t]hat was when he saw the dog" (298). It is at precisely this moment of maternal awareness, of remembering his own mother in the eyes of his victim, that Scranton registers the sight of the dog with the baby tied to its back. He then sets out to follow the dog-baby entity for several days and nights, until he is finally able to free the child. Here the narrator describes the moments leading up to the child's "delivery":

> The world darkened. Afraid of losing the trail, Fox gave his utmost. As night fixed upon them, man and dog were close enough to hear each other breathing, and so, in that rhythm, both slept. Next morning, the dog stayed near grinning for scraps. Afraid to frighten him with a rifle shot, Fox hadn't brought down game although he'd seen plenty. He managed to snare a rabbit and then, with his tinderbox and fire steel, he started a fire and began to roast it, at which smell the dog dragged itself belly-down through the dirt, edging close. The baby made its first sound, a vague murmuring whimper. (300)

The man and the dog in this mythical creation story are initially separate beings. Scranton is a white male, a lone figure recklessly working his murderous way through the women and children of an unfortu-

nate Ojibwe village. The dog is a trusted ally of the Ojibwe, a member of the community, and an emissary assigned the magnanimous role of delivering a child from the slaughter being committed against its people. Though aware of each other's presence, they maintain an uneasy distance for the first several days of Scranton's pursuit. Then man and dog experience a profound coming together, so much so that they find themselves breathing and sleeping in the same rhythm. Here, we catch a glimpse of an inevitable intimacy, the two bodies undergoing a physical awakening and an instinctual awareness of their own sameness as it exists within the web of kinship that structures an Indigenous world. It is this coming together that precipitates the symbolic birth of the child, and she makes her first sounds. Scranton unties the cradleboard, frees and bathes the baby girl, but is then faced with the puzzling prospect of how to care for the child, especially what to feed her. Her hunger cries become constant and overwhelming, and finally, out of mad desperation, the soldier makes an odd gesture:

> It seemed, when he held her close upon his heart as women did, that the child grew angry with longing and desperately clung, rooted with its mouth, roared in frustration, until at last, moved to near insanity, Fox opened his shirt and put her to his nipple.
>
> She seized him. Inhaled him. Her suck was fierce. His whole body was astonished, most of all the inoffensive nipple he'd never noticed or appreciated until, in spite of the pain, it served to gain him peace. As he sat there, the child holding part of him in its mouth, he looked around just in case there should be any witness to this act which seemed to him strange as anything that had happened in this sky-filled land. Of course, there was only the dog. (301)

This is the first breastfeeding image of "Father's Milk," and there is an explicitly didactic tone to the episode. Scranton experiences his epiphany in the wake of violent conflict with an Indigenous community. The baby is an Ojibwe baby, from an Ojibwe village, born of an Ojibwe mother, and culturally marked as such by her arrival in the *tikinaagan*. Struggling to make sense of the baby's desires, Scranton comes to realize that perhaps "she was teaching him something" (302). One of the lessons from within a kin-centric framework is that the nursing relationship exists outside the realm of what might be considered human.

It is not the sole province of human beings; it is an activity undertaken by many other animals. As such, Erdrich presents a distinctly animalistic description of the act of nursing: the baby *rooted* at Scranton's chest with its mouth; it *roared* in frustration; it was *fierce*. Later in the story, the narrator says the baby was "wild for him" (301), and Scranton, in encouraging this strange child to latch on, is described as being "now past civilized judgement" (302). Note as well the explicit description of a transgression of body boundaries: *the baby was holding a part of Scranton inside of her*. The lesson here might be that bodies are not distinct and exclusive of each other. There is room for overlap, for crossing over, for seeping into another body, and for taking the body of another into your own. This is the very nature of the nursing relationship, and again it is one that is shared by human and nonhuman animals. Thus, it is not incidental that in this mythical birth story the breastfeeding moment is shown to be a bonding experience shared by the man, the child and also the dog. It is an intimacy that would be taboo if allowed into the light of language, but perfectly acceptable at this level of animal instinct. The dog passes no judgment.

The episode depicts Scranton's body reacting to the animal desire of the child. He is somehow being schooled by nature, and the lesson delivers him into a space that is "beyond civilization" and that only makes sense when viewed by a nonhuman animal. His tutor is an infant; his mentor, a dog. But we must take care not to slip too easily into romanticized and infantilized views of Indigenous people and Indigenous knowledge. Many scholars have warned of the tendency to view Native peoples as somehow closer to nature, or as children of nature: the egregious *noble savage* stereotype. Treuer raises similar concerns about the tendency to interpret fictional Indians as "civilization's ghosts" or "exemplars" of loss and recovery, and therefore as vehicles for satisfying some sort of misplaced nostalgia (24). It can be difficult, Treuer admits, to "escape this all-pervading thing [of] exoticized foreknowledge" (25). It can be difficult *not* to see Scranton's epiphany as a moment of (re) connection to some lost Indigenous animal past. But we must look further and deeper. To read this episode as a didactic moment involving an Indigenous awakening is in some ways essentialist and reductive. The image of male lactation introduced here is by no means the exclusive province of Native American literature: Tolstoy used a similar concept, however much more fleetingly, in *Anna Karenina*. Indeed, Scranton's

corporeal surprise is framed in his own Western, Christian terms, with a formulaic prayer and a reference to a non-Indigenous deity. This is not a reiteration of some acknowledged Indigenous ritual. Native American literature, as Treuer tells us, should not be read as transparently reflecting the experience of Native American cultures (196). Still, Scranton's epiphany makes for a startling image, and one made all the more miraculous by the fact that not only does Scranton allow the Ojibwe child to suckle at his breast, the dog as his sole witness, but that this act allows Scranton to actually lactate.

> *Ask and ye shall receive. Ask and ye shall receive*. The words ran through him like a clear stream. [Scranton] put his hand to his chest and then tasted a thin blue drop of his own watery, appalling, God-given milk. (302)

In his reading of *Love Medicine*, Treuer shows how Erdrich's prolific use of metaphor to unite seemingly disparate threads of the narrative is in fact a Western literary convention. While critics such as James Ruppert contend that the unification of "multiple levels of meaning" in the literary representation of one "physical act" is a Native American approach, Treuer classifies this as a rather more universal facet of narrative. He disputes the notion that "symbol and ambiguity are somehow Indian and Indian alone" (47). In the case of "Father's Milk," the "physical act" involving Scranton Fox is indeed a highly symbolic event, one that unites and unifies myriad levels of meaning within the text. But while the literary *technique* here cannot be seen as one derived exclusively from Ojibwe oral traditions, the cultural content suggested by the use of metaphor certainly can. In this sense the *symbol* of Scranton Fox and his ability to breastfeed becomes a window into an Indigenous knowledge system based on the core philosophy of "all my relations." When Scranton Fox's breast emits milk, his entire bodily reality changes. He becomes a mother, and he comes to be in communion with the world outside his body, whereas previously the world outside his body was a territory to be conquered and colonized. This universal connection is metaphorically distilled within the single "blue drop" produced by Scranton's first lactation. The color blue, as a symbol of connectedness, appears time and again in *The Antelope Wife*, especially as it concerns the color of the beads that get passed from generation to generation of women throughout the novel. The first sighting of this blue in the narrative is in the

beads that hang from the cradleboard in "Father's Milk." In the breastfeeding moment a single bead of blue connects Scranton to the maternal experience, to a world outside his own "civilized" existence. Later in the novel another grandmother, Zosie, will deconstruct the matrilineage of the novel's central character, Cally. According to Zosie, blue is the color of time, and she declares: "Only twice in my life did I see that blue altogether clear. I saw that blue when my daughters were born—as their lives emerged from my life, that colour flooded my mind" (*Antelope* 215). Blue is the color of maternity, of clarity, and Scranton Fox has earned membership in this powerful blue band of mothers.

OZHAAWASHKWAMASHKODEYKWAY: BLUE PRAIRIE WOMAN

Scranton Fox's corporeal reality—as a human, male, Christian soldier—is challenged by his ability to nurse the Ojibwe child he acquires through interaction with the Ojibwe dog. This "embodied interaction of breastfeeding" (a term used by Edith Frampton in her work on African American author Toni Morrison) is echoed in the second storyline of "Father's Milk," that dealing with the maternal tribulations of Blue Prairie Woman (note again the use of the color blue within the matrilineal world of "Father's Milk"). Blue Prairie Woman, or Ozhaawashkwamashkodeykway, is the biological mother of the child taken in and nursed by Scranton Fox. She had just given birth when the antelope warned her of the cavalry raid on her people's village, so to save her baby, she wrapped her in a cradleboard and tied her to the back of a dog. Again, we see the intimate relations between humans and animals, this sense of trust, and their coming together in matters of childbearing and maternity. This second part of "Father's Milk" begins with Blue Prairie Woman's grief at losing her child and goes on to detail her quest to find the child once again. Here the narrator describes Blue Prairie Woman's distress the day after the bloody raid:

> At night, for the first month after that day, [Blue Prairie Woman's] breasts grew pale and hard and her milk impacted, spoiling in her, leaking out under her burnt clothes so that she smelled of sour milk and fire. (307)

The narrative of "Father's Milk" is thus balanced with the presentation of a female maternal figure, counterpart to the lactating Scranton

Fox, whose bodily reality is also defined according to its ability/disability to connect to bodies outside of her own via the nursing relationship. Here Blue Prairie Woman does not have a baby to suckle, and so she finds herself in great physical and mental pain. Erdrich paints a poignant image of a maternal body in which the flow of life-giving fluid has been stopped. Likewise, Ojibwe oral tradition tells us that the great maternal body of Mother Earth needs her lifeblood of water to flow in order to nourish and purify the life she supports (Benton-Banai 2). And so for Blue Prairie Woman, the effects of such a rupture between otherwise symbiotic bodies are foul: the milk is impacted and spoiled; the maternal body is burnt and sour. As Blue Prairie Woman's narrative continues, and not unlike Scranton Fox's story, she is offered a solution to the issue that distances her from the maternal experience:

> An old midwife gave her a puppy and she put it to her breasts. Holding to her nipple the tiny wet muzzle, cradling the needy bit of fur, she cried. All that night the tiny dog mercifully drew off the shooting pains in her breasts and at dawn, drowsy and comfortable, she finally cradled this sweet-fleshed puppy to her, breathed its salty odour, and slept. (307)

Thus, we have our second example of a breastfeeding relationship in Louise Erdrich's "Father's Milk."

Anthropologists have documented a handful of instances where women in Indigenous cultures have nursed pet animals. James Serpell asserts that the practice was "perfectly normal and natural" among several culture groups in Hawaii, Barasana, and Guiana, among others (81). The anthropologist W. E. Roth observed that women in tribal Brazil would "often suckle young mammals just as they would their own children; e.g. dog, monkey, opposum-rat, labba, acouri, deer, and few, indeed, are the vertebrate animals which the Indians have not succeeded in taming" (qtd. in Serpell 170). The naturalist and Arctic explorer Sir John Richardson noted that "the red races" of North America fed bear cubs with their own breast milk (qtd. in Serpell 167). Serpell also describes examples of cross-species nursing (human-to-dog) observed in the royal court of the Ch'ing Dynasty in China and among the Barasana Indians of eastern Colombia. In Erdrich's own tradition there exists a story cycle featuring twin goddess figures known as Matchikwewis and Oshkikwe. In one such story, Oshkikwe becomes a mother.

She wakes up one morning to find a cradleboard, not unlike the one Scranton Roy encounters at the start of "Father's Milk." The storyteller Delia Oshogay tells us that "Oshkikwe took sick and found a little boy and a little pup. [And the] pup used to guard the little cradleboard" (44). Oshkikwe nurses "the baby on one breast and the pup on the other" (44). When a witch kidnaps the child and dog, Oshkikwe must set out to rescue them. When she does find them, the child is now a grown man and has forgotten Oshkikwe, and so she must demonstrate to him that she is his true mother. To do so, she bares her breasts to the man and the dog. After this gesture, he has a sense of some connection to the stranger, and so (quoting again from Oshogay's version of this story, collected in Wisconsin in 1942)

> he went to see the young woman, accompanied by the pup. When the pup got there, he went to nurse at the woman's left breast. Oshkikwe said to him, "You are my son, and here is the milk you lived on before this old witch got a hold of you." (45)

There are clear connections to the oral tradition in both threads of the narrative in "Father's Milk." But the tenor of each episode is quite different. Scranton Fox is described as a Quaker, a scion of a religious patriarchal family, a soldier, a murderer, and an aggressor against Indigenous peoples. In every way he is initially presented as an emblem of white, Christian, imperialist, military paradigms. In order to break down this patriarchal and hierarchical worldview, he is permitted to share in the maternal experience; his conduit into this maternal space is a creature that according to his upbringing might be considered a lowly dog. (As an aside, it is interesting to note here that in the short story version Erdrich calls this character Scranton Fox, a name that suggests some level of affiliation with the animal world. In the novel he is Scranton Roy, which in the French etymology means "king," a term that suggests dominion, if not outright domination; it certainly carries connotations of European-style rule.) Again note how Fox's lactation is prefaced with a biblical formula—"*Ask and ye shall receive. Ask and ye shall receive*"—an allusion to Fox's strong Christian ties. We might read the underlying message here as an ironic one: of course, no Christian god would violate the terms of gender just to provide nourishment for this suffering baby. Turning water to wine is one thing; turning a male body into a lactating body is another altogether. Note, as well, that the words

are not verbalized by Scranton Fox, nor are they written by him. Instead, the ritualistic couplet of "ask and ye shall receive" is here transformed from the realm of language to the realm of pure corporeality: the quote dissolves in the animality of the moment and becomes instead a material manifestation, the "clear blue stream" that courses through Scranton's maternal body. Finally, consider that in order to convince the dog to trust him, and release the baby to him, Scranton had to "wash himself all over and approach naked to diminish the whiteman's scent" (5). Scranton Fox relinquishes all that has defined him to date: his race, his religion, and ultimately his gender. Thus, Scranton's breastfeeding scene is more magical and morally directed than Blue Prairie Woman's. It is didactic legend: he is taught a lesson about universal relationships. Scranton must divest himself of his own bodily reality in order to redeem the "dark acts" he perpetuated against the Ojibwe village. Blue Prairie Woman's nursing of the puppy reads more realistically; it is a more natural occurrence. Her nursing is presented as a part of her own Indigenous maternal traditions, derived from the lore and wisdom of the midwife.

THE NURSING CONNECTION

The breastfeeding motif in "Father's Milk" is not Ojibwe culture. It does, however, have the power to suggest or to represent culture. David Treuer urges us to keep this distinction in mind for any reading of Native American fiction, to be "concerned with echo not origin" (5). The episodes involving Scranton Fox and Blue Prairie Woman both echo with Indigenous history and cosmology and in some very explicit examples of kinship, with knowledge handed down through Indigenous oral tradition. Deploying the maternal body as she does in different gender and species manifestations, Erdrich emphasizes the powerful and expansive connectedness of the "all my relations" worldview. As the feminist scholar Eleanor Kuykendall writes, maternal activities show us the way to develop an "ethic of caring and personal accountability which embrace conceptions of transformative power and mutuality" (qtd. in Frampton 144). Certainly we can see a "transformative power" at work in the Scranton Fox narrative, and Blue Prairie Woman's alliances with the dogs and antelope bespeak a profound sense of interspecies mutuality. A maternal ethic of care binds together all of the creatures in "Father's Milk." The breastfeeding event stands as an emblem of

the Indigenous philosophy of "all my relations" and its moral imperative to respect all life forms within the kincentric ecology, to "accept the responsibilities we have within this universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner" (King ix).

In the case of Scranton Fox's breastfeeding abilities, it appears that nursing offers a corrective to his overly masculine endeavors—religion, war, imperialism—and thus offers him a much needed sense of balance. In the case of Blue Prairie Woman, nursing a puppy is a fact of life in a world where all animals—human and nonhuman—coexist; it points to a taken-for-granted interrelatedness in all things. The act of nursing is highly significant because it physically links bodies, and when readers see bodies linked in ways they would not ordinarily consider, this can serve to shock, to awaken, to shake a conceptual foundation that might otherwise be firmly entrenched in a system that defines experience according to binary opposites: self/other, male/female and human/animal. Feminist literary scholar Jean Wyatt, in her exploration of the breastfeeding motif in the fiction of Toni Morrison, explains that

> the nursing connection erodes the distinctions of the symbolic by making the boundary between "you" and "me" soluble. Is the milk that the baby drinks part of the baby or part of the mother? . . . [Breastfeeding] dramatizes the impossibility of separating what belongs to the one body from what belongs to the other when the two are joined by the nipple or, rather, by the milk that flows between them, blurring borders. (481)

In "Father's Milk" the narrator "dramatizes" a powerful example of this "border blurring" between the dog and the human. The breastfed dog grows up in Blue Prairie Woman's care, becomes her constant companion on her journey to find the daughter she gave up, and takes on this somewhat mystical quality as a body not quite separate from the human who nursed her.

> The dog nursed on human milk grew up coyote gray and clever, a light-boned loping bitch who followed Blue Prairie Woman everywhere. Became her second thought, lay outside the door when she slept, just within the outer flap when it rained, though not in. (309)

Even though, as the narrator explicitly states, the dog and the woman never again physically touched after the puppy weaned itself, their con-

nection is unmistakable. Though different in that they sleep always divided by the threshold—dog and human each belong to their own plane of existence—they are inseparable in their maternal journeys, and as in the Scranton Fox narrative, where man and dog are united in the act of symbolic birthing, so too are Blue Prairie Woman and the dog (whom she will name Sorrow) united by the power of the maternal. The dog is "[a]lways there," a constancy and loyalty the narrator defines in terms of the animal's alternating maternal status: "Huge with pups or thin from feeding them, teats dragging, the dog followed Blue Prairie Woman" (310). Together they locate Blue Prairie Woman's daughter. Together they discover that Scranton Fox's wife, the school teacher Peace McKnight, is in the midst of giving birth to his second child. The moment in the narrative where woman and dog lie in wait and observe this birth event mirrors several of the key images of Scranton's story:

> [Blue Prairie Woman] walked for hours. She walked for years. She walked until she heard about them. The man. The young girl and the blue beads she wore. Where they were living. When she reached the place, she settled on a nearby rise, the dog near. From that distance, the two watched the house—small, immaculate, scent of the hearth fire made of crackling oak twigs. Birth. There was birth in the house, and illness too. She could sense it. Silence, then flurries of motion. Rags hung out. Water splashed from basins or hauled. One shrill cry. Silence again. All day in thin grass, the dog, the woman, sunlight brave on them, their eyes narrowing, breathed each other's air, slept by turns, waited halfway in each other's bodies, the woman, the dog, and then the daughter. (310)

And so we see another quest, echoing not only Scranton's tracking of the cradleboard canine, but also harkening back to the Ojibwe creation story, in which Original Man walks the earth in pursuit of knowledge of creation (Benton-Banai). We again see the blue beads, an allusion to the blueness that connects all the characters and, indeed, all living things. We once again see fire: in Scranton Fox's case, it was the fire he built to roast the snared rabbits that lured the dog closer, close enough to foster a sense of trust between the two beings. Here, it is the crackling hearth fire of Scranton's home, a fire no less crucial for creating a space fit for a family. Finally, we have the human and the nonhuman animals as the central agents, the symbolic parent figures involved in extraordinary

births. Again, we see dog and human come together so that their biological rhythms are intimately matched. Here they "breathe each other's air, wait halfway in each other's bodies." The dog-child-man triumvirate of the first half of the chapter suggests maternity as the unifying factor among these three otherwise disconnected beings; it is in the coming together of the man and dog that the child is "born." And again, in the Blue Prairie Woman narrative, we see a human, a dog, and a birth. It is important to note here that the birth to which the narrator appears to refer is not the one of Scranton Fox's son, delivered inside the distant house. It is "the daughter," as in Blue Prairie Woman's daughter, who is delivered from Scranton's home and into the arms of her biological mother. Thus, the same child is (re)born in both birth stories.

INSIDE THE SKIN OF AN/OTHER

There are several ways human and animal bodies merge within the corporeal kinship that characterizes Louise Erdrich's fiction. These range from the familiar to the magical to the shocking. Humans can clothe themselves in the skin of an animal, such as when Scranton Fox, welcoming the birth of his biological son, Augustus, wraps the child in the skin of a dog. They can also be adopted by animal families, such as the daughter of Blue Prairie Woman, who blends so seamlessly into a herd of antelope that "[w]hen they walk, she walks. . . . When they run, she runs with them" (314). Humans, of course, can also eat animal flesh, including that of their ostensibly closest kin, the constant and loyal dog. The eating of dog meat has been documented in several Indigenous cultures in the Americas (Schwartz). Erdrich herself invokes the sacrificial context of the White Dog Ceremony later in *The Antelope Wife*, when a canine destined for the cooking pot is instead befriended by a young girl and becomes a pet (75). The inverse happens in "Father's Milk." The dog named Sorrow is without question a constant and intimate companion to Blue Prairie Woman. Together they walk the land in order to track down the daughter saved from the cavalry raid, and together, waiting halfway in each other's bodies, they await the opportunity to regain the child raised by Scranton Fox. Following the birth of Scranton's second child, the daughter opts to depart her paternal home and accompany her biological mother. And so the threesome heads out together: Blue Prairie Woman, the dog named Sorrow, and the child named after

Scranton's own mother, Matilda. But the journey turns perilous as the mother contracts a fatal fever, and the human duo faces certain starvation. Once again Blue Prairie Woman looks to her dog companion to save her child's life. Here the dog serves a new purpose:

> Blue Prairie Woman, sick to death and knowing it, reaches swiftly to her left and sets her grip without looking on the nape of the dog's neck. She drags the dog to her. First time she has touched the dog since it drank from her the milk of sorrow. Soft bones, soft muzzle then. Tough old thing now. Blue Prairie Woman holds the dog close underneath one arm and then, knife in hand, draws the clever blade across the beating throat. Slices its stiff moan in half. Collects its dark blood. Blue Prairie Woman then stretches the dog out, skins and guts her, cuts off her head, and lowers the chopped carcass into a deep birchbark container. Suspended over flames, just right, adding hot stones, she knows how to heat water the old way in that makak. Tending the fire carefully, weakening, she boils the dog. (313)

And with that, the dog she nursed, the dog that became her "shadow" and her "second thought," now becomes . . . dinner?

As with the story of the baby's arrival on the battlefield in her canine-borne *tikinaagan*, this episode is culturally marked by the presence of a single Ojibwe word, *makak*. Unlike the cradleboard, this term is translated as "birchbark container." Both scenes are also deliberately framed in terms of cultural memory: the narrator of the first expressing the need to preserve the story for future generations; the protagonist of the second ensures the survival of her daughter because she knows how to boil water "the old way." Past and present, tradition and survival all seem to coalesce on this deliberately placed word. Further, while Treuer cautions that Erdrich's unifying use of metaphor is not a technique exclusive to Native American fiction, the layers of meaning that she brings together in this scene do suggest or represent Indigenous knowledge. The "gurgle of dark blood" and the water prepared in "the old way" connect with the flow of breast milk, which mobilizes the major plot points of the story. The concepts of fluidity and maternity are, in fact, central to the Ojibwe worldview: "The Earth is said to be a woman. . . . She is called Mother Earth because from her come all living things. Water is her lifeblood. It flows through her, nourishes her, and purifies her"

(Benton-Banai 2). Balance, another key concept in Indigenous knowledge, finds an apt metaphor in this dramatic scene. Recall that in the story of "Oshkikwe's Baby" the mother figure nurses "the baby on one breast and the pup on the other" (44). In "Father's Milk," even in the midst of desperation, violence, killing, and eating, there is balance; and the fulcrum upon which it rests is, once again, the maternal: "[The daughter] sings her mother's song, holding her mother's hand in one hand, and seriously, absently, eating the dog with the other hand" (314). Finally, if we consider "Father's Milk" to be an extended allegory for the concept of "all my relations," we must consider this: Blue Prairie Woman fed this animal with her breast milk. Her biological daughter now consumes the flesh that was nurtured by the milk. The connection of bodies via the intergenerational and interspecies transmission of the life-giving liquid is thus complete. As she ingests the dog, the girl also ingests her mother's original milk. Everything is related; all is connected.

There is another striking aspect to this scene: the seeming lack of reflection on the part of Blue Prairie Woman as she kills and prepares the animal. She is unthinking and unfeeling; she is acting, as it were, on pure instinct. Seen in this light, the above passage serves to characterize Blue Prairie Woman as acting in kinship with her animal relatives—the drive to kill and eat is one we all share. The human is enacting her animal drives, just as Scranton was enabled to enact his through the animal desire of the foundling. Note as well that the sacrifice of the dog Sorrow takes place, not just without thinking, but also "without looking." The dog is transformed from animal companion to sustenance, but this does not transpire under the gaze of the human subject: Blue Prairie Woman "reaches swiftly to her left and sets her grip *without looking* on the nape of the dog's neck" (314, emphasis mine). This provides an interesting sidebar to the exploration of the animal in Louise Erdrich. Gaze, as Laura Mulvey has argued in her work on visual culture, is ultimately about dominance and control. When you look at an object, you draw the sensory data into your own set of cultural codes, and it becomes what you desire it to be. For Mulvey, it is the male gaze that determines and defines female subjectivity. For Jonathan Schroeder, "to gaze implies more than to look at—it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze" (58). Mulvey's and Schroeder's world is the world constructed through the eyes of men, to the detriment of women. It is also, one might argue, a world con-

structed through the eyes of the human, to the detriment of the animal. For John Berger, in fact, the loss of humanity's real, embodied relationship *with* animals can be charted in direct correlation to the rise of our looking *at* animals. Where once animals were "with man at the centre of his world" (252), we now encounter them only in zoos, rodeos, circuses, film and television, the shelves in the toy store—where they are placed under scrutiny of a one-way gaze:

> Animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are. (257)

ECHOES AND ORIGINS OF "ALL MY RELATIONS"

John Berger sees human-animal relations in terms of loss: in the Western world, he concludes, we have lost our embodied, practical, real-world connection with nonhuman others and replaced it with the disempowering distance of the gaze. In the fictional world of Louise Erdrich real, embodied, and intensely intimate relations between animals and humans are (re)enacted. These bodies join and separate and rejoin in myriad miraculous ways: a dog and baby coupled by a cradleboard; a soldier and his enemy connected by bayonet blade; a war deserter and foundling attached by the blue beads of lactation; a woman and puppy joined in the breastfeeding event; a newborn wrapped in the skin of a dog; a child holding her deceased mother by the hand, with the flesh of her deceased dog in her mouth. Animality seeps out of the dogs and the antelope, across the porous divides of species and gender and through the skin of the human characters. It becomes intermingled with their humanity until familiar distinctions no longer exist, and human language no longer suffices. A herd of antelope is a family; a puppy is a baby; a father is a mother.

When David Treuer claims that there is no such thing as Native American fiction, he is aiming to spotlight the "distinction between reading books *as* culture and seeing books as capable of *suggesting* culture" (5). He declares that we should be "concerned with echo not origin" (5). Reading a short story such as "Father's Milk" as Indigenous culture

does indeed run the risk of characterizing indigenous people in a reductive and stereotyped way: as somehow closer to nature, or perhaps more egregious still, as animalistic or beastly. Still, the echoes of Ojibwe oral tradition are loud and clear in Louise Erdrich's "Father's Milk." In it she harnesses the power of Indigenous history, language, knowledge, and storytelling, as well as the power of non-Indigenous narrative elements and techniques, and distills it all in the clear blue stream of metaphorical milk. This central motif of the breastfeeding event, and the manner in which Erdrich uses it to connect bodies across the divides of gender, generations, and species, delivers readers to an imaginative place and time before zoos, stuffed toys, and Disney cartoons. This is a time where animals were with us, at the center of our world (Berger 252).

"Father's Milk" is about relatedness, about the real, embodied, intimate world of "all my relations." This relation is one of human-animal kinship: to sister birch tree, grandmother rock, brother wolf. It is one of lived, corporeal experience. Another of Erdrich's Ojibwe narrators in *The Antelope Wife* puts in this way: "[We are all] beads . . . sewn onto the fabric of the earth with endless strands of human muscle, human sinew, human hair[. . . .] We are as crucial to this as other animals. No more and no less important than the deer" (preface to part 2). Put another way, the shared milk of Louise Erdrich's short story suggests to readers the shared breath of an Indigenous kincentric ecology.

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INTERVIEW

A Walk in the Woods with Murv Jacob

RACHEL C. JACKSON

Interviewing Murv Jacob is like walking backward through the woods while he walks forward right beside you at a quick and steady pace. Keeping up with him in this way is a challenge. You have to trust he knows where he is going—at times in spite of his tremendous imagination, lightning wit, and bizarre sense of humor. He makes connections between ideas so quickly, sidestepping obvious answers and averting predictable conclusions, that your own assumptions about the path your discussion will take immediately give way to the task of reaching the next clearing with him. Yet, he always gets you there. It's a rewarding, if peculiar adventure to say the least.

Brian Hudson and I met up with Murv and his partner, Deborah Duvall, at the Tribes 131 Gallery in Norman, Oklahoma, in the early afternoon of March 27, 2011. Tribes 131 features a fantastic array of Oklahoma's Native artists and provides a rich representation of Indigenous peoples and cultural aesthetics in the state and surrounding region. Murv's work is included in the collection. Gallery owner Leslie Zinbi welcomed us that day—as she does all gallery visitors—into the dynamic space she creates there. She graciously cleared a table for us and helped us set up various recording equipment for the interview. She enjoyed watching Murv work his way through our list of questions. It was obvious they were old friends.

Early on in the process of putting together the special issue, Brian solicited advice from me in identifying a Cherokee artist whose work would be appropriate to include. Next to natural landscapes, animals are a hallmark of Murv Jacob's paintings. I have admired Murv's art for many years. If you spend any time in Cherokee Country, you'll find his work in a wide variety of places—on pottery, in children's books, on T-shirts, in public murals, and in private collections, to name a few. The

lines, colors, and dimension in his artwork—in addition to the subject matter—work together to illuminate the cultural sensibilities of an intimately Cherokee perspective.

In every trip to Tahlequah, I'd find myself staring intently after hours into the front window of the Murv Jacob Gallery on North Muskogee Avenue. Just as beautiful as the pieces he paints there, the gallery testifies to Murv's amazing productivity as an artist. It is obviously a space where creative work and Cherokee culture happens. To the side of the gallery is a mural, Murv's own Indigenous version of Tahlequah's would-be city seal: two brown bears shaking hands in the midst of a forest, surrounded by a circle of Kituwah mound designs. Inside the circle and above the bears appear the words "two is enough"—derived from the Tsalagi words for "two" (*tali*) and "enough" (*yeligwu*), from which the town's name originates. The image is both delightful art and Native politics. Who wouldn't want to meet this person? Now I had an opportunity.

Together Brian and I generated a list of questions that seemed germane to both the *SAIL* special issue's focus on animal studies and to the general interests of *SAIL* readers. The answers we got from Murv, transcribed in the interview that follows, forge an undeniable impression of him as someone spirited enough to spontaneously agree to create a piece of art for the issue. Murv painted *Animal Stomp* for us on his own accord, seemingly just because we asked him nicely if he had something we might use. Like the painting, the interview is at once jovial and dark, simple and powerful, strange and straightforward, and brilliantly animated—all the while presenting the vision of an Aniyvwiya'i artist.

Murv's recent book project, which he mentions early in the interview, is the now-published *Secret History of the Cherokees*, coauthored with Deborah L. Duvall and James Murray and published by Indian Territory Press (2011). It is a well-researched historical novel that tells the story of the Cherokees "in a way it has never been told before." The book moves through historically based vignettes, the earliest of which is set in 1736 and the latest in 1863. The narrative includes respected Cherokees such as Nancy Ward and Sequoyah, as well as infamous figures such as Joe Vann, Tom Starr, and Stand Watie. Murv is especially proud that the book includes the voices of African slaves within the tribe, people who are generally left out of Cherokee history, and whose descendants have been lately left out of tribal elections. The book also won the 2012 Wordcraft Circle Book Award.

You can find out more about Murv Jacob and his many projects on Facebook and at www.jacobandduvall.com. I hope you enjoy the interview, this walk in the woods, as much as we did. See if you can keep up.

RACHEL: We just wanted to start by asking you some questions about your creative process, and then also the piece you created for the special issue.

MURV: I wake up feeling like road kill in the morning, but I shake it off and I try to paint all day and do stuff. We're working on a novel—we've been working on it for three years. It's in the final edit. We've researched about two hundred other manuscripts writing this thing. It's a historical novel about the Cherokees in the mid-1800s. Finally I think people are going to know who the Cherokees were. All these Cherokee Nation people who came here had slaves. Then they brought the people out of the woods, the Keetoowahs, and none of them had slaves. It was like totally two separate groups of people with two separate attitudes. One group of people wants to live back in the woods and be subsistence and have banks and printing presses and say bad stuff about the president. They want to be political. And the other group . . . You can look at the two groups and see the differentiations. The Keetoowahs don't even call themselves a tribe. There's just a big differentiation between the two groups of people. With the Keetoowahs you have to be at least a quarter blood quantum to be a member, and the Cherokee Nation now has members down to one four-thousandth—which I thought FOX News would find appalling.

RACHEL: What kinds of tools do you work with, say, for instance, in the cover piece?

MURV: Umm, Marxism and Capitalism. No, uh, let's see. Okay, when I'm painting a painting, I use Utrecht paint and canvasses. This family fled Holland in the 1930s to get away from the menace that they saw was really real and that others weren't so smart to notice. They got out of there, but they had been making paint and canvasses for years. They made the paint for Gauguin, and Van Gogh was stealing paint from these people, but it didn't bother them—they let him take it. They knew he didn't have any money. Now they all live in Brooklyn, and they're happy as they can be. They make the best paints and the best canvasses, and they don't cost

any more than the others. So why buy something else? They have four hundred years of experience.

RACHEL: What kind of time do you invest in a piece like *Animal Stomp*?

MURV: Oh my God, you know there's a guy on TV that makes these paintings in an hour. You know, like, if we had a show on me, it would be like a forty-episode show. It would only be interesting for people who are certifiably insane. I probably paint slower than anyone I've ever met, but I keep painting. It's like that snail who is heading toward the ocean. If I was painting in a straight line, I probably would have gone around the earth about forty-two times by now. I've probably painted over more canvas than everybody in Oklahoma put together. You just have to paint every day. There's a lot of people that call themselves painters who paint once a week, or if they get in a bad mood that day, they decide they're not going to paint. So I just try to paint even when I'm not in that good of a mood and then get up the next day and paint over it—repair the damage I did the day before.

RACHEL: From where do you draw inspiration for your paintings?

MURV: From where do we draw the inspiration to do anything? Why do anything creative? Who knows where that comes from? If I was going to guess, I'd say that it's in our blood. It's in my blood because my great grandma taught me to paint with oils when I was eight years old. She was way into it. It seems like everyone in my family has got some art. I don't try to be original. I try to be ultra-original. I try to do something new every day, you know. I try to keep what I've done as a reference point, though. Am I making any sense?

RACHEL: Yeah. Absolutely.

MURV: I mean, I don't really have a style of painting. I have hundreds. It all adds up to . . . stuff. Something. Tell me my life is worth something.

RACHEL: Yes. I would say so.

MURV: That I didn't just go through all this crap to find out it was a dream when I wake up tomorrow.

RACHEL: As far as the cover painting, there will be some people that don't come from Cherokee culture looking at the cover. Is there anything you'd explain to them?

Murv: Like most people don't come from that culture. The Cherokees, by my estimate, lost 10,400 miles of riverfront property to people that weren't Cherokee. What's that worth in American dollars, you know?

RACHEL: Well, it's certainly worth pointing out. Could you explain what's going on in the painting?

MURV: For twenty-five or thirty years I've been studying the Cherokee animal cycle of stories. There's like a cycle of animal stories and a cycle of people stories. I've been warned time and again not to mix the two, but I do—of course. Somebody had to. And in the Cherokee dances, they dance counterclockwise around the sacred fire. The Cherokees around Tahlequah refer to that as the old dances, or the stomp dance. Most of the dances they do here in Oklahoma aren't Cherokee dances. The Cherokees basically lost their culture about two hundred years ago, and people have been trying to act as cultural preservationists, but they're actually cultural revisionists or cultural reconstructionists. I don't know the exact word, but something like that.

But anyway, I try to go back to when North America was one big woods. In the old days some areas had four trees per acre because the trees were that big—before they cut them down. You can't picture it now. They were old-growth trees. They cut them down to make railroad ties, and bars, and churches, but these forests were sacred to the People. They didn't take from it overtly. They would take some trees to make their houses, you know. Try to understand. It would be like a group of people who lived in the woods, and the forest is their Walmart, but they don't take anything they don't need. They don't go just grab a bunch of stuff from China and drag it home, you know.

America needs to wake up. I mean, we've just trashed the continent. I mean, totally trashed it. Sure some of it's going to recover, but some of it . . . look at all that concrete and asphalt out there. How long is it going to take for it to reclaim itself? At least [Leslie's] doing something with this space. She's always got something good going on in here. But most [space] is taken up by stupid endeavors that are doomed to failure.

RACHEL: You mention that you've been studying the animal stories. Many Native writers and thinkers claim that animals are connected to us and that they belong to our wider community. Do you agree with them?

MURV: Perfect. Perfect question, because the Cherokees think of them as the Bear People, and the Wolf People, and the Bird People, and the Tree People, and the Flower People. They're people too, to the Cherokees. And, yeah, the Cherokees did have the buffalo. The Wood Bison was the biggest herd of buffalo in North America. They were all wiped out by about 1800 by the people with the new black-powder rifles. The Cherokee villages were set along the path of the Wood Bison, which would clump up. They were pretty solitary animals during most of the year, but during the migrating and mating season they would clump up and travel together in a herd. They'd have fights the whole way, you know, shake the earth. They said when the buffalo were coming the ground would shake for days. You could just feel the earth tremble—there were that many of them. They were about the size of a Toyota truck. They were good-sized critters. Or maybe the Plains Bison was the size of a Toyota truck and the Wood Bison was the size of a Chevy three-quarter ton, you know. They probably weighed about a ton anyway.

The Carolina Parakeets are totally extinct now too, but the Cherokees kept them as pets. They weren't so lucky when the Europeans showed up. They were a seed-eating bird, and they would attack orchard fruit while it was still green to get the seeds out of it, so the Europeans started shooting them. And instead of fleeing like ordinary birds, they would come back. The Europeans killed them all. The last one died in, I think, 1909 in the Cincinnati Zoo. They didn't have a mate—couldn't find a mate—to breed any more of them, so they just died out. They were about a ten- or twelve-inch-long parakeet that looked more like a parrot. They spoke, but I doubt any of them ever learned English. They probably spoke Creek, and Cherokee, and Choctaw, and Chickasaw. They lived in all the tributary rivers of the Mississippi, so they were here too. There were some flocks of them here. And now we need them because you go to the river, and there's just cockleburs everywhere. That was the main thing that they ate. Their ecological niche is no longer filled, and now there are only acres of cockleburs. We could maybe find a bird in South America and bring it in to eat all the cockleburs, but it would probably die from all the stuff they're spraying on them now. [*Sirens pass in the background*] We'll wait for those to pass. That's probably someone expiring from diabetes.

RACHEL: How would you say artistic representations of animals influence how we treat them?

MURV: People try to make the animals more human, but it's been my experience that animals are already more human. They share more human characteristics than humans do these days. So, is that an answer?

RACHEL: Yes. I think it is.

MURV: It's a great question. Let's hear it again. I may have another answer.

RACHEL: Okay. How does the artistic representation of animals influence how we treat them?

MURV: Well, I paint the landscape. Nobody in modern art treats the landscape as if it's worth a tinker's damn. They just ignore the landscape. Or, if somebody's painting landscapes, modern artists see them as being on a lower level of art than they are. It's kind of a class-consciousness thing. In fact, I just painted four new landscapes. They don't make a reference to anything except what they are. They're eastern Oklahoma landscapes. Animals are a part of it.

RACHEL: Have there been any important animals, pets for instance, who've been important in your life?

MURV: There's a black skunk I see a lot. I dream about animals all the time. I like animals. I see animals all the time. There was a hawk living in Tahlequah this year that thought it was a crow. It was living with a flock of crows. At first I thought the crows were attacking it because they were all doing that "KAW KAW." But then the hawk went with them, and I realized the hawk was part of their flock. They like him, and he likes them. They've adopted each other. So, you know, you can't really go by what you think when it comes to animals. We saw two hawks sitting in a tree together today, and I don't think I've ever seen that. Think about it. You always see a solitary hawk. I might paint that because I've never seen that, except today in real life. And people are going to go, "They don't do that!" Well, maybe one of them was fake, and the other one came over to see what the fake one was doing or something. I don't know. They looked real.

RACHEL: I've never heard of a hawk decoy.

MURV: It's hard to tell. It might be some sort of government design.

RACHEL: In what ways do animals connect us to place? To our places?

MURV: We're animals. In what ways do we connect ourselves to a place? What did Big Man Japan say? He said we're all kind of scavengers, and we're all kind of displaced. Everybody's really afraid someone is going to bump them, and they'll have to go off and reconnect to another place. But we're animals, and we connect to other animals. We connect best to dogs and cats and cows and horses and pigs. I mean the list goes on and on and on. What would we be without the forest and the animals? A Walmart. A parking lot. What would we be? We wouldn't be anything. And that's what we're leaving to our grandkids.

RACHEL: How would you describe the human/animal relationship in terms of Cherokee culture?

MURV: Oh, being Cherokee is the biggest human trap you can get sucked into. Now, like I said, the Keetoowahs aren't that way. They don't have an elite class. The Cherokee Nation has kind of an elite class, an elite group of white Indians. Every once in a while they let an Indian with enough blood it shows work his way up into their ranks. The Keetoowahs aren't class conscious. And they don't have to be reconstructionists because they still have a culture. Every person's different. Some people come from a background of strong culture. Others acquire it. Others have no interest in either of the above. Or is it below? I know one thing. There's gravity holding me to this chair, and I'm surrounded by the universe on every side. And human beings are animals. They've got to have water, and they've got to have air. They want to have babies, and they want a warm place to sleep, especially in the winter. I don't know. Ask me the question again and maybe I can come up with a better answer.

RACHEL: How would you describe the human/animal relationship in terms of Cherokee culture?

MURV: It needs improvement. See, the old-time Cherokees wouldn't kill a squirrel. The squirrel plants the forest. The deer don't plant the forest. The squirrels plant the forest. The deer go in there and eat the hickory nuts and acorns and stuff, but they don't plant them. The squirrels do.

RACHEL: How does Mound culture influence your work? In some of your paintings I see hallmarks of that culture.

MURV: Well, you should. I've painted the villages and the Temple Mound. Around this sacred fire was the place where they buried their dead. So

they literally danced on the graves of their most sacred ancestors. And the fire would gradually be elevated by time. When they would elevate the mound, they would move the fire and then build the mound up to the next level. You can look at them and see that was done. Then the fire would be brought back to the mound. Cecil Dick told me the only purpose of the mound was to elevate the fire to a higher level because they always built them in river valleys. I don't know if that's right. I don't know if anyone knows anymore. I think they built the mounds because the river flooded, and it was a safe place to go if it came up overnight six feet or eight feet. But I'm a survivalist, so that's the only reason I'd build a mound. Certainly not for religious reasons. That's just crazy. Religions are all crazy. Please quote me on that. Gaw, the Indian religions are just as wacky as any other religion I've ever run into too. I've grown out of that. I've got a sort of a Marxist egalitarian attitude that no race is better and no religion is better. Religion's not doing anybody any good.

RACHEL: Where do you see your work going in the future? You said when we talked previously that you've been doing a lot of landscapes. Is that something you see yourself doing more of?

MURV: I've painted landscapes before. It's just nobody else works with landscapes. They're a bunch of idiots, and they've all got a different agenda. So I'm painting some landscapes. And a few hundred years from now when we've totally destroyed them, it will be interesting to look back and see what they looked like. I don't know. I think the human species is determined to destroy this planet. The best we can hope is to get out of it with some dignity because we're not going to get out of it alive. That was preordained, probably for a good reason. People need to band together and resist, but I'm not a college-educated scholar. I've met some. Some of them are pretty smart, but a lot of times you see that whole educated thing eating away at the core of their being to where they're just hollow. Do you think it's the end of the world? It's certainly the end of us because we have screwed up as a species about as good as any species you're going to find. We have set ourselves up above the others and taken on this air of disdain and superiority, but we're just driving around in metal boxes and flying around in metal tubs. We're not doing anything that spectacular as far as I can say. At least there's not a long list of things. There's a few creative people here in Norman, but I could probably count them on both

hands including my thumbs. If this is too radical and too weird, let's try to do another interview that's more milquetoast and academic.

RACHEL: Not at all.

MURV: I'm a smart ass. I'll probably die a smart ass. I should have kicked off early like Mozart. Well, it's an honest interview. Those are rare. And you can probably pull a few weeds and find some vegetables.

Prehistoric Surveillance in Bethlehem?

CARTER REVARD

Chaunteclere Has 100,000,000-Year-Old HD Curved-Screen 3D & Binocular Color TeleVision[1] inherited from his Grandpa, Tyrannosaurus Rex,[2] installed Behind His Third Eyelids[3] (Eco-friendly: No Batteries or Plug-in Needed). Several famous people are spinning cuckoons in their graves at this revelation: for instance, Geoffrey Chaucer,[4] William Shakespeare,[5] Henry Vaughan,[6] William Blake and Isaac Newton,[7] Pieter Breughel Jr,[8] and Karl Marx.[9]

So three questions remain
in this supernatural mystery:
What did Chaunteclere SEE,
when did he see it,
AND
do roosters crow in Heaven?[10]

NOTES

1. Since Chaunteclere has always lived in the light, his inherited con-dominium in Bethlehem uses color TV for round-the-clock surveillance. Adam and Eve, by fortunate fall, went 24/7 and daily walk in darkness, but have inward eyes.

2. DNA from the fossilized femur of a Tyrannosaurus has been found to resemble most closely that of the domestic chicken. The reported comment on this from publicists for the *Kentucky Fried Chicken* franchise operators was, "What clucks we have been." A new ad campaign is reported to be in preparation, based on the theme *Our Customers Can Eat Them First*.

"The domestic chicken (Gallus domesticus) originally descended from the wild red jungle fowl (Gallus gallus) of southeastern Asia. The females, including mature hens and younger pullets, are raised for their edible eggs and meat. Immature males, called cockerels, are castrated to become meat birds called capons. Mature males, called cocks, or roosters, have long been used for sport." (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 15th ed. [*Micropædia* 2.830])

3. Here are excerpts from an article by Michael Purdy in the Washington University *Record* for the week of February 15, 2010:

> Researchers at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis have peered deep into the eye of the chicken and found a masterpiece of biological design. Scientists mapped five types of light receptors in the chicken's eye. They discovered the receptors were laid out in interwoven mosaics that maximized the chicken's ability to see many colors in any given part of the retina, the light-sensing structure at the back of the eye.
>
> "Based on this analysis, birds have clearly one-upped us in several ways in terms of color vision," says Joseph C. Corbo, MD, PhD, senior author and assistant professor of pathology and immunology and of genetics. "Color receptor organization in the chicken retina greatly exceeds that seen in most other retinas and certainly that in most mammalian retinas." Corbo plans follow-up studies of how this organization is established. He says such insights could eventually help scientists seeking to use stem cells and other new techniques to treat the nearly 200 genetic disorders that can cause various forms of blindness. [Kram YA, Mantey S, Corbo JC. Avian cone photoreceptors tile the retina as five independent, self-organizing mosaics. PLoS One, Feb. 1, 2010.]

Birds likely owe their superior color vision to not having spent a period of evolutionary history in the dark, according to Corbo. Birds, reptiles and mammals are all descended from a common ancestor, but during the age of the dinosaurs, most mammals became nocturnal for millions of years. Birds, now widely believed to be descendants of dinosaurs, never spent a similar period living mostly in darkness. As a result, birds have more types of cones than mammals.

"The human retina has cones sensitive to red, blue and green wavelengths," Corbo says. *"Avian retinas also have a cone that can detect violet wavelengths, including some ultraviolet, and a specialized receptor called a double cone that we believe helps them detect motion."* In addition, most avian cones have a specialized structure that Corbo compares to *'cellular sunglasses': a lens-like drop of oil within the cone that is pigmented to filter out all but a particular range of light.* Researchers used these drops to map the location of the different types of cones on the chicken retina. They found that the different types of cones were evenly distributed throughout the retina, but two cones of the same type were never located next to each other. "This is the ideal way to uniformly sample the color space of your field of vision," Corbo says. "It appears to be a global pattern created from a simple localized rule: you can be next to other cones, but not next to the same kind of cone."

Corbo speculates that extra sensitivity to color may help birds in finding mates, which often involves colorful plumage, or when feeding on berries or other colorful fruit.

"Many of the inherited conditions that cause blindness in humans affect cones and rods, and it will be interesting to see if what we learn of the organization of the chicken's retina will help us better understand and repair such problems in the human eye," Corbo says.

4. Mr. Chaucer, speaking from the office of the scribe Adam Pynkhurst, where he was supervising Mr. Pynkhurst's efforts to revise the Hengwrt Manuscript and produce the Ellesmere Manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*, referred reporters to what the Nun's Priest had said of Chaunteclere:

His voyce was merrier than the merry orgon
On masse-dayes that in the churche gon.
Wel sikerer was his crowing in his lodge
Than is a clocke, or abbey orolodge.
By nature he knew ech ascensioun
Of the equinoxial in thilke toun;
For whan degrees fiftene weren ascended,
Thanne crewe he, that it myghte nat been amended.

5. Mr. Shakespeare tweeted his response to a reporter's question from New Place in Stratford, where he had lately retired: *"C Hamlet sc.1, Horatio/Bernardo/Marcellus re brd of dwnng sngth al nite lng."*

6. Said Mr. Vaughan, *"I told you so, in my poem Cock-Crowing, if you'll remember what I said about seeds of light:*

Father of lights! what Sunnie seed,
What glance of day hast thou confin'd
Into this bird? To all the breed
This busie Ray thou hast assign'd;
Their magnetism works all night,
And dreams of Paradise and light.
Their eyes watch for the morning hue,
Their little grain expelling night
So shines and sings, as if it knew
The path unto the house of light.
It seems their candle, howe'r done,
Was tinn'd and lighted at the sunne."

7. Mr. Newton, with much gravity, refused to comment, but Mr. Blake cheerfully pulled out a concertina borrowed from Allen Ginsberg and with its accompaniment chanted the final stanza of his *Mock On, Mock On, Voltaire, Rousseau:*

The atoms of Democritus
And Newton's particles of light
Are sands upon the Red Sea shore
Where Israel's tents do shine so bright.

8. Mr. Breughel said, *"You may recall that I painted Chaunteclere in Bethlehem on a stable roof, above which a great Star shone, from which a beam came directly down and into the eye of Chaunteclere where he was looking down at us from the roof above Mary and Joseph and the Child, before whom the Three Kings were standing or kneeling. He was there for a reason."*

9. Dr. Marx said: *"I explained in the 1840s, as is reported in the Eleventh Edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (volume 17, page 807), that the proletariat cannot emancipate itself except by breaking all the chains, by dissolving the whole constituted society,*

by recreating man as a member of the human society in the place of established states and classes. Then the day of German resurrection will be announced by the crowing of the Gallican cock." A Messianic prophecy, nicht wahr? out of the empty tomb, a spectre haunting Europe?

10. For answers, stay tuned to research reports at ArchæoBLOGOS.ink.

The Animals' Ballgame

GEARY HOBSON

The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, together with the nearby university in the capital city of Tahlequah, is gearing up for what has long been billed as the Nation's (*Tsa-la-gi*; *Tsa-ra-gi*; *Ji-lo-gi*; *Chi-la-gi*; *Chalaque*; *Cholukee*; *Ani-yun-wiya*; or whatever variant one prefers) "First Ever Cherokee Writers' Gathering." Word has gone out far and wide for more than a year, advertising and proclaiming it, and at the same time beseeching all who are writers to come and take part in it. Web pages have glowed about it; the blogosphere is filled with information about it; mass mailings have ensued; and word-of-mouth is trumpeting it all far and wide. It promises to be, so the Nation's own website declares, the greatest get-together of Cherokee writers ever assembled. And in the magnificent auditorium in the W. W. Keeler complex on the university campus in Tahlequah—the town "set like a jewel among gently rolling hills" (as a noted scholar once wrote)—the writers, the would-be writers, and wannabe writers are assembling in vast hordes and precipitous multitudes.

At last the day of assemblage dawns, and the vast entourage of Cherokeeness comes forth into the auditorium like a fleet of unleashed Achaean warships upon the besieged Trojan city and plain. First, there are the hordes of CNO-identified writers and artists surging onto the scene in all their beastly prominence, coming forward in vast accompaniments, in virtual clutters and clowders and nuisances and destructions and kindles and litters and pounces (as in cats of all sorts and varieties), in warrens and droves and buries and traces (as in rabbits), in gazes and nurseries and rafts (likewise of beavers) and bevies and romps (ditto for otters), in drays and scurries (of squirrels), and gangs and herds (the many-hoofed majesties in all their varieties). In a word, the scribblers are coming!

The symposium's premier topic—long decided on and thereby duly appointed—is to be a panel in which several differing versions of the justly famous and well-known tribal story of "The Animals' Ballgame" will be presented—most prominently, that of the famed non-Cherokee and non-Indian anthropologist James Mooney, as well as later versions by the eminent Cherokee storytellers Lloyd Arneach and Kathi Smith Littlejohn. There are to be readings of these versions, as well as renditions of still other variants. Already, quite a gaggle of volunteers have advanced themselves as commentators and elucidators. The enduring question: which of the three—and possibly more?—variants is the correct one?

Once, in the long-ago time, the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and all other Cherokees spread far and wide spoke the same language and almost, at most times, thought the same thoughts, as only an extraordinarily unified people tend to do. However, with removals, expulsions, exiles, schisms, and wanderings far afield, they had all been scattered like so many wind-blown leaves, mainly through the American Southland, of a diaspora that occurred at the time of The Road Where the People Cried northwestwardly out of the southwestern portion of the traditional Cherokee homeland of the Alleghenies and Appalachians, across rivers and creeks of Tennessee, then across Kentucky, and over the Ohio River and into Ohio and Indiana and Illinois and then into Missouri and then southwestwardly into Arkansas and on into eastern Oklahoma—leaving not only the dead and buried, but also the runaways from the caravans and all to be counted by the enumerators as part of the four thousand lost.

Most visible and preeminently recognizable of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma is Professor Jonah Erskine, renowned Cherokee scholar and novelist, author of nearly sixty books on Cherokee history and lore, emeritus professor (self-retired at the early age of forty-five) from prestigious Cherokee Nation University, father of ten Cherokeelets, uncle to two dozen more, tribal elder of seventy-one now, slow-moving (but oh, so deceptively so in his comportment), a man at ease with himself and his world—the perfect Cherokee attainment—and an everyday habitué of the très stylish Inn of the Cherokee Nation coffee shop and restaurant located just a mere tomcat-fling from the tribal headquarters, as well as the university auditorium, who had been holding forth this bright, breezy October morning. Ensconced had been he in his favorite booth

in passive ursine fashion, his morning stint of writing completed and his habitual ham-and-eggs breakfast dispensed with in his usual leisurely manner, accompanied by endless cups of coffee in the Smoking Allowed section (the management, even at this late date in Civilization's advancement, would never kowtow to the rising tide of political correctness so ever insistent about no-smoking rules as to declare the entire restaurant a No Smoking Zone, not with Professor Jonah Erskine and the sheer might of the Cherokee intelligentsia that he manifestly carries within himself, while gracing the restaurant with his magnanimity). Now that's power! The restaurant's management feels it can bear it because Professor Jonah brings in the customers, folks eager to see the writer known to all Cherokees and friends of Cherokees everywhere—all without exception ever hopeful of kind and pleasant words, along with signed autographed copies of his books. In short, his fond benediction, a blessing that all seek to obtain, and in which no one ever goes away disappointed.

Slow-moving though he appears, with a slow smile accompanying his ever-present magnanimity, he moves from restaurant to auditorium with the deceptive ursine majesty of a creature fully aware of himself and his effect on all around him. One can imagine Henry the Eighth and Richard the Lionhearted moving in similar waves of supreme self-knowledge and competence.

Next after Professor Jonah—as indeed all tend to call him—comes Juley Chatsmith, sometimes called Foxy, erstwhile chief of CNO and a quasi-writer of somewhat fragile pretensions. He has futzed and foxed around while maintaining that he is writing—even, at one point, joining with another writer to "do" a book of a most redundant nature, one replete with brilliant photos in stark and glaring colors that grace the ultimate coffee-table book that nonetheless purports to be scholarship, while claiming for himself coauthorship credit, when in all likelihood all Foxy has written is the scant introduction and a few touched-up paragraphs here and there. Small wonder then why folks often call him "Foxy." (And Foxy writes just like this penultimate sentence, a long one-way chase through the briars and brush so as to elude the country club huntsmen.)

And after him comes Flora Deeley-Knotts—Identity sniffer par excellence—and why not? Doesn't her 1/256th degree of Cherokee blood and CNO tribal membership card grant her carte blanche to do so? Her overindulgence of perfume unfortunately works to an opposite effect,

making her somewhat stinky instead of irresistible. Skunky at her best. She is the author of many interoffice memos, emails, and blog postings.

Sal Ekorre, forthwith following Skunky—uh, Flora—is a hypertensive poet of mixed blood, with very little knowledge of her Cherokee culture, but one of the most vocal to let all know that she has her enrollment number from the CNO, and of course, she will say, that's what counts. Attractive, very thin and wiry, hair of a frizzy reddish brown, she moves in rapid jerks and spasms. One often has the impression she could zoom up a tree as fast as lightning, if such were ever to be necessary. She carries a worn leather satchel in which she keeps not only copies of her four published collections of poems but also all the early drafts of them, as well as sheaves of poems-in-progress, all like a thick sediment of cracked nutshells. One can't help but wonder what else Sal-lee has squirreled away in that bag.

After her, comes Attakullakulla Terrapin, a much self-published and, unfortunately, too little self-edited Cherokee writer of vast pretensions to literary excellence. Deceptively slow-moving, hard-shelled (in other words, impervious to would-be helpful critical advice of whatever ilk, and unequivocally sure of his excellence as a writer), he waddles in, constantly on the alert for the otherworldly, the exotic, the fantastic, and all to appear in his next thriller.

Then comes Sharleen Redundant Deer Prancey, author of ninety (or is it one hundred and ninety?) books and chapbooks, on delicate toes in elegant shoes that are greatly akin to polished hoofs of the deer tribe people. Sharleen writes incredibly long sentences, all for the most part quite beautiful and balanced, although at times they come so much full circle that the reader ends up lost.

Coming into the hall, she exclaims: "I come as a red deer all dressed out for the Deer Dance!" and waggles the plastic set of antlers on her head.

"But, Sharleen," Professor Jonah says, "does aren't supposed to have antlers."

To which Sharleen replies, "Oh . . . ," and looks nonplussed.

Then, in Ms. Prancey's footsteps (or hoof steps) and close behind, comes Dr. G. Stu Leverett, the hip-hop of Cherokee officialdom. He is a small, hypertensive individual who blinks his eyes incessantly, nervously, while wriggling his nose from side to side and up and down, all the while causing one's attention to invariably center on a faint harelip. He is highly energetic, a skilled writer of grant proposals and edicts

(he had once hoped to be a published poet or novelist, but this never came about, though he occasionally pens the essential critical article for websites with crusades to carry). Over the years, he has self-published a round dozen collections of his grant proposals and, like Jonah Erskine, is nationally known—that is, Cherokee Nationally known. As a writer, he writes rapidly, with very little editing, often racking up a dozen pages in an hour's work and, like Sharleen Prancey, he, too, is guilty of writing long labyrinthine sentences (although his are often very unwieldy), so that he all too often seems to become confused with his diction as he proceeds in quick spurts that invariably double back to the beginning. He at all times bristles a scowling demeanor, so that a local wag—Foxy Chatsmith himself, if fact be known—often refers to him as "Mr. Pissed-Off Guy." It shouldn't be surprising then that Dr. Leverett is thus known far and wide throughout Cherokeedom by his Indian name of Wretched Ailing. Some say the name is because of his having to endure a private hurt that tampers at all times with his good will. Still others say, in their probable piques of meanness and flippancy—that his name is actually Wretched Alien, the "alien" part referencing that he is half some kind of Southwestern Indian, something Pueblo or Navajo or some such. Nonetheless, he will always inform one and all that he is a dyed-in-the-wool, legitimate Cherokee, because his number tells him so. Lately, there have been many broad hints from him making the rounds that he will use the conference to announce the unveiling of a new CNO program, a trick up his sleeve, as it were, with himself as the executor and director, that will, as he declares in his habitual stern-mouthed fashion, "settle everyone's hash, once and for all about this identity nonsense."

Then, behind this *jistu* of all *jistus*, comes an entourage of truly staggering proportions: antelopes, bison, buffalo, mountain lions, cougars, pumas, bobcats and bobkitties, wolves, coyotes, opossums, minks, otters, raccoons, rats, mice, moles, prairie dogs, cats, dogs, horses, mules, cows, sheep, goats, and on and on. But notable among these thusly assembled herds and herdlets, five in particular: Justin Heath Danielson, Hud Brianson, Nelson Joshua, Beauty K. Suagee, and Wave Jester. They haven't, up to now, bore down too excessively on others, or stunk up places with skunky effluvia, or disgorged buzzard-like their paunches' contents onto anyone's shirt fronts. They are, relatively speaking, fresh as the October morning's sunlight.

These, then, are the vast numberings of furry, fluffy, hoofed, tusked, and tanned beasties of the vasty CNO.

Now a gander at the invading Outlanders, united and all-acknowledging in their view of themselves as no less Cherokee than any or all of the CNO assemblage. They are a virtual biblical tide of aviarity, of surprising and stupendous multifariousness; these Outsiders/Cherokee writers come in aeries and convocations of eagles, scolds of jays, exhalations of larks, richnesses of martins, coveys of quail, murders and sieges of crows, murmurations of starlings, kettles and casts of hawks, charms of hummingbirds, flocks and gaggles of geese—in short, my-oh-my, all these flocks and flights and congregations and dissimulations and valeries and piteousnesses and cotes and exhalations and murmurations—all a vast seemingly unending tide of feathery might.

Prominent among them, and in particular, is Sully Humdinger (or Dirtmaker, as he is often called in Cherokee), a tall, bespectacled, seventy-ish man from Kentucky, who still retains his flowing mane of dark brown hair that is invariably covered with the Native multicolored scarf. He is a renowned storyteller and the publisher of language texts, now lives in Texas, and has been publishing for more than three decades. Mr. Humdinger is also a part-time college professor and involved in Texas and Kentucky Cherokee affairs, and has been for all his adult life. Because of his quite prominent height—right at six feet four inches—he always seems to crouch as he stands, and this gives the effect that his back is extraordinarily crooked. He also has a habit of waving his arms around his sides while talking, with the effect of great flapping wings. He is widely regarded as one of the most prominent writers of Cherokee identity nationwide.

Right behind him is Dr. Wally Baldon, an Arkansas Cherokee who, ironically, has been living in Oklahoma for the past twenty years. But he never forgets that his allegiance is to the Arkansas group. Like Sully, he is a storyteller, and also a poet and novelist and literary scholar. Though nearsighted as all get-out, he gives the impression that he is as eagle-eyed as can be. His gaze/stare is drilling in its intensity. He has more irons in the fire—or eggs in the nest—than any ten other writers and rarely finishes anything. Yet he has produced a half-dozen books over his long career.

Then there's Waleila Tote, a lively Cherokee lady who, though enrolled with the Keetoowah Band, has spent much of her life in Cali-

fornia, so that she is—or at least she feels she is—shunned by CNO. She is a poet who writes small haiku-like poems, which she calls "poemlets." They come at you, as you read them, like "benevolent hummingbirds, bearing good will and comfort," as Wally Baldon once wrote in a critical article. Her hand movements are similar to that—rapid, almost faster than the human eye can follow.

Also from California comes Thomas Kingfisher, novelist, film script writer, raconteur—wing-flapping in all his delightful kingfisherness. He is often criticized for spending so much of his time in Canada, but he explains: "Hey, folks, what the hay! Cut me some slack—Cherokees are everywhere."

Comes apace Gladys "Bo Bo" Hoot, from North Carolina by way of Montana and Washington State and Michigan, but no less Cherokee than any of the other assembled highfliers. Her scant three books of poetry are more power-packed than those of poets with ten times the titles to their credit. Bo Bo is an intense, dedicated artist and teacher, often working entire nights on a single line of one of her poems.

Then Jeffie Honored and Ron Well-Burnt lead a congregation of blackbirds, crows, starlings, grackles, and an assortment of other night-colored feathered beings. They represent the ever-growing contingent of Cherokee-blooded people—growing not so much in terms of children coming into the world, but of people too handily labeled black or African American who have become knowledgeable of their Indian heritage—a much larger group of people than 95 percent of the American populace realizes or even will acknowledge. Jeffie is a poet of strong voice and firmly held views and opinions. She does not easily suffer the presence or dodderings of fools, and she can dispense with them in easy, humorous fashion. Ron is older than Jeffie, coming out of the Delmarva region of Tidewater and Chesapeake America, of mixed Cherokee and other tribes along with black and white mixed-blood. He has been an established poet for three decades, the author of nearly a dozen books, with each new one being a stronger offering from the ones preceding it.

Professor Robin Bark, a mixed-blood out of Montana, by way of Nebraska, who has become in a relatively short time a respected scholar in literary methods of applying traditional Indian medicine and curing practices to the manner of approaching critical theories dealing with Native American literature. She is a tall and confident person who rarely reveals dissatisfaction or disgruntlement. She is always in balance.

Chiki Dee Deedeelow, from out of Texas, and Beau Thudfall, hailing from only the Apportioner knows, come dressed in chickadee and titmouse costumes that they have been told is the correct dress for those two important totemic avians. They are known as formidable demon slayers in their critical essays and reviews and so they do indeed be. They are widely respected and esteemed for their roles in the old-time long ago story of the dreaded *Utlun-ta,* the Spear-Finger.

In addition to all the writers on hand, there are numerous other folks on hand, broods and clusters of admirers and emulators, all desirous of some day joining this remarkable parliament of established writers.

Professor Jonah comes forth, welcoming the wing flappers as they thread their way into the auditorium and find perches for themselves.

"Welcome, welcome," says Jonah, his short arms moving in slow beckoning fashion. He is the epitome of courtliness.

"*Wado, wado*," responds Professor Sully Humdinger. "On behalf of my co-fliers, I return your greeting." And one by one, Jonah shakes in turn each hand of the CNO writers as the Outlanders find seats for themselves.

"I assume you are all ready to discuss the topic at hand?" Jonah says.

"Yes," says Sully, and to which Professor Wally Baldon adds, "And ready, too, to introduce other variants of the Animals' Ballgame story."

"Others?" asks Juley Chatsmith, old Foxy, as he scoots up front to where the greetings are taking place.

"Yes," answers Wally. "In addition to the widely known Mooney story—now over a century old in print—and those by Mr. Arneach and Ms. Littlejohn, there are other variants by Robert J. Conley and Gayle Ross and Gregg Howard and so on. We think these bear looking into as well."

"Well, then, *osda*," says Jonah. And as he is about to speak further, Dr. G. Stu Leverett interrupts him by interjecting his small, fidgeting body in front of him.

"Yeah, well," G. Stu says (and he always insists on being called "G. Stu," rather than just "G" or even "Stu." "That's all well and good, but I believe we have a more pressing topic to consider"—and he pauses significantly when he becomes aware that everyone's attention is on him. "I think we first need to determine once and for all *who* and *what* a Cherokee is or is not." He speaks loudly, with his eyebrows knitted into his characteristic "Mr. Pissed-Off Guy" demeanor.

There are murmurs and groans a-plenty.

"I mean, just look around. Just look at yourselves!" And he fastens his attention on Jeffie Honored and Ron Well-Burnt in particular: "Too dark to be real Indians and sure as heck not real Cherokees!" And then to Robin and Sully: "—and too light to be real Cherokees!"

"What kind of trick have you got up your sleeve, G. Stu?" Jonah asks. Behind him, Foxy Chatsmith and Sal Ekorre and Attakullakulla Terrapin chortle and literally bounce up and down.

"But we came here to discuss traditional stories," Bo Bo says, and Wally seconds her. "And not somebody's particular political agenda!"

"And most particularly, not mean politics," Sully says.

"Well, now," says G. Stu. "Let's just say that the agenda has changed." He grins delightedly, bouncing up and down on the balls of his feet. "We're gonna pledge this conference to determining who is and who is not a real Cherokee."

All around, the groans manifest themselves more loudly, particularly from the Outlanders.

Then, up come two more conference attendees. They are Thelma Small and Twisty Cade.

"We're Oklahoma Cherokees, but neither of us has ever lived here," says Twisty. "I was born and raised in California, and Thelma, here, was born and raised in Arkansas." And Thelma nods her head. "But, to tell the truth, we both have been more interested in other fields of study—English novels, science fiction, webpage designing, even Kiowa Indians—rather than to merely Cherokee matters. But we've decided we want to reconnect, to learn—"

He is interrupted by Foxy and Sal and others.

"No, you're both Wannabes. We don't think you belong here. Go back to where you came from." Various voices clamor. Then Sully and Wally come forth and speak to them.

"Well," says Sully. "You might join our side in the debate—because I guess it looks like we are going to have to debate this whole thing that Dr. Leverett has brought up."

"Yes," says Wally. "Welcome to our side. We'll catch you up. Just come this way."

And Wally and Bo Bo take the two in hand and go over to a corner.

"Now," says Wally. "We're just going to have to expand your thinking a bit."

"Yeah," says Bo Bo. "Make real *Ji-lo-gi* out of you in no time flat!"

"Aww, you can't teach them anything!" says G. Stu, who horns his way into the group. "They ain't nothing but fly-by-nights." Then he turns to the others and says to them: "And you all are a bunch of popinjays!"

And for the next fifteen minutes or so, while the main bunch of all the conference attenders are still arguing back and forth about Cherokeeness, Wally and Bo Bo give Thelma and Twisty a crash course on identity. They can, as a result and after only a few minutes, feel their minds stretching to take in all the new ideas. Crash course, it really is. Sometimes, though, as teachers will often tell you, someone can come to incredible profundity in a short matter of time, whereas it will sometimes take others months or years, or maybe never, to come to certain knowledge. Thelma and Twisty are quite literally molded into new beings. They are now both Okie and Outsider Cherokees, and not merely fly-by-nights, though it must be admitted that they are that, too.

"Well, damn it, let's get this show on the road," shouts G. Stu. Everyone's attention is on him. "And here's the first salvo: I go back to what I said a while ago—Why do you Arkies and Kentucky and Texas and what-not other Outlanders look so different than us Okie *Tsa-la-gi*?"

And Sully and all look around at themselves. Yet, it was true that most of them didn't exhibit as much apparent "full-bloodedness" as G. Stu and Foxy and a lot of the CNO ones did.

"And, two, do any of you have CNO enrollment cards?" And before anyone is allowed to answer, he says: "I thought not." And he laughs, licking his lips and wiggling his nose, he says: "Two points for our side!"

"But you're not being fair—" Bo Bo starts to say, but both Sully and Wally pat her arms and caution her to stay calm.

"We'll get our turn," says Sully.

"Next," G. Stu says. "Do any of you, and the communities you come from, have a formal relationship with the federal government as a tribe or tribal people?"

More groans. Truly, most of them didn't have such status.

"Now, here's an easy one," G. Stu says. "If you are Cherokee, why don't you live in Oklahoma? After all, isn't this where the government long ago decided we should all be?"

Wally starts to say something about his own twenty-five-year residence in Oklahoma, but when both Sully and Bo Bo smile at him, he calms down.

"And now," G. Stu offers. "If you are really Cherokee, why don't you all come to our tribal gatherings—our stomp dances, our churches, our national holidays . . . ?"

At this, then, Sully himself gets out of sync. He stands, crying aloud: "You are being too narrow-minded, you . . ." and he leaves his statement uncompleted as he realizes he has done exactly what he has cautioned the others about.

"Aww, what do you mean—you old gut-eater!" G. Stu sniffs at him.

But before anyone can answer, if they are so inclined, G. Stu goes on.

"And, now, here's the kicker. If you are really a Cherokee—if you are *really* interested, deeply interested, in being a *real* Cherokee—then I ask you to join in my new campaign to clean up the tribe—er, I mean, to straighten out the tribe! If you really want to be involved, I ask you to join my new enterprise that I call Group Empowered Specifically To Apprehend Potential Outsiders. I promise you it will clean up our tribe. We will purge—"

Finally, realizing that she can't take it anymore, and angry, too, Robin Bark, the out-from-Montana-and-then-to-Nebraska Cherokee scholar, stands up and calls aloud to G. Stu: "You pride yourself so much on your oh-so-more-Cherokee-than-thou stance. If that's so, then why haven't you, through universal Cherokee courtesy and good manners, allowed any of us, as the Outsiders and Outlanders you call us, to proceed first before you began to hold forth? You, sir, Mr. G. Stu, are not only an ill-mannered person, you are a cultural bully!"

Suddenly, G. Stu's face turns woodstove-red hot in such embarrassment as he has never before known. Abjectly, he sits down, totally abashed, his face still red. He knows that Robin is correct: he has violated the cardinal rule of courtesy by not inviting guests to speak first in social situations.

And Robin, too, is blushing, though not as bad as G. Stu, since she is conscious that she has never been so outgoing, particularly in public.

It's as if the game has suddenly changed. One after the other, various Outlanders rise and address the points raised earlier by G. Stu, now ensconced in a totally uncharacteristic silence.

Bo Bo stands up. "As to how we are said 'to look' or 'not to look,' I ask you to look over at Cora—and all due respect to you, Cora, as I say this—but brothers and sisters, isn't Cora, a bona fide CNO member, only at 1/256ths Cherokee, more non-Cherokee by far than most of us,

even most of us Outlanders? I am a North Carolina Cherokee, a little less than half Cherokee by blood, but even if I'm not CNO, aren't I just as much Cherokee as Cora, or any of you?" There are calls of agreement, from both the CNO writers and the Outlander ones.

Waleila Tote stands to be heard.

"I want to respond to what our brother G. Stu said about having enrollment cards as being the only qualifier of whether or not one is a real Cherokee. Well, I spent most of my early years in California after our family was relocated there in the Dark Ages period of the fifties and sixties, and I know of many Cherokees who were born there whom we never allowed to be put on the tribal rolls. Remember, that was a time when the government was making another one of its efforts to get rid of Indians. By not allowing, or even not informing parents of the whole process, many young ones were not enrolled and were therefore disenfranchised. As I say, I know many who were victimized by that process. And many of them were Cherokees."

Everyone assents to her point. Enrollment, then, is not the be-all or end-all requirement, seems now to be the consensus.

Chiki Dee Deedeelow now stands and, in a heavy Texas accent, seconds all that Waleila, the marvelous hummingbird, has said. "I saw the same thing in Texas, growing up there in the seventies," she says. "I've known jillions of Indians without cards." She pauses, then amends her statement with a giggle. "Well, maybe not jillions. Billions is more like it."

Everyone laughs. The mood of things is clearly on the mend. There is a sense of airiness, of high-flown sentiment, of airborne softness, as of a dove's downy breast.

Very promptly, others stand and offer counterarguments to those that G. Stu had put forth, until finally, a moment of contention arises. Flora Deeley-Knotts, with blond hair and blue eyes, stands and in a storm of indignation assails the convention.

"Well," she says. "I for one am not going to apologize for my 1/256th degree of Cherokee blood. Nor my fairness of hair and complexion. Is it my fault that my ancestry—my Cherokee connection—is so far back in history? What counts is now. Is it my fault that I can prove it, and most of you others can't?"

Out of pique and with an uncharacteristic edge of anger, Sully Humdinger stands and counters her argument.

"My degree of blood quantum goes back that far, too, young lady," he says. "But the real issue is what particular individuals did with the tribal rolls at various times in our history. Now my folks didn't get on any of the Cherokee rolls. We hid out in the Kentucky and West Virginia hills during the Trail of Tears. As did hundreds of other folks. Maybe even thousands. Some even speak some of the language today. Is this dismissible, simply because they weren't assigned a 'white man's number'?"

Sully is disgruntled with himself, principally because he knows he has uncharacteristically related something in a, to him, too personal manner. It does not accord with his long-held views of what and how a scholar should comport himself. He feels that he has dirtied not only Ms. Deeley-Knotts, but also himself. He quickly glances over at her and thinks that he sees that she is equally discombobulated. He determines to make amends to her afterward.

"And another thing," says Bo Bo. "Dr. Leverett, I believe you have been sailing under a questionable flag. You indict Wannabes and seek to purge them from the CNO or anything even remotely Cherokee. Well, then, how about yourself?" Bo Bo asks, looking owlishly without a single blink of the eye.

"What do you mean? I'm no damned Wannabe!" G. Stu says, getting steamed.

"Well, what about your claims to being a writer? Do self-published grant proposals make one a writer?" She smiles as she says this.

"Well, why the hell not?" G. Stu steams. "Somebody might find some good out of them someday."

"True. But you overlook one difference between yourself and most of the other writers here." Bo Bo is still smiling.

"What's that, Little Miss Know-it-all?"

"For one thing, you are almost the only self-published writer here. There's been no process of refereeing with regard to your work. Therefore, you are a Wannabe writer." She smiles, with a surprising degree of uncharacteristic meanness, and repeats:. "A Wannabe!"

Several around are laughing, and among the hardest is Juley Chatsmith, old Foxy himself.

"Don't laugh, Foxy. You are also a self-published writer, for the most part."

Foxy is immediately pissed. But he sits down and keeps his mouth shut.

"So what it all boils down to, ladies and gentlemen, is a continual lesson in the willingness to accept without undue judgment and harshness. Of tolerance. Of forbearance," says Jonah.

Then, little Thelma Small stands and speaks.

"How do we know that all the Cherokees are represented here today? We see that there are not only Cherokees from Oklahoma, but also Arkansas and North Carolina and Texas and on and on. How can we know where all of them are? Or even *who* they are?"

She is applauded as she resumes her seat. Then Twisty gets up.

"How can we judge people by only one way—whether they have a card and such? How about, as Dr. Humdinger put it, people who haven't had cards for generations but yet still speak the Cherokee language? Are they, then, any less real Cherokees than those with cards who don't know even a word of the language?"

Then Dr. Justin H. Danielson stands to speak.

"Yes, you are both right," and he nods toward both Thelma and Twisty. "There are language speakers who aren't then real Cherokees, by Dr. Leverett's definition, and there are blond, miniscule-fractioned blood quantum Cherokees determined to be so because of an enrollment number. Why, then, can't we agree that there isn't just one way to be Cherokee, but actually several?"

He is applauded as he sits down.

Then Wally stands. He takes off his glasses and cleans them with a small cloth as he begins to speak. He blinks his eyes continuously as he does.

"I think we ought to all recall the greatest of all Cherokees—at least for those of us who are dedicated to the notions of literacy and education and communication and so forth—none other than Sequoyah himself.

"Sequoyah, you will remember, after he set our people on the road to literacy, the ability to read and write the language, turned his attention to another matter."

He pauses. The audience is quiet. As he replaces his glasses, he continues speaking.

"He was an old man then, after coming to the western country—which to him was at first Arkansas, you'll all recall; then, it was Indian Territory—and he found something missing. In fact, he found a lot of somethings missing. He was wondering where the Lost Cherokees were."

There are sounds of approval to what Wally has been saying. He continues: "But I will let my much younger colleagues finish here, if you all don't mind," and he nods to Thelma and Twisty.

"*Wado*, Dr. Baldon," says Thelma. "Yes, for Sequoyah, the Lost Cherokees weren't just those lost in all the movings-west before the Trail of Tears. Then, there were literally hundreds, maybe a thousand or so, who have all along been counted as among the dead on the Trail of Tears, but who, probably, because they escaped and hid out in the hills and river bottoms and stayed in areas of the march country—Tennessee and Kentucky and Ohio and Indiana and Illinois and Missouri and Arkansas—were counted as dead by the military conductors on the trek. There were also some who had, according to legend, gone on into what is now Colorado, the Rockies, and who knows where else?"

"Sequoyah, as you all know, went to Mexico, because he'd heard that there were Lost Cherokees there, too," said Twisty, standing side by side with Thelma.

"Brothers and sisters," says Sully as he joins the two younger people standing in front of the audience, while gesturing to Wally to join them. "The Lost Cherokees, then, are literally everywhere. Why don't we, then, as the so-called educated ones of our people, make it our destiny to look for the Lost Cherokees? To find them and add them to our numbers, whether it be in Oklahoma or Kentucky or wherever."

"I agree with you all," Jonah says as he joins them standing in front of the audience. "We can respect people who say they are Cherokees by blood, or by enrollment number, or by how they do and think and speak things—all are aspects of Cherokeeness. We just have to keep remembering good old Sequoyah."

"Yes," says Jeffie Honored. "Now that we, in the modern age, have such things as computers, the Internet, blogs, television, DNA testing, and so forth, we ought to be able to find our lost ones much more easily."

"Then our job is in all actuality just beginning," says Bo Bo.

There is applause as people turn to one another, talking over all that has been going on.

"It looks like things are ending on a positive note, don't you think?" asks Flora to Waleila as they enjoy a cup of coffee together.

"Yeah, we really racked up the points there at the end, didn't we?" Waleila says.

Suddenly there is a commotion at the entrance to the auditorium, of

many people coming in, talking and laughing. And so, maybe it wasn't all over yet. It is an entourage of writers with names like Rattlesnake Romero and Culebra Jose Blackstrike and Maria Goingback and Juan Salazar Guess and Martin Kingsnake Quintana and gosh, who knows who else?

"*Buenas Osiyo*, *compadres y diginotli*! We are the Mexican Cherokees," says Rattlesnake Romero. "The children of the ones that old Sequoyah found. The legend is true, amigos."

And Sully and Foxy and Wally and Bo Bo and, yes, even G. Stu himself, walk down the aisle toward them, hands extended in greeting and smiles aplenty. How long before they petition for a place in the overall nationhood of Cherokee?

Afterward, in a herd of the younger scholars discussing the day's events, they still seem nonplussed by all that has occurred. Like young elks and deer and moose and antelopes, they masticate the subject over and over again.

"Well, one thing we can come away with," says Dr. Nelson Joshua.

The others look at him, and when he doesn't say anything further, Dr. Wave Jason asks him what it is.

Nelson smiles, says: "The toleration of diversified views."

"Come again?" Suagee K. Beauty asks.

"The ability, or the willingness, to tolerate differing points of view. Something I recall in my study of Elias Boudinot. I believe we've been seeing that whole endeavor endangered—threatened in ways we hadn't even banked on before."

"Yes, you're right. It's good that old Sully and Jonah seemed to always have that in mind," Justin Danielson says. Hud Brianson agrees.

And at another table Foxy turns to Sully as they each sit enjoying late afternoon coffee. He looks as if he has something on his mind. He does, and he brings it out.

"You know, I can't help but think about the topic we all came here thinking we would be discussing—which of the variants of 'The Animals' Ballgame' is the real one, the more authentic. Which do you think it is?"

Sully clears his throat, smiles a small smile, and ducks his head in his characteristic fashion.

"Oh, that's easy," he says. And he pauses and looks shrewdly at Foxy,

and Foxy, waiting for the answer, knits his brows and is about to repeat his question when Sully answers.

"They all are."

"Why? Why do you say that?"

"Because everyone always tells the story in his or her own way. No matter the minor changes, from one telling to the next, story to story, each one is always true and special. We should never forget that."

A bit later on, Sully muses, the symposium's systematic sidetracking was all for the best, as it turned out. Instead of examinations of the various versions of "The Animals' Ballgame," we were at last confronted with that ticklish Authenticity/Identity within/without the CNO subject. When, and why, did that happen? The why was vague, but the when was when old G. Stu Leverett shanghaied things, with his questions about how people look (and don't look), and about why, then, if claiming to be Cherokee, are they not living in Oklahoma, and such and such? Well, now that we've tackled that, what next in terms of topics? Sully thought for a while; then he recalled listening to the brown-haired, light-complexioned Sal Ekorre as she expounded about property and policy rights for particular citizens in the Nation, sounding like a right-wing Republican (which she is)—well, a possible topic might be: Cherokee mixed-bloods as baronage and/or would-be (Wannabe?) royalty. That ought to raise a hackle or two.

"Now that the confab is over, I can't for the life of me recall what we were arguing about to begin with. Can you?" says Jonah.

"No, I can't say that I can either," Sully replies.

And so the game—or the conference—ends.

BOOK REVIEWS

Grace L. Dillon. *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*. Sun Tracks: An American Indian Literary Ser. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-8165-2982-7. 260 pp.

Amy Gore, *Montana State University*

Walking the Clouds ventures a competent exploration into the infrequently discussed area of Indigenous literary genre. Dillon posits that science fiction (SF) "provides an equally valid way to renew, recover, and extend First Nations peoples' voices and traditions" (1), a position that contributes to a celebration of these authors' artistic accomplishments as well as opening up a refreshingly new realm of study for Indigenous literary critics. Her central question, as stated in her introduction, asks, "[W]hat exactly *is* science fiction? Does SF have the capacity to envision Native futures, Indigenous hopes, and dreams recovered by rethinking the past in a new framework?" (2). Even readers unfamiliar with science fiction and skeptical of its juxtaposition with Indigenous literature may find themselves likewise convinced that both fields "have much to gain by the exchange" (2).

Dillon's anthology represents an international array of Indigenous writers, from familiar authors such as Sherman Alexie to less familiar writers such as Celu Amberstone. Her introductions to each selection of fiction provide a critical framework in that she helpfully places the selection in relation to the rest of the anthology, as well as providing its contextualization within the more general realm of the science fiction genre. Particularly enjoyable in the introduction to each piece of fiction are occasional passages from the particular authors, commenting on the connection between their work and the science fiction category. Some,

like Diane Glancy, openly acknowledge that their work was not originally conceived within science fiction, as she states: "I was happy 'Aunt Parnetta's Electric Blisters' was in the Norton SF reader. I hadn't thought of the story in terms of SF, but after it appeared there, I understood. The story is about . . . that combination of tradition and technology" (27). Another writer, Stephen Graham Jones, commenting on the genre and his own work, expresses: "it's got to be science fiction . . . that's what I grew up reading, what I still read, what I aspire to write when and if I ever get good enough. Science fiction, it can instill a sense of wonder in you like no other mode, no other genre" (233). These personal connections between authors and texts further convey to the reader the importance of the critical lens of science fiction as an additional tool in which to read and share Indigenous literature, even if at first the combination seems like an odd pairing. Celu Amberstone stresses this importance, saying, "For me, Aboriginal SF isn't about robots and sterile Euro-American physics and astronomy. . . . It is our responsibility to offer humanity a new vision of the universe" (63).

Dillon divides the anthology into five sections, the first of which she entitles "The Native Slipstream." This section addresses the alternative ways in which science fiction represents time, and offers selections by Gerald Vizenor, Diane Glancy, Stephen Graham Jones, and Sherman Alexie in which they use the conventions of the genre to experiment with Indigenous nonlinear concepts of temporality. Dillon emphasizes within this subgenre the possibilities of alternative histories and creative, futuristic imaginings for Indigenous writers. Readers of this first section will begin to make connections between the slipstream and the experimentations of other Indigenous literature, such as Blake M. Hausman's *Riding the Trail of Tears*, an acclaimed work of fiction perhaps too recent to be included in the anthology, that also defies linear expectations of time.

The next section, "Contact," notes the potential play within the titular concept as Indigenous science fiction writers confront the genre's common trope of cosmological imperialism. Selections from Celu Amberstone, Gerry William, and Simon Ortiz highlight their revisions of the genre's typical Self/Other representations, complicating mainstream notions of what is human and what is alien. Doing so thus calls into question through Indigenous perspectives the space odyssey's mission of contact, discovery, and conquest. The inclusion of Ortiz's short story

"Men on the Moon" is especially memorable in this section as the science fiction framework revitalizes the story's emphasis on conflicting epistemologies, humorously stated from the viewpoint of the grandfather Faustin. As he watches, bewildered, the televised *Apollo 11* moon mission and tries almost Socratically to understand his grandson's explanations that the men "believed there was no life on the moon" yet were still "trying to find knowledge," the narrator slyly devalues a perfunctory awe of scientific advancement (93). Faustin wonders to himself if these men need "special tools" to find knowledge where there is no life, and as to learning the origin of life: "Hasn't anyone ever told them?" (93).

Dillon's final three sections, "Indigenous Science and Sustainability," "Native Apocalypse," and "Biskaabiiyang, 'Returning to Ourselves,'" offer further subcategories of Indigenous science fiction. The first of these reminds readers of the significance of *science* to science fiction and includes selections from Nalo Hopkinson, Gerald Vizenor, Andrea Hairston, and Archie Weller, whose writings "reenlist the science of indigeneity in a discourse that invites discerning readers to realize that Indigenous science is not just complementary to a perceived western enlightenment but is indeed integral to a refined twenty-first-century sensibility" (3). As an example, the excerpt from Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* includes interactions between an Indigenous animal person (Chichibud) and exiled people persons (Antonio and Tan-Tan), the latter of whom find themselves in a new environment and must rely on the Indigenous ecological science of the stranger Chichibud for their survival. Stories such as these offer more holistic visions of the universe and the future, a vital component for our imaginings of survival in science fiction.

"Native Apocalypse," and "Biskaabiiyang, 'Returning to Ourselves,'" address more overtly Indigenous futuristic imaginings, both identifying fiction that reenvisions historical, apocalyptic trauma as a means of healing. Dillon points out common historical events that are often revisited and reversed in Native writing, most notably the Ghost Dance, which "may be the most widespread image connected to Native Apocalypse" (9). The two sections become more intimately connected as Dillon argues that "Native Apocalypse is really that state of imbalance," necessitating Indigenous science fiction storytelling as one means of moving toward healing, a "return to ourselves." Certainly all of the selections in these final sections represent empowerment, "encourag-

ing Native writers to write about Native conditions in Native-centered worlds liberated by the imagination" (11).

Walking the Clouds clearly represents a distillation of extensive, thorough research within both Indigenous studies and science fiction. Dillon's introduction to the anthology and to each selection contains numerous references to outside resources, ranging from comparative science fiction and its generic study to Indigenous theory and contemporary film. Readers who wish to continue their own explorations in Indigenous science fiction as a result of this anthology will find these resources helpful in future critical analyses or in compiling texts for a special topics course. This anthology would also be an excellent addition to introductory classes on Indigenous literature, offering an attractive new segment for students. Finally, Dillon's anthology not only offers an innovative study of comparative literature but also delivers an excellent example of how to compose such a compilation for those who might follow her lead into this brave new world of Indigenous literary genre.

Colin Calloway, ed. *Ledger Narratives: The Plains Indian Drawings of the Lansburgh Collection at Dartmouth College*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2012. ISBN: 9780806142975. 283 pp.

Richard Pearce, *Wheaton College*

In 2010 Joyce M. Szabo, author of three major books on ledger art, was invited to direct a series of weekly seminars at Dartmouth's Hood Museum, working with more than 140 ledger drawings in their Lansburgh Collection. This large collection provided an ideal opportunity for five young scholars to join with Szabo in reframing and expanding our knowledge of the picture-narratives in ledger art. Two years later Dartmouth's Colin Calloway, author of *One Vast Winter Count*, edited the product of these seminars in *Ledger Narratives: The Plains Indian Drawings of the Lansburgh Collection at Dartmouth College*, where he introduces us to the rich history of ledger art as well as exemplary drawings in the Lansburgh Collection.

Joyce Szabo follows with her chapter, "Battles, Courting, and Changing Lives: The Mark Lansburgh Collection." She explains that the unique and important Mark Lansburgh Collection was the result of many years of collecting and lecturing about medieval art—particularly

illuminated manuscripts. Then she traces the evolution of warriors drawing an individual's brave deeds on hide to picturing them in more detail in books of paper, particularly those used by accountants. During the reservation period, when men could no longer play their traditional roles, images of war deeds were replaced by scenes of hunting and courtship. And in the transitional period between 1875 and 1878 drawings by warriors imprisoned in Fort Marion formed a pictorial record of their journey from Fort Sill in Indian Territory to St. Augustine and of their lives in prison. During each of these periods, Szabo points out, the drawings had a different meaning or function. In the pre-reservation period they established a warrior's status in his warrior society and tribe. At Fort Marion they not only established his status in prison, but they also served as a means of communicating with prisoners from five different tribes and the tourists in St. Augustine. And on the reservations they served as a way of preserving their history of daily life. Szabo finally brings both her vast knowledge and analytic power to bear on ten representative drawings.

In "Striving for Recognition," Michael Paul Jordan expands on the role of ledger drawings in establishing and maintaining social status during the reservation period. He examines seventeen drawings of coups, which continued to be recited in meetings of warrior societies on the southern plains, even during the reservation period. And he shows that status was achieved not only by bravery but also by wealth and access to powerful spiritual forces. Wealth is reflected in the many ledgers where warriors' elaborate regalia and weapons are drawn in detail. For example, in the "Old White Woman's Ledger," a Cheyenne artist portrays himself literally surrounded by his possessions—his horse with its silver-decorated bridle, buckskin leggings, breastplate, beaded blanket strip, eagle-feather fan, and a bonnet. And access to spiritual forces is reflected in three drawings of warriors holding a shield and emerging unscathed from a shower of bullets or arrows. It is also reflected in two drawings of a Sun Dance ceremony, a quest for spiritual power. Two facing pages picture a Sun Dance camp and a close-up of the crowd bearing witness to a warrior with his body pierced and bleeding as he dances away from the Sun Dance pole.

Jenny Tone-Pah-Hote illuminates the role of intercultural connections in "Illustrating Encounters: Trade, Travel, and Warfare in Southern Plains Ledger Drawing, 1875–1880." These connections resulted

from warfare, trade, and intertribal visiting, which Tone-Pah-Hote explains in historic detail and substantiates through analysis. She begins with "Osage War Dance," by an unknown Kiowa artist, where the five dancers are identified not only by their dress and objects they carry, but by labels, which they learned to write at Fort Marion: Osage, Pawnee, and Kiowa. In another drawing the Cheyenne artist Chief Killer pictures a scene of Mexican traders wearing hats (a conventional way of identifying Euro-American traders) while riding into a Cheyenne village. A bow and arrow (a result of a mutual exchange) is carried by one of the Comancheros. And she discusses a courting scene by Kiowa artist Koba or Etahdleuh. In the scene of five couples courting, each of the individuals wears a product of people from different cultures "interconnected through webs of trade" (40).

In "Unsettling Accounts: The Violent Economies of the Ledger," Melanie Benson Taylor challenges the common presumption that the "drawings constitute vital artifacts of resistance . . . managing to safeguard tribal memory and tradition in bold, striking, and defiant lines on the intrusive surfaces of enemy paper." Instead, she urges us to "explore . . . the extent to which these drawings signify not just coercion but complicity, not a writing *over* but a writing inextricably tangled *within* all that the ledger represents" (189–90).

She begins by placing ledger drawing in comparative historical context. "It is not mere happenstance," she argues, "that the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865 transitioned seamlessly in the violent ongoing crusade to eradicate the Great Plains of Natives impeding the settlement of the American West" (190). She cites historians who show that Reconstruction includes the rebuilding of the American South and a "federal agenda . . . to forcibly remake the nation into an industrial-capitalist organism, a project that requires the dispossession of the plantation South and the Indian territories." And she sees the evidence of capitalism when over the pages of account books are striking images of violent warfare and ostentatious displays of acquisitions (horses, regalia, accoutrements, and weapons)—or, as Michael Jordan has noted, "trappings of wealth and status" (193). The most striking evidence of what she calls "entangled complicity" is "Buffalo Meat's Price Menu," composed of both images and words he learned to write at Fort Marion to indicate each item's value on the lines of the ledger.

Art historian Mary Peterson Zundo turns from economics to geog-

raphy in "New Geographies and Surveying Eyes." She focuses on the Southern Cheyenne artist Chief Killer, whose drawings are distinguished by landscape, rather than action, and who uses the American landscape "as a new means through which to express his Native identity and understanding of the world" (201). Most of Chief Killer's drawings are of what he saw while being taken from Fort Sill in Indian Territory to Fort Marion on the coast of Florida. While other warrior artists were picturing warriors in detailed regalia or scenes of hunting and courtship, Chief Killer paid attention to the details of the changing landscape on his trip across the country, to the size and color of the houses surrounding Fort Marion, to the ships sailing up the bay past the prison, and to the landscape on the far shore, including the hills and telegraph poles. He also drew western landscapes, which contrast with his views of the town.

Chief Killer's landscapes "share certain features with, and possibly operate compositionally, like maps—not like the Euclidian maps printed by far away Philadelphian cartographers, but maps that reflect a Native experience of space and place based on lived experience in that land" (210). Significantly, this was a time when America was developing the science of surveying and mapmaking—to divide and sell sections of Native land and patrol it to protect white settlers and railroad building. "Perhaps not surprisingly," Zundo tells us, "it was, in part, a deadly encounter with a party of surveyors that landed Chief Killer in prison" (203).

Vera B. Palmer took part in a support program for Native Americans in three different prisons. In "Tracing the Schoolhouse/Big House Legacy: Ledger Art and Prison Work," she argues that ledger art, with its roots in the Fort Marion prison, where seventy-two Indians were encouraged to create ledger art, was part of "the education/civilizing process" (220). Having introduced several contemporary Native American prisoners to ledger art, Palmer juxtaposes the drawings it inspired with drawings from the Lansburgh Collection. For instance, she juxtaposes the "Vincent Price Ledger," where an unknown ledger artist depicts a warrior "poised to count coup while his enemy hides, crouched in a tiny enclosed space," with a drawing by a Lakota prisoner she calls Ray in the Auburn maximum security facility in New York State (a prison built in 1813 on the site of a former Cayuga tribal village). Ray's drawing, called *Two Images of a Self* (1998), contains three successive drawings. First is an image of "a Native self, imprisoned [behind bars] by his own rage, while [in the next image] his alter ego brings solace and

strength, offering the Sacred Pipe through the bars. The pipe-bearer self appears 'free' compared to the confined self of pent up anger." The final image, "an aerial view of side-by-side prison cells, suggests that the two 'selves' endure identical circumstances, but their responses to the same conditions are completely different" (225–26).

In her concluding essay, "Reconstructing History from a Fragmented Past," Joyce Szabo complicates the "multiple narratives" in the Lansburgh Collection, first by exposing what we can never know about the drawings and then by expanding what we now know. We do not know the context of individual drawings, for they were made under different forms of duress, detached from their context as parts of complete books, divorced from their original uses within the societies that made them, and, in the case of those made in Fort Marion, lacking the cultural associations of the other tribes in Florida. Nonetheless, with her vast knowledge and careful scholarship, Szabo expands our knowledge of twenty-one multilayered drawings, some from the Lansburgh Collection and others from museums across the country.

Szabo explains how Ohettoint's shark-hunting scene connected the warriors with their previous life as hunters. And she exposes the humor in his whimsical drawing of an umbrella falling from the lighthouse on Anastasia Island. She analyzes the multiple narratives in Chief Killer's view of a classroom, which includes the word *God* and signatures of various prisoners—all of which reflect the prisoners' attempts at assimilation and declaration of their identity in a new system. She expands the historical record and the interpretations of reservation drawings, celebrates renowned warriors, and discusses the status of army scouts and agency police. Indeed, Szabo's final essay forms a fitting conclusion to the weekly seminars at Dartmouth's Hood Museum and the expanded knowledge provided in the essays of all the participants.

Susan A. Miller and James Riding In, eds. *Native Historians Write Back: Decolonizing American Indian History*. Lubbock: Texas Tech UP, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-89672-732-8. 384 pp.

Julianne Newmark, *New Mexico Tech*

The volume *Native Historians Write Back: Decolonizing American Indian History*, edited by Susan A. Miller and James Riding In, is a useful and

tightly curated collection of essays by prominent Native scholars, all united in a mission to "challenge academic hegemony" and to "expose the dishonesty of . . . hegemonic myths," as the editors reveal in their introduction. As a supplement to the primary textual materials most examined by scholars of Indigenous literatures, this collection of essays reveals the disciplinary decolonization tactics used by Indigenous historians, tactics employed in academic and home-community domains.

As Susan A. Miller writes in the volume's opening essay, "Native America Writes Back: The Origins of the Indigenous Paradigm in Historiography," the writing of Indigenous history must serve Indian communities, as must American Indian studies as a discipline. In this way the sharp contrast with traditional American historical study is drawn: the work of Indigenous historiographers is decidedly *not* neutral (38). In such work, names are named and events are described accurately with terms such as *atrocity* or *genocide*, which non-Native historians have typically avoided (14). Indian communities must benefit by the work, and Indigenous historiography must not "encode the innocence of the nation-state in their invasions and seizures of Indigenous peoples' lands" (23). Such explanations indicate the tenor of this collection and its relevance to scholars of Indigenous literatures, for whom this volume can serve as a companion to titles in literary studies that advocate for Indigenous/tribal approaches to Native texts and the application of theoretical, analytic lenses that emerge from Native communities and discourses (well-known texts in this vein are Robert Allen Warrior's *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*; Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Warrior's *American Indian Literary Nationalism*; and Womack's *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*).

Native Historians Write Back begins with Miller and Riding In's useful introduction, which positions the text as one unapologetically designed to first address and then reject colonial paradigms as they pertain to the telling of Indigenous histories. The four sections that follow feature previously published works by leading Indigenous historians from many tribes. The first section, "Challenging Colonial Thought," features two essays by Miller along with essays by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Lomayumtewa C. Ishii. In her essay that begins the section, Miller identifies the specific inheritance, from the meeting of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in 1975, of the directive that Indigenous historiography must not "encode the innocence of nation-states in their invasions

and seizures of Indigenous people's lands" (23). Cook-Lynn's examination of the Lewis and Clark story unites the territorial and the textual as she decries the forms of American celebratory history in which "the white . . . individual . . . [is] at the center . . . and the Native is a mere prop" (47). Similarly, Ishii engages the question of the appropriateness of using non-Indigenous theories even in his own study (such as in his application of Edward Said's and Mary Louise Pratt's approaches). He proposes a "for Hopis by Hopis" mechanism, a theme that resonates in the theoretical designs outlined by the authors in the remaining sections of the volume.

Section 2 of the collection, "Affirming Indigenous Historical Narratives," features essays by Vine Deloria Jr., Matthew L. Jones, Winona Stevenson, and Leanne Simpson. A passage of Deloria's accurately captures the authorial objectives of the essays in this section, all of which reveal a debt to Deloria's valuable work on affirming the essential and critical value of Indigenous oral testimony. In the 1977 essay "The United States Has No Jurisdiction in Sioux Territory," included as the first essay in this section, Deloria writes, "Many of us feel that the oral tradition is . . . more accurate in preserving the spirit and meaning of . . . negotiations than the written record or any attempt by a state or federal court to interpret [a] treaty" (74). Following in this vein, essays by Jones and Stevenson reveal the Indigenous storytelling way of preserving and privileging Indigenous (for Jones, Otoe-Missouria, and for Stevenson, Cree) accounts in an effort to destabilize colonial discourse. Simpson's essay historicizes Nishnaabeg assumptions regarding initial treaties with the Canadian government, who they assumed (as in other treaties to which they were accustomed) would not violate their sovereignty as a consequence of such negotiations (101).

Section 3 features essays by Donna L. Akers, Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, James Riding In, and Steven J. Crum on the theme "Asserting the History of Dispossession." Akers's essay points out the inexcusable reality that many historians of Native people are not Native-language speakers, thereby perpetuating through language alone the persistence of "racialist or colonialist thinking" (106). Wilson uses stories from her own family, that her grandmother "carried," to reveal a long-established awareness on the part of Native people of the ways in which their own accounts "subvert[ed] the usual historical narratives" (127). Riding In explores the consequences of the trial of four Pawnee men for the mur-

der of a white man, Edward McMurty, in Nebraska, a case that stands as a gross example of "the extension of US criminal jurisdiction over Pawnees" in the mid- to late nineteenth century (168). Riding In examines the highly charged, racist landscape in Nebraska in which the "rampant anti-Indian bias" ensured that no fair trial or treatment of Pawnees was possible. Crum's essay describes the long legacy of the lack of survey documentation for the Ruby Valley Shoshone agency. Crum tracks references to the "six-square-mile" reservation both in oral accounts and in government documents and reports on Native practices of remembering that, in their persistence, today continue to challenge white practices of forgetting. These essays in section 3 are united by their attention to Native tactics of "not forgetting" and the wounds that open as a result of colonial devaluation of Native memory. Works of historiography such as these essays aim to attend to, and work to heal, these wounds.

The volume's final section, "Examining Issues in Light of History," begins with Jennifer Nez Denetdale's discussion of the invisibility of women in "theorizations of the nationalist phenomenon" and their status as "hidden" in "discourse[s] surrounding Indian nations and nationalisms" (177). Denetdale's focus is on the rival models of Diné womanhood in the political and performative domains as represented by women's attempts to be political leaders and their long history as representatives of the tribe as Miss Navajo Nation. By using non-Native feminist and postcolonial critics (Chandra Mohanty and Anne McClintock) as she crafts her own theorizations, Denetdale reveals one of the central themes of this volume: the utility (or inutility) of non-Native discourse in the telling of and in critical engagement with Native histories. Another essay of Miller's appears in this section, a consideration of the designation, and desired rights, of "Seminole Freedmen." Miller writes, powerfully, that black Indian discourse "[is] but one thread of the hegemonic historical narrative that props up American colonial power in Native America" (188). Myla Vicenti Carpio's essay offers an empowered account of the ways in which outpost colonies of the Laguna function as parts of that tribe, despite their members' physical distance from the home community. She affirms the "authenticity" of urban Indians and offers several first-person accounts by members of the Albuquerque colony to reveal how the colony supports the larger tribe and serves to preserve and promote Laguna cultural identity in an urban context through various activities. An essay by James Riding In concludes the volume's fourth section. He considers the collection of Native crania

by white American scientists in the mid-nineteenth century. Riding In explains the processes of recovery undertaken by the Pawnee people today to reclaim Pawnee crania that were seized in the nineteenth century. Riding In declares the symbolic and societal weight of the unburied Pawnee crania, a declaration that serves as the concluding, resounding note of the volume. He enunciates the need for continued Indigenous vigilance in preserving and protecting Indian bodies, languages, land—collectively conceived and deployed by present-day Native historians as history retold and corrected on Native terms.

This volume is a useful one for scholars and students of Native American literature; it is a well-structured companion to texts in literary studies that do related work of textual decolonization. Miller and Riding In's volume collects important studies by leading Indigenous historians from the last three decades. This view informs the reader that the work of decolonization taken on by today's Indigenous historians was formally begun in an academic context decades ago and in home-community contexts more than a century ago via oral resistance to white hegemonic narratives and political incursions. The editors aid readers by opening each chapter with a concise prefatory note that positions the subsequent essays within the broader framework of the collection, a handy tool for those who have not encountered these essays elsewhere. Taken together, these essays are united by a mission, as Miller writes, to privilege "texts by Indigenous historiographers" in the telling of Native history and to prefer "Indigenous testimony" in such work. The proposals offered by this collection resonate with the clarity of their counterhegemonic purpose: the objective of such work is to promote the continuation of historiographic decolonization, which Native and non-Native scholars and Indigenous community members can practice and from which all can benefit.

dg nanouk okpik. *corpse whale*. Sun Tracks: An American Indian Literary Ser. 73. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-8165-2674-1. 101 pp.

Jasmine Johnston, *University of British Columbia, Vancouver*

While I was searching the library stacks for a book on ecological poetics, dg nanouk okpik's *corpse whale* caught my eye. A whale, a corpse?

I took it off the shelf and opened it to a poem named "Drying Magma Near Illiamna." "We lying in the onyx rain by garnet-cloaking icebergs," it asserts, and it mentions watching polar bears and watching puffins "with nests / filled with ruby eggs of egrets." The complexities of clause, lineation, and white space between words and stanzas are almost immediately subsumed by black and red—gemlike rain, bloodied ocean water obscured by green and blue ice, petrified mountain architecture, fluorescing eggs. okpik's film-negative imagery evokes the still-pluming and glacier-covered Mount Iliamna volcano in a region of Alaska that has been a locus for precontact to present-time Indigenous settlements and is now a contested site for open-pit mine development. In between these historical moments the speakers of the poem "lurk and twitch blood gales" as geological time surges and recedes. "Trails of sea cows reach the mountains / with meltwater draining off the peaks," and Alyeska "dissolves in mud" while the speakers "live in earth mounds" that "mutate into slat board" and "quiver into the sea." The poem ends with images that fuse past and present, flesh and stone: "Serpentine / women touch minerals of DNA to gather strength."

As I read through the rest of the collection, I debated whether okpik's imagery is surrealistic or mythopoeic. I found myself looking up information on geology and geography; shamans; whales, polar bears, and sea birds; multiply-named and multiply-souled agents human, animal, and otherwise; features of Inupiatun grammar; environmental rights. So I think the book is both surreal and mythic; it is complex, recondite, knowledgeable, passionate. As I continue to read about historical and spiritual features of Inuit culture, I realize more and more that okpik's poems offer a course in a way of being that is utterly inimitable, steeped as it is in her life experiences and studies. Her epigraphs, glossary, and profoundly vivid vocabulary throughout demonstrate the hard work she puts into her poetry and the hard work required to interpret her poetry.

"The greatest peril of life lies in the fact human food consists entirely of souls," runs the first of two epigraphs (the words are Buster Kailek's). The second, from a shaman named Orpingalik, concludes, "When the words we want to use shoot up of themselves—we get a new song." Although okpik's poems are densely learned solutions to complex problems, they are also instantly compelling songs. As I read over the pages, ocean and ice, pharynx and marmot, skin boat and meteor, whalebone and cyberspace, squid poison and tundra, Gilgamesh and Sarah Palin, fireweed and

frog precipitate in the mind and insinuate themselves into the mouth. The poems, which combine Inuit with Euro-American bodies of knowledge, are punctuated by the twelve months of the Roman calendar translated into Inupiatun moons; each of these moon-poems transmits and transmutes lore. "*Suvluravik Tatqiq*," for example, is the "May / Moon When the Rivers Flow"; the month evokes the "Edible Ice Worm / Moon when fawns are born" in a way that mimics "her/my plasma made of stag beetles lily flowers." The "her/my" construction is common in many of okpik's poems; the poet-speaker's voice is often tandem, operating in both the first person and third person to uncanny effect.

She and I, I and she: the greater one's body of awareness, the more apparent the visionary and deeply analogical sense of okpik's poems becomes. For example, in one of the major poems in okpik's collection, "For the Spirits-Who-Have-Not-Yet-Rounded-the-Bend," the poet-speaker is "dancing in the midnight sun not for law, or man, but for whale and blood." Whales and blood have their own rationalities, their own dynamic syllogisms, their own positions of articulation, their own worlds. Reading these poems, I think of belugas caught in icepack and narwhals whose left teeth spell sex and rank and perhaps serve to sense changes in temperature, water pressure, and salinity, indications of freezing ice (ever a danger). I think of lore concerning the origin of narwhals in the body of a woman hunting who was dragged under the surface of the ocean. Her hair twisted together in the water to form the narwhal's tusk—a transformation that must have involved tortuous spiraling in sea currents and subzero freezing of filamentous keratin into a bony (toothy) spear. I think, too, of polar bears in their maternity dens, tunneled in and enclosed for months until the mother breaks through the snow to venture miles more to the edge of the ice for seal meat. Life takes life.

By putting the names of every living thing in northern life—obsidian and persimmon, bulldozers and eclipses, I and she—in the mouth of the speaker, the poet becomes more than human and also less. This transhuman glory, so vivid on the page, so visceral in the mind, is an encompassing and etiolating ecological vision. Ecological in all the senses of what is within and without, large and small, hidden and bare, underneath and overhead, past and present and future. It is a work never finished and, I would think, a work difficult to begin. Like the originary hunter-turned-narwhal, the poet-speaker in the central poem of the collection, "Her/My Arctic: Corpse Whale," paddles past a "narwhal,"

past a "purple octopus grabbing the rearview mirrors," past "flouncing caribou," until "she/I witness/es in triple thick permafrost of sea and land" a "merging" between the "sinew back" and "threaded / bones of the land." So okpik's poetics are always a merging.

Writing in this mode is always to be becoming; writing and reading in such a mode demands attention to the mutual influence between the form of the text and the content it evokes. It seems to me that okpik's poetics are, in addition to transhuman, focused on language. Her practice of code switching between Inuit and English requires the reader to pay close attention to the orthographical and aural textures of the poems as well as the cultural idioms she intercalates—spirits as well as *inua* (animated yet mortal animals), song as well as *sila* (soul that is breath and breath that is the direction of one's life). I think of the morphological structure of Inuit language; words are formed by adding a number of morphemes to a root to produce many new and unique lexical options. Each of these potentially unique words commands, in turn, unique polysemies upon examining each constituent suffix in relation to all the other suffixes and to the root. Thus the context of each word may often help to form the word, so that the occasion for each utterance may well be coextensive with everything leading up to and away from the moment of word-making. I think, too, of how time—variation in tense—is expressed in terms of proximal and distal moments: a thing occurs only a short while ago or in a short while to come or a longer while ago or in a longer while to come, so that position is the key to temporal subjectivity. Finally, I think of the shifting boundaries embraced by transhumanist art and the way that subjects and objects function in relation to verbs in Inuit languages. Nonspecific verbs (verbs with indefinite objects) construe subjects the same way that objects of specific verbs (verbs with definite objects) are construed, while specific verbs construe subjects the same way that objects of nonspecific verbs are construed. The intransitive subject and the transitive object look or sound the same, while the transitive subject and the intransitive object look or sound the same. Thus okpik's poet-speaker, as she enunciates in the I/her voice conjugated with verbs dually first and third, is tracing and traversing the boundaries between subject and object, self and other, now and then (and long ago and long yet to be).

The precept that the "greatest peril of life lies in the fact human food consists entirely of souls" is quite clearly a sacred as well as a practical truth for the poet-speaker; okpik writes in "Moon of the Returning

Sun" that "I as wolf girl became weary of the light"; she (I as wolf) is waiting "for the universe to turn / around again" and make possible a "recovery/extraction" not unlike the transmigration of aspects of the human soul or souls described by some Inuit elders. Until then, "wolf girl rewrites tundra." The last poem in the collection, "An Anatkuq's Marionette of Death," ends with "Her/my scream shrill and piercing" and "echoes between bats and bugs." In these reverberations are "Inuit mastodons" and "musk oxen," "blue jays," and always "ravens," more "ravens / ravens." Life takes life. In these cosmic yet personal recoveries and extractions between bodies and beings, okpik expands the poet-speaker's consciousness far beyond the boundaries of subject and object, of body and language, of whale flesh and blood and human flesh and blood—and of ravens and ravens and ravens.

Ralph Salisbury. *Like the Sun in Storm*. Portland: Habits of Rainy Night P, 2012. ISBN: 978-0974668376. 92 pp.

James Mackay, *European University Cyprus*

Ralph Salisbury is a poet unjustly neglected, whose publishing history in major outlets far predates that of N. Scott Momaday, and whose compacted, imagistic verse holds simple truths that speak nonetheless of a lifetime's thought. His poems glow with tender reverence for the natural world and a fierce, sometimes overwhelming, indignation at humanity's destructive warmongering in the midst of such beauty. His recent collection of selected and new poems, *Light from a Bullet Hole* (2009), revealed just how powerful his facility for tightly compressed images has remained over a long career, and this new collection, *Like the Sun in Storm*, contains several pieces that can comfortably sit alongside that lifetime's achievement.

Salisbury's vision has always been palimpsestic. Certain identifiable and recurring layers of memory and experience again and again are seen peeking through evanescent moments of present experience. Sometimes it is the atrocity of his Cherokee-Shawnee ancestors' loss and the way that it undermines foundational American mythologies that is uppermost, as in the opening poem of this collection, "An Indian Blows Up Mt Rushmore and Indianizes What Cannot Be Resanctified" (4). Here the great ecocide of the national memorial crumbles under imagi-

native assault, punned into "Rush Less," with dead presidents erupting from the ground under pressure from "Indian incisors" to protect Indigenous peoples at last. Indeed the first section of *Like the Sun in Storm* (titled "The Struggle for Survival") is largely devoted to "Indian" poems, carefully arranged to move the reader from angry confrontations with historical injustice ("Putnam Township School Number Five," for instance, clearly indentifying Andrew Jackson with Hitler as *genocidaire*), to assays into the question of recovering spiritual teachings from the past, with invocations of Uktena, Deer, and "The Being we Cherokees believe humans can not name" (7), to a final diptych of poems (one autobiographical) about Indian children alone in the night. The placement of these last two poems seems to suggest a loss that has come in no longer seeing the world in terms of "Counselor Wolves and Ancestor Bears," a loss made all the more dramatic in the second poem by the speaker's lack of knowledge that would enable him to connect the stampeding "silent pasture stars" with the wings of Raven Mocker.

The second recurrent layer in Salisbury's writing is made up of what seems to have been a seriously tough hardscrabble rural childhood lived in the darkest heart of the Great Depression. His various biographical statements show that the alcohol-soaked, violent father figure that overshadows several of his poems is rooted in real experiences ("my own father Indian, half, / hard-working and loving, half, / then dangerous, pistol-shooting drunk" [41]). So, too, the loss of a brother to malnutrition and a childhood spent trapping to keep the family from starvation. Salisbury shows that a childhood lived in poverty marks the adult forever, with his speaker always conscious of the blessings of the world, always ready for disaster. But he also makes use of the child's experiences to build empathy with others living in hard times, a blue-collar sensitivity that gives his poetry its lyrical toughness ("eight hours, to feed your family," and "eight hours until pepperless soup" [19]). This working-class voice permeates the second section of the book and reminded me tonally of some of the work of Gogisgi, a fellow Cherokee poet with a hard-won humor and empathy for all caught in the machines of Molochian capital. The third section, "A Look Around, and Beyond," remembers deceased family members with a concentration on the redemptive qualities of time ("the kind grandpa / the violent drunk / who fathered me" [36]). Perhaps due to the always hovering danger of sentiment clouding such insights, this is probably overall the weakest section of the collection, though individual poems sparkle.

The transformative moment in Salisbury's life, the palimpsest layer to which his poetry returns probably above all others, came the moment that he signed up to fight at the tail end of World War II, becoming, as the title of his 2009 collection of short stories would have it, *The Indian Who Bombed Berlin*. The experience inspired in him a lifelong disgust with war, a moral horror that radiates from poems that at any moment can be invaded by napalm, strafing aircraft, bayonets, or bombs both close-range and atomic. The best example of the effect this has in his verse is the twinned short poems "Warplanes, Hummingbird, Cat and Poet" (24) and "Blossoms, Wings, Words" (25) from the 2008 collection *Blind Pumper at the Well*, in both of which a hummingbird drinking from a plastic feeder inspires a reverie on the thin divide between the beauty of nature and the horror of war. Nothing in the collection under review quite reaches those heights, though the triply interlocked imagery of "American Suburb, War in Iraq" (52), in which bicycle handlebars suggest first stags locked in combat and then futile oil war deaths, comes very close. Certainly the anger at the stupidity and aridity of the latest wars for oil remains naked in lines such as "here the only thing new is the food spilled / from a child's intestines to feed the seemingly blessedly insatiable / appetite of earth" ("An Iraqi Story, Taking it Home" [54]). That poem's speaker's final swerve, to choose in the light of Iraqi child deaths to hold his own love for his children close, speaks to the more personal and autobiographical feeling of this collection compared with earlier works. I have to confess to a personal preference for the angrier voice of prior poems such as "A 20th Century Cherokee's Farewell to Arms" (26–27) from *Rainbows of Stone* (2000). Those poems link the three-deep palimpsestic layers to produce a unified vision of a world threatened by forces of colonial and capitalistic violence, a vision that gives the best of Salisbury's work a toughness and depth.

In the tender final section, which includes this collection's title poem, Salisbury's "words wrenched deep" (66) turn to family and love. Some of the best imagery of the collection is here ("bombers were tunneling air / propellors the gnawing of enormous rats" [78]), and the move to tenderness and what feels like perhaps his most personal poems in a lifetime's worth of semi-autobiographical work give this section a winning simplicity and directness. In a collection that gradually reveals itself as an extended musing on family, and the place of the personal in wider history, these are fitting capstones.

In closing, it is also worth noting the publisher of this latest volume,

the Habit of Rainy Night Press, which is a small press (this is not usual for Salisbury's work: his forthcoming memoir, for example, will be published by the University of Nebraska Press). An imprint of the small nonprofit Elohi Gadugi, created specifically to promote socially and environmentally progressive work, the press has done a good job both of setting and promoting this collection, and as with all such ventures they deserve the support that readers can give by ordering this book directly from their website.

Heid E. Erdrich. *Cell Traffic: New and Selected Poems*. Sun Tracks: An American Indian Literary Ser. 70. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2012. ISBN: 978-0816530083203. 272 pp.

Zachary R. Hernández, *University of Texas, Austin*

Identity and blood have long been central concerns in Native literature. Many of the works of the early Native renaissance period explore this issue through a male protagonist who leaves home and struggles to return, which suggests that Indigenous struggle can be resolved around the male body. More recently authors such as Thomas King, LeAnne Howe, and Louise Erdrich have focused on the female body. Heid E. Erdrich's new work, *Cell Traffic: New and Selected Poems*, keeps the female body, especially the mother, at the center of her consideration of these issues and the text. *Cell Traffic* is a collection of poetry and prose comprising new, collected, and selected pieces from previously published works. It is a text that delves into the complexities of identity, love, and relationships by bringing together worlds that often seem contradictory.

Erdrich explores complex issues at the intersections of self-reflection, love, and the maternal body. The prose piece, "Two Sides," tells the story of a woman who refuses, for unstated reasons, to help someone she loves but continues to help others she does not. The woman struggles with the anxieties and expectations of life as a mother and lover and deals with the demands coming from multiple male characters, such as a husband, children, and an unnamed "he." Furthermore, "When they Find Each Other On Facebook" is a poem that shows two people, at least one in a committed relationship, rekindle a past relationship on the seemingly disconnected world of Facebook. Erdrich suggests that impersonal

online communication allows people to forget the weight of words and their responsibility for what they say. Readers might enjoy comparing this poem to Sherman Alexie's "The Facebook Sonnet." Additionally she offers line-by-line translations of poems from English to Ojibwe and then back to English to show the tension and shifting meanings that occur between the two languages. Yet *Cell Traffic* is a difficult text to narrow down to brief descriptions and themes such as identity, genetics, and gender, even though such themes are present throughout the text. The best way to do justice to a book made of poems is to admire the multifaceted beauty and truth in its parts, because only by understanding the parts can a reader comprehend the whole. Therefore, this review offers a few close readings of selected poems in the collection.

The first section of *Cell Traffic*, "Chimeras," focuses mainly on the fairly new scientific idea of cell trafficking, which is the transfer not of DNA but actual genetically unique cells between mothers and their children while they are still in the womb. Children carry these cells throughout their lives, and mothers pass them on to their children, as well as transferring the cells of their mothers and their grandmothers going back generations, perhaps forever. The first poem of the section, "Thrifty Gene, Lucky Gene: For Asignak," introduces issues of genetics, movement, and ancestral connections. Erdrich reminds Rabbit, a frequent character throughout the collection, that Ojibwe stories have always articulated and constructed knowledge of distinct familial bonds. In other words their stories narrate and suggest a deep ancestral bond already, so it's not like Ojibwe People need scientific narratives to explain their relationships to each other. The poem alludes to the double helix, a genetic model popular in contemporary science, which Erdrich describes as the spiral of destiny and chance that carries the code of life. Hence, Erdrich draws a connection between Rabbit and her origin, tied through "fate," by funneling two different worlds, the Ojibwe and the Western. Ojibwe people have known about ancestral links through their stories for generations and generations. So the coming together of the Ojibwe knowledge system and scientific storytelling becomes a process of healing within the text. Erdrich is not paying attention to the differences but to the similarities and how these two worlds can come together in a way that is not contrary to Ojibwe notions of relationships, family, and ancestral ties.

The poem "Mitochondrial Eve" tells the story of two children being

lowered down a well. As they are being sent down, Erdrich describes the world as they see it at the point when they are hanging halfway down. Using the language of dichotomies, Erdrich splits the world into the light above and the "mysterious" darkness below. A repetition of binaries is used to construct a world of oppositions and contrasts that is to be deconstructed later through the use of scientific stories. The children are comforted by the darkness beneath them, at the "dark beauty" in which they can see the stars that hide during the day. So they hang there for a millennium trying to decide between the celestial below or the brightness of the sun above, forgetting why they were there in the first place or who put them there. They seem to be afraid of the world above and the light it provides until "a strand of maternal code thinner than hair," yet tangible and enduring as the ages, pulls them back up from their descent that has resulted in ages of deliberation over the differences in their world. They find themselves asking why it was they had stayed afraid of the enemy and the other for so long.

In this poem Erdrich speaks to the fears that humanity holds of difference and links it to the idea that we are lost, because we do not know how we got to where we are or who we are. It is important to note, however, that the children were not born in this well; some unnamed person, or supernatural figure, lowered them down there. So readers get the sense that they were taught this fear instead of being born into it. In this poem Erdrich, as she does throughout the collection, privileges the maternal body and human intuition. She disrupts the construction and fear of the "other" by pointing to the greater truths embedded inside the maternal body.

Constantly keeping the maternal body at the heart of many of the poems, Erdrich hijacks patriarchal literary traditions and appropriates cold scientific prose to focus on identity and identity making from a maternal perspective that acknowledges the power of women. Her poetry exposes people to the idea that women, especially mothers, are the ones that hold the most influence over the connections our bodies hold with our ancestors, the universe, and humanity. At its core, *Cell Traffic* is about a search to understand ourselves, and by extension each other. It is about where we come from, where we are going, and what our purpose is.

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RICHARD PEARCE retired in 2001 from Wheaton College in Massachusetts, where he had taught and published in the field of modernist fiction for almost forty years. After a visit to George Flett's studio on the Spokane Reservation, he began to study ledger art. In 2003 he curated a show of George Flett's work at Wheaton College and developed a website designed to preserve not only images of Flett's ledger drawings but also Flett's own words, which are used as much as possible in the commentary (http://www.wheatoncollege.edu). In 2004 he began writing about women and ledger art, developing his collaborative approach and focusing on Sharon Ahtone Harjo (Kiowa), Colleen Cuttschall (Oglala Lakota), Linda Haukaas (Sicangu Lakota), and Dolores Purdy Corcoran (Caddo). *Women and Ledger Art: Four Women Artists* was published in 2013 by the University of Arizona Press.

CARTER REVARD, Osage on his father's side and with a Ponca aunt and cousins, was born in the Osage Agency town of Pawhuska, Oklahoma, in 1931. In 1933 his mother married his "full-blood" Osage father, and in Dust Bowl times they moved to Buck Creek, twenty miles east of Pawhuska, where he and six siblings graduated from its one-room school. He went on to Bartlesville College-High, winning a radio quiz scholarship to Tulsa University and in 1952 a Rhodes Scholarship to Merton College, Oxford, at which time his grandmother Mrs. Josephine Jump and the Osage elders gave him his Osage name. After a BA in English from Oxford, he took a PhD from Yale, taught at Amherst College, then moved to St. Louis and taught medieval and American Indian literature and linguistics at Washington University, St. Louis, retiring in 1997. Besides scholarly essays, he has published poetry (*Ponca War Dancers*; *Cowboys and Indians*, *Christmas Shopping; An Eagle Nation*; *How the Songs Come Down*), essays (*Family Matters*, *Tribal Affairs*); and poems/memoirs (*Winning the Dust Bowl*). A new collection of poems, *From the Extinct Volcano, A Bird of Paradise*, is forthcoming from the Mongrel Empire Press.

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