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The Place of Understanding in a Phenomenology of You

"Language . . . endures, but it endures as a continuous process of becoming."
— V. N. Vološinov

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Introduction

Do you recall the other day when we met in the campus Quad? As you approached, I put my head down to keep from greeting you too soon. It's tricky, this business of saying hello. Starting our ritual of mutual recognition too early and too far apart, we will wave our hands like idiots. But if I don't respond to your smile until we are upon each other, you will puzzle, "Now what's going on with Miles?" If I wait too late, and we pass, you may decide, "What the hell," cut your losses, and leave me dangling.

Tricky business, like I say. It recalls Erving Goffman's astute observation made some years back. After discussing at length how we theatrically present ourselves to each other, he assured us that of course everyday life is not drama. But then he went on to add that the difference between the two is not always easy to discern (1959).

Tricky business indeed. At times, I wonder how we accomplish our encounters as well as we do. The structuralists among us say, "It's simple Simon semiotics." One sign elicits another and that still another. "Good morning" gets a polite smile and in return, a "Good morning Miles," and if I'm lucky, a slight nod in recognition of my existence.

In semiotics, signs convey not their deep essences, which in any case they do not have, but they bounce off each other in either a complementary rhythm or in antagonistic beat, and thereby structure meaning. Signs beget signs beget signs beget etc. Yet, following the argument of one of its progenitors, Saussure (1986), semiotics' structuring sacrifices the richness of everyday speech, or *la parole*, for the elegant purity of language, or *la langue*. And we, you and I, know we are robust denizens of the planet, full of flesh and blood, and along with our mammalian kin use our hands, our feet, our heads, and, above all perhaps, our faces to trumpet the rhetoric of our being.[1]

While not abandoning semiotics' strong suit in revealing how our lives so often conform to words rather than the reverse, it is to phenomenology to which we turn for a wider and deeper consideration of how we establish what it is we

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are up to from the "simple" exchanges of "hellos" to the deepest, most heartfelt struggle for significance. Phenomenology suggests that we work to accomplish our efforts through that intensive mixture of experiencing and speaking it calls "understanding."

"Understanding" is a big, warm, cuddly word that cynics, such as you, may not care for. On the contrary I argue that the word has in its sound the qualities we use to find our way to each other and to the world about us. Understanding does not act apart from experience, as a semiotician would have it, but in accord with the senses (such as smell and sound); organs (such as the foot and the hand); and facilities (such as the symbol) which orchestrate and are orchestrated by us, that is, you and me.

When I get started rolling down this track I feel the urge to pull out all stops and in the true spirit of phenomenology let things unfold as they may. But from past experience I know if I do so, I will lose you and everyone else, so let me lay out in advance the track down which we will roll (if not rock). We will (1) elucidate the nature of understanding. We, or at least I, will (2) dare to lodge understanding in the chain of life's relatedness. Then we will (3) reposition the I in the "I and you" into the proper binary in which "you" come first, that is "you and I," or even better, you-I. From there we will (4) scan in a hopelessly inadequate fashion evidence for the emergence of understanding in early hominid evolution. Finally, we, if you are still with me, will (5) end this journey with poetry.

Understanding

When we say "phenomenology, Martin Heidegger will rise—metaphorically of course—and announce "*Achtung!*" Maurice Merleau-Ponty will immediately insist, "Présent." But Hans-Georg Gadamer, with a glance at the two, will raise his voice in a loud, strongly accented "Here." With their intellects bright and shiny, each clamors to be heard. But all will speak of how we, you and I, engaged one another "pre-theorectically." Even as I say "Hi," and before you respond, "Hey Miles," we are aware of who we are and have a good idea what each is up to, that is, between us resides "understanding."

What some might call intuition and others, even divine insight, the three phenomenologists above argue that understanding consists of the symbolic manipulation of the body, hand, face, and voice to form an intertwined, emergent intersubjectivity that goes between the you of you and the me of I. Neither solely experience with a verbal dash nor verbal proclamations with a touch of emotion, understanding constitutes the primary mode of communicating between us, you and me, as members the human species.

To expand upon understanding, we can fortunately turn to a concise statement by Thomas A. Schwandt (1999). Schwandt distinguishes understanding from other modes of human communication through a series of contrasts, which in the interest of specification we may number and subdivide.

1. Knowing and Understanding

a. To know is to engage in conscious deliberation, but to understand takes its meaning literally from to "stand under." Consequently to understand is "to grasp, to hear, to get, to catch, or comprehend the meaning of something"(452).
b. In contrast to knowing which asks me, "How do you know that?" understanding asks, "What do you make of that?" In understanding I ask, not assert, "What's going on with you?"
c. The quest for knowledge is the hallmark of the species, but in understanding we are. In questing for knowledge we designate, discover, refer, or depict, but when we seek understanding, we disclose ourselves before each other.

2. Understanding, Reading, and Learning

a. Despite those who argue text is a type of discourse (for example, Ricouer 1979), Schwandt considers reading as too private and too internal to elucidate the qualities of understanding. Learning, on the other hand, more clearly discloses the nature of understanding, especially if we see learning as enactment, performance, or praxes.
b. Citing Gadamer (1989), Schawndt continues to insist that understanding is not private self-reflection. In our personal trajectories, long before we seek to "find" ourselves, we understand ourselves as those who respond to each other in an open, *self*-evident manner, that is, I find you before I discovered Miles.
c. Continuing along this line, Schwandt insists that our efforts to articulate, to pronounce, to *say* what we *think* is inseparable from our efforts to understand. When I see you approaching in the quadrangle, you question me, before either of us open our mouths.[2]

3. Understanding as Relational and Existential

a. Understanding is not a pre-ordained cognitive map that I apply to your actions. Rather understanding exists between us, and since even you—who show yourself as the absolute stranger, a person speaking in a language foreign to me—reveal a familiar side, you and I reside in the existential tension between the two, between the strange and the familiar, between exile and home, between loneliness and joy.[3]

4. Understanding at Risk

a. A key feature in the mode of understanding is the risk of "getting it wrong." The very possibility that we may misunderstand what each is up to gives

understanding its objective character. The risk challenges us to adjust our conversations. If the risk did not haunt us, we would enter a completely subjective mode, the mode of always being correct. But the risk of misunderstanding guarantees that we continually adjust our notions of what is going on.

b. The continual adjustment comes from our mutual involvement. We have not absolute criteria to determine our responses to one another, but that does not mean we give up our search, saying "What the hell." Nor does it mean that we always dazzle each other with "Congratulations!" It does mean that I continually search for you and you for me, and in that search, that restless search, we find one another—for the moment.

5. In Conclusion

a. In sum, Schwandt insists that understanding is not an epistemology but an existential being in the world, an ontology characteristic of humans.[4]

To Schwandt's masterful exposition of the nature of understanding we add an important note about presence and place. "Presence" is understanding when we are face-to-face, eye-ball-to-eye-ball, hand-in-hand. Presence extends beyond and deeper than "consciousness." "Awareness" may be a near synonym. You remember when we stood in front of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that early spring, overcast day? At our feet were a wreath and an infantry boot. We saw each other, you and me, reflected in black marble, and our hands, on their own, sought a name of a person we did not know, a name among the names, Mary T. Klinder (Richardson and Dunton 1989). Presence does not always carry such a heightened sense, but whenever we meet, in the briefest of glances, we, you and I, are. As the Vietnam Memorial so dramatically informs us, place is the material context in which understanding resides.

The Memorial and we speak to each other. Presence surrounds us. But what else is there, along with presence? Absence. The secret of the Memorial's sense of presence is the appalling knowledge of absence. Mary Klinder's name is on the wall, because she is absent. She is dead. She resides in the no-where. A place beyond reach.[5]

Life's Relatedness

Understanding, we agree, is not a thing, but a relationship. When we call out to one another, we, you and I, exist in the calling out. The we of you and me resides in the presence, in the now, the calling out creates.

The we is fragile it seems. It vanishes when the calling out between you and me ceases. Yet, the we is hardy. It comes forth instantly in the next encounter of you and me. In that encounter, in that understanding, the you of you and the I of me are reborn in the we. *We* are, once again.

Understanding in these words appears so delicate, so precious, so ephemeral, that it is a mystery, a secret, an ineffable. Yes, it is. It is all of those, but it is also a relationship. As a relationship it is common, a known, a spoken. It is a constituent of our be-ing. If that is the case, it is nothing more or nothing less than a fixture of life.

As a fixture of life, understanding lies within the net that all life forms reveal. It is but a special characteristic of life itself. Just as the we exists in relationship between you and me, life exists in the interaction among life forms. From its very beginning, life was not bounded, isolated molecules, but it was the interaction among them. Living systems differ from non-living ones in that information occupies the central role in their maintenance and in their replication. This means the maintenance and replication processes are less than completely random, that is, they are capable of evolving (Rasmussen et al. 2004). The dynamics of the self-organizational material produces inheritable variations that in the presence of one another ensure both continuity and innovation, stability and flux.

"We need to move from the molecules to an understanding of the interaction network in a cell" (Bishop 2002:E-79). Metazoan organisms essentially are networks on interacting cells, and they exist in ecosystems featuring the physical environment to be sure, but that environment is heavily populated by members of the same and different species. Not only that, but the physical environment itself changes because of the information, maintenance, and replication feedback system, and those changes beget changes. You have only to breathe to recognize the contribution of earlier life forms to your existence. And even as we speak, our speaking interaction contributes to additional changes—global warming.

When we met in Quad, we, you and I, joined the live oaks, the mocking birds, the squirrels, and the azaleas to constitute the aboveground biota linked to the below ground community of fungi, nematodes, microarthopods, insects, and earthworms, the belowground biota (McNeill and Winiwarter 2004). The words exchanged between us in our greetings were but links in the great chain of beings be-ing.

Communication among life forms constitutes a core feature of life itself. Paradoxically, individualization of life forms, by increasing the separateness of life, challenges communication to develop attributes that will put these individuals in contact with one another, one that penetrates their growing individuality. Consider vertebrates. Physically, they present a case of distinctive individuals that separate off from each other through thick barriers of bone, muscle, and skin. Consequently, communication in turn develops signals that "increase efficiency and facilitate detection and recognition" (Johnstone 2202:1059). To distinguish themselves from background noise, (1) the signs become conspicuous; (2) they channel themselves into a relatively few, stereotyped displays or sounds; (3) they themselves grow redundant; and finally (4) they begin with a series of sounds, frequently loud, or colors frequently brilliant, to alert each other that messages are on the way.

We humans also employ a number of body gestures that constitute part of the informational-maintenance-replication system by following the above pattern. We also speak. Speaking also, particularly ritual discourse, sets itself the task to accomplish detection and recognition, but by being under cortical control, speaking, of course, opens up a world in which we become "you" and "I." We move inside our words and live our dreams within their boundaries.

You-Me

Within the world of symbolic discourse, we, to survive, must continue to find one another. We have compounded an already difficult task. Our interaction is now symbolic interaction. When we speak, the materiality of words, the sound of the signifier, emerges as our first "reality." "Subjectivity must be approached not as the point of origin but as the *effect* of . . . discourse" (Easthope 1983:1983, my emphasis). The "I" that I claim to be emerges out of your words. When you call "Miles?" the experiential I, so dear to my heart, comes to be as the response,"Yeah?" The signifier "Miles?" calls forth the signifier "Yeah?" Clearly (!), we see each other "through a glass darkly."[6]

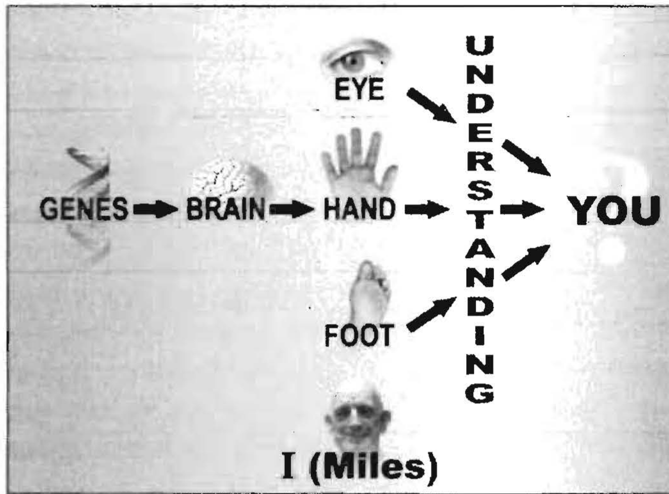
When we see each other, who sees first? When we look at one another, whose look starts our looking? The answer, I believe, is you and yours.

Johnny Weissmuller made a serious mistake when in 1932 he thumped his chest and shouted, "Me Tarzan" and then pointed straight at Maureen O'Sullivan and confidently announced, "You Jane." A much more accurate picture would have him pointing breathlessly at Maureen and say, "You Jane," and then with a shuffle of his feet and a blush on his face, whispering, "Me Tarzan."

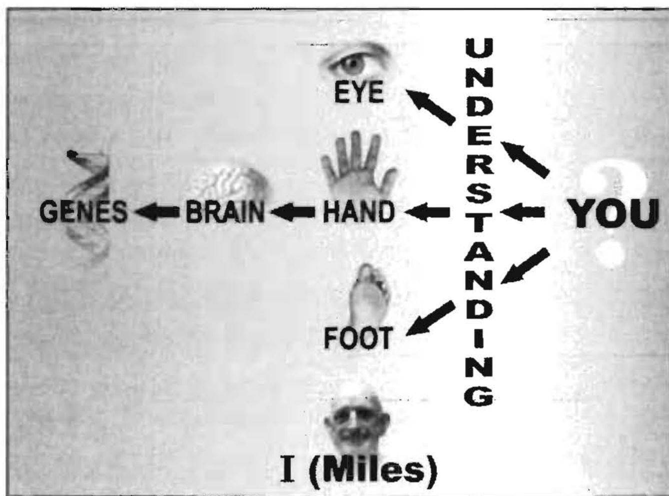
But Johnny was in good company. René Descartes set himself to doubt everything, even if he were truly doubting. At the end all of his doubting he came to know that the one thing he could not doubt was that he thought, therefore he concluded, in Latin, "*Cogito ergo sum*," usually translated as "I think, therefore I am." Another Frenchman, several centuries later, concluded that Descartes had it backward, and so Jean-Paul Sartre lead us into existentialism with, "*Je suis, conséquemment je pense*" A Spaniard, Miguel de Unamuno, concurred in that behind or within every label we could apply to each other there stood "*un hombre de carne y hueso*—a man of flesh and bone." All three thinkers prefaced their assertion on an "I." It was "I" who thought, it was "I" who claimed an existence, it was "I" who protested every label applied to him. Could it be that they were wrong? Could it be they put the wrong person first? Could it be that the "first person singular" pronoun should give way to the "second person singular"? If "you" came first, then would "I" be the consequence of "your" actions? Precisely. "You are, consequently so am I" (Figure 1).

How can I say this? On what basis can I assert that contrary to Johnny and his intellectual betters, "You are, then I am"?

Figure 1



The J. Weissmuller et al. hypothesis



The M. Richardson hypothesis

Several famous investigators of the human condition have come close to the position. Charles Cooley (1922) refers to you as the "looking glass self" in which in you, I see my actions. George Herbert Mead (1934) all but concurs in his argument that the meaning of a gesture lies in its response. The secret "I" that I am can only becomes a public Me when I take the role of the other (i. e., you) and reflect back upon myself. Martin Buber argues for an even closer connection when he replaces the "and" in "I and you" with a hyphen, that is, "I-You" to support his assertion that one side calls forth the other (Buber 1987).

We have a specific case before us. It is your reading that lets this text live. Until you read what I write, the text on which I have worked with such diligence and such conviction just lies on the paper. It must have your refreshing eye to live. The "I" you see right after the "The" in this sentence depends upon your reading.

Only in your reading, does that "I" live (See reader response theory: Suleiman and Crosman [1980]; as well as Deborah Tannen [1989]).

If you need additional arguments to be convinced that "You are, consequently I am," here is one that clinches the case. It is your death that comes first. Only when you die, do I know death. When you die, your death assures me that death is not only a word, but an event, a biological process, I cannot escape. I understand now that I too will follow you. The abyss opens.

The Emergence of Understanding

The place of understanding in the ongoing exchange between you and me testifies to its primal nature. It would appear to even be more fundamental than language in the narrow sense, to be a feature that antedates verbs and nouns, and, broadly considered, to be a feature congruent with the human condition itself.

Where in the fossil record do we find the human condition? How can we infer from paleontological record of us the emergence of understanding?

First, let us review the nature of understanding. To repeat, the quest for knowledge is the hallmark of the species. For many of us in many situations, knowledge controls. Through knowledge we *master* the world, and if the cards fall right, each other. But in understanding we, you and I, are. Through revealing ourselves in the presence of each other we gain not mastery over each other but the unfolding, continual *mystery* of you, by which I am.

Understanding, consequently, exists between us, and since even, or especially, you, show a dark, stranger streak to your familiar face, we, you and I, reside in the existential tension between us, between the strange and the familiar, between exile and home, between loneliness and joy. Gadamer himself affirms in italics, "*The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between*" (1992:295).

Given that understanding resides in our constant negotiation between the strange and the familiar, how we locate this "site" of constant negotiation in the archaeological record of human be-ing? How can we recognize such a "site" amidst the detritus of the past, the cast-offs, the left-overs, of centuries? Fortunately, Wendy Ashmore, in her distinguished lecture before the Archaeological Division of the American Anthropological Association in the fall of 2000, encourages us to do just that, to interpret the spatial display of the archaeological record *socially*, to recognize *place* as a component of dispositions and decisions (2002:1172-1183). Thus encouraged, let's proceed.

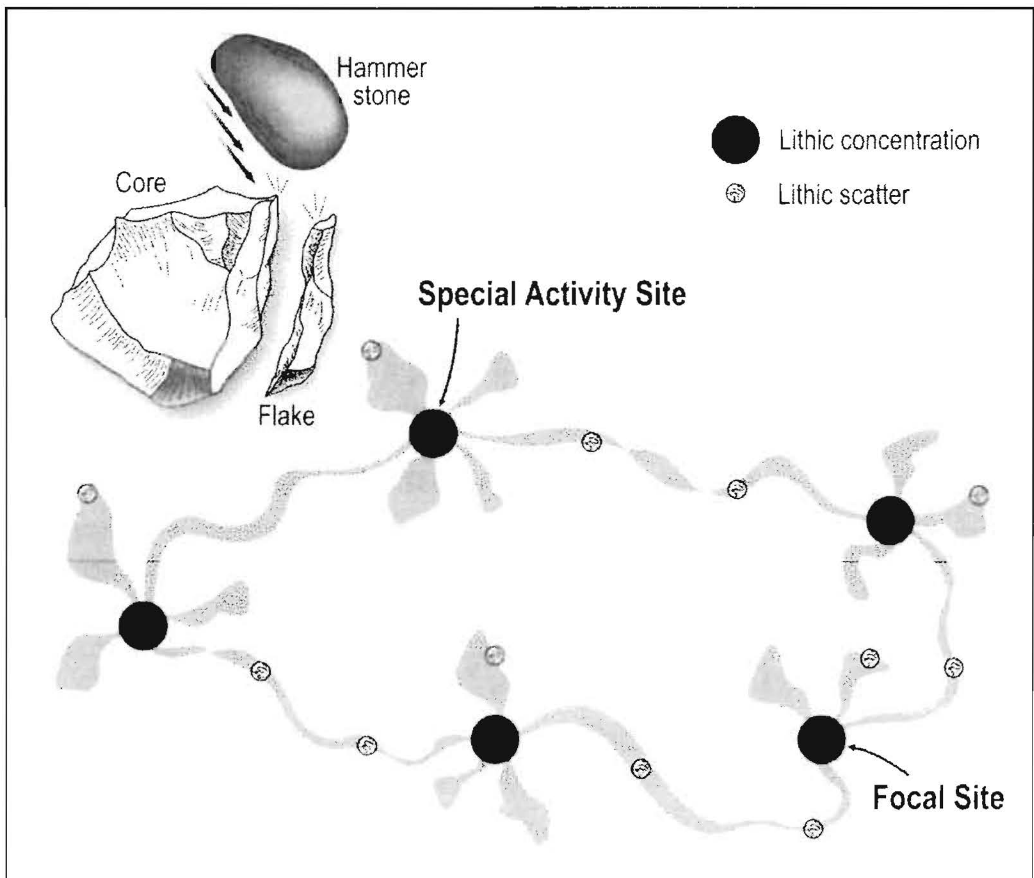
If understanding is constituent of being human, then naturally we search the record for the first "humans." Humans in the broad consideration here, I would argue, antedate *Homo sapiens*, *Homo erectus*, and even the genus *Homo*. We find humans wherever we see primates who walked erect and who communicated symbolically. This puts us roughly 2.5 millions years into the past among bipedal creatures who transformed pebbles into tools, collectively known as the australopithecines.[7] Short

in statue, small in brain, with brow ridges, prognathic face, and big molars, they would win no Mr. or Miss Universe prize, until we looked at their hands.

The hands of a variety of australopithecines share commonalities, such as longer and more robust thumbs that suggest control and manipulative skill comparable to that of modern *H. sapiens* (Susman 1994; Panger *et al.* 2003). While pebble tools are not always found in association with each of the varieties, the commonalities suggest they engaged world with the hand.

Engaging the world with the hand implies that these creatures, small brain notwithstanding, stood, and were transforming in the manner that authors diverse as Karl Marx (1972) and Anthony Gibbens (1984) insist as characteristic of human be-ing. In so doing they were not only making tools but also making the landscape and each other.[8] As we move forward from the oldest tools at 2.5 million years ago to the interval between 2.0 and 1.5 million, we find not only an abundance of pebble tools but also a distribution of them in alternative patterns of relatively dense clusters and thin scatters. This spatial arrangement seems to indicate a social arrangement of concentrated living/activity areas with relatively empty spaces in between, or more directly, homes bases to which the australopithecines return again and again (Figure 2). This interpretation, which was first put forward in the 1970s

Figure 2



and 1980s (e.g., Quiatt and Kelso 1985), has been revisited and reinvigorated. Lisa Rosa and Fiona Marshall (1996) have argued that meat, a high quality, moveable resource, that, the early hominids secured through hunting and scavenging, was transported repeatedly to areas associated with water, trees, and plant food. From there the short, bipedal hominids defended themselves cooperatively from the large carnivores that threatened these small, relatively slow moving creatures whose bipedality presented their vital organs in full view of carnivores' sweeping paws or searing fangs.

Returning to the same area and uniting to drive off predators intensified the general primate sociality. Such a home base deepened knowledge of particular individuals—who to challenge, who to avoid, and who to cuddle up with—and gave security to young—who to run to, who to play with, and who to run from. Such enhanced solidarity led, perhaps inevitably, to a division between home base, the inside zone with its friendship, squabbles, and sex, and the opposite, the outside arena of insecurities, likely misfortunes, and life-threatening dangers. Consequently, the concentration of tools in one general place lays the foundation not only for the experience of community in all of its immediacy, but by it very enhancement, the experience of its opposite, the lack of exchange outside, in all of its distancing.[9]

Let me hasten to affirm that the intense social exchange within the community and its absence outside, in the "not-community," is some distance from symbol exchange of the here and of the there. To bridge between social exchange and symbol exchange requires an account of the origin of symboling. This task, difficult though it may be, is at least more modest than the much larger one on the origin of language.

My attempt follows the path led out by Terrence Deacon's book, *The Symbolic Species: The co-evolution of language and the brain.* Here, to start, come two extraordinary quotes from this extraordinary book: "The remarkable expansion of the brain that took place in human evolution . . . was not the cause of symbolic language but a *consequence*" (340). "It is simply not possible to understand human anatomy, human neurobiology, or human psychology without recognizing *they have been shaped by . . . symbolic reference*" (410; my emphases). Consequently, to take a strictly evolutionary approach to symbolic communication, we must see it as part of the adaptive radiation of humans subsequent to the ape-human split of roughly 5 million years ago. Symbolic communication differs from gesturing in that in gesturing the tie between the gesture and the object gestured at is indexical—the male peacock's display of his tail feathers indexes his overall physical state to the female in question.[10] In symbolic communication the tie between the symbols take precedence over the physical tie to the referent. The relation between symbols is abstract and categorical. Saussure-like, Deacon insists that the interplay between symbols produces their signification. The question of the shift from exclusive social exchange to symbol exchange is a shift from purely indexical to symbolic communication.

Deacon then advances his argument to ritual communication. Ritual *embodies* social exchange. The experiential performance of the ritual is very much part of its power—an argument paralleling that of Roy Rappaport (1999). The energy among participants as they reciprocally wheel and bow transmits the information portrayed by their stylized movements in such a direct, muscular fashion that words, for all their ethereal elegance, cannot achieve.

In addition, Deacon points to the widely recognized power of ritual to convey information by reversing the message: to establish peace, act out war; to enhance solidarity, act out alienation; and to promote fidelity, act out betrayal.

This reversing works outs a discursive logic of

Self	Other
Here	There
Us	Them

And transforms the social exchange occurring at the home base into symbolic exchange among early humans. The concentration of pebble tools produced by hominids become the place, like the quadrangle, where we, you and I, encounter one another with understanding, even before either of us speaks a word.

Journey's End

From a casual encounter in the Quadrangle, we, you and I, have elucidated understanding, lodged it in life's fundamental relatedness, positioned you before me, and, brashly and without class, scanned the emergence of understanding in hominid evolution. Exhausted and uptight, I go for solace in

Poems
a Usted

and Hence
à Moi

Vološinov Poetics

"A word is territory
shared by both addresser and addressee,
by the speaker and his interlocutor."

If I say Miles, does the M stay
with me, and the s go to you
and the l to the love we said we'd share?

How Is It Where You Are?

I reach for you.
You reach for me.
We touch—

When it doesn't rain,
and it's not too hot.
Here, in Louisiana,
that ain't often.

How Much Like You!

In some strange state, the other day
I heard the words of a Cuban bolero.

Siempre que te pregunto
que cuándo, cómo, y dónde,
tú siempre me respondes
quizás, quizás, quizás.

"Always when I ask you,
When? How? Where?
Always you respond,
Perhaps. Perhaps. Perhaps."

The Pair Tree

In life's backyard,
planted by circumstance,
a lone tree with a single leaf
and on that stem, one fruit.

A green You lobed, with veins
branching shaping a claw.
A red Me filled, with skin
bursting, voicing a cry.

Crazy Miles

Fighting the simulacra
he planned to blow holes
in the classroom walls
so they could have real windows.
In the end, they led him away,
but not unkindly.

Acknowledgments

My debt continues to Mary Lee Eggart for her wonderful art work, and I thank Helen Regis for her gracious encouragement. Julie Hanebrink and Frank Fillibeck contributed their editorial eyes, but any remaining sloppiness and uneven phrasing are mine.

Notes

1. Forgive me, but I cannot let these words stand without honoring my debt to el hombre de carne y hueso himself, Miguel de Unamuno, and his lifelong "agony" to comprehend himself as a creature of flesh and bone and as speaker of the sanctifying word (1974)

2. Do we say what we think, or do we think what we say? Growing up as countryboy in East Texas, I was more non-verbal than verbal. So English teachers drove me up the wall with their "Proper speaking reveals a thoughtful mind." To this day, I remain suspicious of "proper speaking."

3. For earlier but still pertinent expositions, see Buttimer (1976) and Seamon (1980). In his presentation of us as inhabiting the world as interpretative beings, Schwandt quotes Kerderman (1998) "The existential tension between 'home' and 'exile' at once distinguishes our human situation and ... makes understanding [that situation] possible." I have recently attempted to expand on that tension between being-in-place and being-out-of-place (2003).

4. In a broader treatment, Schwandt succinctly sums up the matter, "Understanding is participative, conversational, and dialogic" (2000:195; my emphasis).

5. In his critical work on structuration in which he stresses the "essentially transformative character of all human action," Giddens refers to locations as providing the physical setting for human action but perhaps even more importantly they offer the contextuality necessary for the transformative to occur. As we see here, locations are places whose settings offer the contextualty for us to understand (always hesitantly) where we are, who we are, and what are we up to (1984:119).

6. The paragraph itself appears darkly, and I apologize. At this stage in this text, I have to relay on your familiarity with Ferdinand de Saussure (1986 [1966]), Jacques Derrida (1976; 1978), and Anthony Easthope (1983), which, with the possible exception of Easthope, I know you possess.

7. In the older terminology, Hominidae (humans) contrasted with Pongidae (the three great apes). Because of the molecular evidence that shows chimpanzee more closely related to humans than either to the gorilla, one version of the newer terminology based on molecular comparisons places both chimps and humans in Hominidae, with subfamily distinction, Homininae, for humans. Having nothing against chimps, but because of the profound morphological and the behavior differences between the two, I stick with the older classification, with hominid being any primate that walks up right, and human any bipedal primate that communicates with symbols. Presently, four fossil genera antedate the australopithecines. From youngest to oldest, these are Kenyapithecus (3.5 MY), Orrorin (6 MY), Ardipithecus (4.4-5.8 MY), and Sahelanthropus (7 MY). Discussion continues concerning their bipedal status.

8. In contrast to those who might suggest that the makers produced Oldowan tools by more or less randomly pounding one pebble against another, Semaw et al. (1994) argue that

knappers of the Gona, Ethiopia tools—the oldest on record—knew what they were doing. The large number of well-struck flakes with conspicuous bulbs of percussion indicated a clear understanding of facture mechanics. In addition the knappers preferred trachyte to other material for its better flaking properties.

9. Such an interplay immediately brings to mind Derrida's intertwining of presence and absence, with presence being but absence deferred and absence being but presence deferred (1973), or in general, the play of discursive logic, by which symbols, whose very presence, standing for objects not there, makes absence possible.

10. Just for fun, let me mention a case of experimental male plumage enhancement among barn swallows. The scientists, diabolically of course, darkened the ventral feathers of selected males already mated with females and found that the manipulated males were the preferred object of choice of females not only among the original females but among others as well. Those males without enhancement lost out, that is, they have fewer offspring (Safran et al. 2005).

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The Dog Tribe

Jenny James

In 1753, a Jesuit missionary attributes a religious epithet, i.e., the Dog Tribe, to the Cherokee. This is the first documented historical reference for this term. Textual evidence supports a religious interpretation of the meaning of the epithetic reference, Dog Tribe. A sacred woman and dog, two mythic figures which appear in Cherokee narratives, are central to deciphering this term and are directly related archetypes. Each has mastery over the cosmos, considerable religious power and moral authority, and layers of hermeneutical significance. They are integral to understanding mythological dimensions of the sacred feminine sensibility of the matrilineal Cherokee. Chronological expressions of the sacred woman and dog archetypes in texts about the Cherokee reveal syncretic forms. Mythological motifs and figures from Judaism, Christianity (McLoughlin 1994), Zoroastrianism (James 1996), and Eastern Woodland religions, particularly those of the Great Lakes region, appear in these syncretic structures.

Depth psychology, the history of religions, structuralism, and literary criticism each have used the term archetype in the 20th century to describe important religious forms, as found in consciousness, culture, rituals and texts. Archetypes are accepted as fundamental structures of the human psyche and religious life which express sacred meaning (Moon 1987; O'Flaherty 1988). Since early humanity regarded animals as significant religious beings whose purpose and destinies are cosmologically bound to the teleology, or ultimate end, of humanity and the earth, the analysis of animal archetypes offers a unique point of access into Native American traditions.

Introduction

The sacred woman and dog are an archetypal pair, or moiety. As a moiety, one figure implicitly invokes the presence of the other. C. G. Jung (1969) and depth psychologists, like Erich Neumann (1969) and Eleanora M. Woloy (1990), have argued the Great Mother archetype is a primary image of the human psyche in early cultures world-wide that is associated with a maternal origin, the natural world, and the reconciliation of opposed phenomena, such as birth/death, fertility/barrenness, healing/disease, and order/chaos. For Neumann, matriarchy is a psychological, rather than a socio-political, stage of development in which one is dependent upon maternal and feminine expressions of the unconscious mind. The Great Mother archetype and her manifestations as goddess, ancestor, primordial parent, and sacred woman express the Archetypal Feminine complex of the psyche through which early humanity is related to female deities, nature and animals (Neumann

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1969, 24-38). Of these, the sacred dog is the major animal representative of the Great Mother archetype in her various forms.

In the language of the comparative history of religions, the sacred woman, as ancestor and primal parent, is the cosmic origin, to which all things return for renewal (Eliade 1954, 101). Because they are created by a divine being, the cosmos and nature are sacred and reveal fertility, harmony, order and permanence (Eliade 1957, 116-117). The sacred woman overcomes opposed phenomena by holding such oppositions in balance. To symbolically participate in her being is to overcome oppositions in one's life (Jung 1969; Eliade 1954, 1958, 1959). By returning to the cosmic origin, via the sacred woman and/or her representatives, primal harmony, balance and order is re-experienced; physical, moral and mystical transformation occurs; and one feels whole (Eliade 1954, 1958, 1963). Because of the dog's relation to the Great Mother, the dog archetype embodies her sacred feminine power and moral authority, and symbolizes her presence in a theriomorphic, or animal form. The mythic dog, therefore, makes primal harmony, balance and order, and religious transformation possible. In sum, the sacred woman and dog are psychological constructs, religious symbols, and intentional expressions of consciousness that overcome oppositions in nature, re-establish moral order in the presence of chaos, and demonstrate profound transformative physical and spiritual powers.

In order to explain the religious significance of the epithet Dog Tribe in terms of the dog and the Great Mother archetypes and their expression in Eastern Woodland myths and rituals, this paper will trace the hermeneutical value of the sacred dog archetype within Cherokee narratives. Of the animal archetypes found in human consciousness and early cultures, the dog is particularly significant because the dog is directly related to the Great Mother as her companion, guide and guardian. An examination of Cherokee texts will show the sacred dog in Cherokee tradition is associated with a primal flood, access to the spirit world, fertility, health, corn, fire and the great white dog of the Great Lakes tribes. In the narratives which follow, the sacred dog reconciles oppositions in nature and re-establishes moral order, balance and harmony in the face of chaos; creates a path to the spirit world and appears at its threshold to judge obedience/disobedience; expresses physical and mystical transformation; overcomes disease and death; protects, guides and guards humanity; prescribes ethical conduct and the performance of rituals; symbolizes reconciliation and the experience of wholeness; and returns the Cherokee to their cosmic origin. The continuities of the dog archetype and sacred dog symbolism over time in Cherokee literature indicate the sacred dog is a rich textual symbol that may be instrumental to the reconstruction of Cherokee belief and spirituality, pre and post contact.

Sacred Woman, Sacred Dog

Presently, the hermeneutical significance of animals within Native American traditions is being explored anew (Brightman 1993; Brown 1987; Harrod 2000).

Because of proximity and survival, the spirituality of early and indigenous peoples is linked to animals. Anthropologists like Levi-Straus (1988) and Mary Douglas (1991) have used the importance of animals to early humanity to better understand indigenous myths and rituals, and the relation between them. Animal archetypes—whether considered as cultural icons (Eliade), psychic phenomena (Jung), psychic codes (Levi-Strauss), or rich textual symbols (Frye)—provide a significant means for interdisciplinary analysis which can augment and complement research in Native American traditions. All four levels of archetypal meaning are viable in the comments which follow, and these levels offer new insights into Cherokee spirituality.

The dog is a pervasive animal in Native American cultures (Allen 1920; Butler and Hadlock 1994; Pferd 1987; Schwarz 1997). Historians of religion and folklorists acknowledge the hermeneutical significance of the dog in world religious traditions (Dale-Green 1966; Eliade 1964; Howey 1972; Leach 1961; White 1991), especially within Zoroastrianism (Afshar 1988; Boyce 1989). The dog is an important animal in shamanism that acts as a guide, guardian and companion to the spirit world (Benedict 1964; Eliade 1964; Hulktranz 1961; Krappe 1942; Paulson 1964). The guardian animal phenomenon is present in Northern Eurasia, North, South and Central America, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Central Europe, and Scandinavia (Paulsen 1964, 212-213).

Literally, the sacred animal spirit, like the shaman, is a psychopomp; that is, a conductor of the soul to the place of the dead. The animal becomes the shaman's other soul, double and alter ego. In Siberia, the Yakut shaman views his animal helper as his "animal mother," or "mother-beast" (Eliade 1964, 89). According to Eliade, "from the most distant times almost all animals have been conceived either as psychopomps that accompany the soul into the beyond, or as the dead person's new form" (Eliade 1964, 93). The spirit animal makes it possible for the shaman to 'breathe the soul' of the ill person into the celestial region, and to inhale the soul in any of the three regions (Heaven, Earth and the Underworld) and 'relocate' them at will. Thus, Eliade claims, "friendship with animals, knowledge of their language, transformation into an animal are so many signs that the shaman has re-established the 'paradisal' situation lost at the dawn of time" (Eliade 1964, 99).

The sacred dog is also an important spirit animal associated with the Great Mother archetype. Feminist scholars (Baring and Cashford 1993; Gimbutas 1982; Johnson 1994; Walker 1996) and Jungian analysts (Estes 1995; Neuman 1963; Woloy 1990) have delineated an archetypal pair, the Great Mother and her dog. For the Jungian depth psychologist Eric Neumann, the principle animal of the Great Mother archetype is the dog, "the howler by night, the finder of tracks . . . the companion of the dead." The dog's mistress, the Great Mother, has power over conception, birth, death and rebirth. She can open or close "the wombs of all creatures, and all life stands still." In her positive aspect, the Great Mother is the life-giving "mistress of the East Gate, the gate of birth," the womb, as when Demeter brings the earth to life. Whereas in her negative aspect, the Great Mother

is the death-meting, "mistress of the West Gate, the gate of death," like Hecate who with her dog Cerebus guards the entrance into the underworld, the cave, the crossroad and the abyss (Neumann 1963, 170-171).

Eleanor M. Woloy describes the Jungian view of the dog/Great Mother relation, saying "Every early culture had an Earth Great Mother with a dog companion" (Woloy 1990, xi). In addition to the presence of the sacred dog at birth and death, the dog companion is also associated with healing, as in 2500 B.C. when the dog appears with the Sumerian Great Mother Gula, who restores the dead to life. In death and disease, in life and rebirth, in healing and restoration, the dog in myth functions as a liminal or "threshold animal, its place being at the gateway to the underworld, at the boundary between life and death" (Woloy 1990, 36). For the Zoroastrians, the Iroquois, the Huron, the Ojibwa, the Seminole and the central Inuit, the dog is a guardian who protects the path to death and rebirth, the dog is a guide/psychopomp who accompanies the shaman and the dead to heaven or hell, and the dog is a sacred spirit animal who insures the successful transformation, or the punishment, of the soul (Woloy 1990, 36-37). Because the dog can heal itself through its saliva, the dog archetype is associated with healing; because the dog howls at the moon and ancient peoples believed the moon caused plants to grow at night, the dog archetype is associated with fertility; and because the dog eats carrion, the dog archetype is associated with death and the dark side of the Great Mother (Woloy 1990, 23-45).

The dog also is a significant symbol in the human psyche inasmuch as it is the first domesticated animal, and as such, represents humanity's first such bond with non-humans. Since the dog stimulates our need for kinship with nature—which for Jung is an expression of the feminine principle in both women and men—it is fitting that we find the archetypal dog with the Great Mothers Artemis and Hecate, with Diana and Isis, with Hel and Gula, and with Sarama and Ishtar (Woloy 1990, 40, 70). The dog and the Great Mother archetypes reconcile multiple opposites in nature, with the dog both carrying disease as a carrion eater and curing disease through canine saliva; or guiding one to death or to a new life. Similarly, the Great Mother gives vegetation, or takes it away; rewards good behavior or punishes bad; and in claiming the soul, both gives birth and death.

Within depth psychology and archetypal analysis then, the dog is identified with the Great Mother. Just as the dog accompanies the shaman to the spirit world, so too does the dog accompany the Great Mother in order to insure that the soul will return to and be reborn within the her womb. That is, as guide, guardian and companion, the dog leads humanity through that life, death and rebirth determined by the Great Mother. The dog is posed at the threshold of the spirit world; that is, at the junctures of religious transformation (the path to heaven, a mountain, or the Milky Way) or death (hell, the abyss, the cave). As an archetypal pair, the dog and the Great Mother share a singular identity such that Sirius the Dog-star is Isis and Isis is Sirius. The sacred dog, as the principle animal of the Great Mother, has great cosmic and religious power and moral authority. Because the Great Mother and

sacred dog archetypes symbolize and express the Archetypal Feminine complex, i.e., maternal origin, the reconciliation of opposites, and the bond between humanity and nature, their relation may give insight into matrilineal structures of Cherokee society and myth, and the nature of the sacred feminine found therein.

The Great White Dog in the Eastern Woodland Traditions

According to the American historian Frances Parkman (1823-1893), an epithet referring to the Cherokee as the Dog Tribe appears in historical literature in 1753. Parkman recounts a 1753 attempt by a Jesuit missionary sympathetic to the French to incite the Iroquoian nations to first push the English settlers out of Ohio, and then "attack the Dog Tribe, or Cherokees," because the Cherokee might give aid to the English settlers in Virginia (Parkman 1969, 72).

Given the connection between the Cherokee and the Iroquois, the term Dog Tribe makes sense as an epithetic reference to the Cherokee. The Cherokee are thought to be an Iroquoian group, who migrated to their current Appalachian home after being driven out of the northeast by the Delaware (Finger 1984, 3). Significant scholarship has documented the similarities between Iroquoian and Cherokee languages, cultures and mythologies (Cockran 1952; Fenton 1978 and 1990; Fenton and Gulick 1961; Fogelson 1961, 1962, and 1980; Fogelson and Walker 1983; James 1996; King 1977; Mooney 1889; Speck 1945; Witthoft and Hadlock 1946; Witthoft 1947).

For the Eastern Woodlands groups, and particularly the Great Lakes tribes, the dog is a major religious figure and cultural symbol which plays a prominent role in the White Dog Sacrifice, a midwinter ritual of rejuvenation for the good creator god. The White Dog Sacrifice is also extensively documented in Eastern Woodland scholarship (Blau 1964; Hewitt 1960; Morgan 1962; Seaver 1956; Shimony 1961; Speck 1949; Tooker 1965, 1970). The appearance of the Dog Tribe epithet in the 18th century provides evidence the Cherokee brought the Eastern Woodland veneration for the White Dog to the Southeastern region, and this epithetic reference is one more example of a shared Iroquoian-Cherokee past.

After Parkman, the dog next appears in *The Cherokee Phoenix*, an important 19th century source. Beginning in 1828, the Cherokee published the first Native American newspaper, with Elias Boudinot (1804-1839) as the founding editor. During the first two years of publication, before *The Cherokee Phoenix* was consumed by impending removal, Boudinot published various anecdotal materials. In one such early edition, Volume II, No. 3, of April 1, 1829, and within a recurring front page series on Indian cultures, Boudinot published an interview of an elder male Cherokee regarding indigenous Cherokee traditions, which was conducted by "W" (the Reverend Samuel Austin Worcester, a missionary to the Cherokee from 1825 until his death in 1859).

The Cherokee elder describes an eminent flood, which is revealed to one man by his dog, who speaks to the man, and instructs him to build a raft to escape the

destruction of the world. This he does, despite persecution, and once the man and dog are launched upon the water, the dog cries piteously to be thrown overboard, and "after a whole day's entreaty," the man obliges, whereupon the dog is "immediately devoured" by encircling alligators, who had previously "destroyed every living creature which swam on the water, but this one man and his dog."[1] Eventually the waters recede, the man lands, and on the seventh day of making camp, is surprised by the shouts of other people, who turn out to be his drowned tribe, whom he discovers miraculously "revived again," as they emerge from a hill.

Many Great Lakes tribes likewise throw a dog overboard during storms, which situates the above flood story in Eastern Woodland traditions (Kinietz 1956, 286 328; Martin 1904, 62). In this text, we see an archetypal dog functioning as a moral guardian, guide and companion to the Cherokee who are saved through the dog's self-sacrifice to the flood waters' chaotic power. Because of the dog, the man is restored to his tribe and the tribe emerges from the spirit world on the seventh day (seven being a sacred number in Cherokee myth).

In the next issue of *The Cherokee Phoenix*, on April 15, 1829, Volume 2, No. 4, the recurring series on Indians again appears with an extensive interview (which had originally appeared in *The Missionary Herald*) with four elder Seneca men, who describe their indigenous religious traditions to a missionary. These informants stress the importance of an annual White Dog Sacrifice in the Seneca tradition. The midwinter ritual involved several days' preparation and execution, with tribal conjurors announcing, on the first day, the importance of everyone participating in tribal rites, and on the second day, interviewing the people about their dreams. The dreams of the people, by revealing certain moral and material concerns, were thought to anticipate the desires of their creator god, who was due to appear to them. On the third day of celebration, a strangled white dog mounted aloft on a pole was offered to the creator so that he could clothe himself in the dog's skin, and be revived through the sacrifice of the white dog. In this way, the world would be renewed for another year. Just as Eliade describes, the dog's (psychopomp's) breath/life is offered by the shaman to the dying god, who is restored to a new life through the sacrifice of the dog (Eliade 1964, 93; James 1996, 94-154; Morgan 1962, 216-217).

Later the same month, in the April 29, 1829, Volume 2, No. 7 issue, *The Cherokee Phoenix* contains a letter, written in response to an Englishman, Israel Worsley. Worsley had claimed in the March 25, 1829 volume 2, no. 2 edition of the *Phoenix* that the Cherokee were part of the lost tribes of Israel and still retained Judaic monotheism. Against this argument, "W" (Worcester) writes to the editor, stating that Cherokee conjurors,

> address themselves to imaginary beings, who are not God; such as the great white dog, the great bear, the lizard, etc., to whom they direct their prayers, in the light of deities, properly speaking . . . Certain it is they have no name for the Deity which signifies the Great Spirit.

As late as 1829 then, the Cherokee shamans still invoked the power of the "great white dog." Worcester goes on to say, "The Cherokees have only two names for God, one of which . . . signifies the Creator, and the other . . . he who dwells above;" whereas, they do not have or use the term "Great Spirit" to designate God. Finally, he asserts, that names like El and Elohim are unknown to the Cherokee, while he affirms that the name Yehowah may be known to some Cherokee through the missionaries.

In this group of texts taken from *The Cherokee Phoenix*, the sacred dog archetype appears as a moral guardian who saves the Cherokee from a great flood, as a psychopomp to the spirit world whose life revives a dying god, and as a spirit animal important to Cherokee shamans. The transformation of the White Dog during the midwinter ritual of the Seneca is described in detail, and through Worcester's testimony noted above, we find the Cherokee also venerate the "great white dog" (James 1996). As noted below, other references to the sacred dog in Cherokee literature share plot similarities and motifs with Eastern Woodland tribal myths, particularly those from the Great Lakes region. Eastern Woodland mythologies and the ritual of the White Dog Sacrifice provide significant hermeneutical information regarding the religious context of the Dog Tribe epithet. The sacred dog archetype appears in various collections of Eastern Cherokee religious documents and folklore well into the 20th century (James 1996).

Other Methodological Considerations: Syncretic Myths

In addition to Eastern Woodland motifs and myths, Cherokee mythology also contains Judaic-Christian and Zoroastrian elements.[2] No single contemporary scholar of Cherokee studies has done more to delineate the relation between Christian and indigenous Cherokee beliefs than the historian of religion William G. McLoughlin. Like the Reverend Worcester, he encounters problems of syncretism in oral Cherokee traditions—problems which Cherokee historian Theda Perdue describes as the "blending of the Old Testament, Cherokee mythology, and European folklore" (Perdu 1977, 209). McLoughlin traces the roots of these blended factors and, having surveyed the various denominational mission reports during the almost forty years of evangelization by Moravians (1800), Congregationalists (1817), Baptists (1819), and Methodists (1822), concludes that only 10-12% of the Cherokee population were converted to Christianity prior to Removal (McLoughlin 1986, 382). Given this rate of conversion, many indigenous archetypal structures should survive in the Cherokee literature.

Syncretism, or the blending of religious phenomena from different traditions, reflects the struggle between Cherokee religious traditionalism and Christian evangelism. Initially, the missionaries assumed that the Cherokee had "no organized religion of their own." Nor did they find equivalent terms for Christian theological concepts within the Cherokee language. Over time, they learned that the Cherokee did indeed have a tradition in which an afterlife was believed to resemble ordinary

life with similar activities (McLoughlin 1986, 358-359). But few missionaries bothered to investigate Cherokee indigenous belief.

The blending of indigenous and Christian religious structures demonstrates that Cherokee Christians practiced "a form of Christianity which they had adapted to many of their own values and beliefs" (McLoughlin 1994, 4). While post-contact Cherokee mythology exhibits "amalgamations of Cherokee and Christian traditions," such syncretic fusions encode the efforts made by Eastern Cherokee shamans to update and strengthen Cherokee mythology in light of Christian competition (McLoughlin 1994, 152).

The competition between shaman and missionary is found in the oldest single collection of texts and letters of Eastern Cherokee culture and religion, the *Payne-Butrick Manuscript*. The Reverend Daniel S. Butrick (1787-1847) was a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions stationed at various Southeastern missions to the Cherokee from 1817 through 1838, at which time he removed with the Cherokees to Oklahoma. Along with the Reverend Samuel A. Worcester and the Reverend Evan Jones, he tried to learn the Cherokee language and culture. He chose especially to minister to the Cherokee full-blood traditionalists and felt the Cherokee language was superior to his own in terms of its ability to express theological concepts. He advocated and trained a native ministry, and through his efforts to gain support for the Cherokees to remain in the southeastern United States, he began a manuscript on their traditions in 1835. He asked the playwright, journalist and native rights activist John Howard Payne (who also interviewed informants, recorded interviews, and contributed material) to publish the completed manuscript in 1837 (McLoughlin 1994). In short, Butrick was sympathetic to Cherokee belief, and one would expect to find structures of indigenous religion within the *Payne-Butrick Manuscript*.

For McLoughlin, the flaw of Butrick's research was his certainty that the Cherokee were Diaspora descendants of Israel. This bias influenced many of his interpretations, such that,

> It did not seem to occur to Butrick that the Cherokees had first met European Christians as early as 1540, that Spanish priests had traveled among them in the seventeenth century, and that English and French missionaries had preached among them for more than a century prior to his arrival in the Nation. Nor did he recognize in many of these sacred myths the Cherokees were putting together biblical accounts with their own ancient myths and creating a syncretic approach to religious history that enabled them to keep some of the old and add something of the new . . . (McLoughlin 1994, 144).

The Judaic bias of Butrick's interpretations, however, led him to the most innovative contributions of his work, i.e., his efforts to collect and record oral recitations of Cherokee religious traditions, and then to structurally compare the morphology of the syncretic Cherokee myths to those of the Hebrew Scriptures, as he attempted to prove to Payne the authenticity of their Jewish heritage. This

effort, along with James Adair's study of southeastern tribes, are perhaps among the first morphological studies of Cherokee traditions, and are also among the first comparative historical studies of Cherokee religion.

The Cherokee Great Mother

An earth diver origin myth given by the Cherokee traditionalist and informant Sickatower appears in the *Payne-Butrick Manuscript.* Herein, he identifies the first person on earth as a woman "who had been brought down from the skies." The Woman from the Sky is an Eastern Woodland earth diver, or cosmogonical figure, from whom the world is derived. As such, she is the origin of the cosmos. Like the White Dog, the Woman from the Sky earth diver is well documented in Eastern Woodland scholarship (Connelley 1899; Fenton 1962; Hale 1888; Kongas 1960; Meeker 1901; Wheeler-Vogelin and Moore 1957). The Woman from the Sky is recognized as the "the principle myth" for the Iroquois, Huron, Shawnee, Wyandot, Delaware and Machican (Bierhorst 1985, 200-201). All the Iroquoian tribes trace their genealogy from the descent of the Woman from the Sky (Smith 1881-1882, 32-33). She is a significant religious figure who survives from pre-Columbian times into the contact period (Fenton 1962, 285).

The Woman from the Sky earth diver is associated with the dog archetype in the Eastern Woodlands traditions, and as well as with the religious power and moral authority of the sacred feminine, such as corn, fertility, birth, death, healing, disease, and cosmic order (James 1996). There are many examples of the relationship between the Woman from the Sky and the dog in Eastern Woodland literature. The White Dog Sacrifice is conducted for the revival of her grandson. In Huron myth, the Woman from the Sky falls to the earth with her dog (Martin 1904, 238). She later travels to the spirit world with her grandson Iouskeha on the star path for humans, while dogs travel on an adjacent path for dogs (Tooker 1964, 139). In an Onondaga earth diver myth, the Woman from the Sky spreads her body with corn mush, which dogs lick off (Fenton 1962, 190-191; Hewitt 1903, 152-153; James 1996, 124-125). For the Shawnee, their female deity is called "Our Grandmother," who "is always accompanied by a small dog" (Leach 1972, 319; Voegelin and Voegelin 1944, 374). Our Grandmother also assumes "the role of Creator," when she "descended from the sky and created the turtle, the earth, and the features of earth and sky. Her grandson, Cloudy Boy, and his little dog, traveled with her" (Bierhorst 1985, 200-201).

According to Sickatower, the Woman from the Skies has two young sons who wonder where their mother disappears to every day, and how it is that upon her return, she always feeds them with corn and beans. They conspire to follow her, and learn of their mother's supernatural powers when they see that she shakes corn and beans from her very body. They resolve to kill her as a sorceress; whereupon, she intuits their evil intention and says,

> Sons, your minds are bewildered and your sense is gone and your Mother must be killed by her own Sons. But I found food for you and I was your food and in killing your Mother you yourselves will fill yourselves with evil. But your mother will remain a mother to you, even though you kill her. Take heed therefore and treasure up of her words.
>
> You may think that I am killed, but I shall not be dead. Do my bidding, for I shall be alive both on earth and in the skies. In the skies I shall rise up to the place when I descended when I came upon the earth; and that place is called Wah-Sew-Sah; in that place shall I live.
>
> Do my bidding; for you will have to labour within and without; to bear hot suns and wearisome hours and to feel the sweat rolling from your brows, when I am killed.
>
> Do my bidding; and when I am killed, drag my body, to and fro, over a large space. From the spot over which you drag my body, I shall come out upon the earth, and from my habitation in Heaven I shall see whether you do my bidding and toil earnestly to cause me to increase upon the earth. When you see me risen about one foot from the earth, you are to labour all around me and take away every weed that may have come to clog my growth; and though the sun burn you when you do this, and though your work make you very weary, do not falter; but remember I am your mother; and call upon me with songs, and let me hear you . . . (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume II, 53).

The speech of the woman to her sons continues for some time, as she instructs them about the proper planting of her body. She says that when her body has "fully grown," she will, as the corn stalk lift her head proudly. "You will look on me and be glad: and be sure that you are careful of me, for elsewhere you shall find no milk whose source is inexhaustible like mine." When her "head towers so high that no foot can step over my crest, waving towards the Heavens," the sons are to

> set apart seven days and seven nights; and on the next morning which shall follow at the rising sun you are to cut deep lines upon your limbs like those between the grain rows of my spikes: and then you are to take me by the hand and to draw me towards you and to prepare me for a feast (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume II, 55).

For the feast of the body of the woman from the skies, the sons are to make invocations. And if the boys do not obey their mother's instructions, the woman from the skies will fling them to "Ool-skay-tah," or to "disease, distress, anguish, the destroyer" (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume II, 56).

We find an archetypal Great Mother figure within Sickatower's interview. Her language resonates with religious power and moral authority. It is she who has control over life and death, and creation and destruction. Because of her fertility and power, she is feared as a sorceress. As the First Woman, a sacred woman and the Cherokee female ancestor, she gives her children (humanity) life through her body, which is transformed into corn. Conversely, she threatens to inflict them

with disease, pain and death if they disrespect her, disobey her instructions, or violate her behavioral code. As the Great Mother, she is the gate to life and death. As a powerful Great Mother figure, she ascends to the sky and descends to earth at will. As the Corn Mother, she appears on earth as a sacred plant, and will be celebrated in the Green Corn Ceremony. She is a sacred being who ascends to the spirit world, from whence she came.

The Woman Brought from the Skies in the *Payne-Butrick Manuscript* reflects the Jungian analysis of Neumann (1963) and Woloy (1990) in other aspects. She is the fertile rain giver and Woman from the East, who gives vegetation or drought, which is seen when Butrick relates a rain feast was celebrated to propitiate the women in the east, as follows:

> In times of drought, the Cherokee conjuror would call upon all the thunder beings, and if no rain was forthcoming, he would call upon the woman in the east, who had given assurance that if others did not relieve them, in this particular, they must call upon her, and should surely hear, and grant them an abundance of rain, but without thunder. (My informant, an old man, told me he never knew this to fail bringing rain.) . . .
>
> After the rain commenced, if there was an appearance of too much the conjurer offered a sacrifice to the woman, requesting her to stay her hand and cause the rain to cease (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume IV Part 2, 305-306).

Again, in Jungian terms, in her aspect as birth giver, the Great Mother appears in this passage as the gate, or the way of the East. Butrick supports this archetypal interpretation of the Woman of the East by reporting that, among the Cherokee, she is often alluded to with great deference (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume I, 103).

Likewise, the Great Mother archetype is present in the *Payne-Butrick Manuscript* as corn, and the protector of corn. When Cherokee shamans turn to the Woman from the Skies in her role as Corn Mother, she answers their prayers, which Butrick describes as follows:

> This set of conjurers, I believe, suppose that once the corn died and went above, having a spirit or seed, behind, telling it that in every time of need, it must look to its mother above. These conjurers, therefore, probably substitute corn above for the woman above . . . Thus they pray to the corn above in order to turn a storm of wind from the corn (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume IV Part 2, 308).

Finally, the Woman Brought from the Skies is likely the "the Ancient of Days, the progenitor of the Cherokee Nation," who is brought to earth, according to Sickatower, at the same time as fire (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689, Volume II, 63; James 1996, 114). While the term "Ancient of Days" may reflect a Biblical allusion to the Ancient of Days in Chapter 7 of the Book of Daniel in Hebrew Scripture, the same female figure and terminology is found in the Huron tradition

(Tooker 1964, 145-151; James 1996, 138), as well as within the Iroquois-Huron origin myth cycles (James 1996, 135-143).

The Cherokee Woman from the Skies is a Great Mother figure and sacred woman who demonstrates her religious power and moral authority over nature and humanity by ascending to heaven and descending to earth at will; by transforming her body into corn; by answering the prayers for fertile crops and rain; by preserving humanity from disease and death; by establishing behavioral norms; and by inflicting disease and meting death when necessary. She is the cosmogonic earth diver, and source of all things which follow after her descent into the world.

Guardian Dogs at the Threshold to the Spirit World

As the Great Mother archetype of vegetation, death and rebirth appears in the *Payne-Butrick Manuscript* in the figure of a sacred woman, so too does the archetypal dog appear as moral guardian, spiritual guide, and companion to the Cherokee. The sacred dog is associated with behavioral norms, and the soul's journey to the spirit world by a Cherokee traditionalist and Christian convert, Nutsawi (Pine log), who declares in a passage (which recalls both the Judaic-Christian and Zoroastrian notions of a fiery judgment) that the obedient people upon death would live with God forever. However,

> if they were disobedient, they would be miserable forever in a lake of fire. That just as they got to that place an awful gulph would appear before them, across which they would see a small pole, with a black dog at each end. Being impelled forward, they would go onto the middle of this pole, and then the dogs would turn it, and plunge them off into the gulph or lake of fire (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume III, 2-3).

In another interview with Nutsawi, Butrick reports that the disobedient,

> would be miserable eternally in a lake of fire; that just as they got to that place an awful gulph would appear before them, across which they would see a small pole, with a black dog at each end. Being impelled forward, they would go on to the middle of this pole, and then the dogs would turn it, and plunge them off into the gulph or lake of fire. Some few, however, might be permitted to cross, but on arriving at the other side, they would be put into a house of fire, and transfixed with large iron spikes, and thus tortured forever (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume I, 6).

Judgment by fire is a Zoroastrian concept adopted by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This image of a bridge of apocalyptic judgment over a fiery abyss guarded by dogs is prominent in Zoroastrianism (James 1996, 113-151).

In another version of a fiery judgment myth, Nutsawi (along with two other informants) links Moses wandering in the wilderness with the judgment of fire,

and a pole lying across the abyss of fire "with a great black dog at each end." These dogs turned the pole like a roasting skewer, and as the wicked "went on this pole, to cross, the dogs turning it threw them in" the abyss (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume IV Part 1, 40-41). The insertion of Moses into a myth of fiery judgment involving dogs who guard the path to the spirit world demonstrates Nutsawi's attempt to reconcile Cherokee tradition with the Judaic-Christian tradition, a Cherokee sacred narrative with a Judaic-Christian narrative, a religious story oriented toward nature (Cherokee) with a religious story oriented toward history (Judaic-Christian), and lastly, Cherokee normative figures (the dogs) with a Judaic-Christian normative figure (Moses).

Sacred dogs are also associated with a primal flood in the *Payne-Butrick Manuscript*. In a letter to Payne, Butrick relates a flood myth which parallels *The Cherokee Phoenix*, volume II, no. 3, of April 1, 1829 sacred flood story, noted above. He writes,

> . . . on a certain occasion when all the people were assembled at an all night dance, a dog commenced howling in a most astonishing manner; and when his master commanded silence, the dog spoke and told him the cause of his distress, viz. that the world was to be drowned . . . (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689 Volume IV Part 1, 11).

Nutsawi indicates if people persist in disobedience, the final judgment of fire is to be preceded by a judgment by flood, when "the world became full of people who were very wicked," who "disregarded all good instruction," and who "would not listen to any thing good that was said to them." The Cherokee primal flood story, and its sacred dog, is fused with the Judaic-Christian Noah's ark myth in the Nutsawi's narrative, as follows:

> At length a certain dog told his master to make a vessel, and take in his family and provision and seed to sow, because God was about to bring a flood to destroy all the people for their wickedness. The dog also told his master to pray to God at day break with his face toward, as he prayed, lift his hand (with the palm down) as high as his head, and then put his head to the ground. In the same manner also at night, only then he might pray in his house, without regard to the position of his face. The old men supposed that all kinds of animals went into the vessel also. The master obeyed the directions given, and having shut the doors, the rain commenced, and continued forty days and forty nights, while the water at the same time gushed out of the ground, so that as much water came up, as fell down from the clouds. The wicked people could swim but little before they would sink and drown (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689, Volume III, 6).

In another version given by Nutsawi, elements of the Biblical flood narrative are introduced into the Cherokee primal flood myth, as follows:

> . . . when men were found to be incorrigible, at length a certain dog told his master to make a vessel, and take in his family and provision and seed to sow, because Ye, ho, waah was about to bring a flood to destroy all for their wickedness. The dog also told his master to pray to Ye, ho, waah at day-break, with his face toward the sun, (east), and, as he prayed, to lift his hand, with the palm down, as high as his head, and then put his head to the ground . . . (*Payne-Butrick Manuscript* #689, Volume I, 7a).

The religious power and moral authority of the sacred dog, the role of the sacred dog as guardian to humanity and symbol of behavioral norms, and the sacred dog's function as psychopomp to the land of the dead appear in these narratives. The series of details given by Nutsawi regarding how the dog instructs the man on the proper manner of prayer demonstrates the considerable religious power and ethical authority of the dog within Cherokee belief. The sacred dog, rather than Noah, speaks for God, and mediates between humanity and God in Nutsawi's flood accounts. Nutsawi, both full-blood traditionalist and Christian convert, blends elements of Jewish mythology—such as the stress on obedience to Jehovah, the forty days of flood, the building of a sailing 'vessel', rather than the raft of *The Cherokee Phoenix* story noted above, and saving animals in the sailing vessel—into his version of the Cherokee dog-flood myth.

As a sacred being, the dog appears at the threshold between chaos and order, and the spirit world and hell. The dog delivers the Cherokee from the chaos of water and fire by reinforcing behavioral and ritualistic norms, by making spiritual transformation possible, and by reinstating cosmic order. Nutsawi incorporates the spiritual power and role of the dog archetype as guardian and guide to the Cherokee into Judaic-Christian flood morphology in multiple accounts. In Nutsawi's narratives, the mythic structures associated with the sacred dog echo Judaic-Christian and Zoroastrian fiery judgment, as McLoughlin would say, in new syncretic fusions.

The Dog's Neck: Archetypal Motif from the White Dog Sacrifice

Within a generation, the sacred dog is simultaneously associated with both a primal flood and the Eastern Woodland White Dog Sacrifice in Cherokee tradition. In 1846, the Cherokee leader Stand Watie tells the ethnologist Henry Row Schoolcraft a dog-flood myth in which a dog warns his master of an imminent deluge, instructs him to build a boat, and demands to be thrown overboard so that the man and his family might be saved (Schoolcraft 1847, 358-359). To reinforce his point, moreover, the dog instructs the man to look at his neck in order to verify the truth of his words. When the man turns round and looks, he sees "the dog's neck was raw and bare, the bone and flesh appearing" (Schoolcraft 1847, 359). Stand Watie introduces herein a new motif in the Cherokee dog-flood myth, i.e., a neck of raw skin with a protruding bone, which the sacred dog uses to verify the truth of his warning.

Several generations later, in Mooney's report from his fieldwork with the

Eastern Cherokee conducted in 1887-1890, the archetypal dog again appears in a Cherokee flood story. Much like previously noted flood myths, a man's dog howls daily by the bank of a river. When his owner scolds him, he begins to speak, warning the man to build a raft so that he can escape an impending flood. He tells the man that when the rains come, he must "first" throw the dog into the water (Mooney 1982, 261). The man builds the raft and loads it with his family and provisions, the dog is thrown overboard, and they escape death. When the water recedes, the man and his family disembark; and they believe themselves to be the only survivors, until they hear "a sound of dancing and shouting on the other side of the ridge." The man discovers piles of human bones over the ridge and realizes "that the ghosts had been dancing."

As with the version told by Stand Watie two generations before, the dog in Mooney's story testifies that he is giving a truthful warning regarding the flood, saying, "'If you want a sign that I speak the truth, look at the back of my neck. He [the man] looked and saw that the dog's neck had the skin worn off so that the bones stuck out" (Mooney 1982, 261). This new Cherokee motif of the worn skin and protruding bone, introduced into the dog-flood narrative, must refer to the strangled dog of the White Dog sacrifice, and the role of the dog as psychopomp to the dying creator god. We know from captivity narratives and eye witness accounts, the Eastern Woodland sacrificial dog was strangled so that no bones were broken and no blood was shed (Morgan 1962, 210-211; Seaver 1856, 224). In the midwinter ritual of the White Dog Sacrifice, when the dying god was revived by the dog, that is, when the god becomes the dog, the animal was intact. Ritual strangulation by the Eastern Cherokee was similarly observed in 1848 by Charles Lawman. He learned from an Anglo informant that the Cherokee ate only game animals whose bones had not "been broken or mutilated" during the Cherokee Green Corn festival (Swanton 1977, 770-771).

In short, the psychic code of a talking dog, who points to his neck to verify his authority in Stand Waite's and Mooney's Cherokee flood stories, is explained by the iconography of the Eastern Woodlands White Dog sacrifice ritual. That is, the dog of Schoolcraft's and Mooney's flood stories points to the bone in his neck as a sign that he is the sacred, great white dog.

Animals in the Cherokee traditions become a special interest for Mooney, after meeting Chief Nimrod Jarrett Smith of the Eastern Cherokee Band in 1885, and in again in 1886, when Smith "came to Washington to seek legal aid so the Eastern Band could secure treaty benefits enjoyed by the Cherokee Nation." During these meetings, Smith intrigues Mooney by telling him "that old tribal religious beliefs included animal gods whose powers were thought to be immense" (Colby 1977, 55-56). Once Mooney comes to the Qualla Boundary in North Carolina to conduct fieldwork, he places the dog within the circle of most sacred Cherokee animals, saying, "The uktena (a mythic great horned serpent), the rattlesnake, and the terrapin, the various species of hawk, and the rabbit, the squirrel and the dog are the principal animal gods" (Mooney 1982, 340).

The Dog Star and the Milky Way

Through the 1898 field research of the Canadian scholar and public figure Robert Grant Haliburton, the ethnoastronomer Stansbury Hagar identifies two dog-stars, Sirius and Antares, as dogs, who guard the path of the souls on "opposite points of the sky, where the Milky way touches the horizon." He writes,

> Both are never seen at the same time, but one or the other is always visible. The tradition is that souls, after the death of the body, cross a raging torrent on a narrow pole, from which those of the evil-doers and cowardly fall off, and are swept to oblivion in the waters below. Those who succeed in crossing go eastward, and then westward to the Land of Twilight. They follow a trail until they reach a pass beyond which the trail forks. There they encounter a dog (gili), who must be fed, otherwise he will not permit the soul to pass. Having left him behind, the soul continues to follow the trail until it encounters another dog, who must also be propitiated with food. The unfortunate soul who is insufficiently provided with food for both dogs, having passed one, will be stopped by the other. The first will not permit him to return, and he will be held a prisoner forever between the two animals.The trail which the souls fall is probably the Milky Way, generally known among the North American Indians as the 'Path of Souls,' over which they pass from earth to the land of souls, though the Cherokee of to-day do not seem to use that name for it. The pass would then refer to the points where the Milky Way touches the horizon (Hagar 1906, 362-363).

Hagar's representation of the dog-stars recalls Nutsawi's description of guardian dogs standing at a threshold of fiery judgment, and demonstrates the dog archetype survived for several more generations after Butrick and Payne's interviews with the Cherokee.

However, in Hagar's account, astral, guardian dogs standing at the threshold to the spirit world are associated, not with fire or 'lakes of fire,' but with water. The Huron believed there was a dog guarding a river to the Country of Souls whose "only bridge was a tree trunk." The dog "jumped at many souls and made them fall into the water and drown" (Martin 1904, 228; Trigger 1990, 121-122). In Hagar's myth then, we find another Eastern Woodland allusion to the dog as guide and guardian to the spirit world, and as a symbol of behavioral norms.

Both Hagar and Mooney record myths in which the dog creates the Milky Way by stealing corn meal. Once caught, the dog runs away and as meal falls from his mouth, the Milky Way is created (Hagar 1906, Mooney 1982). The Cherokee Milky Way origin myth, which associates the dog with corn meal, recalls the Onondaga myth cited above in which the Woman from the Sky earth diver spreads her body with corn mush, which is licked off by dogs (Fenton 1962, 190-191 Hewitt 1903, 152-153 James 1996, 124-125). The Cherokee Milky Way myth therefore shares Eastern Woodland archetypal motifs, i.e., a sacred woman, corn meal/mush and dogs.

The Great Mother and sacred dog archetypes are associated with corn and the

Milky Way in the Archetypal Feminine complex (Neumann 1963 Woloy 1990). Within the Cherokee Milky Way origin myth, the Corn Mother is present in the meal insofar as corn meal is a gift from the Corn Mother, who is Corn Itself. As the dog runs dropping meal from his mouth, the "inexhaustible milk and nourishment" of the Cherokee Corn Mother becomes the Milky Way, or the path to the spirit world. This archetypal interpretation correlates with Huron mythology, wherein, the sky woman and good creator god create a path to the spirit world through the Milky Way for humans, while the sacred dog creates a path for dogs.[4]

An archetypal interpretation of the Cherokee Milky Way origin myth, in which the Great Mother and Sacred Dog are symbolically present, is supported by another Milky Way origin myth recorded by Hagar. Therein, a northern man was jealous of a southern hunter, and kidnapped his wife one day as she was "grinding corn into meal." Her dog ate the meal, and as he pursued his mistress and her abductor across the sky, meal fell from his mouth, forming "the Milky Way." When the woman from the south arrived in the north, the weather became so warm that "all the ice in that region began to melt." So her abductor "was compelled to release her," and "she returned home with her dog" (Hagar 1906, 363-364).

In this second story, the bond between the woman and her dog—as the archetypal expressions of the Great Mother (as the Corn Mother, the Milky Way, Corn, etc.) and sacred dog (as companion, guardian and guide)—is affirmed. The archetypal forms of the Great Mother and her sacred dog are likewise present as psychic phenomena expressed in the multiple structures of corn and sky, woman and dog, and their power over their kidnapper and his icy environment. Normative behavior associated with corn rituals is also evoked by their presence.

This second story also alludes to the Cherokee migration history and their journey from the icy Great Lakes region to the Southeast. When the northern abductor is compelled to release the woman and her dog from the south because the ice is melting, the sacred myth affirms both the north as the place of Cherokee origin, and the Southeast as their ultimate home (see Cockran 1952 and Witthoft 1962). The archetypal pair of the sacred woman and dog is integral to understanding the religious context of both Milky Way origin stories, and demonstrates the tremendous religious power and moral authority they share within Cherokee mythology.

The Survival of the Sacred Dog in Other Cherokee Myths and the Archaeological Record

The sacred character of the dog archetype appears in various forms in other Cherokee artifacts and myths. For example, the sacred dog is associated with healing by Mooney in the last quarter of the 19th century. Sixty years after the work of Butrick and Payne, Mooney describes the sacred medical formulae of the Cherokee for treating rheumatism as prayers to the dog. The disease of rheumatism is sent, by the powerful animal spirit Little Deer, to disrespectful hunters who kill too many

animals or who fail to ask for pardon in killing game (Mooney 1982, 250-252). The power of the sacred dog, however, is just as great, if not greater, than Little Deer's.

To cure rheumatism, the shaman first calls upon each spirit dog of the four directions, saying "O Red Dog . . . O Blue Dog . . . O Black Dog . . . O White Dog," to apply their special, respective, spiritual powers and "remove the intruder," rheumatism, which "is regarded as a living being." The shaman combines then four antidotal plants, which are know as deer eye, deer ear, deer shin and deer tongue as a physical antidote. After this, the shaman prays "to the dog" (the natural enemy of the deer according to Mooney) "to come and drive out the deer spirit . . . [and] . . . the patient is forbidden to eat deer meat for a certain period" (Mooney 1890, 47). While Mooney attributes the dog's power to a natural hatred between dog and deer, within archetypal analysis, the power and authority of the sacred dog over Little Deer is derived the Great Mother. She has control over death and disease. As her companion animal, the dog is empowered to drive out illnesses, and reestablish ethical norms that have been violated.

The sacred dog is present as the guardian of the dead (psychopomp) during the archaic and mound building periods. Thomas Lewis and Madeline Kneberg describe the dog as special to the archaic peoples of Tennessee inasmuch as dogs were carefully buried, "either with their owners or in separate graves" (Lewis and Kneberg 1958, 32; Hudson 1976, 48-51). In his study of vertebrate remains in the Southeast, Barkalow describes the reverence given to the dog by the shell mound builders, as follows: "Dogs seem to have been accorded the same care when buried by the aborigines as that given to their fellow aborigines" (1972, 25-27).

The sacred dog symbolizes the fertility of the Great Mother in Cherokee effigy pipes. According to Cherokee scholar Duane H. King, John Witthoft was unwilling to submit pictures of numerous dog effigies in his study of Cherokee stone pipes because they were sexually explicit, and too erotic for publication (Witthoft 1949).[5] Dog effigy water bottles, buried with humans, date from the Mississippian period (1400 C.E.) in the Southeast (Dickens 1982, 27, 53). The sacred dog, as guide, guardian and companion, must carry water for the dead on their journey to the spirit world. Charles Hudson, noting the significance of the dog in conjunction with dog effigy water bottles, says, "The dog was an animal which was believed to be peculiarly close to man; so close, in fact, that the medicine which was believed to make a man into a witch could be administered to a dog, which thereafter became an infallible tracker of game . . . " (Hudson 1984, 13).

Witch-medicine was given to dogs at Cherokee wakes so they could detect witches. As late as the 1970's, according to John Witthoft, the dog was important to Cherokee funerary practice. Much as Nasu the demoness in Zoroastrian religion comes to snatch the soul of the deceased (Dale-Green 1996 Gaskell 1968 Gnoli 1987), the Cherokee feared witches would take the soul of the dead. To avert this, the shaman and those vulnerable to witches took "witch-medicine" so they could see them. The same witch-medicine was given to dogs so that they too could

"detect witches and see them in their invisible forms," and frighten the witches away (Witthoft 1983, 71). As a spirit being, the sacred dog has power over other spirits, like witches.

An "old woman" who lived in the hearth fire also protected the house from witches.[7] Will West Long, a Cherokee informant,

> insisted [to Witthoft] that the fire on the hearth had an intensely spiritual nature, was human in thought, consciousness, intent, emotions, etc., and was in fact an old woman who was a grandmother in kin terms. She was a member of the family and the household. Proper treatment of the fire was essential to the well-being of the family, good family life, mannerly and proper conduct, and many rules about the conduct of the hearth contributed to the health, strength, and magical power of the old woman. Putting out the fire on the last day and ritual new fire during the Green Corn was essential, as was the proper sharing of meals by burnt offerings to the fire. If all was conducted well, the old woman would be strong and vigorous and would effectively protect the family from witch attach and many other ills. If the needs of the fire were neglected and proper ritualistic behavior were forgotten, the health and strength of the old woman suffered, she began to fail in her efforts to protect the family, and witches could get at them to snatch a bit of liver substance, finally overdoing their attack when protection failed and liver disease appeared" (Witthoft 1983, 72).

The old woman of the hearth fire and the dog are protectors of the Cherokee and their home from witches, disease, death and chaos. Here again in the funerary customs described by Will West Long to John Witthoft, the Great Mother and the sacred dog moiety is present in the tremendous religious powers of the old woman of the hearth fire and the sacred dog and their ability to overcome chaos and establish order, balance and harmony.

The old woman of the hearth fire is a sacred woman, who has sufficient power and authority to keep a family healthy, and defeat evil spirits, disease, death, etc. Just as the Woman Brought from the Skies gives health or disease and thus must be obeyed, so too one must obey the old woman of the hearth fire. Her fire must be properly put out and then rekindled during the Green Corn celebration. We know from Mooney, the place of the dog in Cherokee tradition is upon the hearth by the fire (Mooney 1982, 280), which acknowledges the function of the dog as the guardian and companion of the sacred woman of the hearth fire. As symbols (Douglas), the sacred woman and dog moiety thus implicitly encodes proper fire rituals in Cherokee tradition.

These Cherokee fire and funerary customs also parallel the role of the dog as guardian of the living and the dead in Zoroastrianism (Dale-Green 1966 Boyce 1989 James 1996), and the Zoroastrian fire cult. According to Boyce, the hearth fire was the only continuously burning fire, "lit when a man set up his home and kept alight as long as he himself lived, [in short] a divinity within the house." It was therefore kept with great care and offerings (Boyce 1975, 455), much as the care given to the sacred woman of the hearth fire described by Will West Long to

John Witthoft. In this sense, the symbolism of the sacred female hearth fire and her canine guardian and companion reflects another Zoroastrian syncretic structure in Cherokee religion.[6]

A further generation removed from Mooney and Hagar, dogs with shamanic powers appear in the story of "The Hunter and the Three Dogs," collected by Frans M. Olbrechts during his 1927 fieldwork among the Eastern Cherokee (Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick, 1966). The dogs, "a very small one and two larger ones," are hated by the hunter's wife, who does not feed them when the hunter is away. When "the Little Dog," who is "a magician," speaks to the Hunter in human language and complains of this treatment, the angry hunter says, "'Do whatever you feel like doing! Shame on her for treating you that way'"! The dogs confer and resolve to steal meat from the woman who, they believed, kept meat [jerky] in a small bag. The woman, herself, is described as "a great magician," who kept "urenda" (magical powers) "in a small bag . . . filled with roots and bark." When the dogs discover there is no meat in the medicine bag, they return it, but because they have smelled the bark, they also became "magical."

The next morning at breakfast, the woman eats "choice meat," but does not share any with the dogs. She sees her torn bag and attributes this to rats. As she is eating, she accidentally bites her finger instead of the meat, whereupon, finding the blood from her finger to taste good, and she begins to suck meat from her fingers, toe and breast. By the next day she is insane, and her daughter tells her she must not eat "her own flesh," and so the mother kills and eats her. The dogs are frightened by this turn of events, and the Little Dog goes to warn the hunter to take an alternate path home since "your wife has become a maneater." Even though the dogs and the man run in a direction opposite from the woman, she finds and chases them. They reach a lake where the man "made something like a raft, or a canoe, and they all got upon it and went to the center of the water." The woman pursues them, and when she overtakes them, the man pushes her away, and she drowns.

The man and dogs travel to the other side of the lake where they see an old man and women and ask to stay with them. The old couple says they have no food for them, and the hunter says that he and the dogs will hunt for them. The old couple agrees, but warns the hunter about their evil chief, who will "want to challenge you to a game." Soon the evil chief appears and challenges the hunter to a race, at which time the Little Dog says he will run in the place of the hunter, who cannot outrun the chief. The hunter puts his clothes on the Little Dog "who became just like a man, just like the hunter."

The Little Dog wins the race, and then the evil chief challenges the hunter to a ball game. The Little Dog is not big enough to win this game for the hunter, so he sends "our larger brother" dog to play. The Little Dog and hunter go off in the woods to hunt, "but all the time the Little Dog knew all about the game, as if he were seeing it. The dog won, and the Little Dog knew it." And when the hunter and the Little Dog return, the hunter is made chief of the settlement.

"The Hunter and the Three Dogs" reflects both positive and negative aspects of the Great Mother and the dog archetypal moiety. In a positive sense, the dog archetype once again guards humanity, and guides the hunter to safety. Because the sacred dog is in the hunter's boat, the hunter is able to drown the maneater, enforcing a prohibition against cannibalism. The sacred dog also shape-shifts to aid the hunter, and secure food and attain worldly power for him. The religious power of the sacred dog is so great, he can 'see,' or is psychically present, in multiple locations. Many of these functions are also found in a Seneca story, "The Dogs Who Saved Their Master." Herein, "Little Dog" helps his master defeat a monster and wins a race (Bruchac 1992, 77-82; James 1996, 190-192), which establishes another correlation to a Great Lakes myth.

In a negative sense, the Olbrechts-Kilpatricks version of "The Hunter and the Three Dogs" story depicts a conflict between the hunter and his wife regarding meat, and instances of cannibalism, which reflects moral anxiety over killing animal kin. This anxiety is conflated with fear of feminine power (Neumann 1994, 227-281), since the cruel cannibal is the wife, who is not a direct threat to game (as is her husband), but is a direct threat to the welfare of the dog. Insofar as the wife expresses sacred feminine power, it is the negative power of the Great Mother to mete out death. While both the wife and the dog are referred to as magicians, the wife uses her magical powers (urenda) for evil, while the dog uses his for good.

Traveller Bird from Snowbird Ridge, North Carolina tells another story of "The Dog and the Hunter," in which a solitary hunter faces reality alone as his wife and children "had been killed by enemies while he was away hunting" (Bird, 1972). With enemies all around, "it was dangerous to be alone"; and since game was scarce, "this forced the Hunter to travel far, looking for food." He wounds a buffalo with his last arrow, whereupon the buffalo runs away. The Sun then tells the discouraged hunter to seek his "brother," who "will help you," at the mountaintop (close to the upper world). At this time,

> The hunter started walking up the mountain path, and met a Dog trotting toward him. The Dog stopped and said, "Friend, you have enemies close by and around you I have some puppies. They are motherless and weak. I have no milk for them. If you will take care of my puppies, I will be your brother and helper. I will lead you away to safety." (Bird 1972, 48-49).

The Dog then borrows the hunter's clothes, thereby shape-shifts and becomes the hunter, and leads his enemies to a swamp of quicksand, where they die.

Then the Dog returns to his cave "where his puppies and the Hunter were waiting." He gives the Hunter back his clothes, and the hunter wraps the four weak puppies in his hunting shirt. The Dog then begins to lead the Hunter home when they see the wounded buffalo. The Dog pulls out one of his whiskers, which becomes an arrow, and hands it to the Hunter. Next, the hunter shoots and kills the buffalo, and roasts the meat. The Hunter, Dog and puppies eat their fill and return to the Hunter's home.

This story, of course, contains archetypal elements similar to the Olbrechts-Kilpatricks' Cherokee story of "The Hunter and the Three Dogs" and the Seneca version "The Dogs Who Saved Their Master" as discussed above, as well as to the expressions of the dog archetype examined in this paper. In both Cherokee myths of the hunter and the dog, the favored small dog is more than a hunting companion. He symbolizes the Great Mother archetype. In Traveller Bird's story, the sacred dog appears close to the sky, the origin of the sacred woman. He is in contact with the Sun, who is feminine in the Cherokee tradition (Mooney 1982). The dog symbolizes the sacred woman's power over fertility, and her ability to give life. As directed by the Sun, the dog guides, protects and saves the hunter. In return, the grateful hunter helps save the dog's puppies. Indeed, the dog and man work cooperatively to save them.

This latter fact can only be explained through the Archetypal Feminine complex. We may ask, what need does a spirit animal, moreover that animal companion of the Great Mother, have for human assistance? The answer is "none." These texts show that humanity needs the dog as that guardian spirit animal who, as the representative of sacred feminine power and moral authority, establishes cosmic order, balance and harmony. As Woloy points out, there is a bond between us and the dog which expresses a human need, both male and female, for nature. When the grateful hunter wraps the puppies in animal skins to keep them warm, and shares an equal and sympathetic concern for the needs of the Little Dog and the puppies, humanity is ordered, balanced and harmonious within a sacred universe. The sacred dog symbolizes the bond between humanity and the cosmos, between the Great Mother and nature, and between the Cherokee and all living things. In short, the sacred dog symbolizes normative moral behavior and expresses the Cherokee harmony ethic in mythic terms (Loftin 1983 Thomas 1958).

The umbrella of images given in an archetypal approach to Eastern Cherokee texts shows many underlying connections between mythic structures and sacred feminine power and moral authority. The Woman Brought from the Skies is a sacred woman; she is the origin of all things, including order, balance, and harmony; she is the Great Mother, the First Woman, and the ancestor of the Cherokee; she is the Corn Mother celebrated in the Green Corn Ceremony; she is the Woman of the East, the gate to life and birth; she is the great Shaman, who shakes corn and beans from her body; she is Corn and the power of fertility, the nourishment of food, and the giver of rain; she is the Milky Way and the path to the spirit world; and lastly, she is (possibly) the Ancient of Days and fire brought to earth; she is the Sun and sacred woman of the hearth fire, and in this final regard, she is likely the sacred fire of the Cherokee. She is also the harbinger of death and the gate of the West; she is disease and pain; she is the cave and the yawning abyss.

In all these aspects she is represented by her companion animal, the sacred dog, who overcomes chaos and saves humanity from the primal flood; who protects the righteous at the entrance to the paths of the soul, and bars entry to those who have been evil; who is the strangled, sacrificial White Dog, one of the principle deities of

the Eastern Woodland tribes; who is the dog-star Sirius (and Antares), who guides the human soul to the spirit world; who erotically celebrates the fertility of the Great Mother; who is associated with corn, the Corn Mother and the Milky Way (the path to the spirit world), which the dog and sacred woman (as Corn) together create; who is the healing dog of four directions, who can cure rheumatism, the hunter's disease; who is the funerary dog who can see witches; who is the companion to the sacred woman of the hearth fire and rests upon her at the fireside; who is the shamanic dog who shape-shifts into human form; who is the guardian dog who aids the hunter, defeats cannibalism, and uses sacred power and authority (urenda) for good; and who, as a sacred being and guardian of the Great Mother, establishes order, harmony and balance within the cosmos and Cherokee culture, and in so doing, returns the Cherokee to their cosmic origin, i.e., the woman from the skies.[8] In these archetypes, we find the religious power and moral authority of the sacred feminine in Cherokee mythology is transformative (of body and spirit), reconciliatory (of opposed forces, like birth and death, and beings, such as humans versus animals, and vice versa), foundational (for order, harmony, balance, fertility and permanence) and caring (animals for humans and humans for animals).

Conclusion

Within the syncretic fusions of the Cherokee tradition, one finds mythic motifs and figures drawn from Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism, and Eastern Woodland religions. These syncretic structures encompass the hermeneutical context for the religious epithet Dog Tribe. In these blended forms, the dog is a major symbol that hermeneutically evokes the religious power and moral authority of the sacred feminine within the Cherokee mythos. As a cultural icon (Eliade), the dog, as the guardian spirit animal to the sacred woman, metaphorically represents spiritual wholeness and the reconciliation of opposed forces in one's life. As a psychic phenomenon (Jung), the dog symbolizes the co-existence of this world and the spirit world (upper and lower)—three domains in which the sacred woman and dog establish order, harmony, and balance. As a psychic code (Levi-Strauss), the dog personifies the sacred feminine. As a cultural symbol, (Douglas), the dog implicitly encodes morality, and rituals of conduct directed toward the sacred feminine hearth fire and corn, the sacred feminine plant. Finally, as a rich textual symbol (Frye), the dog metonymically refers to the sacred woman, as the 'lamb' refers to Jesus. Archetypally speaking, wherever the dog is, the sacred woman is also.

Both Worcester and Mooney, generations later, refer to the great white dog as a key religious figure for the Eastern Cherokee, providing another link between the cultures and religions of the Woodlands tribes, particularly the Great Lakes tribes, and the culture and religion of the Cherokee. As late as the 1970's, the sacred dog still appears in literature about the Cherokee. Finally, sacred spirits animals, such as the dog, have hermeneutic, or interpretive, value for the reconstructive process of ancient religious ideas, and that time when women and animals had

great spiritual significance in the matrilineal societies of the Eastern Woodlands tribes and beyond.

Mooney tells us that as De Soto passed through Cherokee territory in the 16th century, he was given "some dogs of a peculiar small species, which were bred for eating purposes and did not bark" (Mooney 1982, 24-25). Perhaps the Cherokee gave the Spanish their most valuable animal, bred for a White Dog sacrifice and/or a Green Corn feast, with the characteristic inability to bark linked to ritual strangulation. Given the spiritual significance of the dog in Cherokee myth, we might add to Mooney's explanation for the term "cave people," the historic and linguistic translation for "Cherokee" (Mooney 1982, 182-183), an insight drawn from the dog archetype. That is, the dog is present at the cave, a juncture of this world and the spirit world, to guard and guide the sacred woman and her people.

Notes

1. Alligators representing forces of chaos is certainly a southern Eastern Woodland embellishment, perhaps Seminole, to this myth. See a Creek version of this story in Burland 1985, 115 and James 1996, 182.

2. Curtin and Hewitt noted elements of supposed "Aryan" and Jewish mythology in Native American myths, which could only be found in fragments (Curtin and Hewitt 1911, 53). Horatio Hale cites David Cusick's "History of the Six Nations" for its Zoroastrian interpretation of the good and evil Iroquoian creator twins (Hale 1888 Beauchamp 1892). John R. Swanton says the dualism of the Iroquoian universe reminds one of Zoroastrianism (Swanton 1928, 212). For a discussion of Zoroastrian motifs in Cherokee mythology, see James 1996.

3. In Zoroastrianism, a bridge to the spirit world is described as being guarded by two dogs, one of whom is Sirius, the Dog-star/White Dog (Gaskell 1960, 226).

4. Immediately upon death, Elisabeth Tooker reports, the human soul, "left the body and went at once to Iouskeha [the good creator god] and his grandmother Aataentsic [the sky woman], by way of the Milky Way . . . 'the path of the souls.' The souls of dogs always went by the way of certain stars near the [human] souls' path . . . [called] 'the path of the dogs'"(Tooker 1964, 139).

5. Personal communication.

6. The bond between woman and dog, and duties to dogs are significant within Zoroastrianism. It is the responsibility of every believer to care for the pregnant female, whether 'two-footed or four-footed'. See Ballou 1976, 195-198; James 1996, 127.

7. According to Charles Hudson, the most important Cherokee deity is the sun, who is also the female grandparent, and the sacred fire (Hudson 1984, 13).

8. In Cherokee myth, contemporary animals are derived from sacred animal prototypes, who have returned to their sky origin (Mooney 1984, 231).

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