W(h)ere There's a Wolf, There's a Way: The Lupine Gothics of *Mongrels* and *Where the Dead Sit Talking*

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> "I started looking wider and I realized that everybody … was drawing American Indians as some form of wolf. And I thought, what's the attraction there? Why do people do this? And also I was disgusted by it, not that a wolf isn't a cool animal, but just in the way it's been memorialized on a thousand truck-stop blankets." --Stephen Graham Jones

In this excerpt from an interview with Billy J. Stratton, Stephen Graham Jones (Blackfeet) muses about the conflation of Native America with wolves across mainstream representations. Here he's speaking specifically about why he's relieved Art Spiegelman didn't have any Native characters in *Maus*, "because I know he'd draw him or her with a wolf head" (Stratton 52). While such tired cliches of Indigenous people serve as a source of frustration for Jones, his conversation with Stratton stems from a discussion of his own werewolf novel, *Mongrels* (2016). Jones reclaims the wolf in his own work in ways that trouble facile associations of the lupine with the Native. Nor is Jones alone in this unsettling reclamation; consider for example the recent release of *A Howl: An Indigenous Anthology of Wolves, Werewolves, and Rougarou*, edited by Elizabeth LaPensée, which offers stories from the past, present and future. This essay places the lycanthropic representations in Jones' text in conversation with those (and the more broadly lupine) in Brandon Hobson's (Cherokee) novel, *Where the Dead Sit Talking* (2018, hereafter, *WDST*).

These texts may seem, on their face, very different: Hobson's is a realist novel about a Cherokee adolescent in foster care living with a white family in rural Oklahoma and Jones' is a tale about a boy from a family of werewolves who mainly live on the run.[1] Yet, the two texts share a number of similarities. Specifically, both take the form of Southern Gothic bildungsromans (narrated by their protagonists); both wield werewolves (in their main texts and epigraphs) as devices for coming-of-age stories about male adolescents who are specifically working to construct their notions about masculinity; both protagonists attempt to configure those masculinities while being raised by people other than their biological parents; and, due to their familial situations, both protagonists are often on the move while longing for a kind of stasis or stability that they deem "normal."[2] In this article, I contend that both novels wield their lupine imagery (of werewolves and wolves) within Gothic traditions replete with secrets variously withheld and revealed as devices to interrogate the tensions and overlaps between a series of apparent dichotomies, notably: the (masculine) wild and the (feminine) domestic; solitude and community; and motion and stasis.[3]

Sequoyah, the narrator/protagonist of *WDST*, lives with the Truett family (for the bulk of the novel) in Little Crow, "near Black River, in rural Oklahoma" (11). He is estranged from his biological mother because "she finally landed herself in the women's prison for possession of drug paraphernalia and driving while intoxicated. She got three years since she already had a record" (5).[4] Sequoyah's mother remains incarcerated throughout the novel. He explains, "My mother and I were alone, too. My father had left us, packed up his jeep and headed west to find God. I never knew him" (3).[5] Sequoyah's mother does appear in the novel in both present scenes and past remembrances, though their relationship is fraught and increasingly emotionally distant. Two other foster children are also living in the Truett home, "A seventeen-year-old girl named Rosemary and a boy who's thirteen… His name is George" (11). We

learn that Rosemary is Kiowa and that she "had attempted suicide, twice," a fact that becomes important as the novel progresses (105). Sequoyah quickly becomes obsessed with Rosemary, but while she is initially quite interested in getting to know him, she grows decreasingly so over the course of the text (to his consternation).

Mongrels' unnamed narrator (who I will refer to as The Nephew, the last persona he adopts over the course of the novel) lives with his deceased mother's sister Libby and brother Darren, his aunt and uncle, both portrayed throughout the majority of the novel as werewolves, albeit mostly in human, not wolf, form.[6] While Libby does the bulk of the raising of The Nephew, he idolizes his uncle, explaining, "Every boy who never had a dad, he comes to worship his uncle" (20), and later, "I wanted to be him so bad (38). By contrast, The Nephew contends that Libby "wanted me to be the one who got to have a normal life, in town. / We're werewolves, though" (35).[7] The Nephew reflects on his years between the ages of eight and sixteen as he and his aunt and uncle crisscross the southern tier of the United States between New Mexico and Florida. The Nephew waits (impatiently) to discover whether he will ever turn into a werewolf (like his aunt, uncle, grandfather, and, we learn, father), or if he will not (like his mother).[8]

Both texts demonstrate their attention to were/wolves from their very beginnings, and I offer readings of their respective epigraphs to frame the contexts into which each situates itself. The context of these other texts, I argue, mirrors the ways the young protagonists emplace themselves either in physical space or within their relationships and/as responsibilities. *Mongrels* begins with an epigraph attributed to James Blish: "Eventually I went to America. There no one believes in werewolves" (np). Jones frames his Southern werewolf story within this broadly US national context, but it requires a bit of a tweak of Blish's original, which reads, "And then I came to this country. Here no one believes in the werewolf" (45). Blish's "There Shall be No

Darkness," from which this epigraph obliquely derives, however, is set, not in the US, but Scotland—Jones' epigraph, like The Nephew's narrative itself (as we will see), tells the truth, but tells it slant. Jones recasts the nation that, in Gothic tradition, denies the ghouls and ghosts that haunt its landscape.

Moreover, like "There Shall Be No Darkness," *Mongrels* also deals with the science behind werewolves—it theorizes both their history and evolution as a mode of fleshing out issues of belonging in both community and in place. In Blish's text, lycanthropy is regarded as a disease and a mutation (specifically of the pineal gland), and, as such, a possible evolutionary step toward something new. Jarmoskowski, the werewolf in the story, opines just prior to his demise, "Someday the pineal will come into better use and all men will be able to modify their forms without this terrible madness as a penalty. For us, the lycanthropes, the failures, nothing is left" (44). Werewolves then represent a potential hope for a kind of transforming humanity which comes with a maddened bloodlust, which represents too great a curse.[9] That curse, likewise, takes the form of isolation—and it is this isolation that leads Jarmoskowski to "come to this country." He laments, "It is not good for a man to wander from country to country, knowing that he is a monster to his fellow-men…I went through Europe, playing the piano and giving pleasure, meeting people, making friends—and always, sooner or later, there were whisperings, and strange looks and dawning horror" (45). Much like the protagonists of *Mongrels* and *WDST*, Jarmoskowski is always on the move, longing for but never finding, never even really hopeful for, a sense of community or belonging. To that end, Joshua T. Anderson notes that in *Mongrels*, "traveling from 'state to state' across geographical borders is a necessity, and … transforming from 'state to state' across the lines of species (human and wolf) and monstrosity (human and werewolf) is a condition of lycanthrope life" (127). Similarly, Jarmoskowski continues, "Sometimes, I could spend several months without incident in

some one place and my life would take on a veneer of normality. I could attend to my music and have people about me that I liked and be—human" (45). In each of these novels, as in Blish's story, this unfulfilled longing to remain in one place and/or find belonging with/in community is likened to human normalcy, while those who cannot attain that stasis, for whatever reason, become excluded from humanness (and aligned with the lupine).

Of course, such a phrase as "human normalcy" requires its own canon of stories by which to contextualize it (as its meaning will vary wildly across different histories, locations, trajectories, and intersections). As Daniel Heath Justice explains in his chapter "How Do We Learn To Be Human?" from *Why Do Indigenous Literatures Matter* "Although we are born into human bodies, it's our teaching—and our stories—that make us human" (33). Both *Mongrels* and *WDST* are stories about the importance of stories, particularly stories about home and community, in shaping the kinds of humans we become.[10] Justice continues, "the role of experience, of teaching, and of story [is] to help us find ways of meaningful being in whatever worlds we inhabit, whatever contexts we've inherited" (34).[11] Such, then, I argue, are *Mongrels* and *WDST*: stories about characters becoming human and navigating the spaces between humanness and inhumanness that wield lupine images as symbols of both the dangers and possibilities of those seemingly disparate states. These are not, however, how-to guides; they are stories about pitfalls and dangers, messy tales about the incompleteness and the contingent nature of that becoming and of very human fallibilities.[12]

Hobson's novel likewise begins with a pair of epigraphs replete with (were)wolf references or allusions. The first reads, "'A starving man will eat with the wolf.' –Native American proverb." Those of us who work in Native American Studies are apt to read the provenance Hobson provides for this aphorism with some distrust, of course; the

phrase "Native American proverb" is dicey. We regularly encounter memes, for example, like this, vaguely interspecies inspirational quotes associated with particular creatures—wolves, eagles, and buffalo—that seemingly can't be traced to any particular Native nation or community. It's hard not to read some tongue-in-cheek play from Hobson here. The Jones passage I use as the epigraph to this essay wields this pairing, as Jones continues, "It gets so annoying to see. I get so tired of that stuff—and I *say* that, but if you keep getting tired of every little thing like that you're going to spend your life fatigued, so you finally just allow yourself to be amused by it" (Stratton 52). Hobson's epigraph conjures this wolf/Native American pairing, and we can picture it emblazoned across the "truck stop blankets" Jones mentions above. Yet, this rendition relies on a peculiar manifestation that maligns the wolf, suggesting that eating with them could only come about because of starvation (we might contrast such a negative reading of this canid with Jones' "not that a wolf isn't a cool animal"). This alleged proverb certainly parallels settler constructions of wolves as dangers to be eliminated across North America.[13] And, as such, the wolf *qua* Indian *qua* wolf motif further reminds us of settler elimination of Indigenous peoples.[14] In contrast to these defaming and violent views toward wolves, though, Hobson elsewhere asserts, "Though hunting was a profession, a Cherokee would not kill a wolf, as wolves were messengers to the spirit world ("How Tsala" 22).[15] All of this to say: we might read an irony in Hobson's epigraph *and* attribution, but each also signals a bit toward understanding the text's protagonist and his tendencies to lupine ideation, as I will demonstrate below.

Hobson follows this broadly attributed proverb with something far more particular; the second epigraph to *WDST* reads, "'Poor strangers, they have so much to be afraid of.' –Shirley Jackson" (np). In this instance, as with Jones's epigraph, we encounter a passage by a specific author, though without the text from which that

passage comes. Hobson lifts this quote from Jackson's gothic novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, which his text in some ways mirrors.[16] Jackson's novel famously and richly begins, "My name is Mary Katherine Blackwood. I am eighteen years old, and I live with my sister Constance. I have often thought that with any luck at all I could have been born a werewolf, because the two middle fingers on both my hands are the same length, but I have had to be content with what I had" (1).[17] The protagonist/narrator of Jackson's novel, called Merricat by most of its characters, laments having not been born a werewolf, displaying a longing that both Sequoyah and The Nephew mirror (and contrasting Jarmoskowski's portrayal of lycanthropy as a curse).[18]

The Blackwood family in Jackson's novel is collectively reclusive, and the townspeople mock and jeer Merricat when she takes her biweekly trips from their isolated house to town to buy groceries and to get books from the library (Merricat is particular to "fairy tales and books of history" (2). She explains, "The people of the village have always hated us" (4). In order to drive out a newly arrived relative who is attempting to attain the family's wealth, Merricat sets fire to the house. The fire department puts out the fire, but the townspeople proceed to loot and smash the remains of the house. Thereafter, Constance and Merricat remain in the relatively undamaged ground floor of the house, visited only by occasional townspeople who, out of guilt or fear (the young women are imagined to be witches), leave food for them. In the final vignette of the novel, a young boy, spurred by his friends, makes his way to the porch and calls out, "shakily," a taunt the townspeople had earlier directed at Merricat (146).[19] That night the sisters find "on the doorsill a basket of fresh eggs and a note reading, 'He didn't mean it, please.'" In response, Merricat, in the third to last line of the novel, states, "Poor strangers…They have so much to be afraid of" (146). Similarities abound between Hobson's novel and Jackson's: in both we encounter odd and maudlin young people, similarly odd adult caretakers, a town full of creepy people,

a family living in relative isolation out in the woods, family stories of dubious veracity, and deaths that may or may not have been accidents.

Adding layers of referentiality to Hobson's epigraph, Merricat explains that she likes three things in particular: "my sister Constance, and Richard Plantagenet, and Amanita phalloides, the death cup mushroom" (1). Richard Plantagenet might refer to any of a number of people, but likely gestures to the great-grandson of King Edward III of England. As Jamil Mustafa contends, "The inclusion of Richard III among Merricat's favorites is…illuminating…because Richard was supposedly guilty of the same crime that Merricat commits, the murder of blood relations—in particular, of male heirs" (135). While Constance is found to have killed the family, she is not convicted of any crime. The reader later learns that it was in fact Merricat who killed the family, and quite intentionally—like Hobson's novel (as we will see), Jackson's opens with a death foretold, and possibly, with the protagonist/narrator, a murderer.[20]

WDST includes its own specifically werewolf narrative of sorts, constructed, like that of *Mongrels*, as a fiction within the larger fiction of the novel. Sequoyah explains to George, "I once got a boy to believe I was a werewolf" (205). He explains that the other boy was in a shelter with him and had asked him about the burn scars on his face: "I told him I was attacked by a wolf in the woods in the middle of the night" (205). The reader is well aware that Sequoyah received these burn marks from his mother; he explains very early in the novel, "I was burned by hot grease once when I was eleven. My mother was drunk, but it was an accident…Hot grease stung my cheek and neck…The scars are small but noticeable enough" (4). We read multiple layers of storytelling in this passage. Within this work of fiction, Sequoyah, named for the creator of the Cherokee syllabary, crafts another fiction. Nonetheless, we see a kind of wish fulfillment in this werewolf tale. Rather than explaining the true source of his scars, he decides for a less domestic, and a much more wild, injury.[21] Instead of being scarred by

his mother in a kitchen, he opts to claim a wolf attack. Outwardly, Sequoyah parallels The Nephew's rejection of the feminized domestic space as the foregrounding element of his autobiography. Yet, Sequoyah, as I discuss further below, will ultimately embrace both his own feminine elements and an idealized, if individualized, notion of domesticity.

The trick here is that Sequoyah gets this other boy to believe him. He creates a story about himself to make himself seem dangerous, to protect himself from a variety of encroachments: intimate, physical, violent. As Jones notes, "Truth is in the rhetoric of me convincing you and you saying, 'I believe that. I feel that to be true'" ("Observations" 24). But, this entire novel is really working to do similar work. It's a story about a character telling a story about himself that doesn't quite add up and seeing who is going to buy it. Throughout the text, the reader occupies a position similar to that of both the other boy and of George in this vignette. Sequoyah is telling a story about having told someone a story that was meant to create distance and fear, and that in this case is also meant to generate intimacy and respect, if not trust.

Furthermore, Sequoyah sexualizes his werewolf self-fashioning. He asserts, "I told him sometimes I wake up in the mornings naked with scratches and blood and mud all over my body. I told him other wolves gave me a hard-on" (205). Sequoya's wielding of sexual arousal as part of his mythos blends a rough-and-tumble machismo with a bestial sexuality that means to create distance between himself and this other boy. He crafts himself as feral, unbound by the rules of society that disallow these manifestations of wildness. He proceeds to tell the story of telling this same boy a story of stealing a pickup truck and driving to Galveston, Texas, where he was found and arrested, "I told him they threw me down and handcuffed me just off the freeway. I told him a coyote came out of the brush and started to attack the trooper, ripped into him. Bit his leg so that blood sprayed everywhere. The coyote smelled my blood, knew

I was part wolf. The coyote ripped out the trooper's organs and we started eating it. The kid believed every word" (205). Sequoyah's story turns on the wild coyote recognizing his wildness and power, where the emblem of authority—masculine but civilized law enforcement—fails to do so, a failure that ends in his death.[22] Given this tendency toward telling tall tales, Sequoyah's role as a reliable narrator is in doubt throughout the novel.[23]

Indeed, this story and the epigraphs of the text are not the sole references to wolves in the novel. When we first meet George, we learn that "He was reading fairy tales mostly…stories of wolves and children, and also science fiction stories" (26). Sequoyah tells us that he had "won honorable mention in a contest at school one year when I'd drawn a cartoon wolf with bandages on his nose and a patch over one eye. The inscription underneath it read: 'Do What's Right! Don't Fight!'" (167).[24] Rosemary explains that as a child, "The stories I liked to read all dealt with children escaping wolves" (190). As Sequoyah goes on a bicycle ride that he remembers as one of his "most invigorating experiences" while living with the Troutts he recalls, "I imagined wolf tracks under my tires" (193-94). While he waits in a hospital room for a diagnosis after having vomiting spells and headaches, he imagines, "They would tell me I was part animal, part human, some other entity" (263). And, finally, of a meal he consumes after being released from the hospital, he explains, "I devoured everything, wolfing it down with my hands, eating like an animal. I was so sated in that moment, so freshly and newly awake, I didn't even notice until I got home that all the rooster sauce and ketchup on my shirt looked like blood" (266). These passages might seem to lack a single coherent thread, but the sheer repetition of wolf imagery in the text coupled with its epigraphs begs analysis. Beginning with the first epigraph's starving man, we note the ways Sequoyah likens the wolf to voracious and self-concerned feeding. Included in the second epigraph lies his longing toward lycanthropy (which he shares

with Merricat). Finally, he imagines wolf tracks as part of a liberty he feels on his bike ride. In all of these conjurings, Sequoyah, like The Nephew, valorizes as imagination of wolves as lone, rather than, for example, as members of a pack.

These lycanthropic tendencies point toward ways in which both novels participate in gothic traditions. As Eve Sedgwick famously contends, the Gothic novel is "pervasively conventional. Once you know that a novel is of the Gothic kind…you can predict its contents with an unnerving certainty" (9). In her thesis, "The Indigenous Gothic Novel," Amy Elizabeth Gore summarizes Sedgwick's conventions as consisting of "a melodramatic and foreboding setting, a woman in distress, manifestations of the supernatural or uncanny, reference to that which is unspeakable, and a haunting of the past upon the present" (3). Both Jones' and Hobson's novels contain each of the elements Gore enumerates. Moreover, these narratives are littered with monsters, with references to dark magics, with families festering in rural isolations (which is not to say all rurality is such), with brooding, disturbed, and disturbing folks. Such modern wielding of the Gothic is hardly surprising. While Gothic once referred to literature that fits Sedgwick's model and derives specifically from Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century England, contemporary usage expands its meaning self-consciously as Gothic becomes a particular mode for (among other things) contesting narratives that uphold national and nationalist hegemonic norms. In his book-length study of the Gothic, Fred Botting explains, "In the contest for the meaning of 'Gothic' more than a single word was at stake. At issue were the differently constructed and valued meanings of the Enlightenment, culture, nation and government as well as contingent, but no less contentious, significances of the family, nature, individuality and representation" (43). In short, Gothic has always served as an artistic mode for the contestation of fixed, often mainstream, values. Botting continues,

> The contest for a coherent and stable account of the past…produced an ambivalence that was not resolved. The complex and often contradictory attempts either to make the past barbaric in contrast to an enlightened present or to find in it a continuity that gave English culture a stable history had the effect of bringing to the fore and transforming the way in which both past and present depended on modes of representation. (23)

If the Gothic represents a counter-response to or problematized wielding of the Enlightenment—replete with its scientific rationalism and positivism—and one that specifically calls into question the hierarchical or progressivist dyad of civilized/barbaric, then Indigenous communities and communities of color (among others) possess a vested interest in wielding it.[25]

Indeed, this move to (re)claim Gothic traditions and aesthetics manifest in Native American literary critical approaches specifically. Louis Owens, a key figure in such conversations, writes against the United States' constructions of the "Frontier Gothic," offering instead modes by which, "The gothic Indian, that imagined construct imprisoned in an absolute, untouchable past, is deconstructed, and the contemporary Indian is granted both freedom to imagine him/herself in new and radical ways, as well as responsibility for that self-definition" (77). Owens recalls Faulkner's Chief Doom character as a clear example of the Frontier Gothic Indian to be deconstructed. Annette Trefzer offers a reading of Choctaw author Leanne Howe's novels *Shell Shaker* and *Miko Kings* to articulate the ways they "sound gothic resonances and engage with the region's traumatic wounds as spirits ill at rest point at Indigenous dispossession and disrupt official historical narratives" (200).[26] Trefzer hones in on intersectional representations of Indigenous women specifically. Meanwhile, Michelle Burnham likens Windigo stories to the Gothic as a tradition to be reclaimed, and Billy J. Stratton terms *Mongrels* a "neo-Southern gothic werewolf novel" (1). Hobson notes that while he sees

the capacity to read *WDST* as a realistic portrayal of a wounded mind, it might also be read as "a horror novel" (Brennan).[27]

Hobson's novel's setting of Little Crow itself contributes to the gothic vibe of the text. When Sequoyah asks George why the "entire towns seem[s] to have such strange habits," George replies, "'Little Crow is just a really weird place…The police promote prostitution. There's a brothel out by the lake. The police know all about it and they don't care…You could probably get away with murder here'" (118). We note of course that Sequoyah may have done exactly that: he may (like Merricat) have gotten away with murder. Meanwhile, the high school is abuzz with rumors of teens engaging in "strange sex acts and witchcraft" and "similar adult sex parties, where people dressed like mannequins…and they all wore flesh-colored bodysuits" (117). Not all of Little Crow's oddities are of overtly sexual natures, though. Sequoyah notes, "backyard birthday parties involved a game in which children were blindfolded and had their wrists tied behind their backs. They bobbed for dead snakes from a tub of water"; these same families use snakes in their church (117, 118).

In a further manifestation of an anti-positivist uncertainty and general secret-keeping common to the Gothic, each story offers a narrative that it, sooner or later, undercuts. While over the course of the novel the reader comes to accept The Nephew's werewolf narrative, *Mongrels* begins, "My grandfather used to tell me he was a werewolf" (1). This opening offers at least a layer of doubt to the grandfather's story, a layer that remains throughout the first chapter of the text. Still in the first chapter, The Nephew relates, "none of Grandpa's stories were ever lies. I know that now. They were just true in a different way" (25). The Nephew's grandfather is relating stories that convey messages, values, morals, etc. As such, that the details of the stories may never have happened doesn't necessarily make them untrue. Of course, what The Nephew communicates here might just as easily be said of Jones' novel

itself, or of all fiction, or of all stories. Elsewhere, Jones explains, "Truth isn't in verifiability. Truth is always in the narrative; truth is how well it coheres together and how it makes you feel" ("Observations" 24). We are reminded here of a host of canonized Native authors (if Native American literature can be said to tend toward canonicity). Leslie Marmon Silko's (Laguna Pueblo) famous introductory words in *Ceremony* explain, "I will tell you something about stories…They aren't just entertainment./ Don't be fooled. / They are all we have, you see,/ all we have to fight off/ illness and death" (np). In a scene in Chris Eyre's (Cheyenne and Arapaho) *Smoke Signals*, Victor asks his mother whether he should bring Thomas with him on his journey and she launches into a story about making frybread (the message of the story conveys the importance of community).[28] Daniel Heath Justice describes stories that "give shape, substance, and purpose to our existence and help us understand how to uphold our responsibilities to one another and the rest of creation…good stories—not always happy, not always gentle, but good ones nonetheless, because they tell the truths of our presence in the world today, in days past, and in days to come" (*Why* 2). In short, there is a long-established precedent of the ways that Native stories carry both power and message, what we might teach in our literature classes as the "theme" of a work. The narrator of *Mongrels* goes on to declare that such a practice runs in the family, stating that his uncle "Darren was just like Grandpa, telling me one story, meaning another" (100). As such, the werewolf narrative of *Mongrels* takes on a self-consciously metaphorical significance.

Among the secrets that *Mongrels* keeps from the reader is the racialization of The Nephew and his family. One evening at a convenience store, The Nephew runs into some kids from his grade, one of whom, gesturing at The Nephew asks, "He Mexican?" (61). Another follows, "What are you really?" (62). Jones' choice of "Mexican" in this instance is itself rich. Mexico and its denizens are, of course,

profoundly diverse, and that nation celebrates (rhetorically, at least) its diversity in the form of the mestizaje in ways that counter the US's historical anxieties over racial mixing. Placed in the context of the werewolf narrative, especially one called *Mongrels*, we are reminded of ideas of purity and the ways those ideas fail in the face of the complex mixings that life creates (and requires).[29] Yet, of course, for many in the United States, the term "Mexican" is very specifically racialized. It denotes a particular, but flexible, range of brown skin along with whatever other phenotypic elements happen to exist—or not—in the eye of the beholder. It likewise connotes foreign-ness, and the classmates in this scene echo these stereotypes as they say to The Nephew, "Still wet…piso mojado, right?" (61). Jones turns the joke back on these boys (who our narrator names simply and tellingly "Yellow Hair" and "John Deere Hat"), by having them conflate the slur "mojado" with "piso mojado" (wet floor). Moreover, Yellow Hair stands in contrast to werewolves broadly, as we learn later in the novel; Libby tells The Nephew, "I don't think there ever *has* been a blond [werewolf]" (112). "'The only place you could hide would be a wheatfield, I guess. Or a stack of gold.' This is funny to her. Hilarious. Werewolves never get the treasure" (112). The fact that werewolves are never blonde offers another potential reading of racialized phenotype, but since people with (naturally) blonde hair make up a tiny fraction of the world's population (something around two percent), this isn't as big a tell as one might think. The Nephew's addendum that Libby's laughter stems from the thought of the werewolf getting the treasure returns the reader to a more ambiguous sense of alterity.

The Nephew further hints but does not reveal, "The same way animals and cops know werewolves, so do security guards and salespeople and clerks. If you asked them why, they might not say 'werewolves,' would probably just shrug, say there's something shady about us, isn't there?" (90). Of course, Jones' narrator expresses the vague sentiments of unconscious bias (or obfuscated conscious bias) in this "something

shady." All of this is to say that we *can* read a racialized marginalization into these werewolves, though one that needn't necessarily mark them as, say, Indigenous. In the same conversation with Stratton that I use as my epigraph above, Jones explains, "people are always asking me, 'What's Indian about this' So I started writing about zombies and aliens to stop getting that question because I hate that question. That question means people are going into this book with their miner lights turned up too bright looking for just one thing (Stratton 52-53).[30] Lycanthropy in *Mongrels* might signal any of a number of forms of alterity (racialized, classed, or based on status within governmental structures of naturalization to name a few), but whatever it is standing in for in whatever reading someone has, it is clear that to be a werewolf in this novel is to fall outside of the mainstream. It's to come from a population whose story is not told.[31] Paul Tremblay refers to such moments in Jones's work as his "beautiful sentences that both tell and keep secrets" (357).

And that telling, or not telling, of werewolf stories or secrets lies central to Jones' novel. Significantly later in the text, The Nephew explains the family's lack of connection, community, and concomitantly, history: "The reason we don't know where we come from, it's that werewolves aren't big on writing things down. On leaving bread crumbs" (215). There might be any number of reasons why this family has either been elided from official and unofficial record keeping or has obfuscated itself therein, as is true with many marginalized communities. The grandfather tells a story of his participation as a soldier in World War II during which he learns the history of werewolves (the novel offers multiple, sometimes complementary and sometimes competing—if not contradictory—werewolf origin stories). The Nephew contends, "*Maybe* grandpa did go to war, and he *did* make it back…but those years in between, those years between shipping out and straggling back home, those are story years. Years without any photographs or paperwork or newspaper articles to prove them"

(216). Again, the record of this family and their ilk is sparse, both in terms of personal memorabilia (photographs) and official and historical documentation (paperwork or newspaper articles). What they have instead, what all communities maintain, are their stories.

These secrets represent a classic Gothic mystery that The Nephew intends to unveil and chronicle. But, in so doing, he also ultimately explains that werewolves are an image, a device, or an allegory. Libby tells him, "I know you've been writing it all down in that shoe box you keep in that old blue backpack…About us" (292). In reply, The Nephew explains, "'We never had a camera,' he says. It's his only excuse" (292).[32] But, as with all the stories in the family tradition, he explains, "'It's all different anyway,' the nephew tells her. 'The way I did it, I mean. Nobody would know anything, if they found it'" (292). He continues, "You may have fought a bear," referring to a moment earlier in the novel when Libby-turned-wolf does exactly that. It is at this point—in the final pages of the novel—that the reader is reminded that this isn't *really* a werewolf novel at all. Werewolves are a cover, a disguise, for something else that this family is.[33]

Mysteries likewise abound particularly in the vexing and unresolved endings in *WDST*, as we realize that the story we are reading might not be exactly what happened. The final sentences of *WDST* create a new kind of doubt in the reader as Sequoyah concludes, "As the weather grew warmer, Harold [Sequoyah's foster father] helped me build a tepee in the backyard, where I spent most of my time….I started writing my own stories, about Indians and monsters, about brainwashed killers, about mysterious deaths in a mythical Oklahoma town" (273). Of course, we wonder if *WDST* is one of those stories about a mysterious death in a mythical town (particularly since Little Crow seems to not actually exist). But, more than that, the novel's treatment of its own dramatic conclusion, Rosemary's death, is deeply ambiguous. As Sedgwick reminds us of the Gothic, "The story does get through, but in a muffled form" (14).

Of course, for the reader to be aware that secrets exist in a text, the narrative must both reveal and withhold certain details. To that end, *WDST* establishes itself as a chronicle of a death foretold; as Carnes notes, Hobson's novel is "retrospective" (239). The third sentence informs the reader of the details we will soon encounter, "The period of my life of which I am about to tell involves a late night in the winter of 1989, when I was fifteen years old and a certain girl died in front of me. Her name was Rosemary Blackwell" (1). From the beginning, the reader knows the novel's ending, or at least, the story's dramatic height.[34] What is left is the slow unveiling of how these events came to transpire. We know the narrator's age; we know the year. And yet, while the novel's outset begins with this foreshadowed denouement, the as-yet unnamed narrator denies the reader any mystery or revelation, continuing, "I'm alive and she's dead. I should tell you this is not a confession, nor is it a way to untangle the roots and find meaning. Rosemary is dead. People live and die. People kill themselves or they get killed. The rest of us live on, burdened by what is inescapable" (1). And, yet, untangling the roots and finding meaning are certainly what the reader finds themself doing. Such a quest seems precisely among the burdens of what is inescapable—indeed the quest to make meaning of this story might be precisely what *is* inescapable, it might be exactly what stories demand, and what readers do. Moreover, returning to the passage above, I want to examine two key elements: the assertion that this is "not a confession" and Sequoya's note that "people kill themselves or they get killed," because while Rosemary's death is ruled a suicide, the novel leaves it quite unclear whether that is the case (did she kill herself or did she "get killed"—a phrasing rich in its passivity). *WDST* is not only, as Hobson notes, a horror story, but also potentially, a murder mystery, though one that remains unsolved.

The central mystery of *WDST* takes the form of the specific mechanics of Rosemary's foretold death. She tells Sequoyah that "There're taking me out of here.

They're sending me back to rehab," and then tells him "just leave me alone. I don't like you any more" (245). Finally, Sequoyah narrates:

> "You never listen," she said, and these were her final words. In the dimly-lit room I couldn't tell if she was laughing or sobbing. A surge of anger struck me. It stopped me cold, seeing her standing there. I noticed the gun in her hand. Beyond that, I remember hearing a slight hum that seemed to vibrate from somewhere in the room. The vibration moved across the floor and entered me, my body, my mind. The vibration was its own malicious presence, some isolated entity that existed only in that moment. I knew I was not myself, and it felt stimulating and good. I was someone furious, someone hurt, someone blighted by infectious rage. A split second later I could not contain myself and sprang from the bed and placed my empty hand on her gun-gripping hand, my hand on her hand, and we held on, both confronting ourselves, both relentless. (246)

Thus ends the chapter, as the reader grapples with what has happened. Early in the next chapter, Sequoyah recalls, "They found Rosemary's suicide note…It was her handwriting, there was no question…Nobody even suspected murder" (247-48). Between Sequoyah's implanting of the possibility of (unsuspected) murder, his rage, his understanding that he was "not himself," and the malicious presence of the vibration he sometimes thinks he hears and feels in stressful situations, the reader encounters much uncertainty as to how Rosemary died.

When we read the gendered nature of these dark revelations of possible, even likely violence and Sequoyah's feelings of entitlement to Rosemary's interest alongside The Nephew's rejections of Libby, we note the cautionary elements of these stories in regard to certain brands of isolationist masculinities, particularly in terms of these disassociated adolescent boys who long to flee, whether in the form of running—a theme repeated throughout *Mongrels*, or flying—a theme repeated throughout *WDST*.

After all, the specific masculinities of these two adolescents are central to these novels. The Nephew seeks out a particular brand of machismo that he mimics from his uncle. Sequoyah, on the other hand, pairs a hyper-masculine and violent self-narrating with androgyny. He likes to wear Rosemary's clothes and make-up, for example. Hobson reminds the reader of the temporal setting of his novel to underscore these elements of Sequoyah's character. He explains that Sequoyah is "exploring identity issues with his gender and with this overall appearance. In 1989 not many boys wear eyeliner to school…Sequoyah is a little more androgynous" (Michal).[35] With these tendencies in mind, we must recognize the lionization of Darren and Rosemary, respectively in these texts. Both novels frame the domestic sphere as feminine. That is, The Nephew spends the majority of *Mongrels* rejecting the domestic and what he frames as its feminization, as well as his female role model, Libby, while Sequoyah longs for the domestic, replete with specifically, but also not entirely gendered elements, embracing it, along with his female role model, Rosemary, albeit to an unhealthy degree. The Nephew comes around to the importance of his aunt and the dangers and harm of the brand of masculinity he has been privileging, but I argue that both texts tell of fraught formations of marginalized masculinities.

The Nephew gradually reveals the damage of his individuated ideology and ideation to both the reader and to himself. He ponders, for example, what he would do if his family were to stay in one place long enough for him to have what he describes as a normal life, staying at a single school long enough to graduate. He declares, "I liked reading enough, but what was I supposed to do with a diploma? Getting a degree would be like I was deciding to trade in my heritage, my blood" (56). For this boy, formal or institutional education represents a betrayal of family and community, a trade-in of marginalized sub-culture for hegemonic over-culture. But it is also more than that. For him, it's about foregoing ever truly being a part of that community, never

coming of age. He continues, "And if I started making those kinds of gestures, then that was the same as asking to never change, to just stay like this forever, not need all Darren's advice" (56). The fraught and interstitial masculinity that The Nephew craves exists always and only on the run. To stay in one place means to never become the kind of man he, as a boy, hopes to be. Moreover, it means that his bonds with his beloved and idealized uncle would come to naught. The Nephew, then, at the same time he declines certain kinds of community, privileges his homosocial and homofamilial ones. These masculinist relationships are further underscored by the novel's contextualization of this particular passage. Namely, in privileging Darren's advice, he simultaneously negates Libby's advice. This negation glares in light of the fact that Libby has just given The Nephew a multi-page and, within the narrative, ten hour long "werewolf version of The Talk," covering topics ranging from the dangers of driving-while-werewolf, eating from garbage cans, the delicious but addicting and always human-related smell of French fries, pantyhose and stretch pants, and, of course, silver poisoning (37-46). Libby's advice takes the form of "ways to not die"; these are all critically important tips for the protagonist. But, because of his gendered priorities, he undervalues them, and, in truth, Libby as well, despite the fact that she serves as his primary caregiver and the only steady and stable figure in his life.

The Nephew's revelation regarding masculinist ideology becomes pinpointed by the matriarchal Libby. Specifically, The Nephew realizes that when members of the family leave, that means that the rest of the family is being left, being abandoned. When it seems as if Darren has left the family, The Nephew asks, "Do werewolves do that, just leave?" (250). It is telling that this question arises from a protagonist who has been emphasizing the fact that werewolves do that, just leave, for over eighty percent of the novel at this point. The Nephew realizes he might not be the one who leaves, but the one who is left; he is realizing what it means to be a member of a community

that another member opts out of, and he doesn't much like it. In her response, Libby clarifies the gendered nature of The Nephew's approach to glorifying running as he has done throughout the novel. "Her eyes when she looked up to me, they were ancient and tired and sad and mad all at once. '*Men* do that,' she said" (250). It turns out that the quality of werewolves that The Nephew has been celebrating all along is not a quality of werewolves after all, but rather one of human men.

Sequoyah, by contrast, reveals a strong longing for home and stasis, seeing his one constant moving as an *unheimlich* mode of being. He explains, "Moving from place to place, from shelter to foster home, almost always took its toll, and at fifteen I'd never gotten over the crippling anxiety of sleeping in a new room, a new bed, living in a whole new environment" (37).[36] We note the ways that each character, despite privileging motion and flight, nonetheless feels and communicates the ways they suffer from that motion.[37] For Sequoyah, moreover, that longing for flight even comes in the form of his relationship to selfhood. He explains, "I recall the desire to become someone else completely" (220). We are reminded of the "shift" that the narrator of *Mongrels* similarly longs for (and of Sequoyah's fantasy diagnosis in the hospital), a fundamental transformation of self that he hopes lurks somewhere within him.[38]

Both protagonists eventually understand the appeal of staying in one specific location, though Sequoyah, living as he has on the move but without a sense of community seems to long for it more. He explains, "This was the type of life I always dreamed about living someday, being alone in a house deep in the woods somewhere. To be happy, safe…To live alone, without a wife or kids" (18). We note that while he pines for a house in the woods, he also craves solitude. He describes the Troutt homes in idyllic terms, "A house in the country, gleaming in the light that slanted through the trees. I saw a tall oak tree in the front yard with a tire swing" (19). The oak with its tire swing offers both an icon of stability and a welcoming of children and play that belie

the fact that this house, with its foretold untimely death (among other things) is absolutely haunted.[39]

The domestic security of the Troutt's rural home comes forth in Sequoyah's imagistic description of their kitchen in particular, a room (as we've seen with his burns) with rich significance for his character. He narrates:

> The kitchen had a white enamel sink and wooden cabinets painted light blue. The wallpaper was light blue with pictures of small baskets of vegetables and fruit. The room gave off a country kitchen feel. It was a reminder I was in a rural area, a few miles outside of town. I'd never lived in the country before, so looking out the kitchen window at night was like looking in a mirror—there was a vast darkness as far as you could see without any porch lights on. (34)

The rurality of his setting manifests both inwardly in the country style of the wallpaper and sink, outwardly in the darkness all around, and back inwardly as the window becomes not a thing to be seen through, but a thing by which Sequoyah looks upon himself. Gazing outward, he gazes inward, or at his own exteriority, burns and all. The reflection he sees is not only of himself, but of himself in this country kitchen, in the most domestic of domestic spaces in this home that mirrors, so to speak, his idealized eventual existence. He longs to be alone in precisely the kind of place where he finds himself. Where The Nephew rejects such domesticity, Sequoyah privileges it—but while the former locates a need for community in other people—regardless of emplaced stasis, the latter longs only for the constancy of place itself.

The theme of who belongs and who does not, and where, lies central to these two novels, and both wield specifically gendered constructions of a confounded human/lupine distinction or indistinction to think through that theme. The adolescent male narrators search for a sense of self in community through their respective lupine ideations. Both at some points long to emulate the lone wolf of heteromasculinist lore.

Yet, while Sequoyah maintains a longing for solitude, he likewise pines for a feminized domestic space that even in his dreams remains an endangered fantasy. The Nephew, in glorifying a homosocial idea of community that is forever fleeting, forever on the run, eventually realizes the damage such an approach inflicts. Where Sequoyah understands the importance of place and the community it can foster, The Nephew comes to understand the importance of community as place itself.

Notes

[1] Hobson's follow-up novel, *The Removed*, also features a child in foster care. Hobson has noted that, having worked for roughly seven years as a social worker, he is drawn to telling such stories (McDonnell).

[2] The werewolf as metaphor for puberty (gaining body hair, trying to understand new impulses and lusts, etc.) might be a bit on-the-nose. However, Jones notes, "the age that I'm most comfortable writing a character is sixteen, and seventeen and a half, or eighteen…what I want to be drawing from somehow is that hopefulness you have at that age. You always keep the future inside like a secret, when you grow up you're going to be a Blue Angels pilot or Conan, or a superstar. And that's all still inside you. You haven't been disabused of those dreams yet. I like to write about characters who are on the cusp like that" (Stratton and Jones 22-23). This age cusp alongside the potential, but not-yet-realized changes of lycanthropy parallel in *Mongrels*.

[3] Both novels also, and I don't think this is as unimportant as it might seem, feature Chevrolet El Caminos prominently. These neither-car-nor-truck vehicles mirror the in-betweenness of the protagonists.

[4] While the town in question seems fictionalized, the novel tells us that Broken Arrow is "nearby," which would put it about fifteen miles southeast of Tulsa and roughly fifty-five miles west of Tahlequah, the capital of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma (163).

[5] I read a play on the "him" here, the lack of capitalization notwithstanding, between never having known his father and never having known the specific manifestation of God in question.

[6] *Mongrels* alternates longer chapters narrated by the protagonist with shorter ones told in the third person about the protagonist wherein he adopts a persona (vampire, reporter, criminal, biologist, mechanic, hitchhiker, prisoner, villager, and nephew) that

is mentioned at some point in the previous chapter. While "the nephew" is not capitalized in the novel, I do so here to indicate the specific character.

[7] The line break in this passage represents a new paragraph. Jones' novel makes use of these throughout, with many sentence fragments, continued thoughts, and punch lines suspended as paragraphs of their own. These create an effect whereby the novel's form reflects the kind of frenetic, breathless rush of the family's life, of The Nephew's adolescence, and of his perception of his uncle Darren's persona.

[8] The fact that his mother does not change reemphasizes the gendered nature of The Nephew's perception of lycanthropy.

9 At the same time, though, the narrative offers a counter point, "Maybe God is on the side of the werewolves…Maybe God had decided that proper humans had made a mess of running the world, had decided to give the *nosferatu*, the undead, a chance at it. Perhaps the human race was on the threshold of that darkness" (42-43).

[10] Lalonde notes a different work by Jones, "*The Long Trial of Noaln Dugatti* is resolutely centered on writing," a statement that applies to much of his work, including *Mongrels* (230).

[11] While I'm placing these texts within Southern Gothic traditions, Justice's creative work most notably comes in his fantasy trilogy, later combined as *The Way of Thorn and Thunder: The Kynship Chronicles* (another example of the excellent "genre fiction" being produced by Native authors).

[12] This inconclusive nature stands central to the aesthetics of these texts. Carnes notes of *WDST*, "what I find refreshing about this novel is that it does not try to be something it is not. Rather than an awakening novel where a young Cherokee and a young Kiowa become closer to their identities and Native individuals, this book focuses on the problems that teenagers face in an especially tumultuous time in their lives" (239).

[13] Here we might recall Aldo Leopold's "Thinking Like a Mountain" from *A Sand County Almanac* in which the famed naturalist recalls a moment when he and his cohort see a pack of wolves from above. He recalls, "In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf" (130). They all open fire, mortally wounding two of the wolves, mother and pup. He further relates, "We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes…I was young then…I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunter's paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view" (130).

[14] Patrick Wolfe famously demonstrates, "The logic of elimination not only refers to the summary liquidation of Indigenous people, though it includes that. In common with genocide…settler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions. Negatively,

it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively, it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base—as I put it, settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event" (390).

[15] The story Hobson narrates in this piece of a deceased ancestor who learns how to shapeshift from a wolf reappears in *The Removed* (237-45).

[16] Lee lists Jackson among authors whose work Jones's reflects, along with H.P. Lovecraft, Cornell Woolrich, and Stephen King (259), while the Kirkus Review notes of Hobson's text, "As in a Shirley Jackson story, everything seems perfectly ordinary until it doesn't" (*Kirkus*).

[17] This tie between finger length and lycanthropy also appears in Blish's story.

[18] Unlike those of vampires and zombies, werewolf narratives, while emphasizing transitions between types of existence, do not always allow for a transition from someone born a human into a full-fledged werewolf. Such a move is impossible in Jones' construction.

[19] The boy's taunt is "Merricat, said Constance, would you like a cup of tea?" The full version continues, "Merricat, said Constance, would you like to go to sleep?" "Oh, no, said Merricat, you'll poison me" (107).

[20] Moreover, as is the case for the protagonists of *Mongrels* and *WDST*, as Eunju Hwang notes, in Jackson's "Gothic fiction…Home…is not a safe place that secures one's happiness" (119).

[21] We can also read a verisimilitude in a character being tired of explaining such a thing.

[22] Even the roadside location of this telling reflects the boundary between the tamed road and the wilderness just outside of its reaches, another cusp.

[23] As such, we find ourselves wondering if he is truthful about the source and accidental nature of his facial scars.

[24] Sequoyah continues, explaining that he now "drew landscapes, objects of my desire, things to represent my longing for companionship in my time of sickness. This is how I remember it. I drew buildings on fire. I drew a clown holding a machine gun, and a dog frothing at the mouth. I drew an old man dead in a rocking chair. His head was slumped over and he was bleeding from his chest" (167). These disturbing images are fairly common for Sequoyah, who admits to a violent sexual fantasy regarding Rosemary as well. To that end, Hobson has noted that most [readers and interviewers] just ask how disturbed [Sequoyah] is and how dangerous. They tend to think he's a bad, bad person and that's he's a super psychopath" (Michal). But, having spent years working with Native foster children, Hobson explains his complex sentiments for the

round character he has constructed, "I feel sorry for him at times, but other times not so much" (Carroll).

[25] Jarlath Killeen similarly celebrates the "generic openness of the Gothic and its ability to migrate and adapt to formal circumstances far removed from its 'original' manifestations in the late eighteenth century" (3).

[26] Kristin Squint's 2018 monograph, *Leanne Howe at the Intersections of Southern and Native American Literature*, takes a similar regional approach.

[27] A great deal of scholarship works to place Jones's work particularly within various genres, though he asserts, "The only genre is fiction" (Washburn 79). In discussing Jones's *All the Beautiful Sinners* and *Growing up Dead in Texas*, Waegner notes "gothic and postmodern thrusts are profoundly interconnected" (194). Quinney avers that *Demon Theory*'s "multimedia effect" "explicitly position[s] the novel within a genealogy of gothic literature" (291). LaLonde gothically reminds, "one is rarely far from death in the fiction of Stephen Graham Jones" (218). Nor are these connections unique to Jones's work. As Lush notes, "gothic tropes have long supported the literary representation of Native peoples" (306). Meanwhile, Stratton places "the truly malicious descriptions of Native people in the journals and sermons of colonizers and land-takers such as…Increase Mather" in the context of "pregothic horror" ("Come for the Icing" 6).

[28] The screenplay for this film is written by Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene), and based largely on stories from his collection *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, particularly "This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona."

[29] We might relate Vizenor's term "crossblood" here, which he offers in lieu of "mixed-blood" as well as more pejorative terms like "half-breed." Vizenor contends, "Crossbloods hear the bears that roam in trickster stories, and the cranes that trim the seasons close to the ear. Crossbloods are a postmodern tribal bloodline, an encounter with racialism, colonial duplicities sentimental monogenism, and generic cultures" (vii). But, I'm also thinking of Stacy Alaimo's trans-corporeality. Alaimo explains, "Imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (2).

[30] At the same time, Van Alst asserts, "Unless I'm told otherwise, all the characters [in Jones's work] are Indian. But best of all, very best of all, they're incidentally Indian" (xiv). Similarly, Lush avers, Jones "does not emphasize the 'Nativeness' of a character, and that lack of emphasis actually places the reader in a Native-centric world" (310).

[31] Where *Mongrels* offers an awareness of its own narrative as a deflection from something else but leaves that something else unnamed and its racialization obfuscated, *WDST* provides clear references to its protagonist's Indigeneity. Being

Cherokee is important to Sequoyah, and being Native forms much of the bond between himself and Rosemary that will drive the narrative. I would go so far as to contend that *WDST* can be read as an allegory for Cherokee relations to the US federal government, particularly growing out of Cherokee removal (the much more direct topic of *The Removed*) and the ruling in Cherokee v. Georgia that imagined the relationship between Native nations and the US to be like "that of a ward to his guardian." In such a reading, we can further place Sequoyah's absent mother at the hands of settler juridical structures as a manifestation of the US's attempts to undermine Indigenous matriarchies broadly (see Piatote). That reading lies beyond the scope of this essay, but I hope and trust such a reading of Hobson's novel is forthcoming. Here I will simply note that Sequoyah places his movements as a foster child as part of a larger history of movement, one that he traces through his mother (2) and the Cherokee Nation (1). Of this tendency to not stay still he ponders, "Maybe it was in our Cherokee blood" (2).

[32] Libby tells him this chronicling (or his compulsion to do so) is both "sweet" and "stupid" (292).

[33] As Baudeman notes, "In Jones's novels, human history is represented as the sum of individual decisions and causal connections that readers can never fully make sense of, but that in fact only surface here and there as nodes in a structure of gaps, breaks, silences, and discontinuities" (151-52).

[34] The text tells of two other deaths, those of Simeon Luxe (103) and of his nemesis "dumb Nora Drake, who later died on January 19, 2003 of strangulation" (143). Sequoyah feels jealous that Rosemary chooses to spend time with Nora rather than with him.

[35] Moreover, Sequoyah's sexuality remains somewhat ambiguous, but people in Little Crow routinely address him with antigay slurs, taunts, and innuendoes.

[36] *Mongrels* asserts a similar toll that being a werewolf takes its toll on one's body. The Nephew's grandfathers tells him "We age like dogs…You can burn up your whole life early if you're not careful. If you spend too much time out in the trees" (10). Later, we learn from a non-werewolf who is married to a werewolf and knows considerably more about werewolf health, "You're supposed to drink as much water as you can before you shift…If you don't, your skin—you can start to get old before your time" (266).

[37] The concept of belonging in place is central to *The Removed* as well; that novel's final sentence reads, in its entirety: "*Home.*"

[38] Interestingly, Sequoyah notes, "When I was little I wanted to be someone else" (189). But we have seen throughout the novel that he has this want throughout the entirety of our familiarity with him. As such, the reader comes to understand that Sequoyah is

frequently not an entirely self-conscious or self-aware narrator, an understanding that leads the reader to question key elements of the story of himself that he presents. [39] Liz, Sequoya's case worker, explains "how safe it was out here in the country" (23). There's an irony here, since we know that Rosemary is going to die.

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