Composite Indigenous Genre

Cheyenne Ledger Art as Literature

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Suppression of Indigenous literary texts is an aspect of colonization, and reclamation of Indigenous American literature is a critical component of cultural sovereignty. When the Spanish burned most of the Mayan and Aztec codices, they truncated cultural continuity; they also furthered a dehumanized image of the American as an illiterate (and therefore even more heathen) "savage." Survivor Indigenous writers use strategies to subvert the colonizer's genres and reclaim an Indigenous literacy: they "reinvent" English-language literature, to use Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird's term from their book *Reinventing the Enemy's Language* (23–24). N. Scott Momaday's circular structure for *House Made of Dawn* is another example of reclamation, as he embeds Indigenous thought into a European genre and transforms it. Momaday and many, if not most, Indigenous authors inflect written English texts with oral tradition structures. This process continues into the twenty-first century, as Indigenous people assign value to their own categories of texts.

English is a lingua franca for Indigenous peoples of North America, yet it is an imperfect vehicle. As I have taught American Indian and Alaskan Native literature at an all-Native school for over twenty years, and also at non-Native institutions, I have emphasized the hybrid nature of English-language Indigenous poetry and prose. Another Indigenous tradition closer to original Indigenous thought and deserving of reclamation is the sign system of text-images, including glyphs and pictographs, used by Indigenous people in north-

ern and Plains areas of North America. These were first inscribed on bark, stone, or hide. Later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century winter counts and ledger book texts are part of this tradition. Such Native-created textual sources sustain Indigenous sovereignty. As my students and I have encountered these sign-texts, European categories collapse. The images assert a legitimate alternative literacy.

I choose Cheyenne texts and images for personal reasons: I am from the region depicted in these sources, the central grasslands of Kansas. As I interact with them, I connect to my locale and learn its existence in another mode. Students at Haskell Indian Nations University reside in eastern Kansas, within this landscape, at the easternmost edge. Every Cheyenne ledger text references the land, either directly or indirectly.

Also, a good number of Cheyenne pictographic images survive. Cheyenne men participated in the ledger art tradition, including a group sent to Ft. Marion as prisoners of war. Therefore, a number of sources are available, including the Smithsonian online exhibit of ledger images by the Ft. Marion artist Tichkematse (Squint Eyes). The Newberry Library in Chicago has a complete ledger available for scholars' use, attributed to Black Horse, and another exists in nearby Ft. Leavenworth (Lovett and DeWitt).

Finally, most important, Cheyenne people have made the decision to allow outsiders to learn their sacred military narratives, many of which are depicted in the ledgers. Father Peter J. Powell assembled oral accounts of specific ledger drawings and other narratives in his 1987 volumes *People of the Sacred Mountain: A History of the Northern Cheyenne Chiefs and Warrior Societies, 1830–1877*. Dog Soldier Society members explicated their Summit Springs ledger book in the jointly authored publication *Cheyenne Dog Soldiers: A Ledgerbook History of Coups and Combat* (1997). These and other sources re-create the narrative context for images in this time.

Another reason to study the ledger images and texts is for the way these texts inform contemporary writers' history and methods. They are vehicles of continuity, following historic and personal narratives into the present time. James Welch's *Fools Crow* recounts events that

are in the Newberry ledger book, for example. The ledgers occur during the critical transition from tribal independence to reservation prisoner-of-war status, so they contain stories of the last generation before the reservation era. Unique Indigenous philosophical concepts emerge from the texts, especially representations of power or "medicine." The markings invoke texts of military record, history, natural history, literature, art, and spirituality. They are beautiful images with multiple layers of simultaneous impact. Contemporary writers continue to evoke these same tropes.

The actual images are to a degree mnemonic and are completed by historic documentation, oral tradition, and further, Gerald Vizenor suggests, an intangible "fourth dimension," or "presence" (169). Vizenor, also familiar with an Algonquin-language tradition like the Algic Cheyenne language (Cheyennes resided in the Great Lakes region before contact with Europeans), explains this intangible "presence" in the court testimony of an Anishinaabe elder, Aubid. The court case reviews an oral treaty agreement between the U.S. government and John Squirrel, a deceased man: "Aubid, in his *anishinaabe* stories about that meeting with the government men, created a presence of John Squirrel. That sense of presence, as sworn testimony in court, was the obviative, the fourth person in the poses of evidence" (169). The "presence" is the body of tradition that, in the ledger texts, interacts with image-texts.

Vizenor's view of ledger art further details literacy as a dynamic interplay between texts and political stance. He writes of the Cheyenne ledger artist and author Howling Wolf and other Plains men:

> The warriors and their horses are pictured in motion, the artistic transmotion of native sovereignty. The scenes and motion were of memories and consciousness, not poses and simulations. The transmotion of ledger art is a creative connection to the motion of horses depicted in winter counts and heraldic hide paintings. The hides and shields are visionary. (179)

The genre of ledger art and narration is "transmotion": dynamic, culturally multidimensional, and visionary.

HISTORIC PHASES

Cheyenne ledger art begins in the 1860s, with the 1865(?) Yellow Horse ledger (Powell and Malone 13); the Carr ledger book, dated between 1868 and 1869 (Afton, Halaas, and Masich 371); and the Summit Springs Dog Soldier ledger, begun possibly in 1865 and captured in 1869 (Afton, Halaas, and Masich xix–xx). From the 1870s through the 1890s, warrior-artists continued the practice of recording their own and their military societies' texts in ledger books (Powell and Malone 28–29).

During this early phase, the books' drawings directly comment upon the turbulent events of the last years of Cheyenne freedom. During this time period, both Northern and Southern Cheyenne people engaged in much military conflict against Native enemies, such as the Pawnees, Shoshones, and Crows, and against the U.S. Army. These conflicts are depicted, as well as hunting, horse stealing, courting, and camp activities.

Another phase of ledger drawing took place at Ft. Marion, Florida, when Cheyenne prisoners of war created drawings on unlined paper. These drawings record memories of previous tribally independent life and document the transition to new surroundings. From 1875 to 1878, thirty-three Cheyenne men were among the group of Southern Plains prisoners at Ft. Marion, along with Kiowa, Comanche, Caddo, and Arapaho prisoners of war (Szabo 66). A number of the Ft. Marion Cheyenne prisoners created ledger drawings, including Making Medicine, Howling Wolf, James Bears Heart, Tichkematse (Squint Eyes), Cohoe (Broken Leg or Lame), and others (Petersen xvii).

Army scouts in Oklahoma became the next group to produce Cheyenne ledger drawings, and at least one, Squint Eyes, had been a prisoner of war at Ft. Marion (Greene "Scouts" 53). Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho men who worked as Indian scouts at Fort Reno and Ft. Supply (1885–95) composed nine ledger books, dated 1878–91.[1] One ledger book (at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas) has the inscription, "Drawn by Cheyenne Indians 1881 for Capt. Bethel Custer U.S.A.," for a non-Cheyenne man and possibly in a commercial context.[2] Powell documents the Northern Cheyenne artists who contin-

ued a reservation-era tradition of pictographic drawings on paper from 1891 to the 1930s: Daniel Little Chief (Wuxpais) and army scouts Wooden Leg, Limpy, and Shoulderblade (Powell and Malone 29).

According to Powell, a final phase of ledger drawings dates from 1937, when Northern Cheyenne Sun Dance priests began recording ceremonial information in ledger drawing style (Powell and Malone 33). Few of these are published.

COMMUNAL AUTHORSHIP

In contrast to Western tradition, production of drawings was not just individual but often a communal activity: "The fact that multiple artists worked in the same book, even sometimes on the same page, suggests that the production of drawings was a social event, with men working together and no doubt examining and commenting on each others' pictures" (Greene, "Artists" 57). Several glyphic signatures appear in most of these early ledgers. Army Lt. John G. Bourke quotes Friday, a Northern Arapaho and close ally of Northern Cheyenne people, as he describes the shared authorship of ledger drawings in about 1877:

> The "war-record" books we find are not necessarily the military history of one person: pretty nearly every boy has one which he keeps as a memento of his own prowess, but it is extremely common for intimate friends to insert in each other's books, evidence of mutual esteem by drawing scenes from their past lives (To serve about the same purpose as the interchange of photographs and autographs does with us . . .). (Powell and Malone 36–37)

This communal production of "scenes from their past lives" treats the medium as an aspect of Vizenor's "presence" and "transmotion." This mode also supposes a different kind of authorship—and therefore literacy—than Western literary tradition. Texts find completion within oral tradition of a society or community.

The safekeeping of such books was a serious undertaking. In the nineteenth century, during constant relocations, the ledger books

had the advantage of being portable. Indeed, in 1878 Little Fingernail, a younger man who rode with Morning Star at the time of the Ft. Robinson breakout, wore his ledger book strapped to his body. It was one of the few possessions he carried. In it were recorded drawings from his military encounters on the trip from the southern plains to the north, September to October of 1878 (Powell and Malone 41). At Ft. Robinson, he refused to sell the drawings to an interested army officer, Francis H. Hardie. This shows the value a man like Little Fingernail placed on his ledger book. Army bullets killed Little Fingernail during his flight to Montana, and the bullets that tore into his body also tore a hole in his book (Powell and Malone 41; Henson, lecture). Ironically, after the death of Little Fingernail, soldiers gave the book to Hardie as war booty, and the book now is on display in the Natural History Museum in New York City (Powell and Malone 41).

Bourke was an eyewitness to the destruction of many beaded and painted hides, medicine objects, and ledger books during the 1876 Powder River battle (Powell and Malone 35). This parallels the Spanish burning of books and other objects that supported the Indigenous culture, including its literary expression. As a result, untold numbers of texts were lost.

COMPOSITION

At first, Cheyenne men acquired ledger books and colored pencils as booty or as trade goods. They became a common expressive medium for Cheyenne individuals and for military society comrades. At Ft. Marion, Captain Pratt provided unlined paper and other supplies; often the artists sold these for spending money.

Most of the drawings are lead pencil outlines filled in with colored pencil pigments or crayon. Colors include blue, red, yellow, green, black, pink, and brown. Sometimes ink or watercolor paint is used, and it is used effectively for dotted patterns, stripes, and filling in outlined shapes, such as shields. The painted colors include vivid reds and blues, and these are more saturated than the penciled color. In some cases, such as the Newberry ledger book attributed to Black

Horse, sizing on the paper creates a slightly gritty texture for the watercolors (Aubrey). The predominantly colored pencil medium allows for precise but faint details.

In addition to use of different materials, the ledger art texts also require a different orientation to the page. Most often the drawings before Ft. Marion are aligned horizontally along the length of the pages, often paired with the opposite page. The ledger book must be rotated in order to read the drawings. Candace S. Greene discusses "bilateral pairings" as the major organizational principle, as she notes the predominant placement of the Cheyenne man on the right hand side of a page when he is depicted as warrior, hunter, suitor, or horse captor. She deduces:

> Thus, in Cheyenne pictures the position on the right has the same connotation in pictorial space that it has in the ideological realm, where the right side is possessed of greater energy or spiritual force, and thus dominates the left. In pictures of warfare or hunting, this domination is expressed physically. In scenes of male/female interaction, the relationship is metaphysical. ("Structure" 29)

Greene found in 1,300 Cheyenne ledger drawings that 40 percent of the action flowed from right to left, 4 percent of the action flowed from left to right, and 45 percent of the action flowed toward the center ("Structure" 29). Another explanation of the dominance of the right-hand side of a page is the precedent of painting on buffalo-hide robes: "Painted robes were usually worn with the animal head on the left . . . [so] the pictures usually flow in the same direction, from right to left" (Horse Capture and Horse Capture 20). The left-hand side of the body is closer to the heart.

In the Newberry, or Black Horse, ledger book, the artist(s) drew many of the scenes on the right-hand page only, with the opposing page left blank. The rest of the scenes are diptychs that cover two adjacent pages. Sometimes elements of the drawing, like inverted U-shaped horse hoof prints, continue across the center of the book onto the left-hand, or second, page. In a few instances, the action begins in the upper left-hand corner of a diptych and continues

down the page and continues onto the right-hand page (48–49). The right-hand page, however, usually is the starting point for reading the scene, whether at the bottom or top. The shifting of syntactical composition to emphasize meaning also differs from fixed alphabetic texts.

Human and animal tracks in many drawings represent the sequence of events—spatial and temporal simultaneously—that lead up to the focal point of the drawing. This structures the narrative within a visible timeline, through the story of the tracking process. Tracks may also represent a more intangible concept of the trail of power leading up to the dramatic moment of the drawing, so a pattern of dashes—footprints—appears as buildup of a fighter's power, leading to the climactic coup moment (Petersen xxx, 272). Tracks, or "traces," have a dimension beyond the visual representation. An Indigenous British Columbia pictographic map of the afterworld (also from an Algonquin tradition) uses dashes to represent footprints of spirits dancing (Giscombe 35).[3] This is not in the exact geographic region of the Northern Cheyenne people, but the similarity of dashes to the glyphic representation of Cheyenne tracks is striking.

In most compositions, the main figure is usually the Cheyenne fighter glorified by a victorious act: coup, killing, or horse capture. The essential, focal information is the precise detail of the coup moment. All else contributes to representing and verifying this moment, and the composition of the drawings is based on this emphasis. These are, to some extent, drawn "coup tales," one of the autobiographical categories recognized by H. David Brumble III (23–30). Further, the coup moment has significance beyond the historic military event. It exalts the moment of greatest valor. Three-point perspective of the European realist tradition is irrelevant, since the dramatic climax is a mapping of inward spirit, the culmination of military and spiritual action. Facial features are minimal, and identification is through emblems of military spiritual life—shields, war shirts, medicine bundles, and eagle headdresses. The drawings verify the places and times when great men gained their power or, in some cases, great men's souls left this world. Human spiritual courage cre-

ates events that knit specific geographies and human valor into narrative accounts. These are sacred texts.

DESCRIPTORS

All military scenes include the Cheyenne point of reference—the "narrator," or center of the picture—drawn full-sized and detailed, and usually a horse is part of the drama, also drawn in some detail. The literary text centers on this figure. Sometimes, a name glyph floats over the individual. Shield motifs may provide names or other significant information in the Cheyenne lexicon. Separate histories of powerful shields exist, and these show that shields may be loaned to another fighter on occasion, like the Box Elder shield created around 1780 and passed down to fighters until 1879 (Grinnell V.1). The life history of a shield is another form of biography; their creation and military histories are significant and noted in oral histories. Cheyenne ledgers depict many distinctive shields, and their histories are inferred by their specific details. Many shields do not survive, not only because of the U.S. Army's destruction, but also because they were buried with the warriors who carried them (Mooney 15–19).

Details of human figures include dress: trousers, breechclouts, shirts, vests, hooded blanket coats, and hats or headdresses. These can indicate nation and season. Winter scenes sometimes show men wearing hooded blanket coats, such as "Pawnee chased across the river and killed by Cheyenne, has on blanket coat and hood (winter)" (Newberry ledger book 113. Here, trees are leafless to emphasize the season further). Other details include men's medicine bags, which are sometimes grasped in the left hand or suspended around the neck.

The weapons are also detailed—rifles, pistols, clubs, lances, sabers, bows, arrows, and knives. Cheyenne ledger art also includes war society lances as identification. Many drawings foreground an object or individual in the arrangement of figures. One Newberry ledger book drawing (page 43) shows a figure with a pipe tied to his waist.

An 1830s buffalo robe drawing by Mandan leader and artist Four Bears (Mah totope) also has a figure with a pipe at his waist, and the sacred object is a simple but unmistakable line silhouette (Keyser plate 8). James D. Keyser interprets this as an indication that Mahtotope leads a war party. The Cheyenne drawing foregrounds the red pipe more than the Mahtotope drawing, and it is proportionally larger so that it is the focal point of the drawing. It floats like other objects used to count coup or confer spiritual power. Bows also appear in this "floating" position, to indicate a coup, but "coup sticks" as seen at today's powwows are almost never present in the Cheyenne ledgers.

The horses are painted and wear distinctive feathers and medicine objects. Stolen or stampeded enemy horses are drawn with the same detailing as Cheyenne horses, even when human victims are simple line drawings ("Stampeding Shoshone horses under fire" [Newberry ledger book 58]). Wounded or killed horses have the same graphic emphasis as Cheyenne people. Enemy horses are common in war scenes, and a few scenes have only horses ("Running off Horses from Fort Dodge" [Newberry ledger book 130–31]). Coloring shows if the horse is bay, roan, chestnut, sorrel, appaloosa, spotted, white or gray. Some horses are colored blue (Newberry ledger book 49), and this convention continues in the works of some contemporary artists. Warhorses often have tied and ornamented tails. A few horses have eagle feathers or scalps tied to their reins (Newberry ledger book 53, 75, 87, 120, 127, 180, 181). Loose manes indicate the horse and rider were surprised or ambushed.

Enemies may be simple silhouette drawings or sometimes more fully detailed. In one drawing, all the dead Pawnee enemy victims are identical outlines, with no military ranking marks, but they lie in different postures. Their abbreviated representation emphasizes meaning in terms of military coup rankings for the Cheyenne fighter. How each died must be carefully verified in order for the coup to count (Brumble 27), so the posture of the body is significant. Hairstyle is a glyphic representation of national identity, such as the scalplock for Pawnee men and braids for Shoshones.

Battle scenes are not always victorious for the Cheyenne. This compromises the essentiality of the book as a brag book of victories.

One scene in the Newberry ledger shows several Crow fighters killing a single Cheyenne, the man Powell calls the Great Warrior (*Sacred Mountain* 53). This is one of the few times when enemy fighters have detailed identification markers of dress. Deaths of significant people, such as the Great Warrior, are commemorated in winter counts. Ben Kindle's Oglala Lakota winter count, for example, gives deaths of famous Lakota men and some women as significant markers for many years (Beckwith 135–57). Ledger texts are not simply coup tales transferred to paper. The ledger artists present historic accounts from different vantage points, including coup accounts, battles, skirmishes, horse raids, social life, and defeats.

In recent years, the Cheyenne descendants of the northern Dog Soldier Society worked with non-Cheyenne writers to codocument the Summit Springs ledger book drawn by their society members in the 1860s. The Summit Springs ledger book is a collection of histories more than coup stories: "Unlike other books that interpret ledger book art, the authors treat the Summit Springs ledger drawings as historical documents, a history of the Dog Soldiers recorded by the warrior-artists themselves" (Afton, Halaas, and Masich 1). Historic themes in Cheyenne ledger books also occur in Ft. Reno scouts' ledger books (Bates, Kahn, and Lansford).

RELATED INDIGENOUS GENRES

Keyser, in *The Five Crows Ledger*, shows how ledger book lineage links to North American Plains tropes, from prehistoric rock petroglyphs of the northern Plains to historic hide paintings (war shirts, robes, and shields) to early ledger books like the Five Crows ledger drawings of the 1840s. The genre has Indigenous antecedents but utilizes Western materials—paper and pencils and sometimes watercolors. Some question arises regarding its authenticity. Ron McCoy notes the impact of George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, and other European artists on Plains artists but concludes:

> Stylistic changes may have occurred in Plains Indian warrior art during the pre-reservation period, but they did not remove

> the genre as a whole from the realm of an abstracted representationalism that is, in its fundamentals, the antithesis of Western photographic illusionism. (70)

That "abstracted representationalism" is a sign system, with its own convention of recording thought.

Ledger book idioms parallel the Plains Indian winter counts of the eighteenth century to early twentieth century.[4] These Lakota, Kiowa, or Blackfeet mnemonic texts have one pictograph representing each year (Lakota) or six months (summer and winter, Kiowa). Kiowa calendar drawings sometimes included monthly sequences, like the Anko calendar (Penney 56). Winter counts accompany an oral text: "The actual Oglala words are usually mnemonic devices or keys to call to memory the skeleton of an incident which is then further elaborated" (Beckwith 135). The written form represents one aspect of a larger, intangible narrative canon, Vizenor's "presence." Likewise, ledger book texts unpack into larger narrations connected to oral literary traditions of the Cheyenne and also their religious and military traditions. Rock art, hide paintings, and winter count images are all forerunners of this form.

Biography is another aspect of the genre. Hertha Dawn Wong elaborates on the use of names as autobiography and the associations of identification glyphs, or "biographs," with human figures in many ledger drawings (37–56). In ledger drawings, name glyphs sometimes appear over figures, denoting stories of the namings as well. Wong sees the sequence of names in a person's life as a résumé of identity: "for a nineteenth-century Plains Indian male, life proceeded from his names, each new name joining the others before it, creating a changing but continuous personal history—a palimpsestic configuration of the self" (54). The prominence of glyphic representation in the ledger drawings would support the idea that these drawings are autobiographically dense moments, put into relationship with each other through the pages of the book. The pictographic "naming" of the several heroes is not a chronology, but like Wong asserts: "recurrent naming was not a linear process of a new name replacing the one before it. Rather, all the names existed in dynamic relation to one

another" (54). These drawings often refer to more than one person, so there is also a collective impact.

Joseph D. Horse Capture and George Horse Capture describe painted tropes on war shirts as representative of this autobiographic genre: "the drawings served as a mnemonic device; explicit features were not needed since they would be described in the detailed narrative" (21). These were public declarations of military history, made complete by communal consensus of participatory performance. Wong further elaborates the genre:

> The picture scene is complete in itself, a visual narrative of a personal and a tribal history of battle. To be vitally complete, however, this pictured narrative must come to life as speech and action, as when Catlin tells of Mah totohpa, who "sat upon the robe, pointing to his painting" of the battle, and at the same time brandishing the identical knife which he drew from his belt, as he was showing how the fatal blow was given; and exhibiting the wounds inflicted in his hand, as the blade of the knife was several times drawn through it before he wrested it from his antagonist" (30)

In ledger art, the shift from historic pictographs drawn on hide, accompanied by oral text, to drawings on paper, with written and sometimes oral texts, is not a complete disruption.

For most ledger books, correlating texts exist in oral history, like the Summit Springs ledger book (Afton, Halaas, and Masich), W. S. Nye's *Bad Medicine and Good: Tales of the Kiowas*, and Powell's books based on Cheyenne oral tradition. James Mooney, Nye, George Bird Grinnell, and others document the Cheyenne oral traditions. A number of "as-told-to" biographies exist, such as works coauthored by Alex Black Horse, John Stands In Timber, James Shoulderblade, and others. Arnold Krupat describes autobiographical Native texts, often using coauthorships, as "original, bicultural, composite composition" (xi). Ledger texts, however, have more than binary dimensions; they are "composite" in that they have text and glyphs and representational drawings and oral tradition. These are available to fill in details from text-based sources in place of a communally under-

stood oral tradition, or "transmotion" (Vizenor 184–85). Further axes that replace a binary dialectic (Cheyenne-white) are those of Cheyenne relationships with Lakotas, Crows, Pawnees, Shoshones, and other Indigenous nations, as described in the ledger texts. Ledgers represent nuanced views of European-descended American people as soldiers, traders, hunters, and city dwellers.

Cheyenne ledger art is at once autobiographic, historic, military, and spiritual; it is written, drawn, and oral. Such biographic and autobiographic books create a complex narrative map for the contemporary readers. Individual drawings and short sequences coexist in the pages, commenting upon each other, interacting to create a whole work of literature. Contemporary Meskwaki writer Ray Young Bear comes from another Algonquin-based language tradition. He describes analogous disconnections in his own narrative autobiographic style:

> The creation of *Black Eagle Child* was equivalent to a collage done over a lifetime via the tedious layering upon layering of images by an artist who didn't believe in endings, for the sweeping visions he wanted to capture were constant and forever changing. It was therefore essential to depict these visuals in increments, to keep these enigmatic stories afloat in the dark until dust-filled veils of light inadvertently revealed their luminescent shapes. (255)

Each drawing in a ledger book is such an increment, the accumulation of moments in a multidimensional sequence. Stories remain suspended. No closure defines the plot structure, and the impact on the viewer is left open, not boxed into a formulaic resolution.

AN EXAMPLE OF A COMPOSITE LEDGER TEXT

Pages 48 and 49 of the Newberry ledger book depict a skirmish of the Red River Wars. Cursive ink labels on the two pages are "Attack in 1874 on train near the Washita. Escort under Major Wylys Lyman of 5th Infantry. Sketch is disfigured by attempt to change white men to Indians and the wagon caravan into an Indian village" (48) and

"Horse shot by escort" (49). These labels appear to have been added after the book was purchased from the Cheyenne artist-warrior(s). The Newberry ledger artist-author here documents the Lyman Wagon Train Battle from the point of view of a yellow-shirted fighter who carries a turtle-and-dragonfly shield, probably Cheyenne because of his dress, though Kiowas or Comanches also took part in the battle. His horse was shot and killed in the encounter.

Overall, the drawing testifies to the man's courage as he charges the soldiers. Horse tracks begin on the upper left hand side of the diptych, page 48, go down the center margin, and cross onto the lower corner of the next page (49), where the horse is stricken. The horse and Cheyenne man are on the right-hand page, the position of prominence. These form the narrative time frame as well as a site mapping. The tracks of the horse show the path of the yellow-shirted man as he rides his horse past the soldiers' train and is unharmed. Dashes under the horse show where the man dismounted and stayed with the horse, then walked forward and away, unharmed. The man proves himself brave by harassing the soldiers without injury. The positioning of the figures on the page, then, give the central narrative structure as well as the theme.

Details of the right-hand drawing denote more specific information. The man holds a quirt and an antler in his left hand and a pistol in his right hand. The antler may represent membership in the Elk Scrapers war society. The quirt represents coup and speed (Petersen xxx, 294). His belt is a holster for the pistol. The man wears a yellow-speckled cloth shirt with garters on the upper arms, a choker, a black belt with holster, red trousers, moccasins with beaded edges, and a long red breechclout edged in white, characteristic of Cheyenne men. Tied in his hair is a medicine bundle topped with a yellow feather.

The man carries a shield edged with eagle feathers that are tipped with yellow. In its center is a green turtle, flanked on each side by green dragonflies. Dragonflies occur on shields and other military insignia because "dragonflies are quick and are difficult to kill, and when they fly near the ground they create dust that makes them hard to see" (Maurer 140). This underscores the relationship between the

representation system and the attitude of the earth itself being a text of meaningful signs. The turtle is a tenacious earth being, a balance to the sky power represented by eagle feathers.

The horse is adorned for warfare. The horse's tail is tied in red cloth, and it has an eagle feather in its tail. It has a saddle, loose reins, and loose tether, which indicate haste. The bullets appear on the bottom of the page, in the air and hitting the horse, but the man is beyond range. A cannon ball also appears in a trajectory from the cannon on the previous page. The horse bleeds from the mouth (indication of death) and flank, and his intestines spill onto the ground. He is a brave being who is dying bravely.

The second page (Newberry ledger book 48) is the source of the bullets, a group of eight soldiers in blue trousers and gray shirts. They originally had reddish hair, but this is colored over with black to resemble Pawnee hairstyle. This refers to the label "disfigured by attempt to change white men to Indians." They are grouped left of center, in a spiritually less prominent site, and they are within a circle of eleven boxes with wheels that represent the wagon train, or "escort." Four of the boxes have tepee poles and flaps drawn over them to disguise them as "Indian." These secondary revisions of the images create their own subtext.

In the center of the group, a soldier lights a cannon, and a large puff of smoke emits from it. The cannon resembles the Rodman cannon in use at that time, such as with Custer's Seventh Cavalry (Viola, *Little Bighorn* 61). The lower left margin of the page is filled with smaller puffs of smoke as soldiers shoot from behind the wagons. They hold Springfield carbines, the single-shot rifles issued to the army at that time (Viola, *Little Bighorn* 169).

Other non-Cheyenne sources give corroborating information about the Battle of Red River as a major engagement of the Red River War, August 30, 1874. Col. Nelson A. Miles needed supplies in order to stay in the field, in the Texas Panhandle region, so he sent to Camp Supply for support. On September 9, Capt. Wylys Lyman made the trip, under attack, and Nye records the engagement near the Washita River in Oklahoma:

> Captain Lyman first sighted the Indians at eight o'clock on the morning of September 9. His thirty-six wagons were moving south toward the Washita in double columns, twenty yards apart, ready to be corralled instantly should danger appear. . . . He had just negotiated the passage of a deep ravine when the main body of Indians, whose presence he had not suspected, suddenly appeared in rapidly moving masses on his front and both flanks. (*Carbine* 214)

The troops dug defensive trenches under this onslaught. One soldier, Sgt. William DeArmond, died in the first charge. Comanche, Cheyenne, and Kiowa fighters attacked the thirty-six supply wagons. They laid siege until September 14, when troop reinforcements arrived. According to the hoof print glyphs in the ledger book, the yellow-shirted man made a charges past the soldiers, along with the rest of his comrades; this is consistent with Nye's account, as recorded in his inflated diction:

> Some of the braves sat erect on their ponies, brandishing decorated lances and shields. Many indulged in gymnastics, throwing themselves out of sight on the far sides of their mounts; or stood erect on their horses' backs, with lofty red-and-white headgear flowing in the wind. A few galloped at full speed faced to the rear. All maintained a constant yammer of insulting and defiant yells and gestures. (*Carbine* 214–15)

The charges successfully kept the army pinned down in their entrenchment.

Nye records the Kiowa oral tradition of a young man's bravery in dashing between the soldiers' fortified trenches four times. According to the account, Botalye wore a white sheet tied to his waist and threw down a red blanket. He also wore two feathers in his hair, which were shot apart (*Bad Medicine* 193). This figure does not appear to be Botalye. However, another Kiowa version of the fight states, "None of our men were killed, but Sait keente's horse was shot" (Nye, *Bad Medicine* 197). This verifies the dead horse and no loss of human life. This image could be Saitkeente, a son of Kiowa leader Satanta who

was present at the battle, or an unidentified Southern Cheyenne fighter. Such charges of the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Arapaho horsemen through the firing range of the soldiers were the extent of the battle (Nye, *Bad Medicine* 192–94).

Both the ledger text and the recorded oral tradition create a fuller view of the battle. The historic document created by Nye from Kiowa accounts and army records places an event within a linear chronology. The ledger book, however, centers on the admirable behavior of the Cheyenne fighter and the horse. It records military action and spiritual identity.

LEDGER ART TRADITION IN CONTEMPORARY CHEYENNE TEXTS

Edgar Heap of Birds, a Cheyenne-Arapaho artist, speaks to the survivance of a "circular Cheyenne world" sensibility more than exact mimetic of ledger form in his essay "Of Circularity and Linearity in the Work of Bear's Heart." Bear's Heart, a Cheyenne ledger artist imprisoned at Ft. Marion, is a model regarding method, as Heap of Birds explains:

> The strong lead forged by Bear's Heart should be followed by our contemporary art practice. For today's Native artist, it is imperative to pronounce strong personal observations concerning the individual and political conditions that we experience. . . . At times this visual expression should speak of human rights and issues of tribal sovereignty, but most important, our art must articulate viewpoints from a deeply personal perspective. The direct stylistic form should evolve without restrictions of presumed tribal traditions. Perhaps the preeminent exercise in sovereign freedom shall become the offering of one's free-form thoughts as they are reflected from daily life. (66)

Heap of Birds calls for individualized art "practice," analogous to the practice of the ledger warrior-artists, who represent events from personalized viewpoints, yet still within the context of moral, spiritual, and historic referents. Heap of Birds participates in a continuing Chey-

enne "presence," as an artist and as a member of the Cheyenne Elk Warriors Society (Berlo 232).

Lance Henson, a contemporary Southern Cheyenne poet, creates poems that reflect the concise and highly connotative form of ledger art texts. He dedicates his poem "Buffalo Blood" to the warrior-artist Little Fingernail:

your pictures
look at them

they are walking
over the
mirror
of the morning star

Henson's poem refers to the ledger drawings as well as the heroic events Little Fingernail enacted. He addresses the great fighter of the Ft. Robinson breakout in present tense, creating simultaneity with historic elements of the poem. His compressed word art invokes the fourth "presence," as defined by Vizenor, and extends historic events into present time.

The precedent of these pictographic texts, whether taken as a legitimate literacy or studied from a Western perspective, imparts context for contemporary writers. Ojibwe author Louise Erdrich's reworkings of the same characters and the same events, but from different perspectives—such as the reappearance of Fleur Pillager in five of her ten novels—parallels the simultaneity of ledger texts. Her work continuously supposes and emphasizes a spiritual "presence." James Welch's heroes Fools Crow and Jim Loney experience dreams and visions that direct their actions, rather than the Aristotelian plot structure of Western literary works. The ledger texts represent such vision in detailing of power objects, such as shields, medicine bundles, war shirts, and head regalia.

Oral and scholarly written documentation, in combination with the ledger book images, re-create a hybrid Cheyenne/non-Cheyenne genre of narration. Each drawing or text exists in a time continuum, from precontact glyphs to the nineteenth-century ledger art to the

present time. Vizenor describes Native texts, or literacy, as multidimensional maps:

> Maps are pictures, and some native pictures are stories, visual memories, the source of directions, and a virtual sense of presence; others are simulations and not a trace of the actual territory. Maps are references, not counterfeits; the memories of the actual territory are not transposed by simulations. Mappery is virtual, the creation of base line representations. (170)

Mapping suggests a holistic, not linear, representation of reality. Cheyenne and other pictographic texts are an alternative literature of unbroken cultural integrity.

NOTES

1. Candace S. Greene, in "Artists in Blue," and Bates, Kahn, and Lanford, in "Washee and the Indian Scouts of Fort Reno," document eight Southern Cheyenne ledger book holdings and identify scouts who contributed to this genre. Another is at Ft. Leavenworth.

2. Inscription is from my own photograph of the ledger at Ft. Leavenworth. In 1880 Capt. Bethel Moore Custer was stationed with the Twenty-fourth Infantry in Indian Territory, at Ft. Sill, Ft. Reno, Cantonment on North Fork Canadian Run and Camp Supply. He died in 1887. He was no relation of George Armstrong Custer.

3. Thompson River Indian traditions include pictographic signs parallel to rock art signs in the northern Plains, such as sun, star, lightning, and bear (Giscombe 37). As specific signs may be parallel, so may the intent behind them.

4. Winter counts may have older timelines. Doyasan, a Kiowa, described worn hide winter counts being copied periodically. Existing winter counts extend to the eighteenth century, including Ben Kindle's Lakota winter count (Beckwith 135–57).

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