Geary Hobson. *The Road Where the People Cried.* Mongrel Empire Press, 2020. 60 pp. ISBN: 9781732393530.

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I grew up on land that was promised to my tribal nation. I am a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma (CNO), whose reservation status was confirmed by the Supreme Court of the United States on July 9, 2020. My hometown of Bushyhead, Oklahoma, was always-already "Indian Country," to put it as a critical theorist, which I claim to be. "Indian Country" is a legal term that reminds all citizens of the United States that we live in a republic. We are not merely one nation, but many nations joined by treaties. With its recent ruling, our republic's most powerful court has demonstrated willingness to uphold these treaties. While this decision brings hope to Native folks, it remains to be seen whether the hundreds of treaties the United States has made with tribal nations will likewise be honored. We should thank Native activists such as Suzan Shown Harjo and many others who have been tirelessly protesting land theft, statues, and racist mascots for decades to regain control over our stories. This historical moment in which we find ourselves regarding Indian Country—where sovereignty is confirmed and racist signifiers are denied—is why Geary Hobson's new book of poetry, *The Road Where the People Cried,* is such a timely reminder of the endurance of the Cherokee people and our sovereignty.

Hobson's book, which features beautiful cover art by the late Janet Lamon Smith, focuses on several figures in Cherokee history, along with fictional characters whose voices ring true. These voices help the reader imagine the hopelessness and despair and also the determination of the Cherokee people before, during, and after The Trail of Tears, one of the most genocidal acts in American history. In his prologue, Hobson uses an arboreal metaphor to emphasize the many nations that branch from one republic. The book revolves around the most traumatic event in modern Cherokee history, beginning during Removal and consisting of twenty-eight poems in four seven-part sections. The second section takes place before the Trail of Tears. The third section returns to the time of Removal, and the final section is set after the Trail of Tears. The book is at once a celebration of where we are today as Cherokee people and a reminder of how we got here.

Hobson's collection opens with harrowing imagery in the first line of the first poem, where the voice of the historical figure Rain Crow tells us to look and listen ("Sgé!

Listen!") (1). Rain Crow describes a scene during the forced march. Five dead Cherokees' bodies "lie in stiffened attitudes" beside "the frozen road / in a stand of leafless hackberries" (1). In the same vein, fictional character Susie Wickham muses in another poem, "You know, a dead child is a sure-hard fact to face," referring to the many children along the Trail of Tears who died among one-quarter of the tribe before reaching what is now called Oklahoma (2). Death and despair appear early in Hobson's collection, but so does determination. In "Going Snake," we are told that, at eighty-two years old, the prominent Cherokee leader and eponymous subject of the poem keeps "looking straight ahead and never back, / straight into the face of death, / straight to the west" (5).

Hobson's poetry is carefully crafted with precise diction in both English and Cherokee, bringing to mind the work of another Cherokee poet, Gogiski (Carroll Arnett). Besides his careful choice of words, Hobson uses the absence of words (indicated by spacing) to create poetic effects through typography. In "This World," which is set in the time before the Removal, the speaker says, "Look closely   you will see the world" while explaining Cherokee cosmogony (12). The same technique helps us visualize both the road in "Richard Old Field Speaks" and Richard's belief that other Cherokees "will have it much harder / than us   trying to go over ruts" as the collection moves back to the period during the Removal (23).

During the protests of 2020, I watched statues of Andrew Jackson in Mississippi and elsewhere coming down, at least temporarily, from their undeserved pedestals. These statues not-so-passively celebrate Jackson's policies of ethnic cleansing and genocide against my people. They also celebrate his disregard for the laws of our republic in his failure to enforce Chief Justice John Marshall's ruling on Cherokee sovereignty. Hobson warns us that the specter of Jackson can appear in unexpected places with his poem "Meeting Andrew Jackson in an Albuquerque Bar," a poem about a drunk man encountering the man who is arguably our most infamous president. The speaker of this poem tells us, "I almost fell off the barstool when I saw him" (38). The narrator confronts the apparition, recounting Jackson's crimes against humanity. The only response the speaker receives, however, is a reciprocating glare from "crazy Tennessee eyes" (*ibid*). This interaction with Jackson is suspect not only because of the anachronistic setting, but also because of the unreliability of the speaker, who admits to being a "bar-drunk" (*ibid*). Nevertheless, his warning is timely: The specter of Andrew Jackson can appear in any time or place.

Hobson's *The Road Where the People Cried* is an important and timely collection that shows us the significance of remembering the trauma of the Trail of Tears by vividly describing the Removal in all its sensory details. Hobson's book was published in a year when, despite a pandemic, Indian Country exercised its agency through increased activism and voter turnout to send a clear challenge to signifiers of genocide. This challenge requires, first of all, that we remember the 574 nations that compose the republic of the United States. Remembering the laws of all our nations along with our stories will help keep our republic vigilant against the next time the specter of Jackson reappears.

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