

White

Coyote and Brother Crow: A Little History

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The poem, *Coyote and Brother Crow: A Little History*, was written to be presented to new employees with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). It was meant as a catalyst to provide a timeline of events, promote discussion, and uncover diverse perspectives among those employees. Although on one level the poem is (hopefully!) a creative, entertaining presentation of history, on another level it is deep-rooted in the value of storytelling as a means to champion sensemaking and to develop insight. There are some theoretical foundations that may support the storytelling value of a creative piece.

Santayana (1998) wrote, “[t]hose who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (p. 82). The socio-biological condition of humans, however, promotes mechanistic behavior and values the routinization of predictability and control (Tart, 2001). Arguably then, the past we can remember is a conditioned aspect of our condemnation. In other words, those who can remember the past are also condemned to repeat it because of the role the past plays in automatizing our condition(s). The remembered past is simply a manifestation of the cultural norms and values that allow it to be remembered.

It is necessary, then, to examine more closely Santayana’s past and what the ability to remember it would mean. In an interview with Sylvere Lotringer (Lotringer & Baudrillard, 1986), Jean Baudrillard called history an “immense toy” (p. 144). Given that analogy, history can fundamentally be played with to potentially create inauthenticity of one’s beliefs while promoting myths among us as socio-biologic beings. These beliefs and myths are presented in partial glimpses of actuality and require a more comprehensive method of examination. We do not remember the past, we merely

remember the past we remember. Within that relationship between the past and the past we remember there exists the potential for repetitive condemnation, mechanistic behavior, predictability, and control.

Sartre (1963) called for totalization in determining and making sense out of experience. A question requiring further research is whether the ability to forget is a biological defense mechanism. If it is, it would make Sartre’s totalization an impossibility without a great deal of psychological reconditioning. The ability to forget may also be a social defense mechanism, as there is an inherent abhorrence to change among social systems. “The dominant schema of an organization is its store or memory of previous learning” (Stacey, 1996, p. 174). Previous learning conditions us and prevents us from having alternative perspectives that would deviate from “consensus consciousness” (Tart, 2001, p. 17) among a shared social system. Alternative perspectives can delegitimize the dominant schema and create a metacognitive consideration of how history is remembered.

Although hesitating to provide the reader an in-depth interpretation of the poem to follow, I offer that Coyote and Brother Crow are spiritual representations of the metacognitive consideration of American history. The trickery of the Coyote spirit is countered by the hope of the Brother Crow spirit, and together they make an attempt at a holistic remembrance of the past and its excesses to avoid the condemnation of repeating it.

I also offer two interjections for the reader to consider. First, this poem was not necessarily mine to write and I humbly apologize to those better suited to write it. Secondly, I ask readers to contemplate their own histories and their own excesses to identify their Coyotes and their Brother Crows.

Coyote and Brother Crow:
A Little History

Coyote has a way;
a way for mischief.
a scammer,
trouble dealer
double-dealer,
hustler,
swindler,
master of chicanery,
Coyote fills his life with fourberie
trickery
false flattery
deception
and shadows.
Coyote loves the shadows...
a conniving coaxer
a hoodwink hoaxer
a desert dust joker
a go-for-broker
a manipulator of conflict
and confliction
with an addiction
for destruction
Coyote is a scavenger
a self-amuser
a friend abuser
a user
a refuser
of responsibility
Coyote is an opportunist
seeking what comes soonest
effortless
but complex
with his dealings
regardless of feelings
a racketeer
a bamboozler
a flimflam fraud
a shake and a nod
and a disappearing spirit
into the night
dark night
midnight
shadow night
cursing the moon
and the moon's light
and laughing
Coyote is a laugher
cringing to cower

White

a howler
howling his laugh
in the aftermath winds
that blow no good,
no good,
no good
Coyote is no good.
And he leaves his crime
crimeless
travels time
timeless...

Coyote was there
when Europeans came
he howled his name
just to hear it
a moonlit spirit
wanting to be heard
needing to be heard
as kings
and governments
gave their word
and Brother Crow
was just a bird
but knew the trouble
Coyote loved...

Beads and land
and salvation traded
What one loved
the other hated
and what's worse?
the diseased curse
small pox
or false talks
or encroachment
or displacement
or pushing greed
Coyote loved the greed
Coyote loved the need
the deceptive seed
the shiny bead
the golden rocks

the aftershocks
of cultural paradox
religion traded for riches
religion forced for blood
forced by hungry leeches
Coyote got too big for his breeches
too big for his britches
laughing himself
leaving himself
in stitches
delighted with the glitches
delighted
With ignited
and flaming wicks
of burnt and burning conflicts
and always the greed
the continuous need
for more
landing on the shore
pushing for more
through western doors
pushing for more
with profits in store
and profiting more
but at what expense?
Coyote's suspense
loved the potential
of essential
manipulation of differences
and Coyote howled...

Coyote on parade
paraded
perpetuated
Misconceptions
Misperceptions
Interpretations
misinterpretations
ethnic sensations
tearing apart nations
misconstrued
lied to
all in a flash of clash and crash
and way-of-life passion
ways-of-life passions
the passions of greed

White

against a spiritual breed
and Coyote laughed
he had a way;
a way for mischief
and he would nibble
nibble
nibble
around the edges
to irritate the middle
and then retreat to the ledges
and legends
and howl
his laugh
in the wind
to cower again
in flimsy substance
of flimsy being
Coyote always seeing
what would happen if
if
if
he intervened with
with
with
guile
while
his wild wile
formed the gem
of a stratagem
full of deceit
deceit
a trick
standing alone
a bare-boned
trick
picked
and licked
with Coyote's trickery
and left to
complete the deceit
complete the cheat
oh, Coyote howled
with no concern
of his own
alone
alone
and watching...

And it was bloody

a bloody history
animals slaughtered
pelts bartered
trees killed
land tilled
plans laid
progress made
a bold
foothold
chokehold
on America
sweet new America
America the beautiful
the bountiful
bound to fall
into patterns
of seasonal harvest
in the extraction
of resources
natural courses
and forces
forcing the expansion
the disruption
the claiming unclaimed
renaming the named
blaming enflamed
and holding too tightly
and Brother Crow
grew to know
what was right
and what was rightly
being wronged
with established policies
fallacies
discrepancies
seized
from seas
to shining seas
Brother Crow
took flight
and Coyote laughed
in the draft
of changing winds
putting his grins
and spirited sins
against
the balance
Coyote's talents
were far-reaching
society breaching
despite the settlements

**The Treaty Making
Era (1778-1871)**

White

the agreements
the handshakes
the gives and takes
and takes
and takes
until
Thanksgiving crumbled
English
Spanish
French
German
fought over
the sober
Right of Discovery
entitled to entitlement
and verified
validated
satiated
by the
Doctrine of Manifest Destiny
giving Christianity
God-given right
to settle the land
with protected stand
And Ben Franklin
And Pat Henry
were involved to keep
Native neutrality
as God sorted out
the destiny
and Coyote
could not have planned
such an intervention
So he howled
his God-given howl
and then
with revolutions complete
the Colonials
and Natives
became embattled
with horses saddled
rifles cocked
cultures shocked
and blaming
always blaming
Coyote loved the blaming...

Coyote,

self anointed
pointed
the way to the populations
the living
thriving
populations
the Native nations
living as they had lived
in the places they had lived
but Coyote
went to find it
then reminded
the desiring
about the desirable
and desire drove them places
took them places
shook those places
and populations dwindled
firewood kindled
but the campfire stories
told the youth
one-sided truths
about right and wrong
and legendary songs
were one-sided
(the way Hollywood decided;
but let's not get ahead)
Coyote has too much time
to get ahead,
instead
the vast land
(given away
because who would pay
for such barren places?)
needed to be surveyed
cordoned accordingly
and Brother Crow
flew across the plains
and regions
where the legions
of buffalo lay rancid
and starvation was rampant
and the deserts were seen
as just deserts
and just desserts
for the forgotten
who could not forget
as memories were unforgiving
long and unforgiving
but Coyote's memory
was suspended

White

as he transcended
the past
with the present
and all the pleasant
turmoil
he had caused
he licked his paws
and howled
his Coyote howl

Coyote howled
policy for people
policy against people
policy and policy-makers
consisting of diatribes
against individuals
and tribes
and paving the wagon trail
westward wagons
rolled
stories told
futures unfold
hot and cold
and Coyote howled
Coyote laughed
land takers
profit makers
oh, the expansion
the settlements
the forts
the battles
the cattle
the ranches
the branches
of water rights
and irrigation
irritation
a nation growing
Nations knowing
policies of governance
sovereignty
and self-determination
self-governance
policy against policy
procedure turned against itself
needing to preserve itself
hold fast to itself

outlast itself
government tests
and tests of governments
self-determinants
and Brother Crow
flew over and saw
glimmering changes
in the narrowing ranges
of policy and law...
Coyote watched...

Coyote's time is slow
too slow
to come and go
with decisiveness
while changing terms
change the firm
concepts of law and policy
domestic dependent nations
were wards of the federals
the federal government
was guardian
(Coyote was partyin')
as the convoluted relationship
of owned and ownership
begins to slip
and trust begins to emerge
and trust responsibilities
started with Cherokees
against Georgia
1830's Georgia
so the War Department
takes over
takes over
takes over
the war
Coyote laughs even more
imagine the chaos
what's won and lost
the War Department
and a Superintendent
Of Indian Trade
with the super intent
to maximize standardization
of fur trade
in a factory system
and Jackson

**The Removal Era
(1830-1850)**

White

ol' Andy Jack
wouldn't look back
but refused to enforce
the legitimate course
of the report
from the Court
Supreme
it seems
Andrew had a little Coyote in him, too.
so he decided to remove
the states from the mix
and fix
the court decisions
between the collisions
of policy
and constitutional rights
darkening the night
raising the stakes
between tribes and states
and forced removal followed
out to territories without statehood
head west young man
but be good
and the act withstood
trails and tears
for 48 years
and Coyote
marked his calendar
another trick improved
another tribe removed

Coyote calls ahead
makes reservations
laughs at his fun
laughs at his pun
it's just land
it's just
it's land
but it's not just land
Coyote laughs
and it isn't just
his scavenger ribs bust
and he scoots off
alone and scared
someone might have stared
in his direction
to try to make correction

**The Reservation
System (1850-1891)**

to his manipulative intervention
Coyote is a trickster
a jokester
a hoaxer
a poker of fun
the maker of puns
he howls...

Coyote played the numbers
hardship never slumbers
so when the tribes lost mass
the law was passed
and land was allotted
fewer people
fewer acres
the rest was surplus
land grabbers
land takers
expansion
rancher mansion,
taxation
hand-in-hand
Coyote-planned
more land lost
more lives cost
more laws tossed
into the one-sided decisions
with written law precision
in the name of assimilation
reserve the reservations
for the Nations

And Brother Crow
flew low
over the civilizing power
of private property
and heard the intent of the laws
and saw
Congressman Dawes
become infamous
with the cause
as Coyote
selfishly licked his paws

White

and laughed
his burrowed laugh
and howled at the civilization
of the Dawes path:
"wear civilized clothes...
cultivate the ground,
live in houses,
ride in Studebaker wagons,
send children to school,
drink whiskey
[and] own property."
and it was all properly
documented
sealed, presented
carried out
and executed
well-suited
for materialism
capitalism
fatalism
and radical criticism
and even Senator Teller told 'em
"...the real aim of [the Dawes Act]
is to get at the Indians' land
and open it up for resettlement"
there was no impediment.
and all it took was anglicized names
to play the Dawes games
and get in the melting pot
so common surnames
is what they got.
chicanery
manipulated chicanery
Coyote laughed.

**The Allotment and
Assimilation Era (1887-
1934)**

But there were still
five civilized tribes
not assimilating,
so Congressman Curtis
English-French-and-Native-Born
on allotted land
(albeit torn)
extended the disastrous laws
of Congressman Dawes
and eradicated
communal practices
in the name

of political game
and political gain
of social equalities
and the good old fashioned
American capacities
using his own Native-ness
along the way
in anyway
it was beneficial
in his official
political positioning
giving the word
his word
a word
and never seeming deterred
fully acculturated
leveraging the fact
above the attack
of being assumed to be
one-eighth incapable
of handling individual rights,
so the constitutional plights
intervened, and
tribal courts were abolished
tribal sovereignty was abolished
tribal governments were weakened
tribal rights were subject to federal law
but Brother Crow
flew low
and saw
the free public schools
and watched as Townsmen
native Townsmen
exercised a right to vote
Coyote did not see those
he has a way
a way for mischief
and Congressman Curtis
moved into the
publically allotted residency
assimilating the Vice Presidency
and it was all ironic
Coyote loved irony.

Brand new century
brand new view

White

1900's
and what to do?
Coyote has not grown tired
Coyote still haunts his own howls
and the Office of Indian Affairs
hears the scrutinizing sounds
of effectiveness
as its roles are evaluated
measured
by the status of
economies
health
and education
of tribal nations
still struggling
for rights
so the Miriam Report
pointed fingers
and identified the plights
of failed policies
and bureaucracies
and hypocrisies
and allotment ended
new initiatives were produced
relationships seduced
futures introduced
and poverty was recognized
Coyote didn't mind poverty
it was his new century view
gave him something to do
augmented his massive fraud
and his misappropriation
of his self-propelled position
with an impoverished sensation
the conditioned causation
separating the factors
into their differences
Coyote howled

**The Reorganization
Policy (1934-1953)**

Tribes
described
as "legally incompetent wards"
of the federal government
needed a parliament
a western constitution
to replace traditional
traditions

Indian Reorganization
extended federal trust
forever
Coyote loved forever
timeless
timelessness
forever
tribal society manipulated
constrained
reformatted
made to look like what it wasn't
made to be what it looked like
but surplus lands
lost in allotment
were granted back
here is your land
it belongs to you
it always has
but now I say so
Coyote listened
walked away
scowling back
howling back
at the trick
the trick
policy and trick
and Brother Crow
flew quick
as the sick were aided
credit funds granted
small business started
jobs offered
the BIA reflective
court systems established
tribal land pooled
corporate entities joined
and 70%
of the once cited as
legally incompetent
agreed and accepted
the Indian Reorganization Act
(an IRA)
only to see Coyote's
misuse
abuse
incompetence
and corruption
resurrect themselves
to react and enact
their influence
Coyote's influence

White

on policies
practices
attitudes
behaviors
Coyote had a savior
as he laid low
and re-read the Dawes Act
and Brother Crow
waited
until Congress intervened
to terminate federal relationships
terminate trust relationships
redistribute tribal lands
into private tracts
and resold
as individuals were told
urban relocation was the way to go
and specific cities were cited
trails and tears
trails and tears
through the years
New York City
(now 87-thousand native people)
Los Angeles
(now 53-thousand native people)
leaving checkerboard reservations
pieced together
by political weather
and the result of policies
conflict and strife
Coyote loves conflict and strife
while jurisdiction
is an affliction
of power
and control
and the soul
of public law
83-280
is in the shady
issues
political and economic
interest
as tribal consent
was not needed
would not have been heeded
so eroded
tribal sovereignty
and intruded
upon communities
like Coyote
with his way

**The Termination Era
(1953-1968)**

his way for mischief

Coyote loved
the constant
inconsistency
the inconsistent
constancy
back and forth
south then north
east then west
give and take
then take the rest
there is to take
corruptible, fake
mistake
the snake
for helping hands
no-one understands
the acts
and laws
and Brother Crow
flying over
stops to pause
to see what Coyote has done
undone
redone
and Brother Crow
knows
what Brother Crow
knows
and so he goes
to see Coyote
who laughs
and welcomes no counsel
needs no trust relationship
forced upon him
Coyote lives alone
but tells Brother Crow
to watch
watch the efforts
small and great
Public Law, 638
Education and Self-Determination
Coyote says,
"I don't have wings
I'm not like you
but let's watch and see

**The Self-Determination
Era
(1968-Present)**

White

what this will do”
and tribes were given
administrative authority
given
allowed
permitted
administrative authority
in the land of the free
more disparity
irony
(Coyote loves irony)
and programs are
compacted
contracted
to a third entity
an assimilated entity
but with close scrutiny
and with most control still
within
the government’s grasp
the government’s clasp
waiting to change
like it’s changed
every 20-25 years
back and forth
south then north
east then west
power possessed
and conflicting in nature
treaties
relocation
allotment
assimilation
reorganization
termination
self-governance
self-determination
salvation
Coyote watched
Brother Crow
fly away
fly away
Coyote howled in his solitude
and screamed,
“don’t intrude”

Obesity
Tuberculosis
Diabetes
Alcohol
Influenza
Pneumonia
Homicide
Suicide
Native pride
Sugar
Cigarettes
Poverty debts
Consumerism
Capitalism
Materialism
Infant mortality
Mother mortality
Methamphetamines
By any means
Homeland Security
Since 1492
Citizenship
Rights
Participation
American dream
Spirits scream
Gaming
Casino mitigation
Court cases
Cobell litigation
Reclamation
Nothing owed
Nothing expected
Interventions
Interventions
Interventions
Conventional conventions
Coyote has a way
a way for mischief
he is a trickster
a fixture
a mixer-upper
a handed-upper
a hoaxer
a coaxer
a midnight rider
a fly-by-nighter
a complex soul
a hole in which a dream drops
he howls until he stops
and then he laughs

White

fools
fools around
falls down
gets up
limps
when he's unhurt
runs
when he is
manipulates the system
watches the disagreements
constricts the limits
feels the beat
fills the heat
completes deceit
and if not for road kill
Coyote would not eat.

Brother Crow
sees the horizon
Coyote can not
and everyday
is a new day
for the old way
and the future way
and Brother Crow
on his wings
sees the new day spirit
and sings
and watches
the spirit rise
above the mountain
in the skies
and Brother Crow flies
into a new day
a new day
a new day
while Coyote sleeps

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