

Tommy Boy Gannon

Professor Nietzsche-Thoreau

Obscure Early-20th-Century American Authors

13 Oct. 2018

### **Ind'uns & Birds**

Not surprisingly, Mary Allen's 1983 study of *Animals in American Literature* includes no Native authors, and peremptorily dismisses Native views by claiming that "primitive man was mystified by his relationship to animals" (8). But, armed with examples from Melville through Hemingway, Allen sets out to establish (besides her love for italics) her thesis that "[a]n astonishing number of actual animals play impressive roles in American literature" (10). Indeed, the "*abundance of our literary inheritance is in the free, willful, and often joy-inspiring animal*"; and such a plethora of animals "give[s] American literature a cast like no other on earth, born as they are of regard and love" (198, 199). I am left "mystified" myself, wondering if these are the same Melville and Hemingway that I have read, books of harpoons and rifles, of an ego-fear and Other-loathing forever eager to subdue not only other species but the "free, willful," and "joy-inspiring" aspects of the human psyche itself. Certainly I overstate my case as much as Allen does hers, but I do so in proposing once again that the Native American attitude towards the animal is radically different from the pathological objectification of the natural Other endemic to Western colonization:

Then they [the colonizers] grow away from the earth  
 then they grow away from the plants and animals.  
 They see no life  
 when they look  
 they see only objects.  
 The world is a dead thing for them.  
 They will kill the things they fear  
 all the animals. . . . (Silko, "Long Time Ago" 90-97)