

EDWARD DORN

TRIBE

My tribe came from struggling labor
Depression South Eastern Illinois
Just before the southern hills start
To roll toward the coal country
Where the east/west morainal ridges
Of Wisconsin trash pile up
At the bottom of the prairie, socially
A far midwest recrudescence of Appalachia
My grandfather French Quebecois
Master pipefitter in the age of steam
Indian fifty percent, very French
Who didn't derogate himself
As a breed, showed none of those tedious
Tendentious tendencies. Came down
From Chebanse, from the Illinois Central
In Iroquois Country, to the Chicago &
Eastern Illinois line's division at Villa Grove
In one of the Twenties boomlets,
The last precipitous edges of the great devolvement

These forbears on my mother's side
Owned a nice clapboard house in old town
Where I was brought up off and on during
The intensity of the depression, parents
Wandering work search, up and down
The bleak grit avenues of Flint, following
Other exodus relatives, Belgian in-laws
From another French connexion
Michael Moore-land from the beginning
Manmade poisons in the cattle feed way
Before Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease and angry cows—

Governments always conspire against
The population and often
This is not even malice;
Just nothing better to do.

I'm with the Kurds and the Serbs and the Iraqis
And every defiant nation this jerk
Ethnic crazy country bombs—
World leaders can claim
What they want about terror,
As they wholesale helicopters
To the torturers—

 But I'm straight out
Of my tribe from my great grandma Merton
Pure Kentucky English—it would take more paper
Than I'll ever have to express how justified I feel.

Reprinted from *Chemo Sábe* (Limberlost Press, 2001);
an earlier version appeared in *CR* 45:2 (1999)