

**PROGRESSIVE TRADITIONS:
CHEROKEE CULTURAL STUDIES**

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My dissertation intervenes in prevalent debates between nationalists and cosmopolitans that have dominated American Indian literary theory and displaced alternative questions about the empowering potential of local identities. Both positions too often categorize American Indian literature with a reductive dichotomy that opposes traditionalism against assimilation, resulting in the seizing of mechanisms that coordinate change and in the unwarranted archival exclusion of many authors—such as those I discuss—who speak to historical problems with present effects. Seeing past this dialectic requires a fresh look at what precisely is gathered under “assimilation” and “traditionalism”—a reassessment I initiate by arguing that Cherokee representations of dynamic, agentive identities proceed from traditional, adaptive strategies for addressing cultural and historical dilemmas. My project is organized into two sections of two chapters, the first of which introduce principled practices from several scholarly perspectives then applied to primary texts in the subsequent chapters. In the first, I examine an array of traditional religious dispositions and the critical theories that have been advanced to interpret and apply them to Cherokee literature. In the second I take up gendered religious innovations in the memoirs of Catharine Brown, a nineteenth-century Christian convert, and in the science fiction of contemporary novelist Sequoyah Guess, both traditionalists who synthesize identities through pragmatic accommodation and find not erasure but support for Cherokee

culture through traditional practices like “gaining knowledge.” The third chapter looks at traditional political structures, providing a cultural context for discussion of Elias Boudinot’s and John Ross’s contentious (and again gendered) rhetoric in chapter four. I argue here that failure to understand the tension over Cherokee Removal to Oklahoma in the (de)structure of political centralization, which vacated the discursive spaces that once forged consensus, has led too many critics to authorize nationalist rhetoric uncritically. I emphasize the major themes of worship and dissent herein because they most often suffer misapplications of the assimilated/traditional dichotomy that simultaneously says so much and so little. I hope my work opens American Indian literary criticism to critical theory, opens theory to American Indians, and most importantly, opens the imaginative possibilities of communal identity.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Joshua B. Nelson, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, is a native Oklahoman, and he and his wife divide their time between Norman and Canoe Mountain, south of Park Hill. He earned his B.A. in psychology from Yale, his M.A. in English from Cornell, and is now Assistant Professor of English and Native American Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

Dedicated to Tiffany for her love and support, to Mom for her example, to Ronnie for his instruction in the essentials, and to Granddad for his stories.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990's, debates between nationalists and cosmopolitans have dominated American Indian literary theory, displacing theoretical and political arguments not immediately concerned with either camp's political programs. Looking to literature for creative articulations of communities' shapes among Cherokee people, Cherokee critics like Jace Weaver, Daniel Justice, and others have taken Craig Womack's cue in approaching literature from theoretical perspectives grounded in some aspect of relevant tribal culture.¹ Major trends have included emphasis on traditional orature, ties to and relationships with land, embeddedness in tribal history or political problems, and connections with communities of various shapes. On the occasions that literary critics confront the problematic work of Cherokee authors like Catharine Brown, Elias Boudinot, John Oskison, or Will Rogers, they seem compelled to apologize for the writers' assimilationist appearances, adopting a historical pattern of dismissal that reduces Indian identity to dichotomies wherein Indians are either traditional or assimilated, and the latter is a code for "not really Indian." Disassembling this too-long enduring, heteronomous dialectic requires an reassessment of what precisely is meant by assimilation and traditionalism. I argue that Cherokee authors employed traditional adaptive strategies to resolve cultural and historical problems. At the edges of the already liminal, smaller groups of Cherokee

¹ Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) 1-36; Daniel Justice, "'Go Away, Water!' Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative," *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, by Janice Acoose, et al., ed. Craig Womack, Daniel Justice, and Christopher Teuton (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2008) 147-68; Daniel Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006) 7-10; Craig Womack, "The Integrity of American Indian Claims (Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Hybridity)," *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, by Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006) 91-177; Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999) 1-20; Craig Womack, "Theorizing American Indian Experience," *Reasoning Together*, 353-410.

people have long coalesced around common causes and shared interests like fostering traditional values, organizing opposition to colonialism, or advocating technological education. I propose that theorizing a nimble pluralism inhering in what Pierre Bourdieu calls the *habitus*,² or a given society's network of principles and practices that guide its operation, that is adept at defining challenges and delimiting the scope of their resolution, can help us understand how Cherokee traditionalism mediates among cultural forces in tension. The authors herein rarely advocate context-free and eternal solutions; rather, they are precisely and inextricably historically and culturally situated. While the values and practices that shape their conclusions extend from conservative traditions, culture and belief in the lived lives of Cherokee communities are not so immutable as criticism has rendered them, nor did the authors intend to inscribe definitive and abiding ethnological identifications of difference in their discourse on often-times very narrow problems. Their works are instead persuasive efforts in an ongoing historical process in particular discursive contexts, that forge novel connections across traditional beliefs and practices.

This interpretive plurality resonates with Cherokee traditionalism, which is accustomed to multiplicity. Medicinal plants, for instance, are thought to have seven different uses. Rarely does one person know or expect to know all of them for every plant, and rather than jealously insisting upon his exclusive understanding, he respects that of others. Should American Indian literary criticism open itself to such conjunctive interpretation, such cooperative knowledge, where it formerly found only displacement or loss of tradition it might come to see agency in the development of both internal and external societies. While some Cherokee theorists have formulated culturally-grounded strategies for interpreting Cherokee literature, the archive's

² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Les Editions de Minuit, 1980 (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990) 53.

diversity resists integration under any single paradigm. Daniel Justice, for instance, explores recurrent cultural themes of belovedness and what he dubs a Chickamauga consciousness, respectively corresponding to patterns of accommodative conciliation and nationalist resistance. Mary Churchill elaborates the former by drawing on the religiously-inflected “White Path” tradition of achieving harmony through a mediating balance of opposition. Eva Garrouette and Jace Weaver emphasize the importance of community attachments to authors and their work, though they trace different ramifications of those affiliations.³ All these theories offer certain advantages and clear readings of some texts, yet too often they tend toward monistic interpretation, as if the particular cultural value or practice each identifies is *the* differentiating or overriding principle of Cherokee literature and culture, and that it offers the *best* interpretations of the entire Cherokee canon. The complexity and depth of the works I discuss in the succeeding chapters are but gestured at by these paradigms, however, when their authors are not dismissed as Cherokee in name only. The inability to understand how these authors fit into the field of American Indian literature—not only by theorists of Cherokee literature but also of American Indian literature—points up the need not for a newer and better totalizing framework, but one(s) more variegated, dynamic, and pluralist. For these reasons, the practice-oriented theory I advance here, which concerns itself with a range of cultural and social behaviors and the principles connected with them, is less a narrow prescription than a meta-theoretical justification of theoretically applying multiple principled practices disfavored or as yet untheorized.

³ Justice, *Our Fire* 19-42; Mary Churchill, *Walking the White Path: Toward a Cherokee-Centric Hermeneutic for Interpreting Cherokee Literature*, diss., U of California at Santa Barbara, 1997 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1997) 137-87; Eva Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and Survival of Native America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 2003) 99-152; Weaver, *That the People* vii-xiv, 26-45.

Of late, American Indian literary nationalists like Womack, Weaver, Robert Warrior in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, and others have proposed theories grounded in autonomous Native intellectual traditions and practices directed towards greater political and intellectual sovereignty for tribal nations. Their theories, however, have imprecisely articulated the relationship between the national political apparatus—the nation-state—and the national cultural body—the nation-people.⁴ Nationalism, whether colonial or anti-, is the insinuation of the political sphere into the personal through narratives of commonality. In Benedict Anderson’s terms, it shapes communities’ imaginations of themselves via various strategies, structures, and epistemologies.⁵ Opposing nationalists on many points, cosmopolitan theorists like Arnold Krupat and Elvira Pulitano reject their privileging of indigenous voices in criticism and their separatist approach to literature and experience. Fearing the ossifying, mystical, or political misrepresentations of essentialist arguments, cosmopolitans who argue that culture should be understood as hybrid rather than “pure” believe that nationalists have failed to address challenges facing stable conceptions of identity and to recognize the progressive advocacy of global over nationalist consciousness.⁶ Rather than trying to stretch one or another of these theories to accommodate the infinite array of strategies, values, dilemmas, and resolutions in the Cherokee world, my reading of Cherokee practice argues for

⁴ Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, “The American Indian Fiction Writers: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, the Third World, and First Nation Sovereignty,” *Why I Can’t Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays: A Tribal Voice* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1996) 78-96; Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, “Literary and Political Questions of Transformation: American Indian Fiction Writers,” *Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekeya’s Earth* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 34-44; Robert Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995) 1-44.

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1983) 5-7.

⁶ Elvira Pulitano, *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2003) 61-62; Arnold Krupat, *Red Matters: Native American Studies* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2002) 109-12.

multiplicity in interpretation. It opposes neither nationalism nor cosmopolitanism *in toto*, joining with both in the support of Indian peoples' right to self-determination and understanding the distinction between long term visions and short term goals, which occasions acceptance of the state as a periodic or temporary means of effecting immediate positive change.⁷ It departs from them, however, insofar as they fail to confront the depredatory, coercive powers available to tribal nation-states that even now centralize power, hamper public discourse, segregate populations, and disenfranchise groups considered refractory or simply distasteful. Nationalists might counter that their faith in human political institutions is borne of historical necessity vis-à-vis the singular force of colonialist power, but to address Indian audiences familiar with the real and potential abuses of the tribal-state and to omit discussion of effective means of resistance or effecting its improvement does little to empower agency at its root. Cosmopolitans' trust extends from liberal, humanist optimism for the potential of the nation-state to foster human development, a position with a long and respectable philosophical genealogy, but not without problems for Indian people, particularly in its secularism and its long-term goal of the replacement of tribal or other local identities with a utopian vision of affiliation-at-will.

My methodology borrows from cosmopolitanists a willingness to engage with postcolonial theory, from nationalists an insistence on tribal specificity not least for the sake of empirical validity, but most fundamentally from the Cherokee authors I study a praxis that justifies multiple positions by their productive interpretation. Attuning my readings to an understanding of internal variety encourages swifter and more sustained discussion of theoretical issues than has been formerly possible, when critics were hampered by the expectation that readers required rudimentary instruction

⁷ Noam Chomsky, "Goals and Visions," *Chomsky on Anarchism* (Oakland: AK, 2005) 190-211.

in who American Indian authors were, not to mention focused critical problems surrounding them. The time has come for close comparisons of under-evaluated Indian generalities with local specifics, and while I hope a range of Indian and non-Indian thinkers will find this a useful approach, I understand that other tribes' circumstances differ dramatically from the Cherokees'. Few are the tribes that have not been disparaged by allegations of assimilation-induced contamination, however.

American Indian Literary Nationalism

Much of Indian nationalists' arguments merit retention and expansion, and if, as identity theorists have it, experience is pertinent to interpretive truth and theory, then American Indian voices can offer illuminative interpretations that have been marginalized if not wholly ignored in mainstream discourse. Their insights derive not from some genetic access provided by Indian blood, but because culture matters to the ways people behave with and understand each other.⁸ American Indian critics' novel analyses of Indian and other literature testify to the importance of their perspectives for all literary critics but particularly for Indian readers, who before the Native nationalists began writing were largely without visible academic role models. They thus helped inaugurate an internal discourse among Indian thinkers familiar with intellectual and cultural particularities, ready to move beyond introductory matter, and prepared to engage in concrete political action. Even though the early wave of criticism treating the major texts and authors of the American Indian literary

⁸ William Wilkerson, "Is There Something You Need to Tell Me?: Coming Out and the Ambiguity of Experience," *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, ed. Paula Hoya and Michael Hames-García (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 2000) 251-78; John Zammito, "Reading 'Experience': The Debate in Intellectual History among Scott, Toews, and LaCapra," *Reclaiming Identity*, 279-311; W.V.O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *Quintessence: Basic Readings from the Philosophy of W. V. Quine*, ed. Roger Gibson (Cambridge: Belknap, 2004) 31-53; Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism: An Open Question* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995) 8-10; Sean Teuton, *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* (Durham: Duke UP, 2008) 16-17.

renaissance attempted to situate the literature culturally and historically, theirs was largely a project of discovery frequently limited to the anthropological or ethnological records and positioned on the outside of the tribes they investigated. Not every internal tribal community is available to every Native critic, but their affiliation with one or more can open them to knowledge absent from official archives. Together with their attention to internal politics, their interests have sometimes led them to turn their attention to the marginalized, intra-tribal voices of homosexual, lower class, traditionalist, and other groups.⁹

Womack outlines his concept of nationalism: “The concept of nationhood itself is an intermingling of politics, imagination, and spirituality. Nationhood encompasses ongoing treaty relations with the U.S. government. Nationhood has to do with federal Indian law, and tribes’ testing of the sovereignty waters through new economic developments and other practices,” positioning culture in nationalist discourse as a means to political ends.¹⁰ Weaver asserts Native nationalism “sees itself as attempting to serve the interests of indigenes and their communities, in particular the support of Native nations and their own separate sovereignties.”¹¹ This paramount political advocacy—the increase of tribal nations’ sovereignty—appears from one perspective their most attractive program, especially in its issue from a cultural campaign that following Warrior they have dubbed “intellectual sovereignty.”¹² Warrior, Womack and Weaver define the term differently, but each agrees it encompasses the self-

⁹ Warrior, *Tribal Secrets* 106; Womack, *Red on Red* 271-303.

¹⁰ Womack, *Red on Red* 60.

¹¹ Jace Weaver, “Splitting the Earth: First Utterances and Pluralist Separatism,” *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, 15.

¹² Warrior, *Tribal Secrets* 87-98; Cook-Lynn, “Literary and Political Questions” 41-42, Womack, *Red on Red* 59.

determined intellectual, cultural, artistic, and political expression of the nation-people. Notwithstanding claims that the political is the natural executor of the cultural, nationalism is foremost about politicism, which propagates uniformity, and not about heterogeneity, which complicates the solidarity under which nationalism operates most expeditiously.

Insofar as they support the increased sovereignty of the nation-people, including over the nation-state, theirs is a compelling project, but their willingness to authorize the nation-state as uncomplicatedly representative of the nation-people evidences a philosophical misalignment. Nationalists may well mean to strengthen tribal-state power specifically against U.S. and state governments and intend only to remind their self-professed primary audience of Indian readers that resistance to fourth-world colonialism requires their readers' attention. Upon objection to any given tribal-state policy, nationalists may make recourse to the distinction between the government and the governed, but as isolated exceptions insufficient to warrant reevaluation of the rule. Nationalists have claimed in several places that theirs is not a closed discussion, that they are only sketching the outlines of a discourse about political and cultural nationalism, but seldom in their advocacy for the strengthening of sovereignty have they suggested what limits they would impose on tribal-state power, or according to what principles or processes it should be supervised. This nebulous relationship between the cultural and political, which for an eponymous nationalist by default defers to the latter—they do not call themselves tribalists or communitarians, after all—jeopardizes the personal and communal sovereignty of the nation-people in its a priori authorization of the natural procession of the cultural into the political.¹³

¹³ Justice, *Our Fire* 19-26; Justice, ““Go Away, Water”” 150-55.

Cosmopolitan critics mount another objection to nationalism in their critique of a perceived atheoretical or anti-theoretical rhetorical posture in nationalist separatism.¹⁴ Womack defends this elision, “I do not bother much in this book with the skepticism of postmodernism in relation to history. It is way too premature for Native scholars to deconstruct history when we haven’t yet constructed it.”¹⁵ For their part, nationalists have slightly demurred cosmopolitans’ point, agreeing that they do in fact use non-Native theory but asserting that their goal of fostering discourse among American Indian voices requires that their theories be privileged.¹⁶ For nationalists, their eschewal more accurately reflects distaste for postmodern and postcolonial theories of hybridity and mediation than unawareness or incomprehension of them, believing these approaches poorly accommodate Natives’ fourth world conditions and do not confront Native material realities, when they have deigned to examine Native peoples and their literatures at all.¹⁷

To be sure, American Indian literary nationalists have seldom engaged directly with nationalist scholarship by mainstream theorists like Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner, or Anthony Smith, for instance, or with postcolonial scholarship by the likes of Frantz Fanon, Partha Chatterjee, or Homi Bhabha. Instead, they foreground preliminary scholarship by prominent Indian figures like Simon Ortiz and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, attempting to develop an independent discourse more sympathetic to nationalism than elsewhere available. This discourse is most troubling

¹⁴ Pulitano 61-62, 70, 87-88, 97-100; Eric Cheyfitz, *The Columbia Guide to American Indian Literatures of the United States since 1945*, ed. Eric Cheyfitz (New York: Columbia UP, 2004) 104-06; Krupat, *Red Matters* 26-28.

¹⁵ Womack, *Red on Red* 3.

¹⁶ Womack, “Integrity” 101; Warrior, *Tribal Secrets* xvi-xxi.

¹⁷ Weaver, “Splitting the Earth” 39-40; Womack, “Integrity” 100.

to pluralist practice in its myopic insistence on overtly political discourse on narrowly prescribed issues over sovereignty, which extends to artistic and literary expression, as the sole respectable principle of colonial resistance, a programmatic stance that not only fails to describe alternative actual or potential ways of maintaining communities, but often fails even to look for them. Further problematizing interdisciplinary exchange is the negative connotative baggage accruing around terms like “nationalism” or “sovereignty,” especially in theoretical circles that almost without exception understand nationalism—in the best cases—as a temporary evil pending supersession by a higher, post-nationalist consciousness. Finding in Native literature and criticism a celebration of a posture they disparage as atavistic, progressively-minded thinkers accuse nationalists of short-sighted provincialism, chauvinistically insisting on their difference.

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitan critics argue that what is needed instead is exploration of similarity, especially among peoples allied in anti-imperial resistance. They believe with their philosophical forebears that armed with a sympathetic intellect, they may find themselves at home anywhere, literally as citizens of the cosmos. With an etic perspective, they understand source material in relation to generic patterns in American Indian, pan-Indian, and global indigenous literature. Their familiarity with continental and postcolonial theory has brought sophisticated inquiry into the study of American Indian literature and in facilitating its visibility has generated increasingly widespread academic interest. The anti-colonialist, subversive spirit of non-hegemonic American Indian literature seems to draw many cosmopolitans, who may then act as

translators or mediators in helping to introduce other audiences to an unfamiliar body of work.¹⁸

Allied by a common enemy in colonialism, cosmopolitanism does not oppose nationalism at every turn. Arnold Krupat, the chief proponent of a cosmopolitan critical position in American Indian literary criticism, however, articulates a hesitancy toward possible nationalist misrepresentations: “For Womack, the most important thing in any approach to Native literatures ‘should be a study of the primary culture that produces them’ [*Red on Red*] (25). Here, one might ask—as also with Cook-Lynn—whether culture and nation are synonymous...(And there are dangers, as a number of writers have pointed out, in treating the ‘people’ or the ‘nation’ as a unitary force or indivisible essence).”¹⁹ The dangers to which Krupat alludes might include the absence of administrative transparency and accountability, suppression of dissent, and the disenfranchisement of citizens. Even nationalist sympathizer Lisa Brooks in her afterword to *American Indian Literary Criticism* wavers, pondering nationalism’s downside: “I’ll admit that talk of nationalism makes me wary. For me, like many, it calls to mind the setting of boundaries, both physical and cultural, and defending those boundaries with force...It recalls the potential for violence.”²⁰ To rescue the term, Brooks has “a different kind of nationalism in mind...a nationalism that is not based on the theoretical and physical models of the nation-state...but rather relies on the multifaceted, lived experience of families who gather in particular places.”²¹ Brooks retains her optimism for a distinct, people-centered nationalism despite nationalists’

¹⁸ Krupat, *Red Matters* 13, 17.

¹⁹ Krupat, *Red Matters* 10.

²⁰ Lisa Brooks, “At the Gathering Place,” *American Indian Literary Nationalism* 244.

²¹ Brooks 244.

insistence that theirs is axiomatically a political criticism devoted to expansion of the tribal nation-state's political power. Krupat explains that this expansion of sovereignty "means a decrease in the 'dependency' of Native nations on the federal government and a greater degree of 'autonomy.'" But it is not clear just what political *forms* expanded sovereignty for the people—as the 'agency that lays claim to a monopoly of decision-making power'...and the sole possessor of 'legitimate force' (Ree 87)—might actually take."²² Krupat rightly critiques nationalism's failure to articulate its ideal political forms, that is, to offer a definite, positive statement of program, but he himself, other cosmopolitans, and their philosophical confederates hardly meet this burden of proof, either.

If nationalists or quasi-nationalist cosmopolitan supporters advocate a dramatic reformulation or just an alternative structural design of the tribal political apparatus, they have not said as much. Whatever misgivings they may have, cosmopolitans gloss over the *de facto* problems of state power and remain dedicated to the enhancement of Native nations' sovereignty—especially as a thorn in colonialism's side—but not strictly because they support the nationalist goals of Native peoples or governments.²³ They see nationalism and its generative consciousness as a necessary evil, an intermediate point in materialist history's progress toward a higher loyalty to a "new humanism" or an "internationalist" consciousness, in Frantz Fanon's language approvingly cited by Krupat.²⁴ That would be scanned: Fanon anticipates an "occult

²² Krupat, *Red Matters* 5, citing Jonathan Ree's "Cosmopolitanism and the Experience of Nationality" in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998) 87.

²³ Krupat, *Red Matters* 18.

²⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, 1961 (New York: Grove, 1963) 246; Krupat, *Red Matters* 7, 22; Bruce Robbins, "Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism," *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998) 2.

instability” in this novel identity, the characteristics of which he declines to clarify,²⁵ although he hints at its enabling structure:

As we see it, a program is necessary for a government which really wants to free the people politically and socially. There must be an economic program; there must also be a doctrine concerning the division of wealth and social relations...What can be dangerous is when they [“African and indeed all underdeveloped peoples”] reach the stage of social consciousness before the stage of nationalism. If this happens, we find in underdeveloped countries fierce demands for social justice which paradoxically are allied with often primitive tribalism.²⁶

For Fanon, nations must first buy into Marxist ideology (and perhaps Leninist statism—the “program” that will ensure compliance with the “doctrine”) before they can develop the capacity to understand their local concerns’ rightful, secondary place. Further, subscribing to a materialist historical model, Fanon and his cosmopolitan followers unwittingly echo imperialist self-justificatory dismissals of others’ cultural differences as manifestations of inferiority, insinuating with the language of primitivism a lingering savagery.

Besides their supercilious valuation of tribalism, many cosmopolitans inherit Fanon’s general philosophic sympathy for the state as a civilized institution and administrator of the “programs” charged with advancing humanist goals.²⁷

Cosmopolitan theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah philosophically grounds his version of cosmopolitanism in the principles and practices of Western liberalism.²⁸ Classical liberalism in its search for new forms of democratic political organization and authorization calls for regular justification and careful scrutiny of state institutions

²⁵ Fanon 227.

²⁶ Fanon 203-04.

²⁷ Robbins 9; but also see Pheng Cheah, “Introduction Part II: The Cosmopolitical—Today,” *Cosmopolitics*, 22.

²⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005) ix-x.

“because they are both necessary to so many modern human purposes and because they have so great a potential for abuse. As Hobbes famously saw, the state, to do its job, has to have a monopoly of certain forms of authorized coercion; and the exercise of that authority cries out for (but often does not deserve) justification.”²⁹ While Appiah maintains humanism’s focus on basic human rights, he subtly eases the call for perpetual review of the concomitant structures intended to enable their protection in his assertion that “the primary mechanism for ensuring these entitlements *remains* the nation state.”³⁰ Taking the nation-state’s existence as authorization for it nullifies the need for critique that should be ongoing, not formulated once and forever. As liberalism increasingly aligned itself with state-sympathetic politics, insistence on regulation of state became state regulation. The authority of the nation-state to carry on its wide range of functions thus becomes vested. As for whether Appiah has proven the nation-state is indeed the “primary mechanism for ensuring” human rights—much less whether it *ought* to be—I am not persuaded, given the vagaries of national and tribal-national politics.

Krupat is in fact more suspicious of the state than Appiah, though both share the progressive vision of an internationalist humanism against colonialism and late capitalism.³¹ He writes, “in my view, cosmopolitans will probably find themselves supporting not only nationalitarian [internationalist] forms of nationalism, but also—if warily—most nationalisms directed against an oppressive colonial order.”³² Diverging

²⁹ Appiah, *Ethics* 245.

³⁰ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006) 163, emphasis added.

³¹ Arnold Krupat, *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1996) 105, 112.

³² Krupat, *Red Matters* 18.

from Appiah and other state-sympathizers, Krupat enters a dilemma: how to support Native nations' pitch for greater political sovereignty while maintaining scrutiny over the nation-state. He conveniently redeems Native nationalism by extending Brooks' suggestion that its conception of the nation is premised upon a cultural formulation of the people rather than of the state, writing in *Red Matters*, "Native American nationalisms...differ from other nationalisms...in that they do not seek the creation of postcolonial states,"³³ news which may surprise tribal nation-states. According to Krupat, not only do Native people not desire a nation-state, "The 'sovereign political entities' that Native nations were and continue to be were not and are not *states*."³⁴ He does not define "state" in *Red Matters*, or anywhere else that I can find. Rather than working through a challenging contravention, Krupat simply denies it exists.

In his equation of peoplehood with nationhood, nationalist Daniel Justice also avails himself of this ready dismissal of the connection between the tribal state and tribal people, proclaiming "Indigenous nationhood should not, however, be conflated with the nationalism that has given birth to industrialized nation-states."³⁵ If tribal people exercised no agency in the creation of the nation-state, the political arm of the Cherokee Nation must be a colonialist prosthesis grafted onto a people powerless to control their political lives, a condition inconsistent with nationalists' insistence on cultural and political sovereignty. Whether the tribal nation-state conforms to Cherokees' ideal political structure is worth careful inquiry, but it cannot proceed well from the assumption that Cherokee people were not involved in its creation or are not implicated in its perpetuation. Whether understood as authority possessed of

³³ Krupat, *Red Matters* 5.

³⁴ Krupat *Red Matters* 3.

³⁵ Justice, "'Go Away, Water'" 151.

legitimized violence, a centralized political structure with a monopoly of decision-making power, a body of legislators, the arbiter of justice, a standing bureaucracy subject to codified legislation and regulation, the administrator of education, promoter of welfare, maintainer of order, or any other common standard, the Cherokee Nation and many other tribal nations meet the qualifications.³⁶ The Cherokee Nation administers a police force, whose officers are trained by federal law enforcement agencies, have the authority to use (and have used) deadly force, and are cross-deputized with county and municipal entities; maintains headquarters; employs administrative, legislative, judicial, and bureaucratic officials; operates schools, child welfare offices, firefighter corps, and health clinics, among other governmental responsibilities, under the rule of law, beginning as a centralized body in the 1820's. The Cherokee nation-state now oversees the business entity Cherokee Nation Industries, an electronics company that manufactures among other things wiring harnesses for the Bell-Boeing V-22 Osprey combat-troop carrier helicopter, under a federal Department of Defense contract. The Osprey, originally designed for use in combat situations, crashed several times in testing and is now used in the Iraq war primarily to transport troops and supplies close to the fighting front.³⁷ (The wiring harness has in no way been implicated in the Osprey's design troubles.) How such national activities are not part and parcel of an "industrialized nation-state" I have difficulty understanding.

³⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983) 3-5.

³⁷ "Cherokee Nation Industries Employees Tour Bell Helicopter Assembly Center," News and Events, Cherokee Nation Industries website, Nov. 14, 2008, online, accessed 21 Sept. 2009, <<http://www.cherokee-corp.com/news.php?article=11>>; Mark Thompson, "V-22 Osprey: A Flying Shame," *Time* 26 Sept. 2007, online, accessed 21 Sept. 2009, <<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1665835-1,00.html>>.

Humanism

Whether through ignorance or willful misrepresentation, cosmopolitanists' and nationalists' disregard for actual conditions and tribal peoples' agency in the state's establishment and on-going problematic activities is difficult to resolve, but it likely proceeds from the optimistic if sometimes utopian visions that here are divergent from or at least secondary to American Indian communities' immediate goals. Some of these admittedly include the pressing need for jobs in impoverished areas, the discussion of which I must reluctantly set aside here. In addition to the automatic authorization of state authority, the humanist position undergirding cosmopolitanism advocates two features that clash with my reading of principled practice in Cherokee literature: 1) the dissolution of nationalist boundaries and subsequent birth of Fanon's aforementioned "new humanity" that will "define a new humanism,"³⁸ and 2) an associated secularist privilege. This new model of affiliation, liberated from narrowness and born of "occult instability," is couched as objective and enunciatively unencumbering, but there may be some strings attached.

The vision for the new humanity precludes loyalty to any of the internationalist collective's national or tribal forerunners, supplanted by a humanity-wide imperative to be enforced by what cosmopolitanist scholar Pheng Cheah calls "an ideal institutional framework for regulating the anarchic behavior of states,"³⁹ that is, a state without coercive powers or the need for them. Edward Said concurs with Fanon's value-laden indictment of tribalism, which he calls nativism: "The tremendous *ressentiment* in nativism aside...there are two reasons for rejecting, or at least reconceiving, the nativist enterprise." The first is that it is not "the only choice for a resisting, decolonizing nationalism." More importantly for Said,

³⁸ Fanon 246.

³⁹ Cheah 24.

...to accept nativism is to accept the consequences of imperialism, the racial, religious, and political divisions imposed by imperialism itself. To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences like *négritude*, Irishness, Islam, or Catholicism is to abandon history for essentializations that have the power to turn human beings against each other; often this abandonment of the secular world has led to a sort of millenarianism if the movement has had a mass base, or it has degenerated into small-scale private craziness...⁴⁰

What little may be discerned of this shadowy, new-humanist opacity might well alarm American Indian communities. First is its genesis in the proposition—perhaps accurate in its description of African or Islamic groups but untenable among American Indians—that tribal divisions are the product of colonial agency; second is the pejorative description of those divisions as “primitive,” and third is his disingenuous equation of religiosity with fanaticism. Should the uncharacteristic vitriol in Said’s quote prove characteristic of humanist adherents, it is unclear if anti-tribalist theorists would reexamine their hard-thought stance in light of American Indian historical and cultural contexts.

While colonialism undoubtedly effected alteration to tribal social boundaries, to ascribe all divisions to imperialism and to stop with this conference repudiates Native history, disavows Native epistemology, and nullifies Native agency. Tribal oral histories that predate and narrate the time before European contact incontrovertibly distinguish among tribes. Perhaps Said would discount such orature, equating the manifest “historical world” to which he refers with the written record of Western historicism, in a reprisal of the colonialist expunction of Native history. But as he argues elsewhere, discounting Others’ histories clears a narrative space for historical retelling that authorizes imperialist intervention in the name of progress and humanity.⁴¹ Further, by declining to investigate the roles that Native peoples have

⁴⁰ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994) 228-29.

⁴¹ Said, *Culture* 236; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978) 86.

played in establishing their own social orders that persist into the present, re-writing socially organized tribalism as a colonialist divide-and-conquer tactic totalizes the myth of Western agentive supremacy in the very grand-narrative history that anti-imperialist criticism seeks to unsettle. Given such manifest contempt for broadly considered indigenous social structures, humanist cosmopolitanism gives American Indian traditionalist conservatives good cause to doubt whether they will offer greater tolerance for closely considered, specific tribal practices. Its theoretical effects in its attempts to persuade others to its own universalist account, then, differ not enough from imperialist erasures and divestitures at both local and broad structural levels.

Marshalling an auspicious intellectual genealogy in Fanon, Appiah, and Jean-Paul Sartre (to whom we could add Said, Homi Bhabha, and more), Krupat wonders with them if “we”—humanity, presumably—are ready for the “transcendence of racism and an end to violence” through internationalist affiliation, though he more pointedly asks the question in the context of American Indian literature.⁴² More clearly positioned, then, the question is if *Indians* are ready for the new humanism. To American Indian communities desirous of preserving their religions, cultural practices, epistemologies, and everyday comings and goings, many practical effects of old evangelical and new humanist interests in them are indiscernible. Both relegate Native interests to a subordinate status and see in their final goals a nullification if not an erasure of tribalism: its cultural differences, political traditions, religious beliefs—any loyalty below a transcendent humanity.⁴³ Before paternalistically deigning to wonder if Indians are “ready” for progress in this particular course, perhaps someone should first ask if indeed “we” at all *want* it. Cosmopolitanism and humanism offer insights

⁴² Krupat, *Red Matters* 119-120.

⁴³ Krupat, *Turn to the Native* 54-55, 68-69, 106-07; Pulitano 86-89.

for American Indian literary criticism to be sure, but we should approach them well-informed of their goals, of Indian groups' relationship to them, and our own capacity for reshaping them to suit internal needs.

Pluralist Praxis

But what is the boundary separating the internal from the external? We should be leery of attempting to define what feature distinguishes groups, for such an attempt is ultimately an invitation to join forces with a pre-contact version of traditionalism against the civilizing hordes—an invitation to lock in to the same dichotomy that ossifies identities and prescribes cultural agency. By shifting focus away from monistic markers of culture toward a consideration of a range of the practices by which culture is maintained in times of stability, challenge, and development, however incomplete the exploration of that range must be, we can nevertheless more completely describe Cherokee culture and its volitional capacities. We can do so at least to the extent that we can correlate common principled practices obtaining in decision-making or behavior across diverse conditions among a group calling themselves and called by others, Cherokee. These “principled practices”—formed in conversation with cultural values and their own histories, shaped by and shaping them, and present in but operating without necessary conscious theorization—manage the incorporation of alteration to the social structure in belief, habit, practice, or the structure itself. Their developmental regulation tends toward the perpetuation both of themselves and the matrix of conditions that enable them.

This is the culturally conservative, even the traditionalist, nature of what Pierre Bourdieu calls the *habitus*:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring

structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.⁴⁴

The “outcomes” of these principles are as important as their mode of operation inasmuch as the *habitus* “is always oriented towards practical functions.”⁴⁵ Such goals may be either concretely social, such as accumulating economic or symbolic capital, as Bourdieu discusses in his analysis of marriage strategies, or they may be meta-social, such as maintaining the valuations of that capital and the economic or social conditions determining and supporting them. Bourdieu understands this “durability” as intrinsic to the dispositional practices constituting *habitus*, claiming it “tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information” and “tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible,”⁴⁶ which it achieves through actors’ internalization of historic social schema. But because dispositions inhere throughout the matrix of the social structure, “the *habitus* is an infinite capacity for generating products—thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions—whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production.”⁴⁷ The *habitus*’ situation in time, that is, in socio-historical context, thus becomes a condition of dispositions’ existence but neither precludes their practical operation or pertinence, nor their altering development into the future, beyond the *habitus*’ historically-constituted present condition.

⁴⁴ Bourdieu 53.

⁴⁵ Bourdieu 52.

⁴⁶ Bourdieu 60-61.

⁴⁷ Bourdieu 55.

Though Bourdieu makes much of the *habitus*' traditionalist refusal to alter when it alteration finds, his emphasis on its conservative tendencies results from his attention to its every-day operation. It is as present, however, in moments of inescapable crisis and rupture, but still exerting its principle of parsimonious regulatory alteration. While mindful of the historical limits on the *habitus*' capacity for improvisation, Bourdieu does not fail to describe its "infinite capacity" for generation—infinite because its epistemic boundaries do not so much vivisection a culture's interior as they circumscribe the perimeter of the entire range of a culture's practices, beliefs, and representations (in a deep history, no less), which interact with each other across the entirety of the social matrix. Neither the *habitus* nor its limits are strict prohibitions on practices' applicability, and certainly they far from monolithic indices of cultural identity.⁴⁸ Formed of principled practices—a term I use more or less synonymously with Bourdieu's "dispositions" to reiterate their interdependent relationship—that exist only in their enactment, and this in forever fluctuating circumstances that cannot but effect some change, the *habitus* itself might be better understood as dynamic process rather than static amalgamation. Bourdieu inclines more toward reifying the *habitus*, but given its constitution in practice, conceiving it as such does not fundamentally alter our understanding of its functions: perpetuating the practices and conditions constituting it, and regulating change. It is this agentic capacity born in multiplicity that can help unambiguate the components subsumed under the appellations "traditional" and "progressive" and help trace their fluctuant influence.

Several attempts have been made at identifying abiding, necessary, and sufficient markers of tribal and/or American Indian cultural difference, that is, some

⁴⁸ Bourdieu 55.

measure of who Indians are individually and collectively and what it is that makes them such. The leading contenders are philosophical or spiritual beliefs about land, kinship or blood ties, indigenous language use, retention of mythical stories, self-identification, community recognition, ceremonial participation, religious beliefs, a history of treaty-making, geographic residence, and historical or cultural awareness. For some, phenotype undoubtedly remains an indication of Indianness; for others, Indianness might well be precluded by membership in too high an economic class. Over time, all have waxed and waned in importance in the critical literature. I do not dispute that any of these practically function in the formulation of cultural boundaries by certain actors, but the numerous glaring exceptions in the historical record and common experience to each of the proposed limiters, people(s) who are almost universally regarded as Indian but fail to conform to one or more of the theoretical standards, point up the need for theories better attuned to anomaly and complexity.

I also question the desirability and practicality of many of these markers and the rhetoric used to advance them. In arguing that Indian culture depends on its connection with ancestral land, how are we to make sense of tribes that have been relocated? How many tribes were not? As for those living on the lands where they were before European invasion, if their country has on average been constricted by, say, a generous seventy five percent—are they one-quarter the Indians they once were? What is gained by arguing that loss of indigenous languages heralds the loss of culture entirely? Is interest in learning the languages increased, or are non-speakers alienated and discouraged? Too often the rhetoric of imminent demise reinforces the myth of the vanishing Indian, and where the dominant discourse once fixated us in the past, we are now writing ourselves out of the future.

This is not to say that such boundary-drawing practices are not important (although we would surely like to see some left in the past); quite the contrary—they

are of enormous importance and are made yet more so and made more powerful through their interrelationships with each other and with the innumerable other principles and practices that constitute the tribal *habitus*. The strength accruing in the connections between principled practices dispersed in the *habitus* also mandates a responsibility on the part of theorizing agents to maintain others that lend each their salience and force. One's death might diminish the others, but it necessitates no self-immolation. If there is a locus of cultural difference, perhaps it resides not in any singular, discrete feature but gathers together and migrates across the infinite combinations of thought and unthought beliefs and practices. These capacities for innovative, combinatory strategies can help us theorize not only historical agency but also potential strategies for present and future challenges. The principled practices related to worship, deliberation, and diplomacy, only a few of many, are among those I would like to consider in Cherokee literature, as authors not only mitigated the rupturing force of colonial history but also exercised agency in the developmental preservation of Cherokee culture.

Cherokee Literature

The authors I study in the ensuing chapters most often bear the brunt of accusations of assimilatedness, often for the very practices that I here attempt to reclaim as traditional dispositions. These dispositions, too, acutely intersect with contemporary issues facing the Cherokee and many other tribal peoples but suffer from deficient contemporary theorization. In each of the sections that follow, I have attempted to look into principles and practices thoroughly and have thus offered in each section a preliminary chapter on traditional dispositions. These may seem to some literary readers to spend an inordinate amount of time and space reviewing critical material originating outside literary scholarship, in anthropology, ethnology,

sociology, religious studies, history, biography, and more. Too often it seems to me that literary criticism makes generalized, unsupported allusions to Indian cultures without the support of either experience or comprehensive research. If this interdisciplinary, social-science theoretical perspective on literary reading seems slightly unorthodox, so once did arguing for literature's historical contextualization.

An objection might here arise to the apparent privilege afforded knowledges produced *about* rather than *by* Cherokees. I should admit that I actually believe the converse to be true—that culturally-aware Cherokees understand Cherokee culture better than the best non-Cherokee researchers, not inherently, but as a function of context, familiarity, and experience. A non-Cherokee with a similarly embedded background would no doubt be similarly equipped, if differing in experience. In any case, I do position Cherokees' analyses alongside non-Cherokee voices in these chapters. My belief in their greater general authority does not mean, however, that western-originated research is invalid or not useful. Rather than acquiesce to another stifling, preclusive dichotomy, I have attempted to situate western and indigenous knowledges in complementary conversation, believing with Robert Burns and the Cherokee authors here in the potential benefits of seeing ourselves as others see us. Each section's preliminary chapters are thus linked to those following, where Cherokee writers' voices take primary place and afford vital opportunities to test theory against praxis. I further disavow any private privilege my subjective position as a Cherokee might seem to bestow. I claim no special experience, and have tried to find corroboration of all of my references to Cherokee experience or culture in publically available resources. Certainly I can lay no claim to any special knowledge or expertise, as many marvelous and rewarding interactions with Cherokees infinitely more knowledgeable than I am about Cherokee traditions have shown me only too clearly.

As an initial step in dismantling the bankrupt assimilated/traditional dichotomy plaguing American Indian literary criticism, the first section examines select traditional religious practices and theorizes religious innovations in works by two nearly unknown Cherokee authors: the memoirs of Catharine Brown, a nineteenth-century convert to Christianity; and *Kholvn*, a novel by contemporary traditionalist Sequoyah Guess.⁴⁹ In these works Brown and Guess narrate forms of traditional practices like “gaining knowledge,” a process of community edification through education in which new ways of knowing and potential solutions are vetted against inherited beliefs and traditions. The historical course of alterations to spiritual and religious principles and practices, though often maligned as a sinking of tradition, instead follows a gendered trajectory tending always toward the *habitus*’s perpetuation, and as such charts both male and female culturally-preservative agency, even as it sometimes entails changes more drastic than expected.

Nowhere has interweaving internal and external systems been a seamless historical process, however. The second section looks at a particularly devastating transition through Elias Boudinot’s and Chief John Ross’s political rhetoric of civilization during the Removal crisis of the 1830s, read against a centralizing and again gendered movement away from traditional political dispositions of consensus-building and debate. A key problem for the combined chapters of this section is the linkage of dissent with assimilatedness, a correlation that discourages any articulation of sentiments that might be thought counter-hegemonic. That connection to assimilation is the primary basis of my emphasis on political dissent and religious worship, for progressive practices in these areas in particular have been and continue

⁴⁹ Catharine Brown, *Memoir of Catharine Brown: A Christian Indian of the Cherokee Nation*, ed. Rufus Anderson, 2nd ed., Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1825, reprint (Signal Mountain, TN: Mountain P, n.d.); Sequoyah Guess, *Kholvn* (Kansas, OK: Kholvn Books, 1992).

to be most regularly and unproblematically characterized as evidentiary of an identity that has abandoned or neglected Native traditions—that has crossed over to the light side, as it were. As important as they might be to some specialists, progressive and/or altered dispositions in fields like dress, labor, diet, education, transportation, art, military service, language, and so on have largely escaped the prevailing scrutiny against already-constituted expectations of allegiance to political and religious habits that exerts such a polarizing influence on American Indian populations. Subtextually uniting the sections is an analysis of the gendered currents of alterations to religious and political dispositions, which as I hope to show, are by no means ubiquitously positive simply by virtue of being volitionally conceived, nor simply by benefit having been done by Cherokees. As Theda Perdue has argued, many of the political transformations of the early nineteenth century systematically divested Cherokee women of political and economic power. Such disempowering maneuvers directed at internal subgroups paradoxically contributed to the disempowerment of the whole of the population. On the other hand, women in assuming spiritual leadership roles sought not to empower themselves through the appropriation of men's power but to strengthen people generally by providing communal spiritual resources.

Perhaps such local examples of agency seem like small potatoes to nationalists or cosmopolitanists who look to the state as a prime force for human development. To them, perhaps, questioning the expansion of political sovereignty may seem retrograde, but a moment's reflection on the history of imperialism should check this expectation of support for government on the part of American Indian tribes. The statist campaign against American Indians hardly belongs to the remote past, either; in the 1970s the Indian Health Service was involuntarily sterilizing Indian women,⁵⁰ and

⁵⁰ Jane Lawrence, "The Indian Health Service and the Sterilization of Native American Women," *American Indian Quarterly* 24.3 (2000): 400-419.

at the time of writing, in opposition to the Cherokee Nation's bid to disenfranchise the Cherokee Freedmen, members of the Congressional Black Caucus have introduced a series of bills threatening to terminate the trust relationship between the U.S. and the Cherokee Nation.⁵¹ That American Indian tribes would oppose U.S. statism seems banal; more complicated is the attitude toward tribal statism, which as it consolidates power moves away from rule by consensus and restricts the sphere of debate—symptoms that at least attend if they do not themselves structure such conflicts as Freedmen citizenship. The Cherokee nation-state reincorporated under the Indian Reorganization Act, survived the termination era, and has in many ways prospered during the current self-determination policy, and many writers have celebrated the advances made in tribal sovereignty.

The distance between the Cherokee bureaucracy and the Cherokee people, however, is widening. Even as the nationally-owned Cherokee Nation Industries manufactures military helicopter components, the executive branch enables the disenfranchisement of Freedmen, the judicial branch denies the right of same-sex marriage, and the legislative branch conspires to undermine the validity of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, literary critics are silent about how national rule might be brought in closer accord with the express will of Cherokee people, how their opinions might be better solicited, or how they might manage their affairs with greater independence. According to nationalists, whatever objections tribal people might have to the tribal nation-state are pre-empted by their loyalty to the centralized political body, but the literature of many Cherokee authors tells another story, one with deep-seated doubts about centralized power in the hands of anyone, including other Cherokees.⁵² Their demand for local control and their accounting of the state's

⁵¹ Will Chavez, "CBC Wants to Deny Tribe Housing Funds," *Cherokee Phoenix* May 2008: A1-2.

⁵² Traditional stories about the people's destruction of the historic priestly caste that attempted to

responsibilities in representation, justice, access, frugality, and restraint sets a precedent the Cherokee Nation and nation-people would do well to emulate. A fresh look at Cherokee traditions, beliefs, and practices with an eye toward the full range of their application to the complexities of being Indian in America can not only improve our political structure but can also embolden our communal imaginations.

appropriate too much power attest to this distaste for undemocratic rule; see Raymond Fogelson, "Who Were the Aní-Kutáni? An Excursion into Cherokee Historical Thought," *Ethnohistory* 31.4 (1984): 255-63.

SECTION ONE:

VHWOÖAT

The status of religion or spirituality in academic discourse is a delicate matter and is contentious even within the traditionalist nationalist movement. Craig Womack affirms the connection, “A compassionate literary nationalism makes religious studies a key feature of its interests...[an important] reason for making religion a cornerstone of a materialist theory is because spiritual matters are paramount for Indian people themselves and no discussion of art or politics can proceed without referencing them.”¹ In the same volume, Robert Warrior equivocates this religious focus with his advocacy of secularist criticism that will observe the difference “between having religious beliefs and invoking those religious beliefs and demanding of others agreement with them in intellectual discourse.”² Among cosmopolitans, secularism in discourse is more nearly dogmatic than religiosity, with the latter systematically cordoned off into discrete areas of religious studies.³ From a purely pragmatic perspective akin to Womack’s, religiosity resounds in many Cherokee authors’ works, Catharine Brown’s and Sequoyah Guess’s to be sure, and an analysis of that trend is incumbent to responsible scholarship. This practice accords with Eva Garrouette’s “Radical Indigenism” methodology, which for her recognizes “that sacred elements are absolutely central to the coherence of our knowledge traditions and that if we

¹ Craig Womack, “The Integrity of American Indian Claims (Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Hybridity,” *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, by Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006) 170-71.

² Robert Warrior, “Native Critics in the World,” *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, by Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006) 208.

³ Arnold Krupat, *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture*, Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1996, 27-28; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, New York: Norton, 2006, 81, 91; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005, 265-67; Eva Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and Survival of Native America*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 2003) 101-07.

surrender them, there is little left in our philosophies that makes any sense.”⁴ Spiritually-minded Native scholars have lamented the critical gulf between religiously-inflected reasoning and discourses that bristle at fundamentalist or essentialist thinking,⁵ but we can find in the Cherokee literary archive authors who built their own bridges between apparently unlinkable points. Understanding their engineering remains to critics.

Prior to European contact, Cherokee religious beliefs and practices, though not codified in written archives, obtained a permanence comparable to the doctrinaire Christianity promulgated by the missionaries who streamed into Cherokeeia in the nineteenth century. Both religions underwent tumultuous and sometimes reciprocal change during this time, but the trauma induced by the US’s relentless imperialist assault on Cherokee land and culture took a heavy toll on traditional religion, at least its most overt structural presences. A series of historical and social shifts issuing in response to cultural revival, defensive military maneuvers, and developments in gender and political roles posed serious challenges to old shapes of Cherokee religion, yet the *habitus*’s omnipresent, self-perpetuating material and political influence safeguarded many traditional beliefs and practices, or found consonances between them and those introduced by missionaries. Although Cherokees did not convert to Christianity in significant numbers until the late nineteenth century, early syncretistic patterns—enacted by all types of blending, modification, adoption, and/or rejection of apparently contradictory religious elements—instantiated ingenious progressive traditions that have conserved and adapted Cherokee culture up to the present.

⁴ Garrouette 104.

⁵ Craig Womack, “Theorizing American Indian Experience,” *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, by Janice Acoose, et al., ed. Craig Womack, Daniel Justice, and Christopher Teuton (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2008) 363-68; Garrouette 102-03; Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) 28-32.

Though separated by nearly two centuries, both Brown and Guess diplomatically negotiate across non-Indian and intra-Cherokee gendered, cultural, and religious groups, forging imaginative alliances. Brown was among the first Cherokee converts to Christianity, and her memoirs, collected from various diary entries, letters from her, and reminiscences of others have slowly gained critical attention for the first-hand glimpses they provide into the Cherokees' daily lives at a crucial historical juncture. Scholarship on Brown and the *Memoir*, however, has only skimmed the surface of the possible meanings and potential strategies for asserting a culturally-specific agency her writing suggests. Like Brown, many other Native writers who pronounce some position that seems too far afield of accepted ways of being religiously, politically, or economically Indian have been dismissed as duped, assimilated, or internally colonized. Situating her writing and conversion in a tribal social history reveals far stronger attachments to Cherokee people *as* Cherokee people than her critics have yet been able to see. Her theology blends, modifies, adopts, and refashions Christian and Cherokee religious beliefs and practices into an innovatively spun web at once complicated in its cultural distinctions and simple in its controlling tenet of proving "useful for her people."

Sequoyah Guess, a self-published Keetoowah Cherokee author from rural northeastern Oklahoma, mainly authors science fiction/horror novels that draw on Cherokee oral traditions, landscapes, and culture for his monsters, settings, and characters. While some nationalists have seen Guess's work as exemplaric of sovereignty-centered polemic, such forced readings belie his prevailing synthetic plurality that de-centers the nation-state as the arbiter of Cherokeeness, or indeed any supposed necessary and sufficient marker of Cherokee identity, like citizenship, blood, religion, or language. Though fantastical, Guess's world is anchored in the realities of northeastern Oklahoma Cherokee life, and it reflects the diversity of that geography,

particularly in his characterizations of both Cherokee Nation and United Keetoowah Band citizens, Cherokee traditionalists, white and Indian Christians, and non-believers—none of whom find themselves unilaterally equipped to manage the conflicts they face. This spirit of complementarity extends in Guess' novels through his style, content, plots, light pedagogic tone, hospitable treatment of mixedbloodedness, and comparative theological inquiries. This pluralism, by no means achieved without complication, contrasts with the oppositional positions taken by the two Oklahoma Cherokee tribes snarling over resources and with the divisive rhetoric of critics who insist that traditional and Christian identities cannot fuse.

Guess's additive sense of identity is remarkable not only for its resonance with Brown's but also in its directionality; that is, insofar as it originates from a source aligned in significant ways with conservative traditionalism. In many respects, he voices the traditionalist perspective that critics claim they champion, yet they elide his advocacy of accommodation in favor of emphasizing separatism, however qualified. Such insularity finds little expression by many traditionalists themselves, like Guess or Crosslin Smith, the Keetoowah leader of a stomp grounds in Cherokee country.⁶ To be sure, they advocate strengthening community and political sovereignty among Cherokee people, but they find in cross-cultural, pragmatic accommodation not wholesale eradication of tribal identity but rather means of strengthening and preserving Cherokee culture via selective application of effective knowledges and strategies culled from multiple sources.

⁶ Crosslin Smith, "The Good Mind," lecture given at 14th Annual Symposium of the American Indian, Northeastern State U, Tahlequah, OK, April 1986, videocassette; Crosslin Smith, "The Way of the Sacred Eagle," lecture given at 16th Annual Symposium of the American Indian, Northeastern State U, Tahlequah, OK, April 1988, videocassette.

CHAPTER ONE

Paths of Righteousness

To help contextualize the next chapter's readings of Catharine Brown's memoirs and Sequoyah Guess's *Kholvn*, this chapter introduces traditional Cherokee religious beliefs and practices that pertain to some of the less conspicuous cultural presences in their works, particularly regarding harmony and cooperation, righteousness and charity, continuity and education, and purity and cleansing. I specifically look to social and religious developments that have been under-emphasized in much scholarship on Cherokee religion, which has instead been more often interested in exploration of an alternative, if not romanticized, harmonious relationship with the natural world. Without discounting such differences in ecological worldviews, or the insightful theorization that Cherokee cosmology extends kinship relations to the non-human world, I want to explore how spiritual beliefs also inform right relationships to other humans, not only as a feature of a loose-knit cultural spirituality but also as concrete religious edicts. I further position this Cherokee sacred humanism in relevant historical moments: the decline of the traditional priesthood at separate moments in oral history and priests' later separation from the polity, the introduction and spread of Christianity, and the gendered transformation occasioned when men moved to political from religious leadership roles. In many ways women assumed these last as Christianity spread, setting the historical religious stage for Brown's and Guess's narratives and offering an example of women's innovation mobilized from within the *habitus*.

This chapter's selection of principled practices by no means intends a comprehensive or even middling representation of Cherokee religion, but only a narrowly bordered weaving of a handful of dispositions at particular times. Despite my

subjectively constricted scope—perhaps even because of its adumbration—I hope that it might nevertheless illustrate the wealth of innovative interlockings of traditional and progressive practices and beliefs available along even a single thread in the richly varied fabric of the *habitus*. Much of the traditional Cherokee religion I discuss concerns Keetoowah societies, which have their roots in oral histories that proclaim the ancient town of Kituhwah as the original nucleus of the Cherokee. The modern religious incarnations of the Keetoowah were developed near the turn of the twentieth century through Redbird Smith’s direction of the communal recovery of ancient traditions. I offer nothing revelatory about Cherokee religion or the Keetoowah Society.¹ I have relied on sources long publically available or offered publically by religious leaders, for several reasons: 1) to respect traditional practitioners’ right to privacy and the protected nature of much religious knowledge; 2) to acknowledge my own position as an outsider to these traditions, without authority to speak representatively or definitively; and 3) to keep the lines of discourse open, using the plentiful information already at general disposal. If traditional religious leaders want to gain more exposure or to make more information available, they will do so, as they have done in the past. In the meantime, interpreting what they have already offered us can keep us busy for some time, if we are open to new ways of approaching, understanding, and applying it.

The White Path: Harmony, Righteousness, and Community

The traditional Cherokee principle that has received the most critical attention is that of harmony, according to which a Cherokee maintains positive “relationships with his fellow Cherokee by avoiding giving offense, on the negative side, and by

¹ I offer still less about other stomp dance religion societies like the Four Mothers or the Seven Clans societies, who are less conspicuous in the historical record, for reasons that might include greater reticence, factional disputes, lower membership numbers, or others.

giving of himself to his fellow Cherokee in regard to his time and his material goods, on the positive side,”² as anthropologist Robert Thomas has it in an early discussion. Drawing on Thomas, Fred Gearing emphasizes the former injunctive dimension: “The single focus which created pattern in Cherokee moral thought was the value of harmony among men...this principle of harmony appears to direct those Cherokees today, cautiously and virtually at all cost, to avoid discord. The emphasis in its application is negative—thou shalt not create disharmony—rather than positive.” Gearing elevates harmony from a “basic principle” as in Thomas’s formulation to a supreme, singular guiding principle, even as he admits “This Cherokee ethos cannot be demonstrated directly by the historical record.”³ I understand him to mean by this disclaimer that while Cherokee actors endeavored to maintain harmony, they did not enunciate it as a principle *per se*, and that proving a negative like avoidance or non-action, by showing how a disrupter of harmony might have been shunned, say, cannot be accomplished with the historical record.⁴ These anthropological considerations of harmony mainly confined themselves to interpersonal relationships in a community. First seen mainly in the social sphere, theorists have begun to discern the harmony ethic’s influence in literature, religion, politics, cosmology, epistemology, and elsewhere.

Mary Churchill’s dissertation presents such an expansion of the theoretical applications of the harmony principle: its definition, examples in oral history, and as a structural attitude informing Cherokee literary theory. For her, harmony exemplifies

² Robert Thomas, “Cherokee Values and World View,” unpublished manuscript, U of North Carolina, 1958.

³ Fred Gearing, *Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century*, *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association* 64.5, Part 2, Memoir 93 (1962): 31.

⁴ As it turns out, Chief John Ross regularly invoked harmony in his rhetoric, and to multiple audiences, during the factional disputes over Removal. John Ross, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, ed. Gary Moulton, vol. 1 (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1985) 265, 271, 303, 337.

the socially-oriented synthesis of forces in (typically) dialogic opposition, but their equality results in a binary more durably static than in a Hegelian system of conflict and conquest of one element by another. This codependent, durable tension defines for Churchill the concept of balance, which is connected to harmony but refers specifically to the opposition she identifies between, for instance, genders, directions, color symbology, war and peace, and other paired complements. Like harmony, the concept of balance has taken center stage in studies of Cherokee religion and features prominently in the literary theoretical perspectives of Churchill and Daniel Justice.⁵ Both also appear in the voluminous writings on American Indian religion not specifically focused on that of the Cherokee, although most authors tend to treat the two more synonymously than does Churchill, with harmony extending to relations with non-human realms. I will return to Churchill's influential formulation later in this chapter, following discussion of some of the other principles, practices, and historical circumstances impacting Cherokee traditionalism that will help contextualize the ideas of harmony and balance.

Without attempting to dislodge harmony from its privileged place in indigenous religious studies, I would like to suggest here that it is not so originary a concern in Cherokee morality as the critical literature suggests. Ample evidence in oral and written history and in literature testifies that harmony and balance are guiding principles, to be sure, but overly-focused attention to them as such seems relatively recent and may reflect an internalization of a discourse concerned more with broad, "Indian" questions rather than close study of Cherokee or other cultures specifically. Such influence entails no necessary contamination of the Cherokee theorizing of

⁵ Mary Churchill, *Walking the White Path: Toward a Cherokee-Centric Hermeneutic for Interpreting Cherokee Literature*, diss., U of California at Santa Barbara, 1997 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1997) 137-87; Daniel Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006) 27-34.

Church, Justice, and others; if anything, it suggests that Cherokees have affirmed those values as broadly consonant with their other concerns. Other, locally-oriented philosophies focused on alternative principles predate attention to harmony and balance, however, and these have received but little scholarly treatment. While pervasive, dispositions maintaining harmony are inseparable from conditions deemed favorable enough to warrant their perpetuation, and they are assessed not simply on the basis of an absence of discord but on the extent to which they provide the same sorts of happiness any people seek: some measure of love, liberty, security, creativity, etc. The Cherokee religious concept of the White Path symbolizes some of the principled practices thought to enable these goals in conditions that make possible a harmony worth preserving.

Though the White Path, also called the Path of Peace, is discussed somewhat spottily in oral histories and secondary literature, several characteristics recur in speeches and writing explicitly and metonymically about it. Thomas offers a useful summary: “[God’s law] is the ‘Law’ or ‘Rule’ which God laid down for the Indian to follow. It consists not only of ‘following the White Path,’ that is being peaceful, friendly, and observing the rest of the moral virtues; but also of keeping up the old Cherokee customs, such as the fire, stomp dancing, etc.”⁶ He emphasizes here the White Path’s social dimension, which is inseparable from its culturally preservative function. Foremost a religious concept, the idea of the White Path urges peace and harmony in social, natural, and cosmological relations through language, hunting, doctoring practices, etc., all governed by an idea of “righteousness” as a means of achieving “a good mind” or “becoming right-minded.” Anthropologist Albert Wahrhaftig argues that harmony is more an effect of righteous living according to the

⁶ Robert Thomas, *The Origin and Development of the Redbird Smith Movement*, master’s thesis, U of Arizona, 1953, 150.

law symbolized by the White Path than it is a causal force, inasmuch as social and individual contentment is evidentiary, providing “the ultimate sign that [the Cherokee] are living according to sacred design.”⁷ Keetoowah Society leader Crosslin Smith describes the White Path as “a white righteous road” that connects the four peoples across the four corners of the earth via a “white road, the first cross of extreme, deep religious meaning. It is the same law that was passed on in to the Bible—this is pre-history time.” He clarifies the law’s fundamental precept: “‘Love one another and love me’: this was the first law. The same law gives full complemence [sic] to the new law called Ten Commandments.”⁸ Here and elsewhere, the connection between righteousness and divine law is made explicit. While the Keetoowah divine law is plainly not as detailed as, say, the Bible, it similarly and foundationally concerns the proper attitude humans should have towards the Creator and towards each other. Ceremonies, dances, and prayers all reinforce these attitudes as do the instructions for living related in oral histories.

Even as Smith emphasizes the injunction(s) to love the Creator and others, we see it presupposes certain entities—you, one another, Me—and right ways of treating them—with love, which may be of a different sort for the human and the deity—that are not explicitly defined and can only be understood by reference to other laws, habits, principles, beings, and so on. Upholding this law will require reference to a great deal else in order to find its own complemence. If upholding the primary law, itself a social principle, may be taken as practicing righteousness, the plurality of the attitudes constituting it reinforces the sense that it, too, is not a monistic foundation of Cherokee cosmology or worldview but rather another forceful principle among many

⁷ Albert Wahrhaftig, “We Who Act Right: The Persistent Identity of Cherokee Indians,” *Currents in Anthropology: Essays in Honor of Sol Tax*, ed. Robert Henshaw (New York: Mouton, 1979) 263.

⁸ Crosslin Smith, “The Good Mind,” lecture given at 14th Annual Symposium of the American Indian, Northeastern State U, Tahlequah, OK, April 1986, videocassette.

in the web of the *habitus*, perhaps more influential or far-reaching than others but still not sufficient unto itself.

To help clarify the primary law, Keetoowah traditions retain and impart others, the laws of the Seven Clans. Citing Janet Jordan, Churchill recounts six:

Be peaceful and loving, they say.
Have a white, a pure and cleansed heart, they say.
Do not falsely judge another, they say.
Do not do people harm, they say.
When people make demands upon you, fulfill them.
Love thy neighbor as theyself [sic].⁹

In personal conversations with stomp grounds members, I have also been told of four other guidelines for interpersonal relations, here paraphrased: love each other unconditionally; treat every person as a sacred creation; cling to each other; and be stingy with one another (that is, don't use each other up). The categorical differentiation of humans and the attention focused on them specifically in these traditional religious teachings are often overlooked in scholarship on the Cherokees and other American Indians. Many scholars are attracted to the cultural components of Indian beliefs and practices that promote less consumptive environmental dispositions, but few investigators have seen—or they have declined to see—the religious connections that lend them their force, divorcing ecological beliefs and behaviors from the spiritual, social, and material emphasis on taking care of other people that traditional practitioners themselves profess to be at the heart of their philosophies. This concern for others manifests itself in principled practices like charitable giving, ready hospitality, and community labor.

A focus on community takes center stage for two important Cherokee theorists of Indian identity and literature, sociologist Eva Garroutte and Native American

⁹ Churchill 183, citing Janet Etheridge Jordan, "Politics and Religion in a Western Cherokee Community: A Century of Struggle in a White Man's World" (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1975) 127.

studies-theologian Jace Weaver. Garrouette's *Real Indians* surveys the most common ways American Indian identity is reckoned in legal, biological, cultural, and personal discourses and in its latter chapters proposes an alternative set of criteria based on kinship as a way of defining community. For her, "a definition of identity founded in kinship responds to at least two themes that one encounters across a range of tribal philosophies. One of these reflects a condition of *being*, which I call *relationship to ancestry*. The second involves a condition of *doing*, which I call *responsibility to reciprocity*."¹⁰ The first may be seen in genealogical or ancestral connections, although Garrouette hastens to point out that those she imagines concern not bloodedness nor pedestrian, racialized identity markers. If this hereditary state of being still suggests an essentialism, it is a well-qualified, Native version open to alteration through adoption, communal vetting, and other processes.¹¹ Garrouette's second criteria is more germane to consideration of traditional religious dispositions, both in its emphasis on doing, or what I call principled practices, and in her insistence that others' social concerns are also of paramount concern to the individual's comportment and constitution, in voluntary behaviors that "contribute to tribal survival" through generosity of time, resources, and spirit.¹² The interview respondents she quotes severally underline the importance of helping behaviors that maintain "The People—those who understand themselves as bound together in spiritually faithful community,"¹³ again emphasizing the religious aspects of community-mindedness. The behavioral responsibilities they point to as embodying or

¹⁰ Eva Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and Survival of Native America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 2003) 118.

¹¹ Garrouette 118-27.

¹² Garrouette 128.

¹³ Garrouette 129.

enacting Garroutte's idea of reciprocity often concern the immediate, this-world, material well being of the community by providing for others' food, safety, labor, or economic needs in accordance with spiritually-understood "Original Instructions... sacred stories, and historic practices."¹⁴ Each of these, Garroutte argues, helps constitute tradition, which she defines as "fundamentally a *sacred* concept." She affirms a Cherokee/Choctaw respondent's definition of tradition: "tradition is what is passed on orally, and it tells you the way you are *supposed* to be. It has to give us *good*. It has to give us *growth*. It is the lessons that were taught us by the ancient ones and the elders to help [each of] us be a better person, and closer to the Creator. And we have to use it in the way it is intended...It's spiritual."¹⁵ This progress-oriented expression of traditional value urges the development of good relationships (righteousness, perhaps) with the Creator, with the self, and with the "us" of community, which encompasses the present community and also the past-in-present community of elders and "the ancient ones."

Garroutte's identity theory recalls Jace Weaver's in *That the People Might Live*, where he writes, "Natives define their identity in terms of community and relate to ultimate reality through that community."¹⁶ In his argument, community "is, in fact, the highest value to Native peoples, and fidelity to it is a primary responsibility,"¹⁷ and he reiterates the religious foundation not just of social behavioral principles but also of a general, commonly-held difference in American Indian thinking or consciousness. He asserts, "Because of the failure of Native cultures to recognize any split between sacred and secular spheres, this worldview remains essentially religious, involving the

¹⁴ Garroutte 136.

¹⁵ Garroutte 137. Emphasis and editorial comments in original.

¹⁶ Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) 32.

¹⁷ Weaver 37.

Native's deepest sense of self and undergirding tribal life, existence, and identity, just as the Creator undergirds all the created order."¹⁸ Like Garrouette, he asserts the relevance of the religious principle of righteousness to community interaction, arguing that "being *rightwised*... involves right relation not only between the human self and human others but between self and place."¹⁹ Combining the phenomenological, ontological, moral, and social centrality of community with a "proactive commitment" to it, that is, an agentive working for its survivance, to borrow Gerald Vizenor's concept, Weaver coins the term "communitism" by fusing "community" and "activism" to describe what for him is "the single thing that most defines Indian literatures."²⁰ Literature, too, functions primarily to maintain community, but seeing in it no less diversity than in social communities, Weaver complicates any perceived homogeneity with his recognition that "today we exist in many different kinds of community—reservation, rural, urban, tribal, pan-Indian, traditional, Christian."²¹ Even as many agents participate in several of these communities, they belong to still others.

Despite Weaver's important qualification detailing the multiplicity of community, I am disinclined to fully accept the theorization of community preservation as the "single" most permanently descriptive essence of the variety of the Cherokee (much less the Indian) world, not because I reject the pervasive significance of community—indeed, I am here endorsing just that—but because it becomes too-encompassing a term in Weaver's and Garrouette's constructions. Weaver broadens the Indian idea of community to include what he calls "the 'wider community' that

¹⁸ Weaver 28.

¹⁹ Weaver 31.

²⁰ Weaver 43.

²¹ Weaver 45.

includes *all the created order*, which is also characterized in kinship terms. No sharp distinction is drawn between the human and nonhuman persons that make up the community.”²² Garrouette shares his general sense: “in tribal philosophies people take their place, or find their identity, within a kinship network that includes not only other humans but also animals, plants, minerals, geographic features, the earth itself, celestial bodies, and spirit beings.”²³ Both here expand the argument, grounded in the evidence of traditional and contemporary oral histories extant in perhaps all tribes, that kinship relations extend beyond the human world and inform right relationships with those human, natural, and supernatural. In generalized theories, however, community becomes no less than *everything*. In a limit case, Native identities and literatures, then, are ostensibly to be distinguished from those of non-Natives by virtue of their positionality within, well, the cosmos—and how then are they unlike those of non-Natives?—and find their essential nature in their support for the universe or any given part of it. Native or not, what way of being is not supportive of some part of existence? Even nihilism works for *something*. Knowing that Indian peoples are not committed to everything under the sun in identical ways, a sweepingly tautological definition of community does not say enough about distinctions—how they originate and function and to what purposes.

A narrower critique reveals other problems with the descriptive power of casting community as the essence of Indian identity and literary expression, at least as an undelineated, umbrella principle. Weaver and Garrouette both stipulate that Indian communities may be urban and Christian, say, but dedication to the furtherance of such communities *alone* does not make them peculiarly Indian anymore than advocacy

²² Weaver 39, emphasis added.

²³ Garrouette 132.

for an Indian community makes the advocate Indian.²⁴ Further, relationships between communities, whether or not affiliated in kinship terms, are not everywhere governed by identical principles or practices. Cherokee clan names come from human, animal, and plant communities, for instance, but we do not interact with each of these forebears equally: we might, for instance, eat deer and potatoes, but we do not eat humans. And while we use kinship terms to speak of some entities in the natural world, like the thunders and rivers, we do not speak of dirt, say, as a relative. Perhaps such details are trifling. But perhaps if we were to consider them on their own terms and explore the particular imaginative strengths they provide, we could understand how *this* culture's theorization of place or land or its principled practices concerning living and moving and exploring in it enabled it to persevere and prosper in a transplanted locale.²⁵ Theories that while admirably seeking to offer communities a broadly applicable means of strengthening their cultural or political sovereignty unfortunately obscure many unique, local ways of being and believing that generate enormous potential agency.

Without understanding the specific nature of the relationships among communities predicated on traditional philosophies, our apprehension of the inductive principle of communities as kin is imperfect at best. The clarification of the diversity

²⁴ Garrouette admittedly avoids these critiques through her additional requirements that belonging to a community also requires a state of "being," that is, of having "...a connection to ancestry rooted in the individual's fundamental nature" (120) and that that connection be recognized by others in the community. The incorporation of community acceptance does not fully extract us from the repetitious logic that seeks to know by whose criteria a community's claims to Indianness, like an individual's, are established. It seems to me that by including personal assertions, communal affirmations, and the opinions of outsiders to the community as variables in the assessment of identity claims, theorists have made sufficient allowances and must at some point make a pragmatic—that is, telically and realistically oriented—decision, a jumping into the circle, that need not control under all past, present, and future conditions.

²⁵ The practice of "moving the fire" is one example of a method providing for the transplantation and sanctification of a new stomp grounds. See Thomas, *Origin* 153, 161-64; Benny Smith, "The Keetoowah Society of the Cherokee Indians," Master's thesis, Northwestern State College, Alva, OK, 1967, 27-28; Janey Hendrix, "Redbird Smith and the Nighthawk Keetoowahs," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 8.1 (1983): 36.

of Indian lives that Weaver begins is crucial not least because the plurality it affirms complicates and vivifies what might otherwise seem a simple inversion of the individual vs. society binary that fails to transcend binaristic thinking. That pluralism, however, is nearly undone by the monist insistence that community for community's sake sufficiently describes the values by which every possible community might justify its differentiation, regardless of their own interpretations of their central values. If (often, when) generalizations come to be reified as expected features of Indian communities or representations, particularities that might not accord with them can be discounted as assimilationist, or worse, as preclusive of an Indian identity. Without carefully, narrowly describing the parameters of the communities Indian writers seek to maintain or develop, theorists may too easily lapse into quick and easy recapitulations of reified, externally produced characterizations (too often caricatures) of what makes an Indian community "Indian," disregarding or disparaging any traits or boundaries that smack of too much assimilation, do not hearken far enough back, or seem to affirm the wrong kind of community. I fear that Weaver has done something like this in his analyses of Elias Boudinot, discussed in chapter four, perhaps as a result of his willingness to identify, if circumspectly, an abiding essentialism that he carries forward from earlier attempts by influential figures like Vine Deloria to identify a persistent Indian difference.

Like Weaver, American Indian religious scholar George Tinker echoes Deloria's generalizations about American Indian religious concepts as he posits a basic difference between Western thinking as fundamentally temporal and Indian thinking as spatial, a distinction that structures the association of community and land or place, which I worry is becoming critically fixed. To return for a moment to the value of harmony, when conceived spatially, it represents a static state of balance

achieved through restraint and respect for other lives and forms of life.²⁶ Dodging this rigidity both temporal and spatial, the symbolism of the Cherokee White Path suggests rather a methodic dynamism operating in fluid circumstances, regulating change and mediating its impact in an ongoing process. As a “path,” a combination of the spatial and temporal—a site for moving, a moving site—it maps the way to righteous relations rather than marks off a boundary to a discrete or unalterable space. As explained by Crosslin Smith, the White Path not only represents the laws of peace and righteousness universally shared by all peoples, it also unites and connects them in processes that necessarily entail some modification. Again, this does not, however, mean that one thing changed means all things have changed. Cherokees have exercised unique dispositions to manage development socially, culturally, and religiously to ensure that changes are made in accordance with the bulk of tradition, that they accord with accepted notions of what is right, and that they meet with general consensus. The practice of gaining knowledge is one such principled practice.

Gaining Knowledge: The Making of Transformation

Gaining knowledge involves the investigation of a variety of potential, pertinent problem solutions, not necessarily for the sole sake of learning, but to address needs in accordance with values of philosophical and communal harmony. Appointed representatives are dispatched in some way to explore and report back on new knowledges or strategies that their communities believe might prove productive. At times such as Redbird Smith’s investigation into forgotten traditional practices, community outsiders were consulted to help address questions group members were having trouble answering on their own.²⁷ Following this “fact-finding” mission, the

²⁶ George Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004) 12-27, 95-98, 112.

communities effectively vet proposed solutions, often through committees of one shape or another, to determine their compatibility with inherited beliefs together with their capacity to resolve deficiencies, resulting in only parsimonious alterations to tradition. Keetoowah traditions recount several instances of such communal interpretive management, from the earliest stories of the Cherokees' coalescence as a people to the recovery of religious traditions during the stomp dance revival in the twentieth century.²⁸ Keetoowah Society member Benny Smith describes his group's general process and several component practices:

In times of crises, the Keetoowahs have a unique way of asking guidance for the action that should be taken. A Keetoowah council composed of seven medicine men from each clan is called upon to examine the threatening situations. These medicine men in the olden days were known as the wise men or elders of the tribe. The duties of medicine men are to work for peace, to work for the sake of humanity, and to keep the favor of God; therefore, on all major decisions, these men are called to examine, through spiritual consideration, the best course of action to take. This spiritual consideration might consist of fasting, following certain rituals, offering solemn prayers, or meditating while seeking God-sent visions or revelations. This procedure is used in all important decisions and sometimes during illnesses.²⁹

The Keetoowah Society is not alone among Cherokees in regulating adaptation in this way, for there are several historical references to such counceled mediation. Calling it “a” way is perhaps a misnomer, however, for as Smith demonstrates, gaining knowledge as I have broadly conceived of it gathers together many other practices,³⁰ all in the service of yet another, the travelling of the White Path. In a relatively short

²⁷ Hendrix 8.1 (1983): 26-27.

²⁸ See Thomas, *Origin* 180; Howard Meredith and Virginia Milan, eds., *A Cherokee Vision of Eloah*, trans. Wesley Proctor (Muskogee, OK: Indian University P, 1981) 21; Janey Hendrix, “Redbird Smith and the Nighthawk Keetoowahs,” *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 8.2 (1983): 84.

²⁹ B. Smith 20.

³⁰ While they might work together, gaining knowledge and community vetting are not necessarily linked in traditionalist thinking; I have yoked them so conspicuously and regularly by my own devices.

space, Smith here demonstrates what Bourdieu calls the *habitus*'s "infinite capacity" to constellate dispositions from across the entire field of available beliefs and practices. A single disposition like community vetting amalgamates forces social and familial (in the clan representatives and council formations), symbolic (in specifying that the council should be formed of elders), scientific (through the medicine men's work); religious (more or less throughout); historical (invoked in the phrase "olden days," which the elders will best remember); and philosophical (materially humanist in its attention to, well, "the sake of humanity" and illness)—and this interpretation is far from exhaustive. Smith's late theorization notwithstanding, I imagine that gaining knowledge and community vetting were usually understood as a customary means of mediating debate. These largely untheorized practices perhaps also ferried goals not entirely their own, together with unintended consequences, some of which undoubtedly contributed to the erosion or erasure of some traditions. It is fair to say, however, that a primary function, conscious and unconscious at both individual and communal levels, of the pluralistic practices clustered together in gaining knowledge and deliberating in council is to edify the community spiritually and materially—to preserve by adaptation, to progress by conservation—in a still pluralistic set of potential responses.

This developmental continuity recurs throughout the revolutions of Cherokee religion, which in its earliest traditional incarnations was led by what Rennard Strickland has called a "priestly class,"³¹ a phrase with connotations suggesting too sharp a separation from others in society and too hierarchical a system of power. It has some advantage over "medicine men," which when not hackneyed yet fails to impart the religious connections to their healing work. Though religious leaders' power once

³¹ Rennard Strickland, *Fire and the Spirits: Cherokee Law from Clan to Court* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1975) 45.

permeated the Cherokee world and they advised everyone from clan elders, to war and peace chiefs, to individuals, it underwent a steady decline at least from the time of European contact—“at least,” because oral histories tell of the people’s tension with religious leaders some time before the Europeans arrived. Howard Tyner in his history of the Keetoowah Society records an account of an early group of medicine men’s widespread misuse of their knowledge, which led to the imposition of the death penalty on any medicine man who caused the death of another by conjuring.³² In other stories found in several sources, a group of priests/medicine men called the anikutani had begun to think of themselves as above common people and above the laws of righteous behavior, especially in regard to sexual mores. Their abuses of their station generated resentment and indignation that turned into disharmony and finally rebellion, when they were killed in great numbers.³³ To what degree oral histories of the anikutani narrate an actual, widespread execution is unclear. It seems to me and other Cherokees with whom I have spoken to be largely allegorical, if perhaps based on historical events, an admonishment to rulers not to lose sight of their responsibilities and their accountability, but to be sure some interpret it more literally. Whatever its source, like the story Tyner recounts, it establishes an affirmative precedent that the general populace is empowered with the ability to alter religious institutions as it sees fit and to assert final control over them—even through violent upheaval—to bring them in line with social expectations. At the risk of stating the obvious, it is worth reiterating that the oral tradition here itself documents *change*—and to religion, a fundamentally stabile sphere, and to religious authority that is

³² Howard Tyner, “The Keetoowah Society in Cherokee History,” Master’s thesis, Tulsa U, 1949, 28.

³³ Raymond Fogelson, “Who Were the Aní-Kutáni? An Excursion into Cherokee Historical Thought,” *Ethnohistory* 31.4 (1984): 255-63.

invested with dangerous supernatural power—as a means of positively effecting the continuance of the larger value of righteousness for the larger body of the people.

In the written record, subsequent events chart the further decline of religious leaders' power. Several historians cite medicine men's inability to treat smallpox as a chief cause of their waning influence, which they argue suggested to Cherokees their disfavor with the Creator and/or the medicine men's ineffectiveness. In his early history, James Adair claims that the cold-water purification rites they prescribed hastened rather than checked the disease's course, leading them to an apostate despair in which "all the magi and prophetic tribe broke their old consecrated physic-pots, and threw away all the other pretended holy things they had for physical use, imagining they had lost their divine power by being polluted; and shared the common fate of their country."³⁴ According to anthropologist Raymond Fogelson, other potentially contributing factors included the Delawares' theft of a sacred medicine bundle and the extinguishing of the sacred fires in the Cherokee homelands with the concomitant, gradual abandonment of consecrated places. He points out that some believe the fires were moved as lands were lost and ultimately conveyed along the Trail of Tears, with new places of worship sanctified upon arrival in the west. The foregoing explanations share a somewhat synecdochic or inductive interpretation of the decline of medicine men's power, in that they extrapolate the whole of general development from specific moments or parts of the religious history, framing its changes in a narrative order that both attempts to make sense of their successive complexity and that also affirms the Cherokees' volitional capacity to draw religious institutions into right relationships with social principles.

³⁴ James Adair, *Adair's History of the American Indians*, originally published London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1775, new edition ed. Samuel Williams, National Society of Colonial Dames of America, in Tennessee, 1930; reprint New York: Promontory, n.d., 245.

Other scholars have suggested more socially-oriented causes for the dissolution of the traditional religious complex. Rennard Strickland accuses the priestly class of complicity in the shift towards a money economy in medicine men's acceptance of traders' and government officials' gifts and favors they received as the de facto leaders and negotiators for the tribe. Their participation in secular politics, he argues, resulted in a "close identification of the ancient priestly class with the new commercialism," which contributed to their loss of spiritual authority, especially given the Cherokees' progressive implication in an economy upon which they were becoming both dependent and disadvantageously positioned.³⁵ Other developments may also have exerted unforeseen effects. Robert Thomas identifies literacy as an unexpected detriment to medicine men's institutional stability insofar as the formerly intensive training was relaxed with the introduction of a means of recording sacred formulas and prayers in Sequoyah's syllabary. He also suggests that the inscription of easily reproduced religious knowledge democratized and diffused it, further weakening the "priesthood."³⁶

Largely eschewing such explanations, historian William McLoughlin argues,

Often the greatest pressure for rapid cultural change came from that group of Cherokees who were of mixed ancestry, better-educated, wealthier, and who expected personal gains in power and prestige from new laws and institutions. Because they were capable of mastering rapidly the skills of the white missionary teachers, they worked hard to earn their praise; in accepting the ways of their conquerors, they overcame the insecurities of defeat. But by grasping at this new source of dignity and self-worth, they had to reject their identity with the values and customs of their own people. Unfortunately these ambitious mixed bloods were not always conscious of this. They thought they were proving themselves to be good Cherokees by becoming good whitemen and white women.³⁷

³⁵ Strickland 45.

³⁶ Thomas, *Origin* 47.

Discussing here a relatively short span of time, McLoughlin centrally attributes definite cultural change, including religious leaders' decline, to the catch-all ascension of the self-aggrandizing mixedblood elite, which has been demonized to account for the decline of almost every traditional practice. Although he admits that its members "were strongly committed to sustaining Cherokee control over their own affairs and skeptical about assimilation,"³⁸ he nevertheless affirms that their best efforts to assert their sovereignty tended ironically to whittle it away as an effect of an internalized, colonialist inferiority complex. This argument holds only if we accept the implicit assumption that "the ways of their conquerors" (never minding the implicit assumptions of this naming)—e.g., practicing religion, education, diplomacy, et al.—were the exclusive provinces of whites, that pre-contact societies did not worship, teach their children, negotiate with other tribes. There may have been marked differences in the ways Cherokees and whites understood and enacted such practices, but they were not so alien as to be categorically distinct. Alternatively, we would have to assume that if Cherokees had such dispositions, mixedbloods were able to excise and transplant them *in toto*, a nigh-impossible operation given the reticulation of dispositions. Replacing religion or any other meta-disposition in an individual, much less in a corporate body, would be less like transplanting an organ than like replacing the central nervous system. While acute ruptures may potentially transform the *habitus*, the continued, subtle presences of traditional practices evidence a slower and more measured evolution.

To be sure, the sons and daughters of Cherokees and whites were more likely to be Christian and often aided missionaries in proselytizing, which was at times

³⁷ William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1984, reprint (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1994) 8-9.

³⁸ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 8.

aggressive and insidious. But the Cherokees' democratic religious structure, the priests' inability to cope with smallpox, their identification with market development, the unending colonialist assaults on land and culture, and other events like the Lenni Lenape's medicine bundle theft (many others of which are undoubtedly absent from the historical record),³⁹ among other conditions—like the conservative National Council's petitions and invitations for missionaries to open schools—converged at the nexus of religious practice in the sequence of a protracted and still-ongoing process of change to and re-inscription of tradition. The changes that were made to such an important part of the society cannot be singularly attributed to a homogeneously-imagined mixedblood class. Particularly missing from most analyses of Cherokee religious history is consideration of Cherokees' own volition in the changes made, which if incorporated in scholarly perspectives might incline us to look more towards development rather than decline, which is the inevitable, defeatist narrative of Native disappearance authored by a perspective that fixes tradition in stasis.

Availing itself of the evangelistic zeal of the Second Great Awakening, Congress as early as 1792 allocated funds to help solve “the Indian problem” through the civilizing, collaborative efforts of missionaries.⁴⁰ During this time they could not unilaterally foray into Indian nations without threat of reprisal, which could still take on a violent aspect.⁴¹ Missionary work in Cherokeeia during the late eighteenth and

³⁹ James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee, 19th Annual Report, Part 1, 1897-98*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900, reprinted in *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder, and Cherokee, NC: Cherokee Heritage Books, 1982) 396-97.

⁴⁰ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 33-34.

⁴¹ The historical power dynamic was still dicey, as revealed by a 1787 report to the Continental Congress regarding the need for Georgia and North Carolina to cede land to the federal government to use as treating currency. Though it dates somewhat earlier than the major period of missionary entry, it reveals the trepidation with which the young America regarded the still-dangerous southeastern tribes:

The committee conceive that several other considerations cannot escape the observation of the two states, which may be urged in favor of the cessions...; The committee believe that the two states...will be disposed to follow the liberal examples of the other states in a similar

early nineteenth centuries entered in neither by missionary zealotry nor colonial ambition alone, which would have been interpreted—and responded to—as an act of unauthorized intrusion, but at the specific requests of the rapidly adapting Cherokee government and of local towns. In their desire for schools they deliberated the costs and benefits (those technological, economic, and political must surely have weighed heavily) and elected to extend several invitations to missionaries from Moravian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Baptist denominations.⁴² The missionaries remained at the pleasure of the National Council, as the Moravians discovered when they were nearly expelled for failing to develop the educational program envisioned by the progressive conservatives. The opening of the Presbyterian school seems to have taken some of the heat off, allowing them to remain in operation.⁴³ The powers converging at this historical moment created a peculiarly paradoxical triad: while the Cherokee were hardly a subjected people, they by necessity deferred to the military and consequently at times the political persuasion of the U.S. But at perhaps the greatest moment of religious influence in the country, Cherokee communities had more or less exclusive sovereignty over the spread of Christianity within their borders, even as religious groups held court over much of the government's public policy, and perhaps even more over public opinion. What should be clear is that in the early stages of contact with Christianity—when Native invitations and permissions characterized their relations, not evangelical intrusions and prescriptions—traditional Cherokee

situation...that by making the proposed cessions, those difficulties they now experience will be removed, that is, the controversies respecting Indian affairs, and those dispersed settlements which tend to render the governments weak and feeble, and to produce expensive and calamitous wars with the Indians. ("Committee Report," *Journals of the Continental Congress, Documents from the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789*, online, American Memory Database, Library of Congress, accessed June 8, 2009, <[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/bdsbib:@field\(M010+90898156\):>](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/bdsbib:@field(M010+90898156):>)).

⁴² See in general McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 35-212.

⁴³ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 51-53.

communities were hardly the passel of feckless dupes and scraping sycophants later scholarship has made them out to be.⁴⁴

Despite occasional checks, more than once U.S. military power and colonial policy superseded American public opinion, overwhelmed Cherokee defenses, and disorganized their social and political structures. Following a series of military defeats and problems with rogue treaty-making, dispersed Cherokee towns responded by coalescing into a formal, nationalized political body. Several changes attended this centralization (discussed in greater detail in chapter three), perhaps the most drastic and far-reaching of which officially codified and sanctioned a shift from matrilineal and matrifocal clan-based social structures towards patrilineal and patriarchal institutions. Theda Perdue has discussed the long-term effects of this shift on Cherokee society generally and women in particular at length in her history *Cherokee Women*. Men traditionally acted as leaders in the political world, so finding them continuing in those roles as the nation developed comes as no great surprise. It is worth noting, however, that prior to the shift, not only were their traditional powers dramatically circumscribed but also that the political realm itself actually governed very little in the old world, confined generally to questions of external relations. Internal matters were by and large administered by clan or priest leaders.⁴⁵ As the national body became entrenched, however, it assumed ever-increasing dominion over internal affairs, and women found themselves at ever-greater remove from the constricted and constricting center of power.

⁴⁴ William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity, 1794-1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Persistence*, ed. Walter Conser (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1984) 36.

⁴⁵ Strickland 10-39.

Gendered Religious Development

Despite the systematic attempts to redefine power as something held by men, women were not without a voice. They found occasion to protest formally and separately to the Cherokee National Council and to the US Congress against land cessions, and certainly they continued to influence political policy, albeit in less institutionalized and more nuanced ways than before the ratification of the Constitution, which was the culmination of the movement away traditional forms of governance. As Perdue notes,

Women, like Native people more generally, may well have had less “power” or “status” if we define those words in political and economic terms. The deerskin trade *did* make Cherokee women less central to the new commercial economy and centralized political authority *did* exclude women from publicly participating in decisions of nation importance. Hunting and foreign affairs, however, had always been the domain of men, and even though European contact accentuated the activities of men, trade and warfare did not significantly alter the world of women. Women had their own arena of power over which they retained firm control. The growing involvement of men in the world beyond may, in fact, have enhanced the power of women within Cherokee society.⁴⁶

Confining herself to the period between 1700 and 1835, Perdue contends that “Even the ‘civilization’ program, the most direct assault on Cherokee conceptions of gender, failed to transform the relations between men and women in most Cherokee households.”⁴⁷ Perdue is correct in her argument that Cherokee women grew stronger internally, not strictly in response to but rather in tandem with political centralization, I would add. In cutting her history short at 1835, however, she neglects still other significant ways (and the significant numbers of Cherokee women who became

⁴⁶ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, rev. ed. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1999) 10.

⁴⁷ Perdue 10.

Christian) in which they redefined the scope of their power in progressive-traditional consonance with an alternative cultural understanding of power itself.

As traditional religious practices and male religious leaders' authority waned, as Cherokee men led the assumption of clan powers by the polity, and as missionaries endeavored to spread Christianity, female leadership flowed into newly imagined religious spheres, primarily emergent Christian communities. While Christian and traditional religions clearly had points of difference—irreconcilable for some—they also shared several principled practices that others found easily blended. In many respects the spiritual leadership roles women assumed mirrored those they filled in traditional communities. In both traditional and Christian cases, men filled the head positions as “priest,” but women administered many of the requisite ceremonial practices, figured prominently in their symbology, and educated children in religious traditions. Most important, I imagine, was their general social leadership in a society long accustomed to matriliney and matriarchy.⁴⁸

Perhaps the contradictions between Cherokee religion and Christianity arising at this historical juncture seem too easy, the rupture too radical to indicate anything but a revolution in cultural continuity. Not every change, however, heralds an utter cultural revolution. Many major developments such as those involving social, religious, and gender roles clearly effected immediate and subsequent upheavals, but they were volitionally enacted in order to maintain the greater part of the Cherokee way of life, and when enacted often drew upon or refashioned already-familiar principled practices, at least to some of the women in Cherokee country.⁴⁹ That most

⁴⁸ Perdue 25-27. Also see Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon, 1986) 1-42.

⁴⁹ While historians might cast Cherokee women as everywhere alike in their traditionalism, we should be aware of the falsely homogenizing influence of such tendencies, as Chandra Mohanty has argued in “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.” Such leveling enables the dichotomization of women as traditional or progressive, ignorant or educated, authentic or corrupt.

scholars have failed to recognize the persistence of traditional principles and practices following so obvious a shift, however, recommends it as an obvious point to begin exploring the potential strength of cultural perseverance. Other differences, contradictions, and paradoxes—and, I imagine, similarities—lingering in more stable times are undoubtedly apparent to those more familiar than I with Cherokee women’s communities, and future scholarship will surely do much to help us see more of their diversity.

The suggestion that Cherokee women came to be the *de facto* leaders of the religious/spiritual sphere during the politically centralizing period of the colonial encounter might recall Partha Chatterjee’s subtle and sophisticated theorization of a similar change in East Indian history when nationalism constituted a similarly gendered sphere for women. This cultural space was defined against the scientific, technological, and political sphere wherein the West had proven its superiority, persuading the postcolonial nation to model itself after the western world’s successful strategies in these areas—this would be, literally, a man’s world. Chatterjee’s description of the corresponding woman’s world can help us think through the complexities of the interactions between politics, gender, and religion. He writes:

The material is the domain of the “outside,” of the economy and of statecraft...The spiritual, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture...but it is not as though this so-called spiritual domain is left unchanged. In fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful,

Spurred by Mohanty’s astute perception of the mainstream theoretical construction of Third World female subjectivity, and with focus on the contradictions posed by Christian Cherokee women, I’d like here to disrupt the “already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location or contradictions” that reinscribes the prevailing cultural versions and indices of value. See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *boundary 2* 12.3 (1984): 333-58, 336-37.

creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a “modern” national culture that is nevertheless not Western.⁵⁰

Forming a distinct culture, an insulated repository of what constitutes the people’s exclusivity, requires then the identification and elaboration of difference, separated from both western influence and the antiquated remnants of traditionalism that do not conform to the freshly imagined national culture. This domain, which would encompass religion, domesticity, and other aspects of culture, was constructed as “an inner domain of sovereignty, far removed from the arena of political contest with the colonial state.”⁵¹

Perhaps Chatterjee is correct that in India “the hegemonic discourse which framed these writings [educated women’s autobiographies]—the discourse of anti-colonial nationalism—was in its core a male discourse,”⁵² but this separation of official and unofficial discourses draws too hard and fast a line between the public and the private, at least insofar as it describes how we might approach the texts rather than how they are either bracketed or “marketed” from a nationalist perspective. Chatterjee keenly traces political nationalism’s cultural ideological program, but we might also look for the political program, or at least the political effects, of the culturalism operating apart from the nation-state. By following the reciprocity between the private and the public, we can see women not only asserting autonomy in the sphere ostensibly set aside for them by men as they assembled a Cherokee Christianity and shaped schools’ educational curriculum, for instance, but also affecting the course of politics in relatively direct ways through their given or withheld support for the state’s various enterprises that required their participation and more generally in the value

⁵⁰ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993 in *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) 6.

⁵¹ Chatterjee 117.

⁵² Chatterjee 136.

they placed on them.⁵³ Not all positive statements, even those that articulate a difference, are always-already “trapped within [colonialism’s] framework of false essentialisms”⁵⁴ but are often agentively determined goals and values to which people may aspire. I am not arguing they are unmediated by theoretical or historical construction, but their situatedness does not prove agency’s negation. If anything, a poststructuralist critique of subjectivity ought to find in the *habitus*’s project of preserving its constitutive conditions a tendency to a traditionalist or epistemic conservatism in a limited, diachronic historical moment. At such discrete points, statements of difference may be more or less effective, accurate, or good, but they are not automatically dismissible as “false essentialisms” in the service of a nationalist, ideological invention of traditionalism.

In Cherokee history at least, nationalism was not so forceful a force as to effect an entirely new purpose for the spiritual domain or for people who thought of themselves as spiritual. Chatterjee celebrates Benedict Anderson’s reformulation of nationhood as existing in the imagination more than in a checklist of attributes, but points out his myopic focus on the Euro-American nation-state as a standard referent.⁵⁵ Chatterjee in *The Nation and Its Fragments* finds innovative imaginations at work on questions of community and resistance by looking beyond the normatively-constructed center of power to the periphery, but he too examines power primarily of the nation-state. By reimagining power and ways it may be exercised—with the authority of cultural tradition rather than of legitimized coercion, say—we may yet find it at still further remove from the normative national center. To be fair, Chatterjee

⁵³ Judith Lowder Newton, “Power and the Ideology of ‘Woman’s Sphere,’” *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1997) 880-95.

⁵⁴ Chatterjee 134.

⁵⁵ Chatterjee 3-6.

is not here writing a study of culturalism, but of nationalism and its interpolating strategies, one instance of which I will take up in chapters three and four.

Before turning to the (masculine) polity's troubled relationship with culture, however, I would like to suggest that agents—Cherokee women, precisely—launched their own creative projects that sought no less than the preservation and/or creation of their own versions of community through strategies alternative to the nation-state but not less political for their religious, social, gendered, and communal emphasis. These projects may at times have worked in conjunction with the nationalist project, but they often overtly and covertly opposed it, or at least certain directions it took. In terms of their flow into leadership roles in the religious sphere, where superintendence was desperately needed, they undertook responsibility for the dynamic administration of religion and tradition not because they were unwittingly indoctrinated with and determined by a masculine, nationalist ideology (neither Cherokee nor American) and cordoned off into a controllable, apolitical or powerless zone, but through an imagined sense of culturally preservative integrity volitionally practiced, *powered*, into being. Though early missionaries' efforts concentrated on converting males, historian William McLoughlin claims that the majority of new Christians were women, among the Moravians before Removal and in dramatic numbers following, when women accounted for two-thirds of mission church members, and two-thirds of post-Removal converts were fullblood women.⁵⁶ Whatever the official Christian/missionary policy on women's leadership and despite the prominence of several male converts like Elias Boudinot and Jesse Bushyhead, women, too, took on conspicuous and influential roles as teachers and regents of community cohesion, and in many ways their centrality to and superintendence of Christian churches persists today, both in sheer number and

⁵⁶ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 27, 147; McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 209-10, 84, 331.

force. Even the early twentieth-century stomp dance religious societies, which in some ways inaugurate a re-masculinization of Cherokee religious leadership with their prominent, male-only chief and firekeeper positions, retain significant, regnant roles for women over the rejuvenated clans, other women's societies, children's education, ceremonial participation, the feeding of participants, and more.⁵⁷

Neither were Cherokee women subject to as forceful an isolationist historical imperative as Chatterjee identifies at work in India. Cherokees were more willing to consider changes to the scientific/political and religious/cultural spheres and others outside this subsumptive theoretical dichotomy so long as the bulk of Cherokee sovereignties—political, cultural, religious, economic, et al.—might remain intact and distinguishable as Cherokee. In terms of the religious change orchestrated by Christianizing women, some scholars have argued that traditional Cherokee religion and Christianity were radically incommensurable, their fundamental concepts requisite in one instance and absent in the other, or in outright opposition—and these scholars have included western academics, Cherokees (academic and otherwise), Christians, and traditionalists. The two religions share several important dispositions like prayer, fasting, and worship, some of which I will outline in the next chapter, that if studied in detail would offer strong support to a more robust theorization of religious consonance than I can offer here, but challenges to its possibilities coming from such wide and authoritative quarters merit consideration.

Traditionalism Revisited

Among the strongest assertions of Indian/western difference is Mary Churchill's refutation of the dualism in Charles Hudson's opposition of purity and

⁵⁷ Carolyn Ross Johnston, *Cherokee Women in Crisis: Trail of Tears, Civil War, and Allotment, 1838-1907* (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2003) 133; Thomas, *Origin* 180-81, 196; Tyner 79; B. Smith 12, 14.

pollution as an interpretive concept borrowed from western philosophy that does not well translate or describe balance in Cherokee thinking, a view of oppositionality without antagonism shared by Daniel Justice. A related critique advanced by Jace Weaver and Eva Garrouette emphasizes the communal over the individualist focus of the Cherokee worldview. None of these theorists argue explicitly against the possibility of syncretism but rather each identifies a fundamental point at which they believe Cherokee and mainstream thinking to be farthest apart, a difference with extensive and sometimes exclusive ramifications. Besides their identification of tensioned points between Cherokee and western culture, they offer on their own terms well-developed descriptions of Cherokee philosophy and nuanced strategies of reading literature in a cultural framework, or at least in particular aspects of it.

Churchill confronts Hudson's examination of ideas of purity and pollution in his seminal *Southeastern Indians*, arguing that although he claims it is only one lens among many for looking at Cherokee religious beliefs and practices it in fact becomes the controlling paradigm of his study. She summarizes his position:

In Hudson's interpretive model, oppositional elements are separated from one another by means of boundaries. While these elements may merely differ from each other, conflict or antagonism can characterize their relationship as well. The central opposition that informs Hudson's *Southeastern Indians* is the dichotomy between purity and pollution. For Hudson, purity is associated with order and the maintenance of boundaries between different categories, while pollution entails chaos and the mixing of categories or the crossing of categorical boundaries. Beyond these somewhat descriptive understandings of *purity* and *pollution*, however, there are value laden aspects of—and even moral dimensions to—these terms.⁵⁸

At the risk of stating the obvious, the moral dimension, then, favors purity to pollution, which seems reasonable enough. The problem, Churchill argues, is that both

⁵⁸ Churchill 12.

concepts have been imported into Cherokee studies beginning with early and proto-ethnologists like James Adair and William Bartram, with subsequent scholars replicating their western-derived encoding.⁵⁹ Initially acquiescing Hudson's position, she argues that Cherokees might have understood some concepts in a valuation of purity and pollution but concludes that he overextends the dichotomy, while using concepts that have their primary referents in Judeo-Christian traditions and are thus not careful enough translations of Cherokee ideas. Of greater concern to her than the inaccuracy of the descriptors, however, is the structure of Hudson's analysis, their pairing in antagonistic opposition.⁶⁰

Drawing on Joseph Epes Brown, Joan Scott, Jacques Derrida, and others, Churchill interrogates how it is the elements of the binary are constructed, attempting to show in Hudson's case the western genealogy that informs his understandings of purity and pollution that he then superimposes on his analysis of Cherokee religion. She finds in binary opposition and the related dialecticism two primary limitations: first, they posit an antagonism where none may in fact exist. The theoretically-originated tension imparted to the terms of a binary further implies a normatively valued preference for the first, so that in common constructions like purity versus pollution, culture/nature, settler/native, separation/border-crossing, et al., the former accrue favor and are positioned to demonstrate their superiority. Second, she levels a poststructuralist critique that identifies the connections and interdependencies between the elements of the binary.⁶¹

The nature of the interdependence she hypothesizes is less linguistically definitional than in most poststructuralist accounts—which might characterize

⁵⁹ Churchill 35-61.

⁶⁰ Churchill 72, 77.

⁶¹ Churchill 24-26, 62, 77-82.

“purity” as “not polluted,” for instance—and is more concerned with an exploration of the distinct power inhering in particular categories, power that can be accessed by means of crossing into those spheres. Boundary-crossing thus becomes a mediating and harmonizing process that unites rather than opposes the elements. Pointing to the respected and positive power of menstruation and of the Uktena, the mythical serpent-monster, examples Hudson used to demonstrate their “abominable” valuation because of their categorical ambiguity,⁶² Churchill rescues them from their classification as “polluted.” From this revaluation of their power, she inductively argues that they “point to the centrality of boundary-crossing and category-blurring to sacred endeavors. Instead of being opposed to the sacred, ‘anomalies’ were sources of access to it.”⁶³ Cherokee religion, according to her, recognized “the reality that contact with ‘abominations and anomalies’ was an unavoidable part of life and that for the well-being of the community such contact was necessary and sought after for the spiritual power it could bring.”⁶⁴ She extrapolates the concept of boundary crossing to interpret other common religious dispositions, such as ceremonial scratching and going to water, in addition to the major annual religious event, the Green Corn ceremony. Scratching, she argues, draws on the usually negatively-connoted power of blood in a possible reenactment of menstruation; going to water enacts a crossing from this world to that under us (the source of the waters), and Green Corn marks the threshold of the old and new years, with attendant rejuvenations in forgiveness, the sacred fire, and other relations and symbols.

⁶² In his reply to Churchill, Hudson regrets using “abominable” and “anomalous” synonymously and explains he intended no pejorative connotations, and thus no facile good vs. bad opposition between categories. He further objects to the ostensible poststructuralism in her critique. Charles Hudson, “Reply to Mary Churchill,” *American Indian Quarterly* 24.3 (2000): 495-96.

⁶³ Churchill 72-73.

⁶⁴ Churchill 67.

Though Churchill does not discuss retrograde movement, border crossing cannot go on *ad infinitum* in the regular ceremonial system she describes, for there must be a movement back to the more or less discrete spheres in order for the boundary to be crossed at intervals. The act of crossing, however, for her enacts the unifying necessary for the maintenance of balance, the principle she puts at the heart of Cherokee religious traditions. She writes,

In sum, it is balance and synthesis, opposition and unification, as simultaneous complementary processes that Cherokee traditions maintained, not purity, as Hudson's interpretation suggests. Thus, Hudson's approach can be understood as partially correct in the sense that opposition was part of the whole system, but not the only process. I differ with Hudson to a greater degree on the meaning of boundary crossing, however. While Hudson's model is based on the elimination of crossed boundaries, mine incorporates liminality as an essential positive feature of Cherokee religious traditions.⁶⁵

With balance understood as a state of non-antagonistic opposition between equal and complementary forces, and synthesis as a moment of border-crossing between them, Churchill dismisses purity more or less entirely, supplanting it with the synthesis represented by boundary crossing (which presupposes oppositional spheres—usually two but occasionally four in sets of two, as with the cardinal directions—and some kind of boundaries separating them) as the purposive method/goal of Cherokee religion.

This proposed system insufficiently describes the variety of Cherokee religion or traditionalism. To begin, balance, like the harmony ethic critiqued above, is not only constituted by but is also dependent upon, connected with, and in the service of other principles: it requires equality to work; is affiliated with all sorts of social, political, religious, and other principles like power; and labors for the maintenance of righteousness. How are we to make sense of reticulation apart from oppositionality,

⁶⁵ Churchill 178.

whether inclined toward dominance or not? Additionally, not all oppositions are fruitfully synthesized, not all boundaries are usefully crossed, if indeed there is such a thing as negativity—healthfulness does not seek out illness, for instance. Healing does not look uncritically to the power of harming: while inoculation can build resistance, a hatchet won't cure a headache. Boundary crossing is not undertaken for its own sake alone, but as a method interwoven with a series of principles and practices whose efficacy and function we would do best to describe precisely, not in tangential but strictly metaphorical relationship to a theoretical construction of balance, harmony, or synthesis (or purity or righteousness, for that matter).

Churchill's Derridean insight that the components of a binary commonly thought to vie for dominance may in fact be interrelated or interdependent does not, however, seem to enable her theory to escape another trap against which Derrida warns, that the negatively-connoted term may simply be reconstructed and reconstrued as positive in an inversion of the binary that does not transcend the limiting methodology of dualist thinking. Churchill does not strictly celebrate the "positive implications of 'pollutants,'"⁶⁶ but she is much interested in rescuing many negatively-connoted practices from such valuations and in deconstructing ideas of purity in Cherokee religion. Her reinterpretations of going to water, the Green Corn ceremony, menstruation, and others give the appearance of dismantling the purity/pollution dichotomy, but the oppositional categories themselves, however renamed, are more or less retained intact, for without them existing, boundaries between them could not be crossed. Moreover, the boundary crossing foundational to her theory of Cherokee religion looks much like the mediation Claude Lévi-Strauss finds temporally uniting binary elements, at least until the irreconcilable binary surfaces again, in the same

⁶⁶ Churchill 67.

guise or in another pose. If we substitute “religion” for “myth,” Lévi-Strauss could be summarizing Churchill’s argument when he writes, “the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction (an impossible achievement if, as it happens, the contradiction is real).”⁶⁷ Shifting the theoretical emphasis from oppositionality toward mediation of opposition as a controlling principle of both individual and social religious reasoning—only a repositioning of a continued (structuralist?) monist focus still dedicated to describing *the* purpose or *the* method of a people’s thinking—does not go far enough toward describing the diversity of Cherokees’ agency or their religious principled practices. Among these, I cannot imagine that Cherokees conclusively could not or did not conceive of purity as a pertinent religious concern—the ideation of purity is not the sole province of Christianity, after all—yet Churchill in her attempt to displace purity with the affiliated concepts of balance and boundary crossing perpetrates many of the same abuses she condemns in Hudson.

Early in her argument Churchill acquiesces that purity *may* be a feature of Cherokee religion: “Many American Indians do characterize some of the traditions as purificatory. Even some Cherokees do...I am not arguing that no Native American religious traditions value purification; instead, I am suggesting that a close examination of Cherokee traditions makes such a description of Cherokee sacred ways suspect.”⁶⁸ But by the time she offers as an example the Keetoowah Society’s Seven Clan law, which explicitly states “Have a white, a *pure* and *cleansed* heart, they say,”⁶⁹ her suspicion has become radical skepticism aimed at establishing boundary

⁶⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 1958, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963) 229.

⁶⁸ Churchill 72 n.178.

⁶⁹ Churchill 183, emphasis added.

crossing as foundational by disparaging purity as spurious. Describing the practices of sacrifice and touching medicine, Benny Smith, too, discusses purity and cleansing in relatively straightforward language: “the fire keepers make the burnt offering, often called feeding the fire. The burnt offering is usually a small game animal or a white chicken; each signifies purity”;⁷⁰ “After dancing all night, the Keetoowahs use what the white man calls the ‘black drink’. The Indians call it medicine...The Keetoowahs drink and wash their hand[s] and faces with the black drink. This is an act of external and internal cleansing to help maintain purity.”⁷¹ Perhaps these practices are sequentially ordered, with purity serving sacrifice, and sacrifice maintaining harmony as the principal of principles. Or perhaps the connections among worshipping, cleansing, sacrificing, interacting with the human, natural, and supernatural worlds, et al., are not so hierarchical.

Undaunted, Churchill writes, “Allusions to purity can nonetheless be found in statements by twentieth-century Cherokees, however. Why would this occur? Surely, Cherokees themselves would employ more accurate terms for discussing their beliefs and traditions, one would think.”⁷² One would think that Churchill, who elsewhere champions dialog with and respect for Cherokees’ own understandings of their traditions,⁷³ would be more inclined to lend credence to their interpretations. Such pronouncements, however, might be seen as lending too-great support to Hudson’s position, the western-constructedness of which she has been at pains to establish. She helps clear up the Keetoowahs’ true import:

⁷⁰ Benny Smith, “The Keetoowah Society of the Cherokee Indians,” Master’s thesis, Northwestern State College, Alva, OK, 1967, 15.

⁷¹ B. Smith 16.

⁷² Churchill 183.

⁷³ Churchill 83.

Despite the Christian meanings that are evident in statements by contemporary Cherokees...it is important to note the relevance of harmony to these beliefs. The Keetoowah Society Seven Clan Rule *really* addresses the means to promote and maintain harmony in the community...Relying on the ideas of the harmony ethic and white path, we can understand at least some statements about purity by twentieth-century Cherokees as efforts to live by means of “balance and synthesis and the non-material nature of reality” that Kilpatrick has identified as foundational to the Cherokee thought world.⁷⁴

The remainder of statements about purity we can perhaps simply dismiss. With the authority of an objective academic, Churchill translates traditional religious practitioners’ apparent miswording and dispels their characterizations of purity as a primary religious concern. If purity is significant, it is by its service to social harmony, itself a subset of the primary, controlling principle of balance, both of which are achieved through the synthesizing mediation of opposition.

Against Hudson’s suggestion of purity and cleansing as central, Churchill proposes her model of balance and boundary crossing in their places, essentially replacing one set of terms in a recurring dialectic with another, without altering the totalizing structuralist synchrony that more problematically interprets Cherokee culture through its broad methodology than through its specific focal points. Describing Roland Barthes’ shift away from structuralism, Catherine Belsey succinctly cautions against structuralism’s sweeping claims, and against like totalizing paradigms:

Apropos, apparently, of nothing in particular [Roland Barthes’] *S/Z* begins, “There are said to be certain Buddhists whose ascetic practices enable them to see a whole landscape in a bean.” This rumination then continues: “Precisely what the first analysts of narrative were attempting: to see all the world’s stories (and there have been ever so many) within a single structure: we shall, they thought, extract from each tale its model, then out of these models we shall make a great

⁷⁴ Churchill 186, emphasis added. Churchill here refers to the work of Jack and Anna Kilpatrick in *Run to the Nightland: Magic of the Oklahoma Cherokees* (Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1967) and *Walk in Your Soul: Love Incantations of the Oklahoma Cherokees* (Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1965).

narrative structure, which we shall reapply (for verification) to any one narrative: a task as exhausting... as it is ultimately undesirable, for the text thereby loses its difference.” Suddenly the grand claims of structuralism appear absurd. Once you have found the single determining structure, there is nothing to choose between the universe and a bean. The microcosm simply becomes an illustration of the general pattern, another instance of the same—thrilling for the system-builders, but then what? What can further investigation discover? Only endless repetition. The big questions have been answered in advance.⁷⁵

By reducing to balance and boundary crossing such diversities as the story of Kanati and Selu, the practice of going to water, the Green Corn ceremony, beliefs about menstruation, the Uktena, death, gender differences, and more—in seeing one pattern in so many things—Churchill fails to venture far enough into the liminality she wants to celebrate: rather than dismantling the structuralist framework built up around Cherokee religion, she has simply rebuilt it on another site.

Daniel Justice’s nationalist perspective on Cherokee literature in his *Our Fire Survives the Storm* fills out an alternative complementary dualism using Churchill’s structural framework, a theoretical debt he acknowledges. Like Churchill, he rejects a Hegelian dialectical narrative of progress but stops short of indicting binarism when constructed with a relationship characterized by balance rather than by antagonism, writing, “Whereas the progressivist interpretations of various Cherokee dualisms presume an inevitable eclipse or erasure of one of the pair, a more culturally rooted understanding looks to the *relationship* between them.”⁷⁶ Accepting Weaver’s insistence that community is at the heart of Indian identity, and believing that “Nationhood...is the political extension of the social rights and responsibilities of peoplehood,”⁷⁷ combined with Churchill’s defense of dualism, Justice turns his focus

⁷⁵ Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002) 43.

⁷⁶ Justice 28.

⁷⁷ Justice 24.

to the Cherokee dual political structure that used a standing polity called the white government in times of peace and a red organization during war. From this governmental dualism he extrapolates what he calls a “Beloved Path” and a “Chickamauga consciousness,” paired Cherokee cultural and political attitudes that offer him a culturally specific methodology of contextualizing and interpreting Cherokee literary texts.⁷⁸ His distilled thesis, presented with remarkable succinctness and clarity, is worth quoting at length:

...what I call the red “Chickamauga consciousness,” [is] so named for the nationalist resistance movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that was devoted to armed response to U.S. violence and expansion into ancestral territories. Chickamauga consciousness, an extension of the red/war governmental division, is centered in Cherokee intellectual and artistic separatism, in a rhetorical rejection of literary, historical, or philosophical accommodation. Coupled with the Chickamauga consciousness is a white “Beloved Path” reading that places peace and cultural continuity above potentially self-destructive rebellion. Neither exists independently; there is a necessary tension that brings the war and peace perspectives together in constant movement—again, the idea of nationhood as dynamic concept.⁷⁹

Guided by balance and complementarity, this relationship embraces the interdependence Churchill identifies in border crossing, but Justice is not as concerned with the crossing of one element into the other as with the principles embodied by each. That the red and white structures exist in regular, predictable actuality or potentiality sufficiently binds them together.

The dualism in the political arena that Justice identifies differs conceptually from the structural synchrony Churchill theorizes, insofar as he sees metaphorical *traces* of the differing attitudes more than a recapitulation of a constant behavioral or systemic imperative. If I am reading him correctly, he argues, for instance, that John

⁷⁸ Justice 20.

⁷⁹ Justice 30.

Ross's rhetoric we can understand as nationalistically defiant in the way that Dragging Canoe's resistance asserted Cherokee sovereignty, but not that his writing or policies specifically played out the schema of a red war chief. Much like Rennard Strickland in his genealogy of Cherokee legality in *Fire and the Spirits*, by precisely situating the texts he reads in their historical contexts Justice demonstrates how agents in diachronic time may adapt traditional dispositions to address contemporary dilemmas without abandoning the character of those strategies. Such is the "dynamic nationhood" he reiterates throughout *Our Fire Survives the Storm*.⁸⁰

Though I believe his emphasis on agentive, historical flexibility differentiates his argument from the out-of-time, structuralist binarism I find in Churchill's emphasis on balance and mediation (despite Justice's professed debt to this model), his separation of political postures into the red/Chickamauga/defiant and white/Beloved Path/accommodationist spheres smacks too much of the old traditionalist/progressive dichotomy, notwithstanding Justice's claim that complementarity rather than antagonism renders the model inherited from Churchill and to some degree Hudson a creation of a wholly different cloth.⁸¹ He may be entirely correct in his claim that "the established body of Cherokee scholarship has generally focused on a limiting dualism that is rooted in Eurowestern progressivist ideas of savagism and civilization. Yet the dualistic structure itself isn't inherently problematic, as various complementary pairings are deeply embedded in Cherokee culture and history, although not inevitably along the progressivist spectrum."⁸² Dualism we may have, but to it we are not bound. Justice and Churchill show that their models of a Nativist binarism can offer compelling readings and empowering

⁸⁰ Justice 30.

⁸¹ Justice 19-20.

⁸² Justice 27.

insights, especially in political structure and gender divisions; for that matter, Lévi-Strauss demonstrates that western dialecticism can do the same thing. But like any good building contractor, we have many framing options. If we were to look more pluralistically at the traditional political world, for instance, we might find that besides the red and white governments, the political structure extended certain powers and influence to clans, priests, women's councils, towns, and even outsiders (how many is that?), among other agents. These are not accurately enough described by a subsuming, dualist bifurcation. By theorizing the roles such actors have played, we might discover the ever-widening benefits of pluralism.

Though Justice begins his argument from others with which I have critiqued—I disagree with Weaver and Garrouette that dedication to community especially when too-expansively defined constitutes the essence of Indian identity, with Churchill that balance sufficiently widens the scope of binarist constructions, and with Justice that peoplehood and nationhood are naturally coextensive—I gladly embrace his thoughtful development of the Chickamauga spirit of resolve and the Beloved Path dedication to peace and the lucid readings they inspire in Cherokees' political representations. Yet these are but two among innumerable postures whose complexity it does not hurt to describe in detail. While politics are clearly central to the lives of many Cherokees, a point Justice's astute readings of the Cherokee Constitution, John Ross's rhetoric, and the Treaty of New Echota among many other texts firmly establishes, it is worth remembering that when compared with the traditional social power of the clan, that of the polity was markedly lesser at certain points in the life of the nation-people. The extent and implication of this diffuse political-social dynamic I take up in greater detail in chapters three and four. Justice asserts that "Nationhood is, fundamentally, the *political* expression of a people's understanding of themselves as a

people,”⁸³ and he elects to situate himself as an expressly political reader of Cherokee literature, believing that “the exercise of nationhood continues to be a dominant social ethic among Cherokees...It is in relationship with the tribal nation that the individual Cherokee is defined.”⁸⁴ As Craig Womack has argued, most existing criticism of American Indian literature has been conspicuously apolitical, with a tendency to ignore contemporary issues, to focus on benign cultural differences, and effectively to write tribal nations out of power. In this regard his and Justice’s development of a nationalist criticism represents an important exercise of politically creative intellectual sovereignty, to borrow Robert Warrior’s phrase. But if indeed the social and political are not fully coextensive, if the latter does at times attempt to assert its dominance over the former, a nationalism not fully disposed to suspect the nation-state of abuse might too readily throw its support behind the polity, which is too often the impediment to peoples’ free exercise of agency. This, too, is a political criticism, but one that aligns itself more stringently with people in local communities, the primary source of cultural agency, the governors of the government.

Perhaps balance, boundary crossing, harmony, righteousness, and purity are among the more salient concepts of Cherokee religion, along with community responsibility (Weaver’s “communitism” or Garrouette’s “responsibility to reciprocity”). Future scholars will theorize yet more prominent features—but still we have failed to think through “more a way of living with variety than of subduing it,” as Wayne Booth so eloquently stated,⁸⁵ and have only “sailed the coast” in our attempts to discover the values in variety itself. Not least among these is the combinatorial and

⁸³ Justice 216.

⁸⁴ Justice 23.

⁸⁵ Wayne Booth, *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1979) 3.

generative capacity to script infinitely innovative responses that incorporate the conservative, accommodate the new, and open pathways rather than incessantly stage a fundamentally unchanging balancing act.⁸⁶ We can see such agency in the fusions of traditional and Christian dispositions narrated by Catharine Brown in the early nineteenth century to Sequoyah Guess in the early twenty-first. Perhaps these assemblies, too, represent mediations, but they are not everywhere predetermined by binaristic or oppositional relationships, nor any one great structure, but rather by relationships that also move through, with, around, over, under each other, in pluralist, reticulated portages perhaps better understood as navigations charted among prolific potential interconnections in constantly changing waters.

⁸⁶ This line of structuralism's critique I borrow from Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990) 9-10.

CHAPTER TWO

“Gaining Knowledge” and Gathering Strength: Syncretism in Catharine Brown’s *Memoir* and Sequoyah Guess’s *Kholvn*

At the turn of the eighteenth century, the missionary zeal of the Second Great Awakening had failed to open many roads into Cherokee country. Although Cherokee lands had been drastically reduced by treaty and war over the course of interactions with the British, French, and Americans, the Cherokee nevertheless represented a powerful military and political force impervious to unwelcome overtures from evangelistic missionaries, however enthusiastic.¹ By the close of the nineteenth century, though, missionaries’ inroads were well established, and thousands of Cherokees had converted to Christianity. Among the earliest and most influential of converts was Catharine Brown, the daughter of a relatively affluent family from an Alabama town and an early attendant of the Brainerd mission school, established in eastern Tennessee in 1817 under the direction of the predominantly Congregationalist American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM). On her arrival the missionaries were doubtful that the proud and beautiful Cherokee woman could acclimate to their strict lifestyle, but she soon became a favored student whose enthusiasm led many of her family and other Cherokees to the new religion. Less than two years after her conversion, she was sent to take charge of a school at the town of Creek Path. Only three years later, in 1823, she died of tuberculosis at the approximate age of twenty-three. Her story was widely spread as an exemplum among the Cherokees, earning her an almost saintly reputation. After her death Rufus Anderson,

¹ Much of the material on Catharine Brown in this chapter is reprinted from my article “Integrated Circuitry: Catharine Brown across Race, Gender, and Religion,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 30.1 (2006): 17-31, by permission of the American Indian Studies Center, UCLA, © 2006 Regents of the University of California, for which I am grateful.

corresponding secretary for the ABCFM, began a biographical article on her, but he found the subject matter compelling enough to warrant a separate edition, which he compiled from Brown's letters, journal, and others' recollections and documents.² Her memoirs, though heavily edited and assiduously framed by Anderson's ready hand, offer a rare opportunity to consider the progressively traditional strategies imagined early in the imperial encounter, although most critical treatments of Brown have done little but dismiss her and her writing as uncomplicatedly assimilated.

To help illustrate the deficiencies of reckoning identity according to the tired traditionalist/progressive or fullblood/mixedblood dichotomies, the second half of this chapter compares Brown's *Memoir* with the modern fiction of Sequoyah Guess, a traditionalist and citizen of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, who has authored and self-published several works that offer clear depictions of traditionally progressive Cherokee dispositions that defy binaristic logic, especially those related to worship and religion. Like the *Memoir*, Guess's representations of the complexities of Cherokee life, especially in his first novel *Kholvn*, demonstrate that they cannot

² Catharine Brown, *Memoir of Catharine Brown: A Christian Indian of the Cherokee Nation*, ed. Rufus Anderson, 2nd ed., N.p.: Armstrong, 1824; Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1825, reprint (Signal Mountain, TN: Mountain Press, n.d.) 19; Arnold Krupat, *Native American Autobiography: An Anthology* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1994) 114; Theda Perdue, "Catharine Brown: Cherokee Convert to Christianity," *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, ed. Theda Perdue (New York: Oxford UP, 2001) 88; Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George Tinker, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001) 44-45. For an historical summary of people, places, and events see Mary Higginbotham, "The Creek Path Mission," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 1.2 (1976): 72-85. Many primary sources survive in the Papers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the Houghton Library's archives at Harvard University, and several references to Brown may be found in Joyce Phillips and Paul Phillips, eds., *The Brainerd Journal: A Mission to the Cherokees, 1817-1823* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1998). Brown's (misnamed) memoirs were published in 1824 in a difficult-to-find first edition by Samuel Armstrong; in a second edition the following year by John Haven publishers in New York and by Crocker and Brewster in Boston; and in at least a third edition by the American Sunday School Union in Philadelphia in 1832. Mountain Press's 1998 reprinting of the second edition, which I have used, ameliorates the scarcity of those prior (this date is taken from the publisher's website, <<http://www.mountainpress.com/books/na/details/gn-0153w.html>>, accessed 1 May 2004, and is not found in the edition itself). There are differences among the editions in the way of deleted passages that bear closer scrutiny. For the sake of clarity, each subsequent reference to this volume will attempt to identify either Brown or Anderson as the primary speaker—would that conclusive differentiation could be definitive.

accurately nor usefully be described with such narrow options. Pertinent practices achieving some consonance in the *Memoir* and *Kholvn* include praying and smoking, dreaming and listening for the Holy Spirit, and going to water and baptizing. Similarly harmonized principles of worship, love, charity, faith, and righteousness resist easy categorization in reductive “white” or “Indian” columns. These are in addition to cultural dispositions like the communal vetting affiliated with gaining knowledge, political and material inflections of usefulness, and the mediation of meaning through the Cherokee language. Assembled together, these several principled practices (though a paltry sample in comparison to the multitude contained within the *habitus*) operating among several intra-Cherokee communities begin to suggest that the very diversity of dispositions is itself a strength, and indeed, though it is not overtly theorized in either *Kholvn* or the *Memoir*, a pluralism of effective problem-solving tactics emerges as a traditional meta-strategy of long and privileged standing. Some of these may promote change, others reject it; some may recall traditions long unused or nearly forgotten, and still others might improve both traditional and progressive ways of thinking by fusing what is best in each. Such is Brown and Guess’s religiously-minded pluralist pragmatism.

Catharine Brown

The few critics such as Theda Perdue, Carolyn Ross Johnston, and Arnold Krupat who have written about the young Cherokee Catharine Brown suggest that her conversion to Christianity and her approximate six years spent with the missionaries at Brainerd eradicated any connections to Cherokee culture. A careful, tribalist reading of her memoirs and of the archival documents uncovered by Joel Martin, however, demonstrates the need for a theoretical model of interaction attuned to the complexity of multiple layers of experience, for by placing them within a cultural context, we find

that Brown's "Cherokee-ness" becomes a more salient feature than has previously been visible. Martin astutely notes several principled practices that evidence the strength of Brown's cultural ties, including her outdoor worship and her reliance on dreaming as a spiritual hermeneutic. Her retention of such dispositions taken together with her practice of Christianity substantiate the simultaneous presence of what Martin calls the "religious creativity and spiritual resiliency" of Native peoples in general and Brown in particular.³ That her agency exercised from within a Cherokee cultural paradigm has led to her critical depiction as assimilated suggests that the descriptors "traditional" and "progressive," separately and together, may camouflage more options than ordinarily supposed. It is tempting to cast the meeting between American Indian people and missionaries who brought the congressionally-mandated doctrine of civilization in a Hegelian dialectic, pitting opposite if unequal opponents in a fight to the assimilationist death.⁴ Most scholars who have written of Brown point to her as a signpost at the outset of the Cherokees' road to civilization, as did the missionaries who were her contemporaries. According to Anderson, Brown was indeed the first Cherokee baptized at the Brainerd mission school, but this fact reveals very little about the confluence of multiple forces that her conversion represents, forces such as intertown tension in Cherokee country, the spiritual revival of the nineteenth century, the erosion of matrilineal power in Cherokee society, the American nationalist land-grab, anxiety among Cherokees over white belligerence, the growing threat of removal, and deepening immersion in Euro-American economic structures.⁵ The

³ Joel Martin, *The Land Looks after Us: A History of Native American Religion* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001) 28.

⁴ James Treat, "Introduction: Native Christian Narrative Discourse"; James West, "Indian Spirituality: Another Vision," *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996) 6-13, 34-36.

⁵ Laura Donaldson, *American Sampson: Haunting the Native-Christian Encounter* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, forthcoming); Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, rev. ed. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1999) 3-11; Brown, *Memoir* 25; Phillips and Phillips 91.

Brainerd school could never have been established had not the National and town councils, influenced by earlier Cherokee converts like Assistant Chief Charles Hicks (later Principal Chief), invited missionaries to open schools in Cherokee lands.⁶

Perhaps this same complexity has discouraged theoretical discussion of an earlier Cherokee converted by Moravian missionaries, described by the ethnologist James Mooney: “Later they established missions among the Delawares in Ohio, where their first Cherokee convert was received in 1773, being one who had been captured by the Delawares when a boy and had grown up and married in the tribe.”⁷ Where to begin the categorizations, from which oppositions? Is he Cherokee, Lenni Lenape (Delaware), male, Christian, pagan, displaced, adopted, civilized, Indian? Once one dialectic is synthesized, how much of the defeated or reincorporated antithesis persists, especially in critical discussions that barely admit of traces or alterations of the antithesis to the thesis in even the language used to name the resultant synthesis, much less in actual analysis? Questions of identity, confronted from a structuralist paradigm by a sequential series of dialectics, are better addressed by admitting the possibilities for multiple, lateral comparisons, which we can begin by disassembling the vocabularies of synthesis. For example, if we work backward from the solutions “adoptee” = “Cherokee” vs. (>?) “Delaware” and “convert” = “Christian” vs. “Indian,” we could reexamine how interactions with the Delaware altered Cherokee society itself, how Christianity was changed by Indian converts, or how a converted Delaware-Cherokee adoptee fused his particular traditions with Christianity, rather

⁶ William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1984, reprint (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1994) 35-45, 110.

⁷ James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee, 19th Annual Report, Part 1, 1897-98*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900, reprinted in *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder, and Cherokee, NC: Cherokee Heritage Books, 1982) 83.

than how one affiliation dominated another, then another and another. The urge to set up elements in conflict may come readily, for as Wendy Doniger writes in her foreword to a collection of lectures by Claude Lévi-Strauss, “language itself predisposes us to understand ourselves and our world by superimposing dialectics, dichotomies, or dualistic grids upon data that may in fact be entirely integrated. And underneath language lies the binary nature of the brain itself... The simplest and most efficient way to process experience seems to be by dividing it in half, and then to divide the halves in half, reformulating every question so that there are only two possible answers to it, yes or no.”⁸ Lévi-Strauss, whose structural anthropology depends on binary theory, applauds another of its wonders: “It is only the present state of scientific thought that gives us the ability to understand what is in this myth [and mythical thinking in general], to which we remained completely blind before the idea of binary operations become familiar to us,” seeing in mythical thinking an early manifestation of the structure of all thinking, including the scientific, which with its practical empiricism synthesizes and supersedes the mythic, rendering it knowable for the first time.⁹

The binary model has its utilities, but its flow-chart-strict interpretive capacities become clumsy when more than two pertinent elements enter a junction—a limitation Doniger implicitly admits in passing swiftly over the “data that may in fact be entirely integrated.” Further, the “us” to which both Lévi-Strauss and Doniger refer universalizes a Euro-American, pseudoscientific theory premised upon antagonism.¹⁰

⁸ Wendy Doniger, Foreword, *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*, Claude Lévi-Strauss, rev. ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1995) viii-ix.

⁹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*, rev. ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1995) 23.

¹⁰ Mary Churchill might mount such a critique, and though in chapter one I critique her argument concerning balance without dominance, I do so not based on the premise that such an arrangement does not exist, but that it does not *everywhere* exist, just as conflict does not everywhere control.

Apart from Fredric Jameson's critique of structuralism's synchrony, its out-of-time logic,¹¹ there are several other analytical troubles with binary thinking: first, its insistence on absolute and exclusive value. If there are tensions between the Cherokee and Lenni Lenape aspects of the man Mooney discusses, a binary limits him either to Cherokee or Lenni Lenape identity, for according to the logic of the dialectic he cannot finally be both, either through mediation, which enacts a temporary bridging, or through synthesis, which is a new creation, an evolutionary hybrid. We cannot know how this man thought of himself, but as Anne McClintock astutely notes, "race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together... Rather, they come into existence *in and through* each other—if in contradictory and conflictual ways,"¹² suggesting that the ripples of influence, if diminishing, are nevertheless ongoing. We may usefully take a snapshot of a pooling moment we then title an identity—and that representation may even be faithful for a great long while—but it is no more eternal than it is the moment itself, and we may never see the other currents pushing or pulling our subject into frame. McClintock's emphasis on experiential reticulation is well taken, yet she, too, narrowly defines the spheres of identity in Eurocentric terms, privileging currently acceptable neo-Marxist categories. In the midst of the Second Great Awakening in Cherokee country, religion, age, clan, town, and more, theorized and not, swirl in other relevant eddies of experience.

Second, attempting to work out tensions through a dialectic model can lead to the construction of faulty pairings, such as setting Cherokee identity against gendered or religious identity in an antagonism that does not at a majority of points or perhaps

¹¹ Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972): 5-22.

¹² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 5.

even at all prevail. Some argue that there are fundamentally opposed precepts of Christian and tribal identity, a position undoubtedly shaped by the many disgraces in the history of Christian and Indian interactions, but significant numbers of Christian Indians like Brown and Guess have discerned fundamental tenets of traditional religion and Christianity and found them not preclusive but rather supplementary, a relationship ill-described by an aggressive, conflictual precept of dialectical enmity. Still another Jamesian problem extends from the first two, in that a binary construction's inability to account for degree of power (and thus perseverance) and its inattention to historical circumstance lends itself to arbitrarily limiting, normative definitions. Initial forces (overcome in a Hegelian dialectic; essentialist in a structuralist binary) become generalized or ossified, unchanging components against which all future interactions are measured: the Cherokee in 1800 must be the same Cherokee of 1900, 2000, 2100, with no regard for developments that negotiate apparent inconsistencies and strategize communal survival. As Jameson argues, a binary model obfuscates its synchronic styling of history,¹³ which in American Indian literary theory appears when deviation from the assumed, historically fixed essence is interpreted as cultural deficiency, once again, "not really Indian."

In her book *Cherokee Women*, historian Theda Perdue mentions Brown in passing and finds none of the all-important harmony but only conflict between Christian and Indian:

Few women in the Cherokee Nation could equal Catharine Brown or, at least, her memory. Most did not seem to want to. They preferred their traditional religion, which did not distinguish between the physical and spiritual worlds, which emphasized harmony and balance, and which placed the needs of the community above those of any individual. Those Cherokees who converted to Christianity became part of a hierarchical religion that promised little control over the physical world (that is, illness and weather), defined relationships to the natural world

¹³ Jameson 96-98.

and other human beings in terms of dominion and submission, and placed responsibility for salvation, behavior, and success squarely on the individual.¹⁴

Despite Perdue's outstanding work on Cherokee women's agentive perseverance, she does not fully interrogate ways in which Brown might have reconciled apparent contradictions in her life. Discourse dedicated to division gives rise to the tired trope of "walking in two worlds," a cliché that when describing American Indians usually gets embellished with the aesthetic of a greeting card: Indians "walk with one foot in a moccasin and one in a wingtip" or "have a foot in two canoes." These metaphors offer little toward understanding the complexity of identity and agency. Power comes from multiple sources, multiple energies that work in conjunction, not in segregation from broader operations, be they historic, communal, or otherwise. Traditional Cherokee stories, such as those involving powerful supernatural threats, teach a similar lesson, in which communities of all sorts must come together to defeat such beings. In the story of Untsaiyi a group of men imprison an evil gambler who wagers for lives; women's collective power defeats Nunyunuwi, the Stone Man; Utlunta, the Spearfinger, would not have been killed without the aid of the animal community—Tsililili, the chickadee, indicated the monster's vulnerability. These and other traditional stories emphasize survival through the harmonious union of *diverse* communities' powers (among many other messages), much as Catharine Brown incorporated strength across gender, religion, and culture and in so doing imparted that strength to inner communities struggling with political and social changes.

In stressing the communal dimensions of identity here, I hardly mean to suggest the death of the individual subject; indeed, the proliferate critical emphasis on community in American Indian identity theory might not speak empoweringly enough to how individuals can volitionally act with or without the support of communities,

¹⁴ Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 170-71.

which even as they offer primary means of support and even perhaps of a distinctive consciousness itself are not ubiquitously and unerringly doing all they might to protect and cultivate what is best for their members or themselves. Against exaggerated and prevalent Euro-American constructions of the individual as untethered and wholly autonomous, however, a swing towards the communal is warranted. I only mean to suggest that for some Cherokees an alternative construction of personal identity wherein responsibility to the communities of which they are members is of greater concern than we might find among groups for whom individualism, fluidity of group affiliation, or cosmopolitanism is more highly valued. Just as we find communities—of innumerable shapes, dedicated to various causes, organized in myriad histories—working in conjunction with each other, so too may we see individuals living economic, religious, spiritual, social, familial, cultural, psychological, and all sorts of lives in association with other like-living agents. In short, the lives of communities and individuals are heterogeneous and complex. In terms of identity, we are not inescapably destined to mosey around bipedally in a moccasin and a wingtip. (I like to think of us more like millipedes. But I can see how not everyone would find the metaphor ambulatory.) No theory can accommodate all of our possibilities, but surely we're ready to consider more than two at a time.

Space for diversity opens by conceptualizing the *habitus* as a reconstituting web of dispositions wherein practices matter most in the instance of their practicing, beliefs the moments they are believed, both for consideration of the specific circumstances surrounding their expression—that is, to see what it is that effects them and how—and for observation of what practical difference the theoretical framing of community affiliation makes—that is, to see what dispositions' effects are and where they're felt. Like a farmer planning a field's irrigation, identities in their reticulation can chart numberless paths through the web's structural conglomeration of

connections, supports, tributaries, branches, spirals, etc., that hang together, reinforce, influence, intersect with, or even oppose each other, directly or indirectly, as they trace courses for the accomplishment of some purpose. Crucial to my understanding of identity as pathways assembled from an array of options is that movement through them reinforces and affects both the courses themselves and the proximate others that contour the field, effecting sometimes dramatic changes to both their structural character and purpose, locally and across the entire system, relative to some measure of the power of the movement. I understand agency as deployment of power or energy along an identity pathway, wherein the action and its path are integrated elements. Identity, then, is as much that which is done as that which is had. I have tried to emphasize, however, that personal identity and agency do not exist in isolation but through and across that exercised by other agents. This complementarity, mindful of a scale of power, can strike a balance between the fictions of univocal individuality and utter negations of personal agency.

The convergence of courses is not always easily accomplished but is aided by conscious planning and the unconscious vetting by the *habitus*. These strategies of coping with change play out in Catherine Brown's memoirs, seen in the agency she exerts in connection with missionaries near and far, her family, and other Cherokee people engaged in similar interactions, such as female peers or her students. Just as town bodies of Cherokee people cut paths for the educational benefits missionaries offered by extend invitations to open schools, Brown found that many of the courses of her life could similarly converge despite expectations to the contrary. Her blending of Christian and Cherokee traditions evokes the verb-based foundations of the Cherokee language, which prioritizes doing in constructing meaning rather than the "thingness" of a phenomenon. To demonstrate: ᏅᏍᏓᏁᏍᏔᏅ, the word for church,

means “where they gather to study,” ᠔Z᠕᠎ is “Gospel,” meaning “spoken outward,”¹⁵ and the word for God, ᠎᠎᠎᠎᠎᠎, is “Creator,”¹⁶ or more literally something like “He provides” or “apportions.” A review of the syntactical structure, suffixes, prefixes, and affixes of Cherokee verbs, which conjugate for time, direction, texture, duration, number, causality, and animation among other factors, would also emphasize the primacy of process in Cherokee epistemology, in contrast to the noun-based structure of English.¹⁷ From a Cherokee perspective, we might see in Brown’s life less a concatenation of discrete events in displacing series than a sophisticated portaging among pathways.

Perhaps seeing Brown as an Indian who then became a Christian, Theda Perdue and Carolyn Ross Johnston are among those who suggest that there are diametrically opposed fundamentals of Indianness and Christianity, at least as it was practiced by nineteenth-century missionaries, much in the same way that missionaries and many members of Congress argued that Indian culture and Christianity were mutually exclusive.¹⁸ Contemporary Christian missionaries, even those as conservative as the Southern Baptist denomination, have largely abandoned this position and now encourage missionaries to respect indigenous cultures and to develop cooperative models of Christianity and indigenous customs and values. This paradigm

¹⁵ Ruth Bradley Holmes and Betty Sharp Smith, *Beginning Cherokee*, 5th ed. (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1976) 22, 248-49; Durbin Feeling, *Cherokee-English Dictionary*, ed. William Pulte (Tahlequah, OK: Heritage P, 1975) 141. Holmes and Smith offer a rich genealogy of the verb kanesdi (᠎᠎᠎᠎᠎᠎), which means to speak or address, and is found in variations in words like Gospel, song, psalm, history, story, poem, treaty, testimony, and tradition, all of which connote announcing or heralding.

¹⁶ Feeling 177.

¹⁷ William Pulte and Durbin Feeling, “Outline of Cherokee Grammar,” *Cherokee-English Dictionary* by Durbin Feeling, ed. William Pulte (Tahlequah, OK: Heritage P, 1975) 241-305.

¹⁸ Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 159-84; Carolyn Ross Johnston, *Cherokee Women in Crisis: Trail of Tears, Civil War, and Allotment, 1838-1907* (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2003) 40-54; Theda Perdue, ed., *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, by Elias Boudinot, originally published Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1983 (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996) 8-12.

shift depends on a surprising kind of strategic essentialism, wherein indigenous thinkers and others forced evangelists to reexamine missionaries' complicitous roles in the genocide of the Americas and to scrutinize the foundational elements of their doctrine. For Mark Custalow, former National Native American Missionary of the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, the immutable doctrine concerns the sufficiency of God's grace for salvation; so long as teachings do not contradict this tenet, the Mission Board's official line seems to encourage respect for cultural practices such as sweat lodges or other cleansing ceremonies.¹⁹ The evangelical work of early Native Christians like Brown, Hicks, Boudinot, and many more, and the leadership roles assumed by American Indians in modern Christian churches demonstrate the changes that may eventually be wrought by integrative enterprise. For example, in 2008 the Oklahoma General Convention and the national Southern Baptist Convention elected as presidents Emerson Falls, a Sac and Fox and Choctaw, and Johnny Hunt, a Lumbee, respectively.²⁰ This is worth pausing to consider: the major fundamentalist Christian denomination in America and Oklahoma is headed by self-identifying Christian Indians—to them, white Baptist church leaders look for spiritual guidance and direction, perhaps conscious that their church's history of racial relations is less than spotless and that they might not be able to generate among themselves satisfactory answers to ongoing race-related problems. Such

¹⁹ Mark Custalow, "Native American Church Planting," North American Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, online, accessed 19 Apr 2004, <http://www.namb.net/lightupthenation/body_cpt_12_nativeamerican.asp>; also see Mark Custalow, "Biblical Guidelines for Contextualizing Native American Church Ministry," Church Planting Village website, North American Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, n.d., 11, 12 pp., online, accessed 22 June 2009, <<http://www.churchplantingvillage.net/atf/cf/%7B0938A074-4176-42D7-8428-77A665D9544E%7D/Bible%20Guidelines%20for%20Contextualization.pdf>>.

²⁰ Bill Sherman, "Oklahoma Baptists Elect First Native American President," *Tulsa World*, 11 Nov. 2008, online, accessed 15 June 2009, <http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?articleID=20081111_1__Onewe02724>; "Southern Baptists Choose Johnny Hunt New President," Associated Press, *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, 10 June 2008, online, accessed 15 June 2009, <<http://www.star-telegram.com/804/story/692978.html>>.

changes do not excuse the immorality of imperialism, but they do offer examples of what can come of Indian agency, in contrast to the proliferate narratives of victimization. In fact, the present coming together of Christian and Indian religious beliefs and practices bears a striking resemblance to that accomplished much earlier by Brown and others.

One of the most intriguing convergences in Catharine Brown's case concerns her understanding of Christianity through her Cherokee cultural framework. An account of a dream in which Brown meets a "little boy" was not included by Anderson in her memoirs, but it survives in the letters of the ABCFM. Joel Martin reproduces it in *The Land Looks after Us*:

In my sleep I tho't I was traveling and came to a hill that was almost perpendicular. I was much troubled about it, for I had to go to its top. I knew not how to get up. She said she saw the steps which others had gone and tried to put her feet in their steps, but found she could not ascend in this way, because her feet slipped. Having made several unsuccessful attempts to ascend, she became very weary, but although she succeeded in getting near the top, but felt in great danger of falling. While in this distress in doubt whether to try to go forward or return, she saw a bush just above her of which she tho't, if she could get hold it she could get up, and as she reached out her hand to the bush, she saw a little boy standing at the top, who reached out his hand; She grasped his thumb, and at this moment she was on the top and someone told her it was the Saviour.²¹

This account offers glimpses of textual dimensionality invisible to binary logic, despite the unsettling shift in point of view revealing its overt mediation. The little boy is likely one of the Yunwi Tsunsdi, who Mooney describes as "'Little People,' who live in rock caves on the mountain side; they are little fellows, hardly reaching up to a man's knee...They are great wonder workers...They are helpful and kind-hearted, and often when people have been lost in the mountains, especially children who have strayed away from their parents, the Yûñwí Tsunsdi' have found them and taken care

²¹ Martin 71.

of them.”²² For many Cherokee people, the Yunwi Tsunsi represent a powerful spiritual force in the world,²³ and Brown likely believed an extraordinary being communicated with her through her dream. Dreams were a powerful source of knowledge about matters both uncommon and everyday in Cherokee culture,²⁴ and, as Martin forcefully argues, through her dream knowledge she found guidance through a new path, divergent though dependent upon the steps others had taken before her.²⁵ This path was not available to Catharine Brown the individual outside of history and community, but was opened by—was the consequence of—the spaces opened when Euro-American political and religious expansionists encountered Cherokee people who respected their traditional values and adapted to a rapidly changing world.

Just as Cherokee if less dramatic is Brown’s concern for “her people.” For Brown, as for many Cherokees, a fundamental compassion and concern for others extends from an idea of identity intimately connected with community. This priority finds expression in Brown’s preoccupation that she with other Cherokee converts like her brother David be prepared “for usefulness among my people”²⁶ given “their awful

²² Mooney 333.

²³ Mooney 331-36; Martin 71-2; Richard Bushyhead, “The Little People and the Nunnehi,” Kathi Smith Littlejohn, “The Cherokee Little People” and “Nunnehi, the Gentle People,” and Barbara Duncan, “Edna Chekelelee,” all in *Living Stories of the Cherokee*, comp. and ed. Barbara Duncan (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1998) 183-87, 68-74, 125-26, respectively; also see Jeannie Reed, ed., *Stories of the Yunwi Tsunsi: The Cherokee Little People* (Cullowhee, NC: Western Carolina U, 1991).

²⁴ Albert Wahrhaftig, “We Who Act Right: The Persistent Identity of Cherokee Indians,” *Currents in Anthropology: Essays in Honor of Sol Tax*, ed. Robert Henshaw (New York: Mouton, 1979) 264; Robert Thomas, *The Origin and Development of the Redbird Smith Movement*, master’s thesis, U of Arizona, 1953, 40, 92, 124, 190, and especially 213-14, 217; Raymond Fogelson, “Cherokee Notions of Power,” *The Anthropology of Power: Ethnographic Studies from Asia, Oceania, and the New World*, ed. Raymond Fogelson and Richard Adams (New York: Academic Press, 1977) 189; Mary Ellen Meredith and Howard Meredith, *Reflection on Cherokee Literary Expression* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen P, 2003) 48.

²⁵ Martin 71-73

²⁶ Brown 59.

situation while out of Christ.”²⁷ She repeats this sentiment in some form a dozen times throughout her brief memoirs, reiterating the centrality of praxis and community to her moral vision, which did not escape the attention of Anderson and other contributors to the *Memoir*.²⁸ In a later, more comprehensive biographical essay on Brown than the sketch in *Cherokee Women*, Perdue revises her assessment of Brown (that few women wanted to equal her in her Christian devotion) and attends to her melding of the personal and the communal, rightfully foregrounding the value of community:

The missionaries interpreted her behavior as evangelical, the ardent desire of believers to spread the gospel, but Catharine’s concern may have stemmed from the Cherokee concern for community. Unlike Christianity, which concentrated on the salvation of individual souls, Cherokee religion focused on community well-being. Convinced of the correctness of Christianity, Catharine agonized not over her own soul, but over the collective soul of her people... Her baptism seems to have opened the door for other Cherokees. Soon over a hundred adults joined her in Christian fellowship...²⁹

This concern for the well being of the community calls to mind Eva Garrouette’s “responsibility to reciprocity” and Jace Weaver’s communitism,” discussed in the preceding chapter, and the Keetoowah belief in God’s law to love one another.³⁰ At the risk of redundancy, it may be worth reiterating that for all its importance, “community” is not fully coextensive with the entire network of relations and ways of relating in a given world—unless community names the web itself, in which case it still pays more to discuss its particulars than to float inevitably imprecise generalizations. And besides, a number of Native and Cherokee people are in fact

²⁷ Brown 66.

²⁸ Brown 41, 45, 54, 59, 74, 81, 82, 83, 90, 94, 100; Anderson 19, 54, 58, 122.

²⁹ Perdue, “Catharine Brown” 80-81.

³⁰ Eva Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and Survival of Native America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 2003) 129; Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) 32; Crosslin Smith, “The Good Mind,” lecture given at 14th Annual Symposium of the American Indian, Northeastern State U, Tahlequah, OK, April 1986, videocassette.

selfish and define their identities according to very individualistic agendas—and they are still *Native* people, who perhaps even deserve scholarly attention.

Several critics have seen a corollary between a purportedly formerly unknown individualism together with a decline of women's political power to Christianity's introduction, assuming a doctrinal emphasis on personal conversion and a political complicity with the goals of the US civilization program, which included ideational roles for women in the private, domestic sphere and specifically not in the public, political sphere. In an influential article, Barbara Welter explores nineteenth-century ideas of femininity that coalesce in what she has dubbed the "the cult of true womanhood," whose attributes "could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity."³¹ Perdue joins Welter's concept of true womanhood with her narrative of conflict between white and Christian against Cherokee and traditional, writing, "Cherokees learned to be true women primarily through the work of Protestant missionaries," who inculcated in the "elite" an expectation that Cherokee women "conform to the ideals of the cult of true womanhood, that is, to be sexually pure, submissive to fathers and husbands, concerned primarily with spiritual and domestic matters, and excluded from politics and economics outside the home."³² Like the conflict between whites and Indians more generally, the outcome of this gendered tension appears foregone, and women found that "domesticity brought influence, not power. Similarly, purity and piety seemed almost anachronistic in a culture and age that tended to value the material above the spiritual."³³ While Wilma Dunaway argues that most Cherokee women

³¹ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18.2 (1966): 152.

³² Theda Perdue, "Southern Indians and the Cult of True Womanhood," *Half Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past*, ed. Catherine Clinton (Durham: Duke UP, 1994) 43.

³³ Perdue, "Southern Indians" 51.

resisted the imposition of foreign gender roles at least until Removal, she too sees in missionary history white culture attempting to steamroll Native culture, and in the so-called cult of true womanhood a locus for acculturation, albeit among a minority.³⁴

Common to such binaristic histories of the heteronomy of gender roles is the tendency to see assimilation or resistance as the only options available, the ossifying tendencies of which I have already discussed. They are further complicated by what Shirley Samuels has called “the double logic of power and powerlessness,” which simultaneously affirms the historical separation of women from spheres of power and indicts them for failing to exercise the political power they purportedly did not possess.³⁵ As Samuels argues, closer examination reveals far greater overlap between the public and the private than theories of discrete spheres allows. Despite the suggestions that a woman like Brown was simply playing out a stock, assimilated (become domesticated) character’s role scripted for her by an alien culture, I argue that not only did she speak to the immediate social and political concerns of Cherokee people, but she also offered her own philosophy of usefulness to the missionaries. The piety of true womanhood for her entailed concrete engagement with national politics, which offered missionaries chances to put their Hopkinsian theology into practice. Martin alludes to Brown’s social consciousness when he writes, “for Catharine Brown, conversion to Christianity often seemed an effective way to gain respectability, recognition from powerful whites, and a good education. Like Catharine Brown, converts were able to use their enhanced access to the dominant culture to better promote the causes of their people.”³⁶ The imminent causes of the Cherokee were

³⁴ Wilma Dunaway, “Rethinking Cherokee Acculturation: Agrarian Capitalism and Women’s Resistance to the Cult of Domesticity, 1800-1838,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 21.1 (1997): 171.

³⁵ Shirley Samuels, introduction, *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford UP, 1992) 4.

rights to life and land, and while it is mostly tacit, in the assembly of the *Memoir* anyway, many missionaries following her lead took her materialist concern on these matters to heart, politically advocating for the Cherokees despite the opposition of their governing authorities.

Leonard Sweet in his history of the female seminary movement argues that for Protestant women “the principal sphere of usefulness was the home,”³⁷ but he clarifies that, theoretically at least, usefulness as a concept was more closely concerned with evangelism, with both linked to the pressing millenarianism of the nineteenth century. He writes, “Usefulness, while it included the component of the home and family, was defined primarily in terms of building the kingdom of God on earth.”³⁸ Others echo this explanation of usefulness as an enactment of proselytizing.³⁹ Brown, too, seems to share this sense, seen in her connection of “doing good” or “being useful” with her sorrow “for my Cherokee brothers and sisters, when I consider their awful situation while out of Christ.”⁴⁰ The belief that the Second Coming was imminent assuredly lent some of the immediacy to Brown’s conversion efforts, just as it did to the missionaries’, many of whom believed their labors uniting the nations under Christ could hasten the longed-for day. The prospect of deliverance must have been attractive to many Cherokees like Brown, beset with political troubles and plagued by recurrent epidemics of smallpox, measles, and other diseases. During the years she was alive,

³⁶ Martin 75.

³⁷ Leonard Sweet, “The Female Seminary Movement and Woman’s Mission in Antebellum America,” *Church History* 54.1 (1985): 52.

³⁸ Sweet 44.

³⁹ Genevieve McCoy, “The Women of the ABCFM Oregon Mission and the Conflicted Language of Calvinism,” *Church History* 64.1 (1995): 69; Joseph Conforti, “Mary Lyon, the Founding of Mount Holyoke College, and the Cultural Revival of Jonathan Edwards,” *Religion and American Culture* 3.1 (1993): 83.

⁴⁰ Brown 66.

tuberculosis especially imperiled the Cherokee—no less than three of the Browns died of it, including Catharine. Elias Boudinot wondered if the “Cherokee Nation is destined to fall by this Instrument of Death.”⁴¹ Brown also might well have been motivated by the religious vacuum emerging from the medicine men’s loss of spiritual authority, pushing her and other women to become spiritually useful. In addition, the Cherokees’ worsening political conditions as they attempted to protect their borders against illegally encroaching white settlers and the US’s attempts to remove them west no doubt added a social dimension to her idea of utility. When Brown’s memoirs were published in 1824, the year after her death, the Cherokees had only just escaped the second removal crisis of 1819 at the cost of some four million acres—more than a quarter of their remaining land—when they were confronted by still more requests for cessions by President Adams’ administration, whose term-long machinations set the stage for the final theft carried out under Jackson.⁴² The perennial demands for land, the attacks on persons, and the designs on cultural and political cohesion that Brown had directly experienced—such conditions induced her father to join the Old Settler emigrants to Arkansas before the Trail of Tears—help contextualize the desperate urgency in her oft-expressed desires that she and her family “do good” and “be useful” to their people.

Conversion to Christianity in this intricate and perilous historical context not only provided a metaphysical satisfaction in working for the sake of others’ souls and Christ’s earthly kingdom; it also supplied evidence for a practical political and ethical argument that would testify to the civilizability and civility of the Cherokee. Much as

⁴¹ R. Palmer Howard, “Cherokee History to 1840: A Medical View,” *Oklahoma State Medical Association Journal* 63 (1970): 73, quoted in Russell Thornton, *The Cherokees: A Population History* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990) 49; Phillips and Phillips 513; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 385.

⁴² McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 206-59, 411-27.

immigration apologists must take pains to prove the banalities that Mexican people *do* work and Muslim people by and large are *not* suicide bombers, Cherokees felt compelled to counter their stereotypical, “scientific” categorization as savage or barbarian, below and therefore without the rights of civilized people, the force of which sanctioned a trove of predations. The acceptance of Christianity, the pursuit of education, and the adoption of “civilized,” i.e., Euro-American ways of life, labor, and society, were to warrant against accusations of savagery deployed to denounce Indian interest in the land as an imperfect right of occupancy only—removing a group of savages could be justified as benevolent protection, but removing a civilized people could only be seen as robbery. While conversion might indeed be the result of epiphanic shifts in spiritual beliefs, it also here emerges as a strategy by which women both create communities of novel shapes and also enter those communities’ often gendered and social critiques into the political and legal discourses from which state-centric forces were at pains to remove them.

Despite Brown’s social focus, Perdue sees in Brown’s conversion a causal disconnect between her need for integration with the community and the community’s willingness to extend it: “At the same time she sought and found community in her new faith, conversion drove a wedge between her and the vast majority of Cherokees...Instead of uniting her people through Christianity, Catharine found herself estranged from many of them because of her faith.”⁴³ Although Perdue in this essay suggests that Brown’s conversion to Christianity did not effect total erasure of Cherokee culture, her insistence on structuring the juncture of Christianity and Cherokee culture as antagonistic elides a great deal of the complexity of Brown’s and other converts’ experiences. A number of Cherokees opposed to increased contact with Euro-Americans generally and the missionary project specifically would no

⁴³ Perdue, “Catharine Brown” 81.

doubt have ostracized her, but many others in fact welcomed her. Anderson records, “Catharine and David were employing themselves diligently at Brainerd. Once, in particular...these two young Cherokees, aided by a pious Indian woman of great age, collected a little group of their people, who had come to spend the Sabbath there, and held a religious conference, with prayer and praise, all in the Cherokee language.”⁴⁴ Not long before her death, Brown spoke to Laura Potter, wife of missionary William, of her work with local Cherokee women: “I have no desire to live in this world, but to do good. But God can carry on his work without me. I hope you will continue the meetings of females. You must not be discouraged. I thought when I should get to the Arkansas, I would form a society among the females, like ours. But I shall never live to get there.”⁴⁵ Perhaps Brown in her hope that meetings of women specifically would carry on foresaw that they would soon be in the best position to provide for Cherokees’ religious and spiritual needs. Her transversal of Christian and Cherokee communities through her organization of gendered religious societies set a precedent for female superintendence of religion that would in short time become the dominant pattern in Cherokee society, a pattern that in many ways perseveres in Cherokee Christian groups today, where women are the backbone of the communities that provide religious “usefulness” to the greatest number of Cherokees, through spiritual support, material assistance, cultural continuity, and more. Like the majority of women who would follow her in conversion, Brown was also committed to the survivance of *her* people and their ways of life, whether they be in their eastern homelands or in the west. Though she desperately sought to stay with the missionaries at Brainerd and not to go to the Arkansas territory with her family, she implicitly belies the assumption—because she has first-hand knowledge to the contrary—that

⁴⁴ Anderson, in Brown 40.

⁴⁵ Brown 93.

removal was tantamount to death. Though circumstances away from home were difficult and dangerous and countless reasons discouraged leaving, Cherokees if compelled could live—were living—in far-off places and were still Cherokees there.

Perdue's suggestion that Brown's evangelism was a relative failure expects a great deal of a woman who died at twenty-three, in the earliest stages of proselytizing in Cherokee country. Considering the prominence of Christianity among Cherokee people today, Brown's evangelical work could easily be reframed as part of a larger traditionalist circuit, in which she appears more an innovator than an anomaly, especially given her age in a community that generally looks to elders for spiritual guidance. Perdue also normalizes both Cherokee and Christian religion, which for her "stood at odds...on fundamental issues. Cherokee religion promoted cosmic balance, not sacred hierarchy, and community welfare, not individual salvation."⁴⁶ Cherokee religion was incorporated in the daily lives of individuals and was therefore largely an individual or local experience, guided by certain commonly held tenets.⁴⁷ Central among these was, as Perdue and others note, the well-being of the group. But were the

⁴⁶ Perdue, "Catharine Brown" 89.

⁴⁷ See for instance, Mooney, *Myths* 229, 392; James Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," *7th Annual Report, 1885-88*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891, reprinted in *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* 318-19. Much of the research literature on Cherokee religion relies heavily on James Mooney's ethnological work in the Qualla Boundary in North Carolina near the beginning of the twentieth century; most of his research relies on the male informant named Swimmer. The vast and geographically diverse territory once inhabited by the Cherokee, the degree of town autonomy, the privacies of clans, the separation of social gender roles, and the dynamism of culture and religion generally should lead us to question the nearly sacrosanct status afforded Mooney's early work, itself shaped by the proto-anthropological, social evolutionary theories of the likes of John Powell, Daniel Brinton, Frederic Putnam, Lewis Morgan, and others, preceding Francis Boas' cultural relativism, not itself without problems. For a concise introduction to the theoretical history of the Bureau of American Ethnology and the broader fields of ethnography, ethnology, and anthropology, see Lee Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1998) 26-53; for a critical biography of Mooney's early years and his time working with the Cherokee see L.G. Moses, *The Indian Man: A Biography of James Mooney*, Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984, rev. ed., reprint (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2002) 1-51. Craig Womack's chapter "In the Storyway" in *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999) 75-101 offers an insightful deconstruction of ethnologically-situated narrative.

missionaries such as Samuel Worcester, Daniel Butrick, and others with whom Brown lived and studied indeed preaching sacred hierarchy and abandonment of the community? Brown certainly did not take from them such a message. She writes, “O may I be enabled to follow the example of my teachers, to live near the Saviour, and to do much good. I wish very much to be a missionary among my people. If I had an education—but perhaps I ought not to think of it. I am not worthy to be a missionary.”⁴⁸ The good she sought to do, which she saw in lived out in the missionaries’ work, fell not in some imagined impassable gulf between communal welfare and individual salvation, but neither was it simply a matter of mediating a binary so conceived. The good she so desperately wanted to do as a Cherokee missionary to Cherokees was for their sake—and their most pressing needs surrounded the political and social removal crisis, which she and her family would well have understood, several of them already having joined the Old Settlers in Arkansas.

Such political and social concerns are barely overtly addressed in the letters and diary entries that Anderson assembled in the *Memoir of Catharine Brown*, but they so haunt the collection that in many ways it is itself an expression of political solidarity with Cherokee people and a defense of righteous treatment for them. The rhetorical figure of ellipsis, or the omission of grammatical or conceptual elements, characterizes Brown’s anxiety, as in her lamentation, “Frequently do I weep for my Cherokee brothers and sisters, when I consider their awful situation while out of Christ.”⁴⁹ The conventional consequence of being “out of Christ” or “wander[ing] in darkness,” another ambiguous phase she commonly employs, is of course damnation, but she seldom arrives at such forceful language (although she does at one point articulate a fear of “eternal destruction” for her “poor Cherokee brethren and sisters,

⁴⁸ Brown 61.

⁴⁹ Brown 66.

who do not know the blessed Jesus”).⁵⁰ Her use of ellipsis, however, leaves open other possibilities of not being Christian. These, I argue, include this-world fallout authorized by the logic that the US need not recognize the rights to life, limb, or property of savages—an appellation coextensive with “heathen” or non-Christian. Being useful thus entailed laboring for the Cherokees’ good not just in the next world but also in this one. Her letters not only advocate the political expediency of conversion, but they also reprove, albeit with similar rhetorical subtlety, the nation afflicting the neophyte Cherokee attempting to grow in the faith.

Brown levels such a political critique in her allusive invocation of Isaac Watt’s hymn “The Song of Moses and the Lamb: Or, Babylon Falling” in her closing of a letter to a missionary’s wife: “And now, my dear sister, may we both be faithful to our Lord, and do much in the world. And when time with us shall be no more, may we be permitted to meet in that world, where Christians will be collected to sing through eternity the song of Moses and the Lamb.”⁵¹ Brown leaves unspoken two of the hymn’s stanzas proclaiming the sinfulness of nations and their impending punishment:

Who dares refuse to fear thy name,
Or worship at thy throne!
Thy judgments speak thy holiness
Thro’ all the nations known.

Great Babylon, that rules the earth,
Drunk with the martyr’s blood,
Her crimes shall speedily awake
The fury of our God.⁵²

⁵⁰ Brown 46.

⁵¹ Brown 50.

⁵² Isaac Watts, “LVI [Hymn 56]. The Song of Moses and the Lamb: Or, Babylon Faliing, Rev. xv. 3. And xvi. 19. And xvii. 6,” *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 7th ed., Boston?: Bristol?, 1720?, online, Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, no. 29733, record number w038649, <http://docs.newsbank.com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:EVAN&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F2F820D6CD2D2B0&svc_dat=Evans:eaidoc&req_dat=0D0CB4F0E6B93180>, 66-67.

While the Cherokee nation if it dared refuse to proclaim itself Christian would surely suffer God's fury, no less would the US, whose crimes were with every added convert committed against Christian Indians, now become martyrs, and the Americans, persecutors of the faith. To be sure, by the early nineteenth century it was no longer the Cherokees who were spilling the most blood. Brown thus appropriates Christianity and claims the moral high ground for the Cherokee. Similar rhetorical tactics can be found in many other religious writers like Elias Boudinot, William Appess, Samson Occom, and more. Such examples provide a deeper historical context to Andrea Smith's provocative theorizations of alliances among contemporary Indian female activists and Christian fundamentalists in her recent *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances*.⁵³ Though there is some almost-but-not-quite mimicry in Brown's missionary-taught language, she speaks here not with a difference of deficiency, but rather with a tacit assertion of superiority, saying in effect that those saving souls and laboring for others' social and material needs, and patently not those preying upon others, are the true Christians. In the comparison to Babylon, on the other hand, the Americans invite their own destruction and damnation through their wanton viciousness.

Perhaps she was more forthright in her indictments of US policy in other instances not included in the *Memoir*. Anderson might have thought such direct political critique coming from an Indian woman impolitic or inexpedient and muffled Brown's voice, but in his gloss he does articulate in two instances an explicitly

⁵³ Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham: Duke UP, 2008) ix-xxxv, 200-75. Another unlikely parallel can be seen in Latin America in the radical inverted syncretism of the eighteenth-century Andean indigenous leader Túpac Amaru, as described by Gustavo Benavides: "both vocabulary and syntax have been mastered and recreated and we find that Christianity provides the general framework within which action of all type, including military, can take place. As a central element in Andean self-definition, Christianity can now be used against the colonial Christian—or from the Indian point of view, anti-Christian—power." Gustavo Benavides, "Syncretism and Legitimacy in Latin American Religion," *Syncretism in Religion: A Reader*, ed. Anita Leopold and Jeppe Jensen (New York: Routledge, 2005) 209.

polemical position in an harmonious counterpoint to Brown's voice uncommon to such mediated, double-voiced narratives. In the first case he recalls an eastern lecture series given in 1824 by David Brown, who was studying at the Andover seminary: "The addresses, which he delivered in many of our principal towns and cities, on the wrongs and claims and prospects of the American Indians, will not soon be forgotten by those who listened to them."⁵⁴ The second, delivered in the closing commentary, urges conversion as the most direct means of righting those wrongs and allaying the troubles besetting not just the Cherokees but Indians in general:

Various unpropitious causes press heavily upon the poor Indians; and it is believed, that nothing will save them from extinction, as a people, but the general prevalence of true religion. All things else will be vain without this...Bring this religion to act strongly upon the Indians. Give them the full enjoyment of Christian ordinances. Then their "winter will be past, the rain will be over and gone." Agriculture, art, science, legislation, and literature, the germs of which already appear, will grow in rich luxuriance, and the Indian character will be respected by the nations of the earth.⁵⁵

Conversion here is thematized as both a sacred and secular means of salvation, the former undiluted by the latter; that evangelism entails positive political effects is rather indicative of its rightness. Just as striking as this politicization of conservative religion for a progressive cause is that Christianization is urged not as means of unadulterated assimilation but as a strategy by which Indians might retain their sovereignty and distinctness as a people, their "Indian character." Undoubtedly the missionaries would have advocated Euro-American cultural and political ways as nearly universally superior, but they left more room for difference than they are generally given credit for.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Anderson, in Brown 41.

⁵⁵ Anderson, in Brown 120-21. Anderson's allusion is to Song of Solomon 2:11, in a piquant reference to the most erotic book of the Bible. He perhaps suggests that marriage of Indian women to white men numbers among the ordinances they should fully enjoy.

One reason for the dearth of clear denunciation of US Indian policy in the *Memoir* was surely that that critique was to some extent understood by the audience. Despite its ostensibly apolitical official position, the ABCFM like other denominations' mission boards made it clear by its actions, interests in Cherokee education and civilization, opposition to removal, and in its general purpose that it would break with government policy and stand with American Indians when it believed that policy contrary to its work or the tribes' best interests as it understood them. During the removal crisis of 1819, ABCFM representatives even assisted the Cherokees during treaty negotiations in Washington as they fended off expulsion.⁵⁷ The ongoing depredations by encroaching white settlers experienced by Cherokees living near the national borders, like Brown and her family, are referenced in the *Memoir*. Anderson recounts her father's motive for moving his family to Arkansas: "The old grey-headed man, with tears in his eyes, said he must go over the Mississippi. The white people would not suffer him to live here. They had stolen his cattle, horses, and hogs, until he had very little left."⁵⁸ Brown's willingness to distinguish between the whites at Brainerd and those stealing her family's property and safety is remarkable.

Because much of their funding came from federal sources, mission boards had to be careful in appearances, but individual missionaries like the Congregationalists Samuel Worcester and Elizur Butler, and Baptists Evan and John Jones often risked a great deal in their support for Cherokee political and social issues. Opposing Jacksonian Removal, several ABCFM missionaries together with Evan Jones and two others from the United Brethren signed a joint resolution published in *The Cherokee*

⁵⁶ In time, intermarriage with whites would of course dissipate such distinction.

⁵⁷ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 71.

⁵⁸ Anderson, in Brown 25.

Phoenix that proclaimed, “Resolved, that we view the Indian Question, at present so much agitated in the United States, as being not merely of a political, but of a moral nature—inasmuch as it involves the maintenance or the violation of the faith of our country...Resolved, therefore, that we view the removal of this people to the West of the Mississippi as an event to be most earnestly deprecated,” in a statement that further implicates the political with the religious, the religious with the political.⁵⁹ Later in the crisis the ABCFM left the decision to sign Georgia’s oath pledging allegiance to the state up to individual missionaries but imparted it would financially and legally back any missionary willing to challenge the edict, and by extension, Georgia’s jurisdiction over Cherokee territory. Taking up the cause, Worcester and Butler spent more than a year at hard labor in a Georgia prison waiting for the Supreme Court to render its unenforced decision in *Worcester v. Georgia* before the board and then they gave up the cause.⁶⁰ Though it was initially supportive of Jacksonian removal, the Baptist mission board came to side with Jones, who did all he knew how to do in opposition, authoring petitions and anonymous tracts as well as speaking at Cherokee councils, in Cherokee.⁶¹ He went so far as abetting if not leading a vote among his congregation that condemned the signing of the New Echota treaty and excluded the signers from fellowship. Of this move, also taken by ABCFM missionary Daniel Butrick, McLoughlin writes, “Nothing marks more clearly the politicization of religion in this crisis. It also indicates how closely missionaries such as Butrick and Jones had come to view politics from the Cherokees’ perspective.”⁶² Neither would Removal spell the

⁵⁹ “Resolution by Missionaries,” *Cherokee Phoenix* 1 Jan. 1831, reprinted in Samuel Worcester, *New Echota Letters: Contributions of Samuel A. Worcester to the Cherokee Phoenix*, ed. Jack Kilpatrick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick (Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1968) 83-84.

⁶⁰ Althea Bass, *Cherokee Messenger*, 1936 (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996) 138-60; McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 55.

⁶¹ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 73, 93, 115.

⁶² McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 102.

end of missionaries' involvement in Cherokee politics. As an abolitionist Jones would go on to play a role in the organization of the Keetoowah Society, which was simultaneously social, cultural, and political in its factional traditionalism, and his son John, also a missionary, advocated for the Cherokee as federal agent and spoke out against allotment.⁶³

Such missionaries were not simply acting out of character for nineteenth-century Calvinists. According to church historian Samuel Pearson, abolition would become the pivotal social point around which Congregationalists gathered as an official denomination from a coalition of like-minded Protestants,⁶⁴ but their history stretches somewhat further back to the early excursions into Indian territory taken by David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, and Samuel Hopkins, who all worked with Native populations and developed significant theological writings out of their experiences among Indian people⁶⁵—among whom they would have come across much of community harmony, personal restraint and sacrifice, and perseverance under oppression, whether or not they were able to cognitively see what they physically saw. Perhaps the Indian communities living with these prominent figures in American religion informed their ideas of social justice and modeled for them tactful politicisms much as Catharine Brown illustrated the immediate importance of turning the concept of usefulness to projects that Cherokees could actually use. Jonathan Edwards did indeed tend towards an authoritative paternalism that he legitimized by attributing

⁶³ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 117-26.

⁶⁴ Samuel Pearson, "From Church to Denomination: American Congregationalism in the Nineteenth Century," *Church History* 38.1 (1969): 82.

⁶⁵ While Brainerd and Edwards pastored churches for Indian people, Hopkins did not, though he did frequently visit Edwards at the Stockbridge "praying town" and made brief use of that material in his biography of Edwards. His *Historical Memoirs* contains more of Hopkins's opinions on successful proselytizing among Indians. *Historical Memoirs, Relating to the Housatunnuk Indians*, Boston, S. Kneeland, 1753, online, Google Books, accessed 6 June 2009, <<http://books.google.com/books?id=Hr0OAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=hopkins+historical+memoirs+relating+indians>>.

missionaries' success in converting the heathen to divine influence rather than to social activism.⁶⁶ Other prominent religious leaders, however, encouraged a surprisingly culturally sensitive and socially engaged evangelism that provided a theological basis for pro-Native, Christian activism. David Brainerd, an early missionary to northeastern tribes and a friend of Edwards, epitomized missionary sacrifice and service, and while Edwards recorded his life story in his *Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians*, which was especially influential among Congregationalist missionaries,⁶⁷ he failed in his commentary to attach much importance to the cultural sensitivity and awareness that Brainerd exhibits in his reproduced diary. Edwards does admire Brainerd's dedication to learning the local language so he could preach without an interpreter. He also records Brainerd's commitment to providing for the Indians' education, to collecting money and goods for their material well-being, and to helping them secure property of their own. Edwards' focus, however, is less on encouraging works than on depicting proper religious attitudes or comportment.⁶⁸

Identifying in Edwards a philosophical and practical shortcoming in his other-worldly lack of concern with life's realities, his student and friend Samuel Hopkins promoted a theological principle of disinterested benevolence that expected greater secular impact and engagement as evidence of authentic Christian belief. Joseph

⁶⁶ See for instance Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians, with an Abridgment of his Diary and Journal*, ed. John Styles, Boston: Samuel Armstrong, 1812, online, Google Books, accessed 6 June 2009, <<http://books.google.com/books?id=3nwYAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=life+of+brainerd+edwards>>, 125, 316.

⁶⁷ Joseph Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work: 'The Life of David Brainerd' and Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Culture," *Church History* 54.2 (1985): 196-97. Conforti here emphasizes the book's importance at Andover Theological Seminary, which "...was the training center of the ABCFM's missionaries," according to David Kling, "The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions," *Church History* 72.4: (2003): 811.

⁶⁸ Edwards 68, 173-74, 316; Conforti, "Jonathan Edwards's" 195. Edwards's and others' concern with Indians having land of their own may well have less to do with championing their autonomy than with inculcating them with a Lockean sense of individualism and individually-held property.

Conforti summarizes Hopkins's developments: "Love of God and neighbor, and not the saving of one's soul, became the core of Hopkinsianism. The true Christian must lose himself in a cause higher than his own salvation—namely the temporal and eternal well-being of others. Thus the most peculiar tenet of Hopkinsianism, and the one most offensive to the rational mind, reinforced the social activism" that his theological developments encouraged.⁶⁹ In his history of the relationship between the New Divinity school of theological thought and the foundation of the ABCFM, David Kling argues, "What Edwards proposed was an aesthetic, beatific vision that Hopkins found incomplete and in need of 'improvement.' In a very real way, Hopkins brought Edwards back to earth by locating true virtue in social behavior, in an ethic, not an aesthetic, of disinterested benevolence. Whereas Edwards saw true virtue culminating in a holy consciousness, Hopkins viewed it as culminating in holy action."⁷⁰

Missionary work offered ample opportunity for such holy action, and it took on political inflection through the very nature of its enterprise, that is, by placing converted peoples on an moral par with whites, with equal claims to and expectations of Christian treatment (i.e., with fairness, charity, equity, kindness, etc.). In time Hopkinsianism more and more informed the prevalent New Divinity theology, and for Conforti "The movement increasingly captured the allegiance of aspirants to the Congregational ministry, especially in the years leading up to and following the founding of the predominantly Hopkinsian Andover Seminary in 1808."⁷¹ Samuel

⁶⁹ Joseph Conforti, "Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity: Theology, Ethics, and Social Reform in Eighteenth-Century New England," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34.4 (1977): 584. The "most peculiar tenet" is Hopkins's argument that a Christian ought to be willing to suffer damnation if that end somehow served God's glory.

⁷⁰ Kling 805.

⁷¹ Conforti, "Samuel Hopkins" 588.

Worcester graduated from Andover in 1823⁷²—what might he have learned there that prepared him for the type of service he would render the Cherokee a decade later?

Broadly speaking, Hopkinsianism emphasized social harmony, justice and equity, kindness and generosity, and equality.⁷³ In contradistinction to facile caricatures of Christianity as individualist and materialist, Hopkins, presumably like his followers, “was disquieted by the conflict between traditional social values and the behavior of New Englanders in a time of critical change. Like other evangelicals, he inherited a social ethic that stressed corporate obligation, personal restraint, and communal harmony and simplicity. But the economic and demographic expansion of New England during his lifetime promoted acquisitive, egocentric patterns of behavior at odds with those norms.”⁷⁴ Like Brown, he also urged a distinctly humanist usefulness. In his account of missionary John Sargeant’s life, *Historical Memoirs Relating to the Housatunnuk Indians*, Hopkins prods his readers:

Should we not be mov’d to such charitable Endeavors from the Consideration of the wretched and forlorn Circumstances, in which the poor *Natives* appear before our Eyes. We often behold those piteous Objects, appearing half naked and almost starv’d; which is the Effect of their vicious Way of Living. We see them also in the Depths of Ignorance & Barbarity...And yet the Powers, both of Body & Mind are not inferiour to our own. Were they brought to Civility & Industry, they might stand upon equal Ground with us...and were they instructed in divine Things...they might stand as fair for the Kingdom of Heaven as

⁷² Bass 20.

⁷³ A handful of quotes from Hopkins’s *Historical Memoirs: Relating to the Housatunnuk Indians* may illustrate: “Tho’ the *Indians* are sunk below the Dignity of human Nature, and the Lust after Drink exposes them to be cheated out of what little they have; yet this gives us no Right to deal unjustly with them. They have a natural Right to Justice, and many, with great Propriety, challenge it at our Hand, feeling we profess to be subject to the Law of Christ, which teach us to do *that which is altogether just*” (169); “We should also exercise the Kindness and Generosity towards them, that shall convince them that it is for their Interest to be in Friendship with us.” He anticipates an objection that Indians’ ungratefulness ought preclude such kindness: “We have good Authority for being *kind to the Unthankful and to the Evil*. And if that good Being who recommends it to us, had not given an Example of it, in his Dealings with us, how deplorable had our State been?” (174)

⁷⁴ Conforti, “Samuel Hopkins” 574.

we do. Should not our Eyes therefore affect our hearts, when we behold them in such miserable Circumstances? And should we not exert ourselves in all proper ways for their help. Did the Wounds of the poor Man *half dead*, who *fell among Thieves*, plead with so much Eloquence for human Compassion, as the unhappy State of the poor *Natives* does for Christian Charity?...The noble Example of some generous & pious Persons, at Home, may well excite us to liberal Contributions for the Benefit of the poor Heathen.⁷⁵

Despite the passage's overtly racist vocabulary of savagism, barbarism, and civilization, Hopkins here gathers together many of the principles undergirding his social emphasis, and in advocating compassionate contribution for Indians' material needs articulates an uncommonly relativist position that argues that Indians are in fact spiritually and intellectually equal to whites, at least in capacity. He checks too superior an attitude in his readers with a quick reminder that "A few Generations back we were in a State of Heathenism, as they now are: *Aliens from the common Wealth of Israel—and without God in the World.*"⁷⁶ Hopkins encourages his Christian followers to follow Christ's example by feeding the hungry, clothing the cold, and offering other acts of charity as they are able. (With notable political acumen, he also suggests that kind and fair dealing would win the friendship of powerful tribes and ally them with the English rather than with Catholic France, at lower financial cost to the colonists. Hopkins is nothing if not practical.⁷⁷) Though his language of degradation points up his implicit, perhaps unconscious, acceptance of the paradigm of Indian inferiority, Hopkins seems to be consciously attempting to move himself beyond it, turning customary speak of powerlessness, poverty, and ignorance to progressive discussion of education, charity, and sovereignty (albeit dimly conceived). Whereas Edwards

⁷⁵ Hopkins 174. In his *The Life of Brainerd*, Edwards takes note of Brainerd's charitable solicitations for his Indian congregation, but in his closing remarks pays little mind to the material hardship of the Indians, urging instead charity for the difficult circumstances of the missionaries only (291-92, 320-21).

⁷⁶ Hopkins 181.

⁷⁷ Hopkins 174-75.

only gestured in such directions in *The Life of David Brainerd*, Hopkins advocates the goals not as ancillary, temporal effects of a holy consciousness, but rather as effective, practical—again, *useful*—approaches to successful missionary work.

For Baptist and ABCFM missionaries, pragmatic missions work was most productive in gaining converts when it was in consonance with the Cherokees' own goals and methods of attaining them. While it should not need repeating that advocacy for and the actual identification of Cherokees' educational, material, political, and cultural goals originated not with missionaries but with Cherokees themselves, the importance of such sectional volition cannot be overemphasized. Though some critics have broadly painted the missionaries' goals and methods as oppositional to Cherokee culture—arguing like Bethany Schneider “That going to that holy place,” i.e., converting to Christianity, “entails the renunciation of culture, language, nation, and life itself”⁷⁸—exception upon exception calls the rule into question. Several missionaries' interest in oral traditions, the communal atmosphere of camp meetings and the group labor employed at them, the eventual acceptance of medicine men into Christian fellowship, and the parallels between the Cherokee purification going to water ceremony and Christian baptism have all been seen as intersections between Cherokee and Christian pathways that later enabled enduring convergences.⁷⁹

Language figures prominently in two others that historian William McLoughlin argues worked most forcefully to make Christianity a viable option for Cherokees: the

⁷⁸ Bethany Schneider, *From Place to Populace: Indian Removal and State-Formation in Antebellum American Literature*, diss., Cornell U, 2003 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2003) 162.

⁷⁹ Samuel Worcester, *New Echota Letters: Contributions of Samuel A. Worcester to the Cherokee Phoenix*, ed. Jack Kilpatrick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick (Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1968) 43-53, McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 136-37, McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 194-97, 199, 211, 205, 200-01; Mooney, *Sacred Formulas* 336.

training and subsequent efforts of Native ministers who preached in Cherokee, and the translation of the Bible into Cherokee.⁸⁰

Keeping with the question of language, I would like to consider its role in education more closely. The Cherokees' desire for and the steps they took to establish schools, discussed in the last chapter, represent another consonant interest for Cherokees and Christians that also touches on the question of language. Missionary schools in their instructional methods more often employed Cherokee than has been admitted. Given the affinity between language and cultural ways of knowing, the unexplored irregularity of missionaries' indulgence of the Cherokee language bears closer investigation. While McLoughlin writes of the ABCFM schools, "Their missionaries made little effort to learn Cherokee...none of the teachers thought it necessary to employ interpreters or try bilingual education,"⁸¹ the translation and publication of the Bible and other material represented just the latter, while if not in a classroom setting certainly in wider society. Both Daniel Butrick and Samuel Worcester, who wrote several articles on the language for the *Cherokee Phoenix*, showed great interest in learning Cherokee, even if neither never mastered it.⁸² And as Rufus Anderson notes, Cherokees like Catharine Brown, David Brown, and John Arch provided translation services and conducted prayer and study in Cherokee.⁸³ In light of Anderson's approving (if patronizing) tone discussing the Browns' leadership of "a little group of their people" who were praying and praising "all in the Cherokee language,"⁸⁴ and David's statement that he would "sometimes preach myself in the

⁸⁰ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 205, 207.

⁸¹ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 66.

⁸² Worcester 5-9, 41-42, 59-69; Anderson, in Brown 46.

⁸³ Anderson, in Brown 39-40, 42; Phillips and Phillips 114-15.

⁸⁴ Anderson, in Brown 40; also see Phillips and Phillips 158.

sweet language of Tsallakee,”⁸⁵ it seems likely that she would have taught more than a little in Cherokee when she headed the school at Creek Path and also that the ABCFM missionaries approved of her doing so. Most explicitly, the Brainerd mission school’s journal contains an entry recommending Catharine for the teaching job at Creek Path: “I think it would be well for her to come as she can talk & there will be no good interpreter.”⁸⁶

The exception to culturally-destructive missionary education presented in Baptist Evan Jones’s case is even more complicated. McLoughlin writes:

Although the Joneses were committed to bilingual education, the Cherokee council ruled that its public school system (adopted in 1841), supported by Cherokee funds and taught by Cherokee teachers (all mixed-bloods), must be taught in English. Not until after John Ross’s death in 1866 were the Joneses able to persuade the council to try their plan. In 1866, the council adopted a series of bilingual textbooks in arithmetic, geography, and history that were to be written by John Jones and published on the Baptist printing press... Unfortunately, the Cherokee Nation lacked the funds to implement this plan fully. It was strongly opposed by the wealthier English-speaking parents who wanted nothing to do with the old language.⁸⁷

Mixedbloods, it appears, can be held responsible for any evil. Even though he was purportedly the champion of the fullbloods and headed the government that included the National Council, which was controlled by fullbloods as late as 1861,⁸⁸ John Ross opposed teaching Cherokee youth how to communicate in their language—is this a traditionalist value?—while the representatives of assimilation like Elias Boudinot editorialized in Cherokee, Samuel Worcester disseminated the Sequoyah syllabary,

⁸⁵ Anderson, in Brown 42, quoting a letter from David Brown dated 24 Sept. 1824.

⁸⁶ Phillips and Phillips 176.

⁸⁷ William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity, 1794-1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Persistence*, ed. Walter Conser (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1984) 116-17.

⁸⁸ William McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears: The Cherokees’ Struggle for Sovereignty, 1839-1880* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1993) 189.

Catharine Brown taught usefulness, and Evan Jones preached the Gospel in Cherokee. Ross, however, was surely more than a simple opponent of Cherokee language, as is evidenced by his use of translators for national addresses, for example. He and the council leaders undoubtedly sought to offer future leaders the best academic preparation they could get, perhaps thinking they could pick up Cherokee after class. My point is not to tarnish traditionalists' reputations, and certainly not to claim that traditionalism has never existed, but that each of these Cherokee people and Cherokee allies worked as best as they were able for the people's survivance in complex situations with competing demands. They might have been more or less effective, and in some places destructive, true. Scholarship is not just at liberty to analyze and critique what worked better and what worse; that discernment is incumbent upon it. But we should understand that this pattern of criticizing mixedbloods or assimilation advocates for all sorts of ills—really, for being mixedbloods—like the binaristic opposition of Christian and Indian says as much about contemporary scholarship's own situated, invested attitudes as it does about history, culture, or literature. And what it says is that many are prepossessed with simplistic, circumscribed, and defeating notions of what Indians may do for themselves, often pulling up short at changes in education, exploration, worship, or anything that appears to drift too far from a contained idea of the past.

Such a limited historical focus, not only bookended by signpost events like Removal or the turn of a century but also served by the ability to set aside the changes occasioned by displacement or, say, the industrial revolution, problematizes Perdue's normative definition of Cherokee community in the early 1800s. This isolation and segmentation of the population marginalizes what was an important and growing component of Cherokee society, both in the east and among the Old Settlers in Arkansas. Though Catharine Brown dreaded the prospect of going to Arkansas,

concern for the welfare of the Cherokees there motivated her to help organize a women's charitable society that contributed to its mission station.⁸⁹ Of Brown's impending move to run the new Cherokee school in Alabama, Anderson writes, "When it was known at Creek-Path, that she was to take charge of the school, the most enthusiastic joy was occasioned among the people. They seemed to feel that the preparations could not be made too soon. Not less than fifty Cherokee men, besides negroes and boys, assembled immediately to build a house, which, in two days, was nearly completed according to their stipulation."⁹⁰ Whatever "wedge" lodged between Brown and the Cherokee communities of her time—local communities primarily in charge of their affairs—they seem to have worked around it. Brown, like other missionary educators, would have served at the pleasure of the community; that she stayed at Creek Path for nine months speaks as much of communal agency as missionary zealotry. Her tenure at the school resembles the community vetting of new knowledge discussed in chapter one. Having gone out to gain knowledge from the missionaries at the Brainerd school, Brown returns to Cherokee people to demonstrate what she has learned and to offer them the opportunity to accept, reject, or modify it as they see fit. A similar process is acted out more locally among Brown and her immediate family members. That Anderson's or the missionaries' (or Perdue's) political agenda results in selective information must be kept in mind, however, for they might exaggerate the response to the school or equivocate the greater enthusiasm for education than for Christianization. Anderson might also have occluded Brown's continuing ties to community or traditional practices, either by choosing to omit materials such as the story of her dream or by simply not being able to understand that which was before him.

⁸⁹ Anderson, in Brown 58-59, 78, 127-28.

⁹⁰ Anderson, in Brown 42-43.

He would not have been alone in having such a problem. Treasurer of the ABCFM and later an outspoken advocate and editorialist for Cherokee rights, Jeremiah Evarts once met with Catharine and of her wrote,

Her prayers are distinguished by great simplicity as to thought and language, and seem to be the filial aspirations of the devout child. Before Mrs. Chamberlain took charge of the girls Catharine had, of her own accord, commenced evening prayer with them, just as they were retiring to rest. Sometime after this practice had been begun, it was discovered by one of the missionaries, who, happening to pass by the cabin where the girls lodge, overheard her pouring forth her desires in very affecting and appropriate language. On being inquired of respecting it, she simply observed, that she had prayed with the girls, because she thought it was her duty.⁹¹

Unaccustomed to eloquence and intelligence from Cherokee women, missionaries like Evarts assumed they must have neither. Besides seeing only what they expected to see, some also neglected to question their narrow, culturally determined definitions of what constituted intelligence or spirituality. Brown retained and practiced a great deal of traditional Cherokee spirituality, such as when she periodically left the mission to pray alone. Anderson records the narrative of Laura Potter, “In the warm season of the year, the adjacent woods was the place of her retirement. She not unfrequently spent whole days in fasting and prayer. One fine summer’s day, she had been absent nearly all the forenoon in the woods, and...I felt anxious for her safety...She returned, expressing much concern that she had caused me so much anxiety, and added, that she was sorry she had not told me of her intention to pass that day in the mountain.”⁹² Perdue does see Brown’s retention of Cherokee tradition in her reclusion in nature and her uncharacteristically frequent fasting: “even in her biography, written primarily to convince potential contributors of the efficacy of Indian missions, evidence emerges that calls into question the missionaries’ success in the complete eradication of Native

⁹¹ Anderson, in Brown 24-25.

⁹² Anderson, in Brown 115-16.

culture...there are no clear examples of apostasy. Instead, we have ambiguous practices that probably represent a blending of Cherokee and Christian beliefs.”⁹³ Ross Johnston concurs: “Although she was a Christian convert, she also continued traditional Cherokee practices such as fasting, and she participated in women’s prayer groups, often in the forests and mountains. Brown and her parents continued to enlist the help of traditional healers. Thus, she may have retained more of her Cherokee beliefs and been less acculturated than the missionaries’ account claimed.”⁹⁴

Describing the preferred sites for Keetoowahs’ deliberative meetings, modern Keetoowah leader Benny Smith affirms the traditionalist propensity to go to “high mountains seeking revelation from heaven...usually in the woods and preferably on a mountain. The main requisite was for it to be a still, quiet place away from interrupting activities.”⁹⁵ Martin, too, argues that Brown seems to have shared this traditionalist proclivity to worship in the mountains.⁹⁶ These are but a few of the traditionalist dispositions Brown enacted. Though there may be a threshold beyond which adaptation becomes not blending but assimilation, it is neither clear given such examples of retained traditional practices that Brown crossed it, nor by whose past or present authority it was established.

Like the missionaries, contemporary scholars may see only what is familiar to them. In the anthology *Native American Autobiography*, Arnold Krupat writes of Catharine Brown, “We will not learn of Cherokee lifeways in the early nineteenth century from Catharine Brown. But hers, too, is a Native American life, one that needs to be taken into account in any generalizations we would make about Native people in

⁹³ Perdue, “Catharine Brown” 86.

⁹⁴ Johnston 43.

⁹⁵ B. Smith 8.

⁹⁶ Martin 70-71.

the Americas.”⁹⁷ The implicit assumption here is that Brown’s Christian conversion renders her not-Cherokee, although she can still be “Native American” in some esoteric way. What besides Cherokee lifeways do Brown’s unexhausting concern for community, especially women, her outdoor worship, her fasting, her interpretation of Christian precepts through Cherokee cultural symbols, and her worship in the Cherokee language teach us? Craig Womack rejoins, “When an Indian converts to Christianity, not all of him gets converted, no matter how thorough his newfound convictions.”⁹⁸ That part remaining—which for some might well be the entire web of principled practices, in addition to new additions—is best understood from a cultural perspective as familiar as possible with tribal epistemologies and prepared to see in educational dispositions like gaining knowledge programs of development, not displacement.

Brown’s work as a teacher incorporated power from many paths; pertinent here again are community, gender, and religion, both traditional and Christian. In gathering together the groups of girls at the Brainerd school for prayer meetings and in her teaching at the girls’ school at Creek Path, Brown negotiated a merging among several groups’ agendas that could have cataclysmically collided in less careful hands. Communal agency is central to this interaction: the school at Creek Path would not have existed had the surrounding communities not elected to invite the Congregationalist missionaries of Brainerd to Cherokee country,⁹⁹ and the Brainerd missionaries, too, served at the pleasure of the communities. Clearly, if Brown hoped to keep her post, she needed to attend carefully to the expectations of the Cherokee families with students at the school and to those of the Cherokee political leaders. The

⁹⁷ Krupat 115.

⁹⁸ Womack 183.

⁹⁹ Anderson, in Brown 38.

administrators of the Brainerd school no doubt had expectations of Brown and the school occasionally at odds with those of the community, and the expectations of the Cherokee girls and mothers must have contrasted sharply at times with those of the white women at Brainerd—that Cherokees and missionaries sometimes crossed paths does not mean, however, that they were unable to find common ground.¹⁰⁰

Gender, race, and religion move in conjunction in Brown's dream of evangelizing to Cherokee women living west of the Mississippi, if she were bound to go there. For her, a community of women—Cherokee, Christian, Women—was of abiding importance as a source of much-needed spiritual and physical strength in desperate and dangerous times for Cherokee people, during which their traditional religion was for a multitude of reasons providing less support to increasingly fewer people. This erosion was not, however, ubiquitous, insofar as traditional—i.e., religiously-inflected—principles and practices in direct and tangential connections continued to inform politics, attitudes toward community, Christianity itself, and especially gender roles, among other elements. Stories of the first woman, Selu, reinforce the traditional legitimacy of woman's power. Selu is the Corn Mother, without whose gift of corn, the Cherokee would not be.¹⁰¹ As Perdue notes, Cherokee women exerted substantial agency and power in traditional communities, which were both matrilineal and matrilocal, and women also played a role in governance and warfare. They were responsible for a great deal of labor and retained control of property and children during marriage and in the event of divorce, which they could initiate; men not wishing to be divorced had little recourse. Women also retained control over sexual and reproductive matters.¹⁰² In short, Cherokee women were well

¹⁰⁰ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 335-52; McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Christianity* 152-218.

¹⁰¹ Mooney, *Myths* 242-49; Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 13-15; Johnston 24-27.

accustomed to power over affairs we might synchronically understand as political and outside of female social jurisdiction. They formed strong communal ties among themselves in extended kinship and political networks, often stronger than those they formed with men. As their example demonstrates, a multitude of socio-political powers can well be administered in forms alternative to the nation-state. Catharine Brown's religious and educational work with Cherokee girls and her dream of continuing it are coextensive and inseparable from her immersion in the patterns of Cherokee gender. Christianity offered her a means of strengthening Cherokee communities, especially the women with whom she was closest, and helping them in their efforts to maintain their fellowship, powers, lands, and identities.¹⁰³

Sequoyah Guess

Such an array of affiliations also characterizes the work of self-publishing author Sequoyah Guess, whose biography in *Kholvn* offers a succinct, pertinent biography:

Sequoyah Guess is a full blood Keetoowah/Cherokee and a Traditional Storyteller. He has served as Chairman for the Historical Preservation Committee and senior Cultural Site Investigator for the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma. He still serves as a consultant to the Historical Preservation Office of the UKB. He's a member of the Seven Clans of the Fire Cultural Camp committee and the infamous Turtle Island Liars Club. *Kholvn* is his first novel. He also produced, directed and wrote the script for the made-for-video movie version of this book in 1993-1994. It was the first movie to ever be produced entirely by Native Americans.¹⁰⁴

While he might not have a lucrative book contract, Guess is certainly possessed of a great deal of cultural capital. He is frequently called upon by both the Cherokee

¹⁰² Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 17-40.

¹⁰³ Other salient cluster might include those organized by class, age, and clan affiliations.

¹⁰⁴ Guess, inside back cover.

Nation and the UKB (of which he is a citizen) to tell stories at national affairs, by local universities to lecture on Cherokee traditions, by film festivals, museums, and so forth. He has been nominated as a Living Treasure by the Cherokee Nation and the affiliated museum, not least for the artistic and cultural services he has rendered, including his instruction in the Cherokee language, his seven novels, a practical Cherokee language book, and a collection of traditional stories passed on to him by his grandmother.¹⁰⁵ Also a sixth-generation descendent of Sequoyah, he is, in common parlance, a traditionalist.

His first novel *Kholvn*, published in 1992, is named for the monstrosity of Cherokee tradition, the ravenmocker, a cannibalistic and frighteningly powerful witch that prolongs its own life by shortening those of its victims. The narrative begins with its ordinary-people protagonists scattered across the United States: the major characters include Cody Clearwater, a Cherokee Baptist preacher living in New Mexico with Navajo people; Ira Jammer, a Cherokee tribal policeman working in South Dakota with Lakota folks; Morgan Booker, a white woman and former love interest of Clearwater in Tennessee, and Summer Moccasin, a young Keetoowah traditionalist together with her grandfather George Autumn of Cherokee Oklahoma.¹⁰⁶ After all have dreams or visions prompting them to return to their fictional hometown of Herald in northeastern Oklahoma—Cherokee country—they assemble and are confronted with Henry Longbush. In the backstory Longbush is a medicine man come unhinged by the arson-caused deaths of his wife and children. Though he has lost his sanity, he has gained the powers of the ravenmocker. Blaming the people of Herald for his family's deaths, he is rapidly consuming townsfolks' livers, the means by which he

¹⁰⁵ Chris Teuton, "Scary Stories: An Interview with Traditional Keetoowah/Cherokee Storyteller, Novelist, and Filmmaker Mr. Sequoyah Guess," *Mississippi Quarterly* 60.1 (2006-2007) 151.

¹⁰⁶ The characters' names carry their own culturally dense symbology: the preacher Clearwater needs just that for his baptizing, and Summer *Moccasin* walks the White Path.

steals their remaining days, and it falls to the collected heroes to defeat the evil that even other witches fear.

The historical circumstances prefiguring Guess's writing concern the revival of traditionalist practices and beliefs that attended the rejuvenation of the Keetoowah Society and the stomp dance in Cherokee country near the turn of the twentieth century. According to oral history, the Keetoowah Society dates back to the earliest of times, with the word "Keetoowah" sometimes used synonymously to refer to Cherokee people. Mooney writes, "A strong band of comradeship, if not a regular society organization, appears to have existed among the warriors and leading men of the various settlements of the Kituhwa district from a remote period."¹⁰⁷ Leading up to the Civil War, the abolitionist missionaries Evan and John Jones played some role in reorganizing the society, which then was composed primarily of conservativist fullbloods (again, to whatever extent those descriptors can describe) who opposed too-rapid acculturation, especially manifested in slavery and alliance with the Confederacy. The Society seems to have waned somewhat in the years following the Civil War, but in the 1890s, Cherokee traditionalists found great cause for concern as they were confronted with the federal government's allotment policy, and they again reformulated the Keetoowah Society as a cultural, political, and religious collective brought together not least to oppose the breakup of the tribe's government and lands. To confront America's ongoing "Indian problem"—a euphemism that referred to the widespread social ills of Indians' lack of opportunity, lack of representation, lack of resources, and America's lack of Indian land—many paternalistic sympathizers such as the Friends of the Indian resurrected the Jeffersonian assimilation policy with a vengeance and lobbied for the termination of tribal governments, the breaking up of reservations, the dissolution of common title to lands, and their dispersal in individual

¹⁰⁷ Mooney, *Myths* 225.

allotments, with surplus lands going to white settlers. The Dawes Act, the legislation authorizing such measures, passed Congress in 1887, and the Dawes Commission arrived in Cherokee country in 1894 to begin negotiating for what threatened to be the end of tribal life, later aided by the Curtis Act of 1898. According to Robert Thomas in his history of the Keetoowah Society, Cherokee traditionalists blamed themselves for the negative changes heading their way, believing they had failed to uphold God's laws. They therefore took steps to bring themselves and their followers religiously and culturally back into favor by recovering "what the Ketoowahs had lost."¹⁰⁸ As mentioned in the preceding chapter, they set about this project according to established dispositions of gaining knowledge and community vetting. Thomas describes several instances in which changes were not implemented until a committee of elders came to a collective consensus about the meaning of a vision or idea and an agreement that it accorded with what the group understood to be distinctively Cherokee ways of thinking, doing, and being.

As early as 1889, several traditionalists including Bluford Sixkiller, Ned Bullfrog, "Old Man" Chewey, and George Benge, together with Redbird Smith, met as such a body to reconsider the purpose of the Keetoowah Society. They reasserted that it was primarily religious, perhaps in an attempt to distance the organization from political troubles that had plagued it in the past. Despite their efforts, politics would continue to beleaguer the organization, and sometime around 1898 a split over how best to confront allotment would splinter it into the Keetoowah Society, the political forerunner of the UKB; and the Nighthawk Keetoowah Society, the religious, stomp dance group.¹⁰⁹ For his prominent leadership role, Redbird Smith is so closely associated with the Nighthawk revitalization movement that many historians have

¹⁰⁸ Thomas 119.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas 145-46.

given it his name, but as Thomas has emphasized, several people before Smith's time played a role in bringing about the conditions under which his work prospered, and not all of them were Cherokee. Redbird Smith's father Pig Smith prepared his son for superintendence of Cherokee traditions by sending him to live and study with a man known as Creek Sam, who Thomas reports was part Cherokee but was primarily identified as a Natchez Indian. The Natchez in general and Creek Sam in particular were recognized as keepers of the southeastern Indians' cultural traditions. Smith and the other committee members also drew on the Creeks' knowledge of old customs and beliefs, both their own and the Cherokees'.¹¹⁰

This scenario invites a cosmopolitanist interpretation of the hybridity of identities, even those purportedly the most traditional or removed from out-group contamination. Given the fact that Cherokees were never *not* interacting with non-Cherokee people, the idea of unadulterated cultural purity is fictional or at least rhetorical, not just for the Keetoowah Society, but also for Cherokee society as far back as it can be traced in both the historical records of the western written and the Cherokee oral traditions. Ancient migration stories, the linguistic connection of Cherokee and Iroquois languages, the adoption of members of other peoples, the commerce with them, and more testify to the fluidity and dynamism of culture, even from its imagined inception.¹¹¹ But there *are* pragmatic, observable differences among peoples, and those by and large more durable distinctions matter more to peoples' ideas of themselves than the comparatively fewer and more discrete moments of

¹¹⁰ Thomas 112-13.

¹¹¹ Howard Meredith and Virginia Milan, eds., *A Cherokee Vision of Eloah*, trans. Wesley Proctor (Muskogee, OK: Indian University P, 1981); Floyd Lounsbury, "Iroquois-Cherokee Linguistic Relations," *Symposium on Cherokee and Iroquois Culture*, ed. William Fenton and John Gulick, Bulletin 180, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1961) 9-18; William McGoun, "Adoption of Whites by 18th Century Cherokees," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 9.1 (1984): 37-41.

departure from established ways of being. That Cherokee, Iroquois, Natchez, Creek, American, and British peoples interacted with and influenced each other does not render them identical in their hybridity—why else would they continue to differentiate and call themselves Cherokee, Iroquois, and so forth? Principled practices like gaining knowledge and community vetting demonstrate the *habitus* tempering and utilizing the effects of external interaction, and also governing change proposed from within. Above all, theories of hybridity prone to an all-or-nothing concept of mixing—an idea of homogeneous heterogeneity resulting from a binary insisting that between purity and adulteration only the latter is possible¹¹²—desperately require attention to the other options attending cultural junctions, where communities and individuals may select, reject, alter, preserve, *innovate*. The failure to discuss agency together with hybridity veils a deterministic sleight of hand that portrays assimilation as natural and inevitable—not too far a cry from an apologia for colonialism—and out of the hands of its proponents, resisters, or more interestingly, those imagining innovative ways of fulfilling yet-unrealized human potential. While any course may be pursued volitionally, it is doubtless still subject to both the vagaries of force and to

¹¹² Such is the problem, I think, with Elvira Pulitano’s assumptions that “Those familiar with something called *Native American literature* are fully aware that such literature is, in the end, the product of conjunctural cultural practices, the Euramerican and Native American, and that whatever our geographic, cultural, or ideological position, we cannot dismiss such a crucial premise in our interpretive acts. Written primarily in English by authors possessing a consistently high level of education, these works are already heteroglot by nature—even as they rely heavily on elements from Native epistemologies...” (8). For her, “...Native American literature itself is a product of a crosscultural encounter” (9), seemingly missing that Native literature, like Native criticism, is at perfect liberty to address itself to its audiences with whatever degree of out-group engagement it sees fit. Pulitano may also be unable to decrypt the cultural code employed by writers she dubs separatist, leaving her poorly positioned to judge the content or the efficacy of their communications. Critics might disagree over how effective such exclusive discourse is at effecting certain goals, but as I argue in the introduction, the cosmopolitanist goals of undifferentiated group boundaries and a new humanism characterized by acceptance of a universal hybridity are by no means ubiquitously shared, nor are they foregone conclusions. Elvira Pulitano, *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2003) 8, 9. Craig Womack discusses these and other issues with Pulitano’s critique of separatism at length in his “The Integrity of American Indian Claims (Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Hybridity,” *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, by Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, and Robert Warrior (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006) 91-177.

unconscious mediation through the *habitus*, which even though it may have diminished in overt theorization of tradition nevertheless also replicates its unconscious historical dispositions and structuring conditions.

One attempt that the Nighthawk Keetoowah Society revitalization made at regulating religious change was in its constitution's early codified exclusion of Christian worshippers. The section read: "We shall not have two kinds of religion, only Keetoowah religion, which we worship God, and we shall all be loyal to that. If any person shall join any other religious denomination, he shall forfeit his membership to our Keetoowah Society." A member's application was also to indicate that "he is not a member of any religious denomination. After his acceptance, the secretary shall write his name, if he has any children or just a wife; he shall enroll them giving their age, their clan, showing they were not members of any other religious denomination."¹¹³ Finding this exclusion untenable for whatever reason, perhaps because of the increasing number of Christian converts desiring admittance, already covertly practicing both the Keetoowah and Cherokee religions, or the prominence of the Baptist church especially, the Society elected to admit Christians to membership, amending the Constitution with a remarkable piece of theological fusion:

Concerning the Adoption of Christ, September 16, 1934, Buffalo Town

Today, Keetoowah Society of the several towns, seven clan council assembled, hereby amend its constitution so that from now on it shall be this way: thereas, since we find Jesus Christ was born here on earth, the son of God, He shall be accepted by the Keetoowahs. But he shall not be accepted completely according to the Bible. But whereas John the Baptist, has said when he was baptizing some of his followers, "It's

¹¹³ "Keetoowah Constitution and Bylaws," Appendix B, in Howard Tyner, "The Keetoowah Society in Cherokee History," Master's thesis, Tulsa U, 1949, 123, 124. The date of the exclusion is uncertain. Tyner indicates that the original document is in Cherokee and that John Smith, Redbird Smith's son, authored this draft in English. The preamble of sorts refers to the Keetoowah Society's constitution of 1859, the English version of which does not include such a prohibition, and also says it was amended in 1889, but what the amendments included or even if the two constitutions are at all related is ambiguous (100, 121).

true I'm going to baptize you with water now. There's one coming after me who is mightier than I am. I'm not even worthy to bear his shoes. When he comes, he will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and the FIRE." We see furthermore, when Christ came, when he went into Solomon's temple, he found the money exchangers there inside the temple and he drove them out. They had several kinds of animals and birds there for sale, to be used for sacrifice in the fire. He told them, "This is not for to make money. It's for the Lord's work." Also he told them, "I didn't come here to destroy the law. I come here to fulfill it." Therefore, we, the Indians (Keetoowahs) have the FIRE, and the Holy Ghost was given us, and we can see that the taking in of our new members and the escorting of them around the FIRE seven times represents the FIRE Baptism. (Since Christ baptized by fire, he was therefore essentially a Keetoowah, and so he should be accepted in Keetoowah religion.)¹¹⁴

There are several relevant implications in this astonishingly rich passage, which again demonstrates the importance of community vetting, and in this case theorization, of cultural change. To begin, there are some particular religious meanings attached to the prominently featured elements of fire and water that deserve some explication. Of fire Charles Hudson writes, "The most important Cherokee spirit was the Sun, who was thought to be a woman. They called her 'grandparent'. She was the source of all warmth and Sacred fire was her representative on earth."¹¹⁵ Mooney does not draw as direct a link between the sun and the fire, but he certainly links the two as the most powerful of deities, together with water. He writes, "The sun is called Une'lanûhî, 'the apportioner'...Missionaries have naturally, but incorrectly, assumed this apportioner of all things to be the suppositional 'Great Spirit' of the Cherokees, and hence the word is used in the Bible translation as synonymous with God... The sun is invoked chiefly by the ball-player, while the hunter prays to the fire; but every

¹¹⁴ "Keetoowah Constitution" 131-32. Tyner reprints the Constitution and of it writes, "Appendix B is the constitution of the Nighthawk Keetoowahs and was written by John Smith, son of Redbird Smith who was the first chief of the Nighthawks. The original copy is at the Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma" (100).

¹¹⁵ Charles Hudson, *Elements of Southeastern Indian Religion* (Netherlands: Brill Academic, 1984) 13. Note the female gendering of the principal deity—perhaps such a minute difference makes no difference. Perhaps it is not so minute.

important ceremony—whether connected with medicine, love, hunting, or the ball play—contains a prayer to the ‘Long Person,’ the formulistic name for water, or, more strictly speaking, for the river.”¹¹⁶ Whether the missionaries and their translators misunderstood or deliberately appropriated the Cherokees’ closest deific parallel seems more of an open question than Mooney allows. The invocation of the elemental deities re-translates the adoption of Christianity back into a primarily Cherokee religious vocabulary (even in English), so that the plain-language (though Cherokee-inflected) summaries of the Gospel message are put into the service of a precisely situated and material Cherokee discourse.

While the elements of Christianity discussed in the amendment may be familiar to western audiences, their abruptness and seemingly arbitrary sequence (Jesus is God’s son, his arrival was foretold by John the Baptist, Christ will baptize with fire, the cleansing of the temple, the fulfillment of the law, the operation of the Holy Ghost) on closer examination reveal a skillful and subtle statement on the possibility and potential of mixing Christian and Keetoowah religions, along with an application of Christianity to immediate Cherokee concerns as a kind of illustrative test case for the utility of such combination. The argument leads off by finding Jesus “here on earth,” that is, not aloof or abstract, but interested and connected to human interests. Recounting his coming through reference to the prophecy of John the Baptist, the authors of the amendment offer Cherokee readers a relatable figure. The Cherokee religious would likely have witnessed some prophesying at the ceremonial grounds, and John’s baptizing in its resemblance to the going to water ceremony would also have been familiar to them. If they knew more of Biblical teaching, as many of them undoubtedly did, some might also have found John’s bare subsistence on locusts and wild honey while living in the wilderness resonant with their own lives,

¹¹⁶ Mooney, *Sacred Formulas* 340-41.

meager in comparison to more affluent Cherokees and whites. His preaching of repentance and his rebuke of the Pharisees' legalism and the Sadducees' politicism might too have seemed apropos to the challenges they faced in resisting allotment, which more than a few Cherokees advocated, if only as an unstoppable expediency. Besides the connection between Jesus and fire that helps to establish his deity, the subsequent baptism by fire brought by Christ represents an eschatological judgment that must have seemed long overdue—and it is the idea of judgment that reveals the passage's hidden logic. For the Cherokees drawing closer to the Creator by walking the White Path,¹¹⁷ which included the Keetoowah fire baptism, judgment would bring justification; for others unpurified, something less desirable.

And who are these? The amendment (again, dated 1934) jumps from discussion of fire baptism to the story of Jesus' expulsion of moneychangers and sellers of sacrificial animals in the temple, exploiting those who came to leave offerings and desecrating the place of worship. Their simony closely resembles a problem the Nighthawk Keetoowah faced in the years after allotment had been accomplished. Keetoowah elder Benny Smith describes the trouble that arose some time after the Nighthawk split: "the Keetoowahs have been approached a number of times to give up the old cultural ways of worship. Some members, seeing the possibilities of great financial gain, attempted to convert the ceremonials into a paying attraction."¹¹⁸ By showing Christianity's anti-materialist philosophy established by Jesus' willingness to confront the financially powerful hypocrites, the amendment affirms the non-fungibility of things sacred, which included ceremonies, traditions, and undoubtedly for many, land. Indignation over what the Nighthawk Keetoowahs

¹¹⁷ Thomas 122. Thomas here narrates an interpretation of one of the several sacred wampum belts, many of which concern the White Path.

¹¹⁸ B. Smith 27. Smith also describes the Keetoowah practice of sacrifice, which some surely thought incompatible with Christianity (15). The amendment, however, references a Biblical counterpart.

following Redbird Smith saw as an unlawful and wrongful theft of their lands—their farms, their worship grounds, their schools, their graveyards—barely sixty years after the Trail of Tears, when the nation gave its solemn promise it would protect and secure the Cherokees’ rights, also implicated those whites and complicit Cherokees in the den of thieves who would one day be called to account.

The appropriation of Indian lands, however, was again given the appearance of lawfulness and benevolence as a means of dissolving the cultural attachments that discouraged the individualism American society ostensibly rewarded. The amendment’s next segue, to Jesus’ assurance that he came not for the destruction but for the fulfillment of the law via a reorientation to its principles rather than its forms, such as the Pharisees manipulated, again speaks to the specific concerns of Keetoowah people. They felt that the Curtis Act’s mandated dissolution of the tribal government without its consent ran contrary to the spirit of the law, if not to its letter. Moreover, well after the allotment of land in severalty, unscrupulous whites were “legally” divesting Cherokees of their holdings by all sorts of devices. Jesus’ confirmation of the value of the old law could easily be understood as an acceptance on principal that Indian traditions and laws need not pass away, as assimilation advocates urged, but instead find or even provide Christianity and the colonialist nation that imagined itself as Christian with full complemence, as Crosslin Smith has it.

The amendment’s assertion that the Keetoowah people are possessed of the fire and the Holy Ghost also claims for them a proper and superior understanding of the spirit of the law. The ambivalence of the phrase “But he shall not be accepted completely according to the Bible,” however, betrays a lingering anxiety over the fusion of Cherokee and Christian religions. Though the amendment asks for no theological contributions from Christianity, enough members were apparently not getting all they needed at home spiritually to prompt the authorization of Christian

membership. While the very act of revisiting the constitution implicitly admits the need for modification or supplementation, the amendment provides only for a limited degree of change. Furthermore, the indictment of Pharisaic duplicity and the appropriative claim to the Holy Ghost as sacred fire go beyond limiting alteration of Keetoowah society to proposing a reciprocal complementarity: that the Biblical script cannot be “completely” accepted means Christianity itself stands in need of a supplemental interpretation, an interpretation more complete and better because more aware of the spirit of the law than others that penetrate no deeper than the outward forms. The amendment’s intriguing last sentence establishing the Keetoowahness of Christ through the practice of baptism by fire—Cherokee by doing—admits no Keetoowah inferiority to Christianity but instead declares the religion as fit to sit in judgment as Jesus. The Keetoowah theorization of syncretism offers this righteous discernment to Christianity in exchange for the right to admit and retain Christian members.

The recognition of incompleteness internally and externally—the admission of a ubiquitous inchoateness in religion and culture—and the simultaneous acknowledgement of different cultures’ discretely held, preferable understandings (because more complete, descriptive, effective, etc.) of, say, spirituality or technology on specific points, inform the deliberate pluralism that itself performs a central dispositional strategy for Cherokee culture’s maintenance and development. This pluralism as practice is at work in Guess’s *Kholvn*, the Keetoowah constitutional amendment, and Brown’s *Memoir*. Such “outsourcing” might recall Partha Chatterjee’s identification of nationalism’s gendered bifurcation between the masculine technological/material and the feminine spiritual/cultural worlds, but besides the historical re-masculinization of religious leadership seen in the Nighthawk revival, there prevails in Cherokee history a greater, across-the-board conversative

tendency toward less severe separation. While certain beliefs or practices might be inviolable, all that might be considered religious or cultural is not and has not been off-limits, but rather in charge of its own perpetuation and development. Throughout religious, cultural, economic, technological—perhaps throughout all nameable spheres—Cherokees kept up what traditionally worked and supplemented it with select beliefs practices that worked better, all the while engaged in internal development with internally generated purposes and methods. Long affiliated with a stomp dance societies, Guess is undoubtedly familiar with their traditional means of handling change, and his texts often incorporate the theme of pluralism within and without cultural groups as a means of resolving conflict.

Especially in *Kholvn*, disparate groups' coming together against common problems, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, and admitting their commonality in their mutual worship of a single God emerge as recurrent elements of a moderated pluralism. Almost exactly midway through the novel, Baptist preacher Cody Clearwater and Nighthawk Keetoowah George Autumn, the most forceful spiritual personalities in the narrative, meet for the first time, dramatizing an intra-Cherokee cultural convergence of religious outlooks long in tension. Autumn's granddaughter Summer Moccasin facilitates the meeting of the four major protagonist groups (in the passage with the most Cherokee language):

“We were all meant to be here,” Summer said and turned to her Grandfather as he spoke again.

“Yowa, our Father in Heaven, has brought each of us to this point,” the young woman said.

Cody held up a hand.

“Hold on a second,” he said. “Hisvnoyis?”

The old man nodded.

“Jantas Jisa jistawidido gesv?” Cody said asking if the old man knew he was a follower of Jesus.

“Agwantada,” George said telling the younger man that he did know all about him. “Hatljadohvsgi. Advsqu. Ejula Edoda Galvdihe

gininvsido. Yowa jiyoseho, nihiv Jisa hiyoseho. Asesgina, ejula Edoda enoseho. Uwasvda uwanda doust doyu gesv. Yowa yi-ga. Ale Jisa yiga. Asesgina nigada egidoda.”

Summer translated for the rest what the two men had said.

“Are you Nighthawk?”

“Do you know that I follow Jesus?”

“Yes, I know you are a preacher. I am also a preacher. We’ve both been sent by the Creator. I call Him Yowa. You call Him Jesus but we both call Him Father. Only He knows which is truly right. Whether it is Yowa or Jesus. But He’s the Father of us all.”

“I know the Nighthawks love our Father in Heaven. We Christians do too,” Cody said. “I know that both our people believe in the Spirit of God, that He lives in His children. But I also know that the Nighthawks don’t believe in Jesus, the Son of God. Maybe someday they will.”

George Autumn smiled and said in Cherokee, “Perhaps. But don’t the Christians say their God is three in one?”

“Maybe you’re closer than most folks think,” Cody said returning the older man’s smile.

“Maybe closer than Christians,” Summer said.¹¹⁹

The Nighthawk theological position on the acceptance of Christ remains murky in this passage (and throughout *Kholvn*), and despite Clearwater’s affirmation that they acknowledge God and the Holy Spirit—and his two-out-of-three-ain’t-bad optimism—Autumn suggests that acceptance of one is sufficient and that the mystery of the trinity, which has escaped most Christians’ full understanding, recommends an intellectual and spiritual humility.¹²⁰ Moccasin’s closing jab, like the Keetoowah constitution’s claiming of the Holy Ghost, presumably with the insights it imparts, goes one step farther in proposing the possibility of Nighthawk spiritual superiority. Perhaps her reaction voices Guess’s distaste for the judgmental and racialist attitudes of some Christians toward the stomp dance, the experience of which he describes in an interview with Cherokee literary scholar Chris Teuton:

¹¹⁹ Guess 109-10.

¹²⁰ It may also be the case that the society or grounds to which Guess belongs has not codified its relationship to Christianity the way the Keetoowah Society has.

...it was up to us, which way we wanted to go, the way of Christianity or the old ways. I really never had a preference all my life. I'd go to church with them [his parents], and sometimes I'd go to a stomp dance. And there are a lot of people like that now. In this day, they'll go to both. But the thing was the Christian communities looked down on the stomp dance. There's not so much of that now, but there's still a little bit of it. But the stomp dance people never had a bad word to say about Christianity, which was always kind of funny to me...It doesn't matter to me which one I go to. They're both places of worship, and I know who I'm worshipping. Being acquainted with both worlds, I was able to translate it into *Kholvn*.¹²¹

The translation to which Guess refers turns up in several ways. That Guess narrates Autumn and Clearwater's exchange first in Cherokee and subsequently translates it more or less verbatim into English enunciates language itself as an important marker of cultural identity and as a middle ground. While Clearwater importantly speaks Cherokee, all the other Cherokee protagonists but Moccasin do so haltingly if at all, and the two of them thus fulfill important roles as linguistic as well as cultural mediators. Guess himself linguistically translates in multiple ways, both through the narrator and in his choice of writing in transliterated Cherokee instead of the Sequoyan syllabary, opening the Cherokee passages to audiences who cannot read Cherokee. On one hand, Guess is thus able achieve one of his "underlying goals" of helping "people to be learning something without really realizing they're learning something...I put in words or traditions or history hoping that it will stay with the reader, whatever it is that they pick up."¹²² On the other, he does something quite significant despite its obviousness: he composes fiction in Cherokee. This is no small thing, to offer Cherokee passages of creative writing, however brief, to Cherokee-reading audiences, helping to inaugurate a people's literature in their language. Though Cherokee readers are perhaps the primary intended audience of such sections, Guess is quick to let other readers in on the story with distinctly democratic

¹²¹ Teuton 155.

¹²² Teuton 172.

accessibility. In my experience, most contemporary Cherokee speakers are similarly accommodating to non-speakers, offering quick summaries, explanations, and vocabulary lessons as they carry on conversations. They by and large want to teach the language and want others, Cherokee and non-, to learn it if they are willing. Their amicability, like Guess's linguistic openness, stands at odds with the stereotypical view of fullbloods or traditionalists as standoffish and private.

Much of Guess's humor comes from linguistic tricks with a bathetic Cherokee/English language creolization or with the difficulties non-speakers can have with Cherokee, such as when the characters first learn about the ravenmocker from Eric and Tom Trueblood's father: "He said he had a dream about a ball of fire but he called it a . . . , [Eric] thought a second. 'A Colon.' Cody shook his head and laughed. 'Colon?' Tom asked. 'That's some kinda mark when you're writing, ain't it?' 'It's got something to do with your insides,' Ira offered. . . 'What's a Colon?' Eeya asked. 'Actually, it's Kholvn,' Cody corrected giving the word [its] proper pronunciation. 'Legend stuff. A story to scare kids with when they won't go to bed or come in after dark.'" ¹²³ Such peculiar linguistic false friends provide endless opportunities for joking about linguistic differences.

Sharing Clearwater's skepticism of oral traditions, most of the Cherokee characters except Autumn, Moccasin, and Longbush are at some distance from both the Cherokee language and Keetoowah traditions. Though he announces himself a Baptist preacher, in the story itself, Clearwater functions more as an intermediary than as an exhorter, and in fact his doubts about Christianity rival the conflict with Longbush's black magic for centrality. Guess has said Clearwater's seeking paralleled his own: "Cody was modeled after me and at the time I was kind of battling which way of life was right, the old ways or Christianity. I finally realized, like Cody did,

¹²³ Guess 93.

that it's not about Christianity or the old ways; it's not whether Keetoowah beliefs are right or whether the Christian world was right. It's faith. Faith in what we believe, that's the ultimate reality, that's the ultimate truth."¹²⁴ When at the end of *Kholvn* the assembled protagonists struggle to defeat the original demon-ravenmocker Nicotani, Clearwater has an epiphany: "'It's not about the differences between the Nighthawk Keetoowah religion and the Christian religion,' Cody said... 'It's not about religion at all...'" Behind the preacher, the prayers of the three drifted up. Ira and Morgan spoke English while Summer chanted ancient Keetoowah words in a soft, lilting tone. Around them a soft, pure white light began to radiate. 'It's all about faith, Cody said. 'Faith in the Creator! In Yihowa! In Jesus! In God!'"¹²⁵ Revisiting the question raised in the meeting between Autumn and Clearwater of how to address God, this section similarly names many names, apparently verifying the medicine man's claim that only God himself has knowledge of which is proper, but also suggesting that many may work. This admission of the limits of language, the boundaries of the knowable, is a paradoxical strength of a pluralistic approach to knowledge, insofar as it is loathe to closing the door on new interpretations or applications of traditions, practices, or beliefs, not seeing in them a once-and-for-all "answer" to what they might mean. The faith that Clearwater/Guess translates here is an admittedly monist solution. I do not mean in translating "their" statements in *Kholvn* in turn to assert that they are "really" saying something else, or that faith is less important than the text makes it, but the text itself does certainly do other things—and the very communication of the idea of a faith available to disparate communities is not least among them.

The theme of a uniting faith is represented in *Kholvn* through the symbology of the White Path, discussed in the preceding chapter, which is represented as a white

¹²⁴ Teuton 176.

¹²⁵ Guess 216.

cross connecting people from the four quarters of the Earth. In the novel, the main sets of protagonists converge on Cherokee country (which Cherokees have traditionally understood as occupying the movable center of the universe) from each of the four directions. The novel does not mention the White Path by name, but the imagery it evokes leaves little doubt as to the cultural allusion invoked by the description of George Autumn's vision calling him to help against the kholvn:

In the last vision, he saw the people. They were coming from the four points of the compass. And that, he thought, was as it should be. Two, probably a man and his wife, came from the north. They were Indians. The man was Tsalagi. The woman was Ayywiya, what kind, he wasn't sure. Perhaps Lakota. The man hid behind a shield which was both good and bad. If a person was hidden by a shield he was safe but that person wasn't able to see.

A woman, filled with tears, came from the east. She was bringing a friend. This was strange. They were both Aniyonega. White folk. The woman would overflow with the tears she so desperately held back.

From the west came a sad man. He was tired beyond his years. At his side was his son... Though the sad man was drained of strength, he was a man of the Father In Heaven and knew where he could receive more. He came reluctantly. The man of the Father was Tsalagi. His son was half.

The old man saw himself coming from the south. He was hurrying, trying to meet the others before something happened.¹²⁶

Keetoowah leader Crosslin Smith further explains that early oral histories held that “you must have medicine from the east, and you must have medicine from the west, then you must have medicine from the north, and you must have medicine from the south” in maintaining the laws governing the proper loving and connected relationships among various peoples and with the Creator. Smith represents this system with four colors of people (red, white, black, and yellow) positioned in a circle quartered by a white cross, symbolizing the “white righteous road,” “the first cross of extreme deep religious meaning” tying people together that they might remember each

¹²⁶ Guess 100.

other.¹²⁷ According to James Mooney, each direction is associated with specific symbolic meaning: the East with power or war, the South with peace, the West with death, and the North with defeat.¹²⁸

Through his characters' spatial affiliations, Guess demonstrates that other symbolic associations are possible in the traditional framework and that the ethnological account of Cherokee cosmology is neither definitive nor exhaustive.¹²⁹ Autumn's traditionalism matches up conventionally with southern peaceful associations, but the police officer Ira Jammer's northern connection is less clear. Jammer does experience loss through the death of his Lakota wife Angela (called Eeya, or "Pumpkin" in Cherokee), but her dying may not be especially telling—Guess has stated that he decided which characters would die by pulling their names out of a can.¹³⁰ Jammer's character is the most empiricist in the novel, perhaps associating him with a pragmatic secularism that like his badge, "shields" him from problems too esoteric. The sorrow connected with the white woman Morgan Booker coming from the East also expands on the customary interpretation of war or power as a positive site of aggressive assertion. Having fled her hometown after a romantic falling apart with Clearwater and the death of her parents, Booker's sadness is the product of a lack of meaningful connections with other people, particularly with Clearwater. The strangeness that Autumn feels extends from the linkage of the East with "white folk"

¹²⁷ C. Smith, "The Good Mind."

¹²⁸ Mooney, *Myths* 431. The colors Mooney has corresponding to the directions—blue to north, white to south, red to east, and black to west—are separate from the colors corresponding to peoples in Smith's formulation.

¹²⁹ Too quick an understanding of directional symbology has often led critics to claim that the traditional association of the West with death made Cherokees philosophically fearful of Removal in the 1830s, refusing to discuss the traditionalist Old Settlers' earlier move to Arkansas and the oral histories of western exploration, for instance. The Removal problem and the philosophical responses and spiritual considerations connected with it are not so tidily summarized.

¹³⁰ Teuton 175.

come not to conquer but to ally and perhaps unite with the Cherokee. Clearwater, too, complicates the pat joining of the West with death. He is plagued less by death itself than by doubt, about whether he serves a benevolent God, whether he is worthy of loving or being loved, and other problems. Death, Clearwater's stand-in for the problem of evil, may dwell in the West, but so does the preacher, led there by God's calling and possessed of strengths of importance to others.

In the symbolic structure of the White Path, each component requires the others, not only in a binary pairing, but in a reticulated plurality. In the penultimate graveyard battle, the united group defeats Longbush by sculpting a representation of the White Path cross. Searching for a way to defeat the ravenmocker, "Summer walked to a wreath of lilies. A wooden cross was suspended with wire in the middle of the circle. She studied it carefully. There was something... Summer tore the cross from the wreath and threw it on the ground then proceeded to stomp [dance?] on it. Morgan noticed the Nighthawk Keetoowah girl desecrating the religious object and screamed for her to stop... 'I'm not after the cross,' Summer said holding it up. 'I want the wood... Cedar!!... Help me,' she cried... 'I need three more.'"¹³¹ The heroes position the planks at corners, using the pieces of the Christian cross to shape a physically and metaphorically larger one. In short, they trick Longbush into impaling himself with them. In his defeat, sacred medicinal properties of the cedar in Cherokee traditions converge with the Biblical symbolism of the lily,¹³² and the cross of Christ merges with the cross of the White Path. Summer Moccasin's declaration that she needs "three more" refers not so much to her need for three other planks of cedar as to that for the integration of the powers represented by the crosses. Morgan Booker, however, does not aid the others in dismantling and reconstructing the crosses (also in wreaths,

¹³¹ Guess 207-08.

¹³² Mooney, *Myths* 240, 421; Matthew 6:28, among other references.

i.e., encompassed in a natural circle) and only “watche[s] broodingly,”¹³³ perhaps suggesting that the brunt of the work of coming to the table in religious understanding is borne by the Indians, but she is at least present during the conflict and does later join the others against the demon ravenmocker. The elements of the entire structure are thus united, not one element coupled with second, but each to every other: the Cherokee and the white, the Christian and the Keetoowah, the sacred and the secular, the fullblood and the mixedblood, the pragmatic and the idealist, the aggressive and the peaceful, the progressive and the traditional—each is connected not just to a dichotomous counterpart but to every part of the whole.

Guess encodes other traditional principled practices in *Kholvn* without parading their distinctiveness; he indeed intentionally obscures some. Like the language, many traditions are in the public domain in a sense, but others are kept more private. Guess warns his readers at the outset, “I have deliberately omitted songs from the Keetoowah Nighthawk religion in keeping respect for the ‘old ways.’ But their teachings, I believe, are held intact within the words of this book along with the teachings of Christianity.”¹³⁴ He also admits to self-censuring his work in his interview with Teuton, claiming, “it’s a fine line on what I want to expound upon and something that I just want to mention and not go into much detail about. And, of course, it’s mostly when I’m talking about the medicine or some beliefs that I have to watch how much I do let go of. It’s kind of fun sometimes, trying to see how far I can go without really actually letting the cat out of the bag.”¹³⁵ Much of the reticence about certain beliefs and practices assuredly comes from the spotty history of relations

¹³³ Guess 208.

¹³⁴ Guess, “A Word from the Author” n.p.

¹³⁵ Teuton 162.

between traditionalists and academic-types—first ethnologists, then anthropologists, now literary critics—who often had little regard for their subjects’ privacy or anything but their own agendas in their interactions, failings I hope to avoid, needless to say.

Despite his elisions, several of Guess’s references to traditional dispositions, like purification ceremonies and dream interpretation, are apparent to those literate in Cherokee culture. Alluding to a going to water ceremony, for instance, Guess cursorily writes, “George and Summer attended the medicine council where they walked through the cleansing cedar smoke and were taken to a nearby stream where they were prayed over as they washed the evil away.”¹³⁶ He explains this section further to Teuton: “What I do when I’m writing is, like in *Kholvn*, I went back through and read it, and I had to delete quite a bit of stuff. For example, the good medicine man and his granddaughter go to water, and I describe the ceremony. Later on, I thought, ‘That’s not good. I better take that out.’ And so I kind of edited it down to where they said they went to water and splashed, and that’s all I kept on that.”¹³⁷ The lack of detail on the actual practices or prayers involved in going to water helps maintain the ceremony’s integrity to the extent that while some readers or researchers might recognize some splashing for the religious ceremony it represents, they could not hope to replicate it substantively, discouraging cultural appropriation or at least obviating the forgery of any such pretensions. As Teuton observes in his questioning, Guess’s withholding clear explication of such cultural practices excludes many readers or at least keeps them from as full an appreciation of his novels as they might have.¹³⁸ His choice of an audience narrowed by his works’ expectations of familiarity with the subject matter and even the physical availability of the books themselves parallels the

¹³⁶ Guess 169.

¹³⁷ Teuton 162.

¹³⁸ Teuton 162.

progressive traditionalism of the narrative insofar as both it and Guess's act of writing to an audience conversant in tradition demonstrate a conservatism that manages community change through community involvement.

Guess references this community vetting in several places in *Kholvn*, such as when George and Summer consult with group of Keetoowah leaders: "they talked with the Council of Elders of the Stomp Grounds they attended. The old man and his granddaughter told the group of the night before [fighting the ravenmockers] and the fact that George didn't think the work was over. He told them of the vision that wasn't complete yet. The Council agreed with them. Before the two left, the Council sang a prayer of protection over them and those who would soon work with them. And when they finished, the Elders felt that victory was at hand."¹³⁹ This scenario closely follows the method of solving problems described by Benny Smith in the preceding chapter and also testifies to anthropologist Robert Thomas' observation that "vision seeking among the Cherokees...is controlled and channeled by the group."¹⁴⁰ While we do not learn whether the council elders experienced a vision like Autumn's, every member of the novel's major collective—the progressive, conservative, moderate, Keetoowah, Cherokee, Christian, and agnostic Indians and non-Indians assembled to fight the cannibal—was visited by a dream that imparted some sense of the trouble to come and the roles they would together play in confronting it. Such supernaturalism may be conventional in horror or fantastical genres, but in the case of *Kholvn* it takes on an apparent culturally traditional dimension even in its pluralistic application.

Cody Clearwater's calling is especially intriguing in light of what we have so far seen of dreams in Cherokee literature. In his dream, "He stood on a high bluff beside someone. There was no need to turn to see who it was. He could feel the love

¹³⁹ Guess 144.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas 217.

and peace radiating from the person. Below them at the bottom of the bluff, a picturesque, whitewashed, slat-board church building stood.”¹⁴¹ The parallels with Catharine Brown’s dream are striking—the personal contact with a deity presumably Jesus, but who is unnamed; the ascendance on a high bluff; the experience of God in nature, and of course in a dream. In terms of genre, *Kholvn* and the *Memoir* could hardly compare, and even in these pointed passages the similarities between the two are not so close as to suggest that Guess was borrowing from or even referencing Brown—which makes the cultural continuities across almost two hundred years that much more surprising. Other traditional principles and practices connected to, say, names, clans, other stories from oral histories, land, and more coruscate throughout *Kholvn* and Guess’s other works, but I’ll need to set aside their discussion for now.

Again like Brown, Guess is concerned with the spiritual and cultural well-being of Cherokee people, and *Kholvn* is manifestly conscious of contemporary social and material problems, although they require a different set of considerations than Brown faced. Chief among the issues Guess takes up are problems stemming from American racism, like economic disadvantage, unemployment, and anxiety over mixed-race romantic relationships. Other social concerns he addresses include problems like substance abuse and discrimination based on blood quantum, that while preconditioned by American racism might be alleviated by Cherokees’ own agency. This social consciousness that subtly figures throughout the novel helps explain the seemingly incongruous project Clearwater proposes in the denouement.

More or less out of the blue, Clearwater announces that he intends to take the lessons he has learned fighting the ravenmocker with group support to the political arena. The passage reads, “‘You know?’ Cody said thoughtfully. ‘The Cherokees have always been divided by something or other. They’ve never been truly at peace with

¹⁴¹ Guess 3.

one another. But I found out that if we would only try to get along...we can do it. And that's what I'm gonna tell the councils..on both sides. We CAN get along. I[n] fact, we must get along if we're gonna survive.”¹⁴² The councils he refers to here are not those of the elders at the stomp grounds, but the Cherokee Nation's and United Keetoowah Band's political councils (monsters for a sequel?), that have been at odds over policy, land, resources, power, control, etc., for as long as anyone can remember. These conflicts continue today, with the Cherokee Nation claiming authority over lands the UKB calls theirs and at multiple turns opposing the UKB's efforts to exercise sovereignty by moving land into trust, administering housing funds, and claiming jurisdiction, for instance. The official position from the Cherokee Nation claims the UKB government is little more than an upstart that has no claims to jurisdiction, treaty rights, or successor status to the Cherokee nation's claims on the United States, although the Cherokee heritage of UKB members is undisputed.¹⁴³ The rhetoric against their right of self-governance, however, appears increasingly anxious over claims to land within its borders and the confusion that would result from an *imperium in imperio*, applying without irony the same logic that opposed Cherokee nationhood in the east in the early nineteenth century. For its part, the UKB has attempted to establish its legitimate governance on a platform of superior authenticity by making disingenuous historical claims attempting to establish an uninterrupted history of Keetoowah leadership steeped in traditionalism and bloodedness from the time before European contact, and by simultaneously challenging the legal and cultural legitimacy of the Cherokee Nation.¹⁴⁴ Several times the two sovereignties have without apparent

¹⁴² Guess 222.

¹⁴³ Chad Smith, “Letter to Cherokee Citizens from Chad Smith,” *Cherokee Phoenix*, 2005, online, accessed 16 July 2009, <<http://www.cherokeephoenix.org/1542/Article.aspx>>.

¹⁴⁴ “Keetoowah History Essay,” United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians website, n.d., online, accessed 7 July 2009, <<http://www.keetoowahcherokee.org/documents/history/historyessay.pdf>>;

irony looked to federal courts to settle questions over who is entitled to what rights of independence.

Again standing in for Guess, Clearwater references such divisions that hinder Cherokee unity and that have direct effects on the daily lives of Cherokee citizens. For Guess, “getting along” or being “at peace” with each other does not entail the eradication of differences among Cherokees, for even the four survivors of the encounter with the *kholvn* after their victory “went their own separate ways to collect themselves and see which way their lives would go.”¹⁴⁵ Clearwater does not advocate a single way of believing or a single set of practices in helping Cherokees survive as a coherent people. There is not even mention of a single government. The focus is on working for survivance, not just by looking past difference to commonality, but rather by marshalling the resources represented in difference. Guess, like Brown and other women who took up leadership roles in religious communities, extends recognition and respect for others’ power; he does not look to drain it off nor eradicate it—such is not the strategy everywhere, as the next chapter will show.

There must indeed be space for difference, and there must be room for differing, that is, practices of diverging, disagreeing, dissenting. While the “councils on both sides” have become skilled at disagreeing with each other, the opportunities even for discussion have narrowed considerably within the tribes, as the political leaders take ever-stronger measures to fortify their positions, such the UKB’s disallowance of dual tribal citizenship. Again with distinct social consciousness, Guess early in the novel presents a similar state of affairs when people traded authority for security but wound up with coercion and fear. The prologue to *Kholvn*

“UKB Chief Responds to CNO’s Public Statement,” United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians website, 18 Jan. 2008, online, accessed 7 July 2009, <<http://www.keetoowahcherokee.org/1182008.html>>.

¹⁴⁵ Guess 221.

relates the oral history of the anikutani, the mythical caste of priests whose tyrannical rule finally became so egregious that the Cherokees rose against and executed them. Imagining a lone survivor of the massacre, Guess invents the origin of the kholvn. At the novel's outset, this is the story Clearwater hears from his grandfather: "It was a horrible and bloody lesson that needed to be passed down. And maybe, if the Complete People were lucky, they would never have to learn it again."¹⁴⁶ This story and the story that remains to be told of how the councils might resolve, accommodate, or perhaps even synthesize their differences bookend the novel's cultural and religious messages in a politically and socially engaged framework that characterizes much of Cherokee literature, from Brown to Boudinot to Guess. Encouraging the Cherokee and UKB councils with a message of peace may not seem revolutionary or dangerous, but if a culture gives itself over to control, to a for-or-against politics, alternative courses can invite remarkable overreaction—disavowal, disenfranchisement, and worse. As the next section on the traditional dispositions of dissent demonstrates, there are indeed bloody lessons to be learned.

¹⁴⁶ Guess iii. "Complete people" is an alternative rendering of the Cherokees' name for themselves, aniyvwiya, usually translated "real people."

SECTION TWO:

ଶିକ୍ଷାକ୍ରମ

The last section discussed gendered religious developments in Cherokee culture with an embedded critique of how politicism both partially structured the direction of those historical changes and was itself partially restructured by women's exercise of agency. This section will offer a complementary reading of a centralizing trend in Cherokee political development together with an embedded critique of how gender and culture were simultaneously implicated in and suffered from a turn away from more democratic, traditional principled practices, with an eye towards exploring the reticulated resonances observable along but two channels in the intricate braid of the *habitus*. In this section's combined chapters I undertake a reading of the political rhetoric of two key figures in the Removal crisis of the 1830s, Elias Boudinot and John Ross, both of them intellectual and political leaders who helped shape the modern Cherokee Nation at a pivotal moment but found themselves on opposite sides of the debate over the fraudulent New Echota treaty, which provided for the final cession of all eastern lands and authorized removal to the west. Boudinot helped found the *Cherokee Phoenix* (soon renamed the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian Advocate*), the first American Indian newspaper, which was written in both Cherokee and English and served as its editor for better than four years. His initial opposition to and subsequent support of Removal in his *Cherokee Phoenix* editorials and his pamphlet *Letters and Other Papers Relating to Cherokee Affairs: Being a Reply to Sundry Publications Authorized by John Ross*, respectively, inaugurate a complex body of Cherokee political literature that demonstrates both the alarming potential for factionalism in plurality and the equally alarming cleavages engendered by the suppression of dissent

that accompanied centralization of governance, a shift from consensus-based rule with causes reaching back to the earliest interactions with white colonists.

Against the clandestine formulations of policy that attend centralized government, in his late writing Boudinot publically aired his views on the impossibility of remaining in the east. He was not attempting an overthrow of Ross's government, nor the installation of self-serving rule by the mixedblood class of which he was a member (as was Ross); even few of his detractors would deny he worked with the best of intentions for the material, political, and spiritual interests of Cherokee people. He believed the *Phoenix* a proper space for publically explaining the difficult realities of their situation and debating the merits of their Pyrrhic options but ran into utter refusal on the part of the government to allow such open deliberation. Against what his critics have called Boudinot's assimilationist program, they have attempted to identify definitive characteristics of Cherokee identity, and many have found in John Ross a figure invested with cultural authority, having served as chief for more than thirty years. They have themselves endowed Ross's resistant position with an ethnological permanence that he purposefully deflected, using rhetoric surprisingly similar to Boudinot's, and calculated to persuade similar, non-Indian audiences. These persuasive arguments critics have unfortunately come to regard as authentic and abiding declarations of Cherokee philosophical fundamentals. Seldom has such de-historicized credulity been extended to political rhetoric as has been to Ross's.

Twin failures to situate historically and politically the orature and literature narrating resistance to Removal and to consider its primarily persuasive purpose has led to an objectification of and implicit trust in nationalist rhetoric, and a simultaneous equation of "assimilationist" positions with subjectivity, situatedness, and contamination—indeed with "mixedbloodedness" itself. Concomitantly, all resistance to and resisters of removal are gathered together under the antonymous (and besides

Ross, nearly anonymous) “fullblood” category, in a continuation of the antagonistic assimilated/ traditional dichotomy with the addition of the pernicious language of eugenics. By examining the practices and rhetoric of Ross and Boudinot, the unwitting figureheads of the fullblood and mixedblood camps, I will attempt to unsettle these categories that undergird so much of the history and critical treatment of Indian America. I am not attempting to prove that the mixedblood class is pure invention, nor that its loosely defined members were nowhere involved in schemes to appropriate power in ways that undermined fundamental features of Cherokee society. I argue instead that advocacy of Removal and mixedbloodedness are far from synonymous and conversely that resistance to Removal equates neither with fullbloodedness nor traditionalism; in short, the presence of one disposition, belief, or practice does not necessarily indicate acquiescence to a full range of bi-categorized others but rather points up the heterogeneity of agency. In the complexity of Cherokees’ diverse social and historical circumstances, individuals, families, and communities employed an array of strategies designed to protect their ways of life broadly considered as they best saw fit. For many commonly thought fullbloods, this meant backing progressive changes to governance structure in the development of a centralized state; for many mixedbloods, it meant utilizing and developing traditional models of dissent in nascent political spaces like the pages of the *Phoenix*. I argue against the tendencies to uncover traditional roots for practices of which critics approve and to dismiss as assimilationist those they condemn, and advocate instead for a perspective that observes the continual interplay of tradition and change and that evaluates the practices linking them not by a synchronic politics of identity but by a broad measure of the practices’ efficacy.

Over and against binaristic dialecticism, the debates between Ross and Boudinot are more productively considered within the (de)structure of the centralization of power, which vacated the discursive spaces where dissent and debate

forged consensus. Considering the Removal crisis in the context of Cherokee governance's central gravitation, Boudinot's public disagreement ironically emerges as more traditional than Ross's unilaterality as he struggled to accommodate the needs for decisive and authoritative rule of the nascent nation within the traditional political structure. Ultimately, Boudinot and other treaty party members believed themselves effectively disempowered and censored from arguing their points either to Cherokee people or to the government. When Jackson's administration contrived a scenario whereby they could at last exercise agency, rightly or wrongly, they usurped the right to speak on the nation's behalf in a final betrayal of the principles of open debate and voluntary consent to which they formerly expressed allegiance. The next chapter will offer a summary of cultural practices, beliefs, and structures connected with deliberation and governance, the changes they underwent, and an overview of the historical context in which Boudinot and Ross faced the dangers of the US government's Removal policy; the subsequent chapter will undertake a close reading of their writings and speeches in relief against this dispositional framework.

CHAPTER THREE

Town and Country:

Contexts and Principled Practices of Deliberation

The traditional Cherokee political milieu was anchored in the town (and the social in the clan), of which there were around forty at the turn of the nineteenth century, down from more than sixty in the eighteenth. Towns ruled themselves through an interrelated system of governance that incorporated power structures political, religious, and social in an integration that ensured—even mandated—a far-ranging diversity of opinion on public questions from several groups by no means regimentally like-minded. A prevailing principle of egalitarianism encouraged widespread participation from a town's people at internal town councils and in inter-town, proto-national meetings. A remarkable feature of Cherokee political philosophy was its nigh-total lack of enforcement mechanisms at the local and national levels, features now considered requisite not just for the polity's operation but for its very definition. In the absence of coercive governmental bodies and even legitimating principles of such institutionalized coercion, leaders coordinated consensus through the exercise of persuasive influence, good judgment, respect for others' autonomy, and representative solicitation. The US's perennial demands for land cessions challenged these methods of achieving harmonious relations and seemed to require a more deliberate and consolidated political apparatus to be headed by those acculturatively skilled. A developing class of wealthy mixedbloods like John Ross and Elias Boudinot emerged in the Removal crisis of the early nineteenth century to preserve the nation, if not in the towns then at least in the country. Set against the backdrop of the traditional political world, their stories of permutation, progress, and perseverance unmask the

contradictions, complexities, and continuations of the *habitus*'s infinite generative capacity crudely disguised by superficial dichotomous veneers.

Towns were autonomous population centers that shared a council house and ceremonial grounds and were linked by kinship, language, and other indices of self-identification. The towns were the centers of political and religious life. The average town of some three hundred people and three hundred acres also shared food, land, and community resources.¹ In cultivating common fields and orchards, they practiced *gadugi*, a principle and practice of economic and labor cooperation that required input from all able members of the collective. Raymond Fogelson and Paul Kutsche note the linguistic similarity between *gadugi* and the word for town, *skadugi*, suggesting etymologically the relationships between the philosophies and practices of being and working together in a place.² The drop in the number of towns reflects the shift from the tribalist agrarian economy before the eighteenth century toward the market economy of the fur trade that accompanied the Cherokees' increasing reliance on trade goods, together with their adoption of Euroamerican agricultural principles. These entailed several changes to crop diversification, gendered labor practices, and more, but most importantly in terms of settlement demographics, emphasized individual over communal labor. The United States' Indian civilization program also promoted individual land ownership—when Cherokees participated in such programs that brought plows, spinning wheels, looms, and missionaries, they abandoned urban

¹ Betty Anderson Smith, "Distribution of Eighteenth-Century Cherokee Settlements," *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History*, ed. Duane King (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1979) 46-57; Russell Thornton, *The Cherokees: A Population History* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990) 32; William McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986) 8.

² Raymond Fogelson and Paul Kutsche, "Cherokee Economic Cooperatives: The Gadugi," *Symposium on Cherokee and Iroquois Culture*, ed. William Fenton and John Gulick, Bulletin 180, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1961) 88. Durbin Feeling has "town" as "*gadhvi*" in his *Cherokee-English Dictionary*, ed. William Pulte, Cherokee Nation (Tahlequah: Heritage Printing, 1975) 93.

centers, such as they were, for more isolated family farms. By no means did all Cherokees live in towns prior to the shrinking nuclearity of the nineteenth century, however. In her demographic study, Betty Anderson Smith suggests that many of the 160 geographic names she finds in the eighteenth-century historical record likely denote “semipermanent hamlets” that “were probably smaller villages occupied for a while, then abandoned as natural resources were depleted.”³ I pause to note this rural diversity to suggest that even as I attempt to unsettle the nationalist emphasis on the history of the centrist government by shifting focus to the political structure of the towns, the histories of significant parts of the tribe remain untold.

The general structure of executive leadership persisted through settlements’ dispersal well into the nineteenth century. During times of peace, the executive position was filled by a white chief who oversaw internal matters, organized agricultural labor, and administered the town council; during times of war a red chief took over leadership. There is some evidence that red chiefs acted as representatives in towns’ external commerce, although white chiefs were also involved in international negotiations. Both in times of peace and war, the chiefs led by example and persuasion, having next to no coercive powers. A council of medicine men or priests advised both red and white chiefs—in addition to the rest of the populace—on the religious implications of problems big and small. Even after their deposition in pre-contact history for overstepping the authority granted them by the people,⁴ their input remained requisite on policy and conduct both private and public. In addition to the priests, deputy chiefs, and assistants, town chiefs were aided in their offices by two male advisory councils made up of clan representatives and elders in general called

³ Anderson Smith 47, 57.

⁴ Raymond Fogelson, “Who Were the Aní-Kutáni? An Excursion into Cherokee Historical Thought,” *Ethnohistory* 31.4 (1984): 255-63 assembles the most complete account.

Beloved Men. These in turn were advised by the female council and the female heads of the clans, who generally did not publically speak during council meetings but advised privately, both before meetings and during private caucuses while town councils were in session.⁵

A woman who had earned renown in war was known as *Ghighau* or Beloved Woman. As heads of female councils, such women could publically affect policy, and at times such as deciding the fate of prisoners, whose release or punishment entailed serious international political ramifications, even determine it. Historian Theda Perdue implies that women's councils may not have been standing bodies but also suggests that women may have regularly caucused together during town councils. Whatever the duration of the women's councils, it seems clear that they were readily convened. My focus on the town council, where most women were not allowed a voice, might seem to suggest that women exercised little political power, but theorists of Cherokee traditionalism like Perdue, Rennard Strickland, and Laura Donaldson dispel such an illusion. They demonstrate that a great many institutions generally assumed to be the domain of the political state apparatus in fact came under the purview of the social clan structure, and the seven clans in the Cherokee matrilineal system came under the leadership of the clan women. The administration of justice in the case of homicide, for instance, was invested in clans through application of the retaliatory "blood law," which required the life of the killer or a stand-in from his clan.⁶

⁵ Fred Gearing, *Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century*, *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association* 64.5, Part 2, Memoir 93 (1962): 23-27; Fogelson and Kutsche 91-92; Duane Champagne, "Symbolic Structure and Political Change in Cherokee Society," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 8 (1983): 87; Duane Champagne, "Institutional and Cultural Order in Early Cherokee Society: A Sociological Interpretation," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 15 (1990): 12-19; V. Richard Persico, "Early Nineteenth-Century Cherokee Political Organization," *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History*, 93-95.

⁶ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1998) 41-59, 144-45, 228; Rennard Strickland, *Fire and the Spirits: Cherokee Law from Clan to Court* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1975) 22-26; Laura Donaldson, "But We Are Your Mothers, You Are Our Sons: Gender, Sovereignty and the Nation in Early Cherokee Women's Writing," forthcoming; also see

The clan figured prominently into the shape of the traditional polity through its ubiquitous presence throughout the *habitus*. Although Duane Champagne argues that high structural differentiation among social, religious, and political systems in broadly considered Cherokee society facilitated rapid centralization, particularly at the national inter-town level, he also explores the degree of integration of these spheres both nationally and locally, identifying limited ways through which clan and religious structures facilitated the development of a national political identity.⁷ Strickland argues, “The clan was, without doubt, the major institution exercising *legal* powers,” over, for instance, marriage, property, inheritance, religious ceremonial duties, murder, sexuality, parenting, witchcraft, and other domains, in contradistinction to *political* power.⁸ Although clans were not given discrete positions in town or national council meetings, they did have a representative voice in both, given the influential role of the clan elders council in addition to their pervasive powers in internal affairs. National councils were practically non-existent for most of the eighteenth century, but the presence of clan members in all towns large enough to have a council house and ceremonial grounds united Cherokees in a national-social structure.⁹

Further, religious ceremonies provided opportunities for towns to interact under formal circumstances and lent a widespread spiritual dimension to political processes, going beyond the priests’ influence on political leaders. Fred Gearing points out the strategic fortuity of scheduling national councils to correspond with major

Raymond Fogelson, “Cherokee Notions of Power,” *The Anthropology of Power: Ethnographic Studies from Asia, Oceania, and the New World*, ed. Raymond Fogelson and Richard Adams (New York: Academic Press, 1977) 192-93.

⁷ Champagne, “Institutional and Cultural Order” 21, 15-16, respectively.

⁸ R. Strickland 27, emphasis added.

⁹ R. Strickland 25-26; Persico 95; Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 46; Champagne, “Institutional Order” 11-12; Fogelson and Kutsche 90-91; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 11.

harvesting, planting, and other ceremonies to foster a sense of communal well being and reciprocal relationships.¹⁰ Not only were medicine men or priests invested with permanent advisory roles to the chiefs, they also presided over ceremonies and acted as the principal interpreters and keepers of the sacred laws governing belief and behavior, all in a culture for which spirituality was warp and woof, informing perhaps every conceivable practice, from hunting to farming to marriage. In essence, medicine men represented and maintained the cultural repository.¹¹ A practice as common as making a hunting bow, for instance, requires adherence to spiritually and scientifically informed methods, such as knowing when the tree should be harvested, and which sides should be used or discarded based on directional energies. We can only speculate on the vast religious considerations of international politics. Although Champagne argues that medicine men primarily exercised power locally because of the limited scope of national consolidation, their influence was indeed considerable given the importance of the medicine men to social life and to the structure of the town as the fundamental civic unit. In one instance retold by Champagne, a priest's counsel weighed enough to prevent a group of Cherokees from joining their insistent British allies in a war party because his divination from a crystal told him the time wasn't right for military action.¹²

Neither priest, chief, nor clan elder levied much coercive power, especially in regard to political action, but in the absence of institutionalized cohesive power,

¹⁰ Gearing 4-5; also see R. Strickland 56; Fogelson and Kutsche 93.

¹¹ R. Strickland 10-12, 22; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 15-16; James Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," *7th Annual Report, 1885-88*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891, reprinted in *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder, and Cherokee, NC: Cherokee Heritage Books, 1982) 318; Raymond Fogelson, "The Conjuror in Eastern Cherokee Society," *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 5.2 (1980): 61; Benny Smith, "The Keetoowah Society of the Cherokee Indians," Master's thesis, Northwestern State College, Alva, OK, 1967, 6.

¹² Champagne, "Institutional and Cultural Order" 12-14.

Cherokee towns nevertheless maintained affiliations among each other, practiced a distinctive tribal identity, and leveraged a national political presence. Such connections persevered not on the basis of negative threats of retribution from a central authority, nor even from potential ostracization by other towns, but on a reciprocal respect for autonomy in harmonious relations. This ethical precept, which also guided interpersonal relationships—rooted in religion, incorporated in the clan, branching throughout the milieu—was the foundational principle organizing the non-binding, confederated form of Cherokee governance.¹³ Under such rule, towns’ decisions and actions were independent of others’, and while they could and did unite for particular purposes, during times of war, for instance, such partnerships were temporary and end-based, dissolving upon resolution of the crises occasioning their formation. Refusal to join with another town brought no reprisal,¹⁴ and similarly, individuals could not be compelled to enter into agreements to which they did not consent. Intrinsic recognition of and respect for the autonomy of towns and actors to associate and disassociate freely were encoded in the practices of coalition.¹⁵

For the sake of harmonious relations among autonomous agents, delegated leaders worked under the auspices of principled practices that ensured correspondence between their constituencies’ desires and the representations leaders made for them. In the event leaders did not act in accordance with consensus opinion, they could be

¹³ Gearing 30-36; John Loftin, “The ‘Harmony Ethic’ of the Conservative Eastern Cherokees: A Religious Interpretation,” *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 8.1 (1983): 40-45; Albert Wahrhaftig, “We Who Act Right: The Persistent Identity of Cherokee Indians,” *Currents in Anthropology: Essays in Honor of Sol Tax*, ed. Robert Henshaw (New York: Mouton, 1979) 262-64; Champagne, “Institutional and Cultural Order” 10.

¹⁴ Champagne, “Institutional and Cultural Order” 17, 19; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance* 8-11; Fogelson and Kutsche 97; Persico 93-95.

¹⁵ At the individual level, we could well read such autonomy in the liberal attitudes toward divorce. See Theda Perdue, ed., *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, by Elias Boudinot, originally published Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1983 (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996) 57-58.

deposed,¹⁶ but such measures were generally kept unnecessary through the chief mechanism for arriving at consensus: repeated and regular consultation with the elective communities. This habitual returning to represented bodies—to check in, to inform, for approval, for veto—kept them informed and regulated against misrepresentation. Gearing describes the series of deliberation, negotiation, and reporting through which consensus evolved:

...each clan attempted to reach a corporate opinion. The older men from the seven clans (the beloved men) then joined the village priestly officials and became for the moment the body of elders. They talked over the sentiments of the various clans. Then these beloved men talked again with their representative clans, reporting opinions of the other clans, then gathered again as elders, and so on. Probably both sets of discussions included public speeches; a general council probably gave the outward appearance of a New England town meeting, with un-New England-like caucuses going on intermittently. Councils continued in this loose manner for days or, with interruptions, for weeks.¹⁷

This “caucusing” recalls the communal vetting associated with the practice of gaining knowledge discussed in the first section. It survives in traditional communities in the shape of committees called to offer guidance on matters of debate, and it helped shape the Keetoowah Society’s revival of the stomp dance in the early 1900s.¹⁸ This communicative cycle ensured leaders’ accountability and the politic body’s active participation, and as a component disposition of the political *habitus*, was both integral to and representative of the practices generating and perpetuating the consensus-based model of local rule, premised upon harmonious living among autonomous agents.

Most researchers have tended to emphasize the negative or injunctive aspects of Cherokee dispositions. The harmony ethic, for instance, has been described by its

¹⁶ Champagne, “Institutional and Cultural Order” 15.

¹⁷ Gearing 39.

¹⁸ Fogelson, “Cherokee Notions of Power” 189; B. Smith 20.

discouragement of open conflict, but its positive injunction to give of resources generously bears closer examination. Similarly, we might reimagine the general sense of harmony not as a stasis we should avoid upsetting but as a protean practice itself—as “harmonizing”—requiring constant adjustment and fine-tuning, given the eternal flux of the *habitus* in which it operates. Most critics have similarly seen the sharp curtailment of leadership abilities, even in times of war, as a negative lack of coercive power or executive weakness.¹⁹ I understand the absence of centralized power rather as a positive power, but one retained by the people, through which they themselves formed the truly executive branch. Harmonizing into consensus required work, not aloofness, and in any event was not synonymous with unanimity but rather meant that a compromise that dissenters could abide had been reached until a better solution could be worked out. Missing from discussions of consensus and the harmony ethic is the sense of these as on-going, dynamic processes that had to be actively forged and re-forged in time, which as Gearing points out might take weeks. Other researchers reiterate the great deal of time required in consensus decision-making.²⁰ A prevailing egalitarianism mandated that all males could speak during council meetings, not only those elected to leadership roles, meaning the expressions of diverse viewpoints and points of contention were many. The harmony ethic discouraged overt aggression and individualistic assertiveness, but that hardly means there was no disagreement, only that it required tactful and respectful expression—deliberations over matters on which there is no disagreement or conflict do not take weeks to resolve.²¹

¹⁹ Fogelson and Kutsche 97-98; Gearing 31, 37-41; Persico 93-94, 100; McLouglin, *Cherokee Renaissance* 11; Champagne, “Institutional and Cultural Order” 15-16, but also see Loftin 41.

²⁰ Gearing 39; William Strickland, “Cherokee Rhetoric: A Forceful Weapon,” *Journal of Cherokee Studies* 2.3 (1977): 377; Loftin 42.

²¹ Gearing points out that there were practices in place, especially during the caucusing, that discouraged undue quibbling and unhelpful or inappropriate input (37-42). While women were generally not allowed to speak in council, that rule was by no means universal—as mentioned above,

The principled practices intersecting with, happening concurrently, or enacting consensus governance in the traditional Cherokee world no doubt helped prolong such occasions, but they also facilitated their operation insofar as they reinforced the importance of communal, harmonious agreement to the entirety of the culture. Such dispositions included caucusing according to clan, age, and gender; and religious practices like preaching, dancing, praying, smoking, fasting, and others.²² All helped orient political deliberations in a deep cultural context in which decisions were made not by virtue of power invested in leaders more or less independent of community review, but by leaders' capacity to persuade others to join in assent and action. Individuals might accumulate influence and authority in several symbolic or cultural currencies, like family position, age, history of success in hunting, war, or diplomacy, or they might be possessed of special charisma or acuity. Proficiency in arbitration and skill at rhetoric were particularly valued for their non-confrontational means of resolving competing interests and cultivating dispositional Cherokee civics.²³

Consensus was by no means easily built, and when it could not be reached, three options surface in the historical record: no decision at all would be made, those recalcitrant in their dissension could withdraw or abstain from the debate with the understanding that the towns they represented would not be bound by the conclusion, or in extreme cases, dissenters might mount a revolutionary opposition. The second was the usual means of amicably allowing others to forge as complete a consensus as

Beloved Women regularly spoke, and women's councils also contributed on an *ad hoc* basis. I imagine that the importance of the clan to the town structure ensured ample input from women during community consultation (also see Champagne, "Institutional and Cultural Order" 16). For more on the traditional consensus-based model of governance, see McLouglin, *Cherokee Renaissance* 10-12; Champagne, "Institutional and Cultural Order" 10-19; Persico 94.

²² B. Smith 1, 12-16; Gearing 41-42.

²³ W. Strickland 375-84; Gearing 40-45; Champagne, "Institutional and Cultural Order" 14-15; Fogelson, "Cherokee Notions of Power" 190-92.

they were able. But as Albert Wahrhaftig explains, for all the importance of harmony to the Cherokee *habitus*, it was subordinate to “the more compelling ideal of rightly identifying the people’s path. Those who are certain that they are right must live according to that knowledge, accepting the consequent exacerbation of disharmony and alienation from others.”²⁴ The last option, for matters in which even withdrawal could not be countenanced, might proceed in several ways, two of which seem to recur: removal not just from a particular decision but in greater or lesser degrees from the body politic, or outright insurrection against the established order. Neither took place as a matter of course, but there are several instances of such dramatic rupture in Cherokee history, including the Chickamauga revolt over land cessions, the Old Settlers’ removal to Arkansas to escape white depredation, the legendary deposition of the priestly class, and White Path’s rebellion against too much and too swift acculturation.

By the 1820s, circumstances had led Cherokee culture away from consensus-based rule toward increasing political and governmental centralization. It was this shift that occasioned White Path’s revolt and similar opposition from some traditionalists to the ratification of the Cherokee Constitution in 1828. As the demand for Indian lands mounted in the American southeast, the Cherokees circled their wagons, as it were, to protect against the unscrupulous US practices of treating with autonomous Cherokee groups or towns, attempting to bind the entire tribe to cessions made without their input, and punishing all tribal members for the disruptive or aggressive actions of a few. Beginning in the early 1800s, the primary protectionist strategy by which they aimed to maintain control over lands, coalesce the cultural body, and increase the material economy was through consolidating towns’ political powers into a

²⁴ Wahrhaftig 266.

streamlined, central state apparatus that would function as the sole representative body authorized to negotiate on the tribe's—now, the nation's—behalf.²⁵

The development was swift, from the establishment in the late 1700s of a tribal council modeled on town councils (often called the National Council, which continued to be dominated by locally-minded conservatives), to that of a standing legislative body (the National Committee) in 1817, and of a judiciary in 1821. Concomitantly, coercive authority moved from social to political structures with the uninterrupted inclusion of war-time leaders in the regular government and the creation of a police force in 1808. In 1820 the nation was divided into districts for the purpose of electing leaders to the national government, a shift away from election by more numerous towns. The culmination of these measures was the ratification of the Constitution in 1828, in which the Cherokees declared themselves politically on a par with the other nations of the world. Though modeled more or less on the US Constitution, that of the Cherokees differed in several points, such as its explicit assertion of divine authority and the communal ownership of land.²⁶ Not entirely an unprecedented invention, the Constitution mostly codified the structural changes already obtaining in practice, such as the growing political and coercive powers of the administrative bodies and the chiefs (the principal and deputy chief offices had consolidated and supplanted those of the red and white chiefs), whose authority was formerly more symbolically influential than imperiously commanding.

All this movement from an equilateral periphery to a central authority constricted the diversity of heard viewpoints, and the investment of power in the hands

²⁵ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 44-45, 139-42, 156-67, 284-89; R. Strickland 51-52; Persico 95-108; Champagne, "Symbolic Structure" 91-92. Gearing 85-112 locates the shift somewhat earlier, in the mid-1700s, and joining him is Champagne, "Symbolic Structure" 87-96.

²⁶ Persico 99-108; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance* 407.

of fewer elected officials not only divested town councils of local control, it also gradually vacated the processes and opportunities whereby town members communicated their input to their leaders. In the interests of efficiency, the slow and deliberative consensus-based model of decision-making formerly practiced within and among the Cherokee town confederation gave way to a swifter, more decisive organization based on majority rule. This central government became the product and producer of a nationalist consciousness that insisted on the subordination of local concerns to those of the larger body, effectively stifling public discourse in its promotion of acquiescence to the greater good, as defined by a concentrating, power-holding cadre. Combined with other changes such as the decline of medicine men's authority (due to causes detailed in the first chapter), centralization facilitated the differentiation of the political complex from the religious and social, swiftly disempowering and quieting the discursive contributions from priests and women, whose spheres formerly provided the foundations of political power.²⁷ Opportunities to express alternative positions and to exercise consensus-based practices managing and incorporating dissent were eroded or lost as the state's leaders amalgamated greater powers over both internal and external affairs.

Fullbloods and Mixedbloods

Scholars of Cherokee history have charted the changes to traditional political, social, and economic structures with greater nuance than I can reproduce in this summary, but less careful are their sketches of who created and controlled the state. When not seen as either an artificiality engineered by meddling Europeans, the state, if not the formation of the nation itself, is often understood as an inevitable but

²⁷ Champagne, "Symbolic Structure" 91-92; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 224-27; R. Strickland 40-52; Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 138-58.

inadequate reaction to the irresistible force of American imperialism. In the latter, slightly more empowering light, the tendency is to lionize traditionalists who pursued the only tragic strategy that offered any promise and to villainize those who subsequently appropriated the state and turned it to their own ends. (The former skips tribal agency entirely and jumps straight to the perceived opportunism.) As history tells it, intermarriage with white traders set the stage for the cooptation of the state by a new class in Cherokee society, that of the elite mixedblood. Discussing contemporary critics' frequent dichotomization of Cherokee identity, anthropologist Circe Sturm writes,

The Cherokee population was, and continues to be, far more complex than such a neat division between wealthy mixed-bloods and poor full-bloods allows. This reductivist tendency has shaped too much of the debate about Cherokee identity. Running throughout much of the scholarly literature is an assumption that the racial ancestry of Cherokees correlates not just with their class standing but with certain social values. Full-bloods are often understood as cultural conservatives, as bearers of "tradition," whereas mixed-bloods are expected to be oriented toward progress and change.²⁸

The tendency Sturm identifies is as unfortunately pervasive in history and literary criticism as it is in anthropology. Even critics conscious of the contradictions figures like Boudinot and Ross present, aware of the *post hoc* constructedness of the categories, and desirous of problematizing if not abandoning them, too often find themselves unable to escape its shorthand critical vocabulary, unwittingly replicating the binarism that arrests the volitional culture-perpetuating strategies of individuals and groups of any background.

Responsibility for the creation and development of the Cherokee state belongs with the whole of the body politic, and Cherokees as a whole shared (and share) in its

²⁸ Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 2002) 56.

successes and failures. Authorization of statism and the practices supporting it or undermined by it cut across the too-vividly imagined divide between nobly doomed traditionalists and opportunistically Machiavellian mixedbloods. While the language of blood had come to infiltrate Cherokee discourse before and during the Removal era, the meanings of terms like mixedblood and fullblood during this historical period are no less ambiguous than they are now in their metaphorical referral to beliefs, dispositions, and practices as much as to racial lineage. As Sturm insightfully argues, both terms accumulate references to a range of practices, beliefs, and affiliations. During the Removal crisis, the correlation between advocacy of Removal and mixedbloodedness was not so firmly theoretically established as it has become, nor was the opposition of both to traditionalism and fullbloodedness.

Although I am skeptical about how well “mixedblood” describes a homogeneous group—what are the characteristics of mixedblood women, for instance? or are halfbreeds male by default?—and am positive that “fullblood” when describing better than three-quarters of the population tells us next to nothing at all, in trying to offer some history of the pattern of change, I too find myself circumscribed by the vocabulary and only hope that someone will deconstruct it better than I am able to. Three dramatic changes set the stage for the ascension of what is called the mixedblood class in Cherokee society: Cherokee economics increasingly came to depend on trade with the US; negotiations with the US government required fluency in English and familiarity with white customs; and the affluence and influence of inter-married white traders effected changes that shifted the material balance of power to mixedblood inheritors through changes to laws administering property and descent²⁹—Cherokees found codification of patrilineal inheritance among the nation’s earliest

²⁹ Perdue, *Cherokee Women* 136-41; R. Strickland 41, 44-50.

statutes, written into an 1808 law that also established a central police force.³⁰

Mixedblood families were generally wealthier, more likely to attend white missionary schools, in control of more property, and more often slave-holding than their fullblood counterparts.³¹ According to a demographic study of the census of 1835, just under twenty-three per cent of Cherokees were mixedbloods, and slightly more than thirty per cent of families had at least one mixedblood member.³² To this group belonged John Ross and Elias Boudinot.

John Ross, Elias Boudinot, and the Nation against Removal

John Ross (known in Cherokee as Cooweescoowee) was born in 1790 in Cherokee country to a Scotland-born father and a mixedblood mother; by most accounts he was about one-eighth Cherokee and was raised in a comparatively untraditional household, although his contact with other Cherokees was likely frequent and substantive. His father was a merchant who employed a private tutor for his children's education and later sent Ross to the Presbyterian mission school established by Gideon Blackburn in 1803, among other institutions. Although Ross was exposed to Christianity early and often, he did not embrace it until late, adopting Methodism in 1829.³³ After leaving school, he entered into business trading, an occupation in which he met with life-long success, and into land development and speculation, becoming

³⁰ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 140.

³¹ William McLoughlin and Walter Conser, "The Cherokees in Transition: A Statistical Analysis of the Federal Cherokee Census of 1835," *Journal of American History* 64 (1977): 679-703; Thornton 47-54.

³² McLoughlin and Conser 693. Scholars reiterate the minority position of the mixedblood group—but one-quarter is no small minority.

³³ Gary Moulton, *John Ross: Cherokee Chief* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1978) 5-13; William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1984, reprint (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1994) 51-57.

one of the five most affluent Cherokees of his day. He went into military service from 1813 to 1814, when he fought with a Cherokee cavalry detachment with General Andrew Jackson against the Creeks at the Battle at Horseshoe Bend. Busy in 1813, he married his first wife Quatie (also known as Elizabeth Brown Henley), a Cherokee woman about whom little is known, besides that she was purportedly a fullblood who helped establish Ross's credentials with the nation's conservatives.³⁴ In later years Ross would speak no Cherokee, at least not for any of his public addresses. While the historical record is unclear about how much Cherokee he spoke, it seems likely that he at least had some rudimentary conversational skills given his immersion in the Cherokee world. Critics like Boudinot, however, did not miss the opportunity to upbraid him for his lack of facility.³⁵ Some five years after Quatie died on the Trail of Tears, Ross married Mary Stapler, a white Quaker woman from Delaware; until her death twenty years later in 1865 she faced with him the desperate violence of factionalism following Removal, enjoyed with him the prosperity of the rebuilt Cherokee Nation, and endured with him the ravages wrought by the Civil War. Following a long sickness, Ross died in 1866 in Washington, D.C., in semi-exile as he tried to negotiate a treaty that would ensure the Cherokees' continuity as a united nation as it faced post-war factionalism and renewed US attacks on land and sovereignty—challenges that recurred throughout his political career.³⁶

³⁴ Moulton 12-13, 80, 100-01; Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004) 48. I have found no corroboration of Konkle's suggestion that Quatie spoke no English.

³⁵ Moulton 15; Elias Boudinot, *Letters and Other Papers Relating to Cherokee Affairs: Being a Reply to Sundry Publications Authorized by John Ross*, Athens: 1827, also in Senate Document 121, 25th Congress, 2nd session, reprinted in Boudinot, *Cherokee Editor* 186; Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 229.

³⁶ Moulton 139-43, 182, 193-96.

Following his military service and despite conspicuous cultural and symbolic deficiencies, such as his limited command of Cherokee and his remote genealogy, Ross rose to unparalleled prominence as a statesman, beginning with his apprenticeship under the primary chief Pathkiller and assistant chief Charles Hicks. He served with distinction on several prominent negotiating delegations and as president of the National Committee. After the deaths of Pathkiller and Hicks in 1827, Hicks's son served a brief term as chief, but at the next election in 1828, the General Council elected Ross to the office of Principal Chief, a position he would hold until his death.³⁷ The intervening years were perhaps the most trying the Cherokee people had ever faced as they attempted to stave off the United States' relentless demands for the nation's final relinquishment of its remaining lands in the east and for its displacement west to Indian Territory. The bitter stories of their resistance and ultimate removal on the Trail of Tears and of the factionalism that plagued the nation from the years before Removal and on past the Civil War have come to define Cherokee history for many. Ross's stewardship during these dark and dangerous times testifies to his devotion and capable leadership. He is often accounted the leader of the "fullblood majority" despite his manifest affiliations with the "prosperous minority mixedblood faction," and while some historical scholarship has revisited the extent to which Ross represented fullblood sentiments—in effect moving him from one side of the dichotomy to the other—little has been done to deconstruct the categories themselves or interrogate the stakes in their construction.

Bernd Peyer, for instance, argues that fullblood/mixedblood or the traditionalist/progressive dichotomies inadequately describe the range of social interaction, calling both categories "artificial" (166), but he essentially substitutes the

³⁷ Moulton 15-37; Stanley Hoig, *The Cherokees and Their Chiefs: In the Wake of Empire* (Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1998) 124-32.

US for the traditionalists in continued dialectical opposition to an un-deconstructed mixedblood class. He fits Ross smoothly into this category with the claim that

The only marked difference between Boudinot and Ross, other than Boudinot's having signed a treaty without the required sanction of the Cherokee government, was the precise point in time at which he changed his mind about removal. Three years after the Treaty Party's "capitulation," John Ross also concluded a removal agreement with the US government even though the majority of the Cherokees were undoubtedly still against it (not to mention his earlier proposals, which had also been made without a public referendum).³⁸

While Ross was indeed more prone to progressivism than most critics have allowed, to stop at Peyer's conclusion that the historical period just prior to and including Removal "can be characterized as a losing race between Cherokee acculturative survival strategies and the insatiable land greed of an expanding and increasingly aggressive American nation" discourages consideration of the culturally conservative impetus for and continued role in "survival strategies" of various casts.³⁹ This gloss almost entirely ignores the traditionally preservative purposes to which acculturative strategies were put, effectively proclaiming the *a priori* triumph of the mixedblood over the traditionalist, and preemptively announcing the winner of the next contest between the US and the progressive Indian.

For many scholars Elias Boudinot has personified the dispositions of mixedbloodedness and progressivism just as Ross has those of fullbloodness and traditionalism, despite the irony that Boudinot had substantially more Cherokee blood than Ross, as did other prominent, progressive leaders like his younger brother Stand Watie, paternal uncle Major Ridge, and cousin John Ridge. About 1804 Boudinot was born Gallegina (Buck) to Oowatie (later David Watie), who was likely either full or

³⁸ Bernd Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1997) 214.

³⁹ Peyer 169.

three-quarters Cherokee, and Susannah Reese, whom historian and genealogist Emmet Starr records as half Cherokee and half Welch, making Boudinot around three-quarters or five-eighths.⁴⁰ I note Boudinot's blood quantum only because I have nowhere else seen it computed, although much has been made of Ross's exceptional "overcoming" his dearth of Indian blood. Perhaps pointing out the Watie and Ridge families' high percentage would undermine the vilifying association with mixedbloodedness and assimilation that scholars have taken pains to establish. In other respects, Ross and Boudinot were uncannily similar. Like Ross, Boudinot was raised in a progressive household, in his case the town of Oothcaloga, a community that practiced individualist rather than communal agricultural principles. He too was educated by a private tutor and in Cherokee missionary schools; the one he attended was established by Moravians at Spring Place in Georgia in 1801. Boudinot arrived young in 1811 and stayed until 1818, when he left Cherokee country to continue his education and training to become a missionary at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, run by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. John Ridge would join him there the next year. On the way to Cornwall, Gallegina, as he was still known, met the aging Elias Boudinot, president of the American Bible Society and Revolutionary War-era statesman, and the two were mutually impressed. Gallegina took on the elder Boudinot as benefactor and thenceforth adopted his name. Educational opportunities besides those offered by missionaries were few and far between, and to be sure, many Cherokees like Ross abided their proselytizing for the educational benefits. Boudinot, on the other hand, was a devout Christian wholly

⁴⁰ Thurman Wilkin's history has the brothers Major Ridge and David Watie's mother as one-half Cherokee, but Starr claims both men were fullbloods. Such ambiguity proliferates, indicating a much more relaxed attitude toward blood quantum in early years. See Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy: The Story of the Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People* (New York: Macmillan, 1970) 4; and Emmet Starr, *History of the Cherokee Indians and Their Legends and Folklore*, Oklahoma City, 1921, reprint (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 2003) 473.

dedicated to the cause of converting Cherokee people, having himself converted in 1820.⁴¹

Also like Ross, Boudinot married a white woman, but with considerably greater opposition than Ross endured. It was at Cornwall that Boudinot met, fell in love with, and in 1826 ultimately married Harriet Ruggles Gold, the white daughter of a school official, replaying John Ridge's controversial interracial marriage to Sarah Bird Northrup in 1824. The vitriolic reaction by the ostensibly progressive northeasterners—which brought Gold's own brother to the town square to burn her and Boudinot's pictures in effigy—revealed to Boudinot the sharply circumscribed degrees to which Indians would be welcome in white society. They could become Christians, educate themselves, attend the country's finest institutions (Boudinot aspired to study at Andover, then Yale, but was prevented by illness)—in short, they could *mimic* anything whites did so long as they understood that their reproductions, borne in deficiency, retained an ineradicable and insurmountable imperfection. In Homi Bhabha's terms, they needed to remain conscious of their difference to dissuade hubristic expectations of equality. Despite the death threats and public condemnation in all shapes of vehement disapproval, Boudinot and Gold were married, four years after Boudinot had left Cornwall. She joined him in Cherokee country where they worked closely with missionaries on their civilizing and educational endeavors. Still dedicated to the civilization and Christianization of the Cherokees, Boudinot appears to have been utterly persuaded, however, that Indians and whites would never be able

⁴¹ Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 3-9; Ralph Gabriel, *Elias Boudinot: Cherokee and His America* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1941) 22-34; Peyer 177-81. For Ross's religious attitudes, see McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 349; Moulton 7. See McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 2-3, 35-81 and in general for the linkage between the educational programs of the federal civilization policy and missionary work.

to live equally together in United States society, and he thus turned his efforts to the development of the Cherokee Nation.⁴²

In its attempts to strengthen national solidarity and to resist US demands for land cessions, the Cherokee Nation looked for public venues to communicate with its citizens and to make its case to foreign allies. Recognizing Boudinot's literary and rhetorical talents, in 1826 the government set him to work on a speaking tour across the northeast to raise money for the establishment of a national academy and a newspaper. The government with uncommon acumen foresaw not only the cohesive, nationalistic force a paper would propagate, compensating for the proliferating fragmentation of other social and religious structures, but also its persuasive potential in offering sympathetic audiences alternative accounts of the unconscionable depredations they faced in resisting the expansion of American empire. The hoped-for school would have to wait, but the speech Boudinot delivered, "An Address to the Whites," reprinted as a pamphlet, earned enough to buy a printing press, and a paper was established with the National Council's authorization. Beginning with its first issue in 1828, the *Cherokee Phoenix* printed news, editorials, laws, and some cultural and religious material in both Cherokee and English, taking advantage of Sequoyah's prodigious invention in 1821 of a syllabary for the Cherokee language. With the assistance of missionary Samuel Worcester, Boudinot drafted numerous editorials, selected traded content from other newspapers; corrected proofs; managed the business end; and translated material like the Bible, newly passed and pre-existing laws, and religious tracts into Cherokee, to be published in the *Phoenix* and separately. For a salary of \$300 per year, he served as editor of the *Phoenix* from its founding

⁴² Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 8-11; Gabriel 57-92; Theresa Strouth Gaul, *To Marry an Indian: The Marriage of Harriet Gold and Elias Boudinot in Letters, 1823-1839* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2005) 1-52.

until 1832, when he found himself at odds with John Ross over the question of the editor's liberty in discussing the Removal question in the nationally-owned forum.⁴³

Demand for Indian land was hardly new in the early nineteenth century, but Jeffersonian civilization programs had checked the militancy of early years. Many Cherokees cooperated with the government agents and missionaries who urged adoption and development of white models of religion, agriculture, education, economy, political structure, codified governance, and more. Later, in the pages of the *Phoenix*, in speeches, anywhere it might be persuasive, Cherokees pointed to their advancement in civilization according to the measures set before them as a means not just of countering false descriptions of their continued savagery—a tactic frequently trotted out to demonstrate Indians' inability to understand the principles of cultivation and property and to establish their consequently inferior claims to land⁴⁴—but also to demand consistency and follow-through in federal policy. Andrew Jackson, elected to the presidency in 1828, promoted acquiring Indians' remaining eastern lands through their removal well beyond the Mississippi. His removal policy aggressively pursued land cessions through means both above- and below-board, couched in the benevolent language of facilitating Indian civilization away from the pernicious influences of unscrupulous whites who could not be controlled by the federal government. Georgia eagerly assented to his plans, emboldened to pursue the acquisition of Cherokee lands under the terms of an 1802 compact in which the state relinquished its claim to western lands in return for the federal government's promise to extinguish Indian

⁴³ Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 15-25, 87-89; Bethany Schneider, "Boudinot's Change: Boudinot, Emerson, and Ross on Cherokee Removal," *English Literary History* 75.1 (2008): 151-77; Robert Martin, "The *Cherokee Phoenix*: Pioneer of Indian Journalism," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 25.2 (1947): 102-18; Peyer 182-89; Gabriel 106-27.

⁴⁴ On this period in particular, see Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind*, rev. ed., originally published as *The Savages of America*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1953 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1988) 53-75.

claims within its borders. The discovery of gold in Cherokee country only provided added incentive for the state to develop some means of driving out the Cherokees.⁴⁵

The means it found maintained at least the appearance of legitimacy under the rule of law, a guise important to the US's imagination of itself as a nation of justice and order. Heedless of Cherokee protests, Jackson's administration exacerbated their troubles in pushing for the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which authorized the federal government to negotiate treaties providing for final land cessions and removal. Jackson also withheld the annuity payments from previous land cessions that constituted the Cherokees' major operational funding and withdrew the federal troops charged with maintaining order and protecting Cherokee boundaries against intrusion. Attempting effectively to abolish the Cherokee government, in 1829 Georgia proclaimed the annexation of Cherokee country and extension of its laws throughout the Cherokee nation, disallowing, for instance, Cherokees mining their gold, contracts between Indians and whites not witnessed by two whites, any action that might dissuade others from removing, the assembly of Cherokee councils or courts, and the testimony of Indians against whites in Georgia's courts. This last especially pernicious disenfranchisement essentially encouraged Georgians to robbery and intimidation with impunity; historians record instances of attempted rape and even murder that went unpunished by the state judiciary branch in its collusion with the Georgia governor. The Georgia Guard militia, ostensibly replacing federal troops to protect Cherokee and their interests, more often aided and abetted their harassment, such as when it twice arrested Boudinot on charges of libel.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 1989 ed. (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1932) 229-30; Kenneth Penn Davis, "Chaos in the Indian Country: The Cherokee Nation, 1828-35," *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History* 129-47.

⁴⁶ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance* 428-38; Wilkins 202-07, Penn Davis 142, 144; Foreman 236.

Despite their difficulties, the Cherokees through advocacy in the *Phoenix* and elsewhere found allies, many of them federalists opposed to Jacksonian politics and sometimes also to his removal policy. Some like prominent missionary and editorialist Jeremiah Evarts advised the Cherokee Nation—acting as a foreign nation—to bring a test case contesting Georgia’s presumption of jurisdiction over Indian lands to the US Supreme Court. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), which challenged Georgia’s jurisdiction in the case of George Tassel, accused of murder, the federalist Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that Indian nations are not foreign in the constitutional sense but rather “domestic dependent nations” in a state of pupilage or wardship to the US government. His ambiguity then as now left some room for the exercise and recognition of Indian sovereignty, and Marshall himself suggested the court would revisit the question if the matter of jurisdiction were more firmly established. The opportunity arose when the missionary Samuel Worcester and others were arrested for refusing to take an oath of allegiance to Georgia and its laws. In *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) the Marshall court ruled that Georgia had indeed overstepped its bounds and that its extension of state law over Indian land was unconstitutional and illegal in its encroachment on federal jurisdiction. In ordering the release of Worcester it was effectually ordering Georgia to desist its usurpation, but as the case made evident, the judicial branch had no means of effecting compliance with its rulings if faced with a recalcitrant executive or legislative branch. Untroubled by the revelation that the system of checks and balances rested upon a sandy foundation of good faith compliance, recognizing the judiciary’s powerlessness, and unphased by any compunction to execute a directive contrary to his policies, Jackson apocryphally remarked, “John Marshall has rendered his decision; now let him enforce it.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Foreman 233-35; Wilkins 207-29; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance* 438-47.

Elias Boudinot, John Ridge, Major Ridge and others had long been at the forefront of the struggle against removal, but after it became clear that the US had no intention of testing Georgia's resolve for the sake of protecting the Cherokees, they settled on a new course.⁴⁸ They began to contemplate the merits of taking the nation away from the Georgia Guard, away from the thieves of their property, their dignity, their lives—but also away from the ancestral homes of their families, away from the mutually constitutive land where they had been since time immemorial. Once Boudinot began to question the tenability of resistance to removal in the pages of the *Phoenix*, he found himself at odds with John Ross, and he resigned his editorship in mid-1832—more on this in the next chapter. Three years after leaving the *Phoenix*, as conditions degenerated and Ross met with increasing stubbornness in Washington against any accommodation for continued Cherokee presence in the east, Boudinot became convinced that removal was the only course that offered any chance of Cherokee survival, in an all too literal sense. He joined the Ridges and some twenty others in signing the New Echota treaty against the manifest wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people, ceding all remaining claims in exchange for five million dollars and land in what would become Oklahoma. All signed in full awareness that in so doing without approval of the National Council they were more or less subject to lawful, summary execution at the hands of any Cherokee citizen who found it expedient. Major Ridge himself had not only helped pass the law forbidding unauthorized land cessions, but he had also served as co-executioner in the killing of Doublehead, a chief who ceded land without approval in 1807.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Wilkins 229-78 has a thorough account of the events leading up to the treaty signing; also see Penn Davis 139-44; Foreman 244-50, 264-69; Moulton 50-86; Grace Steele Woodward, *The Cherokees* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1963) 171-90.

⁴⁹ Wilkins 36-38; R. Strickland 77-78.

Although Ross mounted a persuasive campaign to discredit the fraudulent treaty—publishing pamphlets detailing its spurious origin, marshalling support from the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson and John Quincy Adams, and gathering some fifteen thousand signers of a petition protesting its ratification—the Senate did ratify it and then-president Martin Van Buren signed it into law in 1835. Ross kept up the campaign for the next three years, but in 1838 federal troops began moving Cherokees at bayonet-point into stockades.⁵⁰ Some four thousand, about a quarter of the tribe, died on the Trail. Boudinot and the Ridges died not there but shortly after their arrival in Indian Territory, all killed the same day in 1839.⁵¹ Major Ridge was shot while riding along a trail; John Ridge was dragged from his bed and multiply stabbed in front of his wife and son. While constructing his new home, some men approached Boudinot saying a friend needed medicine, and as he went to get it, they attacked him with knives and hatchets and crushed his skull.

These were the circumstances, these the stakes, these the lives—of my own farming people, leaving their twenty-five acres in corn in the old Hickory Log district for Goingsnake District, a thousand miles away—that mattered in the rhetoric of removal. As I turn now to the literature to unpack the metaphors, frame the historical context, tease out the connotations, and survey the research, I bear them in mind.

⁵⁰ In his consenting opinion in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, Justice William Johnson opposed designating Indian tribes “nations” as a matter of principle, writing, “Where is the rule to stop? Must every petty kraal of Indians, designating themselves a tribe or nation, and having a few hundred acres of land to hunt on exclusively, be recognized as a state? We should indeed force into the family of nations, a very numerous and very heterogeneous progeny” (*The Cherokee Nation v. the State of Georgia*, 30 US 1, Supreme Ct., 1831, 25). As Priscilla Wald keenly observes, “His use of the word ‘kraal,’ an Afrikaner term for an enclosed village or the animal pen within the village (like the English term ‘corral’), shows just how loathe Johnson was to claim human kinship with indigenes.” Perhaps these stockades, terribly reified, were the “petty kraals” he had in mind. See Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 25.

⁵¹ For closer treatment of events following the signing through the trail and the assassinations in Indian Territory, see Foreman 269-312; Wilkins 279-326; Moulton 87-126; Woodward 192-218.

CHAPTER FOUR

“No Weapon to Use but Argument”:

The Removal Rhetoric of Elias Boudinot and John Ross

In language commonly thought “assimilationist,” both John Ross and Elias Boudinot championed the civilization programs the US proffered as a means of resolving its Indian troubles, but far from evidencing their unconditional acceptance of whites’ exterior representations of Indianism, to modify Said’s phrase, it is telling that they advocated civilization programs not just to Cherokees but also to the US itself. As they questioned the consistency of the US’s policies of civilization and Removal, they insisted that the civilizers follow through on their promises to provide the educational opportunities and protection guaranteed by treaties as a matter of general humanitarian concern. When they advocated civilization to Cherokee audiences, however, it was not as an end in itself nor with approbation of the full demise of Cherokee culture, but rather as a means of strengthening internal resources and ensuring the survival of the Cherokee nation as a distinct cultural-political entity. Even when Boudinot concluded that those goals could not be accomplished in the east and began to consider Removal, it was only as a means towards this larger goal, contrary to Ross’s insistence that national and cultural distinctness depended upon unanimity. I do not choose up sides in this chapter or attempt to prove that the treaty party members were traitors or patriots, or that Ross was a tyrant or savior. Instead, I look behind the opposition to the alterations to the *habitus* that exacerbated the factionalism and violence that plagued the nation for decades afterwards. While I understand US colonialism as the primary culprit, I am interested here in the Cherokees’ own actions and reactions, their exercise of control over their world. This alternative reorientation to the context of epistemic continuity and rupture, with the understanding that not every volitional act is *de facto*

justified, condemnable, or even simply effective, suggests that although political centralization admirably aspired to defend the nation's physical and cultural boundaries, its attendant hegemonic strategies and homogeneous postures ran counter to deliberation and dissent as irrepressible dispositions of the Cherokee *habitus*.

Much of Boudinot's writing and rhetoric prior to his pro-Removal shift proclaimed the progress the Cherokees had made toward civilization, against competing and pervasive arguments that alleged the savagery or at least the savage state of Indians in general and/or Cherokees in particular. In his fundraising speech "An Address to the Whites," he states, "it cannot be doubted that the nation is improving, rapidly improving in all those particulars which must finally constitute the inhabitants an industrious and intelligent people. It is a matter of surprise to me...that the Cherokees have advanced so far and so rapidly in civilization. But there are powerful obstacles...The prejudices in regard to them in the general community are strong and lasting."¹ Such prejudices were manifested in debates over whether Indians could progress into civilization at all, an argument Boudinot counters with concrete evidence, statistics, and specific examples. He turns the indictment into an incumbency: "The time has arrived when speculations and conjectures as to the practicability of civilizing the Indians must forever cease...It needs only that the world should know what we have done in the few last years, to foresee what yet we may do with the assistance of our white brethren..."² The discourse of savagery, like that of Orientalism, was accruing institutional authority, emanating from religious, scientific, political, and other sectors, and its representations from privileged positions of

¹ Elias Boudinot, "An Address to the Whites Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church, on the 26th of May, 1826, by Elias Boudinott, a Cherokee Indian," Philadelphia: William Geddes, 1826, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot*, ed. Theda Perdue, originally published Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1983 (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996) 72.

² Boudinot, "Address" 69-70.

exteriority were marshaled as proof that removal was in the best interests of both the savage and civilized.³ Boudinot's denial of the hegemonic belief that Indians were incapable of civilization or progress, despite his qualified acceptance of the general developmental paradigm, is no small thing, nor is his turning of the tables on his white audience, alleging that prejudice on its part, not incapacity on the Indians', most stood in the way of progress for both. Realizing that progress would require effort on both sides.

He returns over and over to themes of progress and civilization, often in contradistinction to Cherokee traditions, expressing hopes that superstition and savage institutions might soon be eradicated, using language we now find shockingly saddening, but perhaps then calculated to curry favor and excite white audiences to sympathetic activism. For instance, having recorded a description of clan structure and its administration of the blood law of homicide revenge, he writes, "Our readers will say, 'those were savage laws indeed.' They were, and the Cherokees were then to be pitied... But we can now say with pleasure, that they are all repealed, and are remembered only as vestiges of ignorance and barbarism."⁴ Ignorance and barbarism are opposed by Christianization and civilization, whose implements—but not whose administration—Boudinot solicits from white benefactors. His striking anti-traditionalist sentiments seemingly leave little room for doubt about Boudinot's attitudes, but they are called into question by a closer examination of what progress in civilization, apparently the converse of traditionalism, consists in his rhetoric. He calls

³ Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 13; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978) 21; also see Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind*, rev. ed., originally published as *The Savages of America*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1953 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1988) 56-58, 63-75.

⁴ Elias Boudinot, "Indian Clans," *Cherokee Phoenix* 18 Feb. 1829: 2, col.5, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 108.

for development and retention of already existing institutions, such as the rule of law (under which the blood law was a particular instance he disapproved of), not the wholesale eradication and substitution of all such superstructures in, for instance, governance, worship, industry, or culture.

Failing to understand in Boudinot's rhetoric the narrow construction of "civilization" and the breadth of traditional practices and beliefs additionally set aside from the civilizing enterprise, many of his critics have understood such passages and his advocacy of progress as a personal cultural inadequacy manifested in a rejection and repudiation of all facets of distinctly Cherokee culture, further hypothesizing a reciprocal rejection on the part of Cherokee communities—a conjectural negation of Cherokee identity in the past that is therefore authorized in the present. Theda Perdue, for instance, writes:

The Cherokee Nation was composed primarily of traditionalists who clung to the culture Boudinot dedicated his life to eradicating... Boudinot, in seeking to create a homogeneous "civilized" nation, was going against the widespread tendency among Cherokees to accept divergent lifestyles and customs as long as they did not jeopardize the community. And because he was part of a very small minority which tried almost to compel people to undergo a cultural transformation, other Cherokees probably viewed him with some suspicion... Elias Boudinot was a tragic figure not just because he made a serious error in judgment or because he paid the ultimate price but because he could not accept his people, his heritage, or himself. He was the product of colonization, and his thoughts and deeds may well tell us as much about our own culture as about nineteenth-century Cherokees.⁵

Structuring Cherokee history and agency in Manichean opposition, Perdue turns the limitations of binarism to her advantage, on one hand tidily clearing away the exceptions and ambiguities Boudinot presents to these generalizations of progressivism as internalized colonialism (which are only too-representative of critical

⁵ Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 33.

material on Boudinot), and on the other suspending traditionalism in time, withholding from it the means or interest to effect alteration to the *habitus*, however dire or promising the circumstances. Traditionalists may only “cling”—in doomed desperation, I suppose—to a disappearing past, hoping against hope to save the “thing” of traditional culture from the forces opposing it. Whatever its purpose,⁶ this ossification of tradition and the associated aspersions cast on those who might seek to make any change—that they are inescapably corrupted by colonial contact, prohibiting them from accepting their people, heritage, or selves—may indeed “tell us more about *our* own culture” than *we* might wish to know: that Indians, “their” history and “their” agency are for “us” to tell and for “us” to read. “Their” purposes are not their own, but may serve to elucidate “our” interests. *This*—not Boudinot’s work to strengthen and preserve his people—is the “product of colonization”: to have our intellectuals, our histories, our capacity to shape our own lives, stripped away and defined by their connections to the original, the only real, “us.”

Against Perdue’s claim that “Throughout his life, Boudinot maintained that the preservation of his people depended solely upon abandonment of their own traditions, culture, and history,”⁷ I argue that Cherokee traditions, culture, and history were conveyed in his ideas of civilization and progress, though they were by turns overt, tacit, defiant, untheorized, or unconscious. Further, they are enacted in the expression of the ideas. They are enunciatively performed forces themselves, not pieces of flotsam tragically clung to against their eventual, inevitable sinking. I am not claiming Boudinot was everywhere attempting calculated rhetorical subversion or that he was

⁶ I want to add, I don’t believe Perdue malicious, not in the least. I believe her to be an ally of Cherokee people and a scholar whose work has championed Cherokee agency and excited others to do the same. I do, however strenuously disagree with her methodology and her conclusions in this instance.

⁷ Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 3.

not influenced by or even essentially “on board” with mainstream ideas of civilization and progress. But insofar as his speeches and *Phoenix* editorials were largely directed to white audiences, that he would use terms calculated to find favor with those audiences is not surprising. I also find occasion to wonder how his and many other Cherokees’ understandings of progress and civilization depart from those of his critics, historical and contemporary, and how their conceptions—developed by Cherokees for Cherokee purposes during an early point in white relations, and thus at not-too-distant remove from the traditional *habitus*—might reflect that cultural mediation, might retain some vestige of that communal agency.

Most criticism conveniently opposes Ross to Boudinot on the matter of tradition. Maureen Konkle, for instance, points to Ross’s cooperation with John Howard Payne on his early ethnography and concludes, “It appears that Ross understood traditional knowledge as *history* and, unlike Ridge and Boudinot, believed that it should not be rejected but rather written down and accounted for, and celebrated.”⁸ Such sympathies notwithstanding, Ross too found occasion to invoke the language of civilization together with a repudiation of tradition, writing to President James Monroe,

Father. The ignorant and wretched condition of your red children makes them in some degree inferior to their white brethren... Your magnanimous and benevolent exertions have not been in vain, as respects the Cherokees, education, agriculture, manufacture, and the mechanic arts have been introduced among them, and are now progressing... The liberal encouragement given by the nation for general improvement, cannot fail to accomplish their complete civilization. True, there are many who have been raised under the native habits of their ancestors... but under the present aspect of improvement, they will not fail to encourage their children to adopt the

⁸ Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004) 48.

prevailing habits of industry and civilization; therefore as the old stubbles disappear, the new sprouts will flourish under cultivation.⁹

A year later he would write to President John Quincy Adams in a yet more strident tone: “for the sake of civilization and preservation of existence, we would willingly see the habits and customs of the aboriginal man extinguished, the sooner this takes place, the great stumbling block, *prejudice*, will be removed.”¹⁰ Like Boudinot, Ross ricochets the rhetoric of moral inferiority back at those first firing the accusations, indicting whites’ uncivilized bias as the primary impediment to Cherokee progress, not any deficiency of theirs in ability or effort. Contrasting the two, Perdue claims, “John Ross was personally as highly acculturated as Boudinot, but Ross represented traditionalists and did so without exerting any pressure on them to change their beliefs or way of life,”¹¹ yet what besides “pressure” for change did Ross, as president of the National Council then Principal Chief, exert in the passage of laws altering inheritance, political centralization, and encouragement of civilization? The “extinguishing” of tradition through civilization for which Ross seems to be calling, like Boudinot’s relegation of it to mere “vestiges” is not, however, unequivocal, for it is subordinated to the “preservation of existence.” Though Ross and Boudinot do not say as much, I argue that the eradication of tradition that they seem to advocate ought not be understood as the desirable erasure of *all* traditions, but as the alteration or perhaps abandonment of certain untenable or sacrificial practices or principles—or just the appearance of such “progress”—in order that the greater number of other practices enacting and comprising the *habitus* might be preserved. That those practices

⁹ John Ross, “To James Monroe,” 19 Jan. 1824, *The Papers of Chief John Ross*, ed. Gary Moulton, vol. 1 (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1985) 59. Ross’s name appears at the head of others’ signed to the letter. Subsequent references to Ross’s writings refer to this volume.

¹⁰ John Ross, “To John Q. Adams,” 12 Mar. 1825, 105. Ross’s signature appears above those of G[eorge] Lowrey and Elijah Hicks.

¹¹ Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 33.

are not theorized or enumerated in no way makes them less part of Cherokee traditions. The missing element that brings the total to more than the sum of the parts may even reside in the principles and practices yet undeclared.

Boudinot like Ross adopted the rhetoric and programs of civilization and progress precisely to further this culturally and politically preservative goal, using the most effective defense available to them. As Ross put it, “The Cherokees, under any circumstances, have no weapon to use but argument.”¹² Ostensibly borrowing from what Perdue calls the “basic European creed,” Boudinot emphasized several component features Cherokees should adopt to become like “‘civilized’ peoples [who] had farms, republican governments, Christian churches, and systems of writings,” as opposed to “‘Savages’ [who] hunted for a living, relied on frequently brutal customs for their law, worshiped nature or idols, and lacked a written language.”¹³ In “Address to the Whites” he details “those particulars which must finally constitute the inhabitants an industrious and intelligent people,” in which the Cherokees are progressing and best “act as a powerful argument in favor of Indian improvement: First. The invention of letters. Second. The translation of the New Testament into Cherokee. And third. The organization of a Government,” also adding success in education and industry.¹⁴ He would brandish evidence of that progress in his editorials up to 1832, representatively proclaiming, “*the common Indian among the Cherokees is not declining, but rising.*”¹⁵ Boudinot’s writings were practical, not philosophical, and

¹² John Ross, *Letter from John Ross...in Answer to Inquiries from a Friend Regarding the Cherokee Affairs with the United States* (Washington, D.C. [?]: n.p., July 1836) 455.

¹³ Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 13.

¹⁴ Boudinot, “Address” 72-74.

¹⁵ Elias Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 21 April 1830: 2, col. 5, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 116. Emphasis in original.

he offers few definitive theorizations of “improvement,” “civilization,” and the like, but statements such as these—particularly in their affiliations, in the practices informing and informed by the principles—afford some opportunity to explicate his brand of progress.

The first evidentiary feature of Cherokees’ capacity for becoming civilized, “the invention of letters,” is fundamentally about their educability and desire for education, the point of which is the preservation of the Cherokee as a distinct cultural and political body. As for much of the US, religious institutions offered the Cherokee the only practically available vehicle for education, and in Boudinot’s speech both religion and education are linked to writing—distinctively Cherokee writing. After lauding Sequoyah’s achievement, Boudinot makes the three-way connection explicit: “The translation of the New Testament, together with Guest’s mode of writing, has swept away that barrier which has long existed, and opened a spacious channel for the instruction of adult Cherokees.”¹⁶ The barrier of illiteracy primarily stands in the way of evangelism for Boudinot, but the passage’s ambiguity also suggests the attenuated opportunities for discourse, which are broadened by writing as a conduit for national communication. This interpretation is strengthened when we recall the purpose of his talk was to raise money for a national paper. When Ross wrote to Sequoyah, then living with western emigrants, presenting him with a congratulatory medal for his invention of the syllabary, he too identifies the similar “untraditional” connections among the Cherokee language and white religion and education:

The present generation have already experienced the great benefits of your incomparable system. The old & the youth find no difficulty in learning to read & write in their native language and to correspond with their distant friends with the same facility as the whites do. Types have

¹⁶ Boudinot, “Address” 74. Boudinot refers to Sequoyah’s English name, which has also been spelled (George) Guess and Gist.

been made and a printing press established in this nation. The scriptures have been translated & printed in Cherokee; and whilst posterity continues to be benefited by the discovery, your name will exist in grateful remembrance. It will also serve as an index for the aboriginal tribes, or nations, similarly to advance in science and respectability...¹⁷

Ross demonstrates the value writing has in Christian evangelism and in learning, but in also pointing to its cohesive force—its capacity to bring together in words those separated by geography, age, or religion—he puts writing, “advance” in education, and religion in the service of “nationing,” the political movement that makes nations of tribes. Though cognizant of internal differences and subsidiary affiliations, Ross understands them as ancillary to a unified national consciousness, and he particularly values the roles of education and writing in its service.

Encouraging education as a means of developing a specifically Cherokee civilization appears throughout the rhetoric of this period. In a May 1828 editorial tallying the projected high costs of removal, Boudinot suggests the funds might be better spent on schooling and hopes that Cherokee learning will continue in the native tongue: “With this money let their [sic] be a college founded, where every advantage of instruction may be enjoyed. Let books, tracts, &c. be published in Cherokee and English, and distributed throughout the Nation and every possible effort be made to civilize us, let us at the same time be protected in our rights.”¹⁸ Two important dispositions are revealed here: first, as languages in no small part structure and generate the knowledge that inheres in cultures, with marked differences among them, the propagation of the Cherokee language as a component in formal education and in connecting communities in national discourse via the newspaper and other printed material marks a material commitment to upholding a profound cultural

¹⁷ John Ross, “To George Gist,” 12 Jan. 1832, 234-35.

¹⁸ Elias Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 14 May 1828: 3, col. 2, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 100.

distinctiveness along the road to civilization. Boudinot's work translating religious texts with their abstractions, the poetry of hymns with their rhythms and aesthetics, or simply Cherokee's basic classificatory verbs that conjugate for texture, shape, flexibility, etc., or the ten pronominal prefixes, would have no doubt made him keenly aware that some things can only be said—can only be thought—in Cherokee, with its singular denotations, associated connotations, and sets of deferred meanings. Such complexity would surely have inspired in the man made of words a desire that that knowledge and way of knowing be retained. Though he urges Cherokees to learn English, I have nowhere found that advocacy tied to an attack on Cherokee. At Brainerd and at Cornwall, the missionaries' interest in learning native languages as a means of aiding their evangelism no doubt helped Boudinot see the advantages of bilingualism. To be sure, not all missionaries were so (counter-) progressive, and some marked native languages for eradication, cognizant of their cohesive and "atavistic" influence, an influence Boudinot turned to preservative advantage.¹⁹

Second, the closing conjunctive phrase of this excerpt, "let...every effort be made to civilize us, let us at the same time be protected in our rights" reminds his readers of their freely-accepted responsibilities both to offer access to civilization and education (and, as it turns out, cultural nationalism) and to protect the Cherokees' rights to their land and sovereignty. The government had pledged itself to do both in Jefferson's civilization programs and since its first treaties with the oft-repeated promise that by allying with and placing themselves under the US's "protection," the Cherokees would be guaranteed in their security. But what precisely were the rights Boudinot wanted preserved? Like the terms progress and civilization, he frequently leaves them undefined, perhaps because he imagines them self-evident, or perhaps

¹⁹ William McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986) 76, points to Presbyterian Gideon Blackburn's ban on Cherokee.

because he prefers to maintain in his readers their unproblematic understandings and to allow the cultural resistance in his to go unspoken. He does offer some clues in a January 1829 editorial:

The causes which have operated to exterminate the Indian tribes that are produced as instances of the certain doom of the whole Aboriginal family appear plain to us...they were precisely such causes as are now attempted by the state of Georgia—by infringing on their rights—by disorganizing them, and circumscribing their limits. While he possesses a national character, there is hope for the Indian. But take his rights away, divest him of the last spark of national pride, and introduce him to a new order of things, invest him with oppressive laws, grievous to be borne, he droops like the fading flower before noon day sun... There is hope for the Cherokee as long as they continue in their present situation, but disorganize them, either by removing them beyond the Mississippi, or by imposing on them “heavy burdens,” you cut a vital string in their national existence.²⁰

Rights, then, are political and national in character as the legitimating principles of self-government—of sovereignty, as we now call it. In his language of organization, he stakes for the Cherokee Nation an equal claim to those rights America asserted in the Declaration of Independence to form a government, “*organizing* its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness,” and to protect itself from foreign infringement and oppressions like those perpetrated by Georgia. (He again recalls Jefferson’s objections: “In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms: our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury... We have warned [“our British brethren”] from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us”). Asserting the Cherokees’ right to a “national existence,” to maintain their own geographic and conceptual limits, he declares independence for the Nation wherein its people may deliberate and determine their own course.

²⁰ Elias Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 28 Jan. 1829: 2, col. 5, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 105.

Traditionalists had done so in the past, not just in times preceding European contact, but in their insistence on the very civilization programs that later critics have used as evidence of acquiescence to colonial imposition. Several instances testify to the Cherokees' volitional control over education in the nation, from their near-expulsion of missionaries who had failed in their promises to provide instruction, to the community-built schools at Creek Path, to historian William McLoughlin's general sense that "Missionary schools tended to be founded in response to local requests for them rather than according to any prearranged plan."²¹ The National Council's advocacy of the introduction and maintenance of schools brought it at one point in 1819 to delegate John Ross and others to look into plans "to establish an endowment to support schools by selling a tract of its [the nation's] land that would fetch a good price."²² They were successful in having the project included in the treaty they signed in February of 1819, allowing for the sale of twelve square miles to establish a school fund.²³ As late as 1833, Ross pressured Lewis Cass, Jackson's Secretary of War, to learn "what disposition has been made of the lands reserved under the treaty of 1819 for the purpose of raising a school fund for our nation, and if sold, to state the amount of the proceeds and also the application made of the same."²⁴ Such a transaction points up the deficiency of the monist characterization of traditionalism as uniformly

²¹ William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1984, reprint (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1994) 49-53; Rufus Anderson, *Memoir of Catharine Brown: A Christian Indian of the Cherokee Nation* by Catharine Brown, ed. Rufus Anderson, N.p.: Armstrong, 1824, 2nd ed. Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1825, reprint (Signal Mountain, TN: Mountain Press, n.d.) 38-43; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 355.

²² McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 254.

²³ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 253-59, 355. It appears unlikely the sale was ever accomplished as the US was holding out for the sale of *all* lands. There are scattered references to other educational funds, like the US Education fund established in 1819, but they appear to be unassociated. The Cherokees did benefit from these funds channeled through missionaries like the ABCFM to establish schools.

²⁴ John Ross, "To Lewis Cass," 28 Jan. 1833, 258.

opposed to or incapable of understanding Christianity, education, or the principles of fungible property. The integrity of the nation depended not solely on past principled practices of worship, industry, place, etc., but also on its people and their capacity to exercise agency in a dramatically changed and changing world, one that demanded the benefits of education and adaptability.

The nation's leaders directed Boudinot to work for the same ends. One object of his 1826 fundraising tour was the establishment of a national secondary academy, the benefits of which he thought so evident that he saw no need to "spend one moment in arguments, in favour of such an institution; need I speak one word of the utility, of the necessity, of an institution of learning."²⁵ He would, though, write of the project and its proposed funding via real estate profits in a later editorial, arguing, "The Cherokees as a nation have had sufficient time to learn and appreciate the advantages of knowledge: for what else distinguishes them from their brethren?...It becomes every citizen then, particularly every ruler, as a guardian of the nation's welfare, to do his utmost endeavor to forward education...It is this which will preserve us from the common burial place of Indians—oblivion in which many tribes are forgotten, & to which many would suppose us to be hastening."²⁶ Here, as in Ross's letter to Sequoyah quoted above celebrating the syllabary as "an index for the aboriginal tribes," Boudinot's language suggests an exceptionalist attitude, and while both were Cherokee chauvinists, they situate their progress in education as a matter of context rather than of essential predilection. More important than education itself, though, are "the advantages of knowledge," principle among them that the "nation's welfare" may be better guarded and "preserve[d]," and if somewhat haughtily, they held up their

²⁵ Boudinot, "Address" 77.

²⁶ Elias Boudinot, "National Academy," *Cherokee Phoenix* 18 Feb. 1829: 2, col. 4-5, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 106-07.

efforts as a method other tribes might emulate to similarly protect their cultures. According to Boudinot's reasoning, education is not a means by which civilization supplants traditionalist culture but one of defending it and physically preserving Indian lives; it emerges as the primary strategy by which politicians can uphold their primary protective duties to the people. For him and other Cherokees, securing access to education was early on a paramount responsibility of the political arm.

The commitment to education was so much the product of collective political agency that it was written into the sixth article of the Constitution of 1827, which was ratified by the conservative National Council: "Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government, the preservation of liberty and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged in this Nation."²⁷ Absent from the US Constitution but present in that of Massachusetts, this article establishes with remarkable clarity the benefits the Cherokee Nation identified in education's interrelationship not just with religion but also with the polity, in its cultivation of an informed, critically thinking population that through the aid of educational institutions established by the government would ultimately improve government itself, "knowledge being necessary to good governemnt." An educated people further works toward "the happiness of mankind" and "the preservation of liberty": goals carefully constructed in parallel phrases that indicate their equal footing with and relevance to the practices of political sovereignty, through the people's principled and informed governance of the government. McLoughlin argues that this clause was controversial among those opposed to change too drastic and swift, noting its careful wording that equivocates how positively the Nation saw the connection between religion and education. The wording, and, of course, the article's very

²⁷ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence* 400, 407.

inclusion nonetheless endorse education, undoubtedly anticipating the Cherokees' own administration of their schools.²⁸

Although not citizens of the US, the Cherokee's treaties bound the nations together and provided the foundation for their political relations, and appeals to the history and the structure of those negotiations between equals in sovereignty became staples of Cherokee anti-Removal rhetoric. Ross regularly invoked treaty history in his memorials to Congress, his speeches, and throughout his writing.²⁹ Boudinot, too, criticized US failures in its Indian policies by frequent reference to treaties. In his anti-removal editorials, he made the US's upholding of its treaty obligations an express measure of the nation's Constitutional legitimacy, its consistency in its Indian policy, and its own professed standards of civilized and Christian conduct. As historian Angela Pulley Hudson summarizes, "He accused the US government of supreme hypocrisy by illustrating the ways in which the measures taken by state and federal officials were wholly opposite to both the spirit and letter of the US Constitution."³⁰ In the same 1829 editorial in which he discusses the right of organizing sovereign government over and against Georgia's attempt to impose its Othering laws, he writes, "the United States must either defend us in our rights, or leave us to our foe. In the former case, the General Government will redeem her pledge solemnly given in

²⁸ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* 232. For more on the importance Cherokees saw in education, see McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance* 72-73, 254, 354-55, 400.

²⁹ See for instance John Ross, "Memorial to the Senate and House of Representatives," 17 May 1834, 290; "To the Senate and House of Representatives," 21 June 1836, 427; *Letter from John Ross, the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, to a Gentleman of Philadelphia* (Washington, D.C. [?]: n.p., 6 May 1837) 491; *The Cherokee Nation v. the State of Georgia*, 30 US 1, Supreme Ct., 1831, 2-12.

³⁰ I am indebted to Angela Pulley Hudson for sharing her article on Boudinot's constitutional language for this reading. See her "'Forked Justice': Elias Boudinot, the US Constitution, and Cherokee Removal," *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance: Word Medicine, Word Magic*, ed. Ernest Stromberg (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2006) 50-65. My derivative, earlier suggestion that his language also recalls the Declaration of Independence owes to her.

treaties.—In the latter, she will violate her promise of protection, and we cannot, in future, depend consistently, upon any guarantee made by her to us, either here or beyond the Mississippi.”³¹ His call for the US to uphold its treaties by claiming the jurisdiction delineated in the Constitution intersected with the emergent conflict over the powers of the federal government and those of the states, effectively challenging the US to demonstrate its commitment to constitutional precepts not just for the Cherokees’ sake, but in order to prove that its national presence was not empty posture.

In an 1831 editorial, he observes the challenge to federal power posed by South Carolina’s threat to nullify protective tariffs: “The conduct of the Georgia Legislature is indeed surprising—one day they discountenance the proceedings of the nullifiers of South Carolina—at another, they even out-do the people of South Carolina, and authorize their Governor to hoist the flag of rebellion against the United States! If such proceedings are sanctioned by the majority of the people of the U. States, the Union is but a tottering fabric, which will soon fall and crumble into atoms.”³² His reference to the US as a “fabric,” a contrivance of human hands denaturalizes the nation as permanently given and reminds his readers of the need for maintenance against its degeneration, here requiring attendance to consistency in policy and philosophy. If the US were to prove unable to carry out the promises made in treaties as “*the supreme law of the land,*”³³ quoted from the Constitution’s sixth

³¹ Elias Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 28 Jan. 1829: 2, col. 5, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 105-06.

³² Elias Boudinot, “High Movement,” *Cherokee Phoenix* 8 Jan. 1831: 2, col. 2, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 121.

³³ Elias Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 15 May 1830: 2, col. 5, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor*, 118.

article, then citizens, states, tribes, and foreign governments likewise could not “depend consistently” on its other guarantees, past, present, or future.

His critique of consistency accrues meaning throughout his editorials. When some members of Congress opposed to the Indian Removal Act amended it with a declaration of the inviolability of preceding treaties, he bristles with irony at the empty display of sympathy: “We confess our ignorance, our utter ignorance, of the views of the majority of the members of Congress, so far as they have been developed, on the rights of the Indians, and the relation in which they stand to the United States, on the score of treaties; nor can we discern the consistency of contending for the unconstitutionality of these treaties, and yet at the same time, declaring that *they shall not be violated*.”³⁴ He skewers the rational inconsistency of declaring that treaties must be upheld while in the very same act Congress authorizes their abrogation. His rhetoric simultaneously treats consistency as a foundational logical principle and as a definitional quality of substantiality, that is, an interrogation of what it is that things consist of, things like treaties and constitutionality. He asks that the US behave consistently in both substance and method: it should unambiguously declare what treaties are and how they will be treated. To help the US’s apparent confusion, he suggests that it simply look to its own definition of treaties as the “supreme law of the land,” and appends the Cherokee understanding that they are “solemn instruments,” imposing “sacred obligations,”³⁵ entered into freely and supported by the rule of law, which ought to be theoretically consistent in its non-contradiction and its durability. Consistency thus also becomes a matter of temporality. Boudinot argues that if the US

³⁴ Elias Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 19 June 1830: 3, col. 1, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 119.

³⁵ Respectively, Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 15 May 1830: 2, col. 5, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 118; editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 12 Nov. 1831: 2, col.2, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 142.

fails to act with predictable regularity toward states' challenges to federal power, as he claims it has not in its condemnation of South Carolina and its indulgence of Georgia, it will not long consist as a nation, but will "*soon* fall and crumble into atoms." He prophecies that if the US will not uphold its treaties and bind states to comply with federal law, the failure to support and exercise the legitimating authority of the Constitution would undermine the US's moral and structural integrity, and its abrogation of its promises to its peer nations and to itself will jeopardize its ability to long endure, certainly in its self-proclaimed guise as a moral, Christian nation.

Boudinot regularly remonstrates with his audience to reverse the US's oppressive, coercive, and disingenuous course on the basis of its incompatibility with the Christian precepts upon which the nation was ostensibly founded and operated, and by which it justified its right of expansion. In a particularly Jeremianic letter sent in to the *Phoenix* while he was on another fundraising tour, he writes,

To take our lands by force is a serious matter—it is fraught with considerations full of interest to the people of Georgia themselves and to the whole Union...It would be robbery to all intents and purposes. And would the General Government look on with indifference and see its solemn pledges trampled in the dust? "There is a Lion in the way" whether the Government of the United States interferes or not—The integrity of the Union is at stake. As respects the Cherokees...They reside on the land which God gave them—they are surrounded with guarantees which this Republic has voluntarily made for their protection and which once formed a sufficient security against oppression. If those guarantees must now be violated with impunity for purposes altogether selfish, the sin will not be at our door, but at the door of our *oppressor* and our faithless *Guardian*.³⁶

³⁶ Elias Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 24 Dec. 1831: 3, col. 3, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 144-45. Perdue dates the smudged issue December 21; the Sequoyah Research Center's online archives believe it to be December 24, which by the calendar accords with the indicated Saturday day of publication. Regarding Boudinot's ironic use of Marshal's language of guardianship, see again Pulley Hudson 56-57 for an insightful reading.

If his biblical metaphors and references are untraditional, the purposes to which he turns them—the protection of tribal lands, criticism of harmful policy, assertion of inherent sovereignty—are pointedly conservative. Boudinot here invokes Proverbs 26:13 (“The slothful man saith, ‘There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets’”) in a dual critique that charges the US with a sluggard’s indolence for its failure to intervene in the criminal and sinful “robbery” of Cherokee land. In an addition to the verse’s customary reading as a commentary on spiritual laziness, he identifies Georgia with the lion, charging it with a predatory rapaciousness that violates not just Cherokee rights, but also the US’s volitional treaty agreements, and even the will of God inasmuch as it was He who established the Cherokee in their homelands.

While Ross does not seem to have been as devout as Boudinot, his rhetoric calling the US to account on the basis of its own religious precepts is transposable with Boudinot’s. He closes an early letter to Congress, “whilst the Cherokees are peacefully endeavoring to enjoy the blessings of civilization and Christianity, on the soil of their rightful inheritance; and whilst the exertions and labors of various religious societies of these United States are successfully engaged in promulgating to them the w[o]rld of *truth* and *life*, from the *sacred volume of holy writ*, and under the patronage of the General Government—they are *threatened* with *removal* or *extinction*.”³⁷ Ross’s rhythmic emphasis chiasmatically reveals the bitter irony of the US’s false patronage, which urged the Cherokees to accept treaties’ promises of civilization—the “*truth*” secreting “*removal*”—that they might come to greater security—the “*life*” bearing “*extinction*.” That ironic critique extends as well to the hypocrisy of promulgators of the faith who, like Boudinot’s slothful man/nation, ignore their own culpability in the nation’s duplicity.

³⁷ John Ross, “To the Senate and House of Representatives,” 15 Apr. 1824, 77-78.

Protesting the New Echota treaty late in the anti-Removal campaign, he would level the same comparative strategy in his pamphlet “Letter from John Ross...to a Gentleman of Philadelphia”:

The first of your ancestors who visited as strangers the land of the Indian, professed to be apostles of Christ, and to be attracted by a desire to extend the blessings of his religion to the ignorant native. Thousands among you still proclaim the same noble and generous interest in our welfare; but will the untutored savage believe the white man’s professions, when he feels that by his practices he has become an outcast and an exile? Can he repose with confidence in the declarations of philanthropy and universal charity, when he sees the professors of the religion which he is invited to embrace, the foremost in acts of oppression and of outrage?³⁸

Chiasmus again characterizes Ross’s movement back and forth between appearance and reality: the acumen displayed by the savage, the native become alien, the benevolence unmasked as rapacity. This rhetorical structure syntactically replays his anxiety over the perfidy of the “civilizers,” religious or civic, demonstrating his full awareness that just because whites might have said something, it wasn’t necessarily so, no matter how sacrosanct the vocabularies in which surreptitious agendas were couched. Both he and Boudinot raise the Cherokees’ embrace of Christianity as a bulwark against US aggression by demonstrating the hypocrisy of one Christian people assaulting another, particularly after declaring that the Indians’ conversion would unite them as allies. Such careful use of irony should also alert us to the possibility that he and Boudinot, too, understand that motives may be prudently hidden in the invocation of particular discourses that lend rhetorical authority.

Like their contemporary William Apess (Pequot), Boudinot and Ross accuse the US and Georgia of gross failure to meet their own standards, charging that “The intruders... have acted more like savages towards the Cherokees, than the Cherokees

³⁸ Ross, *Letter...to a Gentleman of Philadelphia* 502-03.

towards them.”³⁹ Though Boudinot here refers specifically to illegal settlers on Cherokee lands, it seems clear in another editorial that he finds the same savagery in the Georgia legislature’s “extension of tyrannical and unchristian laws, which threatens to blast all our rising hopes and expectations,” albeit clothed in frock coats instead of animal skins.⁴⁰ A Methodist itinerant minister and author, Apess similarly offers white readers a literary mirror framed by the discourses of Christianity and civilization. Nationalist Jace Weaver celebrates Apess’s reflective analysis, subversion, and resistant stance in his writings, avowing “The rest of Apess’s work [besides his autobiography] must be viewed as resistance literature, affirming Indian cultural and political identity over against the dominant culture.”⁴¹ Though it seems to me (and to Weaver himself, confining his focus to Boudinot’s editorials) that the analysis could apply as well to Boudinot’s passionate entreaties and invectives against white depredation and his demands for justice and recognition of the Cherokee Nation in the east, Weaver is compelled to concur with Perdue in his final evaluation. He writes that “in his pursuit of ‘civilization’ for the Cherokee, it says much about his views of community that Elias Boudinot could not, over the course of his lifetime, ever envision any positive alternative other than assimilation or Removal,”⁴² a summary judgment I find untenable read against his editorials. Between 1826 and 1832 Boudinot staunchly opposed Removal, and many “external” alternatives commonly understood as the imposition of unequivocal civilizing efforts often already

³⁹ Elias Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 9 Sep. 1829: 3, col. 3, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 111.

⁴⁰ Elias Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 17 June 1829: 2, col. 4, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 109.

⁴¹ Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) 55. For more on Apess’s Christian reflections, see Robert Warrior, *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005) 28-32.

⁴² Weaver, *That the People* 75.

inherited in or were transformed by culturally distinct dispositions. Without considering the damage done by such limiting assumptions to our ability to theorize or even recognize Native agency, many critics have supposed principled practices enacting education, dissent, diplomacy, et al., outside Native cultural and historical experience.

Boudinot and Ross intended that their questioning of the legal and moral consistency of US policy would make the Cherokees' problem one of general relevance to "the whole Union,"⁴³ not only as a matter entreating compassion and empathy for the Cherokee exclusively but as one that touched on the principles of Christianity, humanism, justice, and lawfulness for everyone. Boudinot's recapitulations of the Union's official and unofficial narratives of itself, together with his warnings that it would "soon fall and crumble" if it did not act in accordance with them, were meant to spur his readers into activism on the Cherokee's behalf but may instead have occasioned a defensive reaction to what Priscilla Wald calls a recognition of the Cherokees' uncanny and threatening reprise of the US's own founding, revolutionary moment. Elaborating on the consonances between the US and the Cherokee constitutions, which also echo throughout Boudinot's editorials, Wald argues that the very similarity between the Cherokees' declaration of nationhood, principled on its claim to the rights of a civilized people, and that of the United States, as a nation borne of rhetorically articulated rebellion, was more alarming than ingratiating through its destabilization of the US's nationalist and exceptionalist auto-narrative, which legitimated its instantiation on the basis of natural rights endowed to some (those civilized, for which we may read "white") and not others (savages or "not white"). She writes of the Cherokee's ratification of their Constitution, "outrage stemmed from anxieties that were exacerbated by the profound threat of Cherokee separatism to the collective identity. The Cherokee Nation's becoming like but not of

⁴³ Boudinot, editorial, *Cherokee Phoenix* 24 Dec. 1831: 3, col. 3, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 144.

the United States political entity, mirroring without acceding to its conditions, seemed to jeopardize the terms of a United States identity.”⁴⁴ The danger to the US arises from “those ways in which, as Homi Bhabha suggests, ‘mimicry is at once resemblance and menace,’” insofar as “Cherokee sovereignty would validate a permanent Cherokee presence on lands considered by Georgia to belong to the state. Such a presence would challenge the integrity of the state and of the Union,” most acutely in the power it imagined it had to declare its borders and police its interior.⁴⁵ If the Cherokees did not come under Georgia’s jurisdiction yet fell within its boundaries, they would embody the revolutionary anxiety over an *imperium in imperio*, inhabiting an uncontrolled and uncontrollable gap in state power that it could not abide.

Wald is most closely concerned with the lacuna the Cherokee’s suit in *Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia* exposed in the constitutional definitions of personhood, claiming “In effect, the Cherokee bid for recognition by the United States as a foreign nation was a bid for full personhood within those bounds.”⁴⁶ I believe Wald’s argument generally glides too easily from what might more rightly be understood as citizenship rather than personhood, a slippage that dodges the question of what guarantees of rights the US Constitution makes to non-citizens. Nevertheless, Cherokees to be sure were negotiating for a limited extension of federal power over the state of Georgia on their behalf, a negotiation required of them given their relative powerlessness to check Georgia’s affront and preconditioned by their historical acquiescence to place themselves “under the US’s protection.” The request for

⁴⁴ Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 27.

⁴⁵ Wald 28, citing Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse” *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 126.

⁴⁶ Wald 36.

recognition, constituent to that for intervention, thus does capitulate to an agreement to be “bounded” by federal authority, but importantly, the Cherokees imagined limits to those limits. To a certain extent their bid for recognition as a foreign nation expressly asked for *exclusion* from the US citizenry and from federal authority when they didn’t need it, calling for an as-yet unimagined relationship in which the federal government would protect the self-declared rights of unbounded, non-citizen persons.

Though John Ross and former attorney general William Wirt, the Cherokees’ lawyer in the Supreme Court cases, crafted a careful legal argument, the Constitution’s ambiguity on the relationship of Indians to the US surely suggested that Marshall’s ruling would depend on questions not answered in black letter law; they hoped, for instance, his federalist leanings would incline him to assert federal authority. With little legal precedent, the suit makes its case not least on principles of natural rights, especially ownership of land and establishment of government. The suit, like Boudinot’s editorials, also pleads for a humanist sympathy against manifest injustice, particularly insofar as the Cherokees’ social progress should leave no doubt that they were capable of managing their own affairs, managing them well, and that injustice committed against them was committed not against a tribe of proto-humans but against a duly constituted nation of civilized people. Marshall summarizes the plea:

They have established a constitution and form of government, the leading features of which they have borrowed from that of the United States...They have established schools for the education of their children, and churches in which the Christian religion is taught; they have abandoned the hunter state, and become agriculturists, mechanics, and herdsmen; and, under provocations long continued and hard to be borne, they have observed, with fidelity, all their engagements by treaty with the United States. Under the promised “patronage and good neighbourhood” of the United States, a portion of the people of the nation have become civilized Christians and agriculturists; and the bill

alleges that in these respects they are willing to submit to a comparison with their white brethren around them.⁴⁷

Once again, Cherokee volition turns the purportedly assimilative civilization program towards the reinforcement of the nation's distinctiveness. As Wald points out, the comparisons the suit makes—on one hand suggesting equality with US polity and on the other insinuating the inferiority of their (and the northern jurists') lower-class "white brethren" on the other—may not have served as well as Wirt and Ross might have hoped, challenging as they were to the US's ideas of itself as unilaterally sovereign within its declared borders and as inherently superior to its brown brethren.

Wald's reading of the socio-psychological operations of the uncanny in the US response to Cherokee presence is insightful and persuasive, but stopping at a fearful or discomforted reaction to a challenge to the self—and here we must make the leap to a collective and homogeneous imagined self—deemphasizes other forceful causes of the Cherokees' invasion by Georgia, its rejected claim to nationhood, its abandonment by the US congress and people, its loss of land and life. She writes, "*Cherokee Nation* was finally about the incomprehensible hole in the map within the perimeters of Georgia. Marshall's narrative of the Union could make no sense of it, and the Cherokee bid for nationhood American style only further complicated that narrative."⁴⁸ It was not simply that the US could not imagine limits to its boundaries and influence in a new relationship based on separate equality, but that it *would not*, for such a relationship stood as a barrier to a national auto-narrative not passively characteristic of the zeitgeist but actively produced by and producing a will to accumulate power and appropriate Indian land. Wald rightly observes, "Ostensibly reading Constitutional law, [Marshall] was in fact writing it," arguing that in his

⁴⁷ *The Cherokee Nation v. the State of Georgia*, 30 US 1, Supreme Ct., 1831, 6.

⁴⁸ Wald 26.

decision he “recast in a distinctly Unionist narrative the often contradictory policies toward indigenous peoples, policies that veered between removal and an assimilation that secured the appropriation of their land and identity.”⁴⁹ The decisions in the Marshall trilogy—*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, *Worcester v. Georgia*, and *Johnson v. McIntosh*—certainly “recast” historical precedents, with some glazes more philanthropic than others, but they additionally append new chapters onto the corpus of US colonial law. The contradiction Wald finds in the methods of Indian policy reflected in *Cherokee Nation* are finally only too consistent with their unspoken purpose: the assertion of federal power over Indians and their lands, within or without the current national borders. To this overriding goal all others touching on Indian matters—legal, moral, humanist—could ultimately bend.

“The Toleration of Diversified Views”

Perhaps Boudinot and Ross came to recognize the paradoxical consistency, doomful in its legality and portent, of this controlling agenda of US Indian policy that the weapon of argument—the counter-rhetoric of civilization and Christianity—espoused by them, white allies, anyone, was powerless to stop. Ross espied the destination of the US’s seemingly rudderless meanderings with epiphanic eloquence: “The Cherokees...are surely the best judges of their own true situation, [and] can properly appreciate...the expressed sympathy for their misfortunes, and the avowed benevolence towards the Indian race, all of which amounts simply to this: ‘we want, and intend to take your lands, and are sorry you are unwilling for us to do so in our way.’”⁵⁰ Boudinot, convinced that the Cherokees would never in the US be allowed

⁴⁹ Wald 24-25.

⁵⁰ John Ross, “To the Senate and House of Representatives,” 21 June 1836, 437.

the free exercise of their natural rights or be treated with anything but a pretense of equality; assured of the federal government's indifference to their sufferings in its executive, legislative, and judicial branches; and frightened at the imminent threat of an unofficial genocidal campaign, at some point in early 1832 began to soften his stance against Removal. Though he did not specifically argue for it in his editorials, while he was with John Ridge on a fundraising tour in the northeastern US, his brother Stand Watie edited the *Phoenix* and perhaps at Boudinot's direction included a notice that the delegation was considering a treaty providing for Removal, a possibility the very mention of which Ross would not allow.

Ross and the National Council were unwilling that the *Phoenix* should express anything but a unified front against Removal and prohibited Boudinot from writing anything in its pages to the contrary. Whether because he could no longer conscientiously advocate resistance, was dedicated to the freedom of the press, or saw the writing on the wall, he and Ross came to an understanding in August of 1832 and Boudinot resigned as editor. In his letter of resignation printed in the *Phoenix* he explained his irresolvable conflict: "Were I to continue as Editor, I should feel myself in a most peculiar and delicate situation. I do not know whether I could, at the same time, satisfy my own views, and the views of the authorities of the nation. My situation would then be as embarrassing as it would be peculiar and delicate...I love my country and my people...I cannot tell them that we will be reinstated in our rights, when I have no such hope..."⁵¹ The competition between his duties of conscious and of office is exacerbated by his reiterated sense of peculiarity and delicateness, words that most obviously describe an awkward, or as he has it, potentially "embarrassing" social scene, or that might more subtly indicate a recurring sense of singular oddity

⁵¹ Elias Boudinot, "To the Readers of the *Cherokee Phoenix*," *Cherokee Phoenix* 11 Aug. 1832: 2, col. 3-4, reprinted in *Cherokee Editor* 164.

and fragility. The quick tendency is to read Boudinot's sense of peculiarity into his personal identity, formed in uncommon social circumstances in many ways and places separate from Cherokee people, but this reading makes no sense of the vulnerability echoing in the delicacy of his situation. That vulnerability should be read into the juxtaposition he raises not between himself and the people, whom he declares he loves (whether or not they love him back), but between himself and the "authorities of the nation"—that is, between the individual and the state. Whatever misgivings he might have had, he grew increasingly convinced of the necessity of Removal in the next years, and in 1835 as a leader of the Ridge/treaty party, acting without authorization, he signed the fraudulent treaty of New Echota, fully aware of that in so doing he gained no security but rather invited his own death. Perhaps even in his earliest misgivings about the consonance of his thinking with official policy, he became acutely aware that dissent—especially when uncommon or peculiar—entailed vulnerability, and to the very entity possessed of the ultimate coercive power.

Conjecture about the specific cause of his change of course, connected with his signing of the Removal treaty, has preoccupied many Boudinot scholars. Most attribute his shift to Jackson's refusal to enforce the *Worcester* decision; McLoughlin, Peyer, and Weaver add the loss of support from political and missionary allies who began to advocate Removal. In an influential argument, Perdue predicates his intransigence to coming under Georgia's jurisdiction, which might have allowed the Cherokee to stay in the east with subsequent US citizenship, on his experience with racism in Cornwall. He apparently learned there not only about racism but also how to accept it. Upon his return, "Boudinot continued to be an ardent advocate of 'civilization,' but so completely did he embrace the tenets of Western culture that he seems to have accepted the dominant white attitudes toward Indians...His resistance to the absorption of the Cherokees into white society probably stemmed from a belief

that Indians and whites could never be equals. At the very least, Boudinot's encounter with and perhaps subconscious acceptance of white racism reduced to an afterthought the idea of Indian assimilation."⁵² (Perdue here is referring to assimilation within the citizen-boundaries of the US, not to the Cherokees' assimilation of the principles of civilization and Christianity.) Seemingly, not wanting to live among whites, like wanting to live like whites, is evidence of an internalized colonial consciousness—and such is the advantage of alleging an assimilationist consciousness: once leveled, it can be adapted to account for practically any exigency. I must admit that the logical basis of asserting that Boudinot went from believing that whites would never *treat* Indians as equals to believing Indians *were not* whites' equals escapes me.

Maureen Konkle, despite her empowering reading of political volition in early American Indian writing, unwittingly reinforces Perdue's failure to decode Native agency in the interplay between civilization and the full range of traditional dispositions, even as she recovers Cherokee agency in the creation of the nation. She writes, "apparently rejecting all aspects of Cherokee practices and belief, accepting the EuroAmerican definition of civilization as being essentially 'like' whites, and insisting on natural equality with whites cause problems in the spokesmen's [e.g., the treaty party's] discourse...Ridge and Boudinot rejected traditional practices outright, characterizing them as the primitive foundation from which the Cherokees were moving ever forward but not something to be retained in any manner whatsoever."⁵³ This analysis replicates the all-or-nothing dichotomy between assimilation and traditionalism that ignores practices inhering in the *habitus*, theorized or not. Not *all* aspects of "Cherokee practices and belief" were rejected out of hand by progressive-

⁵² Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 10-11, 29.

⁵³ Konkle 47.

minded figures like Ridge and Boudinot—besides their obvious ties to Cherokee culture, such as their retention and public use of the language (not small things on their own), insistence on distinct boundaries, strong family ties, deliberate return to Cherokee country, and intellectual advocacy for Cherokee and other Indian groups, I question whether anything short of an early, complete, and permanent removal from Cherokee communities and individuals could possibly effect the type of erasure their critics claim they consciously sought. Additional untheorized traditional practices carried on in progressive developments could be found anywhere: in agriculture, say, with the cultivation of native and newly introduced crops by traditional labor cooperatives like the *gadugi* using technological innovations like plows, or in religion, discussed in the last chapter, or in the principled practices structuring consensus, such as deliberation, debate, and dissent.

The council house—the traditional site where Cherokees congregated and argued for weeks before reaching consensus—gradually emptied as the centralized government assumed control over both internal and external decisions. But for a time, the pages of the *Phoenix* promised the nation an alternative place to gather and stay apprised of national goings-on, yet the potential of that imagined locus was circumscribed by the inherited precept that general dissent and deliberation as impediments to decisive action should yield to the duly-delegated if at times obscure authority of the elected government. The general council founded the *Phoenix* with the understanding that it would advocate explicitly nationalist political goals and accordingly provided for only a qualified freedom of the press, which Ross explained in his 1828 annual message:

The public press deserves the patronage of the people, and should be cherished as an important vehicle in the diffusion of general information, and as a no less powerful auxiliary in asserting and supporting our political rights... The only legislative provision

necessary for conducting the press, in our opinion, is to guard against the admission of scurrilous productions of a personal character, and also against cherishing sectarian principles on religious subjects. The press being the public property of the Nation, it would ill become its character if such infringements upon the feelings of the people should be tolerated. In other respects, the liberty of the press should be as free as the breeze that glides upon the surface.⁵⁴

The sole express injunctions against ad hominem attacks and denominational squabbles afford the editor wide latitude, with the proviso that the paper is fundamentally national and that its ends should work toward the inculcation of a nationalist consciousness. There is little doubt that the nation controls the press, but lost in the shuffle is the matter of who it is that rightfully controls the nation. As “public property,” the “public press” suggests a theoretical right of access by the people, an access that was in practice sharply curtailed, both in material the editor’s office would express or allow to be expressed by others.

Perhaps anticipating the potential contingencies in operating a newspaper simultaneously free and bound, the National Council in the Cherokee Constitution made no assurances of the freedom of the press. After the conflict with Boudinot, Ross publically clarified the expectations of future editors: “The *views of the public authorities* should continue and ever be in accordance with the *will of the people*; and the *views of the editor of the national paper* be the same. The toleration of *diversified views* to the columns of such a paper would not fail to create fermentation and confusion among our citizens, and in the end prove injurious to the welfare of the nation. The love of our country and people demands *unity of sentiment and action* for the good of *all*.”⁵⁵ The logic of the passage seems valid and sound enough: the paper depends on the authorities for its views, just as the authorities depend on the people.

⁵⁴ John Ross, “Annual Message,” 13 Oct. 1828, 141.

⁵⁵ John Ross, “To the General Council,” 4 Aug. 1832, 250.

Theda Perdue goes so far as arguing that Ross in this view “expressed the traditional Cherokee approach to politics in which councils reached a consensus and chiefs had no power to enforce their will.”⁵⁶ A close reading, however, reveals not a conservative consensual disposition so much as an assertive display of a dramatically concentrated locus of power, couched in the rhetoric of egalitarian tradition.

Ross subtly switches here the dependent relationship between the polity and the people in a classic reenactment of the government’s legally transcendent emergence. The public invests the state with the responsibility to protect the public, a responsibility that extends to protecting the public from itself, effectively elevating the state to a superintendent position outside the rules of its own creation—a state forever in a state of sovereign exception. Its claim to legitimacy endures in tautology: what the state does is best for the people because the people created it to do what is best for them. This unassailable rationale equating the state’s operation and the people’s best interest excuses the repeated ellipsis of the subject in Ross’s injunction—who might harbor “diversified views” if not the people? Who, exactly, will not tolerate those views and demand “unity of sentiment”? Will it be the people who will police these transgressions of ideology, or will it in fact be the police?⁵⁷ The rhetoric of nationalism conveniently articulates no difference. The freedom to express views at odds with the public authorities—that is, elected and sitting officials—would henceforth “be as free as the breeze that glides upon the surface,” but would penetrate no deeper.

We might expect a national paper to stick to the party line, but Ross problematically extended his insistence on an enforceable nationalist consciousness to

⁵⁶ Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 165, 227n.14.

⁵⁷ I find it piquant that one of the most outspoken opponents of the treaty party, Thomas Foreman, was a sheriff.

the general public. In his annual message of 1833, he spoke at some length on the principles informing his conception of unity:

It is a self evident truth, that no community can successfully surmount an opposing difficulty and attain the object of desire, unless the members thereof can and do exercise a *controlling* influence of common interest, so as to ensure harmony and perseverance among themselves by unity of sentiment and action, and the force of this truth, is equally applicable to nations. . . we cannot be too strongly impressed with the necessity of pursuing that course which is best calculated to meet the views, interest and welfare of the people. On all important questions, when a difference of opinion arise in regard to their rights and interest, the sentiments of the majority should prevail, and whatever measure is adopted by that majority for the public good, should be the duty of the minority to yield, and unite in the support of the measure, this is the rule of order, sanctioned by patriotism and virtue; whilst a contrary course would lead to faction, confusion, and injury.⁵⁸

Ross takes his turn to adopt the language of the Declaration of Independence, calling acquiescence to the state as the national institution entrusted with “controlling” the common interest a “self evident truth,” ironically co-opting the language of a document that articulates the principles of insurrection. His reference to smaller communities gestures toward traditional, town-based dispositions of consensus, but he mistakes the practices of persuading that prevailed therein, in the absence of coercive authority in the traditional political *habitus*, for the practices of “controlling,” a more efficient if less democratic—and less traditional—set of dispositions. He similarly invokes the traditional principle of harmony but understands it as a condition that may be mandated, dodgily using a subject-less language of power and control. Harmony for Ross is a state to be commanded by a “force” that disappears in passive syntax but nevertheless “calculates,” “impresses” us to “pursue,” and “prevails.”

⁵⁸ John Ross, “Annual Message,” 15 Oct. 1833, 271. Emphasis added.

Traditional consensus and deliberation were balancing acts that required recalibration with every movement, agreement, deferral, denial, or compromise. The rule by majority that Ross sanctions by virtue and patriotism, but not by tradition, is less about balancing than about acclimating the people to imbalance. Rule by consensus is the rule of all by all through the but-too-obsolete practices of compromising—binding together in agreement. Majority rule may be entered into freely, but it also takes advantage of coercive institutions to help those out of balance who might be feeling discomfited adjust to *the* “rule of order.” Ross offers majority rule as the only method of order rather than an option among others, subtly turning the “rule of order” into the order of rule; that is, the principle of order sanctions the practice of ruling, of exercising control. He again carefully equivocates subjective agency, dissolving enforcement into the natural order instead of identifying it as a set of coercive practices and institutions under state control. Characteristic in its ellipsis of volitional subjects and objects, the last ambiguous sentence, ostensibly a warning that the body politic may come to harm if dissent prevails, also veils a threat: while “a contrary course would lead to faction...and injury,” a patriot might well bring injury to a faction.

Ross was committed enough to ideological uniformity that he led or countenanced efforts to unseat from their leadership roles Boudinot and the Ridges, who were impeached by members of the National Council for “maintaining opinions and a policy to terminate the existence of the Cherokee community on the lands of [their] fathers.”⁵⁹ The treaty party pressed for a trial to defend themselves and offer their own account of the obstacles they believed made continued resistance to

⁵⁹ Thurman Wilkins, *Cherokee Tragedy: The Story of the Ridge Family and the Decimation of a People* (New York: Macmillan, 1970) 253, 356 n. 68, 64, citing “Currey to Lewis Cass, 15 September 1834 in National Archives RG 75, Letters received by the Office of Indian Affairs: Cherokee Agency (East) 1834-36 (M-234, Roll 76, frames 0315-45).”

Removal untenable and futile, but Ross declined either to offer them a hearing or to dismiss the charges. These measures he deemed necessary even after he spearheaded the indefinite suspension of elections, a move designed to sustain the government and avoid conflict with Georgia law, which had outlawed any exercise of Cherokee government, but one that engendered resentment among treaty party members who were by degrees removed from policy deliberations.⁶⁰ Politically excommunicated, denied access to any venue for public discourse—effectively silenced—the frustrated treaty party members, convinced both of the necessity of a final, immediate settlement of the Cherokees’ deplorable and worsening condition and of their own superior judgment, signed the treaty of New Echota, betraying the trust of the great majority of the Cherokee people and themselves abandoning the principled practices of consensus.

In his pamphlet *Letters...A Reply to John Ross*, written to justify his and the treaty party’s actions in signing the New Echota treaty, Boudinot described the conditions that lead the treaty party to such measures, complaining of the (C)hief source of their discontent:

...we will state what *we* suppose to be the great cause of our present difficulties—our present dissensions. *A want of proper information among the people*. We charge Mr. Ross with having deluded them with expectations incompatible with, and injurious to, their interest. He has prevented the discussion of this interesting matter, by systematic measures, at a time when discussion was of the most vital importance. By that means the people have been kept ignorant of their true condition... The original error was in the refusal of the leaders and advisers of this nation to discuss the question which is now agitated only in the last extremity, and in closing every avenue by which the people might be reached with correct information.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Elias Boudinot, *Letters and Other Papers Relating to Cherokee Affairs: Being a Reply to Sundry Publications Authorized by John Ross*, Athens: 1827, also in Senate Document 121, 25th Congress, 2nd session, reprinted in Boudinot, *Cherokee Editor* 211-12; Wilkins 252-55, 235-36.

⁶¹ Boudinot, *Letters* 161-62.

Much of Boudinot's justification for the treaty party's actions hinged on similar claims, that if the people were as aware of the full state of affairs as the leaders, they would consent to relocate the Nation in the west, and many critics have debated the proposition. Most agree that Ross was not entirely forthcoming in his public addresses about severity of the US's pressure, its increasing refusal to negotiate on any conditions but total removal, or the concessions for a treaty he had already offered, whether in earnest or as delay tactics.⁶² I am skeptical that reading between the lines of Ross's dealings can reveal a great deal more than we already know about his allegiance to the Cherokees' clear mandate to stay in the east, the Cherokees' commitment to remain in their lands, or the depth of the treaty party's devotion to the Cherokees' distinct survival.

What concerns me more here is the clear auto-theorization of the experience of ideological oppression Boudinot articulates on behalf of the treaty party. Though his claim that Ross closed "every avenue" exaggerates the extent to which the treaty party was truly incommunicado (he made this claim in a pamphlet he paid to have printed, after all), it does raise important questions about leader-citizens' responsibility to echo the party and/or public line, their responsibility to act in accordance with their best judgment and conscience, and according to what principles, traditional or progressive, conflicts arising among diverse dispositions should be mediated. Though in most of the document Boudinot protests too much, he does unwittingly confide some ambivalence in this passage. His preamble ostensibly promises it will reveal the cause of the treaty party's dissensions, but the syntax is appositive: the "dissensions" rename the "cause of the difficulties." Less dissolutive is his general, though belated hesitancy

⁶² Moulton 57, 61-71; Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 158. Boudinot accused Ross of ambiguity with both the Cherokees and the US government throughout his *Letters*, dubbing him "the Delphic Oracle"; see for instance *Cherokee Editor* 178, 191, 200.

arising from the stupefying complexity of the “interesting matter” of the Cherokees’ “difficulties”—problems of such enormity they slip in only as meiosis, as anesthetizing euphemisms. Boudinot yearns throughout the documents reprinted in *Letters* for discussion as a “vital,” i.e., urgent and life-giving practice, once widely enacted but “progressively” constricted. His letter of resignation from the *Phoenix* editorship, reprinted in *Letters*, not only confides his reluctance to propagandize against his better judgment but also exhorts “every citizen *to reflect* upon the dangers with which we are surrounded...*to talk over* all these matters, and, *if possible*, come to some definite and satisfactory conclusion.”⁶³ His pleas for public deliberation issue perhaps from the embodied *habitus*, disposed as it was to consider matters in due time, concluding only when conclusion was possible, in repeated consultation with various communities, open to the influence of authorities like clan mothers, elders, and spiritual leaders. He searches for a space of participatory deliberation, a place where dissent belongs: a nation of people conversing with rather than controlling each other. His problem is historically systemic rather than personal, more about the general stricture of spaces, opportunities, and practices of dissent extending from the Cherokees’ cession of local to central authority than it is about Ross’s muzzling of the national newspaper’s editor.

As far as the specific case is concerned, Boudinot’s defense of the treaty party’s actions in *Letters* does not hold up even on its own grounds. At one moment he claims authority for the signers under a written compromise negotiated with Ross but in another disavows the legitimacy of the agreement because of alterations Ross made after the treaty party signed it. The alterations were in fact approved by John Ridge, the *de facto* leader of the pro-treaty contingent, and Boudinot seems to have tacitly

⁶³ Boudinot, *Letters* 163, all emphasis added.

approved them as well.⁶⁴ Although he rails against what he believed to be disingenuousness on Ross's part, the treaty party had finally forced Ross into a compromise, and the treaty advocate leaders John Ridge and Stand Watie were included in the delegation that Ross empowered, "with full powers from the Cherokee people in general council assembled, to make such a Treaty as may appear to us best calculated to ensure the present peace and future posterity of our country."⁶⁵ Ross led this group to Washington to negotiate a "final adjustment of the existing difficulties," as he equivocated to Lewis Cass.⁶⁶ While this delegation was in Washington, Boudinot and Major Ridge formed another at New Echota, bent now not on finding some compromise but on exercising control. Following the widespread protest against the New Echota treaty, Boudinot justified it as "the best that can be done for the Cherokees, under present circumstances," and urged Ross to give up his protestations and instead convince the Cherokee people of the impossibility of obtaining any better conditions.⁶⁷ This he should do over and against objections to one-sided negotiations—objections founded on the principle of mutual consent, like "One party has no right to take away any part of it [a compromise], or to make any additions without the consent of the other... One party cannot bind in this manner the other; much less can one individual bind both the contracting parties"⁶⁸—grievances he made against Ross's alteration of the compact with the treaty party but which went unnoticed in his own actions.

⁶⁴ Boudinot, *Letters* 195, 185, 183, 181.

⁶⁵ John Ross, "To John F. Schermerhorn," 30 Oct. 1835, 372.

⁶⁶ John Ross, "To Lewis Cass," 2 Jan. 1836, 378.

⁶⁷ Boudinot, *Letters* 216.

⁶⁸ Boudinot, *Letters* 183.

But proving the treaty party's error and Boudinot's dumbfounding hypocrisy does not require endorsement of all Ross's measures, against the signers or even in his rightful defense of Cherokee lands, as some critics have tended to do. Too many of his dispositional adjustments tended toward the centralization of power and its alienation—its removal—from the hands of the Cherokee people. Perdue justifies Ross's restrictions on the freedom of the press and general freedom of speech with her reading of traditional politicism: "In prohibiting dissent, Ross expressed the traditional Cherokee approach to political disputes. Originally, the Cherokees arrived at decisions through consensus, and anyone who could not agree simply withdrew so that the group could present a united front. Since the Cherokees overwhelmingly opposed removal, Boudinot and other proremoval Cherokees should have withdrawn and maintained silence, according to traditional Cherokee ethics."⁶⁹ Though I appreciate the search for enduring dispositions, I believe the interplay between adaptation and perseverance to be more complicated than Perdue here implies. First, as consensus gave way to centralization, the option of withdrawal was dramatically curtailed. Whereas once-existing multiple communities not consenting to decisions could formerly decline to be bound by them without reprisal, withdrawal in the post-Constitutional era, at least as far as movement off the land was concerned, entailed disapprobation, disenfranchisement, near-total loss of resources, the possibility of state punishment, and renouncement of the rights of citizenship from the *only* community, making it an increasingly remote possibility.

Second, prohibiting dissent in an exercise of political coercion is hardly a traditional disposition. In a selective departure from tradition, coercive powers were invested in political leaders based on the conservative volition to perpetuate the bulk

⁶⁹ Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 26.

of the *habitus*, yes, but even the harmony principle informing the practice of consensus offers insufficient cause to order or control the people's expression. Harmony, again, is about developing balance, not enforcing unanimity, about participation, not suppression, and as Albert Wahrhaftig argues, despite its prominence it was not a superlative principle but one subordinate to the incumbency to lead the people on the right path, even into revolution if necessary. Other agentic adaptations to the *habitus*, like republican governance itself, to some degree similarly authorize leaders to depart from the wishes of their constituents when they don't align with their better judgment and conscience—"peculiar" as those cases may be.

Most importantly, dissent itself was not—is not—anti-traditional. Dissent in fact inheres in the principled practice of consensus, for only from the toleration of diverse views can consensus be "reached," as Perdue claims it was.⁷⁰ I encourage readjusting focus towards the *reaching*, rather than the having, of agreement, for what precedent would be set by capitulation to a version of traditionalism with a near-total authorization of state ideological authority? Then as now, dissent is vital, in Boudinot's phrase, to push the nation to become as representative of the people as it purports to be, especially on those questions said to be too momentous to allow the expression of diversified views and that it deems too peculiar. Dissent, deliberation, and development belong as much to the Cherokees' *habitus* as to any other group's, and no matter the weight of the versions of the public good or tradition narrated by the nation-state, academics, or even the nation-people, we have a responsibility to interrogate their accuracy and utility, perhaps even their morality.

What might we learn were we to confront head-on the messiness, the contradictions in the courses pursued by Ross as well as by Boudinot? Are there traditions requiring progressive interventions superordinate even to Ross's all-

⁷⁰ Perdue, *Cherokee Editor* 165, 227n.14.

consuming campaign to remain in the eastern homelands? In fact, both regularly argued against Removal not only on the grounds that the lands were the homes of their ancestors since time immemorial—and to be sure, they argued this emphatically—but on assertions of the right to independent, distinct sovereignty. As Ross stated in a proposal for land cessions to Lewis Cass, “it will be impossible for the Indian tribes to be perpetuated as distinct independent communities within the limits of the United States—not because they are destitute of such rights, and do not hold a strong claim on the protection of this Govt.—but because it is evident that...the Govt. will not afford that necessary protection which the Indian right demands.”⁷¹ Boudinot in *Letters* invokes the same rights of self-governance, reprinting the treaty party’s 1834 resolutions that harmonize surprisingly well with Ross’s determination that the Cherokees be “perpetuated as [a] distinct independent communit[y]”:

Resolved, That it is our decided opinion...that our people cannot exist amidst a white population, subject to laws which they have no hand in making...that the suppression of the Cherokee Government, which connected this people in a distinct community...will completely destroy everything like civilization among them...That, although *we love the land* of our fathers, and should leave the place of our nativity with as much regret as any of our citizens, we consider the lot of the *Exile* immeasurably more to be preferred than a submission to the laws of the States...That we are firmly of the opinion, that a large majority of the Cherokee people would prefer to remove, if the true state of their condition was properly made known to them.—We believe that if they were told that they had nothing to expect from further efforts to regain their rights as a *distinct community*, and that the only alternatives left to them is either to remain amidst a white population, subject to the white man’s laws, or to remove to another country, where they *may* enjoy peace and happiness, they would unhesitatingly prefer the latter.⁷²

The distinctness so important to both sides of the New Echota treaty debate stands in marked contrast to allegations that advocacy of Removal was synonymous with an

⁷¹ John Ross, “To Lewis Cass,” 14 Feb. 1835, 321.

⁷² Boudinot, *Letters* 176-77.

eradication of all traces of Cherokee culture, for in its mostly unnamed components resided the very distinctness that all sought to preserve. The independence they tried in their respective ways to secure was not exclusively political, although both Boudinot and Ross elevated the political sphere to a superintending role over other cultural principles and practices of nationhood.

Neither supposed that emigration would spell the actual end of Cherokee sovereignty or the nation, and once each was finally convinced of Removal's inevitability, they turned their attention to reasserting their independence in the western Cherokee Nation. "Peace and happiness" there were hardly as directly forthcoming as Boudinot promised, but the dispositions of independence, self-control, and self-sufficiency retained throughout the *habitus* in practices of governance, dissent, industry, and more perpetuated a distinctly Cherokee identity throughout the period of rebuilding, the violence of the Civil War years, the next round of reunification and rebuilding, and the temporary, limited dissolution of the Nation in the Dawes era. Most histories of the Cherokee have written their survivance, in Gerald Vizenor's term, as pointedly political, but the material ascendancy of the political and its appropriation of traditionalism, reinforced in the exterior representations of Cherokee history, culture, and literature, have occluded alternative stories of non-politically nationalistic agency on the part of the people. Perhaps centralization as a means of streamlining the Cherokee government's efficiency was the right answer to the imperial Removal policy; perhaps it was the only answer. I do not believe it is still the only answer. Since the 1800s, Cherokee Nation governance has increasingly centralized, exacerbating tensions with those dissenting from the policies they had no hand in creating, and disempowering or disenfranchising growing numbers according to a reactionary and decidedly untraditional paradigm. Accommodating the rights of Cherokee people today may well require assimilating such alien processes as slow

deliberation, rational dissention, and consensus-based rule, over and against exclusionary processes that make enemies of allies and ourselves.

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