

Native Resistive Rhetoric and the Decolonization of American Indian Removal Discourse

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This essay examines nineteenth-century Native resistance to the American Indian removal policy as a strategy of decolonization. Attention focuses in particular on the tactics of decolonization employed in the rhetoric of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole nations as it functioned to expose the dilemmas and hypocrisies of U.S. government justifications for Native removal as animated by discourses of territoriality, republicanism, paternalism, and godly authority. This analysis of the rhetorical strategy and tactics of decolonization helps to reassess the agency of nineteenth-century American Native voices and to gauge in general how rhetorics of resistance can be articulated in colonial contexts.

Keywords: American Indian Rhetoric; Indian Removal; Decolonization; Native Resistance; Five Civilized Tribes

One of the U.S. government's first nineteenth-century policies involved removing American Indian nations from their homes during the 1830s. The reasons for removal were various and often contested. Some proponents claimed that the government should remove American Indians to the farthest points possible in order to foster a white nationalism. For instance, in 1830 Senator John Forsythe asserted, "[I]n no part of the country have the Indians an admitted right to the soil . . . [they are] a race not admitted to be equal to the rest of the community."¹ This certainly occluded American Indians living particularly along the southeastern frontier from participating in U.S. national life and garnering protection under a pronouncement that ironically considered "all men created equal."²

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By contrast, removal proponents thought that the policy was “dynamic and potentially positive” because it sought to protect American Indians from land encroachers—who would otherwise steal land and threaten communities—while creating a civilized group of Native yeomen beyond the Mississippi.³ President Andrew Jackson claimed that the benefits of excess land and the elimination of hostile Natives who endangered frontier communities were consequential to the policy’s alleged aim: to save Natives. After signing the Indian Removal Act of 1830, Jackson reported, “[T]he consequences of a speedy removal will be important . . . to the Indians themselves.”⁴ To most proponents, the primary thrust of the policy was benevolence.

This attitude was echoed by Jackson’s secretary of war, John Eaton, who noted that usurpations by southern states and the resulting reduction of Native sovereignty could only be remedied by “a removal beyond the Mississippi, where, alone, can be assured to you protection and peace.”⁵ To proponents, failing to enact a benevolent removal policy would, thus, lead to Native disappearance.

The hypocrisies of a benevolent policy that sought to sustain Native nations by removal were glaring to American Indian nations. To confront these hypocrisies, American Indians appropriated the government’s arguments as a decolonizing rupture that enabled them to create “rhetorical strategies for enforcing an Indian perspective in contested cultural space, in which Indians are at a political and cultural disadvantage.”⁶ The historical record indicates that such rebukes of policy probably empowered Natives. As Arnold Krupat argues, “to take possession of the master’s ‘books’ is to obtain some important parts of the master’s power—which then . . . may be turned to one’s own purposes.”⁷ American Indian resistance through appropriation was dynamic, revealing the presence and agency of Native discourses.⁸

This essay evidences how American Indian decolonization undermined Native removal, and addresses how this defiant, resistive strategy functioned to work out the dilemmas within the dominant discourse.⁹ Specifically, I argue that Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and Seminole responses to Indian removal appropriated the government’s discourses of territoriality, republicanism, paternalism, and godly authority, thus decolonizing these discourses from within. In the process of enacting this resistance, American Indians exposed the hypocrisy of the policies, while simultaneously showing themselves to be worthy as agents of change with regard to such policies.

An examination of this decolonization is instrumental to understanding the nineteenth-century activism of American Indians, especially in the face of frequent misrepresentations of their efforts by various colonial and colonizing interests. Foremost is the misconception that “the Indian” simply “disappeared” without engaging in discursive appeals to resist U.S. governmental policies.¹⁰ This pervasive inaccuracy assumes that American Indians were simply moved without working through political channels to defy policies. Another misconception assumes that American Indians responded to government policies solely through violence.¹¹ In point of fact, American Indians were neither helpless and voiceless, nor inherently bellicose. As Frederick Hoxie contends, Native groups “talked back,” which helped to reconstitute their ethos and to demystify the government’s hypocrisies. Indeed, he

contends, “By talking back to those who considered themselves superior, Indians could show that they rejected the self-serving nationalism they heard . . . [making] it clear that they refused to accept the definitions others had of them.”¹² “Back talk” did not reject governmental discourse. Instead, Natives adapted to the dominant discourse so as to establish “a measure of identification with their white audience” prior to revealing contradictions and making demands with regard to particular policies.¹³ This dynamic did not assume an “either/or” pattern, but rather a “both/and” structure.

Despite misconceptions of the silent and violent Native, scholars have attended modestly to American Indian discursive responses to removal. This scholarship involves descriptions of rhetorical strategies related to the ways Native communities reacted to removal. William Strickland, for example, has analyzed Cherokee anti-removal discourse and discovered that they rebuffed removal because they thought that it “would be followed by more relocations.”¹⁴ Similarly, Walter Conser’s work on the appeals of Chief John Ross found that the Cherokee leader engaged in three counteroffensive tactics, the foremost of which involved “the issue of legitimate authorization to undertake negotiations.”¹⁵ Robin Patric Clair’s ethno-rhetorical work has focused on how Cherokee discourse not only helped shape Native identities, but also demonstrated that the government’s sentiments were rarely accepted *prima facie*.¹⁶

These studies of American Indian resistive rhetoric bring up another inaccuracy about Native activism among the “five civilized tribes”: the belief that the Cherokee Nation was the sole, or at least preeminent, of the outspoken nations. Partly for this reason, this essay examines the discourses of the other four “civilized tribes” in the southeast: the Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and Seminole nations. Aside from this misapprehension, there are other reasons why the Cherokee Nation is not considered here. First, the other four nations were more distant in terms of place and contact with the government than was the Cherokee Nation. The latter had undertaken a number of steps to assimilate, assuming the practices of Western dress, the English language, a written alphabet, Christianity, and agriculture. Although some Cherokee factions resisted removal, a great majority did not protest it to the vehement degree that the other nations did. Second, the other four nations operated in the discursive shadow of the Cherokee Nation, rendering them doubly subaltern. The U.S. government typically counted the Cherokee Nation a strong and safe ally. For this reason, they were the last to remove, and were given more opportunities to negotiate for better reservation land and more money for their homelands.¹⁷ Third, and related, the other nations were the first to remove. Their resistive strategy of decolonization, then, may have set the tenor for any Cherokee resistance that would follow. The generative feature of their invention warrants study as a separate moment of resistance.

The resistance of these nations complicated the implementation of the Indian Removal Act through decolonization. Even though the present essay is case specific, its implications for how the “both/and” rhetorical structure functions speaks to the larger issue of decolonizing as a rhetorical strategy of subaltern groups. To that end, I

first contextualize the removal policy, showing the influence that it had on the four nations, and introducing decolonization as a resistive framework. I then address the issue of textual veracity before examining the ways in which the Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and Seminole nations appropriated the U.S. government's nationalist language as channels to decolonize Indian removal. I conclude by discussing the theoretical and methodological implications of demystifying misconceptions of nineteenth-century Native American voicelessness and violence.

Indian Removal, the Southeastern Nations, and Decolonization

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 commenced through a series of treaties with the "five civilized tribes." These nations were targeted because their lands in the southeast were the most coveted for American settlers who already lived on the frontier. The Act did not force removal, but instead allowed the U.S. president to appropriate "a suitable number of districts, for the reception of such tribes or nations of Indians as may choose to exchange lands where they now reside, and remove there."¹⁸ According to this language, Native nations could opt either to remove or to remain on their lands. Ronald Satz argues that Jacksonians wanted to "promote removal without doing anything that would alienate public support by appearing blatantly immoral."¹⁹ Indeed, in his Second Annual Message (1830), Andrew Jackson claimed that Natives had a right to choose for themselves: "[We] have as little right to control them," he said, "as we have to prescribe laws for other nations."²⁰ Of course, he also introduced in his address an irony of this self-selection: "[A]ll good citizens . . . unite in attempting to open the eyes of those children of the forest to their true condition, and, by a speedy removal, to relieve them from all the evils."²¹ Recognizing the irony, many American Indians questioned the integrity of the Removal Act.

The Choctaw Nation was the first to initiate the removal process, providing the first instance of resistance. In September 1830, Secretary of War John Eaton traveled to Mississippi to entreat with the Choctaws for their removal to a reservation in present-day Oklahoma. Eaton suggested that the Choctaws "[k]eep at peace and be happy, for otherwise you will soon become wretched and miserable indeed," warning them that settlers could exert their will without federal intervention.²² The Choctaw Nation then signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in September 1830, which forced it to "cede to the United States, the entire country they own and possess east of the Mississippi River . . . [so that] the Government [could] extend to them the facilities and comforts" it could not offer them otherwise.²³ The basis of the treaty was protection against white intrusions.

The government next negotiated with the Creek and Chickasaw Nations in 1832. In the case of the Creeks, several attempts at entreating had proven exhaustive to U.S. Indian agents.²⁴ The government then proceeded to allow whites in Alabama to encroach illegally on Creek lands. When the Creek Nation petitioned the U.S. government for help, the government reiterated its argument that only removal could protect it. The excusing of white encroachers, and subsequent arguments for removal

mitigating the settler–Native conflict, proved cyclical as conflicts continued. Indian agent John Coffee chided a Creek council in September 1830, when he wrote,

To these [Alabama's] laws, where you are, you must submit; there is no preventive—no other alternative. Your great father cannot, nor can congress [sic] prevent it . . . Your great father's earnest desire is, that you may be perpetuated and preserved as a nation.²⁵

Couched in benevolence, Coffee hinged Native survival on allowing whites to expand into Native territory. The rhetoric of fear and protection worked, as the Creek Treaty was finally passed in October 1832.

The Chickasaw Nation suffered a similar fate. Like the Creek Nation, it was subjected to white encroachment as the U.S. government looked askance. As Wilcomb Washburn argues, “[t]he threat of state jurisdiction was the club used to intimidate the Chickasaws.”²⁶ The combination of breaches from Mississippi settlers and the failure of the U.S. government to make good on its promises of protection finally forced the Chickasaw Nation to relent. The opening clause in the Treaty of Pontitock Creek of October 1832 stated that the Chickasaw Nation “find themselves oppressed in their present situation; by being made subject to the laws of the States in which they reside. . . . Rather than submit to this great evil, they prefer to seek a home in the west.” The U.S. government would grant them this “home” and uplift them from “oppression.”²⁷ Of course, this protection was contingent on them agreeing to “hereby cede, to the United States, all the land which they own.”²⁸

In 1832, Secretary of War Lewis Cass visited Seminole territories in northwest Florida and noted the nation's despondency. “These miserable people are now reduced to the utmost necessities of life,” he wrote to Jackson. “[T]hey have been in penury and wretchedness for years and many have perished.”²⁹ In typical fashion, Cass sent agents to offer protection. Francis Paul Prucha argues that the tactic worked—“the promise of food and clothing in the treaty eased the negotiations”—and a group of Seminole leaders signed the Treaty of Payne's Landing in May 1832.³⁰ The treaty suggested that a Seminole envoy first assess its new reservation. Returning from the prospective reservations, most of the leadership denied the treaty due to a lack of fertile land. Still, a minority of the leadership approved a redacted version called the Treaty of Fort Gibson in March 1833.³¹ U.S. authorities demanded that the Seminole Nation remove itself by 1836 and promised to “designate and assign . . . for their separate future residence, forever, a tract of country.”³² Seminole removal opponents argued that a minority had secured the treaty, but it was too late.

The Indian Removal Act provided a calculated breach through which Natives could challenge U.S. removal plans, as well as a larger sense of agency. After all, treaties were formal agreements between sovereign and independent entities. The opportunity to engage in treaties attributed a modicum of power, and Native communities seized this break as a basis of decolonization.

Broadly, decolonization involves a resistive rhetoric through which subaltern groups appropriate dominant discourses and turn them around to expose the problems and duplicity of these discourses. Reading texts through such a framework

is part of the larger postcolonial project in the humanities. Accordingly, Raka Shome notes that the postcolonial condition attends to the tragedies of colonization by exposing the “imperialism of Western discourses.”³³ Colonization, to borrow from Derek Buescher and Kent Ono, begins when colonizers “appropriate land, conquer indigenous people, and found colonialist governments to oversee the efficient operation of property and labor. . . . [Then they] teach the colonized the language, logic and history of the colonizer.”³⁴ Postcolonial studies examines the ways in which these hierarchical relationships functioned over time and continue to function through issues beyond labor and territory (the contemporary instantiation is deemed neocolonialism). As Shome and Radha Hegde indicate, this research is “concerned with phenomena and [the] effects and affects of colonialism” through “not only . . . the framework of dominance but also . . . that of resistance.”³⁵

For American Indians, decolonization involved critiquing the narratives offered from the colonizers’ perspective and championing their own narratives. Linda Tuhiwai Smith contends that decolonization was a strategy used during early U.S.–Native interactions that helped form “the fabric of communities that value[d] oral ways of knowing” and that the recovery of these strategies is important to understanding the “painful past.”³⁶ Decolonization enacted by American Indians in the nineteenth century typically functioned by appropriating U.S. governmental discourse, as it was the prominent language system available.³⁷

Complications of Textual Sources and Veracity

One of the more problematic issues of studying nineteenth-century American Indian discourse is veracity. As Wayne Moquin and Charles Van Doren claim, “[T]here are no masses of letters, diaries, speeches, newspaper articles, pamphlets, books or tracts hidden away in tribal archives” with which to triangulate texts.³⁸ Thus, authenticating texts involves comparing the extant versions of discourse, or tracing a piece of discourse as far back in the historical record as possible. In using the Native rhetoric that exists, I am mindful of the need to corroborate versions of discourse.³⁹

Overall, authenticity is problematic because it punctuates a Western obsession with attributing truth to a rhetor. Susan Hegeman writes that this denies a Native oral tradition that puts stock in the “word,” arguing, “[We] can recognize that both sources of authenticity, and their corresponding desires, derive from our own cultural context, which understands validity and value primarily in terms of texts and authors.”⁴⁰ Nineteenth-century contexts necessitated such rhetorical moments as American Indians and government agents met to negotiate treaties. Herein lies part of the difficulty, inasmuch as the U.S.–Native colonial relationship obscures what was said and recorded, thus silencing—to an extent—so-called authentic Native voices. In terms of such cultural interactions, what we have instead, writes Krupat, are recorded moments that are “always heteroglossic and polyvocal, formed always in relation to the speech of others.”⁴¹

So, does this mean that critics should avoid studying nineteenth-century Native texts because they cannot be verified in the same way as a twenty-first-century

presidential speech? Krupat answers no, and intimates that even when we have a veracious text in front of us, it could contain others' influences, or it could be redacted in print, or contain outright lies that undercut its so-called intent.⁴² He suggests that critics should recognize the lack of lock-tight authenticity, and in so doing remain cognizant that Native texts from the nineteenth century are the consequence of collaboration.⁴³

One main way, then, to understand Native texts is to center them as a constellation of U.S. and Native influences, situate them in context, and seek to demonstrate how they rely on and simultaneously resist dominant discourses. Working from Krupat's ideas, if the texts are authentically Native, they will probably contain U.S. influences given the colonial context of interactions between Natives and U.S. officials. Similarly, if the texts are translated or recorded differently from the so-called authentically Native, then the U.S. influence will still be there, as will be the Native arguments. These co-influences are part of the consubstantiality of intercultural relations.

The key is to remain somewhat ambivalent in one's analyses. For instance, the argument about American Indians decolonizing U.S. discourses by both adopting and resisting them is reflective of the hybridity of Native rhetoric, which was necessitated by a colonial context, such as treaty negotiations conducted through discursive forms forced on the rhetorical situation by a dominant power.⁴⁴ Granted, the "transformational mimesis" through which American Indians had to address the U.S. government served as "a potent strategy for hegemonic blocs" to control Natives.⁴⁵ Still, there was undeniably accommodationism on the part of Natives. As Robert Yagelski notes, "[A]ntagonistic kind[s] of contact . . . required Native American leaders to adopt new rhetorical techniques in order to deal successfully with their white antagonists," but also had a strong impact on Native rhetoric in general.⁴⁶ Instead of this historical consequence being used to silence, it might be used to interrogate how Natives had to articulate themselves in colonial contexts in order *not* to be silenced.

Native Anti-Removal Tactic I: Decolonization through Territoriality and Republicanism

In terms of context, one of the most foundational Jacksonian-era principles was the mission of expansion and the civilizing of so-called savages in the wilderness. This mission was used to justify how the United States "conquered" others and "establish[ed] and perpetuate[ed] histories" that naturalized a hierarchy where the federal government possessed considerably "greater importance" than "others."⁴⁷ This mission of progress was a version of "manifest destiny" ordained by a higher power, which demanded that Americans fulfill a "divine covenant" as central to its destiny as a superior people.⁴⁸

The broadening of the U.S. land base inevitably led to a connection between territory and republicanism. That is, as the nation expanded in the early nineteenth century, and as American settlers occupied these new spaces, property holding became a vital component of a republican citizenry that would nurture the nation.

Ronald Takaki claims that expansion “offered whites the promise of property ownership and a stable republican future.”⁴⁹ The more citizen-freeholders there were in the newly expanded republic, the safer the U.S. nation would prove to be.

This territoriality also involved the issue of race, as it underscored who could be considered part of the nation. As Jacksonians moved into the West, they defended their claims to territory “in terms of racial superiority.”⁵⁰ Any such guilt about this was alleviated through scientific doctrines that placed whites on a higher cultural plane than other races. That American Indians occupied lands meant little to the U.S. government when considering the connection between territory and citizenship. Jacksonians, in particular, used racial categories to define citizenship. Jackson noted in 1829 that Natives lacked the same “civilization” as whites (“Indians . . . have retained their savage habits”) and therefore could not be a part of the U.S. nation merely because “they had seen [it] from the mountain or passed [it] in the chase.”⁵¹

The ambiguity of American Indians’ power often teetered between their rights to territory based on birthright and the competing idea that their race precluded ownership. Ultimately, American Indians would not be considered property owners during the Jacksonian era. Smith contends that in terms of the “birthright membership, no one had a better claim as native-born Americans than Native Americans.”⁵² However, their “Indianness” limited their property roles to occupants, not owners. Ownership involved productive use of the land, as well as private holdings of territory. As far as the U.S. government was concerned, only whites satisfied these criteria. The government conceived of a homogenous nation that included “a people with the same language and laws, good cabins and enclosed fields . . . [and] private property.”⁵³ Native nations, for the most part, supported different lifeways.

Moral Inheritance, Territorial Primacy, and Republican Memories

One way in which southeastern Native resistance to removal invoked a tactical decolonization was by an appeal to Native moral inheritance of the land. Moral inheritance ensures that the struggles of one’s ancestors are sanctified through the conscientious actions of the community. It thus pledges to take up the mantle of a culture’s forebears so that those ancestors’ work and struggles are not undertaken in vain. Native rhetors relied on such reminiscences of their predecessors to resist removal.

In protesting the Treaty of Ponticock Creek at a council with U.S. Indian agents, for instance, Levi Colbert (Chickasaw) couched his rhetoric in the Chickasaw’s ancestral link to territory. He said, “[W]e never had a thought of exchanging our land for any other, as we think that we would not find a country that would suit us as well as this we now occupy, it being the land of our forefathers.”⁵⁴ Colbert worked through the dominant discourse. His words mimed those of Senator Peleg Sprague, who argued that Congress should preserve the government’s honor by considering Natives’ rights as “recognized and affirmed by the United States” based on the Constitution and the founding fathers.⁵⁵ Speaking of ancestors, Colbert then

said, “[W]e cannot consent to be under your Government. If we should consent we should be likened unto young corn growing and met with a draught that would kill it.”⁵⁶ The Chickasaw ancestors thus sustained the tenor behind the “young corn” vehicle, the Chickasaw Nation itself. Without its roots—its ancestors—honored, the nation was sure to be killed. As Colbert discussed the Chickasaw Nation’s reliance on territory, he also implicated the U.S. government as a threat to that land. Ostensibly, should the U.S. government succeed in removing the Chickasaw people, it would effectively harm them through the deprivation of homeland. Colbert thus rebutted removal rhetoric, which tended to weaken Native sovereignty by calling it “tenancy” and disconnecting it from Native ancestry. In its stead, territory was confirmed as a central component of Native lifeways, while European land ownership was downplayed.

To combat the U.S. government’s claim to territory based on productive use, Natives turned the tables by insisting on the importance of owning the land first. A quintessential example of such a memory of primacy arose in a *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper editorial written by Ames (Choctaw). Arguing that the Choctaw Nation had a right to choose against emigration, he reasoned that before the United States came, “[t]he Choctaws existed there, and [sic] independent nation, governing themselves.” He continued, “[T]he United States never attempted to impose laws upon them, but implicitly acknowledged their inability to do it by treating them as an independent nation.”⁵⁷ Claiming territorial primacy, Ames directly challenged the American superiority on which removal discourse relied. Therefore, Native conceptions of Native rights to territories worked through eternal connections to the land, rather than through recent conquest. Ames demonstrated how historical connections to territory trumped the government’s impulsive seizure of territory.

According to the historical record (particularly *Gales & Seaton’s Register of Debates in Congress*), these primacy arguments might have been considered during the removal debate. For instance, such territorial arguments resonated with the anti-removal speeches of Senator Sprague when he mentioned that American Indians were owed some semblance of land rights because they “had existed since time immemorial” on them.⁵⁸ The likelihood that congressional leaders at least had access to Native arguments is enhanced by the notion that the Native-based *Cherokee Phoenix* was distributed to the U.S. Congress and reprinted in major metropolitan newspapers during the 1830s.⁵⁹

Another territorial and republican tactic of decolonization involved asserting Native independence through the building of memories of a shared past between the U.S. government and American Indians. These memories often championed the “American Creeds” and pillars of republican culture.⁶⁰ In this vein, Native rhetors drew on figures such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and appropriated foundational texts like the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution to secure sovereignty. This indicates Natives’ reliance on dominant storylines. However, southeastern nations reconfigured these memories to emphasize their rights to retain

tribal homelands, thus illustrating how the problems with such dominant storylines could be unmasked.

Anticipating removal, Pushmataha (Choctaw) and Puckshunnubbee (Choctaw) wrote an open letter in the *Cherokee Phoenix* in which they remembered the “friendly” Jefferson administration. They then used this memory to question the territoriality of the Jackson administration and to hearken to Native independence, challenging early governmental concepts of Native sovereignty:

It is said we have no *claim* to the land here. . . . How different is this from the language of the illustrious Jefferson, — “go home,” said this great and good man to our fathers, “build your houses, clear your fields, and cultivate the earth. . . . [S]o long,” said he, “as you live in peace with me and mine . . . you shall live upon your lands undisturbed.”⁶¹

Pushmataha and Puckshunnubbee referred to the memory of Jefferson as an argument from authority to warrant remaining on their homelands. As early as 1803, Jefferson asked American Indian nations to remain in the East in order to “improve.”⁶² The Choctaw Nation had taken his advice. Thus, Pushmataha and Puckshunnubbee averred, “If ever the Choctaw character is renovated, here is the place to do it—if we are ever to experience the blessings of civilization, here is the place.”⁶³ In this instance, the government’s arguments concerning territoriality were decolonized by showing how they had actually followed the European model of productivity. If the government violated this, U.S. hypocrisy would be shown to trump earlier agreements.

In a similar example, Ames appropriated the Constitution to demonstrate Native sovereignty. While Jacksonians contended that the Constitution provided for U.S. governmental interference into Native affairs—Congress was emboldened “to regulate commerce with foreign nations . . . and with the Indian tribes”—Ames insinuated the status of Native sovereignty by nodding to the fact that American Indians had been paired with “foreign nations.”⁶⁴ To this end, he remarked: “Were the Indians ever considered, or treated as a part of our citizens? . . . Had they [Indians] ever had any voice in establishing any State Government, or forming the General Government? Never.”⁶⁵ Representative Isaac Bates, during the House removal debate, cited the Choctaw republican argument specifically, noting that Native protection was a farcical “contrivance” for Jacksonians to acquire more land.⁶⁶

Ironies of Territorial Expansion and Republicanism

George Harkins (Choctaw) demonstrated how anti-removal rhetoric decolonized the Native removal policy through the ironies of territoriality and republicanism. He began by reflecting on how Natives attempted to fulfill their “duties” to the United States and, hence, were worthy of land. He said,

Taking as an example from the American government, and knowing the happiness which its citizens enjoy, under the influence of mild republican institutions, it was

the intention of our countrymen to form a government assimilated to that of our white brethren.⁶⁷

Appropriating the republican language of the U.S. government, he admitted that such assimilation was all for naught: "The man who said that he would plant a stake and draw a line around us, that never should be passed, was the first to . . . [draw] up the stake and [wipe] out all traces of the line."⁶⁸ Pessen remarks that Jacksonians understood such incongruity, for they "were fully aware that their doctrine . . . was all the more specious because its assumption of Indian savagery was untrue," indicating that Natives had moved beyond so-called savagery.⁶⁹

The use of irony as a mode of resistance illustrated the prudence of indigenous rhetoric. In his Annual Report of 1832, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Elbert Herring claimed that the Creek and Chickasaw treaties would "greatly tend to the improvement of their condition, and, at the same time, be productive of much benefit to the State of Alabama, within whose confines their wide and extended possessions are situated."⁷⁰ The last clause in Herring's report caught the attention of removal dissenters in Congress and the Creek and Chickasaw nations. To the latter groups, the idea of states garnering benefits at the expense of American Indian territory was something of a farce, and revealed the conspicuous hypocrisy of protecting Natives by denying their rights.

As Speckled Snake (Seminole/Creek) skeptically put it, the East would soon catch up with the West and the U.S. government's promises would be overturned. Speaking to a combined group of Creek and Chickasaw communities and U.S. officials in 1830, he said the government had earlier insisted, "Get a little further, least I tread on thee." He continued that he had "listened [to] a great many talks" and that they all began and ended the same, with the government insisting, "Get a little further. . . . [T]he land where you now live is not yours. Go beyond the Mississippi."⁷¹ Speckled Snake pointed out how every removal treaty negotiated between the Creek Nation and the United States had not been the last, despite territorial "in perpetuity" clauses typically contained in such treaties. Resistance worked, then, by participating in the dominant discourse and questioning its honesty.

The passages above remind readers today that nineteenth-century American Indian territory was connected ontologically to Native nations. The U.S. government's connection to the land related its use to productive citizenship. According to Strickland, Natives consistently argued against removal on the grounds that they "should not relinquish the land of their ancestors."⁷² To critics of American expansion, the so-called settlement of Native territory, in particular, was terribly flawed. William Robbins argues, for instance, that the idea of expansion "refuses to acknowledge the presence of others who already inhabited the regions."⁷³ The disconnection during the Jacksonian era between governmental and Native perspectives on territory was substantial.

Native Anti-Removal Tactic II: Decolonization through Paternalism and Godly Authority

Paternalism was another Jacksonian practice that guided U.S.–Native relations. Paternalism involved a rhetoric infused with “policies and practices of treating or governing people in a [parental] manner, especially by providing for their needs without giving them responsibility.”⁷⁴ Such paternalism functioned by naturalizing familial imagery within political contexts, and likening “what is done by colonial powers to what goes on in the family, giving it a moral justification that it would otherwise have lacked.”⁷⁵

American Indians were incorporated into the new U.S. nation as protected wards and vital agents of the U.S. government’s acquisition of territory. As Prucha argues, “Since children were defenseless, they required assistance and support, and since children were not fully responsible, they required guidance.”⁷⁶ The idea of a nation as “family” often justified the United States’ land encroachments.

Godly authority comprised another element of U.S. nationalism. Sidney Lens describes this as a grand motivation needed to remind early Americans that God was on their side in their conquest of American Indians. He argues,

[N]ature had given them a special right to expand. They were, like the ancient Israelites, a ‘chosen race,’ . . . carrying progress forward wherever they went. They were not trampling on other people, they were opening up new vistas for them.⁷⁷

With God on its side, the U.S. government could rationalize its expansion to secure more land for settlers.

Divine authority also arose through the “doctrine of discovery,” which was cited as the rationale for seizing land in the western hemisphere. Ostensibly, the U.S. government simply claimed dominion over any land on which it set its feet. The doctrine of discovery “paved the way for further progressive infringement of independent Indian sovereignty as the United States made efforts to legitimate” its manifest destiny.⁷⁸ According to Senator Forsythe, this providential permission made “[t]he lands, the streams, the woods, the minerals, all living things, including the human inhabitants . . . the property of, or subject to, the government of the fortunate navigator.”⁷⁹

Consummating Paternalism and Benevolent Hypocrisies

Native anti-removal discourse illustrated the necessity of appropriating the removal policy’s paternal rhetoric. It then decolonized the policy by engaging in and appealing to the government’s language of benevolence, as well as constructions of U.S. supremacy and Native inferiority. For instance, at the Dancing Rabbit Creek council in 1830, Colonel Webb (Choctaw) resituated the government’s justification for removal based on a diminished Native identity as a reason to leave Natives alone. “[W]hen you were young, we were strong; we fought by your side. . . . You have grown large; my people have become small,” Webb said, alluding to U.S. might and exceptionalism. “Brother, my voice is weak; you can scarcely hear me. . . . [I]t is

not the shout of a warrior, but the wail of an infant. I have lost it in mourning over the misfortunes of my people.”⁸⁰ Because of the perception that the U.S. government was strong and Natives were feeble, Webb intimated that the United States should take special care to uplift their Native neighbors by leaving them alone. He complicated the dominant discourse by actually charging it to fulfill its promises.

Calling attention to the government’s fulfillment of its paternal promises was also part of the rhetoric of Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen, an anti-removal advocate who contended that if the government’s aim was to be “the guardians of public honor” then it should act with “faithful performance.”⁸¹ This matter was especially resonant as Webb reminded the U.S. government that when it was young, Natives had “fought by your side.”⁸² Natives had fulfilled their promises when they were the benefactors of fledgling English settlers.

The appropriation of paternalism as a function of decolonization also found an outlet in Pushmataha’s (Choctaw) discourse. Asking a governmental council for protection against both the state of Mississippi (which wanted to annex Choctaw land) and pro-removal officials (who turned a blind eye to Mississippi’s incursions), Pushmataha asserted,

When we had land to spare, we gave it with very little talk . . . as children ought to do to a father. We hope our father will not be displeased; he has made us [happy] from our infancy; we hope the same protection will be found in the arms of our father as formerly. When a child awakes in the night, he feels for the arm of his father to shield him from danger.⁸³

Like Webb, Pushmataha contended that the United States “father” had always received what it wanted from its “children.” He used the very language of the government to ask, yet again, for more protection. Pushmataha intimated that the Choctaw Nation had no more land to spare, and that they gave it without confrontation. When locked out of decision making, the Choctaw Nation expected to find the government’s protection. This argument was reflected in the removal debate, as congressional removal opponents relied on Native accounts to rebuke Jacksonians.⁸⁴ In the end, the government’s side of the paternal relationship was shown to be unfulfilled. Harkins lamented, “[W]e hope in the name of justice, that another outrage may never be committed against us and that we may in the future be cared for as children.”⁸⁵ The U.S. government was shown to have committed injustices by mistreating its so-called wards.

Godliness as Resistance

The southeastern nations also spotlighted godly appeals by relying on divine authority to protect their homes. Recall that the U.S. government emboldened its assumptions of “cultural superiority as well as an insatiable desire for land, expansion, and empire” with godly permission.⁸⁶ In this context, it viewed Native territories through the lens of *terra nullius*, the notion that the land was “the

uninhabited or unimproved ‘wasteland.’”⁸⁷ American Indian discourses appropriated the “god” argument in order to demonstrate how providence could likewise stand by American Indians. Religious arguments are particularly important, considering that Native conversions to Christianity relied on eradicating “all vestiges of tribal life and culture” and proving that the Christian god could save them.⁸⁸ Regardless of whether the U.S. government interpreted Natives as godly, however, the assertion of identity could rightly speak to a consummatory function of Native rhetoric.⁸⁹ Godliness, therefore, garnered importance for pragmatic arguments, but also for self-assertions of Native character.

To safeguard their property, Native rhetors protested against removal by creating godly identification between themselves and the U.S. government. Mingo (Chickasaw), M’Gilvery (Chickasaw), and Stimoluet (Chickasaw) pleaded, “We hope to be let alone where we are, and that your people will be made to treat us like men and Christians, and not like dogs.”⁹⁰ In this instance, the council reconstructed itself not as savage, but rather as closer to the godly precepts of the United States. They implored the government to consider them as neighbors, and argued that the government had sinned. On this, Representative Bates concurred in his House rebuttal during the removal debate, when he bluntly told advocates, “[Y]our faith is gone, your honor violated, and there is nothing left worth a wise man’s thought.”⁹¹

Similarly, southeastern nations appropriated the language of the U.S. government to reverse the label of “savage.” No Native rhetor in the public record demonstrated this tactic more than Coacoochee (Seminole), who spoke to a group of U.S. Indian agents in 1841 to protest against removal. Combating the false promises in the Treaty of Fort Gibson, Coacoochee exposed the government as evil: “Still he gave me his hand in friendship: we took it; . . . he had a snake in the other; his tongue was forked; he lied, and stung us.”⁹² In his estimation, the government represented the animalistic embodiment of evil as it extended friendship, perhaps even familialism, on the one hand and “stung” with the other.⁹³ Such familialism speaks both to Coacoochee’s participation in the discourse and to his resistance to it. In this context, the “forked tongue” with which U.S. Indian agents negotiated alludes to their dishonesty. Coacoochee furthered his invective by constituting the U.S. government policies as ungodly. At his council, he chided Seminole members who had followed the U.S. government’s instructions: “If your hearts are bad let me see them now . . . let me know they are dark with bad blood; but do not, like a dog, bite me, so as soon as you turn your backs.”⁹⁴ Instead of lying, he insisted that these assimilators, as symbols of the government, make known their motives.

Anti-removal rhetoric also positioned Native agency as godly in juxtaposition to the U.S. government. In an 1830 memorial to Congress, Yoholo (Creek), Tuckaubatchie Hajo (Creek), Tustenuggee (Creek), and Smut Eye (Seminole/Creek) claimed,

[S]o far back as their tradition is disposed to tell . . . [we] were a free people, in the undisturbed enjoyment of those rights held sacred . . . derived from the Great

Master of Breath, who created mankind equal, in possession of an unmolested enjoyment of life.⁹⁵

This passage punctuates the argument that god granted Natives land for “all time immemorial.” Moreover, the “Great Master of Breath” endowed them with the natural rights of equality, freedom, the “enjoyment of life,” and the “blessings of self government.”⁹⁶ Frelinghuysen agreed during the Senate debates, asserting that Native natural rights should provide “common bounties of a benignant Providence.”⁹⁷ Natives rooted sovereignty in such natural rights, akin to the Declaration of Independence’s reliance on gifts “endowed by their Creator.”⁹⁸ All of this evidence points to the ways in which southeastern nations appropriated appeals to a god as a decolonial tactic.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis reveals some of the ways in which the Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and Seminole nations decolonized the Indian Removal Act, as well as various removal treaties and the U.S. government’s rhetoric of removal. Their resistance worked by participating in the dominant discourse, and challenging the frameworks that the U.S. government set as foundational: territoriality, republicanism, paternalism, and godly authority. In so doing, American Indians worked through a “both/and” rhetoric that appropriated and transformed the government’s discourse.

The analysis points to a number of implications about the presence and power of the American Indian voice during the early part of the nineteenth century, as well as to larger considerations concerning the strategies and tactics of resistance in colonized contexts writ large.

First, the existence of the southeastern nations’ anti-removal rhetoric ruptures the dual misconceptions that American Indians either simply conceded to the pressures of the Indian Removal Act or moved immediately to violent confrontations. Although governmental removal rhetoric failed to animate Native sovereignty, it ironically “provided a mechanism for resistance to EuroAmerican authority and an opening for critique on the part of Native intellectuals and political leaders” in the 1830s.⁹⁹ Assessing the American Indian voice for its discursive power is crucial to understanding the removal era. Reading these Native rhetorics for tactics of decolonization highlights Elizabeth Rich’s assertion that although “documents from the late 19th century provide access to the ways in which an emerging American identity depended on a particular history and a specific perception of American Indian people,” they also exemplify how Native discourses boldly faced down “the colonial record . . . [and] challenge[d] it.”¹⁰⁰

Second, the case study addresses decolonization as a strategy of resistance that, Matthew Dennis writes, involves subaltern groups “in their postcolonial predicament, to paraphrase Aristotle, [discovering and utilizing] . . . well the available means of persuasion.”¹⁰¹ These means include appropriating dominant discourses and

challenging them from the “inside.” Such an approach invokes a dynamic that allows for resistance through the “master’s” language, while providing a chance to expose the dilemmas of the dominant discourses.¹⁰²

Certainly colonial contexts, with their deep-seated histories of oppression, make resistance difficult, especially as subaltern voices are relegated to a cultural backdrop. As Olga Gershenson argues, “[In] the traditional understanding of the colonial discursive operation . . . colonial relations are modeled as a one-way street: the colonizer subjugates the colonized, which is possible because the colonized adulates the colonizer.”¹⁰³ However, this structure does not account for the heteroglossic qualities of intercultural exchanges, such as when subjugated people work through dominant discourses and assert their own rhetorical inventiveness. This is when mimesis is “charged with . . . danger” and when “normalized” knowledges and disciplinary powers are undermined based on their own structures and substance.¹⁰⁴

To the question of how resistance can be articulated in colonial contexts, it seems prudent to answer that it is through navigating a “both/and” structure wherein the appropriation of dominant languages is imbricated with subaltern reinterpretations that decolonize the colonial context. According to Duane Champagne, “[T]he emphasis on decolonization models creates greater consciousness of the effects of colonization on culture, thoughts and institutions.”¹⁰⁵ Again, this decolonization does not raise the specter of equality—a definitional impossibility in the colonial milieu. However, it does provide an approach to assessing resistance in such contexts. The recognition of Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and Seminole decolonization through appropriation may mirror the resistive efforts of other subaltern groups mired in colonial circumstances.

Third, this examination of nineteenth-century Native rhetoric addresses the issue of textual veracity, which is often overlooked in other work related to Native Studies. The problem is, as Yagelski underestimates, a “sticky one.”¹⁰⁶ Simply put, there is no perfect way to determine whether Native texts have been corrupted by white translators, other Native translators, government officials, congressional clerks, Gales and Seaton and other popular publishers, or leaders on the floor of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. Krupat suggests admitting this problem, and then reading the Native texts in the larger colonial context. He argues, “For the study of Native American materials, this means attention to the domestic imperialism, which, sometimes intentionally, sometimes not, operated on this continent against indigenous peoples everywhere.”¹⁰⁷ To operationalize this, the critic might interrogate the relevant context and within that moment gauge the likelihood that Native arguments examined would have been articulated by an American Indian rhetor, based on knowledge of that rhetor, her/his context, and her/his tribal nation. Krupat justifies this approach by contending that any representation of a U.S.–Native rhetorical moment would probably include a consubstantiation of both.¹⁰⁸ Herein lies the rationale for my insistence that the “both/and” decolonial move be explored fully, as well as the probability that a Native rhetor may have uttered the words articulated in the moment.

A fourth implication is that this American Indian resistance challenged removal by slowing down its implementation, often motivating the U.S. government to resort to deceit. As the U.S. government engaged in these unethical means of removal, it provided further evidence for American Indians who decolonized governmental discourses. The government was shown by Natives to be untrustworthy, sinful, and excessive. These arguments were included in the government's removal debates, as evidenced in the above analysis. For instance, Connecticut Representative William Storrs, referring to a Choctaw memorial he had received, questioned the government's benevolence and republicanism. He exhorted the House in 1830, "By surrendering the question of [Native] sovereignty, the Executive has, for all substantial purposes, virtually surrendered the treaties, too."¹⁰⁹ Storrs continued that if the removal plan attempted to undercut the Native sovereignty agreed on in earlier treaties, then the land given to the United States in exchange must also be null and void. Therefore, he opined, the U.S. government failed in its "responsibility . . . to the opinion of the world" to be fair and just.¹¹⁰ Such challenges to the efficacy of policy speak to the effectiveness of the strategy of decolonization.

Ultimately, analyzing nineteenth-century American Indian rhetoric is imperative to a more complete picture of Indian policy debates, by discovering the ways in which decolonization worked and illuminating the manner in which Native discourses problematized dominant discourses. As Clemmons points out, "Native perspectives must be incorporated into the historical narrative before a more nuanced and complete story of Indian-white relations . . . can emerge."¹¹¹

Notes

- [1] John Forsyth's Remarks, April 15, 1830, in *Gales & Seaton's Register of Debates in Congress*, Senate, 328.
- [2] "Declaration of Independence," in *A Documentary History of the United States*, ed. Richard Heffner (New York: Signet, 2002), 9.
- [3] Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991), 67.
- [4] Andrew Jackson, "Second Annual Message to Congress, 1830," *U.S. House Journal*, December 6, 1830, 25.
- [5] John Eaton, "Letter to John Ross, Richard Taylor, Edward Gunter, and William Coody, April 18, 1829," in Office of Indian Affairs, Letter Book no. 5, pp. 408–12, Record Group 75, National Archives.
- [6] Patricia Bizzell, "(Native) American Jeremiad: The 'Mixedblood' Rhetoric of William Apress," in *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance: Word Medicine, Word Magic*, ed. Ernest Stromberg (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 46.
- [7] Arnold Krupat, *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 156.
- [8] Siobhan Senier, *Voices of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance: Helen Hunt Jackson, Sarah Winnemucca, and Victoria Howard* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 19, 21.
- [9] I use the term "strategy" to mean an overarching plan of action. In this case, decolonization is a strategy of resistance that ultimately worked to unveil the dominance functioning in the government's removal rhetoric. I use the term "tactic" to indicate a particular way that a

larger strategy is enabled and played out. As de Certeau writes, a tactic "is a calculated action" that operates "blow by blow." Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 36–37. In the case of anti-removal rhetoric, tactics of decolonization involve appropriating dominant discourses.

- [10] Dippie, *Vanishing American*, 4.
- [11] See Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846–1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).
- [12] Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), viii.
- [13] Ernest Stromberg, "Introduction," in *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance: Word Medicine, Word Magic*, 5.
- [14] William M. Strickland, "The Rhetoric of Removal and the Trail of Tears: Cherokee Speaking Against Jackson's Indian Removal Policy, 1828–1832," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 47 (1981): 294.
- [15] Walter H. Conser, Jr., "John Ross and the Cherokee Resistance Campaign, 1833–1838," *Journal of Southern History* 44 (1978): 195.
- [16] Robin Patric Clair, "Organizing Silence: Silence as Voice and Voice as Silence in the Narrative Exploration of the Treaty of New Echota," *Western Journal of Communication* 61 (1997): 315–337.
- [17] Donna Hightower Langston, *The Native American World* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2003), 147.
- [18] Indian Removal Act (1830), *U.S. Statutes at Large*, vol. 4: 411–412.
- [19] Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 64.
- [20] Jackson, "Second Annual Message," 25.
- [21] Jackson, "Second Annual Message," 27–28.
- [22] Quoted in Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 71.
- [23] "Treaty with the Choctaws (1830)," in *The American Indian and the United States: A Documentary History*, vol. 4, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn (New York: Random House, 1973), 2423–2436.
- [24] Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and His Indian Wars* (New York: Penguin, 2001), 84–86.
- [25] John Coffee, "Talk to the Creek and Chickasaw," *Niles Weekly Register*, September 18, 1830, quoted in Arrell M. Gibson, *The Chickasaws* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 170.
- [26] Wilcomb E. Washburn, "Introduction," in *American Indian and the United States*, 2448.
- [27] "Treaty with the Chickasaws (1832)" in *American Indian and the United States*, 2449.
- [28] "Treaty with the Chickasaws," 2449.
- [29] Lewis Cass to the President of the United States, Department of War, January 23, 1832. National Archives, Record Group 75, Ratified Indian Treaty File No. 178, Item 2-T, Secretary of War, Letters Sent, vol. 9.
- [30] Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 84.
- [31] There is evidence to suggest that the U.S. government selected a minority group that was "supposedly representative" of the Seminole Nation to sign the treaty instead of the majority leadership. See Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 101.
- [32] "Treaty with the Seminoles (1832)," in *American Indian and the United States*, 2446.
- [33] Raka Shome, "Postcolonial Interventions in the Rhetorical Canon: An 'Other' View," *Communication Theory* 6 (1996): 41.
- [34] Derek Buescher and Kent A. Ono, "Civilized Colonialism: Pocahontas as Neocolonial Rhetoric," *Women's Studies in Communication* 19 (1996): 131.
- [35] Raka Shome and Radha S. Hegde, "Postcolonial Approaches to Communication: Charting the Terrain, Engaging the Intersections," *Communication Theory* 12 (2002): 258.

- [36] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 33, 146.
- [37] For example, Granville Ganter noted that the “most characteristic gift” of Chief Sagoyewatha’s (Seneca) rhetoric was his ability “to decolonize and transform republican rhetoric to serve Native politics.” Granville Ganter, “Red Jacket and the Decolonization of Republican Virtue,” *American Indian Quarterly* 31 (2007): 576.
- [38] Wayne Moquin and Charles Van Doren, *Great Documents in American Indian History* (New York: Da Capo, 1995), xvi–xvii.
- [39] Nineteenth-century Native discourse was often oral and was recorded by either Native translators or agents of the War Department and, later, the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These discourses were published in popular presses and recorded in the Department of Interior, Record Group 75: Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, in the National Archives, and in the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs File, Record Group 233, in the Library of Congress. I have attempted, whenever possible, to analyze texts from these popular and archival sources. I have also drawn from Native-based outlets, such as the *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper, for primary discourse. The *Cherokee Phoenix* was founded in 1828 by Elias Boudinot, a Cherokee leader, to protest against removal. The paper represented the positions of the “five civilized tribes.” According to Grace Steele Woodward, the newspaper was sent to the U.S. Congress on a regular basis as well as “the four corners of the United States.” Grace Steele Woodward, *The Cherokees* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 168.
- [40] Susan Hegeman, “Native American ‘Texts’ and the Problem of Authenticity,” *American Quarterly* 41 (1989): 271.
- [41] Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, 237.
- [42] Krupat, *Ethnocentrism*, 237.
- [43] Arnold Krupat, “An Approach to Native American Texts,” *Critical Inquiry* 9 (1982): 323–338.
- [44] To ensure as much textual accuracy as possible, I provide a brief discussion of each source and its location in the record throughout the notes section.
- [45] Richard Morris, “Educating Savages,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 154.
- [46] Robert Yagelski, “A Rhetoric of Contact: Tecumseh and the Native American Confederacy,” *Rhetoric Review* 14 (1995): 71.
- [47] David G. Gutierrez, “Significant to Whom? Mexican Americans and the History of the American West,” in *A New Significance: Re-Envisioning the History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 68.
- [48] Lyon Rathbun, “The Debate Over Annexing Texas and the Emergence of Manifest Destiny,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 462.
- [49] Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 173.
- [50] Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 198.
- [51] Quoted in S.G. Heiskell, *Andrew Jackson and Early Tennessee History Illustrated*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Ambrose Printing Company, 1920), 203, 206.
- [52] Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 183.
- [53] Takaki, *Iron Cages*, 63.
- [54] Levi Colbert, “Plea from the Chickasaw,” in *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian–White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492–2000*, ed. Peter Nabokov (New York: Penguin, 1999), 151–52. Levi Colbert was a major chief of the Chickasaw Nation throughout the 1820s and 1830s, and was a principle figure in negotiating the Treaty of Ponticock Creek. Colbert fought for tribal separatism, but later moved toward conciliation with the U.S. government as removal seemed inevitable; H.B. Cushman, *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Natchez Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 428–30. Colbert spoke English, based on his assimilation with settlers in Mississippi and Alabama. Colbert’s “Plea” was a response to the government’s early efforts to remove the

- Chickasaw Nation through a voluntary removal process. Mention of this text was first found in Anne Kelley Hoyt, *Bibliography of the Chickasaw* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987) and was later traced to the *Journal of the Chickasaw Council*, October 16, 1826, to November 1, 1826. *American State Papers*, vol. 2, Indian Affairs, 10. The text itself was probably recorded by the Chickasaw sub-agent at the time, John L. Allen, during a council with Chickasaw leaders.
- [55] Indian Removal Debate, April 17, 1830, 21st Congress, 1 Session, Volume 6, Part 1, Columns, 33–34.
- [56] Colbert, “Plea from the Chickasaw,” 152.
- [57] Ames, “The Choctaws,” *Cherokee Phoenix*, December 23, 1830. Ames was a member of the Choctaw Nation of Mississippi and was a frequent contributor to the *Cherokee Phoenix*. Although no record of him exists in the public record, the coincidence of his name with that of Edward Raymond Ames, a white Methodist Episcopal reverend who lived in Mississippi and married a Choctaw woman, indicates that he may have been related to this family in some way. “Mixed blood” among the “five civilized tribes” and Europeans was not uncommon by the early nineteenth century. See Theda Perdue, *Mixed Blood Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003).
- [58] Sprague’s Remarks, April 17, 1830, *Gales & Seaton’s Register of Debates in Congress*, Senate, 356.
- [59] Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Editor: The Writings of Elias Boudinot* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 15–16.
- [60] “American Creeds” refer to “the set of great democratic, legal and individualist beliefs and principles on which the American state and constitution is founded.” These principles are thought to be providential and natural. Anatol Lieven, *American Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5.
- [61] Pushmataha and Puckshunnubbee, “For the Cherokee Phoenix,” *Cherokee Phoenix*, September 22, 1829. Pushmataha was a major chief of the Choctaw Nation from the 1810s to the 1820s. He fought on the side of the United States during the War of 1812, and opposed Tecumseh’s quest for pan-Indianism in 1811. Eckert discusses the two leaders’ debate in depth, as does Lincecum. Nothing is known about Puckshunnubbee in the record, though he appears as a co-author with Pushmataha in at least one more editorial in the *Cherokee Phoenix*. See Allan Eckert, *A Sorrow in Our Heart: The Life of Tecumseh* (New York: Bantam, 1993), and Gideon Lincecum, *Pushmataha: A Choctaw Leader and His People* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004). Pushmataha and Puckshunnubbee’s open letter is a plea for sovereignty in the face of the U.S. government’s continued removal efforts. The editorial is found in “Removal—Choctaw” in the “Cherokee Phoenix Index” of the Sequoyah Research Center, American Native Press Archives, at http://anpa.ualr.edu/indexes/cherokee_phoenix_index/a.htm/.
- [62] Jefferson declared to Congress his desire to assimilate Native nations by “leading them thus to agriculture, to manufactures, and civilization; . . . and in preparing them ultimately to participate in the benefits of our Government.” President Jefferson on Indian Trading Houses, January 18, 1803, in *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 22.
- [63] Pushmataha and Puckshunnubbee, “For the Cherokee Phoenix.”
- [64] “The Constitution of the United States,” Art. 1, Sec. 8 and Art 1, Sec 10, in *A Documentary History of the United States*, ed. Richard Heffner (New York: Signet, 2002), 22–23.
- [65] Ames, “Choctaws,” 2.
- [66] Isaac Bates’s Remarks, May 19, 1830, *Gales & Seaton’s Register of Debates in Congress*, House, 1049.
- [67] George Harkins, “Farewell Letter to the American People,” *Niles’ Weekly Register* 41 (February 25, 1832): 480. Harkins was a popular anti-removal activist of the Choctaw Nation, who ascended as a primary chief in 1850. He was fluent in English as a relative of

- Greenwood Leflore, a U.S.-friendly Choctaw leader (Moquin and Van Doren, *Great Documents*, 151). Harkins's open letter was first published in a local newspaper in Natchez, Mississippi, and was reprinted in *Niles' Weekly Register*. The letter was then printed in the *American Indian* (1926): 7, 12. The letter appears in one of the quintessential secondary collections of Native discourse: Moquin and Van Doren, *Great Documents*, 152.
- [68] Harkins, "Farewell Letter," 480.
 - [69] Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 297.
 - [70] Elbert Herring, "Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 24, 1832," in *House Executive Document* no. 2, 22nd Congress, 2nd session, serial 233, 163.
 - [71] Speckled Snake, "The Creek Indians," *Niles' Weekly Register* 36 (1829): 274. Speckled Snake was a minor chief of the Creek Nation (probably the Upper Creeks, who often identified as Muscogee). The text cited here is a response to a letter sent to the Creek Nation by President Andrew Jackson in 1830, which exhorted Speckled Snake to accept a removal treaty. Speckled Snake delivered the letter to a mixed audience of U.S. Indian agents and fellow Creeks (Moquin and Van Doren, *Great Documents*, 149–50). The letter was reprinted in the *Cherokee Phoenix* (July 8, 1829).
 - [72] Strickland, "Rhetoric of Removal," 294.
 - [73] William G. Robbins, "In Search of Western Lands," in *Land in the American West: Private Claims and the Common Good*, ed. William G. Robbins and James C. Foster (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 5.
 - [74] Prucha relies on this definition from the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. See Francis Paul Prucha, *The Indians in American Society: From the Revolutionary War to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 11.
 - [75] John Kleinig, *Paternalism* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), 171.
 - [76] Prucha, *Indians in American Society*, 11.
 - [77] Sidney Lens, *The Forging of the American Empire from the Revolution to Vietnam: A History of U.S. Imperialism* (Chicago: Haymarket Press, 2003), 2.
 - [78] Joy Porter, "Native Americans: The Assertion of Sovereignty and the Negotiation of Citizenship and Identities," in *Federalism, Citizenship and Collective Identities in U.S. History*, ed. Cornelius A. Van Minnen and Sylvia L. Hilton (Amsterdam: University Press, 2001), 183.
 - [79] Forsyth's Remarks, 333.
 - [80] "Speech of Colonel Webb," in *From the Heart Voices of the American Indian*, ed. Lee Miller (New York: Vantage Books, 1995), 147. The official document is found in U.S. Congress, 23d, 1st session, *Senate Document* 512, vol. 1, 240. There is nothing in the record about Colonel Webb, except that he stood up at the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek council to address the U.S. Indian agents negotiating with tribal leaders. This is indicated in *Senate Document* 512 (see citation above). He also contributed two editorials to the *Cherokee Phoenix*.
 - [81] Frelinghuysen's Remarks, April 9, 1830, *Gales & Seaton's Register of Debates in Congress*, Senate, 316.
 - [82] "Speech of Colonel Webb," 147.
 - [83] "Treaty of Doak's Stand (1820)" in *The American Indian and the United States: A Documentary History*, 2377.
 - [84] See especially Bates's Remarks, May 19, 1830, 1050.
 - [85] Harkins, "Farewell Letter," 12.
 - [86] R. Douglas Hurt, *The Indian Frontier, 1763–1846* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), xiv.
 - [87] Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 150.
 - [88] Colin G. Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins, 1999), 350.

- [89] Consummatory rhetoric refers to an internal discourse designed for the “purposes of gathering the like-minded.” See Randall A. Lake, “Enacting Red Power: The Consummatory Function in Native American Protest Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 128.
- [90] Tisho Mingo, William M’Gilvery, and Stimoluet, “Indian Emigration,” in *Cherokee Phoenix*, June 11, 1828. Mingo, M’Gilvery, and Stimoluet were colleagues of Levi Colbert, all of whom engaged in a letter-writing campaign against removal. Mingo et al. wrote their open letter in the *Cherokee Phoenix* as a response to U.S. Indian agents demanding a voluntary removal treaty prior to the election of Andrew Jackson. No mention of these names is made in Cushman, *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians*, though the book does discuss Colbert having confederates in his anti-removal campaigns.
- [91] Isaac Bates’s Remarks, May 19, 1830, 1051.
- [92] Coacoochee, “Speech to Removal Council,” in John T. Sprague, *The Origin, Progress and Conclusion of the Florida War* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1847), 288–89. Coacoochee was a war chief of the Seminole Nation during the Second Seminole (or Florida) War of 1835–1842. During this time period, he ascended as a leader whose railings against removal became legendary within Native circles. For more on Coacoochee’s reputation as a political force, see Susan A. Miller, *Coacoochee’s Bones: A Seminole Saga* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003). I first found mention of this text in Moquin and Van Doren and traced it to Sprague’s 1847 book, written only six years after the speech’s delivery. The text itself was probably recorded by a U.S. Indian agent and passed along to Sprague, who was a field reporter during the Second Seminole War. This version of the speech is the only one extant and has been cited by Seminole scholars such as Miller (see citation above) and James W. Covington, *The Seminoles of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993).
- [93] Coacoochee, “Speech to Removal Council,” 288–89.
- [94] Coacoochee, “Speech to Removal Council,” 290.
- [95] Opotle Yoholo, Tuckaubatchie Hajo, Tustenuggee, Smut Eye, et al., “Memorial of the Creek Nation of Indians,” in *Cherokee Phoenix*, March 17, 1830. This memorial was found in the *Cherokee Phoenix*, which published numerous Native rebuttals to removal, especially throughout 1830—the year that the Indian Removal Act was passed. This memorial can be found at the Western Carolina University online library files at <http://www.wcu.edu/library/cherokeephoeenix/vol2/no48/pg4colla-4b.htm/>.
- [96] Yoholo et al., “Memorial.”
- [97] Quoted in *Great Debates in American History from the Debates in the British Parliament on the Colonial Stamp Act (1764–1765) to the Debates in Congress at the Close of the Taft Administration (1912–1913)*, vol. 8, Civil Rights part 2, ed. Marion Mills Miller (New York: Current Literature Publishing Company, 1913), 267.
- [98] “Declaration of Independence,” 9.
- [99] Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827–1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5.
- [100] Elizabeth Rich, “Remember Wounded Knee’: AIM’s Use of Metonymy in 21st Century Protest,” *College Literature* 31 (2004): 74.
- [101] Matthew Dennis, “Red Jacket’s Rhetoric: Postcolonial Persuasions on the Native Frontiers of the Early American Republic,” in *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance: Word Medicine, Word Magic*, 15.
- [102] Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, 156.
- [103] Olga Gershenson, “Postcolonial Discourse Analysis and Intercultural Communication: Building a New Model,” *Intercultural and International Communication Annual* 28 (2005): 128.
- [104] Gershenson, “Postcolonial Discourse Analysis,” 128.
- [105] Duane Champagne, “In Search of Theory and Method in American Indian Studies,” *American Indian Quarterly* 31 (2007): 362.

- [106] Yagelski, "Rhetoric of Contact," 69.
- [107] Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, 5.
- [108] Krupat, "Approach to Native American," 325–26.
- [109] William Storr's Remarks, May 15, 1830, *Gales & Seaton's Register of Debates in Congress*, House, 998.
- [110] Storr's Remarks, 994.
- [111] Linda M. Clemmons, "'We Will Talk of Nothing Else': Dakota Interpretations of the Treaty of 1837," *Great Plains Quarterly* 25 (2005): 174.

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