

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Settling Debts: Early Native American Authorship and the Credit Economy

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9bj6v9h9>

Author

Ramm, Gerard Curtis

Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Settling Debts:
Early Native American Authorship and the Credit Economy

By

Gerard Curtis Ramm

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Beth Piatote, Co-Chair
Professor Hertha D. Sweet Wong, Co-Chair
Professor Elisa Tamarkin
Professor David Henkin

Spring 2022

Abstract

Settling Debts: Early Native American Authorship and the Credit Economy

by

Gerard Ramm

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Berkeley

Professors Beth Piatote and Hertha D. Sweet Wong, Co-Chairs

In this dissertation, I argue that the economic knowledge adapted from the early American credit economy influenced Native American authors' literary and rhetorical compositions. By applying a political-economic lens to the works of Samson Occom, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, and Elias Boudinot, I argue that debt and indebtedness offered these Native authors a means of interrogating the dynamics of settler-colonialism and Indigenous sovereignty in the years between 1760 and 1836. Debt and economic principles allowed Native authors to secure the means of Native advancement, critique the program of removal, and reassign dependency and obligation within the rapidly changing milieu of Native-settler relations.

For my Mother and Father

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Samson Occom and The Ends of Patronage	24
Chapter 2: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft’s “Humble Present” and the Mixed Economy of Ojibwe / Settler Relations	66
Chapter 3: Foreclosing on A Native Nation: Elias Boudinot, Removal, and Cherokee Bankruptcy	109
Afterword: William Apess and The Debtor President	159
Bibliography	165

Acknowledgments

So much will be said in this dissertation about the relationship between debt and gratitude that I hesitate to dwell on the topic here. When I consider the enormous effort and kindness that my friends and colleagues have shown in helping along this project, I am compelled to admit that debt is debt and gratitude is gratitude, and gratitude is greater. While I will earnestly try to fulfill any outstanding monetary debts to those listed below (and apologies if I have forgotten them), I will commit their acts of generosity and support to a lifelong ledger in my mind.

First, I would like to thank my advisors Beth Piatote and Hertha D. Sweet Wong for their constant support of this project and my academic development. Hertha's studies of early Native American literature provided a magnificent exemplar for my academic work. She also helped orient me to the often foreboding world of graduate school at Berkeley and exercised sagacity and clemency in her advisory role. Her enduring confidence in the project and astute calls for clarity and depth in the writing are sincerely appreciated. From my earliest visit to Berkeley, Beth has helped provide me with a sense of place and purpose in the academy, and has been a model teacher, author, and activist. Her expert direction of the independent study I pursued on early Native American writing helped generate this dissertation project and her deft guidance throughout the exam and dissertation processes were indispensable. Without her generosity and insight as a scholar and advisor, this project would simply not exist.

I sincerely thank David Henkin and Elisa Tamarkin for forming the other parts of my committee and exercising an open-door policy when it came to advice and resources related to the dissertation. I am aware that my research often led me to extremely precise inquiries and David and Elisa were both patient and magnanimous in their response to my punctiliousness. I also owe a special thanks to Elisa for accepting me to the program in English at Berkeley in the first place and for conducting a vigorous exam on 19th century American literature that helped formulate the contextual road map for this dissertation. Thanks go as well to Bryan Wagner for expertly chairing my exam and to Scott Saul for providing helpful feedback on my intellectual endeavors.

For their enduring friendship, I would like to thank Max Stevenson, Ariel Baker-Gibbs, and Cheng-Chai Chiang. Their intelligence, buoyancy, and comfort have been invaluable over the past seven years. Special thanks to Max and Ariel for being adroit readers of my chapters and for doling out corrections and peace-of-mind in equal measure. With regards to all of the friends and colleagues I have made through participation in our academic workers' Union, enough thanks can never be given. To my friends Alex Bush, Valerie McGraw, Thomas Hintze, and Eric Peterson, thank you for demonstrating that one can both devote oneself to organizing and finish a dissertation, however late it may arrive. To Gaelan Ash, thank you for stimulating my capacity for argumentation by challenging the basic assumption that the University should even exist. To Garrett Shishido Strain and Kavitha Iyengar, who first organized me into the labor movement, thank you for modelling fastidiousness and good humor in your approach to a daunting, but achievable, undertaking. I am honored to have known and worked alongside all of the brilliant organizers who make up UAW 2865 and Student Researchers United.

I owe special thanks to my aunt Dixie who has always cultivated a sense of connection to my Quapaw roots and Native ancestry. As both a scholar of the Quapaw language and a loving family member who put me up during my earliest studies of Native America, you have given me, my family, and our larger community so much. To my fiancée Katie, thank you for being the abiding voice of encouragement in my head, for laughing with me throughout the process, and

for continually setting my priorities straight. Without you, my progress through graduate school would have been joyless at best, and my progress through life would be equally so. To my brother and Adelaide who provided much needed shelter and comfort during the worst of times, thanks do not begin to cover what I owe. To my Mother and Father, to whom this dissertation is dedicated, I truly would not have completed, nor started, this work without your motivation. As an educator, my Mother showed me, from an early age, the transcendent value of learning. As a musician, my Father nurtured my enthusiasm for the arts. My life-long project of intellectual development is inspired by their deep belief that one can always grow in wisdom. Finally, I want to make a special dedication to Richard Covert and his wife Angela. Dick and Angela were the earliest intellectuals I had ever met, and Dick's memory as well as Angela's abiding words of faith were the secret impetuses for this project's completion. For all those who have guided me here today, be-it through quiet encouragement or raucous coaxing, thank you.

Introduction

In January of 1830, the Federal Indian Agent to Andrew Jackson's administration, Lewis Cass, published a protracted defense of Indian "emigration" in the *North American Review*. Jackson's removal policy, Cass argued, reflected the natural differences in the character of Natives, which made their society incompatible with the expanding nation of America. In enumerating these differences, Cass alleged the following about Native social structure: "They have no criminal code, no courts, no officers, no punishments. They have no relative duties to enforce, no debts to collect, no property to restore. They are in a state of nature, as much so as it is possible for any people to be."¹ Against the inclining complexity of American life, Cass situates a people who continue to cling to "the utter nakedness of their society."² Inflected by the parallel negations in Cass's writing, the "state of nature" to which these Indigenous People belong is conjured through paucity. Just as it has none of the restrictions of civil society, it also lacks one of its more fundamental features – private property.³ Without this, Cass insinuates, Indian abjection will inevitably be made worse by their inability to conduct business – to enforce duties, raise taxes, and collect debts.

Writing 50 years before Cass pronounced Indigenous society propertyless, Mohegan author Samson Occom observed a conflict in his journal over an unpaid debt:

An officer came to my House and attachd my oxen for a Small Debt I owed, and Thirdsday I went down to N London to see whether the Law, in the New Revised Law Book was yet in favour of the Indians, and I found it Strong in favour of us,—and I sent a line to one of the Men, and the next he came and Promisd to withdraw his action, and they did withdraw.⁴

This episode neatly belies Cass's characterization of Native social and economic deficiency. Not only does Occom demonstrate the desire to restore his property, but he consults civil procedure in order to make a case for his property rights as an Indian. Occom—an early exemplar of a rising class of Native literati—evinced legal know-how as well as financial fluency in his consultation of the New Revised Law Book. Laws and procedures governing the relationship between creditors and debtors were, after all, in a state of flux during the later 18th century, and without the help of the most recent prescriptions, Occom may have faced the seizure of more than his oxen.⁵ This small victory regarding the "Small Debt" of one Native author reveals more than just Cass's disingenuousness. It encapsulates the struggles of Native Americans to adapt their knowledge to the ever-evolving economic circumstances of settler-colonialism. Far from Cass's stereotypical representations, Native Americans found themselves embroiled deeply in

¹ Lewis Cass, "Review of Documents and Proceedings Relating to the Formation and Progress of a Board in the City of New York, for the Emigration, Preservation, and Improvement of the Aborigines of America. July 22, 1829," *The North American Review* 30, no. 66 (1830): 74.

² Ibid.

³ For the connection between private property, civil society, and the "state of nature," see David S. Siroky and Hans-Jörg Sigwart, "Principle and Prudence: Rousseau on Private Property and Inequality," *Polity* 46, no. 3 (July 2014): 381–406, <https://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2014.13>.

⁴ See Samson Occom and Joanna Brooks, *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Leadership and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Native America* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 328.

⁵ See Bruce H. Mann, *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 169-182.

the complex financial workings of early America, and they often articulated their own rights – both individual and collective – by taking up roles in the ubiquitous credit economy.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore these manifestations of Indigenous economic knowledge by considering how a subset of the earliest published Native American authors engaged with and wrote about debt. In the era spanning 1760-1840, the U.S. credit economy conditioned both the emergence of Native literature and the political struggle over expansion and the removal of Native tribes.⁶ Contending with a settler state growing rapidly in size, population, and power, Native authors published works largely to resist new circumscriptions of their sovereignty; political, legal, and cultural. Their writing, or what remains of it, has formed the basis of much contemporary scholarship in Native American studies. The fields of legal studies, linguistic anthropology, ethnography, and editorial studies have been mobilized in recent scholarship to elucidate how Native writers contended with the development of the United States and its attendant forms of indigenous dispossession. By centering debt in my own study, I align the field of political economy with the study of early Native authorship, but what follows is more than an economic history of removal. It is an investigation of how Samson Occom, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, and Elias Boudinot wielded economic knowledge in the most trenchant debates of their era regarding Indigenous character, and how debt animated their literary inventions and political interventions.

Broadly, debt conditioned the world of Occom, Schoolcraft, and Boudinot in two essential ways. First, it supplied financial backing for the enterprise of Native literacy, and therefore facilitated the rise of Native authorship. While manifold cultural trends contributed to the emergence of Native authorship, proprietary authorship, as Philip Round informs us, propelled Native authors into the literary marketplace, even as the integrity of intellectual property was under question.⁷ In all cases, Native authorship depended on capital, which was often delivered indirectly. For some of these authors, funding their writing projects and Native literacy at large meant relying on patrons. For others, it meant soliciting donations to provide for printing presses and editorial fees. And yet for others, it meant petitioning colonial agents for literary resources and throughways to the public. In each, “debt” can be construed as a form of economic and social dependency which enabled Native printing, publishing, and circulation. Native authors recognized how their careers depended on debt in these ways, and often expressed these unique modes of interdependence in writing.

Second, debt and credit were necessary elements in colonial expansion. As Bruce Mann reminds us in his economic study of early America, those living between 1760 and 1840

⁶ For my purposes, “removal” includes, but is not limited to, legal and political circumstances that resulted in the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which put into effect the forced displacement of thousands of Native Americans from their ancestral lands east of the Mississippi. While this Act of Congress serves, in some ways, as an historical endpoint in my project, in others it is merely the apotheosis of a series of political and economic tactics designed to rob early Native tribes and nations of their sovereignty, deplete their resources, and make them more likely to dissolve their land claims. Because these tactics were employed variously by the federal and state governments, as well as all manner of settler-colonial actors from Ojibwe territory to the Cherokee Nation, I use “removal” in a variety of geographical and historical settings to describe a largely singular tendency on the part of the settler nation-state. For the expansive use of the term “removal” in other literary criticism, see Mark Rifkin, *Manifesting America: The Imperial Construction of U.S. National Space* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, First Peoples : New Directions Indigenous (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

⁷ See Phillip H. Round, *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

witnessed the rapid advancement of banking and, along with it, a proliferation of both public and private lending.⁸ Rampant credit transactions built a thick network of economic dependencies and speculation that in turn supplied the settler state with a means of expansion and consolidation. Working within these conditions, settlers acquired means – both legitimate and faulty – of appropriating Native land and resources by taking on debt to fund their colonial enterprises. More than that, debt was weaponized as a tool for defrauding Natives of their land, even as national policy. Finally, the interstitial realm of colonial trading posts, captured by Richard White in *The Middle Ground*, required Natives to employ market logics to pay and take on debts for resources and required white traders to learn the socio-cultural stakes of credit transactions in indigenous societies.⁹

The term “debt” in this dissertation indexes, not simply the various forms of structured economic obligation common in a credit economy, but the legal, social, and moral forms of dependency that attend these obligations. Native authors tapped these multifarious connotations of credit in order to reconfigure their relationship to U.S. colonial expansion at moments of Indigenous crisis. While it is true that much of early Native American literature attempts to counter the interference of settler colonialism by promoting Native autonomy, Native authors also had a keen sense of the way dependence and independence might be re-constituted through the rhetoric of political economy. Debt, and its peculiar mode of engendering dependence between two parties, enabled these authors to express alternatives to situations of military and territorial circumscription and removal. Outside of the material manner in which debt intersected with Native writing during the era of removal, I examine how debt provided a rhetorical means of describing other relations than those involved in outright dispossession.

Studying how Native authors interacted with the political-economic conditions of debt provokes several questions: how did Native authors represent the faulty forms of credit that resulted in land appropriation? How did they think about the relationship between real property and speculative trading? What forms of economic regulation were important to Native communities, and how did authors advocate for these forms? How did indebtedness, both individual and collective, provoke Native authors to take up particular rhetorical means and political goals? Delving into each of these questions requires a more detailed account of the political-economic milieu from which Native authorship emerged.

Debt and Settlement: 1760-1840

On May 28, 1830, the Indian Removal Act was passed by the United States Congress, conferring to President Andrew Jackson a range of powers relating to extinguishing Native claims to land. The monumental act authorized the purchase of millions of acres of Native land, mostly in the Southern region of the United States, and initiated the forced removal of several thousand tribal members to reserve lands west of the Mississippi. For Jackson, the act symbolized a broad solution to the natural antagonism between whites and Natives. Jackson’s State of the Union address from the same year approximates Cass’s arguments on white-Indigenous incompatibility:

What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous

⁸Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 3-6.

⁹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, 20th anniversary ed, Studies in North American Indian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

farms, embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute (...) The present policy of the Government is but a continuation of the same progressive change by a milder process. The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites.¹⁰

Casting removal as a “milder” form of mitigation, Jackson entices the U.S. into believing that the “melting away” of Native society is not only desirable, but proper, natural, inevitable. For Native advocates, this stereotypical manner of representation may not have been new, but the Removal Act was. This extensive new law manifested the worst fears about Jackson’s rise to power and signaled the end of a national policy of “civilizing” the Indian.¹¹ The material interests of empire had apparently won out against even the most ardent arguments for Indian acculturation and incorporation.

One day after the ratification of the Indian Removal Act, Congress approved a sweeping act reforming the U.S. Treasury procedures. The first part of this bill assigned a central solicitor of the Treasury who would take the reins on collecting the federal government’s various loans. Placing in the hand of the solicitor “charge of all lands and other property which have been or shall be assigned, set off, or conveyed to the United States, in payment of debts, and of all trusts created for the use of the United States, in payment of debts due them,” this act effectively centralized the collection of mortgages owed to the government. While distinct in their operational directives, these two acts were more interrelated than one might expect. The development of the American mortgage market and its ties to the U.S. Land Office and the Treasury was, across the history of early America, dependent on the state of Native American affairs. For Jackson, the availability of ceded Native territory in the East augured new credit opportunities for settlers, just as Indian dispossession and deterritorialization had always done. The contemporaneous passage of these acts, in this way, encapsulates how the economic propulsion of the early U.S. was equally predicated on removal and debt.

Samson Occom lived between 1723 and 1790, being the only author in this study who witnessed the transition of the U.S. from colony to independent nation-state. During this era, the status of debtors’ and Natives’ rights was, more or less, in constant flux. While the English Crown presided over numerous complaints from Native Americans about colonial encroachment on land guaranteed by previous treaties, their enforcement of Native rights was rarely decisive.¹² As British colonies expanded their holdings and experienced population booms throughout the mid-18th century, the territorial claims of Natives were constantly challenged. Meanwhile, western expansion during the colonial era led to a series of armed conflicts between the English and French. In the contest between empires for territorial mastery and expanded commerce on the new continent, the French and English conscripted tribes into uneasy alliances to fight on either side.¹³ The patchwork confederacies between Native, French, and English led to new treaties, but more importantly for this study, it led to complex socio-economic transformations. While the French pursued a policy of cultural accommodation with Native Americans that

¹⁰ Quoted in Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, Third edition, The Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2016), 120.

¹¹ For this change in policy, see Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1973).

¹² See Joanna Brooks’ Introduction in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 10.

¹³ See White, *The Middle Ground*, 224.

intertwined French and Indigenous logics of economic exchange, the British instituted “the kind of imperialism that civilized men thought they should by right exert over ‘savages.’”¹⁴ As the “middle ground” of French-Indian cultural exchange shrank before the successive conquests of the English, the rights of these Indigenous people were circumscribed and the complexity of their socio-economic expression was reduced to the activity of the conquered.¹⁵ These wars of Indian conquest waged by the British had a profound impact on the general economy of the American colonies. As recounted by Bruce Mann, the Seven Years’ War drove colonies to regulate the activity of creditors and debtors with greater urgency, given the extreme instability that war introduced. Overall, wars of expansion encouraged smuggling, spiked commodity prices, and “magnified the normal vagaries of production, trade, and investment” leading many enterprises into insolvency.¹⁶ It also exacerbated a perennial weakness of the colonial economy – the general scarcity of actual money. Along with the paucity of specie in the colonies, war and taxation took more money out of the hands of colonists, “driving up the cost of borrowing, enriching those with money to lend, and building pressure on colonial legislatures to issue paper money, which, as always, promptly depreciated, causing additional dislocation.”¹⁷ Without “an adequate circulating medium of exchange” the colonial economy became steeped in debts of all manner. For influxes of cash, colonists frequently relied on loans and investment from British patrons, which were viewed advantageously to the colonial bills of credit, which were issued to supply mortgages and other loans. Interestingly, these forms of colonial currency would sometimes bear images of Native Americans in an attempt to make concrete their “symbolic promises about future tobacco sales, future land values, and the future prospect of property taxes.”¹⁸ Supplying credit instruments thus helped establish a long-standing association of increased economic security with the advantages of colonial expansion and Native subordination. As everyone knew, establishing the colonies would take money, and in turn, procuring real money would depend on the continued removal of Natives from opportune territories.

Like the French and Indian war that preceded it, the U.S. War for Independence was funded largely on credit.¹⁹ Emerging from the war, the U.S.’s financial priorities hinged on establishing national stability for its credit economy and on acquiring new land for settlement. Thomas Jefferson believed he had the key to fostering both of these conditions. In contradistinction to the National Bank, which established a much-needed national currency and debt, Jefferson’s economic plan was predicated on the U.S. Land Office and its extensive mortgage-based lending. After 1800, this land office advanced so many mortgages to U.S. settlers that it became, functionally, “the largest bank in the world, with millions of dollars in outstanding debts.”²⁰ The prospect of easy credit from a national source led to rampant westward settlement, as prospective planters, loggers, and miners took on debt and moved into Native territory. To ensure that ample land would be on offer through the U.S. Land Office, Jefferson pursued a number of policies that would hopefully circumscribe Native holdings and render them pliant under a new agrarian existence. Of particular interest is Jefferson’s instruction to William

¹⁴ Ibid, 256.

¹⁵ Ibid, 257-259.

¹⁶ Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 53-54.

¹⁷ Ibid, 54.

¹⁸ Scott Reynolds Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History of America’s Financial Disasters*, 1st ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 6.

¹⁹ Ibid, 7-8.

²⁰ Ibid, 41.



Figure 1. This 1690 Bill of Credit was issued to fund King Williams' War against the French and their Indian allies. The imprint of the Native American holding bow and arrow was a typical representation of the symbolic promises of Empire made in early colonial paper money.²¹

²¹ Found at "History of U.S. Currency | U.S. Currency Education Program," accessed March 15, 2022, <https://www.uscurrency.gov/history>.

Henry Harrison that “we shall push our trading houses, and be glad to see the good & influential individuals among [the Natives] run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop th[em off] by a cession of lands.”²² While this was certainly not the first time that debt was wielded as an instrument of Native dispossession, it is a particularly stark example of the ways in which debt and settler-colonialism operated co-dependently to help dissolve Native sovereignty. If credit helped settlers acquire new lands in the West, debt helped confiscate these lands from their original Indigenous owners.

In the same letter in which Jefferson encouraged driving up trading post debts for Native individuals, he referenced two potential fates for the Native inhabitants of the expanding U.S – “our settlements will gradually circumscribe & approach the Indians, & they will in time either incorporate with us as citizens of the US or remove beyond the Missisipi.”²³ As we know, Andrew Jackson eschewed the incorporation program and instituted wholesale removal in his Indian policy. But the removal program was also fundamentally related to the development of the credit economy in the early Republic, and the need for cheap land to supply value and opportunities to U.S. citizens who were otherwise strapped for cash. Take the account books of any American business in the years between 1800 and 1830, and you would find less actual cash on hand than credit and debt that linked businesses to consumers in a string of obligations.²⁴ Not only were individual transactions between suppliers and clients dominated by debt, but loans formed the basis of businesses’ links to other businesses, and perhaps most importantly, to banks. To support the burgeoning economy of the U.S., banks readily lent to new businesses and entrepreneurs, facilitating a slew of new commercial ventures. Without readily available specie, these banks still found ways to supply money by introducing new currency into circulation in the form of banknotes. Banks supplied banknotes to discount bills of exchange provided at their doors, thus becoming storehouses of other parties’ debts and facilitating commerce between other businesses. In all, the loans and exchanges that banks provided were meant to reflect “the widening panoply of commodities for sale, including labor and land.”²⁵

Under Jackson, multiple developments led this system of credit to become a sea of speculation. Jackson succeeded in his goal to transform international trade with England by establishing a less-regulated market in cotton. The major trading houses and banks in England invested heavily in the cotton trade, while planters and traders in the U.S. expanded their ventures based on easy credit from a growing number of banks.²⁶ The unregulated cotton trade led to the formation of hundreds of “agency houses” – proto-investment firms that acted like banks in their interactions with would-be entrepreneurs. One consequence of the rise of these pseudo-banks was that accommodation loans began to outnumber other forms of transactions

²² “Founders Online: From Thomas Jefferson to William Henry Harrison, 27 February 1 ...” (University of Virginia Press), accessed March 17, 2022, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-39-02-0500>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See Edward J. Balleisen, *Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy and Commercial Society in Antebellum America*, The Luther Hartwell Hodges Series on Business, Society, and the State (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 28: “Most business owners did not supply cash when they bought stock or supplies, nor demand cash when they sold merchandise, agricultural produce, or finished articles. Instead, they took on debt as purchasers and extended credit as sellers. At the forefront of these transactions were individuals who made their living through mercantile exchange.”

²⁵ Jeffrey Sklansky, *Sovereign of the Market: The Money Question in Early America*, (London, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 97.

²⁶ See Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats*, 107.

that banks would conduct. These were “personal loans unconnected to any commercial transactions typically to enable a borrower to invest in land or equipment, a new shop or a new venture.”²⁷ In practice, the proliferation of accommodation loans meant that credit was increasingly risky and intertwined – “A borrower who came to the agency house for credit (...) ran to the furthest edge that the agency house would allow, usually ninety days (...) At the end of the ninety days, borrowers then paid these bills with a further accommodation note. In other words, they took out a loan to repay an existing loan, usually paying the interest in cash.”²⁸ Accommodation loans were a freer form of lending than discounting bills. They allowed would-be entrepreneurs to take money with no security except their mortgaged property and repay with other loans. As risky loans and fledgling banks increased, widespread speculation on future gains became the engine for economic development during Jackson’s tenure as financial commander-in-chief. Along with easy credit and business speculation came failure.

The specter of widescale financial ruin hung over the credit economy, even as it underwent expansion. Jackson knew that part of the key to maintaining British faith in cotton futures was territorial growth and land sales.²⁹ For credit to continue to expand and for cotton speculators to eventually reach their promised returns, Native land had to be appropriated, commodified, and sold at an accelerating pace. This commodification process played a crucial role in removal of the southern “civilized” tribes. In the case of the Chickasaw and the Choctaw, public surveyors, state banks, and newly formed “land companies” conspired to defraud and dispossess Native peoples of their land and make it available for auction and resale. While banks financed would-be planters in setting up their shops, surveyors created tangible plots out of Native territory, deploying a completely improvised set of policies as regards occupancy, use, and borders which left thousands of acres of land “unclaimed” and up for grabs.³⁰ Meanwhile, land companies – with financing from investment and credit firms as far as New York and Boston – went about occupying, dispossessing, and purchasing Native land.³¹ When individual Natives would sell land to the agents of these companies, they would be commonly offered an advance with promises to pay the balance “after the president approved the deeds, as required by treaty. By the time the Choctaws sought payment, however, speculators had bought and sold the deeds half a dozen times, and the original purchasers, indebted to the Choctaw owners, had long since disappeared.”³² Through coordinated financial manipulation, surveyors and banks managed to whittle down Native land claims to a sliver in much of the cotton planting areas of the South. Meanwhile, the land companies’ slight-of-hand maneuvers bilked Native Americans of the money from their land sales, ensuring they would remain economically vulnerable as the U.S. government moved towards wholesale removal.

Throughout the early history of the United States, the credit economy was wielded by U.S. policy makers like Jefferson and Jackson to further national expansion and dispossess Native tribes. While settlers, businesses, and politicians waged a battle for Native land in the arena of economics, the arena of law was equally important to the furtherance of U.S. empire and the articulation of Native American rights under this evolving regime. Understanding the

²⁷ Sklansky, *Sovereign of the Market*, 127.

²⁸ Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats*, 105.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 115-116.

³⁰ Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory*, First edition. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2020), 177-178.

³¹ *Ibid*, 190.

³² *Ibid*, 204

foundation of Native American law in this era is important for this study due to the law's interest in defining the peculiar relationship of dependency and relative sovereignty that existed between the U.S. and Native tribes. If Native land was the key resource upon which U.S. nationhood depended, the making of Federal Indian Law reflected the need to redefine Native property interests and restrict Natives' abilities to articulate national rights that would impede U.S. expropriation.

In general, American Indian law in this era was determined by three prominent Supreme Court Cases decided by Justice John Marshall. While treaty-making and interpreting were still prominent activities between tribes and the federal government during this era, these court cases had a sweeping effect on the status of Native American rights that impacted their ability to conduct negotiations and pursue legal recognition of their treaty rights. In the first of these cases, *Johnson v. McIntosh*, Marshall's decision took aim at the right of Indians to sell or hold title to their lands. Rooting his decision in the history of contact between Natives and European colonizers, Marshall argued the following:

(The original inhabitants) were admitted to be the rightful occupants of the soil, with a legal as well as just claim to retain possession of it, and to use it according to their own discretion; but their rights to complete sovereignty, as independent nations, were necessarily diminished, and their power to dispose of the soil at their own will, to whomsoever they pleased, was denied by the original fundamental principle, that discovery gave exclusive title to those who made it.³³

This "doctrine of discovery" that Marshall asserted in his decision had complicated conceptual origins, but a clear set of consequences for Native land rights in the era of the Early Republic. In essence, Indians could only sell land to the U.S. and were viewed "merely as occupants" of their land. Unlike the inalienable property rights of U.S. Citizens, Indian title to land existed in a state of speculative occupancy, "to be protected, indeed while in peace,"³⁴ but ultimately extinguishable by "purchase or just war."³⁵ This diminution of their property rights cast Native Americans as propertyless, echoing the judgments of colonial officers like Lewis Cass and enabling the U.S. to compile and acquire Native land with maximum efficiency.³⁶

Marshall followed his decision in *Johnson v. McIntosh* by confounding the case of Native land rights further in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*. In his 1831 judgment that the Supreme Court could not grant an injunction against Georgia laws bent on destroying Cherokee nationhood, Marshall established that the Cherokee nation was not a foreign nation that would be afforded the protection of federal jurisdiction. Instead, Marshall invented a new category to contain Natives' claims to sovereignty:

Though the Indians are acknowledged to have an unquestionable, and, heretofore, unquestioned right to the lands they occupy, until that right shall be extinguished by a voluntary cession to our government; yet it may well be doubted whether those tribes

³³ David H. Getches, *Cases and Materials on Federal Indian Law*, 5th ed., American Casebook Series (St. Paul, MN: Thomson/West, 2005), 64.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 68.

³⁵ Eric Kades, "The Dark Side of Efficiency: *Johnson v. McIntosh* and the Expropriation of American Indian Lands," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 148, no. 4 (April 2000): 1065, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3312840>, 1068.

³⁶ See *Ibid*, 1071-1073.

which reside within the acknowledged boundaries of the United States can, with strict accuracy, be denominated foreign nations. They may, more correctly, perhaps, be denominated domestic dependent nations. They occupy a territory to which we assert a title independent of their will, which must take effect in point of possession when their right to possession ceases.³⁷

In one sense the designation of “domestic dependent nations” is a natural extension of Marshall’s decision in *Johnson v. McIntosh*. The Cherokee nation could not claim the same manner of territorial sovereignty without exercising independent title to their lands. But Marshall’s legal definition was also entirely novel – it was a means of hedging the Cherokee legal rights that were articulated through their own constitutional democracy, by making their rights subordinate to the overarching legal sovereignty of the U.S. “Meanwhile they are in a state of pupilage,” Marshall elaborated, “their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian.”³⁸ These domestic metaphors of guardianship would only go so far, as the federal government failed to protect their wards against settler encroachment and violence in the proceeding years.

While Marshall attempted to assert a degree of Native autonomy independent of state jurisdiction in *Worcester v. Georgia*, ultimately the legal diminution of Native sovereignty and property rights had helped solidify removal by the mid-1830’s. The concepts of “discovery” and “domestic dependency” deployed in Marshall’s decisions became hallmarks of Indian law. As the federal court deployed muddled concepts concerning occupancy and guardianship, the foundations of Native sovereignty during this period were further eroded by the negligent and injurious actions of local political actors and settlers. The rapidly shifting legal and economic grounds of nationhood propelled Indian removal by realigning settlers’ perspective on the status of their Native neighbors. Even as some Native Americans articulated a strong desire to assimilate to white models of civilization, the institutions of trade and law shifted the ground beneath the feet of Indigenous peoples clinging to their rights and the notion of transnational accommodation. As historian Claudio Saunt put it, “while U.S. officials would continue to complain about the bonds forming between their citizens and native peoples, they also insisted with growing urgency and dwindling evidence that the two ways of living were fundamentally irreconcilable. In truth, only one thing was truly irreconcilable: native and white ownership of the same land.”³⁹

Native American Authors’ Use of Debt

As the property interests of their colonizers eclipsed the social cause of Native advancement, Native authors had to contend with the rapid deterioration of settler relations as they existed. They also had to process and respond to perplexing beliefs about their dependence on a relatively new and unstable nation-state. One way of depicting their struggle is to cast Native authors as the ill-fated resisters of the economic forces behind removal. As capital and national law conspired to seize their land, Native authors attempted to protest this process by staging social and moral arguments that were rapidly becoming out-of-date. This lens would apply to Schoolcraft’s nostalgic poetic mode just as it would to Boudinot’s strenuous advocacy for Cherokee acculturation. If raw economic interests motivated the shift in national policy from

³⁷ Getches, *Cases and Materials on Federal Indian Law*, 106.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Saunt, *Unworthy Republic*, 14.

accommodation to removal and if debt was wielded as a weapon of dispossession, then Native authors might be seen as the natural adversaries of the credit economy.

Nonetheless, even in their most truculent moments of protest against colonial incursion, Native authors did not shy away from writing about financial matters, nor did they eschew participation in the developing economy of the U.S. Instead, Native authors coopted economic principles in the battle over colonialism and Native sovereignty. Far from passive victims of capitalism's evolution, Native authors took part in the expansive credit economy by overseeing loans, manipulating values, regulating insolvency, and deploying the social/moral connotations of debt. Their swift adaptation to financial logics was, furthermore, folded into a general strategy of Native survival and resistance. The dire consequences of credit's expansion in enabling colonial displacement were met, in turn, by economic know-how and appeals to monetary value by authors making the case for Native rights. Since credit was the primary medium of exchange in the new national economy, financial knowledge manifests itself in Native writing mainly through references to debt, although this takes many different forms. Often, moral arguments concerning the treatment of Indigenous peoples take economic forms and vice versa. At other times, debt supplies Native authors with a way of describing the peculiar transmutation of their relation to the settler state. Debt, after all, implies continued relations between two parties, and involves finding an agreeable solution to dependency. However it was engaged, debt and its rhetorical use to disclose certain obligations and speculative arrangements between whites and Natives helps us reassess how Natives thought and wrote about the economic stakes of dispossession.

The structure of debt also provided Native authors with alternatives to the legal suppression of Native national rights. According to legal studies critic Eric Cheyfitz, Justice John Marshall's legal decisions in the early 1800s ensured that Native territory could be re-narrated as domestic space (subject to federal laws) and that Native nations would endure a brand of nested sovereignty – circumscribed by the larger affairs and interests of the sovereign U.S. state.⁴⁰ The legal matter of dependency meant that the federal constitution superseded Native constitutions, making Native laws and affairs dependent on the oversight of the U.S. This model of dependency matched the paternalistic attitude of U.S. policy makers towards Native tribes. As many scholars have noted, Native authors adopted rhetorical strategies to instantiate political autonomy and resist domestic dependency.⁴¹ But debt provides something different to these same authors – a tool for rejiggering how dependency is constructed between Native tribes and the nation. Sometimes this meant reversing the relationship of dependency, to reveal how Natives held on to extant moral, political, and financial debts owed by the burgeoning settler state. In other circumstances, though, Native authors laid bare their indebtedness to the settler state to expose the clear lines of contractual dependency there implied. Like treaty language, debt offered a means of exposing the imprecision of generalized U.S. domestic policy as it concerned tribes and nations. And often, referencing a financial debt was a means of solidifying a mutual dependency between Natives and whites, existing on a more level plain than the legal system.

⁴⁰ See Eric Cheyfitz ed., *The Columbia Guide to American Indian Literatures of the United States since 1945*, The Columbia Guides to Literature since 1945 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/Doc?id=10183552>, 50-52.

⁴¹ For a good collection of essays concerning early Native writing and the question of sovereignty, see Helen Jaskoski, ed., *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays*, Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture 102 (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Finally, I am interested in how and why Native authors wrote not only about debt, but in the form of debt. Here, I rely on Mary Poovey's premise in *Genres of the Credit Economy* that credit and literature originated in a common goal: familiarizing and mediating value in modern society.⁴² In this economy, credit instruments and literary writing "not only performed variants of a single function, but sometimes shared formal features as well."⁴³ Outside of writing about debt, the poems, letters, speeches and pamphlets of Occom, Schoolcraft, and Boudinot approximated the formal aspects of monetary instruments, aiming to negotiate the terms, not only of their own publications, but of a Native national voice. Repurposing the financial forms of contracts, notes of exchange, and financial disclosures, Native authors performed their own accounting of the role and value of Native survival. Performing this remediation of value through texts that adopted the formal significance of financial instruments, Native authors offered up a new rationale for retaining Native nationhood to a republic preoccupied with assessing its own value as an expanding country with its own pressing debts.

The chapters of this dissertation are arranged in a rough chronological order in order to tell a long history of Indian removal and Native authorship, originating in the colonial struggles of the late 18th century. Chapter 1 addresses the writing career of Samson Occom and his reliance on charity and debt to sustain himself as an advocate of Native literacy and tribal rights. As we will see, Occom was an adept economic agent in the developing enterprise of Native conversion and education. Playing on the expectations of his patrons, Occom unified white and Native participants in this enterprise through the pronouncement of mutual obligations that could be wielded to explicate political and moral exigencies for Native peoples. Chapter 2 focuses on Jane Johnston Schoolcraft – one of the earliest Native American poets published in English, whose judgments concerning the "plethoric moil" of capitalism did not deter her from instrumentalizing credit relationships in her poems.⁴⁴ While she relied on "Middle Ground" reasoning derived from the French-Indigenous fur trade to describe evolving colonial relations with the U.S., she also prescribed new ways of looking at treaty obligations and Native dependency through the value systems of the credit economy. Chapter 3 examines Elias Boudinot, the Cherokee removal, and the economic moralism of insolvency. By thinking through the financial stakes of civilization and removal for the Cherokee, I hope to show how Boudinot's struggle to bring about and justify the Treaty of New Echota reflected particular moral-economic principles that stated financial failure had to be dealt with justly to ensure renewal. Boudinot's active opposition to the settler state, thus, morphed into an opposition to speculation and economic mismanagement, which allowed him to depict voluntary removal as a proper response to bankruptcy.

This study owes much to the scholars who have unearthed and elevated the work of early Native American authorship. In addition to Joanna Brooks, Robert Dale Parker, and Theda Perdue who, each, masterfully edited the collections of the respective authors' works, Lisa Brooks' *The Common Pot* and Phillip Round's *Removable Type* proved indispensable in their adept reflections on the materiality of early Native authorship and the political-economic stakes of settler-colonialism. For their generative histories of Native Americans' adaption to European trade, I have relied heavily on Richard White and Claudio Saunt. For all things debt and credit,

⁴² Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁴ See "The Contrast" in Jane Johnston Schoolcraft and Robert Dale Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 118.

Bruce Mann's *Republic of Debtors*, Edward Balleisen's *Navigating Failure*, and Scott Reynolds Nelson's *A Nation of Deadbeats* have been my most vital resources.

I must admit, as well, in this introduction a crucial elision in my scholarship which was made consciously, yet not quite conscientiously. While my dissertation centers on the U.S. nation state's appropriation of land, some of the strongest theoretical and historical works on this era focus on the corresponding theft of personhood. Chattel slavery was not only a crucial pillar of the early American economy, it was a system of racial oppression which traversed nearly every arena of early American cultural and political life. Scholars like Ian Baucom, Stephen Best, Saidiya Hartman and Walter Johnson have penned brilliant accounts of the financialization of slavery and the intersection of the American slave system with the credit economy.⁴⁵ In many ways, they have shown how the institution of slavery was critical for the project of national expansion and development, but also conceptually totalizing and unique in its subjugation and objectification of black people. For this latter reason, the financialization of slavery does not emerge much as an intertext in my study of Native American authorship, but I would be completely remiss to not cite these scholars as providing model modes of inquiry in my approach to this project.

In addition to these critics who have laid the groundwork upon which my study is based, I feel something must be said of the enormous value supplied by the authors in this study more generally. Native American literary studies has begun to acknowledge how the writings of authors like Oocom, Schoolcraft, and Boudinot form a veritable canon within which Native intellectualism today can be rooted.⁴⁶ But more than that, the Native authors in this study crafted ingenious articulations of rights, sovereignty, and Native survival by drawing on a range of cultural, political, and economic knowledge. These authors captured not only the dire circumstances of removal, but also the inventiveness that was born out of socio-economic adversity. They are seminal not only as literary thinkers, but as economic thinkers. The wealth of knowledge provided through their work discredits the claim that Native Americans in this era owned nothing, developed nothing, contributed nothing. Our debt to them, in fact, is beyond repayment.

⁴⁵ Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). Stephen Michael Best, *The Fugitive's Properties Law and the Poetics of Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226241111>. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, *Race and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁴⁶ See Robert Allen Warrior, *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

Samson Occom and The Ends of Patronage

In 1783, a Mohegan author, pastor, educator, and practitioner of a dozen or so other trades took time off from his various occupations to write a reflection titled “The Most Remarkable and Strange State Situation and Appearance of Indian Tribes in this Great Continent.” This short piece includes an unsparing depiction of the desperate state of Native Americans in the colonial world of the late 18th century:

Indians So Called, in this most extensive Continent, are Universally Poor, they have no Notion of Laying up much for the Future, they all live from Hand to Mouth, as the Common saying is Chiefly by Hunting Fishing and Fowling; the Women Raise little Corn, Beans, and Pompkins, and pick Wild Fruts, and do other Drudgery; those that live among or near the White People, have Learnt, Some of them, to live a little in imitation of them, but very poor Still, they are good Serv^{ts} to themselves, they have no Oeconomy to live; wastful and imprudent, both of time & Substance, they will wory and Toile all Day to lose two Shillings & gain Six pence⁴⁷

The passage adopts a moralistic tone – its emphasis on Indian “drudgery,” “wastful(ness)” and “impruden(ce)” implies that the universal impoverishment of these peoples may be due to inherent flaws in their character. Equally on trial, though, is their unwillingness to adopt an “oeconomy to live”: their impartiality to “trades” and their loathness to abandon cultures of mere subsistence. Their rote reliance on living “Hand to Mouth” means they have no wages to “lay up,” no capital to accumulate; Natives’ widespread poverty is a consequence of their failure to imitate the ways of their colonizers. This is a curious indictment, especially since the preceding half of the piece takes aim at the “Conduct of the Most Learned, Polite, and Rich Nations of the World,” providing a Christian-themed excoriation of Europeans: “I find them to be the Most Tyranical, Cruel, and inhuman oppressors of their Fellow Creatures in the World, these make all the confusion and distructions among the Nations of the Whole World.”⁴⁸ Between the Indians who have failed to store up the means of survival – either due to stereotypically assigned sins or to stubbornness in the face of widespread social change – and the Europeans who have enacted a tyrannical project of destruction and confusion among the colonized, the piece seems to be lost in its own moral accounting. Who is really to blame for the extreme richness of one nation and the extreme poverty of another? How are we to judge the moral and economic capital of Indians who struggle to adapt to the New World order?

It would not be the first time, nor the last, that Samson Occom lamented the state of his fellow Native Americans in writing.⁴⁹ A prominent Indigenous preacher and author of the first

⁴⁷ Samson Occom, “The Most Remarkable and Strange State Situation and Appearance of Indian Tribes in this Great Continent,” in Samson Occom and Joanna Brooks, *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Leadership and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Native America* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 59. Brooks’ edition includes editorial marks that denote interlineations and words struck through in the original. I have excluded them from this chapter for the ease of the reader. I have, however, made no corrections to original spellings, phrasings, etc.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴⁹ See “Sermon on the Execution of Moses Paul” in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 192; and Occom’s comments on the end of the Mason Controversy: “I am afraid the poor Indians will never stand a good chance with the English in their land controversies, because they are very poor, they have no money. Money is almighty now-a-

published Native American book in English,⁵⁰ Occom drew upon a lifetime of missionary work amongst tribes in the Northeast and his own upbringing as a Mohegan to provide grim portrayals of the poverty of Indians at large. Despite his moralizing tone, the universal impoverishment depicted by Occom could be said to encompass even himself. Indeed, the portrait of Native peoples scraping by in “The Most Remarkable and Strange State Situation” echoes Occom’s account of his own “manner of Livining” from his 1768 “Autobiographical Narrative”:

I was obligd to Contrive every way to Support my Family; I took all opportunities, to get Some thing to feed my Family Daily,—I planted my own Corn, Potatoes, and Beans; I Use to be out whoeing my Corn Some times before Sun Rise and after my School is Dismist, and by this means I was able to raise my own Pork for I was allowed to keep 5 Swine, Some Mornings & Evenings I would be out with my Hook and Line to Catch Fish, and in the Fall of year and in the Spring, I used my Gunn, for we lived very handy for Fowl (...) Besides all these Difficulties I met with adverse Providence (...) all these Losses helpd to pull me down, and by this Time I got greatly in Debt”⁵¹

Hunting, Fishing, Fowling, and planting, were altogether necessary parts of Occom’s survival, in spite of his admonitions against such forms of “drudgery.” That Occom saw himself in his portrait of Native American poverty is evident from his spiteful representation of debt in these two passages. Occom spends a great deal of time rehearsing his “wory and Toile” at sustaining himself and his family, only to wind up in the situation of subsistence Indians everywhere: losing two shillings and gaining six pence. In terms of their shared adversity, manifest in their manual labor and the day-to-day accumulation of debts, Occom was a man of his people.

In literary criticism and Native studies, Occom is commonly viewed as an author with fraught dual allegiances to Europeans and Native Americans.⁵² It is true that – as far as their economic, political and cultural existence was concerned – neither Occom nor the Native peoples of New England lived outside of the influence of colonial forces during the second half of the 18th century. The expansion of colonial territory forced communities of Indians to confront a new political-economic regime, motivated mainly by a white desire for land and resources. Occom spent his life navigating this settler-colonial advance into Native territory, participating in certain acts of resistance to colonial appropriation while simultaneously managing his livelihood and the survival of his family by participating in Christian conversion and educational missions. His

days, and the Indians have no learning, no wit, no cunning; the English have it all.” Quoted in Bernd Peyer, *The Tutor’d Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America*, Native Americans of the Northeast (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 74.

⁵⁰ See Phillip H. Round, *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 49.

⁵¹ Occom, “Autobiographical Narrative, Second Draft,” in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 56, 57.

⁵² See David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 49–57; Michael Elliott, “‘This Indian Bait’: Samson Occom and the Voice of Liminality,” *Early American Literature* 29.3 (1994): 233-253; and Keely McCarthy, “Conversion, Identity, and the Indian Missionary,” *Early American Literature* 36.3 (2001): 353-370.

most vociferous criticisms of the Anglo-US regime take form in writing through his disputes with missionary societies, where wages and the consequences of money-raising were primary subjects of debate. Writing to his employers and patrons, Occom expresses a keen awareness of how he and, by extension, his fellow Native Americans, have been exploited. His condemnations, combined with his lamenting the oppressive poverty of his fellow Indians, give us the vision of an author who felt the negative consequences of capitalism's advance in the very fibers of his being.

But there was more to Occom's approach to economics than outright opprobrium. Occom did rely, and chose to rely, on funds raised from an economic machine whose constituent parts spanned several of the richest of nations. Given that Occom was as active in his solicitation of money as he was in his condemnation of it, we are compelled to ask how Occom conceptualized the financial obligations that shaped his life and his writing. Were patronage and debt, for instance, merely features of the sordid economy of the Anglos, another nefarious device through which Natives and converts impoverished themselves? Or did they imply a different relation than simple subordination? How were they configured vis-à-vis Christian charity and Mohegan sovereignty?

In attempting to answer these questions, I focus on both Occom's financial relationships and his rhetorical use of debt to describe the evolving circumstances of his service to colonial society. Immersed as he was in a missionary marketplace which involved patronage, wages, debt, and a fair amount of hustle, Occom's literary concerns are as much material as they are moral. The adverse economic circumstances of his life find voice in his body of extant letters and often manifest as contestations of the very political-economic system upon which he relied. In many of these writings, Occom employs a rhetoric of exchange that depicts his own nexus of dependencies through a lens which conjoins charity and market logics. Occom's deployment of debt and credit goes beyond conventional usage by interrogating the economic arrangements inherent in Christian charity for Indian peoples. By reframing relationships of altruism and patronage around indebtedness, Occom attempts to account for the various forms of obligation – political, spiritual, financial – that structured the Native-colonial encounter throughout the rapid changes of the late 18th century. In this way, Occom employed economic literacy and a language of debt to critique colonial presumptions of authority and sovereignty over Natives and their activities.

To materialize these claims, I trace the various roles Occom played in the institution of early Native education in America and the patronage superstructure which conditioned it. I start by examining the economic underpinnings of the enterprise of Native conversion and education, with particular attention to the way that Occom's principal mentor Eleazar Wheelock represented the benefits and dependencies of Native conversion to his audience of European and American benefactors. The chapter then moves from Wheelock's writings to Occom's, taking a closer look at the ways in which this exemplar of the Native education mission managed his own streams of patronage and obligation. Occom's fastidious accounts of his debts and donations ultimately drove him to a complex understanding of the multifarious roles he played in the enterprise of Native education. This awareness was essential in his subsequent disagreements with Wheelock, which erupted around the issue of Dartmouth and the use of Occom's raised funds, which reflected a moral/economic crisis in the larger picture of the Great Awakening's Native education program. Through these different phases in Occom's career, we witness how a Native American author constituted himself within the unique economy of charity and debt that suffused Occom's world. Within his correspondences lies a larger lesson about how the limitations of

patronage and the machinations of debt fueled the development of Native consciousness of colonial injustice.

The Great Awakening and the Enterprise of Native Education

For Northeastern Native American tribes like the Mohegan, surviving in the 18th century required near constant adaptation to the economic and political developments of colonial America. The acceleration of European settlement in colonies like Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts, often entailed aggressive land grabs that violated the boundaries of original treaties between the British government and Native tribes and nations. The fact that Europeans saw land and the resources thereon as fungible and contractable assets complicated coexistence for Natives who mainly saw land usage through a usufruct lens.⁵³ While Indians relied on shared access to wide swaths of land for hunting, trading, and other essential activities, the drawing and redrawing of boundary lines by colonists made navigating these lands more and more difficult. Meanwhile, widespread land leases and purchases made on bonds required the Mohegans, amongst others, to adapt to European legal and economic literacies. All of these changes were happening while European authorities, including the British royal government and the subsequent revolutionary American government, were redefining the political, legal status of Native tribes. While most of these changes were intended to regulate the transfer of Indian lands to Europeans, and guarantee certain treaty rights were overseen by authorities, settlers on the ground frequently ignored these decrees in favor of wholesale appropriation.⁵⁴

Within this milieu of impoverishment and encroachment, a new industry was taking shape that would further challenge Native Americans to adopt new social logics. During Occom's lifetime, The Great Awakening – a religious revival movement of Protestant preachers originating in the mid-eighteenth century – made it its mission to teach Native subjects the Christian faith and literacy in English. As such, it brought about socio-cultural alterations along with political and material opportunities that would transform Native-settler relations. To understand how Occom emerged as a literary figure and economic actor, it is necessary to perceive him both as a witness to the dispossession of Indians in the 18th century, and as a contributor to the enterprise of Native education. In particular, his use of debt and his manipulation of charitable impulses in writing are only legible if we understand the complicated network of motives and investments that structured his life as an itinerant preacher and Native educator. Christian education aimed to fulfill long-term social/ethical interests as well as short-term financial ones. In analyzing these interests, I want to argue that the institution of Native education during Occom's life was less a well-oiled machine for acculturation, and more of a speculative enterprise in which the production of learned, Christian Native subjects was the desired, if not guaranteed, end.⁵⁵ Because a number of parties were invested in sustaining Native

⁵³ See Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind*, 11.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 55-57. The most important of these changes, in terms of conducting Native land rights, were proclamations in 1761 and 1763 to cease the issue of grants to Indian land and “designat(ing) the Appalachian watershed as the fixed boundary between British settlements and Indian territory.” According to Peyer, the Continental Congress, by and large, upheld these rights in the early years of its existence, “recognizing Indian tribes as sovereign entities” and resolving “that no Indian land could be transferred except by consent of Congress.”

⁵⁵ For this observation, I am drawing upon numerous scholars of Occom who have found in his participation in the missionary program acts of indigenous sovereignty and defiance. Of particular note is Hilary E. Wyss's distinction between “Readerly Indians” or the ideal, passive products of Christian learning and “Writerly Indians” who deploy literacy to enact individual and collective autonomy. See Hilary E. Wyss, *English Letters and Indian Literacies: Reading, Writing, and New England Missionary Schools, 1750-1830* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,

education in the colonies – including Occom himself and others from his Native communities – the enterprise had to be managed and represented carefully. In particular this meant actively recruiting Native subjects to schools, attaching patrons to the program from an international network of donors, and issuing assurances of success. The strategies that New Light ministers employed to manage the enterprise of Native Education were similar, in this regard, to those used by entrepreneurs looking to enrich themselves in the new market economy of colonial America.

The Great Awakening, as a religious movement, conducted Native American education through a collection of loosely related schools, mission projects, and societies.⁵⁶ The Boston Commission was one of the preeminent institutions of The Great Awakening in the Northeast, providing one centralized hub for the ordaining and employing of ministers, the parceling out of grants for Native learners and teachers, and the operation of new mission trips. One active Protestant preacher emerging from the Boston Commission's work was Eleazar Wheelock, the founder of Moor's Indian Charity School, Dartmouth College, and the principal mentor and patron of Samson Occom. Wheelock was one among a series of Great Awakening visionaries who established schools and participated in the management of Native education for tribes like the Mohegan, the Oneida, and the Montauket. Ministers and educators like Wheelock, often played a middleman role in procuring and dispersing assets from central societies like the Boston Commission, but they could also operate independently in soliciting funds for their own projects. Aside from their ability to raise money for Native education, the institutions and practitioners of the Great Awakening were relatively successful in introducing Christianity and literacy for a number of reasons, including their focus on broad participation, community development, and oral performance, which appealed to Native peoples in the 18th century.

Another key source of their success derived from the urgent needs of Native American communities themselves. Native Americans pursued the missionary's path to mitigate the confounding changes introduced by European political and legal structures and to establish diplomatic and economic advantages in the changing world of the colonies. Colonists' deployment of legal instruments to attain Native land required Native Americans to interact with a number of written documents – treaties, writs, land leases, etc. Under pressure from encroachment, "Native communities turned to the literate members among them to represent them in the complex legal maneuvers entailed in land tenure."⁵⁷ Outside of training Native leaders in literacy to enact legal and diplomatic gestures, evidence suggests that Natives viewed sending children to Christian schools as, itself, an act of diplomacy. Establishing linkages with the world of white missionaries allowed Natives a potential voice for grievances and a means of strengthening relationships with surrounding colonists.⁵⁸ Once Native preachers and educators were trained to a point of mastery, they also could strengthen ties with surrounding tribes. Itinerant preachers like Occom who preached to and educated several different Northeastern Indian groups helped create diplomatic and community ties between tribes that may have been

2012), 61-63. See also Katy L. Chiles, *Transformable Race: Surprising Metamorphoses in the Literature of Early America* (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2014), 47.

⁵⁶ For the observations on the Great Awakening, the Boston Commission and Wheelock in this paragraph, I rely on Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 3-4; and Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African American and Native American Literatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 48-50.

⁵⁷ Round, *Removable Type*, 50

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 56

otherwise isolated from one another.⁵⁹ Forging these intertribal networks was a crucial strategy of survival and one that was carried out through a program of missionary labor.

Of course, there were also more obvious material advantages afforded to Indians who participated in the education efforts of the Great Awakening. While tribes like the Mohegan saw their members suffering under the constraints of poverty and dispossession, Protestant preachers offered Indians not only a means of attaining a living, but also short term economic incentives like free room and board, stipends for education, etc.⁶⁰ Occom's own journals describe Indians taking part in Great Awakening lessons for material reasons: "not that they regarded the Christian Religion, but they had Blankets given to them by the Fall of the Year and for these things, they would attend."⁶¹ Together with Phillip Round's observation that some Native peoples "took literacy education as a form of 'repayment' for the indenture of their children,"⁶² this entry demonstrates how Native peoples viewed participation in education economically. In particular, attending lessons and sending children to acquire literacy could be seen, from a Native vantage point, as part of an ongoing trade strategy, oftentimes filling in assumed debts and remainders held between Native and white parties. Both as a means of fulfilling immediate material needs and as a way of sustaining the interchange of goods and labor between whites and Natives, Native education supplied for the economic interests of Native communities struggling to survive and maintain sovereignty during the 18th century.

If Natives took part in education in order to avoid poverty, sustain trade, and strengthen some of their diplomatic and territorial claims, these motivations were largely unacknowledged by the white missionaries who taught and employed them. For them, teaching Indians Christian morals and English literacy was intended to provide the basis for a massive socio-cultural transformation of Natives. Taking aim at the same subsistence mode of life that Occom critiqued, these Great Awakening ministers attempted to offer up examples of European society to emulate in hopes that Natives, particularly those in high value areas like the Northeast, would stop making controversy with settlers and take up the plow.⁶³ John Sergeant, a contemporary of Wheelock's, described this process in imperialistic terms, hoping to "in the most effectual manner change their whole habit of thinking and acting" to install "the English language among them instead of their own imperfect and barbarous dialect" and thus create "a civil industrious and polished people."⁶⁴ Aside from saving their souls, the educators of the Great Awakening movement wanted to effect a wholesale change in their earthly character that would ensure the peaceful transfer of society in America from "barbarity" to "civilization."

The purported moral advantages of this assimilationist program were bound up with the economic incentives that Protestant practitioners ascribed to Native education. Wheelock clearly perceived the monetary benefits of converting Indians, as is evident from his 1763 work, *A Plain and Faithful narrative of the Original Design, Rise, and Progress, and Present State of the Indian Charity-School at Lebanon in Connecticut*. The introduction to this work offers up an explicit return-on-investment rationale to the education mission of the school, factoring in the

⁵⁹Lisa Tanya Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 86.

⁶⁰ See Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*, 4.

⁶¹ Quoted in *Ibid*, 192-193.

⁶² Round, *Removable Type*, 56.

⁶³ See Chiles, *Transformable Race*, 34.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Round, 54.

relative cost-effectiveness of educating Natives vs. waging war on them. Ultimately, Wheelock hinges the success of his enterprise on forms of colonial compensation:

Can the Objection that there is extraordinary Expence and Difficulty in accomplishing it, be esteemed weighty enough to excuse and justify our Neglect, in a Case of such Necessity and Importance? And considering further, that the Advantage thereby to the Crown of Great-Britain (...) would abundantly compensate all the Expense, besides all those temporal and eternal Rewards of such Charity and Liberality, where are secured in the many great and precious Promises of God.⁶⁵

Thwarting potential critics, Wheelock makes explicit that the goals of Indian education include enlarging the English Crown's colonial holdings, resulting in an offset of the expenses involved. Merging promises of religious rewards with "temporal" ones, Wheelock treats the projected financial returns of Native education hyperbolically: "How great the Benefit which would hereby accrue to the Crown of Great-Britain, and how much the Interests of His Majesty's Dominions, especially in America, would be promoted hereby, we can hardly conceive."⁶⁶ Wheelock's assurances of "Benefits" were meant to hold water with wealthy donors in England who viewed giving to this venture as a means of broadening their spheres of commerce. One such donor waxed poetic on these desired consequences: "What an increase of our Settlements! How great is the augmentation of ye Staple of these Dominions! What ye Increase of ye demand for British Manufactures to cloth the new Subjects! How important this to the Commerce of Great Britain & ye Colonies! And what a source of opulence to ye whole Empire!"⁶⁷

Enthusiastic prognostications of this kind helped spur English charity for the civilizing mission. Notions of augmented "commerce" and "opulence" supplemented Christian ideals of charity in the minds of donors who provided the means for numerous missions and schools across America in the 18th century. While ministers like Wheelock projected confidence in the cost-effectiveness of Native education, the development of these educational institutions was in fact predicated on a number of factors: "land ownership, disease, alcohol, and warfare (...) the exchange in food goods and material culture."⁶⁸ Religious practitioners who established boarding schools or sent preachers on mission trips into Native territory had to be cognizant of these various risks and interruptions, while Indigenous Peoples had the survival of their family and communal structures to consider in their participation. Given these variables, the success of these preachers' assimilationist program was mixed. But if the Great Awakening did not provide for the wholesale conversion of Indians into Christian colonial subjects or amplify the commercial prospects of British businesspeople to quite such a high degree, it did provide for the financial needs of colonial ministers and missionaries. In order to spread the gospel of the "New Light" in the 18th century, religious practitioners found themselves dependent upon consistent donations from their European backers for wages, real estate, new developments, etc. The need to project

⁶⁵ Eleazar Wheelock, *A Plain and Faithful Narrative of the Original Design, Rise, Progress and Present State of the Indian Charity-School at Lebanon, in Connecticut* (Boston: Printed by Richard and Samuel Draper, in Newbury Street, 1763), 13-14. Once again, I have omitted and altered editorial marks and spelling conventions in the original for sake of clarity.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus*, 57.

⁶⁸ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*, 3.

success to potential donors was, thus, high, and Native converts like Occom were essential components in the façade of the Great Awakening's success.⁶⁹

As historian Margaret Szasz points out, the success of the conversion/education project was highly contingent upon the production of exemplary Native converts, "which was then advertised by the missionary/schoolmaster for the express purpose of attaining financial support."⁷⁰ Advertising success in this manner took several forms. In Occom's case, from the time of his entrance into Wheelock's school a nearly constant watch was taken over his letters and notes for details that might be auspicious. Occom was called upon to write letters of gratitude, record the facts of his conversion in autobiographies, and even provide handwriting samples, all to be sent to inquiring donors.⁷¹ These pieces of evidence were carefully curated, to not only give the impression that Indians were hard at work converting and being converted, but that they were grateful and dependent upon the gifts parceled out from their patrons.⁷² Accordingly, Occom figures prominently in Wheelock's many narratives, and descriptions of his feats of education and preaching appear alongside calculating passages on the economic usefulness of Native preachers:

An Indian Missionary may be supported with less than half the Expence, that will be necessary to support an Englishman, who can't conform to their Manner of Living, and who will have no Dependance upon them for any Part of it. And an Indian who speaks their Language, it may reasonably be supposed, will be at least four Times as serviceable among them, supposing he be otherwise equally qualified as one who can communicate or receive nothing from them, but by an Interpreter.⁷³

In an act of apparent ingenuity, Wheelock devises a scheme for Native education "at least four Times as serviceable" and costing "half the Expence" of employing Englishman for teachers. In Wheelock's account, Native preachers like Occom who already rely on a subsistence "Manner of Living" would deliver greater returns on Christian conversion than English missionaries who would supposedly soak up more donation funds in wages, interpreters, etc. Wheelock's accounting here had a profound impact on the lives of these Native missionaries who were forced to rely on meager salaries from Missionary societies to perform spectacular feats of conversion and education, even as they spent ample time fundraising for Great Awakening projects themselves. At the same time, Wheelock's contention that Indian converts would provide relatively cheap labor formed a crucial part of his assurances to potential donors about the expenses involved in converting Indians like Occom.

As much as this system was exploitative, Wheelock's words also reveal an anxiety over his own dependence on these Native missionaries, who provided the keystone to the Great Awakening's donor-based industry: "Indian Missionaries will not disdain to own English ones,

⁶⁹ On Wheelock's Narratives, Hilary Wyss claims, "all in all Wheelock uses his narratives to reinforce the notion that his project is not only vital to Native American conversion but also that it is overwhelmingly successful. One way or another, these narratives are about recording success and confirming the general excellence of the school (and by extension, of Wheelock himself)." Wyss, *English Letters and Indian Literacies*, 57.

⁷⁰ Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*, 6.

⁷¹ Wyss, *English Letters and Indian Literacies*, 38-39.

⁷² *Ibid*, 42.

⁷³ Wheelock, *A Plain and Faithful Narrative of the Original Design, Rise, Progress and Present State of the Indian Charity-School at Lebanon, in Connecticut*, 16.

who shall be Associates with them, (where the English can be introduced) as elder Brethren; nor scorn to be advised or reproved, counselled or conducted by them; especially so long as they shall be so much dependent upon the English for their Support.”⁷⁴ Once again, Wheelock is incentivizing English donations by claiming that support will yoke Native preachers to their European “elder Brethren.” Still, lurking in this passage is the implication of Indian “disdain” for their roles as the younger, “reproved,” “dependent,” charges of the Great Awakening. Wheelock’s projection of security is often marshalled to mask an insecurity, particularly about the prospect of Indians becoming independent preachers and educators themselves. His messages to his English supporters convey control over these Native converts, but evince his urgent reliance on them for his scheme:

We have the greatest Security we can have, that when they are educated and fitted for it, they will be employed in that Business. There is no likelihood at all that they will, though ever so well qualified, get into Business, either as School-Masters or Ministers, among the English; at least till the Credit of their Nations be raised many Degrees above what it now is, and consequently they can’t be employed as will be honorable for them, or in any Business they will be fit for, but among their own Nation.⁷⁵

Here, Wheelock circumscribes the role of Indian converts as school masters and Ministers “among their own Nation,” implying that their business will solely be conducted through the established missions of the Great Awakening. His assurances here seem out of left field, unless we consider that Wheelock was anxious about independent Native preachers providing competition for English ministers.⁷⁶ By warding off such concerns for donors, Wheelock was also expressing his need to keep Native converts dependent on him, so as not to disrupt the delicate political economy of missionary work in the colonies. Not only, then, did Wheelock have to produce Native converts, he had to manage their dependency (as well as his own dependency upon them) in order to keep the lines of financial support intact.

In Hilary Wyss’s analysis of 18th-century Native education, Great Awakening practitioners like Wheelock appear engaged in a near constant effort of managing “the ethical and logistical problems of collecting money from distant donors who had little sense of the practicalities of missionizing Native peoples.”⁷⁷ In doing so, Wheelock reached new speculative heights in that he “uses his narratives to reinforce the notion that his project is not only vital to Native American conversion but also that it is overwhelmingly successful. One way or another, these narratives are about recording success and confirming the general excellence of the school (and by extension, of Wheelock himself).”⁷⁸ Wheelock’s assurances helped interweave Native

⁷⁴ Wheelock, *A Plain and Faithful Narrative of the Original Design, Rise, Progress and Present State of the Indian Charity-School at Lebanon, in Connecticut*, 18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 26.

⁷⁶ Many Great Awakening educators and pastors did express jealousy for this new class of Native preachers, Occom especially. See Eve Tavor Bannet, *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading, 1720-1810 Migrant Fictions* (Cambridge [England] ; Cambridge University Press, 2011), 168: “Occom failed to understand that white ministers were competing for livings and status in New England, as well as for patronage and credit in Old England. The conversion of Indians might reflect well upon them; but the missionary successes of native preachers such as Occom or Niles awoke ‘jealousies,’ especially when a native minister succeeded with the Indians where white ministers failed precisely ‘because he was a poor Indian’ himself.”

⁷⁷ Wyss, *English Letters and Indian Literacies*, 36.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 57.

education and Indian educators in a transnational network of political and economic investment, in a manner not dissimilar from colonial entrepreneurs and businessmen. As historian Bruce Mann reminds us, at the same time that The Great Awakening achieved ascendancy in a charitable marketplace, “commercial development rode the crest of a rising tide of indebtedness, a tide that reflected the confidence of prosperity as farmers and planters, artisans and shopkeepers, traders and merchants borrowed against anticipated profits to finance the undertakings that they knew—not hoped, but knew—would create them.”⁷⁹ Projecting success, assigning securities, accounting for expenses and providing underwriters for returns on investment, were familiar tactics both in the world of Christian educators and business developers. In this way, the management of patrons mirrored the management of debt, particularly when it came to such a novel and speculative venture as educating Natives in the colonies. And for all the actors in this venture, just as in the circuitous world of the credit economy—donors, white ministers, conversion societies, individual Native preachers, and whole communities of Indians—determining who owed what to whom was a complex, but vital task.

Occom’s Letters: Gratitude and Debt

As a keen participant in the economy of Native education, Occom made it his business to track the lines of financial dependency around him. He did so, by and large, through personal correspondences that reveal the intricate ways in which a Native convert interacted with the economic world that produced him. Debt permeates Occom’s letters, from his earliest correspondences to his latest, suggesting that his accounts of his indebtedness as well as his overtures of gratitude are crucial rhetorical strategies in his interactions with the world of European patrons. Not only that, but loans and charity are often conjoined or indistinguishable sources of financial sustenance for Occom, so much so that his writing often evinces a merger of these logics in a way that plays upon the economic incentivization of Native education proffered by his mentors and employers. In this way, Occom’s letters demonstrate his deftness with managing the entangled worlds of commerce and Christian charity, while advancing a unique form of acquisitiveness that entrenches his patrons in a relationship of mutual investment that turns on the versatility of debt/charity.

As we will see, Occom’s conflations of debt and charity were both conventional and compatible with contemporary understandings of donations and loans. In 1630, John Winthrop advanced a model of Christian Charity for the emerging American colonies that included the forgiving of debt as a crucial manifestation of religious mercy. For Winthrop, giving to the poor and loaning to the poor were concatenated and the ascendancy of credit in the colonies had to be held accountable to Christian morals. In fact, he “insisted that New Englanders treat (credit) chiefly as a means of charity” and “urged his auditors to shape their conception of loans and debts to the needs of their immediate community. If necessary, they were to give away their money as an act of pure mercy.”⁸⁰ Winthrop’s urging creditors to think of themselves as benefactors likely influenced Protestants’ conceptualization of both charity and debt in Occom’s time.⁸¹ Even as commercial economies developed transnationally, debt and benefaction were still

⁷⁹ Bruce H. Mann, *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 34-36.

⁸⁰ Mark Valeri, “Religious Discipline and the Market: Puritans and the Issue of Usury,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1997): 747–68, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2953881>, 747-748.

⁸¹ While Mann maintains that Winthrop’s moral treatment of debt was out of mode by the 18th century, one realm in which it could have stayed fresh was the Great Awakening. Great Awakening preachers frequently drew on the

appended concepts, even in the philosophical workings of economic thinkers like Adam Smith. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Smith claims “the man who does not recompense his benefactor, when he has it in his power, and when his benefactor needs his assistance, is, no doubt, guilty of the blackest ingratitude.”⁸² While Winthrop and Smith present two different sides of the conceptual coin – Winthrop arguing that debt should be treated as charity, and Smith that charity should be recompensed like debts – both acknowledge the close social and moral proximity of these material exchanges.

For would-be benefactors during this time, then, charitable giving involved a complex of implied social obligations and moral dependencies. As historian Dustin Griffin makes clear, the world of English literary patronage in the 18th century evolved out of ancient notions of “interested giving” or as it was known in classical antiquity, “De Beneficiis.” Combined with the moral economizing of Protestant thinkers and economic philosophers, this notion compelled patrons to understand their acts of charity as conferring an “obligation which ‘binds two persons together.’”⁸³ This bond was not simply motivated by traditional social mores, but by economic incentive: “The system of patronage was never simply a form of noblesse oblige or disinterested generosity. It was in effect an ‘economic’ arrangement that provided benefits to both parties.”⁸⁴ In the case of Native education, we have already seen how economic incentives factored into the “interested giving” of English benefactors to missionary projects run by Wheelock and other Great Awakening practitioners. What remains to be seen is how Occom organized his own relationships to these interested parties and how he utilized the common conflation of debt and charity to advance his own causes. Occom took advantage of the obliged giving of his patrons by using debt in two ways. First, he made frequent mention of his debts in his letters, linking the interested giving of his patrons to future financial relief in the form of resisting insolvency. Second, he took charity in the form of bills of exchange – a credit instrument that entrenched himself and his patrons in relationships of mutual financial trust and accountability.

At the outset of his career, having left Wheelock’s school in search of opportunities to preach and educate among the Mantauket, Occom was careful to maintain ties with donors who supported his and Wheelock’s mission. In these letters, Occom affects gratitude for “Favours” granted him by deftly invoking religious motivations and making thanks to God. Still, debt finds a way of seeping into his genuflections. In a 1756 letter to an unknown benefactor, Occom writes:

I look upon Myself of all Cretures the most indebted to God, who has call’d me out of the Grossesst Paganism, where I was perishing without the least Glimpse of Gospel Light, and brought me into his marvellous Light, and dispos’d the hearts of one and another of his dear People to Shew Pitty and great Kindness to me (...) May God reward you out of his Immense Treasures of Rewards and Gifts. And however little you may account of it thro the greatness of your affection to Christ which will make you think little of the Most you can do for him yet it was great in the Eyes of Christ, and I trust you are Intituled to the Blessedness of him that considereth the Poor.⁸⁵

teachings of Winthrop and other staunch Calvinists to advance their own critiques of economic development in the colonies and the moral precipices involved. See Mann, 36-37.

⁸² Adam Smith, “The Theory of Moral Sentiments,” n.d., 322, 70.

⁸³ Dustin H. Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 10.

⁸⁵ Occom, “To ‘Madam,’” in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 65.

This lengthy account of the Madam's "Pitty and great Kindness" merges Christian blessings with economic language. Occom is effusive in his wishes that "God reward you out of his Immense Treasures of Rewards and Gifts." By considering the poor, the benefactor has become "intituled" to blessings, and in receiving the favors of His flock, Occom finds himself "indebted to God." While these applications of contractual and economic language may have been conventional in the Protestant rhetoric of his time, they nevertheless indicate how Occom conceptualized his obligations to his donors. The offering up of heavenly redemption and blessings for worldly gifts is part of a disclosure of Occom's debts owed both to God and his benevolent followers. Occom contends that charity "must be acknowledg'd and Remembred," placing himself in the position of a thankful recipient of charity, but also of the accountant of charitable funds meted out to him. This early letter provides a blueprint for the role that Occom would take on with his patrons – simultaneously the "most obliged, dutifull, & obedient servant" of his benefactors and the faithful transcriber of financial needs and moral returns.

In his acts of accounting to patrons, Occom was particularly intent on announcing his outstanding personal debts, which extended beyond what he figuratively "owed" to his donors. In an early letter to Solomon Williams, for example, Occom begins "I can never be thankful Enough to your Self Sir, for the kindness and Pity you have Shown to Such a Creature as My Self, and also that I have Such a one as your Self, to go to for Direction and help, at any time." The overture here extends the terms of the charitable relationship between Williams and Occom by taking allowances on Williams' "direction and help, at any time" and by claiming he can "never be thankful Enough." Occom's assumption of future gratuities is then proceeded by a claim of immediate financial need:

Just to Let you know, that I have not Receiv'd a peney from the Gentlemen at Boston neither have I receiv'd any thing from the Indians worth a telling of, these almost two Years; and I am now Drive to the want, almost of every thing, and I owe upwards of £30 in York Money, and I think I have taken nothing Needlessly, I Send these few Lines thinking you might have receiv'd Something from the gentlemen—and I Shou'd to know if by Mr. Buell—This, With Sincere Duty to your Self Sir, is from your most unworthy Servant⁸⁶

Here Occom pilots a strategy that he would employ continuously throughout his correspondences with patrons. By disclosing an extant debt in the full amount and denomination ("£30 in York Money"), Occom makes an indirect appeal for financial assistance. While Occom's main request is to hear if Williams has "receiv'd Something" from Mr. Buell, he simultaneously implies his need for help. In a colonial economy in which debts were omnipresent and wreaked havoc for poor and wealthy alike, the mention of a specific debt, bound up with the emotional appeal, "I am now Drive to the want, almost of every thing," adds an urgent, if indirect, request to the patron. Occom is also quick to forestall judgment on his debts, claiming "I think I have taken nothing Needlessly." While the ground was shifting in the credit economy of the colonies, debt often still carried the onus of a moral failing – profligacy being the cardinal sin to creditors and debt courts.⁸⁷ But Occom combines assurances with elaborate declarations of gratefulness over

⁸⁶ "To Solomon Williams (1752)" in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 64-65.

⁸⁷ See Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 45-46.

the funds he has received so far to dispel the notion that his financial strain is the result of such moral insolvency.

Through letters that harped on the religious motivations of his patrons, Occom used moral appeals of this nature to help resolve his earthly struggles with debt. Sometimes his requests for assistance in repaying his loans are much more direct,⁸⁸ but in most of his letters to individual benefactors, he is careful to maintain both a posture of extreme gratitude and a degree of indirection in his allusions to immediate financial help. More than simply a means of supplying him with cash on hand, though, Occom's presentation of his debts were also used to secure a more lasting obligation between him and his patrons. The project of Native education, like Occom's own life, relied on renewed acts of charity, facilitated through bonded and mutually obligated relationships of patronage. By alluding to the economic hindrances of debt that stood in the way of the moral triumph of the Great Awakening effort, Occom made his donors the co-signers of his present debts and partners in his future financial survival, without sacrificing the politesse of the patronage relationship.

The lasting obligation which Occom aimed for in his relationships with his patrons was secured both indirectly through careful presentation of his debts, and formally through actual loans. As is evidenced in his letters, Occom's patrons often offered him donations at a distance through bills of exchange. These precursors to modern day checks were essentially a written order from one party to a second to pay a third. The first party, known as the drawer (in this case, Occom's patrons), incurred a debt to a second party, the drawee (often a vendor, bank or other dispenser of cash), in favor of a third, the payee (Occom himself).⁸⁹ Occom managed the issuance of these bills of exchange, often writing to his benefactors to ensure the faithful receipt of these instruments.⁹⁰ Evidently, Occom viewed these instrumentalized lines of credit as advantageous. In a letter to an English donor, John Thornton, Occom writes, "I have Drawn a Bill of Exchange upon you for the Whole of your most kind and generous Donation, Necessity urges me, and I am very Confident it will not be disagreeable to your Mind; I have also Drawn on you as a Trustee two Bills, for two half years past, according to your kind Direction and permission heretofore for I have heard nothing Contrary from you till now."⁹¹ In these exchanges, Occom makes debtors of his benefactors, essentially transferring his financial strain to the charitable party. In his rhetorical treatment of such debts, Occom is careful to connect the instrumentality of these debts to the magnanimous intentions of the benefactor – "your most kind and generous Donation." Combined with explicit "Direction and permission" to facilitate these bonds of credit, Occom relies on the assumption of continuing good will on the part of his patrons and even wards off the unpleasantness of debt by assuming that "it will not be disagreeable to your Mind." Occom's tone of religious generosity thus mitigates the formal instrumentality which links him to his patrons in contractual terms. Despite Occom's declarations of gratitude, the bills of exchange have, in fact, enacted a novel transformation: no longer is patronage simply a matter of at-will single donations, but is facilitated through a

⁸⁸ In a 1765 letter to the Connecticut Board of Correspondents, Occom simply writes "Gentlemen on examination of my Acct. with Mr Gershom Breed I find myself Indebted to him Nine Pounds Seven Shillings & Seven Pence Lawfull Money (excluding the Acct. Heretofore exhibited to ye Rev.d Eleasar Wheelock) now due, which please to pay him with Interest until paid & oblige." See Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 73.

⁸⁹ Here I paraphrase Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 11.

⁹⁰ For evidence of this, see Occom's series of letters to the Wheatleys, entitled "Your Good Offer," in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 90-91.

⁹¹ "To John Thornton" in *Ibid*, 114.

tangible link of credit which can be renewed endlessly based on the assumption of continuing good will.

The procedural mechanics behind Bills of Exchange necessitated strong linkages between the three parties to the debt. Receipt making and accounting were important means of upholding the integrity of the debts assigned through bills, but there was also a fair amount of trust and credibility involved. Bruce Mann offers a summation of these procedures as well as the moral/financial consequences involved:

Upon acceptance, the drawer became liable to the drawee for the amount of the draft. A drawee's refusal to accept a draft had serious consequences for the drawer, the magnitude of which is best captured by observing that rejected bills were referred to as "dishonored." (...) When payees returned dishonored bills to their drawers and demanded payment—a process known as protesting a bill for nonpayment—the drawer was liable to the payee for the principal sum of the bill, interest from the date of protest, the costs of protest, and, for foreign bills, a surcharge of up to 20 percent of the principal as damages for nonacceptance.⁹²

By entering into the role of Bill Drawers, Occom's patrons put themselves and their honor on the line in a legally risky species of exchange. The fact that the drawer ultimately became accountable not simply to the drawee but to the payee for bills that were "dishonored" outlines how bills of exchange might have complicated more direct relationships of patronage. While Occom was morally and socially beholden to his patrons, particularly to recompense them in the form of written thanks, Thornton, Wheatley, Wheelock, and others were also beholden to Occom in the drafting of honorable bills. Essentially, this locked patrons into their intentions, creating more reciprocal, and therefore more bonded, relationships with their beneficiaries. Occom perceived this dynamic clearly, and accordingly he ventured to maintain these stricter bonds of credit and charity with patrons, even in spite of massive social upheavals. In a letter to John Thornton in 1776, he writes: "Accord to your kind Direction, and permission, I Continue to Draw Bills of Exchange upon your Honor, and shall Continue so to do, till I hear other wise from You; I hope these unnatural Wars amongst you, will not intirely Stagnate the Streems Which have run So long, to refresh the Souls of the poor perishing Indians, with Divine Knowledge."⁹³ Occom argues that not even the revolutionary war should obstruct the obligations of charity/credit which link patrons to "poor perishing Indians." The fact that Occom drew Bills of Exchange from these patrons allowed him both a more steady means of accessing funds from afar, but also a way of establishing, on the honor of his patrons, an uninterrupted "stream" of interested giving. Seeking to ward off the threat of interrupted credit imposed by war, Occom uses heightened diction to elevate the issuance of bills of exchange to a Divine process, directly linking holy benefaction to the "the Souls of the poor perishing Indians." Upholding the debts and lines of direct credit which benefited Occom was more than a temporal concern, it was a holy duty.

By blending religious motivations with debt obligations, Occom opened up space in his correspondences to reflect his own personal motives and the broader political-economic interests that surrounded Native education. Like Wheelock, Occom knew that patrons of Native education were engaged in interested giving, and that the potential insolvency of one of their exemplary

⁹² Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 11.

⁹³ "To John Thornton," in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 113.

Native converts would reflect poorly on a venture meant to bring Natives closer to God and agrarian capitalism. Debts undisclosed and dishonored bills risked unravelling the enterprise of Native conversion, and along with it a potential “source of opulence to ye whole Empire!” Playing on the speculative intentions of British and American patrons, Occom linked his own financial well-being to the collective struggles of Native peoples who came into contact with the Great Awakening. In a 1796 letter to Susannah Wheatley, for instance, Occom begins by offering “ten thousands Thanks” for the favours she has bestowed upon him and, in his typical form of indirect appeal, turning his attention to his own present “Straights and Necessities.” Through his accounts of his own debts and labors, though, Occom arrives at a stirring presentation of the larger necessity of his fellow Natives:

I am sure if God Shou’d Deal with me according to my Deserts I should have nothing that is Comfortable in this World nor in that which is to Come—How many poor Creatures have I seen in the World as good by nature as I am, go almost Naked in the Severest Weather, and have no where to Lay their Heads, and not one Mouthful of the meanest Bread that they Can Command, but are Oblig’d to go from House to House, and from Door to Door, With Tears Streaming Down their Dirty Cheeks beging a Crum of Bread, and when they have one mouthful given them, they know not Who will give them the next,—When I come to Consider how much better God has Dealt with me, I am Astonish’d at my Self, that I have no more Sense of the Distinguishing Goodness of God to Me, and to mine⁹⁴

While the passage serves to amplify Occom’s own modesty and gratitude for God’s Goodness, it also brings to the forefront the dire impoverishment of his fellow Natives. By bringing into focus the suffering of Natives at large, Occom could be said to be widening the scope of his donors’ magnanimity while reminding them of the material needs and justifications of Native participants in the Great Awakening project of education. While Occom contrasts his present comfort with the desperation of the “poor Creatures” around him, there is nevertheless a parallelism between their “Oblig’d” state and his own. Just as Occom relies on charity to lift him out of needfulness, so too do these impoverished Natives require uplift in the form of generosity from white benefactors. By compounding his own state of neediness with those of Native beggars, Occom is re-emphasizing the lines of obligation which link wealthy European patrons to impoverished Natives. Beside Wheelock’s more sunny forecasts of Native conversion, these passages amplify the present despair of Native Americans in an effort to elicit lasting and more liberal giving. They also imply that, just as Occom is responsible to his patrons, the financiers of the Great Awakening are responsible to these impoverished Indians. Occom himself, thus, neatly occupies multiple positions in the enterprise of Native education – while he relies on charity to lift himself from poverty, he also aligns himself with benefactors who are equally indebted to God.

Across the body of his letters, Occom assigns himself a myriad of roles. He is both a needful debtor and an expectant payee. He is a humble servant of his patrons and an accountant of their spiritual and earthly returns. He is an enactor of important projects of Native education and a chronicler of enduring Native poverty. He is the dependent, oblig’d beggar and the lynchpin in a prosperous enterprise of Indian conversion. By crafting these different roles, Occom carved out a unique intermediary position in the colonial economy of the Great Awakening. Through pronouncements of dependency and obligation, Occom ultimately

⁹⁴ “To Susannah Wheatley” in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 96.

established himself within a broad field of interested giving, amplifying the prospects of his own financial survival by creating a network of obliged patrons with bonded connections to himself and the cause of Native education. In this way, Occom was an adept manipulator of his own obligations and debts. How well, though, did Occom understand the obligations, dependencies, and debts of his patrons? To answer this question, we need to examine in greater detail Occom's relationship to his closest benefactor and how he navigated the discontinuation of a bond so crucial to his own survival.

Eleazar Wheelock's Dishonored Bill

Occom's letters to Eleazar Wheelock vastly outnumber his communications to his other patrons. Wheelock, after all, provided Occom's point of entry into Native education and missionary work. From the time of Occom's inception as a Protestant preacher and Native educator, Wheelock and Occom maintained close ties, both facilitating Native education for tribes in the Northeast and participating in joint fundraising efforts. Wheelock's interests in Occom are well-established: Wheelock highly valued the convert's role in the mission of Native education, believing these Indian ministers were cheaper and more effective proselytizers amongst their own people. Wheelock relied on Occom to not only promote literacy and conversion, but to recruit new Native students to his school. And when Wheelock sent Occom on a two-year fundraising trip to Europe to solicit donations for what would eventually become Dartmouth College, he also expressed his confidence in Occom's ability to represent the project of the Great Awakening faithfully, and to solicit donations without risking the whole of the enterprise.⁹⁵

For Occom, Wheelock represented a patron whose social proximity helped facilitate more direct lines of aid. Occom is less circumspect in his appeals to Wheelock for financial assistance, calling upon him directly to supply charity and loans, to pay back his debts to others, and to even intervene in complex financial arrangements with other patrons.⁹⁶ In part, Occom assumed an open line of charity and credit from Wheelock in exchange for the enormous, and often scantily funded, missionary tasks he took on for his patron. In 1764, for instance, Occom embarked on a missionary trip to New York with no allocations from the Connecticut Board of Correspondents. He writes to Wheelock, leaving his more immediate needs in his hands:

I am sorry you couldn't get at Least Some Money for David, it looks like Presumption for us to go on long Journey thro' Christians without Money, if it was altogether among Indian Heathen we might do well enough—But I have determined to go, tho' no White Missionary wou'd go in Such Circumstances—I leave my House and other Business to be done upon your Credit, and it will be Dear Business in the End.⁹⁷

About his unpaid service to Wheelock and the other Connecticut Ministers, Occom is rightfully salty. In reminding Wheelock that “no White missionary wou'd go in Such Circumstances,”

⁹⁵ It must be said for Wheelock that he did so over the protests of some of his fellow ministers, who viewed Occom's participation in the political struggles of the Mohegan over fraudulent land-leasing as a red-flag. Wheelock clearly had faith in his long-time mentee and was not afraid to ruffle a few feathers so that Occom might have a larger sphere of influence. See Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind*, 74-75.

⁹⁶ Many of Occom's extent letters are short pieces to Wheelock recounting his financial dealings and requesting direct aid. See Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 67-73.

⁹⁷ “To Eleazar Wheelock” in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 72.

Occom expresses awareness of his relative worth amongst missionaries, as well as a degree of indignation over the unequal employment of Indian missionaries like himself. By framing his service in this way, Occom lends leverage to his demands for financial assistance in the form of Wheelock's credit. While borrowing and accepting charity from Wheelock did not always require such forceful argumentation, the appeal made here highlights Occom's view of the dynamics that upheld his patronage relationship with Wheelock. The frankness in his appeals to Wheelock for "Credit" is mirrored by his blunt assessment of his worth to him as a missionary.

In this way, Wheelock and Occom were financially interdependent in their pursuits. While Occom drew on Wheelock for immediate financial aid, Wheelock viewed Occom as a valuable actor in his life-long enterprise of educating and converting Natives. So closely entwined were the prospects and reputations of Occom and Wheelock that when they were slandered by another minister who sought to interpose himself between Wheelock and his wealthy English benefactors, the only option was to collaborate on a refutation. In response to Andrew Oliver's accusations to the London Society that Wheelock and Occom had "failed to credit the Society for the Propagation for the Gospel (SPG) in New England for its role in Occom's education,"⁹⁸ Occom felt the need to set the record straight on his and his closest patron's affairs in a well-published piece of writing. Occom knew that misrepresentations of this kind threatened not only his moral reputation, but the continued stream of charity which flowed from England to himself and Wheelock. So eager was Wheelock to put an end to these mutually incriminating slanders that he researched and provided accounts of wages and money transferred from the SPG to Occom over the course of his entire career.⁹⁹ These accounts formed the climax of Occom's *Autobiographical Narrative* of 1768.¹⁰⁰

By treating a controversy over funds and wages in the conclusion of his narrative, Occom once again attempts to trace the lines of investment and dependency that imbued his life and career as an Indian preacher. While marshaled as a defense of his and Wheelock's relationship, Occom makes space in this narrative to advance more general critiques of the ministerial system operated by the Boston Commissioners. To comprehend the full thrust of Occom's argument, it is necessary to quote this passage at length:

(...) all these Losses helpd to pull me down, and by this Time I got greatly in Debt, and acquainted my Circumstances to Some of my Friends, and they Represented my Case to the Commissioners of Boston, and Interceded with them for me, and they were pleased to Vote 15 [£] for my Help; and Soon after Sent a Letter to my good Friend at N London acquainting him, that they had Superseded their Vote; and my Friends were so good as to represent my Needy Circumstances Still to them, and they were so good at Last, as to Vote £15 and Sent it, for Which I am very thankful; and the Rev^d M^r Buell was so kind as to Write in my behalf to the gentlemen of Boston; and he told me they were much Displeasd with him, and heard also once agin, that they blaimed me for being Extravagant, I cant Conceive how these gentleⁿ would have me Live, I am ready to imputed to their Ignorance, and would wish they had Changd Circumstances with me but one Month, that they may know, by experience What my case really was; but I am now fully Convincd, that it was not Ignorance, For I believe it can be provd to the world, that these Same Gentlemen, gave a young Missionary, a Single man *one Hundred Pounds* for

⁹⁸ See Joanna Brooks' note on "Letter to Eleazar Wheelock" in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 77.

⁹⁹ See "Letter to Eleazar Wheelock," in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 77.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

one year, and fifty Pounds for an Interpreter, and thirty Pounds for an Introducer, so it Cost them one Hundred & Eighty Pounds in one Single Year, and they Sent too where there was no Need of a Missionary,¹⁰¹

The passage concatenates debts, charity, and wages in a single line of dispute. As Occom describes, the Boston Commissioners were called upon to supply assistance in repaying some of his debts. While Occom treats this charity with his typical overtures of gratitude, it is implied that the £15 provided to him was neither sufficient in supplying for his needs (since he was at the time “greatly in Debt”), nor a sum commensurate with their support for white missionaries in similar circumstances. Controverting the claims that Occom owes his success as a preacher to the SPG’s support, Occom demonstrates how their charity was not only meager, but discriminatory. Occom allays moral judgments on his “extravagant” debts by deploying accounts and records containing real wages and sums, buttressing his claims of unequal treatment at the hands of missionary societies. Further, he ascribes to his maligners dishonorable intentions, beyond mere “ignorance” of his circumstances. Their mishandling and unbalanced dispersion of funds is evidence not only of his own innocence, but his would-be patrons’ impropriety.

Occom’s excoriation of the Boston Commissioners recalls his complaints to Wheelock that “no white Missionaries” would provide the unpaid services that he provides to the enterprise of Native education. Indeed, while the *Autobiographical Narrative* is meant to shield Wheelock from further defamation, his critiques are directed towards a scheme that Wheelock himself piloted – paying Native converts less than white missionaries. Occom continues:

Now You See What difference they made between me and other Missionaries; they gave me 180 pounds for 12 years Service, which they gave for one years Service in another Mission—In my Service (I speak like a fool, but I am Constrained) I was my own Interpreter. I was both a School master, and Minister to the Indians, yea I was their Ear, Eye & Hand, as Well Mouth,—I leave it with the World, as wicked as it is, to Judge, whether I ought not to have had half as much, they gave a young man Just mentioned which would have been but £50 a year; and if they ought to have given me that, I am not under obligations to them, I owe them nothing at all; what can be the Reason? That they used me after this manner.”¹⁰²

What begins as a pointed repudiation of Andrew Oliver’s dubious claims of credit for Occom’s career evolves into a wider indictment of the biased treatment of Indian ministers at the hands of missionary societies. Occom laments the lack of assistance he was provided in his conversion efforts, while also insisting that his situation forced him to act more independently than white ministers and educators. Once again, Occom references the relative worth of his labor as an Indian convert, but unlike Wheelock who views these advantages as part of a cost-effectiveness scheme, Occom insists that his joint roles as “Interpreter,” “School Master,” and “Minister” should be valued highly and compensated equally. These assertions of value and underpay are reinforced by his earlier depictions of his various means of survival. The obligations that supposedly tie him to his patrons and employers are compounded by his obligations to “Contrive every way to Support my Family.” By laying bare both his labors and the value of his role as “Ear, Eye & Hand, as Well Mouth” to Indians at large, Occom is establishing the broader

¹⁰¹ *Autobiographical Narrative, Second Draft*, in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 57-58.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

implications of his own mistreatment. At stake in this dispute over misplaced credit and unpaid wages is the survival of himself and his family, the appropriate management of the missionary enterprise, and the rightful treatment of Natives in their interactions with these missionaries.

In crafting an argument of such import, Occom presents his evidence like an advocate before a jury, leaving it “with the World, as wicked as it is, to Judge” the conclusions of the case. The matter at hand – essentially a dispute over who was owed what in a past transaction – could only be argued using Occom’s manifest knowledge of debt court proceedings.¹⁰³ Occom, like most 18th-century debtors, was an active study of the legal precedents surrounding credit, and here he addresses his potential future patrons by “bargaining in the shadow of the law.”¹⁰⁴ No stranger to the legal trials that confronted debtors on undisclosed debts, Occom musters his monetary evidence to advance a persuasive moral argument against the claims of due credit leveraged against himself and Wheelock. Ultimately, Occom’s plea of innocence hinges on the nullification of an assumed debt, as he questions his imagined jury “whether I ought not to have had half as much, they gave a young man Just mentioned which would have been but £50 a year; and if they ought to have given me that, I am not under obligations to them, I owe them nothing at all.” Occom presents an obvious example of racialized inequity to absolve himself from any obligations or debts owed to the white missionaries who employed him. If it should be universally recognized that Occom was not dealt with fairly in his dispensations, then Occom cannot be said to owe anything to his presumptive benefactors. Furthermore, this logical appeal reverses the accusation of debt, placing the onus of unfulfilled obligations on Occom’s white benefactors. Here, an act of moral and legal disputation helps Occom reflect not only the dependency of white patrons on himself, but their state of indebtedness to his extraordinary efforts. Occom’s view of the white world’s obligations to him, therefore, abridged moral rectitude and literal indebtedness, evidenced by his reproving tone and his assignment of specific dollar amounts to the unfulfilled obligations of the Boston Commission. His taking the missionary enterprise to task for inequity and indebtedness opens up a novel field of inquiry for a Native convert relying on a complex system of patronage for support. What is the true value of Occom’s labor as a contractor of the benevolent mission of Native education? And what is the remainder due to him from the charitable, but inadequate, support from his patrons?

These questions, which nagged Occom throughout his career, would eventually be turned on his closest benefactor in a letter that further explicates Occom’s views of his patron’s obligations. Returning from his two-and-a-half year fundraising trip to Europe, having raised “the incredible sum of £11,000 or more for Indian education,”¹⁰⁵ Occom had forged new bonds with English patrons while unintentionally jeopardizing his relationship with Wheelock.¹⁰⁶ Dismayed by Wheelock’s change in disposition towards him and outraged at Wheelock’s decision to admit no full-blooded Native students into an incoming Dartmouth class, Occom

¹⁰³ Occom demonstrates his knowledge of the laws governing debts in two instances. In the first, previously cited in the introduction to this dissertation, Occom consults the “New Revised Law Book” concerning a small debt he owed for which an officer attached his oxen. In the second instance, transcribed in a letter from 1788, he refutes the legal justification for the execution of a lawsuit against a fellow Indian, “John Dantuckquechen” “upon Suspission of Debt.” See “Is There no Redress for the Indians?” in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 128.

¹⁰⁴ Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Peyer, *The Tutor’d Mind*, 76.

¹⁰⁶ Scholars have suggested that Wheelock’s falling out of favor with the London Trust combined with Occom’s newfound acclaim with English donors caused him considerable jealousy and even resulted in Wheelock attempting to “discredit Occom with his English friends.” See Bannet, *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading, 1720-1810 Migrant Fictions*, 171.

confronted Wheelock in a letter taking aim at the new direction of the college his patron resided over:

I think your College has too much Worldly Grandure for the Poor Indians They'll never have much benefit of it,—In So Saying I Speak the general Sentiment of Indians and English too in these parts; So many of your Missionaries and School masters and Indian Scholars Leaving You and Your Service Confirms me in this opinion,—your having So many White Scholars and So few or no Indian Scholars, gives me great Discouragement—I verily thought once that your Institution was Intended Purely for the poor Indians with this thought I Cheerfully Ventur'd my Body & Soul, left my Country my poor young Family all my friends and Relations, to sail over the Boisterous Seas to England, to help forward your School, Hoping, that it may be a lasting Benefet to my poor Tawnee Brethren, With this View I went a Volunteer—I was quite Willing to become a Gazing Stock, Yea Even a Laughing Stock, in Strange Countries to Promote your Cause—We Loudly Proclaimed before Multitudes of People from Place to Place, that there was a most glorious Prospect of Spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus to the furthest Savage Nations in the Wildnerness, thro your Institution.¹⁰⁷

Occom begins by upbraiding Wheelock for feats of extravagance, turning a flaw commonly imputed to himself against his patrons' mismanagement of the funds he raised. While more abstruse than his straightforward adjudication of mismanaged funds in the *Narrative*, this passage still declares a present inequity by juxtaposing the “Worldly Grandure” of Wheelock’s educational institution with the trials of his “poor young Family” and himself. Occom is careful to note his role as a “Volunteer” and to explicate the terms of his service “to become a Gazing Stock, Yea Even a Laughing Stock, in Strange Countries to Promote your Cause.” While Occom claims he was willing to take on these efforts unpaid, as it were, he is still eager to illuminate the ironic consequence – that the labors he endured for free would so enrich an institution that serves no purpose to him or his fellow Indians. Once again, the assertion of an abstract debt owed to Occom is incorporated into what Wheelock owes the “Poor Indians,” for whom the effort was meant to serve.

Although Occom makes these arguments in a private letter, he notes how Wheelock’s malfeasance is already well known to a broader community. Speaking for “the general Sentiment of Indians and English too in these parts,” Occom draws upon the reputational integrity of the Native education project as his principle point of leverage in his argument. The pointed reminders that he “Loudly Proclaimed before Multitudes of People” the intended purposes of his fundraising serve as a warning to Wheelock regarding his obligations to these English donors, implying that Wheelock’s failure to live up to the putative causes of Native education might diminish the credit of the whole. He goes on to point out that Wheelock’s failure to uphold the terms upon which Occom offered his labor threaten the financial solvency of his project as well:

I am going to Say Something further, Which is very Disagreeable Modisty woud forbid me, but I am Constraind So to write,—Many gentlemen in England and in this Country too, Say if you had not this Indian Buck you would not Collected a quarter of the Money you did, one gentleman in Particular in England Said to me, if he hadn't Seen my face he woudnt have given 5 happence but now I have 50£ freely—This one Consideration gives

¹⁰⁷ “To Eleazar Wheelock,” (July 24, 1771) in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 99.

me great Quietness, I think I went to England with Honest Heart, I think I have done that which I think was my Duty to Do.¹⁰⁸

Here, we see Occom breaking the typical constraints of “Modesty” in order to reflect the raw financial calculus that attaches him to the missionary cause. Formally abandoning the politesse that sustained his patronage relationship, Occom writes to expose his relative value to the enterprise of Native education in multiplying terms, ascribing the magnified “Grandure” of Dartmouth to his own efforts.¹⁰⁹ His speculation on the minimized investments of donors had he not been present (would it have been a quarter of the £11,000? A tenth?) offer Occom a position of elevated credit upon which to issue judgment on Wheelock’s affairs. Given the tarnishing of Wheelock’s reputation over the purported misuse of the funds that Occom raised, Occom implies that his future gains will be worth relatively little, and that Occom himself must protest the inflated value of a college meant to benefit Indians – a crucial party in the economy of Christian conversion. From this vantage, we can see Occom’s letter as an attempt at disputing a dishonored bill: a refutation of the faulty premises upon which Wheelock attempted to garner credit; an assertion that the purported value of Wheelock’s funds cannot be upheld due to the negligence of the initial terms set. Just like an unpaid payee who confronts the initial drawer on a dishonored bill, Occom confronts Wheelock with the insolvent status of his debt and the defunct status of his reputation.

Transposing Wheelock’s patronage into a creditor relationship helps us see more clearly the importance of the financial wrangling and claims of inequality that Occom enacted throughout his letters. Occom had a keen understanding of how honorable reputations impacted the solvency of his patrons. The ends of patronage could only be achieved through a process of accounting which called into the public eye the status of debts and obligations that were meant to adjoin the interests of Natives and Europeans participating in education and conversion. Accordingly, Occom transcribed the mechanisms of accountability in the credit system into his arguments on the moral impropriety of abandoning Native education. Occom even made good on his threats of diminished support for Wheelock by taking up the matter of his dishonored bill with a wider public. To another patron, John Bailey, he wrote in 1784:

As for Doctor Wheelock’s Institution for the Indians, to me it is all a Sham, it is now become altogether Unprofitable to the poor Indians; in Short he has done little or no good to the Indians, With all that vast Sum of Money We Collected in England he never had educated but two through the College, one Indian and one Mallato, and there has not been any Indian there, this Some Time, as I have been lately informd; all the good that money has done is, has mad the Doctors Family Very Grand in the World.¹¹⁰

By declaiming Wheelock’s enterprise as a “Sham,” Occom attempts to more closely align a benefactor with his own efforts. Co-opting the capitalist vocabulary of English patrons of the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 99-100.

¹⁰⁹ Occom’s claim was not unfounded: the white minister who accompanied Occom on his fundraising trip, Nathaniel Whitaker, engaged himself in a scheme to get rich off of English donor funds “by using it to buy goods to ship to New England and sell at a profit there.” Whitaker’s plot was eventually found out and added its own flavor of dishonor to the fundraising effort. See Bannet, *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading, 1720-1810 Migrant Fictions*, 159.

¹¹⁰ “To John Bailey” in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 121.

Great Awakening, Occom argues that Wheelock's enterprise will be "unprofitable," a claim meant to foreclose future speculative investments in his school. The passage thus reflects Occom's ability to manipulate dishonor to secure himself future gains, but it also captures Occom in a state of increasing disillusionment over a broader problematic – the gaping inequality between the "Very Grand" whites in America and the "poor Indians." Coming off his publication of "The Most Remarkable and Strange State Situation and Appearance of Indian Tribes in this Great Continent," Occom views this problematic with increasing irony. It is not as if "Vast Sums" are not capable of being raised on the part of Natives. That great piles of money could be garnered for poor Indians is obvious to Occom, especially after his fundraising trip to Europe. Rather, it is the circuitous manner of dispensation – the colonizer's control over money meant to provide directly for Indian education and enrichment – that led to the impoverishment of Natives and kept them from more profitable paths in colonial America. Patrons like Wheelock, who occupied a middle-man position in the machinery of the Great Awakening enterprise – who supplied bills of exchange, filled in debt obligations, and parceled out measly wages to the Indians under their thumbs – were ultimately the obliged and morally culpable parties in the economy of 18th-century settler-colonialism. And if the terms that these brokers imposed upon Indians were dishonored, perhaps it was time to re-bargain the social contract which locked Indians into this diametric relationship of poverty and "Grandure."

In his letters contesting Wheelock's dishonorable bills, Occom's tone is less legalistic than in the *Autobiographical Narrative*. Instead, his personal vitriol tends to spill over, implicating not only Wheelock in his rebukes, but the English patrons who viewed him as "an Indian buck" and a "laughing stock." Consciously breaking the bounds of "modesty," Occom reflects an astounding awareness of how his own pursuit of his duty in support of Wheelock has led to contortion, constraint, and humiliation. As Occom was coming to realize, there was more at stake than actual sums and expenses in his relationships with patrons. There were basic matters of equity and dignity that were sacrificed in the industry of Christian patronage, threatening both Occom's personal autonomy and the sovereignty and survival of his fellow Natives. The ledgers he writes to Wheelock over Dartmouth, which contain these fundamental concerns, rank among Occom's most defiant acts as an author and activist, if only because they interrogate the value system in which Occom found himself entrenched. While patronage could help repay debts, maintain household expenses, and facilitate long-term giving, it could not answer the more pressing existential concerns of Natives in Occom's place during the 18th century – What was the value of humiliation? How could subjugation be compensated? What could be retained or redeemed for Indians from whites acting dishonorably?

"till They Can Swim Alone": The Case for Independence

Occom's late interventions in Wheelock's enterprise are audacious examples of a Native thinker exposing the exploitative nature of an entire system of religious colonial assimilation. They stand out amongst Occom's communications to patrons, which overall tend to reinforce the notion of widespread Indian gratitude to these Protestant practitioners and their "liberal" European backers.¹¹¹ While many of Occom's dealings with patrons included straightforward

¹¹¹ See, for instance, Occom's letter to Robert Keen from 1768 which conveys the following: "about 5 Weeks ago Onoyda Indians Came to see me, they manyfested great Joy at my return from England and and were very thankful to hear the Liberality of Christians and all receive me with gladness and tender affection,—they are very thankful to hear the Benevolent Disposition of Christians over the Mighty Waters, by freely Contributing of their Substance

thanks for gifts and favors, debt offered him something different. What I have argued is that Occom's experience with debt and financial obligations allowed Occom a means of adjudicating the fraught relationship between whites and Natives in the 18th-century enterprise of Native education. Taking white ministers and patrons to task for their scanty support of an effort deemed vital for Native and white relations, Occom played on the conceptual closeness of charity and debt to imply that white patrons were equally bound by certain moral, social, and economic obligations as the Natives to whom they gave and loaned. The reversibility of obligation in these relations is commensurate with the relational calculus of the credit economy. Once again, Mann notes, "Relations between creditors and their debtors were not purely bilateral affairs. Creditors were themselves debtors, and debtors often had many creditors. Each debt was a strand in a web of indebtedness that bound debtors and creditors, creditors and other creditors, debtors, and other debtors to one another in complex interrelations."¹¹² In his meticulous handling of the controversies that impacted his livelihood, Occom evinced clear comprehension of the web of indebtedness which connected him, Wheelock, the colonial ministerial societies, and their European benefactors. Occom's true innovation was to assume that he was not the weakest strand in this web, the most desperate debtor who owed only enduring deference to his creditors. Instead, Occom argued his own worth to Wheelock and the white ministerial industry in terms of multiplied monetary amounts, suggesting that he grasped all too well the capitalist logics which motivated the Great Awakening's investment in Native education. If white preachers like Wheelock expected to create a "source of opulence to ye whole Empire" and "augment" their own prospects in the meantime, they were not going to achieve it without Occom. Occom knew that he was an indispensable part of the transnational network of exchange that supported the colonial project, and was therefore owed a great deal.

Occom's handling of Europeans' obligations and his masterful manipulation of his role in the enterprise of Native education suggests that he, like many of his Native compatriots, viewed participation in Native education as an essential act in the evolving commerce with Europeans. Forming lasting bonds of patronage that facilitated Native literacy was meant to forge a more equal relationship between Natives and Europeans who were called upon to form new exchange agreements over land and resources. As Occom found out, however, the outstanding and dishonored debts that circulated in the Great Awakening's enterprise provided poor models for mutual accountability and equity between white parties and Natives. For this reason, amongst others, Occom spent his later years trying to disentangle himself and his fellow Natives from the industry of the Great Awakening. The result was an effort at uniting several Northeastern Tribes in autonomous communities, governed by more traditional Native principles and relying on Indians for the whole of their teaching and preaching. Occom's departure from the ministry of the Great Awakening and his spearheading the Brotherton Movement suggests that his attempts at calling Wheelock to account for his debts were ultimately fruitless.¹¹³ Instead of relying on the veiled intentions of these colonial middlemen, Occom acted to support Natives and elevate the credit of their nations by pursuing exactly the kind of independence against which Wheelock inveighed in his messages to donors.

towards the Instructions of the Poor Indians in North American,—they Hope by this Means their poor Children's Eyes may be opened, that they may See with their own Eyes." Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 81.

¹¹² Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 19.

¹¹³ For more on the Brotherton Movement and their struggles to unite in an economy of mutuality against the incursions of colonial society, see Reginald Dyck, "The Economic Education of Samson Occom," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 24, no. 3 (2012): 3–25, <https://doi.org/10.5250/studamerindilite.24.3.0003>, 18–20.

One communication of interest from this later period in Occom's career is a 1791 letter to a fellow minister titled "Indians Must Have Teachers of Their Own Coular or Nation." Presaging the collective movement of Indians to found sovereign communities outside the reach of white land leasers or missionary societies, Occom writes to this white would-be benefactor to secure "a little help" for the Stockbridge Indians (close compatriots with the Brotherton Indians, amongst whom Occom lived). His appeals, however, are notably different from those in his earlier letters to patrons. While Occom alludes to the needy state of himself and his fellow Indians, he does not deploy lurid details of their begging, starving, or alcoholism. Rather, he straightforwardly connects their want to the oppression of Europeans:

They (Indians) have very great and reveted Prejudice against the White People, and they have too much good reason for it—they have been imposed upon, too much (...) and when there is any Mischief, any of them; then there is an out Cry against them (...) : The poor Indians were in a Miserable Situation before the Europians Come; and Since the Europians have Come into this Country, they are more so, except a few that have had a little Gospel Light.¹¹⁴

While Occom participates in the Christian prejudice that pre-contact Indians were miserable, he squarely lays their present desperation at the feet of Europeans. Occom's claims of increased suffering contradict the assumed benefits of assimilation that fueled the enterprise of missionary societies. In place of Native cooperation with European-bred capitalism, there is widespread "Mischief" and outcries against Natives, resulting in a present state of warranted mistrust. Whereas Occom's earlier appeals were meant to relay the gratitude of Indians and continued assent of Natives to white teachings, here Occom unveils a situation of lapsed confidence in the colonial relationship, which must be mended by greater autonomy – "I am now fully Convinc'd, that the Indians must have Teachers of their own Coular or Nation."¹¹⁵ Cutting against Wheelock's assumption that Indian preachers and educators would continue to view white ministers as benevolent brothers, mentors, and benefactors, Occom attempts to sever the lines of dependency that Wheelock viewed as essential to the administering of Native education.

Of course, the letter is still an example of Occom soliciting funds from patrons, but he has altered his mode of representation when it comes to his need for money. Nowhere does the letter brim with descriptions of his own debts and his family's struggles. These personally motivated depictions of need are subsumed by a more collective appeal for assistance to the Stockbridge Tribe. Furthermore, Occom is less cynical in his depictions of these Indians and his requests are for a more limited form of generosity. The Stockbridge Tribe is, by his description:

well inclin'd to the Christian Religion, and they are Diligent in their Temporal Concerns; and they have determined to go on till they Shall be able to maintain them Selves in their Religion, and in their Temporal Concerns if they keep on as they have begun but a little While, they will be able—But they are not able to walk yet, they Still Creep they want a little Help to lead by the Hand a little way, and they Can't Swim alone yet, they need to have a little help, to have their Chins held up a little While, till they can Swim alone.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ "Indians Must Have Teachers of their Own Coular or Nation", in Occom and Brooks, *Collected Writings*, 133-134.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 133.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*.

By expressing appreciation and confidence in a community of Natives moving towards autonomy, Occom captures a different side of the struggle for survival of Indians in the 18th century. The Stockbridge tribe are not desperate, as such, nor are they awed by the liberality of Europeans for their education and conversion. Rather they are beginning to master both spiritual and “temporal” concerns on their own. Occom’s appeal for “a little help” here fundamentally breaks the mold of the patronage relationship. Gone are the references to continuous drawing of bills, uninterrupted “streams” of generosity, or an undying gratitude for white charity. The interested obligations that Occom played upon in his earlier wrangling of patrons has given over to legitimate modesty captured in his repeated use of “a little” to depict the needs of the Stockbridge Indians. In brokering funds for this tribe, Occom refuses to enter into his old game of manipulating privileged roles in a network of long-term dependency. Perhaps drawing on his newfound awareness that such relationships could be soured by dishonorable intentions, Occom aims instead at self-sufficiency for Indian peoples – an eventuality that he presents with a delicate sense of conviction: “they need to have a little help, to have their Chins held up a little While, till they can Swim alone.” Far from catering to the speculative interests of investors qua donors to the Native conversion enterprise, Occom predicts a time in the near future when Native education could be achieved without manipulative gratitude, exploitative wages, “gazing stocks” for White donors, and endless debt. In this way, Occom muses, a newfound collective sovereignty might effectively bring about an end to patronage.

Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's "Humble Present" and the Mixed Economy of Ojibwe /
Settler Relations

Born nearly 80 years after Occom, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft was, by some estimation, the first Native American poet in the English language.¹¹⁷ Unlike Occom, Schoolcraft did not trade on her authorship. Her parents were prominent fixtures in the lucrative Michigan fur trade, and her husband, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, was the colonial administrator of Michigan territory for the United States. Economic logics converge with artistry in Schoolcraft's writing in a different way than in Occom's. Much less inclined to write in order to procure funding for her own projects of Native American enrichment, Schoolcraft nevertheless wrote poetry – much of which was never published or circulated widely – that reflected a complex, evolving world of settler colonial relations and the commerce that undergirded it.¹¹⁸ As a fixture of her intercultural community in Sault Ste. Marie, Schoolcraft was witness and played party to a number of material and cultural exchanges that reshaped the Michigan Territory and Ojibwe society. I argue that these forms of exchange, though not always overt, are indexed in her poetic writing.

To understand both the social and economic forces that surrounded and, in some ways, produced Schoolcraft, one must first turn to the history of the fur trade. Over the course of two centuries, the transatlantic trade in peltry brought American Indians throughout the Americas, but especially in the Great Lakes region, into more constant contact and negotiation with white traders and reshaped the territorial claims of European powers in North America and the geopolitical status of individual Indian tribes and nations.¹¹⁹ Not only that, it spawned a novel form of cross-cultural contact and exchange, hinged on European traders' and Anishinaabe peoples' pursuit of commerce and political and military advantages. The Great Lakes region, where Schoolcraft spent most of her life, and its denizens – from Ojibwe to French to Scotts-Irish to American – were fundamentally conditioned by the fur trade and shaped by the intricate political economy that sprouted from it.

While numerous scholars have contributed to how we think about the fur trade, particularly as a social, political and economic structure uniting Europeans and American Indians, none is quite as exhaustively detailed as Richard White's *The Middle Ground*. White's two-hundred-year survey of the fur trade in the Great Lakes region provides a key insight into how European and Algonquian societies confronted one another in this early era of colonialism: through invention, interpretation, and accommodation born of necessity. The need of both parties to "arrive at some common conception of suitable ways of acting"¹²⁰ helped create new social codes and scripts for interaction, as well as internal cultural modifications:

¹¹⁷ Schoolcraft composed both in English and Ojibwe. Of her status as a "first" in Native American literature, Robert Dale Parker maintains, "Jane Johnston Schoolcraft was nevertheless among the first American Indian writers. She was also the first known American Indian literary writer, the first known Indian woman writer, by some measures the first known Indian poet, the first known poet to write poems in a Native American language, and the first known American Indian to write out traditional Indian stories." See Parker's Introduction in Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky*, 2007, 2.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 2-3.

¹¹⁹ For this and other observations about the Fur Trade, I rely on Susan Sleeper-Smith's introduction to the anthology, Susan Sleeper-Smith ed. , *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

¹²⁰ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, 20th anniversary ed, Studies in North American Indian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 92.

Members of two cultures established an alliance that they both thought furthered interests generated within their own societies. They maintained this alliance through rituals and ceremonials based on cultural parallels and congruences, inexact and artificial as they originally may have been (...) These solutions may have been (...) elaborate cultural fictions, but through them change occurred. Such changes, worked out on the middle ground, could be remarkably influential, bringing important modifications in each society and blurring the boundaries between them.”¹²¹

From here, White narrates several phases of the fur trade. In each, he expands his thesis about mutual interpretation and adaptation of cultural logics to prove how the trade reconditioned Native and settler societies at large. Many of White’s examples are moments of market exchange that acquire multiple valences under the cultural terms of both French and Native traders. According to White, a standard economic account of rational motives and commerce cannot go very far in explaining the fur trade system, in which mutual dependencies, and the inability to overpower the other by military force, necessitated new, and often not straightforward, forms of exchange: “The fur trade was a constantly changing compromise, a conduit, between two local models of the exchange—the French and the Algonquian.”¹²²

This mode of cultural compromise in the name of evolving commerce and settler-colonial relations, as we will see, helps contextualize Schoolcraft’s writing to a large degree, but it is also important to note that Schoolcraft lived through a widespread social transformation that in many ways rendered the Middle Ground obsolete. While her family, her upbringing, and her poetry evince the lasting influence of negotiation and intercultural accommodation, a new set of historical conditions was conspiring to dissolve the Middle Ground, including the U.S.’s assumption of territorial authority over the Great Lakes region, the corporatization of the fur trade, the expansion of extractive and agricultural industries, and the aggressive Indian policies of the Jackson administration.¹²³ While Schoolcraft may have been familiar with the modes of international accommodation that pervaded the world of her mother and father, that world looked quite different by the end of Schoolcraft’s life.

What is captured in Schoolcraft’s writing is not simply the transcripts of a Métis party to the Middle Ground, but a reckoning with the collision of two eras of Ojibwe-Settler history. The fact that Schoolcraft’s writing includes and sometimes enacts intercultural accommodation and invention may be at times a reflection of and, at other times, an homage to the Middle Ground. Without the benefit of strict dating, we cannot say for sure which poems correspond to which events in the course of the shifting cross-cultural terrain, but I maintain that her poems situate an evolving political and cultural situation amongst the Ojibwe within a dynamic past and present, demarcated by the rapid shifts in the exchange economy that took place over the course of Schoolcraft’s life as a writer. These economic developments not only entailed a series of crucial changes in the status of Ojibwe-settler relations, but symbolized a deterioration of intercultural understanding as U.S. assumed more control over Indigenous relations. Through her poems and her grappling with new colonial treaties and forms of exchange, Schoolcraft attempts to enact a renewal of that same Middle Ground understanding between the U.S. and the Ojibwe in the context of widescale Native dispossession. That renewal is enacted through Schoolcraft’s poetic repurposing of debt.

¹²¹ Ibid, 93.

¹²² Ibid, 94.

¹²³ Ibid, 518-522.

The Intercultural World of Schoolcraft's Sault Ste. Marie

Claiming that Schoolcraft was a product of the Middle Ground encompasses not only the advantageous intermarriage between her fur trader father and prominent Ojibwe mother, but her exposure to the evolving dynamics of commerce and politics that saturated the Great Lakes Region at the start of the 19th century. Schoolcraft was a member of a novel kinship network that evolved from the fur trade and a witness to and participant in the often off-kilter transformation of the trade itself, with gifts, contracts, treaties, debt, and credit in constant circulation between Ojibwe and white settlers. In order to contextualize how these features figure in Schoolcraft's work, it is necessary that we understand how Anishinaabe people adapted to the novel forms of commerce introduced by the trade.

Richard White's work makes an important intellectual intervention – one that is upheld by subsequent scholars of the fur trade – by ascribing to Native participants in the fur trade the status of individual and collective agents, rather than casting them as victims of a westward-marching, capitalist rationale. From its earliest phases, the structural relationship between Natives and Europeans in the arena of the Middle Ground was inventive rather than determinative. While European records may detail the professed dependency of tribes on European forces, recent scholarship has shown how these accounts exaggerated the supremacy of the French / English position in the trade.¹²⁴ Bruce M. White even suggests that Indian supplicants may have been exerting their own social will by professing a certain dependency on Europeans in the trade, attempting to cement a social bond that was symbolized by the Father/Son relationship of care: “Such a possibility might put into perspective many accounts of diplomatic and trade meetings between the Ojibway and Europeans in which the latter reported their distinct impressions that the Indians were suffering, starving, and greatly dependent on them—perhaps far more than was actually the case.”¹²⁵ Through the lens of this scholarship, we perceive Native suppliers and buyers as savvy participants in an international economy, expertly adapting their own cultural meanings to capitalist exchanges.

Through the inventive processes of the fur trade, Native participants brought Indigenous models of filiation and cultural exchange to bear on European modes of commerce as well. To successfully navigate the channels of the fur trade, Europeans had to learn and integrate themselves into elaborate kinship networks amongst the Ojibwe and others. In doing so, they cemented social bonds with their Anishinaabe trade allies by yielding to Native social norms of exchange and intermarriage. When it came to expanding kinship networks to accommodate for the fur trade, women played an essential role. Numerous scholars have demonstrated how by intermarrying with European fur traders, Native women not only embodied the bonds of kinship upon which successful commerce in furs often depended, but they also worked to translate cultural practices and negotiate real exchanges between European and Algonquian societies. In the earliest accounts, fur traders found intermarriage necessary not simply to affix their social ties to powerful fathers-in-law amongst tribes, but because long-term survival depended on the labor of Indigenous women. In the Ojibwe context, for instance, “women in fur trade communities formed influential and intimate associations with European traders. These men

¹²⁴ See D. Peter MacLeod, “The Anishinabeg Point of View: The History of the Great Lakes Region to 1800 in Nineteenth Century Mississauga, Odawa, and Ojibwa Historiography,” 45-64; and Bruce M. White, “Give us a Little Milk’: The Social and Cultural Significance of Gift Giving in the Lake Superior Fur Trade,” in Sleeper-Smith, *Rethinking the Fur Trade*, 114-136.

¹²⁵ White, “Give us a Little Milk,” 130.

required a regular stream of skins and food, and indigenous women controlled the greater part of the harvested food supply goods.”¹²⁶ In many ways, a steady supply of goods, both for survival and commerce, hinged on Native women who incorporated European traders and their Métis offspring into kinship networks that helped expand their trade relations. Native women also ensured that European traders were beholden to the social bonds implied by intertribal commerce. More than that, as historian Susan Sleeper-Smith observed, “amid the dynamics of this changing social landscape, Indian women who married fur traders relied on the interface between two worlds to position themselves as mediators between cultural groups, to assume leadership roles in religious training, to influence commodity production, and eventually, at least in a few cases, to establish themselves as independent traders.”¹²⁷

One such Ojibwe woman was Schoolcraft’s mother, Ozhaguscodaywayquay, whose marriage with the English fur trader John Johnston was typical of the Middle Ground experience. In his thorough account of the lives of the Johnstons, Robert Dale Parker claims that they “were all contributors to that Midwest Métis world,” and that “they were extraordinary for their political and social influence in Ojibwe, British, American and Métis cultures; for the records they kept (...) and for their range of movement from everyday to elite cultures, from woodland to waterways to literary salons and treaty negotiations, from Ojibwe elites to a frontier version of predominantly white high society.”¹²⁸ Preferring a wide “range of movement” across societies, Schoolcraft’s family members were adept navigators of disparate cultural logics, and in this way embodied the social adaptability that was born of the Middle Ground. Ozhaguscodaywayquay played a particularly strong role negotiating between these different spheres. As Parker confirms, Johnston’s success as a trader “must have owed a great deal as well to Ozhaguscodaywayquay’s talents, influence, and connections. Over the years, she also developed skills recognized by white men, for when John died in 1828 (from multiple illnesses), she took over the business.”¹²⁹ This role of Schoolcraft’s mother, though not unusual in the context of the fur trade, imparted her and her family a unique position of prominence in Sault Ste. Marie during a time in which new arrivals were seeking out lines of contact with the Ojibwe. Appropriately enough, Ozhaguscodaywayquay leveraged her role as a fixture in the fur trade and the head of an expansive kinship network during treaty negotiations with the U.S. Her intervention in the negotiation of new treaties reveals an adeptness at adaptation to new political situations as the world previously dominated by French fur traders came to be occupied by U.S. settlers.¹³⁰

If her parents’ marriage was emblematic of the Middle Ground, Jane Johnston’s own marriage to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft might be said to evince the transformation of the Ojibwe/Settler relationship as that Middle Ground began to retract and the U.S. advanced. Henry was one among a growing presence of U.S. settler-explorers whose territorial authority over previously held Native lands was being procured by conquest and treaty. He also typified the upwardly mobile citizen of the new U.S. republic, whose scores of intellectual endeavors and “man of letters” persona were meant to cement his place as a scion of the American revolution. Jane’s marriage to Henry introduced her to an even broader array of cultural influences,

¹²⁶ Brenda J. Child and Colin Calloway, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*, Penguin Library of American Indian History (East Rutherford: Penguin Publishing Group, 2012), 32.

¹²⁷ “Women, Kin, and Catholicism: New Perspectives on the Fur Trade” in Sleeper-Smith, *Rethinking the Fur Trade*, 446.

¹²⁸ Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, 4, 6.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 16.

challenges, and negotiations and, perhaps indirectly, brought about changes in the society of Sault Ste. Marie and the broader Michigan territory that would cement the U.S.'s authority in the region. By all indications, Jane's role in her marriage was a transfigured version of her mother's role as a societal intermediary; somewhat less important to Henry – the intrepid U.S. explorer and colonial agent – than Ozhaguscodaywayquay was to John Johnston – the fur trader seeking out Ojibwe routes for successful commerce. And yet Henry did still rely on her for her connections to the Anishinaabe world as well as for her transcriptions and translations of Ojibwe cultural material.¹³¹ For this reason, much scholarly attention has been paid to the relationship between Jane and Henry. Some have even implied that Schoolcraft's writing career represents a species of surrender to the domineering colonial intentions of her husband.¹³² To me, however, understanding Schoolcraft's position within an orbit of intercultural influences, shifting sovereignties, and fraught exchanges reveals a more nuanced reading of her work.

Balancing Henry's desire to publish defining works of ethnographic research on Native Americans and her own position of stature among the Ojibwe at Sault Ste. Marie, Schoolcraft began to write. Outside of the few efforts made by her husband to include her work in publications of his own, Schoolcraft's works never made it to print. Her translations of Ojibwe stories and poems that were incorporated into Henry's widely read *Algic Researches* largely went uncredited, and her contributions to her husband's magazine *The Literary Voyager* never achieved broad circulation.¹³³ Ensclosed as she was in a position of relative financial and social privilege, and deriving neither notoriety nor wealth from publishing her work, one may wonder why she wrote at all. Robert Dale Parker points out, "we have no information outside her poems themselves of anything that Schoolcraft thought about poetry, hers or anyone else's, or how she understood her ambitions or role as a poet. Though she wrote many poems, there is little record of her thinking of herself as a poet by vocation."¹³⁴ Nevertheless, we can see in Schoolcraft's writing – which often pared down and censored Ojibwe cultural material in order to accommodate the sensibilities of her husband's white readership – a kind of foundational ethics of the Middle Ground. Rather than seeing Schoolcraft as a proprietary author, pursuing self-promotion in a literary marketplace, we might instead view her writing as an exercise in intercultural mediation in an increasingly complicated colonial landscape. While we may never know the specific motivation for her writing, Schoolcraft's poetry could best be understood as a practice of amalgamating the disparate sensibilities that made up her life by creating a literary forum in which the various parties of the settler-colonial encounter are brought together to stake their claims in a changing world.

¹³¹ For Henry Schoolcraft's profile as a U.S. colonial agent and his reliance on Schoolcraft for his acts of ethnography, see *Ibid*, 24-25.

¹³² Among the most critical of Schoolcraft is Maureen Konkle. After scrutinizing Schoolcraft's career of poetics and ethnographic writing as well as her personal correspondences with her husband, Konkle concludes that the combined traces of Jane and Henry's biographies, "Reveal not only how Native peoples' authority for their knowledge is effaced in Euro-American writing but also how Native historicity is effaced, and in particular, how the fact of Native writing itself is denied." Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/Doc?id=10116515>, 180.

¹³³ Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, X.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 33

The Explorer's Debt and Trade's Moil

A prime example of how Schoolcraft achieved this act of intercultural accounting is found in the poem "On The Doric Rock, Lake Superior." This poem may have been inspired, as Parker suggests, by Schoolcraft's correspondence with a group of explorers accompanying Henry on a long trip across the Great Lakes region and their depiction of the Doric Rock – a naturally occurring, presumably ancient stone arc along the coast of the lake. More than a simple ode to exploration, or a personal piece of correspondence "To a Friend,"¹³⁵ the poem is a meditation on the value of such a discovery, and discovery in general, refracted through various cultural lenses. The full text of the poem reads:

Dwellers at home, in indolence and ease,
How deep their debt, to those that roam the seas,
Or cross the lands, in quest of every art
That science, knowledge, pity can impart
To help mankind, or guild the lettered page
The bold discoverers of every age.

This spirit—in thy breast the ardent guide
To seek new lands, and wastes as yet untried
Where none but hunters trod the field before
Unveiled the grandeur of Superior's show
Where nature's forms in varied shape and guise
Break on the view, with wonder and surprize.
Not least, among those forms, the traveller's tale,
These pillared rocks and castle pomps prevail
Standing, like some vast ruin of the plain,
Where ancient victims by their priests were slain
But far more wondrous,—for the fair design
No architect drew out, with measured line
'Twas nature's wildest flower, that graved the Rock,
The waves' loud fury, and the tempest's shock
Yet all that arts can do, here frowning shine,
In mimic pride, and grandeur of design.

The simple Indian, as the work he spies,
Looks up to nature's God above the skies
And though, his lot be rugged wild and dear,
Yet owns the ruling power with soul sincere,
Not as where, Asia's piles of marble high,
For idol gods the beast was doomed to die,
But, guided by a purer-led surprise,
Points to the great good sovereign of the skies
And thinks the power that built the upper sphere,

¹³⁵ Parker heavily implies that this "friend" was Henry's compatriot Melancthon L. Woolsey who composed unusually "effusive" letters to Jane during his journey. See Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, 96-97.

Hath left but traces of his fingers here.¹³⁶

The poem's primary dichotomy is between nature and art, the sublime and the scientific. While the Doric Rock is a feat of nature that puts architecture and design to shame, the poem nevertheless venerates the acts of explorers who are able to capture and record its glory through art and science. This tension between art and nature is undergirded by the poem's trope of presumably European explorers vs. their presumably Native American antecedents. The central stanza alludes more than once to the Indigenous Peoples who predated the explorers: "Where none but hunters trod the field before," "Where ancient victims by their priests were slain." On the surface, these stereotypes cast Native Americans as indolent and ignorant predecessors to the intrepid explorers whose scientific approach to discovery varies widely from the primitive past of hunting-gathering and ritual violence. The rote reading of the poem's antithesis would thus assign Europeans to science and Natives to nature – a designation that matches widespread literary archetypes of the time.¹³⁷

This antithesis is expanded in the final stanza where Schoolcraft turns her attention to religious themes. The "simple Indian" uncorrupted, with "soul sincere," is yet another obvious trope of indigeneity. In allowing her Native subject to spy "the ruling power," Schoolcraft may be merely rehearsing the stereotypical implication that the Indian's closeness to nature and ample faith in the supernatural makes him a prime subject for Christian conversion. While this trope could be seen as a capitulation to the predominant representations of the age, one might also contend that the depiction of the Indian's worship of nature in the final stanza draws a line of contrast with the worship of Enlightenment values in the first. Whereas the "bold discoverers of every age" spend exhaustive campaigns in search of new knowledge "to guild the lettered page," Indians are possessed of a more essential knowledge of God through their innate connection to nature. If the second stanza treats this Indigenous simplicity with passing judgment, the final stanza redeems the Indigenous subject and reinforces the tension between art and nature by placing the "Simple Indian" in a position of privileged knowledge over the European explorer, whose arts and letters ultimately fail to capture the traces of God's fingers on the landscape.

I spend time unpacking this unresolved tension in order to approach an answer to the supposedly rhetorical question that motivates the poem: how deep is the debt of the world to its explorers? What is the *actual* value of European discovery? I not only want to treat the rhetorical question literally, but I want to imply that there is a material way of treating the "debt" that is at the heart of the poem. If "The Doric Rock" attempts to account for the value of discovery and winds up suspended between art and nature, between spiritual value and scientific value as a means of explication, then I argue there is a third form of accounting in the poem that emerges through the language of wealth.

To establish the American Indian as a paragon of sublime, unlearned worship, Schoolcraft relies on a rather unusual juxtaposition with another colonized people: "Not as where, Asia's piles of marble high / For idol gods the beast was doomed to die."¹³⁸ On the one

¹³⁶ In Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, 94.

¹³⁷ On the state of artless nature to which Native Americans putatively belonged, see the extensive comments in Lewis Cass's "Review of Documents and Proceedings Relating to the Formation and Progress of a Board in the City of New York, for the Emigration, Preservation, and Improvement of the Aborigines of America." July 22, 1829.

¹³⁸ I claim it is unusual, but Schoolcraft's contrast between Native and Asian may mark an early instantiation of a mode of representation theorized by Lyko Day in which "an antinomial view of capitalist relations" produces a moral/ethnic dichotomy "in which the concrete, noncapitalist dimension is Indigenous and the abstract

hand, the lines supplement Schoolcraft's definition of the "natural God" of the Indian and highlights the poem's central figure as a truly sublime feature: in Asia, they built towers to their gods; in America, we sought them in Doric rocks. However, Schoolcraft also insinuates references to material wealth in her extended contrast between Native Americans and Asians. The mention of "idol gods" alludes to the golden calf – a symbol not only of misdirected faith, but of a flawed human faith in money. Along with Asia's "piles of marble high," which summons the imagery of hoarded precious materials, the allusion reminds the readers that idol gods often demand material forms of worship. By contrast, the Doric rock, as material, has relatively little exchange value – it bears no trace of human labor, nor has it been fetishized through some mystical instantiation of its inherent value like marble.¹³⁹ In its utter "rock"-ness, it reminds us that the raw economic worth of intrusions into Native land are relatively small, and that colonists searching for Indigenous material to ransack, may be surprised by failure. Schoolcraft's surprisingly desolate imagery in the second stanza comes alive in this context – the "wastes as yet untried" and "vast ruins of the plain" draw further contrast with the lucrative spoils of colonization in Schoolcraft's imagined "Asia" or any other society where idol gods predominate.

If the Doric Rock itself carries no real value, what is left to those bold discoverers of the first stanza in the form of remuneration? In the first stanza, after all, we are reminded that part of the purpose of discovery is to "guild the lettered page." This passing reference to literal enrichment in the form of gold inlay infers a material valuation that underlies the intellectual conquests of discovery. Where no marble nor gold exists for plunder, perhaps the only consolation for adventurers into the wastes of North America is the complicated "debt" held by the rest of the world. Is a straightforward substitution of spiritual and artistic value enough to make up for the purely economic losses of these disappointed colonial officers? Or, with her question about how deep the debt is owed to explorers, could Schoolcraft be referencing the prospect of bankruptcy – both economic and moral – awaiting the explorers, scientists, and settlers venturing into Indian country?

By representing how explorers and Indians stake their claims – spiritual, scientific, and material – on a single landscape, "The Doric Rock" reflects a tension in the value systems that intersect in the settler-colonial context. In the generic reading, the innocent Indian performs a kind of spiritual critique of the rational designs of settlers. But while in the overt narrative of the poem, Schoolcraft's explorers seem to be motivated by nothing but an earnest desire to explore, the poem also insinuates that there are economic impulses to U.S. discovery that complicate the relationship between Native home-dweller and settler-explorer. The debt that is unspoken in the poem reminds us that settler expansion into the North American terrain is predicated on values that may be speculative and illusory in nature. Just as the gold idols which predominate in the explorer imagination are wholly contrived, debt, too, is constructed by projections of value.

While the expenditure of colonial values provides the subtext for "The Doric Rock," Schoolcraft's "The Contrast" provides a more conspicuous portrayal of the problem of wealth in

representation of capitalist modernity is Asian." Day's setting for this critique is the late nineteenth century, as Asian labor grew in demand with the expansion of the railroads, and I have not seen historical antecedents, outside of Schoolcraft's poem here. But as I argue, *The Doric Rock* relies on this kind of pseudo-cultural contrast with Asia to highlight the pre-capitalist values of the "Simple Indian." See Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 46.

¹³⁹ Here I am relying, again on Day's explication of Marx's concepts of exchange value, commodity fetishization, and money. See Day, *Alien Capital*, 8-13.

the settler-colonial context. “The Contrast” sets out to examine Schoolcraft’s life by comparing “the present moments with the past / And mark difference, not by grains, / But weighed by feelings, joys and pains.”¹⁴⁰ What’s captured through this emotive account, however, is more than personal growth or a loss of innocence, but a key phase in the social and economic transformation of the Ojibwe in Sault Ste. Marie. In the final stanzas, for instance, “The Contrast” catalogues the estranging impact of U.S. authority over the Michigan territory and the Ojibwe at large:

Thus passed the morning of my days,
My only wish, to gain the praise
Of friends I loved, and neighbours kind,
And keep a calm and heavenly mind.
My efforts, kindly were received,
Nor grieved, nor was myself aggrieved.
But ah! how changed is every scene,
Our little hamlet, and the green,
The long rich green, whose warriors played,
And often, breezy elm-wood shade.
How changed, since full of strife and fear,
The world hath sent its votaries here.
The tree cut down—the cot removed,
The cot the simple Indian loved,
The busy strife of young and old
To gain one sordid bit of gold
By trade’s o’er done plethoric moil,
And lawsuits, meetings, courts and toil.

Adieu, to days of homebred ease,
When many a rural care could please,
We trim our sail anew, to steer
By shoals we never knew were here,
And with the star flag, raised on high
Discover a new dominion nigh,
And half in joy, half in fear,
Welcome the proud Republic here.

(29-54)

The changed order depicted encompasses a set of U.S. influences – religious, ecological, bureaucratic – but the heightened diction employed to describe trade and gold emphasizes the economic changes that have tainted the “simple Indian’s” way of life. From a historical perspective, it could be argued that wealth is the central motivator for the wholesale change which we see in “The Contrast,” and that the institutions of law, labor, and logging constellate around it. This may be why Schoolcraft’s vociferous description of trade makes up the affective climax of the poem as a whole, which ends with Schoolcraft in a state of relative ambivalence

¹⁴⁰ “The Contrast” in Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound The Stars Making Rushing Through the Sky*, 117-118. Further line citations made in text.

over the present changes, welcoming the “proud Republic” “half in joy, half in fear” (53-54). While the encounter between the Republic and the Ojibwe – an encounter producing ever more urgent circumstances in the era of removal – is cause for ambivalence, the encounter with capitalism – personified here by gold and trade – can only be depicted as malevolent and excessive, reinforced by the redundancy in the phrase “trade’s o’erdone plethoric moil.”

In “The Contrast,” we see the same reification of the “Simple Indian” as a figure of pure spirit, transfixed in a nostalgic past, but “The Contrast” also affixes to this stereotype the mantle of romantic anticapitalism. This use of indigeneity to “hypostatize the concrete, rooted, and pure, on one hand, and identif(y) capitalism solely with the abstract dimension of social relations, on the other” is a phenomenon described by Iyko Day, whose theorization of Romantic Anticapitalism in the American 19th century locates these exact tropes in literature.¹⁴¹ While Day depicts romantic anticapitalism primarily as an aesthetic and ideological strategy to enshrine white labor and white land ownership as a pure form of social existence as opposed to the “alien” labor forces that arrive later in the 19th century, Schoolcraft’s poem deploys romantic anticapitalism to depict the social turmoil of the encounter between the U.S. and the Ojibwe. As opposed to the endlessly circuitous “shoals” of capitalism imposed by U.S. settler society, the simple Indian pines for a past uncorrupted by “sordid bits of gold.”

While numerous scholars have exemplified how “The Contrast” manipulates genre and sentimentality to issue a critique of Euro-American society during an era of removal, Day’s scholarship might suggest that “The Contrast” and even “The Doric Rock” are participating in an aesthetic troping of indigeneity that favors the machinations of empire.¹⁴² Or at least the poems’ reliance on a nostalgic view of the past to explicate the troubled relation of Native Americans to capitalist development seems to immobilize Native American social relations in the present. In lamenting the present arrival of the “votaries” of the new Republic, with their alien lawsuits, courts, and meetings mobilized in the name of capital accumulation, the past becomes the site of untroubled indigeneity, capable of glorification because of its supposed disappearance. Tying the purity of Indigenous relations to the past, furthermore, becomes a key way in which settler society elides Indigenous claims in the present, in service of the prime directive of settler colonialism: “to appropriate land alone rather than to appropriate Indigenous labor to expropriate that land’s resources.”¹⁴³ In this way, “The Contrast” could be seen as reinforcing the racialist assumption that Native Americans’ resistance to capitalist property relations reflected their

¹⁴¹ Day, *Alien Capital*, 46.

¹⁴² For more observations about the problematic “innocence” of Schoolcraft’s ideal past, see Christine R. Cavalier, “Jane Johnston Schoolcraft’s Sentimental Lessons: Native Literary Collaboration and Resistance,” *MELUS: The Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 98–118; Bethany Schneider, “Not for Citation: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft’s Synchronic Strategies,” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 54, no. 1–4 (4th Quarters 2008), 111–143; René Dietrich, “Native American Poetry in the Age of U. S. Expansion: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft’s ‘The Contrast’ and John Rollin Ridge/Yellow Bird’s ‘The Atlantic Cable,’” in *A History of American Poetry: Contexts-Developments-Readings*, ed. Oliver (ed. and introd.) Scheiding, René (ed. and introd.) Dietrich, and Clemens (ed. and introd.) Spahr, 482 pp. vols., WVT-Handbücher Zum Literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium (WVT-Handbücher Zum Literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium): 19 (Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (WVT), 2015), 111–24.

¹⁴³ Day, *Alien Capital*, 26.

backwardness and incapacity for civilization.¹⁴⁴ The apparent outsiders to trade become trade's victims.

Against such a reading, I want to suggest that Schoolcraft's valorized past is not necessarily one of nostalgic indigenous purity. Despite the invocation of the "simple Indian" and the references across her works to pre-contact mythology, Schoolcraft's own personal past, marshalled in "The Contrast" as a more peaceful alternative to U.S. incursion, reflects the impure, yet adjustable world of the Middle Ground. The early sections of "The Contrast" provide ample evidence for this claim. The "woodland bowers" of Schoolcraft's childhood are adjoined with her "father's simple hall, / oped to whomso'er might call." And of her leisure time, Schoolcraft admits, "Concerts sweet we oft enjoyed, / Books our leisure time employed / Friends on every side appeared." Line by line, Schoolcraft alternates stereotypical Indigenous influences with European, juxtaposing the open forest with the library, the oral tradition with the written word. Ultimately, what's upheld in Schoolcraft's past is not some isolationist purity of the Ojibwe, but the amity within impurity facilitated by the cohabitation of her two lineages – a cohabitation that would not have occurred without trade itself. With this in mind, the central contrast of the poem is not between Indigenous purity and capitalist complexity, but, between "friends" and "votaries." Against a "romantic anticapitalist" reading, I suggest that Schoolcraft's primary critique is against the excessive devotion and supposed immutability of the "proud Republic." While the fur trade engendered an experiment in cultural adaptation and admixture that ultimately produced "friends" and "neighbours kind," the new industries, fueled by the U.S. expansion into Michigan territory, represent a threat to this order in the form of rigid lines of power and institutionalism. The poem takes aim at the ethical drawbacks of wealth hoarding and commerce to critique the increasingly stark imposition of U.S. logics of capital on a more flexible, friendly, mixed mode of commerce and society.

One way of historically explicating this contrast drawn in Schoolcraft's poetry is to examine how debt transformed during Schoolcraft's lifetime. Debt was always an essential feature of the Middle Ground and fueled European exploration into Native territory during all eras of North American colonialism. In the Ojibwe context, participants in the early phases of the fur trade attempted to learn the ins and outs of credit and debt from the European vantage while ascribing distinct traditional interpretations to debts held by both parties.¹⁴⁵ The assumption that debt would play a concrete role in the establishment of trade relationships led to both cross-cultural competency and confusion, as debts were often conflated with gifts or other less market-rational forms of exchange. This form of confusion is, as Richard White acknowledges, a key feature of the Middle Ground, and one that necessitated evolution in the relations between whites and natives during the long history of the fur trade.¹⁴⁶ On the European side, the gifts traders supplied to Native communities had to be both construed as establishing social bonds with new Indigenous communities and as a means of establishing debt that Native participants would repay in spring pelts.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ For a thorough discussion of how this assumption inflected U.S. policy making from the era of Washington to Jackson, see Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 10-30.

¹⁴⁵ White, *The Middle Ground*, 115.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 114.

¹⁴⁷ Child and Calloway, *Holding Our World Together*, 40.

Schoolcraft's own acts of gift giving validate her understanding of gift/debt under the intercultural logics of the Middle Ground,¹⁴⁸ but she was also likely aware of other forms of debt that began to reshape the settler-colonial landscape. There were, of course, the debts between European parties that sustained the fur trade and brought entrepreneurial explorers like Jane's father to the Great Lakes region in the first place. There were also bankruptcies and overwhelming debts in the Eastern U.S. that inspired a younger generation of Americans to make their way west into Indian territory – Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was among these.¹⁴⁹ But there were also new species of speculation and exchange that threatened to reorder the world of Ojibwe-settler relations. By the 1820's, the fur trade was becoming monopolized. The large corporations who took the place of independent traders increasingly rationalized the trade in peltry.¹⁵⁰ One consequence of this development was that fur traders began to be more deliberate in their accounting of debts owed to them by tribes, and often even leveraged debt for larger scale concessions.¹⁵¹ This wider pattern of broad scale trade debt that plagued Native communities, including the Ojibwe, was responsible for the agreement of 1825 that the Federal government would begin paying individual Indian debts to fur traders out of tribal funds. As historian James L. Clayton explains:

The government was vitally interested in Indian land cessions to meet the needs of an expanding population. Since the good will of a trader was often crucial to the successful conclusion of a treaty, United States authorities saw no evil in speeding the negotiations by providing for the satisfaction of traders' claims. This practice—perhaps innocuous at first—grew gradually but steadily until by the late 1830s about \$200,000 was secured annually by traders from Indian treaties, and in 1842 such claims amounted to over \$2,000,000. The bulk of this money was paid to individuals in the Great Lakes region.¹⁵²

From this vantage, debt was not simply the fuel for discovery by individual explorers or failed entrepreneurs – it was rather becoming a crucial chess move in the expansion of the territorial United States into native land. The fact that fur traders had suddenly found a way to make themselves rich off of tribal money paid out from the federal government undoubtedly

¹⁴⁸ See Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through The Sky*, 45 for a particularly striking anecdote in which Henry Rowe Schoolcraft “flattered (Andrew) Jackson and Jackson’s secretary’s family with gifts from Indian country, including moccasins and “cakes of maple sugar from the north, prepared under the direction of Mrs. Schoolcraft.”

¹⁴⁹ See Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, 24. Henry went bankrupt as a supervisor of glass works in New York State after British imports of glass resumed after the War of 1812: “Trading on his scientific talents, he escaped west as an explorer in the Ozarks and then on two trips to what today we call the Midwest.” With this in mind, there is a real temptation to treat the entirety of the Doric Rock as a send up of her husband’s supposedly purely scientific intentions for traveling west.

¹⁵⁰ In “The Growth and Economic Significance of the American Fur Trade, 1790-1890,” James L. Clayton claims “from the 1790s to the War of 1812 there were no powerful fur trading monopolies in the United States... During the 1820s and 1830s, however when large and powerful concerns such as the American Fur Company, the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and the Chouteau companies sent hundreds of men great distances into the wilderness in search of pelts, exports fell” in Sleeper-Smith, *Rethinking the Fur Trade*, 172. See also White, *The Middle Ground*, 479-481 for his depiction of the rationalization of the trade after 1790.

¹⁵¹ Child and Calloway, *Holding Our World Together*, 49.

¹⁵² Clayton, ““The Growth and Economic Significance of the American Fur Trade, 1790-1890,” in Sleeper-Smith, *Rethinking the Fur Trade*, 169.

complicated the intercultural claims to land, wealth, and peaceful relationships with both the Ojibwe and the U.S. government. This represented not only an acceleration of the capitalist logic of accumulation that had long been held back by the accommodation of the Middle Ground, but a complex development in settler-colonialism that drew Ojibwe participants into novel calculations about the value of land, debt, and sovereignty.

Many of the early 19th-century treaties between the Ojibwe and the U.S. reflected this new calculus. As the fur trade underwent a series of booms and busts throughout the early 1800s, the Great Lakes became the target of other industries: primarily logging and mining. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft played a prominent role himself in facilitating the Fond Du Lac Treaty of 1826, “which stipulated the Americans’ right to engage in mineral mining in Ojibwe lands in present-day Wisconsin and Minnesota.”¹⁵³ As extractive industries with more vested interests in land acquisition began to supplant the fur trade, the complex system of social accommodation that characterized early settler/Native contact began to unravel. Increasingly, Indigenous parties had to safeguard their interests by guaranteeing annuities for land ceded in treaties and by understanding the ups and downs of the U.S. exchange market, rather than intermarrying or formulating complex kinship and gift exchanges as a means of solidifying their claims.

Finally, the situation of the Ojibwe in Michigan was complicated by the swift shift in the national credit system that took place under Andrew Jackson’s presidency. The myriad of state and local banks that cropped up under Jackson’s manipulation of the U.S. economy were eager to issue paper money and billets to a new class of American land speculators.¹⁵⁴ As historian Edward Balleisen points out, “speculators and settlers bought land at government auctions or through private sales, usually relying on debt-based financing.” In addition, “the settlement of the trans-Appalachian frontier, and the construction of grand transportation projects,” among other good financial portents, “stimulated a free flow of credit from both European and domestic sources.”¹⁵⁵ The successful settlement of the Western frontier vis-à-vis credit, in turn supplied credit to new explorers in the West, creating a kind of feedback loop of economic speculation centered around land purchases in previously held Native territory. This opened up a new can of worms for the Ojibwe of Sault Ste. Marie. J.P. Bowes points out that the population boom in Michigan territory between 1830 and 1834 was almost entirely thanks to Jackson’s financial innovations, allowing white settlers access to a free flow of credit and paper money on which to establish homesteads and livelihoods from logging to agriculture to mining.¹⁵⁶

With these developments in mind, Schoolcraft’s poetic treatment of the economically turbulent relationship between U.S. settlers and “simple Indians” appears to echo the historical imperatives facing the Ojibwe. Still, Anishinaabe participants in this altered economy proved adaptable, and many even used annuity payments to repurchase ceded tribal land.¹⁵⁷ Even under increasingly stratified social circumstances, many Ojibwe communities found opportunities for

¹⁵³ Frank Kelderman, *Authorized Agents: Publication and Diplomacy in the Era of Indian Removal*, Suny Series, Native Traces (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019), 178.

¹⁵⁴ A treatise-size account of this phenomenon can be found in Scott Reynolds Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History of America’s Financial Disasters*, 1st ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 95-125.

¹⁵⁵ Edward J. Balleisen, *Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy and Commercial Society in Antebellum America*, The Luther Hartwell Hodges Series on Business, Society, and the State (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 33.

¹⁵⁶ See John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4526682>, 184.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

ritual in the new economy of land sales and annuities by transforming the annual dispersal of goods and silver from the U.S. government into communal gatherings where goods were distributed through traditional Anishinaabe means.¹⁵⁸ Schoolcraft's poetry is one example of these novel indigenous adaptations to the new U.S. context – both in fact and in deed. From one vantage, her writing was itself an act of accommodation to a U.S. colonial officer whose demands for cultural material were mediated through Schoolcraft's pen. From another, her poetry enacts negotiation with the arriving votaries of the U.S. at large by attempting to describe an advantageous relationship between settler and Native, facilitated by friendship, intimacy, and flexibility, rather than by hoarded credit and carefully guarded debts. "On The Doric Rock, Lake Superior" and "The Contrast" both perform such a role, but one of Schoolcraft's simplest poems provides the best example of an intercultural contract designed for the era of U.S. authority over the Ojibwe.

Poem As Gift, Poem as Billet

Overall, "My Humble Present is a Purse" goes largely overlooked in scholarship on Schoolcraft. Disguised as a short, unassuming, sentimental ballad, the piece involves an intricate set of mutations and references that implicate debt, trade, and settler colonialism. Like "The Contrast," "My Humble Present" provides a means of remediating the colonial encounter by harkening to earlier forms of settler-indigenous contact and reflecting their moral superiority. The key difference is that "My Humble Present" achieves this not by critiquing trade, but by enacting it – performing a poetic repurposing of debt to activate the terms of intimacy and adaptation that should accompany trade and social interchange. To understand how this occurs, I will first examine how "My Humble Present" transforms from a literary representation of property exchange – a gift given between presumed friends – to itself a kind of credit instrument. The full text of the poem reads:

My humble present is a purse,
Of little worth 'tis true;
Without, 'tis plain, and what is worse
Within, 'tis empty too.

But not to cost, in Friendship's eye,
The gift its value owes;
And oft we prize a trifle high,
When 'tis the heart bestows.

This claim at least, I do aver,
And promise by this billet,
Take you the purse tho' empty now,
And when I can I'll fill it.¹⁵⁹

The first stanza offers up the purse in question as a gift while also staging an evaluation of its worth. Its relative "humbleness," both of construction and content, imply a limited circulation of

¹⁵⁸ Child and Calloway, *Holding Our World Together*, 54-55.

¹⁵⁹ Schoolcraft, "My humble present is a purse," in Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky*, 98. Subsequent line citations made in text.

exchange, from author to addressee alone. Of course, this assessment of worth anticipates the reversal of the second stanza, which introduces “Friendship’s eye” – the personal lens to which the purse owes its sentimental value. This stanza emphasizes the personality of the property at hand, making it an expression of a social bond. While the purse’s low market value and high sentimental value supposedly prevent it from resale or further circulation in commodity capitalism, the final stanza introduces an entirely different form of exchange, characterized by the strong contractual language of the first lines: “This claim at least, I do aver / and promise by this billet.” The reference to the billet immediately calls to mind the common nineteenth-century paper instruments that averred or instantiated debt. Billets, or bills of exchange, were portable paper contracts signed and handed over to creditors in order to secure a loan, often specifying terms, interest rates, etc.¹⁶⁰ In its final lines, then, the poem transforms from a sentimental evaluation of property to a bill of exchange all its own: whereas the gift only reflects a personal bond, the billet assigns a debt (“this claim I do aver”), specifies an amount (“I’ll fill it”) and outlines the terms of repayment (“when I can”). With the poem acting as a billet, the poet becomes a debtor, the addressee a creditor, and the purse a form of collateral meant to ensure the debt. The final stanza, thus, transmogrifies the social field of gift exchange to invoke the credit economy.

That the poem mobilizes, stanza by stanza, three distinct notions of value with regards to the purse in question suggests that the poem is confused over the form of property exchange it has enacted. Is the humble present a gift or is it proof of a debt? While this confusion in the poem may point to an unresolved tension in interpretation, by using multiple historical lenses, we can better understand how this muddling of gift and debt, sentimentality and raw economic contract, operate to describe and prescribe the transformation of trade and settler-colonial relations during Schoolcraft’s lifetime. Given the broad scale changes in debt and commerce between Ojibwe and the U.S. previously examined, Schoolcraft’s poem could be seen as functioning in a number of different ways. First it could be working to exhume the intercultural practices of accommodation of the Middle Ground. Richard White reminds us that the fur trade “remained in reality a precarious amalgam of exchanges that ranged from gifts to credit transactions, to direct commodity exchanges, to extortion, to theft.”¹⁶¹ With White providing background, “My Humble Present’s” mixed economy comes to life. The uncertainty of sentiment, debt, friendship, cost and value are typical of a mode of exchange in which commodities were routinely mistaken for gifts and trade depended upon an intricate interplay of cross-cultural gestures, logics, and signifiers. Debt and gift giving constantly verge on one another in this uncertain economy. Social bonds are affixed to market instruments and presents imply remuneration by coin. As the poem works both to bestow the heart’s affection and imagine the author’s indebtedness to its recipient, the stakes of this exchange are socially intermediated, rather than determined alone by the creditor. White’s principal insight, after all, was to show how this mixed economy necessitated a program of cultural and political accommodation rather than assimilation or elimination. On these grounds, debt supplies an economic valence to an adaptive social contract by attempting to assign specific terms to a relationship hinged upon the interpretation of exchange.

To a Native author confronting traders’ widescale calling in of credit, the rise of extractive industries, and rapacious land speculation, the advantages of this mixed economy must have seemed obvious. While the confusion of gift for debt may have led to misinterpretation or

¹⁶⁰ See Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 11.

¹⁶¹ White, *The Middle Ground*, 480.

precarity in some ways, in others it ensured secure, long-term relations with white settlers during the era of the fur trade. Bruce White's article "'Give us a Little Milk': The Social and Cultural Significance of Gift Giving in the Lake Superior Fur Trade," examines how gifts operated in this context not only to engender good will and social ties at the outset of trading but in many cases to "establish and affirm more elaborate relationships."¹⁶² Crucially, gift giving was not only a proxy for material debts owed between Native and European, but often helped stamp a greater kinship between the two parties:

Although it has yet to be shown in a quantified way, the Europeans apparently did the bulk of the gift giving in many of these diplomatic transactions, just as in the family group it was initially the father who gave to the child... Indians gave many gifts of furs and ceremonial presents during these exchanges. But they did not necessarily give a tangible, equal present in an economic sense, as in the peace talks between Ojibway and Dakota. Their gift was something more profound—the loyalty that a child feels toward the parent, a long-term tie that was expressed by a defense of the parent against insult and violence and a willingness to avenge an attack.¹⁶³

Given the unequal exchanges that substantiated gift giving between Europeans and Native fur trade parties, the presumption of continued trade depended on professions of kinship and future loyalty. The mode of address in "My Humble Present" fits this historical model quite precisely by investing high personal value in an exchange with relatively low monetary value, and by attempting to establish a link of long-term intimacy between the poet and the addressee. In enacting a trade of great social import, the poem also upholds the Ojibwe belief that "tangible objects could be used to signify feelings."¹⁶⁴ From this vantage, the desired "friendship" between traders is facilitated by the act of gift giving enshrined in the purse, mitigating the unresolved debt that is named in the final stanza of the poetic contract.

With these terms and historical practices fully invoked, Schoolcraft's poem could be construed as a kind of heuristic for U.S. settlers looking to establish a range of relationships with Ojibwe Natives in the evolving economy of the early 19th century. Schoolcraft was composing her poetry during a period in which widescale credit was being leveraged to disadvantage Native Americans. In this light, "My Humble Present" seems to model and idealize an antecedent form of Native/white relationality organized around accommodation that is out of step with Schoolcraft's present. Counterpoised with the atrophy of Native-settler relations during the removal era, "My Humble Present" evokes the sense of a variegated economy of obligations and social bonds situated in a generative past. These more traditional forms of social bonding and exchange that had sustained relationships between settler and Indian were in decline. The eager U.S. newcomers to trade may very well have neglected the vital practices of gift giving at the outset of their takeover in the Great Lakes region; and we know for a fact that the fur trade monopolies that came to power during Schoolcraft's lifetime installed directives against ample gift giving and social welfare overtures of traders in the past. By harkening to a past practice of gift giving, Schoolcraft's short poem is a portable guidebook for these newcomers, and simultaneously a critique of their shallow understanding of settler-Indian relations.

¹⁶² White, "'Give us a Little Milk'" 115.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 115.

Still, there seems more at stake in “My Humble Present” than a nostalgic attempt at reliving the once-vital exchanges of the past. As “The Contrast” plainly demonstrates, Schoolcraft, knows how to command the past tense for effect, especially when it comes to drawing out the social and political disadvantages of the present. Rather than situating the exchange of the purse in a “humble past,” though, Schoolcraft’s poem adapts the mixed social and economic logics of her fur trading forebears into a present-day poetic contract. From this vantage, debt functions less as an instrument of Native dispossession and more as a means of stipulating an ongoing relation of white/Native reciprocity, made in the terms of present-day commerce.

As suggested earlier, Ojibwe citizens had to involve themselves in the evolving world of finance in order to understand how their claims to land were being reordered under the new Republic’s economy. Debt and credit instruments like billets and bank loans were ubiquitous in the emerging marketplace of the 19th century and their sale and resale fueled mass speculation on real estate west of the Appalachians. This speculative market not only required fluency in the reading and circulation of billets and bank notes, but also the interpretation, and often the elision, of Native claims to land.¹⁶⁵ Andrew Jackson’s economic innovations only sped up this process by introducing a slew of new credit instruments into the fledgling economy, issuing mainly from new state banks, many of which were being established on the American frontier.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the U.S. Land office was eager to supply open plots to U.S. settlers who relied on debt-based financing and mortgages doled out by the office itself. By the 1830s, the Michigan frontier was awash with credit and billets of all varieties, each helping to rewrite claims to territory and property for U.S. settlers and Natives alike. The Ojibwe had to reckon with this “plethoric moil” as much as the bank owners, land officers and settlers of the early Republic.

Within this saturated field of commerce, we can interpret Schoolcraft’s poetic contract as not simply a sentimental appeal to past principals, but an earnest attempt at immersion in a new marketplace for Native-settler relationality. The adept references to claims averred, prices re-estimated, and billets received recast the poem as a more modern form of financial reckoning adapted to the encroaching world of U.S. finance. Beyond the lamentations of “The Contrast” or the biting incriminations of “The Doric Rock,” “My Humble Present” makes an earnest attempt at meeting the world of U.S. capitalism partway.

Let us imagine that the addressee of “My Humble Present” arrives at a bank with poem and purse in hand. Let us jump even further by suggesting that the bank agrees to discount the poem, granting the addressee cash for the billet and taking the averred claim to promise to fill the purse at a later date as evidence enough of repayment from the poet. What else would the bank be agreeing to in its purchase of this credit instrument? Is it possible to validate the final stanza of the poem – the part that transforms the poem into a bill of exchange – without acknowledging the purse’s uncertain status as gift/collateral? What happens to the relationship of “friendship” enshrined in the poem’s language and the purse’s provision? Does it simply convert, rationalize itself, reduce the personal and cultural consequences of the contract? As Bruce Mann reminds us, in an economy of circulating billets, “promises to pay must be severed from the transactions that give rise to them and be treated as essentially fungible. Only then can written credit instruments circulate in the economy. Assignability thus promoted economic efficiency by depersonalizing

¹⁶⁵ Bruce Mann depicts the world of 18th and early 19th century land speculators in these terms: “‘imprecise surveys, no surveys, unextinguished Indian titles, competing claims from other speculators (...) made their land difficult to sell and difficult to hold on to.’” *Republic of Debtors*, 201.

¹⁶⁶ See Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats*, 110

the relationship between debtor and creditor—part of the social cost of commercialization.”¹⁶⁷ At the same time, colonial historian Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor asserts that “while promissory notes were ‘impersonal’ in that they were legally fungible, women and men attached them firmly to people and personal exchanges.”¹⁶⁸

The trouble with Schoolcraft’s billet in such a field of commercialization is the uncertain interpretation of value contained therein. While the promise to fill the purse implies a somewhat feasible monetary remuneration, this guarantee from debtor to creditor is backed up by the valuation of a purely social bond: friendship. The mortgaged item of the purse is worth little in terms of gold, yet instantiates a bond of amity between the parties which in turn guarantees the eventual debt. It is impossible, in this poetic circumstance, to extinguish the local social meaning of the debt in the name of financialization. Still, if we are to assume that the poem is intended for mass circulation in a broader market of billets and credit instruments, then we must ask how these social promises might proliferate in this new economy. Discounting, trading on, and reselling the credit instrument assembled in “My Humble Present” would involve more than market logic – it would have to interpret the multiple claims embodied in the purse and the social scene from which the object and the contract originated. Moreover, it would have to place a kind of rational evaluation on the terms of friendship averred in the piece. It would need to establish value from the offer of increased intimacy which the purse substantiates. These modern machinations, in essence, would need to adapt to the terms of social exchange specified by the Ojibwe party. The poem is, thus, a test case for the possibility of such an adaptation – can billets be instruments of the same form of social adaptation and intimacy that characterized the Middle Ground? Can the field of trade, undergoing almost daily renovations from the U.S. side, allow for the ongoing friendship between Ojibwe and settler?

In other words, the poem’s identification with debt projects a marketplace where a peculiar mode of mixed Native and white sociality might be understood and validated, forming the basis of future gains. Against the economic imperatives guiding dispossession, which configured land as the only valuable asset attached to Native Americans, Schoolcraft’s poem sets a simple, worthless purse on a speculative journey into settler society where the bonds of friendship and affection might circulate and inure traders to its social logic. In this imagined exchange, debt opens the door for a proliferation of accommodation between Natives and whites.

Treaty-Making and Outstanding Debts

I began this chapter by suggesting that Schoolcraft’s writing indexes both the split cultural influences that surrounded her and the complexities of trade spread across two unique political-economic systems. If, in the machinery of Schoolcraft’s symbolism, a gift is a means of establishing an enduring social compact between two distinct cultures, debt, then, is a means of renewing and accounting for the obligations that buoy the settler-colonial relationship. The question remains, however, as to the extent of Schoolcraft’s real investment in the world of both debt and settler-colonial relations. While I suggest from the language of her poem that Schoolcraft’s “My Humble Present” represents an attempt at entering the world of advanced financing in order to form a more perfect union between settler and Ojibwe, this poetic effort is

¹⁶⁷ Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Ellen Hartigan-O’Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3441667>, 82.

made in the realm of imagined dealings. But how closely did these imaginative efforts mirror real understandings?

It must be admitted that it cannot be taken for granted that a Métis Ojibwe woman who, by all accounts, worked hard to integrate herself into the role of the wife of a prominent white American, was also as fluent in the transforming credit market as I have suggested.¹⁶⁹ We know that American women during the colonial period and after were adept issuers of bonds, promissory notes, and due bills, often supplying and pursuing credit with merchants vis-à-vis these assignable notes.¹⁷⁰ We also know that with each innovation in the emerging credit economy of the early republic, women's role became increasingly marginalized.¹⁷¹ We know all of this mostly from the perspective of white women's interactions with debt in the colonial world of commerce. From the Ojibwe vantage, as we have seen, women in the tribe and their Métis offspring were often active participants in the commerce of their fur trapping communities. As many scholars have noted, they augmented the wealth of their European husbands and family by translating intercultural modes of deal-making, and some even successfully navigated the complex world of exchange independently by tapping into kinship and economic relations unknown to white settlers.¹⁷²

Where Schoolcraft lies on this spectrum is somewhat uncertain. Parker suggests "even if Jane would likely have seen Ojibwe and Métis models as less prestigious, given the steady encroachment of white authority and the military and political power of upper-class white people like those her father identified with" she nevertheless "took an interest in other models of femininity" including the intercultural broker role embodied by her mother.¹⁷³ Jennifer Brown tells us that the skills that Ojibwe women leveraged in the fur trade society were often transmitted from mother to mixed daughter, despite the encroachment of the cult of white womanhood, meaning Schoolcraft could very well have been versed in the diplomatic trade models her mother helped carry out.¹⁷⁴ Still, it is important not to reify this understanding without evidence.

All speculation aside, it is most likely true that Jane's knowledge of commerce and its intersection with colonial affairs came from sources other than Andrew Jackson's rampant marketplace of credit and debt – sources like treaties. I have mentioned the 1826 *Treaty with the Chippewa Made at The Fond Du Lac of Lake Superior* mainly in passing as a means of explicating Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's role as a colonial negotiator and the U.S.'s increasing interest in mining on the Ojibwe territory. At this juncture, it is worth a more detailed accounting as it elucidates Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's investment in the issuance of colonial claims and

¹⁶⁹ Parker suggests that Schoolcraft had adapted herself, in part, to the "cult of true womanhood," and as such may have been less involved in the management of financial matters than her husband. See Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, 17.

¹⁷⁰ See Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy*, 78-84.

¹⁷¹ Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4321885>, 72.

¹⁷² For more on this phenomenon see Sleeper Smith's examples of Odawa and Ojibwe women taking the trade into their own hands in her chapter "Women, Kin, and Catholicism: New Perspectives on the Fur Trade" in Sleeper-Smith, *Rethinking the Fur Trade*, 4443-481; and Brenda J. Child and Colin Calloway, *Holding Our World Together*, 47.

¹⁷³ Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, 16-17.

¹⁷⁴ See Brown, Jennifer S.H. "Woman as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities" in Sleeper-Smith, *Rethinking the Fur Trade*, 520.

Ojibwe wealth. Article 4 of the Treaty, for example, assigns around 640 acres of land to the Métis descendants of fur trade relationships, “it being deemed important that the half-breeds, scattered through this extensive country, should be stimulated to exertion and improvement by the possession of permanent property and fixed residences.”¹⁷⁵ Jane is among the only party named explicitly in this section under “[Oshauguscodaywayqua](#) and her descendents.” Henry’s involvement with Jane and reliance on all of Ozhauguscodaywayqua’s family for the successful signing of the treaty undoubtedly played a large role in why a specific parcel of land is named in her case. In this situation, Jane’s status and her mother’s as intercultural fixtures resulted in a very real issuance of property – a demonstration of how the fur trade roles that persisted in the U.S. colonial context could continue to be wielded advantageously in the field of exchange.

Unlike billets, promissory notes, or other forms of debt, however, the Treaty of Fond Du Lac attaches major disclaimers to its promises of property exchange. When it comes to the annuity payments and infrastructure promises made in exchange for Ojibwe cooperation, land cessions, and mineral rights the treaty amends: “it is expressly understood and agreed, that the fourth, fifth and sixth articles, or either of them, may be rejected by the President and Senate, without affecting the validity of the other articles of this Treaty.” Further the annuities of “two thousand dollars, in money or goods” “shall continue only during the pleasure of the Congress of the United States.”¹⁷⁶ While these caveats may have been standard fare for treaties signed between colonial agents and Native tribes to safeguard the ratification processes of the federal government, they nonetheless reflect the settler colonial authorities’ hedging approach to remunerating the Ojibwe. The additional mechanisms of approval and conditional agreement add a layer of bureaucratic uncertainty to the forms of agreement and socio-economic exchange that the Ojibwe may have been used to in the Middle Ground. These added layers of bureaucratic discretion may have factored into Schoolcraft’s critique of the votaries of the U.S. and “their endless lawsuits, meetings, courts and toil.”

It is simple to demonstrate how the new treaty-making practices of the U.S. diverged from the models of practical accommodation and mutual adaptation prominent in the era of the French-Algonquian fur trade.¹⁷⁷ It is more difficult to show how Ojibwe subjects (and poets) interpreted these new forms of policy making and the conditions outlined therein. When it comes to the Fond Du Lac Treaty, however, we have one key piece of evidence provided by Schoolcraft herself in a translated letter titled “Character of Aboriginal Historical Tradition.” Supposedly the transcribed message of a “distant relative” and addressed to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft as “Editor of the *Mussinyegun*,” the letter supplies less an ethnographic sample of Ojibwe “historical tradition” and more a direct appeal to Henry, concluding with a detailed request:

O Sir, if I could write myself, (and not trouble my generous relation as I now do) I think I should strive to make you acquainted with all our ancient traditions and customs without deceiving you in the least—just as I heard them from my father. Tell me sir, if it is true, that our great father (The President) is going to cause a house to be built, and a man in black to come and instruct us poor Indians, and if we are to dwell in the house. My heart

¹⁷⁵ “Treaty with the Chippewa Made and Concluded at the Fond Du Lac of Lake Superior, 1826.” (n.d.), Wikisource.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Through analysis of more than one agreement between Algonquian and U.S. representatives, Richard White demonstrates that American officials failed to understand these models of diplomacy. See White, *The Middle Ground*, 382-384.

danced with joy, and my eyes filled with tears of gratitude, when I first heard what is before us.

(...) But when the man in black comes to teach us poor young ignorant people the right way, I shall know better; and when I can write, I shall not forget to send you all the pretty songs and stories my mother used to teach me—to be put in your paper. Until that time shall arrive Sir, I must wish you health.¹⁷⁸

As Parker demonstrates, the allusions to the “house being built” and the “man in black to come and instruct us poor Indians” are direct references to the Fond Du Lac Treaty which stipulates a \$1000 annuity “be appropriated to the support of an establishment for their education, to be located upon some part of the St. Mary’s river, and the money to be expended under the direction of the President.”¹⁷⁹ While it may seem strange to a modern reader that a Native subject might be actively appealing to the U.S. for the construction of such a school, this desire on the part of the narrator is representative of the expectations of Ojibwe individuals who were attempting to adapt themselves to a new social and political reality. In his work *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*, Scott Richard Lyons recasts treaties between the Ojibwe and the U.S. as markers of Native “consent in a context of coercion,” rather than outright symbols of ceded authority.¹⁸⁰ By assuming that Native parties had a complex grasp of the terms of the treaties they entered into, necessitated by their understanding of the value of what they ceded to settlers in the exchange, Lyons argues that treaties’ institution of modern changes like schools were sometimes viewed as desirable among Native participants. The newfound Ojibwe assent to annuities, infrastructure, schools, and literacy may have reflected less a surrender than an adaptation to the forces of social change. From this vantage, the unnamed narrator of “Aboriginal Historical Tradition” evinces this readiness for change in her solicitation of the treaty promises from Schoolcraft.

The text of the letter, however, illustrates not only the Ojibwe adaptation to the shifting social ground of settler-colonialism, but an adaptation of the fur trade logics of exchange to a new encounter with the U.S. In her conclusion, the narrator makes a clever appeal to Henry Schoolcraft, acknowledging both his role as a colonial officer and as an avid documenter of Ojibwe ethnography. Playing on his desire for enrichment from the “pretty songs and stories” of the Ojibwe and his responsibility over the claims laid down in the Treaty, the narrator offers up a quid pro quo – once the school has arrived, I can supply you with the stories and songs you want. In this sense, the letter forms a supplement to the 1826 Treaty of Fond Du Lac, attempting a renewal of its social and material agreements and a reopening of negotiations with the colonial agent who had initially penned it. Inherent in this renewed negotiation is the narrator’s sense that something is still owed to the Ojibwe – the promise of annuities for schooling. The final line of the piece which begins “until that time shall arrive Sir” even conveys a sense of impatience with the intransigence of the U.S. party and engenders a kind of new contractual understanding of what’s on offer in terms of cultural repayment in the form of transcribed song and stories. Even in the narrator’s language of graciousness and moral improvement, we can still distinctly read the calling in of an outstanding debt.

¹⁷⁸ “Character of Aboriginal Historical Tradition,” in Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, 118.

¹⁷⁹ See Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, 219.

¹⁸⁰ See Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*, Indigenous Americas (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 2-4.

We are back in the realm of mixed economy. Are the offers and requests in this letter best understood as initiating trade, diplomacy, or gift-giving? The narrator's "tears of gratitude" would imply that the treaty's school annuities are construed as a gift, were it not for the subtle implication contained in "when I first heard what is before us" that the promise of the annuities remains an unfulfilled debt. Even the narrator's exaggeration of the relative weakness of the Ojibwe with phrases like "us poor Indians" and "us poor young ignorant people" echoes the rhetorical strategies identified by Bruce M. White as mixed messages sent by Ojibwe parties to solicit gifts and greater kinship from trade partners on the Middle Ground: "If an Indian told a trader or a government agent that he was 'destitute' and in great need, did this mean that he was simply acquisitive? Was it not also possible that he was interested in establishing a social and political tie with the trader or government agent?"¹⁸¹ The narrator of the letter, transcribed through Schoolcraft's pen, exemplifies this acquisitiveness, drawing on old models of intercultural exchange to call in the obligation of the U.S. colonial agent. This obligation and the letter itself which offers its own promises, can be construed in many of the same ways as Schoolcraft's "My Humble Present" – a marker of debt, an offer of a gift, an attempt at reestablishing a social bond mediated through the interpretable logics of the Middle Ground.

The text of "Aboriginal Historical Tradition" thus deploys a kind of mixed, adaptable logic of exchange to the treaty-making policies of settler colonialism under the U.S. Unlike "My Humble Present," though, this attempt is not made in the realm of poetic play. The rhetorical flourishes and the coded quid pro quos are meant to produce real material results, with real social consequences. The letter alludes to the social gravity of its own appeal by way of reference to past promises made between settlers and Natives:

My father was descended from one of the most ancient and respected leaders of the Ojibwa band—long before the white people had it in their power to distinguish an Indian by placing a piece of silver, in the shape of a medal on his breast. However, my father had one of those marks of distinction given him; but he only estimated it as being a visible proof of amity between his nation and that of the whites, and thought himself bound by it, to observe a strict attention to the duties of friendship; taking care that it should not be his fault if it did not continue to be reciprocal.¹⁸²

The narrator here continues to valorize social value over material value, drawing on her father's "estimation" of the silver medal as essentially minting a relationship of loyalty and friendship between two peoples. Imbued with her father's "strict attention" to continued reciprocity, the narrator attempts to hold accountable the U.S. in her treatment of the Fond Du Lac treaty later in the letter. These referenced "duties of friendship" add leverage to the narrator's position in the negotiation over the school annuities by invoking a past social compact, embodied in the tangible silver objects in her possession. The narrator's appeals resonate interestingly with an historical instance of failed negotiation between Henry Schoolcraft and Eschkebugecoshe of the Flat Mouth Ojibwe in 1832:

Laying the medals of all the Leech Lake leaders and a string of wampum given to him previously by the Americans at Schoolcraft's feet, Eschkebugecoshe went on:

¹⁸¹ Bruce M. White, "Give Us a Little Milk," 130.

¹⁸² Schoolcraft and Parker, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, 217.

‘These and all your letters are stained with blood. I return them all to you to make them bright. None of us wish to receive them back until you have wiped off the blood....’¹⁸³

Eschkebugecoshe’s actions and words in this instance provide a clear view onto the consequences of lapsed trust and obligation between the Ojibwe and the U.S. It also further demonstrates how the bestowal of medals was understood by the Ojibwe as less a personal gift than an act of concretizing the good relations between colonial and Indigenous parties. The fact that Eschkebugecoshe returns the medals to Henry Schoolcraft and stipulates a further obligation to “make them bright” before they are received again demonstrates the flexibility of their symbolic nature through the social exchange logic of the Ojibwe. An item given over from colonizer to colonized is not, in fact, an inert, fungible instrument – stripped of its social significance and reduced to material value. It is a marker of an ongoing relationship, one that could be bruised or bloodied, or returned to sender depending on the lapsed debts of the colonizer.

Amidst these socially fraught acts of exchange and diplomacy, we once again see Jane Johnston Schoolcraft in the role of intermediary, stepping in to translate and transcribe a Native relative’s overtures at exchange with her husband, the colonial officer. By assuming that Schoolcraft had a vested interest in the facts of exchange that the Fond Du Lac Treaty stipulated, we can at least see her delivery of the letter to Henry as an act of helping to re-establish a social compact through the rhetoric of mixed trade and diplomacy. Remembering her literary treatment of settler-colonial relations, we could see the letter responding to the pitfalls and promises of treaty-making “half in joy, half in fear.” But in Schoolcraft’s hands, the letter also expresses the need for large scale societal adaptation on the part of the U.S., as much as the Ojibwe. If treaties call for the advance of modern changes among the Ojibwe, Schoolcraft’s translated letter calls for a critical shift in understanding amongst the treaty makers – that the obligations set down in writing be viewed not as retractable, fungible offerings, but as markers of long-term societal cohabitation and exchange. Schoolcraft herself must have understood both sides of this compact, implicated as she was in both the diplomacy of her husband and the trade of her parents. Like her poetry, Schoolcraft’s letter stages the meeting of these two logics, testing the flexibility of the settler-colonial relation by intermixing trade and treaty. By doing so, Schoolcraft underlines the exigency and value of accommodation to the newly arrived “votaries” of the U.S., implying that with every new exchange of land, there must be a renewal of social understandings.

Outside of supplying a snapshot of a world of Indigenous relations under transition, Schoolcraft’s work intercedes in the forward march of U.S. authority to remediate value from a variety of cultural and social perspectives. Along these lines, her elucidation of treaty language and channeling of trade tactics are strategies commensurate with her literary depictions of the social bonds between Natives and settlers, which are precariously predicated on the successful interpretation of promises and debt. Staged against the failure of the U.S. (and often her husband) to maintain the social discourse and interchange necessary to uphold the trust of the Ojibwe, Schoolcraft’s writing displays both the risks and returns of this new phase of settler-colonialism, and at times provides glimpses of advantageous mediation. The activity of her work reflects the Middle Ground roles of the Métis trader modified to the exigencies of her life and times. While scholars of Schoolcraft have long acknowledged her vexed relationship to Ojibwe sovereignty via her mixed-bloodedness, her upper class background, and her marriage, I believe configuring

¹⁸³ Quoted in Bruce M. White, “Give Us a Little Milk,” 124.

her work as enacting new lines of mediation in a world of altered value offers us a different view. Far from an author “trapped in a critical double bind” who is “doubly marginalized not only for engaging in the sentimental conventions of nineteenth century women’s writing, but also for offering an ‘inauthentic’ indigenous voice in the process,”¹⁸⁴ Schoolcraft instigates a re-evaluation of the Indigenous-settler compact by intertwining the socio-economic futures of the Ojibwe and the U.S.

Though active as an author for only a short time, Schoolcraft both captured and reimagined the colonial situation of the Ojibwe through an alchemy of new and old logics of exchange. As regards the afterlife of her writing and her reckonings with debt, there is a curious story to tell. During the 1830s, the Jackson administration was eager to clear Michigan territory of Natives and settlers were equally as eager to establish their claims on newly available public lands. The treaties signed during this era enshrined both the sale of the land and the exchange of territories in Michigan for those in Osage county and elsewhere. Throughout these negotiations, Ojibwe parties continued to call in the government’s debts, even refusing to relocate until they saw the promised annuities from the government.¹⁸⁵ Despite their shrewd accounting, the U.S. continued to fall short on many of their obligations made in writing.

While the U.S. reneged on its treaty promises to the Ojibwe, it also, by and large, failed to uphold the promises it provided to settlers who migrated to Michigan territory in the early 1800’s. The rampant market in easy credit, which Andrew Jackson had worked hard to arrange in the early years of his Presidency, spurred on land acquisitions in Ojibwe territory up until 1837, when it utterly imploded. The failure of banks to back up their bills and lines of credit and the widespread bankruptcy of citizens who lived a roaring seven years on loans led to an extraordinary development in the situation of the Ojibwe: land stopped selling. A notable retraction of settlers into Michigan meant that hard line removal procedures initially proposed by Jackson never reached fruition, and that most of the Ojibwe remained on or close to their ancestral territory during the 1830s and successfully resisted relocation west of the Mississippi. The collapse of the plethoric market in credit and debt and the bankruptcy of its votaries resulted in relative territorial security for the Ojibwe.¹⁸⁶

The history of removal and settler-colonialism in Michigan territory is, in this certain sense, exceptional. While the fur trade familiarized European modes of debt and trade amongst the Ojibwe and helped engender adaptable social contracts between the two cultures, the U.S.’s deployment of treaty delegations and credit for land purchases was meant to replace this mixed economy and refocus settlers on the real prize of American colonialism: land. The fact that this strategy failed in the case of the Ojibwe does not mean it did not succeed elsewhere, nor does it mean that society reverted to the adaptable grounds of the fur trade post-1837 crash in Michigan. Despite the best efforts of Schoolcraft to imagine a renewed sense of accommodation between the two, the future of the U.S. and the Ojibwe would see new feats of subordination, defrauding, and dispossession. Given this immutable future, the gift of Schoolcraft’s writing may indeed be humble: amidst a rapidly eroding Middle Ground, Schoolcraft’s flights of fur trade fancy provide

¹⁸⁴ Cavalier, “Jane Johnston Schoolcraft’s Sentimental Lessons,” 111.

¹⁸⁵ See Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians*, 190.

¹⁸⁶ I’ve paraphrased Bowes’ account of the 1837 credit market crash and the subsequent failure of removal policies in Ojibwe territory. Important to note that there were early overtures of the U.S. government to relocate Ojibwes to land West of the Mississippi, but these attempts were made largely vis-à-vis diplomatic trips, etc. rather than outright military removal. Ultimately, only a small portion of the tribe relocated. See Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians*, 184, 189-192.

merely a glance at the conditions and values of the Ojibwe when colonialism was momentarily in a state of incertitude and change. The oncoming expansion of the U.S. across the continent, engineered by grand wizards of financialization and speculative trade, would utterly supplant the direct dealings, gifts, and acts of friendship between fur traders, the Ojibwe, and their Metis intermediaries.¹⁸⁷ These events would exhibit how the turbulent moil of capital could provide the expedients for dispossessing the Ojibwe. But during Schoolcraft's lifetime, at least, Indian removal had to capitulate to the caprices of debt.

¹⁸⁷ For insights on this process of territorial expansion at the hands of financial robber barons, see, Richard White's Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011). In particular his account of the treaty abrogation process which led to the expansion of the Northern Pacific through Minnesota, North Dakota, and Kansas is relevant here. 59-62.

Foreclosing on A Native Nation:
Elias Boudinot, Removal, and Cherokee Bankruptcy

The crisis over Cherokee removal pitted two fledgling nations against one another in a contest to own, occupy, and rule over Indian land. The war of attrition that ensued was marked by legal victories, political setbacks, economic maneuvers, theft, and violence. Even as the State of Georgia invalidated Cherokee laws, encouraged the dispossession of their homes, and locked up their activists and missionaries, the vast majority of Cherokee tribal members refused to sell land that was rightfully theirs.¹⁸⁸ In 1835, however, a small party of prominent Cherokee led by John Ridge decided to cut their losses in this ever-evolving conflict and negotiate a treaty with Andrew Jackson's ambassador. The Treaty of New Echota stipulated that the Cherokee nation would be moved to reserve land West of the Mississippi and converted the collectively held land of the Cherokees in Georgia and Arkansas into a sellable parcel worth five million dollars.¹⁸⁹ Could the Cherokee have received more for their lands? More pressingly, could they have avoided removal wholesale? In the aftermath of the Treaty, these questions provoked a trenchant debate amongst the Cherokee, promoted in part by Principal Chief John Ross whose ongoing conflict with the "Treaty Party" led him to declare that the Ridge delegation had betrayed the tribe by signing a treaty of so little value. Among those who would eventually be assassinated for their involvement in the Treaty of New Echota was former champion of Cherokee land reinstatement, Elias Boudinot.¹⁹⁰

Before Boudinot's signing of the Treaty of New Echota left an indelible mark on his career as a writer and advocate for Native American rights, his life resembled those of other Native intellectuals of the era. Like Samson Occom, he was educated in an Indian missionary school.¹⁹¹ Like Schoolcraft, Boudinot's family were prominent figures in his tribe, and their status as landed farmers made Boudinot part of a class of ascendent, literate Natives who generally viewed cultural adaptation favorably. Like both Occom and Schoolcraft, Boudinot relied on white patronage as well as familial support to fund his writing career and projects of Native uplift.¹⁹² But Boudinot differs from Occom and Schoolcraft in that he was uniquely positioned at the center of a tribe whose goal of greater sovereignty meant the establishment of a complex, constitutional government. Well before the Removal Act and the Treaty of New Echota, the Cherokee were attempting to define their own nationhood based on the model of U.S. constitutional democracy. Their gambit to run their own affairs and coexist with the expanding United States by adopting laws, officers, and a market economy was unique amongst Native tribes facing removal. Boudinot played several roles in this emergent nation – at times its legislator, its spokesperson, its fundraiser, and, most notoriously, its unauthorized ambassador. As an author, he chronicled the rise of Cherokee nationhood in the first Indian newspaper, *The Cherokee Phoenix*. Founded in 1829 and published in both English and Cherokee, the *Phoenix* reported on both the barbaric attacks of Georgian settlers and the resilient advancement of the

¹⁸⁸ For a summary of these events, see Daniel Blake Smith, *An American Betrayal: Cherokee Patriots and the Trail of Tears*, 1st ed., A John Macrae Book (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2011), 95-104.

¹⁸⁹ See Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 138-139.

¹⁹⁰ A detailed telling of these conflicts and the resulting assassination is provided by Theda Perdue in her introduction to her anthology on Boudinot. See, Elias Boudinot and Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Editor, the Writings of Elias Boudinot*, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 25-30.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 9.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 5.

Cherokee towards civilization, taking care to constantly assert the inclining value of Cherokee nationhood to both English-reading patrons and Cherokee citizens.

Given that Boudinot's signature adorned both ardent anti-removal editorials in his newspaper and *The Treaty of New Echota*, scholars of Boudinot have tended to focus on the reversal of his political outlook and his betrayal of the movement for Cherokee land reinstatement. Boudinot's decision to abandon his fight against removal has been the subject of a slew of articles, book chapters, even whole dissertations, which offer up a range of interpretive methods: Cherokee nationalist readings, textual scholarship, psychological profiles, post-structuralism, etc.¹⁹³ Without attempting to re-cover well-trodden ground or pry open the mind of an author living two centuries ago, I want look at how Boudinot represented his decision to sign the *Treaty of New Echota* by examining how he conceptualized the shifting value of land and nationhood at a point of crisis. In exploring these questions, I adopt a political-economic lens to show how business principles intersected with issues of political sovereignty when it came to determining the outcome of the removal conflict. As Bernd Peyer observes, "the motivation behind the mission of civilization was to put on equal legal footing the entities of the US government and the Native Nation – to have a level playing field between the institutions of whites and those of Indians. But in place of a legal calculus based on notions of justice and civilization, there were raw material interests that superseded all others."¹⁹⁴ Peyer views the Cherokee gambit of "civilization" as an attempt at proclaiming legal and social rights for Natives that would eventually be overtaken by the raw financial determinism of settler-colonialism and federal expansion. But the Cherokee as a whole had a clear stake in those "raw material interests" as well. Recognizing the settler colonial drive to dispossess Natives of their land, the Cherokee adapted economic policies to uphold collectively owned and occupied land, while advertising the material value of an emergent Cherokee nation that would secure their rights. While the Cherokee acted to resist the multinational forces of capital that helped defraud their Indigenous neighbors, they also drew upon financial models that were introduced through the early American credit economy. Boudinot helped develop much of this economic framework as a legislator, fundraiser, and writer, all the while proclaiming Cherokee political-economic power, in direct contrast to the raw power of Georgia's land-grab free-for-all.

By claiming that the economic health of the Cherokee nation was of tantamount concern in the political struggle over removal, I contend that the internecine battle over the *Treaty of New Echota* was also, in part, determined by material struggles and financial principles. Analyzing Boudinot's change in political conviction, in this sense, requires focusing in on an under-investigated detail in the history of removal: the Cherokee nation had gone bankrupt. For Boudinot and his contemporaries, this monumental financial failure triggered a significant transformation in the perceived value of the struggle for land and nationhood. Insolvent as they were, the Cherokee nation had to relinquish some of the most sacrosanct principles of collective

¹⁹³ See, respectively, Mikhelle Lynn Ross-Mulkey, "The 'Cherokee Phoenix': Resistance and Accommodation," *Native South* 5, no. 1 (2012): 123–48, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nso.2012.0002>; Frank Brannon, "The Press of the Cherokee Phoenix Newspaper as Artifact," *Native South* 11, no. 1 (2018): 117–43, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nso.2018.0004>; Jonathan Filler, "Arguing In an Age of Unreason: Elias Boudinot, Cherokee Factionalism, and the Treaty Of New Echota" (Bowling Green State University / OhioLINK, 2010); Bethany Schneider, "Boudinot's Change: Boudinot, Emerson, and Ross on Cherokee Removal," *ELH* 75, no. 1 (2008): 151–77, <https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.2008.0008>.

¹⁹⁴ Bernd Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America*, Native Americans of the Northeast (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 191.

property and land occupancy in order to avoid further socio-economic destruction. For Boudinot, then, whose lifelong aspirations depended upon the moral and economic prosperity of the Cherokee nation, removal represented more than a necessary evil or a logical imperative. It represented a knowing violation of the social principles of the tribe made in order to obtain freedom from the severe consequences of debt.

In his justifications for the Treaty, Boudinot is upfront about the scale of this transgression, but he is also judgmental of the delusional speculation of his political opponents. As opposed to reckless gambles on treaty provisions and hopeless delay, Boudinot championed an immediate and honest accounting for the Cherokee failure and a just liquidation of their assets. In this way, Boudinot's reversal in position was informed by the predominant principles of economic moralists who represented financial failure as a crucial ethical challenge to those living in early 19th-century America. The basic prescriptions of the economic moralists with regards to insolvency are mirrored in the Treaty of New Echota and parroted by Boudinot in his last published act of writing. If the grand enterprise of Cherokee civilization had gone bankrupt, Boudinot argued, acceptance of a Treaty was a key act of moral/financial restitution in the face of glaring political-economic failure. In many ways, economic moralism propelled Boudinot into the defining political conflicts of his life, while ultimately falling short as a means of justifying the fundamental contravention of Cherokee life enshrined in the Treaty: the selling of the land.

The Economic Moralists and The Cherokee Credit Economy

Before the Presidency of Andrew Jackson would create broad opportunities for the appropriation of Native land, settlers were thwarted in their ambitions to obtain Cherokee territory in Georgia by an untested source of power: tribal governance. The Cherokee effort to establish a constitutional government was certainly made in part to safeguard the rights of tribal members and ward off land speculators and thuggish settlers. Their gambit to run their own affairs and coexist with the expanding United States by adopting laws, officers, and a market economy was, in this way, a critical bulwark against dispossession. Scholar Angela Pulley Hudson explains:

In the interests of promoting the growth of the American Nation, the federal government had agreed to extinguish Indian title to lands claimed by Georgia in the 1802 compact. But the federal government had also been promoting the acculturation of the Cherokees, affirming their movements toward regular law, and rewarding their accomplishments in the 'arts of civilization,' including individual property ownership and plantation agriculture.¹⁹⁵

While tribal governance, on the one hand, established legal rights for tribal members and created an established seat of power through which to negotiate with the U.S. government, it also played into the U.S.'s integrationist view of white-Native relations by demonstrating that Native nations could generate wealth on their own without the intervention of settler-colonial ventures. The emergent Cherokee government fought for legal sovereignty for the entire tribal collective while

¹⁹⁵ Angela Pulley Hudson, "FORKED JUSTICE: ELIAS BOUDINOT, THE US CONSTITUTION, AND CHEROKEE REMOVAL," in *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wr9rm.7>, 53.

also revolutionizing the tribal economy by enshrining private property and a market economy.¹⁹⁶ These changes were meant to appease would-be defenders of removal by demonstrating that political and economic assimilation were not only possible, but current and valuable.

To understand how Boudinot conceptualized removal as failure, we need to analyze the parallel development of the U.S. economy and that of the Cherokee. Although it was meant to display assimilation, the economic policy of the Cherokees did not strictly adhere to that of the U.S. Many of their laws, in particular those regarding debt and insolvency, are crafted in contradistinction to the lack of protections provided by U.S. law. Even as the Cherokee were establishing private property and a freer market, their policymaking, in many instances, preserved collective property and attempted to avoid the pitfalls of a less-regulated economy. Above all else, the Cherokee were interested in prohibiting economic activity that would bankrupt tribal members, forcing them to sell their land and improvements and relocate. In this way, the Cherokee reinvented economic policy, with one eye on the risks and failures of the American economy, and another on the arguments of economic moralists who insisted on fair treatment for insolvents. In all, the Cherokee sought a path for economic development that would ensure retention of their most coveted possession: their land.

We have seen how Andrew Jackson's presidency changed the shape of national finance by introducing new banks, new credit, and new arenas for business. The rapid development of the transnational cotton trade along with its multifarious credit schemes led to a highly speculative economy. This booming economy depended, largely, on two conditions: 1) the easy flow of credit from bank to borrower and, 2) the continued appropriation of land and slaves to sustain agricultural production in the South. The U.S.'s status in the global economy, thus, rested on the intricate bonds between Native tribes, enslaved persons, and credit economists who each impacted the perceived value of the plantation economy. While the second policy initiative put the Cherokee and the other major southern tribes in Jackson's crosshairs, the first had a profound impact on a different population of "dependents" in early America – bankrupt debtors. Insolvency and economic ruin were the flipside of the boom brought on by speculative purchases made with borrowed money. As economic historian Edward J. Balleisen notes, "universal dependence on credit also made Americans more susceptible to the shifting currents of the overall economy, of the misfortunes of the firms with whom they transacted business, and thus more likely to undergo financial shipwreck."¹⁹⁷ Throughout the early life of the Republic, busts accompanied booms and plunged businesses into the materially and morally fraught realm of bankruptcy. While Jackson expanded the markets at exponential rates, spawning thousands of new financial institutions, he also introduced new risks to American borrowers. In this rapidly evolving financial field, "insolvency constituted an omnipresent counterpart to the narratives of economic achievement so often lauded by the era's pundits and politicians."¹⁹⁸

Since the early bankruptcy laws of the U.S. were short-lived and infrequent, insolvent businesspeople found themselves in a complicated situation with regards to their creditors. When a venture was assumed insolvent, creditors used every advantage afforded to them to appropriate and/or resell their debtors properties to recoup their losses. If debtors could not reach a deal with their creditors over missing funds, or in cases where entrusted property was refuted, the courts

¹⁹⁶ See William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992), 287.

¹⁹⁷ Balleisin, *Navigating Failure*, 32.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 2.

handled creditors' claims granting them attachments on property owned by the debtor.¹⁹⁹ Few legal protections prevented wholesale economic ruin for insolvent debtors. In many cases, "the receiver would take legal title to all of the debtor's goods, including intangible property such as book accounts and commercial paper; he would then have power to reduce those assets to money, whether through collection or sale, and then pay the creditor."²⁰⁰ Banks and other creditors often pursued such measures in times of economic turmoil, calling in the loans that fueled the speculative economy they helped establish. Beyond the attachment and auctioning of their property, debtors faced more draconian state laws and policies in most cases of insolvency. While mired in court costs and attachments, insolvent debtors were prevented from re-engaging in business.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, debtor's prisons still operated into the mid-1800s in the U.S., providing the harshest threat available to creditors seeking retribution for unpaid debts.²⁰² For individuals and businesses caught in the maw of economic failure, there were slim opportunities to avoid wholesale dispossession and a state of propertyless toil some described as akin to "perpetual bondage."²⁰³ These consequences were so dire that many debtors facing financial ruin dissembled about their financial health, called in favors from established friends and investors, pursued further speculation without available funds or, more simply, fled.²⁰⁴

As Balleisen notes, the implications of economic failure were not only material but also moral and social. Facing the curtailment of their personal autonomy and the besmirching of their reputations as responsible citizens and economic actors, businesspeople searched for guidance on how to avoid the ignominy of failure.²⁰⁵ Amidst a sea of economic wreckage, early policy advocates and merchant-intellectuals attempted to chart a course for debtors based on sound moral principles. For those on the verge of insolvency, these economic moralists argued, there were essentially two options: to dissemble, withhold, and speculate in spite of inquiries and lawsuits; or to make a full, even, and honest disclosure to one's creditors and community. In 1810, John Wilson, then chairman of the committee on the insolvent laws of Pennsylvania, published a letter contending that a policy of debt forgiveness could help produce the latter result, while also raising debtors out of their "most desperate state."²⁰⁶ Wilson promoted the idea that "the lover of a good name will bind honourable men to make payment, after release, if in their power: but there is no law that can force them to give what they have not."²⁰⁷ Perceiving the present policy of endless pursuit of debtors for their future earnings as counterproductive to economic morality, Wilson instead insisted,

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 80-81.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 81.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 15.

²⁰² John Bach McMaster, *The Acquisition of Political, Social, and Industrial Rights of Man in America*, American Classics (New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1961), 66.

²⁰³ Balleisen, *Navigating Failure*, 15.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 76-78

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 69-70.

²⁰⁶ John Wilson, "Considerations on Insolvency, in a Letter to the Hon. John Wilson, Esq. Chairman of the Committee on the Insolvent Laws of Pennsylvania, House of Representatives, Lancaster - Document - The Making of the Modern World," accessed December 30, 2021, https://go-gale-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Monographs&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=10676&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=20&docId=GALE%7CU0103086616&docType=Monograph&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZMMC&prodId=MOME&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CU0103086616&searchId=R1&userGroupName=ucberkeley&inPS=true, 5.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 9.

You can make it the *interest* of the debtor (and that is a powerful instrument) to be honest, by your laws. Construct them, so that he can embrace them without infamy, and he will surrender, whenever the pressure is so great as to endanger his reputation and his honour: and, with submission, permit me to say, that it is the duty of a legislator to remember, that the reputation, and the honour of an unfortunate debtor, is *all* the treasure that he can possibly save from the wreck of fortune! But hold him infamous, and you drive him to destruction!²⁰⁸

Wilson argued that the laws governing insolvency would do better to deal in the carrot of “honour” than the stick of destitution and “slavery.”²⁰⁹ If the law could preserve a modicum of honor for the bankrupt in an honest disclosure of their debts, then it could avoid debtors resorting to begging, lying, and stealing to prevent economic ruin. Along these lines, Wilson places great stock in the value of reputation to the average businessperson, constructing his argument on the will towards honest dealings amongst even the most burdened of debtors. Accordingly, Wilson is quick to justify his defense of a more lenient bankruptcy policy by asserting his own honor: “Heaven knows my heart! it is not merely, that because thereby I should have my property free and unembarrassed hereafter:—No, indeed! I feel bound in duty, strengthened by honour, to fulfil every contract I have ever made, by all the means which it may please kind providence to place in my power.”²¹⁰

If Wilson’s letter is a passionate plea for debtor’s rights made on the basis of certain moral presuppositions, a much more practical account is given by Thomas Cary in his speech, “The Dependence of The Fine Arts for Encouragement, In a Republic, on the Security of Property; With an Enquiry into the Causes of Frequent Failure among Men of Business.”²¹¹ Cary offers almost a step-by-step strategy for avoiding moral and economic ruin in spite of insolvency:

In one class of cases, there has been, through fruitless attempts to escape exposure, total wreck and destruction of property, with ruin to many around. In the opposite class, seasonable disclosure has led to preventive measures. Careful liquidation, and a just appropriation of what remained, have diminished evil consequences, and amounted, in some instances, to a full and honorable discharge of obligations. Results have shown, too, sometimes, that the resolute adoption of that course which was dictated by an unflinching adherence to integrity and truth, has proved it to be *the very* course that was the best, even in a mere worldly view, for skilful management in difficulty, and for avoiding failure altogether.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 10.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 5.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 5.

²¹¹Thomas G. Cary, “The Dependence of the Fine Arts For Encouragement, in a Republic, on the Security of Property; With an Enquiry into the Causes of Frequent Failure Among Men of Business: An Address, Delivered Before the Boston Mercantile Library Association, November 13, 1844” (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1845). While Cary made his speech in 1844, well after the conclusion of the Cherokee Removal crisis, the opinions therein are representative of other economic moralist writers who were contemporary with Boudinot. See Balleisen, *Navigating Failure*, 69-70.

²¹² Ibid, 15.

Without drawing on bankruptcy law to help make his case, Cary insists that the least deleterious path for the insolvent is the one “dictated by an unflinching adherence to integrity and truth.” Disclosing the full scale of financial failure, combined with “careful liquidation,” “just appropriation” and “a full and honorable discharge of obligations” are the difficult, yet advantageous moral imperatives for the debtor. In addition to prescribing these discrete operations to the insolvent, Cary admonishes those who would further speculate upon their failing enterprises:

If we suppose the principles of scrupulous integrity to have been in action among these parties, what would have been the effect? The purchaser would have said—“I cannot subscribe a promise to pay for goods that I have bought under appearances which are likely to deceive others, without disclosing the truth. I must disclose the fact, that my solvency is at risk from causes not generally known; or decline the purchase, although it is offered to me.” (...) Experience has generally shown that *any* principle which would deter a man from diverting the capital from regular business before it can be easily spared, to make such new investments in a spirit of speculation, would operate fortunately for himself.²¹³

Cary taps the highly fluid mobile credit economy to display a common hypothetical confronting an insolvent debtor. Should the businessperson facing insolvency make further purchases of goods on bills of exchange in an attempt to stay afloat? While the temptation to further hedge on a failing business may be high in a mobile credit market, Cary maintains that a proper and full account of the truth is always more advantageous. In his distinction between “regular business” and the “spirit of speculation,” Cary is quick to assert that diverting capital from the one into the other is a disastrous move and, furthermore, unbecoming a moral businessperson.

Wilson and Cary both exemplify moral economists struggling against the quagmires and temptations of the turbulent credit economy. While honor, truth, and self-regulation were the proposed moral deterrents against economic ruin and endless speculation, various states and other entities experimented with legal deterrents. The development of economic law-making in Cherokee country, for instance, reveals the rising importance of debt and insolvency procedures to both promote the social advancement of the tribe and regulate against failure. Some of the earliest Cherokee laws concerning debt were attempts at setting interest rates on promissory notes and creating procedures for the collection of interest accrued on outstanding debts, to be “collected for the benefit of the treasury of the Cherokee Nation.”²¹⁴ In addition, these policies set assurances for creditors pursuing suits against defaulting debtors, ensuring fines would be levied on debtors not appearing in courts, and providing for attachment of their private property. These advantages meted out to creditors mirrored the policies of credit law in the various U.S. states, yet distinctions began to manifest themselves in the case of the Cherokee credit system. While creditors had the right to pursue defaulting debtor’s property in cases of insolvency in the U.S., Cherokee debtors received certain protections against complete financial devastation. The Cherokee allowed for securities to be offered in suits of unpaid debts that could help grant the debtor a temporary stay of execution.²¹⁵ In cases where contracts did not specify terms of

²¹³ Ibid, 20-21.

²¹⁴ *Laws of the Cherokee Nation...* (Tahlequah, C. N.: Adam Matthew Digital, 1852), http://www.americanwest.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/Graff_670, 21, 32.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 59-60.

repayment, the Cherokee laws granted debtors ten days to repay debts before the matter could be handed to the courts. In all, the Cherokee attempted to place penalties for unpaid debts in the hands of public officers, rather than creditors and their agents themselves, providing some level of stability and regulation to the procedures of insolvency.²¹⁶

In addition to these basic regulations, Cherokee law enshrined a crucial proviso in resolving cases of insolvency: “That it shall not be lawful for any officer or officers to attach, and sell the following property of any person or persons, on any account whatsoever, to wit : houses, farms and other improvements; household and kitchen furniture, farming utensils, and also, one cow and calf, one sow and pigs, and one gun, shall be reserved.”²¹⁷ While attachment and auctioning private property of debtors was permitted by Cherokee law, these exceptions to the law provided for a baseline of security for debtors facing insolvency, ensuring that bankrupt debtors might have a basis from which to rebuild their livelihoods. The items exempted indicate preferential treatment for those Cherokee practicing agriculture. The insolvency law thus reflects the Cherokee central committee’s program of transitioning the tribe from hunting to planting in the larger context of adapting a property-based, market economy.²¹⁸ But it also reflected another key priority: retention of Cherokee inhabitants and land. The Cherokee were aware that economic ruin was a key factor in forcing tribal members to relocate. Installing basic protections against complete bankruptcy could prevent a situation where individual Cherokees sold their land and moved west, particularly if the securities against insolvency included their homes and farms. Exempting these improvements encouraged Cherokee to establish themselves on the soil and to use available debt to make discrete advancements in property and commerce.

Protecting individual debtors from liquidation of their assets kept tribal members from relocating— an important factor in resisting removal. The tribe’s approach to their collective resources mirrored their wariness over individual debtors’ risks. For one thing, when the tribe drew on treasury surpluses to create loans for individual tribal members, they insisted on members providing “two good and sufficient securities” and created processes to collect on unpaid debts to the tribe.²¹⁹ As opposed to the scattershot policies of state and local banks and loan agencies, the tribe attempted to stay consistent in their lending and ensure that loans stayed secure. Cutting even further against the grain of U.S. credit deregulation, the tribe passed a law in 1826 directing the Treasurer “not to receive into the Treasury from the Agents of the United States, on account of the annual stipends, which are to be paid by them to the Cherokee Nation, any other description of money than Specie, Treasury or Notes of the United States Bank.”²²⁰ This law was the consequence of a many-year long struggle between the tribe and the U.S. agents over annuity payments and debt. While a certain amount of the annuity payment was used to pay the tribe’s outstanding debts to U.S. entities, most of it was meant to be distributed to the tribe in cash, following a negotiation with the U.S. Indian Agent in 1819.²²¹ The Cherokee enacted a series of policy shifts in order to limit the amount of annuity going to trade debts and maximizing the amount in cash paid out to the tribe. The issue on the government side was that, with the proliferation of small banks, specie and treasury notes were harder to come by than local bank notes and other forms of credit. Recognizing the instability of these bank notes’ value,

²¹⁶ Ibid, 79.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 60.

²¹⁸ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, XVII, 287-288.

²¹⁹ *Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, 50.

²²⁰ Ibid, 83.

²²¹ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, 281.

however, the Cherokee continued to advocate for cash.²²² The 1826 law was part of a strategy to mitigate the risks of large-scale devaluation associated with credit failures, and to retain as much actual money as possible. While this issue was never completely resolved between the U.S. agents and the tribe, the policy nevertheless reveals economic savvy and “just dealings” along the lines of Cary’s prescriptions for businesses. Favoring specie and banknotes, the Cherokee refused to buy into the hype on credit saturation and speculation in the larger U.S. context, and attempted to store themselves up against large scale economic ruin.

Overall, the tribe’s handling of insolvency and public treasury resources reflected a more fundamental concern for their new society: collective ownership of the land. While the tribe attempted to avoid individual and collective economic failure, they also set clear prohibitions against land transference in the Cherokee Constitution:

Art. 1st: The lands within the sovereign limits of the Cherokee Nation, as defined by treaties, are, and shall be, the common property of the Nation. The improvements made thereon and in the possession of the citizens of the Nation, are the exclusive and indefeasible property of the citizens respectively who made, or may rightfully be in possession of them (...)

Art. 6th: The citizens of the Nation, possessing exclusive and indefeasible right to their respective improvements, as expressed in the first article, shall possess no right or power to dispose of their improvements to citizens of the United States under such penalties, as may be prescribed by law in such cases.²²³

Though adopting private property was an important step in reconciling the Cherokee to the U.S., the Cherokee created a variegated economy when it came to their land and basic structures. By setting aside the land as common property of the Nation, the Cherokee prevented individuals from packaging and selling their allotments, thus avoiding the high levels of confusion and fraud that characterized the Choctaw and Chickasaw interactions with land companies and settlers.²²⁴ The land could only be sold by a treaty between the whole of the tribe and the U.S. These policies safeguarded against the transference of the land into fungible real estate, available to land companies and settlers for dispossession. This policy created a unique class of private property rights in Cherokee improvements – one that was “exclusive and indefeasible” yet also non-transferable to citizens of the United States. These manipulations of private property reveal a national policy dead-set on making unimpeachable the land and occupancy claims of tribal members. While mortgages and attachments for land in cases of insolvency became a more common part of the U.S. economy at large, the Cherokee made every effort to make these features of the credit economy an impossibility.

While the U.S. economy was booming and busting on the back of easy credit, the Cherokee were inventive in their economic policy-making – redefining private property, standardizing insolvency policies, and declining unsecured loans and banknotes in favor of an economic model that was resistant to wholesale failure. Since 42 percent of the new laws the Cherokee issued between 1817 and 1828 concerned economic issues, the legal reform of Cherokee society is often seen as an attempt at enshrining the U.S. model of free market

²²² Ibid, 316.

²²³ *Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, 45.

²²⁴ See Saunt, *Unworthy Republic*, 176-178.

capitalism and thus “expanding the economic development and prosperity of the nation.”²²⁵ But closer examination of the laws themselves reveal remarkable foresight and wariness over the risks inherent in credit capitalism. While the Cherokee indeed worked to introduce a market economy, their policymaking also shows resistance to the rise of bank notes, unsecured loans, unregulated insolvency procedures, and land fraud. With one eye on their neighboring tribes, for whom financial illiteracy meant broad dispossession, and one on the catastrophic risks of economic failure, the Cherokee attempted to regulate their burgeoning economy and prevent financial ruin. The legal and political success of the tribe establishing a constitution was intertwined with sagacious economic policy, establishing a bulwark against settler incursions and theft. Failure in the arena of finance, as the Cherokee knew and expressed in their law-making, was tantamount to removal.

Civilization and Property in Boudinot’s Early Writings

Alive to the possibilities of financial failure and tribal removal, Elias Boudinot played an active role in facilitating the economic development of the Cherokee. As a member of the tribal council, Boudinot signed off on multiple laws regarding trade debt, insolvency procedures and, receiving bank notes for annuity payments.²²⁶ Along with other leaders in the tribe, Boudinot crafted economic policy in hopes that Cherokee capitalism could outpace the settlers’ and Andrew Jackson’s diminishment of Indigenous society. Resisting economic failure went hand-in-hand with projecting social development and strengthening anti-removal sentiment. In this way, the Cherokee economic policy not only had to work internally to create more viable market actors, it also had to exhibit wealth and project prosperity to the white public at large.

Along with his role as a tribal legislator, Boudinot was chosen as the public relations person for this important enterprise. His early writing – marshalled to solicit funds for the tribe from white audiences around the new Republic – attempted to break through the stereotypical image of Native Americans as underdeveloped and “uncivilized.” In refuting these damaging representations, Boudinot insisted that the tribe’s development could be seen clearly in their social and economic promise. Even as the battle between settlers and the Cherokee escalated, Boudinot published the wealth of the nation to assure an increasingly wary white public that the civilization mission was delivering profits. In tune with the writings of economic moralists, Boudinot associated the sound economic growth of the tribe with its moral and social development, while insisting that failure was a long way off for the newly commercialized tribe. In the analogy between Cherokee nation and colonial business, Boudinot performed the crucial tasks of attracting investors, forecasting speedy development, and downplaying risk. *The Cherokee Phoenix* and his speeches to white audiences were key instruments in parrying the two-pronged threat of economic failure and tribal removal.

In 1826, in the midst of a tour of U.S. cities to raise funds for a national academy and a printing press for the Cherokee, Boudinot composed “An Address to the Whites” – a lecture with which to attract investment in the Cherokee treasury. In the speech, Boudinot denounces a regressive view of Natives originating in “infant prejudices,” and attempts a more auspicious

²²⁵ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic*, 289.

²²⁶ *Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, 50-59, 87-88.

survey of their present and future.²²⁷ Beginning with the land itself, Boudinot lays out the Cherokee's many assets and improvements:

This country which is supposed to contain about 10,000,000 of acres exhibits great varieties of surface, the most part being hilly and mountaneous, affording soil of no value. The vallies, however, are well watered and afford excellent land, in many parts particularly on the large streams, that of the first quality (...) These advantages, calculated to make the inhabitants healthy, vigorous, and intelligent, cannot fail to cause this country to become interesting. And there can be no doubt that the Cherokee Nation, however obscure and trifling it may now appear, will finally become, if not under its present occupants, one of the Garden spots of America. And here, let me be indulged in the fond wish, that she may thus become under those who now possess her; and ever be fostered, regulated and protected by the generous government of the United States.²²⁸

As careful as the Cherokee were to attract and repel credit capitalism in their laws, so Boudinot is careful to represent a favorable, but not entirely desirable, landscape for the Cherokee. While he admits that most of Cherokee territory affords "soil of no value," thus warding off speculators, he maintains that there are sufficient advantages to "make the inhabitants healthy, vigorous, and intelligent." Boudinot's portrait of a people attached to and deriving moral advantages directly from the land has a picturesque appeal, while also conjoining moral values to economic "interest." As much as he is orienting the audience towards a propitious future – projecting agricultural success in the "Garden spot of America" – he is also predicting the spoilation of this setting should the land fall into other hands and no longer be "fostered, regulated, and protected" in the same way. While Boudinot's narrative is mostly idyllic up to this point, he nevertheless highlights the land's status as property of the Cherokee ("under those who now possess her") and insinuates that dispossession would be concomitant to deregulation and defacement of this "interesting" terrain.

From this point, Boudinot adds further assurances that the Cherokee will yield fruit in their mission of civilization, proclaiming the onset of an agrarian Native society. Sidelining the individual failure of tribal members who have stuck to subsistence hunting for their course of living, Boudinot sets out to prove "that the nation is improving, rapidly improving in all those particulars which must finally constitute the inhabitants an industrious and intelligent people."²²⁹ In his antithesis between subsistence living and industriousness, Boudinot implies that civilized society is one whose labors produce property and profit. Never failing to back up his claims of progress, Boudinot quickly catalogs the advances made within the Cherokee nation towards a more property-oriented society:

In 1810 there were 19,5000 cattle; 6,100 horses; 19,600 swine; 1,037 sheep; 467 looms; 1,600 spinning wheels; 30 waggons; 500 ploughs; 3 saw-mills; 13 grist-mills &c. At this time there are 22,000 cattle; 7,600 horses; 46,000 swine; 2,500 sheep; 762 looms; 2,488 spinning wheels; 172 waggons; 2,943 ploughs; 10 saw-mills; 31 grist-mills; 62

²²⁷Boudinot, "An Address to the Whites," in Boudinot and Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 68.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 71.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, 72.

Blacksmith-shops; 2,943 ploughs; 10 saw-mills; 31 grist-mills; 62 Blacksmith-shops; 8 cotton machines; 18 schools; 18 ferries; and a number of public roads.²³⁰

Using striking survey differentials as his preferred tool of argumentation, Boudinot succeeds in revealing the Cherokee's acquisitiveness over a period of 16 years. Certain of these developments are more impressive than others – the introduction of 62 Blacksmith-shops over the course of 16 years, for instance, demonstrates a nation not only in need of new tools, but supplying itself the necessary means of industry. The numbers, in this sense, not only display civil progress towards an agrarian, capitalist existence, they also show increasing national independence. Given that the Cherokee yet relied on the government's annuity payments for the plurality of their public funds,²³¹ and given that Boudinot was arriving in Eastern cities to ask for donations, this catalog of increasing improvements exhibits how these investments might pay off in the form of a more self-sustaining society for Natives. Ultimately, these lists of improvements demonstrated to potential donors/investors that the Cherokee were managing their assets soundly and were able to carry on their own business with increasing self-reliance.

Boudinot's assurances of the solvency of Cherokee civilization play directly into his appeals for aid. In fact, he solicits investments not by invoking the suffering of the Cherokee, but by expressing unremitting faith in their moral and economic salvation. Eschewing elaborate supplications, Boudinot instead presents the case for white charity as a matter of fact: "Need I 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; need I do more than simply to ask the patronage of benevolent hearts, to obtain that patronage."²³² Building momentum through a series of rhetorical questions, Boudinot fixates the would-be patron in a moment of urgency, implying that the causes *and ends* of their giving should be self-evident. Boudinot continues:

With that assistance, what are the prospects of the Cherokees? Are they not indeed glorious, compared to that deep darkness in which the nobler qualities of their souls have slept. Yes, methinks, I can view my native country, rising from the ashes of her degradation, wearing her purified and beautiful garments, and taking her seat with the nations of the earth. I can behold her sons bursting the fetters of ignorance and unshackling her from the vices of heathenism. She is at this instant, risen like the first morning sun, which grows brighter and brighter, until it reaches its fulness of glory.²³³

In the rising climax of Boudinot's speech, he deploys a unique brand of assertive conviction. Unlike Occom, whose portrayals of Native suffering were crafted to goad his patrons, or Schoolcraft who made poetically oblique references to white and Native intercommerce, Boudinot displays a messianic confidence in the uplift of his people. While religious figurative speech is not out of place in an appeal for charity, Boudinot's prophetic imagery almost carries him away from direct entreaty entirely, his attention focused instead on the liberating actions of his nation and its sons. This ecstatic effusion aggrandizes the efforts of the Cherokee, sanctifying their achievements and improvements as part of an eschatological march towards civilization and "glory." In comparison with these profound acts, what is the meager charity of white patrons?

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ See McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, 297.

²³² "An Address to the Whites," 77.

²³³ Ibid.

How could giving be a burden when compared with the tribe's strivings towards its moral destiny? Or as Boudinot puts it, "Is there a soul whose narrowness will not permit the exercise of charity on such an occasion? Where is he that can withhold his mite from an object so noble? Who can prefer a little of his silver and gold, to the welfare of nations of his fellow beings?"²³⁴

Leaving behind circumspection and doubt, Boudinot's key strategy for attracting white charity lies in the expression of confidence in Cherokee civilization. His attempt to cast social progress as inevitable in the case of the Cherokee acts to contradict the extreme pessimism with which the cause of Indians was met amongst politicians and agents justifying removal. In an 1830 piece, Indian Agent Lewis Cass made public a series of doubts about the Cherokee and their civilization mission:

That individuals among the Cherokees have acquired property, and with it more enlarged views and juster notions of the value of our institutions, and the unprofitableness of their own, we have little doubt (...) But, we believe, the great body of the people are in a state of helpless and hopeless poverty. With the same improvidence and habitual indolence, which mark the northern Indians, they have less game for subsistence, and less peltry for sale. We doubt whether there is, upon the face of the globe, a more wretched race than the Cherokees, as well as the other southern tribes, present(...)²³⁵

Cass meant to provide a direct counterpoint to Boudinot's exclamations of wide-scale economic and moral change. Diminishing the economic transformation of the Cherokee tribe as the acquisitions of a few "individuals," Cass instead relies on racial generalizations of "indolence" and "improvidence" to assert that it is Indian poverty, rather than prosperity, that is inevitable. Cass is not only justifying the government's drastic solution of removal, he is warding off would-be patrons and supporters of the Cherokee by proclaiming their poverty is both "helpless and hopeless." Of course, these public claims were essential in the effort to dissolve, once and for all, Cherokee claim on lands that were widely regarded as profitable. In an 1824 letter complaining about the untapped natural resources held by the Cherokee, Georgia Governor George Troup concurred with Cass by remarking that the territory was "waste and profitless to the Indians, profitless to the United States; but, in possession of the rightful owner, a source of strength, of revenue, and of union."²³⁶ Troup and Cass represented the Cherokee as a profligate people occupying land whose profitability exceeded their use of it. Underlying their racialized attacks on Cherokee occupancy, however, was a more basic desire to acquire the territory for whites and for the U.S. The question for the antagonists of the Cherokee was not whether or not the land could produce wealth, but for whom. Given the national need for expansion, related to their unsteady yet inclining credit economy, the value of Cherokee civilization had to be depreciated.

As this negative view of the Cherokee's prospects gained ascendance in the public offices of the Republic, Boudinot founded *The Cherokee Phoenix* and initiated a public reckoning with settler-colonial assumptions about land, wealth, and Native character. Boudinot continued to provide evidence of Cherokee civilization in the form of catalogs of property and improvements, though his mode of argumentation became more direct. Whereas in the "Address," Boudinot

²³⁴ Ibid, 78.

²³⁵ Quoted in Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, Third edition, The Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016), 112.

²³⁶ Quoted in Saunt, *Unworthy Republic*, 34.

prefers to focus on a positive, attractive project of Native uplift, in the *Phoenix*, he unpacks issues of value and property in a more exacting manner, dissecting colonial prejudice and the public misrepresentations of politicians and settlers. Taking aim at the widespread stereotype of Indian “indolence,” Boudinot wrote in an 1830 op-ed in the *Phoenix*:

The maxim of our enemies, ‘that an Indian cannot work’ the committee suppose ‘well established,’ and it would most certainly be well established if they could but prove their naked assertions. We know of many Indians who not only work, but work hard. Who labors for the Cherokee and builds his house, clears his farm, makes his fences, attends to his hogs, cattle and horses; who raises his corn, his cotton and manufactures his clothing? Can the committee tell? Yes they have an answer at hand. He has no house, no farm, no hogs, cattle, no corn to save him from starvation, and no clothing to cover him from nakedness.²³⁷

By reminding his reader of the civilized attainments of the Cherokee, Boudinot highlights the absurdity of the myth of Indian savagery, as recorded in the U.S. House committee’s 1830 report “On Removal of Indians from Georgia.” Once again, we note how the profession of private property, self-cultivated and maintained, is essential to debunking the joint falsehoods of Cherokee poverty and backwardness. By portraying a people whose various improvements have made them self-sufficient and industrious, Boudinot is contradicting the presumption that their society, their properties, and their land could not be further improved under Cherokee stewardship. The final line conflates the committee’s false judgment about the Cherokee not owning property with the fallacious judgment of savagery – “no clothing to cover him from nakedness.” To assume that the Cherokee are impoverished is, in this instance, to entertain an outdated and injurious view of their social and moral character.

In debunking the myths of Native poverty and indolence, Boudinot was upholding the image of the Cherokee as propertied, profitable, and socio-economically independent. Projecting this image to a public whose conscience was wracked on the issue of removal was a necessary act of political and economic strategy, without which the nation could no longer borrow, lend, or collect for the purposes of civilization. When Cass proclaimed that “so long as the large annuities received from the United States, are applied to the support of a newspaper and to other objects, more important to the rich than the poor, erroneous impressions upon these subjects may prevail,” he questioned the value of supporting Native efforts at civilization – specifically the *Phoenix*, whose subscribers mainly remained faithful to the anti-removal cause.²³⁸ Cass was describing not only a conflict over correct information and “erroneous impressions,” but a conflict over resources and value. To properly uphold the cause of the Cherokee, where was money supposed to be spent? And further, if “large annuities” continued to be paid to the Cherokee to prop up a civilization effort built on specious claims of progress, could not one expect a drop-out in their political and financial prospects – an economic failure, produced by the same false-confidence that propped up insolvent businesses?

Boudinot anticipated such inquests in the *Phoenix* when he conducted his own investigation into the relative value of removal vs. civilization. In an 1828 piece in the *Phoenix* simply titled “Indian Emigration,” Boudinot attempts to unpack the costs of Cherokee removal based on an estimate regarding Chickasaw removal given by the U.S. special agent to the

²³⁷ Boudinot, “Cherokee Phoenix, April 21, 1830,” in Boudinot and Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 115.

²³⁸ Quoted in Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 112

Southern Tribes. As the purported U.S. plan was to wholly compensate for the property that the Southern Tribes would leave behind in their move from Georgia, the estimated value of such a plan, Boudinot maintains, would be astronomical in the case of the Cherokee, whose improvements had grown precipitously. What proceeds is a comprehensive act of accounting that unveils the sizable burden of liquidation costs in the case of the Cherokee:

The number of mills, grist, and saw, is fifty, which may be replaced for the sum of \$25,000, supposing each mill to cost \$500.

Their shops are sixty two in number, and these estimated at \$50 each will cost \$3,000.

Their orchards perhaps may be replaced for \$8,000.

The fences of the Chickasaws are estimated by Col. McKenney at \$50,000. \$250,000 will then be but a moderate estimate for this time of the expense attending the removal of the Cherokee.

(...)

The total amount of cost, then, for the foregoing items, will be \$1,783,730. And supposing we add a fourth for the expense of the Government, the Schools, the military, and other items not enumerated, the whole amount of expense in removing the Cherokees become the limits of any State or Territory will be \$2,229,662.²³⁹

Here, Boudinot's exhaustive catalog of Cherokee improvements and values operates in a number of ways as a testimonial against removal. First, it displays the relative value of Cherokee progress up until this point, suggesting that the Cherokee have been successful in producing a great mass of wealth vis-à-vis adaptation to agrarian capitalism. Second, it suggests that the cost of removal, in reimbursing the Cherokee for their assets, would be prohibitive for the public. Compared with the Chickasaw, the case of Cherokee removal cannot be cast as a simple, inexpensive governmental feat. Combined, these two impressions suggest an alternative future for Cherokee-U.S. relation that Boudinot is quick to supply:

If this project is intended, as we are told by its advocates, for the good and civilization of the Cherokees and other Indians, cannot this sum be put to a better use?—Suppose with this money, the United States begin to establish Schools in every part of the Nation? With this money let their (sic) be a college founded, where every advantage of instruction may be enjoyed (...) What would be the consequences? If we fail to improve under such efforts, we will then agree to remove.²⁴⁰

In his transition from accounting to policy-making, Boudinot reimagines the purpose of public dollars and their use for “the good and civilization of the Cherokees.” In the pithy question “cannot this sum be put to a better use,” Boudinot deflects the accusation of Cherokee misuse of funds by instead holding the U.S. government accountable for malfeasance and wasteful projects. Proposing a grand humanitarian plan of constructing schools and promoting learning and civilization, Boudinot calls into question a removal plan whose purpose lies in liquidating the achievements of a whole people. In light of Boudinot's proposal for more infrastructure to

²³⁹ Boudinot, “Indian Immigration,” in Boudinot and Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 99-100.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 100.

promote and safeguard Cherokee civilization, his preceding act of converting improvements into dollar amounts appears like a hollow and unnecessary end to a flourishing enterprise.

In all, Boudinot's arguments in the *Phoenix* complement the economic policy making of the Cherokee and promote the general principles put forth in their law-making. Whereas the U.S. was extending an economy built on unverified and unsecured debts while fostering land companies who took advantage of market instability to speculate on Native land, Boudinot was strict and uncompromising in his accounts of Cherokee life and wealth. His practice of rejecting the U.S.'s faulty claims when it came to Cherokee poverty reflects his willingness to project a stable, enduring, and profitable project of Cherokee improvement and civilization. While the Cherokee government sought firm protections against insolvency and stores of reliable cash for their Treasury, Boudinot further affirmed the national mission of the Cherokee by publicizing the labor and exchange value of all of its assets and advocating for a just and practical use of public funds.

Furthermore, Boudinot refused outright to speculate on the monetary value of Cherokee land. As tribal law held their territory in a state of collective ownership and prevented disposal under any circumstances to non-tribal members, reflecting on the value of Cherokee land would not only be purposeless, but potentially hazardous to the cause. Even as Boudinot catalogued the price of Cherokee improvements, he left land out of the equation so as not to precipitate U.S. negotiations on price or, more nefariously, the arrival of land companies who would seize on a price-per-acre figure to start the process of buying from tribal members. As monopolized speculators and credit-stricken settlers attempted to set prices on all Native land in the South, riding the wave of cotton market expansion set in motion by Jackson, the Cherokee rebuffed their attempts at creating a land market, and Boudinot held his ground against the demands of the public to evaluate Cherokee territory.

Still, while Boudinot's writings reflect the effort at stabilizing the market and safeguarding the land, his accounts in the *Phoenix* nevertheless shed light upon the possibility of potential failure. Returning to his recommendations on how to use public funds to support the Cherokee, Boudinot concludes: "If we fail to improve under such efforts, we will then agree to remove." On the one hand, this hypothetical appears to be merely rhetorical – it is crafted ironically to reflect on a situation that would never occur. Boudinot knows that the U.S. would refuse to put forth a sum of two million dollars for the sake of educating the Cherokee, and his concluding remark, then, expresses a strong determination of the Cherokee to not remove under the current circumstances. But Boudinot also knew that the public was avidly watching the Cherokee to determine whether or not societal "improvement" could be deemed a failure or not. By placing the possibility of assent to removal in a far-flung conditional, Boudinot is calling to attention the fact that some have already written off the Cherokee effort to civilize. The insinuated suggestion in Boudinot's language is that there needs to be a different criterion upon which to assess failure for the civilization enterprise. If Cass's tired stereotypes and the Congressional committee's inaccurate estimates cannot be relied upon, how might Cherokee failure actually manifest itself?

New Echota and A Bankrupt Nation

While Boudinot was publicizing the attainments of Cherokee civilization, white settlers and lawmakers in Georgia were plotting how to take possession of these new properties. The strategy they set for encouraging wholesale removal was predicated on diminishing the property rights of the wealthiest Cherokees in the tribe, ultimately dispossessing them of their farms and

land.²⁴¹ Hinging their legal justification on a specious interpretation of terms in the treaties of 1817 and 1819 granting leading Cherokee land in exchange for “denationalization,” the Georgia General Assembly passed a law “authorizing the confiscation of their improvements.”²⁴² While the Cherokee fought back in federal courts with a series of legal objections to the new state mandates, the die had been cast for Georgia settlers who used intimidation to force Cherokee families out of their houses and to take up occupancy on their farms. When settlers would not move directly into confiscated Cherokee property, they would take customary possession of the land and resell it to real estate agents or other interested parties.²⁴³ The Cherokee attempted to fight back against these acts of intimidation and deceit by using their police force to ward off white interlopers, but often times once occupancy had been claimed, the Cherokee found themselves hard pressed to force eviction.²⁴⁴

Furthermore, while the Cherokee pursued greater security for their property, the incompatibility of white and Native economic activity grew more and more stark in the Jackson years. In attempting to reconcile Cherokee society with American capitalism, the Cherokee needed to connect the collective self-interest of the two new Republics. They did so by trying to prove that removal would only profit “white land speculators and cotton planters in a few southern states and their equivalents in the old northwest,” and would ultimately be detrimental to the financial health of the majority of U.S. citizens.²⁴⁵ But a declining willingness amongst elected officials to support the Cherokee in their claims against settlers indicated that the public had failed to digest this message.²⁴⁶ Moreover, Andrew Jackson seemed intent on bankrupting the Cherokee by dividing up annuity payments into individual parcels for tribal members, thus massively diminishing the tribal treasury’s stores. Jackson also exercised unilateral power in suspending the payments entirely in 1830.²⁴⁷ Without the annuities which amounted to upwards of \$16,000 annually, the Cherokee faced insolvency on their outstanding debts which ranged from commercial debts, to payments for public officers and enforcers of the law, to legal payments for lawyers who represented their rights in the Supreme Court.²⁴⁸ The superstructure of Cherokee civilization was, thus, threatened with wholesale collapse by financial maneuvers which targeted the tribe’s solvency.

As state and federal policy emboldened settlers in their seizure of Cherokee improvements and land, Boudinot published a series of editorials in the *Phoenix* tracking the sea-change in the U.S. approach to the Cherokee issue. While Boudinot wrote to agitate on behalf of the Cherokee over the escalating crisis in Georgia, his writings reflect a rising apathy amongst the white public. In November of 1831, Boudinot concluded a piece describing the deprivation of Cherokee rights under new Georgia policies thusly:

Is not here an array of *difficulties*?—The truth is, while a portion of the community have been, in the most laudable manner, engaged in using efforts to civilize and christianize the Indian, another portion of the same community have been busy in counteracting those

²⁴¹ See Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 83.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid, 90.

²⁴⁴ Blake Smith, *An American Betrayal*, 95-96.

²⁴⁵ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, 429.

²⁴⁶ Blake Smith, *An American Betrayal*, 123.

²⁴⁷ Blake Smith, *An American Betrayal*, 154; Peyer, *The Tutor’d Mind*, 200.

²⁴⁸ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic*, 297.

efforts. Cupidity and self-interest are at the bottom of all these difficulties—A desire to *possess* the Indian land is paramount to a desire to see him *established* on the soil as a *civilized* man.²⁴⁹

Far from his representation of charitable whites enriching themselves morally through their donations to make the Cherokee a glorious nation, here Boudinot presents, head on, the greed of settlers and the disheartening battle waged against the enterprise of Cherokee civilization. Boudinot aptly unveils the unscrupulous motives of the would-be possessors of Cherokee land. In his attacks on white “cupidity and self-interest,” Boudinot makes an important reversal in his manner of representing Cherokee civilization. Here, a higher purpose for the Cherokee of being “civilized” and “established” on their own soil appears to be at odds with the avaricious purposes of capitalist actors. Whereas elsewhere Boudinot maintained that the progress of the Cherokee could be represented through evidence of property-ownership and industriousness, here Boudinot implies that the engines of the market have overrun the Cherokee mission to civilize. “A desire to possess” has supplanted whites’ more noble principles and directly threatens the rights and livelihood of the Cherokee.

A thread of economic moralism imbues Boudinot’s late writings in the *Phoenix*, as he registers disillusionment with the white public and their avaricious deployment of settler-colonial capitalism. His shift in perspective is represented in a key editorial from 1832 where he demanded, “Has the cause of the Indians been swallowed up in other questions, such as the tariff, the bank &c.? For how can we account for the silence which pervades the public in regard to the conduct of the General Government and the State of Georgia towards the Cherokees?”²⁵⁰ Sensing Jacksonian democracy’s upheaval of Native American policy *and* the principles of governance that regulated capital, Boudinot displayed how the national issues of the tariff and the bank were eclipsing the public’s interest in the cause of Indian civilization. The use of repeated rhetorical questions reveal a sense of doubt about the prospects of the Cherokee mission. Whereas Boudinot’s “Address” elicited white patronage by manifesting confidence in the civilization effort, the late *Phoenix* writings show how the effort experienced grave setbacks in the form of political struggles, exploitative motives, and potential insolvency. The path towards civilization, initially depicted as divinely ordained, had become quagmired by settler interference and a concentrated political-economic assault on Cherokee rights.

Boudinot returned from an 1832 fundraising trip with a few thousand dollars to support the flagging efforts of the Cherokee treasury.²⁵¹ His return was fresh on the heels of Andrew Jackson’s public refusal to enforce Justice John Marshall’s decision *Worcester vs. Georgia*, which deemed Georgia state laws invalid in Cherokee territory. The Supreme Court decision would have granted the Cherokee a significant degree of sovereignty and protection against settler incursions justified by Georgia laws. But with Jackson’s declaration that “Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it,”²⁵² the Cherokee found themselves without the

²⁴⁹ Boudinot, “*Cherokee Phoenix*: November 12, 1831”, in Boudinot and Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 143.

²⁵⁰ Elias Boudinot, “*Cherokee Phoenix* | CHEROKEE PHOENIX | Volume 4, Number 48; Published July, 7, 1832,” accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.wcu.edu/library/DigitalCollections/CherokeePhoenix/Vol4/no48/cherokee-phoenix-page-2-column-2b.html>.

²⁵¹ See Perdue’s Introduction to *Cherokee Editor*, 25.

²⁵² Edwin A Miles, “After John Marshall’s Decision: Worcester v. Georgia and the Nullification Crisis,” 2022, 519. While historians maintain that this was merely a reported quotation of Jackson, most admit that it reflects his presiding attitude with regards to Worcester v. Georgia.

support of the federal government or any other meaningful enforcement body to protect their rights. It was at this stage that the Ross Party and the Treaty Party began to hold contentious debates in the Cherokee nation over the fate of the tribe in the face of removal. While Ross represented the political base of the Cherokee in his contention that the tribe should not remove under any circumstances, the Treaty Party were examining the lot of other tribes who remained in the eastern part of the United States and experienced socio-economic ruin as a result. In large part, these tribes “had become demoralized, split into factions and mired in poverty, debt, and alcoholism.”²⁵³ Fearing the worst for the Cherokee whose efforts at engendering a prosperous, free, safe nation on their ancestral lands were growing more and more futile, the Treaty Party agreed to meet Jackson’s representatives in 1835 to negotiate for removal. Boudinot, now the former editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix* and one of John Ross’s political nemeses, attended to help craft the Treaty of New Echota.

Whether or not the Treaty Party felt their justifications would be legible to the Cherokee at large, they knew that the process of removing and restarting their national project would be costly. Examining the economic stipulations of the Treaty of New Echota allows us a lens into the immediate, rational priorities of Boudinot and his contemporaries, while also demonstrating how a conceptual reevaluation of land and civilization was underway at the time of their negotiations. The motivations of the now bankrupt Cherokee nation were, of course, different from those it had professed when anticipating rapid economic development and a successful civilization program. A key article of the treaty, for instance, addresses payments on the Cherokee’s outstanding debts, stipulating the following:

The just debts of the Indians shall be paid out of any monies due them for their improvements and claims; and they shall also be furnished at the discretion of the President of the United States with a sufficient sum to enable them to obtain the necessary means to remove themselves to their new homes, and the balance of their dues shall be paid them at the Cherokee agency west of the Mississippi.²⁵⁴

On the one hand, the article addresses a direct need for the insolvent Cherokee – finding a way to pay off their outstanding debts on the eve of removal. The fact that the treaty upheld a discrete set of operations to pay out the debts of the insolvent nation suggests that Treaty Party members were acting on the principles espoused by economic moralists like Wilson and Cary. As the tribe confronted serious financial failure in the form of their depleted treasury, the Treaty Party attempted a “careful liquidation” of their properties, facilitated by a survey of improvements on their land.²⁵⁵ By making a final disclosure of their debts, they were acting to avoid the disastrous consequences of bankruptcy and unsettled debts that pervaded the early American credit system. Prolonged lawsuits and attachment by third-party credit handlers would not serve a newly removed tribe. The settling of debts in the Treaty, then, demonstrates how the Treaty party viewed starting anew not simply from the perspective of exchanging one set of lands for another. While this exchange is the predominate theme of the Treaty, laying out an honest and just path to eliminating the tribe’s debts was of equal importance.

As regards the negotiated value of the land and cost of removal, the Treaty reflects a more circumscribed financial situation for the tribe. Whatever Chief Ross’s intentions with

²⁵³ McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic*, 430.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 78

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

regards to his anti-removal arguments amongst the Cherokee, his staunch position with the federal government had failed to shake loose additional funds beyond the five million dollars for Cherokee removal provided by a Congressional vote. The treaty makes explicit reference to this sum in the preamble, stating “the Senate advised ‘that a sum not exceeding five millions of dollars be paid to the Cherokee Indians for all their lands and possessions east of the Mississippi river.’”²⁵⁶ Compared to the \$2,229,662 that Boudinot had estimated in the *Phoenix*, this sum is larger, but it also covers a much greater degree of costs and fees. Important supplementary articles from 1826 indicate that the Treaty party argued for additional funds to cover the costs of removal, believing the \$5 million was only adequate to cover the costs of spoliation and cession of their lands.²⁵⁷ While Jackson agreed to present a proposal to the Senate for an additional \$600,000 dollars, he also denied and voided the original Treaty’s contention that reservations made in previous Treaties could continue to be claimed by Cherokee after removal, or reimbursed and exchanged for additional funds.²⁵⁸ The attempt to hold on to values outside of the \$5 million provided by Congress was, thus, explicitly preempted and the Cherokee found themselves having to justify wholesale removal and abandonment of properties previously bestowed upon them by treaty.

While the Ridge delegation agreed to give up these additional funds, John Ross concocted a different plan on the heels of the 1835 delegation. Ross’s proposal to Jackson’s secretary was for a sum of \$20 million dollars for all Cherokee lands east of the Mississippi River, along with a range of other damages and annuities stipulated.²⁵⁹ If this proposal marked an important moment for Ross – who had previously entertained no treaty offers for removal – it ultimately failed to impress the U.S. who had only just minted a treaty (unauthorized amongst the Cherokee though it may be) for the Congressionally approved sum of \$5 million. Unable to win this new price, Ross retracted into a staunch anti-removal stance, catering to the majority of the Cherokee in their desire to remain in Georgia. This organized resistance to removal would, in part, cause the Cherokee to miss the deadline for removal stipulated in the Treaty of New Echota, thus voiding the contractual rights guaranteed to them and leading to the Trail of Tears.²⁶⁰

As the federal government’s intransigence with regards to price revealed, and the internecine fights over removal amongst the Cherokee confirmed, the era of a unified national mission towards peaceful coexistence with the U.S. had passed. While the signers of the Treaty of New Echota scrambled to procure additional advantages in the removal compact, they also irreversibly overruled Cherokee law to do so. And yet, the Treaty attempts to depict a meaningful transformation for the Cherokee – one predicated on avoiding financial catastrophe and, thus, recommencing the process of social and moral advancement. Boudinot may have realized that the once vaunted prospects of Cherokee progress had faded before an apathetic white public. But the treaty contends that the decline of investment – both moral and economic – in the Cherokee nation need not spell obliteration for the people and the civilization mission at large. If Boudinot and his contemporaries viewed the Cherokee bankruptcy with chagrin and

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 439

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 448.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Blake Smith, *An American Betrayal*, 159-160.

²⁶⁰ See Carl J. Vipperman, “The Bungled Treaty of New Echota: The Failure of Cherokee Removal, 1836-1838,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 540-541. Vipperman’s analysis of the root causes of the Trail of Tears begin with Ross’s resistance to a treaty, although, he contends that the U.S. officials also gravely mishandled the preparations for Cherokee Removal.

removal with deep trepidation, they also tried to initiate a regeneration of the Cherokee civilization effort by enacting a definitive foreclosure on the present enterprise. Whether or not this was politically and economically sage is difficult to tell given the subsequent voiding of the Treaty and the tragic aftermath. It was, however, an attempt to heed the advice of economic moralists – to directly cut their losses and salvage what was left in a severely curtailed context of colonial intrusion and federal control. Now all that remained was to make public this rationale.

Boudinot's Reply to John Ross and Admitting Failure

Boudinot published the pamphlet *Letters and Other Papers Relating to Cherokee Affairs: Being a Reply to Sundry Publications Authorized by John Ross* in 1837, having collected various documents from the ongoing debate around Native removal into one place. As explained by Perdue, the pamphlet attempts to justify the acts of the Treaty party, recuse Boudinot and his cohort of blame in breaking Cherokee law and the trust of the people, and lay fresh accusations at the feet of John Ross. However specious some of his arguments may have been, they reflect both Boudinot's conviction in his pro-removal stance and his bitterness at having lost the majority will of the Cherokee.²⁶¹

To parry effectively the attacks of John Ross, who mainly accused the Ridge delegation of “self interest” in signing the Treaty of New Echota, Boudinot would have to do more than deny and deflect. The pamphlet, rather, performs an intensive accounting of the rationale behind the decision to treat and as such, it reveals much about the shifting assessment of the political-economic status of the Cherokee and their national mission. If the Treaty of New Echota evinces a bankrupt nation bargaining in a desperate manner to sustain the project of Cherokee national unity, “*Letters*” attempts an in-depth moral justification of this position. If the treaty stakes claims, appraises values, and actualizes the transference of land into cash, the pamphlet offers an unobjective view of this large-scale transformation from the perspective of a disappointed agent of Cherokee nationalism. Moreover, despite his contentions that the Treaty Party made the best possible deal and were operating to resolve a moral problem with extreme consequences, *Letters*, as much as anything, is an attempt at accounting for failure. The terms of this failure are elucidated through political, moral, and economic terms, often times imbuing financial circumstances and maneuvers with ethical significance. Boudinot's argument in *Letters*, aligned with the advice of the economic moralists of his time, concerns the need to admit losses and avoid the pitfalls of further speculation. At the heart of this final pamphlet is the contention that only an honest, direct reckoning with failure can absolve the Treaty Party of guilt and open a channel to social and moral amelioration for the Cherokee Nation.

While *Letters* may seem haphazard in its collection of documents and its cataloguing of grievances and allegations, the pamphlet generally follows a tripartite structure that deals, more or less sequentially, with the controversy over the treaty. Boudinot begins with a justification of his resignation from the *Cherokee Phoenix*, then moves to a comparison of the Ridge and Ross Party's preparation for negotiations, and finally addresses the Treaty of New Echota and the various imputations that surfaced in the wake of the treaty. These sections are framed by an introduction and conclusion, which address the ethical, political, and social ramifications of the removal controversy. Boudinot's central thesis, which he divulges in the introduction, is that “the great cause of our present difficulties—our present dissensions” is “a want of proper information among the people. We charge Mr. Ross with having deluded them with expectations

²⁶¹ See Perdue's introduction to the *Letters and Other Papers*, in Boudinot and Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 158.

incompatible with, and injurious to, their interest.”²⁶² While this charge appears to be mostly of a political nature, there is an economic valence to Boudinot’s thesis that reveals itself over the course of the pamphlet. According to Boudinot, the “expectations” that Ross fosters are, in fact, pecuniary by nature, and the collective “interest” of the people that Boudinot claims to represent is as much an economic interest as it is a political one.

The main thrust of Boudinot’s first section on the *Cherokee Phoenix* is that the political schism between Ross and Boudinot after 1832 led to Ross’s censorship of Boudinot’s beliefs in print, and interrelatedly, Boudinot’s refusal to helm the paper any longer. Boudinot’s bitter contentions that Ross had “muzzled” the press by banning “diversified views” of the removal situation from the paper lent weight to his central critique of Ross’s misrepresentations to the public.²⁶³ But Boudinot is also establishing his mode of argumentation in this section. Along these lines, he introduces economic stakes by underscoring how his perception of the value of the paper had shifted with reference to the funds raised to produce it. Boudinot enumerates his reasons for retirement in the following manner:

1. I believe the continuation of the *Phoenix*, and my services as its Editor, have answered *all the purposes* that it can be expected to answer hereafter. Two of the great objects which the nation had in view in supporting the paper were, the defence of our *rights*, and the proper representation of our *grievances* to the people of the United States. In regard to the *former*, we can add nothing to the full and thorough investigation that has taken place, especially after the decision of the Supreme Court, which has forever closed the question of our conventional rights. In regard to the *latter*, we can say nothing which will have more effect upon the community, than what we have already said (...)²⁶⁴

In this justification for discontinuing the *Phoenix* Boudinot extends a rather oblique assertion that the paper has ultimately failed in its key purposes. This is not a failure of will or exertion – the paper has indeed “answered *all the purposes* that it can be expected to answer” – but rather a failure of consequence and reception. The public, though thoroughly informed, and the United States, though having been presented with the case of the Cherokee, have failed to meet the tasks set them in the *Phoenix*. While this is a rather roundabout way of expressing failure, Boudinot is more explicit in his secondary reason for retirement: “The two great and important objects of the paper not now existing as heretofore, and the nation being in great want of funds, it is unnecessary to continue the expenses in supporting it.”²⁶⁵ Ever careful to avoid representing himself as self-interested in his motives, Boudinot instead explains that the purposes of the paper are simply “not now existing as heretofore.” By arguing that continuation of the newspaper would be utterly futile, he signals a crucial shift in the value of the overall enterprise without implicating himself in its failure.

The purportedly declining value of the *Phoenix* not only exists in a political dimension – being previously “great and important” and now extinguished – but in a pecuniary one. The “funds” and “expenses” of the paper, Boudinot maintains, should be reassigned in the wake of

²⁶² Boudinot, *Letters and Other Papers Relating to Cherokee Affairs: Being a Reply to Sundry Publications Authorized by John Ross* in Boudinot and Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 161.

²⁶³ *Ibid*, 174, 165.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 163, italicization in original.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

the failure of the paper. In his proposal to repurpose the extant funds for the *Phoenix*, Boudinot is demonstrating how the Cherokee might capture and salvage the real remaining value in the wake of the failure of the Cherokee reinstatement project. Further, Boudinot publicizes how Ross refused to accept Boudinot's position on this matter, claiming that "after such collections having been made (...) would it be right to discontinue the paper, and apply the money for other purposes, when the interest of the nation would seem to demand its continuance?"²⁶⁶ In this seemingly peripheral debate around the fate of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot attempts to demonstrate the exemplarity of Ross's indefensible position with regards to failure and value. Ross and his ilk, Boudinot implies, have failed to account for a manifest loss, and are thus costing the Cherokee more in the misguided pursuit of hollow objectives. The final blow in this section comes in a footnote where Boudinot claims that, in spite of his principled objection to repurposing the *Phoenix* funds, "Mr. Ross should, within three or four months after, draw the same money from the Cherokee Treasury, to be expended by him and his fellow delegates at Washington, and not leave one cent."²⁶⁷ In this early section of *Letters*, Boudinot unleashes several of his most important tactics of argumentation, relying on representations of delusional optimism and speculative mismanagement of funds to malign Ross and refute the accusations of his own self-interest.

Boudinot begins his second section by presenting a series of resolutions drafted by the Treaty Party, intended to present the case for a treaty plainly. The resolutions take issue with Ross's mode of fostering false expectations, while further representing the struggle against removal as a futile one:

we consider the policy pursued by the Red Clay Council, in continuing a useless struggle from year to year, as destructive to the present peace and future happiness of the Cherokees, because it is evident that while this struggle is going on, their difficulties will be accumulating, until they are ruined in their property and character, and the only remedy that will then be proposed in their case will be *submission to the laws of the States* by taking reservations.²⁶⁸

This resolution portrays Ross and his Red Clay Council as sustaining a struggle in spite of manifest failure, while further threatening the collective interests of the Cherokee. These interests are both moral and financial, as captured by the phrase "ruined in their property and character." While this phrase surely alludes to the dispossessions of Cherokee improvements by white settlers, it also makes a grander claim on the part of the *collective* property of the Cherokee. The final accusation in this resolution, that the Cherokee will only be forced to accept reservations if they remain in Georgia, takes aim at Ross's misjudgment of the goal of negotiations with the states. The implication is that, while a treaty might preserve the right to Cherokee law and collective property over the land by transferring the tribe to a new allotment West of the Mississippi, Ross's resistance to a treaty threatens subjection to Georgia and U.S. law, and the relinquishment of the right to collective property altogether. While it was certain that there were individual property interests on the line in the case of removal, this resolution stakes the collective property interests of the tribe on signing a treaty.²⁶⁹ By aligning themselves

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 165.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 177.

²⁶⁹ For evidence of self-interest amongst the Ridge Party see Boudinot and Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 157.

with the right to collective ownership, the Treaty Party could mount a counterattack on the front of self-interest by accusing Ross of misusing Cherokee funds: “*Resolved*, That we were disposed to contend for what we considered to be our own rights, as long as there was any hope of relief *to the nation*, but that we never can consent to the waste of our public moneys in instituting and prosecuting suits which will result only to individual advantage.”²⁷⁰ Once again, Boudinot demonstrates how Ross’s refusal to admit defeat in a hopeless battle is not simply misguided, but improvident. Here, the Treaty Party even charges Ross with profligacy with public funds in the suit of individual Cherokee’s land cases.²⁷¹ In attempting to convince the Cherokee of the necessity for a treaty, these resolutions invoked the interests of property and collective rights in order to deflate Ross’s claims of an imminent win in the battle against removal.

From here, Boudinot draws upon Ross’s published communications from the Red Clay Council to divulge his various misrepresentations to the nation at large. Boudinot intends to draw an explicit contrast between the plain and direct resolutions of the Treaty Party and Ross’s misdirection and fabrications. An important episode concerns Ross’s response to a small embassy of Cherokee who were attempting to divine the Chief’s intention to treat or not:

It is easy to apprehend what *ought* to have been the reply of a candid person, under Ross’s circumstances, possessing, as he did, the entire confidence of an ignorant and confiding people—It ought to have been plain, direct, and unequivocal, such as this: ‘I have done what I could to have our nation reinstated—I have failed. There is now no other alternative, for the salvation of the Cherokees, but to make a treaty, and *to treat is to sell the land*.’²⁷²

In the course of lending further flame to Boudinot’s accusations of misdirection, this hypothetical also introduces the specter of failure in full view to the reader. By announcing “I have failed” through the hypothetical speech of Chief Ross, Boudinot performs a dire admission of political defeat through an act of ventriloquism. Through the hypothetical, Boudinot, in part, preserves himself from the full onus of blame for the failure of the cause of national reinstatement. But he is also attempting to inscribe this failure in no uncertain terms, “unequivocally” to an otherwise deluded public: “But what was his reply? He told them that they may rest assured that he was their friend, and that the delegation *would not leave them in a worse situation than they were in*. Poor consolation to a perishing people!”²⁷³ By representing the failure of Cherokee reinstatement as obvious and unequivocal, Boudinot is claiming that Ross intentionally deceived the Cherokee public by stoking their hopes for a better deal. Capitalizing on the “confidence of an ignorant and confiding people,” Ross shields himself from doubt by stimulating false expectations of immediate amelioration. This “consolation,” in Boudinot’s account, is essentially worthless.

²⁷⁰ Boudinot, “*Letters*”, 78.

²⁷¹ See Perdue’s note, *Cherokee Editor*, 229: “Ross had retained the Georgia firm of Underwood and Harris in an attempt to stay evictions in individual cases resulting from the Georgia land lottery. Although the fees were supposed to be paid from ‘public moneys,’ the Cherokee Treasury was empty, and so Ross, Martin, and other wealthy men (who benefited from the suits) helped finance litigation.” Perdue demonstrates how the Treaty party’s claims in this case were half-truths. While Ross had an individual interest in litigating the eviction suits, he did not use public money to finance them.

²⁷² *Ibid*, 191, italicization in original.

²⁷³ *Ibid*.

While the first two sections of *Letters* primarily concern the moral and political failings of Ross to address, head on, a crisis of Cherokee authority and land reinstatement, the third section amplifies the financial stakes of the debate by adding a new allegation against Ross: speculation. Much of the third section is dedicated to addressing Ross's accusations of self-interest head-on. In defending the Treaty of New Echota, Boudinot insists that there were no "special advantages" contained therein for the Ridge delegation, nor was Boudinot capable of deriving pecuniary advantages from the Treaty and its various forms of liquidation.²⁷⁴ Whereas the Treaty Party exercise no self-interest in their negotiations, Boudinot claimed Ross's arguments and maneuvers reveal gross acquisitiveness:

Instead of I being benefitted over my fellows, it is you (...) To be sure, I might have had the same opportunities with some of my countrymen to speculate upon the ignorance and credulity of our citizens—I could as easily have taken advantage of their weakness, and ingratiated myself into their good favor, by pretending to be a land lover, and deluding them with hopes and expectations which I myself did not believe would be realized; and under that deep delusion into which our people have been thrown, I could have purchased their possessions and claims for a trifle, and thus have enriched myself upon the spoils of my countrymen but I have detested that vile speculation. I have seen others engaged in it and those too, who were understood to be your friends, and consequently opposed to a treaty. What speculation have I made, then, which you might allege the treaty was made to confirm to me?

Here, Boudinot attempts to outline Ross's scheme to inflate the value of his own property, first by purchasing plots from other Cherokee at a song and second by hoping to generate a larger price for the land in a subsequent deal with the U.S. By refusing to treat and spreading false hopes amongst the people, Boudinot claims, Ross was amplifying his own financial opportunities to purchase land, compile properties, and enlarge his personal wealth. Much like white land company operators who capitalized on confusion over the legal state of Native land, Ross was attempting to buy low and sell high. This act could be characterized as speculation precisely because of the insolvent state of the tribe at the time. Boudinot knew that Ross, along with the other residing council members of the tribe, had witnessed the diminishment of the Cherokee treasury along with the piling up of their legal and commercial debts. To refuse to admit the financial precarity of the tribe and instead continue business as usual by making purchases of individual reservations and improvements was tantamount to the most illegitimate forms of commercial speculation. Inflating the value of Cherokee holdings despite the fact of imminent removal was the equivalent of continuing to take on debt and purchases in spite of certain insolvency.

If the Cherokee failed to accept the truth of their bankruptcy and the "just liquidation" of their holdings in the Treaty of New Echota, Boudinot claimed, certain moral degradation would follow. In his conclusion, Boudinot makes this explicit by accusing Ross of having separated issues of economic advantage from moral considerations:

You seem to be absorbed altogether in the pecuniary aspects of this nation's affairs—hence your extravagant demands for the lands we are compelled to relinquish (...) Upon what principle, then, could you have made the assertion that you are reported to have

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 202.

made, “that the Cherokees had not suffered one-half what their country was worth,” but upon the principle of valuing your nation in dollars and cents? (...) Can it be possible that you consider the mere pains and privations of the body, and the loss of a paltry sum of money, of a paramount importance to the depression of the mind, and the degradation and pollution of the soul?²⁷⁵

Ross’s gambit to squeeze out more in treaty funds from the government, Boudinot claims, comes at the expense of moral degradation for the tribe. By suspending the Cherokee in political limbo, Ross was contributing to the mental and spiritual exhaustion of his countrymen, exposing them to daily deprivation. Through this key admonition, Boudinot elevates his argument beyond accusations of economic miscalculation and dishonesty by invoking the transcendent value of the moral spirit. Ross is not simply guilty of speculating in spite of bankruptcy, but speculating in spite of the “pollution” of the tribe’s collective “soul.” By exposing the Cherokee to the financial destitution of bankrupt debtors, Ross was tacitly endorsing their moral deprivation, while Boudinot was writing to propose an alternative path – one predicated on accepting removal and performing a just and definitive foreclosure of the Cherokee enterprise of civilization.

Of course, in addition to his interest in redeeming economic and moral value in the face of removal, Boudinot was also interested in redeeming himself. If John Wilson was correct in his belief that “the reputation, and the honour of an unfortunate debtor, is *all* the treasure that he can possibly save from the wreck of fortune,” how did Boudinot attempt to salvage his own honor? Against his portrayal of Ross as covetously awaiting “a full compensation for your gold mines, your marble quarries, your forests, your water courses,” Boudinot depicts himself as an underpaid crusader for the continued rights of the Cherokee.²⁷⁶ Assigning himself this role was meant to diminish the widely held opinion that the Ridge delegation had greedily broke Cherokee law by agreeing to a treaty. Boudinot reframed this transgression as an act of courageous and just necessity. In the face of an apathetic white public, rancorous Cherokee infighting, and the financially corrupt machinations of empire, Boudinot attempted to tell a truth that would set his countrymen free, or so he claimed. As Boudinot framed it: “If one hundred persons are ignorant of their true situation, and are so completely blinded as not to see the destruction that awaits them, we can see strong reasons to justify the action of a minority of fifty persons (...) to save a *nation* from political thralldom and moral degradation.”²⁷⁷

Throughout all of his writings, Boudinot associates sound economic principles with moral uprightness. *Letters* marks a kind of apotheosis of this argumentative mode in Boudinot’s writing, composed at a point of deep crisis for the tribe. Boudinot’s accusations of dishonesty, mismanagement, and speculation on the part of Ross mirror the admonitions of economic moralists like Wilson and Cary who wrote about insolvency during Boudinot’s era. Poised as they were on the verge of bankruptcy and the nullification of a contract that could preserve crucial capital, the Cherokee had the same options available to them as the proprietors of a failing business enterprise, according to Boudinot. They could accept Ross’s leadership and thereby delude themselves and the public, while desperately reappropriating funds and speculating on their remaining holdings. Or, they could admit their insolvency and make an honest account of their losses and remainders. In his portrayal of Ross as desperately clinging to a defunct gambit to maximize his own earnings, Boudinot is referencing the figure of the “failing

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 222-223.

²⁷⁶ Boudinot, “*Letters*”, 224, 203.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 162.

business owner” who “rather than restricting damage to creditors by formally suspending business (...) plunged into risky schemes, hoping against hope to recoup their losses.”²⁷⁸ Counterpoised to Ross’s risky maneuvers, Boudinot attempts to frame *Letters* as an act of honest accounting – a means of disclosing the full extent of the failed enterprise of Cherokee civilization and redeeming the remaining value available to the tribe. This economic redemption, Boudinot maintained, was equivalent to the moral redemption of the collective spirit of the Cherokee. Escalating the debate with Ross beyond matters of usurped political authority and broken laws, Boudinot invoked economic moralism to reveal the disastrous social/spiritual consequences of “self-interest” and delusion in the face of bankruptcy.

Boudinot’s Patriotism

It is clear from his conclusion to “*Letters*” how upended Boudinot’s view of Cherokee society had become by the time he signed the Treaty of New Echota. Feeding the flame of his moralistic attack on Ross, Boudinot paints a lurid portrait of the Cherokee succumbing to the “deprivations of the soul”:

I say their condition is wretched. Look, my dear sir, around you and see the progress that vice and immorality have already made! (...) You will find its cruel effects in the bloody tragedies that are frequently occurring—in the frequent convictions and executions for murders, and in the tears and groans of the widows and fatherless, rendered homeless, naked and hungry, by this vile curse of our race.²⁷⁹

Far from Boudinot’s prophecy of the Cherokee reaching their moral destiny, Boudinot implores the public to witness the regression of the tribe into drunkenness, violence, and penury. Tracking the “progress” of the nation’s “vice and immorality” marks a direct reversal from Boudinot’s depiction of the nation ascending a path towards the “fulness” of its “glory.” Indeed, this graphic depiction of a moral nadir for the Cherokee might appear more at home in the writings of Lewis Cass, George Troup, or Andrew Jackson than those of a Cherokee advocate. It is tempting to view Boudinot as adopting the moral histrionics of the colonial politicians who he once derided in order to defend his pro-removal stance. How to view this rhetorical and political reversal which helped reassign millions of acres of collectively owned land to the U.S., other than an act of defection or, at least, capitulation to colonialism?

A redemptive reading of Boudinot’s role – one which I hesitate to fully endorse – would draw upon the underlying principles of economic moralism to suggest that Boudinot foresaw a rebirth of the Cherokee nation on new soil. This vision, of course, is actualized in the preamble to the Treaty of New Echota, which claims the Ridge Delegation wrote it “with a view to reuniting their people in one body and securing a permanent home for themselves (...) where they can establish and enjoy a government of their choice and perpetuate such a state of society as may be consonant with their views, habits, and condition.”²⁸⁰ Just like insolvent proprietors, Boudinot and his fellow Treaty Party members were desirous of a fresh start – one predicated not only on the political reunification of the tribe west of the Mississippi, but on their liberation from financial failure and its attendant moral terrors. In this case, the rhetorical reversal indexed in

²⁷⁸ Balleisen, *Navigating Failure*, 15.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 224.

²⁸⁰ “Treaty with the Cherokee, 1835” in Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties.*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 439.

Boudinot's late writings entails nothing but a yearning for moral redemption and a deployment of economic knowledge. In business, after all, there is a time to project confidence and attract investment, and a time to close shop, pay off one's debts, and liquidate.

What is clear from examining the aftermath of removal, however, is that a more fundamental principle than economic moralism informed the majority Cherokee opinion on Boudinot and the rest of the Ridge delegation – the collective ownership of the land. This principle surpassed even the soundest economic prescriptions and most well-articulated moral advice, rendering Boudinot's last piece of writing valueless in the defense of his life. Boudinot was well aware that selling the land without the consent of the tribe exposed him to execution, as is made clear in his address to the Treaty party: "I know that I take my life in my hand, as our fathers have also done (...) Oh, what is a man worth who will not dare to die for his people."²⁸¹ Further contemplating the political value of legal and cultural transgression, Boudinot offered a punctilious description of his patriotism in *Letters*:

In one word, I may say that my patriotism consists in the love of the country and the love of the People. These are intimately connected, yet they are not altogether inseparable (...) if the country is lost, or is likely to be lost to all human appearance, and the people still exist, may I not, with a patriotism true and commendable, make a question for the safety of the remaining object of my affection?²⁸²

Consciously at odds with a cherished cultural precept, Boudinot contends that there is a necessary point of separation between the land and the people. Pinpointing this moment of moral and financial decrepitude to a deluded public was Boudinot's overriding purpose in *Letters*. In arguing that he had made a just decision to defend the safety of the people over retention of the land, Boudinot recasts his act of economic exchange as an affirmation of political allegiance. Along with the treaty's preamble, Boudinot espoused the view that selling the land was the only way to stay on the path towards civil advancement. Retaining Cherokee self-governance and tribal unity were purportedly the rational ends of the process of transferring the land into sellable property. In this way, foreclosure was an act of nationalism.

Of course, these projections of national renewal failed to inspire the majority of the Cherokee as they once had, one likely cause being that selling the land had capsized the constitutional and political basis of the tribe. While early Cherokee law had subordinated issues of debt and finance to the sacrosanct collective possession of territory, the treaty had utterly overturned these national imperatives by liquidating the land to pay off debts, claims, and costs of removal.²⁸³ Furthermore, the application of Wilson and Carey's advice to the Cherokee may have been a total red-herring, given the circumstances of the Cherokee financial failure. Their bankruptcy, after all, was the result not of gross personal mismanagement, but of a concerted attack by Andrew Jackson on their treasury. Was it simply naivete that led Boudinot to believe that, having moved westward, these bad-faith economic maneuvers on the part of the federal

²⁸¹ See Perdue's Introduction to *Cherokee Editor*, 27.

²⁸² *Letters*, 172.

²⁸³ If Boudinot was employing economic moralism in an attempt to repair the damage done by the treaty, he might have relied on a more influential source of social doctrine. Outside the Cherokee nation, economic moralism failed to reign over the actions of bankrupt debtors. Even in cases of deep insolvency and glaring defeat, proprietors were rare to advance the kind of "just accounts" that Boudinot attempted in *Letters*. See Balleisen, *Navigating Failure*, 71-74.

government would subsidize? Or that economic moralism could truly guide the Cherokee towards renewed prosperity and national uplift? Whatever his thoughts were at this crucial juncture, few saw his actions through his prescribed lenses of political and moral deliverance.

In actuality, Boudinot's patriotism might be said to consist in three things – love of the country, love of the people, and love and management of the nation's prosperity. Without Boudinot's portrayals of inclining Cherokee property and wealth, the national project would have been underfunded and defenseless. Without his hand in economic law-making, the tribe might have had a treasury full of useless banknotes, or a citizenship plagued by insolvency and dauntless creditors. Spurred on by confidence in the tribe's civil ascension and the antagonism of colonial naysayers, Boudinot crafted a national ethos which hinged progress on Cherokee wealth and its just usages. Confronting removal and the most crucial economic/moral decision of his life, Boudinot upheld this ethos over the tenet of the inseparability of land and the people. This decision unseated him from the Cherokee nation's trust, irrevocably.

In these ways, Boudinot's writing and actions had a direct impact on some of the most important questions confronting Native Americans at large in the nineteenth century: what was the value of ceded Native land? What were the costs of continued struggle with the U.S.? Could Native tribes strategically adapt to capitalism while preserving justice? One of Boudinot's key judgments on these matters is the association of sovereignty with solvency. This alignment of the moral and political livelihood of the tribe with their economic destiny was a significant, if ultimately futile, conceptual intervention. It usurped retention of land as the fundamental basis of evaluation for a Native nation's worth, and instead attempted to inscribe other securities for Indigenous survival. Without a surer basis to stave off failure and a strategy of sovereignty based on sound economic principles, Boudinot argued, "the moral credit of this people, their happiness, and their existence are to be sacrificed!"²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 224.

Afterword: William Apess and The Debtor President

Two years before Elias Boudinot published his justification for signing the Treaty of New Echota, Andrew Jackson penned a public letter of his own to the Cherokee nation. Attempting to compel the Cherokee to accept the terms of removal, Jackson wrote:

I have no motive, my friends, to deceive you. I am sincerely desirous to promote your welfare. Listen to me, therefore, while I tell you that you cannot remain where you now are. Circumstances that cannot be controlled, and which are beyond the reach of human laws, render it impossible that you can flourish in the midst of a civilized community. You have but one remedy within your reach. And that is, to remove to the West and join your countrymen, who are already established there. And the sooner you do this, the sooner you will commence your career of improvement and prosperity.²⁸⁵

Jackson's statement emerged while a majority of the Cherokee remained resolute in their decision to remain on their ancestral lands. In spite of constant settler harassment, the abrogation of their laws and the retreat of their missionaries and advocates, most Cherokee continued to reject, outright, the Treaty of New Echota and The Removal Act. Confronted with such determination, Jackson used a different tact: professing a sincere desire to "promote your welfare." Given the cruel eventuality of Cherokee removal, Jackson's rhetoric feels sharply disingenuous. If the Cherokee rejected Boudinot's claim to have signed the treaty for the sake of renewing the tribe's lease on self-determination, how could they ever believe Andrew Jackson's tidings of "improvement and prosperity"? And yet, here the Removal President attempts to put himself on the record as unselfishly seeking a remedy for his Native "friends," declaring complete honesty in his intentions. Did he really believe this avowal could shift the tides?

While credit was the acknowledged de facto currency of the early American Republic, trust was its less-acknowledged guarantor. Credit and debt, at large, were dependent upon trust – trust of repayment between lender and debtor, trust that bills of exchange and bank notes would hold value, trust that the underlying securities for debts would hold true, trust that new credit would provide national opportunity and expansion.²⁸⁶ Like any citizen cognizant of the economic crashes of the early Republic, Jackson was aware that deceit or mistrust lying dormant somewhere in the speculative value system that America had built could spell disaster. Of course, removal presented a crisis of trust between Native Americans and the settler state that had profound implications for the economic status of the U.S. Even against enormous odds, trust had to be reasserted. To grease the wheels of removal, Jackson's letter attempts to expunge his record of ill-begotten motives with regards to Indians. Rather than enumerate the political and economic motivations behind Cherokee dispossession, Jackson chooses to abstract them entirely, abdicating his own responsibility for the removal program. What are these "circumstances that cannot be controlled, and which are beyond the reach of human laws" that conspired against the Indigenous Peoples of America? What abstracted forces, defiant of the law, facilitated their dispossession?

In 1836, Pequot author William Apess supplied an answer. In a speech dedicated to articulating Native American rights amidst the recession of national public support for the Indian

²⁸⁵ Jackson, Andrew, "To the Cherokee tribe of Indians east of the Mississippi River," Digital Public Library of America, <https://dp.la/item/3d31fce0f293b6e2f624dc86906fbc6a.e>

²⁸⁶ See Balleisen, *Navigating Failure*, 14-15.

cause, Apess arrives at an apt encapsulation of the realpolitik behind Jackson's removal policies: "No, even the president of the United States tells the Indians they cannot live among civilized people, and we want your lands and must have them and will have them. As if he had said to them, 'We want your land for our use to speculate upon; it aids us in paying off our national debt and supporting us in Congress to drive you off.'"²⁸⁷ As unveiled by Apess, debt and speculation were the central motivators of the rapacious Indian policy that Jackson framed as benevolent and inevitable. In his aping of Jackson, Apess casts the President as a grasping debtor, tied up in increasingly pressing obligations of his own – "we want your lands and must have them and will have them." In context with Apess's critique, the tone of Jackson's letter to the Cherokee exhibits the desperation of a debtor making a plea to disgruntled creditors. While the Cherokee and the other eastern Indians were cast as despairing in their struggles during this era, ultimately Jackson was in a position of relative need as well – his program of fully paying off the national debt could only be fulfilled with the complete cession of Native land claims east of the Mississippi.²⁸⁸ Apess explicated this fact and thereby elevated the position of Natives in the intricate representational struggle between colonizer and colonized.

Unlike Boudinot who viewed the Cherokee insolvency as a crucial factor in the decision to remove, Apess asserted Indian solvency relative to the U.S. debtor nation. In his earlier work, *Indian Nullification*, Apess uses the civil disobedience of the Mashpee Indians of Massachusetts as an opportunity to reexamine the debts of the colonizer and colonized. After rehearsing the unfulfilled promises of missionary societies and settler states corresponding to treaty cessions and taxes levied on Indians, Apess concludes: "Thus, though it is manifest that we have cost the government absolutely much less than nothing, we have been called state paupers, and as such treated. Those are strange paupers who maintain themselves, and pay large sums to others into the bargain."²⁸⁹ Utilizing the older definition of "pauper" as one "dependent on the charity of others," Apess takes issue with a longstanding misapprehension about the nature of Native impoverishment.²⁹⁰ Rather than assigning the burden of poverty to Native Americans and their putative reliance on state assistance for the means of subsistence, Apess enumerates the unfulfilled obligations of the settler state – a state that has produced Native poverty through fraud and outright theft. Once again, Apess's thrust is to reverse the assignment of debt between Natives and settlers. Costing the state "much less than nothing" is a clever way of insinuating the outstanding debts of the U.S. to the Natives it claims to support. Backed up by his fastidious accounts of money rendered and services unfulfilled, Apess's accusations of state indebtedness controvert the dominant treatment of Native Americans both in culture and in law. If Marshall argued that Native nations' relation to the United States "resembled that of a ward to his guardian," Apess debunked this purported state of pupilage, and insisted instead that the U.S. was acting as an evasive debtor. In ascribing a crippling financial need for speculation and exploitation to the settler state, Apess redeems Native Americans and upholds their independence.

²⁸⁷ William Apess "Eulogy on King Phillip," in William Apess and Barry O'Connell, *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*, Native Americans of the Northeast (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 307.

²⁸⁸ Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats*, 100.

²⁸⁹ Apess and O'Connell, 188.

²⁹⁰ "Pauper, n. and Adj.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed March 24, 2022, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/139049>.

Aside from the legally dependent and morally creditable Indians of which Apess wrote, other “strange paupers” populated the early Republic. They were the debtors for whom the manifold opportunities of early national expansion spelled financial failure and defeat. U.S. colonial capitalism and its acceleration of dispossession had many winners, but its losers were linked together by their poverty, their diminished social cache, and their mutual expressions of betrayal at the hands of an uncaring system. On behalf of the bankrupts, John Wilson captured this ethos of the indebted pauper: “It is an out-lawry, where there is no crime! It is the most desperate state, into which a man can fall, he must famish, or beg, or (I blush for my country, and tremble with horror, while I write it) he must overleap every *statute* of Law, and take shelter under the great and powerful Law of *Nature*.”²⁹¹ Wilson’s pitiable portrait certainly calls to mind the poignant representations of impoverished Natives from Occom or Boudinot. If there was a conceptual closeness in the unwarranted suffering of debtors and Indians in the early Republic, however, it rapidly dissolved. Ultimately, relief was forthcoming for one of these parties, but not for the other. The prohibition of debtor prisons and the slow institutionalization of bankruptcy laws delivered debtors from their “most desperate state,” providing them “shelter” once again under the law, whereas the U.S.’s program of Manifest Destiny placed Native American tribes in increasingly perilous states of “out-lawry” across the 19th century. The historical parameters of this study, it must be admitted, fail to capture the evolution of Native relations, trust and dependency beyond the 1830’s when Apess composed his reflections. In the post-removal history of Native American existence, one can only say that Jackson’s determination to supply the avaricious need of empire with speculation on Native lands prevailed in policy and reality.

Nevertheless, I conclude with Apess because his arguments manifest a latent critique within the writings of Occom, Schoolcraft, and Boudinot that, even today, remains relevant. While each of these authors deployed economic knowledge in a unique fashion, each was also aware of how debt correlated with notions of trust and dependency. As such, debt could be used to interrogate the social dynamics of settler-colonialism as removal gained steam in the early years of the United States of America. By composing their own socio-economic principles, these Native authors contravened the efforts of colonial actors – be it Eleazar Wheelock, Lewis Cass, or Andrew Jackson himself – to increase the dependency of Native Americans on the U.S. and reduce the trust between settler and Indigenous peoples. This Indigenous reinvention of the credit economy confronted the increasingly exploitative operations of colonial capitalism. While it was unable, ultimately, to supplant the colonizer’s financial machine, it did, in key moments, reveal its twisted logics and magnified the settler state’s dependency on Native American labor, trade, land, and society. Apess’s incisive critiques of Indian pauperism and the debtor president are the culmination of these authors’ efforts to redirect the flow of not only capital, but renewed trust between colonizer and colonized.

Lewis Cass’s 1830 review, which depicted Native American society as a sparse “state of nature,” included a curious claim relevant to this reversed logic of debt. Responding to the criticism that Indian removal would be prohibitively expensive, Cass writes, “all should be given, and all no doubt will be given, that can be reasonably employed in their comfortable support. It is not a question of profit or loss, but a great question of national policy, involving the rights and feelings of those, from whom we have obtained much, and for whom we have done little.”²⁹² Considering the source, Cass’s acknowledgment of Natives’ comfort, rights, and

²⁹¹ Wilson, “Considerations on Insolvency,” 5.

²⁹² Cass, “Review of Documents and Proceedings Relating to the Formation and Progress of a Board in the City of New York, for the Emigration, Preservation, and Improvement of the Aborigines of America. July 22, 1829,” 119.

feelings appears to be out-of-place and insincere. Like Jackson who professed his interest in the future prosperity of the Cherokee, Cass's sentiments appear generally at odds with his policies and his estimation of Native society. And yet, even for Cass, who thought very little of the value of Native American civilization, there is a need to confess the nation's deep obligation to the Indigenous Peoples of America. Though Cass's purported faith in the nation to supply them all the necessary means of removal was not borne out in the subsequent history, his writing reflects a little-acknowledged truth – that the U.S. nation had “obtained much” and “done little” for the Native tribes who confronted removal in the early years of the Republic. The totality of the U.S.'s debt to these Indigenous peoples has yet to be evaluated, let alone repaid. But in the vivid attestations of these early Native authors, we may start to perceive more clearly this persistently suppressed debt.

Bibliography

- Apess, William, and Barry O'Connell. *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot*. Native Americans of the Northeast. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992.
- Balleisen, Edward J. *Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy and Commercial Society InAntebellum America*. The Luther Hartwell Hodges Series on Business, Society, and the State. Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- Bannet, Eve Tavor. *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading, 1720-1810 Migrant Fictions*. Cambridge [England] ; Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Baucom, Ian. *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Best, Stephen Michael. *The Fugitive's Properties Law and the Poetics of Possession*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226241111>.
- Boudinot, Elias. *Cherokee Editor, the Writings of Elias Boudinot*. 1st ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983.
- . "Cherokee Phoenix | CHEROKEE PHOENIX | Volume 4, Number 48; Published July, 7, 1832." Accessed January 5, 2022. <https://www.wcu.edu/library/DigitalCollections/CherokeePhoenix/Vol4/no48/cherokee-phoenix-page-2-column-2b.html>.
- Bowes, John P. *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal*. Norman, UNITED STATES: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4526682>.
- Brannon, Frank. "The Press of the Cherokee Phoenix Newspaper as Artifact." *Native South* 11, no. 1 (2018): 117–43. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nso.2018.0004>.
- Brooks, Joanna. *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African American and Native American Literatures*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195332919.001.0001>.
- Brooks, Lisa Tanya. *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*. Indigenous Americas. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. First Peoples : New Directions Indigenous. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Cary, Thomas G. "The Dependence of the Fine Arts Tor Encouragement, in a Republic, on the Security of Property; With an Enquiry into the Causes of Frequent Failure Among Men of Business: An Address, Delivered Before the Boston Mercantile LIBrary Association, November 13, 1844." Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1845.
- Cass, Lewis. "Review of Documents and Proceedings Relating to the Formation and Progress of a Board in the City of New York, for the Emigration, Preservation, and Improvement of the Aborigines of America. July 22, 1829." *The North American Review* 30, no. 66 (1830): 62–121.
- Cavalier, Christine R. "Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's Sentimental Lessons: Native Literary Collaboration and Resistance." *MELUS: The Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 98–118.
- Cheyfitz, Eric, and ebrary, Inc, eds. *The Columbia Guide to American Indian Literatures of the United States since 1945*. The Columbia Guides to Literature since 1945. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/Doc?id=10183552>.

- Child, Brenda J., and Colin Calloway. *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*. Penguin Library of American Indian History. East Rutherford: Penguin Publishing Group, 2012.
- Chiles, Katy L. *Transformable Race: Surprising Metamorphoses in the Literature of Early America*. Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Day, Iyko. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Dayton, Cornelia Hughes. *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789*. Chapel Hill, UNITED STATES: University of North Carolina Press, 1995. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4321885>.
- Dietrich, René. "Native American Poetry in the Age of U. S. Expansion: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's 'The Contrast' and John Rollin Ridge/Yellow Bird's 'The Atlantic Cable.'" In *A History of American Poetry: Contexts-Developments-Readings*, edited by Oliver (ed. and introd.) Scheiding, René (ed. and introd.) Dietrich, and Clemens (ed. and introd.) Spahr, 111–24. WVT-Handbücher Zum Literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium (WVT-Handbücher Zum Literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium): 19. Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (WVT), 2015.
- Dyck, Reginald. "The Economic Education of Samson Occom." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 24, no. 3 (2012): 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.5250/studamerindilite.24.3.0003>.
- Filler, Jonathan. "Arguing In an Age of Unreason: Elias Boudinot, Cherokee Factionalism, and the Treaty Of New Echota." Bowling Green State University / OhioLINK, 2010.
- "Founders Online: From Thomas Jefferson to William Henry Harrison, 27 February 1" University of Virginia Press. Accessed March 17, 2022. <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-39-02-0500>.
- Getches, David H. *Cases and Materials on Federal Indian Law*. 5th ed. American Casebook Series. St. Paul, MN: Thomson/West, 2005.
- Griffin, Dustin H. *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800*. Cambridge ; Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Hartigan-O'Connor, Ellen. *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America*. Philadelphia, UNITED STATES: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/berkeley-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3441667>.
- Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. Race and American Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- "History of U.S. Currency | U.S. Currency Education Program." Accessed March 15, 2022. <https://www.uscurrency.gov/history>.
- Hudson, Angela Pulley. "Forked Justice: Elias Boudinot, The US Constitution, and Cherokee Removal." In *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wr9rm.7>. Jaskoski, Helen, ed. *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays*. Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture 102. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Johnson, Walter. *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Kades, Eric. "The Dark Side of Efficiency: Johnson v. M'Intosh and the Expropriation of American Indian Lands." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 148, no. 4 (April 2000): 1065. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3312840>.

- Kappler, Charles J. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. Vol. 2. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904.
- Kelderman, Frank. *Authorized Agents: Publication and Diplomacy in the Era of Indian Removal*. Suny Series, Native Traces. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019.
- Konkle, Maureen. *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/Doc?id=10116515>.
- Laws of the Cherokee Nation...* Tahlequah, C. N.: Adam Matthew Digital, 1852. http://www.americanwest.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/Graff_670.
- Lyons, Scott Richard. *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*. Indigenous Americas. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Mann, Bruce H. *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- McLoughlin, William G. *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- McMaster, John Bach. *The Acquisition of Political, Social, and Industrial Rights of Man in America*. American Classics. New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1961.
- Miles, Edwin A. "After John Marshall's Decision: Worcester v. Georgia and the Nullification Crisis," 2022, 27.
- Nelson, Scott Reynolds. *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History of America's Financial Disasters*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012.
- Occom, Samson, and Joanna Brooks. *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan: Leadership and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Native America*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- "Pauper, n. and Adj." In *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed March 24, 2022. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/139049>.
- Perdue, Theda, and Michael D. Green. *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*. Third edition. The Bedford Series in History and Culture. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016.
- Peyer, Bernd. *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America*. Native Americans of the Northeast. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997.
- Poovey, Mary. *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Rifkin, Mark. *Manifesting America: The Imperial Construction of U.S. National Space*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Ross-Mulkey, Mikhelle Lynn. "The 'Cherokee Phoenix': Resistance and Accommodation." *Native South* 5, no. 1 (2012): 123–48. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nso.2012.0002>.
- Round, Phillip H. *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663-1880*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Saunt, Claudio. *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory*. First edition. New York, NY: WWNorton & Company, Inc, 2020.
- Schneider, Bethany. "Boudinot's Change: Boudinot, Emerson, and Ross on Cherokee Removal." *ELH* 75, no. 1 (2008): 151–77. <https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.2008.0008>.
- . "Not for Citation: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's Synchronic Strategies." *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 54, no. 1–4 (4th Quarters 2008): 111.

- Schoolcraft, Jane Johnston, and Robert Dale Parker. *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- . *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky: The Writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- Sheehan, Bernard W. *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian*. Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1973.
- Siroky, David S., and Hans-Jörg Sigwart. “Principle and Prudence: Rousseau on Private Property and Inequality.” *Polity* 46, no. 3 (July 2014): 381–406. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2014.13>.
- Sklansky, Jeffrey. *Sovereign of the Market: The Money Question in Early America*. American Beginnings, 1500-1900. London, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009.
- Smith, Adam. “The Theory of Moral Sentiments,” n.d., 322.
- Smith, Daniel Blake. *An American Betrayal: Cherokee Patriots and the Trail of Tears*. 1st ed. A John Macrae Book. New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2011.
- Szasz, Margaret Connell. *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*. University of New Mexico Press, 1988.
- “Treaty with the Chippewa Made and Concluded at the Fond Du Lac of Lake Superior, 1826.,” n.d. Wikisource.
- Valeri, Mark. “Religious Discipline and the Market: Puritans and the Issue of Usury.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (1997): 747–68. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2953881>.
- Vipperman, Carl J. “The Bungled Treaty of New Echota: The Failure of Cherokee Removal, 1836-1838.” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 540-558.
- Warrior, Robert Allen. *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
- Wheelock, Eleazar. *A Plain and Faithful Narrative of the Original Design, Rise, Progress and Present State of the Indian Charity-School at Lebanon, in Connecticut*. Boston: Printed by Richard and Samuel Draper, in Newbury Street, 1763.
- White, Richard. *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.
- . *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. 20th anniversary ed. Studies in North American Indian History. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Wilson, John. “Considerations on Insolvency, in a Letter to the Hon. John Wilson, Esq. Chairman of the Committee on the Insolvent Laws of Pennsylvania, House of Representatives, Lancaster - Document - The Making of the Modern World.” Accessed December 30, 2021. https://go-gale-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Monographs&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=10676&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=20&docId=GALE%7CU0103086616&docType=Monograph&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZMMC&prodId=MOME&pageNum=1&contentSet=GAL E%7CU0103086616&searchId=R1&userGroupName=ucberkeley&inPS=true.

Wyss, Hilary E. "English Letters and Indian Literacies: Reading, Writing, and New England Missionary Schools, 1750-1830." Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.