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The Professional Cherokee: Elias Boudinot and the Negotiation of Indian Political Identity, 1817-39

Irina Rogova  
*Bard College*

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The Professional Cherokee:
Elias Boudinot and the Negotiation of Indian Political Identity, 1817-39

A Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
Irina Rogova

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“Guilt is not readily passed down the generations, but responsibility can be. A first step towards satisfying that responsibility for Europeans and their descendents in North and South America would be to treat indigenous peoples today with respect — something that, alas, cannot yet be taken for granted.”

- Charles C. Mann
1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus
This project would not have had the opportunity to grow and develop without the help of several people both within and outside of the Bard community. These individuals are owed my gratitude for their support.

First, an immeasurable amount of thanks is owed to my adviser, Christian Crouch. Not only has she been a great support throughout (what often felt like) the torment of senior project, but she is also the reason I fell in love with the history of the Atlantic World. It is difficult to find words to express how monumentally her classes and general presence have changed my life. Walking out of her classes every week left me with a sense of immense inspiration, with the desire to turn the field on its head. If not for her enthusiastic teaching style (I can still remember the first day of “Capitalism and Slavery” when she asked who our favorite capitalist was,) and her willingness to work through even the slightest problems with students, I would probably still be stuck studying a field of history that I had no interest in. Thank you.

To Robert Culp and Geoff Sanborn for teaching some of the most inspiring classes at Bard and agreeing to evaluate my final work. I’m sorry it’s so long.

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INTRODUCTION
THE SPACE FOR A PROFESSIONAL

Elias Boudinot’s three names parallel the different stages of his life. First there was Gallegina Oo-Watie, the Cherokee name given to him at birth. Then there was the translation of this first name, most commonly used in histories before 1817: Buck Watie. Finally, there was the name he adopted in young adulthood, Elias Boudinot (sometimes spelled Boudinott in order to avoid confusion with its original holder, a Continental Congressman) which dominates the historical record. The multitude of Boudinot’s names correlates with the different paths he would take during his life in order to establish himself within the political arena of the Cherokee Nation and the United States. Unlike many historical figures situated within oppressed groups who are completely silenced, Boudinot left behind a self-written record of nearly his entire adult life. This project seeks to present the life and work of Elias Boudinot as the professional Cherokee who attempted to craft an Indian political identity by appealing primarily to white American audiences in order to secure the sovereignty of indigenous nations.

The early nineteenth-century was a significant moment in American Indian history – it was a turning point, in which indigenous nations used written appeals to contend with a United States government set on their removal. Several American Indian nations adapted Euro-American practices in order to maintain their sovereignty in a land no longer controlled by an imperial power. A few American Indian intellectuals gained fame in the United States during this era, most often hailed for their ability to eloquently speak out against the oppressive and racist actions of the United States. Elias Boudinot was one of these intellectuals, establishing the first American Indian newspaper in 1828. While Boudinot defined himself as Cherokee, separating and elevating his people from other American Indian nations by establishing a
distinctly Cherokee form of intellectualism, other indigenous writers sought a pan-Indian consciousness. In 1829, William Apess, a Pequot Indian, began writing extensively about white American opinions of indigenous peoples and the effect of these opinions on both societies. He condemned the United States in its weak support of American Indian nations, citing that the history of colonization already built the inflexible negative views white Americans had about indigenous peoples. His powerful language against the formation of Euro-American history sought to condemn white society for its continued lack of understanding of indigenous peoples. This deficit had an effect on the well-being of American Indians. Beginning his career a decade earlier than William Apess, Elias Boudinot initially sought to appeal to and educate white citizens of the United States instead of using the condemnation Apess would defer to. Boudinot’s crafted a speaking technique which presented his Indian identity in a way which appealed to white audiences because of his adherence to Euro-American social standards, present among some Cherokees because of American-sponsored civilization programs. Elias Boudinot established his voice in the discourse between American Indians and the United States at the height of political contention between the two societies, but he was not alone in doing so. Discussions of race were prevalent in the early nineteenth-century, and indigenous peoples were active participants. However, all voices on the subject were neither in agreement on the path of indigenous peoples in the United States, nor were their methods for speaking to a white audience identical. Boudinot sought a different path from Apess, a path which led him to juxtapose his indigenous identity against the perceptions of white America in order to establish himself as the professional Cherokee.

The discourse Boudinot entered into during the 1820s was a product of the political

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relationship established between the United States and American Indian nations in the previous decades. The three names of Elias Boudinot assist in explaining the development of these relationships: After a century of permanent contact with European settlers and the power shift of the American Revolution, indigenous nations showed signs of the varied effects of colonialism and acculturation. American Indian cultures and societies had not been destroyed during these processes, as was evident through Boudinot’s Cherokee name. The Cherokees were not vanishing, but the necessity for the translation of Gallegina Oo-watie into Buck Watie pointed to the growing value of Euro-American standards within the Cherokee Nation. And most significantly, the transformation of Buck Watie into Elias Boudinot illustrates deference to the standards of white society, not just the accommodation of it. Boudinot’s adoption of a Euro-American name demonstrated a heterogeneous Cherokee Nation struggling with changes brought on by Euro-American civilization programs.

Sometime in 1802, Elias Boudinot was born in the town of Oothcaloga in the northwestern area of the state of Georgia. The town, established at the turn of the century by Boudinot’s father, David Oo-watie, and uncle, Major Ridge, had a large role in shaping Boudinot’s childhood around the adaptation of Euro-American practices. In the previous century, Boudinot’s ancestors lived in Hiwassee, a prominent trading town in what would become southeastern Tennessee, where they were able to acquire wealth through the exchange of slaves and skins with European traders. This new economic system, markedly growing in strength and size after permanent contact was instituted with the English around 1700, changed the operation of traditional Cherokee society. Due to the lines of kinship formed by matrilineal descent, children of white traders and Cherokee women retained a space in the tribe while also

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3 Ibid., 4. Tennessee was admitted to the Union on June 1, 1796.
inheriting the property of their fathers. This dual inheritance created an upper class of Cherokees, financially buoyed by European traditions of patriarchal inheritance and politically grounded via Indian clan membership. At the same time, the nation changed its political system with the establishment of a centralized government led by the National Council in 1794, removing local consensus decision making in favor of a representational system dominated by young men. This combination led to the rise of a new kind of Cherokee, who merged claims to the foundations of power within both Cherokee and Euro-American culture and could therefore present himself as the voice of the nation in both societies. Such individuals would fill the role of the professional Cherokee, appealing to the dominant white culture in order to influence politics within the Cherokee Nation itself.

Throughout a century of contact with the British, mixed race Cherokees began to commandeer this new political role. As their wealth and influence grew, so did the prominence of Euro-American practices within the nation. After the American Revolution, the opportunity for the institution of United States led “civilization” programs became even more obtainable.

4 Ibid.
5 Konkle, Writing Indian Nations, 49.
6 A brief remark is necessary on the use of the word “civilization” within this project. There are two forms which the word will take on throughout the text: first is a reference to the civilization programs promoted by the United States in attempts to establish Euro-American practices among the American Indian nations the country had political and economic relationships with. The second is a theory of the societal structures and systems which were expected as a result from such programs. It is important to highlight the privilege and oppression behind the term “civilization.” In the nineteenth-century, (and this language continues into our own times through the language of developed and developing nations,) the ideal of civilization was spoken about by Euro-American (read: white), peoples, and they placed this ideal within their own societies. This placement of value on one form of societal structure is a main source in the formations of institutionalized racism and oppression of non-privileged peoples. Originally this project sought to point to the fallibility of the term through the use of quotation marks – “civilization” – to imply the mutability of the word. This proved to be a distraction in the flow of the project and only opened more questions about the term. For the sake of this project, the use of the term civilization will signify the standard practices of Euro-American society at large such as the reliance on a gendered separation of labor which placed men as farmers and women in the domestic sphere, animal husbandry, the nuclear family, the use of written language as the basis for legitimacy in political systems, and so on. When this project speaks of the Cherokees becoming civilized, it is a discussion of the adoption of Euro-American practices. At no point does this project seek to place one form of cultural practices above another. In fact, the often forced civilization of the Cherokee and other American Indian peoples had a role in the loss of lands and lives experienced between 1492 and the modern day. Value cannot and will not be placed upon one societal structure in favor of another, especially in terms of which
These programs were put into action during President George Washington’s administration. His Secretary of War, Henry Knox, used the peaceful language of Thomas Jefferson’s Northwest Ordinance of 1787 to urge the president to avoid land war with the American Indian tribes of the southeast. The administration honored Indian land rights and considered indigenous nations as “foreign nations, not as the subjects of any particular State.” But the growing white and slave populations of the south would eventually encroach on all remaining Indian lands. Henry Knox believed it was the duty of the United States to preserve indigenous peoples from extinction.

How different would be the sensation of a philosophical mind to reflect, that, instead of exterminating a part of the human race by our modes of population, we had persevered, through all difficulties, and at least had imparted our knowledge of cultivation and the arts to aboriginals of the country, by which the source of future life and happiness had been preserved and extended.

The United States would do itself justice to save the American Indians through civilization, or so Knox believed. He suggested installing commissioners and missionaries on indigenous lands who would provide farming supplies and livestock to Indians, ending their need to hunt wild game. These tools and animals were to be given as gifts, not in exchange for land or money.

With communal access to lands, American Indians had the opportunity to civilize and practice white farming techniques for what appeared as little to no cost. The program was continued through the beginning of the nineteenth-century during Thomas Jefferson’s presidential administration. The idea of civilizing indigenous peoples, however, would continue on in the American consciousness for much longer.

Why did adherence to civilization programs become so prominent amongst wealthy

\[\text{structure came to dominated within the United States.}\]

\[\text{8 Ibid., 167.}\]
\[\text{9 Quoted in Ibid, 168.}\]
\[\text{10 Ibid.}\]
Cherokees? These Cherokees, including Boudinot’s uncle Major Ridge, had allied with the British during the Revolutionary War, leading to a number of concessions after their ally’s defeat. Although a plethora of reasons may be given for the alliance, the hope of holding onto Cherokee lands through appeal to an imperial power against colonial settlers appears to be prominent. While the British encouraged neutrality amongst their indigenous allies until they were needed to supplement the imperial army and loyalist colonial militias, the Cherokees took the opportunity to attack settlers in the Carolinas for previous land encroachments. The American response was so violent that many Cherokees had to seek food and shelter elsewhere after the complete decimation of towns and farmlands. After the victory of the American colonists, the Cherokees continued to suffer through bouts of disease and starvation. Between 1776 and 1794, the year the Cherokees officially surrendered, the nation lost over twenty thousand square miles of its homelands. After peace was made with the newly formed United States, Cherokees were either reluctant or could not return to their old villages and instead raised new ones, scarred by both the utter destruction experienced during the war and the cession of Cherokee lands to the United States within 1785 Treaty of Hopewell.

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12 The practice of using competing imperial and colonial forces to secure land, money, goods, or political power was not a new one among indigenous peoples during the American Revolution. From the earliest interactions between indigenous peoples and colonizers, there was an understood dynamic which included the imperial powers funding exploration and settlement attempts. As the power balance shifted in favor of Euro-American powers during three centuries of colonization, indigenous peoples actively appealed to the imperial forces that held the purse strings and wrote the laws. A history of these appeals aims to demonstrate the political knowledge and power that American Indians possessed, often written out by historians of the Columbian Exchange. These moments of political action demonstrate indigenous communities and nations who did not simply succumb to powerful colonial forces but sought both violent and non-violent ways of protecting their lands and people. For a detailed history of one of these attempts in the seventeenth-century, see: Jenny Hale Pulsipher, “Subjects…Unto the Same King: New England Indians and the Use of Royal Political Power,” Massachusetts Historical Review 5 (2003): 29-57, accessed April 1, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/ 25081179.
13 Kathryn E. Holland Braund, Deerskins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-Americans, 1685-1815, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1993), 167-168.
15 Edward Everett Dale and Gaston Litton, “Introduction” in Cherokee Cavaliers: Forty Years of Cherokee History
The new Cherokee towns strayed from a traditional structure in that they replicated Euro-American communities and further changed the layout of the society over the following fifty years. Building new residences no doubt required the wealth of the growing group of Cherokee elites and heightened their power in these new settlements. The United States played a role in the organization of towns due to trade influences granted by the post-war Hopewell Treaty. The American government stood to benefit from encouraging the adoption of Euro-American practices. After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the U.S. claimed all the land surrounding the Cherokees and many other indigenous tribes of North America. Due to the physical impossibility of controlling the vast new lands, the states had a vested interest in “civilizing” indigenous peoples. On one side of the civilizing process came the adoption of self-sufficient farming practices and animal husbandry, allowing for the cession of indigenous hunting grounds. Former hunting grounds could then be used for white settlement. In the early nineteenth-century, two events encouraged white expansion. First was the Louisiana Purchase and President Thomas Jefferson’s hope for settling the new lands with self-sufficient farmers. Along with this was an industrial innovation – the 1793 invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney – that shaped the possibilities of this newly acquired land. The ability to grow cotton in the south in vast amounts fueled farmers’ desires for larger tracts of land, much like the boom of tobacco planting had expanded Jamestown, Virginia, in the Chesapeake in the early seventeenth-century. Outside of the desire for indigenous hunting grounds to be ceded for white settlement, the United States could also benefit from “civilizing” indigenous peoples who would either assimilate into white society through intermarriage or move to settle agriculture communities in western lands, carrying the practices of the dominant white society to lands which were less appealing to white

settlers themselves.\textsuperscript{16} Dual desires for land and for the promulgation of white practices in the lands of North America stimulated the United States “civilization” program. Tribes with large land claims, such as the Cherokees, became the primary targets of these American programs.

The civilization program, beyond imposing self-sufficient farming and animal husbandry, also sought to change indigenous familial structure and living situations from a multi-generational household to what today is known as a nuclear family – father, mother, and children. The implementation of this structure, though certainly not within all Cherokee families and communities, did have a significant effect on Cherokee society. The growth of the nuclear family amongst the Cherokees led to a decrease in the traditional extended family structure which involved clan affiliation through matrilineal kinship ties. Within the matrilineal kinship system, the tribe was organized into seven clans: Wolf, Deer, Bird, Paint, Blue, Wild Potato, and Twister. By birth, children belonged to the clan of their mothers. Women were the permanent residents of their homes, with men moving from the home of their mother to that of their wife after marriage. The existence of the clan system created a community in which any Cherokee, even if they were unknown in a certain town, could claim a bond with a fellow clan member.

The system’s placement of importance on the clan status of a woman and her ability to pass this status to her children also created a significant amount of power for women within Cherokee society.\textsuperscript{17} Therefore, as the clan structure shifted to focus on the nuclear family and the power of the patriarch, these relationships also manifested themselves in the larger structure of the tribe. While previously Cherokees relied on a political system of community meetings where decision-making occurred via consensus, allowing both men and women influence in the proceedings of the tribe, the shift to wealth accumulation and patriarchal family structures allowed for the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Konkle, \textit{Writing Indian Nations}, 49.
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formation of a male-dominated representative government. This structure grew throughout the first quarter of the nineteenth-century, culminating in the Cherokee Constitution of 1827.

This is the changing society into which Elias Boudinot was born. The first of nine children of David Oo-watie and Susanna Reese, Boudinot was born in a log cabin surrounded by fenced-in fields and orchards in the town of Oothcaloga. Some records claim that Reese was of a mixed white and indigenous background, most likely with a white father, and belonged to the Moravian church. Given the name Gallegina or “Buck” at birth, Boudinot lived outside of a traditional Cherokee lifestyle. His home was only inhabited by his parents and siblings. In a divergence from matrilineal kinship traditions, Boudinot, his brother Stand (who would become a major figure in Cherokee history in his own right and will enter the story in the final chapter of this project), and their other siblings adopted their father’s surname, “Watie.”

David Oo-watie himself was already including Anglicized practices in his life when his children were born, beginning with the move to Oothcaloga and the implementation of Euro-American farming practices and family structure. Although Boudinot and his siblings were given Cherokee names, the family seems to have primarily relied on the translations of names from Cherokee into English. No sources available discuss which language was spoken within

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21 Another brief remark on the term “traditional” within this project. Traditional often harkens to images of static cultures, either ignoring or resisting the change which often surrounds it. That is not the goal of the use of this term in this project. The several times the term “traditional” will be used will be in an attempt to separate older practices of the Cherokee Nation from newer practices heavily influenced by Euro-American requirements for civilization. That is not to say that practices considered “traditional” had not been changed in two centuries of contact with Euro-American peoples. Indigenous cultural were by no means static or completely resistant to change – depictions of them as such seek to promote the power hierarchy presented in the previous discussion of the term “civilization” (note 5.) The major difference between “traditional” and “modern” (meaning contemporary to the historical period discussed) practices and structures is the amount of Euro-American influence each can take before it wholly changes the society in question. So while many Cherokee traditions such as matrilineal kinship, gendered labor practices, or systems of war were affected by contact with Euro-Americans, the adoption of practices such as animal husbandry, male-dominated farming, trade, family makeup, and political structures may be seen as variances from tradition.
the Oo-Watie household, so there is the possibility that at home Boudinot answered to his Cherokee name. But his own writing always referred to one of his two English names, indicating Boudinot’s association with the United States and his appeal to white audiences. Although Boudinot possessed three names, his dedication to his adopted Euro-American name throughout his adult life parallels his desire to participate in an Anglicized community.

Beside the structure of his home and the naming of his children, David Oo-watie furthered the civilization process of his family by enrolling his children in schools run by American missionaries. In 1811, after growing up in a non-traditional Cherokee household, Buck Watie was sent to a Moravian mission school in Spring Place, Georgia. There he was joined by his brother Stand and cousins of the Ridge line, including John Ridge. Spring Place was the first – albeit, most likely unconscious on their part – step in the process of the creation of the political identities for Elias Boudinot, Stand Watie, and John Ridge. The Moravian school aimed not only to instruct Cherokee children in the basics of nineteenth-century Euro-American education (the four R’s – reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion) but also to the “arts of civilization.” There was a hope that the education of children in civilization practices would spread Euro-American practices to their parents and communities. The school aimed to erase Cherokee practices it found to be uncivilized and in turn, unchristian. Owing to this connection, many mission schools were created to attract indigenous students who could be educated in white practices and then returned to their own societies to spread this civilization. A dependence on the susceptibility of young people to acculturation no doubt lay in the goals of mission schools, along with the common mission desire to spread the teachings of Christianity.

Among the first practices the mission schools targeted in their civilization attempts were

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22 John Ridge will also become a prominent figure in the removal crisis this project discusses.
traditional Cherokee dress and the gendered division of labor. The Moravians taught young boys to embrace agriculture and animal husbandry while providing girls with lessons on sewing, spinning, and weaving.\textsuperscript{24} This was nearly a complete reversal of traditional roles: Cherokee women normally held control over the day-to-day care of farms and gardens while men provided supplemental resources through hunting. These roles were deeply embedded in Cherokee culture, tied to the Cherokee origin story, where the first man and woman, Kana’ti and Selu, provided meat and corn respectively. In theory, crossing these gendered labor boundaries could throw the universe out of balance, disrupt individual sexuality, and damage gendered economic and political power. In reality, however, sometimes the obstruction of these boundaries was necessary to continue normal functions within the community. For example, Cherokee men could sometimes be found alongside women, helping to do the more strenuous tasks of clearing fields and harvesting crops.\textsuperscript{25}

The change that the missionaries hoped for, however, stepped outside of any boundary-crossing the Cherokees may have experienced before the establishment of missions. Permanent contact with the English altered traditional roles between 1700 and 1800 – the power of young Cherokee men had risen as they became the primary traders of raw deer skins to the English, cutting out women from the dressing of hides and older tribal leaders from diplomatic relationships. Still, the Moravian education of children in new roles combined with the removal of children from their communities for extended periods of time escalated the prevalence of these non-traditional practices.\textsuperscript{26} The push for women to leave behind their control over agriculture also eliminated a great deal of their power within the tribe. Women, in their roles as farmers, were also responsible for good harvests and for the protection of their crops. They were the

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Braund, \textit{Deerskins and Duffels}, 89.
primary cooks and created the household and kitchen goods that went along with this station. These tasks, especially the handling and distribution of food, gave women significant economic power. This power translated itself to the role of clan matriarchs in war and peacetime decision making – matriarchs could command male relatives to seek revenge through warfare or demand raiding parties to collect people fit for adoption. The civilization requirement of men as farmers and women as domestic workers disrupted this power system. The results displayed themselves in the structures of Cherokee families, such as the Watie family.

In order to support the civilizing process of indigenous children in mission schools, pupils were often housed on the same grounds as the school and their trips home were limited. These practices restricted the amount of time students were able to spend with their families and communities, insulating them from the traditional practices the school sought to eradicate. In interpreting the early civilization of Buck Watie, this mission school practice serves to demonstrate that he was distanced from all forms of extended contact with traditional Cherokee society at age six. More importantly, he would not return to the Cherokee Nation until 1822, at the age of eighteen. The events Buck Watie experienced between the ages of six and eighteen both at mission schools and in Euro-American society further alienated him from the majority of Cherokee society. In a sense, the occurrences during Watie’s formative years changed his relationship with the Cherokee Nation. His social distance from the majority population and participation in the civilizing government of the nation created Buck Watie/Elias Boudinot as a man both outside and inside the nation. His class dictated his outsider status. His participation in the government which claimed to derive legitimacy from the people portrayed him as an

28 Braund, Deerskins and Duffels, 23. Although Braund is primarily writing about the Creeks, the two nations had very similar pre-contact matriarchal structures.
insider to the population of the United States. This duality allowed for a space in which Boudinot could claim a connection to the people of the nation which did not exist. If one were to imagine the movement of Watie away from the nation, beginning with his birth into a non-traditional household through his mission school training and finally to his return and ultimate treason, one may argue that Boudinot was never exposed to what may be called traditional Cherokee culture in the first place.

Boudinot’s alienation from the majority of the Cherokee Nation is not an individual case. As the nation experienced major change at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, the political structure of the nation was overrun by individuals who were also separated from the majority sentiment. This distance created a government filled with elite Cherokees who claimed to speak for a nation they did not understand. The appropriation of the voice of a nation by an individual or even a class was an attempt to collapse the plurality of a people into one lifestyle, one opinion. This was simply not the reality in the Cherokee Nation during this time period. Although the National Council claimed to represent the entirety of the Cherokee Nation, the events surrounding the 1830s removal crisis will demonstrate that the nation was not a unified force. Exclusion was present and felt by its citizens. Elias Boudinot sought to present a version of the Cherokee Nation to the white audiences of the United States which did not exist. His idea of Cherokee identity overshadowed the multiplicity of not only the Cherokee Nation, but indigenous peoples as a whole. And most importantly, Boudinot presented his Cherokee identity to white audiences instead of using it to appeal politically to the Cherokee Nation. This focus on the United States was the major point of separation between Boudinot and his people.

But this is not to say that Boudinot’s construction of himself as Cherokee was false. Historians have questioned his claim to Cherokee identity and have cited his appeal to a white
audience as a cause for concern, for the rejection of Boudinot from Cherokee history. Rarely are white historical figures so thoroughly questioned and rejected for their constructions of identity in opposition to the cultures they came from. The need to point to Boudinot as a traitor of his people without understanding or accepting his own ardent belief that appeal to the United States was a possibility for indigenous sovereignty seeks to silence his contribution to Cherokee and American history. His appeal to white Americans has previously been manipulated to separate indigenous peoples who retained traditional cultures from those who adapted to the changing political climate of the nineteenth-century, to pit these two groups against one another and obscure the harmful role Euro-Americans played in the process. Rejecting Boudinot’s role in Cherokee history because of his political identity as a professional Cherokee defeats the process of unearthing histories of the oppressed.

My terminology of the “professional Cherokee,” a role Boudinot sought to inhabit between 1826 and 1837, aspires to encompass the duality of a position which had influence both within the Cherokee Nation and the United States. In the Cherokee Nation, the populace may have not regarded Boudinot as one of their own, but he was granted a powerful position by the government which sought to represent the entirety of the nation. In the United States, Boudinot was the most readily available representation of what it meant to be Cherokee. Not only did he actively present himself to a white audience through speaking tours and through his role as editor of the Cherokee national newspaper, he was a successful product of the civilization programs of the United States. He was an intellectual in the Euro-American sense of the term, and was the patriarch of a nuclear family, having married white Connecticut resident Harriet Ruggles Gold. His constant appeal to white audiences defined his role as the professional Cherokee against their expectations for the civilization of indigenous peoples. Elias Boudinot gained legitimacy in this
role among elite Cherokees first through his upbringing – he was born into a politically connected family and given an education which allowed his entrance into the Cherokee political sphere in his own right and granted him the opportunity to establish and edit the first national newspaper, *The Cherokee Phoenix*. In the creation of this paper, which was bilingual and attempted to reach both Cherokees and white citizens of the United States, Boudinot claimed the voice of the nation for himself. By doing so, he was able to sustain a constant relationship with the white community of the United States, a relationship he continued to nurture despite his hyper-awareness of the racist sentiments of many white Americans.

Boudinot’s education, marriage to a white woman, and time spent within the United States allowed him to claim legitimacy to speak for the Cherokees within white society. He always presented himself as Cherokee, but this presentation situated itself within the expectations of Euro-American civilization. Boudinot branched away from the majority of the Cherokee Nation in his private life while still claiming the voice of the nation. He used his private life in order to hold onto the reigns of this voice, continually legitimating himself both to the elite rulers of the Cherokee Nation and the United States through his command of the written word. All these processes combined to create the professional Cherokee – the vehicle of representation of indigenous culture to white Americans, a character which demanded the right of American Indians to sovereignty by constantly proving their worth in Euro-American terms. Boudinot believed that if the United States could be convinced of the equal rights of American Indians, the process would begin with the elimination of racist stereotypes through the presentation of indigenous peoples adopting Euro-American practices of civilization. Elias Boudinot as the professional Cherokee – as the family man, as the intellectual editor, as the political spokesman – saw himself as the ideal person to bridge the gap between the United
States and the Cherokee Nation, to create a space in which the elite minority of the nation could dictate the civilization and improvement of the rest of the populace.

This project chronicles Elias Boudinot’s participation within the Cherokee Nation as a professional Cherokee in order to create a political identity which appealed to white audiences and would gain their alliance in the defense of indigenous sovereignty. Chapter one follows his time at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, between 1817 and 1822. There he met his wife, Harriet Ruggles Gold, and experienced the pitfalls of racial politics within the United States during their 1825 engagement. He ended this period of his life in 1826 with a speaking tour seeking to gain funds for a printing press for the Cherokee Nation. As chapter two shows, Boudinot used this press to begin *The Cherokee Phoenix*, where he was editor from 1828 to 1832. Through his post, Boudinot expressed the National Council-approved opinions of the nation on a range of political issues, including that of removal during the administration of President Andrew Jackson. Here, Boudinot crafted himself as the voice of the Cherokee Nation. Chapter three presents Boudinot’s change to a pro-removal stance and loss of his editorial position. The following years map his attempt to rescue his reputation and position as the voice of the nation through various publications between 1832 and 1837. Chapter four targets the language surrounding Boudinot’s violent death in 1839 and this language’s affect on his representation in Cherokee and United States history.

This project’s approach to Elias Boudinot’s life attempts to grant value and purpose to a form of political contention with the United States which other histories of American Indians have excluded. The history of the nineteenth-century Cherokee Nation has been written through a variety of lenses – there have been examinations of the elite class of Cherokees with mixed Indian and white heritage, of the practice of slavery within the nation, of the large proportion of
Cherokees who succeeded in the process of cultural retention during their relationship with the United States, and even studies of the minority political group Boudinot found himself situated within in the 1830s. However, in my research, I found a lack in the presentation of Boudinot as a historical actor with agency, with the ability to craft his own identity and make his own choices. His knowledge of the political systems of the United States, his ability to manipulate white audiences through the written word, and his appropriation of the voice of the Cherokee Nation without even attaining elected office demonstrated Boudinot’s control of his role as the professional Cherokee. Other histories have attempted to credit this to acculturation, to colonization, to Boudinot’s rejection of his own heritage and people. In attributing his actions to larger systems, Boudinot’s very claim to humanity is displaced. This project presents a close examination of Boudinot’s self-written work as the platform through which he can reclaim his agency in the historical record.

The initial goal of this project, of any historical project I would have interest in attempting, is to portray historical events and figures in a multitude of ways. “Official” histories belong in totalitarian states. Histories that erase or form only one way of understanding voices, peoples, and events seek to create history and thereby humanity as black and white, as immutable, as static. But there is a plurality in the human condition, and variety must be presented in history in order for the practice of writing it to be worthwhile. This is an especially important aspect in American Indian history, which for centuries has treated its subjects as either extinct or has dehumanized them. This work is an attempt at pulling Elias Boudinot out of the proverbial grave, to dispel the static image of him in the record, to allow him to speak for himself and then to challenge him in his words, to portray a historical figure in a grey area without heroes and villains but with real, fallible people. Hopefully there is some degree of success.
Elias Boudinot’s years at the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, were significant to his creation of himself as a professional Cherokee during his time as the voice of the Cherokee Nation. Before entering the program at the school, Elias Boudinot still answered to the name of Buck Watie. Watie’s move to Connecticut began with an invitation from Elias Cornelius of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions of Boston to enroll at the Foreign Mission School. During his trip north in 1817, Buck Watie met with Elias Boudinot, former member of the Continental Congress and president of the American Bible Society. The encounter had such a profound effect on Watie that he requested Elias Boudinot’s permission to adopt his name, and upon his arrival in Cornwall, Buck Watie enrolled at the Foreign Mission School under the name of his new intellectual patron. His contact with the original Boudinot influenced Watie’s future political language, opening a connection with the founding rhetoric of the United States.

Boudinot arrived in Cornwall in the summer, just after the Foreign Mission School had opened in May. The school was accessible to American Indian students of many tribes and was popular with elite Cherokees. We know that among the twenty-nine students of the 1820 school year were Boudinot and his cousin, John Ridge, along with six other members of the Cherokee Nation. The only other group represented by more than three members was that from Hawaii. They were joined by Choctaws, Stockbridge Indians (Mahicans living in Stockbridge, Massachusetts), Oneidas, Tuscaroras, and Caughnawagas. There were also indigenous students

31 Ibid.
from outside North America, from Otaheite (Tahiti), Malay, the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), and
New Zealand. Three white students enrolled at the school as well, although they were only
allowed admission if they paid their own expenses and were accepted by the agents of the
school. These students were often expected to learn indigenous languages and go with their
peers to their nation of origin as missionaries. Some students from foreign nations attended the
school through charitable scholarships, others with the means to do so paid their own way.
There is no record of which route Boudinot took.

The school’s diverse population lent itself to the American Board’s goal for a far-reaching
missionary effort:

The education in our own country, of Heathen Youths, in such manner, as, with
subsequent professional instruction, will qualify them to become useful
Missionaries, Physicians, Surgeons, Schoolmasters, or Interpreters; and to
communicate to the Heathen nations such knowledge in agriculture and the arts,
as may prove the means of promoting Christianity and civilization.

Indigenous students were expected to return to their own nations to fulfill these careers. The
school, and others like it, created and perpetuated ideas surrounding the connection between
education of “heathens” and the spread of both Christianity and civilization. It allowed students
to present annual speeches in May which attracted white audiences from across New England.
During these events, it was clear that the Indian students were elevated above their white peers
by white observers of the school: “The Indian pupils appeared so genteel and graceful on the
stage that the white pupils appeared uncouth beside them.” This environment of respect – or at

33 Ibid., Appendix 264.
35 Ibid.
36 Quoted in Morse, A Report to the Secretary of War, Appendix 264.
37 Starr, A History of Cornwall, 155.
the very least, acceptance – for indigenous pupils who followed the path the Foreign Mission School created for them impacted the way Boudinot understood his place within white society. Within the walls of the school, indigenous students were given the opportunity to academically excel and somewhat control the way they were viewed within the white society that surrounded them. By going through the motions, by learning and understanding the way the school wanted to construct not only its students but its overall mission, Boudinot and his peers found some level of acceptance within the white community at Cornwall.

As for the goals of the Foreign Mission School, some promoters of education for American Indians connected the school to the prosperity of the United States. In 1822, an American preacher named Jedidiah Morse wrote

> What greater blessings can we send forth from our country into heathen lands, than youth thus liberally educated? In what way can we, with so little expense, raise and extend the reputation of our country, so effectually promote peace and good will among men, and diffuse blessings through the world?  

The role of education in the civilization program was so important to the United States that it not only sought to change indigenous cultures but also the way the world viewed the young republic. The United States would not conduct these changes through traditional missionary work. Unlike missions that developed in North America during the first two centuries of contact and settlement, where indigenous peoples were brought into a community to be educated by white missionaries, the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions aimed to recruit indigenous men who could spread Christianity to their home-cultures.

With these goals at the center of the mission school’s efforts, Elias Boudinot stood out. Although white observers often described indigenous students as exceptionally civil, there was

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38 Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War*, 78.
still a fear of their struggle to suppress their savagery, Boudinot was an exception. Visitors to the school praised Boudinot for his civilized ways and his rejection of indigenous practices and beliefs. One white observer wrote that Boudinot, John Ridge, and another Cherokee named David Brown, “would have done credit to the best white young men of their age.” In the ceremony the writer witnessed, he pinpointed Boudinot as one who “confuted the idea more completely by his appearance than his arguments, that savages are not capable of being civilized and polished.” This observer placed greater value on Boudinot’s physical representation of civility than on his oration. The juxtaposition of Christian education and civility at the mission schools affected the way Boudinot and Ridge understood their non-traditional upbringings and their interactions with white societies. The requirement that indigenous peoples accept Euro-American practices in order to be “civilized and polished” played into the changes Boudinot made throughout his life, changes that became more and more dramatic as he gained the political power to speak to white audiences for the Cherokees. Boudinot was able to gain legitimacy for his opinions within the white community first by being accepted on his appearance – he dressed and spoke in the civilized manner white audiences expected from a missionary Cherokee. The acceptance of Boudinot’s appearance could then legitimate the declarations he made on behalf of his people, who white audiences imagined as uncivilized. This was one of Boudinot’s first actions in the creation of himself as the professional Cherokee; he gained the respect of white audiences through a presentation of Euro-American civility which could then be transferred to the opinions Boudinot imparted on his white observers.

After some time at the Foreign Mission School, Elias Boudinot took another step toward prominence as a Cherokee in white society. After nearly a decade attending mission schools,

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40 Ibid., 7-8.
41 Ibid., 8.
Boudinot converted to Christianity at Cornwall in 1820.\textsuperscript{42} There is something to be said about Boudinot’s late conversion, after over a decade in mission schools. His name change even preceded his conversion. Boudinot’s conversion appeared to be legitimate – he was well versed in the Bible, often using its language in his private and public writing. In later years, he would dedicate space in the *Cherokee Phoenix* to promote conversion and Christian practices in the Cherokee Nation. He would also work with white missionary Samuel Worcester to translate the Bible and other religious texts into the Cherokee language for national circulation. While conversion was not compulsory at the Foreign Mission School, it was celebrated. Students who had converted were allowed greater privileges such as visits into the town of Cornwall.\textsuperscript{43} Boudinot also understood conversion as yet another aspect of creating himself as the professional Cherokee. By entering into one of the strongest aspects of Euro-American society – religion – Boudinot was able to establish a connection with the white community around him. His deference to Christianity resulted in greater respect and opportunity because it created him as the civilized Cherokee, worthy of acceptance by the white community. Boudinot’s knowledge of and adherence to Christian doctrine led to his recommendation for study at a major center of Protestant evangelicalism, the Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts. Despite the invitation, however, Boudinot was not able to attend the school in Andover due to health issues and chose to return to the Cherokee Nation in 1822.\textsuperscript{44}

Boudinot took another important step in his civilization alongside his education at Cornwall. While in residence as a student, Boudinot met Harriet Ruggles Gold, the daughter of a prominent white family of the town. Boudinot and Gold began a courtship through letters after

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Starr, *A History of Cornwall*, 155.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. Boudinot’s specific health issue is unclear. His cousin, John Ridge, also became ill during his time in Cornwall but stayed in the Foreign Mission School’s steward’s home for several years and eventually married the daughter of the steward, Sarah Northrop, in 1824 (Gaul 8).
his departure from Connecticut. Gold’s father denied her initial request to become engaged to Boudinot, but after she fell ill the following winter, her father relented.\(^{45}\) Engaged in 1825, the pair married the following year. Although marriage to a white woman was a major step in Boudinot’s transformation into a “Christian patriarch,” the events surrounding the engagement also had an effect on how he perceived relations with the United States and its citizens.\(^{46}\)

The initial negative reaction Gold’s father had to their relationship was not isolated.\(^ {47}\) Once the engagement was approved, the entire community of Cornwall worked itself into a frenzy over the upcoming interracial nuptials. The town’s initial reaction was influenced by another marriage that happened the same year as the Boudinot-Gold engagement: John Ridge had also become involved with a white woman of Cornwall. While still at the Foreign Mission School, Ridge had fallen ill and been placed in the home of the school’s steward, John Northrop. He would remain in recovery at the home for two years, in which time he courted Northrop’s daughter, Sarah. They were married, once her parents gave permission, in January 1824. The two moved to Ridge’s home in the Cherokee Nation shortly afterwards.\(^ {48}\)


\(^{47}\) The letters between Boudinot and Gold during their courtship and the events after their public engagement have not been discovered. In *To Marry an Indian*, Theresa Strouth Gaul pieces together letters between other members of the Gold family in order to present the conversation surrounding the relationship. This lack of Boudinot’s voice in events of his private life is rare and certainly was detrimental to piecing together the events of 1825 from Boudinot’s standpoint. However, the language of his future in-laws used in this chapter seeks to depict the kind of reaction and aggression Boudinot may have experienced from the majority of the Cornwall community. As for the lost communication between Harriet Gold and Elias Boudinot, Gaul reprints a letter in which Gold’s mother claimed that her letters from the Cherokee Nation were stolen before they reached Cornwall or removed from Harriet’s temporary residence as the Northrop home: “Harriet has not heard from the South since February, She feels bad, She is jealous that...letters are sent, but taken out of some office before they reach Cornwall, Every letter that she ever had from Elias or Sarah [Northrop Ridge], has been taken from Mr Northrops, she has not seen them for more than 2 months, the one that has got them has had sufficient time to read them, & I think he ought to return them” (Gaul 112). Though no “he” is named in the matter, it is very likely that a Gold family member had taken it upon himself to confiscate letters between Boudinot and Harriet Gold in an attempt to cause trouble with their engagement. The fact that the conspiracy went so far as to stop letters in the post before they even reached Cornwall was a demonstration of the multitude of parties invested in stopping the marriage between the pair.

\(^{48}\) Gaul, “Introduction,” in *To Marry an Indian*, 8.
Boudinot and Gold announced their relationship at a time when Cornwall residents were already wary of the American Indian presence in their community. Reactions from Gold’s family and neighbors were volatile and, at times, violent. Harriet’s older brother Stephen, informed of her engagement through a letter from his sister, had to be locked in a room as he initially suffered through a hysterical fit. Soon afterwards, Stephen participated in a town gathering where effigies of the couple were burned. Gold was mourned by her family as though she had passed away. At the same time, her family communicated with each other through letters, attempting to stop the marriage through shaming Gold and her parents. While at first Gold was trusted in her adamant claims that she was marrying Boudinot because it was God’s will, her family members began to question her as the date approached. Her brother-in-law Herman Vaill was the strongest force against the marriage, constantly questioning Gold’s motives and using religious language in his attempt to sway her. Gold insisted that she chose Boudinot as her husband because of the missionary spirit, knowing his plan to return to the Cherokee Nation and bring his people into the fold of the church. Vaill, however, was convinced that she had ulterior motives:

But there is a wide difference between going among the heathen, by the call, & the leadings of Providence; & going among them merely because we will go. There is a wide difference between going, because we love the cause of Christ, & have a single eye to his glory; &, going because we love another object; & have a selfish inducement.

The terms of marriage between an American Indian man and a white woman were clearly laid out in this thinking. If the missionary spirit drove Harriet Gold to Elias Boudinot, if she had committed herself to God and this was his path for her, the marriage could continue. But if she entered into this relationship because of love or affection for Boudinot, she would be corrupting

49 Starr, History of Cornwall, 156.
50 “Herman Vaill to Harriett Gold, 29 June 1825,” in To Marry an Indian, 91.
not only herself, but also her family and her entire community. The marriage, if not entered into for the right purposes, would also threaten the missionary effort at the school in Cornwall. Vaill went as far as to compare this action to history’s most famous betrayer: “How are you to go away with the infamy upon you, not of marrying an Indian, but of, like Judas, betraying the interests of that cause into which you had entered, in covenant with Christ, & his church.” Vaill’s language was meant to constantly shame Harriet out of her decision. However, he defended his actions as necessary for the protection of the Gold family.

Time and time again, Vaill insisted his objection was due to his lack of belief in Harriet’s claim to a missionary spirit guiding her marriage. He claimed to have no objection towards her chosen companion:

Nor do I give you this advice because I have any personal objections against [the] man. I have always respected him for his talents, for his diligence in [study?] & the proficiency he made in learning, while at the F.M. School; & for his hopeful piety...But to become thus useful, & to prove himself thus grateful to his friend, & faithful to Christ, it is not necessary that he should marry a white woman.

Here Vaill had come to the crux of the issue at hand: Boudinot could be respected in the white community at Cornwall and perhaps throughout the country. He gained this respect through his study and dedication to religion. But marrying Harriet would not help him reach the upper echelons of Christian patriarchy, even though she was committed to the union and to bringing the missionary cause to the Cherokee Nation. There was a limit to the hospitality the white community would afford to American Indians among them, especially young men who sought out American wives. This treatment highlighted the connection between the stability of the white community and the purity of white women – the society as a whole could not function if women were defiled or removed. This threat of contamination by an outsider was steeped in the

51 “Herman Vaill to Harriett Gold, 29 June 1825,” in To Marry an Indian, 99.
52 Ibid., 92.
racial hierarchy of the United States, which placed indigenous peoples below white citizens. So no matter the how fond white communities like Cornwall were of the American Indians amongst them, they would not allow these men to cross the line and procreate with their female residents. Harriet Gold’s family wrote many things to prevent this possibility. Another brother-in-law wrote of her relationship: “We dont [sic] see and feel how good and how pleasant a thing it is to be kissd [sic] by an Indian – to have black young ones & a train of evils.”

Some of the most racist language used in the letters, this quote from Daniel Brinsmade demonstrated the reality of race within the Foreign Mission School’s system. The fear of the children that would result from the union, their taking after their father’s race, drove the community to revolt against the possibility of the marriage.

Herman Vaill went a step further than shaming Harriet Gold by calling her a Judas or alluding to fears of the children that would be born to the couple. Even though he claimed to have respect for Boudinot, he would rather see his sister-in-law die than to allow the marriage:

If H. must die for an Indian or have him, I do say she had as well die, as become the cause of much lasting evil as the marriage will occasion; better to die on the side of Xtion honour & Gospel sincerity than to pine away with satisfied love, & its consequences, on the bed of Love.

Death was a better choice to Vaill than having a relative married and embraced by the Cherokee Nation. The strongest opinions, best represented by Vaill’s letters, called for Harriet Gold’s death. The engagement unearthed racist sentiments in the white community at Cornwall and within the Gold family.

On a broader, state-wide level, the Gold-Boudinot engagement was denounced in the nearby Litchfield newspaper edited by Isaiah Bunce, *The American Eagle*. Bunce claimed that

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53 “Daniel Brinsmade to Herman and Flora Gold Vaill and Catherine Gold, 14 July 1825,” in *To Marry an Indian*, 108.
54 “Herman Vaill to Mary Brinsmade, 2 August 1825,” in *To Marry an Indian*, 122.
the Gold-Boudinot marriage, along with that of John Ridge and Sarah Northrop, was causing the white society of Cornwall to lose its women. Not only was they community losing these women, but they were being taken up by Indian men, a violation of the most basic Euro-American principles. According to Bunce, these women were being “‘taken into the wilderness among savages’” and causing the white community to feel a “heart rending pan[g] which none can realize except those called to feel it.” The relationships between indigenous men and white women at Cornwall sparked fears about interracial relationships as well as the role of white men in this new system. While white men marrying indigenous women were “consonant with the impetus of colonization,” the reversal of the race and gender in relationships born from the civilization process went against the morals of the United States. White men could conquer civilizations, through both war and sexual relationships – women’s bodies were also open to subjugation in colonization. The reverse process, where indigenous men married white women, sought to reverse this colonial system and rattle the racial hierarchy of the United States. The view of indigenous men as brutal, specifically in their relationships with women, upheld the white male as the better in race relations. The act of “elevating, idealizing, and protecting white women” ensured this superiority. If Boudinot could care for Harriet Gold just as well or perhaps even better than a white man, how could the United States continue to elevate itself over its indigenous neighbors?

Harriet Gold was directly exposed to this barrage of criticism. She certainly felt the scorn her once-beloved family members felt for her: “H. says it [letter from Vaill] cuts the hardest of

56 Gaul, “Introduction,” To Marry an Indian, 11.
57 Ibid.
anything she has ever received from anyone.”\textsuperscript{58} There is little doubt that Harriet communicated the things her family said about her engagement to her fiancé, who in turn felt the scorn of a white community unprepared for a familial relationship with the Cherokees. Boudinot felt rejected: he had gone to the Foreign Mission School to further his civilization and using his education to help the Cherokee Nation. A major aspect of this civilization process was the relationship he was able to form with the white community of the United States. And as soon as he crossed over a line, he and his fiancé were viciously attacked not only by strangers, but also by Harriet Gold’s own family. This was the first instance in which Boudinot recognized that working within the supposedly civilized systems of the United States did not guarantee success. The deterioration of supposedly civilized men was evident in Vaill’s call for Harriet’s death.

Along with the vicious attack against Harriet Gold, the community concentrated its blame for these marriages on the Foreign Mission School. Isaiah Bunce concurred with what he claimed was public opinion that “the girl ought to be publicly whipped, the Indian hung, and the mother drown’d,” he found most fault with the mission school directors who sought to assimilate their indigenous pupils into Euro-American society.\textsuperscript{59} These relationships were “the fruit of the missionary spirit,” egged on by the clergymen who ran the facility.\textsuperscript{60} Bunce found so much fault in their actions that although he did not name Harriet Gold as the woman “throwing herself into the arms of an Indian,” he did list the agents of the mission school by name.\textsuperscript{61} His editorials damaged the school’s reputation. Even though the public discourse surrounding the engagement eventually died down and Boudinot and Gold were married in Cornwall in 1826, the Foreign Mission School was not able to escape the scrutiny of the white community.

\textsuperscript{58} “Flora Gold Vaill to Herman Vaill, [19] September 1825,” in To Marry an Indian, 135.
\textsuperscript{59} Quoted in Gaul, “Introduction,” in To Marry an Indian, 9. The reference to the mother is mostly like meant for Sarah Northrop’s mother, whose role as stewardess to the indigenous students of the school was later viewed as an attempt at matchmaking after the Ridge-Northrop marriage.
\textsuperscript{60} Quoted in Ibid., 8. Emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
Mission School did not survive the scandal. It closed its doors the same year, citing that the American Board now found it more favorable to educate young indigenous men in their own lands, away from the temptations of “civilized” society.62

Boudinot learned a valuable lesson. In America, rules based in civilization programs could be changed without notice, and a white community willing to accept indigenous peoples could turn on these allies at any time. Boudinot’s classmate at the Foreign Mission School, David Brown, expressed astonishment at the hypocrisy of the Cornwall community in their reaction to the engagement

Your missionaries have told us that the people of New England were our firm friends & that we might at all times lean on them for assistance...If our dear friends in New England loved us how could they treat us in this cold & unfeeling manner, especially at such a time as this when more than ever we need their prayers & increasing exertions?63

Assistance for indigenous peoples from white communities had its limits, and these limits were placed on the most powerful form of assimilation available between the two groups – sexual relationships. The racism of white society would always be a detriment to Boudinot’s presentation of himself as a Cherokee political figure to the United States. Boudinot could thwart racial objections through various efforts at appealing to the white community: He was already successful in his education and conversion to Christianity. Although his engagement to Harriet Gold negated his previous efforts, he had a better understanding of the systems of racial hierarchy operating within the United States. He recognized the importance of appealing to the white community by recognizing their boundaries for interaction with peoples they considered inferior. This appeal hinged on Boudinot’s presentation of himself as civilized but still Cherokee – distinctly not white. Boudinot injured his creation of himself as the professional Cherokee by

63 Quoted in Gaul, “Introduction,” in To Marry an Indian, 17.
going through with his marriage to Harriet, yet his resilience also demonstrated Boudinot’s desire to have an active role within white America.

The same year of his marriage, Elias Boudinot received the opportunity to renegotiate his relationship with the white community of the United States. With an understanding of racism from his experiences in Cornwall in tow, Boudinot began a speaking tour through major United States cities with stops in Charleston, Philadelphia, and Boston. This tour was Boudinot’s first foray as the voice of the Cherokee Nation. The National Council had charged Boudinot with the task of soliciting money from Americans in order to buy a printing press and set up a national academy within the Cherokee Nation. The speech he gave during the tour was printed in pamphlet form the same year, titled “An Address to the Whites,” allowing for wider circulation and fundraising. It was a clear reflection of Boudinot’s understanding of the structures of the white society that had both encouraged his own civilization and rejected him when he crossed a line through his marriage. To examine Boudinot as a professional Cherokee, his appropriation of the voice of the Cherokee Nation in the “Address” is vital. It was the precursor to major claims by the national government to sovereignty via the civilization of the Cherokee people. Before the nation created its Constitution in 1827, Boudinot’s address alerted the white citizens of the United States of the Cherokee Nation’s intentions of sovereignty within American borders.

There were layers of legitimacy imbedded within Boudinot’s assignment to the speaking tour. First, the National Council’s appointment of Boudinot to the tour granted him the legitimacy to speak for the nation within the United States. His elite status within the nation and his mission school education no doubt informed the choice. The council was the representative body of government formed within the nation in 1794. Basing itself off of the representational

64 Perdue, Cherokee Editor, 67.
system of the United States, the government claimed legitimacy through will of the people. Boudinot himself also had a clear grasp of languages and practices of both cultures. His actions, however, failed within the Cherokee Nation because of the very traits that created him as a professional Cherokee – how could an elite Cherokee speak for the whole of the nation, inhabited by people who had for the most part experienced a very different upbringing?

Boudinot relied heavily on his education in mission schools and the United States civilization program in “Address to the Whites.” He understood that success on the speaking tour could only be achieved if he stayed within certain parameters of what his white audience expected from him. His ability to juxtapose the necessity for United States aid in civilization while asserting Cherokee sovereignty created a document that demonstrated his own passion for changing the nation and his understanding of United States expectations. The “Address” sought to correct beliefs about Indians which could limit this success.

Because many Americans believed American Indians were static, Boudinot began the “Address to the Whites” by reassuring his audience that he did not fit into this category:

Some there are…who at the bare sight of an Indian, or at the mention of the name, would throw back their imaginations to ancient times, to the ravages of savage warfare, to the yells pronounced over the mangled bodies of women and children, thus creating an opinion, inapplicable and highly injurious to those for whose temporal interest and eternal welfare, I come to plead.65

Boudinot often focused on the need to erase harmful stereotypes of indigenous peoples during his career as the public voice of the Cherokee Nation. In his correction, Boudinot also had the opportunity to dictate the true image of American Indians to a white audience. He partnered this goal with the insistence that the Cherokees were a separate political entity which was not subordinate to the United States. To emphasize the equality of the Cherokee Nation on the

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65 Elias Boudinot, “An Address to the Whites: Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church on the 26th of May, 1826,” (1826), in *Cherokee Editor*, 68-69.
political field, ideas of indigenous peoples as unchanging and uncivilized in American terms needed to be erased. Most importantly, Boudinot believed, it was indigenous peoples who had to correct these erroneous images among their white neighbors. The “Address” and the fund raising mission behind it were the first steps in securing a space for the idea of Cherokee sovereignty within the United States.

The argument for the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation necessitated a political spokesperson, a role Boudinot sought to fill. His time in white society granted the familiarity necessary to bridge the gap between the United States and the Cherokees. The tour sought to secure this connection through a transfer of knowledge, from Boudinot as the ideal Cherokee to white Americans. The goal of the “Address” to acquire a printing press with Cherokee and English type was the next step in Boudinot’s assertion of Cherokee civilization. Boudinot was far enough in his creation of self as a professional Cherokee to understand that the press and written form of media and expression were those most valued within the United States. Although the majority of Cherokees may have sought to deviate from these Euro-American standards, in order to appeal to the United States the Cherokee Nation was forced to rely upon the written word. The United States granted legitimacy to written document, and the Cherokees had to acquiesce to this system in their argument for sovereignty.

Boudinot’s 1826 “Address” worked within his understanding of the boundaries white Americans had towards civilizing indigenous peoples in order to dispel preconceived stereotypes of the Cherokees. He cast himself as the voice of a nation who had arrived to educate the citizens of the United States on the true state of indigenous peoples. He had the right to educate because of his privileged political assignment and by virtue of his education in white society.

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66 Konkle, Writing Indian Nations, 50.
Boudinot was “an Indian” whose “kindred are Indians” and whose “fathers sleeping in the wilderness grave…too were Indians.”\(^67\) Boudinot, however, noted that he was not of the same upbringing as his forefathers: “Broader means and nobler influences have fallen upon me.”\(^68\) He did not mention that it was his father – one of those he symbolically placed “wilderness grave” – who encouraged his missionary education and civilization. Boudinot was quick to acknowledge that he “had greater advantages than most of my race.”\(^69\) These advantages stemmed from his elite upbringing – wealth that allowed him to gain an education that many Cherokees would never experience. While many Cherokees struggled to secure their lands, Boudinot had the opportunity to leave it in order to further his knowledge. This combination of his elite ability to speak for the Cherokees because of his education but also his knowledge that many Cherokees did not have access to these “nobler influences” portrayed Boudinot as a man speaking in pursuit of the greater good for a nation. Despite being an elite who clearly had an advantage over the rest of the nation and lived a much more prosperous life, he was still the one chosen by the National Council to speak for the nation in the United States. The National Council allegedly represented the nation, yet it consisted of members with the same elite backgrounds as Boudinot. Thus, the choice of Boudinot as the voice of the nation on this particular tour erased other voices, ones which may have opposed the choices of the council. The use of one voice to speak for a nation played into the expectations the white audience had not only for forms of representational government but also for their relationships with indigenous peoples. Boudinot illustrated his credibility in his speech: “I stand before you delegated by my native country to seek her interest, to labour for her respectability, and by my public efforts to assist in raising her to an equal

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\(^67\) Boudinot, “An Address to the Whites,” in Cherokee Editor, 69.

\(^68\) Ibid.

\(^69\) Ibid.
standing with other nations of the earth.” Boudinot committed himself to ridding the United States of their outdated views of the Cherokee Nation and to change American views of his nation so that the Cherokees, through peaceful treaties with the United States, could preserve their own lands and their sovereignty.

Boudinot also legitimized himself in white society by referencing the classic humble self-sufficient aspect of American exceptionalism.

[Boudinot] was not born as thousands are, in a stately dome and amid the congratulations of the great, for on a little hill, in a lonely cabin, overspread by the forest oak, I first drew my breath; and in a language unknown to learned and polished nations, I learnt to lisp my fond mother’s name.

This humble beginning is a classic American trope that summons images of United States politicians – notably Andrew Jackson. Being born in a “lonely cabin” fit into the United States structure and gave Boudinot credibility with a white audience despite his elite status. The mention of a language “unknown to learned and polished nations” set him up as distinctly Indian.

Boudinot sought to educate from the outside in – a voice which understood both his own culture and the other culture. His white audience knew Boudinot was educated in their own system which demonstrated his ability to adapt his indigenous identity to their standards, to fit himself into their society. This demonstration allowed Boudinot a platform for his voice in America.

Boudinot took on the role of the professional Cherokee in his ability to admonish his white audience without overt accusation – an attempt to correct common misconceptions without pointing the finger at the very people this message could be transmitted through. While he attempted to shake visions of the Cherokees as savage, he did not completely reject all white ideas of indigenous peoples. “Though it may be true that [the Indian] is ignorant, that he is a

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70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
heathen, and that he is savage; yet he is no more than all others have been under similar circumstances. Eighteen centuries ago what were the inhabitants of Great Britain? To dispel presumptions about indigenous peoples in order to preserve the rights of these peoples, and Boudinot used some techniques that had been employed in the past. His focus on the ancestors of the English before contact with the Roman Empire – a history which often labeled these inhabitants as savage – harkened back to arguments made against the ill-treatment of indigenous peoples by Spain by Bartolomé de la Casas in the sixteenth-century. Claiming ignorance as a trait which can be overcome through European forms of education and civilization allowed Boudinot to ask the white audience he was speaking to for financial help in the process. Despite the difficulties the Cherokees faced, he argued, the “insurmountable obstacles which we ourselves have thrown in the way of this improvement,” the “facts will permit me to declare that there are none which may not easily be overcome, by strong and continued exertions.” Here was the popular American idea of self-sufficiency – now not only had Boudinot succeeded in raising himself up, but the Cherokee Nation had the ability to do the same, if only with a bit of help from their allies in the United States.

This appeal for help from the United States also sought to combat the overarching belief that indigenous peoples were static and incapable of change. Boudinot insisted that obstacles could be overcome and change could be achieved, and the idea that “‘Do what you will, an Indian will still be an Indian,’ must be placed no more in speech.” This belief could only continue to exist among “those who are uninformed with respect to us, who are strongly

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., 70.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., 69.
prejudiced against us, or who are filled with vindictive feelings towards us.” Boudinot was illustrated that those who viewed Cherokees as static peoples were not part of his audience – they were people who did not belong in the educated circles he spoke to. He was drawing a line between one kind of white person and the next, separating those who were the root of the problem from those willing to help.

In 1826, Boudinot’s speech could still affect some form of change for the Cherokee Nation. White audiences, more specifically the men amongst them, had the power of the vote. Boudinot used the “Address” to push the election of American politicians who supported Cherokee sovereignty. In turn, these politicians often viewed participation in civilization programs as a prerequisite to sovereignty. Boudinot requested sovereignty by first presenting the Cherokee people as having already achieved an amount of civilization which they did not receive credit for. Civilization already achieved gave away for the possibility that the Cherokees could go even further if helped by the white community that defined civilization. He presented three events in recent Cherokee history as the marks of the nation’s civilization, which “place the Cherokee Nation in a fair light, and act as a powerful argument in favor of Indian improvement.” These events were the invention and publication of the Cherokee syllabary, the translation of the New Testament into Cherokee, and the “organization of a government.”

The Cherokee syllabary – a system of written characters for a language – was invented between 1809 and 1821 by a Cherokee silversmith named Sequoyah (or George Gist.) With a system of written language in place, the Cherokees were able to “civilize” without having to completely assimilate into Euro-American society by using the English language in order to

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76 Ibid.
77 Ibid., 74.
78 Ibid.
79 Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, 49.
transmit information in written form. A decade after the publication of the syllabary, Boudinot wrote that “it is perhaps difficult to say what proportion of the Cherokee may be called a reading people…at a convention…in 1830…it was calculated that upwards of one half of the adult males could read and write in their own language.”

The value of the Cherokee written language can be argued for and against in many different ways. In some accounts, the language did allow for the connection of the Cherokees via publications and the opportunity for better cultural retention as the nineteenth-century sped toward modern times which relied heavily on the written word. On the other hand, the language did not protect Cherokees from the United States and its insistence on removal. Regardless, Boudinot used the syllabary in “Address to the Whites” to argue for the civilization of the Cherokees without the need for forced assimilation.

In an 1832 letter, Boudinot also made a clear distinction between Euro-American goals for civilization and the accomplishment of the syllabary by noting Sequoyah’s ancestry. Boudinot, in large part, referenced an earlier history of the invention of the syllabary written by Samuel L. Knapp in 1829. While Knapp referred to Sequoyah as “half-blood,” Boudinot claimed that “the appearance and habits of Sequoyah are those of a full-blooded Cherokee, though his grandfather, on the father’s side, was a white man.” In his insistence on representing Sequoyah as full-blooded while also acknowledging a white ancestor, Boudinot illustrated the ability of the Cherokees to become civilized without having to become white.

Boudinot also took control of who could and could not be Cherokee – Sequoyah’s white ancestry did not need to be elevated in order to consider his work worthwhile. In addition,

80 Elias Boudinot, “‘To the Editor of the Annals of Education’ in American Annals of Education, April 1, 1832,” in Cherokee Editor, 58.
81 Konkle, Writing Indian Nations, 80.
82 Boudinot, “To the Editor of the Annals of Education,” in Cherokee Editor, 51.
83 Konkle, Writing Indian Nations, 81.
Sequoyah’s interview with Knapp was conducted through several Cherokee interpreters. The interpreters had a large hand in controlling the history Knapp sought to create. This was a major instance of Cherokee participation and control in the creation of their own history for a white audience. In his insistence on Sequoyah’s genealogy Boudinot reiterated a different way to be Cherokee, a way which adapted the useful customs of Euro-American society without forfeiting traditional Cherokee identity. Possibly more important to cultural retention than Sequoyah’s bloodline was the claim that he never learned to speak English, neither before nor after his invention of the syllabary. “He was educated in all the customs of his nation, and, as Mr. K says, was and is to this day ignorant of any language but his own.” Although the customs of the nation Boudinot refers to in the letter are unclear, it was significant that Sequoyah, despite his success, never learned English. He was able to craft a syllabary, a very “civilized” step for the Cherokees and for himself as an individual, without the need to first enter into Euro-American society. By demonstrating this, Boudinot was arguing for the ability of Cherokees to “civilize” in accordance with white society without having to abandon their own culture.

The second sign of civilization Boudinot cited was the translation of the New Testament into Cherokee. According to Boudinot, the translation has swept away that barrier which has long existed, and opened a spacious channel for the instruction of adult Cherokees. Persons of all ages and classes may now read the precepts of the Almighty in their own language. Before it is long, there will scarcely be an individual in the nation who can say, “I know not God neither understand I what thou sayest,” for all shall know him from the greatest to the least. The aged warrior over whom has rolled three score and ten years of savage life, will grace the temple of God and his hoary head; and the little child yet on the breast of its pious mother shall learn to lisp its Maker’s name.

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84 Boudinot, “To the Editor of the Annals of Education,” in Cherokee Editor, 50.
85 Boudinot, “To the Editor of the Annals of Education,” in Cherokee Editor, 51.
86 Boudinot, “Address to the Whites,” in Cherokee Editor, 74.
Boudinot first tied the translation of the New Testament to education. It provided the gateway to a platform of learning which was usually denied or inaccessible to most Cherokees. However, it is unclear whether this was truly the case. The first translation of the New Testament was commissioned by the Cherokee National Council in 1826. Only one copy was authorized, calling into question how “persons of all ages and classes” could read the manuscript for themselves without it having to be constantly circulated around the nation. The translation of this singular copy, done by David Brown (a peer of Boudinot’s at the Cornwall School) and George Lowrey, was so poor that Boudinot undertook a new translation soon afterwards. The purchase of a printing press would solve the problem of distribution of the copy. Boudinot himself understood the poor quality of the original translation and planned to correct it. For the fundraising tour, the example was valuable in its presentation of Cherokee civilization, despite the facts Boudinot left out.

By bringing up the translation of the New Testament, Boudinot reflected his upbringing in mission schools and the Euro-American connection between Christianity and “civilization.” He seemed to truly have believed that the circulation of the Bible in the Cherokee language would allow for wider acceptance of Christianity within the nation. His depiction of the “aged warrior” giving up a “savage life” speaks to Boudinot’s belief in the transformative powers of Christianity. A major tenant of the Protestantism which took root in North America in the seventeenth-century was the necessity for each man, woman, and child to be capable of reading the Bible for his or herself and creating a personal relationship with God. This necessity led to very high literacy rates in early English religious colonial communities. Boudinot reversed this idea by believing Cherokees would become educated through personal contact with the New

87 Perdue, Cherokee Editor, 81n17.
Testament. With the availability of the Bible in Cherokee, all citizens of the nation would have access to the civilization the text could provide, from the oldest warriors to the youngest children. The combination of education and Christianity would bring the Cherokee Nation closure to the ideals of Euro-American “civilization.”

Boudinot’s final example of the civilization the Cherokees had already achieved was the organization of government which the nation had formed since the 1794 institution of the National Council. Boudinot called the Cherokee government “though defective in many respects, is well suited to the condition of its inhabitants.” Boudinot saw a clear path for the Cherokee Nation through the example of the United States government. Once the inhabitants of the nation reached the civilization Boudinot strove for, their government would also rise to the conditions of American government. At the same time, the Cherokee government of 1826 was capable of providing for its citizens without American intervention. Boudinot mapped out the Cherokee government and its three-branch system in an attempt to highlight the sovereignty of the nation, demonstrated by its ability to form a functioning government.

In the “Address,” Boudinot demonstrated that the Cherokee National government paralleled that of the United States. The nation was divided into eight districts which each had a local court system. Appeals could be made to a national Superior Court. Within the districts there were also sheriffs whose role it was to enforce the findings of the courts, collect debts, and arrest criminals. In the role of legislative authority was a General Court, comprising a National Committee and Council. The committee had thirteen members who Boudinot said were “generally men of sound sense and fine talents.” The National Council, over thirty years old at the time of the address, consisted of thirty-two members and a speaker. Articles of government

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88 Boudinot, “Address to the Whites,” in Cherokee Editor, 74.
89 Ibid., 75.
created in 1817 delegated the fifty-four seat council of representatives to a thirteen member Standing Committee whose duty was to manage national affairs when the entire council was not in session. In 1820, the committee and Council solidified the previously unstructured representative system and allocated four delegates to each of the eight districts. The executive power of the nation lay with two principal chiefs. According to Boudinot, “Many of the laws display some degree of civilization, and establish the respectability of the nation.” Boudinot went on to point to the abolishment of polygamy, the legal protection of “female chastity and honor” (referring to 1825 rape laws), the prohibition against killing the elderly due to witchcraft allegations, and the act of murder becoming a government crime. The combination of the government and the acts it had been able to accomplish within the first quarter of the nineteenth-century was, for Boudinot, only a small sample of the civilization the Cherokees could accomplish given the proper resources and the passage of time.

These three signs of civilization in the Cherokee Nation gave Boudinot the platform to ask for help from his audience in his mission to better his people. He hoped that the illustration of the successes of the nation in the production of the syllabary, the extension of education and religion through the translation of the New Testament, and the formation of a three branch system of government would convince the United States that not only could a small amount of help complete the civilization of the Cherokees but that this civilization would allow for the retention of national sovereignty. Boudinot presented

three important truths. First, that the means which have been employed for the christianization and civilization of this tribe, have been greatly blessed. Second, that the increase of these means will meet with final success. Third, that it has

90 Perdue, Cherokee Editor, 82n22.
91 Ibid.
92 Boudinot, “Address to the Whites,” in Cherokee Editor 75.
93 Perdue, Cherokee Editor, 85n25.
94 Boudinot, “Address to the Whites,” in Cherokee Editor 75.
now become necessary, that efficient and more than ordinary means should be employed.\textsuperscript{95}

Convinced that these methods would benefit the nation, Boudinot was willing to obscure the facts of some situations to reach a successful outcome.

Boudinot believed success could be attained through simple additions to the nation: a printing press and a national seminary. However, he also made a distinction between his own position and that of the rest of the nation. Throughout the “Address,” Boudinot referred to the Cherokees as separate from himself, often using “they” to refer to the nation’s actions. He continued this in his request for the printing press, but he also began to use terms such as “our nation,” to encompass their joint requests.\textsuperscript{96} Although Boudinot previously presented himself as Cherokee in the address, this was the first instance where he inextricably tied himself to the nation and to the benefits the nation would receive with his own success. He referred to the neighborhood in which he lived where literacy in the Cherokee language has already reached his peers.\textsuperscript{97} This sense of community and inclusion strengthened Boudinot’s argument for Cherokee civilization: His presentment as a civilized man who was also an active participant within the nation was a reflection of the possibility of a wholly civilized Cherokee Nation.

Acquiring the printing press would produce a national newspaper which could “throw the mantle of civilization over all tribes.”\textsuperscript{98} Here Boudinot used the Cherokee’s status as a “civilized” tribe within the United States in order to express their power to set an example for other indigenous nations. The newspaper could influence white society in its ability to “diffuse proper and correct impressions in regard to their [other tribes’] condition.”\textsuperscript{99} Boudinot once

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
again focused on the incorrect white knowledge which had harmed indigenous cultures in the past. The newspaper would be the vehicle to correct this knowledge, and its power lay in the voice which would be represented. It would be a “vehicle of Indian intelligence, altogether different from those which have heretofore been employed.” Boudinot did not condemn the false white knowledge of the past but instead argued for the opportunity of indigenous peoples to educate white society through their own means.

At the same time, he made it clear that the newspaper would by no means seek to undermine white academic knowledge: “I do not say that Indians will produce learned and elaborate dissertations in explanation and vindication of their own character.” Boudinot was careful to not overstep certain boundaries which had clearly been dictated by white society in the past – his own experience in Cornwall, Connecticut, had made him wary of the lines which those that had previously encouraged his civilization would not accept him crossing. His lengthy explanation of the purpose and uses of the printing press and newspaper sought to calm any white concerns about indigenous assertions of complete civilization or subversion of white ideals. The explanation is nearly five times the length of the one he offered for the establishment of a Cherokee seminary, lending itself to the idea that perhaps a newspaper would not have been as easily accepted by a white audience as a school modeled after Euro-American schools. Boudinot made further references to the nation’s ability to retain sovereignty while still following the civilization plan of the United States: “She [the Cherokee Nation] will become not a great, but a faithful ally of the United States.” Boudinot was constantly careful to not overstep his boundaries as the professional Cherokee and also to reign in just how far the Cherokee Nation would go. No, the nation would never be “great,” because that would aim to

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100 Ibid., 77.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
overpower the United States and create a threat to both nations – Americans would not stand for a “great” indigenous nation which could continue to justify land claims, and the Cherokees could not afford the aggression of the United States. Instead, Boudinot illustrated that loyalty was the best quality the Cherokee Nation could provide to the United States, if only the nation was given the opportunity to completely prosper. He promised the devotion of the Cherokees to the United States in times of peace and war in return for the monetary assistance. Without this aid, Boudinot claimed that the Cherokee Nation would fail and so would the civilization of all other indigenous cultures. These peoples would become extinct.

Boudinot’s vehement pleas and threat of extinction were somewhat successful in his “Address to the Whites.” While the Cherokee Nation did not raise the funds needed to open a seminary on tribal grounds, $1,500 was raised for the purchase of a printing press with both English and Cherokee type sets. With additional funding from the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Mission, the newspaper began publication in 1828 with Elias Boudinot as editor. In one of the most rousing sections of his address, Boudinot had stated his hopes for what the printing press and seminary could provide for the Cherokee Nation:

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 fullness of glory.

Elias Boudinot named the paper *The Cherokee Phoenix.*

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103 Ibid., 77-78.
104 Ibid., 78.
106 Boudinot, “Address to the Whites,” *Cherokee Editor,* 77.
In 1828, Elias Boudinot became the first editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix* after his 1826 speaking tour raising money for a printing press for the nation. The following years at the helm of the paper would be significant in Boudinot’s creation of his role in the political realm of the Cherokee Nation. Boudinot used the space of the paper to express the opinions of the Nation Council, which funded the weekly publication of the *Phoenix*. The paper, however, was geared towards a white audience from the very beginning. While Boudinot presented himself as the voice of the Cherokee people, it was significant that this presentation was made to and for elite Cherokee and white America. He used the paper as a continuation of the presentation of self he made in the “Address to the Whites,” setting himself up as the professional Cherokee to white subscribers. Boudinot’s repurposing of the *Cherokee Phoenix* for white readers, not for the Cherokee Nation itself, and his own connection to the paper would craft him as the professional Cherokee for a specifically white American audience. The result was the amalgamation of Boudinot and the voice of the Cherokee Nation represented by the national newspaper, allowing

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107 I was able to access a few dozen copies of *The Cherokee Phoenix* in the Rare Books Division of the New York Public Library. Some other issues from Theda Perdue’s *Cherokee Editor* were also used in this project. The copies available at the NYPL were an incredible source not only for the voice they provided to Boudinot but also for the power of the paper and the preservation of it. Since the paper itself ran for eight years, with one edition printed every week. Boudinot hired a printer but remained in charge of all other aspects of the paper. The issues in this edition are often months apart, with only a few consecutive weeks accounted for. The available issues are bound in a massive edition, taking up nearly all of the desk space available. The pages themselves are delicate but soft, not crumbling at the touch like many one-hundred-seventy year old newspapers still available. The librarian who assisted in my research, Kyle R. Triplett, claimed that the newspaper was printed on cotton-based paper, a bit more expensive in the 1820s and 1830s than the tree pulp other crumbling editions are printed on. I asked if this decision could have been made with the knowledge that the paper would survive longer, but Mr. Triplett claimed that the effect of cotton vs. tree pulp paper were not completely understood at that time. Most copies of the *Phoenix* in this bound edition are in good condition, easy to read with few tears. The only standout is the one dated August 11, 1832, Boudinot’s resignation issue. It is darker, the text is faded and is more difficult to read. A small slip glued to the bottom resembles an auction slip I have seen before in museum collections. It appears that this issue came to the collection at a later date but all the editions were bound together at once. This specific issue’s significance is clear to the history of the newspaper as well as to the life of Boudinot – it is his resignation issue, where he printed his private letters with Chief John Ross about his changed opinion on the options the Cherokees had in facing removal.
for this legitimacy within the United States, not the Cherokee Nation. In the years before the Supreme Court battles for Cherokee sovereignty, Boudinot involved his own voice in the battle against removal. He claimed the voice of the Cherokee populace, but even in the final decision on sovereignty, he deferred power to the United States.

Boudinot claimed his newspaper sought the “benefit of the Cherokees.”¹⁰⁸ This benefit was twofold: first, the paper would be printed in both English and Cherokee type, allowing for readership within the nation, and second, it would also be available by subscription to residents of the United States. Boudinot sought an American audience that would empathize with the increasing aggression the Cherokees felt from the federal government and the states surrounding them, most significantly Georgia. Many American readers of the paper were also voters – they held the power to influence the decisions of the United States government. Boudinot believed that “there are many true friends of the Indians in different parts of the Union, who will rejoice to see this feeble effort of the Cherokees to rise from their ashes, like the fabled PHOENIX.”¹⁰⁹

The hope for help from citizens of the United States was tied to Boudinot’s previous attempts to demonstrate the Cherokees as a civilizing nation, seeking the aid of the United States in this process. If sympathy votes could not be garnered, at least the voice of the Cherokees would be represented within the United States on the nation’s own terms. These terms were dictated by Boudinot as editor.

The need for a newspaper funded, written, and published by indigenous peoples was high in the years leading up to Indian removal. With white newspapers dominating all markets at the time, indigenous peoples had no control over their representation in the press. In the early

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.
nineteenth-century, and for centuries before that, news sources in America sought to provide a portrayal of American Indians that benefited the cause of the dominant white society. Nineteenth-century American newspapers portrayed American Indians in just the terms Boudinot sought to avoid – savage, barbaric, treacherous, hostile, uncivilized. Conflicts between frontier settlers and Indians were used to illustrate all of the above: Shock and awe tales centered on the kidnapping or murder or white families were common. There were few attempts by journalists to ascertain the cause for conflict between these groups, resulting in the civilian opinion that the solution to the “Indian problem” involved the displacement of and violence against American Indians.

The other popular depiction of Indians in the American press was that of the ‘Noble Savage,’ an idealized indigenous other who needed the help of whites in order to reach civilization, usually through Christianity. This portrayal was not new in the nineteenth-century; Henry Knox had used it to push civilization programs after the American Revolution. The ‘Noble Savage’ garnered his nobility from outdated perceptions of American Indians that Euro-Americans had encountered centuries prior. If civilization programs were not successful, the ‘Noble Savage’ would disappear, through no fault of white society. The dominance of this stereotype of indigenous peoples within the white American consciousness highlighted an inability to comprehend or acknowledge Indians as mutable and changing peoples.

Both the violent Indian and the ‘Noble Savage’ were staples of early nineteenth-century Euro-American thought on indigenous peoples, and they were both reflected in the press. Perhaps more striking, however, than an extreme portrayal was the frequent invisibility of indigenous peoples in the press. Newspapers often did not have much to say about American

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Indians and their affairs, especially when said affairs did not directly involve the United States.  

111 This silencing contributed not only to ideas of American Indians as vanishing peoples and discounted the existent voices of politically significant indigenous nations.

The portrayal of indigenous people in American newspapers as barbaric, as naïve, or even as absent presented the need for the voice of these peoples in the press. Elias Boudinot and the Cherokee National Council endeavored to use the Cherokee Phoenix to insert themselves into an established American institution in order to serve the needs of the Cherokee Nation. Although Boudinot claimed a lack of knowledge in his role of editor, the paper picked up the tropes of the newspaper era of the 1820s in order to appeal to a wide audience. In the pre-telegraph years of the nineteenth-century, newspapers revolved around two factors: first, the decision making of the editor and second, the efficacy of the United States postal service. Most papers included political pieces and local news stories, gathered through observation or public postings, but these were often not enough to fill the space available. Editors sought out other events to include, often including stories from personal letters given to the paper, anecdotes, interest pieces, and literary works. The other major source of news was received through the post – editors exchanged clippings with other papers around the country, free of charge. 112 The Cherokee Phoenix exhibited many of these traits – Boudinot often saved entire pages for religious tales, local interest stories devoted to describing Cherokee traditions, and poetry. He also published articles from American newspapers, many of which were religious papers which supported the Cherokee cause. 113

111 Ibid., 48.
112 Ibid., 14.
113 Ibid., 79. The New York Observer was perhaps the newspaper Boudinot borrowed from the most, with a piece in nearly every edition of the Cherokee Phoenix available. Coward notes that the Observer was a Presbyterian journal which paid special attention to the court battle between Georgia and Samuel Worcester and Elizur Butler which resulted in the 1832 Supreme Court case, Worcester v. Georgia.
Some major changes did occur in the newspaper industry in the 1830. Fueled by urban population growth, higher literacy rates, and improvements in the technology of transportation, large urban centers such as New York City witnessed a “penny press revolution” in which newspapers were published for the lower classes at a cheaper price. Sensationalism was used to reach the “everyman” through stories of crime and scandal. In the penny press, journalism was characterized by personal investigation instead of the collage of news from various contributors. This new system, however, relegated itself to the confines of large urban centers for several decades before reaching the likes of small town papers like the *Phoenix*.\(^{114}\) In the end, Boudinot modeled his publication on the style he witnessed around the country, the 1820s practice of borrowing and observing sans investigation. He used this style to portray the Cherokee Nation in humanizing terms and the justification of their claim to sovereignty. This extra step, moving away from just news about Cherokees towards a defense of the nation sought out a specifically white audience. The Cherokees did not need the paper to tell them about their right to sovereignty. It was the white voters who had the ability to contend with the United States government in order to instill change where indigenous nations could not.

The time for an Indian paper could not have been more necessary in the political climate of the late 1820s. The start of the *Cherokee Phoenix* in 1828 was marked by a tense election year which pitted incumbent John Quincy Adams against war hero Andrew Jackson. Though the Cherokees had a vested interest in the election, Boudinot upheld his intent that the *Phoenix* would “not unnecessarily intermeddle with the politics and affairs of our neighbors.”\(^{115}\) Boudinot understood that a printed opinion from the Cherokee people would not save the nation or sway the election: “We think best to take a neutral stand…as we have no vote on the

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\(^{114}\) Ibid., 13-14.

questions." Still, Adams was clearly the choice for the nation. The incumbent president exhibited a history of throwing out treaties which he saw as fraudulent towards Indian nations while Jackson presented himself as staunchly pro-removal. Jackson won the election, creating another barrier for the Cherokees and other indigenous nations in their struggle against forced removal to the west. The issue of sovereignty and land rights of Indian nations was a large part of Jackson’s political platform. The election was a battle in which indigenous peoples were excluded based on their own status in relation to the United States, but the Phoenix would eventually become its own battle ground over removal.

Despite the necessity for Indian news and opinions on removal, in 1828 Elias Boudinot publicly envisioned the Phoenix as a tool of communication within the nation and a way to garner white support for the Cherokees in their civilization process. In his 1827 prospectus, Boudinot presented no anti-removal purposes for the paper. The paper would focus on four subjects in its pages:

1. The laws and public documents of the Nation.
2. Account of the manners and customs of the Cherokees, and their progress in Education, Religion and the arts of civilized life; with such notices of their Indian tribes as our limited means of information will allow.
3. The principal interesting news of the day.
4. Miscellaneous articles, calculated to promote Literature, Civilization, and Religion among the Cherokees.

There was an even split between the issues that concerned Cherokee readers and white American readers. The publication of national laws sought to inform the population of the constant changes occurring in the nation – for example, in 1827 the Cherokee Constitution was created by the National Council and each issue of the Phoenix advertised the sale of a copy of the

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116 Ibid.
117 Perdue, Cherokee Editor, 146n13.
118 Boudinot, “Prospectus,” in Cherokee Editor, 90.
document. Presenting laws which sought to civilize the nation garnered support amongst United States citizens through this display.

The second goal of the prospectus was a point of interest for both elite Cherokees and white readers. The presentation of Cherokee customs targeted an audience which did not live among the Cherokees. Although a presentation of so-called traditional customs may have been interesting to Cherokees actively participating in civilization, the main goal appeared to have been for the benefit of white readers. At the same time, Boudinot was active in creating a historical record of the Cherokee traditions he and his class endorsed while excluding those which white supporters would frown upon (such as the Cherokee practice of polygamy.) As for the presentation of progress in “Education, Religion and arts of civilized life,” this followed along the lines of the presentation of laws, working to convince white populations of the ability of the Cherokees and other indigenous peoples to thrive in the civilization program.

Boudinot was able to continue a weekly publication as the sole direct contributor through his inclusion of interesting news of the day and other miscellaneous articles. He exchanged copy with nearly one hundred national newspapers and used their articles to fill the pages on domestic and foreign issues as well as interest pieces.\textsuperscript{119} Boudinot was also initially the only translator at the paper, making it difficult to translate all contributions into Cherokee. Consequently a great deal of the outside articles were only printed in English, with Boudinot choosing to translate biblical passages, laws of the Cherokee Nation, his own editorials, and letters to the editor.\textsuperscript{120} Boudinot’s choices for translation limited the education of the majority of Cherokees to Christianity, Euro-American-influenced law, and his own opinions – restricting the scope of civilization available to this population. The discrepancy between the amounts of pieces the

\textsuperscript{119} Perdue, \textit{Cherokee Editor}, 145n4.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 145n3.
paper printed in English to those in Cherokee alluded to a work printed mainly for elite Cherokee and white consumption. After a year of publication, the National Council provided funds for two additional translators – Edward Graves worked on translating Council proceedings; Stephen Foreman focused on public documents and English news pieces.\(^{121}\) However, the issues continued to be dominated by the English language. This lack of translation pointed to Boudinot’s understanding of the true purpose of the paper – to present the voice of the nation and to appeal to elite Cherokee and white audience. Some amount of Cherokee translation granted the paper legitimacy – it spoke the language of the people. Without the inclusion of the first language of the majority of the Cherokee population, Boudinot could not have claimed his paper and in turn himself as the speaker for the entirety of the nation. Certainly, how could the paper present the opinions of the nation at large if the majority of the population could not even read it? Through Cherokee translation, Boudinot secured his legitimacy in the eyes of the elite Cherokee and white audiences. It cannot be overlooked that the Cherokee sections of the paper were short and rarely provided as much information on political issues of the nation as the English sections did. This early form of exclusion of the majority population would work against Boudinot in the following years – he insisted on speaking for the nation while removing the majority’s platform for participation in the paper.

\(^{121}\) Ibid. The historical record is silent on the ethnicity of Graves and Foreman. Their Euro-American names do not necessarily point them being white – as with Boudinot, Stand Watie, and the Ridges, it is clear that there were many Cherokees who preferred to use Euro-American influenced names on a day to day basis. If these translators were Cherokee, they no doubt belonged to the class of elite Cherokees who worked within the national government or benefitted from civilization programs the nation participated in. Their use of English was imperative to their roles as translators, calling for an upbringing with some amount of schooling in the English language, most likely in mission schools. If Graves and Foreman were white, they were most likely associated with Boudinot’s friend and colleague Samuel Worcester. Worcester was a missionary within the Cherokee Nation. Together with Boudinot, the pair often worked to translate religious texts into Cherokee. It is likely that there were several other missionaries like Worcester with knowledge of both languages, and Graves and Foreman could have been among them. Either option is certainly feasible.
Boudinot’s calculations of who would read the *Cherokee Phoenix* and, in turn, subscribe and contribute to its monetary needs were clear from the beginning. His fund-raising tour, where he presented “An Address to the Whites,” was tailored to the sympathies of a white public who supported indigenous civilization programs. In an 1827 letter to his brother-in-law, Boudinot wrote of the paper: “It is altogether an uncertain experiment, for its future existence must entirely depend on the indulgence & good will of those who are friendly to us.”

Boudinot constantly appealed to those who were “friendly” to the Cherokees, even through the very act of establishing the *Phoenix* as a Cherokee paper printed for the most part in English. The issue of language was a contentious one between the elite Cherokees who dominated the government and the majority population who voted for them. In speaking out against certain leaders of the nation, government officials could point to said leader’s knowledge of the Cherokee language as a confirmation or slight of legitimacy in rule. For example, Chief John Ross, who held his position for nearly forty years, needed a translator in order to communicate with non-English speaking Cherokees.

One of Boudinot’s main tactics to garner support, previously exhibited in the “Address to the Whites,” was to subject himself and the Cherokee people he claimed to represent to the standards of white society. Despite decades of active participation in civilization programs by elite Cherokees, the nation was not prepared to present itself as an equal of the United States. Only a minority of the Cherokee population took on a vast amount of Euro-American customs and attempted to parallel American society, making it difficult to claim civilization for the entire Cherokee Nation. However, the *Phoenix* continued to present the nation as civilizing. White

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opinions of the Cherokee Nation in American newspapers and in Congress demonstrated that this effort by Boudinot was not completely successful – white Americans still viewed the Cherokees and other indigenous peoples as savage. But it was not an option to heatedly combat these opinions in the press. Boudinot placated white readers with ideas of a nation constantly improving, never questioning the need or purpose of said improvement. Boudinot himself had actively participated in this process and continued to do so during his years at the Phoenix.

The presentation of Cherokee civilization often paralleled Boudinot’s own efforts within the nation. Despite the fact that Boudinot was well-educated after over a decade in mission schools, he constantly downplayed his own intelligence in its presentation to white society. White Americans would always see Cherokee attempts at white practices as inferior – Boudinot had learned this in Cornwall – so he learned to display his own aptitude as non-threatening. Even in private correspondences to his white relatives, Boudinot was careful to never cross a line in asserting his intellectual capabilities: “We do not wish to be thought as striving to rival other papers of the day, by exhibiting to the public, learning, talents, & information, for these we do not profess or possess.”

Boudinot echoed this sentiment in the Phoenix’s prospectus: “Nor does [the editor] make any pretensions to learning, for it must be known that the great and sole motive in establishing this paper, is the benefit of the Cherokees.” Here was Boudinot’s personal struggle to become civilized – despite his success in education, Boudinot would not make “pretensions to learning.” The paper was not trying to educate its white readers but instead trying to benefit its own people. Of course, sometimes this attempt produced lengthy arguments for the sovereignty and humanity of the people. But Boudinot insisted these efforts were always for the Cherokees, not an attempt to challenge the boundaries of white society. And most

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124 Ibid.
125 Boudinot, “Prospectus” in Cherokee Editor, 90.
importantly, Boudinot did not seek to rival white publications. This presentation of himself and the people of the Cherokee Nation as humble, as reaching for civilization so generously offered by the United States, granted the paper the ability to appeal to white audiences in its early years.

The constant reference to the paper as an attempt to help the Cherokees and nothing more overshadowed the amount effort Elias Boudinot devoted to his work. In his personal communications, Boudinot illustrated how much of his life he contributed to the writing, editing, and publication of the paper. When translators Graves and Foreman joined the paper, it was still solely Boudinot’s job to find and collect outside articles for publication, organize the paper, and add an editorial. Boudinot spoke of his commitment:

My duties are complicated. I have no associate in the Management of the paper, so I have to select pieces for publication, & this requires some time in order to be Judicious, & then I have to prepare what little editorial may be seen in the Phoenix…in English & Cherokee, &…to write one column a week original in Cherokee with so much other work, is no small matter – one cant write fast in Cherokee. When printing days come I have to look over the proof sheets. I have also to receive all communications on business made to this establishment – subscribers names to register, some to discontinue, others to credit, & a particular account of receipts and expenses to keep. When…this is done, a very little part of the week is left.\(^{126}\)

Along with his daily work on the *Phoenix*, Boudinot also worked with missionary Sam Worcester to translate hymns and biblical passages into Cherokee for printing and circulation.\(^ {127}\)

This constant contribution of time and energy created a connection to the paper Boudinot would not shake for the rest of his life. The multitude of translated works made Boudinot a significant participant in the crafting of the ideas being circulating within the nation. Boudinot’s complete immersion in the Cherokee language sought to create a Cherokee relationship with its citizens, not just the government, to grant Boudinot legitimacy to speak for them. His dominance of the

\(^{126}\) “Elias and Harriett Gold Boudinot to Herman and Flora Gold Vaill, 23 January 1829,” in *To Marry an Indian*, 161.

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 161-162.
Phoenix tied him to white audiences, and Boudinot believed himself to be a connection between the two. In his presentation to white audiences, Boudinot became the professional Cherokee: He exhibited the qualities valued by a Euro-American society and still had the position and bilingual knowledge to claim the voice of the nation. Through his missionary education, conversion to Christianity, marriage to a white woman, and political position within the nation, Boudinot was viewed as the ideal outcome of civilization programs by the citizens of United States. This was the voice for the Cherokee Nation that would be heard above all others because it most closely mimicked the ideals of the dominant white society. In binding himself to the Phoenix, Boudinot was able to present his own understanding of Cherokee as the ideal for the nation. This presentation, however, was limited to elite Cherokee and white audiences. Boudinot was far less concerned with appealing to the population of the Cherokee Nation.

Another aspect of Boudinot’s professionalization of his Cherokee status appeared in his work ethic. His devotion to the paper detracted from the other aspects of his life, aspects which solidified his civilization. Still, his commitment to a profession, to being the editor, imbedded him into the white collar work ethic the United States supported. His time devoted to the paper strongly affected his marriage and his relationship with his children. In 1825, Harriet Ruggles Gold had claimed that her choice to marry Boudinot was founded in the missionary spirit. But Boudinot had not completely devoted himself to missionary work – instead, he worked on the paper, which was more focused on sovereignty for the nation than the conversion of the Cherokees. In addition, Boudinot’s work often took him away from his family, the source of his claim to Christian patriarchy. Harriet admitted that “leisure hours with [Boudinot] are very scarce.”

During Boudinot’s four years at the Cherokee Phoenix, the couple had their first four

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Ibid., 162.
children, Eleanor Susan in 1827, Mary Harriet in 1828, William Penn in 1830, and Sarah in 1832. Boudinot presented himself as a caring father in his personal correspondences. He included in his short letters that Eleanor “is a great girl now – begins to talk smartly” and “Mary…has real Indian black eyes. People say she is handsomer than Eleanor.”

Harriet Gold also participated in the presentation of an ideal family structure: “I wish you could see us in our family, in our neighbourhood, and our Nation” she wrote to her family in Cornwall. Her sense of community within Boudinot’s family was strong despite her lack of clan affiliation. In 1832, two-year old William Penn had been sent to his paternal grandfather’s home where his uncles “learn him to walk like an old man to jump like a boy, & make bows like a gentleman.” William’s own father was absent – Boudinot’s son was being educated in Cherokee practices by his male relatives while Boudinot remained at work with the Phoenix. Boudinot’s absence was felt: Writing a month after Sarah’s birth, Harriet acknowledged that Boudinot had still not seen his fourth child. But she was sure that “if it is possible for a person to love an object he has not seen – I know he loves her.”

Boudinot traveled a great amount, either on National Council business or promoting the Phoenix. It appeared that Harriet came to doubt his devotion to her and their family. In a letter to brother Stand Watie, Boudinot wrote: “Tell Harriet I have written to her almost every week –

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129 Gaul, To Marry an Indian, 168n6. This name was most likely not in reference to the original William Penn. In 1829, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missioner corresponding secretary, Jeremiah Evarts, published a series of articles in the Washington Intelligencer in opposition to President Jackson’s removal plans. They were published using the pseudonym “William Penn.” In an October 1829 letter, Boudinot mentioned that “William Penn is very popular amongst us” (Gaul 167). A few months later, Boudinot and Gold’s first son was born. He was most likely named in honor of the essay-writer.

130 Ibid., 75n44.

131 Ibid.

132 “Harriet Gold Boudinot to Herman and Flora Gold Vaill, 29 March [1832],” in To Marry an Indian, 180.

133 Ibid., 181.

134 Ibid.
and generally very long letters...Tell. H. I do behave myself.” 135 Where were these letters if Harriet had not received them? And more importantly, why did Harriet have to be reassured of her husband’s behavior when he was away from home? The sentence and emphasis allows for ideas of infidelity or perhaps participation in other sinful practices such as drinking, gambling, or fighting. Nevertheless, the fact that Harriet had to be reassured by Boudinot of his behavior, and that this reassurance came through a third party, signified the possibility that Boudinot’s private life was not as successful as he needed it to be in order to continue to present himself as the ideal Cherokee to a white audience.

Boudinot’s marriage was successful in the way he used it to solidify his status to white Americans, to become the professional Cherokee. Harriet Gold grew to love the Cherokee Nation and became an advocate for its rights. Despite becoming the wife of an editor instead of a missionary, Harriet could not fathom giving up her life in the Cherokee Nation. She “could never submit to” returning “unless providence made it as plainly my duty as it did to leave [Cornwall].” 136 She had made her own sacrifices in having “the Husband of my choice,” clearly demonstrated in the volatile year in Connecticut. 137 Harriet had been accepted by Boudinot’s family, despite her lack of clan affiliation, and appropriated some aspects of the language and culture of the Cherokees. She referred to her children as “Our little Cherokees,” recognizing their multiracial background and participating in Euro-American patriarchy in having them follow the bloodline of their father. 138 The inclusion of Harriet in the Cherokee Nation was an argument for the success of civilization. After all, how could an educated, Christian white

136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
woman from the United States continue to live in the nation if it did not meet her expectations for civilization? Here, Boudinot’s private life appeared successful and served his presentation of himself as an ideal to white audiences.

In the late 1820s, Boudinot and Harriet’s expanding family paralleled the expansion of the Cherokee Phoenix. The paper began to focus on the protection of the Cherokee Nation against the encroachment of the United States. Boudinot’s editing and personal contributions to the paper illustrated the growing force of his anti-removal stance. In the early years of the paper, Boudinot held off on presenting his own anti-removal opinions. He used communications from Cherokee delegations in Washington D.C. in tangent with letters to the editor to illustrate what he believed to be the nation’s opinion and desires in the removal crisis. A letter to the editor in the summer of 1828 signed “One of ‘The Mass’” railed against a March 20th pro-removal speech given by Congressman James Coffield Mitchell of Tennessee which portrayed the Cherokees as a savage nation controlled by elite chiefs. The author accused Mitchell of feigning concern for the Cherokees in order to acquire their lands – the nation still held lands in the state of Tennessee. They wrote:

> A bad excuse is better than none, and I suppose that [Mitchell’s] condescending friendship to unrivet our ‘chain and improve our conditions,’ is only to obtain our lands; but he never can make us believe that we are so ‘abject and destitute’ as to be unworthy to remain and occupy our present homes.\(^{139}\)

Here there was a strong sense that the Cherokees would not be moved from their current lands, and that claims of barbarism and oppression within the tribe would not force the nation into signing a removal treaty. The anonymous author’s language was strong in its accusations against Mitchell, rejecting the Congressman’s claim to care for the fate of the Cherokees. There was

\(^{139}\) The Cherokee Phoenix, June 4, 1828, Vol. 1 No. 15 (New Echota, GA). Issues of the Cherokee Phoenix quoted in this project which are not accredited to Perdue’s Cherokee Editor were accessed at the New York Public Library Rare Books Division, located on the third floor of the Schwarzman Building, 455 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016. These issues will be cited with their date as well as their volume and issue number.
also the accusation that Mitchell lied in his presentation – “if Mr. Mitchell had taken truth for his
guide, he would have saved himself from much ‘odium and disgust.’”

This letter followed a pattern of the early years of the Phoenix – Boudinot often reprinted
letters to the editor or notes from Washington in lieu of his own opinions on removal. Often he
would include an opinion which was less radical than a contributed text. This method appeared
to follow in the footsteps of the 1826 “Address,” attempting to demonstrate the civilization of the
Cherokee Nation through non-combative rhetoric. In his response to “One of “The Mass”
Boudinot believed that the United States government would uphold legal proceedings and side
with the Cherokees:

Provided, however, the strong arm of the United States protect us in our rights,
and not disorganize us by recommending projects of emigration, when it is
contrary to our wish. We do not expect ever to be a great nation, in the common
sense of the word, for our population is too trifling to entitle us to that appellation.
We may, nevertheless, by our improvement in the various departments of life,
gain the respect and esteem of other nations. Or, should we be blended with the
United S. (which perhaps may be the case,) we shall enjoy the privileges of her
citizens, and receive in common, the regard due to her from abroad. Ed.

Boudinot continued to create the Cherokee Nation in the process of improvement, which he
believed would guarantee the nation’s sovereignty. There was a hope that the “strong arm of the
United States” would help instead of harm, using any power it held over its states to subdue the
constant aggression of white settlers. Boudinot also restated that the Cherokee Nation did not
aspire to be “great,” tying the nation’s inability to rise to the level of the United States to their
smaller population of the Cherokees. This rejection of parity with the United States was another
demonstration of Boudinot’s attempt to appeal to his white audience. There was also a desire to

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140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
be accepted by “other nations,” creating an international appeal for the sovereignty and civilization of the Cherokee Nation.

Finally, Boudinot presented an option which was not often discussed in the pages of the Phoenix or in treaty negotiations in Washington D.C.: the possibility that the Cherokees would assimilate into the United States, gaining citizenship and thereby greater rights to their lands. American citizenship would divide Cherokee Nation lands among its populace, allowing for the buy-out of said lands by the government or private purchases. However, there was also the undeniable negation of indigenous sovereignty implicit in acquiring American citizenship. The Cherokee argument for land rights – along with various other indigenous nations – was centered on the claim for sovereignty within the geographical boundaries of the United States. Boudinot’s suggestion that incorporation into the country and the “privileges of her citizens,” as well as the “regard due to her from abroad” suggest a willingness to sacrifice a centuries-old claim to indigenous sovereignty across the North American terrain. Was there a way for the Cherokee Nation to blend with the United States and still retain a level of sovereignty? Could the Cherokee Nation have continued to exist as a separatist community if it assimilated into the United States and gained the rights of its citizens? Though all indigenous peoples would not gain United States citizenship for nearly another century, the slow process of legal assimilation (civilization programs often aimed for assimilation) of indigenous peoples would begin with offers of citizenship to those who sold their lands to the government. The forced division and sale of communal tribal holdings would follow in the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887. It would effectively destroy any stability within the reservation system.

Long before the Dawes Act, the United States aimed to assimilate indigenous peoples through the adaption of civilization programs. In 1805, President Jefferson said: “humanity
enjoins us to teach them agriculture and the domestic arts; to encourage them to that industry which alone can enable them to maintain their place in existence, and to prepare them in time for that state of society, which to bodily comforts adds the improvement of the mind and morals.”

Years prior to Boudinot’s own concerns about civilization and the Cherokee people, Jefferson had laid out the requirements for the survival of all indigenous peoples. Here it was clear that the United States believed that Euro-American civilization was the only route to the maintenance of American Indians within the nation, and they would help in providing the supplies for such an enterprise. All of this change was a preparation for the possibility of assimilation, for indigenous peoples to be ready for a “state of society” which reflected that of the United States.

Boudinot’s 1828 presentation of the possibility of incorporation into the United States was startling in the pages of the *Phoenix*, a paper dedicated to solidifying the sovereignty of the Cherokee people through various means. More poignantly, in a few short years Boudinot would argue against the incorporation of the Cherokee Nation into the United States. In 1832, Boudinot wrote: “We consider the lot of the Exile immeasurably more to be preferred than a submission to the laws of the States, and thus becoming witnesses of the ruin and degradation of the Cherokee people.”

Where and when did Boudinot break with the need to retain traditional Cherokee lands? The following years of his contributions to the *Phoenix* demonstrated an ever-increasing distrust of the United States government in treaty negotiations and the desire to establish the Cherokees outside the reach of America.

At the close of the first volume of the paper in February of 1829, Boudinot published a plea for funding in several issues of the *Phoenix*, presenting the first year of publication as a

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143 Boudinot, “Letters and Other Papers,” in *Cherokee Editor*, 177.
success in terms of the initial goals of the prospectus. Although Boudinot had “no experience to aid him, and but limited information to recommend him to the public” the paper still “progressed far, generally, to the satisfaction of his readers.” The plea also created a space for Boudinot to redirect the paper from its original intentions of simply presenting Cherokee news and interest stories to the nation and to white subscribers. President Jackson’s election and support of removal changed what Boudinot and the National Council needed from the paper. In a year’s time, the *Phoenix* was transformed into a strong removal opponent, seeking to support the retention of sovereignty of not only the Cherokee Nation but also of all indigenous peoples. In his request for funding Boudinot demonstrated the importance of the *Phoenix*:

> The paper is sacred to the cause of Indians, and the editor will feel himself especially bound as far as his time, talents and information will permit, to render it as instructive and entertaining as possible to his brethren, and endeavor to enlist the friendly feelings and sympathies of his subscribers abroad, in favor of the aborigines. As the present policy of the General Government, the removal of all the Indians beyond the limits of organized States or territories, is assuming an important aspect, the editor will feel himself bound to lay before his readers all that may be said on this subject, particularly the objections against this measure of the government.  

After a year of catering to the goals of the prospectus, Boudinot turned to a new agenda for the *Phoenix*: The newspaper would battle removal on behalf of the Cherokee Nation.

In 1829, Boudinot took another major step in his supporting both Cherokee and general American Indian rights. He renamed the paper *The Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians’ Advocate.* Boudinot also added a new byline, stating the paper was “Printed Under the Patronage, and For The Benefit of the Cherokee Nation, and Devoted to the Cause of the Indians.” The change in title and focus created the *Phoenix* as more than simply a newspaper “for the benefit of the

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144 *The Cherokee Phoenix*, February 18, 1829, Vol. 1 No. 49.
145 Ibid.
147 *The Cherokee Phoenix*, February 18, 1829, Vol. 1 No. 49.
Cherokees.” It was a document of resistance. Still, this resistance was for the most part created by and aimed at elite Cherokees and their white supporters. Boudinot wanted to reach further, to create the paper as a voice for indigenous peoples all over the country. And in claiming the paper for all American Indians, Boudinot claimed the voice of the entire indigenous population of the United States.

In 1829, Boudinot’s desire to advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples against the trespasses of the United States was clearly outside of the original goals of the Phoenix stated in the prospectus. These goals changed after Boudinot understood the amount of control he had over the paper and the power it gave him to affect change for the Cherokee Nation. However, Boudinot would later claim that this aim of protection of the nation was his goal all along. In 1837, he wrote: “Two of the great objects which the nation had in view in supporting the paper were, the defence [sic] of our rights, and the proper representation of our grievances to the people of the United States.”

This statement, made by Boudinot ten years after writing the prospectus, demonstrated the multitude of intentions the Cherokee government saw for the Phoenix. The public goals of the Phoenix – the simple presentation of Cherokee life – were public in 1827. The private goals were understood by Boudinot and the National which funded the paper – the defense of the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation would be presented by the paper. The juxtaposition of these two goals for the paper presented Boudinot’s 1837 desire to portray the Phoenix as an entity outside of himself, which sought to protect his reputation in the Cherokee Nation. But this was in the future. In this multitude of intentions, Boudinot attempted to instead show the paper as an arm of the Cherokee Nation. Yet it was clear that because of Boudinot’s class and those funding him, the opinions of the paper were limited to those with elite

status and political power, excluding a great majority of the population. With his own elite upbringing and personal connection to the major political figures of the time, Boudinot could never truly separate himself from the paper without drastically changing his own beliefs and giving up his political role.

At its initial publication, the *Phoenix* was non-threatening to white readers with its display of Cherokee customs and news stories meant to entertain and bring about a positive opinion of the Cherokees in the United States. Years later Boudinot also claimed that the Cherokee Nation itself, or at least the Council members involved in the *Phoenix*’s funding, understood that the paper had the opportunity to become a weapon in the anti-removal fight. The creation and circulation of the *Phoenix* for the goals stated in the prospectus in turn created a platform for an anti-removal publication. The paper served, in the crisis period of the 1830s, as a vehicle for the opinions of the Cherokee National Council, an institution populated by members of Boudinot’s family and political allies. (Boudinot himself was the clerk of the Council for some time.) With an understanding of the dual nature of the *Phoenix*, the constant inclusion of anti-removal events and arguments as well as Boudinot’s own editorials on the matter come to light as a concerted effort to demonstrate the need for support of the nation to white subscribers. The craft of this presentation counteracted Boudinot’s own claims to a lack of knowledge in the processes of journalism and advocacy. It also reinforced Boudinot’s creation of self as the voice of the nation in his arguments for the majority sentiment on removal.

This change in the tone of the newspaper presented itself in 1829. Progressively throughout the year, following Andrew Jackson’s election, inauguration, and the presentation of an Indian removal bill in the Congress, the *Cherokee Phoenix* became dedicated to the anti-removal effort. The paper was overwhelmed by publications on the topic from other papers and
journals, letters to the editor on the subject, and notes from Cherokee delegations in Washington D.C. As Boudinot could only translate his own contributions into Cherokee, most anti-removal sentiments remained in English only.\textsuperscript{149} The relegation of anti-removal topics to publication only in the English language demonstrated Boudinot’s effort to garner the support of white subscribers in the United States. Boudinot believed in their power to effect change in the federal policy towards American Indians.

In November 1829, Elias Boudinot published an editorial arguing against removal on the grounds of the progress of Cherokee civilization, claiming this process would suffer in the face of forced relocation. He debunked the facts presented by the United States government in support of removal:

The impossibility of civilized them where they are, and the willingness of a majority to remove. In regard to the latter we have placed before our readers, so far as the Cherokees are concerned, the true state of the case, on which the public may rely with safety. As to the former, it is premature to urge it. Notwithstanding what Mr. Eaton says, in the Communication we publish to-day, it is well known to those who are better qualified to judge, that the Cherokees have been in a state of progressive improvement these 30 years, and that the question, ‘whether they are capable of self-government by any of those rules of right which civilization teaches,’ has long been settled.\textsuperscript{150}

The first point of support for the removal policy by the United States was the belief that the Cherokees had not reached an adequate level of civilization, a belief over a quarter of a century old at this time. This belief was coupled with a newer claim – that the Cherokees were not capable of improving while retaining their eastern lands. Boudinot did not spend a great deal of time or effort arguing against this claim – the entirety of the \textit{Phoenix}, like Boudinot’s life, was

\textsuperscript{149} Here I must note that since I neither speak Cherokee or know how to decipher the Cherokee syllabary, it was difficult to deduce exactly which sections of the paper had been translated and which had not been. Through a process of comparing the use of numbers in sentences, the use of headings, and recognizing a few words in Cherokee (such as the most prominent, Cherokee: $\textit{Owv}$), a very loose understanding of the Cherokee layout of the paper was garnered.

\textsuperscript{150} \textit{The Cherokee Phoenix}, November 18, 1829, Vol. II No. 32.
aimed at presenting the civilization of the Cherokees. Boudinot did argue for the ability of the Cherokees to govern themselves, evidenced by the existence of the National Council as well as the writing of the Cherokee Constitution in 1827. The second argument, that the majority of Cherokees wanted to move to western territories, would be a key issues in the removal crisis which followed. Various contingents within the Cherokee Nation and the United States government would claim knowledge of the desire of the majority of Cherokees, often seeking to use such claims to back their own goals. Appropriating the voice of the indigenous populace on the issue of removal was a popular practice by both elite Cherokee and white American politicians. Here Boudinot claimed that the Phoenix had sufficiently presented the desire of the Cherokees on the issue: an anti-removal stance.

On the newer idea that proximity to the white population limited the civilization of indigenous peoples, Boudinot wrote: “We are frequently referred to past history, to enable us to ascertain the truth of the assertion, ‘that the near association of the white and red man is destructive to the latter’ – But does not the situation of the Cherokees refute it?”151 Boudinot himself understood the benefits he received during his time living in Cornwall, as well as the drawbacks of the same time period. However, there was no doubt in his mind that his quest for Cherokee improvement could only be achieved in the eastern territories. “[Removal] will never facilitate the improvement of the Cherokees, but in all probability arrest it.”152 The United States would halt the progress of the Cherokees through removal, progress that the government had encouraged. Boudinot argued that the progress of civilization would stop amongst the Cherokees during removal to the west, and decades of positive effects would also be reversed.

151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
…let us go to the west of the Mississippi, there to indulge ourselves in habits more congenial to us – we will pursue the game – we will follow a savage warfare, and resume what we have already yielded, ‘the barbarous practice of burning prisoners at the stake’ – we will, what we have not done these forty years, make ‘women and children fit subject for the Tomahawk & scalping knife.’…On this soil, our forefathers lived and died, long before the face of the white man was seen. This land is ours by right of inheritance, & peacable [sic] possession… We stand upon our own soil – we enjoy our own rights, derived from our fathers, and guarantied by the American people – if they think proper to wrest these from us, they can do it – we are innocent of all consequences.\(^{153}\)

Explicit in this text was a threat – if the Cherokee Nation was forced from its lands, the consequences would be dire. Nearly half a century of progress in United States-sponsored civilization programs would be lost. The citizens of the nation would fall back into the habits of fabled violent Indians, those outside of the American construction of the “Five Civilized Tribes.”\(^{154}\) Farming, animal husbandry, and textile making would devolve into hunting and “savage warfare.” Violence would dominate relations within indigenous groups and with those who encountered them. These new lands, after all, were already occupied by other indigenous peoples and soon white settlers would push their boundaries as well. If the United States wished to force the Cherokees from their traditional lands and ignore the rights previously guaranteed through various treaties, this reversal of civilization would be the consequence. And it would be the United States, not the Cherokee Nation, which would be left to deal with the consequences of removal. The act would create an enemy for the United States out of the Cherokee Nation. In this threat, Boudinot managed to turn the tables on the United States. He was able to present the possibility of warfare with the Cherokees as the fault of the United States alone. The threat was not directly worded to imply a war with the United States; the Cherokee did not have the numbers for such an action and had seen the results of such campaigns during the Red Stick War

\(^{153}\) Ibid.

\(^{154}\) These tribes were the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole – those who adapted Knox’s civilizing program most enthusiastically.
decades prior. The action of forced removal would result in the devolvement of the Cherokee people, which the United States considered civilized, in an area where white citizens could not be protected by the military. This played directly into the fears of Indian violence so commonly circulated within the United States. Any violence as a result of relocation and in turn devolution would be the fault of the United States who incited removal. Boudinot saw the federal government’s hurry to begin removal as a blind step, lacking consideration for its consequences. He found it his duty to present these consequences to the American public.

Boudinot’s cautioning against removal through the paper fell to concerns about the breakdown of the improvements made through United States-sponsored civilization programs. Although the nation was beginning to look more like Euro-American society, especially the elite upper class, the majority of the Cherokee Nation was in no way represented by Boudinot. Despite the distribution of farming equipment and domestic livestock to the nation, only one third of Cherokee men were farmers at the turn of the nineteenth-century. In addition, the spread of Christianity through civilization had failed, with only one-thousand Cherokees out of a total population numbering over fifteen-thousand belonging to mission churches in 1830. White residents and African-American slaves were included in this count, bringing the total number of Cherokee churchgoers below seven percent of the total population. Another half of Cherokee church members were said to have been suspended for drinking, fighting, or participating in events tied to traditional Cherokee religious practices such as ball games and dances.

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155 Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, eds., The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents, 2nd ed., (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005), 188. This war, also known as the Creek War, occurred between the United States and the Creek Nation between 1813 and 1814. The Cherokee Nation allied itself with the United States. Andrew Jackson was a general in this war. There he gained his reputation as an “Indian fighter.” The Creeks were overwhelmingly defeated and forced to cede great portions of their land.


157 Ibid., 171-172.
cultural retention of the Cherokee Nation remained high despite Boudinot’s claims of the success of civilization programs in the pages of the *Phoenix*. This obscuring of facts displayed Boudinot’s need to prop up the civilization of the nation in order to continue to argue for Cherokee sovereignty.

In addition to protecting the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation, Boudinot surely had personal reasons to stand against removal west of the Mississippi. As an active participant in civilization, Boudinot was quite successful. Although his post at the newspaper was not extremely lucrative, his political position and family connections allowed him to live comfortably. What would be the result of relocation? It was unclear whether the Cherokee Nation could reestablish its representational government system in the west. They would be moving to lands that were occupied by other indigenous peoples – both by Cherokees who had relocated earlier and other nations. If they were to meld with the established Cherokee population, which government would retain control? The reality of being lost in the shuffle was very real for Boudinot. He could lose his prestige without the support of his white audience, of the very people who confirmed his role as a professional Cherokee and spokesperson for the nation. Without the immediate presence of the United States in the western Indian Territory, Boudinot could no longer participate in this role. The loss of his position could have resulted in a loss of wealth, land, and the ability to support his growing family. Not to mention the loss of the intellectual standing Boudinot had built his entire identity upon. Although Boudinot claimed to speak for the entirety of the Cherokee Nation when he railed against removal in the pages of the *Phoenix*, there was also the very conscious knowledge that his own life would be affected greatly by removal. The act of self preservation could not have slipped his mind, and this need
to save himself would manifest itself time and time again as Boudinot defended both his political and private image in the public sphere.

American intentions clarified in May 1830 when Congress passed the Indian Removal Act and President Jackson signed it into law. The Cherokee Nation now faced a nearly impossible battle in the attempt to secure their land rights in the east. The act gave the United States President the power to make treaties for removal with any Indian nation, the divide lands ceded through removal for American settlement, and to make promises of security to Indian nations in their new lands. Finally, the President would “have the same superintendence and care over any tribe or nation in the country to which they may remove…that he is now authorized to have over them at their present places of residence.” There would be no escaping the power of the executive after the passage of the Indian Removal Act, not even through removal. The language of the act seemed to imply that removal was inevitable – the President, in his “superintendence and care” over Indian nations could claim any indigenous lands for the United States and allow white settlement there. It was in the best interest of indigenous nations to take land and payment from the United States than to attempt to battle the republic. The coercion of indigenous governments into signing treaties by the United States was also not beyond the call of the President.

The reality of the passage of the Indian Removal Act only spurred on Boudinot’s efforts against removal. Boudinot called for unity amongst the nation in the pages of the Cherokee Phoenix:

Let then the Cherokees be firm and united – Fellow citizens, we have asserted our rights, we have defended them thus far, and we will defend them yet by all lawful and peaceable means. – We will no more beg, pray, and implore, but we will demand justice, and before we give up and allow ourselves to despondency we

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158 Perdue and Green, The Cherokee Removal, 125.
will, if we can, have the solemn adjudication of a tribunal, whose province is to interpret the treaties, *the supreme law of the land*. Let us then be *firm* and *united*.159

Boudinot felt the inevitability of the passage of the act – Jackson himself endorsed it. Neither the Cherokees nor their white supporters could successfully combat a bill making its way through legislation with support from the president. Boudinot did not give up on the anti-removal mission at this point in time, instead holding steadfast to the necessity of Cherokee unification. If the nation continued to stand unified in opposition to the United States, even if it was forced to relocate, there was the possibility of preserving the government structure which supported Boudinot and his fellow elite Cherokees. These were the Cherokees leading the nation towards civilization attempts and profiting from them. The call for unity also contrasted with the idea of the Cherokee Nation which Boudinot constantly presented in the pages of the *Phoenix*. The nation was not as homogenous as the *Cherokee Phoenix* portrayed it, and calls for unification over an issue as basic as removal demonstrated this variety in public opinion.

Boudinot’s language of unification also supported a stronger stance from the Cherokee Nation on the issue of removal. Boudinot was still certain of the power of rights – granted by the Cherokee Constitution and through previous treaties made with the United States. The Cherokees had followed all the rules, after all. They had appealed to the United States government “by all lawful and peaceable means.” With this tactic turning into failure, Boudinot urged for unity around more forceful options. The Cherokees would now “demand” justice. Asking for the right to be heard was no longer enough, and the Cherokee Nation would turn to the only other power which had not yet chosen a side: the Supreme Court of the United States.

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By July of 1830, the Cherokee National Council had prepared its response to the passage of the Indian Removal Act. Boudinot printed the entirety of it on the front page of the *Cherokee Phoenix*. He also added his own editorial piece on the matter, seeking to admonish the United States in its actions and claiming the unity of the Cherokee Nation in an anti-removal opinion. Boudinot insisted that the address made at the General Council meeting had undergone “a most attentive observation” in order for the paper to be able to “freely testify” that it contained “the sentiments of the nation at large.”[160] The Act was so abhorrent to the entirety of the nation that Boudinot had “never known the people so firm and united as at the present time.”[161] This insistence on the unity of the Cherokee Nation and their strength in opposition to the Indian Removal Act lent legitimacy to the statements of the National Council within the United States. The presentation of unity supported the Council despite the fact that it was comprised of elite Cherokees. The Council then had the right to continue to deny the Removal Act.

Boudinot also foreshadowed the Cherokee Nation’s appeal to the United States court system. “The Cherokees think they have rights…This opinion has never been shaken by all that the general Government has done…Surely the Supreme Court of the United States is the proper tribunal where the great question at issue must be settled. To this tribunal the Cherokees will freely refer their case.”[162] The Cherokee Nation would no longer rely on their ability to send delegations to Washington, delegations which were often shut out of proceedings or turned away by President Jackson. The nation would now appeal to a power outside of the legislative and executive branches. If this attempt was not sufficient, the Cherokee Nation might suffer, but it would also aim judgment at the United States. This judgment, both from anti-removal American

[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
voters and the international community sought to spur doubt about the power and actions of the Jackson administration:

Their eyes are turned, not to the western country, but to that period when, by the judicial decision of the Courts of the United States, they must be either satisfied that they have rights, or that they have none! They intend to wait for that time. It is to talk about exchanging countries, or entering into treaties, while the great question remains unsettled. If we are removed, say they, by the United States from our land and possessions, we wish to leave in the records of her judicial tribunals, for future generations to read, when we are gone, ample testimony that she acted *justly* or *unjustly*. The reasonableness of this determination must appear evident to every mind.\(^{163}\)

The Cherokee Nation would seek to end the removal crisis. Even if the effort failed, the case would make history. Future generations would judge whether the United States acted in a just manner towards indigenous peoples. Boudinot levied the power of the historical record against the United States. The *Cherokee Phoenix* was key in this appeal to history. The paper was a document which, with its circulation to white subscribers, had the power to survive removal if the Cherokees did not. At the very least, it had given the Cherokee people – delivered through the decisions and presentation of an elite Cherokee man – a voice in the public discourse leading up to the Indian Removal Act.

In the following two years, the Cherokee Nation faced two major Supreme Court battles which they hoped would secure their land rights. After the passage of the Indian Removal Act, the nation hired former Attorney General and member of the Democratic-Republican Party, William Wirt to appeal their case to the Supreme Court. Boudinot printed opinions written by Wirt on the lands rights of the Cherokees. The weekly practices of the *Phoenix* were suspended by the “authorities of the nation” in order to publish all of Wirt’s work.\(^{164}\) Boudinot himself

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\(^{163}\) Ibid.

\(^{164}\) *The Cherokee Phoenix*, August 14, 1830, Vol. III No. 16
continued to present the *Phoenix* as a major tool exposing the injustice of the federal government:

> The passage of the Indian Bill has disgraced us as a people, has wounded our national honor, and exposed us to the merited reproach of all civilized communities of the world... Yet the Cherokee Phoenix contains, in every number, sufficient matter to awaken the public mind, if it could but gain attentive readers.\(^{165}\)

The appeal would still be made to the “public mind,” the mind which was not made up in one way or another – that of the white public, not the Cherokee peoples standing united against removal. Even with the suspension of Cherokee government by the state of Georgia, anti-removal sentiments were strong. Still, without a white voice such as Wirt’s to oppose the actions of the federal and state governments, the Cherokee government knew it could not make progress in the retention of land rights.

The first battle was *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, decided on March 18, 1831. It led to an ambiguous conclusion which did not secure rights for the Cherokees. The court found the Cherokee Nation to fall into the realm of a domestic dependent nation, not a foreign political entity separate from the United States. Boudinot, however, did not see this ruling as conclusive on the issue of Georgia’s power in removing the Cherokees from the east. “The opinion plainly intimates that it is the duty of the Executive and Congress of the United States to redress the wrong, and to guard the rights of the Cherokees if they are oppressed.”\(^{166}\) With the Supreme Court not upholding the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation in the case, Boudinot argued that the other branches of government had the duty to recognize grievances enacted upon the Cherokees by the state of Georgia: “The duty of the Government to secure those rights is as binding as

\(^{165}\) *The Cherokee Phoenix*, October 8, 1830, Vol. III No. 21
\(^{166}\) “*The Cherokee Phoenix*, April 16, 1831, Cherokee Nation vs. The State of Georgia,” in *Cherokee Editor*, 126.
ever.”

The Cherokees would continue to hold their ground, and to rely on the citizens of the United States to recognize injustice and correct it. “What else can they do but remain peaceably where they are and continue to call upon the people of the United States to fulfill their engagements.” It was no longer simply the duty of the branches of the federal government to secure the rights of indigenous peoples. The “people,” the citizens, of the United States also owed the Cherokee Nation. In his private life, Boudinot had expected the case to bring events to a head between the Cherokee Nation and Georgia. Three months before the case he wrote in a personal letter: “I think the matter is coming to a crisis, and I am glad it is. Very soon the virtue of the Republic will be put to the test.”

Had not the United States failed this test, failed to protect its domestic dependents from its own white population? The Cherokees would continue to claim their rights despite ambiguous rulings from the court. Boudinot’s ability to use the negative verdict in a positive way for the nation pointed directly to his political ability, to the very understanding of political rhetoric which buoyed his commoditization as the professional Cherokee.

After the ruling, Boudinot backed away from threats of violence he had intimated in the past, specifically those of a Cherokee retreat into what white audiences perceived as savagery. The Cherokee Nation was civilized, after all. “The Cherokees are for peace…they have buried the hatchet long since, and given their word that the blood of the white man shall not stain their hands.” But there was also always a slight doubt in the unity of the nation or the ability of the National Council to control the population’s actions. This fear may have meant to keep Cherokees in check, or to intimidate white supporters of removal. Boudinot, after all, could only

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167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 “Harriet Gold Boudinot to Herman and Flora Gold Vaill, 7 January 1831,” in To Marry an Indian, 173.
170 Ibid., 127.
say: “They will not, at least we think they will not”…”fly to rash and unavoidable measures to vindicate their injured rights.”\textsuperscript{171} In the end, Boudinot was so disconnected from the population of the Cherokee Nation that he did not know how they would react to this decision.

In 1831, Boudinot still believed that the United States would eventually see the error of its ways and rise to support indigenous peoples against the aggressive tactics of individual states and citizens. The issue of land rights grew ever larger in the two years after the passage of the Indian Removal Act. Boudinot became assured that the ownership of land was enough to save the Cherokee Nation from removal. This ownership had to be defended by the federal government, and the citizens of the United States were the only ones with the power to force President Jackson’s hand in the matter. He exhibited this belief not only in the \textit{Phoenix} but also in his own private letters to family members:

The last right and in some respects, the most important right of the Cherokees, is to be fought and contended for – their right to the land. It is true we have been abused persecuted and oppressed beyond measure – our rights have been outrageously wrested from us, yet we are on our lands – we have possession...Now will the people of the U. States permit such an outrage upon the property of the defenceless?... This great evil can be averted if the people can but be induced to speak in their might....Shall robbery be committed? The President must soon be brought under great responsibility.\textsuperscript{172}

Boudinot sought to place responsibility not just on the federal government of the United States but on the very citizens who held power through their votes. The removal of the Cherokee Nation was not simply the displacement of a people – it was the act of stealing land, of stealing property. The United States had passed a law which would affect indigenous peoples through the adoption of treaties forced on the nations by the federal government. Even if a nation signed

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{172} “Elias and Harriet Gold Boudinot to Herman and Flora Gold Vaill, 1 July 1831,” in \textit{To Marry an Indian}, 175-6.
a removal treaty, the citizens of the United States needed to know that they had been coerced into
the process by the very laws created by the federal government.

In 1832, the Cherokee Nation had another day in court. Two American citizens residing
in the Cherokee Nation participated in *Worcester v. Georgia* after the state arrested eleven
missionaries (including Boudinot’s associate, Samuel Worcester) for refusing to take an oath of
allegiance to the state of Georgia. The court ruled in favor of Worcester, citing that Georgia
could not enforce its laws within the boundaries of the Cherokee Nation, overturning their
previous ruling. Chief Justice John Marshall wrote on the court’s ruling: “The Indian nations
had always been considered as distinct, independent political communities, retaining their
original natural rights, as the undisputed possessors of the soil…The very term ‘nation,’ so
generally applied to them, means ‘a people distinct from others…The Cherokee nation, then, is a
distinct community, occupying its own territory.”173 The ruling, though targeted at the prison
sentences of Samuel Worcester and Elizur Butler, created a larger picture of indigenous
sovereignty within the United States. Marshall’s statement claimed that American Indians could
not be stripped of their rights unless they participated in treaties which traded rights for other
benefits. Georgia could not encroach on the land unless the Cherokee Nation signed a treaty
with the federal government.

*Worcester v. Georgia* was a major victory for the Cherokee Nation in its challenge to the
Indian Removal Act through the American court system. Sovereignty of the nation had been
upheld by the highest court within the United States. It was expected that this ruling would be
reinforced by Jackson and his administration. Boudinot wrote to Stand Watie directly after the
case was resolved:

173 Ibid., 81-83.
It is a glorious news. The laws of the State are declared by the highest judicial tribunal in the Country null and void. It is a great triumph on the part of the Cherokees so far as the question of their rights were concerned. The question is for ever settled as to who is right and who is wrong, and the controversy is exactly where it ought to be, and where we have all along been desirous it should be. It is not now before the great state of Georgia and the poor Cherokees, but between the U.S. and the State of Georgia, or between the friend of the judiciary and the enemies of the judiciary. WE can only look and who whoever prevails in this momentous crisis.\footnote{This reference should be properly formatted in the document.}

Here again was Boudinot’s belief in the federal system of the United States. Having followed all the legal roads available to the Cherokee Nation, there was finally a sign of give from the United States. In a case concerning white citizens of the United States living in the Cherokee Nation, Boudinot and the rest of the Cherokee government saw a triumph for the rights of Cherokee citizens. The case fell to the role of federal enforcement, by the executive branch. Boudinot surrendered responsibility for the anti-removal battle in this letter.

The Cherokee Nation had defended itself, with its government leading the battle. They had followed all of the legal paths open to them and came back with a positive result, one which sought to bring relief to not only the upper class but the Cherokee population at large. This relief, however, would not last long. President Jackson would show his true intentions after the ruling of \textit{Worcester v. Georgia}, sabotaging the system of checks and balances within the United States. More importantly, the very same professional Cherokees who had dedicated their lives to fighting removal would begin to see the impossibility of contention with the United States. Removal was a battle for the recognition of Indian sovereignty from the United States. For Boudinot, Cherokee claims to sovereignty were not enough, and he vehemently sought an American opinion on the topic. He put his faith in the power of the Supreme Court. Elias Boudinot’s joy would be short lived as he and his cohorts understood the true lack of power that

\footnote{\textit{“Elias Boudinot to Stand Watie, Boston, March 7, 1832,”} in \textit{Cherokee Cavaliers}, 4-5.}
the court ruling held for the Cherokee Nation. Boudinot once again failed in his presentation as the professional Cherokee to the United States. In the months following the ruling, he would make a decision that dictated the outcome of his life.
Between 1828 and 1832, Elias Boudinot actively participated in the formation and continued life of the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians’ Advocate*. The paper, although far from popular, published significant Cherokee opinions on the events of the removal crisis the nation was involved with in these years: election of Andrew Jackson, the passage of the Indian Removal Crisis, and the Supreme Court cases for indigenous sovereignty. The *Phoenix* became a platform for the promotion of Cherokee sovereignty and the defense of their land rights. By creating the *Phoenix*, Boudinot inserted the voice of the Cherokee Nation into the discourse on Indian nations within the United States; however, by limiting the variety of opinions printed in the paper, Boudinot collapsed the multiplicity of voices in the heterogeneous nation into one “official” opinion. His appropriation of the voice of the Cherokee Nation for a white audience created Boudinot as the professional Cherokee in the United States.

In 1832, Boudinot changed his opinion on removal: He now believed that the Cherokee Nation would best benefit by working with the United States government to relocate west of the Mississippi. After four years of publishing his anti-removal opinions in the *Phoenix* – the same opinions that the Cherokee government and majority population shared – Boudinot was now in an opposing position to his own paper. He had creative control of the paper, but it was funded by the anti-removal government and could not continue publication with a pro-removal editor. Boudinot knew that this change in opinion would cost him his role in the United States as the professional Cherokee. It could also cost him his well-being in the Cherokee Nation. Before he made his change public, Boudinot sought to defend himself in the pages of the *Phoenix*. His attempt appeared somewhat paranoid, giving a sense that Boudinot fully understood the danger a
pro-removal opinion faced within the Cherokee Nation. A short paragraph in the *Phoenix* in the summer of 1832 cautioned readers:

> We would respectfully caution our Cherokee friends against the many reports which are circulating about *certain things* and *certain persons*. This is not time to be impugning each other’s motives, & doubting each other’s patriotism. We hope there will be no attempt made to create the idea that there is a faction formed or forming, and by that means destroy the reputation of certain individuals. *We know of no such faction – we say to all, be national – look to the interest of the people – nothing but the interest of the PEOPLE.*

This statement was an oddity in the structure and goals of the *Cherokee Phoenix*. After years as editor, Elias Boudinot was rarely shy in his attacks, always willing to name his opponents. But now Boudinot was attempting to defend his reputation before the nation knew about his change of opinion. Through the deflection of mistrust and anger towards pro-removal factions in the nation, Boudinot aimed to dispel anger before it could be directed at him. Boudinot sought protection for himself and the members of what would become the Treaty Party – the pro-removal faction of the Cherokee government which would sign a removal treaty with the United States in 1835. Boudinot’s fear of being discovered as a removal supporter spurred him to use the *Phoenix* for his own protection. It was a last-ditch effort at using the paper to encourage variety in the political realm of the nation, variety Boudinot had devoted his career as the professional Cherokee to denying. Three weeks after his call for unity, Boudinot would reveal the private discussion he was engaged in with anti-removal Chief John Ross. The discussion revealed the splintering of the Cherokee government on the nation’s most vital issue. In the above notice, Boudinot attempted to separate his himself from the *Phoenix*, an unusual event in his creation of himself as the professional Cherokee.

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What led to Boudinot’s drastic change to a pro-removal opinion in 1832? In the months after the initial elation of the Supreme Court’s *Worcester v. Georgia* ruling, Cherokee relief was destroyed by the non-compliance of the Jackson administration. In the explanation of his veto of the rechartering bill for the Bank of the United States, President Jackson had written that “executive is not bound by the decisions of the Supreme Court.” Boudinot made the connection between this statement and the *Worcester v. Georgia* decision: Under Jackson, the United States would continue pushing for a removal treaty with the Cherokees and would not halt Georgia’s encroachments onto indigenous lands. Boudinot’s resignation issue, published August 11, 1832, laid out the Cherokee’s impossible position:

> The Cherokee will have nothing to hope from [Jackson’s] interference... the system of oppression, carried on by acts declared to be unconstitutional by the highest tribunal of the country, is permitted to proceed steadily in its final consummation, and the Chief Magistrate of the land, who is sworn to execute the law, views with complacence the mischief as it progresses.\(^{177}\)

This will to ignore the system of checks and balances that upheld the United States federal government spelled the end for any hope of respite from the constant pressure placed on the Cherokees to remove. After this revelation, Boudinot saw no other option for the Cherokee Nation than to sign a removal treaty and receive the best western lands available along with mass monetary compensation.

Boudinot also began to think that even if Jackson supported the ruling of *Worcester v. Georgia*, the case could not be applied to the Cherokee Nation. Boudinot’s disappointment in this decision caused him to view the case at its most basic level: the court had decided that Georgia had no right to arrest and hold Worcester and Butler. Justice Marshall’s opinion in favor of Cherokee sovereignty did not drive the ruling. Boudinot now saw that “for the action,

\(^{176}\) *The Cherokee Phoenix*, August 11, 1832, Vol. IV No. 52.

\(^{177}\) *Ibid.*
we take it, of the tribunal which issues the mandate terminates in the persons of the individuals incarcerated in the Penitentiary” and would “bring no relief to the Cherokees.” The editorial was not a final plea for unity in the nation – Boudinot used his final issue to demonstrate the space available for what would become the Treaty Party. If Chief Ross would not take Jackson’s refusal to enforce Supreme Court rulings into consideration, another part of the Cherokee government would take on that role. It was exasperation at the unreliability of the United States government and the Cherokee government’s naiveté in expecting enforcement by the very man who had originally called for removal. “We have nothing to expect from such an executive; - and if General Jackson is disposed to do as he pleases, the remedy is not with us, but with the people of the United States.”

Boudinot impugned Jackson by refusing to address him by his title – president – instead referring to the title Jackson held during his first wrongdoings towards the Cherokees in the Red Stick War twenty years earlier – general. Though this final action, Jackson lost Cherokee adherence to his authority as leader of the United States. Boudinot used the action to present a distrust of the United States government which was strong enough to support removal, for the Treaty Party at the least.

The frustration and disappointment Boudinot encountered in the failure of *Worcester v. Georgia* was not his first encountered with the hypocrisy of the United States. Before and during his courting of Harriet Ruggles Gold, Boudinot had worked within the system of the mission schools in order to reach a level of civility that would make him acceptable to the community of Cornwall and the United States at large. His efforts appeared to be in vain when the entire town exploded in a frenzy of anti-Indian racism and attempted to end the engagement. In Cornwall, Boudinot had molded himself to function by the standards of the white community and was still

178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
rejected by it. In the same way, Boudinot witnessed the Cherokee Nation struggling to stop removal through legal processes dictated by the United States. The nation consistently renegotiated its existence in terms of the system of the federal government. Boudinot participated in the process, using the *Phoenix* to prove Cherokee civilization to white Americans in order to give the nation a voice in the discussion of its own sovereignty. When President Jackson refused to enforce the *Worcester v. Georgia* ruling, it was clear that no matter how much the nation changed itself to suit the United States, racial difference and the American hunger for land would trample the Cherokee Nation. The disappointment Boudinot felt must have been similar to his experience in Cornwall seven years prior. In both cases, efforts had been made to work within the system of the dominant group – the white population of the United States. Failure was coupled with a feeling of rejection. While this rejection eventually dissipated in Cornwall when the marriage succeeded, the Cherokee Nation could not expect the United States to change its mind as Harriet’s family had. In this realization, Elias Boudinot made the decision to support a treaty with the United States that called for removal in exchange for new lands and monetary compensation. For this change, Boudinot lost his claim to legitimacy as the professional Cherokee in the United States when he was forced to resign from the paper. Without his profession and access to the voice of the nation, he no longer had a platform with which to reach white audiences. Three years later in 1835, Boudinot and others would illegally sign the Treaty of New Echota. John Ridge, who also signed the treaty, would tellingly predict: “I know that in signing this treaty I have signed my own death warrant.”\(^{180}\)

After his resignation, Boudinot all but disappeared from the public discourse of the Cherokee Nation for four years. Although he continued to participate in the government, the

platform of the *Phoenix* was not longer available to him. His letters to the *Phoenix* were either not published or torn apart by the paper’s new editor, Elijah Hicks, brother-in-law of Chief John Ross. In 1835, Boudinot saw the end of his intellectual creation when the Georgia Guard partnered with his brother, Stand Watie, and confiscated the printing press from *Phoenix* headquarters to prevent further anti-removal publications. In 1836, Boudinot experienced a personal trauma which allowed him to begin his attempt at salvaging his reputation and professional status. His wife, Harriet Gold, passed away on August 15, 1836 at the age of thirty-one. Boudinot wrote a lengthy letter to inform her parents of her final moments. The letter was published in the *New York Observer*, a paper which Boudinot had once had a close relationship with. He may have even expected the inevitability of the letter being published, considering his knowledge of newspapers and the fame the couple had achieved in the northeast during their engagement. The letter sought to comfort the Gold family over their loss, but Boudinot also used it as an opportunity to create himself as a Cherokee martyr within the United States. Boudinot turned to his knowledge of Christianity to frame Harriet Gold as a Christian mother and wife. “She told me she should die, and prayed me to be faithful to our dear children – ‘Read the bible and pray with them daily, and teach them to keep the Sabbath.’” Most significantly, Boudinot portrayed Harriet as devoting nearly as much thought to the Cherokee Nation as she did to her own family: “‘I should like to live, if it is God’s will, on account of my dear children, that I may do good to the Cherokees.” Harriet Gold was the ideal “friend of the Cherokees” – a white woman, someone that the United States considered valuable to the continuation of its society.

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182 Ibid.
184 “Elias Boudinot to Benjamin and Eleanor Gold, 16 August 1836,” in *To Marry an Indian*, 184-185.
185 Ibid., 186.
who had followed the teachings of a Christian god to become part of the Cherokee Nation. Although she would always be an outsider, Harriet Gold moved among elite Cherokees who were more willing to value her civilization over her lack of Cherokee background. She made a name for herself in Boudinot’s family, supported her husband throughout his political career in the nation.

Although Harriet Gold’s death may not have been a huge detriment to the majority population of the Cherokee Nation, the American interpretation of her life and death created her as a martyr. In their introduction the letter, the *New Yorker Observer* wrote of Harriet Gold:

> She was devoted heart and soul to the welfare of that race, into which she was adopted; and while laboring in their behalf, and mourning over their deplorable condition, she delighted in being on of them and in sharing with the oppressed, rather than with the oppressor.\(^{186}\)

This commentary on Harriet Gold also bolstered Elias Boudinot’s image in the United States. The *New York Observer* would not change the minds of all the citizens of the Cherokee Nation, but it could allow Boudinot the leverage to continue to claim to speak for the nation to white audiences. Harriet Gold believed in the cause of the Cherokees, and claimed she had been brought to the nation by god himself. She had supported her husband through his various attempts to protect the nation’s sovereignty and land. Even though Boudinot and Gold had deviated from their original goal of becoming missionaries to the Cherokee people, they had still found a way to help the nation. The *Observer* went as far as the set up the Cherokee Nation and the United States as the oppressed and the oppressor, respectively. This presentation of Harriet Gold as a martyr, standing for the Cherokee Nation and supporting her husband, reflected positively on Boudinot. Not only was he a devout Christian, but he was able to convince his wife of the needs of the Cherokee Nation, so much that she considered its citizens in tangent with

her own children on her death bed. The release of Boudinot’s letter to the American press sought to bolster his appearance within the nation. It also allowed for the presentation of Boudinot as a martyr parallel to his wife, being exiled from the Cherokee Nation through his decision as his wife was exiled from her own community in her choice of spouse. As a signer of the Treaty of New Echota, he did not necessarily need such help with white audiences. But if there were elite removal opponents reading the Observer, there was no escape of the presentation of Boudinot’s civility in the letter. Perhaps Boudinot could gain some Cherokee supporters after all.

After the publication of the letter on Harriet’s death, Boudinot would make only one other appearance in the public sphere between 1832 and his death in 1839. Five years after he left the Cherokee Phoenix, and two years after he signed the Treaty of New Echota, Elias Boudinot presented a record of these multiple ordeals in order to defend his reputation to the population of the Cherokee Nation. Originally published in Athens, Georgia, the pamphlet was submitted as a Senate Document to the twenty-fifth session of Congress. Its publication in English and inclusion in the Congressional record pointed to Boudinot’s constant need to appeal to elite Cherokees and white audiences, even though he really had to defend himself to the majority of the Cherokee Nation that was not necessarily literate in the English language. The collection of documents entitled the “Letters and Other Papers Relating to Cherokee Affairs: Being a Reply to Sundry Publications Authorized by John Ross” was one of the most complete records of the major arguments between the Treaty Party and the Cherokee government.\textsuperscript{187}

Beginning with the title, Boudinot sought to create himself as the victim of libel by Chief John Ross. The pamphlet was not able to salvage Boudinot’s reputation within the Cherokee Nation (or, even further, save his life in 1839,) but did appeal to his former white supporters. Its

\textsuperscript{187} Perdue, Cherokee Editor, 158. The pamphlet covered the years of 1832-1837. Due to this, discussion of its contents will move throughout the five year period. Sometimes focus will be placed on the contents of Boudinot’s 1832 resignation letter, while other discussions will focus on his 1837 retrospective commentary on said events.
existence in the public record also allows for a reevaluation of the more secluded years of Boudinot’s life. After the end of his reign as editor of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot’s public voice declined. He was reviled in the pages of the *Phoenix* by his replacement, Elijah Hicks. The publication of a pamphlet, the manipulation of the written word, was one way that Boudinot could defend his actions in the public record. Boudinot sought to defend not only his reputation, but also his life. In 1829, the sale of land without National Council permission was made punishable by death.\(^{188}\)

A large section of the “Letters and Other Papers” were the original communications printed in Boudinot’s resignation issue on August 11, 1832. In that issue, Boudinot addressed the paper’s subscribers directly: “The subscriber takes this opportunity to inform the readers of the Cherokee Phoenix that he has resigned his station as Editor. Some of the reasons which have induced him to take this step are contained in the following letter addressed to the Principal Chief.”\(^{189}\) Boudinot followed the statement by reprinting several letters between Ross and himself. Boudinot used the space of the pamphlet to flesh out and argue against Ross’s claims point by point, attacking the popular chief.

The 1837 pamphlet opened with Boudinot’s address “To the Public.” Boudinot immediately acknowledged that there were two aspects to the “Cherokee question...the controversy with the States and the General Government, and the controversy among the Cherokees themselves.”\(^{190}\) Here Boudinot entered into a field that he had ignored during his tenure at the *Cherokee Phoenix*: the Cherokees were not united on the issue of removal, not even within the governing body of the nation. With the *Phoenix* as the mouthpiece for the nation,

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\(^{189}\) *The Cherokee Phoenix*, August 11, 1832, Vol. IV No. 52.

funded by the anti-removal government, the possibility of dissent against the official stance of the government was not discussed in its pages. Boudinot lost the position as editor for his attempt to present a variant opinion. In his pamphlet, Boudinot openly presented the dangerous idea that had divided the Cherokee Nation in 1835 – there was a faction within the government which believed that “instead of contending uselessly against superior power, the only course left was, to yield to circumstances over which they had no control.”

The statement created the purpose of the Treaty Party – to allow for the inclusion of multiple opinions in a representational government.

Boudinot used the pamphlet the attack the anti-removal faction of the Cherokee National government. He charged Chief Ross and his supporters with having “deluded [the Cherokee people] with expectations incompatible with, and injurious to, their interest.”

The pamphlet constructed the Treaty Party, and by extension Boudinot, as a collective aimed at doing what was best for the Cherokee Nation. He believed that the nation as a whole could not come to a conclusion on removal because they were being controlled by their leaders. Throughout the pamphlet, Boudinot presented the Treaty Party as the only body that fully understood the plight of the Cherokees. They were the ones who acted to save the nation in 1835. The fact that these actions were illegal was downplayed by Boudinot in the work. The pamphlet displayed a rhetorical effort to recreate Boudinot and the rest of the Treaty Party in a positive light, into a party which did not seek to usurp control of the Cherokee Nation. To do so, Boudinot presented the populace as uneducated on their own political status. After all, the Treaty Party did “what the majority would do if they understood their condition – to save a nation from political

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191 Ibid., 160.
192 Ibid., 161.
thralldom and moral degradation." This imagining of the Cherokee Nation as uninformed, either due to their own lack of means or because of some form of oppression by their elected leaders, reflected the image of an uncivilized population Boudinot had in his time at the Phoenix. An uncivilized Cherokee Nation in the needed Boudinot and the Phoenix to help its improvement. But without control of the paper, it was not as great a tool for Boudinot as the professional. Efforts to educate the nation had been unsuccessful through the means of the national paper, but this escaped Boudinot’s condemnation.

In his avoidance of discussing the differences between the two political parties in the Cherokee government, Boudinot presented the Treaty Party’s actions as “disadvantages under which the...party must have labored.” The major disadvantage was the fact, printed time and time again during Boudinot’s tenure at the Phoenix, was that the majority of citizens of the Cherokee Nation were strongly against removal. The Treaty Party maneuvered around this opposition. They signed the treaty first, then explained their actions by discrediting the majority of the nation by claiming they were uneducated and were being manipulated by authority figures.

To advocate a treaty was to declare war against the established habits of thinking peculiar to the aborigines. It was to come in contact with settled prejudices – with the deep rooted attachment for the soil of our forefathers. Aside from these natural obstacles, the influence of the chiefs, who were ready to take advantage, of the well known feelings of the Cherokees, in reference to their lands, was put in active requisition against us.

Boudinot demonstrated his comprehension that the signing of the Treaty of New Echota was an illegal action. He justified this action by referencing the Cherokees as “aborigines” – a term Boudinot did not use often. Previously, Boudinot had used “aborigines” to identify other American Indian nations. Its use sought to elevate the Cherokee Nation, to mark them as

193 Ibid., 162.
194 Ibid., 160.
195 Ibid., 160-161.
civilized beyond others. In this instance, Boudinot separated himself and the Treaty Party from the majority of the Cherokee Nation. He claimed the right to make decisions for the people by valuing his civilization above the rest of the nation. He applied the term “aborigines” to those who dared to continue to accept Cherokee beliefs he no longer supported; he appropriated Cherokee as a title for himself and those that shared his views and relegated the rest of the nation to barbarism. Boudinot was once again asserting the position to decide what was and was not truly Cherokee, this time in a pamphlet which would reach the United States government. His creation of himself as the professional Cherokee now reflected itself back onto the majority population, and he attacked the people despite his previous efforts to help them.

Attacking the value the Cherokees placed on their homelands was another point Boudinot used to demonstrate the nation as uncivilized and uneducated. Only a few years earlier Boudinot himself had advocated for the Cherokee desire to retain their homelands. Did Boudinot forget that in 1826 it was this very land which he cited in the construction of the ideal Cherokee, a Cherokee who was “healthy, vigorous, and intelligent,” because of the qualities of the Cherokee land?196 And it was in his first address to the public introducing the Cherokee Phoenix where Boudinot claimed that the paper had a goal to “invariably and faithfully state the feelings of the majority of our people” on the topic of removal.197 The majority of the nation in 1828 was anti-removal, and this was still true in 1837. In 1829, Boudinot wrote “This land is ours by right of inheritance, & peacable [sic] possession.”198 And the Cherokees would not be removed from the land they held – with the Indian Removal Act in Congress Boudinot claimed the Cherokees would hold fast: “We are yet at our home, at our peaceful firesides...attending our farms and

196 Elias Boudinot, “An Address to the Whites: Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church on the 26th of May, 1826,” in Cherokee Editor, 71.
197 Boudinot, “‘To The Public,’ The Cherokee Phoenix, February 21, 1828” in Cherokee Editor, 93.
198 The Cherokee Phoenix, November 18, 1829, Vol. II No. 32.
useful occupations.” There was of course an emphasis on the civilization practices which some Cherokees had adapted in order to continue to claim land rights against the United States. Boudinot focused on the “farms and useful occupations” to drive home claims to land. Back in 1829, Boudinot believed that if the Cherokees improved, there was no reason for the United States to demand their land. The citizens would continue to work the land they lived on, sure of the impossibility of removal as long as civilization processes were followed:

We happen to know...that the Cherokees are not making any preparation to remove, but on the contrary, that they continue to make improvements as heretofore. We see houses erecting wherever we go – they are enlarging their farms – the progress of education is encouraging, and the improvements in morals has never been so flattering.

However, in 1837, these improvements were no longer sufficient to the United States and by extension to the Treaty Party. There was still a strong connection amongst the Cherokees between their original lands and their place in the universe. Movement to the west, a direction associated with death in Cherokee culture, would not be tolerated by the majority. But the decision had been made without their consent, and the only way Boudinot could defend his role in this decision was to label the beliefs of the majority as incorrect, uneducated, and significantly, manipulated by the leaders of the nation. But the action of signing the Treaty of New Echota was just another manipulation from the leaders of the nation. Boudinot chose to ignore the variance in opinions of the Cherokee Nation just as he and other leaders had done in the past. In his denial of the individual voices of Cherokee citizens, Boudinot homogenized the nation as he had done during his time at the Phoenix. His presentation of himself as the professional Cherokee to white audiences hinged on the denial of plurality to the Cherokees, to

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200 Boudinot, “Selections from the Cherokee Phoenix, July 15, 1829” in Cherokee Editor, 110.
201 Perdue, Cherokee Editor, 226n 2.
elevate his identity above others. He understood that there were different stakes for different people in removal, but he chose the option of a representational voice in the end.

Boudinot’s final claim that the Cherokee Nation’s opinion on removal was being controlled by the elite leaders of the nation was certainly not a new one in 1837. The claim had been made time and time again during the initial years of the removal crisis by agents of the United States government. Nor was the claim completely unfounded – the shift from a consensus system of government to the creation of the National Council at the turn of the nineteenth-century changed the arrangement of political power in the nation. Certain powerful factions among the Cherokees, such as clan matriarchs, lost power in favor of young men, often those with white blood and access to property and wealth. This new system of government created the opportunity for Boudinot and others like him to gain power and influence within the nation based on their commitment to civilization and elite status rather than clan affiliations and ability to garner the support of the populace. The space created by the National Council was one which Boudinot manipulated to form his meaning of Cherokee. However, in 1837 the system no longer accepted him because of the Treaty Party’s transgression, so he chose to attack it.

In order to combat the “requisition” against the party within the nation, Boudinot turned to claims that the National Council – especially Chief John Ross - overpowered and manipulated the will of the Cherokee people. “We charge Mr. Ross with having deluded as [the Cherokees] with expectations incompatible with, and injurious to, their interest...the people have been kept ignorant of their true condition.”

For over a decade, Elias Boudinot lauded over the accomplishments of some Cherokees in the civilization process, using these changes to justify the Cherokee claim to their eastern lands. Within the span of a few months in 1832, his goals

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changed. In order to reverse the years of arguments he had made against removal, Boudinot took a harsh stance against the very people he claimed to protect – the citizens of the Cherokee Nation. Boudinot continually claimed that this reversal still had the people of the Cherokee Nation in mind, that removal was now the only option that could hold the nation together. Boudinot could also have been making a final grab for power, hoping that the United States would honor him and the other treaty signers by supporting them in removal.

In his defense of himself and his connections in the party, Boudinot completely reversed his previous construction of Cherokee ideals and desires. He once again defined a correct way of being Cherokee; now “Cherokee” suited the needs of the removal party. This assertion of Cherokee in conjunction with the signing of the Treaty of New Echota legitimated Boudinot’s denial of the will of the people. “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.”203 The nation, Boudinot claimed – which had been enthralled in the removal crisis for nearly a decade, informed of events through the mouthpiece of the *Phoenix* – was all along blinded to the true circumstances of their situation. It had been up to Elias Boudinot and the Treaty Party to make a decision for the masses – or so it was presented in 1837.

In presenting the majority of the Cherokee Nation as unaware of their true condition in their relationship with the United States government, Boudinot hit an important point in terms of the use of the press within the nation. In some of the earliest texts about the *Cherokee Phoenix*, Boudinot presented the paper with the full knowledge that the nation did not account for a freedom of the press in the 1827 Constitution. The newspaper, funded by the National Council,

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203 Ibid., 162.
would always be a mouthpiece for the opinions of its government. In his 1828 public address announcing the paper, Boudinot wrote: “As the liberty of the press is so essential to the improvement of the mind, we shall consider our paper, a free paper, with, however, proper and usual restrictions.”\textsuperscript{204} The paper would reject “such communications as tend to be evil, and such as are too intemperate and too personal.”\textsuperscript{205} The editor himself would decide which topics were too “evil.” For several years, Boudinot and the financial sponsors of the paper shared the same opinion of what topics and opinions constituted problematic topics for the \textit{Phoenix}. Boudinot had the lawful right to “use his discretion in very respect, in order that the Nation may be benefitted by the institution.”\textsuperscript{206} His direct influence over the paper allowed him to shape the public understanding of the opinions of the nation. Between 1828 and 1832, Boudinot crafted the Cherokee ideal as one nation solidly against removal, united in its efforts to combat the United States. It was in the despair of the 1832 Supreme Court decision and President Jackson’s refusal to enforce it that Boudinot attempted to present a different kind of Cherokee ideal, one which manipulated the purpose of the press. In his resignation letter, Boudinot presented the \textit{Phoenix} as a paper which had achieved its goals – to defend the rights of the Cherokees and to present “our grievances to the people of the United States.”\textsuperscript{207} With Jackson refusing to budge on removal and his reelection seemingly imminent, nothing else could be done by the paper to influence the removal issue. And because Boudinot viewed the goals of the paper to be completed, or at least unachievable, he no longer saw the purpose for a national paper. In conjunction, Boudinot’s actual stated goals in the 1827 prospectus, to inform the nation of important news and spread knowledge about the Cherokees to white readers, seemed obsolete.

\textsuperscript{204} Boudinot, “To The Public,” in \textit{Cherokee Editor}, 92.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{206} Quoted in Perdue, \textit{Cherokee Editor}, 146n7.
\textsuperscript{207} Elias Boudinot, “Red Hill, Cherokee Nation, August 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1832. To John Ross, Esq. Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation,” in \textit{Cherokee Editor}, 163.
without the issue of removal to battle against. His 1832 resignation appeared as a call for the end of the paper.

Boudinot also justified his resignation in terms of the conflict between the *Cherokee Phoenix* as a mouthpiece for the nation and his own changed opinion on removal. Still, he argued that the conflict did not deter his care for the Cherokee Nation. Poignantly, he wrote

I do not know whether I could, at the same time, satisfy my own views, and the views of the authorities of the nation…I do conscientiously believe it to be the duty of every citizen to reflect upon the dangers with which we are surrounded – to view the darkness which seems to lie before our people – our prospects, and the evils with which we are threatened – to talk over all these matters, and, if possible, come to some definite and satisfactory conclusion, while there is time, as to what ought to be done in the last alternative.\(^\text{208}\)

In 1832, Boudinot had wanted the issue of removal to be discussed by every citizen of the Cherokee Nation, for all opinions to be carefully considered. However, the nation had a limited definition of citizenship and an even more limited group of citizens who would make the final decisions for the nation. In the end, Boudinot was pointing to his ideal citizen to make the decision – the members of the National Council. They were the only ones with the political legitimacy to make a choice for the entirety of the Cherokee Nation. But instead of considering removal, the National Council forced Boudinot to give up his position as editor. In his resignation, Boudinot “could not consent to be the conductor of the paper without having the right and privilege of discussing these important matters – and from what I have seen and heard, were I to assume that privilege, my usefulness would be paralyzed by being considered, as I have already been, an enemy to the interests of my country and people.”\(^\text{209}\) Boudinot’s inability to compromise his changed views with the purposes of the paper both led him to seek an end to the publication altogether.

\(^{208}\) Ibid.
\(^{209}\) Ibid., 163-164.
Even before his resignation, Boudinot felt the danger of his change of opinion in accusations of a loss of care for the people. Despite his constant assertions of acting with the nation in mind, Boudinot found it necessary to include the following in his letter of resignation:

I love my country, and I love my people, as my own heart bears me witness, and for that very reason I should deem it my duty to tell them the whole truth, or what I believe to be the truth. I cannot tell them that we will be reinstated in our rights, when I have no such hope, and after our leading, active, and true friends in Congress, and elsewhere have signified to us that they can do us no good.  

Here Boudinot invoked the patriotism he often claimed in his relationship with the Cherokee Nation in his change of opinion on removal. This patriotism was personal and sought to establish Boudinot as a man of the people to provide a platform for his ideas. Boudinot was so invested in the conflation of himself and the *Cherokee Phoenix* in the creation of himself as the professional Cherokee that he could not separate the private and public aspects of his life. He firmly believed that without him, without sharing in his opinions, the paper could not continue.

In 1832, Chief John Ross’s presentation of the paper came with his own opinion on the purpose of the publication. He stated:

The toleration of *diversified views* to the columns of such a paper would not fail to create fermentation and confusion among our citizens, and in the end prove injurious to the welfare of the nation. The love of our country and people demands *unity of sentiment and action* for the good of all. The truth, and the whole truth, has always been, and must still continue to be, told.

In his belief that diverse views in the pages of the *Cherokee Phoenix* would confuse the populace, Ross retreated to a practice of consensus decision-making which his own government had sought to eliminate through the utilization of the representational system. He also placed doubt on the ability of the nation to negotiate opposing views. Concerns of consensus had not been present for Ross in the 1827 ratification of the Constitution, which placed age, blood-line,

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210 Ibid.
211 John Ross, “To the Committee and Council in General Council convened,” in *Cherokee Editor*, 165.
and gender restrictions on who could participate in Cherokee government. Lastly, Ross demanded that the whole truth be known by the population of the nation mere sentences after his refusal to allow diverse opinions to grace the pages of the *Phoenix*. The contradiction was abundantly clear. Ross attempted to keep a consensus within his own ranks, seeking to shame those in the Treaty Party out of public office. In addition, this presentation of Boudinot’s point and Ross’s counterpoint take precedence throughout the rest of the pamphlet.

Elias Boudinot further explained the dangers facing the Cherokees in an acknowledgement of the constant loss of Cherokee lands to the United States. The sanctioning of Cherokee lands to white citizens of Georgia began years earlier, and the nation had faced violence from intruders. Boudinot had taken it upon himself to discuss this violence in the *Cherokee Phoenix* in order to bring to light the danger faced by the nation, outnumbered by its white neighbors and lacking political power against them. The state had even made it illegal for indigenous peoples to testify in court, stripping away legal power from the nation.  

“And think, for a moment, my countrymen, the danger to be apprehended from an overwhelming white population – a population not unfrequently overcharged with high notions of color, dignity, and greatness – at once overbearing and impudent to those whom, in their sovereign pleasure, they consider as their inferiors.”  

Boudinot was frank in relaying what nearly the whole of the Cherokee Nation already understood about the citizens of the states on its border – they were interested in land and did not consider the Cherokees their equals. As the overbearing slave society of the south demonstrated to the Cherokees, being considered inferior to the white population often led to one outcome: “They should have, our sons and daughters, be slaves

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212 Perdue, *Cherokee Editor*, 228n22.  
indeed.”²¹⁴ With slavery prevalent amongst the elite population of the Cherokee Nation – among his family members in the Treaty Party, Boudinot was the only one who did not own slaves – ideas of subjugation were easy to understand. The Cherokees could not stay in a land where the United States government would not enforce justice against the illegal movement and actions of its white citizens. The Cherokees could not defend themselves within a legal framework. Thereby, the best option for the nation was to relocate to land secured by a treaty, away from a large white population. This threat of enslavement was what Boudinot meant by “telling them the truth.”²¹⁵

Most importantly in the defense of himself and the actions of the Treaty Party, Boudinot desired to communicate that he had not lost the will to defend the rights of the Cherokees. His successor at the Cherokee Phoenix, Elijah Hicks, accused him of such directly after his resignation. In an 1832 letter which Hicks refused to publish in the paper, Boudinot wrote: “You could not have meant that I had undergone a complete ‘revolution’ as to deny the ‘dearest rights’ of the Cherokees, or that I ever questioned them.”²¹⁶ In asserting that the rights of the Cherokees would not be upheld by the United States and President Jackson, Boudinot had been accused of arguing against the rights of the Cherokees altogether. This play by Hicks through the Phoenix sought to defeat any attempts at dissent and against government opinion. Boudinot also argued against Hicks’s claim that Boudinot favored a treaty with the United States government, which the nation had been resisting since the passage of the Indian Removal Act. Boudinot’s past illusions to a solution to the crisis which involved a treaty was certainly a change from his earlier opinion, but he insisted that this thinking was still “patriotic…founded upon mature and most

²¹⁴ Ibid.
²¹⁵ Ibid.
²¹⁶ Ibid., 171.
serious reflection."\textsuperscript{217} The emphasis on patriotism and maturity sought to morally place Boudinot above Hicks, who had resorted to personal attacks against Boudinot in the pages of the \textit{Phoenix}. Boudinot was most vehement in the defense of himself against claims of lost patriotism. Boudinot framed himself as patriotic and therefore his actions were as well, no matter their opposition to the desires of the populace.

Through this patriotism, Boudinot created his argument for removal three years before the Treaty of New Echota. He wrote: “My patriotism consists in the \textit{love of country}, and \textit{the love of the People}.”\textsuperscript{218} In using the term “country,” Boudinot referred to the physical land the nation was located upon. The two – country and people – were united but had the option of separation. He went on to designate two situations which played with the binary of his patriotism:

\begin{quote}
[Country and people] are inseparable if the people are made the first victim, for in that case the country must go also, and there must be an end of the objects of our patriotism. But 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 \textit{question} for the safety of the remaining object of my affect?\textsuperscript{219}
\end{quote}

Boudinot approached the issue of removal through the Cherokee’s ties to the land they occupied. In the first scenario he presented, the Cherokees lost their lives through an unnamed disaster – war, disease, enslavement. In this circumstance, the Cherokee would have forever been tied to the land through memory. The memory of a homeland for the survivors would be a place of strength and continued love of people and country. Boudinot’s phrasing – “the end of the objects of our patriotism” – once again separated him and his potential audience from the majority of the nation, creating the population as an object in which the elite subjects could act upon.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 172. \\
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
Then there was the opposite occurrence – the loss of lands without the loss of the population. Boudinot argued for the nation’s ability to recuperate its losses in a different land and to sustain the progress he supported in another country. This argument for nation without homeland was at the core of the removal issue, with the majority of Cherokees feeling so strongly attached to the lands they occupied that they denied the possibility of removal even when it became the only option. Boudinot himself presented three options outside of this binary of country and land – there was the possibility of submitting to the United States, signing a treaty for citizenship, and being overtaken and absorbed by the nation. This final option, however, would have lead to “a moral death!” Boudinot claimed that the point of his post-resignation contribution to the Phoenix, other than the defense of his name, was to present the Cherokee Nation with its true situation. Morally, Boudinot could not calm the country through the Phoenix: “I cannot ease their minds with any expectation of a calm, when the vessel is already tossed to and fro, and threatened to be shattered by an approaching tempest.” During his time as editor, Boudinot had developed a sense of himself as the moral grounding for the nation, able to communicate news no matter its positive or negative connotations. When he was silenced by the National Council, he did not want to sacrifice this role. His presentation of options, and his insistence on his ardent patriotism allowed Boudinot to continue to present himself as a mouthpiece for the nation despite his sudden loss of support from the Council. Defending himself through letters to Cherokee political leaders, to the Phoenix, and ultimately through the pamphlet was the only way Boudinot could conceive to continue to act in his role as the professional Cherokee despite being forced out of his official position. He continued to claim

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220 Ibid., 173.
221 Ibid., 172.
professionalism despite no longer having legitimacy through the paper or the support of the national populace.

In the pamphlet, Boudinot claimed he was acting for the benefit of the Cherokees, not just making political gains. He endeavored to separate his own opinions on the right course for the nation from that of the political factions he was involved with: “I can hardly consent to trust the peace and happiness of our people to political changes and party triumphs.” Either there was a complete lack of understanding from Boudinot’s point of view to the fact that he was already politically involved, long before the possibility of a treaty. Or, perhaps, he was attempting to create himself as the voice of the nation with morally-grounded legitimacy in place of the political grounding the National Council and the Treaty Party held. Boudinot had been pushed out of the political arena by Hicks, who wrote about his defection: “the loss is but a drop in the bucket.” Boudinot interpreted this in two ways: either Hicks saw him as an individual whose “opinions or exertions as a individual are nothing compared to the nation…or it may mean that I am detached from the nation, and that no one approves of the views I have given in my letter of resignation.” On the first point, Boudinot agreed that his resignation was not detrimental to the nation, that his “opinions and exertions are of little consequence,” attempting a separation of his own work from the concerns of the people. However, the fact that his resignation hinged on a change in opinion and that this change led to his need for defense of his reputation with a strong nod towards patriotism problematized Boudinot’s claim that he believed his own resignation to be a drop in the bucket for the nation. Furthermore, Boudinot stated that he was in no way detached from the sentiments of the nation as a whole, that he was “attached

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222 Ibid., 173-174.
223 Ibid., 174.
224 Ibid.
225 Ibid.
to, the nation,” and there were others with greater political power that backed his sentiments. Here Boudinot ardently continued to believe in himself as the professional Cherokee – no, the nation did not need Boudinot but yes, they did need his vision for further action and his supposed apolitical stance. This vision could only be voiced by him, with or without the *Phoenix*.

The rest of the 1837 pamphlet covered the events of 1835, illustrating the Treaty Party as participants in a larger negotiation between Cherokee factions in treaty talks with the United States. In his effort to justify the actions of the party, Boudinot launched an all-out attack on Chief Ross. The attack against Ross’s moral character also appeared as an attempt to raise Boudinot’s standing in the same field, to vindicate his actions in a continued patriotic portrayal of self.

The first front of Boudinot’s challenge to Ross hinged significantly on the construction of the right way to be Cherokee. Language played into this construction in an important way: Boudinot had demonstrated his connection to the Cherokee Nation through his participation at the *Cherokee Phoenix*, creating a bilingual paper in order to appeal to the number of Cherokee peoples who did not speak or read English as well as elite Cherokees and white citizens of the United States. If Boudinot’s goals for the paper, as he had stated in the pamphlet, were mainly to appeal to white populations in the U.S. on the behalf of the Cherokees, there was never a need for the amount of effort he put into the translation of sections of the paper into Cherokee. The paper, however, had been commissioned by the National Council and also sought to open a communication with its own population. Either way, Boudinot was able to demonstrate his ties to the nation and his Cherokee heritage through his ability to translate English into Cherokee and vice versa. In turn, one of the issues Boudinot took with Ross involved the Chief’s lack of fluency in Cherokee: “For all communications of Mr. Ross to the Cherokees are made through an
This was indeed a hard blow against the legitimacy of the Chief, the most powerful figure in the Cherokee Nation. Lack of fluency in the Cherokee language created Ross as a leader separated from the people, either incapable of legislating their will or able to ignore protestations because of a language barrier. Boudinot’s highlighting of Ross’s use of an interpreter brought into question whether Ross was Cherokee enough to ever intended to fight removal for the greater good, or if he sought to personally profit from the a prolonged dispute with the United States government.

The possibility of profit was a major point of contention between Chief Ross and the Treaty Party – Ross accused Boudinot and the others of profiting from the Treaty of New Echota while the majority population of the nation suffered. Ross accused the party of securing a treaty based upon “interested motives.” This was not far off the point – Elias Boudinot, John Ridge, and the other signers were guaranteed the protection of the Georgia Guard by Governor Wilson Lumpkin. The treaty also created a thirteen-member committee to decide which Cherokees could remain on their lands based on their ability to care for themselves and their property. Chief Ross was part of this committee but was outnumbered by at least six Treaty Party members. But these sorts of privileges were to be expected, Boudinot claimed. Ross had signed treaties with the United States in the past and understood that special advantages were always involved in negotiations. “Are [advantages] not found upon the very face of the [treaties] themselves? And are not the names of the persons to be thus benefitted broadly inscribed upon them?” Profits for the signers of treaties were a constant reality, Boudinot asserted, and Ross could not accuse the party of accepting such advantages when he had participated in the same

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226 Ibid., 187.
227 Ibid., 201.
228 Perdue, Cherokee Editor, 231n54.
229 Ibid., 231 note 55.
system before the events at New Echota. Boudinot also rejected his powerful position on the committee as an advantage given that the treaty did not provide payment for its members or even for the expenses of the committee itself.\textsuperscript{231}

Following these claims, Boudinot placed the issue of profit onto the Chief. John Ross was one of the wealthiest men in the Cherokee Nation – he was a slave owner and his properties in Red Hill and Head of Coosa had been appraised for over twenty-thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{232} Although he would be removed from his estate in Georgia to a smaller home in Tennessee, he stood to personally profit from the sale of his land instead of receiving a fraction of the five million dollars the whole nation would be paid.\textsuperscript{233} The fact that Ross would benefit from a treaty he opposed, whose signers were publicly desecrated, over was the hinging point in Boudinot’s attempt to completely decimate the chief’s character. In a November 1836 letter, Boudinot wrote:

\begin{quote}
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 [Ross’s] friends, and consequently opposed to the treaty. What speculation have I made, then, which [Ross] might allege the treaty was made to confirm me?\textsuperscript{234}
\end{quote}

Here was the all-out assault: John Ross had abused his power, had manipulated the populace, had profited from the sale of lands, had allowed his compatriots to cheat his constituents, had paved the way for the suffering of the nation while putting on airs of supporting it, and finally had

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{232} Perdue, \textit{Cherokee Editor}, 231n56.  \\
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., 231n54 and n57.  \\
\end{flushleft}
attempted to place the blame on a different party. Boudinot’s desire to attack Ross pushed the debate into the public sphere. Initially Boudinot had privately sent the letters to Ross included in the pamphlet, a communication between two political leaders seeking to air their grievances. But after the debacle which occurred in 1835, where miscommunication between the two temporarily reconciled factions resulted in the singing of the treaty, the feud between Boudinot and Ross could no longer be contained in the private sphere. With Ross’s access to a public platform – the *Phoenix* – to speak out against Boudinot, the latter had to find a different venue in which he could shield his reputation and turn the tables of accusation against the Chief himself. That venue was the pamphlet.

Why did Boudinot take so long to publish the pamphlet in defense of his reputation after signing the Treaty of New Echota? It was the signing of the treaty in 1835 which pushed Boudinot over the edge in the amount of abuse he sustained for his minority opinion. The private letters from 1836 convey his emotions in this time. Still, the publication of the pamphlet occurred a year later and appeared as a collection of these letters. Boudinot’s early biographer, Ralph Henry Gabriel demonstrated that Boudinot did not publicly reply to Ross until after the death of his wife Harriet in 1836. This connection appeared to claim that Boudinot was concerned with the public image of his family and desired to protect his wife from the harassment he and his family members faced after 1832.

In the end, Boudinot was unable to salvage his reputation after signing the Treaty of New Echota. Although he attempted to hold on to his role as the voice of the Cherokee Nation by claiming to do right for the people, the majority population and the government they supported removed him from his position. His appeal to the “friends of the Cherokees” in the United States

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through the letter on Harriet’s death was most likely successful, but this was not the population he needed to legitimate himself to. After all, the United States government had accepted the Treaty of New Echota despite its illegal status within the Cherokee Nation. Boudinot became an ally to the pro-removal majority within America, and thereby did not really need to appeal to them any longer. Boudinot really needed the approval of Chief Ross and the population of the Cherokee Nation. Yet he continued printing documents lamenting his own choices, attacking the elected leaders of the nation, and questioning the sovereignty of his own people. There was also little evidence that the “Letters and Other Papers Relating to Cherokee Affairs: Being a Reply to Sundry Publications Authorized by John Ross” were ever printed in Cherokee, cutting out a majority of the readers Boudinot needed to reach in order to continue claiming the voice of the nation.

In the summer of 1832, Elias Boudinot made the decision which drastically changed his life. After years of fighting for the land rights of the Cherokee Nation and presenting their case to the white audiences of the United States, he left this cause behind. Through frustration, clarity, or perhaps just a power grab, Boudinot changed his mind on removal and vacated any legitimate claim to the role of the professional Cherokee. No longer voicing the popular opinion of the nation, he surrounded himself with like-minded thinkers and wrote tracts in order to justify their actions. He extracted himself from the public life of the Cherokee Nation. And while the Treaty Party would survive as a faction of the Cherokee government for another thirty years, Boudinot would only live for another two. After his second marriage to a missionary teacher, Delight Sargent, in 1837, Boudinot moved his family to the new western territories before the
forced exodus of the Cherokee Nation later dubbed the “Trail of Tears.” On June 22, 1839, he was approached by several Cherokee men and stabbed to death.

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CHAPTER FOUR
“THE HANDS OF ASSASSINS!”:
ELIAS BOUDINOT, STAND WATIE, AND THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

In June 1839, missionary Samuel Worcester wrote a letter to Connecticut resident Daniel Brinsmade describing the death of his close friend and colleague, Elias Boudinot, on the twenty-second of that month.

I hasten to communicate to you the afflictive intelligence of the death of a beloved friend and christian brother of mine, and your brother-in-law...Under circumstances peculiarly trying to surviving friends, he has been taken from among us...He has fallen by the hands of assassins!... Undoubtedly the part which [Boudinot and the Ridges] took in relation to the treaty has been the cause of these inhuman assassinations.\(^\text{237}\)

This letter is the first available record of Boudinot’s death. Tensions were high in the western Cherokee Nation after the majority of the population arrived in the spring of 1839. The forced removal of the Cherokee Nation and other Indian tribes would later be dubbed the “Trail of Tears,” derived from the Cherokee Nu-No-Du-Na-Tlo-Hi-Lu – “the Trail Where They Cried.”\(^\text{238}\)

The event was gruesome. First, Cherokee citizens were forced from their homes and crowded into concentration camps by American soldiers. After their imprisonment, they were driven out of the Cherokee Nation by the United States army; thousands of American Indians died from disease, exposure, and even murder by white residents of the areas they passed through.\(^\text{239}\) In the end, the resettling of the Cherokee Nation under the provisions of the Treaty of New Echota

\(^{238}\) Vicki Rozema, Voices from the Trail of Tears (Real Voices, Real History Series), (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, 2003), 40.
would result in some four thousand deaths. The blame for this suffering would fall on the signers of that treaty.

Still, it came as a surprise to the Treaty Party when after a national meeting on June 21, supporters of anti-removal Chief John Ross secretly gathered and agreed that the Treaty Party members were to be punished for their infraction. A makeshift tribunal was set up where members from the clans of Boudinot, Watie, and the Ridges sentenced the men to death. Men were chosen to dole out the sentence through lottery. The following morning, four groups of these men hunted down Major Ridge, John Ridge, Elias Boudinot, and Stand Watie, the four most prominent signers of the treaty. Twenty-five men approached John Ridge’s home. Three burst into his house, dragged him from his bed, and each man took a turn at stabbing him. Ridge bled to death in front of his wife. Between ten and twelve men shot Major Ridge as he crossed a creek on horseback in Arkansas. Thirty men sought out Boudinot, four of whom asked him for medical assistance as he began work that morning on the construction of his new home. As the group walked away from the construction site, one man stabbed Boudinot in the back and the rest proceeded to attack the treaty signer with tomahawks. A Choctaw man who witnessed Boudinot’s murder rushed to Watie’s store to warn him. When he arrived, the shop was already full of the fourth party of tribunal appointees. The man pulled Watie aside to warn him, enabling his quick escape. In the end, Watie was the most prominent member of the Treaty Party to survive the attacks. Seeking revenge for the deaths in his family, he accused Chief Ross of

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241 Ibid., 54-55.
242 Ibid., 55.
243 Ibid., 56.
244 Ibid.
inciting the killings. The violence of June 22 would note remain isolated – it would continue for several decades, nearly pushing the Cherokee Nation to civil war on several occasions.

Elias Boudinot’s death and the way it has been juxtaposed with his life most clearly illustrates his two polar representations in the historical record.

Often, Boudinot is denied the plurality in character that other historical figures are allowed. He is illustrated either as the Cherokee intellectual who sought to uplift his people through the Cherokee Phoenix, or the traitor of said people who was justifiably punished for his actions. The presentation of his death by historians has continued, and perhaps overpowered, these opposing views of Boudinot. Beginning with Worcester’s 1839 letter, writings on the death sought to either elevate or degrade the life of Boudinot through the opposing terminology of assassination and execution. This duality lead to a vision of Boudinot trapped in the black and white, stripping him of the complexity which has the ability to humanize him.

Samuel Worcester’s letter may have been the first written on the subject of the June 22 deaths. His status both within the Cherokee Nation and the United States because of his participation in the 1832 Supreme Court case, Worcester v. Georgia, granted him a legitimate voice in both nations. The majority of historical sources label Boudinot’s death as an assassination, but there are some texts which qualify the death as an “execution.” Worcester’s letter may be the root of why the naming of Boudinot’s killers as “assassins” instead of “executioners” has dominated the subsequent historical record of the events. The binary of these two terms, each assigning guilt to a different side of the removal controversy, has had a role in shaping the historical figure of Elias Boudinot in the last one-hundred seventy years. Each term paints Boudinot in a certain light, creating two opposing images of him despite the plurality of

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This chapter will make constant reference to the “historical record.” By this term, I mean the available histories written on Boudinot and the events surrounding his life. The record is the history created by a multitude of historians, working together to present the time period to the public.
his role in the nation during his life and the availability of his own voice as a driving force in historical exploration.

What exactly does the historical record say about Boudinot’s death? Over the span of one-hundred odd years, many historians have tackled the story of the Cherokee intellectual. One of Stand Watie’s biographers, Kenny Franks, brought a gruesome spin on the scene: “[Boudinot’s] brains spilled onto the wet grass. Hearing his screams, Boudinot’s wife and the carpenters rushed to his aid but were too late...As his wife called his name, Boudinot opened his eyes and died.” Overall, this text did not take a harsh stance against the Treaty Party’s actions in removal and therefore portrayed Boudinot’s death in romantic terms, playing up the image of Boudinot as an individual who was cared for even in his dying moments. The image of Boudinot dramatically opening his eyes at this moment of death created a tragic tableau for the reader. Following suit in an essay chronicling the duality of outlaws in the Cherokee Nation, Robert J. Conley graphically described Boudinot as being “hacked to death in front of his house.” Tiya Miles, on the other hand, briefly took a neutral view of the Treaty Party in describing the events of June 22, but her text still listed “Boudinot, Elias…execution of” in the index. Instead of using “death,” Theda Perdue took on the language binary by placing the choice of language on the crime’s perpetrators by introducing them as men “considering themselves executioners rather than assassins...” Boudinot’s most complete biography (written in 1941 and undoubtedly flawed in its portrayal of race,) created these executioners as “not civilized,” seeking to “strike

246 Ibid., 56.
back at the victor” – “the white man,” who was too far to reach. The language appeared to be coded to set a “civilized” Boudinot against his “savage” killers. So when they targeted Boudinot and the Ridges instead of the “white man,” they appear as mistaken in their actions. Two other twentieth-century histories portray the deaths as “murders,” and nothing more.

These are the available texts on the life and death of Elias Boudinot, so it is their language that must be examined in order to bring agency to his historical character. One text stands out against these ambivalent presentations of Boudinot’s death. The texts themselves lack analysis of their own presentation of Boudinot’s death, inciting the need to question the effect of the language binary of assassination and execution. The binary creates a divide between Boudinot the intellectual and Boudinot the traitor. One text does stand out in its refusal to make this separation. A 1959 biography of Stand Watie named the killers as assassins. It also found it significant to tie Boudinot’s death to his successes in life – a rarity in addresses of the event. “So in violence was killed the scholarly former editor of the *Phoenix.*” The fact that it is a rarity to have Boudinot’s accomplishments considered in the presentation of his death points to the historical record’s own ability to repeat the dehumanization of oppressed peoples. If Boudinot is not illustrated as a human with the ability to confront fallibility in his life, the historical record writes him into a set of available tropes of indigenous peoples.

In an attempt to understand how this binary has shaped historical record surrounding Boudinot, the context for both assassination and execution must be explored. First there is the

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possibility of assassination – the act of killing “by treacherous violence” often used in reference to the illegal killings of political figures.\textsuperscript{253} In this context, Boudinot has been defined as having significant political power at the time of his death despite no longer being a participant in the Cherokee government. Historians have linked the killers with the Treaty Party’s political opponent, Chief John Ross. Ross denied connection to the group, but sentiments of betrayal of the Cherokee Nation had been abundant in his language since the faction formed in 1832. There was little doubt that the killers acted, if not from an order placed by Ross, then with intentions to fulfill the desire for revenge sparked by the rhetoric the two parties produced in the preceding years. When the intentions of the murderers and the violence of the killings are highlighted, the record points to the use of “assassination” sought to grant Boudinot’s death both illegality and tragedy.

Yet what if we consider Boudinot’s death as an execution? Execution is defined as, “to inflict capital punishment upon; to put to death in pursuance of a sentence.”\textsuperscript{254} In 1839, despite Boudinot’s publication of a pamphlet in his defense, the image of the Treaty Party declined to a new low with the reality of removal and the Trail of Tears. It is not surprising that members of the Treaty Party experienced hostility and violence when the unwilling nation reached the new Cherokee territory. There was indeed a legal precedent for the violence committed against the party – in 1829, the Cherokee Nation made the sale of land without permission from the National Council punishable by death.\textsuperscript{255} The Treaty of New Echota therefore had questionable legality (despite the willingness of the United States to accept its terms,) and the punishment for illegally

\textsuperscript{255}Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, eds., The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents, 2nd ed., (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005), 14.
selling Cherokee land was death. Viewed through this lens, the signers of the treaty received their punishment, albeit four years after the fact and without a trial. Three weeks after the killings, the National Council itself claimed Boudinot and the Ridges as outlaws, sanctioning their deaths as an execution. In addition, the Cherokees had previously practiced acts of vengeance for the deaths of clan members, usually ordered by clan matriarchs. Cherokees who had not adopted civilization programs as vehemently as Boudinot and the Ridges may have found it appropriate to carry out this vengeance for the deaths suffered by Cherokees during the Trail of Tears.

Samuel Worcester, in light of his close professional and personal relationship with Boudinot, chose to use the term “assassins.” Although the term has stuck – most of the twentieth-century historians of Boudinot also referred to his death as an assassination – the possibility of “execution” as an acceptable descriptive term must be considered in order to continue to form Boudinot as a dynamic historical figure. For if Boudinot was assassinated, if his role as a political leader ended in a tragic death, the continued treatment of Boudinot as a traitor to the Cherokees is not the only way he can be viewed by historians. He can be created as a figure with a multiplicity of intentions and actions, working outside of the historical scope of good and evil, with the agency to relay his own intentions through his voice in the historical record.

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257 Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Cultural Change, 1700-1835*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 49. Perdue explores the system of vengeance killings among the Cherokees in the early years of contact with Europeans. Murder was avenged by the clan members of the deceased, either seeking out the actual murderer or another member of his or her clan. The closest male relative of the deceased was expected to carry out the revenge killing. Once vengeance was exacted, “both clans involved considered the matter settled because harmony had been restored” (50). Though this practice was mostly written about by outside observers, it was a recognized custom of many American Indian tribes.
As for the act that solicited Boudinot’s murder – the signing of the Treaty of New Echota – Worcester mimicked the same language which Boudinot had used to defend himself. “I would that my beloved friend Mr. Boudinot, had had no part in that transaction; yet I have no doubt of the sincerity of his own conviction that he was doing right, and hazarding his life for the good of his people.” In assassination, Boudinot could find protection in the act of doing right for his people – a people whose voice he had appropriated during his life. In death, this claim was continued by those close to Boudinot. But it cannot be ignored that it was a faction of this same overarching group constantly referred to as “the people” did not view Boudinot in the same way Worcester did. For it was members of “the people,” of the Cherokee Nation who sought out Boudinot and the other treaty signers for vengeance killings. The claim to a singular people proved to be divisive on the issue of the treaty, leading the Cherokee Nation to the brink of civil war for the following twenty years. These divisions had also existed before the advent of the treaty crisis, between the elite Cherokee men who had access to the political power of the nation and the majority of the nation which was barred from participation through laws created during the first quarter of the nineteenth-century. Boudinot, however, rarely recognized this division and instead focused on the split over the issue of removal after 1832. His collective love for “the people” turned a blind eye to their true desires, sparking strong feelings of anger and mistrust.

And yet the issue remains – Boudinot is most often written about as either a traitor, or at least a misguided man, who used his appropriation of the voice of the Cherokee Nation to establish a powerful political image for himself. But the use of sentimental and politically positive language still dominates in the portrayal of his death. He was killed for political action but that action can and was considered illegal and harmful to the Cherokee Nation. The term

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259 “Samuel Worcester to Daniel Brinsmade 26 June 1839,” in To Marry an Indian, 203.
assassination still favors his political role and his decade of work in order to establish the Cherokee Phoenix and create an intellectual outlet for the nation. The separation of Boudinot the intellectual and Boudinot the traitor may not appear mutually exclusive but the depictions are in opposition. While Boudinot the intellectual established the Cherokee Phoenix to bring human complexity to portrayals of indigenous peoples in the press, Boudinot the traitor silenced this population by signing the Treaty of New Echota against their will. The second portrayal is more common, so complete inclusion of Boudinot as an outgrowth of “the people,” is not possible. However, his exclusion or rejection from Cherokee history and identity is also harmful to the establishment of agency in the history of American Indian nations.

But what if Boudinot had not been killed in 1839? What if he had remained in the Oklahoma Cherokee Territory, raised his family, and reentered Cherokee government? Such a result is not completely unthinkable – one Treaty Party member had survived the attempt on his life on June 22 and continued to be a Cherokee politician. This man was Stand Watie, Boudinot’s younger brother. Watie’s life provides us a route by which to examine the path Boudinot’s historical portrayal may have taken without his untimely death. While Boudinot’s life is defined through juxtaposition – either he is the intellectual at the helm of the Cherokee Phoenix or the traitorous signer of the Treaty of New Echota - Watie himself endures a different treatment. Because of his longer life span and the role he took not only in the political but also the military realm of the nation, his character has been allowed a plurality which Boudinot has been denied.

Though Boudinot and Watie were often separated by great distances, they shared a familial bond, close but not overtly affectionate. They wrote letters to one another to inform each other of major events in the nation. In March of 1832, Boudinot trusted Watie to take the
reins of the *Cherokee Phoenix* during a stint in the United States. He also depended on Watie to relay information to his wife, Harriet Gold, and often instructed Watie to “Give love to all,” marking his brother as the crux of communications with his entire family when he was away from home. After Boudinot’s death in 1839, the family was separated when Boudinot’s second wife Delight Sargent left for New England with the children after the killings. Watie remained in contact through letters, demonstrating the bond between the family. The children often requested letters and visits from their uncle: eldest daughter Eleanor wrote “Uncle Stand talked of coming here this winter, I do hope he will, how glad I should be to see him.” Watie also demonstrated his connection to his brother by seeking to avenge the deaths of Boudinot and the Ridges in the violent years of the 1840s. Although Watie did not reference his brother by name, his continued pursuit of violent recourse manifested itself in his political actions within the nation.

Stand Watie was born in 1806, the second son of the Oo-watie and Susanne Reese. He joined Boudinot at the Moravian Mission School in Spring Place, where he converted to Christianity and was baptized. Watie returned to his father’s farm some time around 1817. During the years when Boudinot inserted himself into Cherokee political circles, Watie lived a private life with his parents and siblings. Then in 1828 Watie entered the political scene as a clerk for the Cherokee Supreme Court, at the age of twenty-two. In 1834, Watie took on the job of interpreter for the Cherokee Agency, demonstrating his knowledge of both English and Cherokee and growing his participation in government.
By 1835, as the United States prepared a treaty to offer the Cherokee Nation, Boudinot urged Watie to ensure the *Cherokee Phoenix* would no longer be able to dissuade the nation from a treaty. In August, Watie, along with help from the Georgia Guard, confiscated the printing press and type in New Echota, effectively ending the newspaper’s seven-year run. In the action, Watie appeared to have sided with Boudinot in his belief that the paper was being used as a political tool for the Ross faction of the Cherokee government. If the *Phoenix* would not print both sides of the removal argument, it would print nothing at all. Watie returned the press to Boudinot, who repurposed it for Treaty Party agendas.

In December 1835, Watie was selected to replace Boudinot in a delegation sent to Washington to propose yet another treaty to the United States. This was his first major role in Cherokee politics. John Ridge joined him while Boudinot and Major Ridge in the Cherokee Nation. The Treaty of New Echota was signed by twenty Treaty Party members on December 29, 1835. The political division of the nation followed. Watie joined his brother in the various accusations made against Chief John Ross in the following years. In 1837, Watie and his family joined the Ridges and Boudinot in their relocation to the new Cherokee territory, ahead of the migration known as the Trail of Tears. In 1839, Boudinot and the Ridges were killed. Stand Watie would live another thirty years after the attempt on his life. In addition, he would gain prominence in the Cherokee Nation after the violent deaths of the other Treaty Party leaders. Even after peace was made in 1840 between the various factions of the government, Watie continued to be involved in violent attempts on the lives of Treaty Party members. At

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266 Franks, *Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation*, 21-25.
267 Ibid., 23.
268 Ibid., 26-28.
269 Ibid., 28-29.
270 Ibid., 51.
times, the violence was so uncontrollable that the United States government attempted to step in to settle disputes between the various government factions.\footnote{Ibid., 58-59.} It was this intervention by the United States – an action that both parties sought to avoid throughout the removal crisis – that led to an unsound peace between the parties. The entire removal crisis had revolved around the need to gain sovereignty from the United States, and ultimately any form of removal allowed for physical distance from the dominant nation. By allowing inter-tribal relations to intensify to the point where the United States intervened, the Cherokee Nation sacrificed what little gains it had made in securing sovereignty through the tragedy of removal. The intervention of the federal government also weakened the power of Chief Ross, keeping him from completely dominating the new western Cherokee government.\footnote{Ibid., 74.} In the early 1840s, Watie and his supporters won council elections.\footnote{Ibid., 80.}

In 1842, Watie finally received the chance at physical revenge when he killed James Foreman, supposedly one of the shooters of Major Ridge and was acquitted of the murder on the grounds of self-defense.\footnote{Ibid., 80-88.} However, Watie and his followers continued to fear that Chief Ross and his party was attempting to exterminate all signers of the treaty in order to homogenize the politics of the nation.\footnote{Ibid. 95.} The constant invocation of Ross as the violent villain by Watie and his supporters harkens to the idea that the remaining Treaty Party members never fully understood that their decision had caused harm to the majority of the Cherokee Nation and that the general population held them accountable.

The Cherokee Nation suffered through violence and bloodshed through intermittent periods of the 1840s. Ross refused to accept funding from the United States offered through the
1835 treaty, citing that accepting the money would in turn validate the legality of the treaty.\textsuperscript{276} Watie’s supporters sought refuge outside of the nation, fleeing to Arkansas for the protection of the federal government.\textsuperscript{277} When, in 1846, the United States entered into a war with Mexico, Watie pledged Cherokee troops in an attempt to elicit the favor of the federal government.\textsuperscript{278} The following year, Watie chose not to participate in elections, instead focusing on his family with his fourth wife, Sarah Caroline Bell.\textsuperscript{279} In 1853, Watie reentered the political scene after being elected as a representative to the National Council and debuting his legal practice that same year. Upon his reelection in 1855, Watie served as Speaker of the Council, giving him power on the new divisive issue in the nation – slavery.\textsuperscript{280}

In the late 1850s, the sectional disputes within the United States threatened the unstable peace of the Cherokee Nation. Ross supporters aligned themselves with the traditionalist citizens of the nation, calling themselves the “Pins,” arguing for neutrality in relation to the civil war brewing in the United States.\textsuperscript{281} In reaction, Watie’s supporters aligned themselves the “Knights of the Golden Circle,” a confederate secret society, and limited membership to opponents of abolition.\textsuperscript{282} The Confederacy saw the value in Indian allies, especially those in western territories which could serve as buffer zones against the Union.\textsuperscript{283} Ross opposed entering the war; Watie and his supporters feared the growing strength of the Pins. In summer 1861, the

\textsuperscript{276} Ibid., 93.  
\textsuperscript{277} Ibid., 100.  
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., 102.  
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., 108.  
\textsuperscript{280} Ibid., 109-113.  
\textsuperscript{281} Conley, \textit{The Cherokee Nation}, 175. The longest descriptor of the “Pin Indians” I have found is: “The Keetoowah Society of Cherokees became known as ‘Pins’ or ‘Pin Indians’ during the time just before and during the Civil War, because of the identifying pins they wore beneath their lapels. They were mostly full-blood, traditional, abolitionist, and opposed to the ‘progressive’ politics of many of the mixed-blood Cherokees” (178). So while Ross and his supporters allied themselves with an inherently Cherokee secret society, Watie took on the values of a confederate-bred group.  
\textsuperscript{282} Franks, \textit{Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation}, Watie, 114.  
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid.
Confederacy commissioned Watie as a colonel in the Confederate Army, giving him the power to raise men in order to protect Cherokee territory from Union invasion. The alliance became official later that year.\textsuperscript{284} But by 1863, Indian troops had deserted the Confederate army and Watie raised concerns about the treatment of Indian soldiers by the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{285} In addition, the Cherokee National Council abolished slavery that same year.\textsuperscript{286} Despite this, Watie stayed and gained fame for his use of guerilla war tactics against Union troops in 1864.\textsuperscript{287} He eventually gained the rank of brigadier general.\textsuperscript{288} At the end of the war, Watie made history as the last Confederate general to surrender in the Civil War.\textsuperscript{289} Afterwards, Watie retreated back into a private life. John Ross’s death in 1866 signaled the end of a thirty-year political feud, and Watie left residual issues to the younger generations of the Ridge-Boudinot-Watie family.\textsuperscript{290} In 1871, the year of his death, a biographer sought out Watie for a book about the famous leaders of the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{291} His inclusion in this history, for the most part written to convey the lives and accomplishments of white Americans during the war, marked the beginning of Watie’s inclusion in United States history. This inclusion would also translate itself into his representation within Cherokee history.

Stand Watie and Elias Boudinot lived very different lives, but both shared the experience of signing the Treaty of New Echota and the violence it entailed. They both also understood the political process of the Cherokee Nation and the need to leverage a relationship with the United States in this process. They played off one another politically, with Watie taking on and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{284} Ibid., 117-119.
\item \textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 141-143.
\item \textsuperscript{286} Conley, \textit{The Cherokee Nation}, 176.
\item \textsuperscript{287} Franks, \textit{Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation}, 176.
\item \textsuperscript{288} Conley, \textit{The Cherokee Nation}, 177.
\item \textsuperscript{289} Franks, \textit{Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation}, 181.
\item \textsuperscript{290} Ibid., 193.
\item \textsuperscript{291} Ibid., 208.
\end{itemize}
expanding the role Boudinot held in Cherokee government after his death. Watie’s willingness to carry on Boudinot’s legacy continued conflict between factions in the nation for a quarter-century longer and also resulted in the creation of Watie as a historical figure which has been allowed far greater space to assert multiple motives than Boudinot.

The presentation of Boudinot’s death and Watie’s escape is the beginning of the creation of a divergent history between the two – up until that point, it may be argued that they shared similar goals and stories in the historical record. On June 22, 1839, the circumstances changed. In death, Boudinot forever became the traitor to the Cherokee Nation, somehow deserving his violent end. The need to explore these histories lies in the value placed on histories constructed for readers over the constant need to return to primary sources to understand people and events. These histories essentially do the work for us. In doing so, the assumptions of the historian become our own.

Still there is the inclination in the majority of these texts to comment on Watie’s ability to escape his death as a demonstration for his character: Conley writes, “He was a hell of a man.” Nowhere in the historical record is there such a description of Elias Boudinot. The focus on Watie’s masculinity, especially in his role in military conflicts, appeals to the American desire for physically inclined heroes and villains. How many popular histories about the newspaper industry have been written in contrast to the plethora of histories on every major war to have occurred in the Common Era? Meanwhile, Boudinot is the “tragic figure” who “paid the ultimate price.” And although they served similar political purposes, Watie’s military involvement in contrast to Boudinot’s religious intellectual practice created two different figures.

292 Conley, Cherokee Thoughts, 18.
Boudinot’s death ultimately allowed him to remain in a category which would always prevent him from earning the title of “a hell of a man.”

Rather than asking “but what if Boudinot had survived? Would he have led the political chaos within the nation instead of his brother or retreated further into his private life?” we can think about his contribution to Cherokee history and identity through Watie. Watie’s life demonstrates that staying away from the feuds within the nation was impossible until the end of the American Civil War – attacks on Treaty Party supporters never really stopped; Watie constantly had to defend his life and even took another life in the process. The end of violent factional divisions within the nation only arrived after participation in the Civil War, where the nation sided with the losing side and sacrificed a large amount of the Cherokee Nation’s sovereignty.

In terms of the war, Watie was a slave owner and spoke out vehemently against abolition. However, Boudinot himself never owned slaves and did not often print on the subject in the Cherokee Phoenix. Most mentions in the paper were from paid advertisements for slave auctions or notices of runaways – certainly not the actions of an abolitionist paper. Occasionally Boudinot would include pieces which argued against the morality of slavery, once presenting an editorial where he connected the failing morality of the state of Georgia to its reliance on slavery.294 The subject was certainly disruptive in the nation – it was for the most part the elite class with white backgrounds who could afford slaves and chose to adopt the system in practice within the United States. It played into emerging ideas of private property which would come about again during the treaty crisis. But what Boudinot understood, what he had learned during his time in Cornwall, was that white American citizens the Cherokee Nation sought to appeal to

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294 Miles, Ties That Bind, 73-75.
in the removal crisis often supported abolition as well. The paper appealed to this sensibility in its articles and editorials, if not in its advertising. It is however unclear whether the resolution of the removal crisis would have changed Boudinot’s opinion on the role of slavery in the Cherokee Nation. If these white supporters of the American Indian did not succeed in their defense, would they succeed in abolition attempts? And how could the Cherokees assert sovereignty if they followed the conventions of white citizens of the United States? Considering his religious education, it seems unlikely that Boudinot would have agreed with his brother’s desire to side with the Confederacy during the American Civil War. Certainly a large part of the negative view of Watie’s life relies on his opinions during the war. If Boudinot had lived to remain neutral or side with the Union, perhaps his character would have become less maligned in the historical record.

The comparison of Stand Watie and Elias Boudinot does not necessarily seek to fill in years Boudinot missed in the Cherokee Nation after his death. It is unclear whether he would have been able to return to politics as Watie did. After all, Stand Watie reentered Cherokee politics through the controversy and violence surrounding the deaths of his family and party members. Significantly, Watie created his political identity by appealing to factions of the Cherokee Nation. Unlike his brother, he did not constantly seek the approval of a white audience. He took on Christian patriarchy offered by Euro-American civilization programs and presented them to the Cherokee Nation instead of reflecting them back into white society as Boudinot had done with the Cherokee Phoenix. He continued to fight for a specifically Cherokee minority opinion, making gains because of his wealth and the connections he made with powerful groups within the United States. However, Watie stood to protect his own construction of Cherokee identity from within his own nation, not through his relationship with
white society. Chief John Ross fought him through the entire process. Ross also relied on appeal to a distinctly Cherokee audience, foregoing the demands of the United States even after removal. Boudinot would most likely have not succeeded in the western Indian Territory, displaced from the white community which continued to read his work and support his personal civilization process. Without the presence of the United States, he would not have had any chance of continuing to influence Cherokee government, considering his lack of support amongst the Cherokee populace. And without a white intellectual community to contend with, to speak to, and to assert his professionalism to, Boudinot would have most likely found life in the west somewhat disappointing. That is to say, if the danger of retaliation by his own people had not reached him first.

But a presentation of how Boudinot would have dealt with Cherokee politics after 1839 is all hypothetical thinking. The reason Stand Watie’s life matters in relation with Elias Boudinot are the ways in which their lives have been presented in various histories. While Boudinot continues to be either the newspaper man or the traitor, Watie has been explored in depth, given the agency and ability to explain his actions and choices. His public and private life has been considered in tangent, giving him the opportunity to be many things at once: Cherokee politician, grieving brother, husband and father, army general. The multiplicity of Watie’s historical portrayal can most readily be tied to his long life span – he did not write more than Boudinot or speak directly to the nation through his writing, but his length of participation created a vast record of his actions. He has been allowed the space to shape his own life through action instead of the written word, in a way similar Boudinot attempted through his 1837 pamphlet, but failed.

Watie’s plurality in the historical record calls into question why Boudinot has not received this same treatment. Watie, despite his failures, is still retained within the space of
Cherokee history. The front cover of Kenny Frank’s biography of Watie is stamped with the word “Cherokee” from the syllabary - Gwy - the same word which appeared at the top of the Phoenix and attempted to unify the nation. Boudinot is granted no such profound connection to his own nation, for despite having both signed the Treaty of New Echota, Boudinot did not produce anything else worthwhile of positive reflection in Cherokee history. Or so the record would have us believe.

Boudinot was a vehement writer and speaker. There is a vast amount of available information about both his public and private life. But the way his life is depicted still comes down to the same issue raised by the opposition of assassination and execution: There is a stark contrast between the actions Boudinot took before 1835 during his time as the voice for the Cherokee Nation and the time after he signed the Treaty of New Echota. The separation of these two parts of his life attempt to create two different men out of Boudinot instead of allowing him particularity within the historical record. Instead of allowing him to claim the fallibility of humanity. By separating Boudinot into two men who follow the opposing tropes of representations of indigenous people in history – the ‘Noble Savage’ and the demonized Indian – history only repeats the actions it seeks to analyze. The separation writes over the most basic conflicts of racial negotiation Boudinot participated in. This denial of particularity is a continued assault on the histories of oppressed peoples. If the field of history seeks to write about all peoples in equal terminology, to uncover lost histories and grant a voice to forgotten peoples, these very peoples cannot be denied agency through the partitioning of their roles in history. They must be allowed plurality in voice and action in order to create an inclusive historical record.
CONCLUSION

This project sought to explore the political character Elias Boudinot created for himself between 1817 and 1839. In order to succeed, two versions of Boudinot were melded to form a complete image of the man: First there was the portrayal of Boudinot the editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, intellectual man of the nation, seeking the benefit of his people through appeal to the white citizens of the United States. Second was the view of Boudinot as a traitor, a man chose political gain above the welfare of his people. Since the historical portrayals of Boudinot as a newspaper man often exclude his later life and vice versa, the image of Boudinot in the historical record created him as a one-dimensional character. Despite the plethora of his written work, the view of Boudinot as traitor first and foremost is difficult to displace. What does this category of the traitor say about the way his death is presented by the majority of historians?

The most prominent modern scholar of Cherokee history, Theda Perdue, presents her collection of Elias Boudinot’s written work with an introduction detailing his life. At the end of what appears as an objective production of critical works from a prominent Cherokee, Perdue makes a powerful value judgment on Boudinot’s life. She wrote

> Elias Boudinot was a tragic figure not just because he made a serious error in judgment or because he paid the ultimate price but because he could not accept his people, his heritage, or himself. He was the product of colonization.295

And yet Perdue titles her work *Cherokee Editor*. This distinction points to the idea that Boudinot was not connected to his own people, yet still there is no other label for him other than “Cherokee.” He was not white, despite his associations with the United States. This project sought to add “professional” to Boudinot’s Cherokee status, to specify his distinct creation of

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indigenous identity in conversation with white America. But still, for Perdue, Boudinot’s actions in the signing of the Treaty of New Echota were an indication that he had chosen to reject his being as a Cherokee. The rejection of Boudinot’s value to Cherokee history through the action of denying his actions from belonging to the Cherokee Nation seeks to remove his positive influence from national history.

On top of this, Perdue seeks to somehow displace all negative actions by both the Cherokee Nation and the United States, by all players, onto Boudinot as the “product of colonization.” It seems like a throw-away, a quick summation using a popular idea which falls apart upon inspection. First time must be considered – by the 1840s the Cherokee Nation was removed from colonization in its most popular form. The systems of interaction between the Cherokee Nation and the United States had been in place for centuries, and indigenous peoples were truly struggling through the acculturation they experienced with the removal of imperial power after the American Revolution. Next, to posit that Boudinot was the only actor, or one of a few, who was effected by colonization discounts the agency and lives of countless indigenous peoples. And if the finger is pointed at the Treaty Party, at the colonization effort which somehow made them reject their own culture and peoples, less attention is paid to the racist removal policies of the United States.

Crediting Elias Boudinot’s political choices between 1832 and 1835 to the effects of colonialism also strips him of the ability to assert his own identity. His own explanations for signing the Treaty of New Echota pointed to an understanding of himself as a protector of the Cherokees, a position which did not necessarily seek to reject his culture or peoples. Discrediting his words is its own form of silencing, of writing history which only seeks one answer to a complex question. Entering this project several months ago, my main question about
Boudinot asked why and when he made the change that led to his betrayal of the Cherokee Nation. His own words answered this question, stood for his ardent belief that this decision was the only option. But this assertion seems to be somehow ignored by Perdue and other scholars, asked time and time again to somehow find the ulterior motives that will illustrate Boudinot as a man forsaking the nation that birthed him. Boudinot created his own way to be Cherokee; he commoditized the role of the professional Cherokee. He understood the political processes of the United States in a way many indigenous peoples did not or could not, but this understanding did not negate his own claim on a Cherokee identity. The repeated act of questioning his change, of attempting to find an alternative meaning to his own assertions, has somehow warped the record surrounding his life. Though this questioning is vital to the process of creating history, the elimination of the early years and accomplishments of Boudinot’s life in the conversation about his decision creates a figure that loses his depth. That loses his own right to assert an identity.

Boudinot lived a life which he used to create a public image, to create himself as the voice of the Cherokee Nation. This voice was cut short not in his death, but in his decision to change his opinion on removal. Those higher than him silenced his voice, despite his many attempts to repudiate the accusations against him. All of this action played out in a very public arena. Even his death was a public event, told time and time again as an event witnessed not just by Boudinot’s family but by dozens of conspirators and townspeople. That is why it is so interesting that in one of the first pieces written about his death, there was a request for privacy. Worcester wrote: “Be so kind as not to suffer this letter or any party of it, to be put in print.”

This final act of separating the private and the public, (though ultimately unsuccessful

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considering how many histories include graphic portrayals of Boudinot’s death,) is significant in
the life of a man whose public career depended entirely on a specific image of a private life. Violent death
certainly did not play into this image. The way the historical record portrays Boudinot, as a one-dimensional
figure, was solidified through the attempted silencing of the events and reasons surrounding his death.
However, digging up the pieces and confronting the historical record and all its possibilities seeks to pull
Boudinot into the grey area of portrayal. Melding the lives of Boudinot the intellectual and Boudinot the
traitor creates Boudinot the Cherokee, vital to the promulgation of oppressed histories alongside dominant ones.
ELIAS BOUDINOT
(c. 1802-1839)

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HARRIET RUGGLES GOLD Boudinot
(1805-1836)


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JOHN RIDGE  
(c. 1802-1839)

MAJOR RIDGE  
(c.1771-1839)
STAND WATIE  
(1806-1871)


JOHN ROSS  
(1790-1866)

Bibliography


