

5-2016

Assimilationist Language in Cherokee Women's Petitions: A Political Call to Reclaim Traditional Cherokee Culture

Jillian Moore Bennion
Utah State University

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Assimilationist Language in Cherokee Women's Petitions: A Political Call to Reclaim
Traditional Cherokee Culture

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Masters of Arts in
American Studies in the Graduate School of
Utah State University

By

Jillian Moore Bennion
Graduate Program in American Studies

Utah State University

2016

Thesis Committee:

Keri Holt, Ph.D., Advisor

Melody Graulich, Ph.D.

Colleen O'Neill, Ph.D.

ASSIMILATIONIST LANGUAGE IN CHEROKEE WOMEN’S PETITIONS:

A POLITICAL CALL TO RECLAIM

TRADITIONAL CHEROKEE CULTURE

By

Jillian M. Moore Bennion

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

English

Approved:

Dr. Keri Holt

Dr. Melody Graulich

Dr. Colleen O’Neill

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2016

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ABSTRACT

Assimilationist Language in Cherokee Women's Petitions: A Political Call to Reclaim
Traditional Cherokee Culture

By

Jillian Moore Bennion, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2016

Major Professor: Keri Holt
Department: English

Twenty-one years before the forced-removal of Cherokee people from their native lands east of the Mississippi, Cherokee people fought peacefully to maintain ownership of Cherokee-owned lands and attempted to preserve, at least in part, traditional Cherokee culture. Through the drafting of petitions, specifically written between 1817-19, Cherokee women pushed back against pressure to assimilate to Anglo-American culture and to cede Cherokee land to the United States Government. The five petitions that are present in this analysis were drafted in response to an ongoing Cherokee-United States land crisis.

This article looks at petitions written by female Cherokee and male Cherokee because, as I will argue, a comparative analysis of male-authored petitions and female-authored petitions shows the ways that Cherokees both acquiesced to Anglicized gender roles and how Cherokees resisted cultural assimilation. This comparative analysis will also show the similarities and the differences in the type of rhetoric that is used by male authors and female authors. While I am unable to discuss in detail, at this time, all of the

differences between the two sexes' petitions, one major difference between the two types of petitions is that male authors used language of assimilation as a way to reach their larger audience of the U.S. government. Female authors also used language of assimilation but blended that familial rhetoric with traditional Cherokee cultural values as a way to appeal to the Tribe and to the U.S. government.

(54 pages)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In thinking about graduate school, Utah State University was not the school that I thought I would attend. Even so, USU was exactly the school I was *supposed* to attend, exactly the place where I needed to be to make the wonderful academic strides and connections that I did. The staff, professors, and English Department are owed an incredible amount of thanks for the aid they give their students.

I would like to thank Dr. Keri Holt for her dedication to my learning and growth as a scholar; and Dr. Colleen O'Neill and Dr. Melody Graulich who, as part of my thesis committee, challenged me to both personal and academic achievements. A special thanks also is owed also to Dr. Brock Dethier, whose support was instrumental in making my time at USU worthwhile.

DEDICATION

To my family: With sufficient force, I am unable to find words adequate enough to express the gratitude I have for all the unending support, the tireless encouragement, the long nights, late night calls, the drop-everything-and-run-to-my-aid maneuvers, the listen while I cries, the hugs and kisses and laughs, and the ceaseless love that you have given me these past two years and every single day of my life. I do not know how one person becomes lucky enough to have a family like I do, but please know that you never go unnoticed or unappreciated. This thing, this is the kind of thing that is only possible because we do things in our own family way. I wouldn't change a single piece of it.

To my husband: Thank you, Leland, for being a partner beyond measure and a constant source of encouragement in the face of despair, heartache, and ill repute. Of course, you've been a constant source of rides to and fro, provider of sustenance at all hours of the day and night, and bringer distraction at all the right (and wrong) moments. To say that you embody hope is an understatement. To not say that you encourage me to rise academically, worldly, and spiritually would be too unfair all together. Sharing the same space with another person never felt more like home. Love you till you're dead.

The four of you are my best friends and give me an immeasurable amount of happiness.

Thank you. I love you,

Jillian

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Assimilationist Language in Cherokee Women's Petitions: A Political Call to Reclaim Traditional Cherokee Culture

Introduction

To a large degree, Cherokee studies have examined the era of Cherokee culture that is represented by the Trail of Tears. However, Anglo-American assimilation threatened Cherokee culture long before the forced removal of the Cherokee from their native homes in Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and Mississippi. Between 1817-19 when the Cherokee were, to borrow Theda Perdue's words, "debat[ing] land cession and removal," select Cherokee drafted petitions to protest the selling of Cherokee land by specific Cherokee individuals (129).¹ As this analysis will show, Cherokee men and women used petitions as a means of protest against those individual Cherokee who sold land to the US government. While these petitions mainly center on the US-Cherokee land conflict, they also address an underlying issue within the land conflict that was created by Anglo-American assimilation of the Cherokee, one that also threatened traditional Cherokee culture.

This thesis will examine four Cherokee-authored petitions written between 1817-1818, each of which address the land crisis and Anglo-American assimilation of the Cherokee. Two of these petitions are written by Cherokee women and two are written by Cherokee men. In presenting their arguments about the land crisis, these petitioners use

¹ After 1819, some of the Cherokee continued to debate internally the impending possibility of removal. However, as Perdue writes, between 1819-1829, "the Cherokees were not under any particular pressure" from the United States government to either cede land or remove themselves from their land (131). As the Cherokee women suspected, Cherokee who sold land and moved to Oklahoma territory prior to the forced removal threatened the Cherokee who remained east of the Mississippi.

language that seems to emphasize the ways in which the Cherokee actively promoted Anglo-American assimilation. Comparing the petitions authored by women with those authored by men, however, reveals an important difference in their use of assimilationist language. Through a comparative analysis of female-authored petitions and male-authored petitions, I will argue that the female-authored petitions show the ways that Cherokee women used assimilationist language to simultaneously acquiesce to Anglicized gender roles and resist cultural assimilation.

As stated above, the Cherokee women use domestic and assimilationist language in their two petitions as a way to simultaneously appease the Cherokee National Council's interests while also showing Cherokee women's resistance to Anglo-American assimilation. This type of double articulation is a move that many oppressed groups have employed as a means of resistance. Homi Bhabha in his formative book, *Location of Culture*, has termed this type of doubling as "mimicry." Bhabha uses mimicry to articulate the way that colonized Africans mimic the rhetoric of their oppressors as a means of rejecting the oppressors' assertion of values. Bhabha's concept of mimicry has become accepted as a term used widely in postcolonial studies that focuses attention on the usage of language as a form of resistance. As one scholar of Bhabha writes, "the use of language can be a potent site of postcolonial resistance, despite—and, perhaps, because of—how often it has been used as a tool of imperial stratification" (Ahern 8). While the Cherokee are not typically associated with postcolonial studies, I think Bhabha's terminology is applicable in this instance because, in a sense, the Cherokee were colonized—or attempted to be colonized—by the US government.

As this thesis will show, the Cherokee women's mimicry of Anglo-American language reveals their acceptance of Anglo-American assimilation at the same time that it demonstrates their resistance to assimilation. In centering their petitions on domestic language, the Cherokee women were able to engage with the Cherokee National Council, something that, in turn, enabled them to safely make an argument that rejected assimilation and encouraged the return to traditional Cherokee culture. The Cherokee women's efforts to reject assimilation by mimicking the rhetoric of assimilation was led by Nancy Ward. As Ward's history shows, she was a Cherokee woman who closely engaged with Anglo-Americans, providing her with a unique experience that led to her eventual involvement with the land cession petitions.

To show how Cherokee women used assimilationist language to both assert Cherokee acceptance of Anglo-American culture and resist assimilation in the petitions, this thesis has three sections. The first section provides historical context regarding the changes that took place in Cherokee culture as a result of Anglo-American assimilation, focusing specifically on changes in Cherokee gender roles. Examining the history of Anglo-American assimilation of the Cherokee lays a foundation for understanding how the use of domestic language was used as a key strategy within the women's petitions. Building on this foundation, the second section examines Nancy Ward, the primary author of the women's petitions.² Examining Ward's experiences with Cherokee and Anglo-American culture shows how she was able to develop the complex rhetorical

² Although Nancy Ward is credited with authorship of the 1817 and 1818 petitions, from this point forward, I will address the female-authored petitions as the Cherokee women's petitions. I refer to the petitions as the Cherokee women's petitions because Ward collaborated with other Cherokee women in crafting the petitions, and because both petitions are written on behalf of all Cherokee women, reminiscent of the unifying quality that the petitions encourage.

strategies that both accepted and resisted the language of assimilation within the women's petitions.

The main focus of this thesis is the third section, which presents a comparative analysis of two petitions drafted by Cherokee women and two petitions drafted by Cherokee men. The language used in these petitions heavily relies on familial rhetoric or rhetoric that applies to domestic understandings of gender roles within families. Although the majority of this section analyzes the female-authored petitions, it also looks at two petitions authored by men as a necessary way of understanding the different use of assimilationist rhetoric in the petitions authored by women. Although the male-authored petitions, too, use domestic language, the way that the women used domestic language and the intent with which they applied such rhetoric is the primary focus of this section and this thesis.

In the conclusion of my analysis, I will re-address the deliberate use of domestic language in the Cherokee women's petitions that allows them to make a political argument against land cession. This political argument highlights the politics of domesticity that were produced by the Cherokee's adoption of the Anglo-American separate spheres ideology that came in the midst of Anglo-American assimilation of Cherokee culture. By examining how Cherokee women use domestic language to engage in national politics, I argue that their petitions can contribute to other analyses of Cherokee history. Although other scholars have noted the importance of the Cherokee women's petitions in using domestic language, they have not concluded that the Cherokee women's petitions use assimilationist language to *resist* Anglo-American assimilation. In this comparative analysis, I provide a new lens for examining the politics

of Cherokee women's writing and the worthwhile contribution women had on Cherokee and feminist history.

Anglo-American Assimilation of Cherokee Culture

The Anglo-American assimilation of Cherokee people and culture saw the acquisition of Cherokee land, the education of Cherokee children, and the transformation of gender roles, to name just a few of the cultural shifts that occurred over the course of the assimilation process. As Cherokee women underwent changes to their social and political standings within the tribe, the whole of Cherokee culture became more Anglicized; Cherokee people became less tied to the land, less communal, and less focused on the welfare of the whole tribe. These cultural changes are especially evident in the Cherokee-United States land conflict. It is within these land conflicts, however, that Cherokee women saw an opportunity to re-apply their traditional Cherokee cultural ideals, ideals that revered women with more power than they possessed within the confines of Anglo-American assimilation.

In traditional Cherokee culture, women had a great deal of agency and power. Women worked on collectively-owned Cherokee land; women were the farmers of the tribe and the caretakers of the land while men were the hunters and the warriors. Early Cherokee lived on desirable "fertile valleys of the southern Appalachians," where they controlled trade routes and fertile farming ground (Perdue 13). The desirability of Cherokee land to Anglo-American settlers largely contributed to conflicts between the Cherokee and the United States. Early Cherokee land also contained extensive hunting ground. Hunting was not only part of Cherokee men's duty to the tribe and to their

families, it also provided an income. The Cherokee sustained themselves on deer meat, but used skins and hides as provisions in their camp. Later, as trade items were introduced, either through assimilation or through contact with Anglo-Americans, Cherokee men also used trade items as currency. Hunting played such a large role in Cherokee society that Cherokee families came to rely on the income and the subsistence that was introduced with the increase in trade. Moreover, assimilated life dictated that the Cherokee become less dependent on farming and more dependent on trade goods.³ Cherokee-owned lands were fertile, ideal for growing crops with good proximity to water with lush vegetation that drew deer and animal populations.

The United States used Cherokee and Creek hunting grounds to establish and control a trade economy. As early as 1718, the “South Carolina commissioners of the Indian trade had developed more complex pricing systems” for trade goods that were designed to restrict Cherokee’s abilities to trade deerskins for guns, food, and clothes (Perdue 77). Between 1718-1794, the United States seized control of Cherokee land, in part, through the restriction of Cherokee hunting grounds. The loss of Cherokee hunting grounds was particularly difficult for the Cherokee to overcome, specifically because Cherokee men were dependent on the deerskin trade in order to provide resources for their family and the tribe. For Cherokee women, the trade economy made them partially dependent on the men, increasing gender disparities within the tribe.

³ For more information on Cherokee hunting grounds and the established trade economy, please refer to James Adair and to Theda Perdue’s *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change 1700-1835*. To access full ledger records that detail the amount of Cherokee land that was acquired by the United States government, see *Letters Received by the Office of the Secretary of War* relating to Indian affairs accessible as microfilm from the US War Department. See also Gregory Ablavsky’s “Beyond The Indian Commerce Clause.”

The Cherokee continued to argue with the United States to remain in control of their hunting grounds until 1794 when Doublehead, a Cherokee chief, “appealed to the president of the United States to permit Cherokee to retain their hunting grounds,” though with minimal success (Perdue 76). Once the United States secured Cherokee land, a trade economy was established, and the United States government began to implement other forms of cultural assimilation. Most importantly for this analysis, the United States also began purchasing Cherokee land from individual Cherokee. While most Cherokee opposed selling land, the Cherokee National Council, led by Doublehead, yielded to the US government’s pressure and voted to sell pieces of Cherokee land. Eventually, Doublehead was killed by John Ross and fellow Cherokee for relinquishing land to the US in 1807.⁴

The US government’s attempts to assimilate the Cherokee did more than assert control over Cherokee land. In 1817, when the Cherokee were particularly at risk of losing land, they were in the midst of cultural assimilation that impacted their relationship to their land. Prior to assimilation, Cherokee culture functioned with a matrilineal and a matrilineal concept of heritage and identity.⁵ Traditionally, Cherokee women farmed land communally. However, after Anglo-American assimilation, women were encouraged to

⁴ John Ross (1790-1846) was Principal Chief from 1828 until his death. He was a member of the “young chiefs,” a Standing Committee within the Cherokee political system that discussed ways to combat internal crises. As a young chief, Ross engaged in Cherokee politics and was an outspoken proponent of unifying the Cherokee people in order to protect themselves against the US government’s infringement on Cherokee land. For more about John Ross, see Bernd C. Peyer’s *American Indian Nonfiction: An Anthology of Writings, 1760s-1930s*.

⁵ For a timeline of Cherokee women’s lives pre- and post-assimilation, see either Theda Perdue’s *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835* or Carolyn Ross Johnston’s *Cherokee Women in Crisis: Trail of Tears, Civil War, And Allotment, 1838-1907*.

leave the fields for more home-based activities. In contrast to traditional Cherokee societal structure where women and men were given equal share of responsibility and ownership of the land, assimilation created a shift to a more distinct power differential between the genders. Cherokee women forwent their traditional dominant relationship to the land to adopt more domestic roles, positioning themselves in a subordinate role to Cherokee men. Cherokee men, on the other hand, continued to hunt but also acquired greater control over the land when they assumed farming responsibilities. Although there were distinct lines between gender roles in traditional Cherokee culture—where the Cherokee women’s roles were centered on farming land, and the men’s roles centered on hunting land—these roles were not defined by the more formal hierarchical power structures that developed under assimilation. Both women and men worked the land in their respective sense (i.e., farming and hunting). However, most matters of the tribe having to do with land were shared by men and women. Even with assimilation, however, Cherokee culture continued to be tied to the land. For the Cherokee, their bond and claim to the land was ingrained in their culture from generation to generation. According to Purdue, “[m]odern day archaeologists believe that the Cherokee had lived on this land for hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of years; the Cherokee believed that they had always been there” (Purdue & Green 7).⁶

Traditional Cherokee land was owned collectively, but after the US government’s involvement in Cherokee affairs, individual Cherokee began to assert control over specific plots of Cherokee land. Purdue observes that cultural changes took place gradually, stating that, after assimilation began, “matrilineages probably still controlled

⁶ See also, Mooney, James. “Myths of the Cherokee.” *Nineteenth Annual Report*. Bureau of American Ethnology. Washington DC: GPO. 1900.

the descent of houses and other improvements, although among the families of traders and perhaps even some warriors, this was changed. The land, however, belonged to neither individual nor lineage but to the nation” (Perdue 104). While early Cherokee lived in large towns collectively and in close proximity, by 1796 in response to assimilation pressure, many had moved apart and began to till and farm small individual plots. The individual Cherokee who sold plots of land that they tilled to the US were the same Cherokee who sparked internal conflict and debate at the National Council.

Anglo-American assimilation also transformed gender roles within Cherokee culture, and these changes are pivotal to understanding the Cherokee women’s and men’s petitions. Anglo-American assimilation encouraged Cherokee men to take on the Anglicized role as the primary authority in the family and the tribe. This meant that men took on the roles of decision-maker, protector, and head of the household.⁷ Cherokee women similarly were encouraged to leave the fields as farmers and keepers of the land to adopt more Anglicized roles that contributed to life within the home. Cherokee assimilation becomes complicated because Cherokee women “did not reject the “civilization” program, nor did they embrace it wholeheartedly. They simply adopted those aspects of the policy that seemed to address their particular set of problems” (Perdue 115). For both Cherokee women and Cherokee men, the aspects of assimilation that each accepted are evident by looking at the petitions drafted in protest to various aspects of assimilation. This analysis, however, will show that Cherokee women and Cherokee men accepted similar aspects of assimilation to fulfill two different purposes.

⁷ For more information regarding Cherokee cultural change, see Theda Perdue’s *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835*, in which Perdue has recreated the structure of Cherokee culture before their forced removal.

Anglo-American assimilation or “civilization,” as it was referred to as by the US government, “became an official part of Cherokee relations with the federal government in 1791 when the Cherokee signed the [1791] Treaty of Holston” (Perdue 110). This treaty restricted Cherokee farming and hunting grounds in return for compensation by the US government in the form of “husbandry.” The Treaty of Holston was only an early implementation of the civilization program. George Washington, in 1776, “urged Cherokee to follow [the federal government’s] example” and transition from a matrilineal society to a culture wherein males had the responsibility of maintaining land (Perdue 110-11). George Washington also urged the Cherokee to form a national council, which was eventually founded in 1776. The Cherokee National Council was designed to serve as a governing body that would send Cherokee representatives to speak with United States politicians and other US governmental agents.

Many of the Cherokee believed that adopting Anglo-American culture and ideals was their best chance to resist forced removal and maintain peace, so they adopted some, but not all, Anglo-American cultural practices. A large aspect of Anglo-American assimilation that the Cherokee accepted was the existence of the Cherokee National Council. Initially, the Cherokee National Council was a way for the federal government to negotiate with the Cherokee for land and trade routes.⁸ The Cherokee, taking the advice of their “Father the President,” in 1801, established the Cherokee National Council and modeled it after the structure of the US government. The National Council was attended by only male chiefs and warriors and was presided over by the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Chiefs and warriors made decisions on behalf of all the

⁸ The Cherokee National Council was a yearly council, but there were also smaller councils that were led by chiefs in the interim.

Cherokee when they convened annually to discuss treaties and engage in talks with the US government. The Council was formed in order to “establish a Cherokee republic with written laws, a court system, and a national police force. The Council also tried to conform to Anglo-American notions about appropriate contributions for men and women” (Perdue 113). The Cherokee National Council also became a way for Cherokee to come together to discuss ways of protecting the tribe and tribal land against the federal government, and in this regard, the National Council simultaneously created opportunities for promoting tribal unity and resistance. It also became, like the United States’ government at the time, a male-dominated governing body. Using the United States as an example, the National Council was made up of the Principle Chief of the Cherokee Tribe, leaders and chiefs of all Cherokee bands, and Cherokee warriors.⁹ However, the National Council did also hear petitions from Nancy Ward in 1817 and 1818, most likely because she was a Beloved Woman.¹⁰

Nancy Ward used her influence as a Beloved Woman to encourage the Cherokee to reclaim aspects of traditional Cherokee culture. The four petitions that are analyzed here specifically state the ways that Cherokee women and Cherokee men had accepted Anglo-American culture, and the ways that they had become “civilized.” Because I assert that the male-authored petitions do not use assimilationist language for the same reasons that Cherokee women did, I posit that Nancy Ward is the reason that Cherokee women were able to petition the Cherokee National Council and the reason that they were able to

⁹ For more information about the creation of the Cherokee National Council, see Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind*.

¹⁰ Michelene Pensantubbee has established a timeframe for Nancy Ward’s life as a Cherokee Beloved Woman. See her essay, “Nancy Ward: American Patriot or Cherokee Nationalist?”

act as audaciously as they did in drafting the petitions and their use of rhetoric that demonstrates the ways the Cherokee resisted assimilation.

As a result of Anglo-American assimilation and the accompanying shift in gender roles, Cherokee women were removed from having power and agency within the tribe. Women were first stripped of a position of power as they were removed from their role in working the land. The establishment of the Cherokee National Council also diminished the power and influence of Cherokee women by reorganizing authority into a hierarchical, male-dominated governing body. The Cherokee women's petitions represent an important effort by Cherokee women to regain some of the power and influence they lost due to Anglo-American assimilation by writing petitions that strategically used language of assimilation to reclaim traditional Cherokee values. Understanding the complicated form this language took, however, requires examining the primary author of these petitions, Nancy Ward, who had extensive experience in navigating both Anglo-American and Cherokee culture.

Nancy Ward: Negotiating Cherokee and Anglo-American Culture

Between 1817-1818 Cherokee women petitioned the Cherokee National Council to take a more active role in the land conflict, and the leader of these women was Nancy Ward. Ward's involvement with the petitions and with the National Council is noteworthy because she united the Cherokee women to fight against the US government's interference with Cherokee land, ultimately giving Cherokee women a voice of power, a voice that had been diminished due to Anglo-American assimilation.

Ward was revered by some of the Cherokee for her commitment to Cherokee culture. However, Ward also engaged in actions that have garnered criticism from historians and fellow Cherokee because they aided white settlers and Revolutionary American soldiers, raising questions of her loyalty to the Cherokee Nation. Ward's history shows that she is a complicated figure who is often seen as both a prominent protector of Cherokee culture and as an ally to the United States. Despite her controversial history, Ward's actions illustrate the significant role she played in the drafting of the two women-authored petitions.¹¹ Her dedication to Cherokee culture earned her the highest honor given to Cherokee women: Beloved Woman. Because of this title, she was able to sit in Cherokee National Councils in 1817 and 1818 where she read the women-authored petitions. The title "Beloved Woman" (or honored or elder woman) was an honor given to exemplary Cherokee women who showed great loyalty to the Cherokee tribe and way of life.

In the creation of the petitions, however, Ward drew on her experiences with the Anglo-Americans and with the Cherokee to effectively use assimilationist rhetoric as way to both acquiesce with Anglo-American values and assert Cherokee cultural norms. Ward's Cherokee heritage and loyalty, combined with her ability to navigate Anglo-American culture, appealed to the National Council and their goal of obtaining the US government's political and financial protection in exchange for cultural assimilation. Ward's ability to engage with both cultures, however, enabled her to apply Anglo-American cultural norms to her own experience as a Cherokee woman, which she

¹¹ Although two female-authored petitions are present in this analysis, there exists a third petition dated October 17, 1821. According to Theda Perdue, this third petition is more likely to have been written in 1831, nine years after Nancy Ward's is thought to have died in 1824. Because her authorship of this third petition is questionable, I have not included the third petition from this analysis.

outlines in the petitions. Again, even though Ward's ability to negotiate both white Anglo-American and traditional Cherokee culture has often rendered her actions controversial, her ability to engage with both cultures makes her involvement in the drafting of the two petitions particularly noteworthy because the women-authored petitions reveal a complex engagement with Cherokee and Anglo-American beliefs through rhetoric. Therefore, understanding Ward's biography can help us understand the rhetorical and cultural appeals that are present in Ward's petitions.¹²

Nancy Ward was born Nanye-hi in 1738 in Chota, the Cherokee capital in what is now Tennessee. Ward was born into the Wolf Clan, whose members inherited the role of peacekeepers and preservers of Cherokee culture. Ward's political and cultural actions stemmed largely from her experiences as a Cherokee woman growing up during a time of cultural and social changes. Ward's early and most formative years were spent witnessing the repercussions of Anglo-American assimilation of Cherokee people and culture. Ward would have been directly impacted by the changes in Cherokee culture (i.e. shifting gender norms, fear of losing land, pressure from US government), and, as a member of the Wolf Clan, she likely felt it her cultural obligation to protect and preserve Cherokee people in the most peaceful ways possible. As Ward's Cherokee heritage led her to take actions promoting peace, however, this often led her to take actions that were criticized by fellow Cherokee.

Ward's loyalty to Cherokees is evident in the fact that she became a Cherokee War Woman sometime close to 1749. As a War Woman, Ward went into battle with Cherokee

¹² Michelene Pensantubbee "Nancy Ward: American Patriot or Cherokee Nationalist?." See also, James Mooney, "Myths."

warriors and on hunting parties with Cherokee hunters.¹³ War Women typically tended to men's wounds and cooked their meals while away hunting or at war. Theda Perdue describes Cherokee War Women as "women who distinguished themselves in battle," and she goes on to say that War Women "occupied an exalted place in Cherokee political and ceremonial life" (38). As a War Woman, Ward transformed traditional Cherokee gender roles. Although she conducted traditional War Woman responsibilities such as tending wounds, cooking meals, mending clothes, Ward also expanded these traditional roles to include new actions and responsibilities such as sharpening bullets with her teeth so that they could better pierce the flesh of their enemies.

Ward's influence on the Cherokee and Anglos alike came from her title of Beloved Woman, which she earned in 1755 in a battle against the Creek Indians where her husband, Kingfisher, was killed.¹⁴ After Kingfisher was killed, Ward took up weapons against the Creek who killed her husband and is said to have acted valiantly and so bravely that she distinguished herself in battle, warranting a great honor from the Cherokee. Beloved Women were given a title much the same way as a great Cherokee warrior would have been honored, and they were held in high esteem and revered throughout the tribe. One of the honors bestowed on Beloved Women allowed them to be the only women to sit on the Cherokee National Council. As a Beloved Woman, Ward decided the fate of captives, negotiated with whites, and her opinions were welcomed at councils. Beloved Women were thought to have great power, or medicine, which was

¹³ Ward's early history is not as well documented as her later years. Therefore, while we know that Ward was a War Woman, the exact dates that she carried out these duties are unknown.

¹⁴ Ghighua is the Cherokee word for Beloved Woman. I have used Beloved Woman throughout this thesis for consistency.

used to protect warriors going to battle and were also used to preside over white drink ceremonies—the white drink (called black drink by non-Cherokee) is a purification ceremony, used to protect the tribe against outbreaks of diseases and to protect hunters and warriors.¹⁵ Ward presided over one such white drink ceremony in 1775 as “medicine” to protect Cherokee warriors in battle (Pensantubbee 181, 183). Historical accounts of Ward’s actions as a War Woman and as a Beloved Woman demonstrate her commitment to Cherokee culture, and her desire to use her own standing within the tribe to promote peace and protect Cherokee people.

Although Ward was recognized as a loyal and dedicated Cherokee woman, she also showed her desire to promote peace and protect Cherokee culture in her engagements with Anglo-American culture during the Revolutionary War. Ward’s willingness to engage with Anglo-American culture is evident between 1775-1783 during the Revolutionary War. Many Cherokee believed that aligning themselves with the British would ensure the greatest ability to retain control over Cherokee land. Others anticipated that siding with the American revolutionaries would gain the Cherokee favor with the new US government, enabling a powerful relationship that would eventually give the Cherokee the power to retain their land. Ward’s approach, along with the other Cherokee, was to take a position of neutrality in the war, only making exception for times when the war threatened the Cherokee. As Pensantubbee writes, “[r]ather than capitulating to American expansionism, Ward sought Cherokee solutions for preventing destructive retaliatory acts by American revolutionaries” (179). Throughout the Revolutionary War, Ward, as a War Woman, reached both Cherokee and white settlers and revolutionaries,

¹⁵ For more information on Beloved Women, see Fred Gearing’s book, *Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the 18th Century*.

pushing for peaceful resolutions to problems of prisoners of war, settlers, and Cherokee war parties. Though Ward's affiliation with the Wolf Clan caused her to have one view of peaceful resolutions, she was not unfamiliar with the Anglo-American perceptions of peace. In 1777 Ward sent a letter to Charleston, urging revolutionaries to forge peace amongst themselves, urging soldiers to see that "a white cloth was now spread over the path" (Pensentubbee 183). Perhaps controversially, she also warned American revolutionaries and settlers of impending Cherokee attacks. It is in actions such as this that Ward was thought to be aligned with the United States. Although Ward is either remembered as a Cherokee nationalist or American patriot, her history, most accurately, shows that she took the steps necessary to preserve Cherokee culture and Cherokee land, often by engaging with aspects of Anglo-American politics and culture in ways that threatened her standing as a Cherokee.

As stated above, Ward's ideas of keeping peace have led some of the Cherokee to see her as a traitorous figure. However, as Pensentubbee argues, Ward was not a traitor, but the product of changing Cherokee culture and loyally tied to the calling of the Wolf Clan. Pensentubbee goes on to argue that "to understand why Ward assisted captives and revolutionary soldiers one must consider Ward's clan affiliation," which led her to free captives like Lydia Bean (179). Lydia Bean was a white woman who was taken captive by the Cherokee in 1776 and who would have been executed by the Cherokee had Ward not intervened (180). Taking Pensentubbee's argument one step further, I will argue that Ward's decisions "were informed by a matrix of secular concerns, including kinship ties, economic interest," but most importantly, women's loss of power within in the tribe and an ever-present, increasing threat to Cherokee land (Pensentubbee 179). Given the

complexities and of Ward's history, I would argue that she did not act as a traitor, but rather as a loyal Cherokee who was, like many of the Cherokee in the early 1800's, grappling with cultural assimilation, land conflicts, and shifting power dynamics. The ways in which Ward navigated white American culture as a way to protect the Cherokee and their land propelled Ward further into the political sphere where she used written petitions to fight for Cherokee land. As my analysis will show, Ward adopted language of Anglo-American assimilation and transformed that language to urge the Cherokee National Council to recognize that Cherokee culture would continue to diminish the more land that the United States occupied.

A Comparative Approach: Cherokee Petitions Against Land Cession and Removal

Perhaps the most important result of Anglo-American assimilation for Cherokee women was the loss of power. Their loss of traditional cultural practices, loss of land, and changing gender roles prompted Cherokee women to look for various ways of reasserting traditional Cherokee culture in order to protect their children and their people. The US-Cherokee land conflict offered an effective way for Cherokee women to re-enter the altered political sphere of Cherokee culture. In order to make their voices heard in a Cherokee culture transformed by assimilation, however, Cherokee women had to develop new rhetorical strategies for presenting their arguments in their petitions.

By 1817, as the first women's petition was issued, the Cherokee land crisis with the US government had come to a head. Beginning with the 1785 Treaty of Hopewell, the

United States had a long history of offering protection to Cherokee people in exchange for land.¹⁶

In 1788 when the Cherokee National Council first met in Oostanauleh, the future home of all the National Councils until 1818, it can be assumed that they discussed the illegal selling of Cherokee land.¹⁷ Throughout the early nineteenth century, however, a number of the Cherokee sold land to the US government. Most individual Cherokee who sold land to the US moved west to Oklahoma and eventually established an independent tribe. The fracturing of the tribe led to internal conflicts within the Cherokee nation while pressure from the US to assimilate and cede land increased.¹⁸

Resultantly, these internal conflicts inspired the Cherokee National Council to convene in 1817 where Cherokee women first came forward to present their petition. The Cherokee women's effort to regain power within the tribe is in the two female-authored petitions and the rhetorical strategies that the women employed. The women's engagement with domestic language reinforces their strategic use of mimicry, a device that enables them to interact with the National Council in a way that reaffirms Cherokee women's powerful place in Cherokee society.

¹⁶ The Treaty of Hopewell was signed by the US government along with the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Indians in 1785. The Treaty of Hopewell defined boundaries of Native and Anglo-American lands. It also required Cherokee to yield to the "protection" of the US government. The Treaty of Hopewell was implemented to assimilate Cherokee into Anglo-American cultural norms. Per these types of treaties, the US government would "receive [Cherokee] into the favor and protection of the United States of America" in return for Cherokee land (Perdue and Green, 122). Although the Treaty of Hopewell and others like it were signed by Cherokee chiefs, they provided a one-sided solution to land ownership, and eventually caused small groups of Cherokee to re-consider negotiations with the US government (Gilbert, 20-36).

¹⁷ This timeline was established from information gathered from Reels 1-4 of the Letters Received by the Secretary of War.

¹⁸ Sarah H. Hill, "To Overawe the Indians and Give Confidence to the Whites."

In comparing these petitions, it is important to acknowledge the different audiences that the women's and men's petitions address. The two petitions authored by women, written in 1817 and 1818, are addressed to the Cherokee National Council and indirectly argue that individual Cherokees who sold land to the US government threatened all of the Cherokee and exposed the tribe to greater chance of forced removal. In both these petitions, the Cherokee women address their concerns relative to the amount of land that individual Cherokee were selling to the United States government. The two petitions authored by men were written by a Principal Chief and by a Cherokee warrior, and they are addressed to the United States Secretary of War in 1817. These petitions argue that, even though the Cherokee have done all that had been asked of them in terms of assimilation, they have "been wrongly treated" in that the threat of removal "over to Arkansas country," as suggested by the President, became an increased risk.

While it would have been beneficial to locate two male-authored petitions that are also addressed to the Cherokee National Council in order to engage in a more equitable comparison, very few male-authored petitions exist prior to 1816, which is a critical timeframe for looking at petitions pertaining to the land crisis. The lack of petitions written by men that are addressed to the Cherokee National Council may be explained by the extent to which Cherokee men accepted the hierarchical structures of assimilation that encouraged Cherokee people to be beholden to the US government. The Cherokee National Council was implemented in order for the United States to maintain control of the Cherokee. Cherokee men would have petitioned the US government rather than the Cherokee National Council because the US government was the body that had the power to negotiate treaties and payment for land acquisitions for the Cherokee. The Cherokee

National Council was encouraged to answer to the US government, rather than serve as a political body with the power to regulate Cherokee relations and Cherokee-US relations. Because the Cherokee National Council was established to provide order within the Cherokee Nation and to encourage Cherokee people to report to the US government, it is unlikely that the Council would have been used to solve conflicts internally.

However, because the Cherokee women's petitions were presented to the Cherokee National Council, one might argue that this engagement with the National Council shows their rejection of Anglo-American assimilation in favor of supporting more traditional Cherokee culture. Ward, in addressing the National Council, also shows her dismissal of assimilationist political structures. Although instances of petitions written by Cherokee men during 1816-1820 are sparse, there are later examples of Cherokee petitions written by men that are either addressed to the National Council or speeches given before tribal events. Because these other petitions exist, perhaps it shows the effectiveness of Ward's petitions to be heard at the National Council and to argue for a return to more traditional Cherokee culture in 1817 and 1818.

Cherokee petitions authored by women

The 1817 women's petition opens with "[o]ur beloved children, [w]e have raised all of you on the land, which we now have [and]...never have [we] thought it our duty to interfere in the disposition of it till now." Here, the women specifically appeal to the National Council as mothers in a way that also respects the National Council's political interests in following the US government's plan for the Council. They refer to themselves as wives and mothers, women who have raised children on the land now in question.

Stating first that they are women who reside within the domestic specifications of gender roles would have better enabled open dialogue, rather than openly critiquing the National Council's methods of resolving the land crisis. The Cherokee women use the Cherokee's traditional community-focused familial connection to the land in order to protect both the land and future generations of the Cherokee. The language in the 1817 and 1818 petitions hinge on the use of domestic language. The use of "domestic language" in the petitions refers to words and phrasing that center on a woman's life in the home (e.g. homemaking, motherhood, and acts of nurturing, caring for, and raising children, as well as performing domestic labor and tending to the needs of children and husbands).

It is important to make a distinction here regarding the classification of domesticity. Cherokee women's roles within the tribe both pre- and post-assimilation can be categorized as domestic. However, in this analysis, I am referring to domesticity strictly in terms of the Anglo-American concept of domesticity which was brought to Cherokee women under assimilation efforts. This domestic language is where we can first begin to trace the Cherokee women's use of mimicry. Throughout both female-authored petitions the women re-assert themselves as women who, by nature of their Cherokee-ness, hold a place of power within the tribe. The necessity to re-assert their power, of course, comes from the conditions of Anglo-American assimilation which stripped women of their power by encouraging them out of the fields as farmers and into domestic roles within the home. However, the Cherokee women begin to effectually regain power within the tribe predicated on a return to more traditional Cherokee culture. The Cherokee women tell the Council, "never have [we] thought it our duty to interfere with the disposition of it,"

referring to the knowledge that women do not interfere in the political issues of the tribe, at least post-assimilation.

At the same time, this opening language also shows Ward's resistance to assimilation as she refers to the land and to the chiefs and warriors as part of a collective family, and this resistance is where we can begin to see her strategic use of mimicry. The women first play into the collective consciousness of the National Council and their desire to continue to assimilate, but quickly use mimicry to make a safe but critical political statement by suggesting that Cherokee women should reclaim their more traditional roles, namely with regards to matrilocality. Cherokee women's connection to the land was not only influenced by their traditional Cherokee roles as women, but also as mothers whose duty it was to protect Cherokee land for future generations of the Cherokee. Referring back to traditional Cherokee culture, women were responsible for Cherokee lands. Saying that they "have never thought to interfere" in the politics of land draws on Anglo-American assimilation of Cherokee culture when men became the protectors of Cherokee land. In fact, in traditional Cherokee culture, it was very much the women's "duty to interfere in the disposition of" Cherokee land. This engagement with Cherokee politics, in the context of the Cherokee National Council, resists Anglo-American assimilation because the Cherokee women again draw on Ward as a powerful female member of the tribe, who held power over Cherokee land before Anglo-American assimilation. Therefore, the Cherokee women use traditional Cherokee heritage in order to reassert their traditional Cherokee roles as women.

The reference to "duty" proves Ward's ability to navigate traditional culture through the lens of assimilation. Here, in their duty to both traditional Cherokee womanhood and

the newly acquired Anglo-American cultural ideals of motherhood, we can see how the women were inadvertently reconstructing both Anglo-American and traditional Cherokee ideas of female gender roles. In transforming gender roles for the Cherokee and Anglo-Americans, the Cherokee women both accept assimilation and reject the changes brought by assimilation. The rejection of assimilation and the reassertion of traditional Cherokee values are addressed under the veil of assimilationist language. Bhabha's concept of mimicry is especially present in this case. Of mimicry, Bhabha writes, "mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage...It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background—exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare" (85-92). In a sense, Cherokee women, because they have assimilated a great deal, camouflage their resistance to assimilation through their application of assimilationist language in their petitions. The Cherokee women's practice of camouflage effectively appeals to the Cherokee National Council, enabling the women to resist assimilation by adopting a position that pretends they have been assimilated.

Both Cherokee women and Cherokee men, in their individual petitions, specifically mention the ways that they have accepted assimilation and how they had adhered to the "advice" of the President. Given each of their respective audiences, this acknowledgement is an initial step in mimicry because they model their rhetoric after rhetoric applied to the Cherokee in US treaties and negotiations. Ward's 1817 petition, for instance, suggests Cherokee women will, "as mothers and sisters, make clothing, which [their] father the President has recommended." Traditional Cherokee women also made clothing—so too did Cherokee men—but making clothing was only one piece of

the traditional roles of Cherokee women. However, because assimilation encouraged women to retain home-based activities, sewing and fabrication became the primary duty of Cherokee women. Ward's acknowledgement of this role indicates an acceptance of Anglo-American roles, transitioning Cherokee women from farmers to domesticated women who "manufacture [their] own clothes" and have children educated, just as the "President advised."

Similar to the earlier petition, the women's 1818 petition addresses the benefits they have experienced through assimilation. Ward asserts that Cherokee women have become "civilized and enlightened" by "hav[ing] missionary schools, and hope that [their] nation will be prepared for instruction in other branches of sciences and arts." Anglo-American education was part of the "civilization" program designed to assimilate the Cherokee. Discussing the ways that Cherokee women would continue to encourage their children to adopt "civilization" through an Anglo-American education was in alignment with the Cherokee Council's goal for the Cherokee.

While the Cherokee women's use of mimicry might show the ways they adapted to Anglo-American gender roles or emphasize the extent to which they engaged in assimilation, I assert that the Cherokee women's use of this language also represents their desire to reclaim more traditional Cherokee culture. One of the ways the Cherokee women use mimicry to resist assimilation emerges when they assert their "duty as mothers to address the beloved chiefs and warriors." While this language seemingly represents the ways that Cherokee women assimilated, with a closer analysis, this example shows the mimicry at play in the Cherokee women's petition. Instead of suggesting that Cherokee women have accepted their new role as homemakers, claiming

women's duties as "wives and mothers" allows the women to argue for the traditional Cherokee role of motherhood, offering that role as a solution to the land crisis. In this context of assimilation, Cherokee men embraced the Anglo-American fatherly role by taking care of their family through labor, providing monetary contributions, by protecting land, and in controlling the decision-making process. In this instance, the Cherokee women are using "duty" in much the same way as Anglo-cultural norms encouraged men to fulfill their duty to take care of their families. The women are re-creating their role as women to be a rejection of homemaking, while blending the traditional Cherokee feminine role with the Anglo-American idea of masculinity. The women are claiming that, rather than taking care of their families in a domestic sense as Anglo-American gender roles encourage, the women assert that it is the "duty" of Cherokee women to protect and care for their family, harkening back to the ways that women dutifully cared for their families in traditional culture.

The Cherokee women continue to resist assimilation in their petitions as they discuss their criticism of intercultural marriages. Intercultural marriages were not uncommon for Native American tribes, but were also used strategically by both Native Americans and the US government for trade and economic purposes. The women, in the 1818 petition, claim that part of Cherokee "civilization" occurred through the marriage of Cherokee women to "white men...who have been raised in this country from their youth, are connected with us by marriage...and have been active in encouraging the emigration of our nation." These marriages, argue the women, "ought to be our truest friends but prove our worst enemies." The Cherokee women also argue that these white men are "only concerned with how to increase their riches, and do not care what becomes our Nation,

nor even of their own wives and children.” In this instance, the white men who have married Cherokee women represent the ways that the US government has made contracts with the Cherokee, stating that if the Cherokee transitioned into more Anglo-American cultural norms, then all of the Cherokee would be able to retain control of their land. However, the Cherokee women argue that the Cherokee have followed all the suggestions of the President yet are still in danger of losing Cherokee land and have been threatened with the possibility of moving west. This was an especially important concept given the Cherokee traditional matrilineal control of land. White men marrying Cherokee women was an unconscionable strategy to acquire land.

In the 1818 women-authored petition especially, the women use bolder language to illustrate the ways that they have followed the President’s advice with specific regard to the concept of “civilization.”¹⁹ The women claim that the thought of moving to “the other side of the Mississippi is dreadful, because it appears that we, by this removal, shall be brought to a savage state again,” which would undermine all previous assimilation efforts that transformed Cherokee culture from savage to civilized in the ways encouraged by the US government. The women continue to remind the chiefs that they “have, by the endeavor of our Father the President, become too much enlightened to throw aside the privileges of a civilized life. We therefore unanimously join in our meeting to hold our country in common as hitherto.” While this language might also be seen as wholly assimilationist, the boldness with which the women use the language serves as a way to empower themselves and “unanimously join” together, as if to imply a

¹⁹ The 1817 and 1818 petitions approach this engagement with traditional Cherokee petitions very differently. The language in the 1817 petition is much more understated than the language in the 1818 petition, likely because it was the first women-authored petition.

re-formation of the tribe as a whole. In their use of this language, the Cherokee women effectively demonstrate rejection of assimilation and a move to restore traditional Cherokee cultural norms in joining together and thinking of the tribe as a collective family, a unified force against an outside enemy. Taking a more aggressive approach with their use of rhetoric in the 1818 petition also shows that the women used the petitions to expand traditional Cherokee cultural norms, and did so by mimicking the language imposed by Anglo-Americans. Here, especially, is it clear that Ward's involvement created the catalyst for not only a political call to revert to traditional Cherokee culture, but to expand Cherokee cultural norms to include Cherokee women as political actors and contributors to tribal affairs.

Another way the Cherokee women use domestic language to assert traditional Cherokee culture concerns the way the women refer to all Cherokee women as mothers of the collective tribe rather than a single family unit. In addressing "children [who] wish to go over the Mississippi," Ward claims that this act "would be like destroying [their] mothers," which represents a traditional Cherokee cultural value that recognized all Cherokee as "brothers and sisters." The Cherokee women also argue that selling land would mean the destruction of the tribe as a whole. The women say that "[they] have raised all of you [chiefs and warriors] on the land which we now have," calling on their traditional belief that the land is an intrinsic part of the Cherokee family. Furthermore, they also argued that the Cherokee needed to return to more traditional ways of life in order to protect themselves from "moving east." In this phrasing, the women argue that the illegal selling of Cherokee land by specific individuals created conflict for all of the

Cherokee.²⁰ A return to the belief that all of the Cherokee are one and that all of the Cherokee are part of the land would mean, to the women, that Cherokee individuals who sold land and moved west prematurely, would naturally stop selling Cherokee-owned land illegally, therefore reuniting the Cherokee tribe.

This reunification of the tribe that the women propose was not presented to the United States government, but rather to the Cherokee National Council. Not only was the Cherokee National Council a governing body created as a form of assimilation, but it was also a governing body that represented the male-dominated political sphere of the Cherokee tribe. Because Ward took the Cherokee women's petitions to the Cherokee National Council, the women might seem to adhere to more Anglo-American gender roles by placing themselves in a submissive role to the men who sat on the council. At the same time, these petitions empower Cherokee women, returning to more traditional aspects of Cherokee culture that emphasized a strong relationship with the land, a focus on the tribe as a family, and the roles of women and men having shared and equal importance. Here, too, in the Cherokee women's expansion of gender roles, the women's mimicry of Anglo-American cultural practices enables the women to acquiesce to assimilation while simultaneously criticizing assimilation as an institution. Ward's authorship of these petitions, however, allowed all Cherokee women to enter the political sphere of the Cherokee tribe through their use of specific rhetoric associated with assimilation and "civilization" in a way that they were never able to accomplish, even prior to assimilation.

²⁰ As noted by Perdue and Green, the majority of Cherokee land that was sold to the US government prior to 1819 was sold by individual Cherokee who then moved west. Cherokee who lived in Oklahoma and Arkansas implemented their own political and social structures that deviated from traditional Cherokee (76).

Cherokee petitions authored by men

Petitions written by Cherokee men regarding the sale of Cherokee land also involved the use of domestic, assimilationist rhetoric. As I mentioned at the start of this section, an important difference exists in that the two petitions authored by men that are part of this analysis are not addressed to the Cherokee National Council. Rather, they are addressed to United States governmental officials. While the two different audiences make comparisons about their use of rhetoric more complicated, I believe that the men's petitions can nevertheless help illuminate the importance of examining the Cherokee women's petitions as representing something more than simply arguing for the compliance of assimilation. To effectively argue that the Cherokee are using domestic language in their petitions to resist assimilation, I first need to show that the men's petitions do not use assimilationist language to resist assimilation. Because Cherokee men who were affiliated with the Cherokee National Council addressed the US government rather than the Cherokee National Council, at least during the years represented in this analysis, it stands to reason that they did so because they had no intention of defending or re-asserting traditional Cherokee culture.

The first petition was authored in 1817 by Pathkiller, a Cherokee Principal Chief, and it is addressed the US Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun. The second, also written in 1817, was written by Going Snake, an honored Cherokee warrior who, as he writes of himself, "fought against the Creeks with General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend," and his petition is also addressed to the US Secretary of War, Calhoun.

Rather than using domestic language of assimilation to show the ways that the Cherokee resist assimilation, the male-authored petitions use familial language to show the ways that the Cherokee have assimilated to Anglo-American culture as advised by the US government. Examining their use of assimilationist language shows the ways that Cherokee men accepted and engaged with Anglo-cultural norms, specifically regarding their manner of addressing the US government and asserting their own roles as the protectors of their families and protectors of the tribe's land.

Pathkiller served as Principal Chief from 1811 to 1827.²¹ Like Ward, Pathkiller had many interactions with Anglo-American culture prior and during his tenure as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Prior to becoming Principal Chief, Pathkiller was a Cherokee warrior and served under Col. Andrew Jackson in the Creek Wars. Serving in these various roles gave Pathkiller the experience and respect that enabled him to petition the US government on behalf of the Cherokee Nation.

In light of the land conflicts between 1817-1820, Pathkiller's role in the protection of Cherokee land is much more assertive than the Cherokee women had the ability to be. His capacity to be overt about monetary compensations owed to the Cherokee while still using assimilationist language can be attributed to the fact that he was the Anglo-American representation of masculinity—he is not only a man, but a warrior and a chief who had shown loyalty to the United States through his actions in the Creek War. Because Pathkiller's petition was sent during this particular land conflict, it serves as a testament to the Cherokee Nation's desire to resolve the land conflict peacefully. Moreover, although overt in his talk of injustices, Pathkiller continues to

²¹ Pathkiller is also referenced as The Pathfinder, Pathfinder, and Path Killer in US government documents.

adhere to assimilationist rhetoric, even though this rhetoric creates a strong division of power and keeps him in a submissive relationship not only to the US President but also to the Secretary of War.

Pathkiller begins his petitions with the acknowledgement that the Cherokee have complied with the US government's encouragement and elected warriors who were to be sent to meet with the President on behalf of the Cherokee Nation. In Pathkiller's 1817 petition, he argues that the Cherokee have been treated "wrongly" in regards to the US government's threats of removing the Cherokee to "Arkansas country." He also argues that the Cherokee are owed more money from the selling of Cherokee land, asking that the six elected Cherokee warriors would be able to negotiate for "some additional articles in the mode of payment in [Cherokee] annuity," amending a prior treaty that established payment for land that the US acquired from the "Arkansas Cherokee" who had already made the move west. Beginning his petition by discussing the Cherokee's compliance with assimilation is an important way for Pathkiller to open his petition. Pathkiller calls attention to US "civilization" of the tribe, very much in compliance and acceptance of assimilation, but moves rather quickly to discuss the ways that the US government had neglected their "commit[ment] to the care and protection" of Cherokee people, a move the Cherokee women would be unable to make. Pathkiller's use of rhetoric first appeals to Calhoun, but is still explicit enough that he is able to speak about the lack of monetary compensation for Cherokee land. By stating his compliance with assimilation, Pathkiller demonstrates the Cherokee's willingness to remain in peaceful negotiations with the US government.

Pathkiller's audience is an important marker of not only his willingness to participate in assimilation, but also in his reasons for employing the rhetoric that he does. Pathkiller addresses his petition the "Honorable Secretary of War" (Calhoun) whom he calls his "brother" and, like the women do in their petitions, Pathkiller refers to the President of the United States as "father." He continues to participate in a familial yet submissive relationship by referring to Native Americans as the Father's "Red Children" and white settlers as "neighbors" to the Cherokee and their "White brothers." He also refers to the Cherokee as "White brothers" and "White Children" of the "Father the President." Through his use of familial rhetoric, Pathkiller remains in a submissive role to the US government, which he perceives to be an effective role to play in order to protect the Cherokee and the land that the Cherokee still controlled. This relationship ensures that Pathkiller finds peaceful, non-violent ways of engaging with Anglo-Americans. Although Pathkiller uses domestic language to engage in a political and potentially dangerous appeal to the US government, he does so in a way that shows his acceptance of assimilation rather than his resistance to it.

Positioning himself and the Cherokee in the role of children to the President and part of the Anglo-American family allows Pathkiller to discuss the grievances the Cherokee felt in reference to the unfair treatment that they received under assimilation and in regards to the disbursement of their land. We especially see Pathkiller placing himself in a subordinate role to the President when he states to Calhoun that the Cherokee "have successfully unveil[ed] aggraculture [sic] & [the] manufacturing clothing, and educating [of their] children." In his final pleas, Pathkiller says, although the Cherokee have taken all the suggestions of their Father the President, they were "told by [their]

neighbors that [they] shall all have to go over to the Arkansas country as hunters.” Under assimilation, especially in regards to Cherokee-owned land, Cherokee men were encouraged to take up farming and agricultural practices rather than relying on hunting and fur trading. To return to hunting would mean another shift in Cherokee culture, one that would mean a “return to that state again which in the life of [Cherokee] forefathers lived for great many of our people are now experiencing the advantage of domestic habbits [sic] of living by industry and raising stocks.” This piece of Pathkiller’s argument calls attention to the domestic and “civilized” practices that the Cherokee adopted under the “advice of [their] Father the President.” When Pathkiller discussed the ways that the Cherokee assimilated, he does so to lobby for more money from Cherokee land sales, citing that the Cherokee have acquiesced to the conditions set by the US government that encouraged the Cherokee to assimilate and “civilize” in order to keep their native land and remain east of the Mississippi. Here, Pathkiller is strategically using assimilationist language in order to remain in the favor of the US government, playing into the assimilationist language to argue for a peaceful resolution rather than create conflict that might escalate to more violent measures. However, unlike the women’s petitions, Pathkiller’s use of domestic language serves only to keep the Cherokee in the favor of the US government.

In the example above, it is clear that Pathkiller is using domestic language to engage in peaceful talks with the US government. In contrast to the women’s petitions, however, Pathkiller does not use familial rhetoric to reclaim or reassert traditional Cherokee values. Rather, Pathkiller argues that assimilation brings many benefits to the Cherokee. Pathkiller writes, “our people are now experiencing the advantage of domestic

habbits [sic] of living by industry and raising stocks,” mimicking assimilationist language to show how Cherokee life is better than “the lives of [Cherokee] forefathers.” The women’s petitions, however, use domestic language as a way to show how the Cherokee have been disfranchised by Anglo-American assimilation, despite the “education” it has brought to some of the Cherokee. The women claim that their “Father the President advised us to become farmers, to manufacture [their] own clothes, and to have [their] children instructed. To this advice we” the women continue to say “have attended in every thing [sic] as far were able.” In this comparison, we see that Pathkiller places himself in a submissive, child-like role. The women, however, use similar domestic language to illuminate the injustices that have ensued from assimilation. They also use domestic language to appeal to the Cherokee National Council in a way that encourages a return to traditional Cherokee culture because assimilation has been so divisive to their people. Ward’s use of domestic language is evident with their description of the ways that their duties as wives and mothers have changed, and also in their explicit statements detailing how assimilation has damaged Cherokee culture. In Ward’s petitions, the use of assimilationist language is meant to encourage the Cherokee to join together in resisting any continued Anglo-American assimilation of the Cherokee.

Going Snake’s petition is dated the same year as Pathkiller’s and is also addressed to Calhoun.²² Like Pathkiller, Going Snake had experience navigating both Cherokee and Anglo-American cultures.²³ However, unlike Pathkiller’s petition, Going Snake’s petition

²² In Pathkiller’s 1817 petition, he claims that Cherokee chiefs have elected six warriors to serve as liaisons to the US government. Although unable to corroborate it at this time, I suspect that Going Snake was one of those six warriors.

²³ An important distinction between Pathkiller’s and Going Snake’s petitions can be found in the power that each exude in their use of language in the petitions. Pathkiller is

does not address the land conflict. Instead, he addresses the argument that was made in Pathkiller's letter—namely, that the United States government was not abiding by the terms of certain agreements and was treating the Cherokee unfairly. In his petition, Going Snake references an “interview with our Father the President of the United States” where he presented the President with “instructions” from the Cherokee National Council on how to proceed with the land crisis. Going Snake goes on to say that the President will also be given “a petition on a subject of very high and dear interest to [the Cherokee] Nation.” It can be assumed that Going Snake's reference here is in consequence to the amount of Cherokee land the United States illegally purchased.

Going Snake also remains submissive to both the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation and the President when he notes that the Cherokee have “full confidence in [their] Father the President,” and that they “cheerfully [sic] confide all national concerns to [the President's] wise and just administration.” In this example we see Going Snake accepting the President's advice as a beneficial and important addition to Cherokee life, a decision which he believes will win him favor with the President and enable the Cherokee to receive greater payment for land and trade goods. This example also shows the Cherokee relinquishing their political power to the US government by expressing the Cherokee's thoughts of the “magnanimity & benignity of the [US] government.” Going Snake continues to cede power politically by using domestic language to incorporate the Cherokee into a larger Anglo-American family, which he does by demonstrating the extent to which the Cherokee have assimilated. Going Snake uses this familial language,

not demanding, but he does aggressively argue for fair treatment. Going Snake however, remains submissive to both the US government and Pathkiller, the Principal Chief. This is indicative of the hierarchical power structure that the creation of the Cherokee National Council brought to the Cherokee.

not only to show the tribe's assimilation, but also to argue for equal and just treatment. For example, Going Snake refers to a meeting with the President as being successful because "the President listened to [their] communications like a Father and encouraged [them] that [they] might be sure of his influence in obtaining" proper compensation for Cherokee land. Here, we see Going Snake positioning himself as the President's child, an extension of the US government's larger family whom the father-president was responsible for. Going Snake argues that the Cherokee people, like Anglo-Americans, should "equally have a place in [the President's] mind & and that protection and measures for the amelioration of [their] condition" will be carried out in order to create a "state of more perfect manhood and become citizens sharing equally with...all the advantages of enlightened society." This language asserts exactly the ways that the Cherokee have accepted assimilation—they have become enlightened and think of themselves as part of Anglo-American society, and they believe this acceptance has earned them "an equal place" in the President's mind. Because both Going Snake and Pathkiller highlight the ways that the Cherokee accepted assimilation but were still under threat of removal, their petitions use assimilationist language to argue for the President to reconsider payment and actions taken against the Cherokee. In so doing, the Cherokee male petitions' use assimilationist language, but, unlike the Cherokee women, do not use this type of rhetoric as a form of resistance. Therefore, the Cherokee women use mimicry as a rhetorical tool and in ways unlike the reasons Cherokee men employed familial rhetoric, which is an unexpected form of resistance given that (and as I mentioned earlier in this thesis) most scholars ascertain that the Cherokee women used assimilationist

language in their petitions because they imitate the language already that had already been set as a precedent by male petitioners.

The Cherokee women's petitions address the Cherokee National Council with the same level of submission as the men's petitions address the US government. However, the women argue that Cherokee need to "unanimously join" together as they did prior to assimilation and encouraged Cherokee to "hold [their] country together." The male-authored petitions do not refer to the Cherokee as part of one nation. Rather, they refer to the Cherokee as the President's "red children" and brothers to the "white children" under the "benevolent care of the President." Both Going Snake and Pathkiller state that the Cherokee will continue to move toward more Anglo-American cultural standards. Rather than draw closer to Anglo-American culture, the Cherokee women provide a solution to the Cherokee's problems of assimilation. In contrast, the male petitioners argue for increased Anglo-American assimilation and more "civilization," which includes an increased number of "enlightened" Cherokee. Conversely, the Cherokee women argue that increased assimilation will continue to cause dissention within the tribe and so they encourage a reunification of the Cherokee.

It is also clear from the women's petitions that they saw individual Cherokee who wanted to move west, those who had ceded land, as creating danger for the Cherokee still on the other side of the Mississippi. In the first female-authored petition in 1817, the women say that "[they] don't charge any body for selling any lands," but it is clear that Ward feared that "paper talks" with the US government would threaten the Cherokee's land, especially if the US was to gain control over any more Cherokee land. As a last plea, the women "forwarn all [Cherokee] not to part with [their] land." This forewarning,

although explicitly stated that “it would be impossible to remove us all,” represents Ward’s fear that the more Cherokee land the US controlled, the greater the chance that their “father the president” would force the Cherokee west. As Going Snake’s and Pathkiller’s petitions use assimilationist language to increase financial support from the United States, Ward’s petitions, encouraged by Nancy Ward, argue for less United States involvement with Cherokee land and Cherokee cultural affairs by appealing to Cherokee chiefs’ and warriors’ traditional cultural values. Ward appeals to the Council through their use of Anglicized rhetoric that both asserts and resists Cherokee assimilation.

Conclusion

Analyzing the two Cherokee women’s petitions for their use of mimicry reveals the way Cherokee women adhered to cultural assimilation through their adoption of Anglo-American gender roles and how Cherokee women simultaneously used this assimilationist language to resist Anglicized gender roles through their engagement in the political structures of the tribe. In re-asserting their status as protectors of Cherokee land, the Cherokee women explicitly dismiss Anglo-American gender roles as they call to reclaim more traditional Cherokee cultural norms. Through this dual use of rhetoric, the Cherokee women’s petitions are an example of repressed people using mimicry to stand against an oppressor.

Analyzing the ways that these women’s petitions use mimicry adds an element to Cherokee scholarship that answers a call from other scholars to examine archival artifacts created by women. Theresa Gaul notes that she is “still somehow surprised that even with my abiding devotion to women’s writing, I find myself working with the writings of so

many men” (203). Gaul notes that her goal is to “examine the challenges as well as the opportunities inherent in attempting to foreground Cherokee women,” and it is often the opportunities that Cherokee women offer us that are misunderstood or kept out of analyses altogether (201). While most studies of the Cherokee women’s petitions argue that the women use domestic language to show their acceptance of assimilation, my analysis of the women-authored petitions maintains that they used mimicry of Anglo-American assimilationist language to resist assimilation-- a new interpretation of these two petitions and the ways that Cherokee women attempted to reassert Cherokee values.

In examining Cherokee archival documents, I have isolated one way that Cherokee women have been silenced. Because Cherokee scholarship analyzes the Cherokee women’s petitions and determines that they used domestic language to show the ways that they assimilated, they have neglected to see the Cherokee women using their own voices to resist assimilation. In “Manifest Domesticity,” Amy Kaplan examines domestic rhetoric in a white, middle class American context, and, in doing so, she criticizes the ideology of separate spheres and the ways this ideology was used to differentiate the places in Anglo-American culture where women held power and those places where men historically held all the power. According to separate spheres ideology, men held power in the political sphere and women held power in the domestic sphere. Although this model maintains that these two spheres are rigidly separate, “[m]ost studies of this paradigm,” Kaplan writes, “have revealed the permeability of the border that separates the two spaces” (581).²⁴ Therefore, the Cherokee women’s use of domestic language

²⁴ Here, I draw from Amy Kaplan’s essay “Manifest Domesticity.” However, I have also consulted Kathryn W. Shanley’s “Blood Ties and Blasphemy,” which can be found in a collection of essays edited by Rebecca Kugel and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy. Although

marks their efforts to engage in a public, political argument within Cherokee culture, while also fluidly navigating both Anglo-American and Cherokee culture.²⁵ As the Cherokee assimilated to more Anglo-American cultural norms, the roles of women shifted from “cultivat[ing] and rais[ing] corn & cotton to mak[ing] clothing for the men of the tribe” (Perdue 176). The Cherokee women use mimicry of assimilationist language to call attention to the misrepresentations of assimilation, misrepresentations that made the Cherokee believe assimilation would envelop them into Anglo-American culture without the loss of their land.

I position the Cherokee women’s petitions as important archival artifacts. When we think of critical archival pieces that were created by women and that represent Native American history, rarely do we think of petitions of a political nature. More typically, we think of women’s artifacts as baskets, handmade clothing, beadwork, or utensils used for cooking- or clothing-making. In the case of the women-authored petitions, I maintain that these documents provide us just as much or more insight into a more accurate history and as depicting the whole history of Cherokee women. Similarly, in the field of American Studies, this thesis also furthers the critical scholarship that has already been conducted

Manifest Domesticity is not the focus of my argument, it does enable me to demonstrate the ways that women in the nineteenth century participated politically through their domestic position within the household.

²⁵ Although Kaplan’s critique of separate spheres ideology centers on white, middle-class American women’s use of domesticity, applying this critique of separate spheres ideology to the Cherokee women’s petitions, we see the way that Cherokee women were involved in both the domestic and the political spheres of Cherokee culture. Kaplan draws from both Sarah Josepha Hale and Catherine Beecher’s writings as a way to showcase how these women used domestic language to make political arguments in the 1900’s century. Hale’s novel *Liberia*, for instance, “makes race central to women’s sphere not only by excluding nonwhites from domestic nationalism, but also by seeing the capacity for domesticity as an innately defining characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race” (qtd. in Kaplan 125).

that regards women as major contributors to Western history. Gaul argues that a lack of examinations does not mean “that early Native women didn’t produce a ‘body of work’ but [more so that] ‘scholars simply haven’t found it yet’” (Gaul 204). I agree with Gaul that the important work done by Cherokee women has yet to be fully examined, which is why this thesis aims to bring to light more non-traditional archival evidence of the political contributions that Cherokee women made to the tribe, and therefore to Western history. Gaul’s research criticizes the male-centered studies of Native American history, culture, and archival documents, while also critiquing fellow scholars for having played a role in keeping women out of the Cherokee historical narrative through lack of examinations.

Analyzing Ward’s petitions as texts that reveal important societal restructures, cultural norms, gender roles, and assimilation, helps us better understand the Cherokee women as a movement, or as an organized feminist movement, as Tiya Miles has suggested.²⁶ Analyzing the women’s petitions, especially in contrast to the men’s petitions, allows us to see a broader, more encompassing history that the Cherokee women offer contemporary Western American history. In her essay “Locating Women in Male-Authored Archives: Catherine Brown, Cherokee Women, and the ABCFM Papers,” Gaul draws from Hilary Wyss’s research to argue the need for more critical examinations of Cherokee women and their texts. Gaul goes on to argue that more scholars should be searching through the archives to find women-centered and women-written texts. It is in navigating those male-centered archives that I found a comparative analysis of female-

²⁶ Tiya Miles rather convincingly uses Nancy Ward’s involvement in writing the two Ward-authored petitions as a way to argue that the Cherokee women were an early American feminist movement who set the precedent for organized feminist action in the United States.

authored petitions and male-authored petitions to be most effective in arguing the overt use of assimilationist language to both accept assimilation while rejecting it to reclaim traditional Cherokee culture.

However, navigating Cherokee, male-centered archives proved to be as laborious as it sounds. Cherokee history does not exist in a single small, neatly-kept archive. Rather, it exists in a thousand scattered pieces. Some pieces of Cherokee history can be found in the Public Papers of the President at the National Archives, others at various Cherokee agencies. In researching and attempting to locate various Cherokee documents, I was faced with many challenges and limitations, the least of which was locating male-authored petitions written prior to 1820. The majority of the limitations came in the form of shifting through the complicated history of two distinct yet related cultures. This is perhaps why I feel as though I could spend years trying to perfect my analysis, years trying to represent the Cherokee women as perfectly as they deserve. Although there is no way to perfectly represent history, I believe that a first step in the direction of perfection comes from analyzing every part of that specific history. For us to see a more representative history of the Cherokee, more scholars have to examine more critically women-authored texts. Although my most present fear is not representing Cherokee women as they should be represented, I have taken an important first step in analyzing their petitions with such a critical lens—a lens that brings into conversation politics and domesticity in a way that expands American Studies' definition of an encompassing analysis of identities in American culture.

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