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American Ambivalence: Temporality and Trauma
in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Literature

by

Randall W. Harrell

Under the Direction of Mark Noble, PhD

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2021

ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses American literature set mostly in the antebellum period. I begin by describing the editorial work of Elias Boudinot and Elijah Hicks concerning the *Cherokee Phoenix*, then the dissertation moves through the latter years of the American Renaissance with a chapter on Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. The final chapter examines Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*, a work of speculative fiction that follows an interracial couple being torn through time between 1970s Southern California and the antebellum U.S. South. This project engages with studies in Black literature, Indigenous literature, literature from communities of color, and the American Renaissance. It engages broadly with nineteenth-century American literature. For theoretical grounding, I borrow and adapt philosophies from Homi Bhabha and Kevin Bruyneel—theorists in postcolonial studies and political theory, respectively—and trauma theorists Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra. The central argument of this dissertation illustrates features of what I call “temporal ambivalence.”

I argue that writers who confront uncertain futures are often ambivalent about whether to anticipate the unlikely or, in contrast, acknowledge cultural, political, and/or personal apocalypses. In attempts to reconcile lived experiences with possible futures, these authors display an uneasiness with a future while also fashioning literary experiments designed to traverse questionable temporal gaps. The authors I discuss grapple with their own adherence to common cultural sensibilities. This dissertation illuminates how authors struggle with the presence of unknown and pending futures, uncomfortable or multivalent perspectives of each subject's experience with time and an ambivalence about definite temporal moments. Because such writing foregrounds an obsession with speculative futures that may never come to pass, Boudinot, Hicks, Melville, and Butler direct their writing towards proposed futures that cannot

be continuous with the present. Temporal ambivalence, a way of understanding time from multiple perspectives, marks individuals and communities plagued by trauma. For the writers discussed in this project, to be ambivalent is also to be *ambi valent*—to develop the ability to view experience through multiple lenses and respond to the demands of uncertain times.

INDEX WORDS: Cherokee, Post-colonial, Indigenous, Speculative fiction, Ambivalence, Trauma, Nineteenth-Century American Literature, Literary Theory, Temporality

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2021

American Ambivalence: Temporality and Trauma
in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Literature

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August 2021

DEDICATION

I have a beautiful family—an incredible and talented wife and two kids that I’ve been able to spend so much time with during the end of this PhD process. My wife has constantly supported me through all of this—sometimes reasonably reluctant and other times more exuberant than me. She’s been patient and generous. She’s told me so many times that, “If a PhD was easy, everyone would do it.” Well, I’ve done it. It hasn’t been easy. But—Kendra, your support has made it bearable most days. Kendra, this dissertation is mostly mine... but it’s also yours. It’s ours. I’m so proud of both of us for getting through this.

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Acknowledgements are hard. I've thought about how to recognize important people in this section. I'm not sure that these pages are for acknowledging important people in my life. Instead, I should honor those who have had a direct impact on my academic work, especially that which pertains to this dissertation. The previous page dedicates this work to my family. Kendra S. Harrell has been such a long-suffering partner throughout my graduate work. Realistically, I couldn't have done this without her. She has supported me (I've also supported her) throughout this process. Her talents and work-ethic have allowed me to pursue, work through, fail at, become depressed because of, and eventually finish one of my biggest dreams. If I were to acknowledge anyone for this, it would most definitely be her. She's been my light, my encouragement, my motivation. I love you, Kendra.

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thing. When I hear about people who have never heard that from their dad, I have a hard time relating. I never had to work for his love. My mom has always been sensitive and communal and expressive, and she taught us to be the same. I love you, mom. I married into two incredible families—the Staggs and the Aultmans. You’ve all been so generous to me and have supported me through all of this. Thank you for how you love me and our kids. I couldn’t have done this without all of you.

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I’ve written most of these words at Manuel’s Tavern, a local place that has been in Atlanta, GA since 1956. It’s still family-owned. Manny’s has been a place for me to write, research, and relax. And they have some of the best food and beverages in town. Thank you, Manuel’s Tavern and staff.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VI
INTRODUCTION	13
 CHAPTER 1—THE <i>CHEROKEE PHOENIX</i>: TEMPORAL AMBIVALENCE IN A	
THIRD SPACE OF ENUNCIATION.....	24
1.1 Sequoyah’s Cherokee Syllabary and Bhabha’s Third Space	33
1.2 Boudinot’s Vision for the <i>Phoenix</i>	44
1.3 The Changing Ideals of the <i>Phoenix</i>	48
1.4 The Editorial Change of Hands from Elias Boudinot to Elijah Hicks	66
1.5 Coda—“DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP”	73
 CHAPTER 2—TEMPORAL AMBIVALENCE IN MELVILLE’S <i>MOBY-DICK</i>:	
TATTOOS, TRANSCRIPTIONS, AND TRAUMA IN THE ALIEN TERRITORY	
OF QUEEQUEG’S COFFIN-MADE-BODY AND PIP’S READING OF THE	
DOUBLON	78
2.1 Historical	81
2.2 Textual	88
2.3 Theoretical	104
2.4 “The Doubloon”—Traumatic Decodings of Time, Locale, and Experience	110
2.5 Coda	120
 CHAPTER 3—KINDRED’S TEMPORAL PROBLEM: THE ARCHETYPE OF	
AMBIVALENCE AS EXPERIENCED BETWEEN THE THEN AND NOW	124

3.1	The Passing of Time	127
3.1.1	<i>Episode 1—The River—Pre-1815 (pp. 12–17)</i>	132
3.1.2	<i>Episode 2—The Fire—1815 (pp. 18–51)</i>	134
3.1.3	<i>Episode 3—The Fall—1819 (pp. 52–107)</i>	136
3.1.4	<i>Episode 4—The Fight (pp. 108–188)</i>	138
3.1.5	<i>Episode 5—The Storm (pp. 189–239)</i>	141
3.1.6	<i>Episode 6—The Rope (pp. 240–261)</i>	142
3.2	The Making of Meaning	145
3.3	“This Alien Time” of Bodily Fallout	150
3.4	Coda—The Archetype	154
WORKS CITED		156
NOTES		164

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 0.1 ("Elias Boudinot, Editor. Cherokee Phoenix, 21 Feb. 1828")	43
Figure 0.2 Cherokee Phoenix Insignia (Multiple Miscellaneous Items)	50
Figure 0.3 Cherokee Phoenix Masthead (Printed Weekly by Jno. F. Wheeler, for the Cherokee Nation)	51
Figure 0.4 Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians' Advocate Masthead (Printed Weekly by Jno. F. Wheeler, At \$2.50 if Paid in Advance)	51
Figure 0.5 Cherokee Phoenix Excerpt (Elias Boudinot, Editor. Cherokee Phoenix, 11 Aug. 1832)	69

INTRODUCTION

The chapters that follow examine a small but diverse selection of texts: an early-American periodical, a famous work of nineteenth-century fiction, and a novel published in the 1970s but set mostly in antebellum America. In Chapter 1, I begin by recounting Elias Boudinot and Elijah Hicks's editorial work with the *Cherokee Phoenix* from 1828 to 1834. Chapter 2 then shifts to a discussion of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851). The final chapter examines Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* (1979), a work of speculative fiction that follows an interracial couple traveling between 1970s Southern California and the antebellum U.S. South.

Engaging with current social issues of inclusion and representation, I discuss texts that challenge conventional ideas of literary history and canonicity. By comparing three vastly different texts, I also question established understandings of temporality. By beginning and ending with chapters on non-white writers, I draw on their challenges, a history too often washed white, straight, and male. My readings thus resituate the alignment of major and minor works to focus our understanding of America's conflicted past. Each of the texts I discuss respond to curious cultural displacements and bizarre senses of temporal homelessness.

American Ambivalence also builds on theoretical writings of postcolonial and political theory: Bhabha's "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences" (1995) and his speech, as well as Bruyneel's *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.—Indigenous Relations* (2007). Bruyneel adopts Bhabha's third space concept to explain "ways in which the American settler-state and nation have sought, often successfully, to impose temporal and spatial limitations on indigenous political life" (217). In so doing, Bruyneel explores modes of resistance that occupy "a space of sovereignty and/or citizenship that is inassimilable to the modern liberal democratic settler-state and nation," thus detached from "the political choices

framed by the imperial binary: assimilation or secession, inside or outside, modern or traditional, and so on” (217). Bruyneel writes of the complications that reside at the intersection of national sovereignty and places of cultural significance.

Bruyneel’s adaptation adjusts Bhabha’s original third space concept, which designates “a translation space of negotiation” (Bhabha “Translation and Displacement”) that underlies all communication across all differences. For Bhabha, attention to such a space illuminates both “the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy.” Bhabha’s third space, although “unrepresentable in itself,” works towards making known “the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity.” The resulting ambivalence, which suspends normal assumptions about the congruity between speech acts and cultural identities, “destroys [the] mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is continuously revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code” (208). Thus, representation no longer accurately translates the semblance in its reflective glass.

Like Bruyneel, Bhabha leverages a third space as the occasion for strategic negotiation and experimentation. In a lecture given at City University of New York, Bhabha notes that “at the intersection of different languages jousting for authority, a translational space of negotiation, what I called a third space, opens up through the process of dissent, dialogue, conversation, strategy and craft.” He then claims that “The third space as a figure of translation emerges in the distinction, perhaps more strongly the disjunction, within the concept of intention [...] of linguistic supplementation.” In one of the lecture’s most striking moments, he connects the disjunction within all speech to ideas of futurity: “The embryonic moment of translation as afterlife is a rebirth. It is what links the historical narrative of the past to the impending fiction

and fate of the future in the sense in which futurity is a strange combination of consequence and contingency” (“Translation and Displacement”). Translation, in Bhabha’s account, does not simply convert one idea to its match across linguistic barriers.¹ Instead, translation also signals a temporal gap between any utterance and the possible future of its reception.

In his concluding chapter, Bruyneel echoes Bhabha’s temporal gap while describing the persistence of an established and on-going Cherokee national sovereignty, one that persists long after the forced Removal of the 1830s: “John Ross and his Cherokee colleagues refused the treaty terms that they thought would destroy their nation. In so doing, although they likely lost more than they won in the 1866 treaty negotiations, they nevertheless maintained the unity of the Cherokee nation” (220). The endurance of nationhood, or the desire for a long-standing national identity, was forged through the apparent display of sovereignty constituted by a national newspaper, yet that display is fashioned in the light of an increasingly uncertain future. As the editors of the *Phoenix* recognize that Removal is on the horizon, they compose a narrative that illuminates the disconnect between the lived present and the desirable future. As this threat becomes inevitable and immediate, the *Cherokee Phoenix* broadcasts its cause through ambivalent writings framed by the recognition of possible future genocide.

This dissertation grapples with questions of a sociological nature: how do we understand our place in time? While much American writing from this period assumes a future defined by expansion, progress, and prosperity, these three texts exhibit an awareness or recognition of an unknown coming destruction. Put another way, these authors “negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference” (Bhabha 208). Like Bhabha’s writing, this dissertation is interested in writing that negotiates that gap (or third space) by experimenting with unconventional literary forms and building impossible

bridges to unrealized futures. The development and disintegration of identity can often be a demise of personal, professional, and (in the case of the *Phoenix*) apocalyptic proportions. To contrast, I read the *Phoenix* alongside mostly familiar works of fiction to interrogate commonalities that yield alien, strange, or radical returns about what these texts invite readers to consider about their own temporality.

Whereas Hicks begs his readers not to abandon ship, Melville's Ishmael pleads readers to persist even in the face of utter and impending apocalyptic destruction. For a writer like Melville, well-read and duly-informed, naming a ship destined for the deep waters, sunken and overcome, after an Indigenous people would not have been without intention. The *Pequod*, named after the Pequot people of the Northeast, ultimately falls to the turbid and frothy wake of an oppressive ocean at the will of a powerful and long-lived whale. So, what happens when we read the *Cherokee Phoenix* and *Moby-Dick* alongside each other? How does one text illuminate the other? Also, how do these texts from the middle of the nineteenth century inform, or at least converse with, Butler's *Kindred* more than a hundred years later?

I argue that through the writing of Bhabha and Bruyneel, and their development of the third space concept, we see the uncertainty and precarity that often fashion concepts of cultural identity and national sovereignty. How, in other words, should we read texts that persist in spite of their imminent destruction, obsolescence, or irrelevance? How should we understand fiction and non-fiction that envision futures discontinuous with the material histories of their authors, characters, and speakers? How do such writers employ what I call "temporal ambivalence" as a method for negotiating experienced (or yet-to-be-experienced) trauma? Can we trace the presence of American ambivalence about futurity? Can we unlock new ways to engage with other widely researched and discussed canonical texts?

As I describe a theoretical foundation for my notion of temporal ambivalence, I should emphasize that this concept informs and reflects more than being ambivalent about unsettled temporalities. After all, most people have concerns regarding their placement in time and history. Instead, I argue that while these texts experience temporal discomfort, they still embrace and envision—in the face of imminent demise—paths that might lead to idealized futures. These authors deposit ideas of temporal ambivalence in their writing because they are concurrently displaced by cultural connections. We see what I refer to as temporal ambivalence in the anticipation of a future that disrupts the conventions of the present. These texts wrestle with the troubling discontinuity between *now* and *then*. In other words, authors unhinged by temporal ambivalence grapple with their own impossible futures while using writing as a way into that third space of cultural relevance. The speculative or apocalyptic insights they generate are at once discontinuous with their respective moments in history and powerfully instructive about what shapes those moments.

In each of the following chapters, then, I ask how anxieties about the time to come influence our understanding of history, identity, and culture. More importantly, I describe how we generate these social artifacts. Temporal ambivalence is, in short, a subject's response to an uncertain temporal alignment. *American Ambivalence* tells a story about writers that contend with imminent destruction and the subsequent impact their texts have on formations of American identity from the early nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. Like their respective texts, these authors grapple with their own adherence to common cultural sensibilities, often at the cost of contemporary popularity. Boudinot and Hicks continue work on the *Cherokee Phoenix* even in the face of its elimination; Melville publishes a novel that courts its own impossible future; and Butler revisits the trauma of American history in terms that conflate past

and present. Such works illuminate the presence of unknown and pending futures, a sort of uncomfortable or multivalent perspective of a subject's experience of time and an ambivalence towards definite temporal moments. Because such writing foregrounds an obsession with speculative futures that may never come to pass, Boudinot, Hicks, Melville, and Butler orient their writing towards proposed futures that cannot be continuous with the present. In imagining days to come, these authors help us theorize what it means to anticipate our futures while tolerating ambivalence about the temporalities we inhabit.

By beginning with the *Cherokee Phoenix* in Chapter 1, I develop a method for reading that I later use to introduce new ways of reading Melville's *Moby-Dick* and traverse new grounds with Butler's *Kindred*. By approaching this Indigenous text composed in the throes of an assault on national sovereignty, I discuss how the authors of the *Phoenix*, in an effort to reconcile impossible futures and work out their own ambivalence concerning their paper's viability, use the bilingual newspaper as a contested space of negotiation. My reading affirms the persistent sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation as witnessed in the initial publications of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, while theorizing and testing notions of temporal ambivalence seen in the newspaper's "contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation" and its struggle with "the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation" (Bhabha 208).

The *Cherokee Phoenix* interrogates concerns with spatial displacement. In an effort to maintain national sovereignty, the editors of the *Phoenix* cultivate a sense of nationhood not found solely within the boundaries of their homeland; instead, through the periodical, the Cherokee people begin to define their identity through the cultural artifacts of their national newspaper and their newly-developed and nationally-adopted written language. These efforts persist in the face of radical uncertainty about the coming future. In other words, temporal

ambivalence complicates the expression of national sovereignty, casting it as incommensurate with potentially disastrous futures; or, the *Cherokee Phoenix* performs the perseverance necessary for lasting sovereignty. Specifically, I examine the intended origins of the periodical and the circumstances surrounding its premature end. Much of the germane evidence presents itself through the changing perspective of Boudinot. I track these changes while also looking at Sequoyah's work of inventing the Cherokee syllabary and Hicks's closing comments printed within the *Cherokee Phoenix*.

Thanks to its bilingual format, the *Cherokee Phoenix* offers a rich canvas for physical and spatial representation, accentuating the negotiation between lived experience and an uncertain future. The *Phoenix* embodies the third space problem by participating in its creation while also exemplifying its attributes. It represents access to something, the syllabary or the language, while it also affords Cherokee culture with the mechanisms required for communication. By tracing temporal ambivalence through the original publications of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, I direct the reader's attention to the recognition of the impending demise of established Cherokee national boundaries. By tracking important changes within the newspaper, I show how the *Cherokee Phoenix* and its editors not only anticipate an end of their rightful claim to their homelands but also contend with ambivalence about their own project's political efficacy and potential future. I argue that the formation of the Cherokee capitol of New Echota² and its national newspaper reflect an early example of temporal ambivalence that anticipates literary experiments such as Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Butler's *Kindred*.

Chapter 2 witnesses Melville also grappling with temporality in a text that lacks grounding in familiar narrative and ideological frameworks. Much of *Moby-Dick* is about reading, and my chapter draws on close examinations of Ishmael's obsession with reading

throughout the novel. Queequeg's body, for instance, both its corporeality and its representation carved into his unused coffin, becomes a central text for both the novel and my reading of it. *Moby-Dick* resides on the boundaries of aesthetic conventions, a liminal space of negotiation. Bhabha elucidates the descent into the depths of temporal ambivalence as a willingness to sojourn into alien territory, thus decoding "the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation" (209). I argue that one of Melville's ways of writing about futurity includes writing about alien territory—both geographic and temporal—in a novel that constantly asks, "what's out there?" ("The Chart").

Later, Melville's narrator describes Pip's post-traumatic loss of language often and at length. Sandra L. Bloom describes language loss and a person's need to reenact traumatic events: "The only way that the nonverbal brain can 'speak' is through behavior, since it has no words. If we look at reenactment behavior we can see that traumatized people are trying to repeatedly 'tell their story' in very overt, or highly disguised ways" (11). Similarly, "The breach in the mind—the psyche's awareness of the threat to life," Cathy Caruth explains, "is not caused by a direct threat or injury, but by fright, the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly" ("*Parting Words*" 10). Here, Caruth describes the moment of unexpected perpetration of traumatic experience. Pip experiences the traumatic vastness of the lonely ocean in "The Castaway"; thus, he becomes unable to communicate in any way that resembles normalcy, culminating in the central reading of my second chapter—Pip's interpretation in "The Doubloon." As the above theorists explain, victims often retell and relive traumatic experience. The only other option is silence. Pip responds with initial silence followed by new heightened understandings; Ishmael responds with his survivor's narrative. Instead of reading the doubloon similarly to the others aboard the *Pequod*—that is, with self as central—Pip reads the doubloon

as the most central point in the entire ecosystem of their collective lives at sea. In other words, Pip's traumatic venture into the alien territory of the expansive ocean dislodges his general understanding and the conventional alignment experienced by others aboard the *Pequod*. Through this traumatic event, Pip sees into a world that contests conventional temporality, resulting in ambivalence as it pertains to both his interpretation and his assimilation among his shipmates.

In Chapter 3, I move to a twentieth-century text that demonstrates similar expressions of temporal ambivalence while inverting the temporal anxiety. Butler's novel, *Kindred*, quickly becomes consumed with historical uncertainties and precarities. As her main characters move between the present and the past, Butler illuminates a contested space of unfamiliarity, unsettling her characters' identities with each temporal shift. Instead of anticipating a possible future of destruction, however, Butler's characters experience a past at odds with their current lived experience in Los Angeles during the 1970s. They must learn to navigate the unknown territory of a past dominated by American slavery, while also readjusting to their familiar time. Although the examination of temporal ambivalence connects all three of my chapters, Butler's *Kindred* stands apart thanks to its vision of warring temporal settings that recasts antebellum America as the traumatic period with which the novel's characters struggle to reckon. Thus, I argue that *Kindred* is an archetype of sorts, playing out temporal ambivalence in the plot of its own narrative. This third and final chapter focusses specifically on how the novel constructs the passing of time and the making of meaning. My discussion culminates with an in-depth examination of alien territory and bodily dismemberment as seen in Butler's *Kindred*.

Moving from an Indigenous periodical to *Moby-Dick* to Butler's *Kindred* might initially come off as a series of unwarranted leaps. And in some way, I admit that this could be true. On

the other hand, consistencies, especially ones grounded in philosophy and theory, provide a through-line pathway that connects these works of history and literature. Throughout all three texts, we see racial injustice, settler colonialism, traumatic embodiments, and temporal ambivalence.³ These works would otherwise seem incommensurate with one another, but they are melded together. Interestingly enough, moving directly from the *Cherokee Phoenix* to *Kindred* feels inconceivable to me. However, the move to and from *Moby-Dick* builds a necessary bridge.

I also invoke recent scholarship on literary approaches dealing with similar discontinuities. In *Tomorrow's Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America*, for instance, Peter Coviello discusses peripheral ideas concerning Whitman and Thoreau's future-oriented detachment from conventional ideas about sex and sexuality:

If this unloosening made both writers untimely, it tuned them, too, again in differently inflected ways, to the call of an intuited future, a yet-to-dawn moment whose arrival might convert the only marginally legible errancies of their present tense into more viable possibilities. They were, of course, far from the only writers, and far from the only American writers, to address themselves to unripened futures. (65)

For these authors, as Coviello claims, the future waits as a “yet-to-dawn moment,” one anticipated to be congenial, the future “unripened,” “intuited,” and “viable.” Discussing Emily Dickinson, Coviello attempts to capture “what it is to feel misrecognized [...]; what it means to balance between a hunger for articulacy and the expansive permissions of silence; and above all how it feels to yearn, with sometimes painful intensity, for another time, a removal from the clockwork of the present tense into some freer, ampler moment” (65). Directly addressing *Moby-*

Dick, Lawrence Buell describes a related sense of debilitated agency: “All this adds up to a figure whose agency is vulnerable from the start, who despite knowing that Ahab is deranged is quite disposed to acquiesce as the price of admission to an adventure” (371).

Following Buell and Coviello, each chapter of this project pays careful attention to moments of uncertain futures in American literature. I argue that writers who confront such uncertainty are often ambivalent about whether to anticipate unlikely futures or acknowledge cultural, political, and/or personal apocalypses. In their attempts to reconcile lived experiences with possible futures, these authors discussed display an uneasiness with a coming age while also fashioning literary experiments designed to traverse the gap between *then* and *now*. For the *Phoenix*, I argue that trauma is anticipated. As for *Moby-Dick*, I point to moments that open up avenues of understanding coded meaning. Butler’s *Kindred* demonstrates the ways that trauma connects each temporal moment of past, present, and future. By locating these concepts in each primary text, I expose the following: the persistent sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation as seen through initial publications of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the ungroundedness of *Moby-Dick* through the isolating experience of Pip and ensuing fallout as read in the interpretation of the doubloon fixed to the Pequod’s mast, and Butler’s construction of a traumatic past landscape realized through a posture of temporal ambivalence.

**CHAPTER 1—THE *CHEROKEE PHOENIX*: TEMPORAL AMBIVALENCE IN A
THIRD SPACE OF ENUNCIATION**

On May 26, 1838, U.S. troops flooded Cherokee lands in what is currently known as North Georgia. Through a complex progression of fraudulent treaties, appeals by Cherokee citizens, and unheeded Supreme Court rulings, Georgians and other white people encroached upon Cherokee national land as its rightful owners from time immemorial were performing day-to-day life with no intent to abandon the richness of their homelands. Daniel Heath Justice writes how “the vast majority of Cherokees, many enslaved African Americans (including many of Cherokee heritage), and some intermarried and allied whites were driven from their homes and rounded up into filthy, disease-ridden concentration camps by federal soldiers and border-trash militiamen” (*Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* 188). White settlers showed up willing and ready to drive “the proud *Ani-Yunwiya*, the Real People,” forcefully out of their ancestral homelands (Justice, *Our Fire Survives the Storm* 6). Although the Cherokee Nation fought physically and legally, the U.S. and Georgia enacted one of the most significant acts of genocide on the soil that would come under full U.S. federal jurisdiction.⁴ “Today’s Indigenous people in North America,” Justice writes, “are the descendants of those who survived the colonizing apocalypse that started in 1492 and continues today.” Although “settler stories” of “Indigenous deficiency” hoped that the Cherokee people would “vanish into the sunset long ago,” Justice continues, “our peoples are still here, as are our relations, as are our stories” (*Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* 5).

Outsiders have also written at-length about the violence inflicted upon the Cherokee people during Removal. In *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation*, John Ehle

writes that “the corn of the Cherokee was knee high and doing nicely” (320). With little plans to forsake the country of their forebearers, the Cherokee people were more concerned with their own sustenance than the impending assault by American soldiers and Georgia citizens. “Families at dinner were startled by the sudden gleam of bayonets in the doorway,” another non-Cherokee writes, “and rose to be driven with blows and oaths along the weary miles of trail that led to the stockade” (Mooney 130). The lives of Cherokee people were turned upside-down, and they were gathered like livestock, forced to leave behind everything as it was burned, looted, and possessed.

The moving parts necessary for the Removal of the Cherokee Nation were set in motion years before soldiers showed up to physically evict the rightful citizens. Throughout the 1820s, the federal government and the state of Georgia applied routine pressure to relocate Cherokee people west of the Mississippi River. According to Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, “The Indian Removal Act,” signed into law by Andrew Jackson on May 28, 1830, “created the machinery that expelled to a distant territory some one hundred thousand Indians, including sixteen thousand Cherokees” (18). Their use of the word “machinery” captures the violent, inexorable nature of the robbing of occupied land, important spaces that not only sustained a culture for generations but also held the remains of their buried ancestors. “Machinery,” it seems, tells the story of a Removal already in progress, already with momentum and traction of unstoppable proportions. By 1832, the Cherokee people had endured continual efforts to thwart their stay in their rightful homelands. During this time, Harriett Gold Boudinot, Elias Boudinot’s wife, writes to her sister referencing the recent Supreme Court ruling in favor of Cherokee sovereignty. Over disputes concerning Georgia’s legal jurisdiction over those living in the Cherokee Nation, Samuel Worcester, a missionary living among the Cherokee people, was

arrested and jailed. Signaling renewed hope, Harriett Gold Boudinot writes, “The decision of the S. Court has much encouraged the Cherokees, & though troubles may yet be before them—they will continue firm. I fear Messrs Worcester & Butler may yet have to stay another year in their confinement” (qtd. in Gaul 182). Although Samuel Worcester and the Cherokee people won this legal battle over Georgia jurisdiction, their hopes were deflated when the U.S. executive branch, mainly Andrew Jackson, refused to uphold the ruling. In “The Press of the *Cherokee Phoenix* as Artifact,” Frank Brannon confirms that although “US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall argued for Cherokee sovereignty, President Andrew Jackson chose to ignore the situation and allowed Georgia’s continued encroachment upon Cherokee land to continue” (121). More than the abandonment of all reasonable decency, Jackson’s refusal to uphold Marshall’s ruling stands as a moment of unique U.S. governmental division and disfunction.

But during this complicated time—a time dominated by the machinery of national Removal and social upheaval and also a time of renewed hopes and persistent disappointments—a newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, began printing in February of 1828. Amid a Cherokee national emergency the *Phoenix* was born in the capital at New Echota, signifying the rootedness of a people facing imminent uprooting. As Gina Caison claims, “the Cherokee Nation held on, forming a constitutional government, founding a national newspaper, and launching a nationwide public relations campaign for their cause” (118). Years before Caison’s assertion, Althea Bass writes that when “the first issue of the *Cherokee Phoenix* was printed” it ushered in a “new chapter in Cherokee history” (89). This new moment—made possible by the establishment of the *Cherokee Phoenix*—sparks a public series of national efforts of resistance, acts grounded in anticipation and preservation.

In this opening chapter, I read the *Cherokee Phoenix*—a periodical that emerged during the tense historical moment of Cherokee Removal. I argue that its role in disseminating expressions of cultural identity among its people and broadcasting the same to a larger public of white Americans was integral in the continuity of Cherokee national identity. Through examining the *Phoenix*, I set up this project's larger concerns of temporal ambivalence by connecting the narrative of the national newspaper and its sometimes calculated and other times incalculable influence with this dissertation's larger investigation of how temporality and uncertainty become driving forces in growing expressions of identity, as seen later in two American works of fiction. After summarizing the cultural contexts that shaped the newspaper, I discuss the historical and theoretical implications that undergird both the emergence and eventual importance of the *Cherokee Phoenix*. To conduct this reading, I begin by describing the invention of the Cherokee syllabary by Sequoyah, then I employ ideas from Homi Bhabha and Kevin Bruyneel to demonstrate how the contested spaces of identity fall on boundaries that are not often fixed. Eventually, drawing on Bhabha and Bruyneel, I read the *Phoenix* as an enunciation of identity that exist along lines fraught with ambivalence and temporal ungroundedness. I argue that Elias Boudinot exerts the most striking examples of such ambivalence reflected in the various markers of changing sentiments concerning Removal. Tracking Boudinot's changing perspectives from anti-Removal to pro-Removal, I follow a progression of thought in which the editor of the *Phoenix* writes in the face of Removal, dismissal, and discomfort. By leveraging a series of passages from the *Cherokee Phoenix*, I demonstrate how changing political thought and responses to encroaching white people led to Boudinot's shift in opinion around Cherokee Removal. I close the chapter with a call from Elijah Hicks, the editor that replaces Boudinot—a charge to preserve Cherokee continuity.

Elias Boudinot stood at the helm of the *Phoenix* as it began its time in the Cherokee ancestral homelands. In a short biographical sketch on Boudinot, Peyer contends for Boudinot's important role in leading the newspaper. Under Boudinot's editorship, "the Cherokee national newspaper evolved into a formidable anti-removal organ of the Cherokee administration" (Peyer 136). But Boudinot is often "labeled as simply 'pro-Removal,' a designation that flattens the reality of his long work against the state and national forces that relentlessly assaulted southeastern Native nations" (Caison 113). While Elias Boudinot figured prominently as the *Cherokee Phoenix* unfurled its sails, Elijah Hicks took leadership of the *Phoenix* as it ended its time in the Cherokee homelands. As I will discuss, Boudinot is vacated from his position at the *Phoenix* because of his eventual stance concerning the U.S. terms of Cherokee Removal. Chief John Ross strongly encourages Boudinot's resignation without implementing an acting editor. The interim editorship lasts for just two issues—V.1 (August 25, 1832) and V.2 (September 1, 1832). After these complications, Hicks became the new editor of the *Phoenix*. Boudinot set up the *Phoenix* at a time of fresh renewal for the Cherokee Nation. As for Elias Boudinot and his contemporaries, the Cherokee Nation had only recently relocated their capital to New Echota.⁵ In fact, New Echota was established as the capital in 1825, only a few years prior to the newspaper's first issue. In some ways, it was an exciting and lively time for many Cherokee people. This was certainly true for Boudinot who would soon embark on travels to garner general interest and financial support from largely white communities outside of the Cherokee Nation. Elijah Hicks's involvement with the *Cherokee Phoenix*, though shorter, also offered important and lasting significance.⁶ His work with the *Phoenix*, especially in the face of genocide and

Removal, encouraged permanence among Cherokee people. After Cherokee Removal, the *Cherokee Phoenix* remained altogether out of print and production until the late twentieth century.

Reflecting on the mechanics of a Removal process already underway, Boudinot and Hicks wrote against the ruins of their own project. The publishers of the *Phoenix* saw an apocalypse on the horizon. In *Cherokee Editor: the Writings of Elias Boudinot*, Perdue writes that “If the Cherokees remained in the East, Boudinot feared that they would cease to exist as a people” (29). Leery of a radically uncertain future, they composed a literary project that addressed the force that threatened to undo the project itself. The editors of the *Phoenix*, through a national newspaper, reinforced the *idea* of a national identity in the midst of pressures signaling coming demise. Justice writes that it’s crucially important to “feed that fire, protect it, keep it going—it won’t live on its own without attention and care. Like anything that matters, we’ve [specifically Cherokee people] got to look after it” (*Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* 205). The creators of the *Phoenix* established this idea for readers by placing Cherokee written language next to writing in English. They also called attention to the common space in which ideas of identity are produced and conveyed to readers outside the Cherokee community. The text of the *Cherokee Phoenix* anticipates the ways cultures find their voices even in the face of possible erasure. The newspaper thus demonstrates a temporal ambivalence that reveals the discontinuity between now and what is coming or, as I will explain, between current realities and that which looms on the edges of understanding.

To understand the story of the initial six-year publication of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, I propose first looking at its ending. The final issue of the *Phoenix* printed in New Echota on May 31, 1834 included an address, or rather a charge, to patrons outside of the Cherokee Nation and

citizen-readers within the Native community. The paper's second editor, Elijah Hicks, delivers the following address to readers outside of the Cherokee Nation:

To those of our contemporaries throughout the United States, who have sent their able papers to us, we would return our grateful thanks. For the articles they have copied from our journal, and the indulgence with which we have been treated, in our remarks during our labors, in opposition to the most wicked policy that the wit of man could conceive, to expel the Cherokees from their beloved homes, the cruelly treated Cherokees would return to those kind Editors, all they have—their kindest feelings. (*CP* 5.52)

During the early nineteenth century, newspapers shared a common interest to print excerpts from other papers near and far. The *Phoenix* was no different. Hicks's address to outside readers recognizes the established presence of publications "who have sent their able papers to" the *Phoenix*, while also recognizing the ways in which other editors have "copied from" the Cherokee national newspaper and thanked them for "the indulgence with which [they] have been treated." Hicks assumes that the amiable publications share the stance of "opposition to the most wicked policy that the wit of man could conceive," and he expects—or, at least, hopes—that his readers would oppose moving "the Cherokees from their beloved homes." The final address of the paper continues contentious discussion already sustained throughout the course of the publication. Hicks presumes a shared understanding, made possible by the distribution of the newspaper editorial, between Native and non-Native audiences responsive to the travesty of the Indian Removal agenda.

Hicks's 1834 address continues with a message to his own people that leverages ideas of national sovereignty, oppression, and the Removal of Cherokee people, while also focusing on the more pressing idea of Cherokee perseverance:

To our Cherokee readers, we would say, DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP; although our enemies are numerous, we are yet in the land of the living, and of our clearly recognized rights. Improve your children, in morality and religion, and say to intemperance now growing at our doors, depart ye cursed, and the JUDGE of all the earth will impart means for the salvation of our suffering nation. (*CP* 5.52)

Although not often upheld and acknowledged by the federal and surrounding state governments, Hicks points out that the "recognized rights" of the Cherokee people have always been firmly established. He implores his people to stand firm and not give up the fight for recognized nationhood. He reminds his audience that even though they face an apocalyptic end in their homelands, they "are yet in the land of the living." Confident of Cherokee national sovereignty, he writes that "the JUDGE of all the earth will impart means for the salvation of [their] suffering nation." He suggests ways his people might express sustained cultural and national permanence by both believing in such an idea in the face of destruction and, in an effort to ensure social continuity, passing on these beliefs and sentiments to their descendants.

So, what events led to this final publication of the *Cherokee Phoenix*? What led to Hicks addressing his audience about "the most wicked policy that the wit of man could conceive"? What precipitated one of the most apparent moments of mass-land robbery and national genocide in lands that would later be claimed as the U.S.? The Removal of the Cherokee people had long been in process when Hicks admonished his readers not to give up the ship in 1834. Before they were physically separated from their land, white settlers and governmental officials had

attempted to culturally separate them from their land. The United States made earnest attempts—and had some success—to strip the Cherokee Nation of its culture and traditions. Many Cherokee people believed that Removal was the only way to ensure “the present peace and future happiness of the Cherokees” (Boudinot and Ridge 133).

As quoted at length above from the final issue of the *Phoenix*, exchanging periodicals during this time was common. In a letter from Boudinot addressing his father-in-law, he references the common practice of periodical exchange during the time. Boudinot writes concerning other papers, “I exchange with them—you will there also see the Phoenix” (qtd. in Gaul 171). Similarly, Hicks writes to his “contemporaries throughout the United States, who have sent their able papers to” them. He sends his “grateful thanks. For the articles they have copied from our journal, and the indulgence with which we have been treated” (CP 5.52). Because of this practice, the editors of the *Phoenix* were able to read and print excerpts from other publications. In 1832, Boudinot prints these words from an address before the Erodelphian Society of Miami University:

The power of the pale face has driven the Indians hill to hill, from prairie to prairie; their council fires are almost extinguished; their traditions are nearly forgotten; the last echo of their war song is but faintly heard along the receding frontier. Like the white mist of the morning on their native hills, they are melting away, and long, it is feared, before the problem of their origin is solved, the record of their final extinction will have been made. (CP 4.39)

For many Indigenous communities, “council fires” were necessary features of tribal culture. In *Our Fire Survives the Storm*, Justice writes extensively of “the sacred fire” (26). The fire stood, both literally and figuratively, as the center of communal life for the Cherokee people.

“Cherokee nationhood is, like the sacred fire,” Justice writes, “the embodied and dynamic peoplehood principle in which Cherokee continuity is rooted” (*Our Fire Survives the Storm* 27). Georgian encroachment, U.S. federal policy and faulty treaties, and general white sentiment had long made efforts to extinguish “the sacred fire” of “Cherokee nationhood.” The coming dissolution of the nation as they knew it—that is, within their ancestral homelands—looked like something sprawled on the horizon, like a slowly rising sunset or a tossed ship limping its way back to port. In the early 1830s, “the pale face,” with their tricks and treaties, sought to ensure the “final extinction” of the Cherokee people, the voices of their ancestors suppressed into the hilly terrain of their homelands. But as powerfully stated by Justice, in the face of “catastrophe, chaos, and change, our [or their] fire survives the storm” (*Our Fire Survives the Storm* 8).

1.1 Sequoyah’s Cherokee Syllabary and Bhabha’s Third Space

Even in their efforts to retain their standing as a people, the Cherokee people encountered the inevitability of change and the necessity of transition and translation. According to Julia Coates, “One can only speculate as to how the national character of the Cherokee people was shaped by the need to incorporate the new that people were encountering—new experiences, technologies, and environments—while maintaining a sense of continuity and identity rooted in a different place and a different origin” (xii). Coates suggests that Cherokee people faced an important moment of national transition. As the cultural continuity of tradition met the progression of new technologies, the Cherokee people worked to reconcile the ambivalence of rootedness and newness. They found themselves balancing attachments between the old and new; thus, the need arose for a new space to communicate cultural identity. As one of many answers, Sequoyah’s syllabary prepared the way for Boudinot’s work of founding and editing the

Cherokee Phoenix, both of them supporting the traditional past, enacting a unified present, and forging ahead to a sovereign future. In *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663–1880*, Phillip H. Round describes how “the Cherokee developed in 1821 a syllabic written form of the Cherokee spoken language not derived from the Roman alphabet” (123). While Sequoyah’s development filled the persistent void of written language—allowing entrance into Bhabha’s “discontinuous time”—“the establishment of a Cherokee national printing press, to be operated at the nation’s center” (Round 123) cemented the dispersion of the newly-developed written Cherokee language. The product was the *Cherokee Phoenix*, a bilingual newspaper printed in both Cherokee and English, which relied on the technological tools of “translation and negotiation” invented by Sequoyah and implemented by the printing house at the center of the Cherokee Capitol.

Sequoyah created the possibility of the future reception of Cherokee written language. His work to develop the technology of written Cherokee resulted in a syllabary. Instead of establishing a medium for the clean contiguity of translation, Sequoyah makes way for a space that becomes one of negotiation and contest. Sequoyah’s achievements led to the medium through which later editors of the *Phoenix* would begin to assert familiar (in the eyes of white settlers and Anglo-Americans) representations of national and cultural sovereignty. The work of the *Cherokee Phoenix* is surely undergirded by the work that creates the cultural material for linguistic communication—Sequoyah’s talking leaves.⁷

Among only a few others, Sequoyah initiated his people’s transition from being unable to express their own language and thoughts through writing to a people largely and efficiently literate.⁸ “The first half of the nineteenth century in America,” Ralph Henry Gabriel writes, “saw the accomplishment of no more difficult intellectual achievement than that of the Cherokee

silversmith” (103). Most accounts of the development of the Cherokee syllabary involve high-praise and notions of genius, significance, and grandeur. Sequoyah was poised upon an important and interesting precipice, the dawn of his people with a written language that could be communicated across time and distance. In his life, Sequoyah had held many jobs. He was a craftsman, hailed by many as a creative and one who could follow through with difficult jobs. He was mostly someone who worked with his hands. He knew what callouses and bruises and long days and late nights felt like. He was one who had moved through his own history adapting, and more importantly, dreaming. In a piece presumably written by William C. Woolbridge, editor of *American Annals of Education*, and published on April 1, 1832, Sequoyah is hailed as someone worthy of “a never ceasing tribute of gratitude and respect”:

The man who invents a valuable machine to diminish labor, or increase wealth, is deemed worthy of public honors and rewards. If it facilitates the intercourse of men, and the means of improvement, he is ranked still higher; and he who produces something original, whether it be an instrument, or a book, or a plan, or even a single truth, which contributes directly and in a high degree to the promotion of intellectual light, is placed upon the calendar of public benefactors, to whom we pay a never ceasing tribute of gratitude and respect. (qtd. in Perdue 48)

Woolbridge compares Sequoyah to someone who contributes to all facets of society, a cultural figure who develops “a valuable machine”—“something original”—and who “contributes directly [...] to the promotion of intellectual light,” hailing him as worthy of widespread recognition. “The invention of a written language,” Woolbridge writes, “is an effort of genius

and perseverance” (qtd. in Perdue 48). Embodying the spirit of Cherokee continuity, Sequoyah devised a usable language of utility from a well that arguably held no written language.

Without the Cherokee syllabary, the *Cherokee Phoenix* may not have ever been prioritized by the Cherokee Nation and its major political leaders. In his biography of Boudinot, Gabriel asserts that “Boudinot’s work among the Cherokees rested on the corner stone laid by Sequoyah” (101). Woolbridge continues his account of Sequoyah’s great contribution:

Let us, however, imagine every book in our language to be blotted out, let us suppose ourselves unable to communicate our thoughts to the absent, or to keep a record of the past, or to preserve our knowledge for the future, with no other evidence of our rights and property but beads, and wampum, and landmarks, and oral testimony, and we may approximate the value which should be placed upon the labors of *Sequoyah*, the inventor of the alphabet which serves as the medium of intercourse to the Cherokee nation. (qtd. in Perdue 49)

Woolbridge writes that the accomplishments of Sequoyah underlie the possibility of lasting nationhood and national sovereignty. From Woolbridge’s perspective, without the Cherokee syllabary, there would be no “medium of intercourse.”

This accomplishment by Sequoyah becomes even more impressive when considering other factors of his life. Although Sequoyah presumably could not read or write in any language, he pioneered a system through which the Cherokee people could communicate with one another through writing.⁹ More than that, he established the scaffolding that would display further proof of a sovereign national culture. In his attempt to understand how Anglo-Americans viewed sovereignty and established nationhood, Sequoyah perceived that the written language of white settlers provided, whether real or not, their own sense of primacy. By paving the way to a

bilingual national newspaper, his work also initiated the complex series of negotiations and cultural exchanges taken up by writers like Boudinot.

As I have noted above, Homi Bhabha's work on community identity and language heavily informs my reading of the *Phoenix*. In a lecture at City University of New York given in 2016, Bhabha describes his "third space" concept as the occasion for strategic negotiation and experimentation:

What struck me with some force was the emergence of a dialogic sight, a moment of enunciation, identification, negotiation, even a form of recognition, that was suddenly divested of its mastery or sovereignty. In the midst of a markedly asymmetrical and unequal engagement of forces, in an intercultural site of enunciation, at the intersection of different languages jousting for authority, a translational space of negotiation, what I called a third space, opens up through the process of dissent, dialogue, conversation, strategy and craft.

He then claims that "The third space as a figure of translation emerges in the distinction, perhaps more strongly the disjunction, within the concept of intention," which is central to most uses of language. In one of the lecture's most striking moments, Bhabha connects that disjunction within all speech to ideas of futurity: "The embryonic moment of translation as afterlife is a rebirth. It is what links the historical narrative of the past to the impending fiction and fate of the future in the sense in which futurity is a strange combination of consequence and contingency." Translation, in Bhabha's account, does not cleanly convert one idea to its match across linguistic barriers. Instead, it also signals a temporal gap between any utterance and the possible future of its reception. The making of meaning via cultural exchange, thus, can often produce divergent or counterintuitive ends. As a consequence, interpretation brings forth incongruent outcomes,

meanings that are torn into two or more significations. In “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences,” Bhabha posits the following:

The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot [within] itself be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an ambivalence in the act of interpretation.
(208)

The “act of translation” is necessarily ambivalent at the least and infinitely multivalent at most. Because acts of translation produce consequences that exceed the intentions of the speaker, Bhabha proposes paying attention to the tensions that emerge from such moments. For Bhabha, interpretation always finds itself in the relatively indeterminate state of what I call ambivalence. In other words, an interpreter (I mean this in a broad sense) must have the capacity to consider the source text and the (yet to be) new translated text while also working practically in a text that mediates between the two but exists only in an imaginary space. According to Bhabha, such mediation witnesses “two places [...] mobilized in the passage through a Third Space.” As I will argue, this ambivalent, third space deals in more than just the making of meaning; this space is also caught in an important negotiation of temporality.

Bhabha claims that “the void of misgiving in the textuality of colonial history reveals the cultural and historical dimension of that Third Space of enunciation” (209). “The void,” he argues, “reveals the [...] cultural and historical dimension [inherent in] that Third Space of enunciation.” In other words, feelings of insecurity abound when considering the instruments—and more importantly, the ones who hold the instruments—of accepted narrative discourse.

Bhabha's third space, as it applies to a global colonial story fraught with tragedies of invasion and genocide, then becomes the location in which alternate notions of implied social meanings originate—a place of translation, understanding, and negotiation. Although Bhabha references a “void” associated with a persistent third space, I propose a different but related concept for this idea. Bhabha's void can also be likened to an unknown and pending future, a sort of discomfort or ambivalence towards a defined temporal moment. As Bhabha states, those operating out of a conception of a third space “are caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation” (208).

Kevin Bruyneel discusses the importance of national resolve and the role that language plays in cultural identity. Like Bhabha, he directs his readers to understand that “it is helpful to think of language as a practice, in the sense of being both practical and real, especially because we live in and through language as much as any so-called material condition” (xx). At a conference panel associated with *Studies in American Political Development*, George M. Shulman supports Bruyneel's assertions: “Conceptions of interest and identity are inseparably joined in and through the language people use to make themselves a group; group interest and identity are conceived and enacted through language that creates signifying differences” (qtd. in Ryan 152). Among other accomplishments, “Sequoyah compelled eighty-three characters to transmit Cherokee thought” (Gabriel 103). Sequoyah holds one of the greatest achievements among his contemporaries; his development of the syllabary was culture-shaping and laid the foundation upon which generations of Cherokee people would build. In *Removable Type*, Phillip Round claims that “they found themselves at the center of a print culture debate over the legal status of Native nations residing in the United States” (123). He goes on to say that “In the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the two faces of Cherokee sovereignty represented by Sequoyah and Elias

Boudinot [...] came together to create a public voice for the separatist civility that both men shared” (132). Their work together, whether through periphery or otherwise, situated the moment for Cherokee national expression.

The Cherokee syllabary was the foundation upon which the *Cherokee Phoenix* fashioned its resistance strategy. The newspaper rose in defense of the Cherokee Nation. Whether or not its readership knew it at the time, the *Phoenix* supplied the framework to broadcast expressions of national sovereignty. For Boudinot, the longevity of stay in his homeland seemed fickle. How could an Indigenous people of the Americas settle the wide reach of Anglo-American oppression? One of the most viable options would be to develop a weapon against those that would attempt claim. Similar to Bhabha’s description of language translation, Boudinot provides the forum for Sequoyah’s accomplishment to express Cherokee language and thought among the predominantly English-speaking United States. Gabriel writes that “Unlike Sequoyah, who worked alone in his cabin unmindful of the shifting Cherokee scene, Boudinot sought to combine scholarship and action. The *Phoenix* was his weapon, and through its columns he attacked intemperance” (125). The pairing of Sequoyah’s ground-breaking syllabary and Boudinot’s power to disseminate information through the new periodical birthed a moment for further expression of Cherokee nationhood. In 1832, the *American Annals of Education* printed an address from Boudinot praising the contribution of Sequoyah:

Many of your readers are aware of the existence of the Cherokee Alphabet; but few, perhaps, have had access to a history of its invention, and hardly any have any idea of the nature of the Alphabet itself. It is to be regretted that this remarkable display of genius has not been more generally noticed in the periodicals of the day, and proper tribute paid to the untutored inventor. It is not

yet too late to do justice to this great benefactor of the Cherokees, who, by his inventive powers, has raised them to an elevation unattained by any other Indian nation, and made them a reading and intellectual people. (qtd. in Perdue 49)

While at once honoring the accomplishments of the Cherokee silversmith, Boudinot also criticizes the lack of periodical coverage of his great feat. He writes how “this remarkable display of genius” has receded into the margins of history and claims that “proper tribute” of “the untutored inventor” has not found appropriate coverage. Boudinot, in his own day, had at least a glimpse of the impact that Sequoyah’s work would have on history. Gabriel claims that Sequoyah “had opened a gate for the Cherokee people. Through it could be glimpsed a path leading ever upward until it was lost in shimmering dreams of Indian greatness” (104). The stronghold constructed by the Cherokee people in their fight for recognition, sovereignty, and temporal significance resounds not only in the *American Annals of Education* but also in the record of American history. The development of the Cherokee syllabary and the publication of the *Cherokee Phoenix* play an important and pivotal role in the Cherokee Nation’s battle to be recognized as sovereign, a fight that lasts long after they are expelled from their homelands.

Bhabha’s third space describes the necessary possibility of a locale designated as an inter-cultural territory of negotiating meaning between two conflicting systems of knowledge—the English alphabet and the Cherokee syllabary. As the governing bodies of the Cherokee Nation and the United States establish how important modes of politics and culture occur in discursive spaces of language and written negotiations (treaties, newspapers, and letters, among others), Sequoyah develops the Cherokee syllabary—a technology providing the mechanisms for translation and communication. Sequoyah’s Cherokee syllabary situates a foundation upon which culture and politics could emanate. Drawing on his inventive work, Boudinot establishes

the *Cherokee Phoenix*—a text enacting and embodying a third space that translates, integrates, and broadcasts Cherokee thought and displays of national sovereignty. How the *Phoenix* emerges and what the project hopes to accomplish introduces the temporal dimension of temporal ambivalence. Thus, the issues amplified by the *Cherokee Phoenix* contend not only with the “void of misgiving” as understood by Bhabha but also with Removal as anticipated by Boudinot and others—a catastrophic event forcing Cherokee people to negotiate across both space and time. Boudinot tempers a cultural discussion that challenges preconceived ideas of temporality. He amplifies the visual representation of temporal ambivalence in his editorship of the *Cherokee Phoenix* by creating the translated page, a medium akin to Bhabha’s third space, through which to argue for the acknowledgment of national sovereignty and cultural persistence.

Visually, the translated page exerts ambivalence. When encountering the periodical for the first time, readers might experience curious spaces of liminality. A disorientation markedly unique, the Cherokee syllabary as translated into the English alphabet sprawls in columns on the page. In some issues, open space winds through each entry, forcing the eyes to traverse Bhabha’s “alien territory” of enunciation and translation. As one section in English gives way to another in Cherokee, the reader experiences Bhabha’s canvas of negotiation. Although the logic of a syllabary denotes brevity of space, the earliest publications of the *Phoenix* might suggest that the English language overwhelms the portions written in Cherokee. In other words, as seen on the page, English sometimes controls significantly more space in the *Cherokee Phoenix*.

Interestingly enough, this difference in editorial real-estate carries more notability than just the space lost in translation. For Boudinot and others behind the publication, decision were made surrounding what and how much of the newspaper would be translated from the English alphabet to the Cherokee syllabary. In other words, as seen on the page of the *Phoenix*, some text

originally sourced from English does not appear translated into Cherokee. Much of this can be attributed to the fact that the *Phoenix* only had one typesetter. While the demands of typesetting lay before the typesetter, the problem of time persists as there is only so much time to set the type. Readers, especially those who come much later, might find the *Cherokee Phoenix* as a text fragmented by discontinuity, one with visual gaps as well as intellectual interstices, a text fraught in the ire of certain destruction, one concurrently cast into the culture of English-speaking colonizers and eventually perused by readers of Indigenous culture and true accounts of American history.

As Bhabha describes a theoretical void, the *Cherokee Phoenix* displays physical emptiness, voids seen



Figure 0.1 ("Elias Boudinot, Editor. *Cherokee Phoenix*, 21 Feb. 1828")

when encountering the newspaper's format. As the Cherokee syllabary exerts its presence in the *Phoenix*, the newspaper as a whole exerts its sovereignty among white, American culture.

Bruyneel claims that a third space of sovereignty, whether successful or not, vies for national and political recognition. Similarly, the Cherokee people experience the disjunction between

opposing political states. The *Phoenix* represents access to something, namely the written language through the Cherokee syllabary, and in turn renders Cherokee culture into forms accessible and familiar to Western audiences. In regards to Cherokee national sovereignty, the future is not known or presupposed; however, Boudinot and eventually Hicks work in the face of the inevitability of a destabilized cultural identity. The editors of the *Cherokee Phoenix* proliferate awareness or at least anticipation of the coming destruction. The physical space of the *Phoenix* and its content thus speak to and from what I call temporal ambivalence.

1.2 Boudinot's Vision for the *Phoenix*

Elias Boudinot and his wife, Harriett Gold Boudinot, moved from the Northeast to the Cherokee Nation due to on-going oppression from her community and his assignment to work among Cherokee people in the name of Christian church. After the announcement of their engagement, “Harriett’s brother Stephen and the young people of the town gathered on the village green and burned images of Harriett and Elias in effigy, a scene Harriett witnessed from a neighbor’s home where she had been secreted for her own safety” (Gaul 14). Their proposed marriage threatened the projects of settler colonization and Indigenous assimilation. In the introduction to Theresa Strouth Gaul’s *To Marry an Indian*, she explains how “the white man/native woman relationship was consonant with the impetus of colonization,” while “the converse posed an almost unrecoverable threat” (11). Nevertheless, Elias and Harriett Gold Boudinot commence their labors within the Cherokee Nation. Although the role that his involvement would play in the expressed sovereignty of his people may not have been anticipated by him or his contemporaries, Boudinot and his efforts with the *Cherokee Phoenix* showed his anticipation of the Nation’s continued struggle against the U.S. government, a

struggle that would continue to shape Cherokee identity throughout the nineteenth century.

However, Boudinot begins work with Worcester, a white missionary, to commence a project that would print weekly installments of a Cherokee newspaper. They would also begin translating and printing important texts (mostly religious) from English to Cherokee.

From the 1828 outset of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, Boudinot is clear with his motives: “the great and sole motive in establishing this paper, is the benefit of the Cherokees. This will be the great aim of the Editor, which he intends to pursue with undeviating steps” (qtd. in Perdue 90). Similarly, Perdue claims that the “newspaper’s wide circulation made it a powerful propaganda tool for the Cherokees” (16). During a time of persistent uncertainty, the *Phoenix* stood as a fixed cultural marker on which to anchor. In the first issue of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, Boudinot explicitly states the purpose and intentions of the national newspaper:

Let the public but consider our motives, and the design of this paper, which is, the benefit of the Cherokees, and we are sure, those who wish well to the Indian race, will keep out of view all the failings and deficiencies [*sic*] of the Editor, and give a prompt support to the first paper ever published in the Indian country, and under the direction of some of the remnants of those, who by the most mysterious course of providence, have dwindled into oblivion. To prevent us from the like destiny, is certainly a laudable undertaking, which the Christian, the Patriot, and the Philanthropist will not be ashamed to aid. Many are now engaged, by various means and with various success, in attempting to rescue, not only us, but all our kindred tribes, from the impending danger which has been so fatal to our forefathers; and we are happy to be in a situation to tender them our public acknowledgements for their unwearied efforts. Our present undertaking is

intended to be nothing more than a feeble auxiliary to these efforts. Those therefore, who are engaged for the good of the Indians of every tribe, and who pray that salvation, peace, and the comforts of civilized life may be extended to every Indian fire side on this continent, will consider us as co-workers together in their benevolent labors. To them we make our appeal for patronage, and pledge ourselves to encourage and assist them, in whatever appears to be for the benefit of the Aborigines.

In the commencement of our labours [*sic*], it is due to our readers that we should acquaint them with the general principles, which we have prescribed to ourselves as rules in conducting this paper. These principles we shall accordingly state briefly. It may, however, be proper to observe that the establishment which has been lately purchased, principally with the charities of our white brethren is the property of the Nation and that the paper, which is now offered to the public, is patronized by, and under the direction of, the Cherokee Legislature, as will be seen in the Prospectus already before the public. As servants we are bound to that body, from which, however, we have not received any instructions, but are left at liberty to form such regulations for our conduct as will appear to us most conducive to the interests of the people, for whose benefit, this paper has been established.

As the *Phoenix* is a national paper, we shall feel ourselves bound to devote it to national purposes. "The laws and public documents of the Nation," and matters relating to the welfare and condition of the Cherokees as a people, will be faithfully published in English and Cherokee. (*CP* 1.1)

When the *Phoenix* was launched in 1828, Indigenous communities had long been negatively impacted by settler colonialism. Boudinot acknowledged this, honoring those who “have dwindled into oblivion” and recognizing the important role that he and other “remnants” occupy in continued Indigenous sovereignty. He considered this persistence a “laudable undertaking.”

Boudinot asserts that he and his colleagues “are bound to that body”—a complicated structure of accountability and attachment. On the one hand, they were accountable to uphold “the interests of the people”; however, they were not bound by any preconceived conditions as ordered by official legislation of the Cherokee government. On the other hand, an inseparable fusion held them also to the body (or bodies) of the Cherokee homelands—lands whose history was and is intertwined with individual identity and the bodies that reside beneath them. For Boudinot, the *Phoenix* had a semblance of life; it could change and be changed depending on the needs and desires of his country’s citizens and the general good of Cherokee people. The *Phoenix* was born out of benevolent intentions. They hoped that their “motives, and the design of this paper” would pay homage and build momentum for more and more recognition of their national sovereignty. Through the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the Cherokee Nation “created a bicultural public sphere out of which Boudinot hoped public opinion would be shaped” (Round 138). As an example of the importance of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, Boudinot posits its unique placement in American and Indigenous history. He writes that the *Phoenix* was “the first paper ever published in the Indian country.” The Cherokee people, although they had exemplified what the U.S. would have deemed flexible and reasonable, exerted an extraordinary presence in opposition to the U.S. government. Boudinot’s intentions are explicit; he endeavors to publish a periodical that directly addresses “the welfare and condition of the Cherokees as a people.”

On state and federal levels, the U.S. government enacted efforts in attempts to eradicate the Cherokee people. As Cherokee people attempted some forms of assimilation and legal acquiescence, they were still met with resistance. Boudinot attempts, through the *Cherokee Phoenix*, to present a case for empathy and compassion among white readers. He calls this attempt “a feeble auxiliary,” one that diverts attention but ultimately falls on the sword of European encroachment. In a moment when the Cherokee Nation needs all-hands-on-deck, Boudinot and the *Cherokee Phoenix* call for the “benevolent labors” of “co-workers together.” While the *Phoenix* was sanctioned by the Cherokee Nation or as the *Phoenix* states, “the Cherokee Legislature,” Boudinot claims that the newspaper was “established” for “the interests of the people.” Again, he falls in line as many before and after him as one “bound to that body.” In other words, Boudinot’s position as editor produced a feeling of indebtedness within him. He held a position of managing a newspaper while also intuiting the needs of the Cherokee people at moments. He includes himself in a telling description: one of many “remnants” whom “have dwindled into oblivion.” The *Phoenix* was founded on ideals of an already progressing spatial demise of the Cherokee Nation. In other words, Boudinot began his tenure at the *Phoenix* already with an understanding of the absolute encroachment of white settlers into and onto the spatial occupation of Cherokee people in their homelands.

1.3 The Changing Ideals of the *Phoenix*

As I will explain in full later in this section, Boudinot’s politics concerning Removal were not static. In fact, he was one of the “ardent opponent[s] of removal who eventually signed the treaty that set in motion the events culminating in the Trail of Tears” (Gaul 2). Even though he expressed changing thought throughout his time with the *Phoenix*, he is often remembered

only for his treasonous act of signing the Treaty of New Echota in 1835. As early as 1829 during the initial publications of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot had a moment of prophetic vision, one that aptly illustrates Bhabha's third space of enunciation and my concept of temporal ambivalence:

Amidst the many trials and difficulties which have attended us, we have with much pleasure received many individual assurances that our labors have been acceptable. For this we are greatly thankful. If we have been instrumental in furthering the good cause of Indian improvement—if we have added a little to the light which is springing up among the Cherokees,—if we have succeeded in checking the vice of intemperance—and if we have gained the sympathies and good wishes of some of our white readers, for the Aborigines of this Country, our labors have not been altogether in vain, and we should feel well compensated, even if we were deprived of assurances from any of our patrons, that our paper has met with their approbation. (*CP* 2.9)

For Boudinot, the *Cherokee Phoenix* held a paramount position within the Cherokee Nation. He hoped that it would stand as a beacon for Cherokee people and as a challenge for his white audience. Boudinot intended to garner “sympathies” and “assurances” to aid in “Indian improvement” for his people and those from other Indigenous communities. The forum of the *Cherokee Phoenix* contended, in Boudinot's eyes, “for the Aborigines of this Country.” The space of the newspaper provided a medium for expression of culture, a designated territory for translation and negotiation.

Although the *Phoenix* began with Boudinot's confidence and assertiveness, its role remained unsettled. As the periodical progressed, the simplistic outlook of developing something that props up "the welfare and condition of the Cherokees as a people" ultimately fell to social complications—namely oppressive Georgians, unenforced federal court rulings, and the rightfully recalcitrant Cherokee people. The *Cherokee Phoenix* lasted less than a year with its original title, transitioning to a new name in early February of 1829. "The paper's title was amended to become



Figure 0.2
Cherokee Phoenix Insignia
(Multiple Miscellaneous
Items)

the *Cherokee Phoenix and Indian's Advocate*," Round writes, "perhaps to reflect its growing role as a political organ for airing Indian grievances" (135). Between numbers 47 and 48 the newspaper changed from *Cherokee Phoenix* to *Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians' Advocate*. This change further announced its intention to stand in for people of the Cherokee Nation, as well as other Southeastern tribes all enduring their own pressures from U.S. and local governments to assimilate and remove. Another element of the change is noteworthy: the logo. At the inception of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the publishers included a detailed insignia. Round recounts how the "name and its impressive masthead image (a phoenix rising from a cluster of flames) are themselves powerful bicultural signs, which have long served as figures for Cherokee survival" (133). Just as the phoenix in the insignia claims to offer protection, the *Cherokee Phoenix* hoped to offer protection to the Cherokee people's claim to cultural and national sovereignty. When the paper changed its title, as one can observe, it also dropped the recognizable insignia. As Round claims, "the phoenix is a firmly Euro-Western sign" (133); its removal could be a telling

exclusion. Whether to distance their national newspaper from images associated with their colonizing settlers or to emphasize their political resistance in defense of all tribes settled in ancestral homelands of the Southeast, the *Phoenix* underwent major changes pertaining to how it presented itself visually to its readers.



Figure 0.3 Cherokee Phoenix Masthead (Printed Weekly by Jno. F. Wheeler, for the Cherokee Nation)

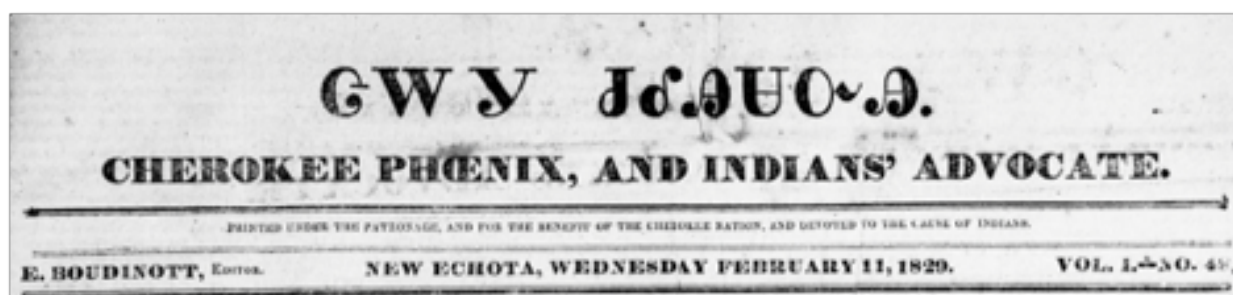


Figure 0.4 Cherokee Phoenix, and Indians' Advocate Masthead (Printed Weekly by Jno. F. Wheeler, At \$2.50 if Paid in Advance)

Throughout the publication of the *Phoenix*, movement between anti-Removal and pro-Removal sentiments can be tracked. Boudinot's change in perspective is curious: what were his motivations, and what pressures were felt from Principal Chief John Ross that eventually led to the removal of Boudinot as editor? In "Boudinot's Change: Boudinot, Emerson, and Ross on Cherokee Removal," Bethany Schneider posits that "Boudinot stood publicly against removal to

lands across the Mississippi. But in 1831 and 1832, while away on a fundraising trip around the United States, he changed his mind” (152). Boudinot’s evolution of thought, his perception of inevitable Removal, and his awareness of the immediate need to change his way of thinking, was also reflected by other Cherokee people of the day. In 1828 and 1829, Boudinot felt a strong temporal tie to the land of his forebearers. Early in the life of the *Phoenix*, he included excerpts from a number of periodicals: the *National Intelligencer*, the *Connecticut Observer*, and the *Arkansas Gazette*. Round writes, “Boudinot traded articles and ‘intelligence’ with one hundred other American newspapers” (135). Thus, Boudinot includes a reprinting from the *N.Y. Obs.* (1829):

there are many substantial reasons for their retaining in the country which they now occupy. It is the country of their ancestors,—they are strongly attached to it—they have made many improvements in it; they have enclosed farms, and cultivated them, built houses, shops and mills, they are advancing rapidly in population, the arts, learning, morals and religion, and are altogether a thriving and prosperous people. If they remain where they are, there seems to be no reason to doubt that they will be highly respectable and happy—but if they remove,—everything to say the least, is put at hazard—we can hardly conceive it possible that their situation in any respect can be improved, while we readily see how in many ways it maybe made worse, and that they run the risk of losing all the advantages which they now possess. (qtd. in *CP* 2.26)

More than just honoring and residing among their ancestors, Cherokee people would have had an interest in continued occupation of lands they had invested significant time and energy into cultivating. Boudinot, along with others, would have felt a connectedness to the landscapes of

their homelands, which had been worked for generations to be best suited for their specific needs. Economically, the Cherokee people had also, similar to the white settlers around them, become heavily engaged with southern plantation life of agriculture and enslavement.

But as Boudinot grew increasingly ambivalent about his current time and of the time to come, he was torn between the circumstances of the present and the possibilities of the future. In a letter from the latter months of 1827, he shared these feelings with his brother- and sister-in-law, Herman and Flora Gold Vaill: “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” (qtd. in Gaul 158). Two years later in 1829, Boudinot writes to the Vaills concerning his work with the *Cherokee Phoenix*:

Perhaps few will properly know the extent of my duties, by merely seeing the Phoenix, which carries but little evidence of much labour. But I can assure you I have no time to be idle. 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. (qtd. in Gaul 161)

Boudinot continues, “If I have, what may be called a leisure day, I have a work of a different nature to perform, preparing tracts in the Cherokee language, with the Rev. S.A. Worcester” (qtd. in Gaul 161). A couple of years later in 1831, Harriet Gold Boudinot writes that Boudinot’s “salary is also small, considering his expenses—but he is willing to makes [*sic*] some sacrifice for his country” (qtd. in Gaul 173).

While early in his editorship of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot’s thoughts surrounding Indian Removal aligned with Ross’s opinion of staying in their cultural homelands. However, his

perspective changed as the paper continued printing and the problems with encroaching Georgians persisted. A few years into the *Phoenix*'s espousal of anti-Removal sentiment, Boudinot began to take actions against Chief Ross's intentions. Round claims that "he began to argue that removal might be the only humane way out for his nation" (137). As pressure from high-ranking government officials and the intense indecency and oppression from the general population of Georgia mounted, an onslaught of complicated and most-often faulty land cessions commenced. These circumstances led Boudinot to increasing ambivalence, often shaped by legal disappointment. Boudinot expresses his temporal ambivalence through editorials signaling both the seeming inevitability of Cherokee Removal and its incommensurability with the project of the *Phoenix*. His shifting perspectives engendered editorial work largely shrouded in contrition of contradictions, implications of national treason, and evidence of unsettled temporality—the front-facing monikers representing temporal ambivalence. At first, Boudinot was resolute in his stance of remaining among Cherokee homelands. But progressively throughout his editorship of the *Phoenix*, his notions surrounding Cherokee Removal undergo a shift. He "began having second thoughts about the feasibility of resisting removal" (Peyer 136). Boudinot printed copious passages in the *Phoenix* in support of his changing ideals. Oftentimes he printed passages from other periodicals that served as tools for political propaganda; other times he would print his own comments and concessions targeted at the same goals.

Early in his editorship, especially in 1828 and 1829, Boudinot penned "editorials [...] in the tribal newspaper [that] encouraged the people to remain united in their efforts to hold their land" (Coffer 70–1). He inarguably aligned with the majority of the Cherokee Nation in that he could see no other homeland than the one holding the bodies of his ancestors. Boudinot also made appeals to the greater good of the Cherokee people's stay through criticism of U.S.

financial investments. In May of 1828, he vied for more responsible allocation of the funds that Removal would require. He boldly concluded that certain financial investments would improve the Cherokee people in means towards becoming the hoped vision of the U.S. government. He concedes that if his suppositions of financial reallocation were not true, then he would accept Removal:

If this project [Cherokee Removal] is intended, as we are told by its advocates, for the good and civilization of the Cherokees and other Indians, cannot this sum be put to better use?—Supposing with this money, the United States begin to establish schools in every part of this Nation? With this money let their be a college founded, where every advantage of instruction may be enjoyed. Let books, tracts, &c. be published in Cherokee and English, and distributed throughout the Nation and every possible effort be made to civilize us, let us at the same time be protected in our rights. What would be the consequence? If we fail to improve under such efforts, we will then agree to remove. (*CP* 1.12)

Boudinot argues reasonable points here, but he also displays his leanings in favor of the United States' project of the civilization of Indigenous communities through settler colonialism. Though he and others among the Cherokee Nation, including Principal Chief John Ross, had conformed to varying degrees of assimilation, much of the Cherokee people still held fast to traditional ways of Cherokee culture.

Although delivered in 1826, two years before his editorship of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot's "An Address to the Whites" dispatched a message vying for "temporal interest and eternal warfare" of Indigenous peoples who claimed the southeastern part of North America as their rightful homelands. "You here behold an *Indian*," he states, "my kindred are *Indians*, and my

fathers sleeping in the wilderness grave—they too were *Indians*. But I am not as my fathers were—broader means and nobler influences have fallen upon me” (qtd. in Perdue 69). Boudinot asks his audience, “shall red men live, or shall they be swept from the earth? With you and this public at large, the decision chiefly rests. Must they perish? Must they all [...] go down in sorrow to their grave?” (qtd. in Perdue 79). During this time, Boudinot still envisioned a way for the Cherokee people to exist within their homelands, even with an eventual assimilation into American culture. Instead of endorsing the Removal of Cherokee people to the West, he conceived of a compatibility that could exist between the two quarreling nations. Boudinot’s early opinions concerning Removal align with that of John Ross—the Principal Chief from 1828 until his death in 1866.

Before the start of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot believed so much in anti-Removal policy that he traveled campaigning for the cause. During his 1826 address mentioned above, Boudinot charges the white settlers of America to stand up on behalf of the Indigenous peoples of America:

I can view my native country, rising from the ashes of her degradation, wearing her purified and beautiful garments, and taking her seat with the nations of the earth. I can behold her sons bursting the fetters of ignorance and unshackling her from the vices of heathenism. She is at this instant, risen like the first morning sun, which grows brighter and brighter, until it reaches its fulness of glory. (qtd. in Perdue 77)

Before becoming editor of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot held out hope for remaining in the land of his ancestors. He pleads with the people in Philadelphia during his address, explaining that the Cherokee people “hang upon [their] mercy as to a garment. Will you push them from you, or will

you save them? Let humanity answer” (79). In these preceding years of his editorship of the *Phoenix*, Boudinot stood firmly on the side of resisting the U.S. and state of Georgia’s attempts to remove the Cherokee people from the Southeast.

Indian Removal touched so much of America during the early nineteenth century that many publications nationwide wrote on the Removal of Indigenous peoples. Even the *New York Journal of Commerce* published on the subject in 1831. This unique publication was so significant that Boudinot thought it suitable to include it in the *Cherokee Phoenix*:

The removal of the Indians means simply their expulsion from every foot of land which they and their ancestors for numberless generations had possessed and enjoyed by indefeasible right, long previous to the existence of the North American Republic. We do not mean to deny the incalculable advantage to the whole world, derived from the substitution of a civilized for a savage community, through the vast region which at this moment form the dominion of the United States, but things ought to be called by their proper denominations. The unhappy Indians are “treated with” as the wild beasts are treated with, they are hunted off the earth, wherever a white man chooses to raise his loghouse. There is no “benevolence” in this, but the pure selfishness of unbridled power. The “removal” means a violent expulsion; the expulsion is followed in almost every instance, and even with a single generation of mankind, of extinction. Within the short term of 30 years, many once numerous and powerful tribes of the Indian race; thus ousted from their homes, have perished. (qtd. in *CP* 3.42)

The attempted eradication of Indigenous peoples so impacted parts of American culture that the tragedy was communicated to the public as a whole. This journal speaks of a people who “have

been hunted off the earth” and “have perished.” The editor of the *New York Journal of Commerce* describes encroaching Americans as ones of “pure selfishness of unbridled power” and “violent expulsion.” Reprinted from the *N.Y. Obs.*, Boudinot included this excerpt that asks an important question concerning Cherokee occupation of their homelands: “‘What title,’ [a Cherokee person] may justly ask, ‘can be better than that of occupancy, time immemorial, and of what avail will be the guarantee of the United States, if they make so light of the guarantees solemnly and repeatedly given of the country which we now occupy?’” (CP 2.26). The tragedy and injustice of American policy and action during this time reached further than just the Cherokee Nation and other tribes in what would later be referred to as the American Southeast. Momentum for maintaining safety from this violence and thievery began to gain traction. If only to maintain preservation, Boudinot and others reluctantly entertained ideas of removing west.

During the 1820s and 30s, the Cherokee people were not the only people contending for their rights in their homelands. Other cultures were also settled in their homelands in what would become the U.S. Southeast. Just to the west, past the Muscogee Nation, resided the Choctaw Nation. Living through their own apocalypse in the years leading up to Cherokee Removal, the Choctaw had their own unique struggle with the American government on both state and federal levels. The Cherokee people, particularly Elias Boudinot, paid astute attention to the happenings among their westward neighbors. Though at one time their attention concerning territory may have been directed towards each other, as white oppressors enacted land cessions and seizures in the decades preceding Cherokee Removal, the Choctaw people and the Cherokee people understood a common enemy. In 1830, Boudinot printed a message from David Folsom, Chief of the N.E. District of the Choctaw Nation:

It is our own country. It was the land of our forefathers, and as their children we call it ours, and we reside on it. And whenever the great white men have come to us, and held treaties with us, they have ever said, "The country is yours." The treaties are written for us by the white men themselves, and we have, as a nation, our own laws and are governed by them. And now, although white men have surrounded us, and settled on every side of us, here alone can we reside. For it was the land of our fathers, and it is now ours, as their children. (*CP 2.51*)

For many Native communities, ancestral ties ran deep within their homelands. The same is true for Indigenous peoples today. Their land held not only their traditions and memories, but it also housed the bodies of their loved ones. The Choctaw chief saw a coming future that would repeat the events of the past and continue those of the present. He considered the security of his people in Indian Territory—that is, lands designated west of the Mississippi—doubting the integrity of American policy for the continued future. Chief Folsom writes, "Here alone can we reside." Conceptions of settling a national presence elsewhere were out of consideration. He reluctantly continues:

We have no expectation that if we should remove to the west of the Mississippi, any treaties would be made with us, that could secure greater benefit to us and our children, than those which are already made. The red people are of the opinion, that, in a few years the Americans will also wish to possess the land west of the Mississippi. Should we remove, we should again soon be removed by white men. We have no wish to sell our country and remove to one that is not fertile and good, wherever it is situated. (*CP 2.51*)

Chief Folsom and the Choctaw people resisted any idea of Removal. They even saw the displacement via American forces as an event that might situate them for more Removal in the future. In an 1829 letter also reprinted in the *Phoenix*, Chief Folsom offers an even clearer account:

I do hereby inform you, I have no wish to have my people remove to the west. I am entirely averse to it. I have no wish to bring calamity and destruction, nor will be an accessory to the downfall and deplorable destruction of my dear people. For if the Choctaw people remove at all it will be against their will, interest, and happiness, and every thing dear to them will close from them. Never can it be said, nor realized, that Choctaws were benefitted by their removal. But loss and sorrow forever to the Choctaw people; and great gain and much joy to the whites by our calamity. (*CP* 2.51)

As the Chief of the Choctaw Nation makes known his stance—that is in regards to the Removal of his people, he is “entirely averse to it” and that the impact of any such Removal would “be against their will, interest, and happiness”—the editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix* initially falls among the resolute faction of Cherokee people against their own Removal.

As he increasingly doubted the feasibility in resisting Removal, Boudinot’s outlook began to change. Once aligned with the absolute necessity of remaining in their homelands, by 1831 and especially in the years leading up to the signing of the Treaty of New Echota, Boudinot stood in complete opposition to widely-held ideologies of Cherokee people, including the Principal Chief, John Ross. Among the changing sentiments of 1820s and 1830s America and its relationship with Indigenous cultures, the Cherokee Nation became a telling example. In so many ways, the Removal story of the Cherokee people tells of a culture that worked towards

earnest acculturation while refusing outright assimilation. However, the Cherokee people eventually suffered relocation and significant erasure. Schneider writes that “signers [of the Treaty of New Echota] were acting illegally not against the colonial power but against the people whom they wanted to save/invent as a nation from that colonial power, the same people whom they took it upon themselves to represent in signing the Treaty” (155). Instead of defying their own people and their national government, most Cherokee people would have sided with the decisions of their appointed and acting leader. Perdue speaks to these ideas:

Since the Cherokees overwhelmingly opposed removal, Boudinot and other proremoval Cherokees should have withdrawn and maintained silence, according to traditional Cherokee ethics. Instead of withdrawing and individually removing as a few Cherokees had done, this minority met at New Echota in December 1835 to negotiate wholesale removal. On the twenty-ninth, the men present signed a treaty that provided for the exchange of Cherokee land in the Southeast for territory in what is today the state of Oklahoma. (26)

With the privilege of hindsight this dilemma would appear cut and dried, but feasible paths towards maintaining their homelands were not as clear during the early nineteenth century. Some, including Boudinot and the Ridges, saw pursuits towards nationhood a different way. Even while working at the *Phoenix*, under the direction of Ross, “Boudinot came to believe that the progress of ‘civilization’ among his people depended upon the preservation of the Cherokees as a corporate group” (Perdue 11). Justice explains that U.S. policy or recognition has never and could never create “the sovereignty of the Cherokees”; instead, “Cherokee sovereignty had *always* been embedded within the tribal nations” (*Our Fire Survives the Storm* 22). For the Cherokee people, the issue was not how to maintain sovereignty; instead, they sought to

understand the best avenues through which to maintain national cohesiveness. While the nation as a whole maintained decisions to remain in their homelands, the editor of the *Phoenix* eventually resigned himself to Removal. In an issue printed in 1831, Boudinot writes of how the governor of Georgia saw the need for Cherokee Removal. He relays the governor's stance on Removal, saying "the happiness and prosperity of the Cherokees depends upon their removal." Boudinot concedes that "It may be so after having made their existence here almost intolerable." These inclusions speak to Boudinot's changing stance on Removal (*CP* 4.13).

On January 28 of the following year, Boudinot reprints "The Choctaw's Farewell," a letter from 1831, in hopes to presumably highlight parallels between their shared experiences in resisting Removal. George W. Harkins, who authored the letter, would later serve as Chief of the Choctaw Nation, recounts how he and his people "were hedged in by two ills, and we chose that which we thought least." And reluctantly "having determined to emigrate west of the Mississippi River this fall," the Choctaw people "are cheered with a hope that ere long we shall reach our destined home, and that nothing short of the basest act of treachery will every [*sic*] be able to wrest it from us, and that we may live free." I argue that Boudinot includes these writings that convey hopes of Removal as subtle encouragement for his own people's surrender to the will of white oppressors. "Friends, our attachment to our native land was strong," Boudinot surely identified with, but "that cord is now broken; and we must go forth as wanderers in a strange land! We must go" (*CP* 4.28). As white encroachment pushes Harkins to the once unimaginable end of their time in Choctaw tradition homelands, Boudinot would have considered that Cherokee occupation of their homelands from "time immemorial" had come to its own apocalyptic end.

Seven months later on August 11, 1832, Boudinot's trust in treaties and promises from the American government fades as he and others consider treason against their own people. Foregrounding these events, "Andrew Jackson, the Indian-hating advocate of white supremacy and Indian expulsion" was elected "to the US presidency" in 1828. Later, "Congress passed the notorious Indian Removal Act, which provided for forcible eviction and relocation of Indians from lands desired by white Americans" (*Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* 187). Eventually, court rulings fell in favor of Cherokee dominion within their national boundaries, which led to Jackson's continued dismissal of Cherokee autonomy through refusing to uphold edicts that banned Georgia's governmental jurisdiction in Cherokee lands. Presumably written by Boudinot himself in the final issue under his editorship of the *Phoenix*, he posits an important question and answers that question with an air of assumed defeat. Boudinot writes, "What sort of hope have we then from a President [Andrew Jackson]," apparently above obligation to enforce "the laws and treaties, as interpreted by a proper branch of the Government?" He explains how his people "have nothing to expect from such an executive!" Boudinot viewed the Cherokee struggle against Removal as something out of their hands: "If General Jackson is disposed to do as he pleases, the remedy is not with us" (*CP* 4.52).

For the Cherokee people, the need to change, modify, and adapt became obvious even during the early days of the settlement of white America. The Cherokee people became adept at this sort of change. Boudinot wrote to the new editor of the *Phoenix* in 1832 asking him to "act wisely, not rashly, and choose a course that will come nearest benefitting the nation" ("Letter to the Editor" 129). Boudinot experienced first-hand the vile and two-faced atrocities enacted upon Indigenous peoples by settlers. His tenure at the *Cherokee Phoenix* involved more than just moving levers at a printing press, setting type, and composing content at a writing desk.

Boudinot involved himself in national, political, and cultural matters from the beginning. In some ways, the weight of his involvement dislodges his personal stance on the issue of Cherokee Removal. Eventually, he “co-founded the Treaty (Ridge) Party” and together with “eighteen other Cherokees signed the Treaty of New Echota at [his] home” (Peyer 136). “The survival [Boudinot] envisioned,” Perdue writes, “was not individual but involved the preservation of tribal sovereignty and ethnic identity.” Boudinot thought that “no price, even removal, was too high to pay for that recognition” (Perdue 31). She also writes that “Boudinot maintained that the preservation of his people depended solely upon abandonment of their own traditions, culture, and history” (Perdue 3). Other founding members of the Ridge Party seemed to fall more heavily on the side of American assimilation. After advocating for the Cherokee people through its national publication, Boudinot was left with the decision to yield to the eventual fate of the Cherokee Nation—that is, Removal to lands west of the Mississippi.

By 1832, Boudinot’s changing ideals led to his leaving the highly influential position of editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*. This was due largely to one reason—concerns over maintaining the unity of the Cherokee people. In accordance with Cherokee thought and national law, Principal Chief Ross dismissed those who subscribed to Indian Removal from powerful and political positions: “The National Council moved to impeach the Ridges from their seats in the Council and forced Boudinot to resign as editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, a position he had held since it began publication” (Perdue and Green 19). Because of the Nation’s firm belief in a united political front, Boudinot was removed from editorship of the *Phoenix*: “Cherokees still believed that leaders should represent a consensus. This is precisely what Ross did: the vast majority of Cherokees opposed Removal and wanted to resist the United States and Georgia at any cost” (Perdue and Green 20). Clearing out the Native proponents of Removal, Ross both

attempted to wait out Jackson's presidency and to prolong the Cherokee Nation's presence in the Southeast. Boudinot's ideas had for too long conflicted with the official political and traditionally-accepted notions of Cherokee claim to their homelands.

While Ross, as Principal Chief, "was personally as highly acculturated as Boudinot," he "represented traditionalists and did so without exerting any pressure on them to change their beliefs or their way of life" (Perdue 33). While "Ross sought to protect Cherokee traditionalists," the editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix* "hoped to save a Nation" (Perdue 33). By the end of 1835, Boudinot chose what he thought was the longstanding sustainability of his people through the surrender of their ancestral land. "After many years of active campaigning against Removal," Caison writes, "Boudinot ultimately signed the fraudulent Treaty of New Echota that gave the United States the ultimate paper backing to effect what became known as the Trial of Tears" (112). In 1834, Boudinot and John Ridge write the "Resolutions of the Treaty Party": "we have come to the conclusion that this nation cannot be reinstated in its present location, and that the question left to us and to every Cherokee, is, whether it is more desirable to remain here" (132). In the same writing, these members of the Treaty Party state their cause at length:

That in expressing the opinion that this nation cannot be reinstated, we do it from a thorough conviction of its truth; that we never will encourage our confiding people with hopes that can never be realized, and with exceptions that will assuredly be disappointed; that however unwelcome and painful the truth may be to them, and however unkindly it may be received from us, we cannot, as *patriots* and well-wishers of the Indian race, shrink from doing our duty in expressing our decided convictions. (132)

Even though the signers of the Treaty of New Echota commenced this act in the face of wide-held opposition, they write, “although *we love the land* of our fathers, and should leave the place of our nativity with as much regret as any of our citizens, we consider the lot of the *exile* immeasurably more to be preferred than a submission to the laws of the States, and thus becoming witnesses of the ruin and degradation of the Cherokee people” (133). While they expected certain exile, some of the members of the Treaty Party found their lot to entail much more. Justice writes, “three of the four leaders of the Treaty Party were executed in carefully coordinated attacks just weeks after the newcomers’ arrival, including leading figures Major Ridge, Elias Boudinot, and John Ridge” (*Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* 189). Among the others, Boudinot’s stance of preservation through Removal eventually carried the highest price. Although officially unsanctioned by the Cherokee government, Boudinot was executed in 1839.¹⁰ Once settled in Indian territory west of the Mississippi, he and other leaders of the Treaty Party settled their treasonous debts through the retribution standard of Cherokee law.¹¹ Perdue writes, “Under Cherokee law, Boudinot received the punishment he deserved. He had ceded Cherokee land without authorization and had subjected his people to a tortuous relocation” (31).

1.4 The Editorial Change of Hands from Elias Boudinot to Elijah Hicks

For Elias Boudinot and his work with the *Phoenix*, national sovereignty became a movable idea. In other words, the value and independence of the Cherokee Nation could not be bound by geographical fissures. As recorded in the shifts of the *Phoenix*, the establishment and perseverance of the Cherokee Nation survived through its ability to be dislocated while still being able to adhere. As the result of his public openness concerning Removal, “Boudinot is eventually relieved from his editorial duties at the *Phoenix*.” Chief Ross removed Boudinot,

“because of his desire to express the pro-Removal argument as a means of national survival” (Caison 131). The last issue edited by Boudinot, released on Saturday, August 11, 1832, was his last moment to address his readers. Boudinot includes three major national and cultural writings at the end of his tenure as editor: his letter of resignation, a letter from Principal Chief John Ross, and his Defense of John Ross’s Letter. These writings accent the complexity of argument surrounding held sentiments of Removal, while also highlighting temporal ambivalence as negotiated by the *Cherokee Phoenix*.

In Elias Boudinot’s parting words, as printed in the *Phoenix* on August 11, 1832, he claims that he hoped the newspaper offered a “defence [*sic*] of our rights and the proper representation of our grievances to the people of the United States.” He claims that nothing more can be communicated that could add “to the full thro’o [*sic*] investigation that has taken place, especially after the decision of the Supreme Court” and that “we can say nothing which will have more effect upon the community than what we have already said.” He goes on to explain how the *Phoenix*’s readership was fully informed: “The public is as fully apprised, as we can ever expect it to be, of our grievances. It knows our troubles, and yet never was it more silent than at present.— It is engrossed in other, local and sectional interests.” He continues about the specifics of the paper. In his third point written to Ross at his resignation, Boudinot writes:

I should feel myself in a most peculiar and delicate situation. I do not know whether I could satisfy my own views and the views of the authorities of the nation at the same time. My situation would then be as embarrassing as it would be peculiar and delicate. I do conscientiously believe 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 beloved 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. I 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 unfortunately already been, an enemy to the interest of my beloved country and people. I love my country and I love my people, as my own heart bears me witness, and for that very reason I would think it my duty to tell them the whole truth, or what I believe to be 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.

(CP 4.52)

Boudinot wrote as one who believed in his nation and his people. He wrote as one who had seen an apocalypse on the horizon, and—whether right or wrong—he chose to surrender his nation to the machinery of Removal. Even in the face of approaching full-scale attempts at genocide, he was a traitor to his people and his country. While his belief in the cohesiveness of his people fueled his national and political stance, he also signed a document that falsely gave away Cherokee land to white settlers. He bids farewell to his readership with the following:

Let me again assure you that I love my country and my people, and I pray God that the evils which we so much fear may be averted from us by his merciful interposition.

I will continue until the close of the present volume when I shall be ready to surrender the establishment to my successor, if the nation think it necessary to continue the paper. (CP 4.52)

At his resignation, Boudinot doubted that the publication could carry itself much longer. He believed in his people and his nation, but he was no longer convinced that the *Cherokee Phoenix* could continue under the approaching injustice of Removal.

Principal Chief John Ross fired back at Boudinot and his writings in the *Phoenix*, recognizing the cognitive dissonance navigated by the editor. In his response to Boudinot, Chief Ross writes, “The toleration of diversified views to

Figure 0.5 Cherokee Phoenix Excerpt (Elias Boudinot, Editor. Cherokee Phoenix, 11 Aug. 1832)

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” (CP 4.52). As a text, the *Phoenix* undermines the “unity of sentiment” just as Bhabha complicates the idea of clarity in translation. While Ross needed to control the spread of contention, Boudinot’s shift from 1828 to 1832 reflected the diversity of perspectives Ross believed undermined solidarity. Ross implies that Boudinot’s own perspectives as editor infiltrated the writings of the *Phoenix*, expressing his own temporal ambivalence and contributing to “fermentation and confusion among” the Cherokee people.

In the same issue, Boudinot published his reaction and defense to Chief Ross's letter. He writes these striking words:

Think for a moment, my countrymen, the danger to be apprehended from an overwhelming white population, a population 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. Then should we, our sons and daughters be slaves indeed...

Were it not that my motives have been misapprehended by some, and wilfully misrepresented by a few, I should not have published my letter of resignation, nor troubled the reader with the foregoing explanations. But is due to myself and my countrymen, for whom the above remarks are intended, that I should at least say what I have said.

In taking leave of my readers and patrons, I must express my gratitude for the great forbearance and allowances with which I have been treated by them. They have had frequent occasion to exercise that forbearance. In return I can only say I have done what I could, and as my limited abilities and means would allow.

(CP 4.52)

On the one hand, the *Phoenix* became a forum in which different ideals were to be compared. On the other hand, it was also an instrument—one that worked towards building an argument for the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation. Whether focusing on the commentary of Boudinot or Ross, control of the *Cherokee Phoenix* and the nation at-large faced Removal and the disruption of both the recognition of their national sovereignty and their newspaper. As Boudinot takes “leave of [his] readers and patrons,” he attempted to settle the doubts of his objectors. Boudinot lived on

a plane in Cherokee history that will forever entice questions and incite defense. He was a man with a nation and a newspaper. But he was also an editor without any viable way out of his cultural predicament. Elias Boudinot faced two kinds of devastation. He sat as editor of the *Phoenix* in the face of his people's own oppression while navigating ways to rationalize his periodical's role in the broad argument of Indian Removal. As the sun rose on the *Cherokee Phoenix* during its initial six years of publication, the Cherokee Nation watched as they were expelled from their homelands. And almost as quickly as the *Phoenix* established itself, it was also lost, at least for a time, to the genocide and Removal of the Cherokee people.

The Cherokee people's presence in their homelands was more than just physical. Bruyneel discusses the political space of Indigenous tribes in America during days of Removal. He claims that "one cannot simply classify indigenous tribes as 'part of or not part of the United States'—as inside or outside—because indigenous tribes straddle the temporal and spatial boundaries of American politics, exposing the incoherence of these boundaries as they seek to secure and expand their tribal sovereign expression" (xv). Not only have Native communities been bound by spatial Removals, they have also been controlled by matters concerning time. Bruyneel writes, "temporal and spatial boundaries [...] demarcate, bound, and clarify the identity and interests of American and indigenous peoples" (xxi). He furthers these ideas:

In resistance to this colonial rule, indigenous political actors work across American spatial and temporal boundaries, demanding rights and resources from the liberal democratic settler-state while also challenging the imposition of colonial rule on their lives. This resistance engenders what I call a "third space of sovereignty" that resides neither simply inside nor outside the American political system but rather exists on these very boundaries, exposing both the practices and

the contingencies of American colonial rule. This is a supplemental space, inassimilable to the institutions and discourse of the modern liberal democratic settler-state and nation. (xvii)

Bruyneel's discussion of Native and white American affairs becomes more vexed as he introduces geopolitical ideas: "The spatial boundaries of concern here are at times quite explicit and obvious, such as those around geopolitical territory, be it of a nation, state, tribe, or city" (2). "In all, the imposition of these spatial and temporal boundaries mark out the practices of colonial rule," Bruyneel writes, "through which the colonizer attempts to 'dominate the physical space,' 'reform the minds,' and 'absorb the economic' as well as the cultural and political histories of indigenous people" (2). Boudinot's original conception of the *Phoenix* resisted this sort of pressure. In other words, Boudinot's *Phoenix* originally challenged the "diversified views" that represented the complex spectrum of its people's struggle. Although Boudinot's project with the *Phoenix* rejected assimilation and erasure, he eventually had to acquiesce with demands of Removal. Instead of falling staunchly on one side or the other, the *Cherokee Phoenix* became a living record of the seams. Bruyneel continues by describing how "indigenous tribes and their citizens are neither fully foreign nor seamlessly assimilated into the American political system," claiming that this liminality complicates "indigenous political identity, expression, and objectives" (5). The newspaper was doomed precisely because it exposed the lie that simply participating in cultural exchanges, such as inventing a syllabary and having a newspaper, could inoculate the Cherokee people against genocide.

After Elias Boudinot stepped down in 1832, and after a brief time without a designated editor, Elijah Hicks took up editorship of the *Cherokee Phoenix*. Although having tense relations with the Cherokee Nation, Boudinot boldly wrote to the new editor of the national newspaper in

the same year of his resignation. He postured himself in a confident and correcting way, writing, “One who has not read my letter would suppose that there has been an important change of sentiment in my views in regard to the all-engrossing subject among us” (127). He sought to dispel thoughts that would suggest his lack of patriotism. He claims that none of the language surrounding his resignation “shows a want of patriotic views and motives; [his] motives certainly were of the most patriotic kind” (128). Instead, Boudinot assured his readers that his “patriotism consists in the *love of the country* and the *love of the people*. These are intimately connected, yet they are not altogether inseparable” (128). Hicks became editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix* early during Volume V. His appointment happened during the fifth and final volume published in New Echota, making his editorship shorter than Boudinot’s. Although eventually taken over by Hicks, Boudinot made strides during his tenure as editor of the *Phoenix* that posited an ambivalence among his readers. In other words, Boudinot accomplished his work of contending with the fissure that separated pro-Removal and anti-Removal sentiments long before the time of his resignation.

1.5 Coda—“DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP”

Still today, Indigenous communities face constant attempts of assimilation, acculturation, and erasure. Land robberies, violence, and the defamation of sacred land sometimes even make mainstream American news. Justice writes that “when the meaningful stories of [...] place and belonging are denied,” oppressed communities must “knit the jagged edges of [their] histories across the woundings of time, space, and experience” (*Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* 184). The wounds inflicted upon Indigenous peoples, whether now or in the distant past, foster the ruptures of “time, space, and experience” that have too often been the stories at the forefront of

communities riddled with generational trauma. Tribal affairs and tribal affiliations, although interrupted and contested throughout history, have long been permanently instilled in Cherokee culture. Essential elements, those at the base of individual and communal existence, have remained constant. Justice ends his conclusion of *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* with these words:

This is the fire we keep: to hold what we were given and pass it on, maybe even add to its strength along the way. We belong to this time, as we belong to those that came before, and as we will belong to those times and places and relations that come after us—in all our difference and uniqueness, in all the ways our diverse peoples recognize meaning and belonging, in this world that our kin have inhabited since before spoken word and inscribed thought. Indigenous literatures matter because *Indigenous peoples matter*. And that to me, is a mighty good cause for celebration. (211)

For the Cherokee people, a central fire was necessary. The fire that has been kept for generations by Cherokee people, as Justice explains, holds together Cherokee culture and continuity. In the face of Removal—their living in and through their own apocalypse—the Cherokee people tended to their inherited fire and ensured its transfer to the next generation, an act that pulls Cherokee sovereignty outside of time, location, or condition.

The person at the head of the Cherokee Nation during Removal, as well as long after, pleads these requests to the American government in 1836:

Spare our people! Spare the wreck of our prosperity! Let not our deserted homes become the monuments of our desolation! But we forbear! We suppress the agonies which wring our hearts, when we look at our wives, our children, and our

venerable sires! We restrain the forebodings of anguish and distress, of misery and devastation and death, which must be the attendants on the execution of this ruinous compact. (Ross et al 140)

The pervading thought among the Cherokee citizenry in the early nineteenth century was that of remaining in the land of their forebearers. Their Principal Chief thought along the same lines. Ross sought to hold the nation together in their homelands, and he fought for this cause for his people.

The *Cherokee Phoenix* lays out plainly the English alphabetic text next to Cherokee syllabary. It offers a way into the alien territory where identity is constructed. Through his writings, Boudinot displays the urgent need to establish and maintain permanence against the expanding boundaries of white colonizers. Boudinot's temporal placement—which falls among the encroachment of Georgians in the early nineteenth century—bred within him justifiable discomfort. His writings within the *Phoenix* broadcast his unsettled acquiescence to America's agenda to displace Indigenous peoples who posed threats to their expansion. Exchanging his own temporal certainty, Boudinot asserted himself among print culture in Antebellum America, demonstrating his relationship with what I call temporal ambivalence. As Boudinot experienced this, the *Phoenix* became the record of historical negotiation, even in the face of Ross's rightful resistance.

In Boudinot's letter to the editor of the *Phoenix* in 1832, he conjures images of a ship tossed in rough seas. Boudinot writes, "I cannot ease [...] any expectation of a calm, when the vessel is already tossed to and fro, and threatened to be shattered to pieces by an approaching tempest. If I really believe there is danger, I must act consistently, and give the alarm; tell my countrymen our true, or what I believe to be our true, situation" (128). Although unsure how his

country, thrown in the violent sea of white encroachment, should navigate its way into the future, he concluded that the future for the Cherokee people could only be found through three options: “1. Nature’s right of all nations to resist and fight in the defense of our lands. 2. Submit and peaceably come under the dominion of the oppressor, and suffer, which we most assuredly must if we make that choice, a *moral death!* 3. Avoid the first two by a removal” (129). For Boudinot, all options carried dire results, but he clearly held option three to be preferable. By the final issue of the *Cherokee Phoenix* as printed in New Echota, Hicks also communicates nautical sentiments to his readers: “To our Cherokee readers, we would say, DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP; although our enemies are numerous, we are yet in the land of the living, and of our clearly recognized rights” (CP 5.52). Similarly and in a moment of ambivalence, Boudinot writes in a letter from 1831 that “It is true we have been abused persecuted and oppressed beyond measure—~~illegible~~ our rights have been outrageously wrested from us, yet we are on our lands—we have possession” (qtd. in Gaul 175). Even after continued attempts to maintain their homelands, the Cherokee people were forced to remove. The apocalypse had arrived. Coffey writes that the “Cherokee Nation,” who were “well versed in white tactics, used every resource at their command to avoid leaving their beloved homeland. The diplomacy of Chief John Ross, Major Ridge (whose real name was Walking-on-the-mountain-tops), and his brother Oowatie held Americans at bay for a time” (70). The time for military initiatives to physically roundup and push out the Cherokee people were no longer to be kept in the distance.

In 1831, Harriett Gold Boudinot writes these words: “The friends of the Indians seem sleeping while their enemies are diligently pursuing their work & the sufferings of the poor Cherokee are daily increased beneath the oppressor’s rod” (qtd. in Gaul 177). She continues, asking, “How are the American people ever to atone for the injuries done the original inhabitants

of the Country?” (qtd. in Gaul 177). Almost two hundred years later, her question still holds great relevance. While Indigenous nations in the U.S.—innately holding their national sovereignty—still face encroachment and robbery, some retain federal recognition of that sovereignty from the U.S. government. Coffer claims, “the Indian people were given no rest” (77). With work and persistence, Native nations in Indian Territory found ways to continue to exert their sovereignty and build anew. Although the death rates were high and the atrocities were extreme, many Indigenous populations have preserved national boundaries of coherence and continuity.

In the face of apocalyptic Removal, the *Cherokee Phoenix* expressed ambivalence that began to form a sense national identity. Hicks asked his people not to give up—“DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP.” His charge, and the newspaper’s efforts as a whole, exemplifies the temporal ambivalence—the ship “already tossed to and fro,” the nation already “shattered to pieces by an approaching tempest”—that also shaped Boudinot’s tenure as editor. Gabriel describes the Cherokee people as ones “drifting with the tide like a ship which has lost her moorings (124). Although attempts to dismember and erase the rich culture grown out of the Cherokee Nation have abounded, the *Cherokee Phoenix* survives as a text that remains inextricable from history. The *Phoenix* postulates the importance of cultural identity as communicated through periodical and literary texts and also displays the unique discomfort associated with temporal ambivalence—a paradox of incommensurate futures and apocalyptic presents.

**CHAPTER 2—TEMPORAL AMBIVALENCE IN MELVILLE’S *MOBY-DICK*:
TATTOOS, TRANSCRIPTIONS, AND TRAUMA IN THE ALIEN TERRITORY OF
QUEEQUEG’S COFFIN-MADE-BODY AND PIP’S READING OF THE DOUBLOON**

As the *Cherokee Phoenix* cried “DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP” in 1834, Herman Melville comes of age in Albany, New York. After writing a handful of novels over the previous decade, Melville finished and published *Moby-Dick* in 1851. In a letter to R.H. Dana, Jr., author of *Two Years Before the Mast*, Melville writes in May of 1850 of his developing manuscript of *Moby-Dick*:

About the “whaling voyage”—I am half way in the work, & am very glad that your suggestion so jumps with mine. It will be a strange sort of a book, tho’, I fear; blubber is blubber you know; tho’ you may get oil out of it, the poetry runs as hard as sap from a frozen maple tree;—& to cook the thing up, one must needs throw in a little fancy, which from the nature of the thing, must be ungainly as the gambols of the whales themselves. Yet I mean to give the truth of the thing, spite of this. (Davis and Gilman 108)

As Melville reached the half-way mark of *Moby-Dick*, he already understood the bizarre and interesting shape his novel was taking. Melville poured effort into a book that seemed to bear an agency of its own. Later in 1850, still composing *Moby-Dick*, he writes to Evert Duyckinck, his publisher, that his “evenings [were spent] in a sort of a mesmeric state in [his] room” (Davis and Gilman 117). The year that *Moby-Dick* was published, he unabashedly confesses to Nathaniel Hawthorne: “I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb” (Davis and Gilman

142). Melville, in 1850 and 1851, indicated that he was on the edge of something that would have a significant impact on his authorial career.

During the final moments of the *Pequod's* life above water, Ishmael narrates from the periphery of the whirlpool from the sinking ship. As it goes down, Tashtego, “an unmixed Indian from Gay Head” (130), enacts the *Pequod's* final declaration of sovereignty on behalf of the ship and its crew:

A sky-hawk that tauntingly had followed the main-truck downwards from its natural home among the stars, pecking at the flag, and incommoding Tashtego there; this bird now chanced to intercept its broad fluttering wing between the hammer and the wood; and simultaneously feeling that etherial thrill, the submerged savage beneath, in his death-gasp, kept his hammer frozen there; and so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks, and his imperial beak thrust upwards, and his whole captive form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it. (623–4)

Moby-Dick's bizarre conclusion offers, in some ways, a response to the story of the *Cherokee Phoenix*. Instead of the *Phoenix* rising from the ashes as common lore chronicles, it fell victim to white encroachment, Removal, and genocide, diminishing with the Cherokee people's residence in their homelands. As Ahab's ship sinks to its inevitable defeat, the *Pequod* raptures its own bird with it. In a moment when the destruction becomes inevitable, Tashtego nails the ship's flag to the mast. As the crew goes down with the ship and as the *Pequod* meets its apocalyptic end, Ishmael's world of texts—the bodies of whales and the bodies aboard the *Pequod*—both merge and disappear. By affixing the final statement of Ahab's flag to the mast, Tashtego, in his fury of

death at sea, holds fast to the sovereign body of the *Pequod*. In other words, even at the dire end, the “unmixed Indian from Gay Head” stands faithful to the figures that represent this novel’s conceptions of collective identity and shared culture.

A glance at Melville’s prose career bears out two authorial methods. For the beginning of his career, he fixed himself on straight-forward linear narratives, writing books about sea travel and island cultures fraught with mystery. But Melville’s interests would soon steer him astern into deeper, more experimental, and complicated narratives. He became preoccupied with storytelling increasingly aware of itself. In *Moby-Dick*, Melville creates a central narrator obsessed with reading. Ishmael reads everything, from wall paintings and tattooed bodies to hieroglyphic monies and entire microcosms of cultural identity, a treatise of the making of meaning and its temporal and spatial repercussions. Melville’s move from novels largely concerned with maritime travel to the philosophical and recursive writings emblematically represented by *Moby-Dick* exposes his obsession with multi-valent renderings disconnected from the singular temporalities of isolated experience.

On its face, this chapter moves from historical to textual to theoretical. To construct a cogent and logical explanation, I unravel—or unfurl if I may—a progression of moves founded in Melville’s awareness of settler colonialism and global expressions of Indigeneity. I then transition to close-readings of *Moby-Dick* via the hieroglyphic body of Queequeg and its sprawling reach throughout the novel. I eventually bring the ship to port by exposing philosophies undergirding the paradox of Pip’s reading of the doubloon via studies in trauma theory and Homi Bhabha’s foundational work in postcolonialism. In this second chapter, I read Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*—a novel published over a decade after Cherokee Removal that bridges the periodical nature of the *Cherokee Phoenix* and the speculative nature of Butler’s

Kindred—to suggest a continuity linking American works from disparate genres and periods that explore cultural difference and identity formation using examples of temporal ambivalence.

By examining Melville’s famed novel, in other words, I continue this project’s larger concerns by connecting the experimental novel of *Moby-Dick* with the temporal negotiation and traumatic renderings within the *Phoenix* and *Kindred*. I begin by illustrating how the events chronicled in the *Phoenix* influenced authors such as Melville, while also highlighting temporal and uncertain expressions of identity. After discussing the historical contexts shaping Melville’s development as a thinker and writer, I examine his treatment of Queequeg’s body as a series of “third space” encounters that shape the novel’s richest depictions of cultural exchange and intimate attachment. Employing ideas from Bhabha and Bruyneel, I examine this novel that contests liminal spaces of identity—those that fall on the boundaries of perception—that constitute enunciations of personhood. I close the chapter with Pip’s reading of the Doubloon, a complex paradox marinated in Pip’s traumatic experience of isolation at sea—that is to say that Pip’s ability to read the doubloon is a product of his experienced trauma. Melville suggests that experiences of cultural difference, which can be disorienting but nevertheless understood via interpretation, are framed by experiences of temporal ambivalence, in which trauma compels us to face unknowable futures.

2.1 Historical

So much of Melville’s writing critiques social institutions and attitudes. When discussing Tashtego’s fall into the inescapable expanse of a whale head, Susan Kalter claims that “Melville reveals Native American thought as the source of his respect for the whale” (16). Although Melville likely had not heard of the specific call from the Cherokee newspaper—“DON’T GIVE

UP THE SHIP,” he would have known about the negotiations and unjust acts enacted upon the Cherokee people. Andrew Delbanco, one of Melville’s biographers, relays that “Press and pulpits poured forth a steady stream of commentary on the nature of savages—mostly provoked by the problem or plight (depending on one’s point of view) of Indians, who were victims of a process that today we would call ‘ethnic cleansing’ but that in those days was called ‘removal’” (47). White Americans in the nineteenth-century couched their discussions of Indigenous peoples in ways to lessen the tragic severity of legislated and socially-enacted matters of racial and ethnic supremacy, using more settled words, such as those brought to light in the comment above from Delbanco.

Words become weapons in the mouths, pens, and presses of the oppressor. Surely Melville took notice of this tactic among those actively involved in oppression and marginalization. Although Delbanco hesitates to put too much pressure on Melville’s knowledge of Indigenous affairs in America, he rightly assumes that Melville “could hardly look at a newspaper without catching some reference, anointed with crocodile tears, to the removal of primitive peoples as the price to be paid for the spread of civilization” (48–9). Again, the vile rhetoric of held sentiments during the time of Melville’s youth and Removal impressed and persisted as far as to embolden historical and biographical accounts of the times. In some ways, *Moby-Dick* foregrounds the “living proof of ongoing Native presence in New England” (Buell 363). In one of the many biographies on Melville, Laurie Robertson-Lorant claims that “*Moby-Dick* draws from a deep reservoir of Native American folklore” (*Melville* 280). Melville, although likely distanced from specific Cherokee struggles, would have had, from an early age, a knowledge of America’s relationship with Indigenous cultures. In other words, Melville was

well-informed about settler colonialism and contemporary culture. According to Robertson-Lorant, “Herman Melville knew American history well” (“Red Blood, White Bones” 379).¹²

Melville’s awareness of matters regarding widespread Removal was part of what animated his critique of colonialism.¹³ Although he stages his discussions of imperialism and colonization in the maritime world of the nineteenth century, his criticisms extend outward into other forms of this same oppression, namely American ideas of Manifest Destiny and white exceptionalism. To this end, I borrow from Kalter’s work on Melville’s sense of Indigenous cultures in the nineteenth century. According to Kalter:

Melville definitively positions Ishmael as an interested student of Native American writing and orality and so reinforces the suggestion that his own ecological worldview finds its dominant source there. To comprehend the extent of these references, it is important to understand the close connection Melville assumes between Native Americans and Pacific Islanders. Whether the connection arises from ignorance of their cultural differences and internal heterogeneity; or from an effort to direct his anti-savagist arguments toward all arguments against those commonly seen as savage; or from a recognition that Manifest Destiny concretely included, in the 1840s, missionary forays into the Pacific, as though contiguous with the mainland—we cannot know with certainty. (Kalter 16)

Moby-Dick casts Ishmael as one concerned with Indigenous cultures of America. When introducing the *Pequod*, Ishmael discusses (although not with entirely correct details) the Pequot people of the Northeastern region of the United States. “Pequod, you will no doubt remember,” Ishmael informs, “was the name of a celebrated tribe of Massachusetts Indians, now extinct as

the ancient Medes” (77). Ishmael embarks on a similar discussion when explaining the lore surrounding the origins of Nantucket—the epicenter of the whaling industry in the nineteenth century:

Look now at the wondrous traditional story of how this island [Nantucket] was settled by the red-men. Thus goes the legend. In olden times an eagle swooped down upon the New England coast, and carried off an infant Indian in his talons. With loud lament the parents saw their child borne out of sight over the wide waters. They resolved to follow in the same direction. Setting out in their canoes, after a perilous passage they discovered the island, and there they found an empty ivory casket, —the poor little Indian’s skeleton. (69–70)

Kalter also argues for “the close connection Melville assumes between Native Americans and Pacific Islanders.” Throughout the novel, Ishmael often conflates Indigenous cultures. Before the stranger bedfellow returns to the inn, Ishmael settles into his shared room at The Spouter-Inn. He examines the belongings of the yet-to-be-met Queequeg, narrating his thoughts while also conflating cultures. Ishmael describes an unfamiliar object: “I can compare it to nothing but a large door mat, ornamented at the edges with little tinkling tags something like the stained porcupine quills round an Indian moccasin. There was a hole or slit in the middle of this mat, the same as in South American ponchos” (22). Later, Ishmael understands landed sailors’ time aground by their complexion. His explanation melds many geographic and cultural specifics:

You could pretty plainly tell how long each one had been ashore. This young fellow’s healthy cheek is like a sun-toasted pear in hue, and would seem to smell almost as musky; he cannot have been three days landed from his Indian voyage. That man next him looks a few shades lighter; you might say a touch of satin

wood is in him. In the complexion of a third still lingers a tropic tawn, but slightly bleached withal; he doubtless has tarried whole weeks ashore. But who could show a cheek like Queequeg? which, barred with various tints, seemed like the Andes' western slope, to show forth in one array, contrasting climates, zone by zone. (33)

Just as Melville identified as a student-at-large, Ishmael surely would have postured himself as a learner. Whether Melville intended to conflate different colonized communities into one manageable subject of investigation, he surely had the life experience to begin putting different geographic locations of colonialism into conversation with one another.

In an article mostly engaged with Melville's *The Confidence-Man*, Leslie Marmon Silko claims that Melville's writing critiques "the great crimes of the European colonization of the Americas and the complicity and hypocrisy of Christianity in the great crime" (94). She claims that Andrew Jackson was "the chief hypocrite and con man to lead America's masses in their destruction of the only remnants of honor the United States still possessed," claiming that he "campaign[ed] for the presidency on his popularity as an Indian killer in the War of 1812," "the slaughter of more than eight-hundred Creek Indian men, women, and children," and "his promise of 'Indian Removal'" (Silko 95). Following Silko, I argue that Melville interrogates the governing logic undergirding that colonial project. While *Moby-Dick* attempts to understand the violence of oppressive colonial systems in a broad sense, it also asks how Christian identity merges itself into settler politics and global imperialism. In many ways, Melville's writings often anticipate studies in postcolonial theory and history.

Besides reading about the struggles of Indigenous peoples at the will of white settlers, Melville would have seen first-hand the effects of rogue state governments' mistreatment of

Indigenous peoples. Melville's life experience would have placed him directly in the path to witness atrocities enacted upon Indigenous peoples. Robertson-Lorant echoes Silko's assessment, claiming that "When Melville went West in 1840, he saw tribal chieftains in full regalia whose dignified and noble bearing made him reevaluate events of the recent past such as Jackson's resettlement policy, the Seminole War and the Cherokee Trail of Tears" ("Red Blood, White Bones" 380).

Expanding his contact with oppressive systems of colonialism, Melville witnessed first-hand "during the whaling voyage that took him to the Pacific in 1842," Robertson-Lorant writes, "how colonialism was ravaging the people of the South Seas" ("Red Blood, White Bones" 380). Not only was Melville able to witness the injustices waged against Indigenous peoples in United States, and not only was he in places to see this violence enacted upon people during his day, he also perceived the long-standing practices that had plagued Indigenous peoples for centuries: "he saw ancient cultures destroyed by European and American soldiers and missionaries, and the health and happiness of native peoples destroyed by poverty and disease" (Robertson-Lorant "Red Blood, White Bones" 380).

More than his interest and concern regarding Native peoples to the Americas, biographical accounts as well as knowledge ingrained in his own writing speak to Melville's desire and ability for learning and retaining information. Just as Melville was an informal student of the histories of Indigenous peoples, he was a student of American history in a broader sense. Robertson-Lorant writes that Melville "undertakes the cultural work of revising, or re-visioning, American history to accommodate different voices and different points of view, including those of misrepresented, underrepresented and colonized Native Americans, Africans and South Sea

Islanders” (“Red Blood, White Bones 380). In one of *Moby-Dick*’s many digressions, for instance, Melville aligns conflicts between whalers and their prey with the violence of early-American colonialism:

New Zealand Tom and Don Miguel, after at various times creating great havoc among the boats of different vessels, were finally gone in quest of, systematically hunted out, chased and killed by valiant whaling captains, who heaved up their anchors with that express object as much in view, as in setting out through the Narragansett Woods, Captain Butler of old had it in his mind to capture that notorious murderous savage Annawon, the headmost warrior of the Indian King Philip. (223)

As ships pursued fish in the sperm whale fishery, settler encroachment on Native communities enacted ventures to heave “up their anchors” with hopes to kill and chase away Indigenous peoples from desirable land. Robertson-Lorant claims that Ishmael “conflates the bodies of slaughtered whales with the bodies of slaughtered Indians, perhaps to remind his readers that ‘civilized’ American soldiers kept the bones and body parts as souvenir of their conquest of” Indigenous peoples to the Americas (“Red Blood, White Bones” 384). Although she might be correct, Melville could just as well be drawing parallels between the hunt for well-known and infamous whales and the unjust slaughter of infamous resistance figures. In other words, by discussing the ways that sailors violently pursued whales next to how Anglo-Americans enacted harm and violence upon Indigenous peoples, Melville emphasizes the rhetoric surrounding the myth of nation building. Through bringing to the forefront the systematic and consistent mistreatment of Indigenous peoples and cultures, Melville suggests that the United States’ true origin story is one of Native genocide.

Melville not only wrote about maritime life in America's nineteenth century, he also lived it. He experienced the unique circumstance of shipping out from New England, being at sea for years at a time, and even the dire incident of being stranded on an Island with little knowledge of terrain, people, customs, or geographical location. Melville served on both merchant and whaling ships. He gleaned detailed and first-hand experience of the whaling industry, and what he failed to learn aboard a whaling vessel, he learned through his own research and reading. Melville was aware of America's vile treatment of Indigenous peoples. In fact, *Moby-Dick* "ends with a scene that evokes the Native American legend of the founding of Nantucket, and by implication, the invasion of America by a race of Ahabs bent on treating her human and natural resources as mere commodities" ("Red Blood, White Bones" 388). More than just including a pervasive presence of indigeneity in *Moby-Dick*, Melville also leverages the diversity of cultures aboard the *Pequod* for espousing challenging ideals and displaying them to his reading public.

2.2 Textual

The elusiveness of Melville's opening chapter, "Loomings," foregrounds an experimental project of dichotomies, ultimately manifesting in the disembodiment of the *Pequod* via reading and translation. In fact, Melville orients much of *Moby-Dick* upon the acts of reading, writing, and translation. In "Indigenous Literacies, *Moby-Dick*, and the Promise of Queequeg's Coffin," for instance, Birgit Brander Rasmussen claims that Melville "creates a space in which to imagine the encounter between Ishmael and Queequeg as one between readers and writers" (113). Ishmael's obsession with reading, which itself provokes reader engagement and provides space to interface with "alien" bodies, responds to fundamental issues governing *Moby-Dick* from the

beginning—namely, the disorientation ambiguously and ambivalently described by Ishmael. So, what looms? While the *Pequod* provides hope of Ishmael's survival narrative, it also dictates the destructive disembowelment of the spatial and temporal landscape of *Moby-Dick*.

Through Ishmael's obsession with the ocean and his indifference with life on land, Melville illustrates the discomfort of living in ambiguous times of inexactness. Ishmael lives in a temporal period that looms on the periphery of his own orientation. In other words, while offering no temporal grounding ("Some years ago—never mind how long exactly"), Ishmael tells of a grimness that one might feel, comparing that feeling to "a damp, drizzly November," a disposition that might provoke one to the act of "stepping into the street" (4). Ishmael recounts scenes that showcase *Moby-Dick's* temporal and spatial world that truly "outr[u]n apprehension" (134). In the pages to follow, I explain how reading becomes the avenue that makes sense of the temporal ambivalence so persistent in *Moby-Dick*, an exposé that culminates with the traumatic experience of Pip and the microcosmic ship's ensuing fallout as read in the interpretation of the doubloon fixed to the *Pequod's* mast.

Melville's novel documents encounters with alien territory and cultural difference largely through framing the body of Queequeg as a contested space of negotiation. *Moby-Dick* appoints Ishmael as the mouthpiece for discussions addressing settler colonialism via language and perspective, specifically the texts of the whale and Queequeg's body. To interrogate how Melville's text makes possible reading, writing, and especially translation, I engage with an overlay of texts—Melville's *Moby-Dick*; Ishmael's conception and translation of Queequeg's body; and Queequeg's coffin, a text of bodily transposition endowed with resurrection power. As the text largely concerns itself with reading, we must in response also consider how the text situates translation. While *Moby-Dick* emphasizes Ishmael's goal to read all that surrounds him,

the text also becomes suspect to subtle modes of reading and resistance itself. In other words, as we follow Ishmael's direction throughout the text—namely, guided lectures on how to read—we are also submersed in the reading exercise executed by Melville's own text. As the reader understands Ishmael's project, which considers all things text, the tensions as laid out in front of the reader becomes more apparent—that is, the text of *Moby-Dick* and Ishmael's central readings of the whale and Queequeg, all alien bodies in need of translation.

Ishmael constantly finds reading the whale difficult, and as the reader begins the interpretive work of *Moby-Dick*, the whale consistently resists interpretation.¹⁴ *The Whale* eludes the reader as he does Ishmael. Reading *Moby-Dick* thus rests in this tension between the limits of human understanding and the iterated limitlessness of the white whale; the novel enacts tension through the opposing perspectives of its own interpretive ends. In other words, one single interpretive approach to *Moby-Dick* would certainly be inadequate when considering how the text occupies itself with acts of interpretation.

Like Ahab's chase of the white whale, Melville's project exists as a progressive pursuit. Unlike many of its contemporaries, the novel requires an astute sort of investigative work that often refuses to arrive at meaning. In "The Whiteness of the Whale," for instance, Ishmael proposes that such deceits, with which nature "paints like the harlot," mean that the adornments of a prostitute cannot be reliably distinguished from the natural color on the "butterfly cheeks of young girls" (165). When Ishmael suggests that nothing hides behind the appearance of things, he anticipates Bhabha's analysis of visual signifiers of representation, which often distort what they are supposed to reflect:

The intervention of the Third Space, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which

cultural knowledge is continuously revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. (208)

For Bhabha and Ishmael, I argue, meaning resides not in the original representation or in the reflected re-presentation; instead, the truest meaning lies in the liminal spaces that bridge the two expressions, a third space, a bending of meaning that produces iterations that breaks from conventionally understood temporality and answers with the tension of ambivalence. Just as reflections are not what they seem, appearances resist interpretation as well. And if either or both were decoded to yield meaning, the result would be an ambivalence that denotes *both* and *neither*. As Ishmael suggests that images might not carry any significant meaning, Bhabha claims that efforts to transcribe “cultural knowledge” through acts of translation never simply reflect what is “originary.” For both, I argue, a temporal rift disrupts the separation and connection between past, present, and future and instead brings into focus how meaning is comprised through interpretation across shattered planes of temporality.

Melville establishes Ishmael from the outset as a peculiarly introspective and interpretive narrator. Ishmael perpetually desires to read all that he encounters, always in an attempt to merge himself with the objects that surround him. As a reminder of Ishmael’s “growing grim about the mouth” (18), and as a read of the blacksmith in Chapter 112, Ishmael claims that all men have a similar experience: “to the death-longing eyes of such men, who still have left in them some interior compunctions against suicide, does the all-contributed and all-receptive ocean alluringly spread forth his whole plain of unimaginable, taking terrors, and wonderful, new-life adventures; and from the hearts of infinite Pacifics, the thousand mermaids sing to them” (369). The story

Ishmael tells of Perth, the old blacksmith of the Pequod is one about the merging of what one does and how one lives. Ishmael describes Perth and the reduction of his life to his labor: “Silent, slow, and solemn; bowing over still further his chronically broken back, he toiled away, as if toil were life itself, and the heavy beating of his hammer the heavy beating of his heart. And so it was.—Most miserable!” (368). The action and object with which he makes his living merge into being the source through which he lives, his heart and its beating. This becomes true for Ishmael as well. Ishmael’s inclination to observe and merge becomes the operation of his life and the value of his life.

Lewis Mumford, one of Melville’s earliest biographers, paints a picture of Ishmael’s desire to merge at the Spouter Inn: “His companion and bedfellow in the crowded inn is another Ishmael, a cannibal named Queequeg” (158). Melville writes of the penultimate merging (the ultimate shall be discussed in a following section) of Ishmael and Queequeg just paragraphs later in nuptial terms: “For though I tried to move his arm—unlock his bridegroom clasp—yet, sleeping as he was, he still hugged me tightly, as though naught but death should part us twain” (38). If Ishmael’s project is one that merges, Ahab’s is one that destroys. Ahab makes known his philosophical perspective of attaining truth, saying that all things are “pasteboard masks [...] If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall?” (140). Ahab continues his monomania, exclaiming, “the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me,” and that it’s the “inscrutable thing” that he “chiefly” hates (140). Instead of the whale representing something that can and should be read (as it does to Ishmael), it represents something that must be destroyed in order to find the “Truth [that] hath no confines” (140).

However, as the novel unfolds, Melville's favor of one perspective over the other begins to exert itself. The perspectives of Melville's foremost forces of narration merge into Ishmael's reading to slowly uncover how he sees the world. Ishmael, who displays such verbosity throughout the narrative thus far, runs short of words when Ahab finally appears: "Reality outran apprehension; Captain Ahab stood upon his quarter-deck" (108). This entrance marks the first of many moments of insufficient narration about the violent Ahab by the amiable Ishmael. Instead, Melville resorts to soliloquy to display the opposing and powerful perspective of Ahab. Ishmael and Ahab fight for the spotlight in *Moby-Dick*. The constant opposition of these perspectives engender tension, thus contributing to the nature of *Moby-Dick*'s alien territory.

Through binary readings of the whale, even ones that present extreme contention, Melville continues his project of opposition, tension, and alien territory. In "The Whiteness of the Whale," before he concludes that natural beauty may be a deception, Ishmael explains what the White Whale represents to him. He states that "It was the whiteness of the whale that above all things appalled" him (159). Ishmael proceeds to pontificate about whiteness, its presence in different cultures and in nature, its reception and non-reception (as in the Albino man who "peculiarly repels and shocks the eye"), and eventually surrenders "a white flag hung out from a craven soul" (159-64). He surrenders his reading of the whale's whiteness after pages of assigning so much significance to the depth of it. However, Ishmael then poses two questions:

Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way? Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color; and at the same time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb

blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows—a colorless, all-color of atheism from which we shrink? (165)

The whiteness of the whale represents one of two things: the veil that covers the god who desires to undercut creation “with the thought of annihilation” or the “dumb blankness” that indicates an absence of such a god. Behind the veil, we find either an unjust god or the fact that there simply is no veil, no wall, nothing behind anything.

In “The Blanket,” Ishmael discusses the skin of the whale. He poses the question: “what and where is the skin of the whale?” (245). Though he claims there could be “no arguments against such a presumption,” he explains that to consider the blubber the skin would be “preposterous” solely because of its depth and denseness; adversely, he refuses to believe that the outermost layer of the “infinitely thin” substance could be “the proper skin of the tremendous whale” because of its tenderness and diminutiveness (245). Though this “outermost layer” seems to be it, Ishmael refuses to refer to it as the skin. He merges the figurative with the physical: “I have several such dried bits [of whale skin], which I use for marks in my whale-books. It is transparent... and being laid upon the printed page, I have sometimes pleased myself with fancying it exerted a magnifying influence” (245). Ishmael reads the whale through the skin of its own body. He states, “it is pleasant to read about whales through their own spectacles” (245). This is a sort of heuristic project. By touching the body of the whale while reading about its form, Ishmael invites his audience to learn how to read through the very act of reading. For Ishmael, everything needs to be read. He sets out to define the boundaries of the skin of the whale, but rather than bringing clarity, he fails to determine clear delineation. Instead, Ishmael points to the liminal complexity of the whale’s skin. He soon reads the markings on the skin as hieroglyphics and states, “the mystic-marked whale remains undecipherable” (246).

As Rasmussen puts it, “The whale, in *Moby-Dick*, is not only the topic of many written sources but itself a site of inscription, its skin covered with marks that Ishmael compares to ancient hieroglyphs” (112). Just as the whale is increasingly undecipherable to Ishmael, the determinate meaning of any particular object in Melville’s textual anatomy of *The Whale* becomes increasingly undecipherable.

As Ishmael reads the body of the whale through pieces of its own skin, he also strives to understand Queequeg through reading his personhood through his own skin. This subtle subversion of cannibal and Christian speaks to Ishmael’s welcomed merging with his friend. Parchment and skin become interchangeable in Ishmael’s quest to read his world. Rasmussen comments on how “Melville describes these tattoos [that is, Queequeg’s] as ‘hieroglyphic marks’ that are ‘written’ on the ‘parchment’ of the harpooneer’s skin” (113). In a moment that sounds equally as applicable to the *Cherokee Phoenix* as to *Moby-Dick*, Rasmussen writes, “For Melville, the term ‘hieroglyphic’ could, then, simultaneously invoke both the alterity of non-alphabetic writing from a colonized territory and the recognition that such writing could constitute a different but equally legitimate literary heritage” (113). Queequeg’s body is written by Melville and read by Ishmael as a text endowed with something intelligible yet indecipherable. Queequeg’s body is ingrained with meaning, though not always understood by those around him: “Queequeg, who had twice or thrice before taken part in similar ceremonies, looked no ways abashed; but taking the offered pen, copied upon the paper, in the proper place, an exact counterpart of a queer round figure which was tattooed upon his arm” (98). Just as his body seems dislocated from meaning, those who view his markings lack the literacy tools needed for understanding. Upon first viewing Queequeg, Ishmael shows his own inability to understand the spectacle of his new bedmate: “Such a face! It was of a dark, purplish, yellow color, here and

there stuck over with large, blackish looking squares. Yes, it's just as I thought, he's a terrible bedfellow; he's been in a fight, got dreadfully cut, and here he is, just from the surgeon" (23). *Moby-Dick* accomplishes more than just decoding the "alien territory" of Queequeg's body; it does more than simply translate his body's inherent text. Instead, as Rasmussen unknowingly suggests, Melville's text enacts Bhabha's "alien territory" while also incorporating images of indecipherability:

Images in the text of *Moby-Dick* thus correspond to images in the pictographic vocabulary of Marquesan tattoos. If we think of Marquesan designs as discrete elements of a larger system of meaning, in which graphic signs represent language, narrative, words, it appears that elements of this code were literally inscribed into the narrative fabric of *Moby-Dick*. (Rasmussen 120)

Just because meaning cannot be determined, does not mean that there is no meaning. Instead, meaning persists even when the viewer lacks the tools necessary for proper literacy. Ishmael's attachment to Queequeg represents more than just his attachment to something like Bhabha's "diversity." Through Ishmael's persistent reading, we see how Melville's text exemplifies the subject's effort to merge with texts that appear unreadable. In other words, instead of just making the alien familiar, Ishmael endeavors to traverse into the strange and unfamiliar landscapes of alien territory.

In her reading of Melville's reliance on "indigenous ideologies," Kalter describes the connection between corporeal and linguistic markers of identity in terms that echo Bhabha's argument about translation:

Colonization takes place first in the immediately frustrated will to inhabit the bodies of others; this failing, one resorts to language as an imaginative surrogate.

Because language holds out to the single subject the promise of access to multiple perspectives, impediments to its transparency—or its complete absence—as well as its counterproductive effects both enlarge the destructive response and promote language as an indicator of intelligence: its existence and magnitude. *Moby-Dick* refutes the inevitability and adequacy of this response. (2)

Because one person is not privy to the bodily experience of another, language becomes a “surrogate” for corporeal integration. As generally understood, whoever wields linguistic power is positioned as one who holds domineering control. Kalter’s eco-critical reading, although much different than mine, positions Melville as one who works against typical linguistic conventions. I argue, as does Kalter in some respects, that Melville’s text demonstrates how when bodies make contact, they bridge distances between corporeal and linguistic understanding. Thus, Melville’s notions of the interplay between the control of othered bodies and language lays the groundwork for Ishmael’s constant negotiation of Queequeg’s personhood.

Ishmael reads Queequeg’s body in “The Spouter Inn” to familiarize the unfamiliar, thus drawing near to meaning. Melville’s narrator claims there is something “inexplicable in him” (34). He states that “At first I knew not what to make of this; but soon an inkling [pun intended, I guess] of the truth occurred to me. I remembered a story of a white man—a whaleman too—who falling among the cannibals, had been tattooed by them. I concluded that this harpooneer, in the course of his distant voyages, must have met with a similar adventure” (34). Ishmael understands the other by placing him among his own recent memories, merging him into his lived experience. Robertson-Lorant discusses the “cultural collage” inherent in Melville’s Queequeg, claiming that he is “an embodiment of Melville’s multicultural vision.” In the sometimes obscure references of “Pacific Islanders and other races and ethnicities,” Melville allows us “to make the right

connections” (“Red Blood, White Bones” 382). At the start, Ishmael offers an ambivalent attitude towards interacting with the estranged harpooner. Melville writes of Ishmael’s conversation with the inn keeper:

I told him that I never liked to sleep two in a bed; that if I should ever do so, it would depend upon who the harpooneer might be, and that if he (the landlord) really had no other place for me, and the harpooneer was not decidedly objectionable, why rather than wander further about a strange town on so bitter a night, I would put up with the half of any decent man’s blanket. (15)

Further interaction with his newfound friend proves to also straddle unclear and warring attitudes. The reader soon learns that Ishmael views Queequeg’s body as alien territory.

But the strange, alien body of Queequeg soon becomes something of comfort and familiarity for Ishmael. In reading the body of Queequeg, Ishmael attempts to make the unfamiliar familiar. Ishmael narrates further this merging between familiar and other or the civilized and the brute through his account in “The Counterpane”:

The counterpane was of patchwork, full of odd little parti-colored squares and triangles; and this arm of his tattooed all over with an interminable Cretan labyrinth of a figure, no two parts of which were of one precise shade—owing I suppose to his keeping his arm at sea unmethodical in sun and shade, his shirt sleeves irregularly rolled up at various times—this same arm of his, I say, looked for all the world like a strip of that same patchwork quilt. Indeed, partly lying on it as the arm did when I first awoke, I could hardly tell it from the quilt, they so blended their hues together; and it was only by the sense of weight and pressure that I could tell Queequeg was hugging me. (36–7)

Melville writes of the penultimate merging (the ultimate shall be discussed later) of Ishmael and Queequeg just paragraphs later in nuptial terms by saying, “For though I tried to move his arm—unlock his bridegroom clasp—yet, sleeping as he was, he hugged tightly, as though naught but death should part twain” (38).

While Ishmael negotiates the differences he has with Queequeg, he also embraces the experience of unknowns. Ishmael embraces that which is alien. He narrates, “Wild he was; a very sight of sights to see; yet I began to feel myself mysteriously drawn towards him. And those same things that would have repelled most others, they were the very magnets that thus drew me” (57). Melville’s Ishmael finds himself in a place that willingly receives the wild—the different, the other, and often those in opposition. Melville writes Ishmael’s wild story of welcoming a permanent bedfellow: “I’ll try a pagan friend, thought I, since Christian kindness has proved but hollow courtesy. I drew my bench near him, and made some friendly signs and hints [...] he made out to ask me whether we were again to be bedfellows. I told him yes; whereat I thought he looked pleased, perhaps a little complimented” (57). The bond between these bedfellows traverses cultural planes. Ishmael’s openness to receive Queequeg’s guarded physicality speaks to a significant merging of characters created in a notable work of American literature.

Ishmael and Queequeg negotiate their cultural differences. Seemingly, it is because of Ishmael that Queequeg survives his initial sickness aboard the *Pequod*. Similarly, Queequeg’s role situates itself all throughout the novel as one that saves. Without Queequeg, Ishmael sleeps in the harsh weather of a New England winter. More than that, Queequeg in ways that might not be explicit in Melville’s novel is Ishmael’s ticket aboard a whaling vessel. Shoemaker claims that “Indians’ reputations as superior whalers momentarily outweighed racist disdain” (122).

She also writes of other common advantages experienced by American Indians (which might also apply to Pacific Islanders): “As officers, Indians experienced empowering privileges: private quarters, better food, the right to be called ‘Mr.,’ and a racial order turned upside down, for as mates it was their job to order white foremast hands around the deck” (125). Although not “Indian,” without Queequeg’s far greater experience and stature, Ishmael likely would not have been able to negotiate his way aboard the *Pequod*. And ultimately, Ishmael’s survival of his own narrative of ships and whales and a monomaniacal captain would not be possible without the coffin, one that bears the likeness and proposed body of his bedfellow Queequeg, his closest compadre aboard the *Pequod*. Because the collective elements of cultural identity are superficial fronts, the body of Ishmael’s bedmate, in some respects, is of a cartographic nature, something quasi-superficial. Ishmael attempts to record Queequeg’s body, attempting to read and decipher it. Just as one who reads the cartographic representations upon the open seas, Ishmael’s reading aspires to navigate places “not down in any map” (Melville 59). While Melville extensively describes the grandiose and tattooed body of Ishmael’s intimate friend, the most curious aspects emerge as the bodies of these two bedfellows begin to merge, an act that eventually provides the impetus of Ishmael’s ultimate salvation and challenges notions of settled temporality.

Ishmael’s relationship with Queequeg brings up significant points of religious identity: “Do you suppose now, Ishmael, that the magnanimous God of heaven and earth—pagans and all included—can possibly be jealous of an insignificant bit of black wood?” (58). Queequeg’s small idol encourages communion between him and Ishmael while enticing contention in the face of his new friend’s indoctrinated religious beliefs. For Ishmael, the communal aspect of companionship casts shadows on his own staunch adherence to strictures of his held ideologies. After all, the bond between these two is one of eternal matrimony: “He seemed to take to me

quite as naturally and unbiddenly as I to him; and when our smoke was over, he pressed his forehead against mine, clasped me round the waist, and said that henceforth we were married” (57). If Melville hasn’t convinced his reader of this marriage yet, he includes discussion about what brings wedded couples together. He discusses the fusing of souls and a honeymoon: “How it is I know not; but there is no place like a bed for confidential disclosures between friends. Man and wife, they say, there open the very bottom of their souls to each other; and some old couples often lie and chat over old times till nearly morning [...] in our hearts’ honeymoon, lay I and Queequeg—a cosy, loving pair” (58).

Although Ismael and Queequeg hold far different religious beliefs, a kindredness fuses them together. Ishmael often describes Queequeg’s behavior as heathen, non-christian, and altogether different than his own. Ishmael narrates, “He [Queequeg] was sitting on a bench before the fire, with his feet on the stove hearth, and in one hand was holding close up to his face that little negro idol of his; peering hard into its face, and with a jack-knife gently whittling away at its nose” (55). As already discussed, Queequeg’s persona harbored much to be detested by someone like Ishmael. But this young sailor’s experience is defined by difference. He reluctantly agrees to sharing a stranger’s bed. Rasmussen writes of how Ishmael and Queequeg’s relationship is solidified: “The relationship between Queequeg and Ishmael is foregrounded in early chapters of the novel as the two decide to join their fates and fortunes by going on the same whaling voyage. This relationship, where compatibility displaces incommensurability, represents Melville’s assertion that mutuality is central to the human condition” (134). Ishmael looks to take his new friend into embrace, one that is not so entrenched in prescribed ideals of religious strictures as it is of specific and personal experience. With that said, Ishmael still works through how to incorporate or absorb the religiously-other through pure human contact—a third space

not common to those bound in the culture of fundamentalism, one of exclusion and marginalization. Ishmael recounts his experience with Queequeg and his irreducible minimum: “Savage though he was, and hideously marred about the face—at least to my taste—his countenance yet had a something in it which was by no means disagreeable. You cannot hide the soul. Through all his unearthly tattooings, I thought I saw the traces of a simple honest heart” (55). Queequeg’s body is a text, his marked skin representing a demanding literacy that only briefly comes in and out of focus.

As Ishmael prefers merging over translating, his attachment to Queequeg privileges corporeal experience over cultural identity. The task of reading Queequeg’s body remaining central, Ishmael begins to fully and accurately understand the record of the harpooner’s tattooed body. Throughout the novel, Queequeg’s body represents one of the most convincing depictions of alien territory. As one part of a larger microcosm read by Ishmael, the hieroglyphics of Queequeg’s body, as transferred by himself to his coffin, offer the buoy of displacement and enunciation through which Ishmael tells the tale of the great white whale. Through the casket meant to house the dead body of his bedfellow, Ishmael is displaced by its surge to the surface of the wreckage and replaced from demise to safety on top of the floating lifeboat. Through the transposed image of Queequeg’s indecipherable bodily territory and the displacement of his coffin from the deadly vortex, the story of Ahab’s battle with *Moby-Dick* survives, along with Ishmael stretched across the death-casket turned life-preserver.

As the ship sinks to depths of the sea, all the crew of the Pequod are dragged down with it. Not until the waters settle and “the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago” does Ishmael, the faithful narrator, emerge to tell of his survival (427). As Ishmael reaches “the closing vortex,” “a creamy pool” and “slowly wheeling circle,” he floats in the

vastness of the ocean. All that he has known of this voyage descends below, and nothing above the surface offers hope of survival. Then the empty, air-tight coffin of his dear friend Queequeg shoots straight-way out of the water as a life-buoy—hope of Ishmael’s survival and the ensuing story of Ahab and his great bout with the White Whale. Chapter 110, “Queequeg in his Coffin,” explains the significance of this moment. Upon suddenly getting well and regaining strength, Queequeg transfers his likeness onto what has become his “sea-chest”:

Many spare hours he spent, in carving the lid with all manner of grotesque figures and drawings; and it seemed that hereby he was striving, in his rude way, to copy parts of the twisted tattooing on his body. And this tattooing, had been the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them. (367)

The encounter with the “alien territory” of Queequeg’s body settles as the foundation for the novel’s counterintuitive theory of interpretation—a method not of converting the unfamiliar to familiar through interpretation but of merging the indecipherable other into the self’s own semblance of identity. Melville’s “complete theory of the heavens and the earth [...] a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth” carries Ishmael’s life-buoy, the body of Queequeg, to salvation. As Ishmael ultimately merges his body to the floating buoy of Queequeg’s unused and fortuitous coffin, Melville brings to completion the bond between these two unlikely companions. Through Ishmael’s ultimate merging with Queequeg, the meaning in the liminal

spaces extant between the familiar and unfamiliar rise to the forefront. In other words, Bhabha's third space of translation and negotiation, via the ascent of Queequeg's coffin from the sinking *Pequod*, manifests through the amalgamation of Ishmael's body with the alien likeness of his "bosom friend."

2.3 Theoretical

Melville criticism commonly engages with the ways in which Ahab and Ishmael each read their world. One of Ishmael's most notable reading lessons happens within the first three chapters of the novel. In one of these early chapters, Ishmael offers his audience a more truncated reading in preparation for what will come later via Pip. In some ways, Ishmael's reading of the painting at the Spouter Inn (Chapter 3) lays a foundation for the later reading of the doubloon (Chapter 99). This early lesson introduces the text's interpretive project, demonstrating how interpretation becomes dissection and dissection becomes interpretation.

Ishmael begins "The Spouter-Inn" with a description of the hotel's entrance as that of "some condemned old craft" (13). His first understanding of this place, a place that stands in as a marriage chapel and an answer to centuries-old religious quarrels, impresses upon him the idea of a wanton sea vessel. As he lifts his head from his first impression of a ship's "bulwarks," Ishmael reads the painting at the Spouter Inn. Melville only waits until the second sentence of this chapter to begin Ishmael's prophetic and astute propensity to read the world around him. Ishmael begins an analysis of "a very large oil-painting so thoroughly besmoked, and every way defaced" (13). He finds great difficulty to arrive "at an understanding of its purpose" (13).

Melville writes for three paragraphs of Ishmael's understanding of the painting. Ishmael, as he has already done in the novel, considers the temporal grounding of the piece of art. He describes the painting as something containing "masses of shades and shadows, that at first you almost thought some ambitious young artist, in the time of the New England hags, had endeavored to delineate chaos bewitched" (13). In reading the image, Ishmael leaves open the possibility for anything and all things: "you at last came to the conclusion that such an idea, however wild, might not be altogether unwarranted" (13). His claim that "an idea, however wild" opens up seemingly endless interpretations, even some without certain fixity. In a similar way that *Moby-Dick* might rapture readers, Ishmael claims that the painting at the Spouter-Inn would freeze "you to it, till you involuntarily took an oath with yourself to find out what that marvelous painting meant" (13). Despite occurring so early in the novel, the painting at the Spouter Inn provides a center around which everything else falls.

Before arrival at its ultimate meaning, Ismael gives many options as to what the painting could be. He posits the painting to be one of the following:

1. "the Black Sea in a midnight gale" (13).
2. "the unnatural combat of the four primal elements" (13–4).
3. "a blasted heath" (14).
4. "a Hyperborean winter scene" (14).
5. "the breaking-up of the ice-bound stream of Time" (14).

The bizarre and inclusiveness of Ishmael's interpretation confounds even the most well-read members of his audience. Lawrence Buell offers an excellent reading of Ishmael's interpretation of the painting at the Spouter Inn:

As many have noted, the “aesthetic of the entire novel” seems encapsulated in Ishmael’s slow, perplexed pondering of what the smoked-up painting in the Spouter Inn is all about—which after a series of wild guesses [...] he takes to be a picture of a “half-foundered” dismantled storm-tossed ship on which “an exasperated whale” is about to impale itself (*MD* 26), an impossible feat of boat smashing. Never was there a novel that so compulsively anticipated its closure. (366)

Buell hints at something of a temporal nature here but doesn’t go so far as to fully interrogate Melville’s language. These five warring but related preliminary conclusions, although not entirely clear, deal with the concept of temporality: “midnight,” a possible correlation to the four seasons (“the four primal elements”), “a blasted heath”—possibly a reference to the growth of springtime, “winter,” and most significantly “the ice-bound stream of Time” (13–4).

More than all of this, Ishmael looks to read the painting in ways that use a reason of relational opposites, presenting multivalent conclusions through close-readings. In other words, he understands this bizarre painting at the Spouter Inn through a logic of ambivalence. Eventually, under Ishmael’s long gaze, he reduces the painting “to that one portentous something in the picture’s midst” (14). In reading the painting, he intends to “any way arrive at an understanding of its purpose” (26). Ishmael maintains this intention throughout the text. The reading of this object leads him to great observational and inquisitive lengths. Eventually, he concludes that the painting is a depiction of “a gigantic fish ... the great leviathan himself” (26). In this early depiction of Ishmaelian reading, he arrives at a definitive answer. However, because

of traumatic experience, this answer becomes troubling for Ishmael and the reader. The conclusive object in the painting becomes the object that resists reading throughout the rest of the text, a resistance common among victims of trauma.

Trauma figures heavily in *Moby-Dick*, the possible exigence that spurs Ishmael to head towards water. To understand *Moby-Dick*'s preoccupation with reading, specifically Pip's reading of the doubloon, I first provide an overview of trauma theory. Foundational work concerning the traumatic came into popularity within the humanities during the 1990s. Among those early theorists, Cathy Caruth's work has been especially influential for this dissertation. Other pertinent trauma theorists include Sandra L. Bloom, Leigh Gilmore, Dominick LaCapra, Joshua Pederson, Robert D. Stolorow, and George Yancy. As a school of theory, still (in some ways) early in its development, studies in trauma theory suffers in regards to cohesion and clean organization. Highlighting deeper complications, Eric Boynton and Peter Capretto posit in the introduction of *Trauma and Transcendence* that "the scope of scholarship on trauma has always been challenged by the temporal, affective, and corporeal dimensions of trauma itself" (1). Ties to time and the body have animated studies in trauma theory since its recent development.

Victims of trauma often experience a feeling of unhinged temporality. In "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History," Caruth examines Sigmund Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*. Much of what she uncovers in Freud's text addresses the ideas of leaving and returning. The moment of repression wedges itself among these two actions. She defines the term "latency" as "the period during which the effects of the experience are not apparent" (186). Caruth's latency is repression. According to Caruth, trauma victims experience the event that causes trauma at a different time than its actual occurrence. This unhinging of temporality enacts what I refer to as "ungrounded" temporality. In "Parting Words: Trauma, Silence and Survival,"

Caruth explains the moment of unexpected perpetration of traumatic experience: “The breach in the mind—the psyche’s awareness of the threat to life—is not caused by a direct threat or injury, but by fright, the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly” (10). By beginning with a discussion of lasting traumatic wounds, I move through the above-mentioned ungroundedness into ideas of ambivalent performance and, eventually, into the central concept of this dissertation: temporal ambivalence.

Traumatic experience carries long-term effects, lasting wounds intimated especially in memory and through the subject’s unspeakability. While LaCapra describes trauma as something that creates a “state of disorientation, agitation, or even confusion” (699), Bloom claims that “For healing to occur, we know that people often need to put the experience into a narrative, give it words, and share it with themselves and others. Words allow us to put things into a time sequence—past, present, future” (6). Memory and language figure largely into how victims respond to traumatic experience. With that said, the remedy seems impossible. While it is true that the traumatized memory refuses a temporally-grounded center, subjects recovering from trauma often find coping tools. Bloom discusses the loss of language and a person’s need to reenact traumatic events: “The only way that the nonverbal brain can ‘speak’ is through behavior, since it has no words. If we look at reenactment behavior we can see that traumatized people are trying to repeatedly ‘tell their story’ in very overt, or highly disguised ways” (11). Similarly, Gilmore writes, “trauma is figured as the unspeakable, the unrepresentable” (702). Adding to the conversation about the silence of trauma, Pederson associates an “amnesic quality” with traumatic experience, claiming that it has its own sort of “unspeakability” (335).

Traumatized subjects often work out their experiences through avoidance and reenactment, a display of ambivalent performance. In 1999, Sandra L. Bloom published from

first-hand psychiatric experience and studies in psychological trauma, citing case studies examining the effects of trauma. She abridges the findings of clinicians, claiming that they “make the point that it is not the trauma itself that does the damage. It is how the individual’s mind and body reacts in its own unique way to the traumatic experience in combination with the unique response of the individual’s social group” (2). She claims, “The cure is in the disease” and that “the nonverbal brain [...speaks...] through behavior, since it has no words. If we look at reenactment behavior we can see that traumatized people are trying to repeatedly ‘tell their story’” (10–11). The traumatized subject can either retell, and in turn relive traumatic experience, or remain silent. Bloom engages with performance-based analyses of the subject’s response to trauma. “If a person is able to master the situation of danger by successfully running away, winning the fight or getting help,” Bloom writes, “the risk of long-term physical changes are lessened. But in many situations considered to be traumatic, the victim is helpless and it is this helplessness that is such a problem for human beings” (3). This helplessness moves the victim further into avoidance and reenactment.

Through influence on liminality and linearity, trauma has a close relationship with temporality. George Yancy writes of “aspects or profiles of the traumatic experience that are linked to temporality, waiting, as it were, to be discerned” (151). Similarly, Gilmore discusses the tussling of temporality. She claims, “the wound of trauma injures not only the person but also the person’s sense of time, splitting it into before and after, hypostatizing the traumatic contents of the past in flashbacks, and disordering memory” (712). Caruth mentions “the future-oriented temporality of the promise” (“Unclaimed Experience” 184). They begin to describe the individual’s space of liminality when experiencing (and/or re-experiencing) traumatic events.

Traumatic experience garners an ungroundedness, a loss of sure standing within a temporal moment that results in ambivalence. Stolorow succinctly writes, “Trauma destroys time” (61). He goes on to claim that “emotional trauma” has a “profound impact [...] on our experience of time” (62). The destruction of time must have a byproduct—temporal ambivalence. To be ambivalent is also to *ambi valent*—or to have the ability or compulsion to possess multiple lens through which to view experience. Similarly, the present gaze towards a future wholeness creates a sense of eventual healing. LaCapra writes that trauma victims long for “the here and now with future possibilities” (699). Among individuals and communities plagued by trauma exists an ungrounded orientation towards time, a temporal ambivalence, a way of understanding time from multiple perspectives.¹⁵ LaCapra explains how trauma blurs temporal delineations and complicates the ideas of past, present, and future. In other words, trauma dislodges linear connections often associated with memory (699).

2.4 “The Doubloon”—Traumatic Decodings of Time, Locale, and Experience

The most explicit instances of trauma in *Moby-Dick* are found in chapters dealing with Pip. In Chapter 93, “The Castaway,” Ishmael tells the story of Pip’s abandonment at sea. Through a set of circumstances, Pip becomes one of the crew that lowers in Stubb’s whaleboat. Pip accompanies Stubb and his crew for three lowerings: the first being uneventful, the second being near fatal, and the third being the single event of the novel that transitions Pip into the most-efficient interpreter aboard the *Pequod*. While a whale is firmly harpooned, Pip leaps in fear into the water. After jumping from the whale-boat, as Melville foregrounds earlier in the novel, Pip becomes “enveloped in whale-lines” (306): “Pip came all foaming up to the chocks of the boat, remorselessly dragged there by the line, which had taken several turns around his chest

and neck.” As Pip’s life is wrapped in the line between the whale and the whale-boat, fortunately for Pip, Tashtego cuts the whale-line that Pip had “become entangled in” as his “blue, choked face plainly looked” (451–2). “And so the whale was lost,” Ishmael recounts, “and Pip was saved” (452). During the third lowering, the violent commotion of the whale causes Pip to jump from the boat again. But this time, no longer physically tangled in whale-lines, “Pip was left behind on the sea, like a hurried traveller’s trunk” (452). Stubb thought little of leaving Pip to pursue the whale, whether for lack of concern or thought of him being picked up by approaching whaleboats.

The text explains how the physical aspect of being abandoned on the open sea equates to a subject’s unseen identity. “Now, in calm weather, to swim in the open ocean is as easy to the practised swimmer as to ride in a spring-carriage ashore,” Melville writes, “But the awful lonesomeness is intolerable. The intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity, my God! who can tell it?” (453). So, instead of being picked up by the nearby whaleboats, Pip is abandoned at sea for a time. To Pip’s fortune, the *Pequod* itself, “by the merest chance,” passes by the young boy but not before his “ringed horizon began to expand around him miserably” (453). As Pip experiences the vastness of the lonely ocean, he becomes unable to communicate in any way that resembles normalcy.

As the *Cherokee Phoenix* works in the face of inevitable destabilization of cultural identity, *Moby-Dick* presents a future that is supposed but still unknown. Although Melville’s novel begins with so much that looms, it still evades notions of what exactly is to come. That which looms finds a landing pad as the text forces Pip into the spotlight. His experience in “The Castaway” detaches him from conventional ways of reading and allows him to glimpse something like Bhabha’s third space of alien territory. Stolorow writes, “experiences of

emotional trauma become freeze-framed into an eternal present in which one remains forever trapped, [...] past becomes present, and future loses all meaning other than endless repetition” (62). For most, experienced trauma comes through remembering; in the case of Boudinot, Hicks, and the *Cherokee Phoenix*, I argued above that impending trauma can be one that is (p)remembered. For Pip, it is his traumatic experience that serves as a gateway to enhanced perception—temporal ambivalence and his ability to interpret the doubloon.

Melville’s narrator describes Pip’s loss of language often and at length. Although Pip occupies a minor role in *Moby-Dick* until his traumatic isolation at sea, his role becomes central as the novel nears its end. Keely Byars-Nichols describes Pip as “a cabin boy who speaks in heavy dialect and initially acts as Ahab’s jester, then after a near drowning seems mad and prophetic” (43). After the “sea had jeeringly kept his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul,” Pip becomes one of the only crewmen, besides Ahab, who had been “carried down alive to the wondrous depths” and witnessed “the multitudinous, God-Omnipresent, coral insects” (321).¹⁶ He is given an “insanity [that] is heaven’s sense” (322). Only through Pip’s isolation at sea and his affliction, referred to by Ishmael as “not drowned entirely” (Melville 453), can he read that which is “unrepresentable in itself” (Bhabha 208). Because of Pip’s experience at sea, how “he saw God’s foot upon the treadle of the loom,” he can see anew what others cannot. As he gains new perspective, “his shipmates called him mad” (453–4).

In “The Log and Line,” an argument ensues between Ahab and the Manxman over old, spoiled ropes. After the Manxman’s suspicions of faulty lines come to pass, the character of Pip enters muttering non-sense, seemingly having lost the truth of his own identity. While the Manxman calls Pip a “crazy loon” (391), Ahab turns and addresses Pip: “Thou touches my inmost centre, boy; thou art tied to me by cords woven of my heart-strings” (392). Pip responds,

“let old Perth [the Pequod’s blacksmith] now come and rivet these two hands together; the black one with the white, for I will not let this go” (392). Pip and Ahab both feel the same connection. The old Manxman comments on the odd couple as they retreat to Ahab’s cabin: “There go two daft ones now ... One daft with strength, the other daft with weakness” (392). Considering Pip’s small stature but divine vision at sea and Ahab’s fall from sanity but commanding position on the *Pequod*, this passage refuses a definitive reading of their relationship—who is the weaker and who is the stronger? Thus, the reader must again assume *both* and *neither*. Just four chapters later in “The Cabin,” Pip affirms their riveted relationship again saying, “ye have not a whole body, sir; do ye but use poor me for your one lost leg; only tread upon me, sir; I ask no more, so I remain a part of ye” (399). Captain Ahab and Pip become inseparable, two seemingly incommensurate characters indefinitely fused in a binary negotiation of dichotomies.

Similarly, Ishmael claims that Pip is of a curious duality of origins. While Ishmael plainly claims that Pip is a “native” to “Tolland County in Connecticut” (451), he casts Pip earlier as being from Alabama: “Black Little Pip [...] Poor Alabama boy! On the grim Pequod’s fore-castle, ye shall ere long see him, beating his tambourine; prelusive of the eternal time, when sent for, to the great quarter-deck on high, he was bid strike in with angels, and beat his tambourine in glory; called a coward here, hailed a hero there!” (132). Even early in the text, Pip holds a connection to the divine and, as the almighty might also have, a disconnection from common temporality. The text claims that Pip somehow exists outside of time or possibly within all time, a temporal ambivalence that Ishmael explains is a prelude that comes before “eternal time.”

Pip’s insight gleaned from his wholly transforming experience at sea allows him to read the doubloon as a marker of the *Pequod*’s vexed temporality—leave it in place, things grow

desperate; unscrew it, the body falls apart. In Chapter 99, "The Doubloon," the role of narrator passes between characters. Each character attempts to decipher or, as Starbuck states, "read" the coin (333). The crew believes that significant meaning lies within the hieroglyphic markings of the doubloon. Each reading seems to understand the doubloon through reflections of each reader's own individuality. Ahab reads first, and in his egotistical monomania, he sees only himself: "all are Ahab" (332). Through the lens of himself, Ahab decodes the design of the doubloon to mean "that man should live in pains and die in pangs!" (333). Because of his woeful life, Ahab projects onto the coin that life and death are both painful. Next, Starbuck soliloquizes a similar experience as he attempts to mold the coin into the creed in which he believes. This is done to no avail, and he refuses to continue in his translation for fear that the "Truth [may] shake [him] falsely" (333). From there, Stubb approaches the coin and only understands it as a zodiac representation. Stubb narrates other readings of the doubloon: Flask, through that "ignorant, unconscious fearlessness of his" (105), translates the coin into its monetary value and, rather incorrectly, determines what it could purchase; the old Manxman, as he often does when he speaks, offers a prophecy of when the White Whale would be raised; and Fedallah only "makes a sign to the sign and bows himself," supposedly in an act of worship to the sun god (335). Queequeg reads the markings on the coin as it relates to the markings on his own body. Rasmussen claims that he's just as adept as the others: "When the crew of the Pequod assembles to offer interpretations of the markings on a gold doubloon, Queequeg proves himself as capable a reader as anyone" (113). Ultimately, Pip approaches, and Stubb seems to leave the vicinity of the mast.

Pip's reading of the coin, which at first seems furthest from lucid, explains the scene. He starts by muttering, "I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look" (335). Pip repeats

this conjugation and asserts that all of the crew are crazy, and he is a crow. The implication of him being a crow is that he brings an omen. Jacqueline Simpson and Stephen Roud state in *A Dictionary of English Folklore* that crows are “regarded as unlucky, and as omens of death, especially if they croak persistently.” Pip continues: “Caw! caw! caw! caw! caw! caw!” (335). Pip’s interpretation of the doubloon not only yields an unlucky omen, it also becomes the one that helps decode the rest. Pip states: “Here's the ship's navel, this doubloon here, and they are all on fire to unscrew it. But, unscrew your navel, and what's the consequence? Then again, if it stays here, that is ugly, too, for when aught's nailed to the mast it's a sign that things grow desperate. Ha, ha! old Ahab! the White Whale; he'll nail ye!” (335). Pip reads the doubloon as being part of the body of the *Pequod*, namely its navel, resonating with Ishmael’s several efforts to find meaning by reading the body of the whale. By reading the coin as part of the body of the *Pequod*, Pip concludes that if one raises the White Whale, the ship will sink; then again, if no one raises the whale, the search goes on forever. In other words, Pip’s all-seeing reading of the *Pequod*’s only Achilles heel, the umbilical doubloon, claims that when removed would ultimately disembowel the quest for the great white whale.

Thus Pip introduces a hermeneutic dilemma: rather than simply interpret the doubloon, his reading binds the interpretive dilemma itself to the fate of the *Pequod*. Ultimately, both of Pip’s interpretations trouble him. His quandary seems to question the validity of interpretation. Can objects be read in the sense that Ishmael attempts throughout the novel? Pip’s reading appears to cut through the indecipherability of the doubloon and instead focuses on reading the ship and her crew. Stolorow unintentionally describes this scene:

Because trauma so profoundly modifies the universal or shared structure of temporality, the traumatized person quite literally lives in another kind of reality,

an experiential world felt to be incommensurable with those others. This felt incommensurability, in turn, contributes to the sense of alienation and estrangement from other human beings that typically haunts the traumatized person. Torn from the communal fabric of being-in-time, trauma remains insulated from human dialogue. (62)

Pip concludes that the doubloon (and all that it represents) will plunge the *Pequod* to the depths of the sea:

This is a pine tree. My father, in old Tolland county, cut down a pine tree once, and found a silver ring grown over in it; some old darkey's wedding ring. How did it get there? And so they'll say in the resurrection, when they come to fish up this old mast, and find a doubloon lodged in it, with bedded oysters for the shaggy bark. Oh, the gold! the precious, precious, gold! (335)

Understanding the ship's circumstance thus becomes the entirety of the interpretation, in which every possible future devastates the prospects posed in the experiments of both Ahab and Melville. Pip's prophetic reading of the doubloon and the body that surrounds it foreshadows the eventual outcome of the *Pequod*'s quest to slay the White Whale. He resists any particular reading of the hieroglyphic inscriptions on the doubloon, emphasizing instead the interpretive paradox comprising the full body of the text. Pip's interpretation of the doubloon, one that spells certain doom for the *Pequod*, consists either of slaying the white whale—thus causing the body of the crew to fall apart—or chasing Moby-Dick without end. Whether the doubloon stays fixed to the masthead or is taken down, the implication denotes two ambivalent outcomes—both of which are bad. Pip's reading also brings into question the compulsive need to interpret the world, an act so emphasized all throughout the text. Since all outcomes are dire, his reading of the

doubloon allows for an understanding of ambivalence that questions whether to interpret at all. Through interpreting with his new valence acquired through trauma, Pip provides the soundest interpretation and the clearest depiction of temporal ambivalence in *Moby-Dick*.

Implicitly, Pip asks if possible futures can be distinguished by interpretive means. He resists any particular reading of the hieroglyphic inscriptions on the doubloon; instead, he emphasizes the interpretive paradox comprising the full body of the text. For Pip, to read the markings on the doubloon would offer little explanation. After all, just moments before, those markings were read in vastly different ways. Instead, Pip perceives another plane of interpretation—one outside of common thought, an interpretation that lacks clean alignment with conventions.

Bhabha claims that “It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew” (208). Similarly to Pip’s temporal setting as “prelusive of the eternal time,” Bhabha interrogates notions of temporality—its looseness or fastness—whereas meaning becomes muddled through binaries that at once seem definite but ultimately manifest as indeterminate—a looseness or a fastness. In “Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish,” Melville discusses what constitutes the ownership of whales in the fisheries sailed by the *Pequod*: “A Fast-Fish belongs to the party fast to it” and “a Loose-Fish is fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it” (433). Ishmael then discusses complicated conflicts and court cases aimed at drawing clear distinctions between the two ideas, ending his diatribe with a series of paragraphs that mostly ask questions. Ishmael’s practice of reading applies the principles of fast-fish and loose-fish to broadly reaching, almost encompassing philosophies of meaning that break from

tethered points and instead concludes in ambivalence. Firstly, Melville asks, “what are the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World but loose-fish?” then he directly addresses the reader:

“And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too?” (435).

Like Bhabha’s third space of “discursive conditions”—those enunciated through representations that imbue no meaning in itself—Pip’s astute reading lacks the same anchors of “unity and fixity” as seen in readings from the others. The doubloon, to borrow from Bhabha, is “unrepresentable in itself.” Only in the wake of Pip’s traumatic experience resides reason. As seen in the body of Queequeg and eventually in the reading of the doubloon, text and language, even when indecipherable, settles “the structure of meaning and reference,” a process deemed by Bhabha as “ambivalent.” At the will of literacy and translation, temporal ambivalence shatters the “mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is continuously revealed” (208).

Rasmussen writes of the third-space present in the body of Queequeg, which also applies to the translation of the doubloon:

An “alternative literacies” analysis thus reveals that Melville reproduces significant images from Marquesan pictography as narrative images constructed with alphabetic letters, the components of his native writing system. In such narrative images, we can see the intersection of two distinct graphic systems. As the units of one graphic language, Marquesan tattoos, link up with the images of another graphic language, alphabetic script, the image emerges as the common ground between two radically different forms of writing, displacing translation as the dominant mode of cross-cultural intersection. (120).

Between the two alternatives exists the third-space of enunciation, the only feasible locale for productive writing, reading, and translation. Only through the overlapping mediums, similar to how Ishmael combines words with whale skin, can meaning be conferred.

The third-space of enunciation for Pip differs from that of the *Cherokee Phoenix*. Bhabha claims “that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation” (208). Pip’s perspective is accomplished by retracting the lens from a close-range, detailed position to one that consumes all of experience at once. If the third space found in other texts is hidden from misdirection or a refusal of translation, Melville’s text acts out its third space of enunciation by including everything. In other words, the actors in the third space become unwilling participants, grasping at meaning but failing to see the delineations of the third space. Melville’s characters fall short of perceiving their placement within alien territory, because they are contained within it. Pip, of course, achieves this unique perspective because of traumatic experience, leading him to his own temporal ambivalence. Pip’s time at sea dislodges him from common experiences of time and his relationship to it. He loses grounding in normal expressions of temporal experience.

As argued in the previous chapter, the Cherokee Nation and the writers of the *Cherokee Phoenix* would likely advocate for a dislodging from what Peter Coviello refers to as the “clockwork of the present tense.” Coviello describes a yearning for respite from the “painful intensity” of lived experience “into some freer, ampler moment” and a “hunger for articulacy” (65). Towards similar ends, Mark Rifkin compares the temporalities of settlers and Indigenous peoples as he interrogates “the meaning and implications of the pursuit of forms of temporal recognition” (viii). Considering Coviello’s temporal dislodging and Rifkin’s discussion of “temporal recognition” and how those concepts apply to Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, uncanny

perception becomes a notable attribute of Pip's character. The desolation of Pip's transformative isolation at sea, his limbs keeping his body afloat and his eyes watching the diminishing beacon of hope in the distance, flings wide his capacity for truth and intuition in such a way as to make him imperceptible and unintelligible to most aboard the *Pequod*. Of course, Captain Ahab embraces the rescued sailor; Pip's experience at sea, described by the narrator as a divine aloneness, carries the interpretive weight needed to decode possibly *Moby-Dick's* most confounding puzzle—the doubloon to the masthead fixed.

2.5 Coda

Melville's narrator, Ishmael, tells a survivor's narrative. In order to glean meaning out of outward events, Ishmael walks his readers through the cataclysm of Captain Ahab's great failing and the watery demise of the *Pequod* into its cradle beneath the ocean's waves. For Pip that response is initial silence followed by new heightened understandings; for Ishmael that response is his survivor's narrative. In the chaos of the *Pequod's* great demise, Ishmael begins to see how the collectivity encompassed by this whaling ship has room for a lone survivor. Robertson-Lorant writes, "Although for a time Ishmael becomes caught up in Ahab's monomania, in the end, he breaks free to achieve a polypositional stance that takes him from his professed 'Presbyterian' beliefs to a kind of pantheistic spiritual rebirth" ("Red Blood, White Bones" 388). However, this comes at a price. Ambivalence imposes itself onto temporality. In other words, instead of being something adopted or received, ambivalence is forced, played over, and enacted upon its subject. Ishmael, through piercing the darkness of ignorance, moves from the strictures of religious tunnel vision to an open stance of receiving outside ideas, no matter how complicated or complicating those ideas might be.

Instead of venturing into the complex and convoluted aspects of *Moby-Dick* blindly, Melville employs certain dissonance in his text. Buell writes, “*Moby-Dick* was the novel in which Melville decisively broke loose from popular fiction, at the cost of baffling much of his original audience” (361). So, instead of adopting a multivalent perspective of temporality, *Moby-Dick* imposes degrees of temporal ambivalence upon its unfolding disaster—thus responding to the vagaries of colonialism as discussed above. As a result, the novel demands interpretive sophistication, which led to negative contemporary reception. But these hermeneutic properties eventually lead to its anticipated revival and participation in common modernist aesthetic sensibilities. So, *Moby-Dick* circled the closing vortex of Melville's tormented experience with nineteenth-century authorship, awaiting Ishmael's embrace with the likeness of Queequeg. The welcoming sea of modernism held wide its arms to Melville. Those who found his work distasteful faded away and only little proof of his existence remained. Similarly, Queequeg's coffin bursts forth, giving opportunity for narrative resurrection—the artistic expression of his corporeal existence and the coffin carved and transposed by the story's most consistent and confident character—the *Pequod's* resident artist.

Similar to the logic governing *Moby-Dick*, Elizabeth Freeman negotiates an understanding between the present and future. Specifically addressing queer temporality, she defines a connection between “temporal dissonance” and the act “of recasting the future in terms other than those dictated by the past” (142). She discusses what she refers to as “suspended temporality” or “a temporality of anticipation, poise, readiness” (153). Freeman moves towards scaffolding a similar conception as my temporal ambivalence, but for me and this study, this concept not only applies to what has been experienced but also to what is being experienced. In other words, this concept of temporality transcends Freeman's proposed assertions and expands

into conceptualizations that occur between all modes of temporal experience, namely that of the connection between present and future. The complex treatise of experience inherent in Melville's *Moby-Dick* accomplishes so much. To fully understand this novel, a reader should consider not only where *Moby-Dick* succeeds but also where it does not. Buell puts it plainly: "*Moby-Dick*'s continual straining toward horizons of possibility that no actual book could hope to encompass becomes one of its marks of distinction not despite but because of such admissions of necessary imperfection" (364). Only through the unlikely survival of Ishmael via Queequeg's coffin does the tale move forth. Some have argued similar circumstances surrounding Melville's publishing career. Ishmael's survival narrative, fraught with temporal ambivalence, lays over Melville's own life nicely. "Like Ishmael," Buell claims, "*Moby-Dick* had to survive the shipwreck of its author's fall from early fame into half a century of oblivion. In 1920, first editions could be bought for less than a dollar" (358).

If we accept Ishmael's story as one that from the very beginning forecasts imminent demise, and we understand the publication of the *Cherokee Phoenix* as that which writes in the face of a national apocalypse, then we can see that the impetus of each story is one already buckling at the knees. In other words, these writings begin at a time informed and rapt with extensive backstories of trauma, tragedy, and catastrophe. While the *Cherokee Phoenix* broadcasts "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP" in 1834, *Moby-Dick* echoes similar sentiments in 1851: "Now, in general, *Stick to the boat*, is your true motto in whaling; but cases will sometimes happen when *Leap from the boat*, is still better" (452). Trauma and tragedy demonstrate an ambivalence that weaves its way into the governing principles of Melville's text. There are myriad ways in which the whale can be understood. Through the multivalent attempts to conquer and commune, temporality becomes a shakable feature.

As this discussion moves from being oriented from a future-leaning present to a present warped and dislodged into a violent past, I move ahead a century or more to Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*—a text, although written in the late twentieth century, that centers on the antebellum plantation life of enslavement in America. Temporal ambivalence, that which is theorized in this chapter and the previous, becomes laid flat, clearly unfolding the temporal tensions found in the *Cherokee Phoenix* and *Moby-Dick* into explicit iterations of time travel. If the first two chapters of this dissertation work towards building a theoretical framework for temporal ambivalence, the next chapter becomes something of an archetype, a model of what it means to traverse the alien territory of cultural displacement.

**CHAPTER 3—KINDRED’S TEMPORAL PROBLEM: THE ARCHETYPE OF
AMBIVALENCE AS EXPERIENCED BETWEEN THE *THEN* AND *NOW***

In Butler’s *Kindred*, the disruption between present and past challenges the set of assumptions and experiences that often constitute selfhood. By constructing a traumatic past in conflict with the lived present of her characters, Butler complicates the paradigms of thought that govern identity formation. She constructs a reiteration of the traumatic past in conflict with her main character’s lived present. For the protagonists of *Kindred*, the past becomes an alien territory, a violent place, an extra-temporal third space irreconcilable with the realities of present-day experience. While displacing her characters, Butler also transports her readers to a place of convoluted identity, destabilizing our assumptions about continuity between past and current cultural roles. Characters in *Kindred* lack the means to assimilate with the past into which they are abruptly transported; and as a result, their past becomes a version of Boudinot’s future—an approaching horizon of violence and destruction that changes perceptions of identity. The novel’s protagonist assumes the role of a quasi-enslaved woman in the antebellum U.S. South, for instance, while her partner must accept the role of white, privileged enslaver. Butler’s text asks readers to confront an alien territory largely notional for twentieth-century American readers, while suggesting that unfamiliar/alien pasts bear on the subject’s own perceptions of selfhood in the present. Thus, as the novel preoccupies itself with constantly disrupting time, it demonstrates how constructed identities depend on negotiations of temporality—that is, navigating incommensurate pasts and presents—marked by alien violence and temporal ambivalence.

This chapter explores the liminal spaces created by Butler in *Kindred*, fissures that exist between past and present and then present and future, embodying a disorienting narrative for both the reader and the actors within the text. Butler calls attention to meaningful connections between historical memory and current lived expression by demonstrating the use of disjointed representations of cultural relocation, in much the same way that Bhabha claims that freedom fighters “negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference” (208). In *Kindred*, the central character, Dana—a Black woman living in 1970s California, much like Butler herself¹⁷—represents a focal point of Bhabha’s “discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference.” Thus, she comes face-to-face with the antebellum U.S. South and its institution of slavery through a non-linear, disjointed, and unpredictable temporality. Stranger still, Dana experiences this through physical transportation between the two worlds.

Characters within *Kindred* confront the past as alien, just as others—namely Boudinot and Hicks, and Melville—encounter the supposed future as alien territory. For Dana the past becomes that alien future, while her 1970s present becomes the past sense of self that her temporal predicament tasks her to reconcile. According to Todd Comer, Butler’s novel “is intimately interested in the collision of worlds, and in mining the ethical and ideological possibilities inherent in this collision” (88). As cited in the previous chapter, Bhabha describes the mechanisms of meaning-making and clear enunciations that shape representation. He contends that any way toward knowledge is “an ambivalent process,” one not fixed to a static point:

The intervention of the Third Space, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which

cultural knowledge is continuously revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. In other words, the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative of the Western nation. (208)

Butler places her characters in a position where they are not who they think they are when they look into Bhabha's theoretical mirror. Instead, the novel shatters the preconceptions, demanding that the characters build new cultural identities.

Butler employs trauma to figure temporal ambivalence directly in the body of her female protagonist. In "Trauma Theory Abbreviated," Sandra L. Bloom claims that "overwhelming emotions can do damage to our bodies as well as our psyches" (2). In *Kindred*, temporal ambivalence and trauma are linked in scenes of torture and bodily dismemberment. Butler leverages conventional understandings of trauma by enacting temporal shifts to uncover how traumatic pasts shape the developing sense of self. *Kindred* reveals temporal ambivalence through traumatic episodes that blur the lines between pasts, presents, and futures. Dana experiences significant material collisions as she carries her experiences from one temporal shift to the next. *Kindred* culminates in the physical dismemberment of Dana, the novel's central character. Where the previous chapter ends with trauma, Pip's abandonment at sea and his new-found sight from such an event, this chapter begins with trauma and follows its subsequent unraveling.

Dana's experience of time-travel during her time between Southern California and the time of chattel slavery in America exemplifies the dire past that Bhabha often obscures. While

the actions of the U.S. South provide a horrific record of the atrocities of the day, past narratives affirm the built structures that lead to *Kindred*'s temporal anomaly that transports its main character to pasts of traumatic experience. "Pastness" presents ideas about "cultural difference" that often rely on fantasy versions of the past, but Butler creates a narrative experiment that disrupts the past as something that signifies the ways that meaning is made in the present. Additionally, Butler casts the past as an active force that brings affliction to the body.

The progressive folding, unfolding, and refolding in *Kindred* ultimately binds up, shores up, and reconciles traumatic experience. Bhabha discusses liminality in regards to a third space while imagining loose connections to temporality. He claims that "the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative" of cultural identification and translation (208). To establish an understanding of self, we often build identities around artifacts of past experience. In this chapter, I will be using three primary moves to expose how Butler realizes the construction of a traumatic past landscape through a posture of temporal ambivalence. First, I analyze each chapter in terms of how time passes within the conceptual world devised by Butler. Next, I elucidate the novel's complex relationship between danger and safety, focusing on the ways that subjects arrive at meaning within the logical universe of *Kindred*. And lastly, I discuss the numerous iterations of alien territory throughout the novel, landing at the ultimate moment of Dana's bodily fallout.

3.1 The Passing of Time

The way that time works—that is, the logic of passing time—features heavily in *Kindred*, which raises questions about each temporal space (that is, the present and the many snapshots of the past) and the implications of the discrepancies between each. When Dana is home, time

works differently than it does in the antebellum past. That difference applies not only to how time is generally understood but also to the tangible expression of how time affects the mind and body. Those placed into forced labor during American enslavement might experience the demands of a single day—its length and rigor—differently than someone experiencing the relatively more comfortable life in 1976 California. In other words, although Dana and Kevin encounter their own set of problems in their own time, Dana’s ancestors on the Weylin plantation must endure much more difficult circumstances of forced labor, low living standards, and the constant physical abuse woven into the fabric of plantation life.

To analyze the temporal discrepancies and incongruities in *Kindred*, I extend conversations posed in the previous chapter and apply concepts from trauma theory to Dana’s experience of time between her home and the Weylin plantation. In “Phenomenological-Contextualism All the Way Down: An Existential and Ethical Perspective on Emotional Trauma,” Robert D. Stolorow writes that “Trauma devastatingly disrupts the ordinary, average-everyday linearity” of time (62). Disrupted linearity, as described by Stolorow, emanates from traumatic experiences. As Dana and Kevin transport between temporal worlds during each episode, the linearity of time is fractured. Time as understood minute-by-minute, in other words, fails to correlate one temporality to the other. Echoing Stolorow’s understanding of trauma, I contend that as it pertains to trauma and *Kindred*, “all duration or stretching along collapses, past becomes present, and future loses all meaning other than endless repetition” (62). In other words, Dana’s ancestral past, at once during each episode, becomes a dangerous present, while her attachments to future become less and less apparent.

The ways in which Dana’s home in California manifests time is often but not always expressed at a significantly slower rate. In other words, most accounts in the novel depict how an

hour in Dana and Kevin's time equals a much longer span in the temporal world of the Weylins. As Dana and Kevin travel into the past each time, the people they knew before, for the most part, have aged drastically while they themselves appear to not have aged at all. Dana experiences the antebellum U.S. South through six violent trips, or what I will most often refer to as "episodes," across time and space. Butler invents six episodes of violent time travel: "The River," "The Fire," "The Fall," "The Fight," "The Storm," and "The Rope." In "The Fight," Dana explains to Rufus (the son of Tom Weylin, the white plantation owner) how she has come to understand time in her new and unique context:

I shook my head. "Just ... let me tell you how it's been for me. I can't tell you why things are happening as they are, but I can tell you the order of their happening." I hesitated, gathering my thoughts. "When I came to you at the river, it was June ninth, nineteen seventy-six for me. When I got home, it was still the same day. Kevin told me I had only been gone a few seconds."

"Seconds...?"

"Wait. Let me tell it all to you at once. Then you can have all the time you need to digest it and ask questions. Later, on that same day, I came to you again. You were three or four years older and busy trying to set the house afire. When I went home, Kevin told me only a few minutes had passed. The next morning, June tenth, I came to you because you'd fallen out of a tree.... Kevin and I came to you. I was here nearly two months. But when I went home, I found that I had lost only a few minutes or hours of June tenth."

"You mean after two months, you ..."

“I arrived home on the same day I had left. Don’t ask me how. I don’t know. After eight days at home, I came back here.” (135)

Throughout this explanation to Rufus, Dana refers to increments of time: seconds, days, months, hours. Somehow and in some way, temporal passing has been abruptly disrupted for Dana. Her experiences between her time and the time of her ancestors prove to be incomparable. In other words, the way that she experiences time in each temporality doesn’t match with its parallel time.

In “The Personal is Historical: Slavery, Black Power, and Resistance in Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*,” Megan Behrent writes that “Dana’s six trips back in time to pre-civil war Maryland provide a lens through which Butler explores issues raised by the Black Power movement and unearths a long tradition of resistance, particularly among women, who have much to teach Dana about survival and strength. Thus, the novel comments on the present as much as the past” (801). But what links present and past also reflects their temporal incongruities. Early in the novel, to orient herself while experiencing this phenomenon, Dana considers time zones and reminds herself that the year in one place must logically be the same in another place. She claims, “If I was in the South, the two- or three-hour time difference would explain the darkness outside” (21). Later she supposes that if it’s “eighteen nineteen,” it must be “eighteen nineteen everywhere” (62). When shoring up her understanding of time between her home in California and the Weylin plantation in Maryland, Dana constantly attempts to understand the two temporal contradictions, demonstrating her growing logic both verbally and internally.

Proposed logics of passing time are difficult to pin down in *Kindred*. For example, time typically passes more quickly in the past than in the present, providing one form of temporal discontinuity present in the novel. However, as previously explained, this is not always the case.

But more importantly than simply pinning down the passing of time in *Kindred*, Butler interrogates the ways that one anchors herself to their time. In other words, Butler asks her readers about the organizing factors that contribute to continuity and discontinuity. *Kindred* posits through its complex web of time travel and trauma that the experiences of Black Americans are so experientially and bodily connected to ancestral days of chattel slavery that attempts to live only one temporal moment—Dana’s time of a much more comfortable present—yields incessant disappointments. As we see the asynchronicity of the passing of time throughout the novel, we also glimpse the ways that Dana’s history eludes logical temporal alignment.

Dana refers to Rufus as “a man of his time” (242). Attempting to understand the dynamics of Dana and Rufus’s relationship, Kevin confronts Dana in a tense conversation fueled by accusation, saying, “You’ve said he was a man of his time, and you’ve told me what he’s done to Alice. What’s he done to you?” (245). Although their circumstances have been unique and complicated, Dana and Kevin have both escaped sexual encounters, whether enacted by Kevin or done to Dana, that would further complicate their assimilation back into their own time period. As the novel constantly pulls Kevin and Dana apart, Butler makes clear that Kevin is Dana’s place to anchor. In fact, Dana calls Kevin her “anchor here in my own time” (246). If Rufus is a “man of his time”—one entwined in American enslavement and plantation economy, then Kevin must be a man of his time—disconnected from practices of the antebellum American South and committed to his relationship with Dana in 1976 California.

While Dana and Rufus navigate sexual and marital jealousy, a larger question pervades: what does it mean to be *of* time and *in* time? On the one hand, being of time means being subject to the influences of cultural pressure. For example, although early in the novel Rufus moves away from his father’s mode of running plantation affairs, he becomes much the same. The

impositions of society pose lasting expectations on those subject to their influence. On the other hand, Dana's experience in time can only be explained through the inexplicable: she's extracted from her own temporal moment to assume a role in a past that contradicts much of what she has experienced in her own temporality. To this end, what does it mean to be of a time or in a time? And more than that, why does Butler bring this tension to the forefront of her most famous novel? Dana's temporal discontinuity brings into question the ways that we understand our own time. Are we the summation of irreconcilable temporal situations? Butler might argue that temporal constraints produce disparate ties to both the past and present—and in some instances, the future. In each of the subsections below, I first explain each episode, including Rufus's call for Dana, her time (and Kevin's) in the past, and the event that sends her back home. After each summary, I offer a reading of that episode's temporality in hopes of unraveling the complex nature of time in Butler's *Kindred*.

3.1.1 Episode 1—*The River—Pre-1815 (pp. 12–17)*

Butler writes that the machinery leading to Dana's episodes "began long before June 9, 1976, when [she] became aware of it, but June 9 is the day [she] remember[s]" (Butler 12). Her first trouble with Rufus lasts significantly shorter than later episodes. As Dana and Kevin settle into the new house they have just purchased, conducting the normal tasks of unpacking and organizing, Dana experiences the novel feelings that always precede her moves through time, feelings that would soon become familiar. Butler writes, "I bent to push him another box full, then straightened quickly as I began to feel dizzy, nauseated. The room seemed to blur and darken around me. I stayed on my feet for a moment holding on to a bookcase and wondering what was wrong, then finally, I collapsed to my knees" (Butler 13). Within seconds, before

Kevin can come near to help, “The house, the books, everything vanished.” Instead of being safe in her new house, Dana finds herself “outdoors kneeling on the ground beneath trees” (13). In a nearby river, a young boy flails about. Dana wastes no time to heroically aid the endangered child, walking “into the water fully clothed” (13). Dana, a black woman, is met with someone who appears to be the boy’s mother. Soon the father of the boy approaches, holding a rifle aimed at Dana. Again, Dana “felt sick and dizzy [...] vision blurred [...] gone into sickness and panic [...]” Within seconds, before the man can fire the gun, “The man, the woman, the boy, the gun all vanished.” Dana returns to her house with Kevin “wet and muddy” and “several feet from where” she had vanished “minutes before” (14).

Dana immediately attempts to understand how time passes between the two modes of this new, unsettling phenomenon. “Across the room, Kevin stood frozen,” she recounts, “staring at the spot where [she] had been.” She asks herself, “How long had he been there?” (14). In “trying to gather [her] thoughts,” Dana tells Kevin, “I don’t know what to tell you [...] It’s all crazy” (15). Kevin in turn asks Dana how long she thinks she was gone. She remembers, “a few minutes. Not long.” Kevin responds, “a few seconds. There were no more than ten or fifteen seconds between the time you went” and returned. Kevin confusedly and reluctantly admits that she “vanished” and “reappeared” (16). After some conversation, Dana explains the experience to Kevin. She describes it as something distant, like a recollection from a blurry past or a suppressed memory: “As real as the whole episode was, as real as I know it was, it’s beginning to recede from me somehow. It’s becoming like something I saw on television or read about—like something I got second hand” (17). Dana’s first episode comprises fewer than six pages of Butler’s prose, brevity that the following chapters do not reproduce. As the novel unfolds, Butler

places more significance on the meaning of time, both through including the passing of more literal time and through unpacking more temporal anomalies and inconsistencies.

3.1.2 Episode 2—*The Fire*—1815 (pp. 18–51)

Dana's second episode brings with it much more time in the past. As before, she "felt the sick dizziness" as "the kitchen began to blur" and "the light seemed to dim." Dana "pushed back from the table, but didn't try to get up [...] couldn't have gotten up" (19). As her surroundings—the table, the floor, the chair—begin "to darken and change," Butler writes that "The linoleum tile became wood, partially carpeted" (19). Dana joins Rufus as "the draperies at the window" are burning. Both pause, "watching as the flames ate their way up the heavy cloth" (20). Without knowing what could be outside a window nearby, Dana pulls the burning cloth from the wall and throws it outside. Dana reasons that the sun was still out back home in California, yet "here it was dark."

Later in the episode, Dana is attacked by a patroller. Again, she feels a similar dizziness as before and falls "slowly it seemed, into a deep starless darkness." As the patroller tries to rape Dana, she finds "a tree limb" and "grasped it with both hands" and brings "it down as hard as [she] could on his head." This time Dana carries more than just mud and memories back from the past; she brings pain from the past, bodily remnants of the patroller's assault and attempted rape. Butler writes, "Pain dragged me back to consciousness" (43). Dana returns home and, unaware of her move across time and space, continues her struggle with the patroller, except it was Kevin that she fought with renewed effort. After calming her down, Kevin—covered in Dana's "blood and his own"—holds her. Although Dana felt that she was "gone for hours," Kevin tells her that she was gone about "three minutes" (44).

During this episode, Dana gleans a better understanding of where and when her episodes take her. At first, she “waited to go home.” Considering her quick action to toss the draperies through the window, she thinks that her “hasty act had done no harm” and that she “could go home knowing that [she] had averted trouble for the second time.” Dana thinks of how her “first trip had ended as soon as the boy was safe—had ended just in time to keep [her] safe. Now, though, as I waited, I realized that I wasn’t going to be that lucky again.” She fearfully asks herself questions: “What would happen to me if I didn’t go back automatically this time? What if I was stranded here—.” Because the boy is “clearly three or four years older” than the last time she saw Rufus, Dana thinks this boy “was not Rufus” (20). She eventually puts together that “The child [she] had pulled from the river could easily have grown into this child—in three or four years” (22).

While talking with Rufus, she reasons that the previous trip “had come only hours ago. Yet the boy was years older.” Now, instead of understanding time moving between seconds and minutes, Dana grapples to understand that hours could also mean years. She puts together two remarkable thoughts: that “Somehow, [her] travels crossed time as well as distance. Another fact: The boy was the focus of my travels—perhaps the cause of them” (24). Because of Dana’s connection between the two temporal moments, the novel posits that she carries a unique hybridity. While her home rests in modern-day California, she feels a sense of belonging among the house of Weylin. In this sense, Dana’s predicament echoes Bhabha’s claim that those “who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of hybrid identity. They are caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation” (208). As Rufus and Dana’s lives merge, Dana becomes one with a “hybrid identity.” The point of view linking one world to the other reflects Butler’s experiment with what Bhabha calls

“discontinuous time.” As opposed to everyone on the Weylin plantation, Dana straddles temporality. She keeps one foot in her native temporality, in other words, while also stepping into the distantly connected past of her forebearers. Dana’s liminality, ambivalence, and hybridity illustrate Bhabha’s “productive instability”: her disconnected attachments, spanning two worlds, produces an extra-temporal ground on which to establish a footing.

3.1.3 Episode 3—*The Fall*—1819 (pp. 52–107)

In her third episode to save Rufus, Dana inadvertently takes Kevin with her. Again, as “The room was beginning to darken and spin,” Dana feels “the sickening dizziness” (58). The narrator illustrates how “Kevin was beside me holding me. I tried to push him away. I was afraid for him without knowing why. I shouted for him to let me go” (58). As Dana is ripped from the present to the past, her contact with Kevin takes him with her. Dana thinks to herself, “In this place, he was probably better protection for me than free papers would have been, but I didn’t want him here. I didn’t want this place to touch him except through me. But it was too late for that” (59). They arrive in the past close-quartered, clutching their supplies for the episode—contained within “the canvas bag” (58). This time, Rufus had fallen from a tree. As he lay writhing on the ground in pain with a broken leg, Dana and Kevin talk with a “boy, black, about twelve years old” (59). Apparently, Nigel, Rufus’s childhood friend and permanent ally to Dana, was with his enslaver when the accident happened.

When Tom Weylin catches Dana with his books in the cookhouse reading, he becomes infuriated: “Weylin dragged me a few feet,” Dana narrates, “then pushed me hard.” He begins beating Dana, “the whip [...] like a hot iron across [her] back, burning into [her] through [her] light shirt, searing [her] skin.” She “kept trying to crawl away from the blows,” hoping that

young Nigel's attempt to retrieve Kevin in time would be successful and the two of them could go home together. As Dana lays "on the ground [...] with a mouth full of dirt and blood and a white man cursing and lecturing" her, she sees "Kevin, blurred, but somehow still recognizable [...] running toward [her] in slow motion [...] Legs churning, arms pumping" (107). Dana passes out and wakes up, in pain from the beating but at home. She slowly concedes what has been a persistent fear: Dana is alone in her house, and Kevin was left behind in the past with the Weylins. She carries all the wounds from Weylin's whip back to 1976 California. Butler writes of the destruction of something beautiful: "My blouse was stuck to my back. It was cut to pieces, really, but the pieces were stuck to me. My back was cut up pretty badly too from what I could feel. I had seen old photographs of the backs of people who had been slaves. I could remember the scars, thick and ugly. Kevin had always told me how smooth my skin was" (113). Dana thinks that she "barely wanted to be alive" (113). Again, danger and fear of death takes Dana from the vicious world of the Weylins.

Dana reasons that her "first trip had lasted only a few minutes, [her] second a few hours." She asks, "What was next? Days?" (58). Later, she contemplates, "I could see the river off to one side and some of the land I had run through a few hours—a few years—before" (67). Rufus tells Dana how he saw her again in her future. He tells Dana, "I saw you again [...] You were on a bed. Just as I started to fall, I saw you." Dana responds, "You did more than just see me," meaning that Rufus had called her to himself again (59). After the horrific beating from Tom Weylin and after Dana travels back home, she reckons with the temporal inconsistencies of her episode. Dana remembers, "I went back into the house and turned the radio on to an all-news station. There, eventually, I learned that it was Friday, June 11, 1976. I'd gone away for nearly

two months and come back yesterday—the same day I left home” (115). While there seems to be something that governs the passing of time, understanding this temporal indecipherability is still beyond Dana’s grasp. As she considers the temporal problem of Kevin being stuck in the past, she thinks, “Kevin could be gone for years even if I went after him today and brought him back tonight” (115–6).

3.1.4 Episode 4—*The Fight* (pp. 108–188)

In “The Fight,” Rufus rapes Dana’s ancestor, Alice. Once a childhood friend to Rufus, Alice is now married to Isaac Jackson. Rufus’s behavior incites a fight between Alice’s husband and himself. Rufus takes a significant beating from Isaac, enough that his injuries conjure Dana from her home in the future. Alice says that Rufus “got to where he wanted to be more friendly than I did” (119). Alice informs and warns Dana: “Your man went away [...] He waited a long time for you, then he left” and “you got to be careful, though. Mister Rufe gets mighty crazy sometimes.” Dana bids goodbye to Alice and Isaac and thinks, “Where had Kevin gone? Why had he gone anywhere? What if Rufus wouldn’t help me find him? Or what if I didn’t stay in this time long enough to find him? Why couldn’t he have waited...?” (120). Dana contrives a story to protect Isaac and Alice and convinces Rufus to play along.

During Dana’s extended stay this time, she doctors Rufus to health after his fight with Isaac and does the same for Alice after a brutal beating in response to her running away. After finding out that Rufus has lied about sending letters to contact Kevin, Dana runs away herself. She gains some ground but is found by Rufus and Tom Weylin. She is beaten close to the point of death, but this time she endures it to whatever end Tom Weylin had in mind, remaining in the past. Butler describes the graphic account of Dana’s beating:

They took me to the barn and tied my hands and raised whatever they had tied them to high over my head. When I was barely able to touch the floor with my toes, Weylin ripped my clothes off and began to beat me.

He beat me until I swung back and forth by my wrists, half-crazy with pain, unable to find my footing, unable to stand the pressure of hanging, unable to get away from the steady slashing blows...

He beat me until I tried to make myself believe he was going to kill me. I said it aloud, screamed it, and the blows seemed to emphasize my words. He would kill me. Surely, he would kill me if I didn't get away, save myself, *go home!*

It didn't work. This was only punishment, and I knew it. Nigel had born it. Alice had borne worse. Both were alive and healthy. I wasn't going to die—though as the beating went on, I wanted to. Anything to stop the pain! But there was nothing. Weylin had ample time to finish whipping me. (176)

As Dana cared for Alice after her beating, now Alice—with help from Carrie—nurses Dana back to health. Weylin finds out about how Rufus lied to Dana about sending her letters to her husband, sending a letter to reach Kevin himself. Although Dana had commenced light work on the plantation, Kevin approaches the Weylin house while Dana is still healing from the Weylin's savage beating, culminating in an emotional reuniting. Just before they are about to leave the Weylins's, Dana recounts, "For a moment, we stood wasting time, staring at each other. We couldn't help it—I couldn't anyway. New lines and all, he was so damned beautiful." Kevin breaks the silence, saying, "It's been five years for me" (185).

As many things among the company of Tom and Rufus Weylin, leaving is not as simple as it might seem. Rufus takes offense to Dana and Kevin leaving with little thanks and without even sharing a meal with him, which escalates the situation. Although Kevin tries to calm the dispute by agreeing to staying for a bit, Dana is adamant about leaving. Dana attempts to “goad him into shooting [her] or shame him into letting [them] go.” Rufus reveals his intense jealousy, saying, “You’re not leaving! [...] Damn you, you’re not leaving me!” Dana recounts, “He was going to shoot. I had pushed him too far. I was Alice all over again, rejecting him. Terrified in spite of myself, I dove past the mare’s head, not caring how I fell as long as I put something between myself and the rifle” (187). In the scuffle, Dana’s vision becomes “distorted, blurred” and eventually “everything went dark” (188).

For Dana, the time between each world becomes indistinct one to the other. She lives in both worlds, understanding both to a degree and conflating the temporal progression of each. By the fourth episode, Dana understands time almost solely as her lived experience between each temporality. Dana puts together time when seeing Alice again: “I tried to see her again as the thin, frightened child I remembered—the child I had seen only two months before. It was impossible” (119). In this moment of the novel, Dana identifies with neither the passage of time in her 1976 world nor the temporality of Alice’s world. Instead, Dana understands her experience of time as a liminal temporal space between the two moments in American history. Butler offers a timestamp at the beginning of the section detailing the fight between Isaac and Rufus. She writes, “I had been at home for eight days when the dizziness finally came again. I didn’t know whether to curse it for my own sake or welcome it for Kevin’s—not that it mattered what I did” (117). When Dana interacts with Alice, Isaac, and Rufus in “The Fight,” she exposes her conflated sense of time. As the date of Dana’s home should be around June 18, 1976 and June

9th marks the beginning of the episodes, Dana's world has only seen around nine days. In contrast, Dana's experienced time is around two months. Complicating matters further, the time she spends away from the alien past somehow grows Alice from a "little" girl (119) into a married woman.

3.1.5 *Episode 5—The Storm (pp. 189–239)*

In "The Storm," Dana is dropped into the middle of a torrential downpour. As this has become routine, she looks "around grimly for Rufus" (197). In her search, Dana stumbles on Rufus's body "lying face down in a puddle so deep the water almost covered his head. Face down [...] either drunk or sick. More probably drunk" (198). After Dana and Nigel get Rufus into the house, Tom Weylin asks to speak with Dana. She thinks, "Just what I needed at the end of a long jumbled day." For Dana, so much experience had been crammed into such a tight window of temporality. After Mr. Weylin tells Dana that she "look[s] as young as [she] ever did," he asks Dana about a wound on her face. She responds, "That's where you kicked me, Mr. Weylin." As "he surged" from his seat, Mr. Weylin exclaims, "What are you talking about! It's been six years since I've seen you" (199).

Dana soon fits back into her place in the Weylin house. She becomes more involved in teaching the children on the plantation, so much so that those who lived close to Rufus's plantation become aware. "It was dangerous to educate slaves," outsiders tell Rufus, "Education made blacks dissatisfied with slavery. It spoiled them for field work. The Methodist minister said it made them disobedient, made them want more than the Lord intended them to have" (236). Because she wants to watch over Alice and do what good she can while there, Dana plans to stay at the plantation for a while. But Rufus eventually breaks "an unspoken agreement" understood

between him and Dana: he hits her. Dana recounts, “It was a first, and so unexpected that I stumbled backward and fell” (238). This betrayal leads Dana to attempt suicide. Killing herself would, of course, get her out of this hellish time. “And in the warm water,” Dana narrates, “I cut my wrists” (239). She would either wake up at home or bleed out; either way, she would be free from the Weylin plantation.

During this episode, two months in the past equals a few hours at home. “The chops I had put out to defrost over two months ago were still icy,” Dana thinks, “I had been away for only a few hours.” Dana reflects, “Nineteen seventy-six had not gone on without us” (196). Between going home at the end of the last episode and the events of “The Storm,” Dana had been away for six years. Fortunately, Dana took Kevin with her back home and escaped bringing him into the past this time. During a heated talk with Tom Weylin, he exclaims, “Six years for me is six years for you!” (200). Just pages later, Isaac corroborates this timeline: “You go away for six years,” he says to Dana, “then come back and fit right in. It’s like you never left” (202). For characters like Isaac, Alice, and Rufus, the temporal gap becomes negligible for relational continuity.

3.1.6 Episode 6—*The Rope* (pp. 240–261)

After the suicide attempt in hopes of attaining freedom one way or another, Dana “awoke in darkness and lay still for several seconds trying to think where I was and when I had gone to sleep” (240). She finds herself in her own bed next to Kevin. Her slit wrists from the desperate act have been bandaged, and she is still weak from blood loss. Although her brave action brought her home, Kevin is less than thrilled by her method. Dana explains, “There isn’t any safe way to almost kill yourself” (240). Kevin and Dana catch up and eventually get back into normal life.

We learn later that Dana enjoys a considerable amount of time of comfort at home. Butler writes, “We had fifteen full days together this time. I marked them off on the calendar—June 19, through July 3. With some kind of reverse symbolism, Rufus called me back on July 4. But at least Kevin and I had a chance to grow back into the twentieth century” (243). Rufus’s call to Dana on July 4th—American Independence Day—inverts Dana’s thoughts of celebrating freedom to experiencing enslavement at the Weylin plantation. Although Dana resists the “chance to grow back” in her own time more than Kevin, as they move further from the episodes of temporal shifts to the past, they both become more confident in their continued presence in their own time period.

Butler emphasizes the bodies of characters in *Kindred*. As previously mentioned, Rufus “looked no older than he had been when [Dana had] last seen him” (247) and young enslaved children “were no bigger than they had been when [Dana] saw them last” (248). Dana understands the ages of others—or the passing of time on the subject—through evaluating and judging evidence of age. As Rufus looks to not have aged in this example, assumedly based on his general appearance, Dana understands the ages of the children by considering the size of their bodies. Earlier in the novel, Dana reflects on how Rufus had aged. In her third episode, Dana contemplates that “The boy was literally growing up as [she] watched—growing up because [she] watched and because [she] helped to keep him safe. [She] was the worst possible guardian for him—a black to watch over him in a society that considered blacks subhuman, a woman to watch over him in a society that considered women perennial children” (68). Butler’s “discontinuous time” positions Dana as guardian to Rufus whose culture considers her subhuman, an ancestor who she constantly negotiates each episode’s temporal shifts through the progressing changes of his body.

Rufus calls Dana after Alice hangs herself. When Dana awakes in the past, Rufus looks around the same age, but Dana comments that he “looked haggard and weary—looked as though it had been too long since he’d slept last, looked as though it would be even longer before he was able to sleep again” (247). Dana hears from another woman on the plantation that Rufus had sold Alice’s children, “his children” (249). Dana eventually goes to the Weylin house and finds “Rufus at his desk in the library fondling a hand gun.” Dana realizes that “This was where he had been heading when he called” her (250). She learns that Rufus had not actually sold his and Alice’s children; instead, he sent them away to stay with family under the guise that they had been sold. He wanted to teach Alice a lesson.

The impetus of Dana’s return home comes as Rufus tells Dana that he sees her just as he saw Alice. “You were one woman,” Rufus says, “You and her. One woman. Two halves of a whole” (257). Rufus wanted Dana “to take the place of the dead” (259). Eventually, as Rufus tells of his resolute intentions, Dana builds up the courage to finally use “the knife in [her] hand, still slippery with perspiration,” killing Rufus in an effort to stop him from raping her (260). After a couple of stabs, the scuffle brings Dana’s body down under Rufus’s. She begins feeling sick, desperately struggles to free herself from under his weight, and begins to feel the bizarre merging of the past and present: “Something harder and stronger than Rufus’s hand clamped down on [her] arm, squeezing it, stiffening it, pressing into it—painlessly, at first—melting into it, meshing with it as though somehow [her] arm were being absorbed into something. Something cold and nonliving” (260–1). Dana realizes now that what she feels is the “paint, plaster, wood,” her “living room,” her “own house” (261). She now realizes she is “joined to the wall,” finally back “in [her] own time” (261).

When Dana returns home to Kevin, they compare each of their time arcs. While Kevin has waited for Dana for only “[a]bout three hours,” Dana had been in the past for “eight months” (241). By the time that Rufus calls Dana to himself, she had been away from Rufus for over two weeks. Initially the reader might assume this adds up to a significant time in the temporal world of the past. On the contrary, as Dana encounters Rufus in the past, he “looked no older than he had been when [she’d] last seen him” (247). Additionally, she reads the bodies of children on the plantation: “I saw two of Nigel’s sons wrestling, rolling around on the ground. They were the two I had been teaching,” the narrator recounts, “and they were no bigger than they had been when I saw them last” (248). Dana’s experiences between the two worlds skew her concepts of temporal implications. For example, at one point she considers “whether a little time in some sort of mental institution would be worse than several months of slavery” (241). While some time alignments previously in the novel began to show evidence for logical comparisons of time between temporal shifts—although mostly confounding and unclear—this episode unsettles those notions, upending clear and consistent correlations between each move across temporal space. Frustrated, Dana explains to Kevin that “It was eight days, time before last. And about three hours last time. The intervals between trips don’t mean anything” (244). Her suspicions are confirmed. She learns during her final episode—after being home with Kevin for fifteen days—that “As it turned out, [she] had only been away for three months” (254).

3.2 The Making of Meaning

In the narrative universe of Butler’s novel, time always eludes clear understanding. The characters within the text see strange principles that govern their new experiences. Dana explains her confusion to Rufus: “This is a crazy thing that’s happened to us. But I’m telling you the truth.

We come from a future time and place. I don't know how we get here. We don't want to come. We don't belong here. But when you're in trouble, somehow you reach me, call me, and I come" (62). Dana tells Rufus that she and Kevin are from California in 1976. Butler writes, "How accepting would I be if I met a man who claimed to be from eighteen nineteen—or two thousand nineteen, for that matter. Time travel was science fiction in nineteen seventy-six. In eighteen nineteen—Rufus was right—it was sheer insanity" (63). Although Dana does not "know how [they] get here," she had already begun to understand sets of logic applicable to their inexplicable time travel. In order to move from one temporal moment to the next, danger has to be involved. While "Rufus's fear of death calls [Dana] to him," Dana's "own fear of death sends [her] home" (50). She reasons that fear of death must be the connection between Rufus and Dana.

In "The Domestic Politics of Disability in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*," Todd Comer writes of the complicated juxtaposition of these warring cultures:

Within the context of 1976 Los Angeles and nineteenth-century Maryland, we need to consider race. Dana is involved with a white man, Kevin, in 1976. She is also involved with a white man, Rufus, in the past. In both time periods, the biracial couple of Dana and Kevin must navigate through the ontological nets of family members. It is within Dana's mirrored relationships with Kevin and Rufus that Butler's text also foregrounds the feminist and patriarchal assumptions about gender roles. Lastly, Butler's text emphasizes class issues. (88)

Comer rightly calls his readers to "consider race." Dana's binary experience between each temporality necessarily causes the reader to consider how her racial identity (among other aspects of her identity) impacts not only the ways others view her but also the ways she must

navigate and negotiate the world around her. The fact that in both temporal settings she is significantly attached to—or as Comer puts it, “involved with”—white men begs the question as to how each temporally-determined “biracial couple” must understand and/or reconcile their “ontological nets of family members.” In other words, Dana finds herself in “mirrored relationships” with men in two opposing and warring cultural temporalities, a challenge that brings with it “class issues,” temporal disorientation, and cultural disenfranchisement.

Regardless, some unexplained connection tethers Dana and Rufus—some sort of temporal bridge, a tie between a long-gone past and distant location to Dana’s world in 1976. Young Rufus explains to Dana that he was able to somehow see her in her new home: “I was walking in the water and there was a hole. I fell, and then I couldn’t find the bottom any more. I saw you inside a room. I could see part of the room, and there were books all around—more than in Daddy’s library. You were wearing pants like a man—the way you are now. I thought you were a man” (22). The bridge creates a direct link between Dana and Rufus. Dana thinks, “So he had called me. I was certain now. The boy drew me to him somehow when he got himself into more trouble than he could handle” (26). Dana’s disbelief concerning the time through which she moves is met with similar disbelief when learning of the geographical distance she moves. Dana thinks, “I sat still, breathed deeply, calming myself, believing him. I did believe him. I wasn’t even as surprised as I should have been. I had already accepted the fact that I had moved through time. Now I knew I was farther from home than I had thought” (27).

Everything about her episodic experiences seems unreal. Dana thinks, “Nothing was real” (115). In “Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self,” Roberta Culbertson writes of the unbelievable, the impossible, and the real:

violence, violation, and trauma, however horrific in their midst, live on in the victim survivor in ways that confound ordinary notions of memory and narrative, or to which ordinary narrative is simply inadequate. The effect can be that the memories take on a cast of unreality; however deeply known, they are also disbelieved, seem unbelievable, even to the survivor who knows quite well the truth. (Culbertson 171)

In the context of the novel, Dana's experiences in *Kindred* actually happen to her. In Butler's medium of speculative fiction, she foregrounds discussions common among scholars of trauma theory that occur two decades later. Through Dana's experiences in *Kindred*, similar to the theoretical work of writers like Culbertson, Butler offers comparable illustrations of how traumatic memory works. As Rufus draws her into a past that comprises what feels incommensurate to her present, Dana struggles with "a cast of unreality," even though she "knows quite well the truth." Through the confusion and disorientation that floods Dana's consciousness, Butler literalizes these effects of trauma through a fictional experiment that anticipates theoretical thought not made popular until the 1990s.

The past is a dangerous place for Dana. It constantly threatens her life, health, and freedom. Butler writes of Dana's eventual mixed emotions when seeing the Weylin house:

I could recall walking along the narrow dirt road that ran past the Weylin house and seeing the house, shadowy in twilight, boxy and familiar, yellow light showing from some of the windows—Weylin was surprisingly extravagant with his candles and oil. I had heard that other people were not. I could recall feeling relief at seeing the house, feeling that I had come home. And having to stop and

correct myself, remind myself that I was in an alien, dangerous place. I could recall being surprised that I would come to think of such a place as home. (190)

Dana is “torn both spatially and temporally between two worlds” (89). She has one foot in each temporal world. A proper example of temporal ambivalence, Dana finds home in the alien.

While feeling definite and desired connections with her time in California, she feels a merging with oppressive circumstances of her past among the Weylin plantation. More so, Dana expresses her own awareness of this temporal dilemma. On the other hand, Kevin remains distant from this understanding.

Safety, as an underlying aspect, figures largely in *Kindred*. Early in the novel, Dana expresses her perspective on how to keep herself safe: “Seconds count when something is trying to kill you. I wouldn’t dare put myself in danger in the hope of getting home before the ax fell. And if I got into trouble by accident, I wouldn’t dare just wait passively to be saved. I might wind up coming home in pieces” (51). As the novel progresses, Dana’s outlook on what constitutes safety changes. She not only has to consider her own physical safety when in the past; she also has to constantly be mindful of Rufus’s safety, even when she would like to choose otherwise. Dana knows that without Rufus and Alice having a child together, her own bloodline would not exist. Butler writes, “It occurred to me that [Isaac] might really be doing just that—killing the only person who might be able to help me find Kevin. Killing my ancestor. [...] Maybe [Rufus] had grown up to be even worse than I had feared. But no matter what he was, I needed him alive—for Kevin’s sake and for my own” (117). Dana’s mindfulness of Rufus’s safety in this moment also concerns Kevin’s safe return home. In a moment of discussing how “a great deal of time had passed” for her, Dana tells of the importance of internal feelings of safety and preservation: “I had begun to feel—feel, not think—that a great deal of time had passed for me

too. It was a vague feeling, but it seemed right and comfortable. More comfortable than trying to keep in mind what was really happening. Some part of me had apparently given up on time-distorted reality and smoothed things out. Well, that was all right, as long as it didn't go too far" (127).

3.3 "This Alien Time" of Bodily Fallout

Kindred literalizes a framework for grasping temporal ambivalence. By setting a novel in two distinct time periods that clash narratively and culturally, Butler places pressure on the cultural differences and intersubjective fissures that shape her characters' experience. In other words, Butler's *Kindred* illuminates Bhabha's third space of negotiation as constituted by Dana's unwitting sojourning between the antebellum American South and California in 1976, a traumatic foray into alien territory.

Dana's walls of safety fall to the persistence of "this alien time." Her lived ambivalence becomes more and more apparent as she settles more into the past. Butler writes of the need for distance and temporal delineation: "I turned and went back out of the house, out toward the woods. I had to think. I wasn't getting enough time to myself. Once—God knows how long ago—I had worried that I was keeping too much distance between myself and this alien time. Now, there was no distance at all. When had I stopped acting? Why had I stopped?" (220). In this moment of vulnerability, Dana begins to see the link between time and distance. She discovers that conventions for establishing identity build present conceptions of self on past ideas of identity in much the same way that hybrid identity is formed on the breaking and broken fragments of cultural mirroring. Bhabha, for instance, refers to the habit of cultural identification as invested in "the guise of a pastness" and "the artifice of the archaic":

The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic. (207)

Kindred devises ways to subvert Bhabha's "guise of pastness" by forcing Dana to contend with the past behind the "guise." Her experience of time-travel to the days of chattel slavery exemplifies the dire past that the "artifice of the archaic" typically obscures. While Dana's ancestral past embodies all of the U.S. South's horrific forays associated with plantation economy, it also provides a record for understanding the atrocities of the day. In "signifying the present," we shore-up our own understandings of pastness, strategically encouraging narratives that affirm our own beliefs and prejudices. In opposition, Butler's *Kindred* transports its Black, female protagonist to a past of unmediated facts and personal experiences. In other words, *Kindred* deflects any notions of contriving a convenient image of the antebellum past.

Dana and Kevin experience a conflation of two different temporalities. The two temporalities not only differ in era but in ideology. For Butler's two time-travelers, "the division of past and present" that Bhabha associates with strategies for representing authority becomes a luxury they cannot afford. For Dana and Kevin, their experience of "pastness," although not entirely a "guise" as Bhabha refers, surely exhibits itself often in dream-like sequences. While Bhabha suggests that ideas about "cultural difference" often rely on fantasy versions of the past, Butler creates a narrative experiment that disrupts the translation of the past into something

signifying the structures that continually shape the present. Through *Kindred*, Butler fashions the past as something unable to be “disguised.” Thus, the past becomes an agential force that literally wounds the body.

Dana and Kevin witness atrocities with Rufus and the Weylins that become “faithful signs of historical memory.” For Dana specifically, the events that happen at the Weylin plantation are not things of memory, but they become Dana’s memories alongside traumatic experiences that are borne in her body both genetically and physically. The alien territory of the past beckons Dana to accept her experiential role as something of long-withdrawn history. Instead, her tie to Rufus pulls her into a codependency that may or may not be necessary. In reading *Kindred* with Bhabha’s concept of third space in mind, and with the methodological framework established in the previous two chapters of this dissertation, the unusual experience of alien territory comes into focus as a concrete idea that disrupts understandings of temporality and ushers in discomforts associated with ambivalence. Dana and Kevin always find themselves immersed in the alien territory of the past. The third space of enunciation exists within their conceptions of identity, products of both the past and the present. Dana narrates this problem clearly:

And I began to realize why Kevin and I had fitted so easily into this time. We weren’t really in. We were observers watching a show. We were watching history happen around us. And we were actors. While we waited to go home, we humored the people around us by pretending to be like them. But we were poor actors. We never really got into our roles. We never forgot that we were acting.

(98)

Butler invites her readers to reassess their own ideas, suggesting that these temporal tensions stretch even to our current experiences. Earlier in the text, Dana speaks to her ambivalent understanding of the space that she occupies. She “stood still for a moment between the fields and the house and reminded myself that I was in a hostile place. It didn’t look alien any longer, but that only made it more dangerous, made me more likely to relax and make a mistake” (127).

Butler begins *Kindred* with a shocking scene: “I lost my arm on my last trip home. My left arm” (9). *Kindred*’s “Prologue” sets up a disorienting text to follow. The ending of Dana’s time in the past and solidification of her continued presence in her present is triggering to say the least:

Something . . . paint, plaster, wood—a wall. The wall of my living room. I was back at home—in my own house, in my own time. But I was still caught somehow, jointed to the wall as though my arm were growing out of it—or growing into it. From the elbow to the ends of the fingers, my left arm had become a part of the wall. I looked at the spot where flesh joined with plaster, stared at it uncomprehending. It was the exact spot Rufus’s fingers had grasped. I pulled my arm toward me, pulled hard.

And suddenly, there was an avalanche of pain, red impossible agony! And

I screamed and screamed. (261)

Here, Dana tells of the traumatic result of the lived implications of temporal ambivalence. While Dana becomes engaged in an uncanny merging, she also lives through a violent and gruesome tearing. In other words, Dana experiences a dismemberment that physically engages with the space between her present and an impossible past experience—the space between being the third space of liminality that is “the wall of [her] living room.”

Similar to Melville's *Moby-Dick*, *Kindred* structures itself as a frame narrative. The frame of the text engages with Dana's dismemberment and disability. Butler "is arguing for a disabled, bodily knowledge that allows the subject to remain in relation to an undomesticated other, who cannot be known by the sort of rational, Enlightenment epistemology that domesticates and assimilates" (Comer 90). This "undomesticated other" describes the Dana that moves from the violent past into the inassimilable future. Butler's final chapter, "Epilogue," begins with a brief reflection of Dana's dismemberment: "We flew to Maryland as soon as my arm was well enough" (262). The consciousness of Dana's recent maiming figures significantly in the event of Dana and Kevin's trip to modern-day Maryland. In the final paragraphs of the novel, Butler writes, "I touched the scar Tom Weylin's boot had left on my face, touched my empty left sleeve" (264). Butler inflicts the past on Dana's body as one way of pulling back the veil that Bhabha describes as the "guise" we use to reinforce our own understandings of identity structures. In other words, the physical wounds that Dana carries on her body between each temporality signal both the trauma she experiences first-hand and traumatic experience embedded within her ancestral ties. As Dana outwardly displays the trauma inflicted upon her body from the physical altercations of her episodes in the past, Butler implies the persistent connection to her genealogical inheritance of trauma.

3.4 Coda—The Archetype

The structure of *Kindred* is built upon expressions of ambivalence. Throughout the novel, Dana and Kevin experience this period of their lives through two staunchly defined perspectives. This is especially true for Dana. The text describes her as a character that at once separates herself from the alien territory of the past while also merging with it, sometimes intentionally but

often unintentionally. In the confusion brought on by time travel itself, Dana constantly tries to understand how all of this has happened to her. Her immediate needs for safety constantly draw her attention away from these thoughts. While discussing the specifics of her time travel with young Rufus, Dana “sighed wearily, longing for [her] own bed and an end to questions that had no answers. How had Rufus heard Kevin and [her] across time and space?” She continues, “I didn’t know. I didn’t even have time to care. I had other more immediate problems” (31).

Bhabha contends that our ideas about cultural identity often rely on a “rhetoric of the separation of totalized cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity” (206). He describes “cultural diversity” as a concept that can only rest upon the “mythic memory” of discrete pasts that reinforce the assumptions of the present. Butler extends Bhabha’s critique to Dana’s and Kevin’s presumed safety from the ravage of American history. As Bhabha suggests, translation is never as clean as it seems. In other words, the space of translation is entombed in uncertainties—an ambivalence of impossible dreams of specifics.

Bhabha’s critique of diversity, as I read it, deconstructs fantastic ideas of clean lines between cultural identifiers—pasts, presents, and futures that are by nature incommensurate. While Bhabha leverages dense theoretical language towards these ends, Butler employs her mode of speculative fiction to convey the complicated liminalities between cultures. The trauma-ridden brutality associated with temporal ambivalence not only disrupts conceptions of past, present, and future, it also inflicts tangible violence through the maiming of Dana’s physical body. Through the contested but accessible space of her novel, Butler posits temporal ambivalence through the intertextual nature of Dana’s time travel between her two worlds.

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NOTES

¹ For more on translation, specifically Bhabha's idea of "cultural translation," see the following:

The cave of making can be a dark and desperate place. From time to time the darkness is dispelled by flashes that dazzle the obscurity. These sudden impulses are too bright to illuminate an idea or light up a thought. There is just too much light. They make the night more impenetrable, the cave more unbearable. And yet the memory of light lingers on and leads you further into a darkness that slowly reveals its own geography of insight and ignorance. Then voices and shadows begin calling to you from beyond the cave, voices of instruction and encouragement, half inscribed and half intuited, half heard, half imagined. It is these voices, freighted with unresolved conversations and interrupted arguments, that finally help you to hold the thought, to hold on to the thought. And in the midst of that movement of ideas and intuitions, you discover a kind of momentary stillness. The precarious tension involved in holding the thought or the note in common, vibrating beyond the control of any one voice, is the timbre of translation working its way into our thinking. In this act of holding a word, a thought, a note, a tone. The grain of the idea or the concept comes to be revealed through the side-by-sideness of the translational dialogue. To hold in common the concept of a third space is to begin to see that thinking and writing are acts of translation. Third space for me is unthinkable outside the locality of cultural translation. (Homi Bhabha CUNY Lecture)

² After Removal, New Echota, like the rest of the Cherokee Nation, went through allotment. After undergoing tremendous changes in the next one hundred years, New Echota was reconstructed in the 1950s and 1960s. What eventually looked like abandoned farm land was transformed back into the likeness of the nineteenth-century Cherokee capitol using the town's original plans and later named a State Historic Site. Other preserved (to some degree) Indigenous sites in what became North Georgia are Etowah Indian Mounds State Historic Site, Chief Vann House State Historic Site, and Chieftains Museum: Major Ridge Home, all located within short driving distances from each other. For detailed information and hours, visit www.gastateparks.org for all three State Historic Sites and www.chieftainsmuseum.org for the Major Ridge's home before removal.

³ Butler converses with issues of race and race relations all throughout her speculative fiction. For more of Butler's commentary via fiction, see *Parable of the Sower*, which features a character of color as the lead, and *Seed to Harvest*.

⁴ Although I discuss Cherokee removal almost exclusively, genocide and Removal was happening from coast to coast. For an account that discusses the "interconnections between settler colonialism and genocide" (28) in regards to Indigenous peoples on the Westcoast in the mid-nineteenth century, see Kaitlin Reed's 2020 article "We Are a Part of the Land and the Land is Us: Settler Colonialism, Genocide & Healing in California." Her article "examines the consistent denial of the California Indian genocide by both historians and the broader American public," "provides a brief historical narrative of the California Indian genocide," and "explores the theoretical underpinnings of settler colonialism and genocide" (29).

⁵ For more information on the complicated and continued history of New Echota, see Andrew Denson's "Remembering Cherokee Removal in Civil Rights-Era Georgia."

⁶ A notable hole in scholarship exists concerning Elijah Hicks and a thorough account of his historical role in the *Cherokee Phoenix* and Cherokee Removal.

⁷ Phillip Round discusses the influence of written language on Cherokee culture and in turn how the Cherokee people influenced print culture: "Books arrived in the New World and transformed it forever. Yet, just as significant, books were themselves transformed in the process [...] the European ideology of the book was put to the service of Native nation building in ways that far surpassed the expectations of the colonizers" (22–3).

⁸ Some have argued that Sequoyah single-handedly developed the syllabary on his own. Others have argued that his daughter was significantly involved. Still, others have contended that more people must have been involved.

⁹ For evidence to the contrary and the implications surrounding Sequoyah's possible literacy in English, see Ellen Cushman's 2011 article "'We're Taking the Genius of Sequoyah into This Century': The Cherokee Syllabary, Peoplehood, and Perseverance."

¹⁰ For a short narrative of his execution, see the following:

Cherokee men came up, inquiring for medicine, and Mr. Boudinot set out with two of them to get it. He had walked but a few rods when his shriek was heard by his hired men, who ran to his help; but before they could come the deed was done.

A stab in the back with a knife, and seven gashes in the head with a hatchet, did the bloody work. . . . The murderers ran a short distance into the woods, joined a company of armed men on horse back, and made their escape. . . . He had fallen victim . . . to his honest . . . zeal for the preservation of his people. In his own view he risked his life to save his people from ruin, and he realized his fears.

(Worcester to D. Greene, June 26, 1839, in Worcester Mss. qtd. in Gabriel 177–8)

¹¹ Samuel Worcester writes:

Undoubtedly the part which they took in relation to the treaty has been the cause of these inhuman assassinations. 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. (qtd. in Gaul 203)

¹² See Delbanco's "Chapter 2: Going Native" for a fuller account of Melville's experience with Indigenous peoples. Notably, Delbanco writes, Melville "had glimpsed only a few Indians here and there: Indian men working as longshoremen on the docks where his father had done business, Indian women working in New York or Albany as seamstresses, servants, or prostitutes. On his trip west in 1840, he had seen Ojibways and Winnebagos walking the streets of Buffalo and encamped along the shores of Lake Erie." Delbanco continues explaining Melville's informational proximity to Removal, saying "when he left, the expulsion of Indians from their ancestral lands along the eastern seaboard was in its final stages" (48).

¹³ Hershel Parker writes that “on the streets of Buffalo Herman also must have seen more American Indians in one place than ever before, for their reservation was at the southeastern border of the town” (174).

¹⁴ In a related reading of Melville and his reception history, see Gavin Jones’s 2014 monograph, *Failure and the American Author*, takes on an interesting study of failure. He begins by discussing the “failure” of Henry Adams and events that precipitated a tradition of failure among American writers in the nineteenth century. Jones juxtaposes the ideas of genius and failure, creating a co-dependency between the two. As he examines “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” Jones concludes that Melville “offers an explicit theory of failure in a culture whose faltering standards of taste made failure seem a necessity, if not a condition of genius itself” (38).

¹⁵ Although he doesn’t get into temporality and ambivalence, Benedict Anderson discusses the liminal nature often associated with collective communities. In *Imagined Communities*, he defines the concept of nation as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). In explaining this concept, he extrapolates his discussion of nation, claiming, “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Of all the characters in *Moby-Dick*, Captain Ahab most notably and consistently pushes forward ideas of monomania and exclusivity. His monomania becomes one of the most telling aspects of his humanity. Benedict Anderson explains that the nation is “imagined as a community, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). He continues to discuss the mechanism through which patriots set out in defense of what seems to be

their own: “this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (7). The community in which the characters on the Pequod exists is one of liminality, one that comprises “boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (7).

¹⁶ Similarly, Jacques Derrida claims that “without the mouth, one cannot conceive of the union of the soul and the body” (“Spacings” 25).

¹⁷ In an interview Butler discusses the personal nature of her writing: “But the work is you” (“Interview with Charles H. Rowell” 48). For Butler, there is something intensely personal about her writing, a connectedness that appears unbreakable.