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“The Injin is civilized and aint extinct no more than a rabbit”: Transformation and Transnationalism in Alexander Posey’s Fus Fixico Letters¹

Tereza M. Szeghi

Introduction: Getting a Fix on Posey’s Ideology

Opposing narratives of Alexander Posey’s death quickly set the ambivalent tone of his legacy. In short, his drowning in his beloved Oktahutche (“Sand Creek”), or North Canadian, river at the age of thirty-five has been seen either as a type of return to a part of the natural world with which he had a close affinity, or as a just punishment for his work for the Dawes Commission and his speculation in the sale of Indian land allotments.² Posey’s friends, family, and supporters “romanticized [Posey] as a literary artist snatched from life before he had achieved the greatness he was destined for” (5). Others believed—and some continue to believe—it was no accident that he drowned in the Oktahutche, the home of Tie-Snake (a member of the Creek underworld associated with chaos and known to lure people to drowning).³ Both interpretations of Posey’s life and death have some basis in truth. However, like most absolute and oppositional views, each fails to fully capture the complexity of Posey and his ever-evolving vision for his people’s future. Although Posey considered himself a progressive, due to his belief that the Creeks’ best means of survival was appropriating aspects of Euroamerican culture for their own ends, his Fus Fixico letters illustrate that he was, in fact, highly critical of U.S. Indian policy and sympathetic to the arguments of the conservative Creeks who advocated resistance to allotment and maintenance of traditional Creek social and political systems.

The complexity and evolution of Posey’s political thought can be discerned through a historicized consideration of an aspect of the Fus Fixico letters that has not yet received sustained scholarly attention: the letters’ brief but significant references to the plans of some members of the conservative Creek faction, the Snakes (and other conservative groups in Indian

Territory, such as the Cherokee Kee-too-wahs), to emigrate to Mexico, where they hoped to secure lands and live free of the U.S. government's paternalistic policies.⁴ These groups aimed to escape from the forced transition from communal to private land ownership and the dissolution of their tribal governments (as mandated by the 1898 Curtis Act and carried out by the Dawes Commission), as well as incorporation of Indian Territory (along with Oklahoma Territory) into state of Oklahoma.⁵ Initially Posey dismissed the plan as far-fetched and unrealistic, but finally endorsed emigration based on his contention that staunch Creek traditionalists could not survive in what was to become the state of Oklahoma. His evolving views of emigration to Mexico correspond to his growing understanding of the increasing difficulty of life in the Creek Nation for conservative Creeks who opposed the changes sweeping Indian Territory at the turn of the twentieth century. Further, his ultimate endorsement of emigration for staunch traditionalists exemplifies his contention that only *certain* Creeks—namely those who embrace allotment and participation in U.S. social and political systems—could survive within the United States.

In this article I first introduce my critical approach to Posey's life and work in conjunction with an overview of the Fus Fixico letters, as situated in their historical and cultural context. I position my argument in relation to the ideological framework outlined by Creek/Cherokee writer and theorist, Craig Womack (one of the most significant Posey scholars), and throughout the article draw upon the groundbreaking historical and archival research of Daniel Littlefield. Following an introduction to the letters and an outline of my central arguments, I analyze Posey's conception of transformation, as it manifests in the Fus Fixico letters, as an alternative to both traditionalist resistance and the assimilationist view that full participation in U.S. society requires the wholesale abandonment of American Indian cultural

norms. I follow this discussion with an exploration of the letters' references to emigration plans vis-à-vis Posey's vision for transformation. Finally, by way of conclusion, I will offer some thoughts about the implications of Creek emigration plans to Mexico—and their historical precedents—for transnational approaches to Creek culture and literature.

In my consideration of Posey's life and work, I operate according to the fundamental conviction, posited by Womack, that Posey wrote as a means of *actively shaping* the political landscape of the Creek Nation—and Indian Territory more generally—not simply to comment upon it.⁶ Moreover, rather than seeing his progressivism as symptomatic of estrangement from Creek culture or Creek people, I share Womack's view of Posey as an active member of a complex, nuanced community with competing, actively debated worldviews.⁷ With the Fus Fixico letters, Posey dramatized the political climate of his time and the diversity of the Creek Nation. In so doing, he countered dominant conceptions of American Indians more generally as members of cultures destined to disappear through assimilation or annihilation. Instead he crafted complex human characters who mull over political events and consider a variety of responses.

In the context of evaluating Posey's various literary influences and sources (American Indian, Euroamerican, and European) in the Fus Fixico letters, Womack recently suggested that we think of Posey's work in terms of transformation rather than hybridity.⁸ I will extend Womack's argument by suggesting that Posey's vision for the Creeks' future was based on his ardent, historically grounded belief in his peoples' capacity for adaptation and change as a means of survival.⁹ In the letters, Posey consistently dramatizes the possibilities for Creek transformation and provides models of what I term the "Transforming Indian"—a construct that opposes the myth of the Vanishing Indian that originated with colonization and persisted during

Posey's time. Through his vision of Indian transformation, Posey challenged—and arguably corrected—the myth's premise, that is, that American Indians were destined to disappear (via assimilation or extinction) as a consequence of contact with an allegedly superior Euroamerican culture.

Posey's belief in transformation, which has led to charges of assimilationism, is actually a traditional Creek belief, as evidenced by the tribe's long history of incorporating other cultural groups and adopting aspects of their cultures.¹⁰ We might note the distinction between incorporating other cultural groups and being incorporated by one. Yet here too Posey draws on Creek historical practice in his suggestion that Creeks take an active role in selecting which aspects of Euroamerican culture they can usefully appropriate in order to participate in U.S. social systems while retaining Creek cultural autonomy. His Transforming Indian is distinctly Creek and is an active agent in the process of acculturation. Although the Snakes, of course, took a different view of the situation and regarded the imposition of U.S. policies—and growing U.S. cultural hegemony—as a grave threat to tribal sovereignty, the material point here is that, historically, Creeks have used cultural adaptation a means of survival. They certainly did not, as a general rule, equate adaptation with cultural extinction.

As Womack argues, however, refuting the notion that Posey was an assimilationist or that his actions are symptomatic of cultural confusion does not require turning Posey into a “‘Super-Creek,’ a staunch traditionalist, or overlooking the history of his more unsavory activities such as working for the Dawes Commission or his later real estate dealings” (138). Instead, Womack suggests that what is appropriate here “is historicizing Posey according to the realities of Creek national life during Posey's time” (138). Womack thereby offers an approach, which I will deploy here, that allows us to avoid the reductive, binary logic that has plagued Posey's legacy. I

will attempt, specifically, to subvert a binary approach to Posey's life and work by arguing that Posey's rejection of the myth of the Vanishing Indian must be tempered by a consideration of the limits of that rejection. Critical to a nuanced reading of Posey's work is the recognition that, even though he offers a model for Creek continuance, he consigns those who fail to embrace that model to the fate of the Vanishing Indian.

The Fus Fixico Letters

Posey is able to capture the complex political climate of the Creek Nation at the turn of the twentieth century due, in large part, to the rhetorical strategies he employs in the letters. In the letters, Posey's persona, Fus Fixico (a fictional newspaper correspondent whom Posey frequently uses as a mouthpiece for his own political views) records the overheard conversations of a group of his full blood Creek friends. Most of these conversations include careful evaluations of U.S. Indian policy and the consequent challenges faced by Creeks around the turn of the twentieth century. Because they were written over the course of six years, the letters offer insight into the unfolding of Posey's political views over time, particularly his disillusionment with disparities between the stated goals of U.S. Indian policies and their practical applications and consequences. The letters not only capture the changing political climate in the Creek Nation over time, but also the range of opinions held by members of the same political faction (namely Creek conservatives). Although Posey wrote the letters for immediate political ends, the letters nonetheless invite modern readers to sit around the fire with Fus Fixico's friends and listen in on their discussions about how to respond to the changes being forced upon them. Accepting this invitation will allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the difficulties the Creeks—and

members of other tribes—faced in anticipating the long-term effects of one of the most catastrophic eras in U.S. Indian policy.¹¹

Given Posey's active interest in Creek politics and his desire to sway his people to embrace the changes underway in Indian Territory, we might expect that he would people the letters with characters who share his views. On the contrary, although he used Fus Fixico to represent some of his own political positions, he placed a group of full blood traditionalists at the heart of the letters.¹² In so doing Posey largely eschewed a direct, didactic approach to political activism and showcased the oral exchange of ideas and the *process* of coming to terms with political realities. Although Posey relied on the racialized political terms current during his lifetime (full blood/traditionalist versus mixed blood/progressive), the basic structure of the letters discloses his understanding of the permeability of these categories. Posey's portrayal of the struggles of a group of full blood, conservative Creeks to address the changes they face, and their debates about how best to do so, reflect a more nuanced understanding of the inner workings of this Creek subgroup than his use of political shorthand might suggest. These characters, moreover, do not blindly subscribe to conservative positions but critically assess the changes they witness in their daily lives.

In addition, through the creation of his progressive full blood persona, Fus Fixico, Posey suggests that blood quantum is not an absolute determinant of political affiliation. During a period when blood quantum was used by conservatives, progressives, and the U.S. government as an indicator of both political views and behavior, Posey's blurring of these boundaries is not insignificant. Many mixed bloods, cognizant of the racial norms of the broader U.S. culture, emphasized their white ancestry and distinguished themselves from "real" or full blood Indians, whom many whites believed were too savage to successfully participate in the emerging U.S.

economic system. For their part, many full bloods, protective of traditional ways, claimed the label “real Indian” and emphasized their high Indian blood quantum as evidence of their cultural purity.¹³ These biological markers of cultural values and competency were also encoded in U.S. law, in legislation like the 1906 McCumber Amendment, which restricted full bloods (legally those with three quarters or more Indian blood) from selling their allotments for twenty-five years based on the view that they were “incompetent” to manage their land and financial affairs.¹⁴

Due to uneven levels of contact and intermarriage with white settlers and the tendency for Creeks exposed to Euroamerican culture to be more open to embracing it, racialized political divisions had long been part of Creek culture; however, the stresses of the allotment period widened these divisions to the point that certain members of the each faction came to see themselves as fundamentally culturally distinct from members of the other faction. Prior to this period, members of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes (hereafter the “Five Tribes”), namely the Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole tribes, utilized their own governmental structures for debating political views and working toward common ground.¹⁵ Nevertheless, with the tribal governments on the eve of dissolution and a new social order (in the form of individual land ownership, U.S. citizenship, and the influx of white settlers) quickly displacing traditional tribal norms, the groups became increasingly polarized.

Posey’s Transforming Indian

A first-time reader of the Fus Fixico letters is likely to be struck by Posey’s simultaneous reliance on the racialized political categories current in Indian Territory during his lifetime and his use of parody to uncover the reductive nature of the binary logic inherent in such discourse.

By illustrating how a group of conservative full bloods come to embrace—or at least accept—allotment and aspects of Euroamerican culture, Posey suggests that even those he refers to as “real Indians” are capable of surviving into the new social order *if* they are willing to embrace it. Throughout the Fus Fixico letters, Posey dramatizes the ability of Indians to transform themselves. For instance, letter number fifty-seven (*Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, August 27, 1905) begins:

“Well, so,” Hotgun he say, “the Injin has spoken. Long time ago he give a war whoop and go on the warpath; this time he call a convention and go on record. Instead a making medicine he make history; instead a chasing the pioneers with a tomahawk, he preside in convention and use the tomahawk for gavel to call the pioneers to order; and instead a swearing vengeance against the pale face, he get up and make a big talk on how to make a state. The Injin is civilized and aint extinct no more than a rabbit. He’s just beginning to feel his breakfast food” (*Letters*, 217)

One interpretation of this passage would be that Hotgun simply replaces aspects of Creek culture with their Euroamerican counterparts. But a closer reading allows for a more nuanced understanding of Posey’s vision of the Transforming Indian. He firmly opposes the annihilation of Creek culture but affirms its capacity to change while remaining Creek. By drawing correspondences between traditional Creek activities and those the Creeks now engage in to protect their tribal autonomy and ensure their survival, Hotgun envisions the newer counterparts as Indian, not Euroamerican, in origin. Moreover, he documents the engagement of the Five Tribes with the specific political issues current in Indian Territory: namely, the political battles associated with statehood. In documenting the Five Tribes’ efforts to see Indian Territory entered into the Union as a separate state (rather than being combined with Oklahoma Territory), Posey

communicates to readers that the Transforming Indian is not merely a theoretical model but is already a reality. Although, in the end, the Five Tribes were not successful in their efforts toward separate statehood, Posey's support of the plan—coupled with his larger emphasis on transformation—gives us a concrete example of the type of Indian engagement with the United States that he endorsed, a type of engagement that still would allow Native peoples to retain distinct tribal identities. The significance of cultural distinctiveness is exemplified further by his suggestion that Indian Territory—and the proposed Indian state—be given an Indian name, such as Sequoyah, instead of being organized as the Territory of Jefferson, as stipulated by the 1901-2 Moon bill.¹⁶

Hotgun's claim that the "Injin is civilized and aint extinct no more than a rabbit" runs counter to both the Vanishing Indian myth and the related Euroamerican assumption that American Indians, in general, were a savage race incapable of change. According to literary critic and cultural historian Roy Harvey Pearce,

When, by the 1770's, the attempt [to civilize the so-called savage] had obviously failed, Americans were coming to understand the Indian as one radically different from their proper selves; they knew he was bound inextricably in a primitive past, a primitive society, and a primitive environment, to be destroyed by God, Nature, and Progress to make way for Civilized Man. Americans after the 1770's worked out a theory of the savage which depended on an idea of a new order in which the Indian could have no part. (4)

Although political and humanitarian supporters of the allotment of Indian lands, those who called themselves "friends of the Indian," still operated according to the belief that American Indians could be assimilated into U.S. society—and must be in order to avoid extinction—the competing

view Pearce describes, of irreconcilable racial difference, also shaped U.S. Indian policies around the turn of the twentieth century, perhaps most notably policies that applied restrictions to full bloods' lands (e.g., the McCumber Amendment). A sort of selective concession of the capacity of American Indians to be civilized has permeated U.S. history. For instance, the reputation of the Five Tribes as exemplary in their degree of civilization—evidenced by their adaptation of Euroamerican style governments, educational systems, and the institution of slavery—did not prevent them from being seen as obstacles to the advance of the United States in the 1830s (a view that was used to justify removing them from their Southeastern homelands to Indian Territory).

Hence, with his promotion of the concept of Indian transformation, Posey handily subverted the view current in turn of the twentieth-century Indian Territory—held by white settlers and many mixed blood members of the Five Tribes—that “real” Indians cannot change (thus making them incapable of participating in U.S. society). At the same time, he destabilized the broader view, common throughout the United States and traceable to first contact, of the “savage” Indian as foil to the “civilized” European. Although Posey focused on events particular to the Five Tribes in Indian Territory, he was also familiar with assumptions about American Indians more generally that were often applied to his people. In letter twenty-one (*Indian Journal*, May 15, 1903), for example, Hotgun pokes fun at Secretary of the Interior, Ethan Allen Hitchcock, who is horrified to see the flimsy shacks lessees of Creek lands had built in order to fulfill their legal obligation to improve property leased for five years or more. Because such improvements became the property of the Indian landowner at the end of the lease, these shoddy constructions both undermined the intention of the law and defrauded Indian landowners. Seeing Hitchcock's reaction, Hotgun suggests, “Maybe so Secretary It's Cocked was out a humor 'cause

he didn't run onto some wigwams" (96). Rather than decrying such practices as Hitchcock does, despite their impact on American Indians, Hotgun calls attention to the generic expectations he imagines Hitchcock brings to Indian Territory, as illustrated by the suggestion that Hitchcock would expect to find wigwams among Native peoples who never lived in wigwams.

Posey subverts the civilized versus savage binary so often applied to American Indians, in part, by grounding his ideology of transformation in Creek oral tradition. In *Red on Red*, Craig Womack provides a detailed discussion of Posey's adaptation of Creek oral tradition in the letters.¹⁷ For instance, he traces the imagery of bones picked clean—which appears often in the letters, to a story in which the Creek trickster Rabbit is “doctored” by Buzzard by being eaten until only bones remain. As Womack notes, Posey draws parallels between the voracious greed of Buzzard and that of whites, and between Rabbit's annihilation and Indians being robbed of all they have. Thus, in light of Posey's familiarity with and use of oral tradition, Hotgun's assertion that the “Injin is civilized and aint extinct no more than a rabbit” may be read as an allusion to the Creek trickster. Such a comparison is apt in light of Rabbit's practice of disguising himself in order to survive difficult situations. With this allusion, Hotgun suggests that outsiders, blinded by their stereotypical assumptions of American Indian savagery/incompetence, fail to recognize American Indians acting in the political arena without suffering from cultural alienation.

By comparing American Indians to Rabbit/trickster, Hotgun advances his belief in the ability of American Indians to transform themselves and gestures to the fact that such a belief has its origins in a long Creek intellectual history. He develops this portrait of the Transforming Indian by illustrating how a tomahawk can be used in a new context. Hotgun thereby suggests that American Indian cultures naturally lend themselves to necessary transformations, while at the same time poking fun at and upending the stereotypical image of the tomahawk brandishing

savage. Further, his ostensibly absurd substitution of a tomahawk for a gavel calls attention to the fetish character of such symbols of jurisprudence. He thus points to the surface elements of assimilationist ideologies, namely their emphasis on appearances as indicators of the Indian position on the savagery/civilized spectrum.¹⁸ On the other hand, endowing the tomahawk with utility in the context of Euroamerican style governance, Hotgun implies that Native peoples have the capacity to engage in Euroamerican culture without swallowing it whole. In opposition to the Euroamerican contention that civilization was a gift given by European settlers to savage Indians, Hotgun depicts American Indians leading the pioneers into a new social order, and not the other way around.¹⁹ Littlefield interprets the final line of this passage (“He’s just beginning to feel his breakfast food”) to mean that the Indian is just getting started, which suggests that Creeks will continue to adapt and change as they always have, instead of simply substituting Euroamerican culture for their own.²⁰

In the letters and in other writings, Posey mocks the nostalgia many Euroamericans felt in the late nineteenth century for traditional aspects of American Indian cultures—a nostalgia enabled by the end of the major Indian wars and the popular sense that American Indians were vanishing due to the large-scale removal of Native peoples to the West.²¹ Spurred by the broad Euroamerican belief that Native cultures were waning and must therefore be captured before they disappear, this nostalgia led to an intense ethnographic study of Native peoples.²² Renato Rosaldo refers to this phenomenon as “imperialist nostalgia,” which he defines as the longing felt by members of imperial cultures for elements of an indigenous culture that they, as members of the imperial culture, helped destroy.²³ Nostalgia for what Euroamericans perceived as lost aspects of American Indian cultures led them to conclude that American Indians simply had vanished. Many Euroamericans, like Hitchcock, could not recognize American Indians (qua

Indians) who operated in new environments and donned non-traditional attire. In an article published in the *Indian Journal* on April 4, 1902, Posey directly addresses and characteristically mocks such myopic sentimentality. He affirms the ongoing presence of American Indians in new guises while simultaneously illustrating the negative consequences of some of their adaptations. Littlefield frames Posey's editorial as follows:

To the ethnologist who claimed that the Indian had become extinct, [Posey] replied, "We fear the ethnologist has been going about looking for wigwams, arrowheads, and the like and not coming across many such relics, has concluded that the Indian is fast going the way of the dodo." There would be no "blanket" Indian in sixty years, [Posey] predicted, but there would be plenty of them "wearing overalls and loving firewater." (Posey 159)

Posey plays on the notion that Indians will disappear by suggesting that a certain type of Indian will cease to exist: the traditional, so-called blanket Indian that had become a staple of Euroamerican authored books and films. Yet he turns Euroamerican assimilationist ideologies on their heads by claiming this outdated and stereotypical image of American Indians and proposing that American Indians may exchange their blankets for aspects of Euroamerican culture that are less than desirable, such as firewater (i.e., alcohol). Although Posey generally endorsed the idea of progress and envisioned a future in which the Creek Nation would participate in the mainstream U.S. economy, he also understood that all aspects of Euroamerican culture were not worthy of emulation and had already proved damaging to American Indian communities. Again we see that he espoused neither complete assimilation nor acculturation to Euroamerican norms for their own sake; rather, he believed his people could *selectively* appropriate aspects of Euroamerican culture (e.g., private property) to better ensure a competitive future for themselves within the United States.

Now that we have a clear sense of Posey's ideology of transformation, as distinct from assimilationism, it is important to note its limitations. Posey's depictions of the Transforming Indian, for all of their wit in pointing to some of the absurdities of assimilationism and dramatizing the Creeks' ability to become active members of the United States without disposing of their own cultural norms, nonetheless stand in opposition to those he identifies as "real Indians." In one way or another, he consigned such Creeks, whom he referred to as "pull-backs," to the fate of the Vanishing Indian.²⁴ As I noted above, his inclination to label more traditional, conservative Creeks as "real Indians," in contrast with others like himself, suggests that he subscribed (at least to a degree) to the "pure versus tainted" framework Womack critiques.²⁵

Littlefield rightly cautions readers not to mistake Posey's "forecast of doom for the Snakes" with acceptance that the Five Tribes were vanishing and notes that, for Posey, survival depended on change, as it historically had for the Creeks (Littlefield, *Posey*, 243). Although these distinctions are indeed significant to a nuanced understanding of Posey's views, I do not believe we can entirely exempt Posey from the charge of embracing some of the popular Vanishing Indian ideology, despite the fact that he did not apply it in a blanket fashion to all Indians. In fact, we can only apprehend the nature of his vision of Indian transformation by considering whom he included in this vision, whom he excluded, and why. By evaluating Posey's references to Creek emigration plans in the *Fus Fixico* letters and how the tone of these references changes over time, we can shed some light on Posey's conviction that Creeks who did not transform *in the manner he advised* faced what he termed "immanent peril"—a conviction that ultimately led him to endorse what can be read as a removal of certain Creeks from their Oklahoma homelands (qtd. in Littlefield, *Posey*, 75).

Mexico as Safety Valve

When Posey first heard of the Snakes' plans to emigrate to Mexico, where they thought they could maintain their systems of government and culture, he scoffed at the idea. He believed that by clinging to what he viewed as "old ways" the Snakes simply resisted the inevitable and pointlessly opposed the transformations he believed so necessary to the survival of his people. Nevertheless, when their resistance to allotment and new systems of government led to many of them being left landless or consigned to allotments far from their homes, Posey contended that the best solution was for them to go to Mexico after all: arguably a perpetuation of the U.S. policy of Indian removal.

In Posey's view it was the "more intelligent" conservative Creeks who favored removal to Mexico where they could obtain land grants.²⁶ Believing conservative Creeks to be impediments to progress, he felt that the best policy was removal, a belief that echoes the fundamental principle behind the U.S. government's policy of removing Eastern Indian tribes to the Western United States—a policy that was justified by the contention that because Indians could not possibly participate in Euroamerican culture, they would be impediments to Euroamerican progress.²⁷ According to this view, removing American Indians would free them to continue their lifestyles undisturbed while making room for the inevitable advance of the United States. And yet, as the Fus Fixico letters illustrate, removal only provided the Creeks with a brief period of relative freedom from U.S. interference. In light of this history, we might wonder why Posey did not also question if and for how long conservative Creeks would actually be free to live undisturbed in Mexico. It seems that the naturalization of the border, which entails a presumption of inherent difference between the countries on each side, resonated in Indian

Territory due to its political expediency at this particular historical moment.²⁸ For some full blood traditionalists, Mexico represented a safe haven from the United States; for many mixed blood progressives, it was an answer to their own “Indian problem,” which they believed jeopardized their social standing in the United States. Mixed bloods who aimed to assert their competency to participate in the socioeconomic and political realms of the new state of Oklahoma—and who often emphasized their white ancestry as indicative of such competency—felt undermined by the separatist movements spurred by traditionalist members of the Five Tribes. The violence engaged in by some separatists, such as the Snakes, provoked anti-Indian sentiments among white settlers that, according to historian Erik M. Zissu, “threatened to tar all tribal members with the same brush of dangerous inferiority” (43). Zissu notes that progressives responded by emphasizing their distinctiveness from full bloods and from traditional tribal practices. He writes, “Progressives repeatedly pointed out that separatists were full bloods and that their acts were the products of a full-blood mentality” (43).

In the *Fus Fixico* letters, Posey references emigration plans in order to advance his political goals. He speaks of an alternate location where conservative Creeks can survive, but he also references the plans in order to critique the political conditions in Indian Territory that led to the consideration of such a drastic measure. It is my contention that Posey was primarily interested in the latter, as his central concern was Indian Territory politics. This contention is substantiated by Posey’s apparent lack of serious consideration of the situation in Mexico or questioning of whether it would indeed be the safe haven many Creeks, for various reasons, imagined.

What Posey initially perceived as the extreme nature of emigration plans signified to him the incredible lengths to which some would go to avoid what he saw as inevitable changes. But it

was this same tenacious adherence to tradition that led him to endorse emigration as a means of ridding Indian Territory of “pull-backs.” Although Posey only addresses the emigration plans of his contemporaries, the idea that Mexico offered a safety valve for American Indians displaced by U.S. settlement dates back to the 1830s when the U.S. government initiated its removal policy. Instead of removing to Indian Territory, some Creeks and members of other Southeastern tribes chose to relocate in Mexico. According to Littlefield, “Mexico was considered a political haven by many conservatives of the Creek and other Indian nations” (*Letters*, 57). Moreover, the concept of emigrating in order to find a homeland in which the people can thrive is as old as the Creeks themselves. Creek writer Louis Oliver recounts the origin of the Muscogee (Creek) as told by “an ancient one by the name of Chikili” (3). Chikili describes the Creeks’ emergence from the “backbone of this continent” and their subsequent migration east in search of the homeland of the sun (3). The Spirit guided them as they traveled in the path of arrows they shot ahead of them, which the Creeks took as indicators—in conjunction with the wisdom of their elders—of the location of their proper homelands. In subsequent years, migration continued to be a means of ensuring cultural continuance and survival, as illustrated by the movement of some Creeks into Florida and Mexico during removal and the migration of Creeks to Kansas during the Civil War (led by chief Opothleyahola, who also had negotiated with the Mexican and U.S. governments to migrate to Texas when it was still part of Mexico in 1834).²⁹ It is therefore no surprise that migration (and Mexico as an alternative home) was seriously considered during the upheavals of the allotment era.

In the early letters, Posey’s lack of regard for migration plans as a serious alternative comes through with clarity and humor and serves his larger interest in shaping politics in the Creek Nation. His early *Fus Fixico* letters focus specifically on what he saw as Chief Pleasant

Porter's inefficiency in issuing allotment deeds to members of the Creek Nation. During this period, Porter was working to rectify what he and other Creek leaders perceived as flaws in their 1901 allotment agreement with the United States. In letter number four (*Indian Journal*, December 12, 1902), Fus Fixico writes, "Well, so I guess when I was go to the postoffice next time I get my deed for Christmas times. Choela he say he was druther had a ticket to Mexico instead of a deed, and Hotgun he says the same thing too. If Porter don't hurry up maybe they go horse back or foot" (58). Using the voice of his fictional persona, Fus Fixico, Posey suggests that there is no legitimate reason for Porter's delaying of the allotment process. Rather, through Choela and Hotgun, he implies that such delays only serve to exacerbate full bloods' frustrations with allotment. He suggests that if Porter does not hurry, Creeks may have no choice but to abandon the Creek Nation entirely. Thus, Porter's inefficiency threatens to bring about the very outcome that Posey and others sought to avoid by supporting allotment. Hotgun and Choela represent Creeks who, in Posey's view, are resistant to allotment yet, if the Creek tribal government facilitates the process, might come to accept and profit by it. The idea that they might set out for Mexico on foot or horseback during a time when travel by carriage or train was common alludes to the ways in which the Creeks were forced to travel from their homelands in the Southeast to Indian Territory. The suggestion that Creeks might be forced to engage in another removal, as a consequence of Chief Porter's incompetence, is harsh criticism indeed! At the same time, the notion that Hotgun and Choela might travel in this fashion may also illustrate the poverty they have been reduced to while waiting for their allotment deeds.

Posey portrays Choela and Hotgun's presence in the Creek Nation as tenuous at best. Despite their preference for emigration over allotment, the fact that they linger indicates that they could be persuaded to accept their allotments—but only if their deeds arrive before they lose

patience with the bureaucracy. Thus ironically, through characters that occupy the opposite end of the political spectrum, Posey finds an outlet for his own frustration with Porter's handling of the allotment process. Littlefield characterizes Posey's frustration as follows,

In May 1902, Posey accused them [Porter and other Creek leaders] of using the proposed supplemental agreement as an excuse to delay issuing deeds until large land companies could gain a hold in Creek lands. Delay also worked against economic progress, which Posey had personally and editorially praised. He had written on May 16, "Delay of deeds means delay of progress." Even though a supplemental agreement was reached in June and ratified by the Creeks in July, no deeds had been issued by October, when Posey began the Fus Fixico letters. Meanwhile, some Creeks had made agreements with land dealers who sought title to Creek lands; others, like Fus Fixico, charged goods against the value of their allotments. (*Letters*, 51)

Posey's support of allotment was based, in part, on his belief that it was the only way that Creeks could secure their land claims. Further, as Littlefield notes, delays in the allotment process made many Creeks financially vulnerable. By making agreements with land dealers and obtaining goods against the value of their allotments, many Creeks sunk into financial debt and were forced to sell their land in order to secure enough money for their immediate needs. Fus Fixico's impatience to obtain his allotment, as well as his concern about the impact of inefficiency in the allotment process on full blood Creeks, echoes Posey's own anxieties.

In subsequent letters Posey's references to Mexico as a potential alternative home for conservative Creeks begin to take on a more serious tone. In letter number five (*Indian Journal*, December 19, 1902), Posey invokes Mexico in, at once, a playful and serious manner. Fus Fixico quips, "Well, I think was have to make big ark like old Noah and put my families in it if it was

keep on raining this way all the time” (59). Only, unlike Noah, Fus Fixico does not wish to ensure the survival of all life forms on earth by bringing along a pair from each species.³⁰ Rather, he plans to equip the ark with meat and sofky (a traditional Creek staple food made of fermented corn). Fus Fixico thereby appropriates the ark from the Judeo-Christian tradition to preserve aspects of Creek culture. When Hotgun makes suggestions about how to properly build the ark, Fus Fixico speculates, “Maybe so Hotgun thinks he could get in and go to Mexico easy this way” (59-60). Posey’s irreverence for Christianity is palpable in this scene, as is his dismissal of Mexico as a realistic home for the Creeks. Fus Fixico does not build an ark in response to a divine mandate, nor as a result of being selected as the only virtuous person left on earth, as in the case of Noah. Fus Fixico instead extracts practical survival tactics from a sacred story, thereby suggesting that there was nothing exceptional or divine about Noah’s experience; the ark was simply a means of surviving a life-threatening situation. This is precisely what Posey attempts to discover for his people: how they can best survive in a political climate that threatens their culture, autonomy, and land base. Like Fus Fixico, Posey is willing to transgress cultural boundaries in order to piece together an effective survival strategy.

Although Posey, through Fus Fixico, transforms the biblical account of Noah’s journey into a vehicle for Creek cultural survival, the comedic manner in which he does so reveals his skepticism about such forms of salvation. He consigns both Noah’s story and, by extension, Creek emigration to Mexico to the realm of fiction—which lends strong support to my contention that the primary function of these references to emigration was to make a point about Creek politics, and not to seriously mull over emigration itself. Fus Fixico’s suggestion that Hotgun might be considering such an unlikely journey indicates that Hotgun is not approaching his situation rationally. Through his juxtaposition of Fus Fixico and Hotgun’s survival strategies,

Posey asserts that accepting a land allotment is the proper course of action, albeit an exasperating one.

Letter five does not leave emigration plans solely in the realm of fantasy, however. Fus Fixico alludes to the delegations that the Snakes regularly supported sending to Mexico.³¹ He writes, “I read in Journal Charley Gibson was go to Gulf a Mexico. He say he was Snake Reporter and maybe so he call council and tell Latah Micco and Chitto Harjo [Snake leaders] he was find lots good hunting ground cheap” (60). Here Fus Fixico refers to Posey’s friend, Charles Gibson, and his regular column, “Rifle Shots,” which he wrote for the *Indian Journal*.³² Not only does Posey, through his persona, reference practical measures that were being taken to secure land in Mexico for emigrating Creeks, but he also endorses the idea that they will be free to live there in a traditional manner through his suggestion that they will find hunting grounds.³³ Nevertheless, Posey’s skepticism about the practicality of such a plan manifests in the speculative language Fus Fixico employs when discussing Gibson’s trip. He writes that Gibson “says” or claims to have been a Snake Reporter and speculates, “maybe so,” that he had reported his discoveries of available land to the Snake leaders. Such language is reflective of Posey’s opinion (at this point in his life) that emigration was still a dubious plan. Thus letter five represents a turning point in the letters with respect to Posey’s view of emigration. Here we see the tone of the references begin to shift from humorously dismissive to increasingly serious as Posey comes to apprehend the situation of full bloods in the Creek Nation as increasingly dire and unsustainable.

When Fus Fixico next mentions Mexico, in letter number twelve (*Indian Journal*, March 6, 1903), he juxtaposes it with the increasingly volatile environment faced by the Snakes remaining in the Creek Nation. Fus Fixico writes:

Well, so Hotgun was glad his hair was getting long again like before the white man was put him in jail for making too much medicine [performing ceremonies] at Hickory Ground, while them Snake Injins was hold council and talk about what good times they could had in Mexico, or, maybe so, South America. Hotgun was say they was shaved his head like it was some mule's tail and shut him up with bad men in the bull pen. (73)

The Snakes regularly gathered at Hickory Ground, a traditional meeting place in the Creek Nation, to practice ceremonies and conduct the business of the tribal government they developed as an alternative to Chief Pleasant Porter's administration. The fact that such activities lead to Hotgun's arrest by "the white man" (and, historically, the arrests of many Snakes) speaks to the erosion of the Creek Nation's sovereignty and the U.S. government's abrogation of American Indian civil rights. By shaving Hotgun's head, U.S. authorities target a traditional aspect of Creek culture, illustrating that Creek culture itself is under attack, not just Creek methods of government and land management.

The contrast between Hotgun's imprisonment in the Creek Nation and his fantasies of freedom in Mexico and South America brings into sharp focus how unfriendly life had become in the Creek Nation for Creeks who were unwilling to adapt and change in order to survive. Hotgun illustrates his refusal to embrace Euroamerican cultural norms by repeating the very offense that led to his imprisonment: growing his hair long. Thus, for a traditionalist like Hotgun, the options—from Fus's perspective, and presumably Posey's—appear to be jail in the United States or relocation to a nation south of the U.S. However, by advocating relocation for traditional Creeks on the basis of their alleged refusal to change, Posey fails to recognize that their desire to emigrate itself was indicative of their capacity to undertake a hugely transformative change if it could provide them with the means to sustain traditional Creek social

and political praxis. Instead of seeing the Snakes' resistance as a form of self-determination and an assertion of sovereignty that ultimately led, as Womack argues, to the restoration of the Creek tribal government (with the 1936 Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act), Posey suggests (through Fus Fixico and in his own editorials) that such persistent resistance signifies traditionalists' refusal to change and thus continue within the new social structure of the state of Oklahoma.³⁴

Although Posey critiques the ways in which conservative Creeks are treated in an increasingly Anglo-dominated political atmosphere and thereby acknowledges the legitimacy of their complaints, he comes to very different conclusions about the proper course of action than which the Snakes endorsed. He ultimately accepts and perpetuates the idea that not all Creeks will survive the transition from Creek tribal government and its system of land management to allotment, statehood, and U.S. citizenship. In letter twelve, for example, he draws distinct lines between those he believes will survive and those he believes will not. Following his discussion of Hotgun's imprisonment and fantasies of emigration, Fus Fixico turns to another type of Creek presumably destined for elimination:

So Wacache was great prophet and he was told about big flood, like bible people was had to ford in olden times. Wacache he say his old swimming hole was hide everything so you can't see Bald Hill floating 'round in it. And so he was send Hotgun word he was had to go to work and don't quit till he was make a ark and put all Snake Injins in it. Wacache he say Dawes Commission was had to save other Injins like me and Charley Gibson. When Hotgun was got that word from Wacache he give Choela order to make lots a boards to cover his ark with. But Choela was hardly know where to get board timber that was not filed on. (73)

In this passage Fus Fixico unites a number of the key threads that run throughout the letters: ideological distinctions among Creeks, positioning of Creek traditionalists in anachronistic space, and criticism of the allotment process.³⁵ Posey again communicates his own political opinions through Fus Fixico; he does not blame conservative Creeks entirely for what he perceives as their inability to survive the transitions underway in the Creek Nation around the turn of the twentieth century. As this passage suggests, Posey also holds the Dawes Commission and its method of carrying out the allotment process accountable for the increasingly precarious position of conservative Creeks. As Wacache argues, the Dawes Commission favors progressive Creeks who are amenable to its policies. He suggests that allotment was never meant to preserve the Creeks' land base, but to allocate land to those who would use it according to Euroamerican norms. Posey assigns Creeks like Hotgun and Wacache to the Creeks' past by linking them, once again, to the ancient biblical story in which the earth was cleansed of nearly all life and a new era begun. Whereas Noah's life was spared, it seems that conditions in the Creek Nation (both political and meteorological) conspire to usher traditionalists out of the United States. Only those who cooperate with allotment, such as Fus Fixico and Charley Gibson, have a future in the U.S. However, as I argued above, by including an ostensibly conservative Creek, namely Fus Fixico, in the category of saved Creeks, Posey concedes that at least some conservative Creeks are capable of change. Thus, his racialized schema of fitness for survival is not absolute.

Although the letters only include brief mentions of Mexico as a fantasy-like safety valve for conservative Creeks who are unwilling to accept allotment and eventual statehood, Posey was more explicit about his views on emigration in the editorials he published in the *Indian Journal* toward the end of his life. Like the Fus Fixico letters, the *Indian Journal* showcased debates among Creeks, as well as other members of the Five Tribes, throughout the allotment and

statehood processes. The possibility of emigration to Mexico was one common topic of debate.³⁶ Posey's decision to change his position on emigration may have been motivated by a number of factors. As letter twelve suggests, the consequences for conservative Creeks who resisted change became increasingly dire under U.S. jurisdiction. Hotgun is imprisoned for his activities at Hickory Ground (participating in traditional ceremonies and attempting to sustain the Creeks' traditional form of government). In addition, due to a combination of what Posey saw as Chief Porter's inefficiency in delivering allotment deeds and the tendency of conservative full bloods to purchase goods against the credit of their deeds, conservative Creeks often found themselves landless and without money.

In "Future of the 'Snakes'" an article Posey published in the *Indian Journal* on April 24, 1908—just over a month before his death—Posey weighs in on the issue directly. He makes a strong case for the Snakes emigrating to Mexico based on the disparity between how full bloods and mixed bloods have fared under allotment and his contention that the Snakes are incapable of surviving in the newly formed state of Oklahoma. At this late stage in his career, his disillusionment with the execution of the allotment process and his increased regard for conservative Creeks (a consequence of the time he spent with them while enrolling them for allotments) are apparent. In the interest of offering a complete account of the various factors that led Posey to endorse emigration for the Snakes, I include the article in its entirety below. Although he only explicitly mentions Mexico once here, the article, when taken as a whole, sheds light on how Posey's ultimate endorsement of emigration dovetailed with his late view of racial politics in Oklahoma.

Future of the 'Snakes'

When the commission to the Five Civilized Tribes opened the Creek land office at Muskogee in April 1899, there was a rush to file by those citizens of the nation possessing the least Indian blood. These people secured the cream of the Creek Indian land. Later the full-bloods began slowly to file upon their allotments, but in almost every instance they could find nothing to file upon but second and third grade land. The best lands lying along the streams and adjacent to thriving towns had all been taken up. After it appeared that all who would file had done so, there was a numerous remnant of the Creek tribe which had absolutely refused to accept the situation and accept their part of the common domain in severalty. They were arbitrarily filed by the Dawes commission upon lands in the Western part of the nation, lying for the most part twenty-five to fifty miles from their cabins and sofky patches. These people have made homes principally along the South and North Canadian river bottoms. The lands on which they live have been allotted in many instances to others. It is only a question of a very short time until these people will be evicted from their homes and be compelled to make new ones on their allotments to which they are strangers. This will work great hardships upon these people. There are several hundred families of these Indians thus situated and they are the real Indians which the United States Government has made so much talk and bother about protecting. These people are totally unfitted to face the conditions that now surround them in Oklahoma. Those of their friends among the more intelligent and well informed Indians think that their affairs should be taken in hand by a commission under the auspices of the United States government, which commission could realize in Mexico a new and better home for them in exchange for their allotments and share of the tribes funds of the Creek nation.

Posey's understanding of the plight of the Snakes leads him, ultimately, to hold the U.S. government accountable for their future. He accuses the U.S. government of hypocrisy in its "talk" about protecting those he refers to as "real Indians"—talk that is not supported by protective action. The shift in his view of allotment is evident here, as he describes allotment as another form of removal, rather than as a means of securing Creek land claims as he once thought it to be. Once again, American Indians are pushed off their lands by people who profess to have more valid land claims, and are consequently forced to abandon their homes for inhospitable regions, far from family and friends. Posey's use of the racialized language of the period underscores his critique of the U.S. government. He points out that federal policy, ostensibly designed to protect American Indians, favors "those with the least Indian blood"—a category that includes not only Creeks of mixed Creek and European ancestry, like himself, but also whites who managed to secure allotments through intermarriage. Posey suggests that those with the strongest land claims, the "real Indians," are left with the worst land. However, as Posey implies, the reasons for this are not merely racial, but also pertain to the political views generally associated with different racial groups within the Creek Nation. Whereas the mixed bloods eagerly await allotment, many full bloods, such as the Snakes, resist individual allotments of commonly held lands.

"Future of the 'Snakes'" might lead us to expect that Posey would support measures which put special protections on lands belonging to full bloods. However, his view that full bloods were ill-equipped to survive in the new state of Oklahoma led him to conclude that restrictions should be removed. He believed full bloods would be free then to sell their lands in order to fund their removal to Mexico. Posey also maintained that the sale of Indian land was necessary for developing a tax base for state and local governments.³⁷

Some contextual information regarding Mexico and its relationship with the United States during this period might allow us to better evaluate Posey's ultimate endorsement of emigration for Creek traditionalists. In short, I agree with Littlefield's contention that the conception of Mexico as a haven from U.S. interference—which was entertained throughout Indian Territory during the allotment era—is best understood as performing a utopian fantasy.³⁸ During this period the U.S. sustained an aggressive colonialist policy toward Mexico, which caused the Mexican government much anxiety.³⁹ The United States' desire for Mexican land in the nineteenth century was followed by U.S. manipulations of the Mexican economy, labor force, and natural resources in the twentieth century – all of which mitigated Mexico's independence and economic stability.

Due to restrictions on full bloods' allotments, few could afford to emigrate to Mexico during the allotment period.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the broad consideration of and planning for the utilization of this escape route is suggestive of how dangerous a place Indian Territory—and later Oklahoma—had become for traditionalists of the Five Tribes. For Posey as well, as I argued above, reference to the plan functioned more as a rhetorical device for the development of political critique—either of the full bloods themselves, or of the U.S. government for dealing so poorly with the more conservative members of the tribes. Thus the concept of Mexico as a safe haven largely remained theoretical. Many mixed bloods alleged that the emigration plan was in fact a means of defrauding full bloods of their land and money. And, of course, there was plenty of room for land fraud—on the part of Mexican officials as well as Euroamericans and mixed blood American Indians who participated in recruiting efforts—in negotiating prices for Mexican lands and determining the value of allotments that would be sold in order to fund the move to Mexico.

Significantly, while the border functioned as a marker of difference for certain members of the Five Tribes, even a cursory glance at the experiences of the indigenous peoples in Mexico during this period reveals that indigenous peoples on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border suffered under strikingly similar colonial yokes. When Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915) became Mexico's president in 1876, he initiated radical changes in Mexican politics, government, and business with catastrophic consequences for Mexico's poor population—predominantly indigenous and mestizo. During his presidency (1876-1880, 1884-1911), he consolidated the federal government's power and undermined the autonomy of local villages by appointing politicians to local offices.⁴¹ In both countries the construction of railroads as part of a broader modernization project led to the appropriation of communally held indigenous lands.⁴² Not only did indigenous people on both sides of the border suffer similar oppressions, they also looked to the opposite side of the border for refuge. In the case of some indigenous Mexicans, such as the Yaquis, forced labor was one catalyst for emigration. Increased agricultural production in Mexico created demand for cheap labor (generally performed by Indians and mestizos)—a circumstance that provided Díaz with what he saw as an answer to his own problems with tribes who resisted his policies. In the case of the Yaquis, forced labor was coupled with forced removal from their homelands in Sonora to plantations in Yucatán, leading a number of Yaquis, ironically (in the context of our broader discussion), to flee to the United States.⁴³

While it is beyond the scope of my discussion to offer a more detailed and complete account of Porfirio Díaz's Indian policies, it should be clear that Mexico was by no means an idyllic refuge for indigenous people hoping to move beyond the reach of a paternalistic government. Nor was it a place where Indian lands were safe from co-optation by government-

sponsored corporations. Conservative Creeks who considered emigrating to Mexico did so with the hope of securing the land base necessary to maintain their cultural, political, and economic sovereignty. Yet these are precisely the things that Indians in Mexico lacked at this time and which many of them joined revolutionary movements that arose in Mexico between 1910 and 1940 in order to reclaim. Given Díaz's consolidation of government power, it should come as no surprise that, at least in one instance, a Mexican federal official disabused potential American Indian emigrants of the idea that they would be able to carry on their traditional governments free of federal interference. In 1897, Mexican Minister Don Matias Romero stated that, if American Indians emigrated, they would be subject to the laws of the Mexican states in which they lived.⁴⁴

Although financial constraints and lack of cooperation from the U.S. and Mexican governments largely prevented the emigration plans of members of the Five Tribes from becoming realities, the seriousness with which these plans were contemplated and pursued is itself worthy of our attention. Despite the chasm between Posey's political ideology and that of the Creek traditionalists, he nonetheless appreciated that the mere consideration of emigration said something serious about the position of Creek full bloods in the Creek Nation and the nascent state of Oklahoma. He, at turns, interpreted emigration plans as of evidence of the full bloods' resistance to change and of the U.S. government's failure to protect those whom he viewed as the most Indian of the Indians. I would add that the potency and persistence of the conception of Mexico as a safety valve among members of the Five Tribes, from the removal era to the 1920s, says something about the importance of indigenous transnationalism and anti-colonial resistance.

Five Tribes traditionalists, in their consideration of emigration, made plain their commitment to maintaining culturally distinct tribal communities organized according to traditional values and social structures. This commitment trumped any association with the United States, and tribal nationalism superseded affiliation with the colonial nation demarcated at its southern extremity by the U.S.-Mexico border. Members of the Creek Nation relied on the most ancient means of ensuring the safety of their people and their survival qua a people: migration. It is even possible that a move to Mexico would have been a return to their origins as a people, as Mexico (in addition to the Red River and the Rocky Mountains) has been suggested as the origin point of the Muscogee speaking bands of the Creek Nation.⁴⁵ In any case, such disregard for one of the foundations of the colonial project—the construction of colonial nation states defined through the imposition of borders across tribal lands—speaks to the strength of the Creeks’ insistence on the very tribal systems colonialists have attempted to stamp out for hundreds of years through extermination and assimilation.

The Creeks and Transnationalism

Although, as I suggested above, proponents of emigration seem to have subscribed erroneously to the logic of the border (as evidenced by their belief that it signified inherent difference between the nations on each side), their willingness to follow the lead of their ancestors in migrating long distances for cultural survival must be understood as a significant anti-colonial disposition—and as part of what Emma Pérez terms the “decolonial imaginary.” In her study of Chicana/o history, Pérez suggests that the agency of the Chicana/o people—and an important part of their resistance—can be located in the silences and spaces of dominant colonial discourses that have been codified as “knowledge.” Likewise, at a time when the U.S.

government prescribed two options for American Indians (assimilation or extinction) members of the Five Tribes carved out other avenues for survival. By publishing editorials and fictionalized debates about the various avenues under consideration in the Creek Nation (and Indian Territory more generally), Alexander Posey not only propelled and helped to create a decolonial discursive space in his own lifetime, but also gives today's readers access to areas of Creek history that have been silenced in dominant Euroamerican histories—areas that are crucial to a more complete understanding of the Creeks' fidelity to their own sovereignty, particularly at a time when the U.S. government attempted to retract it.

Notes:

¹ Posey, *Letters*, 217

² The Dawes Commission carried out the separation of communally held tribal lands into individually owned allotments. Posey's work for the Dawes Commission entailed traveling throughout the Creek Nation in order to enter Creeks into the tribal rolls, thereby making them eligible for allotments. Many members of the Creek Nation, particularly those with more traditional political views, resented Posey's work for the Dawes Commission and viewed his real estate speculation as a deep betrayal. For example, Chitto Harjo ("Crazy Snake"), leader of the conservative Creek faction the Snakes, is said to have called Posey a traitor and accused Posey of having "seduced him with the Creek tongue of his mother and betrayed him with the lying tongue of his white father" in order to sway him to cooperate with the Dawes Commission (Littlefield, *Posey*, 203).

³ See *Red on Red*, 133.

⁴ See Hendrix and Littlefield ("Utopian Dream") for more extended discussion of the Kee-too-wahs' emigration plans during the allotment era and prior.

⁵ The 1887 Dawes Act, the first piece of legislation to mandate the allotment of Indian lands, initially did not apply to the Creeks or the rest of the Five Tribes (see note 14) due to their successful resistance to the legislation and the popular view that these tribes were more civilized than other American Indians (therefore making the assimilative aims of the Dawes Act less necessary for these tribes). However, this exemption ended with the passage of the Curtis Act in 1898. Oklahoma became a state on November 16, 1907.

⁶ *Red on Red*, 147-8.

⁷ In his scholarship on Posey, Womack has consistently argued against the use of hybridity theory, biculturalism, or what he terms "torn between two worlds" approaches. Instead he asserts that Posey "was very solidly in the midst of Creek culture in all its complexity" and that his use of European and Euroamerican literary references and his donning of a suit do not signify cultural confusion (*Red on Red*, 137 & 141).

⁸ *Literary Nationalism*, 160.

⁹ As Womack suggests, “Posey’s supposed endorsement of progress may have been a simple recognition that Native people could and would move into the future, that is, a rejection of the vanishing notion” (*Red on Red*, 143).

¹⁰ See *The Road to Disappearance* 4-5 and *Red on Red* 30-1.

¹¹ According to Kent Carter, the “amount of land in the ‘Indian estate’ fell from 138 million acres in 1887 to 52 million in 1934. [...] By 1928 only approximately twelve thousand members of the Five Civilized Tribes were still protected by restrictions, and they owned just 1,727,702 acres” (226).

¹² For a discussion of how Posey’s persona developed and the roles that the different characters in the Fus Fixico letters played over time, see Littlefield, “Evolution of Alex Posey’s Fus Fixico Persona.” See also Womack’s “Nature Journals” for consideration of Posey’s use of Creek-English dialect for his Creek readership.

¹³ For a more detailed account of the politics of race in turn of the twentieth-century Indian Territory, see Zissu.

¹⁴ For an extended discussion of the implications of restrictions on full bloods’ allotments, and particularly the ways in which this policy opened the door to full bloods being defrauded of their land and money, see Thorne.

¹⁵ The Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole tribes came to be known as the Five Civilized Tribes because of their adoption of Euroamerican style dress, housing, government, and education. I follow the lead of other contemporary scholars in using the less offensive term, “The Five Tribes.”

¹⁶ See *Letters*, 101 for Littlefield’s discussion of the statehood process and related debates in Indian Territory.

¹⁷ Womack outlines the many similarities between the Fus Fixico letters and the Creek oral tradition. These similarities include the use of understatement as a comic device, punning, a story’s denouement centering on a pun, references to races in which the underdog wins, and frequent mentions of features of the local landscape. Posey appropriates common themes found in Creek stories and adapts them to respond to contemporary challenges Creeks faced. See *Red on Red*, 157-166.

¹⁸ The emphasis Euroamericans placed on appearance as a signifier of civilization among American Indians is most famously exemplified by Indian boarding schools (such as the Carlisle Indian school) displaying before and after pictures of students. The schools illustrated their success by juxtaposing before shots of students in traditional Indian dress with after shots of students in Euroamerican style dresses and suits.

¹⁹ Pearce chronicles this ideology and how it has wavered throughout U.S. history depending on popular views of whether or not American Indians were *capable* of assimilation to Euroamerican culture. For example, with respect to English settlers of the late seventeenth century, he argues, “Their faith was simple. If English missionaries could go to the Indians, first organize their living into some civil pattern, and then teach them the Word, they might pull them from the embrace of Satan. An ordered civil life was the basic condition of a holy life; civilization was properly a means to holiness” (29).

²⁰ *Letters*, 220 n.1.

²¹ See Deloria chapter three for a detailed discussion of popular perceptions of American Indians during this period.

²² See Deloria.

²³ Rosaldo, Renato. "Imperialist Nostalgia." *Representations* 26 (Spring, 1989): 107-122.

²⁴ In the *Indian Journal*, January 9, 1903, for example, Posey wrote, "The Indian that falls in line with progressive movements and manifests a cooperative disposition will not fail of recognition in the councils of his white brethren. But the pull-back Indian, as well as the unregenerate white man, will not survive the sentiments and traditions which have been outgrown" (qtd. in Littlefield, *Posey*, 141).

²⁵ See *Red on Red*, 65.

²⁶ Littlefield, *Posey*, 241.

²⁷ For a detailed discussion of the Five Tribes removal from their Southeastern homelands and the various ideologies that propelled it, see Grant Foreman's *Indian Removal*.

²⁸ For an excellent discussion of the naturalization and logic of the border, see Mary Pat Brady's *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies*, chapter two, "Double Crossing la Frontera Nómada."

²⁹ Littlefield, *Posey*, 15.

³⁰ *Genesis* 5-8.

³¹ Posey, *Letters*, 60-61, note 5.

³² Posey and Gibson regularly referenced each other in their articles, a dialogue which dramatized the political debates taking place in Indian Territory at the time.

³³ The Creeks traditionally supported themselves largely by hunting but were forced to rely more on farming when their hunting grounds were reduced by Euroamerican settlement and the animal population was consequently depleted.

³⁴ See *Red on Red*, 39-40 for Womack's discussion of the 1936 Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act.

³⁵ I use the phrase "anachronistic space" as Anne McClintock defines it in *Imperial Leather*. She argues that one of the assumptions that drove and justified the nineteenth-century British colonial enterprise was the characterization of the colonized subject as existing at an early stage in human history.

³⁶ In "Utopian Dreams of the Cherokee Fullbloods: 1890-1934," Littlefield outlines various plans for emigration to Mexico that developed among members of the Five Tribes. Although Littlefield focuses on the Cherokees in his article, he describes the debates that occurred about this topic in Indian Territory as a whole and discusses emigration plans that included members of various tribes, including the Creeks. While many full bloods viewed Mexico as a safe haven from U.S. interference, Littlefield suggests that this image of Mexico was little more than a fantasy.

³⁷ Littlefield, *Posey*, 229. It was this latter view which led him to engage in the activity that has most stained his reputation: working for the International Land Company, which speculated in the sale of Indian allotments.

³⁸ Littlefield, "Utopian Dreams of the Cherokee Fullbloods: 1890-1934"

³⁹ According to Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, critics of Chicano and Chicana literature, the threat of the U.S. annexing additional regions in Mexico persisted beyond the Mexican American war (1846-1848) through the end of the nineteenth century: "In particular, the United States was eyeing the Northern Mexican states and trying to get access to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which President Franklin Pierce also wanted to purchase for building a railroad across the isthmus. But the United States also had its eye on Baja California. And incursions across the border were frequent, from California to Brownsville Texas" (*Conflicts*, 108).

⁴⁰ The fate of the Creeks who moved to Mexico is a subject that merits further inquiry and research. Although there is an absence of scholarship on the experiences of Creeks who moved to Mexico during and after the allotment era (due to the fact that relatively few Creeks emigrated

during this period), slightly more is known about Creek emigration to Mexico during the removal era. During this time, some Creeks went to live with the Alabama-Coushatta Indians in Texas (then Mexico), but most later moved to Indian Territory. Far more is known about the Seminoles' (a former faction of the Creek Nation, whom some Creeks joined in fleeing their Southeast homelands) experiences with emigration to Mexico during the removal era. During the 1830s, a group of Seminoles moved to Texas, and later to the Mexican state of Coahuila, when the U.S. annexed Texas. By 1861, with the exception of Seminole freedmen, all of the Seminoles in Mexico returned to the United States and settled in Indian Territory. They left Mexico to avoid entanglements with civil wars underway there and due to their difficulties in producing enough food for subsistence. When the movement for Oklahoma statehood began, they tried to reclaim their land grant in Coahuila but without success. For more information about the Seminoles' quest for a new homeland, see Kevin Mulroy's *Freedom on the Border*.

⁴¹ In his history of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1940), Michael J. Gonzales describes village politics prior to Díaz's regime. He writes:

For most Mexicans, political life rarely went beyond the confines of their home village. Mexico had a long tradition of local political autonomy, in some areas predating the Spanish conquest, that permitted villagers to control certain basic judicial, administrative, and legislative aspects of their daily lives. Villagers prized this independence. Selection of village leaders had democratic trappings, although those selected invariably possessed greater wealth and status within the community. Effective local leadership helped villagers protect land and water rights, contest questionable taxes, and generally survive the uncertainties of a premodern agricultural economy. (13)

This network of semi-autonomous villages invites comparisons with the Creeks' traditional sociopolitical system. Prior to consolidating their government in order to face the challenges engendered by Euroamerican colonization, the Creek Nation was composed of a number of loosely affiliated towns. Given the ostensive similarities between traditional Mexican and Creek systems—both of which predated European colonization—one can imagine how Mexico might have seemed like an inviting place for conservative Creeks. Creeks who emigrated to Mexico during the removal era, prior to Díaz's presidency, may have taken advantage of the relative autonomy of Mexican villages in order to maintain their traditional way of life. However, it is highly unlikely that Creeks who emigrated during the allotment era would have been able to establish an autonomous nation within Mexico.

⁴² Hatfield, 10. During Díaz's presidency, lower-class Mexicans not only lost their political power, but much of their land base. In his efforts to expand Mexico's business sector, attract foreign investors, and develop international trade networks, Díaz initiated a massive consolidation of Mexican land. Under Díaz's supervision, public lands were transferred to private owners—including U.S. corporations—and used for commercial agriculture and railroad lines. According to Gonzales, between 1878 and 1908, nearly 45 million hectares of public land—previously available to peasants for grazing and farming—became private property (González, 29). By eliminating much of Mexico's public lands, Díaz undermined provisions made by the Spanish Crown in the sixteenth century aimed at protecting dwindling indigenous populations—which the Spanish relied on for manual labor—by establishing autonomous Indian villages with communal property rights and local governments. These villages were granted with the protection of church and state. In addition to eroding the political autonomy of Mexican

Indians (and Mexican villagers in general), the loss of public land posed a serious economic threat to Mexico's lower classes.

⁴³ Between 1907 and 1910, Díaz deported 16,000 Yaquis from Sonora (in northern Mexico) to the Yucatán (in the South) to serve as forced laborers. Most of these Yaqui workers died within a year of their deployment due to grueling labor in Yucatán's tropical climate. The Mayans in the highlands of Chiapas were among those who consented to this low-paying, arduous work out of sheer economic necessity.

⁴⁴ See Littlefield, "Utopian Dreams," 412.

⁴⁵ Grantham, 19.

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