Disrupting the reading of the cultural other: Itabari Njeri's Every good-bye ain't gone. Standing on the dividing line: Elias Boudinot's "An address to the whites" and William Apes' "An Indian's looking-glass for the white man"

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Itabari Njeri's Every Good-bye Ain't Gone

Standing on the Dividing Line:
Elias Boudinot's "An Address to the Whites" and
William Apes' "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man"

by

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Disrupting the Reading of the Cultural Other: Itabari Njeri’s *Every Good-bye Ain’t Gone*

**Abstract**

In this piece, I examine how Itabari Njeri employs a complex organization of her autobiographical material to combat simplistic, stereotypical readings of her life as a contemporary African-American.
In his 1991 "The End of 'American' Literature: Toward a Multicultural Practice," Gregory S. Jay challenged the English profession to create
d... courses in which the materials are chosen for the ways in which they actively interfere with each other's experience, languages, and values and for their power to expand the horizon of the student's cultural literacy to encompass peoples he or she has scarcely acknowledged as real. (274)

His proposal suggests opening of the canon to texts that decenter students' notions of what should be expected from the text itself in a particular genre as well as their notions about the culture behind the text. This openness has encouraged the increasing integration of autobiographies such as African-American Itabari Njeri's 1990 Every Good-bye Ain't Gone: Family Portraits and Personal Escapades into universities' multicultural literary curriculae.

As a self-conscious form, which does not necessarily weigh itself down with ordinary conventions of order and plot, autobiography can offer a decentering approach to literature that challenges readers to interact more closely with the literature in order to perceive its meaning, especially when this meaning 'runs' counter to dominant culture's perceptions of the Cultural Other. In particular, multicultural autobiography acts as a useful educational
tool because--as Henry Louis Gates' critical work highlights—the form inherently inscribes multiple moments of conflict (3-9), which as Gerald Graff argues should remain at the center of multicultural pedagogy (9). Instances of conflict may mark the writer's personal development, demonstrate a reinterpretation of history, or, most significantly, underscore declarations of selfhood, which challenge mainstream, public stereotypes (Gates 9).

As a contemporary African-American autobiography, Njeri's text represents one type of autobiography toward which William J. Andrews was attempting to direct increased attention when he argued in the Baker-Redmond compilation Afro-American Literary Studies in the 1990s that new autobiographical scholarship must generate and address more questions about the formal dimensions of the genre in addition to exploring traditional themes (80; emphasis added). Often, critics have created, demanded, and based significant amounts of criticism of Black autobiography on thematics and structures associated with slave narratives while sometimes ignoring the wide range of autobiographies written since the Civil War (Andrews 81). Njeri's text, with its heavy reliance on techniques of juxtaposition employed within single vignettes and among the vignettes as a group, encourages readers, as Andrews says, to "resist the tendency to place form and theme in a binary opposition that valorizes one at the expense of the other" (80).
structuring of the autobiography does not immediately link it with a tradition of autobiographical slave narratives or even other more contemporary, chronologically-ordered texts, such as Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which have been "compared and interpreted as major evolutions of the slave narrative" (Andrews 81).

Specifically, I argue that Njeri constructs *Every Goodbye Ain’t Gone* to counter mainstream—particularly white—expectations and stereotypes associated with its reading of Black culture and autobiography. Njeri herself states that she began her career as a journalist/writer because, "I wanted to help revolutionize the way people viewed the world and their place in it. . . . I was . . . enamored with the beauty and power of language" (219). I contend that she, like autobiography critics Joanne Braxton or James Olney, clearly recognizes that readers of autobiography "are themselves vicarious autobiographers." (Braxton 1). She does not expect readers to approach her text *tabula rasa* but with already established expectations and formulae for Black experience because of their socio-cultural experience. At the close of the first segment of her autobiography, Njeri addresses potential problems and reactions that she expects from her audience, declaring:

Someone might have thought I’d created a fictional character who rejected her blackness had she been based on what I am: African, East Indian, Amer-Indian, English and French—common ancestral suspects for a member of the African diaspora. And yet, if I wrote as fiction that I am the
great-great-great-granddaughter of a notorious, rum-running English pirate named Sam Lord--his castle now a resort in Barbados--someone would have said I was penning an improbable background for an African-American. (7)

Njeri confronts and refutes potential misreadings of her life even before providing the stories which will generate most of them, indicating immediately that she intends active challenge of her audience's reception of her text.

The complex thematic and structural dimensions of Every Good-bye Ain't Gone strongly--and purposefully--underscore the interwoven nature of the elements that Njeri employs in the construction of her identity. In particular, though, the autobiography's structural dimensions promote provocative reading. Her memoir does not boast a seamless construction. Njeri pieces together sixteen vignettes; she titles them separately and divides them with cover pages. Her organization of the book does not reflect strict chronology; and the subject matter from one vignette to the next may initially appear quite disparate. Njeri offers fragments of her family's life and her own, but she refuses to connect everything together neatly.

Njeri does not totally disorient her readers. She carefully identifies names, ages, locations, and other pertinent information within each vignette. Her section titles clearly underscore that the vignettes represent portraiture. The major implication of this type of construction is that Njeri has had to "freeze" action to
examine it. A consciousness of this implication challenges students to ask, "Why does she construct the story in this manner?" It also encourages them to question what power Njeri gains by encapsulating and naming discrete experiences. Readers are encouraged, thus, to start unraveling the complexities of racism, bit by bit, as they see it operating in her life. Njeri's employment of vignettes underscores that racism affects not just an ethnic group in publically and often stereotypically perceived arenas but also the individual in very private, particularized domains.

Njeri particularly manipulates the interweaving of the individual portraits, so that mainstream observers, particularly whites, must view what the complexity of what they often choose to overlook, scenes that implicate them in discrimination or disallow the simplification of racial concerns and problems to a point where mainstream society feels more hopeful about them or can even push them back onto the ethnic group.

Without delay, Njeri's first vignette establishes her dominant mode of revealing information: juxtaposition, sometimes simply of memories and, other times, of memories and a self-conscious rhetorical presence. This mode immediately encourages students to question her authorial purposes. "Prelude" begins the memoir with the story of her mother's desire for a hat, a personal, mythical symbol that
highlights the African-American woman's desire to overcome oppression. The vignette concludes with strong, rhetorical assertions that she shares "literal truth" with the reader (6). She addresses potential accusations that might be leveled at her work: that her depiction of her father might appear to have been pulled "from a sociological tract," that her pictures of her "moll" aunt might be suspected to be "hallucinations," that her search for her grandfather reads like a made-for-television movie, that her character—if fictional—would be suspected of rejecting her blackness based her genealogical background, and that her place as the great-great-great granddaughter of an English pirate is an improbable background (6-7). She purposefully steps outside the text to comment on its reception. Following the list of misinterpretations that individuals could apply to the text, Njeri asserts bluntly that the "someones" who would believe such things are really "most of America because nobody really knows us" (7). However, she stresses after this point, "So institutionalized is the ignorance of our history, our culture, our everyday existence that, often, we do not even know ourselves" (7, emphasis mine). This juxtaposition of two types of rhetoric and messages—those of the open storyteller and those of the defensive activist, immediately mark the complexity of her autobiography. These juxtapositions within the text offer students their first moments of decentering and encourage examination of her
sustained confrontational tone as Njeri further juxtaposes dominant white culture with her own Afro-American experiences.

The first half of Njeri's autobiography following "Prelude" offers autobiographical material that does not foreground Njeri. Instead, it focuses heavily on family members. Njeri often only writes herself into the background of the portraits as a child observer or as the adult observer returning to visit a family member and pondering this relative's effect on her life. The lack of strict chronology is particularly evident not only among the vignettes, but also within them. Njeri follows her confrontational assertions in the first vignette with "Granddaddy," a portrait produced by her search as an adult for answers about grandfather's death and the childhood memories she unearths during that search. A vignette such as "Ruby" may begin with her adult thoughts while she visits her dying grandmother and then regress far back into childhood memories. Or, as with "Carry-Me-Along," the vignette may begin with childhood memories of her empathic brother who wrote a story about a Czechoslovakian boy during the Russian invasion of his country and end with the author's adult perceptions of him.

It is only in the last six vignettes of the book that she markedly turns the focus on herself. The turn from this initial approach in Every Good-bye Ain't Gone offers a
critical point for discussion with students: What is Njeri’s purpose for foregrounding her autobiography with the images of others? By doing so, does she recover herself? How so? Does she recover her history? How does her family and racial history shape her in her own mind?

The answers to such questions demand that students closely examine the content of her vignettes to see how this content influences the structure of her memoirs. Njeri’s refusal to follow a strict chronology, thus, becomes a particular focal point. The lack of it intimates that the presentation of her vignettes represents issues in an order suggestive of their influence on her as an individual and member of an ethnic group. Njeri’s "Granddaddy," for example, which follows her aggressive approach toward the readers in "Prelude," communicates desire to reach the ethnic Other, to force it to see the harm it inflicts. Her grandfather’s story, significantly, provides a framework for looking at her other relationships with men in her life; it highlights the primacy of his presence in her life as the sole loving, male figure in her childhood and the emptiness felt by his loss. The story she shares of her search to find answers about his death emerges as a story of multiple silences. She experiences a modern Southern community’s secrecy as well as that of her step-grandmother’s silence about her attempts to seek judicial retribution. After these silences, Njeri concludes, "I want a thousand
anonymous bigots to know that somebody’s grandchild might knock at their door, too" (34). By such aggressive discourse, she suggests that her autobiography is going to be one literal and continual knock. It is as a conscious rhetorical action; and she speaks with a self-conscious voice.

Njeri, however, does not permit her autobiography to settle into a tirade against dominant, white culture. By repeatedly returning to an intimate look at her family’s history during the first half of her memoirs, she keeps her audience slightly off-balance. Her subsequent portraits of her grandmother, aunts, and mother in "Ruby," "Aunt May," "Who’s Bad," and "No Fools, No Fun" shift focus to the dynamics of bias within her family caused by the spectrum of mixed blood ancestors and resultant skin colors as well as individual choices to "pass" or not "pass" as white. Notably, though, these sections do not all directly follow in order. Interspersed are vignettes that examine the effects of color beyond family issues. Njeri purposefully moves her readers back and forth between the two, so they will not dwell too long either on her family or dominant society. Between "Ruby" and "Aunt May," Njeri presents portraits of her father and her cousin Jeff in "... When He Heard Mahalia Sing" and "Who’s Bad?". These narrative sections underscore family members’ oppressed racial positions in white society and explore reasons for their
attempts to "pass" in white society or their rejection of this opportunity.

Njeri offers a portrait of her father as a highly educated Marxist historian who, because of society’s racial prejudice, was overlooked. He abuses and loses his family. He relegates himself to the position of a high school teacher. Ultimately, though, he "numbs" himself through life with alcohol, and the only point through which he ever connects with her is the appreciation of music. Njeri concludes:

I know my father’s fury was fueled by his sense of insignificance. He felt himself to be an intellectual giant boxed in by mental midgets... Unlike Ellison, Paul Robeson or Richard Wright, all acquaintances and contemporaries of my father, he was never acknowledged by dominant culture whose cachet he sought. Whether he deserved it or not, only a few are ever anointed in an era. (68)

This recognition of society’s "blindness" to her father and, ultimately, his "blindness" to options other than substance abuse provide a bridge into Njeri’s portrait of her cousin Jeff.

This portrait builds not only on the portrait of mixed blood family members suggested by the "Ruby" portrait, but it too highlights the difficulties of life as a Black male. It illustrates the stresses placed on a youth who chooses his "Blackness" when his appearance speaks "whiteness." Njeri notes, "He looked like one of Ozzie and Harriet’s kids" (77). He does not, however, see options for himself, either as a Black or a "white" in the ghetto. Therefore, as
Njeri points out, "He bought into the street life, but because of his looks, the price of admission was exceedingly high. He looked too much like the enemy, and always had to prove how bad he was" (76). The text points out his everyday frustrations with those who "whiten" him by their glance at him; and it highlights his most significant public battle over cultural identity with the white judge, who sentenced him one year for theft insisting, "I'm looking right at you and you look white to me" and then added a year to the sentence when Jeff insisted that his racial designation needed to be changed to Black (78). Njeri briefly chronicles his time as a drug user, the birth of a daughter (which encouraged him to stop using drugs and get a job that allowed her to attend Catholic school), and his death at the hands of old gang members. She concludes with the realization that his daughter is headed for a life on the streets. Her portrait of Jeff and her predictions for his daughter—like the portrait of her father—emphasizes the limitation of opportunities for Black individuals. Such a suggestion, juxtaposed against more descriptions of family in the final three vignettes of the first half of the autobiography, encourages students to start forming connections between the oppression created by the dominant white society and the behavior of her family. "Aunt May," "No Fools, No Fun," and "Bag Lady" highlight Njeri's shuttling among family members as a child, and they describe
the effects of this movement on her. In these stories, Njeri also reveals that while she has observed the biases shown by her own family, she has also been able to view family members as individuals. Njeri maintains two visions, one of the personal and another of larger socio-cultural contexts. Over her Aunt May, who denied her Black-looking family members access to her in the hospital at mid-life and continually seemed "colorstruck," Njeri will linger in her autobiography, remembering a small detail that exemplifies her aunt's sensitivity and generosity. She notes that, in spite of the family's resentments toward Aunt May, what stood out in her mind is that "Aunt May was always kind to me. . . . She never failed to to slip ten dollars in an envelope and mail it to me on birthdays and on Christmas" (89). With her Aunt Rae in "No Fools, No Fun," Njeri notes that the years of "things-are-fine" appearances, unrealized performance dreams, and day-to-day battles of "passing" have taken their toll on her aunt's life. Njeri sadly acknowledges her aunt's resultant alcoholism, although she does not condone it. Njeri's "Bag Lady" examines her mother's history and details a major confrontation between the two over her mother's refusal to acknowledge her father's alcoholism, as well as her mother's insistent attempts to force her children to continue a relationship with an abusive father who remains separated from the family. The piece is central in Njeri's definition of
herself in the autobiography. She concludes about her mother:

I know my mother is the product of a generation that did what it had to do without whining, without running to shrinks every time there was a problem. She’s a do-it-by-bootstraps woman if there ever was one. "Cast down your buckets. . ." she still likes to say, quoting Booker T. Even though she is a nurse, the daughter of a medical doctor—or perhaps because of it—the psyche is still undiscovered territory for her; that, or just too frightening to explore.

Fortunately, for our relationship, I can and do connect the dots. (120)

Njeri’s passage through her autobiography up to this point represents efforts to sift through the dysfunctionality of her family as well as society, so she can deal with her mother. These three vignettes, which particularly allow for the comparison and contrast of three Black women’s lives, conclude the first half of Njeri’s autobiography.

These three vignettes also underscore Njeri’s employment of the first eight vignettes to redefine Black identity. In a recent Contemporary Authors interview about the book, the author asserted:

. . . the substance of Black identity is complex. Please note that I consider Black a proper noun, referring not to color, but to culture and history. It is not the narrowly defined notion that obtains in the United States—a notion concocted by slave masters to perpetuate their chattel population, even if many were their own offspring. The notion is commonly known as the one-drop-in-the bucket theory of descent, or what I think of as the little-dab’11-do-you school of genetics. In other words, one drop of African blood makes you Black in America and erases any other ancestry. Black identity in the New World is composite. I conceive of it no differently than the generally accepted notion of Latino or
Hispanic identity, a generic ethnic label for people who are to varying degrees a mixture of Indian, European, and African ancestry. Americans do not think of Black identity in this way. Therefore, that I acknowledge and embrace the complex substance of Black identity in the New World has led some reviewers to disproportionately emphasize this aspect of my memoir, even to suggest that one of the book’s major themes is my attempts to come to terms with my miscegenated background. I’ve never met a Negro in America who doesn’t have a mixed background— they’ve just been conditioned not to acknowledge it. (qtd. in Olendorf 308).

She demonstrates her advocacy for a redefinition of Black identity with her multiple examples of family members who both experience or perpetuate prejudice within the family because of visible color differences as well as experience white society’s discrimination. Njeri openly produces portraits of Grandmother Ruby, who insists on characterizing her Haitian father as "black, black, black" (47) to distinguish him from her half-sister’s European father; Cousin Jeff, to whom no worse insult could be passed than "calling him a white man" (71); Jeff’s sister, who has a "fair-skinned, golden-haired child" but hopes that her next child will be "... black, black, black, 'cause that will validate her in the eyes of other black people" (77); and Aunt May, who "passed for white" (85). The range of individuals in diverse backgrounds to which Njeri introduces readers actively combats the formation of an impression of some "typical Black influence" on Njeri’s development.

Having thus duly attempted to sensitize readers to the danger of stereotyping the Cultural Other, Njeri moves the
latter half of her memoirs toward a more self-reflective mode. The release of her deep-seated anger toward her mother—prefaced by the look at the context of the extended family’s life—apparently permits her to examine her own life more freely and closely. As part of her transition to her more self-reflective mode, Njeri gauges the effects of the extended family on the two family individuals closest to her. Her ninth vignette, "Carry-Me-Along," speaks of her brother, and the tenth vignette, "Kay-Kay," discusses her favorite cousin.

"Carry-Me-Along" is a conglomerate of particularly juxtaposed images and thoughts. As in her earlier work with family vignettes, Njeri creates large jumps and gaps in the text to combat stereotyping. She focuses on the singular and contradictory elements of her brother Peter’s Black male life. In her telling, the story begins with the recognition that he was always a creative and empathic child, one sensitive and aware enough to write a story about a Czechoslovakian youth during the Russian invasion. But Njeri’s tale also carefully includes the story of his birth with a bruised back (which lasted the first several years of his life), the result of his mother’s many accidental missteps during her pregnancy, which Njeri suspects were not all accidents (127). The vignette points to Peter as the product of an "overprotected" home (127), a child who slept by his mother’s side until age thirteen and resisted working
as a teenager. Too, the story prompts Njeri’s admissions that she does not understand why it was Peter’s pain—not her own—that finally spurred her mother to leave their abusive father (130); she identifies the issue of "male preference" exhibited in her and many other Black families. Njeri identifies her childhood brother as the enigmatic dreamer, who wishes only to play music when all his mother wants is to turn him into an architect or lawyer and all his sister wants is to help find a "real job" (at least until she realizes music is his vocation). She views the adult Peter as a success, though, for he became a popular recording artist with Atlantic records by continually refusing to abandon his dream of a musical career. Most significantly, however, Njeri senses in Peter the ability to will himself "... to leave in the past any emotional baggage that could weigh him down" (134). She considers him "wise, in that regard" because the baggage of her childhood has weighed her down heavily during much of her adult life. Moreover, Njeri recognizes that, in Peter, she has found one of the "kindest men I may ever know" (134).

In "Kay-Kay," Njeri capitalizes on the process of identifying practical role models and support systems that is suggested in Peter’s vignette. Njeri credits her cousin with interesting her in literature, drilling her on music, and finding her the singular piece of audition music that ultimately got her into the New York High School of Music
and Art. This is the woman with whom Njeri also easily emotionally connects herself because she realizes "[m]y cousin's relationship with her alcoholic mother is as conflicted as mine with my alcoholic father" (142). Kay-Kay's presence, Njeri acknowledges, was a major part of the reason that her first eight years of life were "relatively" idyllic, more stable than those for Kay-Kay in her early childhood (142).

The shift to these two vignettes from the first eight vignettes prepares readers for the remaining ones by slowly moving Njeri into the foreground. Njeri, then, finally places herself at the center of the narrative. She actively identifies processes by which she asserts herself and claims a public and/or private identity. She no longer just recalls observations of parents or relatives and her reactions to them as both a child and an adult. "Took the A Train," for example, highlights Njeri's development into not only a street-smart individual but also a self-assertive, self-respecting individual. It chronicles her lessons in street-smarts from her aunt and her difficulties with pedophiles, exhibitionists, and hostile passengers on the IRT who abuse her. But it ends with the statement of self-assertion. Njeri tells of the day, when as a thirteen-year-old girl, she raised her voice to a 250-pound man who insisted on squeezing next to her on a two-seater in a virtually empty car. She screamed at him, insisted that he
get up, and looked him straight in the eye so that he would obey her. She even stunned the crowd on the platform by booming "Hold it" when she left the train, so they parted to let her pass (151).

As Njeri turns toward examining herself more closely, the content of her vignettes becomes even less chronological than it has been earlier. Her stories also become even more specialized in subject and scope than the earlier ones; they are markedly brief, except for "Has-beens Who Never Were." "Took the A Train" is followed by "Hair Piece," Njeri's commentary on the problems Black women go through to maintain their hair. She hints that white society has helped perpetuate Black women's hair obsession, having originally denied the Black community a comb suited to their unique hair and having encouraged Black women to strive for "straight-haired beauty." She follows that vignette with "Land of the Doo-Wops," which becomes a chronicle of the sexism and sleaze that she must endure as a member of the music world. Her resistance to the sexism especially labels her as a girl with "a real attitude problem" (174). "What's Love Got to Do With It?" jumps to discuss her destructive relationship with Nicholas, a man who cannot fully commit to her or apparently to any other woman. She ties her story back to her parents' marriage, asserting that this earlier model of partnership offered her "... the erroneous lesson that men were obstacles; they just got in the way of
everything that a woman wanted and needed to do for herself (186). She allows herself to divulge the most intimate of details about their relationship, her anger towards Nicholas, and her own neuroses.

The thematic jumps between the previous three vignettes are wide. Their relevance, however, emerges when students make active efforts to see how these vignettes tie back to earlier sections of the autobiography. Njeri presents herself as a woman who recognizes and appreciates the survival skills and racial sensitivities that her family both inadvertently and advertently taught her. She also shows herself to be a woman who poignantly realizes her vulnerability as a woman of color in dominant white culture.

In the second-to last vignette, "Has Beens Who Never Were," Njeri specifically turns to the task of reviewing her past as she reacts to a speech given for the New World School of Arts by Richard Klein, her former principal at the New York High School of Music and Art. Her remembrances are detailed and spin out in multiple directions. First, Njeri ponders her development as a vocalist, relating it to her relationship with her father and noting her failure to make the connection between her throat problems and her psyche, which family traumas repeatedly affected. She highlights her voice teacher’s pronunciations that she was emotionally unstable as a teenager, which she recognizes to be true. She catalogs her successes in talent searches and her
successful volunteer entertainment tour of New York hospitals.

Njeri then turns to chronicling her work with the Congress of African People (CAP) and the intersection of that lifestyle with her developing music career. This experience leads her to a life-changing question: "How was singing 'Quando me'n vo' going to change the world, improve the lot of poor people and people of color across the planet?" (219). Njeri recounts how she told her voice teacher that she was going to sing jazz, if she was going to sing anything at all, and the teacher taunted her, "You would give up the chance for an opera career to sing jazz, that junk that anybody off the streets can do?" (219). In retrospect, Njeri states, "If I had any doubts about my decision at that moment, her cultural chauvinism was precisely the provocation that I needed to stand my ground" (219). Njeri thus explains her move toward journalism as an attempt to prepare herself to help "revolutionize" (219) the way people viewed the world.

Next, Njeri attempts to unravel her CAP self and post-CAP self. She traces her journey to the organization and away from it. She shares her realization that "[t]he message from the nationalist soapbox was collective self-esteem, but based on a cultural chauvinism that became indistinguishable from the racist mentality that we claimed to be fighting" (220). She tells how, as a CAP member, she
was expected to live vicariously through Baraka, a man who had already seen the world and a man who she had turned into a father figure for her absent one. Njeri even describes her adaptation into the CAP as similar to the adaptation she had been required to make in an alcoholic family; she had to repress her personality and her feelings of being an angry, rebellious child (221).

Finally, Njeri speaks of her career as a journalist. She reflects on the people and situations with which it has put her in contact; she particularly contemplates the racial barriers—the ignorance—that still exist. She speaks of the "sophisticated white people," who upon hearing her legal African name, approach her "as a cultural anthropologist finding a piece of exotica right in his living room" (224). She tells of times when she informs listeners who ask about her "real name," "Because of slavery, black people in the Western world don't usually know their original names. What you really want to know is what my slave name was" (225). Then she watches them wince and try to move the conversation toward declaring that hers was a post-Emancipation birth. She insists on the use of her African name as a validation of her race's history, lost as it may seem in dominant American history. She ponders the effects of the "melange of ethnic groups immigrating in record numbers to the United states, inevitably intermarrying" (228), asking "... will we be the only people, in a society moving toward cultural
pluralism, viewed to have no history and no culture? Will we just be a color with a new name: African-American" (228). The vignette ambitiously inscribes almost the whole of her adult life, underscoring the places to which her family and socio-cultural experiences have led her in the search for a public self.

Njeri, however, does not allow the "realization" of a "successful" public self to dominate and end her autobiography. She disrupts readers' possible expectations of closure by presenting one more vignette. This final vignette, "Coda," deals with her private self. She thus highlights that she is acutely aware of both her public and private self as a Black woman. "Coda" emphasizes the primacy of her relationship with a lover raised by a Panamanian mother and Hispanic father in a "military environment and family environment that stressed Anglo conformity" (243). Njeri admits that she often finds that he has "too little insight" into racial matters (244), but she also notes that he consciously opens conversations that will raise his sensitivity. Ultimately, though, what he reminds her is that "We are important" (245; emphasis added), that individual relationships are what count. Njeri’s family relationships are no less complicated at the end of the book, as her side references to them in the vignette indicate. Nor has she abandoned her cultural activism. Njeri suggests that her power to reach people
radiates from her own self-esteem, awareness of her complicated cultural position, and most importantly, her willingness to relate to individuals on a personal level.

Njeri's autobiography Every Good-bye Ain't Gone offers a complex reading experience with its apparently disparate vignette subjects, its refusals to create a strict linear chronology, and its juxtapositions of a historical, private, and public self. Njeri, by her narrative choices, illustrates that "ethnicity is less an essence than a constantly traveled borderland of differences" (Jay 277). Her use of disjunctive narrative techniques reminds readers that ethnicity is, in part, as Michael Fischer insists:

... something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual. ... Ethnicity is not something that is passed on from generation to generation, taught and learned; it is something dynamic, often unsuccessfully repressed and avoided. (qtd. in Jay 277)

Njeri's construction of the autobiography invites students to feel the "bumps at the borderlands" as well as to ask questions if they desire to piece together part of the mosaic of one woman of color's life.

By including African-American Itabari Njeri's Every Good-bye Ain't Gone: Family Portraits and Personal Escapades in universities' multicultural curriculae and emphasizing the autobiography's construction as well as thematic content, professor-scholars will be consciously and unconsciously reinforcing in students' an awareness that an "ethnic self," when encountered in Njeri's and other
multicultural autobiographies, should not be reviewed employing a single approach, namely sole study of the private self or public self without reference from one to the other. By the noticeable gaps—thematic and chronological as well as in the variation and choice of the public and private personae to deliver information—within and among vignettes, Njeri reveals to the audience that the autobiographical ethnic self can never be expected to provide a complete or completely understood portrait of an individual's position as a Cultural Other in dominant society. The reader who honestly desires to understand this position does not necessarily deserve an "easy read," but one that mimics and dynamically focuses attention on the complexities of African-American life.
Standing on the Dividing Line: Elias Boudinot's "An Address to the Whites" and William Apes' "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man"

Abstract
In this piece, I examine the rhetorical strategies that Elias Boudinot and William Apes employ to address nineteenth-century white society and to challenge many of its fundamental assumptions about the state of Native American-white relations.
Since Paula Gunn Allen and her colleagues published *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs* just over a decade ago, there has been an explosion of Native American primary sources and critical commentary made available to educators transforming their "American" curricula into more multicultural curriculae. A survey of the breadth of material, particularly of the scholarship, confirms that critics such as Gunn Allen, Arnold Krupat, and Brian Swann have moved Native American literature in from the margins of "American" literary study where it resided even twenty-five years ago. To date, scholars have carved out some very distinct, significant areas of study. Brian Swann's edited collection of scholars' analyses in *Smoothing the Ground*, for example, testifies to the recovery and successful championing of oral tradition and the study of myth in literary circles. Arnold Krupat's seminal *For Those Who Come After* and A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff's more recent commentary on Indian autobiographers in *Redefining American Literary History* underscore the development of Native American autobiography as a rich field of study. And as the inclusion of the poetic, fictive, and essay work from contemporary individuals such as Joy Harjo, Louise Erdrich, Peter Blue
Cloud, Ray A. Young Bear, and N. Scott Momaday as well as from earlier Native American personages in newer multicultural anthologies such as New Worlds of Literature demonstrate, Native American work is both a viable and accepted part of academia. The body of material now available, moreover, clearly emphasizes that Native American literary talent and scholarship is not limited to a single subject area or genre.

Until more recently, the Native American literary community has invested--and logically so--its energies in defining the "Native American" qualities and interests in the work placed before the wider American academy. In the community's critical years of development, the focus, as Gunn Allen stresses, was on establishing "basic themes, motifs, structures, and symbols found in traditional and modern American Indian literatures" (viii). Certain Indian voices, therefore, have received less attention: voices that mix both white rhetoric and Native American rhetoric, particularly nineteenth-century voices. These Indian voices employ dominant society's English language as well as acknowledge its established belief paradigms (i.e., religious) to gain a receptive white audience initially; however, often, they ultimately challenge these same paradigms, revealing the weaknesses, deficiencies, or misuse of these paradigms.

Such Native American voices have been represented in
collections such as Peter Nabokov's *Native American Testimony* and Annette Rosenstiel's *Red & White*, which gather together various tribal voices attempting to explain the "Others'" views about their contact with the white community and the effects of contact on indigenous peoples. They highlight dynamics created by overlapping cultures. The sheer number of different tribal voices included in the texts testifies to the persistence with which Indians confronted white society. As a unit, these voices emphasizes that white voices have too long overpowered native ones. In the last half decade, though, multiculturally-minded scholars have attempted to rectify this imbalance, and they have finally selected more Native American voices to appear in the general "American" literary canon.

Among the Native American voices now included in the canon via the last two editions of the *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* are Elias Boudinot and William Apes. This essay examines Elias Boudinot's 1826 oration "An Address to the Whites" and William Apes' 1833 article "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man." While countless Native American voices have also confronted dominant society, not all had their words, and more specifically

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1 With due respect, historians, anthropologists, and sociologists should be thanked by literary scholars for collecting and safe-guarding these voices. The entrance of many of these voices into the literary canon has been permitted by their work.
their texts, survive. For a number of Indians, Chief Seattle, for example, native words came into circulation through white individuals who "remembered" them and wrote them down for posterity; now, though, their texts have become grounds for debate (Kaiser 497-536). The texts of Boudinot and Apes, however, are clearly their own. Both individuals were literate and, notably, white-educated. Central to the interests of this study, their texts reveal two skillful Indian rhetoricians whose addresses to white society mark a fine line between capitulation to and challenge of dominant cultural patterns and philosophy. As advocates for their people, Boudinot and Apes embrace the English language, and its accompanying rhetoric, as the principal "weapon in the Indian's battle for survival" (Ruoff, "Three Nineteenth-Century Autobiographers" 266). In their work, the two Indian advocates reveal themselves, native society, and dominant American society at the crossroads of acculturation. The brilliance of their work is the deftness with which they attempt to challenge but not alienate their white audiences.

Boudinot, a Cherokee educated by the Moravians at their school in Spring Place, Georgia, grew up in a period of rapid transition for the Cherokee nation as whites slowly took more and more Cherokee land in the southeastern region (Parins 1792). After completing his education, Boudinot was sent on a speaking tour by the General Council of the
Cherokee Nation to raise money for the establishment of a national Cherokee academy and the purchase of a printing press. He originally delivered his "Address to the Whites" on this 1826 tour. He appealed for funds in cities throughout the U.S., including Charleston, Boston, and Philadelphia, and it was in Philadelphia that this speech was finally published as a pamphlet by William F. Geddes (Perdue 67). The success of Boudinot's task clearly demanded that he create and address an open-minded, generous white audience.

Apes grew up bound out in service to--and, therefore, trained by--various whites (Ruoff 1780). He was further educated by the Methodists after his conversion in 1813 and during his preparation for ordination into the clergy (Ruoff 1781). His "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man" appeared at the end of his 1833 edition of The Experiences of Five Christian Indians of the Peggod Tribe. Appearing after the fifth "Experience," this article even more directly and explicitly identifies and attacks racism than the book's previous sections; it invites the audience to reflect heavily on its own sins (Krupat, "Native American" 183). Apes' communication task, unlike Boudinot's, is not

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2 According to Theda Perdue, "The pamphlet, he hoped, would reach more people than he could personally and would encourage them to support the 'civilization' of the Cherokees" (67).

3 In his article "Native American Autobiography and the Synecdochic Self," Arnold Krupat stresses that the cover of the first edition gives the full title as The Experiences of Five
affected by desire for patronage from white society; it is motivated by his desire to compel dominant society to examine itself closely rather than focus on shortcomings in Native American society. Apes, in fact, expects that, as his address progresses, much of his white audience will react hostilely. Notably, however, he refuses to cater to white society's feelings of superiority at every turn in his address.

Presented in tandem, the texts of Boudinot and Apes serve as good introductory pieces for students newly approaching Native American literary studies. They invite students to see the dominant social context out of which most nineteenth-century Indian-white relations were viewed. They also allow students to examine how these Native American advocates employ similar techniques to engage dominant society's interest in Indian discourse, as well as how fundamental differences in attitudes about white-red relations shape and distinguish each author's rhetoric.

First and foremost, the frameworks of both Boudinot's speech and Apes' article demonstrate that the authors meet Christian Indians or The Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man; and he notes that The Indian's Looking Glass For the White Man "is not merely an alternative title for the collection of autobiographies, but the title of the pamphlet or sermon that appears after the Fifth Experience at the end of the book. This is a brilliant and violent attack on racism" (183). Krupat argues that "[t]he or in the compound title--or, that is, instead of and--on the cover would seem to urge the whole of Apes' book to be taken as providing a "looking glass" for the white man. (183)
their white audience on its own social and philosophical
ground. The white audience’s presence, in fact, is a
pervasive presence in the discourse, and the authors
foreground the element of dependency that shapes and
controls their relationships with whites. From the start of
each author’s address, there is acknowledgment of the white
audience’s view of the Native American. Boudinot speaks of
the term "Indian," "pregnant with ideas the most repelling
and degrading" (1794). Apes describes his people the way
whites would see them upon visiting New England: "[t]he
most mean, abject, miserable race of beings in the world,"
who inhabit "a complete place of prodigality and
prostitution" (1782). They identify the white view of
Native Americans, and then—at least initially—they are
careful to speak with a respectful tone to their audiences.
Boudinot calls to an "enlightened assembly" (1794); Apes
appeals to men and women of "civility" and "a gentleman and
lady, of integrity and respectability" (1782). The two
advocates, though, differ in the degree of superiority, or
ascendancy, they ascribe to white society. Throughout "An
Address to the Whites," Boudinot stresses that the Indian
"march of improvement" (1796) can be achieved only with
white society’s aid. In contrast, Apes only concedes that
he resides in a society where God has placed "fifteen
colored people to one white" (1783), and whites nonetheless
dominate. He will not admit an inferior civilization or
religious position. Ultimately, Boudinot and Apes reveal Native Americans involved in a dependent relationship with white America; there is no balance of power in the red-white relationships they depict.

Boudinot's and Apes' acknowledgment of Native Americans' "inferior" position directly connects to white society's ideas of "Christianization" and "civilization," which were particularly fused in nineteenth-century white minds. As Robert Berkhofer stresses, these two things inevitably existed alongside one another because whites reasoned in this manner:

But what was needed for the savage? The Word could be conveyed by preaching, but in that situation the listener relied partly upon the authority of the speaker. Should not the convert be able to determine matters of salvation for himself by reference to the Supreme Source as revealed in the Holy Scriptures? Was not literacy required, and did not this necessitate the founding of schools? Furthermore, did not the Indians need an economic system that would support the requisite schools and churches? In short, was not civilization as well as religion necessary for the establishment of scriptural self-propagating Christianity. (4)

According to Berkhofer, the "debate about whether to first civilize or to Christianize the savages raged throughout the pre-Civil War period" (5).

Boudinot's oration reflects an assimilationist response to dominant society's ideas about Christianization and civilization, and it emphasizes practical evidence that the Indian can progress beyond his native roots. In contrast, Apes' essay—which appeared as a pamphlet/sermon in the
first edition of *The Experience of Five Christian Indians of the Pequot Tribe* and which quietly disappeared from the second edition—represents a direct challenge to white christianization and civilization. Apes questions a brand of "Christianity" that destroys ancient life-giving practices without offering productive alternatives. Boudinot particularly capitalizes on the social debate while Apes concedes its existence but disregards and approaches the "Indian problem" from a more deeply spiritual, principled angle.

From the start, Boudinot appeals to the audience, hoping that the present state of civilization among his people—naturally occurring with their christianization—serves as evidence that Cherokee Indians deserve white society’s support. He stresses that "in no ignorant country have the missionaries undergone less trouble and difficulty, in spreading a knowledge of the Bible, than in this" (1797). Boudinot also quietly points out that the Cherokee have always believed in a "Supreme Being" (1797), intimating that his people have always been sensitive to the need for religion and the concomitant progress it heralds. He, however, particularly directs attention to the "improved" Cherokee state (1795). This state boasts three major developments that should place it in "a fair light" with dominant society: the invention and implementation of the Cherokee syllabary, the translation of the New Testament
into Cherokee, and the maintenance of a national government comprised of eight districts whose actions are guided by established courts of justice, formal legislative bodies, and the executive power of two principal chiefs (1797-98).

More radical, Apes directs attention back to the spirit of a truly righteous religion. He bypasses the heart of the christianize-first-or-civilize-first debate. He does not care which occurs first in acculturation, and, as noted earlier, he questions the un-christian effects of acculturation. He refuses to argue for Indian's worthiness before whites as Boudinot does. He points to a "God who is the maker and preserver both of the white man and the Indian, whose abilities are the same, and who are to be judged by one God, who will show no favor to outward appearances, but will judge righteousness" (1782). He challenges his audience biblically, inquiring, "Now let me ask you, white man, if it is a disgrace for to eat, drink and sleep with the image of God, or sit, or walk and talk with them?" (1783). And lest he depart too far from the New Testament framework of much nineteenth-century missionary zeal, Apes purposefully introduces Jesus Christ mid-way through his discourse. He exhorts his audience to examine whether it follows Jesus Christ, imitating him and possessing his spirit by loving one another as oneself

4 See Genesis 1:26, 5:3, and 9:6.
Apes pointedly queries, "Now if the Lord Jesus Christ, who is counted by all to be a Jew, and it is well known that the Jews are a colored people, . . . should appear amongst us, would he not be shut out of doors by many, very quickly? and by those too, who profess religion?" (1786). Apes insists that the white Christian best honors his Maker when he acknowledges by his actions and attitudes that "man is made for society," regardless of race, "not for hissing stocks and outcasts" (1786).

In spite of the difference in their basic approach to the audience, both authors largely shape their rhetoric by employing three similar elements. Both emphasize human abuse (that is, the personal sufferings experienced by the Indians at the hands of dominant society), land abuse, and, finally, at greatest length, abuse of the fundamental laws and principles that whites claim to advocate.

Boudinot's identification of Indian suffering is a calculatedly small part of his "Address to the Whites," and it does not open his oration. His oration begins with an appeal to whites to see the "nobler influences" that will raise Indians' positions (1794). Since he speaks from the position of a "delegate" laboring for his country's "respectability" (1794), he will not directly confront his white audience. The suffering he exposes is couched in double-edged rhetoric. He tells his audience:

It is not necessary to present to you a detailed account of the various aboriginal tribes, who have
been known to you only on the pages of history, and there but obscurely known. They have gone; and to revert back to their days, would be only to disturb their oblivious sleep; to darken these walls with deeds at which humanity must shudder. . . . (1795)

He, however, briefly mentions two of the most bloody transgressions committed against Native Americans: the massacre of unarmed Indians at Muskingum Sahta-goo and Cortes' invasion of the Mexican plains (1795). Immediately following, Boudinot informs his listeners that "however guilty these unhappy nations [Indian nations] may have been," they still have been treated unfairly on many occasions (1795; emphasis added). Knowing full well that white society is not entirely accepting of or lenient in its view of Indians, he does not completely absolve Indians of possible guilt related to their "primitive" state. Still, he does note, "Facts are occasionally to be met with in their rude annals, which, though recorded with all the colouring of prejudice and bigotry, yet speak for themselves, and will be dwelt upon with applause and sympathy when prejudice shall have passed away" (1795).

Though brief, Boudinot's references to human suffering serve calculated purposes. First, they remind his audience that it too, if not watchful, may create its own "rude annals" (1795). Second, they manipulate audience receptivity to the author's message. By preceding his progress report on the "present improved state" of the Cherokee nation with the description of white offenses,
Boudinot maneuvers the audience to concentrate fully on his positive review of the Cherokee nation lest it have to contemplate its own travesties (1795).

In contrast to Boudinot, Apes makes no efforts to shield his white audience from the responsibility it holds for Native Americans' suffering. From the start of his address, he is on the attack. To engage the attention of the concerned "gentleman and lady, of integrity and respectability," he points to the "females left without protection" because the "most sensible and active men are absent at sea" since Indian grounds provide too little appropriate employment (1782), to the starving and naked children whose parents can no longer support them through traditional means because whites have destroyed their agricultural base (1782), to the seduction of native women by white men while their native men are away and these females' subsequent lives of prostitution (1782), to the alcoholism perpetuated by the rum distributed by whites (1782), to the inequity between white and red education (1783), and to the murder of Indian women and children (1784). Apes reels off these transgressions one after the other, addressing an audience he identifies in his introduction as "my fellow creatures," "travellers with me to the grave," who, therefore, should not "promote prejudices" (1782). He connects Indians' conditions directly to white practices of "civilization." Furthermore,
he stresses that, in its present state, dominant society systematically locks Indians into negative living conditions because "they [Indians] are made to believe they are minors and have not the abilities given them from God, to take care of themselves . . ." (1782).

By identifying specific Indian problems and describing the dynamics that create them in his introduction to "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man," Apes engages his white audience in an entirely different manner than does Boudinot in his introduction. Soon after his initial approach to the audience, Apes must candidly acknowledge that his "kind of talk will seem surprising and horrible" to many in the audience (1783). He affronts white society's pride; and he wants it, in its aroused state, to remain engaged with his discourse, to have a stake in listening to his proclamations and queries about its behaviors and basic principles.

In Boudinot's and Apes' cases, reports of human suffering focus the audience on blatant white transgressions: events or actions that an audience would have difficulty denying as mistreatment. The authors' discussions of the tangible source of the red-white conflict--Native Americans' dispossession of their land and, therefore, the disruption of their ancient patterns of living--are similarly quite pointed and brief. Notably, while neither advocate spends an inordinate amount of time
dwelling on the dispossession issue, each deliberately places it in his text. Of the two, Boudinot most descriptively sketches the link between the Indians' loss of land and relinquishment of their own ways to make way for white "civilization" (1796). He reports:

The rise of these people in their movement towards civilization may be traced as far back as the relinquishment of their towns; when game became incompetent to their support, by reason of the surrounding white population. They then betook themselves to the woods, commenced the opening of small clearings, and the raising of stock; still however following the chase. Game has since become so scarce that little dependence for subsistence can be placed upon it. They have gradually and I could almost say universally forsaken their ancient employment. In fact, there is not a single family in the nation, that can be said to subsist on the slender support which the wilderness would afford. The love and the practice of hunting are not now carried to a higher degree, than among all frontier people whether red or white. It cannot be doubted, however, that there are many who have commenced a life of agricultural labour from mere necessity, and if they could, would gladly resume their former course of living. (1796)

While he describes a supposed "rise" in the situation of the Cherokee Indians, Boudinot employs the language of loss and want; his speech emphasizes negatives, which do not evoke a feeling of an improved situation for Native Americans (1796). And while he ends this rumination by declaring that the feelings of those who wish to return to former ways "ought to be passed over" (1796), Boudinot's extended description of the demise insinuates desire for the opposite, some recognition of loss from more sensitive audience members. His careful analysis intimates that
whites need the effects of their actions spelled out since they often obscure the effects by examining only part of the portrait of the dispossessed Indian.

Boudinot's emphasis on the dispossession issue potentially elicits sympathy, but even if it doesn't, the placement of the discussion conceivably aids in elevating the Indian image after the audience hears the next section of the oration, which is a statistical quantification of the marks of civilization among the Cherokee. Boudinot catalogs Indians' holdings of livestock, shops, schools, transportation, agricultural equipment, and industrial machinery (1795-96). He demonstrates that the Cherokee Indians have advanced toward white "civilization" in spite of various obstacles posed by dispossession of their ancient lands and the forced shift to agrarian life. In contrast to Apes—and in spite of his posture as a humble delegate to the white audience—Boudinot spends considerable effort diagnosing the core of red-white conflict, loss of land. Yet, he steadfastly avoids any rhetoric that might directly ask whites to assume guilt.

It is, perhaps, a bit ironic that Boudinot is so descriptive about this core problem since, of the two Native American advocates, he postures as an "inferior" throughout so much of his text. By contrast, Apes' address of his white audience on the point of dispossession is markedly brief. He couches it in terms of Indian Bureau agents'
abuse, and it is included within his discussion of human suffering, sandwiched between his laments over Indian alcoholism and lack of equitable education. He asserts that agents assigned to attend their needs "care not whether the Indians live or die. . . . They would think it no crime to go upon Indian lands and cut and carry off their most valuable timber, or anything else they chose; and I doubt not but they think it clear gain" (1782).

Apes' decision not to pursue a lengthy discussion on the issue of dispossession is interesting, considering the detail with which he reveals the dynamics creating human suffering among the Indians. However, as a rhetorical choice, it allows him to avoid a whole strain of religious argumentation that could distract an audience from the level of religiosity he wishes to address. The species of debate he avoids is passed down from Puritans such as John Cotton who summarily asserts that

no Nation is to drive out another without speciall Commission from heaven, such as the Israelites had, unless the Natives do unjustly wrong them, and will not recompence the wrongs done in peaceable sort, & then they may right themselves by lawfull war, and subdue the Countrey unto themselves. (103)

Apes leaves no opportunity for his white audience to "religiously" justify their civilization of the Americas by intimations of primitive, evil, or confrontational behaviors from the Indians. He thus maneuvers whites to look at the fundamental spirit of acceptance and equal treatment
dictated by true Christianity. Apes will not allow the land issue to be reduced to a religious justification that "Christians" had a duty to civilize "heathens."

Both Boudinot and Apes highlight issues of human suffering and dispossession because they can be identified and verified by the observations of white society. As they discuss them, the effects are visible and quantifiable. For Boudinot and Apes, these two elements in their rhetoric serve as a starting point to begin shifting white society's focus toward more fundamental levels of thinking, particularly towards the establishment of a mutually-defined red-white relationship, which requires a complete reevaluation of the Indian's position first and foremost as a member of humanity—not first and foremost as a member of dominant white society.

Boudinot portrays Native Americans as needing to "stretch" for the achievement of that goal, to demonstrate their worthiness of such an achievement. Notably, though, while he verbalizes white's ideas of "progress" as a yardstick for Native American achievement, he also reveals that dominant society has violated an appropriate relationship of dependency/interdependency—especially as understood by the Indian. Apes, on the other hand, eradicates the discussion of this relationship, regardless of how "constructive" it might potentially be. Regardless of their differences on this major point, though, Boudinot
and Apes both invite their white audiences to see that—above and beyond the visible abuses they perpetuate—white society often violates its own principles at the deepest level.

Near the close of "Address to the Whites," Boudinot exhorts his audience:

When before did a nation of Indians step forward and ask for the means of civilization? The Cherokee authorities have adopted the measures already stated, with a sincere desire to make their nation an intelligent and a virtuous people, and with a full hope that those who have already pointed out to them the road of happiness, will now assist them to pursue it. With that assistance, what are the prospects of the Cherokees? Are they not indeed glorious, compared to that deep darkness in which the nobler qualities of their souls have slept? Yes, methinks I can view my native country, rising from the ashes of her degradation, wearing her purified and beautiful garments, and taking her seat with the nations of the earth. . . .

She will become not a great, but a faithful ally of the United States. In times of peace she will plead the common liberties of America. In times of war her intrepid sons will sacrifice their lives in your defence. And because she will be useful to you in coming time, she asks you to assist her in her present struggles. She asks not for greatness; she seeks not wealth, she pleads only for this assistance, to become respectable as a nation, to enlighten and ennoble her sons, and to ornament her daughters with modesty and virtue. She pleads for this assistance, too, because on her destiny hangs that of many nations. If she completes her civilization—then may we hope that all our nations will—then, indeed, may true patriots be encouraged in their efforts to make this world of the West, one continuous abode of enlightened, free, and happy people.

But if the Cherokee nation fail in her struggle, if she die away, then all hopes are blasted, and falls the fabric of Indian civilization. (1800; emphasis added)

His appeal emphasizes almost all the elements of a
responsible and productive dependency as exercised in traditional native cultures. Jay Guiran notes, "In dependency, the individual seeks support, identity, security or permission from outside the self. . . . The direction of dependency-interaction is reciprocal; the dependent seeks, expecting that what he depends upon responds. A bond is created through the relationship" (16; emphasis mine). Dependency reflects a commitment to and concern for the cohesion of community life. Allowed into that framework of Native American thinking, "[t]he reliable white was there to protect, feed, authorize, and even share. . . . He must receive by giving, he must understand that Indian demands were an expression of respect, not lack of gratitude, and he must not turn away from those making the demands" (26).

Understanding this mindset, we can see that Boudinot—in spite of his deferent rhetoric—does challenge his audience. He requests that white society maintain its half of a sacred bond. If it does not, then it risks not only damaging the "fabric of Indian civilization" but also its own character and reputation. Boudinot seeks to emphasize that Indian living conditions are not strictly an Indian problem.

Boudinot’s final appeal to the audience is to prevent the Indian’s extinction. He makes whites’ choices simple, arguing:

There are, with regard to the Cherokee and other tribes, two alternatives; they must either become
He presents Indian loss as a universal loss, an event that affects the entire earthly community. Boudinot also notably articulates particular concern with the "forgetfulness" that will result if whites ignore the Indians' predicament (1801). This "forgetfulness" is a terribly tragic, demoralizing thought for an ancestor- and spirit-based culture. Boudinot, perhaps, also implies that a significant source of history, Indian society—which sometimes serves to enlighten dominant society about its view of itself and, more importantly, which may keep it from repeating mistakes that would cause extinction—will be lost.

As he has made his appeal on behalf of Indians up until the end of his oration, Boudinot has sought to motivate whites' support by emphasizing the gratefulness of Indians and the proud responsibility and kudos whites can claim by extending the "great American civilization." In the final moments, however, while he claims to "speak of the fact [of Indian extinction], without at all referring to the cause [dominant white society]," Boudinot boils the issue down to a question of white aid or Native American extinction. He queries whether dominant society wants its behavior to
maintain a "mournful precedent" (1801). Survival, he asserts, is determined by "you [each individual listening] and this public at large" (1801). He clearly places a challenge at the feet of each individual.

In a deferent fashion, typical of his general approach to the white audience, Boudinot's closing words—at first—elevate audience members for their own comfort and edification. He declares, "They [Indians] hang upon your mercy as to a garment" (1801). Next, he again stresses white society's position of ultimate responsibility for Indian survival. He asks his audience, "Will you push them from you, or will you save them?" (1801). Then, with his final directive words, "Let humanity answer," Boudinot challenges whites to reduce all their complex reactions and beliefs to Indian issues to an issue of respect and care for fellow human beings (1801). And surprisingly, Boudinot's final challenge ultimately emerges as pointed as Apes'.

The vigor with which Apes reveals white society creating visible, physical human suffering and the effects of dispossession of land among the Indians is matched in his attacks on the professed Christianity that condones Indians' mistreatment. There is no polite wending to his point. Once he has used these earlier elements to evoke sympathy and to repeatedly highlight the broken Golden Rule (do unto others...), Apes further confronts his audience with logic that reveals that white American Christians do not see
God's universal picture. He highlights the inconsistency of thinking that whites place before Indians, and he reverses the Indian portrait of life and whites' perception of God's view of non-whites. Apes declares:

I would ask you if you would like to be disenfranchised from all your rights, merely because your skin is white, and for no other crime? I'll venture to say, these very characters who hold the skin to be such a barrier in the way, would be the first to cry out, injustice! awful injustice!

But, reader, I acknowledge that this is a confused world, and I am not seeking for office; but merely placing before you the black inconsistency that you place before me—which is ten times blacker than any skin that you will find in the Universe. And now let me exhort you to do away that principle, as it appears ten times worse in the sight of God and candid men, than skins of color—more disgraceful than all the skins that Jehovah ever made. If black or red skins, or any other skin of color is disgraceful to God, it appears that he has disgraced himself a great deal—for he has made fifteen colored people to one white, and placed them here upon this earth. (1783; emphasis added)

Furthermore, Apes emphasizes that whites, of all the races, carry the most crimes upon their backs (1784). He points to the relativity of whites' definitions of justice and God's perspective on all his beloved creatures. Without compunction, Apes asks, "[I]s not religion the same now under a colored skin as it ever was?" (1784). Apes carefully constructs this part of his address so that, for the more sensitive listener, tampering with Apes' logic is viewed as an affront to God as well. Clearly, at every turn, Apes attacks false distinctions made between individuals on the basis of race.
Before concluding his "sermon," Apes depicts one area in which religious and governmental control overlap to demonstrate the pervasiveness of white society's problem with relative thinking. He describes the "disgraceful" Massachusetts law that fines ministers for performing intermarriages between whites and Indians (1785). He thus reminds his audience of the basic freedom of personal choice that Americans claim to espouse on all levels. Apes admonishes his audience, "I would ask you if you can see anything inconsistent in your conduct and talk about the Indians. And if you do, I hope you will try to become more consistent" (1786). Inconsistency, he knows, creates most Indian and white conflict; moreover, inconsistency is hypocrisy no matter how many labels--social, Christian, or otherwise--are attached to it. Too, as his references to human suffering and land abuse insinuate, small inconsistencies in treatment of individuals develop into larger social problems.

Apes is notably different from Boudinot in how he seeks to harness his audience's attention as he concludes; surprisingly, he is also less openly confrontational, although he is no less calculating in trying to rouse support. He cordially acknowledges "men of fame and respectability--as well as ladies of honor and virtue," "who do not hesitate to advocate our cause" (1786). He indicates that he has some faith in white society. Appealing directly
to individuals, he stresses, "By what you read, you may learn how deep your principles are. I should say they were skin deep. I should not wonder if some of the most selfish and ignorant would spout a charge of their principles now and then at me" (1786). His rhetoric invites his white readers to remove themselves from the company of "some of the most selfish and ignorant" and to consider themselves among those whose principles are not lost (1786). Then, his rhetoric permits audience members to separate themselves from the "selfish and ignorant" if, and only if, they are responding positively to his pleas for aid (1786).

Apes' conclusion attempts to empower and uplift his audience. His words incite action by promising reward in spite of the hardships that may occur. Apes exhorts:

Do not get tired, ye noble-hearted--only think how many poor Indians want their wounds done up daily; the Lord will reward you, and pray you stop not till this tree of distinction shall be levelled to the earth, and the mantle of prejudice torn from every American heart--then shall peace pervade the Union. (1786)

With these evangelical words, Apes leaves his audience to do its Christian duty. Unlike Boudinot whose more mild lecture leaves its audience with the final choice between offering aid or enabling the extinction of a race, Apes ultimately emphasizes that whites' choice, at the most fundamental level, is between acting as sinners or true Christians.

Boudinot's "An Address to the Whites" and Apes' "An
Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man" obviously highlight opposing styles of appeal to dominant society, and the texts' conclusions particularly underline the thought and deliberation with which the Indian advocates confront whites. Boudinot, who refuses to be openly confrontational throughout his piece, must create a sense of urgency to motivate white action by predicting the most extreme result of whites' treatment of Native Americans, extinction. Apes, who attacks his white audience on almost every front throughout his text, must give his white audience space at the conclusion to choose its own behavior—and, therefore, more readily accept that behavior—rather than have it dictated to them and rejected precisely because it has been externally imposed. Apes simply offers a general principle from which that behavior should originate.

Clearly, this examination of Boudinot's oration and Apes' article reveals their texts as sophisticated rhetorical statements. Boudinot specifically produces his text to solicit patronage, and he, therefore, offers a voice that attempts to emphasize white society's already established capacity for generosity and responsibility toward Indians as well as to inspire further supportive activities. But he also represents the Indian voice protective of Native Americans' own social and economic achievements. Apes does not generate his text to obtain monetary aid but rather to advance whites' receptivity to
the idea that they need to reflect seriously upon their own activities. He presents a voice dedicated to highlighting shortfalls in white society’s behavior toward Native Americans. Apes, attempting to reach a more general audience, the larger reading public, whose members may or may not fall on different sides of the civilize-or-christianize-first debate, identifies the fundamental attitudes that permit the continuous regeneration and widespread presence of abuses against Native Americans. Ultimately, the impact of viewing these two voices together is a deep recognition that both speakers seek to reach audiences as messengers who walk beside and among the members of the earthly assembly they inhabit; they vigorously advocate respect for basic humanity.

This study of "An Address to the Whites" and "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man" has focused attention on the two advocates' major content choices, and it has explored the shaping, or placement, of that subject matter. Even more intricate analysis, however, awaits to be done on subtleties such as Boudinot's, and especially Apes', repeated use of rhetorical questions, their choice of moments to appeal to directly to the individual "you" in the audience rather than the nation or religious state, and, finally, their insertion of their "I"-dentities at specific points in the text. Coupled with the present study, such scholarship can only hope to contribute to a greater
understanding of—and greater appreciation for—just how dramatically whites affected and altered Native American life in the nineteenth century.
Works Consulted

Disrupting the Reading of the Cultural Other:
Itabari Njeri's Every Good-bye Ain't Gone


Standing on the Dividing Line:
Elias Boudinot's "An Address to the Whites" and
William Apes' "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man"


Biography

Therese Marie Gyauch, the daughter of Michael P. and Lorraine B. Gyauch, was born in Washington, D.C., on August 7, 1968. As the daughter of a military officer, she lived all over the United States. She attended Davidson College in North Carolina, and in 1990, she received an A.B. degree in Interdisciplinary Communications (which combined study in the disciplines of English and psychology) from the Center for Special Studies. She has since taught at the middle school and the university level.

Ms. Gyauch presented her paper "Disrupting the Reading of the Cultural Other: Itabari Njeri’s Every Good-bye Ain’t Gone" at the 1994 American Women Writers of Color Conference. She hopes to concentrate her Ph.D. studies in multicultural literature and composition and rhetoric with an emphasis on multicultural autobiographies. She expects to enter academia as a professor.
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TITLE