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Recognition, Resilience and Relief: The Meaning of Gift

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“The manner of giving is worth more
than the gift.

1. — Pierre Corneille

In the winter of 1847, as the people of Ireland were being struck by a devastating famine, members of the Choctaw Nation met in a small town in Indian Territory called Skullyville.¹ There, members of the tribe discussed the experiences of the Irish poor and it was proposed that they would gather together what monies they could spare in the wake of their recent removal from their tribal homelands east of the Mississippi River. Ultimately, they collected seven hundred and ten dollars, a sum roughly equivalent to \$20,440 today.² Reports of this amount have been corroborated by several commentators, including Anelise Hanson Shroust and Mike Ward.³ It is not possible to know what source(s) Ward is quoting, but he is possibly citing Carolyn Thomas Foreman’s entry in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, in which Foreman writes

In 1847 a meeting was held at Skullyville where a collection of \$710 was taken up for the relief of victims of the Potato Famine in Ireland. Agent William Armstrong presided and contributions were made by traders, agency officials and missionaries, but the Indians gave the largest part of the money.⁴

He might also be referring to Angie Debo’s famous 1934 historical work, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic*.⁵ It is worth noting that a donation of one hundred seventy dollars is often referred to (a figure approximately equivalent to \$4,895 today). This smaller amount is the one mentioned by Irish historian Christine Kinealy in her work, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland: The Kindness of Strangers* (104).⁶ It is also

mentioned numerous times online and elsewhere: In an online article written for “Irish America” Kinealy states that one hundred seventy-four dollars was sent by the Choctaw, rather than one hundred seventy dollars;⁷ the *Irish Examiner* newspaper, meanwhile, has made reference to one hundred seventy-nine dollars.⁸ The disparity between one hundred seventy and seven hundred and ten dollars is hugely significant; it raises the question of whether or not a transcription error occurred, or, worse still, some of the monies were siphoned off during transit. The discrepancy certainly warrants further investigation. For now, it is fair to say that the amount in question—whether \$20,440 or \$4,895—was surely sizable. More importantly, the act of giving, and the form of international recognition that the gift symbolized, was of greatest significance. In the essays that follow, we will refer to the seven-hundred-and-ten-dollar amount.

Rather than use what money they had to buy badly needed resources in the new territory—land, food, housing, and so on—the tribe made the altogether remarkable decision to send a goodly portion of their money to those who were starving and destitute in Ireland. Although the international dimension of this charitable aid is itself notable, it is the fact that the Choctaws themselves had endured displacement, poverty and untold hardship that makes this donation particularly marvelous. Removed from their ancestral lands by state and governmental policies that supported and enabled not only white settlers’ land claims in Georgia and Mississippi, but also further and sustained encroachments into land west of the Mississippi River, the Choctaw tribe had suffered great losses in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it “is difficult,” as Shroul has recently noted, “to imagine a people less well-positioned to act philanthropically.”⁹ The Choctaws—and the Cherokee, who also sent vitally important aid—“were unlikely donors” primarily because “both tribes had been forcibly removed from their lands in the Southeast only a decade earlier ... [and] they had limited financial and emotional resources to share with distant sufferers.”¹⁰ This essay—much like the book that it appears in—aims to consider the broader contextual frameworks that informed this particularly affecting instance of generosity. It will examine a number of parallels within the cultural landscapes inhabited by the Irish and Choctaw before, during and after the Great Irish famine (1845–49). Accordingly, beyond presenting the Choctaw gift as something of a placeholder for intense acts of international, political, and cultural discernment in the nineteenth century, as Shroul so elegantly does, this essay will speak to various cotemporal (albeit not continuous) points of connection between both communities in several sequential eras, including precolonial, twentieth and twenty-first century ones. It will do so because it is surely worth considering whether those correlations may have influenced the Choctaw donors’ decision to send aid in the first place, and whether they continue to shape or inform contemporary understandings of the gift’s significance, be it in Ireland, in the Choctaw Nation or further afield. Before considering wider cultural and political points of that particular connection, historically or in more recent times, it is,

of course, constructive to momentarily reexamine the events in Ireland that both led to the 1847 donation and made it necessary.

“Frightful Sufferings”

In the years from 1845 to 1849 the worst famine that was to befall any Europe country in nineteenth century hit the population of Ireland. The blight that decimated the potato crop in 1845 was a calamity of huge proportions, and the “Great Irish Famine killed at least 1 million people and led more than that number to emigrate.”¹¹ It is perhaps ironic that the type of trans-Atlantic exchange and movement that would, in time, facilitate and frame the remarkable connection between the Choctaw and the Irish was partly responsible for nineteenth century Ireland’s reliance on the potato. Although “potatoes were not seen by Europeans before 1532 when Pizarro first ascended the Andes of northern Peru at Cajamarca,” the humble spud provided the Irish with a stable, nutritious and relatively cheap crop; it travelled well from the high Andes to the damp, Irish soil.¹² Potatoes also become a standard field crop throughout much of Europe during the eighteenth century, as John Reader has noted.¹³ The potato was especially needed in Ireland during the nineteenth century, however. “By the 1830s,” Kevin Whelan has reminded us, “three million ‘potato people’ relied on the tuber for more than 90 per cent of their calorie intake.”¹⁴ Broadly speaking, a number of factors led to that rather startling reliance on one single crop. These included an increase in both the number of tenant farmers existing at subsistence level during their bid to simultaneously pay their rent to the landlord and export cereals to England, and an increased rate of poverty amongst a growing population. The late J. E. Pomfret, writing in an earlier time (1930), once “thought it pointless to distinguish between ‘farmer’ or tenant and ‘cottier’, as most landholders were miserably poor peasants.”¹⁵

However one chooses to refer to my ancestors, it is undoubted that it was a grim moment of historical happenstance that served to deepen their connection with the American continent: the phytophthora strain of potato blight made its way across an ever-shrinking world and arrived in Ireland in 1845.¹⁶ Although well-connected the wider world in terms of commerce, enterprise, literature and religion—sometimes tragically so, when one thinks of the blight that made its way across the Atlantic—the Irish were often viewed as a disparate and distinct people. Indeed, they were a race apart despite their country’s geopolitical positionality and its proximity the United Kingdom. What makes the plight of these “poor peasants” all the more shocking is the fact that Ireland was not just next door to an increasingly wealthy and dominant Great Britain during Victorian era, but was, of course, part of that same Union. So reviled were the Irish in some quarters that even those who fled the starving nation were sources of scorn and ignominy; reflecting (and perhaps forming) some of the racialized thinking of the day, Friedrich Engels cast aspersions on those who had left Ireland. “The worst dwellings are good enough for them; their clothing causes them little trouble, so long as it holds together by a single thread; shoes they know not,” he wrote

in *Condition of the Working Class in England*. He went on to comment on that “race’s” proclivity for the potato too (both boiled and distilled): “their food consists of potatoes and potatoes only; whatever they earn beyond these needs they spend upon drink.”¹⁷ Even if Engels’s allegation regarding alcohol is somewhat mean-spirited, his comment on the spud is well-founded; Whelan’s point above underlines the fact that, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, more than a third of Ireland’s population had become wholly reliant on a crop that had been brought to Europe by the conquistadors and possibly passed along by the Spanish (in a poem written in 1750, titled “Cáth Bearna Chroise Brighde [The Battle of the Gap of St. Bridget’s Cross],” Seán O’Neachtain referred to the potato as “An Spaineach Geal,” which translates as “the kind-hearted Spaniard”). The sudden loss of this vital food source, along with the degree of governmental and administrative intransigence that followed, meant that a huge swath of the nation encountered untold hardship.

The story of an Gorta Mór is an appalling tale of death and depopulation, and it is an event that historians have sought to understand ever since. The bid to reach such understanding means that there have been numerous debates about the sources of that inequality, the political and social structures of Irish society during the nineteenth century. The legacy of English colonial practice in Ireland and British responses to the news of famine during that period has also come under increased scrutiny. Some commentators have argued, along rather Malthusian lines, that the Irish population had grown rapidly in the decades leading up to 1845, and was, therefore, likely to undergo a sharp reduction in numbers.¹⁸ Others have provided altogether more sophisticated—and convincing—analyses of the complex connection between rising poverty levels, landlessness, inequality and the blight that struck the potato in 1845 and 1846.¹⁹ There now seems to be some consensus that a deadly mixture of “providentialism, stadialism and neoclassical economics” ultimately came to inform what has been described as the British state’s “catastrophic failure” to tackle the causes of the famine (Whelan).²⁰ Regardless of how one seeks to parse historical events and political machinations, the simple fact remains that the population of Ireland declined from over 8 million people in 1846 to 6.6 million in 1851. Contemporary eyewitness accounts of the suffering are utterly shocking. Many readers will have encountered the testimony of William Forster, an English Quaker named who visited Ireland in 1846 in order to survey the country’s need for famine relief. Forster’s agonized portrayal of children who “were like skeletons, their features sharpened with hunger and their limbs wasted, so that there was little left but bones” is known to many.²¹ His account invites comparison with the depth of suffering outlined in another well-known piece—a letter which appeared in the *Times* on Christmas Eve, 1846. Penned by Nicholas Cummins, a Justice of the Peace from County Cork, that correspondence recounted the author’s sense of complete dismay and mounting shock during a visit to the same town that Forster had called to: Skibbereen. Cummins wrote of “scenes that ... no tongue or pen can convey the slightest idea of,” before

attempting to convey to the reader a sense of the death and destruction that he had encountered:

In the first [cabin], six famished and ghastly skeletons, to all appearance dead, were huddled in a corner . . . I approached in horror, and found by a low moaning they were alive. It is impossible to go through the detail. Suffice it to say, that in a few minutes I was surrounded by at least 200 of such phantoms, such frightful spectres as no words can describe. By far the greater number were delirious either from famine or from fever. Their demonic yells are still ringing in my ears, and their horrible images are fixed on my brain.²²

Reporting on behalf of *The Illustrated London News*, the Irish artist James Mahony gave his own report of the unfathomable suffering that was being experienced in that town—and elsewhere—during the year that ultimately became known as “Black 47.” On his travels Mahony witnessed, amongst other abominations, a “hut . . . surrounded by a rampart of human bones.” “In this horrible den,” he found “in the midst of a mass of human putrefaction, six individuals, males and females . . . were huddled together, as closely as were the dead in the graves around.”²³ Ultimately, an amalgamation of events that would be deleterious and dangerous for any nation came to pass; famine, emigration and delayed marriage almost certainly accounted for a halving of the Irish population between 1845 and 1911. The single detail that surpasses the dreadfulness of those facts is, perhaps, the stance taken by some members of the British civil service and members of Parliament during the crisis itself. As incoming assistant secretary to the Treasury in 1846, Sir Charles Trevelyan infamously adopted a laissez-faire approach that was dangerously allied with a zealous, evangelical Protestantism. “The great evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the famine,” he opined in December 1846, “but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the [Irish] people.”²⁴

Trevelyan was not the only man disdainful of what he saw as a rather dissolute reliance on Government funding and support. In January 1846 the Duke of Cambridge supposed that “rotten potatoes and sea-weed, or even grass, properly mixed, afforded a very wholesome and nutritious food,” before adding that “[a]ll knew that Irishmen could live upon anything and there was plenty grass in the field though the potato crop should fail.”²⁵ Fortunately, not all commentators were quite as ruthless. Many international observers commented, impartially, on the worst of the privations, and both the consequences of the blight and the plight of the Irish people came to their attention.²⁶ Just as importantly, several reporters had actually warned of an imminent danger of famine a full decade earlier. In his diaries, Alexis de Tocqueville, the French sociologist and political theorist, foreshadowed the terrible sights that would be later seen by Forster, Cummins and Mahony. In a letter to his mother in

August 1835 de Tocqueville described his journey to Castlebar, in the west of Ireland. After traveling from “cabin to cabin,” he wrote, solemnly, “[I found] a collection of misery such as I did not imagine existed in this world.”²⁷

In the context of this volume's greater project—the consideration of the connections between the Irish and the Choctaw—it is remarkable that de Tocqueville's assessment of the desolation that he found in Ireland was made in view of the deprivations that he had recently seen in America. There, by all accounts, the scarcity and hardship suffered by several tribes was similarly shocking.²⁸ In 1831, just four years before his trip to Ireland, de Tocqueville had witnessed very similar levels of anguish and distress when he observed “the frightful sufferings” that were the result of the “forced migrations” of the Choctaw in Memphis. What lay behind this mass movement of people was, according to Clara Sue Kidwell, the expansionist policy adopted by US government during the early years of the nineteenth century. To her mind, the “defeat of the British in the War of 1812” relieved “the threat of invasion [of the United States] by a foreign power” and “opened up new economic opportunities for trade along the Mississippi River.”²⁹ The period between 1812 and 1831 subsequently saw a consolidation and increase in governmental and state practices which hinged, by and large, upon the implementation of Thomas Jefferson's model of yeomanry and agrarianism. That model necessitated the removal of several tribes and the ‘freeing’ of land; it is a long time since historian Russell Thornton reminded readers that “as many as 100,000 American Indians were removed from eastern homelands to locations west of the Mississippi River during the first half of the 19th century.”³⁰ “Most of this number,” Thornton continues, “were members of five tribes: Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole,” and “most of the relocations occurred in the decade following passage of the United States Indian Removal Act of 1830.”³¹ It was against this backdrop that groups within the Choctaw tribe entered into successive treaties with the government. Agreements such as the Treaty of Doak's Stand (1821) and the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek (1830) redrew land boundaries and radically rearranged all aspects of life for tribal communities, both for the hunters who lived west of the Mississippi river and for those farming east of it.³² For instance, under the terms of the 1821 treaty the tribe relinquished approximately six million acres on the western edge of the Choctaw Nation in exchange for approx thirteen million acres in Arkansas Territory. Meanwhile, under the terms of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, which was “formally acknowledged by only a small number of Choctaws,” it was agreed that the tribe would “cede to the United States... [the] entire country they own and possess, east of the Mississippi River; and they agree to move beyond the Mississippi River, early as practicable.”³³ What followed, then, was a period of unprecedented suffering in the history of the tribe, beginning with what one Choctaw Chief—most likely Nitakechi—described as a “trail of tears and death.”³⁴ So, although the treaties were, on the face of it, intended to guarantee the tribe's future, especially by shoring up land rights and territorial dominion, they were largely the result of governmental and military pressure. Worse, they were only partly accepted.

Such was the extent of the Choctaw's misery that de Tocqueville feared, on some level, that he would be accused of "coloring the picture too highly" if he gave a full and frank report of it.³⁵ Indeed, even though he often adopted the loathsome parlance of the day and referred to the Choctaw as "savages" (showing some of the same racism that Engels had shown towards the Irish), the Frenchman seemed to be genuinely disturbed by the tribe's suffering; he was conscious of language's inability to fully capture or reflect the depth of the terrible torments he saw. Consequently, he professed to being concerned that he had been "witness of sufferings that [he had] not the power to portray."³⁶ Nevertheless, like Nicholas Cummins, he attempted to convey at least some sense of that anguish he continued, writing:

It was ... the middle of winter, and the cold was unusually severe the snow had frozen hard upon the ground, and the river was drifting huge masses of ice. The Indians had their families with them, and they brought in their train the wounded and the sick, with children newly born and old men upon the verge of death. They possessed neither tents nor wagons, but only their arms and some provisions. I saw them embark to pass the mighty river, and never will that solemn spectacle fade from my remembrance.³⁷

The snow and freezing temperatures caused multiple deaths and appalling hardship in 1831, and it is estimated that, overall, 6,000 Choctaw people died during removal—fifteen percent of the tribe's total population.³⁸ Decades later the historian H.B. Cushman would recall witnessing a similar "scene of despairing woe" in 1832 in Hebron, Mississippi. An outbreak of cholera also stalked the tribe that same year, and deaths were a daily occurrence. The journal of one S.T. Cross, who accompanied one group in his official capacity as "Assistant Agent Choctaw removal," recorded no less than eighteen deaths in the seventeen days spanning between November 12 and November 29.³⁹ Cross escorted a group numbering (by his estimation) approximately "one thousand two hundred," and traveled to a designated meeting point—Ecore de Fabre—by way of the Ouachita River. Upon arrival at this juncture on the tribe's journey, he found that there was no transportation to bring the "emigrants" across the waterway, nor were there any agents on the far side to commence the next leg of the passage. In a letter written to General George Gibson, Commissary General of Subsistence, Cross subsequently recalled the haphazard and poorly thought-out circumstances in which the removals had taken place (February 9, 1832). Although there was undoubtedly a degree of infighting within military and governmental ranks—either because of a propensity to place blame elsewhere or to assume the worst of far-off, unsupervised officials—it is patently the case that the removal of the tribe's people was as chaotic as it was brutal.

A brief comparison of the accounts provided by William Forster, John Mahony Cushman, Cross and others, surely reveals the extent to which the horrors experienced in Mayo were, in many respects, analogous to those in Mississippi. Yet, it is the temporal and contextual framing provided by de Tocqueville's commentary that possibly provides the starkest analogy of all; these events were taking place within 48 months of each other, and were being witnessed by an international community of independent and mobile eyewitnesses. In this regard, it is possible to argue that the French diplomat's itinerary and recollections rather uniquely tie the stories about the Irish and the Choctaw together in the nineteenth century. Beyond this particular point of connection, there are countless other, no less complicated or affecting, correlations. As we now know, an echo of the disastrous administrative bungling and the poor planning—if one can say that there was planning at all—that S.T. Cross sketches out in his letter to Washington can be heard in tales of catastrophic governmental blundering during the Irish famine. In closing the soup-kitchens after just six months, failing to prohibit the exportation of grain from Ireland, doing little to stem the tide of mass-evictions and paying miniscule wages to those working on public-works schemes (all in 1846–1847), the British government essentially withdrew basic humanitarian aid from Ireland at the time when it was most needed.

It should also be noted that the closing of the soup kitchens was itself part and parcel of the complex paternalistic relationship that the British sought to cultivate with Ireland and other colonies.⁴⁰ On many levels, the imperialist rhetoric of benevolence often played a part in the justification of British colonial expansionism throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Irish, it was reckoned, were simply hopeless. In Britain a debate raged about which deficiency was the greater caused of the Irish people's misery; in response to the *Times*' suggestion that the "Celtic stock" of Ireland's population would be much improved if alloyed with "Saxon enterprise, steadiness and industry," the writers at the *Protestant Magazine* felt compelled to argue that the Irish must be freed from much worse: "the shackles of Popery ... and the iron bondage of superstition."⁴¹ Regardless of which claim could have been said to prevail, the inference was that the starving poor in Ireland were hungry either because of their indolence or their deference to a brutal spiritual master. Neither condition suggested that the Irish were themselves capable of improving their lot. Deemed incapable of self-government, the colonies were, in the minds of many, in need of foreign rule and (in some cases) a degree of humanitarian aid. However, if given such aid, many nineteenth-century commentators argued, Ireland would continue to rely on the home nation and therefore fail to cultivate more-civilized cultural and material conditions. By opening soup kitchens for just six short months the British government possibly only succeeded in highlighting the imperialist inclination towards interventionism *and* condescension. The provision of public relief efforts had other deleterious effects too; even those who recognized the humanity of the Irish and sought to view Irish affairs with a degree of fairness and noninterference were driven to recognize that the Irish Poor Law Act of 1838 had detrimentally affected the nation's

economy. One such business man was Vere Foster, a member of the Anglo-Irish gentry and founder of the Irish Pioneer Emigration Fund. For his part, he “did not think that there was an innate backwardness and primitiveness to Irish Catholics,” but he *did* believe that had the Poor Law Act had “created an artificial and poorly run market for Irish labor.”⁴² In Foster’s case there was a genuine concern for both the health of the Irish economy and the condition of the people of Ireland. For many other landlords and politicians, Patrick Brantlinger explains, the joint forces of profitability and politicking meant that the good intentions associated with nineteenth century philanthropy were quickly jettisoned once the Irish labor market had been damaged. Then (as now, some might argue) “the principles of political economy [...] overruled humanitarian intentions.”⁴³ Hence, it is possible to argue that economic imperatives steadily and irrevocably diminished the British government’s capacity for compassion and charity. We might also consider a more troubling possibility, however. That is that the rhetoric of benevolence—popular in the pre-famine years—was possibly adopted by countless British politicians and landowners who wished to appear compassionate outwardly, but who were concerned with what they deemed to be the realpolitik of Ireland to hold sway. In that reading, the rhetoric of benevolence is simply a means of masking self-interest, and any ensuing altruism quickly disappears in response to difficult market conditions.⁴⁴

We might find another crucial point of connection between British and American imperialism here, in-so-far-as the expansion of both empire and nation relied heavily on nineteenth-century understandings of the doctrine of liberalism and the belief that all civilized individuals have the capacity for reason and self-government within a commercial society. The expansionist vision of President Andrew Jackson meant that he viewed capitalist development in much the same way as British philosophers and political economists such as John Stuart Mill, who saw market capitalism as an enlightened and rational response to both the savage native’s innate love of freedom, and to the types of obedience and enslavement found in less-developed, barbarous and feudal societies. For Mill, only commercial society could produce “the material and cultural conditions that [would] enable individuals to realize their potential for freedom and self-government.”⁴⁵ It is not difficult to see how, from a British perspective, mid-nineteenth century Ireland—which lacked “Saxon enterprise, steadiness and industry” or was inhibited by “the shackles of Popery... and the iron bondage of superstition”—could be said to have much to gain from a rapidly accelerating and expanding commercial society. This was a form of benign imperialism; a imperialism that was not geared towards “political domination and economic exploitation,” but was instead “a paternalistic practice of government that exports ‘civilization’ (e.g. modernization) in order to foster the improvement of native peoples.”⁴⁶ Notably, that beguiling admixture of paternalism and commercialization is what drove American expansion in the nineteenth century too. According to Michael Paul Rogin, it was by removing the Choctaw and other tribes that Jackson effectively “liberated land from communal use and thrust it into the [contemporary] market.”⁴⁷

Moreover, he did so after the fashion in which “European imperialism [had earlier] carried out primitive accumulation against” those in several of the colonies. Whatever the intention—paternalistic or materialistic—men like Jackson and directors of the British East India Company (Mill’s employers) can be seen to have exploited market forces in order to establish colonial or imperial power. God featured too, of course. Providentialism that commonly informed the British relationship to Ireland appears to mirror, directly, the US government’s attitude toward the tribes. It is not difficult to see a great deal of similarity between Trevelyan’s description of the famine as “a direct stroke of an all-wise and all-merciful Providence” and what Kidwell describes as the American government’s “colonial evangelical impulse toward Indians.”⁴⁸ Where Trevelyan viewed the famine as a “great opportunity” and an “effectual remedy” to the “social evil found in Ireland,” Andrew Jackson, then President of the United States, described the 1830 Indian Removal Act as “generous,” explaining that the tribes would “gradually ... through the influence of good counsels ... cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community.”⁴⁹ Those words clearly recall the nineteenth-century religious and economic moralism. They also recall a pronouncement made in *The Times*, England’s paper of record, in 1799, which stated: “nothing can tend to humanize the barbarous Irish as a habitual intercourse with [Britain] ... and the opportunities of observing the civilized manners of those who are from” there.⁵⁰ Although not entirely transposable, attitudes towards the Irish and the Choctaw (and tribal communities in general) were certainly very alike.

Transatlantic Exchanges

Thus, it is not altogether surprising to learn that British and American processes of expansion and colonization often mirrored one another. Much has been written about this phenomenon. Yet, as Anelise Hanson Shroul has pointed out, less has been written about the extent to which members of various communities in Ireland and Indian Territory would have known about one another during the nineteenth century. Shroul’s dexterously argued and cogent essay does an excellent job of glossing “the treatment of the Irish famine and famine philanthropy in the Indian press.”⁵¹ From an Irish perspective, even a cursory glance at the newspapers of the day will reveal a great deal of interest in, and coverage of, the tribes’ lifestyles, political organization, and dealings with the US government. Even if we take just one newspaper, Belfast’s *News Letter*—the oldest English-language newspaper in Europe—we will find repeated references to American political life and culture. On February 28, 1804, the paper printed details of the Louisiana Purchase, including section nine of the bill, which commented on President Jefferson’s decision to force tribes residing east of the Mississippi to accept lands west of the river in exchange for territories ceded. That same organ, the title of which reflected the fact that the editors literally received packets of letters which contained news from far off lands, also reported on the drawing of boundaries in the United States, noting, “the whole country eastward of

the Mississippi is now cleared of its original proprietors, and an ample field is thereby open for the vast plans of colonization which are now projected by the American Government” (February 6, 1818). In December of that same year, the *News Letter* reprinted President James Monroe’s state of the union address, in which he referred to ongoing “negotiations” with several of the tribes, including the Choctaw, and spoke of “cessions already made ... [and which] have been obtained on conditions very satisfactory to the Indians” (December 29, 1818). The April 10, 1821 edition carries news of another of Monroe’s speeches—although this time regulating the tribes to little more than a footnote—and the February 1, 1833 edition of the newspaper reprinted a report titled “Stewart’s America,” which gave an account of the “400,000 persons” deemed to be Indigenous and living in Indian territory. The latter gave an especially glowing account of lifestyle and practices of the Cherokee, described as “the most civilized of” the tribes.

To my mind, there are two particularly arresting details about the *News Letter*’s coverage of international and American affairs. Firstly, the regular appearance of detailed reports reflects the extent to which news from Indian Country frequently reached an Irish readership in the early years of the nineteenth century. Secondly, and perhaps just as importantly, I would argue that the manner in which the news was presented and framed possibly comments on the complex political and cultural contexts that existed within Ireland and America at the time. In particular, it is worth noting that the paper’s reporting of Indian removal was largely uncritical of the US government’s stance. Moreover, it remained so during a period when the organ’s editorial line changed fundamentally; while under the ownership of Frances Joy and his family the *News Letter* had “welcomed the American and French revolutions” (and could therefore be said to support antigovernment, anti-British forces in Ireland), but it subsequently “became a [progovernment] bulwark of the unionist cause” after it was sold to a Scottish consortium in 1795.⁵² In effect, a crucial shift from revolutionary republicanism to conservative unionism did little to affect what can only be described as a rather pragmatic assessment of the dislocation of America’s “original proprietors.” This seems to raise some crucial points and questions. Evidently, above all else, tribal communities were presented as yielding, quite necessarily, to what were sold as vital and positive forces of change: namely those heralded by the foundation of a new American republic. What might be less obvious, however, is why, exactly, an increasingly unionist *News Letter* might choose to continue uncritical coverage of the governmental policies adopted by the new republic—a country that Great Britain had so recently fought a war with. On some level, this esteem or regard for the nascent country might be read as an act of political expediency. Simply put, both the United States government and the unionists in Ireland were more concerned with the application of civilizing force and issues such as prosperity, enterprise, and religious values than they were with the plight of either the Choctaw or the disenfranchised Roman Catholics in Ireland. An implicit forbearance with American political and military

expansionism may also reflect a shared appreciation of the economic and spiritual merits of colonization. Indeed, a certain degree of homogeneity appears to have existed within conservative political forces in Britain, America and Northern Ireland; leaders within all three constituencies appeared to be devoted to finding the means through which to manage, and suppress, what they regarded as disruptive and disturbing portions of the populace. This last point seems to be borne out by the fact that the April 10, 1821 edition of the *News Letter* carried not only extensive coverage of Robert Peel's vociferous argument against the Catholic Emancipation Act, which he gave in Westminster, but also reprinted portions of US president James Munroe's second inaugural address. Just as Peel believed that the move to allow Catholics to hold public office "would not produce tranquility" in Ireland, Munroe was keen to ameliorate "all future annoyance from powerful Indian tribes."⁵³ The reporting journalist also suggested that Munroe had made clear his intention to make some "improvements in the system hitherto pursued towards the Indian tribes."⁵⁴ A contemporary reader may well find a good deal of paternalism and self-interest in Peel's desire that the British government and the Anglican minority retain control in Ireland, and Munroe's bid to establish "civil government over" the tribes. Meanwhile, the February 1, 1833 edition of the *News Letter* features a biting and acerbic satire of the Irish emancipationist, Daniel O'Connell, which describes him as "Ireland's Mimber." The boisterous and somewhat bawdy ode establishes a kind of wild voraciousness that is then immediately associated with the men of Roman Catholic Church and a shared love—or, rather, *lust*—for money. Notably an in-depth treatment of the increased sophistication and progressiveness of one of the so-called "Five Civilized Tribes," the Cherokee, appears on that same page. Whether it is intentional or not, the account of the tribe's printing presses, judiciary, government, and civic orderliness looms over a highly unflattering account of O'Connell's "sweating" and "roaring" accomplices in Parliament. In short, the paper appears to condone and celebrate very particular forms of social enlightenment and progressiveness.

Biases of a slightly different, but no less difficult, nature are evident in the *Freeman's Journal*, a daily four-page newspaper that was founded in Dublin in 1763. Although moderately nationalist at its inception, the *Journal* became closely allied with government forces in Dublin Castle, mainly as a result of the maneuverings of Francis Higgins, who acquired ownership in 1783. The newspaper became "a mouthpiece of rule from London, receiving subsidies for the publication of proclamations" under Higgins, who was colloquially known as "Sham Squire" and was an infamous informer and supporter of the British.⁵⁵ "[C]ontaining very little Irish news," the *Journal* focused extensively on British and international affairs, and often carried reports from America. Most of these were unflattering to the tribes, and most were concerned with the Choctaw, the Chickasaw, and the Creek. On April 1, 1788 it covered the tale of a young man from the East of England who had infiltrated the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes, and supplied "the savages ... with warlike stores."⁵⁶ In 1791 information about the treaties being drawn up between the Cherokee and government ended with reference

to “savage barbarity” and “deprivations on the frontier.”⁵⁷ That pattern continued: on December 2, 1818, several columns were given over to a description of a group described as a “remnant of the hostile Creeks”; just under two months later, a full page was dedicated to a Department of State report into US/Spanish relations following the War of 1812 and the Creek War of 1813–14.⁵⁸ In terms of editorial bias and an imperial or colonial rhetoric of benevolence, it seems extremely telling that an 1820 account of the admission of the state of Alabama into the union—an account that outlines the fact that “[s]elect committees were appointed on the subjects of improving the Indian tribes in the arts of civilized life”—appears alongside a notice for the eight annual general meeting of the Society for the Promoting the Education of the Poor of Ireland (other staples that appeared in the *Journal* too, of course: advertisements for the latest fashions; news of planned quadrille ball; a long story about the Duke of Kent).⁵⁹ These column inches, abutting one another as they do, possibly speak volumes about the extent to which the British and US governments viewed segments of the Irish and Native American populations—rowdy, primitive and in need of governance.

Officially speaking, the majority of newspapers neither expressly condoned nor condemned the actions of the either government; instead, the majority, patriot and unionist alike, adopted what Vincent Morley describes as a rather “staid” approach, and tended to cover international correspondence and official communiqués impartially.⁶⁰ That fact notwithstanding, it seems reasonable to presume that readers would have been tempted—and were sometimes very nearly invited—to make certain comparisons and deductions. Indeed, editors not only abridged original documents in many instances—thereby placing a particular emphasis on certain concerns that appeared within longer, very detailed parliamentary debates or presidential statements—but they also arranged the resulting articles in an altogether striking manner. For instance, on February 5, 1803 the editor of *Finn’s Leinster Journal* reprinted Thomas Jefferson’s second annual message, which referred to the need to fund both “regular troops” and “militia” in order to preserve military order, and the need to continue with Choctaw removal.⁶¹ Meanwhile, on the opposite page, a report from the General Sessions (the local courts in Ireland) noted that the Chairman had sought more rigorous enforcement of the law in “every barony,” and stated that this should be achieved through the holding of weekly sessions in each barony. In the opening lines of that report, the author praised the Chairman’s condemnation of lawlessness.⁶² The position of the second article appears to invite a comparison between the “tranquility” sought in the Rathkeale court and the “law [and] order” that Jefferson finds as a virtue in the new American republic. However, any ensuing evaluation of the coverage of both speeches may well reveal a more complicated relationship between the states of affairs in both jurisdictions. On one level, Irish patriots may well have found grist for the mill by comparing the US’s civic values of the new republic and its government to those found in Britain and the colonies. That is, rather than focusing on both Jefferson and the Chairman, and their shared concern for harmony and peacefulness, nationalists in Ireland might have cited it as further proof of the fact that republicanism was

politically and legally superior (as well as preferable) to colonial rule; America was now peaceful, whereas Ireland continued to be unruly. On another, and more deeply complicated, level whatever echo of popular sovereignty that the patriots might have found audible in the President's report on this new American liberty was, very possibly, drowned out by his description of the land newly acquired from the Choctaw Nation as "an outpost of the United States."⁶³ In effect, Jefferson's description of a "distant land" that had been depopulated of its original inhabitants, and which he wished to populate with a "very respectable population," was not just an unsavory reminder of the earlier plantation of Northern Ireland, but it also created a contemporary, equally unsettling, correspondence in which the government in US government give the impression of adopting the approach that Westminster and Dublin Castle had taken for years. In effect, Jefferson was, quite simply, speaking of lands "beyond the pale."

Crucially, the editorial commentary that frames and interpolates the speech delivered at the General Sessions may well have led the reader to connect the lot of the disenfranchised Catholic majority in Ireland with Jefferson's apparent "aloof distaste" for those who he disregarded as citizens: the slaves and the Indians.⁶⁴ In what is very possibly a sarcastic and disingenuous description, the journalist depicts the Chairman's speech as "most excellent ... temperate, judicious and enlightened." Equally as telling is his rider to the phrase "the learned Chairman bespeaks," which is: "and we hope truly." He quickly goes on to finesse his point somewhat, however, adding, rather acerbically, that "neither respect for the Law and its natural consequence, general tranquility can be the boast of this country" until such time as "the wild and vulgar predilection for Military authority be abandoned, and the Constable's Staff put in place of the bayonet."⁶⁵ Those who have taken power after the dissolution of the Irish parliament (1800) are the figured here "wild and vulgar." It seems crucial then, that we consider that Jefferson's reliance on "militia" and "regular troops" arose largely out of his need to suppress the slave population and remove the tribes; the unemancipated Catholics of Ireland would surely have noticed a troubling correspondence in the application of military authority and the subjugation of the poor and the helpless. Ultimately, then, the reader is left to decipher what, or more specifically *who*, is the source of the "headlong and indiscriminating prejudice" which the inhabitants of County Limerick are subjected to; martial law, it is suggested, is a poor substitute for self-governance and the proper administration of justice. We see here the need for a form of readerly interpretation or decoding that is very similar to that outlined by Shrouf. In her essay she quotes James Scott, who refers to the need to decipher these messages and "hidden transcripts."⁶⁶ Subtext is all important. Hence, even though the positioning of these articles might initially appear to suggest that in terms of law and order the US and Great Britain are alike—benignly rational—it might also have served to remind readers that they are ultimately divergent in terms of the patriotic ideal. More importantly, in the Irish context a coterminous and considered reading of both pieces may well have jarred the reader's sensibilities even more; ultimately, both articles actually gesture towards the government's subjugation

of a native population by armed force. Whatever doubts might exist in our minds about this being the central concern, both for the paper's publishers and the readership alike, are possibly assuaged by the forcefulness of the editorial line.

The robustness of such commentary continued on into the early decades of the nineteenth century, and the *Kerry Evening Post* carried a hard-hitting account of tribal mortality in April 1838. Significantly, it ran that report alongside news from the parliamentary debate on the Irish Poor Law. A column outlining the contents of a letter sent by a correspondent named Major Pilcher to one General William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, described the "literal depopulat[ion]" that had occurred as a result of numerous outbreaks of smallpox amongst the Mandan, the Assiniboine, the Cree, the A'aninin and the Sáhniš.⁶⁷ While explaining that the areas affected had become "one great graveyard" as a result of the epidemic, Pilcher provided a truly heart-breaking account of the fates of those who survived (an estimated one in fifty):

Most of ... [them] committed suicide, despairing, I suppose at the loss of friends, and the changes wrought by the disease in their persons—some by shooting, others by stabbing, and some by throwing themselves from the high precipices along the Missouri.⁶⁸

Harrowing in the extreme, the *Post's* short piece might be said to have chimed with the dreadful scenes witnessed by de Tocqueville in Ireland in 1835 more easily than it did with long, dry reports on parliamentary debate. With that, many Irish parliamentarians, a majority of whom were mindful of the decimation unfolding around the island, may well have connected the loss of life, disease and relocation in America with the fate of the Roman Catholics in Ireland.⁶⁹ For that reason, it seems worth noting that the newspaper's account of the deliberation on the subject of the Poor Relief (Ireland) Bill in Westminster included the opinion of one N. Roche, who pointed out that "employing the paupers would tend to kept [sic] down those who were struggling to keep out of the workhouse."⁷⁰ Virginia Crossman points out that the "act introduced a nationwide system of poor relief based on the workhouse and financed by a local property tax."⁷¹ This meant that the poor were not only put in fear of being effectively incarcerated in the workhouses that one reformer, Laura Stephens, described as "the great gloomy pile of grey stone buildings, surrounded with high walls" found in many towns in Ireland, but also cultivated a system that "encourage[d] landlords to evict their smallest tenants," thereby ameliorating the economic damage caused by "falling rent rolls, and the [landlords'] liability ... to pay the poor rates on holdings worth less than £4 per annum."⁷² Roche, like many others, saw the Act as producing a perfect storm, wherein the government's apparent charity would, in effect, not only enable and encourage the removal of the Irish poor from the land, but would also create a context in which that removal could be recast as a benevolent act. Crucially, that comment does not appear in the minutes of the debate, meaning,

therefore, that the newspaper went to some great lengths to include this criticism of the Bill in its communiqué.⁷³ That additional insight would have had the effect of balancing the opinions provided by champions of Poor Relief, including that of another Irish MP, W. S. O'Brien, whose input is also recorded in the *Post's* pages.⁷⁴ In the end, there is no looking beyond the fact that countless stories of the various afflictions and torments which affected the Choctaw and several other tribes reached Ireland's shores on a regular basis during the first half of the nineteenth century. Those stories undoubtedly reverberated in the minds of Irish readers, just as accounts of the famine in Ireland would have a resounding effect on the Choctaw just ten years later, in 1845.

“Courtesies of a small and trivial character”⁷⁵

In her book *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland: The Kindness of Strangers*, published in 2013, our fellow contributor Christine Kinealy explores the unprecedented global response to the Irish Famine of 1845–52.⁷⁶ Charitable donations, she explains, came from all corners of the world. Calcutta, as it was known then, was one of the first places where money was collected to be sent to Ireland, and 29,633 rupees had been collected there by January 10, 1846.⁷⁷ At that same time, a committee had been established in Boston in the United States, and it quickly gathered together \$750. Lionel de Rothschild, a London-based Jewish banker formed the British Relief Association in January 1847, and it was to Rothschild's fund that Queen Victoria donated £2,000 (a donation that did not spare her the indignity of becoming colloquially known as “The Famine Queen,” a moniker assigned to her after the *apocryphal* rumor that she donated £5 to help the starving Irish was widely disseminate). 1,000 Roman crowns were donated by Pope Pius 9th, and the President of the United States, James Polk, donated \$50—an amount that the Morgan Friedman inflation calculator estimates to be approximately \$1,307 today, when adjusted for inflation.⁷⁸ More arresting, perhaps, is the fact that “subscriptions to Ireland came from some of the poorest and most invisible groups in society ... [including] former slaves in the Caribbean, who had only achieved full freedom in 1838.”⁷⁹ Donations were also received from Barbados, Jamaica, St. Kitts and elsewhere. It is also profoundly effecting that paupers in an orphanage in New York scabbled together \$2 for the poor of Ireland, and that prisoners serving time in Sing Sing Prison in America—as well as convicts on board a prison ship at Woolwich in London—also donated money.⁸⁰ The significance of the latter donation deepens when one considers that all of those aboard that sorrowful ship would themselves be dead within 12 months of making their contribution. These facts, and many more, are outlined in Kinealy's chapter.

What is particularly useful about her methodical research is that it reminds us not only that there were many sources from which this global generosity emanated, but also that there were various motivations behind the benevolence shown to the Irish. For instance, whereas the relief committee in Boston were heavily invested in the fight for Ireland's independence, the charitable souls in India were spurred into action

by the notion that it was their “fellow subjects ‘at home’” who were in dire need of financial assistance.⁸¹ So, as well as detailing the manner in which money poured into Ireland in greater and lesser amounts, her historical detective work reveals a broader picture of the specific contextual framework in which the global response to the famine unfolded at the time. The Choctaw gift, meanwhile, can surely be situated within the complex eddy that benevolent giving in the nineteenth century and the various agendas which often “politicized philanthropy.”⁸² The tribe’s concern for the people of Ireland may well be viewed in terms of diplomacy and perhaps even deliberateness; the \$710 gathered in Skullyville became, in many respects, emblematic of the Nation’s continued autonomy, strength and robustness primarily because it was a sign of Choctaw endurance and moral strength. As Shrout, Laura Wittstock, and others have noted, this particular charitable donation also focused attention on the extent to which the Irish and the Choctaw had a collective or shared experience of colonization, albeit in discrete and alternate realms. It is crucial, then, that we recognize not only the fact that the “Indian Territory press also used philanthropic acts ... to make tacit comparisons between British misgovernment and American policy,” but also that certain protagonists within the Irish press had invited comparison between the two groups even before then, albeit in less explicit terms.⁸³ This fact is borne out not only in the reporting on tribal concerns in the years running up to the famine (as mentioned above), but also the widespread coverage that the gift itself received in 1847; seven of the country’s most popular papers gave an account of the tribe’s amazing generosity.⁸⁴ Not only was the news of the donation carried by newspapers in all four corners of Ireland, but several communiqués also took the opportunity to tease out some of the broader significances of the contribution to famine relief. The most pointed of these was, perhaps, *The Pilot’s* description of the circumstances in which the Choctaw—and others—made their endowment. The journalist in question did his damndest to highlight not just the openhandedness of donors, but also the particular conditions in which they chose to perform a profound act of kindness. “The contributions still go on. Some of them are remarkable,” he writes, before singling out the people of Tampico and Monterey in Mexico (key sites in the run-up to the Mexican-American War) and the Choctaw. The latter, he notes, have cemented a special bond with the Irish: “‘Lo! The poor Indian’—he stretches his red hand in honest kindness to his poor Celtic brother across the sea.” Finally, he also remarks that Washington bankers Corcoran and Riggs gave \$5,000, a figure which, he argues, put Queen Victoria to shame since she had given “but twice as much.” In what can only be described as a *coup de grace*, he concludes: “All power to the princely bankers for their generosity which casts into the shade the offering of the Queen of rich England.” That same report was carried the following day, June 19, 1847, in the *Dublin Weekly Register*. Only a few short weeks later *The Freeman’s Journal* printed a letter by Myndert Van Schaick, the New York businessman who led the General Relief Committee, which signaled out the Choctaw’s contribution: “they have given their

cheerful hand in this good cause though they are separated from you by miles of land and an Ocean's [sic] breadth."⁸⁵

A significant part of the gift is, then, not the donation itself, but rather the recognition of, as well as the opportunities to speak both to and about, co-temporal, albeit not conterminous, experiences of colonial rule. Thus, the package that was sent by the Choctaws was accompanied by something that was possibly more important—crucial acknowledgments of the warp and weft of historical similarities. In that context, it is not only striking that a paper such as *The Armagh Guardian* should report both on the state of the Choctaw's nation-to-nation negotiations with the US government in 1846 and the tribe's recognition of events in the international arena in 1847. Even more telling than the appearance of these, reasonably brief, references to Choctaw politics and charity is *The Wexford Independent's* reprinting of a speech by Choctaw headman Colonel Samuel Cobb under the title "Indian Eloquence," also in 1846. Appearing directly under a ballad that calls for "true [Irish] patriots to free/The land of their birth from accursed tyranny," Cobb's address reminds the US government "[w]hen you took our country you promised us land," but that, twelve years later, the tribe had "received no land."⁸⁶ A similar bid to reflect on the displacement and relocation that the Choctaw and other tribes had endured is also apparent in the *Galway Vindicator, and Connaught Advertiser's* reprinting of an extract taken from David B. Edward's *The History of Texas*. There, in a column titled "Choctaw Tradition," Edward recounts a "traditional story" told to him by a "Choctaw warrior," and which ends with the pronouncement that "the Choctaws had never spilt the blood of a white man!"⁸⁷ Clearly a retelling of one version of the Choctaw and Chickasaw origin story, the tale recalled the tribes' premonition that settlers, or "children from the far East," would arrive in their country bringing with them the "avaricious" and "ravenous appetite of the wolverine when it has seized the harmless argali of the mountains."⁸⁸ The allusion would not have been lost on the people of Galway. Hence, if it can be argued that the Choctaw viewed the donation as part of a clear process of self-definition in Indian country (and I think it can be), then it is surely possible to argue that Irish stories that told of the receipt of the gift were informed by a very similar instinct and spirit. Referenced and recalled time and again, the \$710 created a point of enduring and lasting contact between communities that were far distant, but who saw themselves as being related through the concomitantly chaotic experiences that colonization and imperial subjugation brought them.

It became something of placeholder for an intense act of political and cultural discernment during the twentieth century too. Indeed, it seems likely that this point of connection, amongst others, would have been on the mind of Éamon de Valera, leader of the first Dáil (the Irish Parliament), when he left Ireland bound for the United States in October 1919.⁸⁹ The visit to the US, which took place during the early phases of the War of Independence, was driven partly by a need for political recognition of the new Irish nation, and partly by a need to launch an appeal for funds to secure the future of de Valera's parliamentary party; where better to go than to the country that so many

donations had come from in the past, and to which so many Irish emigrants had fled to during the famine years. In strictly financial terms the de Valera's "efforts proved successful," according to the University College Dublin archive, and he "raised a significant amount of money for the Irish cause."⁹⁰ However, in political terms, the "long fellow," as he was colloquially known, failed "to receive recognition from President Woodrow Wilson, who viewed the Irish question as a matter for Anglo-Irish, rather than international, relations." In truth, Wilson felt that political discord in Ireland had effectively derailed his bid to lead the League of Nations; having refused to raise the issue of Ireland's freedom at the 1919 Paris Peace Convention, he later insisted, according to William Edward Dodd, that the "Irish had wrecked his whole program for adoption of the work at Paris."⁹¹ Ironically, or perhaps deceptively, Wilson had much of his Tyrone ancestors during his 1912 election campaign, in order to court the Irish American vote, and had even invited the Irish suffragette, nationalist and pacifist Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington to the White House in 1918, spurring her to note that she was "the first Irish exile and the first Sinn Féiner to enter the White House, and the first to wear there the badge of the Irish Republic." It seems entirely fitting and appropriate, then, that when the promise of a conventional political connection failed entirely for de Valera—mainly because Ireland little more than a nuisance to a world leader set on extending and expanding the US's influence internationally—it was the enduring strength of the connection with tribal communities that proved to be deep-seated. It seems highly likely that de Valera would have known about the Choctaw gift, and was keenly aware of the esteem that existed between tribal communities and the Irish. Knowledge of that relationship may well have led him to accept the invitation issued by the Anishinaabeg at Lac Courte Oreilles, who offered to host the Irish leader in the wake of Wilson's snub. On October 25, 1919 the *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator* reported that the Irish political leader had been adopted by the tribe. Chief Billy Boy and Joe Kingfisher, another one of the tribal leaders, addressed de Valera directly during a ceremony, which, according to the correspondent, "took place in an open field in the reservation in the presence of more than 3,000 Indians and white people." "You come to us as a representative of one oppressed nation to another" Kingfisher noted. At that point,

Mr. De Valera rose and walked to the center of the ring ... accepted the head dress of a Chippewa chieftain with gravity as the tom toms sounded louder and louder ... [and] began talking in Gaelic. "I speak to you in Gaelic," he said, reverting to English, "because I want to show you that though I am white I am not of the English race. We, like you, are a people who have suffered and I feel for you with a sympathy that comes only from one who can understand as we Irishmen can. You say you are not free. Neither are we free and I sympathize with you because we are making a similar

fight. As a boy I read and understood of your slavery and longed to become one of you.” Mr. De Valera then told the [listeners] how Ireland had been oppressed by England for 750 years. “I call upon you, the truest of all Americans,” he said, “to help us win our struggle for freedom.” The Indians listened to his impassioned address with owl-like gravity, but when Ira Isham, the tribe interpreter, translated Mr. De Valera’s words into Chippewa they cheered him wildly.⁹²

Journalistic license, some dreadful stereotypes on the author’s part and the Irishman’s account of his childhood “longing,” aside, it is possible to see that the encounter concurrently arises out of, relies on, and produces a complex transatlantic narrative of recognition and acceptance.



Figure 1. Éamon de Valera wearing a headdress presented to him by the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe, one of six bands of the Lake Superior Band of Chippewa Indians who entered into treaties with the United States in 1837, 1842, and 1854.

Establishing not only the facts of an earlier, jurisdictional autonomy—both in Ireland and the Americas—the leader of the Dáil (who was, incidentally, born in New York and raised in Limerick) deconstructs racial codes that had, by the nineteenth and twentieth century, come to inform conventional narratives of conquest and colonization. Here, “whiteness” no longer corresponds with, emblemizes, or indeed bestows

any form of political power or agency. Instead, it is a very different form of common currency—the costs endured by an oppressed people—that are called to mind, remembered, and exchanged. It is hardly surprising that this should be the case, since, as Edward T. O'Donnell has speculated, the original gift had possibly been sent in recognition of political and cultural analogies. The tribe's "sympathy [most likely] stemmed from their recognition of the similarities between the experiences of the Irish and Choctaw," O'Donnell argues.⁹³ For that reason, it is no great struggle to see—or understand—why both populations might have sought to underline the story of the gift for political reasons, and as a means of challenging colonial rule. So, if "Irish sufferers were deliberately selected as recipients of aid" by the Choctaw, as Shrout explains, then it is surely the case that Irish patriots and nationalists retold the story of the gift in a deliberate and purposeful manner. Crucially, they also spread stories of Choctaw removal and resistance.⁹⁴ There is far more than that sense of political activism to the story, however. As the authors of this book are keen to demonstrate, the two communities in question recognized in one another a shared sense of humanity and revealed a great eagerness to lend a helping hand. They saw in one another's relationship to the land, sense of story, memory of the ancestors, and connectedness to a world beyond their nations, forms of appreciation, spirituality and generosity that resonated deeply with them.

The sense of having shared in the experience of having a specific type of encounter, albeit not actual events themselves, endures in both Ireland and the Choctaw Nation today. There is in Ireland, in terms of cultural memory, contemporary discourse and global political relations, a propensity to recall two donations above all others: those made by Queen Victoria and the Choctaw. Of course, it certainly is not all that difficult to see how or why these two particular gifts might appear to crystallize vital strands of the historical narratives that rehearse various accounts of Ireland's relationship with its nearest neighbor; as well as bringing to mind the suffering experienced during the famine itself, a comparative assessment of Queen's donation and that made by the tribe brings a number of previously disparate political and cultural agents into contact with one another. Here, the oppressor's rather benign benevolence stands radically opposed to the altogether more affecting munificence of a recently discouraged and migratory minority group; old enemies and new friends. This standpoint is, in O'Donnell's opinion, also reflected in the views of "contemporary Choctaw" who "note that both groups were victims of conquest that led to loss of property, forced migration and exile, mass starvation, and cultural suppression (most notably language)."⁹⁵ The memory of that form of "cultural suppression" that lives on within both communities, and, I would add, results in there being far more to the story than questions of politics alone; although the donation may have initially served as a means to acquire "moral and political capital" by engaging in a form of "politicized philanthropy," it has come to symbolize something much bigger than a mere tool in the political armory of the Choctaw.⁹⁶ By realizing the connection between experiences including the loss of land, life and language in our two cultures, the \$710 doesn't

just offer us a means to consider, comprehend and bear witness to the horrors of our collective past; it also underlines the similarities that existed *prior* to colonization, *and* the enduring nature of both communities as well as the cross-cultural connection(s) between them. So, beneath that essential story of subjugation and sympathy—which has been co-opted by various groups in a number of ways—there are possibly far more complicated and compelling stories to be told about both the historical circumstances surrounding the Choctaw donation itself, and the complete range of energies that are framed not only by the gift itself, but also by perceptions of its meaning and import.

Notes

- ¹ Skullyville is in current-day Oklahoma, which was admitted as the forty-sixth state of the Union in 1907. Oklahoma is an amalgamation of Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory. Skullyville was an altogether apt place to gather and collect money on many levels; Muriel H. Wright notes that “The word *iskvlli* means a ‘small piece of money or coin,’ in [the] Choctaw” language, and that “[t]he name ‘Skullyville’ was given the village that grew up around” the Indian agency founded in 1832. This was mainly because the name was “a corruption and a combination of the word *iskvlli* and the English suffix *ville*, literally meaning ‘money town’” (“Organization of Counties in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 8, no. 3 [September 1930]: 318, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/chronicles/v008/v008p315.html>). Wright also notes that the Choctaw “themselves probably spoke of the agency as ‘*iskvlli ai ilhpita*,’ meaning ‘the place where money is donated or presented’” (319). It is entirely fitting that the donation was gathered at this complex site as a result; Skullyville was associated not only with Choctaw trading but also with the receipt of monies from the United States government after the tribe had been forcibly removed from Mississippi and into Indian Territory. Moreover, the town’s genesis and development reflects the continuation of reciprocal obligations on one hand, but also the tribe’s dislocation and experiences at the hands of the United States government on the other. That members of the tribe should gather there to think of Ireland’s starving poor, and decide to send a donation to people thousands of miles away, is illustrative of both their awareness of their history as powerful negotiators, traders and politicians and the extent to which national and international events had shaped their lives through their contact with the market economy, missionaries and various government agents. The Choctaw sensed that they were both a proud people who had often helped others in the past, but that their recent history meant that they also shared a common bond with the poor, the landless, the disposed and the dying in Ireland.
- ² The comparison is between 1850 and 2016, and the source is the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis’s “Consumer Price Index (estimate) 1850-” (<https://minneapolisfed.org/community/teaching-aids/cpi-calculator-information/consumer-price-index-1800>).

- ³ Anelise Hanson Shroul, "A 'Voice of Benevolence from the Western Wilderness': The Politics of Native Philanthropy in the Trans-Mississippi West," *Journal of the Early Republic* 35, no. 4 (2015): 563; Mike Ward, "Irish Repay Choctaw Famine Gift: March Traces Trail of Tears in Trek for Somalian Relief," <https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/michael/www/Choctaw/retrace.html>
- ⁴ Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Organization of Counties in the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 8, no. 3 (September 1930): 318, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/chronicles/v008/v008p315.html>
- ⁵ Angela Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* (Norman: University of Oklahoma University Press, 1934), 59.
- ⁶ Christine Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland: The Kindness of Strangers* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 104.
- ⁷ Christine Kinealy, "International Relief Efforts During the Famine," <http://irishamerica.com/2009/08/international-relief-efforts-during-the-famine/>
- ⁸ "Choctaw leader speaks of unique Famine bond," *Irish Examiner*, May 14, 2009.
- ⁹ Shroul, "A 'Voice of Benevolence,'" 558.
- ¹⁰ Shroul, "A 'Voice of Benevolence,'" 554. I will concern myself with the Choctaw gift in this essay, primarily because this is the donation that is most often mentioned in Ireland (as the essay will demonstrate). There is certainly much work to be done on the circumstances surrounding the Cherokee gift, however, and I am sure that that research will be carried out in the very near future.
- ¹¹ Timothy W. Guinnane, 303; Cormac O'Grada, 110; David Dickson, "Famine and Economic Change in Eighteenth-Century Ireland," 432.
- ¹² J. G. Hawkes and J. Francisco-Ortega, "The Early History of the Potato in Europe," *Euphytica* 70, no. 1 (1993): 1.
- ¹³ John Reader, *Potato: A History of the Propitious Esculent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 115.
- ¹⁴ Kevin Whelan, "The Long Shadow of the Great Hunger," *Irish Times*, September 1, 2012.
- ¹⁵ R. A. Houston, *Peasant Petitions: Social Relations and Economic Life on Landed Estates, 1600–1850* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.
- ¹⁶ Didier Andrivon, "The Origin of *Phytophthora Infestans* Populations Present in Europe in the 1840s: A Critical Review of Historical and Scientific Evidence," *Plant*

Pathology, 45, no. 6 (1996): 1027–1035, <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-3059.1996.d01-196.x>

- ¹⁷ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2009), 91.
- ¹⁸ Mary Daly, who taught me as an undergraduate at University College Dublin in the 1990s was one such historian. For a synopsis of the general opinion of Daly and others, see Patrick Brantlinger’s essay “The Famine,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 32, no. 1 (2004): 193–207.
- ¹⁹ Thomas Malthus was simply of the opinion “that land in Ireland is infinitely more peopled than in England.” It was Malthus’s conviction, as a result, that “to give full effect to the natural resources of the country, a great part of the population should be swept from the soil.” See Patrick Brantlinger’s *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). Readers wishing to explore the various arguments surrounding the ideologically bound perspectives that shaped, and even governed, responses to the famine in Ireland would do well to start with Christophe Gillissen’s useful survey of the field, “Charles Trevelyan, John Mitchel and the historiography of the Great Famine,” *Revue française de civilisation Britannique* 19, no. 2 (2014): 195–212.
- ²⁰ Whelan, “The Long Shadow.”
- ²¹ Anthony Trollope, the English novelist, drew on Forster’s accounts of his time in Ireland when writing his final novel, *The Landleaguers* (London: Trollope Society, Reprint edition 1905), xi.
- ²² Christine Kinealy, “The British Relief Association and the Great Famine in Ireland,” *Revue française de civilisation Britannique* 19, no. 2 (2014): 49.
- ²³ *Illustrated London News*, February 13, 1847.
- ²⁴ Patrick Brantlinger, “The Famine,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 32, no. 1 (2004): 198, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150304000440>. Prior to the formation of a new Whig government in 1846—and Trevelyan’s subsequent appointment—the Conservative British Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, had made several practical and successful attempts to alleviate the hunger of the Irish people. It is crucial, therefore, to differentiate between the approaches taken to the Irish crisis. Most notable amongst Peel’s initiatives was the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and his decision to buy Indian corn in the US and ship it to Ireland that same year. Together, these moves temporarily staved off widespread famine. The repeal of the Corn Laws, which had kept bread prices artificially high, led to Peel’s political demise; he succeeded in pushing through the controversial repeal with minority support from his own party and the help of

Opposition (i.e. Whig) members of Parliament and free traders, but never fully recovered his power thereafter.

- ²⁵ Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism* (London: Penguin/Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000), 247. The Duke of Cambridge's comments are recorded in Chrysostom P. Donahoe, *Popular life of Daniel O'Connell: including the funeral oration of Padre Ventura at Rome, Father Burke's sermon at Glasnevin, and Wendell Phillip's centennial oration* (Boston: T.B. Noonan, 1875) and Mary Francis Cusack, *Life of Daniel O'Connell, the Liberator: His Times—Political, Social, and Religious* (New York: D. & J. Sadlier, 1875). Adolphus Frederic, the Duke of Cambridge (24 February 1774–8 July 1850), was the tenth child and seventh son of George III and Queen Charlotte. The website for the Parliament notes, with some understatement, that the “new government led by Lord John Russell did not handle the famine effectively” (<http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/legislativescrutiny/parliamentandireland/overview/the-great-famine/>).
- ²⁶ It should also be noted that several international visitors and social reformers shared at least some of the concerns voiced by Trevelyan. The abolitionist and black leader Frederick Douglass wrote to William Lloyd Garrison in August 1845, and informed his collaborator that “an Irish hut is pre-eminent” in terms of “human misery, ignorance, degradation, filth and wretchedness” (*The Liberator*, 27 March 1846, reprinted in Philip Foner, ed., *Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, vol. 1 [New York: International Publishers, 1950], 138). Rather than suggest that the conditions that he witnessed were in any way linked to what Peter Gray describes as the complete absence of a “national statutory provision for poor relief,” or questioning where, exactly, the ‘problem of poverty’ had come from, Douglass argued that “The immediate, and... [possibly] the main cause of the extreme poverty and beggary in Ireland, is intemperance” (Gray, “The Irish Poor Law and the Great Famine,” paper presented at IEHC [2006] in Helsinki; *The Liberator*, 27 March 1846). Although Douglass’s reasoning steered clear of the “‘orthodox’ view of Irish poverty”—that there was “an imbalance between population numbers and the country’s productive capacity”—it was, nevertheless, politically and ideologically driven; this rather subjective perception of the root causes of Irish suffering was, on the face of it, consistent with the views of members of the temperance movement and the religious reformers who were a key part of the abolitionist movement that Douglass cared so deeply about.
- ²⁷ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Alexis de Tocqueville’s Journey in Ireland, July–August, 1835*, ed. Emmet J. Larkin (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 14.
- ²⁸ The irony of referring to de Tocqueville’s writing in order to substantiate the suffering of the Irish—and to suggest that the French traveler was sympathetic to the plight of a colonized people—is not lost on me. Jack W. P. Veugelers has pointed out that de Tocqueville “never abandoned his opinion that France must consolidate its hold over

Algeria for reasons of strategy and international reputation,” and ultimately “accepted and even praised their manner of waging war against the Algerian people” even though he “deplored the pre-eminence of military men over the political affairs of the young colony.” Jack W. P. Veugelers, “Tocqueville on the Conquest and Colonization of Algeria,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 10, no. 4 (2010): 339–55.

²⁹ Clara Sue Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818–1918* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1995), 23.

³⁰ Russell Thornton, “Cherokee Population Losses during the Trail of Tears: A New Perspective and a New Estimate.” *Ethnohistory*, 31, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 289, <https://doi.org/10.2307/482714>

³¹ Thornton, “Cherokee Population Losses during the Trail of Tears,” 289.

³² Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi*, 141.

³³ Treaty with the Choctaw, Sept. 27, 1830. 7 Stat., 333. Proclamation, Feb. 24, 1831. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/cho0310.htm#fna>. The circumstances behind the signing of the earlier treaties are complex and multifaceted, in-so-far-as various forces are at play, both within the tribe and externally. Furthermore, the machinations of both state and government policies are further complicated by often strained relationships between the various Choctaw chiefs, including Pushmataha, Puckshanubbee, Mushulatubbee, Nitakechi, David Folsom, John Garland and Greenwood Leflore. At various points in time each of these men held their own view on the possibility—and probability—of the tribe’s moving to the west of the Mississippi. Kidwell argues that the “Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek epitomizes the changing nature of tribal identity and individual political power in the Choctaw Nation. The [US] government had gotten its first major cession (Doak’s Stand) by exploiting the division in the tribe between the hunters who constituted a virtually separate nation west of the Mississippi and those who remained in Mississippi and were becoming settled farmers. By 1830, the tribe was arbitrarily stripped of its political autonomy in Mississippi, and the division the government could exploit was ... based ... on the disputes over leadership and who would profit most from the inevitable removal” (141).

³⁴ Nitakechi is reported to have made this remark to a reporter writing for the *Arkansas Gazette*. Sandra Faiman-Silva mentions this quotation in her book *Choctaws at the Crossroads: The Political Economy of Class and Culture in the Oklahoma Timber Region* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). Faiman-Silva cites Betty Jeanne Ward Poulin’s entry in the *Poor’s Manual of Industrials* (1910-15) as one of her sources. James L. Nolan Jr. repeats the phrase in his recent work *What They Saw in America: Alexis de Tocqueville, Max Weber, G. K. Chesterton, and Sayyid Qutb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Thornton, meanwhile, attributes the phrase to the Cherokee,

explaining that “the removal of the Cherokee during the late 1830s was so arduous that they subsequently named it *Nunna daul Tsuny* (Trail Where We Cried); it has become known in English as the “Trail of Tears” (“Cherokee Population Losses during the Trail of Tears: A New Perspective and a New Estimate.” *Ethnohistory*, 31:4 [Autumn, 1984], 289).

³⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve Esq., 3rd ed. (New York: George Adlard, 1839), 338.

³⁶ de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 338.

³⁷ de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 338.

³⁸ Virginia R. Allen, 1970, “Medical Practices and Health in the Choctaw Nation, 1831-1885,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* (48): 124–43; quoted in Russell Thornton, “Cherokee Population Losses during the Trail of Tears: A New Perspective and a New Estimate,” *Ethnohistory*, 31, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 293, <https://doi.org/10.2307/482714>

³⁹ “Journal of Occurrences,” Journal of S.T. Cross—Choctaw Removal, 1832, <http://ualrexhibits.org/trailoftears/eyewitness-accounts/journal-of-st-cross-choctaw-removal-1832/>. Sadly, little needs to be said about the troubling euphemism “occurrences” here.

⁴⁰ One might also suggest that the need for soup kitchens—the provision of which was both brief and necessary—was itself the result of the paternalistic, authoritarian and hierarchically-arranged structure of colonial power. That structure might also be said to have stifled agricultural development in Ireland and made the population reliant on Britain, thereby necessitating the provision of charity.

⁴¹ *Protestant Magazine* XI, Oct. 1849. Quoted in Denis G. Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 154.

⁴² Andrew Urban, *Brokering Servitude: Migration and the Politics of Domestic Labor during the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 42.

⁴³ Patrick Brantlinger, “A Short History of [Imperial] Benevolence,” in *Burden or Benefit? Imperial Benevolence and Its Legacies*, ed. Helen Gilbert and Chris Tiffin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 14.

⁴⁴ It is important to note that the Irish people were not wholly reliant or entirely dependent upon nor simply waiting expectantly for help from the British government. It should also be acknowledged that Irish MPs took their seats in Parliament, and therefore played some role in deciding government policy. Nevertheless, it is still the case that the inaction of the House of Commons in Westminster stymied any proper response to both the events that led to the Great Famine and the death and loss that followed. For further consideration of the colonial power’s responsibilities and the

response of the colonized to same, see Pat Noxolo, Parvati Raghuram and Claire Madge's essay "Unsettling responsibility: postcolonial interventions. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers" (37 [2012], 418–429).

- ⁴⁵ Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy, "Colonialism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, (Summer 2022 edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/colonialism/>
- ⁴⁶ Kohn and Reddy.
- ⁴⁷ Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (1975; London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 167.
- ⁴⁸ Kidwell, *Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi*, 24.
- ⁴⁹ Trevelyan, *The Irish Crisis* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1848), 201; Andrew Jackson's Message to Congress "On Indian Removal" (1830), in "A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774–1875," Register of Debates, 21st Congress, 2nd Session. X, <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llrd&fileName=010/llrd010.db&recNum=439>
- ⁵⁰ Jackson, ix; *Times*, 12 April 1799; quoted in Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798–1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004). <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/13382>
- ⁵¹ Shrout, "A 'Voice of Benevolence,'" 554.
- ⁵² Bill Rolston, *The Media and Northern Ireland Covering the Troubles* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 156.
- ⁵³ James Munroe, "Speech of the American President," *News Letter*, April 10, 1821.
- ⁵⁴ Munroe, "Speech of the American President," (emphasis added).
- ⁵⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, The British Newspaper Archive, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/freemans-journal>
- ⁵⁶ "Extract of a Letter from Kingston, Jan. 19."
- ⁵⁷ "American News," October 20. The fact that it was "not known... what nation the Indians who [had] committed these depredations belong[ed]" to—or if there were indeed Natives at all—did little to dissuade the journalist from placing the news alongside the story about the Cherokee.
- ⁵⁸ "America—Lord Selkirk—The Indians"; "American Intelligence."
- ⁵⁹ According to Nigel Johnston, Project Archivist with The Crowley project at the National Archives of Ireland, "The Kildare Place Society was founded in 1811 with an

ethos of providing non-denominational education to the poor of Ireland. It provided for shared teaching to pupils of all religious beliefs of regular literary subjects, while promoting daily reading of the Bible unaccompanied by verbal elucidation.” As such, the Society appears to have been more interested in altruism than it was paternalism. However, even though “the society [had] received broad support from the Catholic hierarchy,” from the time of its origin, that backing “was slowly eroded as suspicions were aroused about its use of funds to support Protestant missionary agencies, and of failure to honor the agreement respecting reading of scripture in classrooms without remark.” Johnston points out that in “1819, Daniel O’Connell raised objections about the religious impartiality of the society, and subsequently withdrew his support” (“Historical Commentary for 1818,” The Registered Papers of the Office of Chief Secretary of Ireland, <http://www.csorp.nationalarchives.ie/context/1818.html>).

- ⁶⁰ Vincent Morley, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760–1783* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 97.
- ⁶¹ “Congress, Wednesday, December 15.”
- ⁶² “Sessions Notice, for 1803.”
- ⁶³ “Congress, Wednesday, December 15.”
- ⁶⁴ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 195.
- ⁶⁵ Vincent Morley describes *FLJ* as being part of “the patriot press” (*Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760–1783* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 98). It is worth noting, as Juliet Shields does in her work *Nation and Migration: The Making of British Atlantic Literature, 1765-1835* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), that the War of Independence had the effect of bringing “together Anglo-Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics in nonsectarian volunteer corps” (156). These were “armed bodies of citizens that operated independently of government control.” In essence, “the American Revolution encouraged the Irish to reflect on Britain’s colonial rule of Ireland,” and even though “the Irish Parliament voted in support of Britain’s war against the colonies, many among the Protestant Ascendancy, Ireland’s ruling class, feared that the British Parliament might extend the economic restrictions it had place on the American colonies to Ireland” (156).
- ⁶⁶ Shrou, “A ‘Voice of Benevolence,’” 567.
- ⁶⁷ “Dreadful Mortality Amongst the North-West American Indians.” The A’aninin and the Sáhniš are referred to as Gros Ventures and Ricara, respectively, in the newspaper. I am using the names currently used by these communities today.

- ⁶⁸ Major Pilcher, “Small Pox among the Indians,” letter dated St. Louis, February 27, 1838, in *Report on the Indians of Upper Canada* (British and Foreign Aborigines’ Protection Society, 1839), 48.
- ⁶⁹ Again, I am attempting to read between the lines here. Cronin’s research is based on the newspaper’s approach to reporting marches in support of Daniel O’Connell, and hinges on her assessment that the editors were unimpressed with the *Liberator’s* rhetoric and the motives of his supporters (“‘Of One Mind’?: O’Connellite Crowds in the 1830s and 1840s,” *Crowds in Ireland, c.1720–1920*, ed. P. Jupp and E. Magennis, [Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000], 149). The Kerry Library website also describes the *Post* as a paper that was “written primarily for the Protestant Ascendancy.” See “Kerry 1916 from the Archives.” www.kerrylibrary.ie/uploads/2/5/1/5/25158039/introduction.pdf). I would argue that it is likely that the comparison between sections of the Irish population and the Choctaw would not have been lost on many readers even if the newspaper did have a particular ideological bent.
- ⁷⁰ It seems most likely that the “N. Roche” quoted by the *Post* was Edmond Burke Roche—the MP who was elected to the House of Commons in 1837 for Cork—rather than William Roche, who was the first Catholic MP and who represented Limerick around the same time. Around the time that N. Roche spoke in parliament, George Nicholls, the English Poor Law Commissioner, was sent to Ireland by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Lord John Russell. Nicholl’s task was to “arrive at a practical conclusion with respect of any measures to be introduced into parliament in 1837 for the benefit of the poor in Ireland.”
- ⁷¹ Virginia Crossman, “The Poor Law in Ireland, 1838–1948,” *History in Focus* (Winter 2008), <https://archives.history.ac.uk/history-in-focus/welfare/articles/crossmanv.html>
- ⁷² Quoted in Crossman, “The Poor Law in Ireland.”
- ⁷³ “MINUTES,” HC Deb 11 April 1838 vol 42. c545, UK Parliament, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1838/apr/11/minutes>
- ⁷⁴ O’Brien was in favor of the Bill, and disliked Daniel O’Connell’s style of leadership and protest, but he was, nevertheless, a resolute critic of the British imperialism, and once drew up a list of “grievances affecting the English Empire.” He was also an advocate for equality in Ireland, and wrote openly about his empathy for Roman Catholics: “From my boyhood I have entertained a passionate affection for Ireland. A child of its most ancient race, I have never read the history of their past wrongs, I have never witnessed the miseries and indignities which its people still suffer without a deep sentiment of indignation. Though myself a Protestant I have felt as acutely as any Roman Catholic—more acutely than many—the injustice to which the Roman Catholics of this country have been habitually subjected” (“SMITH O’BRIEN, William [1803-1864],” in “The History of Parliament,” *Institute of Historical Research*,

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/smith-obrien-william-1803-1864>).

- ⁷⁵ Henry Clay, May 1 entry, in *The Sands of Time: A Book of Birthday Gems*, comp. Thomas W. Handford (Chicago: Donohue, Henneberry & Co., 1890), 94.
- ⁷⁶ Christine Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland: The Kindness of Strangers*
- ⁷⁷ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland*, 44.
- ⁷⁸ Christine Kinealy, “Irish Famine Sparked International Fundraising,” *Irish Central*, May 10, 2010.
- ⁷⁹ Kinealy, “Irish Famine Sparked International Fundraising.”
- ⁸⁰ Kinealy, “Irish Famine Sparked International Fundraising.”
- ⁸¹ Kinealy, *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland*, 41.
- ⁸² Shrout, “A ‘Voice of Benevolence,’” 565.
- ⁸³ Shrout, “A ‘Voice of Benevolence,’” 564.
- ⁸⁴ *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 June 1847; *Dublin Weekly Nation*, 19 June 1847; *Dublin Evening Post*, Tuesday 15 June 1847; *Mayo Constitution*, 22 June 1847; *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, Saturday 12 June 1847; *Drogheda Argus and Leinster Journal*, Saturday 10 July, 1847.
- ⁸⁵ Myndert Van Schaick, *The Freeman’s Journal*, letter dated 3 July, 1847.
- ⁸⁶ Colonel Samuel Cobb, “Indian Eloquence,” reprinted in *The Wexford Independent*, 21 October, 1846. The extract was taken from the memoir of Thomas Loraine McKenney, who is cited as T. L. M’Kenny in the newspaper. McKenney was as given to making pronouncements about the possibility of civilizing the indigenous population as many of his peers were, but he also held the opinion that “the Indian was, in his intellectual and moral structure, [the] equal” of the American (“Portraits of Native-American Leader,” Stuart Ferguson, *Wall Street Journal*, March 5, 2006, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB114237561224698179>). A full version of Cobb’s speech can be found in: *Memoirs, Official and Personal: With Sketches of Travels Among the Northern and Southern Indians: Embracing a War Excursion, and Descriptions of Scenes Along the Western Borders*, vol. 1, Second Edition (New York: Paine and Burgess, 1846), https://archive.org/details/memoirsofficialpoomcke_o
- ⁸⁷ David B. Edward, “Choctaw Tradition,” in *The History of Texas*, reprinted in *Galway Vindicator, and Connaught Advertiser*, 7 August, 1847.
- ⁸⁸ Edward, “Choctaw Tradition,” 7 August, 1847. “Beyond the Divide: Chickasaw-Choctaw Warfare,” Richard Green, <https://www.chickasaw.net/Our>

Nation/History/Historical-Articles/Culture/Beyond-the-Divide-Chickasaw-Choctaw-Warfare.aspx

- ⁸⁹ That de Valera was profoundly interested in the human aspect of the Irish famine is undoubted. Haunted by the stories of tragedy, loss and hunger that he heard as a boy, he would later, when Taoiseach, commission the first in-depth study of the tragedy in the 1940s. According to O’Grada, he was dissatisfied with the final edition of the book, *Studies in the History of the Great Irish Famine*, primarily because it was essentially an “administrative history of the period,” and said little about the human toll (“Making History in Ireland in the 1940s and 1950s: *The Saga of The Great Famine*,” *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism 1938-1994*, Ciaran Brady, ed., [Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994]. Quoted in Colm Tóibín, “Erasures: Colm Tóibín on the Great Irish Famine,” *London Review of Books* 20, no. 15, 30 July 1998, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v20/n15/colm-tóibín/erasures>
- ⁹⁰ *History Hub: Connecting Past and Present*, www.historyhub.ie, School of History and Archives, University College.
- ⁹¹ See the chapter “Woodrow Wilson: The Denial of Exile,” in *Ireland’s Exiled Children America and the Easter Rising* by Robert Schmuhl (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 75–118.
- ⁹² *The Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*, 25 October 1919. <http://historyhub.ie/eamon-de-valera-chief>. *The Chicago Sunday Tribune*, and several other newspapers, carried the story on October 19, 1919.
- ⁹³ Edward T. O’Donnell, “Hibernian Chronicle 154 Years Ago: The Choctaw Send Aid,” *The Irish Echo*, February 16, 2011, <https://www.irishecho.com/2011/02/hibernian-chronicle-154-years-ago-the-choctaw-send-aid-2/>
- ⁹⁴ Shrout, “A ‘Voice of Benevolence,’” 564.
- ⁹⁵ O’Donnell, “Hibernian Chronicle 154 Years Ago.”
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