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VFVSTETV (TO SERVE): AN INTRINSIC ANALYSIS OF MUSCOGEE
PLAYWRIGHT ELAINE ANDERSON'S PLAYSSCRIPTS

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VFVSTETV (TO SERVE): AN INTRINSIC ANALYSIS OF MUSCOGEE
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A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Members of the Muscogee Nation have encountered and endured several challenging events (the Civil War, allotment, Oklahoma statehood, etc.) since the removal of their ancestors to Indian Territory. A number of writers have emerged since the dawn of the 20th century (Alex Posey, Charles Gibson, etc.) and they have shared with readers the dynamic realities of Muscogee culture. Contemporary Muscogee authors have drawn from this foundation and, as a result, they have expanded a culturally specific literary tradition.

Recent contributions to this tradition are to be found in the form of playscripts written by Muscogee writer Elaine Anderson (1934-1993). Over the course of twelve years (c. 1974-1986), Anderson submitted playscripts to the Five

Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest. This dissertation offers an analysis of three of her works: *Death of the Holly Leaf* (1978), *Checote: Great Leader* (1982), and *Who is There to Mourn?* (1986). I have chosen to apply an intrinsic approach in examining the ways in which Anderson employs dramatic conventions in order to produce culturally specific plays. Each of the three plays features theatrical elements (character, setting, and plot) that reveal the dynamic nature of Muscogee culture. And although the plays feature different topics and settings, they each convey a similar unifying principle: *vfvstetv* (the Muscogee infinitive verb meaning “to serve”). In each of Anderson’s plays, the protagonist serves the community despite personal and communal sacrifice. Each protagonist is tasked with making important decisions. Anderson shows audiences how the decisions the protagonists make produce long-term consequences.

A study of Anderson’s work is important because her work constitutes the earliest examples of modern Muscogee drama. As well, these works apparently represent the extant writings authored by Anderson. Within this dissertation, I discuss in broader terms the status of American Indian theatre; summarize the status of American Indian theatre; describe Muscogee history, culture, and literary tradition; document the publication of Muscogee related works, while examining Anderson’s Muscogee-centered plays.

Introduction¹

Background

According to Kiowa/Delaware playwright, director, and scholar Hanay Geiogamah, “of all the twentieth-century Native art forms rooted in tribal traditions, Native American theater remains the most neglected and underdeveloped due to lack of funding, scholarship, curriculum development, and staffing” (Project HOOP).² Even so, American Indian theater is perhaps one of the most viable art forms for tribal communities and educational settings because of the high interest level for students, the high degree of grassroots community involvement, the versatility for unique tribal expression and cultural generation, and the potential for economic development (Project HOOP). In *Seventh Generation: An Anthology of Native American Plays*, Mimi Gisolfi D’Aponte discusses Native American theatrical tradition. She writes, “the performative origins of Native American Theatre lie in traditional ritual, public ceremony, and storytelling” (D’Aponte xi).

Traditional forms of drama and performance can be found in various American Indian communities – for example, the Beautyway, the Coyoteway and the Blessing ceremonies of the Navajo; the Sun Dance of the Plains people (Cheyenne, Lakota, Nakota, Dakota, Crow, etc.); the Hopi Kachina dances; the masked performances of the Northwest Coast (D’Aponte xi). Another traditional form of drama and performance is the Green Corn Ceremony of the Southeastern Tribes (Muscogee, Cherokee, Choctaw, Yuchi, Seminole, etc.).³ While the Muscogee Nation does not own or manage a tribal performing arts center or theatre company,

members of the Muscogee tribal community do possess a ceremonial and storytelling tradition that could be incorporated into contemporary works of tribally-focused drama.

The Muscogee Nation

According to Jean Chaudhuri and Joyotpaul Chuadhuri in *A Sacred Path: The Way of the Muscogee Creeks* (2001), Muscogee people were “core participants and inheritors of the broad Mississippian culture and core creators of the southeastern cultural umbrella before Columbus” (1). Contemporary Muscogees and Seminoles are descendants of Mississippian peoples who resided in the areas now known as Alabama and Georgia. In this region, Muscogee people established a large confederacy, comprised of autonomous towns (*talwv*) that included those of Muscogee (an amalgamation of Eufaula, Hitchiti, Coweta, and Cusseta tribal groups), Natchez, and Yuchi people, and later gave birth to the formation of the Seminole Nation. Since its time of origin, Muscogee social organization membership has been based on matrilineal clans, including bird (*fuswv*), deer (*eco*), and bear (*nokose*), among numerous others.⁴

The towns, on the local and national level, were divided into two divisions, red (*cate*), and white (*hvtke*). On the local level, the red division was made up of young men, and it was in this division that men received military experience. The white division was made up of older men, military veterans, who possessed experience and presided over the local council. On the national level, towns within the confederacy followed this pattern, with white towns being designated “peace”

towns, and red towns being designated “war” towns. Local and national council meetings were held on a regular basis to discuss and act on issues that were relevant to the citizens within the confederacy.

With respect to gender relations, the Chaudhuris discuss the roles Muscogee women perform in Muscogee communities, noting, “the balance of male and female principles permeates all Creek thinking” (48). Relationships between Muscogee women and men were complementary, rather than adversarial. Women held administrative positions related to the agricultural economy, clan mothers served on “boards of directors” over domestic affairs, possessed equal roles in stomp dance ceremonies, and women were also equal participants in social relationships (48-50).

In *A Dictionary of Creek/Muskogee: With Notes on the Florida and Oklahoma Seminole Dialects of Creek*, Jack B. Martin and Margaret McKane Mauldin observe that early interaction and conflict occurred between the Muscogee and Spanish in the mid-1500s (xiv). The name “Creek” was first applied to the members of the confederacy by English immigrants who labeled the tribal towns they encountered along Ocheese Creek (Martin and Mauldin xiii). Later, the “Creeks” were further defined by their geographic location. Upper Creeks included Muscogee people living in towns on the Tallapoosa and Coosa rivers, while Lower Creeks signified tribal towns that were located on the Chattahoochee and Flint rivers (all in modern-day Alabama and Georgia). The Muscogee (Creek) confederacy continued to exercise full political and cultural self-determination up until the Red Stick War (1813-14).⁵

Conflicts over culture and land supplied the United States with incentives to force the removal of a majority of the Muscogees and other Southeastern Indian nations to lands west of the Mississippi River.⁶ Consequently, the relocation of Muscogee people to Indian Territory was achieved by a series of removal treaties enacted between 1825 and 1832.

In the mid-19th century, the Muscogee Nation, then relocated to the mid-eastern area of Indian Territory, attempted to re-establish its right to exist as a sovereign nation, but the Civil War led to factions within the tribe. Two prominent leaders during this time were G.W. Grayson (1843-1920) and Opothleyahola (ca. 1780-1863).⁷ Grayson led a Confederate regiment during the Civil War. He would one day become chief of the Muscogee Nation and would go on to be the author of the first published Muscogee autobiography. Opothleyahola resisted efforts to fight in the Civil War, leading his Muscogee supporters, as well as freedmen and neutralists from other Indian nations, to refuge in parts of the region/country that would keep them out of the war. However, Civil War tension and subsequent reprisals generated another series of treaty violations and tribal removals.

During Reconstruction, more American citizens encroached on tribal lands in Indian Territory. A major setback occurred in the late 1880s when the Dawes Commission began efforts to break up the Muscogee tribal land into individual allotments.⁸ The Curtis Act (1898) forced allotment onto Muscogee and Seminole people and severely limited tribal authority (Martin and Mauldin, xv). The Muscogee, Seminole, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee nations faced even more

disorder after Oklahoma became a state in 1907. Tribal governments were formally dissolved, placing native peoples under the criminal and civil jurisdiction of the State of Oklahoma. Throughout the 20th Century, the Muscogee and Seminole nations have slowly worked towards recovering the right to self-determination in all aspects of tribal existence, including governance, integration and intermarriage, land protection and recovery, cultural restoration, economic development, education, land, religion, language, and self-image.

In terms of population, the Muscogee (Muscogee/Creek) Nation is today the fourth largest tribe in the United States, with an enrollment of 71,110 citizens (Muscogee Nation).⁹ The tribal land base extends through eleven counties in mid-eastern Oklahoma and the tribal headquarters is located in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, on land held in trust by the federal government. The constitutional tribal government of the Muscogee Nation is divided into three branches. One branch is the executive branch, featuring a Principal Chief and a Second Chief, elected through tribal elections, serving four-year terms. The second branch, the legislative branch, consists of the National Council, made up of 24 council members, also elected by tribal members, to two-year terms. The judicial branch contains the Supreme Court, with a Chief Justice and District Court Judges, who are appointed by the Principal Chief and confirmed by the National Council.

The tribe generates revenue through various retail, gasoline, tobacco, gaming enterprises, as well as federal trust payments. Through the tribal tax commission, the Muscogee Nation regulates and applies a tribal tax for goods and services purchased

on tribal land, and the tribe also administers a tag agency, where tribal members can register their commercial, farm, and recreational vehicles through the tribe. And contrary to reservation-based Native peoples, like the Navajo and Oglala Sioux, a majority of the enrolled members live on personal property and individual tribal allotments located in (or near) small rural towns, such as Muskogee, Okemah, Eufaula, and Weleetka.

The Muscogee Nation has continued to exist and progress without the advantage of a single, extensive land base. Since Oklahoma statehood, members of the Muscogee community have used trust land, individual allotments, and private property to hold and participate in tribal ceremonies and religious services. Through funds generated by the tribal economy, the Muscogee Nation is seeking opportunities to purchase land in the regional area in order to reestablish a more extensive land base that will better serve contemporary and future tribal members politically, economically, and culturally. This is only one of the various means (such as legislation, religious plurality, and language preservation) employed by the nation which can be seen as an exercise of self-determination aimed at achieving tribal restoration.

The Muscogee Literary Confederacy¹⁰

Contemporary Muscogee culture is maintained through and because of a rich and intricate tradition of oral and literary storytelling. This tradition features accounts that speak to Muscogee origin, migration, chaos, history, balance and reciprocity, beings, cultural innovation, racism, humor, politics, removal, survival,

and restoration. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Muscogee writers laid the groundwork for their contemporary Muscogee counterparts.¹¹ Among the first Muscogee writers to exercise their talents were Alice Callahan, Joseph Bruner, Charles Gibson, G.W. Grayson, William McCombs, Jesse J. McDermott, Pleasant Porter, Alex Posey, and George Stiggins (Littlefield and Parins xii-xxiv; Posey 42-44). The contributions of these Muscogee authors inspired and influenced future Muscogee writers. Those who published during the early and mid-20th century include Acee Blue Eagle/A.C. McIntosh, Fus Harjo, Thomas E. Moore/William Harjo, and Tulmochess Yahola (Littlefield and Parins xxiii; Posey 42-44).

More recently, one can identify over two dozen contemporary Muscogee authors.¹² These writers include Elaine Anderson, Annette Arkeketa, Stephanie Berryhill, Helen Chalakee Burgess, Jean Chaudhuri, Eddie Chuculate, Carter Blue Clark, Carolyn Dunn, Donald Fixico, Ronald Fixico, Jennifer Foerster, Joy Harjo, Suzan Shown Harjo, William Harjo Lonefight, Tom Holm, Betty Mae Jumper, Moses Jumper, Jr., David Lewis, Jr., Julie Pearson Little Thunder, Chip Livingston, K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Margaret McKane Mauldin, Janet McAdams, Rosemary McCombs Maxey, Durango Mendoza, Vincent L. Mendoza, Melinda Micco, Louis Littlecoon Oliver, Cynthia Leitich Smith, James Treat, Homer Wiggins, Marcellus Williams/Bear Heart, and Craig S. Womack.

The literary contributions of Muscogee writers in terms of genre are just as diverse as the eras, personalities, and occupations of the writers themselves. With respect to poetry, there are the works of Arkeketa, Burgess, Dunn, Foerster, Joy

Harjo, Suzan Harjo, Moses Jumper, Jr., McAdams, Oliver, and Posey. In fiction, there are the works of Callahan, Gibson, Bruner, Durango Mendoza, Chuculate, Livingston, Smith, and Womack. Authors liberally designated as religious writers, historians, social critics, editors, and journalists/columnists include Berryhill, Bruner, Burgess, Clark, Fixico, Gibson, Grayson, Fus Harjo, Suzan Shown Harjo, Betty Mae Jumper, Lewis, Jr., Lonefight, Lomawaima, Mauldin, Maxey, McAdams, McCombs, McIntosh, McDermott, Micco, Moore, Porter, Posey, Stiggins, Treat, Wiggins, Williams, Womack, and Yahola. In addition, Muscogee playwrights include Anderson, Arkeketa, Ronald Fixico, and Pearson Little Thunder.

Purpose and Significance

This dissertation constitutes an analysis of three playscripts written by Muscogee playwright Elaine Anderson: *Death of the Holly Leaf* (1978), *Checote: Great Leader-Micco Thlocco* (1982), and *Who is There to Mourn?* (1986).¹³ I intend to examine each play in order to illustrate how Anderson uses dramatic conventions to produce a culturally-specific play. Each play features theatrical elements (character, setting, and plot) that reveal the dynamic nature of Muscogee culture. Each play also deals with the notions of leadership and service: *vfvstetv* (the Muscogee infinitive verb meaning “to serve”).

The dissertation also includes a current bibliography of Muscogee related works.¹⁴ The bibliography is divided into two sections. The first section of the bibliography identifies creative and scholarly works that were written by or edited by Muscogee authors. These entries include unpublished playscripts, websites, essays,

poems, short stories, films, and book-length works. The second section of the bibliography identifies creative and scholarly works (written by or edited by non-Muscogee authors) that one could classify as being Muscogee-related productions. These entries include literary collections, essays, websites, and book-length works.

The dissertation contributes to multiple areas of study. It deals with the general dissertation topic, contemporary Muscogee drama, and it also addresses the scope of the thesis: to examine the interrelated components of Elaine Anderson's plays. By focusing on one playwright, this work seeks to introduce Anderson's work to those who are interested in American Indian theatre. More importantly, this work should also call attention to the contributions of lesser-known American Indian writers. The analysis of Anderson's plays should also illustrate the revitalization of contemporary American Indian theatre and demonstrate the effectiveness of Richard Hornby's critical model.

Furthermore, Elaine Anderson, unlike notable playwrights such as Hanay Geiogamah, Diane Glancy, or Tomson Highway, has not received the attention or recognition that she merits. Given this set of circumstances, the dissertation is relevant in three additional ways. First, I hope this composition will draw attention to the life and contributions of Elaine Anderson. It is unlikely that her work will attain international interest; still, those who work in American Indian literary studies would benefit from examining her work. Second, I hope this dissertation will spark interest in other playwrights who submitted works to the Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest. In my visits to the archives, I unearthed close to fifty

submissions. Some of the writers who submitted playscripts are well-known (Linda Hogan, Diane Glancy, etc.), yet others (such as Ronald Fixico) remain unheralded.

Finally, even though the era described as the Native American Literary Renaissance (c. 1968-1984) generated an unprecedented production of American Indian writings (published or unpublished), several authors affiliated with this epoch (and many of those who followed their lead) have yet to receive an extended study devoted to their contributions. Hopefully, this analysis will encourage other students of American Indian literature to research the works of those who may be considered marginal authors.

Methodology

My approach to analyzing Anderson's work is based on the critical model outlined in Richard Hornby's *Script into Performance* (1995). His terms of analysis are posited on five underlying principles. First, the approach reveals something hidden (Hornby 27). Second, the analysis is intrinsic (27). Third, the approach incorporates complexity and ambiguity (32). Fourth, the analysis suspends judgment (35). Fifth, the approach is "wholistic" (36). Additionally, the underlying principles are incorporated into six components: choice, progression, sequence, duration, rhythm, and tempo (80-91).

- Choice consists of the selections made by a playwright. One choice concerns the original source(s) of the play script (Hornby 80-81). Specifically, one should be able to identify and discuss both similarities and differences between the source(s) and the play script.

What ideas are included? What ideas are excluded? Another choice concerns the beginning and the ending of a play. When does the story begin? When does the story end? A third choice involves the significant details that shape the plot. A fourth choice concerns patterns—repetitive movements, images, sounds, phrases, and incidents. Another choice concerns incidents enacted and incidents described (82). A sixth choice consists of recurring themes or motifs. A seventh choice includes complexities and ambiguities. One should take choice into account because identifying key selections is vital when staging the play.

- Sequence involves “the order in which incidents are shown” (83). Specifically, does the playwright utilize linear-chronological order? Or, does the playwright present the incidents in non-linear chronological order? Or, conversely, does the playwright utilize topical (categorical) order? One should take sequence into account because the order in which incidents occur is essential when staging the play.
- Progression concerns the relationship between incidents (beginning with the first incident and concluding with the final incident). Specifically, progression illustrates “the way in which an incident foreshadows another incident, or conversely, the way in which a future incident reflects the earlier one” (84). Hornby adds, “Incidents

do not exist just for themselves but are always reflecting other incidents” (85). Hence, a playwright might use incidents to foreshadow or flashback. Doing so also helps the audience observe the progression of prominent characters. One should take progression into account because identifying relationships between incidents is critical when staging the play.

- Duration is “the length of an incident, in the sense of real chronological time and psychological weighting” (85). What is the length of an incident: long or brief? Also, is an incident important or unimportant? How does the playwright exhibit the psychological weight of important incidents? One should take duration into account because identifying major incidents and determining the amount of time they occupy is important when staging the play.
- Rhythm, in contrast to progression, consists of the transitions between two contiguous incidents (86). One type of transition is augmentation: the building of tension. Another type of transition is diminution: the diminishing of tension (87). A third type of transition is alternation: the successive changing from one state to another state. A fourth type of transition is tension/release: the releasing of tension in order to accentuate the previous or the forthcoming incident (87-88). One should take rhythm into account

because recognizing types of transitions is important when staging the play.

- Tempo concerns “the number of incidents occurring per unit of time” (88). Hornby adds, tempo is “actually a function of two variables—both clock time *and* the number of incidents that occur—rather than playing time alone” (89). Instead of considering the length of a playscript, one can determine tempo by constructing a ratio of incidents to lines per unit. Furthermore, the tempo of a play will vary (from unit to unit) based on the number of incidents that occur within each unit (89-90). One should take tempo into account because measuring the incidents and the lines of each unit is important when staging the play.

The rationale for using these components is based on the presence of a unifying principle. Hornby defines the unifying principle as a “functional relationship between a critical approach and a particular script” (120). The unifying principle “enables a person to grasp the significance of a playscript as a whole” (120). As such, one identifies a unifying principle that underscores how each component contributes to the meaning of the play. If one applies the use of a unifying principle in conjunction with the six components allows then one can both analyze and synthesize a playscript.

About the Playwright

According to her personal correspondence, Elaine Anderson (1934-1993) was born and raised in Oklahoma (Anderson: Personal Correspondence 1978).¹⁵ She was the great-granddaughter of Samuel Checote (former Principal Chief of the Muscogee Nation), a member of the Coweta tribal town, and a member of the Alligator clan. Her parents were Samuel P. Anderson and Martha Gibson Anderson. She was one of six children. As an adult, she lived in various parts of the United States. At one point she moved back to Oklahoma and worked in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation enrollment office until the time of her death.

Although none of her plays have been produced, her contributions to the Muscogee Literary Confederacy are significant. Her playscripts represent the first modern works of Muscogee drama. When she began writing plays in the early-1970s, Anderson possessed no formal theater training. Over the next twelve years, she developed her playwriting skills by submitting works to the Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest. Her works include *Hokte Este Cate (Red Woman)* (1974), *Death of the Holly Leaf* (1978), *Checote: Great Leader* (1982), *Song of Life* (1984), and *Who is There to Mourn?* (1986).

Prior to her death in 1993, she received one First Place award, two Honorable Mention commendations, and an Enrichment Bonus citation. Jorene Coker, one of the playwright's sisters, notified the Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest staff of the playwright's death. In her correspondence, Coker spoke of the ways in which her sister took pleasure in writing dramatic pieces (Personal Correspondence). For

Elaine Anderson, the contest allowed her with an opportunity to fulfill a personal, scholarly, and creative renaissance. She set aside doubts and expanded her horizons. She incorporated oral tradition and archival data into her works. She developed her talents and cultivated a unique dramatic voice. Currently, Anderson's personal correspondence and playscripts are housed at the Garrard Ardeneum (McAlester, Oklahoma) and the Five Civilized Tribes Museum (Muskogee, Oklahoma).

About the Venue

In the early-1970s, Thomas and Allece Garrard (of McAlester, Oklahoma) wanted to create opportunities for emerging American Indian playwrights (Tate). As such, they founded and sponsored The Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest: a biennial competition. As the title maintains, the contest was restricted to enrolled members of the "Five Civilized Tribes". Mrs. Garrard, a member of the Muscogee Nation, served as chairperson of the competition committee for several years. In the mid-1990s, the Five Civilized Tribes Museum staff (Muskogee, Oklahoma) has assumed management of the competition. Since the inception of the contest, over one hundred writers have submitted playscripts. Notable winners of the competition include Diane Glancy (Cherokee), Linda Hogan (Chickasaw), Bret Jones (Muscogee), Judy Lee Oliva (Chickasaw), and Wallace Hampton Tucker (Choctaw).

About the Plays

It is worth noting that, in regards to style, each of her plays can be considered an American Indian pageant. While the each of the plays only feature some of the elements found in early 20th Century pageants (local icons, songs, and interludes of

dialogue), they do bear other characteristics that exemplify pageantry (Hartnoll and Found). By referring to the depiction of American Indians in dramatic works during the American Indian Drama fad (1828-60), one could develop a pertinent definition of pageantry and apply said definition to Anderson's works. With this in mind, three attributes found in the former and the latter include: a tragic American Indian protagonist; multiple and extended monologues; and limited yet heightened descriptions of action. That being said, my designation of the plays as pageants should not be interpreted as a value judgment (good or bad). Instead, my intent is to briefly explain how Anderson's works resemble, stylistically, a particular category of plays.¹⁶

State of Affairs

There is apparently an absence of books, theses, or dissertations that exclusively focus on Muscogee theatre. Conversely, several scholars have made significant contributions to the study of American Indian theatre. Christy Lee Stanlake is a major voice in the field. She has produced several journal articles, has worked on multiple productions, and has published one book-length study. Her analysis of early and contemporary American Indian plays, *Native American Drama: A Critical Perspective*, was published in 2010. Her thesis, *Theatricalizing Power: A Performance Analysis of Selected Plays by Four Contemporary Native American Women Playwrights* (1997), serves as a model composition for this work.¹⁷ In this instance, her application of Hornby's paradigm and her insight into American Indian drama are invaluable.

Hanay Geiogamah, co-founder and co-director of Project HOOP and professor of Theatre and American Indian Studies at the University of California-Los Angeles, has edited two anthologies that pertain to the field of American Indian theatre.¹⁸ Jaye Darby, co-founder and co-director of Project HOOP and professor of Education at San Diego State University, has authored several articles on a variety of American Indian theatre topics and she has co-edited three anthologies that focus on the area of American Indian theatre. Ann Haugo, a professor of theatre at Illinois State University, has authored several articles on American Indian theatre topics. Diane Yeahquo Reyner, Kiowa playwright and educator, has compiled an Internet alpha list of American Indian plays.

With respect to institutions, Sinte Gleska University (Mission, South Dakota) and Haskell Indian Nations University (Lawrence, Kansas) offer degrees in American Indian Theater. Both institutions offer coursework in playwriting, production, acting and directing. While the program at Sinte Gleska University is relatively new (less than a decade old), Haskell Indian Nations University has been producing actors, playwrights, and directors for over three decades. In terms of private venues, Julie Little Thunder (Muscogee), Jana Rhodes (Kiowa/Caddo), and Merlin Little Thunder (Southern Cheyenne) co-founded Thunder Road Theater Company in 1993 (Thunder Road). Based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Thunder Road Theater Company is a “non-profit, community-based theatre company that produces contemporary Native plays written by Native playwrights”. Since its inception, the company has produced several plays each year. Another pertinent institution is the

Autry National Center (Los Angeles, California). The Center sponsors *Native Voices at the Autry*: a program “devoted to developing and producing new works for the stage by Native American playwrights” (Autry National Center). Created in 1999, the program concentrates on three aspects of American Indian theatre: Youth Education; Reservation Outreach; and Writer’s Retreat/Festival of New Plays. Program staff and participants have generated forty-five playscripts (as a result of the Youth Education program), have conducted over seventy workshops and staged readings, and have produced a dozen plays. While challenges that come with attracting sponsors, participants and patrons remain, the field of American Indian Theatre is sound.

As for Muscogee literature, at least two dozen Muscogee writers have published books within the last two decades. Craig S. Womack authored an authoritative work of literary criticism and an inventive novel at the turn of the century.¹⁹ Julie Little Thunder has directed and produced multiple plays, including *Indian Meadowlark* and *The Woman Who Was Captured by Ghosts*. Cynthia Leitich-Smith has published four children’s books and four young adult books. Emerging poet Jennifer Foerster has published work in over a dozen anthologies and journals. Journalist and fiction writer Eddie Chuculate has published poetry, fiction, and articles in over two dozen anthologies, journals, and periodicals. His first collection of short stories, *Cheyenne Madonna*, was published in 2010.

Furthermore, William Harjo Lonefight has created an online Muscogee community that promotes the free exchange of ideas, histories, and works among

Muscogee people living all across the world.²⁰ Also, Margaret McKane Mauldin and Jack B. Martin published both a comprehensive Muscogee dictionary and the stories of Ernest Gouge. Similarly, scholar Matthew Wynn Sivils published original works by Alex Posey. Recently, Joy Harjo created a personal blog and she crafted a one-performer play that premiered in 2009. On a related note, filmmaker Sterlin Harjo has written and directed three films: *Goodnight Irene* (2004), *Four Sheets to the Wind* (2006), and *Barking Water* (2008). Additionally, each of the films premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. In summary, the state of the Muscogee Literary Confederacy is strong.

Notes

¹ I employ endnotes throughout the dissertation for three reasons. First, my advisor and I agreed that the use of endnotes will complement the intrinsic nature of the dissertation. Second, I have included, in the Appendices, a current bibliography of Muscogee (and Muscogee-related) sources. The sources listed in the bibliography speak to the topics outlined in the dissertation. Third, I hope readers will access the sources listed in the bibliography—doing so will enhance their understanding of the Muscogee (Creek) people.

² Because individuals may (or may not) prefer one term instead of another, readers will notice the use of three prominent terms throughout the dissertation: American Indian, Native American, and Indian.

³ See Appendix A for entries that concern Muscogee religious beliefs, practices, and realities.

⁴ See Appendix A for entries that concern Muscogee social and political realities.

⁵ See Appendix A for entries that concern the Red Stick War.

⁶ See Appendix A for entries that concern Muscogee removal.

⁷ See Appendix A for entries that concern G.W. Grayson and Opothleyahola.

⁸ See Appendix A for entries that concern allotment.

⁹ See Appendix A for entries that concern the modern Muscogee Creek Nation.

¹⁰ In *Red on Red* (1999), Womack uses the phrase “Muscogee National Literature” to describe the Muscogee literary tradition.

¹¹ See Appendix A for entries that concern early Muscogee writings.

¹² This list of contributors is not a complete inventory of Muscogee writers. The list only includes those who identify themselves as Muscogee. I apologize to any Muscogee writers who were overlooked. See Appendix A for entries authored by those included in the list of contributors.

¹³ Credit goes to the staff at the Ardeneum and the Five Civilized Tribes Museum for providing access to their archives. Without their assistance, I would not have been able to pursue this project.

¹⁴ The bibliography is not a complete inventory of Muscogee-authored works and Muscogee-related works. I apologize to any writers whose works were overlooked. Furthermore, an emerging and efficient inventory of Muscogee-authored works and Muscogee-related works can be found at the Muscogee (Creek) Book Club Facebook page.

¹⁵ I made several attempts to obtain background information about Ms. Elaine Anderson. I consulted the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation News, the Oklahoma History Center, the Social Security Administration, The Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest, and other pertinent sources. Yet, apparently the only written or typed information about/by Ms. Anderson that exists is located at the Ardeneum in McAlester, Oklahoma.

¹⁶ Credit goes to Dr. Geary Hobson for raising this point when he and I were discussing Anderson’s work.

¹⁷ To my knowledge, Dr. Stanlake is the first person to apply Hornby's methodology to American Indian dramatic works.

¹⁸ Credit goes to Professor Hanay Geiogamah for encouraging me to research Oklahoma American Indian playwrights.

¹⁹ Credit goes to Craig Womack. I read his first book, *Red on Red* (1999), while I sat in a Bay Area bookstore. His tribally-focused work of scholarship reinforced my interest in Muscogee literature.

²⁰ Lonefight's Yahoo! group (c. 2001) predated the Facebook and MySpace social networking phenomenon. As such, it was the first online community devoted to collaboration among Muscogee people.

Chapter One

Analysis of *Death of the Holly Leaf*

Context

This playscript was submitted to the Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest in 1978. The script constitutes the second draft of *Death of the Holly Leaf*. In her correspondence, Anderson notes “I have again attempted to write about my idol, Opothle Yahola. This time I did much research” (Personal Correspondence).¹ She indicates that she conducted research activities at the Creek Council House Museum in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. In turn, she incorporates two of Opothleyahola’s speeches into the play because “they speak clearly of his beliefs” (Personal Correspondence).

With regard to her topic, Anderson writes that Opothleyahola “was beloved by his people, who were loyal to him to his death” (Personal Correspondence). Additionally, Anderson reveals the paradox of her work: Opothleyahola’s decisions, made with the intent of helping others during difficult circumstances, caused suffering. Also, while extolling the contributions of Opothleyahola in the play and in the correspondence, Anderson condemns the McIntosh faction in both documents. In her letter, Anderson acknowledges “my own people were of the McIntosh faction. I do not feel disloyal to write disparaging [sic] of them” (Personal Correspondence).

As to her intentions, toward the end of the letter she expresses a desire to promote cultural awareness and pride among Muscogee people. She believes that young people “do not know anything about our traditions.” With this in mind, she

writes, “I hope someday the Muscogee Indians will regain the pride that was made possible by Opothle Yahola” (Personal Correspondence).

Death of the Holly Leaf

Characters

Opothle Yahola – Upper Creek leader (at various ages): The protagonist.

Menawa – Upper Creek leader (elderly): Opothle’s mentor and opponent of removal

Commissioner – Caucasian male: A liaison between the federal government and the Muscogee Nation.

McIntosh – William McIntosh: a Lower Creek leader and proponent of removal

Eneah Micco – Lower Creek leader and opponent of removal; Opothle’s friend

Jim McHenry – One of Eneah’s followers; opponent of removal

Emarthla – Lower Creek leader (elderly)

Man – Unnamed Creek: one of Opothle’s followers

Girl – Unnamed Creek girl

Young Man – One of Opothle’s followers

Major – Caucasian male: a member of the Confederate army

Cherokee Leader – A leader of a Cherokee contingent of the Confederate army

Army Captain – Caucasian male: a member of the Union army

Doctor – Caucasian male: a Union army field surgeon

General – Caucasian male: a member of the Union army

Death of the Holly Leaf

Unifying Principle

Death of the Holly Leaf conveys the life of Opothleyahola (ca. 1780-1863), a prominent Muscogee leader.² The plot spans from May 1824 to 1863. During this time, Opothleyahola and the Muscogee Nation encounter three tumultuous issues: Treaty Factions; Muscogee removal; and the Civil War.³ His resolution for each issue generates severe and irreversible repercussions. Because *Death of the Holly Leaf* deals with actual people and events, it is beneficial to possess an understanding of Muscogee history and culture. Nonetheless, Anderson offers background information about the milieu and characters in the Prologue and prior to each Act so that audiences will be able to follow the story. Through a depiction of Opothleyahola's life, Anderson produces a candid work of drama that speaks to issues of leadership, sacrifice, and endurance. As a result, the unifying principle of *Death of the Holly Leaf* is to serve: to serve one's community despite personal and communal sacrifice.

Death of the Holly Leaf

Sequence

Anderson utilizes linear-chronological order to show how Opothleyahola served the Muscogee community. She reveals aspects of his life as they relate to three particular eras: pre-removal, removal, and the Civil War. The Prologue begins with a brief overview of Muscogee history and culture. According to Anderson, the original name of the Muscogee people “has been said, in loose translation, to be Este (people) Mus ess to kee, People of the Holly Leaf” (ii). She then segues to a concise discussion of removal. After that, Anderson introduces the protagonist, “OPOTHLE YAHOLA or ABOITHLEYAHOLA” (ii). She notes, “He is not generally as well known as Menawa or a later chief, Chitto Harjo⁴, however, the love Opothle felt for his people and their love for him is unequalled to this day” (ii). She adds that he “never used an English name” and that he was “a staunch traditionalist” (ii). She concludes the Prologue by noting that Opothleyahola took pride in being a Muscogee and that he “never ceased being a full-blood Indian” (ii).

Act I begins in 1824 (1). Two Muscogee men discuss their opposition to a plan that would remove them from their homelands. Anderson writes, “Two men sit under a brush arbor. One is Menawa, leader of the Upper Town⁵ Muscogee. He is ill from wounds received in the Red Stick War.⁶ With him sits Opothle Yahola, a tall well built man of 26” (1). At the conclusion of this scene, the plot shifts to a meeting in Indian Springs, Georgia in 1825. Led by McIntosh, some of the Muscogee leaders sign a removal treaty. Conversely, Opothleyahola voices his

dissent. The scene ends with Opothleyahola warning those who signed the treaty of the repercussions (7).

Act II begins in 1832. Anderson explains that “after much trial and tribulations...Opothle has been forced to sign a removal treaty” (8). Here, he is confronted by a fellow Muscogee leader, Eneah. The two men debate Opothleyahola’s decision to sign the treaty. At the beginning of the next scene, the plot shifts to removal (c. 1836) and the Muscogee people are being “rounded up in a stockade. They stand in mute silence waiting to for the order to move out” (11). As Opothleyahola attempts to reassure his followers, he is challenged again by Eneah. After a heated exchange of words, the men resolve their differences and apologize to one another. The following scene begins “a few months later” (18). Anderson writes, “The people are now in dire straits...it is not cold, but the swamps are damp and have caused a malaria type disease” (18). During this scene, Opothleyahola witnesses the death of a young woman (20). He feels helpless until he hears, in the distance, a group of Muscogee people singing (21). In turn, he feels revitalized and vows to survive the journey.

At the beginning of Act III, “The Muscogee have been in Indian Territory for many years now. It is now 1861 and another threat is upon them” (22). Opothleyahola and his people are “told they must join sides in the Civil War” (22). In the first scene, Opothleyahola pledges neutrality during a meeting with an audience of tribal members. He then reads a letter written by Chief John Ross (Cherokee)⁷ that indicates Ross’ intent to ally the Cherokee with the South. As a

result, Opothleyahola declares that he will lead those who wish to follow him to Kansas. Doing so will place the group under the protection of the Union army (25). Yet, his actions are not neutral. By seeking and obtaining protection, he is aligning his band with the Union.

At the beginning of the next scene, the plot shifts to a few weeks later. According to Anderson, “Opothle and his people have been making a circuitous route and had outpursued [sic] the Confederates” (27). A truce meeting is convened between Opothleyahola and a Cherokee-Confederate contingent. During the meeting, a Confederate major demands Opothleyahola’s surrender. However, Opothleyahola speaks directly to the Cherokee soldiers and professes his respect for the Cherokee. He also expresses his intent to remain neutral (27-28). Much to the Major’s chagrin, the Cherokee soldiers allow Opothleyahola’s group to resume their journey to Kansas without incident.

The following scene depicts the Battle of Caving Banks (December 1861).⁸ In this instance, Opothleyahola plans and implements a successful ambush against the Confederates (31-32). In the process, he instructs a young man on how one should act during the course of battle (31-32). He also refutes the young man’s nostalgic perception of war (32). At the conclusion of the scene, Opothleyahola and the young man exit with the intent of leading women and children to safety (33).

The next scene reveals the aftermath of a subsequent battle. The setting is a refugee camp in Kansas. In this scene, a wounded Opothleyahola explains his ordeal to a Union officer and a Union physician. A majority of the people in his group have

been killed (35). Those who are wounded are suffering from exposure and malnutrition (35-37). As he fields questions from the Union officers, Opothleyahola identifies philosophical similarities and differences that exist between Indian and non-Indian cultures (36-37).

Act IV begins in 1862. Opothleyahola is ill. Still, he appeals to a Union general for permission to lead his group back to Indian Territory (38). Unfortunately, the officer informs him that he does not possess the authority to release Opothleyahola. As he speaks with the general, Opothleyahola details the ways in which their cultures differ (38-37). In doing so, he illustrates the government's flawed relationships with American Indian communities. The act concludes with Opothleyahola declaring "I am still able to carry my burden alone," before exiting the stage.

The epilogue occurs during the following year (1863). An older Muscogee man stands by a grave. As Anderson explains, "he is the one who fought beside Opothle. He is a little older now and walks with a cane as he limps from wounds" (40). He states "Opothle Yahola lies here" (40). He offers a prolonged speech/prayer that extols the contributions of Opothleyahola and seeks guidance (40-41). After that, he declares his intent to educate young people about the history and culture of the Muscogee people. Doing so would "carry on Mekko's wish" (41). The play concludes as the man recalls a speech Opothleyahola delivered to an audience of young American Indians in 1854.

With regard to sequence, the play is based on historical facts. Anderson creates a linear narrative that is episodic. She highlights the significant events in Opothleyahola's leadership of his people. Anderson's sequencing of events is related to choice because she selects the events that are dramatized.

Choice

Anderson's choices are significant. First, she expands prevailing accounts of Opothleyahola's life by depicting him prior to Indian Removal. Additionally, she devotes both scenes of Act I to depicting arguments (both for and against) about Indian Removal. Anderson also incorporates two of Opothleyahola's actual speeches into the play. In Act I/Scene 2 Opothleyahola discusses his opposition to Removal. Another choice concerns the beginning and the end of the play. At the beginning of the play, the author states that the protagonist is 26 years old (1825). At the conclusion of the play, he has passed away (1863). A man visits Opothleyahola's grave and recites one of his speeches. All told, audiences see the span of his life and learn how his decisions affected his people.

Some of the significant details that shapes the plot include the use of no win situations; irreversible actions; and continuity. In Act I, two examples of no win situations exist: Opothleyahola must agree to speak on behalf of Menawa or his faction will be ignored and he must abstain from signing the Removal Treaty or he will betray Menawa's wishes (2-3; 6-7). Irreversible actions occur in Act II and Act III: Opothleyahola's revised position on removal and his declaration of neutrality (which actually aligns his band with the Union). These decisions produce two

permanent and tragic results. With respect to the former, his tribe is relocated to Indian Territory (8). As to the latter, they are compelled to leave their adopted homeland (24). In both instances, they never return. Further, notions of continuity occur in each portion of the play. In Act I, Opothleyahola abides by Menawa's wishes and helps maintain Muscogee political order (2-4; 6-7). In Act II, he is revitalized when he hears the singing of Muscogee hymns (21). In Act III, he mentors a young man and, in the process, passes along to him aspects of Muscogee culture and values (31-33). Opothleyahola is a man whose values are tested on several occasions.⁹

As for incidents enacted and incidents described, one of the choices Anderson makes concerns the ways in which she deals with violence and death. In particular, she elects to describe acts (or the consequences) of violence instead of enacting them. In Act I, Opothleyahola discusses the lashes that Menawa received (3).¹⁰ In Act II, Eneah notes the punishment that McIntosh received in response to his signing of the removal treaty (8). Also, McHenry describes the fatalities that have occurred during removal (14). In Act III, both a successful defense and a horrific defeat are described (31-33; 35-36). In the Epilogue, Opothleyahola's death is revealed (40). Of course, one exception to this pattern consists of the death of a young Muscogee girl in Act II (20).¹¹ Moreover, her death is due to malaria (rather than the result of wounds suffered during a battle). As such, her death is shown in order to underscore the cruelty of removal and the vulnerability of everyone who was forced to endure it.

With regard to complexities and ambiguities, Anderson does not highlight, or point out, two examples of irony. First, she does not overtly communicate the fact that Opothleyahola's power is limited. Second, she does not explicitly speak to the fact that Opothleyahola's decisions (such as his subsequent support of removal and his confrontation with the Confederate army) lead to suffering.

With respect to choice, Anderson elects to focus on three prominent events that occur during Opothleyahola's life (treaty meeting; removal, and the Civil War). She incorporates several key details (no win situations; irreversible actions; and continuity) in order to advance the plot. She incorporates Opothleyahola's actual words and John Ross's correspondence. She describes most of the references to violence and death. Taken as a whole, Anderson shows that suffering was inescapable, regardless of Opothleyahola's decisions and actions. Likewise, Anderson depicts Opothleyahola as a leader who, despite earning and maintaining the respect of his people, was powerless in the face of the dominant culture's oppression of American Indians.

Progression

The relationship between several incidents is relevant. One example involves Opothleyahola's opposition to removal in Act I and his support of removal in Act II. These incidents reflect two positions that he believes will serve the best interest of the tribe. These positions also generate a role-reversal. At first, Opothleyahola is revered for resisting removal. Subsequently, he is scorned because he eventually consented to removal.

Another example concerns his acceptance of removal in Act II and his acceptance of confinement in Act IV. These incidents display an acknowledgment of the fact that his power is limited. As with the first example, this position also generates a role-reversal. Initially, Opothleyahola is mocked for consenting to removal. Later, he is admired because he helped save many lives.

Duration

The duration, in this case real chronological time and psychological weighting, of several incidents are important. Anderson highlights how Opothleyahola justifies each decision and she stresses how each decision results in suffering, despite Opothleyahola's best intentions and limited power. One notable incident is the verbal confrontation between McIntosh and Opothleyahola (6-7). Anderson depicts Opothleyahola as a principled leader. Another prominent incident is the ensuing debate between Opothleyahola and Eneah (13-16). Anderson conveys Opothleyahola as a patient leader. A third noteworthy incident is the death of the young girl (19-20). Anderson presents Opothleyahola as a compassionate leader. Another significant incident is the conversation between Opothleyahola and the Cherokee soldiers (27-30). Anderson characterizes Opothleyahola as a civil leader. A fifth relevant incident is the conversation between Opothle and the young Muscogee man (31-33). Anderson portrays Opothleyahola as a wise leader. Another important incident is the conversation between Opothleyahola and the Union officer (38-39). Anderson renders Opothleyahola as an intelligent and mature leader.

With respect to duration, numerous incidents shape the message of the play. Anderson uses each of the incidents discussed above to reinforce the role of Opothleyahola. She addresses a wide variety of circumstances and fleshes out distinct, yet interrelated, personality traits. Accordingly, Anderson's use of duration helps audiences perceive Opothleyahola's leadership and service to the Muscogee community.

Rhythm

Most of the transitions indicate augmentation: the building of tension. One example of augmentation occurs in Act I/Scene 1. The first scene describes the political conditions within the Muscogee confederacy. Menawa reminds Opothleyahola, "You know of the trouble that is coming" (Anderson 1). A federal commissioner and a rival faction have initiated a meeting during which tribal leaders are expected to sign a removal treaty. The ensuing conversation between Menawa and Opothleyahola reveals their position as well as the stance of a rival faction. The rival faction, led by William McIntosh, intends to sign the removal treaty. In turn, the Muscogee people will be relocated to Indian Territory. As such, Menawa directs Opothleyahola to "Let them know how we stand against this removal treaty" (3). Opothleyahola replies, "I will do all in my power" (3). In addition, the scene also offers references capital punishment. In one instance Opothleyahola says, "I promise you, it will be a bad day for them if they are the cause of our removal" (2). In another instance, Menawa states "Our law is death for traitors" (3). As a result, the

scene builds tension in anticipation of the meeting between the two factions in the next scene.

Another example of augmentation occurs during Act I/Scene 2. In this scene members of the rival factions argue their position. Yet, Opothleyahola refuses to sign the treaty (5-6) as opposed all of the other tribal members in attendance who sign. At the end of the scene, Opothleyahola, “turns to McIntosh, points his finger to his face” and then states, “BEWARE” (7). Hence, the scene builds tension in anticipation of the consequences of removal and retaliation which will be seen in Act II.

A third example of augmentation occurs during Act III/Scene 1. In this scene Opothleyahola learns that John Ross¹², Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, has elected to side with the South. Opothleyahola, on the other hand, declares that he will remain neutral. Still, he announces a plan to travel to Kansas so that the Union army can protect those who elect not to participate in the Civil War (25). Although he has declared neutrality, his actions align his band with the Union (and against the Confederates). Thus, the scene builds tension in anticipation of the coming conflict which the audience knows does not end well for Opothleyahola.

An example of diminution, the diminishment of tension, occurs in Act II/Scene 2. Opothleyahola is addressing his followers when, after a few moments, a group of prisoners, those who resisted removal, approach (12-13). His friend, Eneah, is one of the prisoners. The two men, along with Jim McHenry get into a heated conversation about removal. Both Eneah and McHenry refer to Opothleyahola as a

coward and a traitor. Opothleyahola tries to reason with them; his attempt is unsuccessful. Subsequently, a third prisoner, Emarthla, ends the argument. He says, “Forget your anger, forgive, don’t let this break you apart” (16). In turn, the men extend apologies to one another and then they depart. As a consequence, the scene diminishes tension in order to demonstrate Opothleyahola’s resilience.

Another example of diminution takes place during Act IV/Scene 1. Opothleyahola requests permission to lead his people back to Indian Territory (38). His request is denied. He then offers an assessment of his circumstances by saying, “We are always being removed...we are always having to fight to stay alive” (39). At the end of the scene, Opothleyahola accepts his fate. Therefore, the scene diminishes tension in order to demonstrate Opothleyahola’s resolve. In total, Anderson’s use of rhythm permits audiences to feel the ebb and flow of Opothleyahola’s power and how he succeeds and fails at serving his people.

Tempo

Death of the Holly Leaf is a four-act play. The play also includes a Prologue and an Epilogue. As for tempo, most of the units (scenes) are moderate. The units are neither extremely slow nor tremendously fast. In fact, most units only consist of two or three incidents. Act I/Scene 1 consists of 106 lines but only two incidents: 1) Menawa and Opothleyahola entering into an agreement; and 2) Opothleyahola seeking spiritual guidance (1-4). Act II/Scene 3 features ninety-two lines but only three incidents: 1) Opothleyahola counseling a parent; 2) Opothleyahola attending to

a dying young girl; and 3) Opothleyahola gaining confidence once he hears others signing Muscogee songs (18-21).

However, one exception is Act III/Scene 3 (31-33). This unit features the highest ratio of incidents per unit. The unit contains fifty-eight lines, beginning with Opothleyahola saying to his men, “I have a plan,” and ending with him instructing another man to help him, “take our women and children to safety” (31; 33). And unlike other units, eight incidents occur. First, Opothleyahola organizes his men. Next, they carry out an ambush. After that, he disciplines and then instructs a young Muscogee man. Subsequently, he again corrects and educates the young Muscogee man. Finally, the men retreat in order to evacuate women and children (33). The ratio of incidents in this unit is about 7 lines per incident. Hence, the scene moves quickly.

In relation to tempo, the play proceeds at a modest pace. Weighted with monologue and dialogue, each unit only presents two or three incidents. Anderson slows down the pace at times to emphasize Opothleyahola’s speeches about neutrality, values, etc. Conversely, she deviates from this trend in Act III/Scene 3. This scene features the highest level of intensity.

Conclusion

Death of the Holly Leaf is Elaine Anderson’s first known work of drama. In this instance, Anderson demonstrates (through sequence, choice, progression, duration, rhythm, and tempo) how Opothleyahola tried to serve his people’s best interest against overwhelming odds.

Notes

¹ Two of the three plays discussed in this dissertation each include a cover page. In both instances, the cover pages are cited as personal correspondence in the text.

² Anderson's timeline of the protagonist's life is incorrect. She states that the protagonist is 26 years old in 1825. Yet, according to current scholarship, the protagonist was close to 45 years old in 1825. See Appendix A for entries that concern Opothleyahola.

³ See Appendix A for entries that concern these topics.

⁴ See Appendix A for entries that concern Chitto Harjo.

⁵ See Appendix A for entries that concern Muscogee townships.

⁶ See Appendix A for entries that concern the Red Stick War.

⁷ See Appendix A for entries that concern realities in Indian Territory during the Civil War.

⁸ See Appendix A for entries that concern the Battle of Caving Banks.

⁹ Credit goes to Professor Kae Koger for reinforcing this point during our discussion of Anderson's plays.

¹⁰ See Appendix A for entries that concern Muscogee laws and punishments.

¹¹ See Appendix A for entries that concern Indian Removal. Another incident enacted in the play is the Battle of Caving Banks (December 9, 1861). See Appendix A for entries that concern Indian involvement in the Civil War.

¹² See Appendix A for entries that concern Indian involvement in the Civil War.

Chapter Two

Analysis of *Checote: Great Leader (Micco Thlocco)*

Context

This playscript was submitted to the Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest in 1982. The script constitutes the original draft of *Checote: Great Leader (Micco Thlocco)*. The protagonist is the playwright's maternal great-grandfather.¹ The playwright begins her correspondence to the Contest by noting, "My name is Elaine Anderson, a fullblood [sic] Creek Indian" (Personal Correspondence).² Next, she offers a summary of her family history. She identifies her maternal great-grandparents, Samuel Checote and Priscilla Powell Checote, her maternal grandparents, Joseph Gibson and Hettie Checote Gibson, and her parents, Samuel P. Anderson and Martha Gibson Anderson. She adds, "All were fullblood Creek Indians. We have been fullbloods for four generations" (Personal Correspondence).³

With regard to her topic, *Checote* is a product of Anderson's primary occupation. An employee of the Muscogee tribal enrollment office, Anderson researched the ancestry of each prospective tribal enrollee. As she would review the tribal rolls in order to verify an applicant's eligibility, "the names of history jumped out at me...Isparhecher and Chitto Harjo are the ancestors of people living today" (Personal Correspondence). This also explains why she listed the roll number of each ancestor when she discussed her family tree at the beginning of the letter.

As for the subject of the play, she admits that prior to conducting research for the play "I had never known alot [sic] about Samuel Checote" (Personal

Correspondence). She adds, “I do know the story about him talking to the wolves as that had been passed down to me” (Personal Correspondence). However, she writes “I wish I had taken time to study him long ago” (Personal Correspondence).

According to family sources, she states that Samuel Checote was “known to be courageous as a lion, gentle as a lamb” (Personal Correspondence). It is from this perspective that Anderson depicts her ancestor, a prominent minister and tribal leader.

Unlike *Death of the Holly Leaf* and *Who is There to Mourn?*, in this instance Anderson’s intentions are personal. As one who researched the ancestry of other people, this work is based on research she conducted in order to learn more about her family history. At the conclusion of her correspondence, she expresses pride in the fact that she is “one of the few descendants of Samuel Checote, the Great Leader” (Personal Correspondence).

Checote: Great Leader

Characters

Samuel Checote – Muscogee leader: The protagonist

Council Members – Three Muscogee men

Men – Young man, Middle-aged man, and Old man

Delegates – Representatives of multiple American Indian communities

Oktaharsas Sands: Full-blood Muscogee leader; opponent of Constitutional governance

Agent – Caucasian male; liaison between the factions

Isparhecher – Muscogee leader; opponent of Constitutional governance

Pleasant Porter – Muscogee leader and ally of Checote

Checote: Great Leader

Unifying Principle

Checote: Great Leader presents the life of Samuel Checote (1819-84), a prominent Muscogee minister and leader. The plot spans from 1864 to 1883. During this time, Checote and the Muscogee Nation confront three major concerns: Constitutional Governance; Factionalism; and the Green Peach War.⁴ In each instance, Checote's solution generates constructive results. Like *Death of the Holly Leaf*, this play depicts actual people and events; as such, it is advantageous to hold an awareness of Muscogee history and culture. Still, Anderson offers commentary about the era and characters so that audiences will be able to understand the story. By focusing on one aspect of Samuel Checote's life, the playwright produces a work of drama that speaks to issues of vision, tolerance, and strength. Yet, unlike *Death of the Holly Leaf*, this play does not enact what one would consider typical service. Rather, Checote, through speeches and conversations, uses diplomacy and persuasion to convince his allies and enemies to agree with his point of view. As a result, the unifying principle of *Checote: Great Leader* is to serve: to serve one's community by demonstrating leadership.

Checote: Great Leader

Sequence

Anderson utilizes linear-chronological order to show how Checote served the Muscogee community. Although Anderson focuses on one portion of his life, the sequence of the play sheds light on three segments within this era: Constitutional Governance; Factionalism; and the Green Peach War. This strategy showcases Checote's leadership during a difficult era (1860s-80s). The Prologue is set in 1864. A man (presumed to be Checote) "stands outside a small log house in the country" (1). He provides a summary of his life up to this point in time (2-3). Next, he then prays and asks to be able to return home (4).

Act I is set in 1868-69 (5). Anderson writes, "The Muscogee Creek Nation is in a confused state after the Civil War" (5). The tribe holds a council meeting in hopes of reforming their tribal government. Checote and Oktaharsa (Sands) Harjo⁵ agree to hold an election in order to select a Principal Chief. At the conclusion of the scene, the plot shifts to a debate between two Muscogee men. One of the men, a younger man, desires a progressive government. Another man, an older man, favors a traditional (conservative) government. The scene ends with the old man expressing doubts about the proposed system of government (9). The following scene takes place after the election. Samuel Checote has become Principal Chief of the Muscogee Nation. Anderson notes that the capital of the nation, named Okmulgee refers to "Omvlke, which means 'All, come together'" (10).⁶ In this scene, Checote outlines his agenda. He discusses national defense, religious freedom, annuity

disbursements, and laws (10-11). At the end of the scene, council members discuss other legislative items (13). The third scene spans 1870-73 (14). Anderson depicts an intertribal meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to unify “all the Indians in Indian Territory” (14). Unification of the tribes would create an Indian state; in turn, the participants believe doing so would stop the federal government from eliminating tribal governments (17).

Act II begins in 1870. Checote, Sands Harjo, and the Indian agent attend a council meeting in order to resolve disputes between two factions. Checote observes that, due to factionalism, “we are no closer and seem to grow further apart” (18). As such, he wants “to hear all sides and find a way that we might compromise our quarrel” (18). Sands states his grievances. Checote reiterates his invitation to include Sands in the administration of tribal affairs (19). He also explains the rationale for modifying the disbursement of annuities to tribal members. At the conclusion of the scene, the Indian agent informs Sands that additional payments will be “made to the tribal towns and their Chiefs” (20). Although he is not sure if this is the best solution, Sands is willing to compromise. The next scene is set in 1871 (21). Sands and his supporters try to circumvent the authorized election process. Once Sands conducts an impromptu election, he and his supporters attempt to overtake the council house and “begin our Government now” (21). After a contentious discussion, the Indian agent convinces Sands to yield (22). The third scene is set in 1875 (23). Anderson writes, “This time Checote has been defeated by Lochar Harjo” (23). She notes that Sands “has died and it was an orderly election” (23). Checote

recounts his time as chief, discusses obstacles and accomplishments, and he extends congratulations to the new administration (24).

Act III begins in 1879. Samuel Checote is elected to a third term of Principal Chief of the Muscogee Nation. Anderson notes that the chief “is much older now and a bit weary” (25). In this scene, Checote discusses the political climate and summarizes his forthcoming agenda. He discusses education, fiscal responsibility, and criminal jurisdiction (25-27). The next scene covers the Green Peach war. Anderson writes, “this was caused by the followers of Isparhecher who, as Oktaharsas before them, resented all the actions of the Creek Council and Checote and were agitating for their own government” (28). Unlike in earlier scenes, the antagonist does not appear on stage or deliver any lines. Instead, Checote and council members discuss their opponent as dispatches are brought in as events occur offstage (28-29). At the end of the scene, Checote initiates plans to “disarm the insurgents” (29). He believes this approach will bring “order to our Nation” (29). During the next scene, Checote reveals his intent to pardon most members of the rival faction (30). He then receives word that Isparhecher will not surrender (30). At the conclusion of the scene, Checote expresses regret and frustration over the incessant conflict. The subsequent scene shows Checote’s response to Isparhecher’s campaign (32). Checote enlists Pleasant Porter⁷ to locate Isparhecher and to take him into custody (32). Porter vows to “capture Isparhecher” (33). The final scene of the play depicts Checote and Isparhecher agreeing to end the conflict between the two factions (34). Isparhecher states that he will “obey the Constitution of the

Muscogee Creek Nation” (34). After that, Checote recounts his tenure as Principal Chief, speculates on his legacy, and thanks his constituents for their support. He remarks, “I am not rich in material objects, but I am wealthy in the love of my friends” (35). With regard to sequence, Anderson documents history chronologically and links Checote’s life with important events in Muscogee history.

Choice

Anderson’s choices are important. For instance, she offers a monologue in the Prologue that sheds light on Samuel Checote’s life and beliefs before he became Principal Chief of the Muscogee Nation. In addition, all three scenes of Act I concern tribal governance. The first two scenes deal with developing and implementing a tribal constitution whereas the final scene pertains to the adoption of “a Constitution for a united Government of all tribes in Indian Territory (14).⁸ The playwright also incorporates three of Checote’s speeches into the each act. In Act I/Scene 3, Checote expresses his support of a united Indian government (17). In Act II/Scene 3, he states his appreciation of the conduct of his fellow citizens during the tribal election process (24). In Act III/Scene 4, Checote reflects on his terms of service and offers thanks to his constituents (35).

Another choice concerns the beginning and the end of the play. At the beginning of the play, the “Muscogee Creek Nation is in a confused state after the Civil War” (5). Two factions, the Traditionalists and the Constitutionals, vie for control over Muscogee tribal governance.⁹ Furthermore, Samuel Checote has not yet been elected to serve as Principal Chief. At the conclusion of the play, conflict

“between both warring parties” has been resolved (34). Likewise, Samuel Checote has “served for three terms” (34). Anderson illustrates the scope of his leadership over time.

Some of the significant details that shape the plot include the use of dichotomies. Examples of dichotomies (competing beliefs or desires) exist in each portion of the play. In Act I, tribal members argue about tribal legal jurisdictions and interactions with non-Indians (7-9). One group prefers one set of laws for the entire tribe whereas the other group favors laws be determined by each tribal town. Similarly, one faction approves of dealings with non-Indians whereas the other faction wants to remain isolated. In Act II, tribal members quarrel about tribal election procedures. One group wishes to exercise their vote by “standing on their feet” (21). The other group prefers paper ballots. In Act III, tribal members clash over governance. One group “resented all the actions of the Creek Council and Checote and were agitating for their own government” (28). The other group, led by Checote and other Muscogee Creek government leaders, wanted to preserve the government and to resolve their differences amicably. Anderson’s inclusion of these circumstances underscores the volatile realities of the epoch.

With respect to recurring themes or motifs, volatility occurs in each Act. In Act I/Scene 1, council members disagree about the tribe’s future (7-9). In Act I/Scene 3, tribal leaders discuss an approach that would halt the impending “Territorial plans which were designed to eliminate all tribal governments” (14). In Act II/Scene 1, Checote, Sands, and an Indian agent debate the disbursement of tribal

funds (18-20). In Act II/Scene 2, Sands attempts to change the tribal election process (22). In Act III/Scene 2, Checote makes plans to put down a rebellion (28-29). In Act III/Scene 4, Checote prepares to combat another rebellion (32-33). This recurring motif shows the fragile and contentious nature of Muscogee reconstruction.

With respect to incidents enacted and incidents described, Anderson describes (or makes reference to) violence or death. In the Prologue, a man (presumed to be Checote) laments the people who died during removal (1). In Act I, three tribal members debate appropriate punishment measures (8). In Act II, a councilman remarks on the murder of “two arresting officers (28). In Act III, Anderson writes that the “insurrection has been quelled with few casualties” (30). Also, a councilman notes the “killing of a troublemaker on Pecan Creek” (31). The audience does not witness any direct conflict. Overall, Anderson’s decision to describe violence, rather than stage it, highlights Checote’s leadership during tumultuous times.

In contrast, Anderson enacts several examples of Checote’s leadership. In Act I, Checote supports a single, unified Muscogee government and he advocates for a single, unified Indian government (comprised of all tribes residing in Indian Territory). In Act II, his absence during the contested election proceedings displays his preference for order instead of anarchy (21-22). In Act II, he also accepts electoral defeat (23-24). In Act III, he delegates authority, stands on principle, shows mercy, and extends gratitude (25-35).

As for complexities and ambiguities, Anderson does not indicate why Checote's opponents, the Traditionalists, concede on several occasions. She does not inform audiences if Checote convinced them or if the federal government convinced them. Also, Anderson does not go into delve into the legitimate concerns raised by the Traditionalist faction (such as clan//town governance or matrilineal kinship/tribal membership, etc.). In addition, while she raises the issue of an Indian state in an early portion of the play she does not deal with the concept at any other point. Furthermore, Anderson depicts two complementary Muscogee religious beliefs. In the prologue, audiences observe Checote's awareness of these concepts. Yet, she does not incorporate these realities into other sections of the play.

With respect to choice, Anderson elects to focus on one period of Samuel Checote's life. She incorporates dichotomies and volatilities in order to advance the plot. She describes all references to violence and death. She enacts several incidents that display Checote's leadership. Overall, Anderson's choices allow audiences to perceive Samuel Checote's preference for diplomacy over armed conflict.

Progression

The relationship between several incidents is important. One example involves the formation of a constitutional tribal government in Act I and the preservation of said government in Act II and Act III. These incidents depict the actions of two tribal factions: those who oppose the newly constituted government (Traditionalists) and those who support said government (Constitutionalists). Throughout the play, Checote reiterates his belief that a constitutional government

will serve the best interest of the tribe. In turn, audiences see his diplomatic skills in response to several internal and external challenges.

A second example concerns his responses to adversity. In Act I, the Muscogee people are not a unified tribe. Rather, most tribal members are allied with one of two factions: Lower Creeks (led by Samuel Checote) or Upper Creeks (led by Sands Harjo). Instead of trying to assume leadership of the entire tribe without the consent of the Upper Creeks, Checote agrees to unite the entire nation by holding an election (5). In Act II, Checote loses an election (23). Rather than contest or reject the results, Checote concedes to his opponent. In Act III, he takes measured responses to wide-spread insurrection (26-27). In one instance, he proposes an “intertribal council” to avoid conflict with other tribes instead of pursuing military action (25-26). In another instance, he orders an armed response against a rival faction of Muscogees only as a last resort (30). Overall, Anderson depicts character progression: she shows elements of Checote’s leadership.

Duration

The duration of several incidents, in terms of real chronological time and psychological weight, is noteworthy. Of these, one important incident (73 lines) is the initial argument between two men at the first council meeting (5-5). The state of affairs in Muscogee country is antagonistic and volatile. One faction favors progressive policies whereas another faction prefers traditional policies. For example, a young man proposes the abolishment of “physical punishment” (8). An old man replies, “We used to cut their ears off, eh, that made them behave” (8). In

turn, the young man retorts, “Ears are made for listening, not injury. That’s what I’m talking about” (8). This incident underscores the inner-tribal disputes that occur in subsequent portions of the play.

Another prominent incident (72 lines) is a meeting between Checote, Sands, and the Indian agent (18-20). Checote reminds Sands, “this Constitution is for your people’s benefit as much as mine” (19). He reiterates his willingness to incorporate Sand’s input into the constitution as an amendment. Further, speaking to Sands in Creek, Checote tells him “We can settle our differences if you would be willing” (19). Throughout the scene, Checote attempts to resolve their differences through reasoned argument instead of armed conflict. As such, audiences witness his leadership skills.

A subsequent and related incident (55 lines) is the confrontation between Sands and the Indian agent (21-22). This incident marks two shifts in Sand’s approach. At first, he conducts an unsanctioned election instead of abiding by the Muscogee Nation’s laws. Then, he attempts to take over the council house. However, Checote does not attempt to stop him. In fact, Checote is not present because “he wants more than anything to avoid bloodshed” (22). The Indian agent implores Sands to cease the takeover (22). Once Sands realizes that his actions would be overturned, he relents. Checote’s absence, in this instance, is another example of leadership.

A fourth crucial incident (8 lines) is the decision to sell a portion of their land base. The land is “occupied by the Seminole Tribe” (25).¹⁰ Checote supports selling

the land because “the Seminole Tribe will retain this land whether we like or not; it will never be restored to us” (25). Additionally, he argues, “better to receive what compensation we can, rather than lose it altogether without compensation” (25). Overall, Anderson’s use of duration helps audiences recognize Checote’s leadership during tumultuous and uncertain times.

Rhythm

Several transitions indicate augmentation: the building of tension. One example of augmentation occurs in Act I/Scene 1. This scene displays political disputes within the tribe. A young man disagrees with corporal punishment.¹¹ He says, “It seems time for a change” (7). An old man replies “It was good enough then and it is good enough now!” (7). Subsequently, a heated debate ensues. The men argue about schools, laws, and other tribal affairs. The scene builds tension in anticipation of further conflict between the two factions.

Another example of augmentation occurs during Act II/Scene 1. In this scene, Checote and Sands, who represent members of rival factions, argue their stance. Checote expresses a desire to “compromise our quarrel” (18). Sands refuses to acknowledge Checote as leader of the Muscogee people (18). He also disagrees with “the way money is spent by Checote Council” (18). At the end of the scene, Checote appeals to Sands, saying “We can settle our differences if you would be willing” (19). Unfortunately, they are not able to resolve their disagreement. Therefore, the scene builds tension in anticipation of more conflict between the two parties.

Two additional examples of augmentation occur in Act III. In Act III/Scene 2, Checote learns that the rival faction, now lead by Isparhecher¹², is preparing for war (28-29). At the beginning of the scene, Checote states “We are at a time of peril in our country” (28). He tells the council that the rival faction “is again protesting our government” and “seem to be preparing for another overtaking of our Council House” (28). Given no other alternative, Checote initiates plans to “arrest and bring in the people involved in this insurrection” (29). Doing so will bring prevent a U.S. federal government takeover and doing so will “order to our Nation” (29). In Act III/Scene 4, Checote tells the council that Isparhecher has “began assaults on our people in Okmulgee District” (32). Checote then directs Pleasant Porter to “stop this insurrection” (32). At the end of the scene, he adds, “We are through being conciliatory. Now we will have action” (33). Thus, both scenes build tension in anticipation of continuous fighting between the two factions.

An example of diminution, the diminishment of tension, occurs in Act II/Scene 2. Sands and his followers conduct an unsanctioned election (21). As his followers attempt to overtake the council house, the Indian agent approaches (22). The two men argue about the tribal election process and the implementation of treaty rights. Yet, Sands concedes his position at the end of the scene. As such, the scene diminishes tension because warfare has been avoided.

Another example of diminution takes place during Act II/Scene 3. At the beginning of the scene, Checote “has been defeated by Lochar Harjo” (23). Rather than contest the election results, he accepts electoral defeat. He tells the council “I

have been honored to serve the Muscogee Creek people for two terms” (23). He then details the goals that have been accomplished during his tenure. Next, he praises his fellow citizens for “the peaceful manner in which our late elections have been conducted” (24). At the end of the scene, Checote endorses Muscogee self-determination and rejects paternalism (24). As a result, the scene diminishes tension between rival Muscogee factions. Overall, Anderson’s use of Checote’s speeches and arguments produces a cumulative effect: by the end of the play, audiences realize how influential Checote was in tribal government.

Tempo

Checote: Great Leader (Micco Thlocco) is a three-act play. All of the units feature a slow tempo. Most of the units consist of one or two incidents. For instance, Act I/Scene 2 consists of ninety lines but only two incidents: 1) Checote informs the council of his agenda; and 2) the council debates and passes legislation (10-13). Act III/Scene 4 features thirty-three lines but only two incidents: 1) Checote announces an agreement to end fighting amongst factions; and 2) Isparhecher pledges to sign the agreement (18-21). As for units that contain one incident, in the Prologue, a man (presumed to be Checote) offers a prayer (1-4). Act II/Scene 3 Checote “sums up his terms in office to the Council” (23-24). In Act II/Scene 1, Checote delivers a speech (25-27).

One portion of the play is an exception. Act II/Scene 2 features the highest ratio of incidents per unit (36-39). The unit contains 54 lines. At the beginning of the scene, Sands and his supporters have arrived at the tribal council house (21). At

the end of the scene, Sands agrees to abide by the official tribal election process (22). Unlike other units, six incidents occur. Sands rallies his supporters (21). Next, he directs them to form a line and to vote by calling “out the name they want” (21). His supporters vote (21). Sands and his supporters decide to take over the council house. He states, “We will begin our Government now here in the Council House” (21). Other tribal members “from the other side” arrive and friction ensues (21). The Indian agent arrives (22). After speaking with the Indian agent, Sands aborts the takeover and offers a compromise (22). The ratio of incidents in this unit is nine lines per incident. Overall, the play proceeds at a slow pace. Full of monologue and dialogue, each unit only depicts one or two incidents. Accordingly, Anderson’s use of tempo helps audiences recognize Checote’s leadership ability.

Conclusion

Checote: Great Leader (Micco Thlocco) is Elaine Anderson’s second known work of drama. In this instance, Anderson exhibits (through sequence, choice, progression, duration, rhythm, and tempo) how Samuel Checote tried to serve his people’s best interest during a challenging era.

Notes

¹ See Appendix A for entries that concern Samuel Checote.

² As Dr. Geary Hobson has pointed out, Checote was not, genetically, what Anderson refers to as a “full blood”. He posits that Anderson might have used the phrase in order to depict Checote as a “traditional” Muscogee. Anderson’s claim, also, could also been based on the notion that being, genetically, a “full blood” increases one’s credibility.

³ As stated in the previous note, Checote was not, genetically, a “full blood”. Thus, Checote’s descendants are not “full blood”.

⁴ See Appendix A for entries that concern these topics.

⁵ See Appendix A for entries that concern Oktaharsa (Sands) Harjo.

⁶ Anderson liberal interpretation of the Muscogee infinitive verb is appropriate. See Appendix A for entries that concern the Muscogee language.

⁷ See Appendix A for entries that concern Pleasant Porter.

⁸ See Appendix A for entries that concern unification efforts in Indian Territory.

⁹ See Appendix A for entries that concern Muscogee factions during this era.

¹⁰ See Appendix A for entries that concern the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma.

¹¹ See Appendix A for entries that concern Muscogee laws and punishments.

¹² See Appendix A for entries that concern Isparhecher.

Chapter Three

Analysis of *Who is There to Mourn?*

Context

This playscript was submitted to the Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest in 1986. As such, it to be the final work written by Anderson. Upon inspection, the submission differs from the previously discussed works in four ways. Unlike her previous submissions, Anderson did not attach any correspondence to this submission. One cannot decipher the author's motivation for selecting the topic, naming or developing the characters, or incorporating historical references. Likewise, one cannot obtain any pertinent information about the playwright during this period of her life. The other major differences are content-related. Unlike Opothleyahola or Samuel Checote, the protagonist of the play is not a famous Muscogee statesman. In fact, Sam is a fictional character. Unlike the other works, the plot is not based on significant historical events. The story unfolds in the 20th Century. And finally, unlike the previously discussed plays, the play devotes more attention to personal affairs than political realities. A modern-day parable, *Who is There to Mourn?* portrays Sam's incremental detachment from his family.

Who is There to Mourn?

Characters

Sam – Muscogee male and civil servant (at various ages): the protagonist.

Thomas – Muscogee male (at various ages): Sam’s closest friend

Lucinda – Muscogee female (at various ages): Sam’s wife (16 years his junior)

Sonny – Muscogee male (early twenties): Sam’s son and oldest child

Melissa – Muscogee female (late teens-early twenties): Sam’s daughter

Joseph – Muscogee male (senior citizen): Lucinda’s father

Melissey – Muscogee female: Lucinda’s mother

George – Muscogee male: elder

Woman – Muscogee female: Sam’s former school teacher.

Who is There to Mourn?

Unifying Principle

Who is There to Mourn? dramatizes the life of Sam, a Muscogee civil servant, a husband, and a father. The play is set between World War I and World War II.¹ The plot spans almost thirty years of Sam's life (age 32 to 60). During this time, he marries Lucinda, raises a family, and eventually succumbs to cancer. Sam, a tribal administrator, assists members of the Indian community throughout the course of the play. Yet, he abandons his family in the process. Given that *Who is There to Mourn?* depicts a Muscogee family and community, it is advantageous to possess an understanding of Muscogee history and culture. Unlike the other playscripts, Anderson does not offer extended background information about the milieu or the characters prior to each act. Despite that, audiences will be able to follow the story. Through a portrayal of Sam's life, Anderson generates a frank dramatic work that speaks to issues of commitment, sacrifice, and acceptance. Accordingly, the unifying principle of *Who is There to Mourn?* is to serve: to serve one's community despite personal and family sacrifice.

Who is There to Mourn?

Sequence

Anderson utilizes linear-chronological order to illustrate how Sam served the Muscogee community—at the expense of his family. Anderson reveals aspects of Sam’s life as it relates to three periods of his life: single man, family man, and absentee father. Sam is “about thirty-two” years of age at beginning of Act I (1). Two Muscogee men talk about their background. Anderson writes, “A young man Indian man...is talking to his friend Thomas. Both have mustaches and are full-blood Indians” (1). At the end of this scene, the story shifts to a conversation between Sam and Lucinda. Sam tries to convince Lucinda to go to school.² Although she expresses uncertainties about leaving her parents, Lucinda agrees to attend school. Sam assures her that he will retrieve her from school if her parents become ill. After she exits, Sam and Thomas resume their discussion. Yet, this time Lucinda is the topic of their conversation. The scene ends with Sam telling Thomas that his association with Lucinda will be professional. He says that he will visit with her “only on business. Nothing else” (5).

Act II begins twenty years later. Anderson notes that Sam and Thomas “are now in their fifties” (9). They are “sitting on Sam’s porch, relaxing and talking as old friends do” (9). The two men discuss their sons, their wives, and their neighbors. Sam and Lucinda are married. They are the parents of “two almost grown “children: Sonny and Melissa (10). At the beginning of the next scene, the setting shifts to “late that night” (13). Thomas “staggers inside” Sam’s house and

tells him “They killed him! They killed my boy!” (13). As Sam tries to comfort Thomas, Thomas describes what happened (13-14). After that, the men pray. Paradoxically, once they are finished praying Sam leaves in order to find a bottle of liquor and Thomas vows to kill the men who murdered his son (15-16). The next scene occurs “one year later” (17). Anderson notes that Sam “looks somewhat disheveled” (17). During this scene, Lucinda confronts Sam (20). She tells him “You ought to quit drinking” (17). The argument between them escalates and then Sam “shoves her to the floor” (18). After he exits, Lucinda decides to leave the house. Before she is able to leave, Sam returns (18). In a drunken fit of rage, he accuses Lucinda of adultery. At the end of the scene, Sam “turns threateningly with his fist raised back” (19).

At the beginning of Act III, “It is early morning” (20). In the first scene, Sam and Melissa are “standing outside a police station” (20). Sam tells her that he cannot remember what happened the night before. She informs him that he beat Lucinda “black and blue” (20). Sam tells her, “It’s going to be different. I can’t lose my family” (21). Melissa explains to him that his nostalgic perception of their family no longer exists. She then recounts all of the horrible things Sam has done during the past year. She also tells him that Lucinda is going to divorce him. Although dejected, Sam tells Melissa to relay message to Lucinda. In essence, he consents to the divorce (21).

At the beginning of the next scene, the setting shifts to Thomas’s house (22). Thomas extends his hands and “shakes Sam’s hand” (22). The two men talk about

Sam's problems. Thomas tells Sam to stop drinking. Sam replies, "I've lost my family" (22). Yet, he places some of the blame on his family, adding "They seemed to have forgotten all those years when I was the good guy who did my duty" (23). The focus of the conversation shifts to Sam's tendency to put the community before his family. He states, "You've got your priorities mixed up" (23). While they do not resolve any of Sam's issues, Thomas invites Sam to stay in the guest house, an old house located behind Thomas's home.

The following scene portrays Sam's dependency on alcohol. A man visits Sam and asks him for help (25-26). Unlike other occasions, Sam is drunk. Although he insults the man at one point, he agrees to help him. After the man exits, Sam resumes drinking. He also hears voices calling his name. Sam challenges the "demons" to "come on out and fight" (27). At the conclusion of the scene, Thomas enters the house and attempts to console Sam (28).

The subsequent scene begins "a year later" (29). Anderson writes, "Sonny and Melissa are sitting in the front room of their mother's house" (29). Sonny and Melissa talk about their father (38). Melissa expresses her disapproval of Sam. Rather than argue, Sonny tells her that he is joining the Marines. Sam arrives and attempt to visit with his children. Sonny is receptive but Melissa is rude. Lucinda enters and their children leave. Sam tells Lucinda he has cancer. He also apologizes to Lucinda. In doing so, he has accepted his fate.

The final scene depicts Sam's funeral (34). Melissa stands outside the church (34). As Anderson explains, "The old hymns are ringing from the

building...sad and mournful, yet with words of hope” (39).³ As the scene unfolds, men and women approach Melissa and offer their condolences. They also express their gratitude. In each case, their words commend Sam for helping others (34, 35, and 39). Over time, Melissa’s anger subsides and she begins to mourn her father. She also expresses guilt because “she could not help him” (39). The play concludes as Melissa poses and answers a question: “Who was there to be strong for SAM? Not one!” (39). Overall, Anderson’s sequencing of events allows audiences to witness, over time, Sam’s preference for serving the community over maintaining a stable family environment.

Choice

In this instance, the playwright’s choices are notable. The title is based on Logan’s Speech (1774).⁴ Anderson (through Sam’s dialogue) recalls Logan’s plight (2). However, Anderson does not use the speech (or Logan’s experiences) as the central subject of the play. Rather, she employs one underlying theme of the speech (sacrifice in the performance of service) as a major motif of the play. Anderson uses the aforementioned theme to demonstrate Sam’s attachment to community and his detachment from family. In Act I/Scene 1 Anderson foreshadows this stance. Sam states, “All those years in the orphanage I didn’t have anyone to depend on but myself. I made up my mind that if I could ever help my people I would” (1). Ironically, he meets his future wife during the course of helping her family (3-4). Another choice concerns the beginning and the end of the play. At the beginning of the play, the author notes that the protagonist is “about thirty-two” years old” (1). At

the conclusion of the play, he has passed away at age 60 (39). Melissa, Sam's daughter, explains why she resented her father (39). She also indirectly forgives him for his actions.

Most of the major themes and ideas that shape the plot pertain to abandonment. Three examples that concern abandonment take place in Act I/Scene 1. Sam reveals that he was raised in an orphanage (1). He explains how the federal government has failed to serve and protect Indian people (3).⁵ Also, Lucinda tells Sam that she does not want to attend boarding school because she does not want to leave her mother and father (4). Three examples also occur in Act I/Scene 2. Lucinda reminds Sam that he was absent when she went into labor (6). Sam repeats to Lucinda why he was away—he was driving another family to the hospital (6). Sam reiterates his unwavering commitment to the community (7). Two examples transpire in Act II/Scene I. Sam tells Thomas about some of the people who seek his help (10). Sam also inadvertently reveals the difference between himself and Lucinda, saying she “can't afford to worry about more than two” (11). These examples, as well as others that happen during later portions of the play, underscore how serving one's community often comes at the expense of one's family.

As for incidents enacted and incidents described, Anderson explains almost all of the duties that Sam performs in the community rather than showing them. The only exceptions occur in Act I. In the first scene, Joseph and Melissey ask Sam for help (3). They want to sell a portion of their allotment in order to send their daughter to school. They want Sam to help them obtain a fair price for their land. In turn, they

would be able to finance their daughter's education. In the process of helping the family, Sam meets his future wife. In the following scene, Sam leaves his pregnant wife at home in order to drive an Indian family to the hospital. This incident underscores the unifying principle: although Sam helps another family, he risks losing another child by leaving his pregnant wife at home (6-8). This preference, telling instead of showing, is vital because, like his family, audience members witness more of Sam's faults than his accomplishments.

Anderson also describes (or makes reference to) death in lieu of depicting the incidents. In Act I/Scene I Joseph recalls the death of his children (4). A few lines later, Lucinda, his only surviving child, also references their deaths. In Act I/Scene II, Lucinda reminds Sam that their first child, Haley, passed away while he was out of town (6). In Act III/Scene 8, Sam's friends and relatives attend his funeral. In Act II/Scene 2, Thomas describes his son's death (13-14). These details are shared in order to show audiences how the event triggers a destructive change in Sam's behavior.

As for recurring themes or motifs, "Who is There to Mourn..." is stated on seven occasions. In Act I/Scene 1, Sam relates Logan's plight to contemporary Indian realities (3). In Act I/Scene 2, Lucinda insinuates that Sam has abandoned her (7). In Act II/Scene 1, Sam mentions Logan as a way of contrasting Logan's plight with his circumstances (9). In Act II/Scene 2, Thomas laments the death of his son. In Act III/Scene 6, Sam repeats the quote during a drinking binge (28). In the following scene, Sam talks to Lucinda about his legacy (33). In the final scene of the

play (Act III/Scene 8), Melissa revises the quote, and in doing so, she expresses an understanding of why her father helped others at the expense of their family.

With regard to complexities and ambiguities, Anderson does not indicate why she selected this topic. She does not inform audiences if Sam is based on an immediate relative or her former husband. Also, unlike in other plays, Anderson does not use specific years to indicate the setting of scenes. Each act shifts forward in time. Yet, the only reason why the audience might deduce that Sam is a World War I veteran is because Anderson repeatedly refers to the Battle Meuse-Argonne, an event that occurred during World War I. On a related note, Anderson does not indicate which war Sam's son, Sonny, will experience. In addition, Anderson uses voices to haunt Sam in one portion of the play (27). However, Anderson does not reveal the identities of the voices or if Sam is simply hallucinating. Furthermore, Anderson employs irony in contrasting Sam's relationship with non-relatives with his relationship with his immediate relatives. She raises the question: What is the cost to the nuclear family when one serves the community selflessly? Anderson shows audiences how Sam's self-sacrificing service to the community costs him his family.

Progression

The relationship between several incidents is pertinent. One example involves Sam's acts of service in the first two scenes. These incidents underscore the underlying principle of the play: Sam puts the interest of the tribe ahead of the well-being of his family. These incidents also produce a source of conflict. Initially, Sam

helps Lucinda by convincing her to attend school. Later, he leaves her at home in order to help another family.

Another example concerns his downfall in Act II and his impending death in Act III. These incidents convey different perspectives. In the former, Sam remains focused on helping others even though he has abandoned his family and he continues to drink. In the latter, he acknowledges his errors and apologizes to Lucinda. All in all, Anderson depicts character progression: she shows Sam's regression (from sober to drunk) and Melissa's progression (from anger to acceptance).

Duration

The duration of several incidents is important. Of these, one noteworthy incident (59 lines) is the initial conversation between Sam and Lucinda (3-5). The incident depicts Sam as kind and respected. The incident also portrays Lucinda as strong and caring. The topics discussed in their conversation and the manners in which they exchange ideas foreshadow their long-term relationship.

Another prominent incident (127 lines) is the death of Thomas's son (13-16). The event compels Sam to drink. From this point on, his behavior becomes abusive, self-destructive and counterproductive. A subsequent and related incident is the confrontation between Sam and Lucinda (17-19). This incident represents a turning point in their marriage. Lucinda pleads with Sam to stop drinking. Rather than heed her advice, he accuses her of adultery and he physically abuses her. A fourth prominent incident is the final conversation between Sam and Lucinda. Unable to reconcile with his daughter, Sam tells Lucinda that he is dying. Additionally, he

acknowledges his mistakes and apologizes for his actions. A final important incident occurs at Sam's funeral. Melissa mourns her father (39). This incident transpires after a series of brief exchanges between some visitors and Melissa (34-39). This incident paints Sam as a flawed man, but also a respected and valued leader.

With respect to duration, numerous incidents shape the meaning of the play. Major incidents highlight Sam's strengths and weaknesses. The incidents address different issues and they draw attention to Sam's personality traits.

Rhythm

Most of the transitions indicate augmentation: the building of tension. One example of augmentation occurs in Act I/Scene 1. The scene depicts Lucinda's reluctance to attend school. She is the only surviving child. She is afraid her mother "will get sick if I go away" (4). Sam tells her that going to school would create opportunities for her and "the children you will have in the future" (4). He states, "You can do that by getting an education" (4). As they discuss the pros and cons of education, the conversation suggests an attraction between them. Thomas takes notice. He remarks, "I have an idea you are going to be seeing a lot of that girl" (5). Initially, one might assume the tension could pertain to Lucinda leaving her parents. As the next scene begins, we see that the tension concerns the budding relationship between Sam and Lucinda.

Another example of augmentation occurs in Act I/Scene 2. In this scene, Sam and Lucinda argue because Sam spends a lot of time away from home. She reminds Sam that their first child died while he was out of town assisting another

family. Sam apologizes but he does not pledge to change (6-7). Actually, their argument is interrupted by a visitor. The man needs Sam's help. Sam leaves Lucinda, who is pregnant with their second child, in order to drive the man's family to the hospital (8). At the end of the scene, Lucinda tells Sam "GO ON! I'll be alright. I can take care of myself" (7). Hence, the scene builds tension between Sam and Lucinda and leads to audience member's anticipation of further conflict.

A third example of augmentation occurs during Act III/Scene 3. In this scene, Lucinda confronts Sam. She pleads with him to stop drinking. Sam refuses. He attempts to rationalize his behavior. He also tries to change the subject (from his faults to his responsibilities). Lucinda, in contrast, decides to leave the house. She prepares to visit her parent's home. Although her parents are deceased, their home is "a good place to think" (18). However, Sam returns to their residence before she can depart. An argument ensues and, at the end of the scene, Sam raises a fist as if to strike Lucinda (19). Accordingly, the scene builds tension in anticipation of domestic violence.

One example of alternation, the changing from one state to another state, occurs at the end of Act II/ Scene 1 and at the beginning of Act II/Scene 2. In the former, Sam and Thomas are content with life. They both speak about their children with pride. The scene ends with the signing of an old Baptist hymn (12). The song conveys a calm tone. At the beginning of the next scene, Sam is reviewing paperwork late at night when he hears someone "pounding at his door" (13). Thomas enters and "falls into an armchair" (13). Thomas is grieving because his son

has been murdered. Sam is calm. He offers level-headed support. He does not condone violent reprisals. In fact, he tells Thomas, “Don’t try to get revenge. Think of your family...Don’t go looking” (15). At the end of the scene, he vows revenge. Consequently, the scene shifts from one state (contentment) to another (devastation).

Another example of alternation takes place during the subsequent scene. Thomas has accepted his son’s death. He has not murdered anyone in retaliation (17). In contrast, Sam is “disheveled” (17). He has been “drinking a lot. Ever since Thomas, Jr. died” (17). In the previous scene, Sam was composed. He was the voice of reason. In this scene, he is a shell of himself. The night that he “got drunk with Thomas” put him on a destructive path. At the end of the scene, he becomes abusive (19). Hence, the scene shifts from one state (composure) to another (unruly). Overall, Anderson’s use of rhythm shows audiences the struggles Sam endures: he serves the Muscogee community but he deserts his family.

Tempo

Who is There to Mourn? is a three-act play. All of the units, save one, feature a moderate (or medium) tempo. A majority of the units consist of a few incidents. For instance, Act I/Scene 1 consists of the following incidents: 1) Joseph seeks Sam’s help; and 2) Sam and Lucinda meet for the first time (1-5). Act II/Scene 1 also features two incidents: 1) Lucinda joins the conversation; and 2) Sam upsets Lucinda (18-21).

On the other hand, the final scene of the play is an exception. Act III/Scene 8 features the highest ratio of incidents per unit (36-39). The unit moves faster than

the other scene. The unit contains 227 lines. An elderly Indian woman approaches Melissa at the beginning of the scene (36). Melissa comes to terms with her father's legacy at the end of the scene (39). As opposed to the previous units, ten incidents occur. The older Indian woman engages Melissa in conversation and shares a fond memory of Sam (34). After that, Lucinda approaches Melissa and speaks with her (35). As they talk, Sonny cries out in agony (35). The sound seizes Melissa's attention and changes the tone and subject of the conversation. Lucinda leaves and, subsequently, an elderly Indian couple approach Melissa and offer their condolences (35). Once they depart, Thomas approaches Melissa and tries to comfort Melissa (35-6). Melissa becomes angry and defensive (36). Thomas tells her to "get over it" and to consider the big picture. Thomas leaves and Sonny approaches Melissa (37). They discuss their father's behavior and debate his legacy. Yet, Melissa is not as confrontational as she was earlier (38-9). An elderly Indian man approaches them and says, "your daddy was a good man" (39). Once the elderly Indian man and Sonny depart, Melissa reveals an honest reflection. She wants to let go of all of "the ugly bitterness" (39). She expressed hate toward her father for several years, in part, because, "it was easier to blame [him]. I could not help [him]" (39). The ratio of incidents in this unit is about twenty-two lines per incident.

In regards to tempo, the play proceeds at a moderate pace. Filled with monologue and dialogue, each unit only depicts one or two incidents. Yet, the monologues in this play are much shorter than those that appear in the other plays.

Overall, Anderson's use of tempo helps audiences recognize the degree of Sam's regression.

Conclusion

Who is There to Mourn? is apparently Elaine Anderson's final work of drama. In this instance, Anderson exhibits (through sequence, choice, progression, duration, rhythm, and tempo) how Sam's serving his people's best interest came at the expense of his family.

Notes

¹ Unlike the previous two plays, Anderson does not include exact years (ex: 1825; 1870; etc.). One reason why I believe the play is set between the two wars is because the protagonist is a veteran of the Battle of Meuse-Argonne, an event that occurred during World War I.

² See Appendix A for entries that concern boarding schools.

³ See Appendix A for entries that concern Muscogee hymns and funeral services.

⁴ A copy of the speech was first published in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787). Complete copies of the speech (widely referred to as “Logan’s Lament”) can be found in certain anthologies of early American literature.

⁵ See Appendix A for entries that concern the federal trust relationship.

Conclusion

During a period that spanned twelve years, Muscogee playwright Elaine Anderson authored five playscripts. She submitted each of the playscripts to the Five Civilized Tribes Playwriting Contest. These works are *Hokte Este Cate (Red Woman)* (1974), *Death of the Holly Leaf* (1978), *Checote: Great Leader* (1982), *Song of Life* (1984), and *Who is There to Mourn?* (1986). This dissertation serves as an intrinsic analysis of three of her playscripts: *Death of the Holly Leaf*, *Checote: Great Leader-Micco Thlocco*, and *Who is There to Mourn?* While the playscripts focus on different aspects of Muscogee history and culture, each play deals with the notions of leadership and service: *vfvstetv* (the Muscogee infinitive verb meaning “to serve”). In addition, one can detect other similarities if he/she considers choice, sequence, progression, duration, tempo, and rhythm.

With regard to similarities, Anderson organizes each of the plays into three sections. Anderson depicts males as the protagonist of each play. She also describes, rather than enacts, violence. Anderson arranges the events of each play in linear chronological order. She uses foreshadowing in order to demonstrate the progression of prominent characters. She includes several monologues or actual speeches. As such, the incidents that occur within each play are significant: Opothleyahola decides to align his band with the Union; Checote elects to resolve a dispute with Sands through the use of diplomacy; and Sam chooses to drink. Although each of her playscripts feature augmentation, the limited inclusion of diminution and alternation in certain portions of two of the plays keep audiences

engaged. And since most of the units of each play only feature two or three incidents, ratio variations in certain portions of each of the plays create the tempo: either by increasing or decreasing intensity.

As for differences, Anderson dramatizes three periods of Muscogee history: *Death of the Holly Leaf* (1820s-60s), *Checote: Great Leader* (1860s-80s), and *Who is There to Mourn?* (1920s-1960s). Anderson also depicts three distinct protagonists: Opothleyahola (tribal band leader), Samuel Checote (principal chief), and Sam (tribal administrator). As for conflict, Anderson showcases a unique set of challenges in each play: Opothleyahola (removal), Samuel Checote (factions), and Sam (priorities).

In addition to sharing with others the works of Elaine Anderson, one of my goals is to also appeal to those who are interested in researching unpublished (or unstudied or even understudied) American Indian dramatists. In contrast to prominent dramatists, some successful American Indian playwrights, such as Julie Pearson Little Thunder, Annette Arkeketa, and Bret Jones have not received the scholarly attention that they warrant.

Finally, despite the fact that hundreds of American Indian authors have produced writings (scholarly or creative, published or unpublished) during the last forty years, a majority of the book-length works devoted to contemporary American Indian writers has been limited to the lives and contributions of major figures. With any luck, this dissertation will persuade current students and scholars to select an

alternative approach: to locate and to study works of lesser-known American Indian authors. Mvto.

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