

'IDEAL VEHICLES': MEDALLIC CIRCUITRY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY PORTRAITS
OF NATIVE AMERICANS

by

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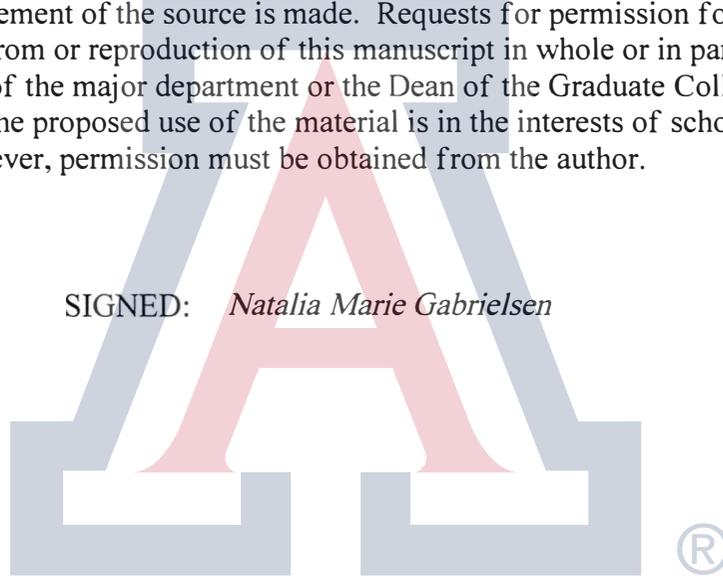
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ABSTRACT

I examine the mobility and circulation of peace medals featured in nineteenth-century portraiture of Native Americans through the lens of object-oriented ontology. This research strives to establish a different perspective for considering nineteenth-century portraiture of Native Americans by situating the works through the framework of materiality and circulation. By applying this approach to a series of portraits of Native Americans with peace medals, my research seeks to define issues of movement and power within the transient, fluctuating space of the nineteenth-century American frontier. To accomplish this, I trace the production and distribution of peace medals within paintings widely viewed at the time, as well as the movement of groups and individuals involved with transporting and receiving the medals. Tracking these objects and their mechanisms of movement within the visual culture of the nineteenth century, indicating not only the thing itself but also its processes of production and movement, reveals a dimension of specificity to pictorial narratives, even as the exhibited artworks promoted generalized ideals regarding Indian policy through their circulation. I follow the peace medals' logistics of production and transit to underscore issues of value and currency on the American frontier, highlighting the ways in which peace medals and the artwork depicting them participated in narratives of Native displacement.

INTRODUCTION

Against the rapidly developing nineteenth-century American landscape, transitional objects emerge which move within and between shifting historical narratives. The Indian peace medallion is one such object whose production, distribution, display, function, and reproduction intersect with many histories and interpretations. These objects permeated visual art of the period, as artists sought to depict the Native American, both as a player, albeit on the losing side of westward expansion, and as a complex symbol for the expanding nation in its triumph over wilderness. Employed broadly by the United States government during the nineteenth century, peace medals were dispersed across the continent during negotiations with Native tribes.

In this study, I examine the mobility and circulation of peace medals featured in nineteenth-century portraiture of Native Americans through the lens of object-oriented ontology. The method of object-oriented ontology – or, thing theory – has been applied generally within the field of art history to interpret the movement, agency, and interaction of things, rejecting anthropocentrism.¹ Jennifer Roberts' scholarship on the materiality and movement of artwork in *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* will serve as my primary methodological model.² By applying this approach to a series of portraits of Native Americans with peace medals, my research seeks to define issues of circulation and value within the transient, fluctuating space of the nineteenth-century American frontier. To accomplish this, I trace the production and distribution of peace medals within paintings widely viewed at the time, as well as the movement of groups and individuals involved with transporting and receiving the

¹ For more on object-oriented ontology, see: Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library: Open Humanities Press, 2011), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/ohp.9750134.0001.001>. Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," in *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1-16. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Romanticism and the Life of Things: Fossils, Totems, and Images." *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 167-84, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.library.arizona.edu/stable/1344265>.

² Jennifer Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014).

medals. Tracking these objects and their mechanisms of movement within the visual culture of the nineteenth century, indicating not only the thing itself but also its processes of production and movement, reveals a dimension of specificity to pictorial narratives, even as the exhibited artworks promoted generalized ideals regarding Indian policy through their circulation.

Chapter One provides a literature review and lays the theoretical basis for the study that follows. I establish Roberts' methodological framework as the guide to my approach and utilize theoretical aspects of thing theory and object-oriented ontology. Moving toward concerns regarding the material weight of peace medals, the work of Francis Paul Prucha, one of the principal numismatists considering the peace medal's history of production and movement, provides the context in which to consider the production and circulation of medals, to which I add the dimension of circulation. Finally, I incorporate recent American art exhibits that have presented the peace medal and materiality as a focus of their inquiry. This recent research on the role of peace medals, in particular, and the current trend in art historical scholarship considering material studies and circulation, in general, are instrumental to my argument.

The second chapter analyzes Charles Bird King's 1821 painting, *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees*, as it relates to some of the earliest routes traveled by American manufactured peace medals. This work has been previously considered in terms of pictorial and documentary authenticity, especially following the revisionist interpretations of art of the American West in the contentious 1991 Smithsonian exhibition, *The West as America, Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920*.³ I use materiality as a methodological tool to

³ See William H. Truettner and Nancy K. Anderson, ed., *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991). For commentary from the public on the exhibition "The West as America," published in *American Art*, see "Showdown at "The West as America" Exhibition." *American Art* 5, no. 3 (1991): 2-11, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.library.arizona.edu/stable/3109055>. Charles Bird King's *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees* was featured in the exhibition. Works by George Catlin were also included.

investigate this image differently. King's painting presents the viewer with a Native delegation who, after being bestowed with a peace medal in Washington, D.C., return to their homelands on the western boundaries of the American frontier. By following the physical heft of the peace medal's movement, I establish that the route suggested by *Young Omahaw* actually existed as a broken circuit, contributing to narratives of Native displacement during early nineteenth-century expansion westward.

Chapter Three assesses two George Catlin paintings from 1844-1845 – *Shon-ta-yi-ga, Little Wolf, a Famous Warrior* and *The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas* – expanding on the themes of circulation and displacements from Chapter Two. These works were painted in Europe while Catlin was traveling with his traveling *Indian Gallery*. On that trip, Catlin accompanied a group of Native Americans, including the sitters for these portraits, from the Ioway who performed at various venues. Such performances were conceived by Catlin as a tourist attraction and as a selling gimmick to promote interest in the purchase of his collection. Though this strategy had been ineffective in securing a buyer for the collection or driving substantial ticket sales while touring American cities, he hoped its application would prove more successful in London and Paris. While his work has formerly been aligned with themes of governmental patronage, I situate Catlin's work at the intersection of material culture, movement, and financial anxiety by exploring the fluctuating physical and immaterial value of credit and debt. Tracing this movement explores the artwork's role in compounding Native displacement and its contribution to shifting political development on the nineteenth-century American frontier.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of possible directions of future research. In particular, I focus on the contemporary Native artist, T.C. Cannon and his monumental

portraiture which utilizes peace medals as a theme. Cannon demonstrates an awareness of the inherent ‘broken circuit,’ as referenced above, and applies it thematically as he knowingly participates in the circulation of Native artwork among Non-Native collections and the dynamics of that ownership.

The paintings examined within the main chapters of this study are a few key examples of the numerous contemporaneous artworks that depict Native Americans and include imagery of a peace medallion. Though there are certainly examples of history paintings that feature Native Americans bearing peace medals, my focus on portraiture within this research is intentional. Portraiture of the nineteenth century was informed primarily by the dominant Euro-American group. By investigating the material culture presented in portraits, my research follows the threads of self-representation that the sitter brings to these portraits, as suggested by Stephanie Pratt in her discussion reestablishing Native presence and identity in nineteenth-century portraiture. These paintings are also ideally suited for this type of methodological assessment because of the conditions in which they were exhibited and circulated. Both King’s and Catlin’s use of their galleries complicate the lines of movement, transporting medals, bodies, and artwork between the periphery and the center.

A framework of materiality is optimal for interpreting the specificity of narratives contained within these portraits. By situating the works according to the methodology of object-oriented ontology, this thesis strives to establish a different perspective for considering nineteenth-century portraiture of Native Americans. I follow the peace medals’ logistics of production and transport to underscore issues of value and currency on the American frontier, highlighting the ways in which peace medals and the artwork depicting them participated in narratives of Native displacement.

CHAPTER ONE: Literature Review

The policy regarding the production and distribution of peace medals was a Euro-American solution to problematic relations with indigenous populations of the Americas, beginning in the seventeenth and extending until the end of the nineteenth centuries. Ranging from allied to combative exchanges, peace medallions were presented to significant tribal members, generally chiefs, as a gesture of goodwill between the United States federal government and specific indigenous communities.⁴ These medallions – generally small, silver, and circular in form – featured the profile of the sitting American president on the obverse of the medal, and an image or scene promoting friendship and cooperation on the reverse. Peace medals were distributed under divergent circumstances – upon an agreement or treaty, defeat and surrender, or for aiding in militaristic force against other indigenous communities. Between 1801 and 1893, when the last peace medals were produced by the U.S. Mint, these objects held a significant role in negotiating federal policy and Indian affairs.⁵

The inherent mobility of peace medals, exchanged between hands, cultures, and ideologies, defines both its materiality and function in the nineteenth century. Portability was one of the primary elements at play in the construction, implementation, and circulation of these medals. Without the lightweight design of the medals, for example, the expedition led westward by Lewis and Clark following the Louisiana Purchase might not have allowed for the transportation of at least eighty-seven medals of varying sizes among the most indispensable travel materials. Had the medals not been created with the intention to be worn around the neck,

⁴ Although these offerings were generally under the guise of ‘goodwill’ between the federal government and indigenous tribes, they might also be appropriately discussed as tools of pacification and manipulation.

⁵ Several scholars, especially Prucha and Belden – both associated with the American Numismatic Society – have published extensively on the history of peace medals. See Bauman L. Belden, *Indian Peace Medals Issues in the United States* (New Milford, CT: N. Flayderman, 1966). Also Francis Paul Prucha, *Indian Peace Medals in American History* (Bluffton, SC: State Historical Society of Wisconsin: 1971).

their visibility would have been reduced and their prevalence within adornment, and therefore portraiture, would be far less evident and perhaps nonexistent. Were the imagery not standardized in its production by the engravers for the U.S. Mint, the medals would not have been easily transferrable between generations of indigenous groups, nor – as it turns out – as easily priced, commodified, and amassed by collectors leading up to the present.

Jennifer Roberts' 2014 publication, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, considers the problematics of movement and transportation in the artwork of early nineteenth-century American artists. She argues that the logistics of transit are built into images, whether this was deliberate or not, and that this “phatic” dimension of an image should not be disregarded during analysis. Applying this previously semiotic term – *phatic* – for her own use, Roberts describes this measure of a picture as, “...the elements [which] are performative acknowledgements of the channel of communication itself, rather than referential or descriptive utterances that convey the content of a message.”⁶ One of the themes underlying Roberts' “channels of communication” is distance, a comprehension and awareness of the space in between a picture and where it is meant to go. By focusing her research on the form of conveyance, rather than strictly pictorial content (and there certainly are instances of overlap in these two ideas), materiality assists in articulating ideas of space, transportation, and delay in early America.

The artwork explored throughout *Transporting Visions* is visually assessed for references, cues, and indications of anticipated movement and its inevitable delays. Her first chapter, for example, focuses on John Singleton Copley's pictorial eccentricities that would have aided in his artwork's artistic reception once it crossed the Atlantic. She turns her focus toward

⁶ Roberts, *Transporting Visions: Movement of Images in Early America*, 6.

John James Audubon and the unwieldy heft of his albums of prints, in part published at such a large size to communicate the life-size measurements of North American wildlife. Their sheer scale rebuffed against theories that America's flora and fauna were deficient compared to their European counterparts.⁷ Her third chapter discusses Asher B. Durand's intentionally detailed complexity as a method of visually slowing comprehension of landscapes at a time when the telegraph began to render distance inconsequential. Each of these methods of inquiry indicate the close attention Roberts paid to what she describes as the 'channel of communication.'⁸ Rather than investigate pictorial content, the objective is to determine how the picture's message is conveyed across time and space, and the means through which that is accomplished. *Transporting Visions* is aptly situated at the intersection of visual and material culture, utilizing aspects of both to distinguish previously unexamined perspectives on nineteenth-century artwork and its courses of transit.

Materiality, the thingness of these objects and the characteristics of their outward physicality, is central to this study. Instead of the end goal, however, materiality functions as a vehicle, as suggested by Roberts. In tracing the materiality, we can define the encounters, transactions, and exchanges that endow things with an agency of their own. This idea is crucial to the arguments made in *Transporting Visions*, and scholars from a range of disciplines have been especially interested in related theories in the last twenty years. Roberts attention to delay and distance can be traced to Jacques Derrida's poststructural *différance*, indicative of cognitive delay due to the addition of a temporal dimension and to the Saussurean model of the

⁷ This debate references the eighteenth-century argument made by Georges-Louis Leclerc, theorizing "American degeneracy." Discussed in Jennifer Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, 104. See also Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, "Of Animals Common to Both Continents," in *Natural History, General and Particular*, 9 vols., 3rd ed., trans. William Smellie (London, 1781), 5:129.

⁸ Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, 6.

sign/signifier/signified relationship.⁹ This deferment makes room for both deconstruction and disparity in the intended meaning, as opposed to the communicated meaning, especially in transit.

Roberts cites Pierre Bourdieu's suggestion that the delay in *différance* can be strategic, even beneficial, in navigating uncertainty. She also utilizes Bourdieu as a warning against categorizations of culturally produced objects based on contemporaneity, noting, "...such objects were, in all probability, separated by space. When they are displayed together, this original separation, along with its attendant mistranslation, anticipation, desire, disappointment, or just plain unknowing – disappears from consideration."¹⁰ This argument demonstrates that a temporal distance may indicate a spatial separation as well, and that in current systems of display and exhibition where objects are grouped altogether for view, art historians must be mindful of these gaps. Informed by Bruno Latour, Roberts aligns her research with object-oriented ontology. Latour, in his 2005 publication *Reassembling the Social*, argues against a hierarchy with humans placed above things, and instead calls for a system of evenly distributed ontological weight where all actors – things and humans alike – form collectives of social action.¹¹

Foregrounding the peace medal's material logistics of movement, Francis Paul Prucha, scholar of American Indian policy, published *Indian Peace Medals in American History* in 1971. It became one of the definitive sources on the topic of peace medals. He includes a list of illustrative plates, and these images of paintings, photographs, certificates, and drawings are loosely used to support his text. In the preface, Prucha writes in regard to the medals: "There is

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 75.

¹⁰ Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, 8.

¹¹ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor–Network Theory* (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 2005), 105.

something in their solidity and permanence, in the limitations placed by their very nature upon the artistic designs they can bear, and in the beauty of the metals from which they are struck that make medals ideal vehicles for the symbols of a culture or an age.”¹² As such, the author frames his discussion of the peace medals along two trajectories: aesthetic and material.

When Prucha describes the peace medals as ‘ideal vehicles for the symbols of a culture,’ the implication is that the agency of these objects is found within the means of transmission and movement. These objects, transferred and interchanged amongst peoples and cultures often at very violent and unbalanced odds with one another, were vehicles of communication, conveyance, and power. The mechanisms at play within this web of relations are extended out to the visual culture which they inhabit and influence. Not only were the medals, themselves, players within an expansive network of social and political implications, but their role within visual culture of the nineteenth century was integral as well. The artwork depicting these objects and the movement implicated by their exhibition actively participated within systems of exchange and circulation, impacting political interactions, perceptions of race, and policies of displacement on the early American frontier.

Scholars have spoken to these points before. Klaus Lubbers, for example, assesses the visual representation on the peace medals in terms of symmetry, highlighting the inequity of federal Indian policy during the nineteenth century in his 1994 article, “Strategies of Appropriating the West: The Evidence of Indian Peace Medals.” He argues, “The thematic logic of Indian peace medals demanded bilateral symmetry, making the right and left side counterparts of one another to indicate reciprocity in the relations between the two parties (as in a treaty or

¹² Prucha, *Indian Peace Medals in American History*, v.

trade policy).”¹³ The visual presented by a peace medal had to be transmitted between two different cultures – not just cognitively, but also materially. Moreover, transmission oftentimes had to take place over great distances. While the images on the peace medal had to be thematically comprehensible, the objects would hold less value if they could not be gifted, carried, and displayed. Despite the allusion to peace and equality of exchange, Lubbers suggests that this was instead a strategy for influencing power structures on the early American frontier.

Exhibitions focusing on the topic of peace medals have also centered on the dynamic between artistic intent and material production. The Gilcrease Museum presented the 2011 exhibition, *Peace Medals: Symbols of Influence and Prestige in North America*.¹⁴ The show assembled eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artworks that incorporate imagery of peace medals. Its associated publication provides perspectives on the production, utilization, and display of these medals from a variety of different disciplines. From an anthropological perspective, for example, F. Kent Reilly writes on the varying power structures inherent within peace medals, correlating the meaning peace medals conveyed with previously established Native material culture. He argues, “...the peace medal became, just as the earlier shell gorget had been, the visualization of a political order, a kinship relation and a power source that was distant and invisible, but real. Likewise, the wearer became linked or allied to this power source, which ultimately controlled his destiny and the destiny of his tribal group.”¹⁵ The peace medal became integrated within Native conceptions of sacredness, and in this way reinforced power structures between indigenous communities and the United States’ federal government. Though

¹³ Klaus Lubbers, “Strategies of Appropriating the West: The Evidence of Indian Peace Medals,” *American Art*, vol. 8 (June 1994), 87, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.library.arizona.edu/stable/3109173>.

¹⁴ The exhibit was curated by Robert Pickering, senior curator with the Gilcrease Museum and professor of anthropology at the University of Tulsa. The Gilcrease Museum features one of the largest collections of art of the American West.

¹⁵ F. Kent Reilly, “Displaying the Source of the Sacred,” in *Peace Medals: Negotiating Power in Early America*, ed. Robert B. Pickering (Tulsa, OK: Gilcrease Museum, 2011).

not explicit, one of the underlying themes of Reilly's argument is that of distance. The idea that the power of the medal was "distant and invisible, but real," is suggestive of the inherent cultural and geographical separation intended between Natives and Euro-Americans. During its movement across the American frontier, a peace medal communicated along competing trajectories of power.

In 2015, the National Portrait Gallery presented *From Token to Ornament: Indian Peace Medals and the McKenney-Hall Portraits*.¹⁶ McKenney and Hall lithographs, originally made for the volume set *The History of the Indian Tribes of North America*, were exhibited alongside peace medals matching those that adorn the sitters in the images.¹⁷ Portraiture featured in *From Token to Ornament* is twofold; the exhibition presents the portraits of tribal delegates while also highlighting the presidential profiles showcased by the medals. The presence of the historical artifacts focuses the viewer's attention on the material characteristics of the medals, emphasizing the object's process of production. The exhibit also underscored an issue at the center of my own study: as the portraits were completed in Washington, D.C., the presence of a peace medal, by definition, necessitated mobility. Groups of Native American delegates traveled from the frontier into the nation's capital, where they were bestowed with medals, to have impressed upon them the country's power and resources. Movement, in this case, went both ways; Native Americans journeyed into the city and peace medals accompanied them in transit back toward the periphery of the nation.

¹⁶ More can be read about *From Token to Ornament: Indian Peace Medals and the McKenney-Hall Portraits* in Rebecca Bush and K. Tawny Paul, ed., *Art and Public History: Approaches, Opportunities, and Challenge* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield: 2017), 114.

¹⁷ William McKenney was the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the United States' War Department between 1824 and 1830, and the lithographs sourced portraiture he commissioned by Charles Bird King.

The objective at the very core of peace medal production was portability: capable of being carried, of being moved from place to place, and of being conveyed and read by diverse and dispersed audiences across time and space. Roberts speaks to this point during her discussion on John Singleton Copley's use of profiles within his portraits. She argues, "It [specie money] serves as a reliable medium for the storage and transportation of value... The profile view, then, whether derived from medallion, coin, or other *clipeus* format, embodied not only 'distance' in the honorific sense, but also distance in the geographical sense."¹⁸ With an emphasis placed on value, Roberts points toward another qualifier of effective portability: resistance to decay. Objects meant for circulation had to resist decomposition, both in a literal, physical sense, as well as in terms of prestige and political significance. Medallions and currency in coinage were ideal for this purpose, especially against shifting laws of fiscal policy within the United States. Metals were durable and impervious to damage. They were also a stable medium upon which a single image could be permanently affixed.¹⁹ The presidential profile as evident on the peace medal is indicative of the status associated with the highest position of power within the country. It also conveys that authority and influence across geographic distance during its circulation and exchange. The dependability of the peace medal's physicality served to enhance its efficacy as a channel of communication between the United States government and the indigenous tribes dispersed across the continent.

These varying approaches in exhibiting peace medals emphasize the materiality underpinning both the production and transport of these objects. The exhibits informed by more recent considerations of the Indian peace medal provide the scholarly and critical backdrop for

¹⁸ Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, 28.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 110. In her chapter discussing Audubon, Roberts also utilizes the Panic of 1819 to discuss the anxieties surrounding currency in the form of paper following bubbles of debt, adding to the cultural mindset that the stability of coinage was steady and trustworthy.

my own research. Prucha's interest in materiality provides a historical context for my argument, in particular regarding the material heft of these objects. Situated in between material and visual studies, Roberts' methodological framework informs chapters two and three as I work to trace and define the movement of medals and artworks, contributing the established materiality of transit. Finally, I apply this movement to structures of mobility across the nineteenth-century American frontier evident within contemporaneous visual culture by investigating parallels in the fluidity of national racial groups and evolving United States fiscal policy.

CHAPTER TWO: Charles Bird King and Early Medallie Circuits

The painting, *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees* [Figure 1], produced in 1821, demonstrates some of the earliest routes traveled by American manufactured peace medals.²⁰ Prior scholarship on this image has analyzed it in terms of pictorial and documentary authenticity. This chapter will utilize materiality as a methodological tool to investigate this image differently, tracing systems of mobility and circulation as they convey messages about power. By following the peace medal's movement, I establish that the route of transit suggested by *Young Omahaw* existed as a broken circuit, exerting agency over narratives of Native displacement. The mechanisms used to accomplish this transmission tease out ideas of influence and value on the nineteenth-century American frontier.

Charles Bird King was an American portraitist established in Washington D.C. He had studied under Edward Savage in New York, and then Benjamin West in London, before returning to America. Settling in D.C. afforded King a network of politicians and wealthy patrons for whom he produced portraiture.²¹ One of King's best-known paintings, *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees* is notable in that it features a group of Native American figures, rather than D.C.'s elite. The picture portrays five individuals predominantly through three-quarter view. The busts of the most visible four are set at alternating angles, presenting their faces to the viewer in a rippling wave. The men of this group are wrapped in white and brown furs, also alternating across the image, leaving portions of their shoulders and chest bare. Set against a dark and indistinct blue backdrop, the painting suggests the group is outdoors. The gradient in background may even hint at a tree line against the

²⁰ Prucha, *Indian Peace Medals in American History*, 3-36.

²¹ Cosentino, *The Paintings of Charles Bird King 1785-1862* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 37-38.

horizon. Against a color palette primarily consisting of subdued blues and browns, the reds within the painting are especially prominent. The vibrant crimson hues of the sitters' face paint, roaches, and war hammer in the foreground are highlighted. This scheme also points to one outstanding detail. The red ribbon around the central figure's neck brings the viewer's eye to the only industrially manufactured object within the image – the peace medal.

Established in the early 1820s, Charles Bird King's Gallery of Paintings was a stable venue in which the artist displayed his own work to the public against the growing cityscape of Washington D.C.²² Its status as a permanent site for the display of his work contrasted sharply with the more common means of display of art – traveling exhibitions – during the antebellum years. From the time it was painted, *Young Omahaw*, *War Eagle*, *Little Missouri*, and *Pawnees* was a mainstay of his personal gallery.²³ A striking composite portrait, the foremost figure wears a James Monroe peace medal – a pronounced detail central to the image. Examining the medal's circuitry – the physical logistics of design, transportation, and movement – helps to make sense of its visibility, and its disparity with King's physically unmoving exhibition space. *Young Omahaw* is an active player in the narratives of indigenous displacement during the early American republic, tracing the mobility of medals and people as they are in transit between the periphery of society and the center.

Around this time, King was commissioned by the United States War Department to paint portraits of tribal delegates to Washington, D.C, arranged by Superintendent of Indian Affairs, William McKenney.²⁴ This relationship with the Bureau of Indian Affairs lasted just over two

²² See Rowena Houghton Dasch, "'Now Exhibiting': Charles Bird King's Picture Gallery, Fashioning American Taste and Nation 1824-1861" (PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2012), 15, <http://hdl.handle.net/2152/19618>.

²³ The painting was exhibited in 1837 and 1838 at the National Academy of Design in New York, submitted under King's name by Gadsby Chapman. Cosentino, *The Paintings of Charles Bird King 1785-1862*, 67.

²⁴ This was briefly mentioned in Chapter One, during the discussion on the National Portrait Gallery exhibition, *From Token to Ornament: Indian Peace Medals and the McKenney-Hall Portraits*.

decades and provided King a relatively lucrative income and consistent funding stream. Many American artists whose primary theme was Native Americans looked to this arrangement as a model.²⁵ George Catlin, for example, sought to replicate this relationship, pursuing government support for artwork documenting Native cultures prior to their anticipated demise.²⁶ Scholarship regarding King's work generally concerns themes of patronage, exploring its role in shaping and informing pictorial content, due to his relationship with the War Department. The relationship between government patronage and politics has been a primary point of entry for Brian Dippie, a scholar of the American West and its mythologies, and he has written extensively on these themes. His 1990 book, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage*, deals exclusively with the subject. King's success with securing commissions through the U.S. War Department is cast as the perfect foil to Catlin's dramatic failures in comparable ventures.²⁷

More recent scholars have developed alternative methods of investigating work by artists such as King and Catlin and explore the nuances in imagery portraying indigenous identity during the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Hutchinson's 2013 article, "From Pantheon to Indian Gallery: Art and Sovereignty on the Early Nineteenth-Century Cultural Frontier," is one such example that considers the exhibition of Native portraiture during the nineteenth century, investigating the influence that tribal sovereignty in the negotiation of identity.²⁸ Hutchinson argues that King's portraiture presents a space accessible to both sitter and artist. She uses the term 'portraiture' with intention, referencing Richard Brilliant's requisite self-representation as

²⁵ King received an approximate \$3,500 from the American government for his commissioned portraits of Native delegates to the capital, a hefty sum at the time.

²⁶ Catlin was not alone in his pursuits. Many artists, especially during the early nineteenth century, attempted with varying degrees of success to receive governmental patronage for their work.

²⁷ Brian Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

²⁸ Elizabeth Hutchinson, "From Pantheon to Indian Gallery: Art and Sovereignty on the Early Nineteenth-Century Cultural Frontier," *Journal of American Studies*, 47 (2013), 313-337, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002187581300008X>.

criteria of a portrait, where the sitter influences the picture through the methods used to present themselves.²⁹ Even as the artist presents a biased interpretation of the sitter within the picture, negotiation of identity occurs within the distance between artist and sitter and both have a role in making meaning. Though King's paintings present his own perspective as a Euro-American artist, there are traceable elements of self-determination present through dress and manner utilized in the negotiation of portraiture.

Stephanie Pratt (Dakota) develops similar themes in her chapter, "Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s-1860s," from the 2013 edited book *Indigenous Bodies: Reviewing, Relocating, Reclaiming*.³⁰ While Pratt discusses the "portrait image" as "always mediating identity," in regards to early nineteenth-century portraiture of Native peoples, she accounts for circumstances in which this negotiation would have been restricted from the sitter.³¹ Offering up measures to counterbalance these inequalities, she writes:

In nineteenth-century America it was portrait painters and photographers, trained in the Western tradition, who recorded the likenesses of Native peoples. The images that result show us what they proposed as an adequate representation of these individuals. But if we use material culture to widen the aperture of perception, it may be that we can discern something that lies mute within these images; the residue of what the sitter brought to the occasion.³²

Pratt is specifically interested in reading the elements of Native material culture employed within the pictorial frame. Whether those objects were props or not, tribally sourced or not, Pratt argues there are threads of intention on the part of the sitter that may be translated by specifically

²⁹ Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991).

³⁰ Stephanie Pratt, "Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s-1860s," in *Indigenous Bodies: Reviewing, Relocating, Reclaiming*, ed. Jacqueline Fear-Segal and Rebecca Tillett (State University of New York Press: 2013), 17-30.

³¹ Pratt, "Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s-1860s," 20.

³² *Ibid.*

examining the material culture presented to the viewer. It is the interpretation of this material evidence that ‘widen[s] the aperture of perception.’³³

I, too, aim to ‘widen the aperture of perception’ by using the methodology of materialism to trace the circuitous routes of the peace medal displayed at the front of the pictorial plane. Utilizing object-oriented ontology is compatible with Pratt’s description of Native (Objiwe, specifically) material culture occupying a category of ‘thing-beings.’³⁴ As discussed in the first chapter regarding Roberts’ use of similar frameworks, scholars such as Latour resist hierarchically classifying objects as operating differently than humans.³⁵ Both objects and humans collect networks of meaning as they navigate space. The peace medal, and its presence within the portrait, exposes modes of circulation and mobility that define the object’s fundamental ambulant characteristics.

To investigate the so-called authenticity and accuracy of the painting, prior scholarship regarding *Young Omahaw* has examined the source of the portrait, asking who the sitters were and where they came from. Established research points to two or three individuals who served as King’s inspiration in forming a fictionalized composite portrait. A delegation of fifteen chiefs from five different tribes in the Upper Missouri region traveled to D.C. in late 1821.³⁶ The painting was completed that same year. Andrew Cosentino, whose 1977 biographical compilation of King’s life was published in association with an exhibition featuring the artist at

³³ Pratt, “Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s-1860s,” 20.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 205.

³⁶ This delegation which arrived in the winter of 1821 is sometimes referred to as the O’Fallon Delegation. Benjamin O’Fallon organized a delegation to Washington comprised of chiefs from tribes in Upper Missouri – Kansa, Missouri, Omaha, Oto, and Pawnee. More regarding this delegation specifically, as well as a history of others, can be found in Herman Viola, *Diplomats in Buckskin: A History of Indian Delegations in Washington City* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 25.

the National Collection of Fine Arts (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum), may have been the first to pose the suggestion that the painting featured a composite grouping of individuals.³⁷ Cosentino writes, “Despite the differentiation implied by the title of King’s group portrait, the similarity in the warriors’ faces suggests that they were based on the portraits of Petalesharro and Peskelechaco.”³⁸ Petalesharro and Peskelechaco were Pawnee chiefs among the 1821 O’Fallon delegation. King produced individual portraits of both chiefs, as well as others from the group, for the War Department. Cosentino continues, “The two heads on the right, for example, are surely after *Peskelechaco*, while that on the left in no doubt based on *Petalesharro*, as are the two central portraits, though these are modified with features denoting age...”³⁹ Certainly there is some measure of doubt regarding which portraits inspired the individual heads within *Young Omahaw*, but Cosentino’s point stands. There are enough similarities between King’s portraits *Petalesharro* [Figure 2] and *Peskelechaco* [Figure 3] and the faces presented within the image that this theory has been taken up as the generally accepted narrative of the painting.

Julie Schimmel takes up this position as well in her essay from *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920*. Schimmel echoes the likelihood that, despite the painting’s title, King utilized “...a convention of multiple portraits of the same or different subjects,” and that the figures presented within the painting “...are probably based on the likenesses of two Pawnee chiefs, Petalesharro, chief of the Pawnee Loups, and Peskelechaco, chief of the Republican Pawnees.”⁴⁰ The group portrait served a dual function: it not only

³⁷ Andrew J. Cosentino, *The paintings of Charles Bird King 1785-1862* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 63

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Julie Schimmel, “Inventing the Indian,” in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 153.

commemorated the travels of the O’Fallon Delegation to the capital, but it also presented a composite image of an indigenous face “type” to the viewer. To Cosentino’s theory, Schimmel adds: “Conceived as Roman nobles, these are men to be admired for physical prowess as well as reason. They represent a race that could perhaps be persuaded by rational argument as well as the formidable presence of the United States government to abandon tribal tradition for a more civilized life-style.”⁴¹ It was imperative that King’s portraits conveyed an “adequate representation,” of these individuals.⁴² This was, after all, his directive from the U.S. War Department, whose efforts benefitted from information King demonstrated through visual abbreviation. Paintings produced for display within his personal studio and gallery, however, might not hold up to the same obligation of implied accuracy in representation and granted him leeway to create *Young Omahaw*, a fictionalized figure study.

If *Young Omahaw*, *War Eagle*, *Little Missouri*, and *Pawnees* is indeed a composite portrait, imagined by a Euro-American artist of the dominant colonialist culture, how can the indigenous material culture within the image – if any – be examined in order to ‘widen the aperture of perception,’ as suggested by Pratt?⁴³ Very few elements of Native material culture seem to have been included when comparing the commissioned portraits, *Petalesharro* and *Peskelechaco*, to the imagined portrait, *Young Omahaw*. *Petalesharro*, for example, wears a long Plains-style war bonnet made of eagle feathers in the official portrait, rather than the roach headdresses presented in the group portrait. In fact, the regalia presented in *Young Omahaw* seems to consist of an amalgamation of Kansa, Pawnee, and Oto adornments.⁴⁴ This may be an

⁴¹ Schimmel, “Inventing the Indian,” 153-154.

⁴² Pratt, “Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s-1860s,” 20.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ The White House collection holds five of Charles Bird King’s portraits from this particular delegation visit. They include: 1) *Petalesharro* (*Generous Chief*), Pawnee, 2) *Hayne Hudjihini* (*Eagle of Delight*), Oto, 3) *Monchousia* (*White Plume*), Kansa, 4) *Sharitarish* (*Wicked Chief*), Pawnee, and 5) *Shaumonekusse* (*Prairie Wolf*), Oto. These are

intentionally fanciful artistic embellishment, or perhaps a slip of King's memory. One of the only pieces of ornamentation that was translated from the commissioned portraits and into King's imagined group portrait is the James Monroe peace medal.

The U.S. War Department was responsible for the production and distribution of the peace medals, and it certainly would have behooved King to include references to his employer within these paintings. Inclusion of the medals may also have contributed to indigenous ideas of trade and distance on behalf of the sitter, to whom the objects equally conveyed meaning. Pratt suggests that there may have been little difficulty in artistically 'translating' the imagery of peace medals from the sitter to the portrait because it was a sign easily understood by Euro-American artists. The peace medal transmitted ideas of power legible to both groups. Native material culture may have been misinterpreted or neglected within portraiture, lending partiality to depictions of objects such as the peace medal. Pratt further explains:

But they also wear strings of beads and/or a peace or trade medal worn around the neck, items of trade and negotiation. [...] All of these possessions reveal the workings of the zone of contact on the frontier, where trade and exchange fostered the growth of intercultural understandings. The complex web of contact, trade and negotiation of the 'middle ground' produced a dynamic environment that fostered in its participants self-fashioned hybridical identities.⁴⁵

The 'middle ground' comprised of intricate systems of contact, trade, and negotiation that Pratt describes is both the physical and cognitive spaces that peace medals navigated. The objects occupied immaterial space where strategies of political identity form, and simultaneously moved throughout literal distances of the American landscape. King's portrayal of the medal within *Young Omahaw* reconciles these modes of encounter, underscoring ideas of Jennifer Roberts'

easily compared against one another within the catalogue from the White House Historical Association. From William Kloss, *Art in the White House: A Nation's Pride* (Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Association, 2008), 353-354.

⁴⁵ Pratt, "Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s-1860s," 25.

'phatic' dimension.⁴⁶ The painting offers a visual representation of collision, indicating both the tangible and intangible negotiations made between the artist and sitter.

The distribution and circulation of peace medals drove the American government's tribal relations throughout the majority of the nineteenth century, and the complex networks of interrelation, both physical and immaterial, are abbreviated by the object's inclusion within the portraits. Pratt continues, "Seen in this light, the material items depicted in the portraits are better understood as discursive signs or even living, real presences as were the sitters themselves, whose meaning can only be understood in the context of a particular moment in frontier history."⁴⁷ Although prior scholarship considering *Young Omahaw*, *War Eagle*, *Little Missouri*, and *Pawnees* generally acknowledges the presence of the peace medal, the implications of its inclusion within the picture have not been examined. There is tremendous spatial and cultural specificity contained within each instance the peace medal is used pictorially. Each medallion visually references a particular region, an indigenous people, or a federal policy. Tracing the material details of the peace medal in this instance reveals a complex web of circulation and mobility previously undiscussed.

Most sources indicate that the peace medal adorning the center figure's bare chest in the foreground of *Young Omahaw* bears the image of the United States' fifth president, James Monroe.⁴⁸ This timeline matches up; the U.S. Mint, established in 1792, would issue medallions stamped with the profile of the sitting president for distribution to tribal representatives. Monroe, president between the years of 1817 and 1825, came into office at a time when this practice was already established, although Congress occasionally took some coaxing to allocate the funding

⁴⁶ Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, 6-7.

⁴⁷ Pratt, "Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s-1860s," 25.

⁴⁸ Cosentino, *The paintings of Charles Bird King 1785-1862*, 62.

stream for the production of these objects.⁴⁹ Although the practice of gifting peace medals can be traced back to some of the earliest cultural contact on the North American continent, this method of exchange was standardized following the Louisiana Purchase when Thomas Jefferson peace medals were transported across the continent with the Lewis and Clark expedition.⁵⁰

Visually, the detail of the peace medal stands apart from the remainder of *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees*. King's rendering of the object is particularly refined and the reflective light produces a sheen unlike anything else contained within the pictorial plane. Obviously manufactured, the object is shaped into a uniform circle. Incongruous with the other items of material culture adorning the figures – furs and beads – the medallion is both industrial and standardized. Although the peace medal is made of silver, a naturally occurring element, this object was clearly produced by a machine, denoting the potential for endless reproducibility.

Manufactured by the United States Mint, this type of production was a relatively recent addition to the federal government's purview.⁵¹ The first Mint of the United States, as well as a federal system of currency, was established in 1791.⁵² Although responsible foremost for producing the coinage of a burgeoning nation, the production of Indian peace medals also fell to the Mint, in part, because of its ability to produce reproducible objects for circulation. Thomas Jefferson was the first president for whom this practice was carried out, although George

⁴⁹ The process for ordering the medals following the inauguration of a new administration is discussed at length in Francis Paul Prucha, *Indian Peace Medals in American History*, 99-100. Thomas McKenney, Superintendent of Indian Trade, wasn't able to obtain the Monroe medals until 1820 – three years after the beginning of the president's first term.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-16. Though George Washington was the first American president to utilize peace medals, this followed a long history of British and Spanish distribution peace medals across the continent.

⁵¹ A. Barton Hepburn, *History of Coinage and Currency in the United States and the Perennial Contest for Sound Money*, (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers: 1968), 20-33.

⁵² The first U.S. Mint was located in Philadelphia, PA. For the peace medals to have been distributed in Washington, D.C., they first had to be transported there. See Frank H. Stewart, *History of the First United States Mint: Its People and Its Operations* (Frank H. Stewart Electric Co., 1924), 14-15.

Washington peace medals had been made and distributed in the late eighteenth century. Rather than the uniform, circular medals produced by the U.S. Mint, these early medals were oval and incised with images. By the early nineteenth century when the medals could be standardized, they were manufactured in three different sizes, connoting the different levels of the recipient's importance. Jefferson's medals were used not only for his own administration, but during the first term of James Madison's presidency as well.⁵³ The machines responsible for pressing the medals were unequipped to produce the solid silver peace medals requested by the Madison administration, rather than the hollow silver shells used by Jefferson, and the process was significantly delayed. The overproduction of Jefferson medals had to suffice for the first four years of Madison's presidency.⁵⁴ Prucha writes:

Thus large numbers of Jefferson medals in all three sizes found their way to the West for distribution to the Indians in addition to those given out by Lewis and Clark. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to decide with certainty the exact time of presentation of particular Jefferson medals excavated in the Mississippi and Missouri River valleys or passed down by generations of Indians in those areas.⁵⁵

Despite difficulties in production at the U.S. Mint, peace medals permeated the American frontier, participating in networks of circulation and exchange. The possibility for limitless reproducibility and dispersal of these objects, arranging indigenous individuals and groups in relation to the federal power conveyed, was hindered only by dilemmas in the peace medal's process of material production.

An occasional complication for the U.S. Mint arose from the need to secure enough bullion, especially during its early years in operation. Although mining is not generally

⁵³ Prucha, *Indian Peace Medals in American History*, 11. This discusses the variations in size for the medal's intended recipient. The largest medals generally went to chiefs, while the smaller two sizes were dispersed to warriors.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 96. The Jefferson medals had been hollow silver shells, joined by a silver rim. The minting presses were not outfitted for molding solid silver medals.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

considered among the pressing factors driving development of the West – at least not until the discovery of major lodes of gold during the mid-nineteenth century – there was enough interest in the potential resources that prompted the expansion of certain regions. The silver of the peace medal in King’s portrait is indicative of mining and the economy that resulted from geological value. Plenty of interest was generated in the mineralogical richness of the Missouri River Valley, a region that held promise for Euro-Americans as the United States looked to expand westward.⁵⁶ The Potosi Mines of southeastern Missouri, for example, named for the silver mining city in Bolivia, were discovered in 1798.⁵⁷ While these mines were not particularly rich in silver, they were endowed with enough of the minerals galena and blende, which contain small amounts of silver that can be separated and sourced.⁵⁸ Though these mining operations may not have contributed to the silver bullion struck for the peace medals, the promise of resources helped drive attraction to the area. These contested spaces of the shifting American frontier were constantly pushing up against and diminishing the homelands of Petalesharro, Peskelechaco, and the rest of the 1821 O’Fallon delegation from the Upper Missouri.

When President James Monroe – featured on the medal in *Young Omahaw* – was inaugurated in 1817, the nation would shortly be thrown into an embroiled debate regarding the addition of slaveholding states to the Union. The Louisiana Purchase, which Monroe had been instrumental in facilitating, resulted in a massive expanse of land that had yet to be delegated between those who believed the United States government ought to restrict the growth of slavery and those who believed the government should not interfere. Monroe’s tenure as president produced what was – at the time – an acceptable agreement: the Missouri Compromise.

⁵⁶ Walter R. Crane, *Gold and Silver: An Economic History of Mining in the United States* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1908), 81-82.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Congressionally enacted, the bill admitted both Maine and Missouri to the Union, the former as free state and the latter as a slave state, and no state above the 36° parallel of latitude would be allowed the institution of slavery, except for Missouri. At the time that King completed *Young Omahaw*, the very land which the O’Fallon Delegation had traveled from was either being delineated, marked and plotted by the economic forces behind the circulation and movement of slaves, or would be imminently contested regarding its prospective development and use for slaveholders.⁵⁹

The presence of Monroe’s presidential profile bore by the peace medal is significant to the object’s circulation, as well as the movement implied by the portrait. Returning to Roberts’ discussion of profiles where she argues, “The profile, in other words, was understood as a transported vision that made absence present without fully integrating it into the space of the viewer.”⁶⁰ The authority and power of President James Monroe was therefore established wherever the medallion might travel as it was exchanged. King’s portrait said as much – this group was bestowed with a peace medal, and the picture suggests they would continue to carry Monroe’s likeness with them, out of D.C. and back across the American frontier. The fourth figure in *Young Omahaw*, though in shadow, is depicted in a profile where the other figures are in three-quarter turn. This nods to the significance of the medallion profile, especially as the shadowed figure’s profile faces right where Monroe faces to the left. Monroe is faced toward the future in the American West, whereas the Native figure looks in the opposite direction.

Though peace medals were dispersed out across the frontier to various tribes, we know that would not have been the case for this imagined, pictorial object. Peace medals were bestowed upon the Kansa, Missouri, Omaha, Oto, and Pawnee chiefs during their visit to

⁵⁹ Viola, *Diplomats in Buckskin: A History of Indian Delegations in Washington City*, 25.

⁶⁰ Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, 26.

Washington, D.C., when they met with President Monroe. This is the circuitry of the delegate's route, implied by King's painting, indicating the physical transit inward to the center from the periphery of American society, and back out again. The group traveled to the seat of American government, and they would return to their lands when the visit ended. Therein lies the problematic of this circuit depicted in *Young Omahaw*. These lands were rapidly changing, contested landscapes overlaid with politically shifting notions regarding what America was and what it could be, and those tasked with molding that vision were ambivalent – at best – about the groups that already occupied its space. The circuit, implied by portraits of Native individuals and groups, was a broken loop.

Despite its content, *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees* was never intended for the United States War Department. Cosentino explains, "...[it] was painted not for the Indian Gallery but for display in King's own studio and later in his gallery, where he also exhibited his many replicas of the Indian portraits he painted for the government."⁶¹ King's gallery space, a constant presence for many decades within a growing capital, highlighted the dilemma – perhaps unintentionally – of place and displacement. Widely viewed by those who traveled to Washington, D.C. and visited King's gallery, *Young Omahaw* may have been the only access point that viewers had into the complex web of exchange evidenced by the presence of the peace medal. The images on display within the gallery conveyed Native Americans, and the medals with them, having only partially completed the circuit of movement from the wilderness, into civilization, and back again. The circuits would not be completed; the land these individuals returned to would not necessarily be as they had left it, nor could it be promised that this land would remain in their possession.

⁶¹ Cosentino, *The paintings of Charles Bird King 1786-1862*, 66.

Roberts continues, “If circulation narratives granted coins and other commodity objects a voice, it was because in the new global exchange networks, to which no individual could have anything but a fragmentary access, these objects themselves were the only witnesses to the comprehensive sum of their own movements.”⁶² The appearance of the medal presented the viewer with a visual synecdoche for the systems of movement and circulation, sweeping networks of exchange to which the viewer would have no other point of access. As the United States of America grew, so did the literal distance that peace medals would travel from their site of production. This worked to generate greater delay both in physical exchange and perceptual comprehension of the object, as well as to widen the gap that prevented individuals from accessing the whole of the exchange system, witnessing only fragments of the circulation.

For King, too, his portraiture may have been the only point through which he was able to access these networks of exchange. The inclusion of the James Monroe peace medal is pictorial mechanism indicating the systems through which the object would have been circulated. It has been established that this visual synecdoche was used to indicate two simultaneous systems of movement; the peace medal was transported both physically, throughout the American frontier, as well as immaterially, within webs of political power and racial identities. Furthermore, King illustrates the groups impacted by the development of the Missouri River Valley – or those from whom he sourced his imaginary portrait – depicted as possessing the medal, manufactured from resources that could have been sourced from their homelands. The pictures produced by King were only the abstract fragment through which the complex system of displacement was accessible, both to him and to those who visited the gallery to view his collection.

⁶² Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, 29. Here, Roberts is specifically referring to literature that emerged during the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries that revealed the ‘lives’ of inanimate objects, such as pieces of currency. I apply it here as a way of discussing the ‘life’ of the peace medal and find its usage appropriate.

Returning to Stephanie Pratt, this examination of the peace medal in *Young Omahaw*, *War Eagle*, *Little Missouri*, and *Pawnees* contextualizes what the sitters for these portraits may have brought to the image. Scholars who have examined the role of peace medals in the past have discussed, at great length, the power and respect commended by a peace medal – and this may very well be accurate. In assessing the ambulant circuitry of such an object, the peace medals also indicate an essential awareness. Sitters bearing one of these medallions for a portrait understood the broken nature of the circuit in which they were expected to participate. They were engaged in narratives of self-determination, navigating complex systems of negotiation and political influence. Analyzing the material culture of this painting, and images like it, helps to ‘widen the aperture of perception.’⁶³ Here, the logistics of production and problematics of movement collide to comprise the picture’s narrative. King’s work translates courses of motion, delineating encounters between objects, commenting on both the place and displacement of medals, indigenous peoples, and the artwork itself.

⁶³ Pratt, “Restating Indigenous Presence in Eastern Dakota and Ho Chunk (Winnebago) Portraits of the 1830s-1860s,” 20.

CHAPTER THREE: George Catlin and the Circulation of Value

My aim for this chapter is to situate George Catlin's portraits and his traveling *Indian Gallery* at the intersection of movement and material culture, as established in the previous two chapters. I trace the mobility of peace medals within Catlin's portraiture through the lens of materiality to distinguish lines of cultural and fiscal exchange between cosmopolitan centers of exhibition, such as Paris and London, and the nineteenth-century American frontier. Despite the durable portability of the peace medal as a material object, Catlin's portraiture reveals the critical instability in its value during American westward expansion.

The *Indian Gallery* was a compilation of paintings and ethnological artifacts, collected from the frontier when Catlin decided to document the lifestyles of American Indians prior to the rapid development of the West. In the late 1830s, Catlin exhibited the *Indian Gallery* in major cities like New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia, with little success. He turned instead toward Europe to tour the gallery. Seeking to promote ticket sales, Catlin arranged for a group of fourteen Ioway tribespeople to join the *Indian Gallery* for exhibitions in London and Paris, performing dances and rituals for his audiences.⁶⁴ Catlin produced a handful of significant portraits featuring members of the troupe during their year in Europe.

Shon-ta-yi-ga, Little Wolf, a Famous Warrior [Figure 4] is one of Catlin's portraits featuring the Ioway from this period. Little Wolf is posed as a monumental figure against an indistinct, but luminous sky. His clothing and decoration are fashioned from natural materials; he is adorned by a bear claw necklace, fur pelts, beaded jewelry, vermilion face paint from ground cinnabar, and a shell gorget.⁶⁵ Two medallions, strung from ribbons around his neck, stand out as

⁶⁴ Brian Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 102.

⁶⁵ Contrary to the concern with Charles Bird King's *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees*, the individuals featured in Catlin's portraits are well-documented and the sitters' name, with minor misspellings or

obviously manufactured and the uniformity of their medallic forms stand out conspicuously against the other adornments worn by the sitter. The larger, silver medal is undoubtedly an Indian peace medal, though the presidential profile is obscured.⁶⁶ The other medal worn by Little Wolf is smaller and appears to be made of gold, rather than silver. It also has a markedly different ribbon than the larger medal. While the silver medal is strung from a green ribbon, there is a tricolor ribbon of red, blue and white which supports the front medallion.

There is substantial evidence that this front medallion is a *donative* medal.⁶⁷ This term differs from the peace medal as it a medal merely presented or bestowed – donated – whereas peace medals generally indicated an agreement or exchange.⁶⁸ When Catlin, the Ioway, and the *Indian Gallery* left London for France in April of 1845, meetings and demonstrations for significant dignitaries in Paris were arranged. This included a private demonstration for the ruling monarch of France, King Louis Philippe I, at the Tuileries Palace in Paris where the tribe was gifted with commemorative medals bearing the profile of the king.⁶⁹ These two

embellishments, serve as the titles for his paintings. In addition, references to ‘Little Wolf’ can be found in finance ledgers, as reported by Dippie. See Brian Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 105.

⁶⁶ Though the engraving on the medal is too indistinct to determine the image, Prucha makes two mentions of peace medals within the Ioway tribe. See Francis Paul Prucha, *Indian Peace Medals in American History*, 30 and 57.

⁶⁷ F. Kent Reilly suggests that the smaller, gold medal “...very well may be a ‘George Washington Fur Trade Medal,’ not a peace medal but rather the symbol of a trade alliance between the Iowa People and the Union Fur Company of St. Louis, Missouri.” See F. Kent Reilly, “Displaying the Source of the Sacred.” *Peace Medals: Negotiating Power in Early America* (Gilcrease Museum: 2011), 15. For further evidence of this object instead as a donative medal, see Fuld’s chapter from the same edited book, George J. Fuld, “French donative medals of Louis Philippe I.”

⁶⁸ The Gilcrease Museum utilizes this term in their object catalog to describe one of the medals given to the Ojibwa group that traveled with Catlin in France. They were also given donative medals by Louis Philippe I. See King Louis Philippe donative medal, 65.58, Kravis Discovery Center (Tulsa: Gilcrease Museum, 1845), <https://collections.gilcrease.org/object/6558>.

⁶⁹ Catlin’s itinerary from this occasion records the moment in which these medals were bestowed upon the Ioways. He writes, “On arriving I was informed by him that he had come from His Majesty with the gold and silver medals to be presented in His Majesty’s name to each one individually. They hung their medals on their necks, suspended by their tri-colored ribbons...” The passage suggests that each of the Ioway received a medal as a gift from the French monarch. Moreover, the details of Catlin’s image contrasts the tri-color ribbon with the solid color of ribbons used by the United States federal government for the exchange of peace medals. See Thomas C. Donaldson. "The George Catlin Indian Gallery in the U.S. National Museum (Smithsonian Institution)." In: *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, Showing the Operations, Expenditures, and Condition of the Institution to July, 1885*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886), 675.

manufactured objects, both the donative medal from King Louis Philippe and unidentified peace medal, form a dynamic, visual relationship with the other regalia in the portrait of Little Wolf. The shell gorget rests at the base of his throat, followed by the elaborative bear claw necklace and strings of beads. Although obscured by the smaller medal, the silver United States peace medal rests higher against Little Wolf's chest, while the gold donative medal is pushed to the front of the pictorial plane. Despite its obvious visibility and the vibrancy of the ribbon from which it hangs, the American medal appears from behind it, larger in scale although its details are ambiguous. Each of the medals is pierced and looped, and the fasteners form extrusive points, positioned and delineated by ribbons, central to his torso.

Catlin's decision to depict Louis Philippe's donative medal in a more prominent position than that of the peace medal may point toward his own financial troubles. Returning to Brian Dippie's 1990 book, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, monetary details are among his primary concerns: who were Catlin's patrons; were there other financial contributors; and what kind of debt Catlin had accumulated by the end of his life. Dippie supports his research with fiscal evidence gathered from the artist's account ledgers, balance sheets, and scribbled lists detailing purchases. Tracing the physical receipts of Catlin's financial state lends a distinct emphasis on materiality to the discussion of the artist's dealings throughout his life. This investigation into Catlin's financial state helps to make sense of his desperate attempts at patronage. During the Ioway's time in Europe, Catlin was seeking a buyer for the *Indian Gallery* as his appeals to the United States Congress for their monetary support had been fruitless. It is reasonable to assume that demonstrations for King Louis Philippe were meant to encourage his purchase of Catlin's *Indian Gallery*. The placement of the medal in Little Wolf's portrait – an image later exhibited in

the Paris Salon of 1846 – may have been a deliberate, if unsuccessful strategy, to court Louis Philippe’s acquisition of the *Indian Gallery*.⁷⁰

As demonstrated by my earlier discussion on Charles Bird King’s *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees*, the presence of a peace medal indicates a circuit of movement facilitating transit into and out of a space. The representation of both medals compresses the effort and resources of movement made by Little Wolf. In Catlin’s painting, the lines representing ribbons against Little Wolf’s chest move inward from the periphery, toward the center, and back again. It is at the periphery that Native Americans are relegated to the frontier, moving and convening at the center, where the medal exists. The medals and their pictorial lines of movement constitute a map, of sorts, correlating with physical, material circulation. They work to diagram the profound physicality of displacement and mobility across the American frontier and Europe as Native and Euro-American groups traverse its routes. The ephemerality of this mobility is striking, especially contrasted with the solid and stable materiality of physical medallions. There is a salient duality present, though, in the depiction of double-sided objects. Only one side of each medal within the painting is presented to the viewer, forever visible. There are, however, two sides to every coin, and while Catlin’s inclusion of the medals certainly nods to the impermanence – the *circuitry* – of mobility and travel, it must simultaneously allude to circumstances of permanent dislocation.

Oftentimes, the circuit traversed by Native Americans in the routes where they encountered peace medals was inequitably broken, delivering them displaced lands or underhanded treaties.⁷¹ In an all-too-common narrative during the early decades of the nineteenth

⁷⁰ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 120.

⁷¹ In Little Wolf’s case, both his wife and his son died during their travels in Paris. The space he left on the American frontier fundamentally could not be the same as he had left it. See *Ibid.*, 107.

century, the Ioway were pressured to cede their ancestral lands on the Midwestern plains to the United States government. By 1838, they were removed to a reservation along the contemporary border between Nebraska and Kansas. The group arranged to tour demonstrations of ritual dances in U.S. cities – eventually meeting up with Catlin for their European tour – in an attempt to raise money against debts owed, both to the federal government as well as to regional fur traders. The Head Chief of the Ioway, Francis White Cloud, arranged with the promoter G. H. C. Melody, backed by showman P.T. Barnum, to tour demonstrations of Ioway ritual dances.⁷² Catlin, Melody, and Barnum alike had hopes that the European interest in the indigenous cultures of North America would bolster admissions. Although White Cloud certainly sought to generate money for the Ioway, transit to Europe was also justified by the tribe as they attempted to raise awareness of the rising levels of indigenous poverty within the United States.

Debt is a theme that plagued both George Catlin and the Ioway tribe, characterizing their time traveling in Europe with one another. Catlin had continued to use credit and accumulate debt as he toured with the Ioway, promoting the *Indian Gallery* by paying for the tribe's excursions and ensuring they were seen out in public. The propensity to spend whatever was made in profits back on promotion for the gallery left Catlin with very little funds leftover, and he was burdened with a mounting debt.⁷³ More than once, the entirety of Catlin's *Indian Gallery* was threatened by his creditors, insisting that he would need to give over his collection as collateral.⁷⁴ The Ioway were similarly positioned in a complex web of financial exchanges, owing more funds than they could feasibly generate during a tour of Europe.

⁷² This brief but lucrative relationship helps to explain Catlin's ability to finance the transport of his hefty collection as well as travel for the Ioway.

⁷³ Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 99. As an example, Dippie writes, "Catlin's balance sheet after one year told the story. As of January 31, 1841, 32,500 visitors had paid to see the Indian Gallery, bringing in \$9,433. His [Catlin's] nephew scrawled on the back of a letter, 'Spent all.'"

⁷⁴ By the end of his time in Europe, Catlin would be threatened debtor's prison, with the *Indian Gallery* held by his creditors. See *Ibid.*, 97, 145-46, 149-51, 320, 361.

The immaterial threat of debt worked to propel both parties in their joint efforts while in Europe. Jennifer Roberts, whose chapter concerning Audubon investigates anxieties regarding debt in early nineteenth-century America, argues:

In the early nineteenth century, and especially in the year clustering around the Panics of 1819 and 1837, public discourse in America was consumed by the dubiousness of modern financial representation: common themes in political and literary discourse included the disconnection of real value from its speculative image in banknotes and other paper credit instruments, and the deceptiveness, volatility, and mystery of the operations of credit. A primary quality attributed to paper credit was elasticity, or, to press the point, its capacity to vary in scale.⁷⁵

This fluidity of circulation described by Roberts only added to the anxieties regarding finances at the time. Money was difficult to trace, stabilize, and pinpoint, while also allowing for proportionately larger expenditures than could reasonably be repaid. In this way, debt as a concept had agency both immaterially and physically. Debt loomed as a threat, but finances in the form of papers, notes, and receipts had to be kept and recorded. Financial panics were not unique to the United States; France and Great Britain were also impacted by uncertainties regarding fiscal stability. Indeed, The Ioway's time touring in France was marred by mounting financial panic and mumblings of revolution.⁷⁶ Against this backdrop of economic uncertainty, the medals in Catlin's portrait appear comparatively stable in value as a form of perceptual and political currency due to the physical solidity of medallions as a medium.

During the tribe's time in Europe, George Catlin produced a portrait of White Cloud [Figure 5]. It is unclear whether this painting was completed before, after, or overlapping with Catlin's production of *Shon-ta-yi-ga, Little Wolf, a Famous Warrior*; both paintings feature the

⁷⁵ Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, 114.

⁷⁶ Revolution eventually drove Catlin back out of France and toward Great Britain. King Louis-Philippe, Catlin's intended financier, would be exiled. See more in Brian Dippie, *Catlin and his Contemporaries*, 107.

donative medal and tricolor ribbon.⁷⁷ The portraits are formatted similarly, with each sitter depicted against an ambiguous horizon. White Cloud's striking face, detailed and clearly rendered, is the focal point of the image, highlighted by the contrast of the green hand print and red face paint which draws the viewer's gaze up to meet his. His own gaze is resolute. Radiating outward from White Cloud's face, the image loses focus, and the regalia adorning his head, neck, and shoulders is rendered with increasingly loose brushwork. At the very bottom of the image, the small medallion hangs from a tricolor ribbon around White Cloud's neck. Notably, there is no American peace medal present. The gold medal that is present is barely identifiable as an object due to Catlin's imprecise rendering. This is a substantial difference from the portrait featuring Little Wolf, where the forms of ribbons and medals – a peace medal included – are clearly depicted. The reversal in Catlin's depiction circles the consideration back around, recalling the duality of double-sided objects such as medals.

After the initial removal from their ancestral homelands in contemporary Iowa, the tribe depended upon the government's consistent but meager annuity payments. These were used to both finance their basic needs as well as pay back debts toward the fur trade, which grew as the industry began to decline.⁷⁸ This left flexible, abstract channels of credit that could be utilized by the tribe while simultaneously holding the potential to be abused by the American government. The peace medals appeared to be a stable object of value – if not a monetary value, at least perhaps political reassurance – in a region that was otherwise both complex and ambivalent in

⁷⁷ The Smithsonian American Art Museum lists 1844 as the year of completion for Little Wolf's portrait and suggests that Catlin touched up the painting for exhibition in the Paris Salon of 1846. This might help to explain the more developed forms, as opposed to the portrait of White Cloud which was completed around roughly the same time. On the other hand, the National Gallery of Art, which holds the portrait of White Cloud, suggests that the painting was done in 1844-1845. This is indicative of a later completion date, but it is not a substantial difference in timing.

⁷⁸ A more detailed account of the debts owed and the transactions that took place can be found in Martha Royce Blain, *The Ioway Indians* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 195.

structure, backed by the increasingly volatile fiscal nature of credit. The artwork of Catlin's traveling *Indian Gallery*, including the portraits which featured these medals – *Shon-ta-yi-ga*, *Little Wolf, A Famous Warrior*, and *White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowa* – also acted as an anchor in convoluted and fluctuating spheres of political and financial exchanges. The gallery's material contents were under constant threat by Catlin's creditors; physical objects in his possession that might have improved his destitution were it not for his passionate devotion to the collection's integrity. The references to medallions in these portraits may also be a material indication of that which Catlin so desperately sought throughout his life: endorsement of a national power.

The stability of value in the peace medal was evidenced by the narratives of indigenous groups across the country approaching the mid-nineteenth century. Kendall Johnson writes on shifting Native perspectives of the peace medal in his 2007 article, "Peace, Friendship, and Financial Panic: Reading the Mark of Black Hawk in *Life of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak*."⁷⁹ While peace medals were initially valued as an object indicating respect and cooperation, the United States' push westward began to change that notion. In the early 1830s, the warrior Black Hawk (Sauk) led approximately 2,500 individuals from the Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo back across the Mississippi River in violation of a removal treaty, initiating the Black Hawk War of 1832.⁸⁰ Black Hawk evaded capture between April and August of 1832, eventually surrendering to U.S. soldiers. After being imprisoned, Black Hawk and other leaders of the Black Hawk War were forced to tour major American cities by order of President Andrew Jackson, so that they

⁷⁹ Kendall Johnson, "Peace, Friendship, and Financial Panic: Reading the Mark of Black Hawk in 'Life of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak'," *American Literary History* 19, no. 4 (2007), 771-799, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.library.arizona.edu/stable/4497012>.

⁸⁰ The war was disastrous, reporting between 450-600 deaths of Black Hawk's group and 77 deaths of white settlers and soldiers.

understand the power of the United States and have impressed upon them the futility of continued resistance. One of the stops on this circuit involved touring the U.S. Mint, the production site of the peace medals. Here, Black Hawk commented on the production by the machines as ‘very handsome.’⁸¹ This statement was meant as “an ironic comment that joins money and peace medals to imply that US currency, like its policies, cannot be trusted,” as argued by Johnson.⁸² The medals and coins manufactured here may have been uniform, readily produced, and appealing to look at, but did not hold anything other than superficial value to Black Hawk. He would refuse to wear peace medals, consistent with his views on the deceitful policies of the federal government as dishonorable.

Johnson demonstrates that Black Hawk’s commentary echoes financial concerns stemming from policies established by Jackson during the 1830s. He explains, “[President Jackson] rounded out his fiscal policy by abolishing the use of paper money to purchase government lands.”⁸³ This re-routed the value of American currency so that it was once again based on precious metals, despite the fact that there was “no federal system in place to buffer frequent bullion shortfalls that resulted from having to transport precious metals by boat, barge and rail...”⁸⁴ Citizen purchase of government lands and societal transit into the west, then, was dependent upon the unreliable transport of material of value, while volatile systems of credit and debt created greater financial instability. This emphasizes again the physical transport and circulation of matter corresponding with the immaterial and perceptual movement of value. From

⁸¹ Kendall Johnson, “Peace, Friendship, and Financial Panic: Reading the Mark of Black Hawk in Life of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak,” 773. This comment is sourced from Black Hawk’s autobiography, the first by a Native American that was published in the United States.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 773.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 789.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 790.

an indigenous perspective, each medal was a duplicitous message, declaring the intention of displacement.

Approaching the mid-nineteenth century, Native groups across the country were aware of the duplicity of peace medals, and these connotations would not have escaped the Ioway. The loose brushwork and insubstantial presence of the medal in Catlin's portrait of White Cloud conflates spatial and temporal distance. In doing so, the networks of trade, movement, and circulation evident across the nineteenth-century American frontier are muddled. While still present, these routes are intentionally left complicated and vague. Francis White Cloud and members of his tribe traversed Europe, hoping to generate funds and awareness for their people. The problematic of the medals – of the artwork, itself – provides a site where these conditions, coalescing mobility and ambivalence, can be utilized by those at the peripheries of American society in narratives of self-determination.

In the context of George Catlin's *Indian Gallery* display, indigenous bodies are decorated with the manufactured markers of the American federal government, as evidenced by the medals within the portraits of Little Wolf and White Cloud. Beyond that, the tribes performing within the context of the traveling *Indian Gallery* compounds the gridded portraiture on the walls – also featuring medallionic indications of space. Each medal Catlin depicted within a portrait is a specific instance of displacement, intent to displace, or past displacement from the American wilderness. This dislocation is supported by the deceptive channels of credit and debt, contrasted by the physical durability of the peace medal as a medium during transit, as well as their intended message of compromise and agreement. Catlin's depiction of the donative medals and the ambiguous surface of the peace medal suggest inequity, or at the very least instability, in exchanges with the United States' government. Circulated during critical progressions westward,

George Catlin's traveling *Indian Gallery* physically embodies the shifting circuitry of dynamic fiscal and cultural interrelations that Native groups navigated during nineteenth-century American expansion.

CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS

Several decades prior to the development of materiality as a method for investigating the movement of things, Francis Paul Prucha described peace medals as “ideal vehicles for the symbols of a culture or an age.” He understood that the object itself was not merely a symbol, but a vehicle.⁸⁵ The peace medal transported the symbol; it was responsible for physically conveying the object’s message across cultures and distance, occupying both a material and perceptual space. It is only more recently through the studies of thing theory and object-oriented ontology that scholars have produced methods to precisely express the ideas of materiality at which Prucha hinted. I used Jennifer Roberts’ 2014 book, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, to demonstrate the “channels of communication” occupied by peace medals, within both visual culture of the nineteenth century, as well as the contested landscapes of an expanding America.⁸⁶ Portrayals of peace medals conflate the object’s capacities for circulation and exchange, communicating the object’s ability to operate simultaneously along physical and cognitive planes.

By examining the material movement of the peace medal within nineteenth-century portraiture of Native Americans by Charles Bird King and George Catlin, I discussed networks of currency, value, and power which influenced the shifting, transient space of the American frontier. The 1821 painting by Charles Bird King, *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees*, was an imagined figure study referencing the broken circuitry of Native delegations to the U.S. capital. The pictorial James Monroe peace medal within the portrait conveyed the movement of resources and people in the exchange of this object, while also communicating ideas of value and power during early medallic circulation. George Catlin’s mid-

⁸⁵ Prucha, *Indian Peace Medals in American History*, v.

⁸⁶ Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America*, 6.

1840s portraits, *Shon-ta-yi-ga, Little Wolf, a Famous Warrior*, and *White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowa*, builds on these ideas by incorporating notions of currency and the American federal government's fiscal policy. Anxieties regarding the materiality and concurrent immateriality of credit and debt are highlighted in stark contrast to the solid, physical presence of medallions within the portrait of Little Wolf. Catlin's portrait of White Cloud more accurately presents concerns about structural ambiguity in monetary systems crisscrossing between Europe, American cities, and the frontier.

Ultimately, one of the unfortunate gaps in my scholarship within the limited scope of this project is the absence of Native artmaking. Moving forward, the line of inquiry that is most compelling to me involves examining artwork by contemporary Native, investigating artists' usage of peace medals, utilizing methods of materiality. T.C. Cannon (Kiowa/Caddo, 1946-1978) is one such Native artist whose perspective references the "channel of communication" in which peace medals historically operated.⁸⁷ His artwork purposefully complicates nineteenth-century racial dynamics in memorializing the imagery of Native peoples within portraiture, parodying the duplicitous honor conveyed through peace medals. In doing so, his artwork participates in narratives of displacement and circulation – speaking both physically of space and distance, as well as economically, by tracing the dynamics of ownership between Native art and Euro-American buyers.

Cannon's 1975 painting *Collector #5 (Man in a Wicker Chair)* [Figure 6], sometimes referred to as *Osage with Van Gogh*, is one of his best-known works and, arguably, one of the

⁸⁷ At the time of this research, the Heard Museum opened its exhibition, "Of God and Mortal Men: Masterworks by T.C. Cannon from the Nancy and Richard Bloch Collection." It is on display at the Museum through April 15, 2018. From this exhibition alone, Cannon's paintings that incorporate imagery of medals include: *Washington Landscape with Peace Medal Indian* (1973), *Collector #5 (Man in Wicker Chair)* (1975), *Big Bow's Children* (1976), and *Chief Watching* (1978).

most recognized images within Native American art.⁸⁸ The sitter defiantly confronts the gaze of the viewer, surrounded by an array of intriguing objects: a Navajo blanket on the floor, an intricate wicker chair, Van Gogh's *Wheatfield* on the wall, and a peace medal worn by the sitter. Cannon's attention to material culture interweaves subverted notions of ownership with themes of movement and value. The pictorial narrative suggests that the sitter is the collector, and that these objects came into his possession from elsewhere. Yet the title also hints at a play on words: if the painting is purchased, the collector within the painting will be collected.

Washington Landscape with Peace Medal Indian [Figure 7], from 1973, is one of Cannon's paintings that most directly confronts themes examined in the earlier chapters. The monumental figure, wearing a peace medal, takes up much of the pictorial place. Despite the scale of the sitter, Cannon labels the painting "Washington Landscape." Sure enough, to the left there is a paned window that shows an outline of the Capitol, far in the distance. Cannon uses the painting's title to direct the viewer's attention toward the "landscape." This is, of course, intentionally misleading because there is actually very little scenery within the image, conjuring instead notions of distance and space. Mobility is embedded within the distance that Cannon references; the sitter is not from Washington D.C, where the manufactured peace medal was distributed to him. Cannon implies that transit was necessary for this portrait to have been produced. The suggestion of distance deliberately signifies both the physical landscape and perceptual space that peace medals simultaneously traversed, conveying the political influence of the United States federal government and economic value in the continuous accumulation of resources and land at the expense of Native communities across the country.

⁸⁸ Melanie Anne Herzog and Sarah Anne Stolte, "American Indian Art: Teaching and Learning" in *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 101, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/wicazosareview.27.1.0085.

Cannon's awareness of this narrative builds upon nineteenth-century ideas of materiality and movement established in the prior three chapters, aligning my continued research with his themes of collection, value, and mobility. By applying Cannon's paintings, as well as those produced by Charles Bird King and George Catlin, with inquiry utilizing the methodology of materialism, the mobility of these objects – both the peace medals and the paintings – are rendered legible. The logistics of production and circulation collide to form the pictorial narratives, tracing the mobility of transit into and out of the American frontier.

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