

# UC San Diego

## UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

Unsettling the archive : dis- imagining colonial subjects to re-imagine knowledge production

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/69t2767r>

### Author

Beebe, Laura L.

### Publication Date

2012

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Unsettling the Archive: Dis-imagining Colonial Subjects to Re-imagine Knowledge  
Production

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Laura L. Beebe

Committee in Charge:

Professor Kirstie Dorr, Chair  
Professor Sara Clarke Kaplan  
Professor Mishuana Goeman

2012

Copyright

Laura L. Beebe, 2012

All rights reserved.

The Thesis of Laura L. Beebe is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form  
for publication on microfilm and electronically:

---

---

---

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2012

## EPIGRAPH

The nature of this sadness stands out more clearly if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize. The answer is inevitable: with the victor. And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers.

– Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*

Knowledge does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject; rather, it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence. Where religion once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge.

– Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*

The restless pursuit of discoveries and divinations has grown to us as attractive and indispensable as hapless love to the lover, which he would not for any price exchange for indifference – nay, perhaps we too are hapless lovers. Knowledge in our hearts has developed into a passion which does not shrink from any sacrifice, and really fears nothing but its own extinction.

– Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Epigraph.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Images.....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Abstract.....	ix
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Boarding Schools.....	22
Chapter Two: The Journal.....	34
Conclusion: Boarding Schools & Archives as Colonial Processes.....	43
Bibliography.....	49

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1: Researcher ID Card ..... 3

Image 2: National Archive & Records Administration Stamp..... 3

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although this project specifically excludes details of boarding school experiences, the archival research undertaken during its development disclosed intense colonial violences endured by several individual students and, in some cases, their families. My experience of that research and disclosure ultimately came to inform the logics and aspirations of this thesis, and, so, I wish to express my overwhelming gratitude to these individuals, their families and their descendants: nia:wen ko:wa. Although they remain unnamed here, potentially the most trying times of their lives lay bare in an archive for academic consumption; I truly hope they find a way home someday.

I remain profoundly grateful for and indebted to the intellectual circle of scholars who supported me through this process. This project could not have been completed without the dedication of my committee members, especially, my chair, Professor Kirstie Dorr, who generously and willingly accommodated several untimely difficulties. Beyond support as a committee member, Professor Sara Clarke Kaplan provided personal encouragement and support when most needed. Professor Mishuana Goeman opened her academic community to me, allowing a growth and development in my intellectual engagement that would otherwise have been impossible. My reading and writing groups provided invaluable feedback, and I would like to particularly thank Kit Meyers and Ma Vang for their thoughtful insights. Angela Morrill helped shape several aspects of



this project during many tree house conversations and late night phone calls, reminding me as needed that I had a story to tell. Maile Arvin shared her brilliance, confidence and incredible advice giving this project hope and courage. Professor K. Wayne Yang encouraged intellectual creativity and wandering beyond academic conventions, carving out space for a desire to confront intimate colonial violence while refusing to recount the particulars of that violence. Finally, this project would not be possible without the love and support of my children who willingly made many, many sacrifices and sustain me through their unfaltering confidence in me.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Unsettling the Archive: Dis-imagining Colonial Subjects to Re-imagine Knowledge  
Production

by

Laura L. Beebe

Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Kirstie Dorr, Chair

This thesis examines off-reservation boarding schools and national archives as particular colonial formations. Employing experience as a methodology, it recounts research undertaken relative to a boarding school journal, using it as a conduit through which to comprehend the relationship between these institutions and settler colonialism. While integrating the journal in its argument, this thesis also refuses disclosure of the contents of the journal, instead centralizing the idea that boarding schools and archives exist as intimately related colonial institutions. Boarding schools have come to shape understandings of Native peoples within the US imaginary at the same time that archives continue to maintain that formation across time and space by providing

“evidence” and/or “proof” of the boarding school as an “authentic” Native experience.

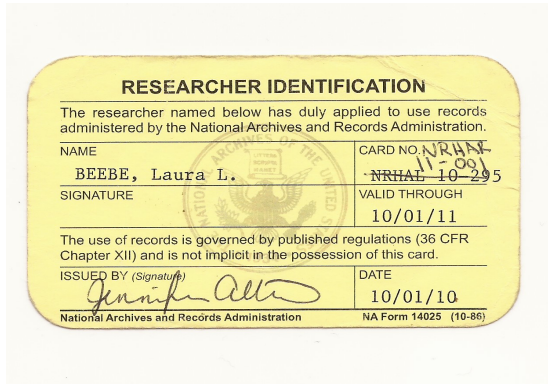
These institutions function to sustain a relationship between contemporary understandings of Native sovereignty and self-determination struggles and knowledge production, examining how these institutions are always already bound up within the logics of settler colonialism. As a consequence, these institutions actively inform contemporary social discourse and political possibilities for Native peoples, confining them within the terms of US settler colonial jurisdiction. It examines colonial epistemologies’ impact on the comprehensibility of Indigenous peoples’ struggles in order to imagine alternative epistemologies in methodology and knowledge production that may work in service to those struggles.

## INTRODUCTION

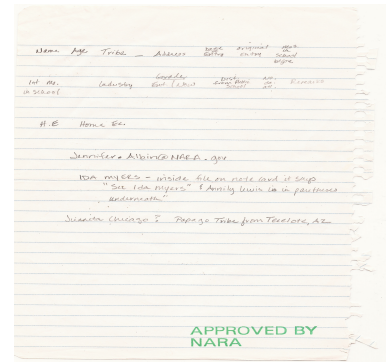
My second ever visit to an archive began with a decently long drive on a beautiful southern California morning. A close friend by my side, I eagerly maneuvered traffic on the interstate until reaching the National Archive. I had expected something....well, something “national” looking, like that monument built in its honor. Instead, I arrived at what appeared, essentially, like a compound. Located at the end of an industrial road, tucked behind a large warehouse building sat a smaller, non-descript building with a parking lot in the front and full perimeter fencing. When I pulled up to the gate, the booth for a security official awaiting the arrival of those with intentions to enter sat empty. So, I reached out and buzzed the intercom. While waiting, I turned to my friend and jokingly said, “Homeland Security.” A somewhat impatient and anonymous voice responded from the other side of the fence, demanding to know why I was there. Explaining that I had made an appointment with an archivist the voice defied my expectation of immediate entry with a second demand to name said archivist. Chuckling slightly at what I perceived as an absurd show of authority, I described my persistent problems with name recall. The intercom sat silently in response. Suddenly exceedingly aware the intercom observed no such absurdity, I continued speaking, giving all the information about the archivist I could remember: “She’s a woman, who only works on certain days and has knowledge of the collection of boarding school records, her name may begin with a “J” or an

“A” (or at least has those letters in it) and her last name sounds like a kind of bird.” There was a click, a buzz and the gate began to slowly slide open.

Inside the building, just past the foyer, sat a small seating area to the immediate left, beyond that, on the left wall, was a locked door. Off farther to the right were the restrooms and rental lockers available for researchers, and, directly in front of me, though beyond both the seating area and the locker area, was a reception desk that nearly spanned the room. Behind the desk stood a man of fairly small stature, presumably the voice of the intercom. Approaching the desk, the man greeted me warmly and asked me to sign in the logbook. Upon learning I lacked an archive ID, he handed me a two-page application to fill out in order to obtain one. Beyond wanting personal identification like name, address and phone number, the document required, as best as I can remember, the disclosure of institutional affiliation, position and number of years at institution, department at institution, department phone number, advisor name (if a student), advisor phone number, intended use of research, thesis/dissertation topic, thesis/dissertation title, names of any and all individuals being researched and my signature declaring I had truthfully answered the application’s questions and would not damage or attempt to remove any archival holdings (a promise I later wanted to recant).



**Image 1:** Researcher ID Card



**Image 2:** National Archive & Records Administration Stamp

Having been duly certified a researcher (Image 1), the archivist I corresponded with came out from the locked door and told me my boxes were ready. She led me through a second door to the right of the reception desk, leaving my friend behind in the seating area, as she had not scheduled any visitation. Entering a large room with several tables and no other people, I chose a table near the door and an electric socket. My computer was allowed in, as were a few pages of paper-written notes that had been stamped as approved (Image 2), but nothing else. I sat in the chair, waiting for my research materials until she appeared from the door in the rear of the room, pushing a rolling cart on which sat a few boxes. Through the door I had entered came a third employee who sat down facing me from a table at the very front of the room. While I worked during the next six hours, he sat in that chair, watching me carefully, once admonishing me for allowing an attendance record to hang a half to a full inch off the bottom left corner of my table. When I left to get some lunch, he took his lunch. When I left to use the restroom, I felt certain that should my computer go missing I'd

have a good idea where to start looking. On more than one occasion during those six hours, I experienced an unbelievably strong impulse to abscond with the boxes. I didn't, of course, though I felt pretty confident I could outrun the intercom guy.

At the end of the day, I had a list of documents I wanted to photograph for use as copies. My attendant informed me that these particular documents were not authorized for photography, but, with the archivist's approval, I could use the copier to make copies. Upon her approval, I did just that and headed out to the front desk. She came out to see me off, asking if I needed to return. I arranged to come back the following week and requested more materials. I had a list of further names I wanted documentation on and then asked for more comprehensive materials specific to the school and time period I was researching. We had an exchange that went something like this:

Me: I'd like to see the files for [list of new student names], and I would also like any other materials you may have that are relevant to [boarding school] during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Archivist: I'll have the files for as many of those students I can find ready for you next week. As for your second request, I can only bring you those materials you specifically request.

Me: What?

Archivist: You have to ask specifically for what you want.

Me: Well, I want whatever you have for that school and that time.

Archivist: All our materials for [boarding school] are in one box and some of the attendants of that school might still be alive. So, I can't just give you all the research materials for [boarding school].

Me: Well, I only want what you have from the first quarter century. Surely, it's assumed those students have passed away.

Archivist: The policy is you have to ask for what you want specifically.

Me: But I don't know what you have.

Archivist: I'm happy to bring you whatever you ask for.

Me: But.....you understand that I can't ask for what I don't know exists, right?...Right?

By the end, I really just wanted confirmation that she understood the backward logic at work in this policy. My desire remains unfulfilled.

My experience researching this boarding school and these students demonstrates the way the physical materials housed in the archive reproduce colonial ideologies and “imperial binaries”<sup>1</sup> of superior/inferior, civilized/savage, enlightened/unenlightened, etc. that can “[divide] the world into bounded entities that can be easily known and measured against one another.”<sup>2</sup> In order to sustain these “dualistic distinctions that explicitly or implicitly serve to mark out hierarchies between groups”<sup>3</sup> the materials selected and made available for empirical research must not only be carefully scrutinized,

---

<sup>1</sup> Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of US-Indigenous Relations*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 7, quoting Bill Ashcroft.

<sup>2</sup> Bruyneel, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



but secured as well. It is not enough to simply possess the materials; rather, mechanisms must be put into place that can sustain the archive's claim to ownership and safeguard the materials from any threat that might result in the removal or destruction of those materials. Here, I am specifically referring to the typical rules of access within an archive. For example, surveillance of the researcher while handling archival materials and the carceral nature of archives such that viewing its materials involves a specific request for retrieval from a restricted access area from which they are removed only when seeing "visitors."

The imposition of a repressive state apparatus within this colonial space regulates not just the materials and the subjects it creates through them, but the subjects wishing to employ those materials for any reason. Though my visits suggest the archive heavily polices the use of the materials for any purpose (e.g., personal genealogical research), this project will focus explicitly on its role within and impact on academic research. Specifically, I want to consider what research practices within and production from the archive reinscribe colonial narratives. Importantly, this reinscription follows from the use of the materials regardless of the researcher's subject position in the colonial hierarchy. Complicity with the state, in this case, does not necessarily require intent, though, no doubt, there have been and are instances where intent exists. The colonial presence within

research results from the colonial structure of the archive as institution<sup>4</sup> and not necessarily as a result of research efforts.

I want to demand more from the archive than simply the representation of events and historical figures. While archival research tends to focus on the relic as the subject of analysis, incorporating details and historical context in order to construct a knowable object, the focus of my archival endeavor strives to illustrate the perpetuation of historical narratives of nation and subjects as a construction process insulating and reinforcing the power dynamics of colonialism. My intent is to locate the journal within the space of a colonial state apparatus<sup>5</sup> known as the national archive. As apparatus it operates specifically to preserve particular historical materials so that those materials become technologies of power narrating nation and citizen building which in turn naturalize colonization and the inevitability of its social hierarchies. Beyond that, this process demonstrates the colonial state's forceful creation of perpetual populations that serve its own ends via the assertion of archives as *the* sites of (capital H) History and (capital T) Truth. As it relates to knowledge production, Western epistemologies align the nation-state with the project of historical preservation by providing it with the opportunity to define who is knowable through empirical investigation – in other words, who counts as data. Academia's demand for empiricism in order to transform information to "knowledge" results

---

<sup>4</sup> See Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 94-9.

in a colonial effect on scholarship maintaining historical elisions justifying and sustaining colonial processes and technologies of power operating to re-inscribe colonial narratives. Thus, the archive reproduces its authority by providing the empirical evidence able to “prove” an interpretation of events, contexts, and/or historical figures. This in turn buttresses the empirical standard while simultaneously delegitimizing other forms of knowledge rendering them less, if at all, able to effectively challenge colonial narratives and/or processes through different forms of knowing. The continual retrieval and interpretation of archival materials for purposes of academic research to some extent inevitably reifies the nation-state’s desired narratives relative to its founding and citizen-subjects.

This thesis further hopes to demonstrate that the national archive as it functions today assists the colonial state in its project of defining Native peoples as Foucauldian biopolitical populations. Within this rubric Native efforts for self-determination are continually undermined or compromised as a result of this particular positionality. The archive continues to construct a biopoliticized Native subject who appears as part of the US’s colonial past. As such, she remains within the jurisdictional purview of the colonial state, becoming a permanent colonial subject. Efforts for self-determination made within this paradigm continually face obstacles relative to colonial interpellation and, consequently, limited by the discourse of rights and equality. Jennifer Nez Denetdale demonstrates a specific instance of colonial subjectivity construction in her book, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*. Examining

mainstream, academic accounts of US history Denetdale exposes a manufactured subjectivity for Juanita serving its own need, at the time, to assure white settlers that Native women “were not too different from white Americans,” thus allaying fears about difference in gender roles. The effect of such a construction for the Navajo in this case specifically, but for Native peoples more generally has been history’s “fail[ure] to acknowledge Native women’s historical realities”<sup>6</sup> to the detriment of their communities and descendants, but, more pointedly, to the benefit of the colonial regime.

As a catalyst for this project, I will use a boarding school journal found in a kind of national archive as a way to understand the archive’s role and as conduit through which to contextualize and understand my research experiences. Through these means, the journal demonstrates the direct connection and relation between the national archive and boarding schools. The journal is at once a boarding school object and an archival object; its preservation depends largely, if not entirely, on its connection to boarding schools as a state project. This defining element is precisely what appeals to researchers as an object capable of producing knowledge reflecting the truth of history, not as a periodization of US history, but as an accurate representation of authentic Native experience and existence. The challenge of this thesis is to show that the production of knowledge follows from the production of the boarding school as a colonial project and, consequently, cannot be made to work outside of those

---

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 90-91.

founding ideologies.<sup>7</sup> In other words, research whose form, focus and object relies on materials constituted from colonial undertakings cannot disaggregate itself from the logics and structures responsible for the emergence of those materials. This thesis intends to demonstrate that boarding schools and archives link directly to the creation and maintenance of colonial ideologies and that each is intimately and directly implicated in the other.

“Saving” the boarding school journal as historically significant situates it within a broader colonial project, confining Natives to what Kevin Bruyneel has called, “colonial time” to serve several means of the nation state’s ends. As he points out in his book, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Post-colonial Politics of US-Indigenous Relations*, Native exclusion from modernity marks political boundaries relative to sovereignty and self-determination struggles by depicting material conditions under which Indigenous people must exist in order to assert a demand for recognition of political structures that pre-exist the US nation-state. As a continual struggle for self-determination, Native societies specifically do not seek inclusion in the American polity; rather, their struggle remains the delineation of American influence and power within Native polities that exist beyond, although within, the physical boundaries declared by settler nation-states. Colonial time, Bruyneel writes, is, more specifically, “temporal boundaries, [which] while often implicit, can be located in economic, cultural, and political narratives that place limitations on the capacity of certain peoples to express

---

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1-5.

meaningful agency and autonomy, especially in a modern context.”<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this project, colonial time is where Indigenous peoples can and will be forever made to exist within the space of the archive – a permanent colonial subject who, when retrieved for any purpose, instantiates Indigenous people into this time the nation-state employs to undermine sovereignty and self-determination struggles.

Through processes of institutionalization meant to inform societal discourse through political power structures and delimit apprehension of variable subjects, off-reservation boarding schools and national archives function individually and dialectically as colonial state apparatuses. It is important to note, however, that these institutions differ somewhat from Althusser’s original formulation of a state apparatus, combining elements of Foucault’s prison as apparatus<sup>9</sup> and Mbembe’s necropolitics<sup>10</sup> with the interpellative power and intent Althusser outlines. Expanding on Marx’s original formulation of the State, Althusser makes clear that the State “has no meaning except as a function of *State power*”<sup>11</sup> (emphasis in the original). State power is expressed through state apparatuses that include the realms of both public and private. Beyond establishing this distinction between the State and state apparatuses, Althusser further distinguishes between two forms of these apparatuses, Ideological State

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> See Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15:1, (2003): 11-40.

<sup>11</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin Philosophy and Other Essays*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 94.

Apparatus (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatus (RSA). The ISA exists primarily in the private realm, employing ideology to naturalize and legitimize the State, and, according to Althusser, includes such institutions as religion, education, culture and family. The RSA, on the other hand, exists primarily in the public realm, most easily understood as instruments of the State, for example police, law, courts, prison, and the military. Importantly, these two apparatuses do not function singularly or exclusively; rather, they function dialectically and neither exists in pure form. The police, for example, use ideology to promote their value to society and ensure their reproduction as an institution, but ultimately their use is violence (physical and non-physical) on behalf of the state. Likewise, schools function on the ideological level, but implement disciplinary mechanisms to ensure conformity.

Attempting to expand the scope of this paradigm, I argue that instead of functioning within a class-based system in a traditional Marxist sense (ruling class versus proletariat) whereby the goal is to reproduce the relations of production, the colonial state apparatus (CSA) specifically functions within and is generated by a settler colonial state as a means to resolve the incongruities inherited to its coloniality. In other words, the CSA strives to reconcile the contradiction between the state's legitimacy and its settler colonial state status. By constructing and deploying specific criteria for what constitutes a citizen-subject and projecting an explicit national identity, the CSA obscures the colonial

state's illegitimacy and vexes the status of Native people relative to what constitutes self-determination.

In concert with these disciplinary processes, the archive and boarding schools stake specific claims against Native sovereignty through the imposition of settler "sovereignty...to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power."<sup>12</sup> Deploying power through its institutions, the state defines life in this instance through access to history and the narratives formed from that access. This power extends beyond delimiting understandings of Native subjectivity for, as Mbembe explains, "The exercise of sovereignty, in turn consists in society's capacity for self-creation through recourse to institutions inspired by specific social and imaginary significations."<sup>13</sup> In other words, archival research, expressing state sovereignty, collapses an archival past into the present, deploying a "politics...[of] death that lives a human life"<sup>14</sup> by maintaining a static signification of "Native" within the US imaginary. Through a distinct form of necropolitics, understood as "the subjugation of life to the power of death,"<sup>15</sup> archival research stakes a claim against contemporary Native peoples by countermanding the death of the past to bring to life a reification of the historical colonial Native subject. Boarding school research exemplifies this process through the explication of its own necropolitical processes that emerge coterminous to the archival process.

---

<sup>12</sup> Mbembe, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Mbembe, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Mbembe, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Mbembe, 40.



By their severity boarding schools tacitly acknowledge culture as a site of articulation,<sup>16</sup> concentrating heavily on this aspect of a subject's being to elicit a desired response. As Stuart Hall explains in *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, articulation is "a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific junctures, to certain political subjects."<sup>17</sup> These connections may appear inevitable and natural and yet there is no reason why they should be necessarily connected except that the subject learns and accepts them as such. Although schools function generally as ideological state apparatuses, the boarding school mission to produce proper citizen-subjects meant that upon arrival the school seized all means of cultural expression, forcing conformity to typical colonial dress; cutting hair against students' will; providing only a colonial diet; forbidding students to speak their native language, facing physical punishment for transgression even when they knew no other language; and compelling them to adhere to Christian religious practices and education. In each of these instances, the dialectic between repressive and ideological is displaced by their union. As a complementary and coordinated singular force the CSA attempts to achieve absolute domination for the purpose of re-articulation.

---

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence Grossberg, (ed.), "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," David Moreley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 141-5.

<sup>17</sup> Grossberg, 141-2.

The CSA appears at the shift from understanding Natives as geopolitical subjects to biopolitical populations.<sup>18</sup> As Mark Rifkin demonstrates in *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*, the colonial state imposed its authority over Native peoples by reshaping understandings of their legal positioning from a geopolitical position to a biopolitical position. This shift changed the relationship between Native peoples and the state such that Native peoples and their tribes were understood as falling within the purview of the colonial state to regulate and police, as would Native land and resources. This shift did more than simply allow the state to claim authority over Native tribes. It asserted settler legitimacy over the geopolitical space previously undermined by the geopolitical positionality of Native peoples. That is, it changed the “Indian problem” from one involving claims to rights of land and self-governance to one of race requiring the legislation of rights articulated within the polity of the settler state. Native peoples effectively became a population of peoples comprehended through the logics of settler colonial governance and, thus, subject to the legislation and terms of settler jurisdiction.

The CSA’s point of origin is in the claim through a more conventional state apparatus of jurisdiction over subjects as a way to try to maintain and legitimate its illegitimate settler colonial ruling power. These efforts, in turn, bring the CSA into being. In this way, the CSA is a generated and generative force of power. The state apparatus takes such action as nullifying treaty making, declaring

---

<sup>18</sup> Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011),

dependent nation status and then must institute a means of governance/rule within its own paradigm. The settler colonial desire to eliminate and appropriate remains intact, but now requires a way to accomplish that differently. The settler colonial aims are no longer about removal/relocation. Rather, they are about containing indigeneity in a way that eliminates it socially, culturally, politically, while retaining it as an initial demonstration of the nation's discourse of liberation and democratization. As a construct of the settler colony it also justifies continued and/or further access to land and resources. Consequently, the archive and boarding schools as colonial state apparatuses need to function on both levels of Althusser's dialectic, existing as the union of both ISA and RSA. United, these apparatuses operate simultaneously for the specific purpose of serving the needs of and preserving the settler colonial state.

To think about this in a slightly different way, David Kazanjian in *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* talks about the process of disarticulation and rearticulation relative to the formation of national and citizen identity. In order to establish itself as an egalitarian nation founded on ideals of freedom and equality, America needed to at once assert a universal identity that is particular in relation to other global national identities. When discussing this process, Kazanjian clearly demonstrates it as one that "does not simply reflect the ideals of freedom and equality. Rather, the embodiment of

the value form...actually generates those very ideals.”<sup>19</sup> Although Kazanjian is specifically talking about ideals of freedom and equality, the CSA’s embodied value form lies in the disarticulation of a geopolitical Native subject and subsequent rearticulation of a particularized, biopolitical and, thus, racial subject. Establishing and maintaining this subject works to produce the US as a beneficent state founded on liberty and freedom, bringing modernity to premodern subjects whose dispossession is in their best interest. In this way, CSAs must be thought of not only as technologies to preserve and maintain power as Althusser suggests, but generative technologies producing and reproducing the embodied value form (i.e., the biopolitical Native subject) for the benefit of the settler colonial state.

The archive, in particular, assists in the maintenance of social hierarchies through difference (race) in order to continually re-assert settlers’ claims to universality, superiority and ruling power. By centering the formation of the colonial nation state and its originary violence alongside purported principals of democracy and freedom as the foundation of the American settler state, viewing national archives as CSAs sheds light on a colonial process allowing the US to continually submit itself as a liberal democratic state despite its protracted history attempting to exterminate Indigenous peoples through either physical violence or forceful assimilatory practices, like boarding schools.

Similarly, off-reservation boarding schools as colonial state apparatuses unified repressive and ideological disciplinary mechanisms thereby subsuming

---

<sup>19</sup> David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America*, (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2003), 19.

the dialectical relationship between them resulting in an apparatus that functions beyond the boundary between interpellater and interpellated. In other words, if the interpellater seeks an answer to its call in order to bring a subject into being, the interpellated expresses an understanding of that call when apprehending as directed at them. According to Althusser, "...the hailed individual will turn around. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was *really him* who was hailed.'"<sup>20</sup> In order to effect a transformation of students' subjectivity, however, the boarding school as a CSA makes its call (ideological) to an anticipated subject and then employs force (repressive) using disciplinary mechanisms to ensure the desired answer. The ideological and repressive forces working together bring recognition to the call and evince a response from the subject appropriate to the colonial hail thereby bringing the subject into being within the governing purview of the settler state. Further, the racial subject's self becomes clearly defined and aware of itself as the undesirable difference, the excess of the universal. At this point the CSA produces the embodied value form that re-situates the geopolitical subject as a racialized biopolitical subject appropriated by and appropriable to settler colonial society in a manner that coheres colonial conquest, violence and jurisdiction with Indigeneity.

---

<sup>20</sup> Althusser, 118.

To demonstrate this argument, I will distinguish between two different types of archives, the first of which I term the national archive. Though I am specifically speaking of archives beyond just the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) which conceptually came into being during the late nineteenth century<sup>21</sup> and officially opened in 1934, excerpts from its Mission and Vision statements provide a useful understanding of national archives as intended in this thesis.

**Mission Statement:**

As the nation's record keeper, it is our vision that all Americans will understand the vital role records play in a democracy, and their own personal stake in the National Archives....The stories of our nation and our people are told in the records and artifacts cared for in NARA facilities around the country.<sup>22</sup>

**Vision Statement:**

The National Archives and Records Administration serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our Government, ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage....We support democracy, promote civic education, and facilitate historical understanding of our national experience.<sup>23</sup>

The national archive as employed here exists as either a private (The Newberry Library, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, etc.) or public institution (public university archive, town or state archive, etc.) and espouses similar virtues expressed above in the NARA mission and vision statements.

---

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/1-about-archives.html#holdings>, accessed May 14, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

As a point of contrast, I will recount my experience within an archive appearing to function and understand itself as something other than the national archive. The point of this narration is not to assert that another's experience would be the same or that this particular organization is the "right way" to archive. Rather, what I hope to demonstrate is that differing processes of storage, retrieval and interaction have the potential to produce different knowledge to a different effect. Where the national archive centralizes the notion of the state as its organizing principal and, therefore, performs service to it, alternate archives may contain information and legacies in a way that does not work for or reify the colonial state.

The first section of this thesis discusses boarding schools as CSAs, specifically avoiding discussions relative to student experiences. Research on boarding school experiences frequently involves the articulation of individual trials, tribulations and even successes, ultimately presenting the reader with a colonially defined and delimited Native subject. Wanting to avoid collusion with the colonial state in my archival research, my efforts focus instead on attempting to shift the focus of boarding schools from experiences to technologies of power implemented specifically to achieve a particular result. The second section recounts my own experiences following the discovery of a boarding school journal in the archive. It offers a contrasting depiction of the archive as a potentially non-national project. The third and final section of this thesis offers a discussion of these two apparatuses working as individual institutions and also

as a dialectical pair, each reinforcing and justifying the existence of the other. Ultimately, where one project grew out of a biopolitical need for population regulation and control, the other continues that work through its ability to create and sustain a particular Native subjectivity available for retrieval by any researcher or genealogist. In combination with other colonial efforts, this manner of knowledge production upholds a colonial understanding of Native peoples in the American imaginary which helps the state assert legitimacy in its efforts to limit self-determination struggles and define Native sovereignty as always already part of US governance.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Boarding Schools

Stories and songs are like humans who when they laugh are indestructible.

No story or song will translate the full impact of falling, or the inverse power of rising up.

Of rising up.

-Joy Harjo, "A Postcolonial Tale"<sup>24</sup>

Research conducted relative to the boarding school experiences of Native students has been incredibly important and useful. However, rather than investigate and explore these historical events, what I suggest here is a usefulness in moving beyond the "experience" of boarding schools to get a different something out of archival research. Native Alaskan scholar, Eve Tuck, in her piece *Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities*, notes that research on marginalized communities tends to paint them as victims and writes, "These characterizations frame our communities as sites of disinvestment and dispossession...They become spaces saturated in the fantasies of outsiders."<sup>25</sup> Likewise, Native scholar Taiaiake Alfred speaks not of "recovery" from the horrors of colonization, but, rather, "regeneration" as a site of empowerment within which to "embrac[e] the struggle to transcend what has been done to us rather than the effort to gain compensation for the crimes or to placate feelings

---

<sup>24</sup> Harjo, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review*, 79:3 (Fall 2009), 412.

and sensibilities.”<sup>26</sup> And very recently, Native scholar Glen Coulthard spoke at the Critical Ethnic Studies conference in Riverside, CA espousing the virtue of “critically embracing” our anger as a way to “undermine or destroy the structures” responsible for producing that anger.

With these aims in mind, shifting focus from historical accounts of boarding school experiences to concentrating on boarding schools as colonial institutions, I want to understand the state’s educational program for Native students within what Patrick Wolfe calls a “discursive formation”<sup>27</sup> imposing a “logic of elimination.”<sup>28</sup> As it expressed its “Manifest Destiny” through dispossession and disenfranchisement, the American state transitioned its approach to the Indian problem from a violent spectacle of extermination to one meant to discipline and regulate Native people into a liberal democratic society based on ideologies of heteropatriarchy and individualism. The closing of the Western frontier marked both the exclusion from and containment of Native populations within a new geographic boundary defined as the United States. This closure also signaled an end to former practices of removal and displacement as the state first established reservations and then attempted to promote private property ownership through its allotment process. Touted by reformists as a means to provide equal opportunity to Indians and famously articulated by

---

<sup>26</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways to Action and Freedom*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 151.

<sup>27</sup> Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8:4 (2006), 400.

<sup>28</sup> Wolfe, 387.

Henry Louis Pratt as a need to “kill the Indian [in order to] save the man,” the institution of off-reservation boarding schools represents a pivotal moment of state intervention wherein Native children faced violent indoctrination into US ideological formations. Outside of their communities and absented from the influence of their relatives, the work of excising the Indian from the man could take place in an environment whose goal was to have the students embody a kind of social death in order that the “man” would survive. Understanding settler colonialism as a process of dispossession, appropriation and extermination, using sociologist Orlando Patterson’s analytic of social death, though most frequently associated with slavery, appropriately reflects settler colonialism’s constitution of the racial differentiation necessary to justify the violences of “Manifest Destiny.” Where the perpetuation of slavery required the absolute obliteration of the subject, the appropriation of indigeneity required the occlusion of Native identity by way of assimilation. The boarding school enclosed a space intended to pass students through a state of social death as a method by which to excise them of their Indianness to develop a reformed American subjectivity. In this respect, the state’s interests in transforming Native subjectivity continued to be served by the “logic of elimination” long past the students’ departure from the schools evidencing a settler colonial technology, reflecting its need to destroy in order to replace.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Wolfe, 388.

Following the definition laid out by Patterson, the school needed to establish a “cultural facet of authority”<sup>30</sup> within the boarding school setting. In essence, it was necessary for the school to transform the students’ actions from one of forced behavior or coercion to voluntary compliance based on recognition of the behavior as “proper.” In this way, acts of Christian prayer and gendered labor, for example, would change from the performance of a compulsion to the practice of an inherent value. That is, the school sought to instill in the students recognition of its authority as a source of cultural knowledge and the locus of “the norm.” With that recognition the school positioned itself to re-create the students according to Euro-American cultural standards and social practices, thus, ensuring the students’ continued acquiescence to the colonial state following their school experience and the transmission of these new values to descending generations.

Establishing this position of authority resulted, in part, from the separation of children from their parents and extended family. Focused on Native children, the physical distance imposed by the school on the student and her family made sustaining meaningful relationships with parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc. extraordinarily difficult, if not, at times, impossible. The school intended the educational environment to transform the students from Native children to acculturated citizen-subjects through a process of re-socialization and re-culturalization. Consequently, it was not enough to simply

---

<sup>30</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 2.

impose significant geographical distance and separation over an extended period of time. In order to simulate a social death for the purposes of a kind of re-birth into subjecthood, the school needed to impart a sense of what Patterson terms “natal alienation,” articulated as “the loss of ties of birth in both ascending and descending generations.”<sup>31</sup> The distance created by the physical and emotional separation certainly intended to achieve disconnectedness from ascending generations. In the absence of their parents and extended family, the students lacked the same sense of sociality or community upon their return. As he further explains, an aspect of natal alienation central to the construction of a state of social death involves prohibiting the child from “freely [integrating] the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with the inherited meanings of their natural forebears, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory.”<sup>32</sup> As a matter of subjectivity formation, these efforts relied on the notion that one’s self-understanding could be made to ascribe little or no significance to filial relations and certainly not to any extended family or ancestral heritage.

Further, by separating descending generations from Indianness schools assumed that exposing them to and teaching them to live according to American heteropatriarchal and individualistic values, ensured their transmission to the students’ own children thereby slowly eradicating the tribal and “primitive” form of living continued by their parents and elders. As a result, though the student

---

<sup>31</sup> Patterson, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Patterson, 5.

and his descendants remained racially Indian, the social and cultural aspects of that Indianness vanished. Patterson characterizes the profound nature of natal alienation as “The incapacity to make any claims of birth or to pass on such claims [and] is considered a natural injustice among all people, so that those who were obliged to suffer it had to be regarded as somehow socially dead.”<sup>33</sup> To the extent the schools allowed students to continue to claim actual blood relation differentiates boarding school alienation from that of American chattel slavery; however, the supplanting of the students’ cultural understanding was intended to create a permanent rupture within the family and community structure precluding the students’ ability and perhaps even desire to make any ancestral claims. In this sense, the school intended to make students unable to claim ancestral cultural heritage, but, also, unable to experience a sense of communal, cultural and, to some extent, emotional connectedness to even immediate family following their boarding school experience.

Instilling a sense of severe disconnected-ness, the school mediated all social contact both within the school environment and without through the outing programs. As an element of social death within the context of slavery, “the master’s authority was derived from his control over symbolic instruments, which effectively persuaded both slave and others that the master was the only mediator between the living community to which he belonged and the living

---

<sup>33</sup> Patterson, 8.

death that his slave experienced.”<sup>34</sup> The symbolic instruments Patterson describes are precisely those boarding schools seized upon a student’s arrival at school: names, manner of dress, hairstyle and, most significantly, language and religion. As a cultural assault, the students endured forcible language replacement, compulsory indoctrination into Christianity, and the strict enforcement of rules that served to teach the students to live according to Euro-American gender norms. To impart these social values the schools exerted extensive effort in regulating social contact between students, particularly as a matter of regulating interactions across genders. Within the space of the schools, “disciplinary mechanisms”<sup>35</sup> were put in place to contain genders spatially while imbuing each student with a sense of individuality. Further, the social contact the students experienced within the surrounding white community reinforced and actualized the gendered labor taught to students as part of their vocational training. Even during school breaks, the students’ ability to return home for any period of time was at the discretion of the school administrator. In all these instances, students’ access to the social relied totally upon the approval, consent and management of the school.

In direct contrast to the conditions of slavery, the social death imagined by the school distinguishes itself as a permanent identitarian condition achieved through a transitory social state allowing the school to remove the Indian from

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 251.

the student while transforming the human-ness of Natives into a particular manner of subject. In this sense, the boarding school was a means to an end of re-birth into American subjecthood through social death by way of forced assimilation. Although any measure of assimilation necessarily suppresses the culture of the assimilated, the project of assimilation as applied to American Indians within the context of boarding schools demonstrates intent not to simply acculturate but rather to deracinate the students for the purposes of actually killing tribal custom, tradition, spirituality and language. As a matter of alienation, natal or cultural, forcing the students to live according to Euro-American standards, traditions, and practices served to hinder or eliminate communication between students and elders, seize the practice of Native traditions, and re-organize Native communities according to the logics of heteropatriarchy in order to insert and naturalize social hierarchies within Native societies.

The efforts made on the part of the school ostensibly and as a matter of policy were thought to reflect the best interests of the students and Native communities as a whole; however, when understanding the deracination of students as an element of colonization motivated by elimination, the politics of discipline and regulation within and between populations more accurately characterizes the boarding school objective. Consequently, boarding schools were a CSA producing “the biopolitics of modern sexuality [called] ‘settler sexuality’: a white national heteronormativity that regulates Indigenous sexuality



and gender by supplanting them with the sexual modernity of settler subjects.”<sup>36</sup> As an instrument of colonization, the attempted imposition of social death upon the students worked to naturalize gender hierarchies, in turn normalizing heteropatriarchy. More specifically, Morgensen writes, “policies aimed at assimilating Indians through the destruction of kinship structures figured Indian cultures as other than heteronormative in order to reinvent and assimilate them as straight, private-property-owning, married citizens.”<sup>37</sup> The establishment of heteronormativity and, therefore, heteropatriarchy into tribal society substantiates boarding schools’ primary objective.

As Andrea Smith points out, by imposing European gender relationships onto Native communities settlers colonized Natives “by their sexual perversity” thus demonstrating them as “queer to colonial regimes.”<sup>38</sup> Establishing Native populations as inherently queer justified the physical violence of colonization and then the “terrorizing violence”<sup>39</sup> deployed against subjectivity meant to compel conformity to heteronormative values. Working in concert with the queering of Native populations at the inception of colonization, the instillation of heteronormativity into Native life functioned as a regulatory instrument by defining and undergirding Euro-American gender relations as the standard or

---

<sup>36</sup> Scott Morgenson, “Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities,” *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, 16:1-2, (2010), 106.

<sup>37</sup> Schneider cited by Morgenson 108.

<sup>38</sup> Morgenson, 108.

<sup>39</sup> Patterson, 108.

societal norm, normalizing the Native population as deviant, and providing justification for disciplining and regulating that population.

Along with challenging the legitimacy of the settler nation-state, Native populations posed a threat racially to the settler population. As a matter of population control, Foucault writes, “In a normalizing society, race or racism is the precondition that makes killing acceptable.”<sup>40</sup> Killing as a condition of a normalizing society extends its definition beyond the termination of one’s physical existence to include such conditions as “political death, expulsion, rejection and so on.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, the settler nation-state had to contend with a population existing as the excess of the universal subject. As Roderick Ferguson states, the universal subject’s “normative heteropatriarchy or heteronormativity exists in opposition to the particularities that constitute nonheteronormative racial formations.”<sup>42</sup> The particularities of race and queerness attributed to Indigenous populations justified and sanctioned the genocide of Native peoples at the inception of colonization and then came to threaten the existence of the colonial settler-subjects through the potential for racial contamination. As Ferguson further explains, “If heteronormativity is racialized... then it is not only gender and sexual integrity that are at stake for heteronormative formations, like the state, but racial integrity and purity as

---

<sup>40</sup> Foucault, 256.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Roderick Ferguson, 12.

well.”<sup>43</sup> As a practical matter then, beginning the project of assimilation with the youngest members of Native society through off reservation boarding schools provided an efficient and expedient opportunity for the state to institute, regulate, and discipline the students according to heteropatriarchal expectations of the colonial nation-state normative society. State racism in this case encouraged the imposition of social death upon the students because “The fact that the other dies does not mean simply...that his death guarantees...safety; the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race...is something that will make life in general... healthier and purer.”<sup>44</sup> In a manner reflecting the transition in governance from spectacular violence of control to terrorizing acts of discipline and despite whatever ostensible purpose they were said to perform, boarding schools operated as a colonial technology of power intending to insulate the colonial nation-state against the biopolitical threat posed by Indigeneity.

In terms of Indigenous population control, boarding schools provide an exemplary instance of colonial intervention and management. The extensive library of research along with both biographical and autobiographical accounts attest to the impact the logic behind boarding schools had on Native peoples. Additionally, the extraordinary volume of archival material substantiating these claims suggests a level of awareness on the part of the colonial state that speaks to the profound affect these institutions had on Native peoples over time and to the significance of this project to the nation-state’s identity. As mentioned above,

---

<sup>43</sup> Ferguson, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Foucault, 255.

boarding schools functioned as CSAs, fulfilling an imperial objective relative to Indigenous peoples whose presence transformed over time from spatial challenge to colonial hindrance to racial threat. It is this linkage between colonial policies and national identities that becomes apparent through the simultaneous examination of boarding schools and the archival legacy constructed in their wake.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Journal

An experience termed *past* may actually return if the influences have the same balances or proportions as before. Details may vary but the essence does not change...The image of a memory exists in the present moment.

- Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead*

Shortly after beginning graduate school and somewhat by chance I discovered a boarding school journal in a library. It's an autograph journal that belonged to a young woman who attended a residential boarding school in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As an autograph journal opposed to a personal log or diary, it contains entries made by several other students who each provide an answer to the same prompts. For example, one of the first prompts states, "Chums," and thereafter the students wrote down the names of their best friends. The prompts also seek answers to questions such as "Favorite Book," "Favorite Flower," and "Favorite Sport." Of particular interest to me were answers provided to prompts such as, "Highest Ambition" and "What are you going to do after you are done with school." Initially, I was so interested in these answers that I intended to analyze the language as a location of resistance and agency. But I'm not actually going to tell you anything that is written in the journal. I'm not going to tell you the name of the young woman the journal belonged to or even her tribe. I'm not going to tell you which boarding school she attended and I'm not going to tell you which library I found it in or where it is now. After spending some time with the

students in this journal, I considered how exactly it and they came to reside in the space they were in, but, also and more importantly, why.

So I approached the librarian hoping to find out more about its origins: Was it donated by someone or by a family? Did it come from the school? Did it once belong to a larger collection? How did it end up there? Somewhat impatiently, she would only tell me that she purchased it while visiting an antiquarian book dealer and “knew immediately it was something that had to be saved.” I was immediately struck by her stated intention to save. Save from what? Save for what? The time for “saving” these students in any meaningful way had long past. What she was really talking about, of course, was saving what we all refer to, with varying degrees of irony, as “history.”

Having decided not to focus on the contents of the journal, I felt somewhat at a loss about what scholarly purpose the journal could serve for me. I had originally laid out a plan to research the individual students, quite honestly hoping I would be able to trace their histories well enough to find their descendants and alert them to the journal’s existence. A naïve and romantic notion fraught with its own ethical dilemmas, I had reasoned that if my grandmother, who wouldn’t have been so much younger than these young women, had written in a journal that was found to exist, I would want to know. After all, the journal is really one of those things that families inherit when the time has come to say goodbye to loved ones. It’s one of those things that is found buried deep in the bottom of a trunk filled with mothball scented old quilts or

inside a tattered old shoebox amidst a collection of mostly old letters and post cards from friends and family visiting places like the Grand Canyon and San Francisco. It's one of those things that becomes the last part of the imagination in the memories you hold of the person you loved. Instead, this object, which likely represents an experience that greatly impacted the lives of each of these young women's descendants, to one degree or another, sat squirreled away as one among many objects worthy of "saving," guarded in an archive – for its own protection, of course.

Feeling firmly that writing about these young women in any conventional way was not what I wanted to do, I had no alternate ideas that would allow me to change course. So, I decided I would simply follow my original plan without the intention of contacting any descendants and without the usual ethnographic approach. I would continue to research the students in the journal – just for what purpose I didn't know.

I began my research into the students at a museum created in remembrance of the school. Having never done any serious archival research before, it seemed most logical to me that this would be the most appropriate and likely place to not only start my research but, also, find a significant amount of material. It wasn't until after I'd spent the day that I realized how very limited the museum was in its archival collection. While they appeared to have significant amounts of artwork created by former students, the collection of official and unofficial documents was fairly sparse, particularly for the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century. The majority of available documents from that time period tended to be inadequately maintained enrollment records and a few yearbooks.

I wasn't aware of this, however, when I walked through the front door to the ringing of a bell meant to announce the arrival of visitors. I was quickly greeted by the curator who was in her office with her daughter of approximately ten years of age. There were two other women sitting in her office, one of whom, I would later learn, also worked at the museum. The curator was friendly and remembered speaking to me on the phone when I had called to arrange this research visit. The other women left her office shortly after I came in, but before the curator could show me where to go her phone rang. She answered it, apologizing to me for having me wait. Learning it was a call she had been waiting for and needed to take, she asked her daughter to take me to the storage room, handing her a key ring full of keys. On the way, we passed many display cases filled with artwork (baskets, jewelry, beading, etc.), photographs (class photos, candid, etc.) and other school memorabilia. Paintings of all varieties clung to the walls and large tapestries fell across most of the length of two of them. Amidst the cases that defined the walkway was a small table I would soon learn was my workspace for the day. When we reached the storage room at the back of the museum, the girl reached out without hesitation to turn the handle. Despite having the keys she apparently had a reasonable expectation that it would be unlocked. The handle turned, she swung the door open and walked in. I followed her into a walk-in-closet sized room lined on every side with shelves. Clearly



very familiar with the materials, she explained to me the organization of the records available, noting for me which date ranges were most lacking. Before leaving me alone in the storage room with the entirety of the archive, she let me know that her mom would be able to help me if I had any questions or was unable to find anything,

As it was my first visit to an archive, I stood in the room trying to decide where to begin, unaware that the openness and availability of the material was anything to take note of. Deciding to begin with simple student rosters, I sat at the little table in the middle of the museum space for hours, walking back and forth from the storage room as necessary. During this time, on at least two separate occasions, visitors came into the museum out of a stated curiosity regarding Native boarding schools. My impression was very much that these were spontaneous visits by passers-by who were generally unfamiliar with the area. On the first occasion, the bell above the door alerted me to their arrival, making me take note of the curator's response to their unanticipated visit. The visitors were hesitant to walk beyond the foyer-like space just inside the door. They didn't wait for long, though, before the curator appeared from her office with a friendly welcome and inquiry as to their arrival. One set of visitors explained that they had heard of Indian boarding schools, this particular school among them, and decided to come inside to see what kinds of things the museum housed. Offering to show them around, she explained, as they walked down the hall into the museum proper, the general history of the school and the purpose it

serves today. I remember one woman was initially horrified to learn it continued to have operational functionality, but appeared reassured by the curator's calm explanation about contemporary structures and practices.

The table I worked at sat not quite in the center of the museum space. Both behind and in front of me were glass cases housing jewelry, baskets, photos, etc. To my right I could see down the hallway to the entrance and to my left were more glass cases and, beyond them, the storage room. As the curator spoke with the visitors, she walked them counterclockwise around the museum, starting in front of me and ending up behind me. It occurred to me during her second tour of the facility that in some strange way, I literally sat among the rest of the museum objects, being explained as a visiting student researcher between mention of basket making practices from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the art program that produced the paintings on the wall over my shoulder. Perhaps it was my tribal membership that made me self-conscious in this way, but when one of the visiting women began asking whether any of the items were for sale and for how much, I experienced a particular awareness as "an object amongst other objects," to borrow a phrase from Franz Fanon.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, in another strange way, Indians suddenly came to exist as part of and actively participating in the contemporary world – not just in the past viewable by memorabilia only in museums and archives.

---

<sup>45</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (Grove Press, New York: 1967), 109.

This museum's layout and approach to historical materials, not unlike other museums, largely depended on an overt display of objects-that-are-worthy-as-history-and-which-tell-you-about-your-"others." In this way, it is not without inherent contradiction as both a subject of analysis and as a Native space. I think it is important, however, at this point, to pause and consider how the presence of the curator and others invested in this museum project mediates and differentiates the experience and degree of understanding on the part of the visitors. Undoubtedly, the tour provided by the curator (and I would assume any of the other museum stewards) directed and shaped the reception of those objects by the viewers. Further, its organization and management by Native peoples makes a claim on what was formerly a colonial technology of power and the materials produced there in a way that marks their significance as points of pride and not as evidence of shameful, oppressive and, in those ways, defining events. Furthermore, the availability of items/relics to view starkly contrasts from the secrecy of the national archive presenting a more inviting and thoughtful engagement, particularly in light of the narratives provided by the curator. Issues of appropriation and interpretation that may arise during independent viewing, particularly by non-Native people, potentially meet with a level of responsibility and obligation to the people under study that becomes invisible in a context formulated entirely by a single individual.

I spent a fair amount of time traveling from my little table in the middle of the museum to the storage room and back, combing through many documents,

looking for the people I was trying to find. On more than one occasion, the curator stopped by to ask how things were going and to find out whether I was finding the information I was looking for. When I told her I wasn't finding very much, she informed me that the National Archive had most of the materials from the decade I was looking for and that I should definitely spend some time there. But she also offered me information about school policies during that time-period, made suggestions about looking through records that might not seem like logical places to look, and shared with me the graduation rate during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. She also discussed with me the variety of tribes that had students in attendance at the school. Upon learning I am Mohawk, she even took the time to retrieve the comprehensive log of students to find out that whether any Mohawk students ever attended this particular school. Although there were none, she did discover a former Seneca student from Pennsylvania and we talked about the other boarding schools Iroquois students in the East were more likely to have attended in the US. Even as a novice visitor, the openness and generosity with which she shared her knowledge struck me as remarkable. Although I had not found much by way of the specific information I had been looking for, I learned far more about this particular school in my conversations with her than would have been possible from just looking at documents. I knew she was too young to have been a student at the school herself as it had been originally run and, yet, in many ways, it felt like we were remembering.

As the day moved toward closing time, I realized no one had approached me to remind me that it would soon be time to collect my belongings and leave. It was only the sudden decrease in activity and sound that alerted me to the lateness of the hour. Not wanting to impose myself any longer than necessary on their personal time, I put away all the materials I still had out of the storage room, collected my belongings and went to the office to express my gratitude and say goodbye. As I approached her office, it became clear that she and another individual were still busily working in their offices, making no preparations to leave. Even so, I felt that it would be most appropriate for me to head out. When I let her know I had finished for the day, she stopped working and asked me again if I was able to find the information I was looking for. I told her I found some interesting information, but unfortunately not quite enough to consider my research complete. She gave me some encouraging words, thanked me for coming out and invited me to return whenever and if ever the need should arise. She also reminded me that most certainly the bulk of what I was looking for could be found at the National Archive.

## CONCLUSION

### **Boarding Schools & the Archive as Colonial Processes**

See the children who became our grandparents, the old women whose bones fertilized the corn. They form us in our sleep of exhaustion as we make our way through this world of skewed justice, of songs without singers.

-Joy Harjo, "The Myth of Blackbirds"<sup>46</sup>

My experiences with this journal and with the people who have been with me on what I now consider a journey, led me to wonder, "What am I doing if I take these words that were only meant for this one young woman, or, at best, this small group of friends, analyze them and give them meaning for others?" Absent any and all other information about these women, every understanding of them necessarily delimits their lives to the boarding school experience I extrapolate from the singular representations provided by this journal. Any life imbued to them through these writings represents and reproduces the colonial project of dispossession and elimination. Having established boarding schools as a tool of elimination, speaking these students into life through these narratives forcefully assimilates them again into colonial society, defining the colonial time used to delegitimize, undermine and evidence our vanishing. And, of course, I'd have to cite it, make available to every potential reader where they could find it so that my accounts could be verified or repudiated. And then someone else could take these young women and their words and give them an entirely different meaning. And they would have to cite it, too, giving this journal and the young women

---

<sup>46</sup> Joy Harjo, *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company), 1996, 29.

represented through it a kind of immortal colonial life – the life of the colonial undead.

So, defining national archives as colonial state apparatuses reframes the contents of the archive beyond the specificity of the materials it houses. Assuming a unifying function of its relics, the actual materials take form beyond the particularities of the history they purportedly preserve. Consequently, the state's claim of authenticity in its project of historical preservation through "national archives" becomes a location imposing a kind of biopower to "make live"<sup>47</sup> particular subjects within the confines of its physical space and within empiricism more broadly. As Foucault states in speaking of society's transition into modernity, "modern man [becomes] an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question."<sup>48</sup> In other words, in this circumstance, the politics of the colonial settler state exceed any individual or collective subjects' condition of biological existence such that the nation-state's power compels particular subjects into a life of "the undead" through its archive to serve its own political purposes. By containing subjects in a state of immortality, the state makes retrievable not "truth," "evidence," or "proof," but the continuation of its own political colonial project through the perpetual re-inscription of narratives constructing a history that preserves and maintains its processes of racial hierarchies and the white supremacy derived from them.

---

<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1*, (New York: Random House, 1978), 143.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

As a colonial state apparatus, the archive similarly proclaims a certain narrative of the colonial nation-state, particularly as it speaks to its origin. This narrative functions to obscure the extermination and dispossession of Native peoples which undermine its asserted principles of foundation<sup>49</sup> and submits as fact a legend which legitimizes its creation, development and presence as a modern imperial power. For example, frontier and captivity narratives tend to portray the Euro-American settler woman as enduring a state of severe vulnerability and threat from Native men. However, in “Decolonizing the 1862 Death Marches,” Waziyatawin Angela Wilson notes, “the culpability of white Minnesota settlers is a story that has not been documented.”<sup>50</sup> It is not so much that there is no awareness of the warring that occurred between the Dakota people and white settlers, but rather that the colonial narrative portrays Indigenous aggression as without cause and unwarranted. Similarly, within the existing narrative white settler women are characterized as vulnerable and victimized, in stark contrast to the narrative Wilson documents from Dakota oral history: “But in November of 1862 the women of New Ulm apparently kept the fires burning to keep the water boiling in anticipation of the four-mile long procession of primarily women, children, and elderly. And they waited to pour the water on the most feeble of the group, the elderly women and the youngest

---

<sup>49</sup> Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, “Decolonizing the 1862 Death Marches,” *American Indian Quarterly* (28, 2004), 187.



children who rode in the wagon.”<sup>51</sup> Horrifying though this account may be, the point here is that Wilson only obtained this information from Dakota history, far removed from any national archive, for within the state’s archive there simply exist no such accounts.

The state’s national archives catalogue materials meant to constitute “facts” and “evidence” of events and circumstances which, when used to assert history, continually justify policies of Manifest Destiny and its requisite genocide, slavery, exclusion, exploitation, etc. Colonial epistemologies of boundaries, time, space, history and hierarchy inform the selection, preservation and use of materials whose designation as history allows research that, intentionally or not, continually regurgitates the founding narrative the state desires. Through these justifications and narratives, Indigenous peoples retain an inferior status within Western thought – suspended in colonial time, continually outside modernity, fraught with inherent pathologies and thus forever vanishing. So narrated, Indigenous peoples pose little threat to the colonial nation state’s contemporary politics and objectives. We are able to exist without threat to the purported US principles of democracy and freedom while simultaneously vanishing as the epistemological processes of colonialism portray the nation-state’s extermination as a series of self-inflicted wounds and pathologies. This regurgitation positions researchers to assist the settler nation-state in its project of narration, evidencing the insidious nature of colonization as a never ending process and implicating the

---

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, 202.

unavoidability of re-inscription and reinforcement when retrieving history from the state's preservation collection.

This is not to suggest that all archives and all boarding schools operate in exactly the same manner and so can be understood in generic terms. The assimilation process, understood as a kind of indoctrination or pathway to inclusion supplants Native knowledge with settler knowledge relative to the formation of the subject. Interestingly, the boarding school era coincides closely with the end of treaty making (1871) and the ascendance of a different political understanding of sovereignty relative to Native American tribes, a sovereignty tied more closely to ideas of jurisdiction.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, beyond the formal political approach to tribal negotiations and agreements, the colonial state, through boarding schools, stakes a claim of sovereignty over Native knowledge, i.e., what is understood as Native knowledge, what Native knowledge requires elimination, and what knowledge constitutes the Native as subject.

This thesis has situated a specific boarding school relic within the space of the archive understood as a colonial state apparatus. This approach to the archive as CSA incorporated first hand experience tracing the individuals in this journal through visits to a national archive and an archive organized and operated by Native people. Though issues of objectivity and bias frequently arise in this context, objectivity is not the primary goal of this endeavor. Rather, research that does not privilege Western epistemology necessarily eschews at least some of

---

<sup>52</sup> Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia 1788-1836*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

those standards. This, of course, is not to suggest that my subjective approach is superior to objective research or that it is the entirety of the foundation on which I have based my analysis. I have taken seriously Robert Warrior's call to "theoretically [explore] the concept of experience and its relationship to the production of criticism"<sup>53</sup> as an effort to produce "new knowledge from new places... [un]burdened by the assumption that knowledge from the colonial center counts more than knowledge from the indigenous world."<sup>54</sup> This is also not to suggest that a single Native scholar counts as "the indigenous world." Rather, I have centralized the idea that experiences of Native scholars and researchers working inside an overtly colonial institution like the university are a kind of intellectual rigor in themselves; that perhaps this rigor, as a potential site to generate new knowledge may counter forms of knowledge production that inform larger structures of education that advance the settler colonial project.

Having demonstrated the potential difference available through a form of archiving not structured in a manner similar to the National Archive and Records Administration, this thesis asserts the possibility of not only new knowledge but new forms of knowledge production that may serve a broader decolonial purpose in their ability to represent and make legible Native peoples, histories, and sovereignty and self-determination struggles. Rejecting "the colonial center" refocuses the common denominator shared by these elements: they each have an inherent relationship to land and, thus, to space and place because of their

---

<sup>53</sup> Warrior, xxiii.

<sup>54</sup> Warrior, 185.

intimate relationships to Native identity. As Native scholar, Mishuana Goeman, articulately explains, “Indigenous peoples make place by relating both personal and communal experiences and histories to certain locations and landscapes—maintaining these spatial relationships is one of the most important components of identity...land is not only given meaning through consensus of claiming territory, but also through narrative practices. It is invested in meaning and identity or identities.”<sup>55</sup> Understanding the archive and fields of knowledge production as types of “locations and landscapes,” in fact, opens them each to new or re-conceptualizations and imaginings through traditional and/or new modes of place-making to reject any allocation to colonial time or subjectivity meant to undermine our determination.

---

<sup>55</sup> Mishuana Goeman, “From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the Discussion of Indigenous National Building,” *Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 1(1), 2008: 23-34.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alfred, Gerald Taiaiake. *Wasa'se: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2005. Print.
- Althusser, Louis. *Lénine Et La Philosophie*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1968. Print.
- Bruyneel, Kevin. *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Print.
- Coulthard, Glen S. "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada." *Contemporary Political Theory*. Vol. 6, 2007, 437-460. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever : A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.
- Fanon, Franz. *Black Skins, White Masks*. Tran. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967. Print.
- Ferguson, Roderick A. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. Print.
- Ford, Lisa. *Settler Sovereignty : Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836*. v. 166 Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.
- Foucault, Michel, Donald F. Bouchard, and Sherry Simon. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice : Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980. Print.
- Goeman, Mishuana. "From Place to Territories and Back Again: Centering Storied Land in the Discussion of Indigenous National Building." *Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*. 1(1), 2008: 23-34.

- Gordon, Avery F. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Harjo, Joy. *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994. Print.
- Kazanjian, David. *The Colonizing Trick : National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Print.
- Lyons, Scott Richard. *X-Marks : Native Signatures of Assent*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.
- Mbembe, Achille. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture*. 15(1): 11-40.
- Miller, Bruce Granville. *Invisible Indigenes : The Politics of Nonrecognition*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003. Print.
- Million, Dian. "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History." *Wicazo Sa Review*. 24.2 (2009): 53-76.
- Morgensen, Scott Lauria. "Settler Homonationalism." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 16.1 (2010): 105-31. Print.
- Nelson, Cary, and Lawrence Grossberg. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. Print.
- Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death : A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982. Print.
- Rifkin, Mark. *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992. Print.
- Silva, Denise Ferreira da. *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Vol. 27. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Print.
- Simpson, Audra. "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship." *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue*. 9 (2007): 67-80. Print.

Simpson, Michael W. "For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook." *Tribal College Journal* 19.2 (2007): 52-. Print.

Smith, Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence & American Indian Genocide*. Cambridge: South End Press, 2005.

Smith, Andrea. *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Spivak, Gayatri. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. Print.

Tuck, Eve "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities." *Harvard Educational Review* 79.3 (2009): 409-27. Print.

Warrior, Robert Allen. *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. Print.

Wilson, Waziyatawin Angela. "Decolonizing the 1862 Death Marches." *American Indian Quarterly* 28.1 (2004): 185-215. Print.

Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (2006): 387-409. Print.