

INTRODUCTION

FROM THE FIRST MOMENTS THEY SET FOOT ON THESE SHORES, THE European invader-settlers of America confronted an “Indian problem.” This consisted of the simple fact that Indians occupied lands the newcomers wanted for themselves. To be sure, this was not the case for the Spanish invaders of the Southeast and Southwest in the mid-sixteenth century, whose intent for the most part was to find treasure and to convert and missionize the tribal peoples they encountered. But in the Northeast, the English, from the early seventeenth century, and then the Americans, as they made their way across the continent, came to understand that, broadly speaking, America’s Indian problem permitted of only two solutions, extermination or education. Extermination was costly, sometimes dangerous, and, too, it also seemed increasingly *wrong*.

In time, it began to appear wiser, as the title of Robert Trennert’s “Introduction” to a study of the Phoenix Indian School put the matter, for policymakers to proceed according to the assumption that “The Sword Will Give Way to the Spelling Book” (1988, 3), thus offering, again to cite Trennert, an “Alternative to Extinction” (1975). Educating Native peoples—teaching them to speak, read, and write English, to convert to one or another version of Christianity, and to accept an individualism destructive of communal tribalism, ethnocide rather than genocide—was a strategy that might more efficiently free up Native landholdings and transform the American Indian into an Indian-American, inhabiting, if not quite melted into, the broad pot of the American mainstream.

In a fine 1969 study, Brewton Berry remarked that so far as the choice between “coercion” and “persuasion” (23) was concerned, “Formal education has been regarded as the most effective means of bringing about assimilation” (22). Robert Trennert writes that when the Phoenix Indian School was founded in 1891, it was “for the specific purpose of preparing Native American children for assimilation. . . . to remove Indian youngsters from their traditional environment, obliterate their cultural heritage, and replace that . . . with the values of white middle-class America.” Complicating the

matter, he adds, was the fact that “the definition of assimilation was repeatedly revised between 1890 and 1930” (1988, xi). Further complicating the matter well into the 1960s was the fact that “white middle-class America” was generally not willing to accommodate persons of color regardless of whether they shared its values or not.

In the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* for 1890, the “Rules for Indian Schools” stated clearly that the government, in “organizing this system of schools,” intended for them to “be preparatory and temporary; that eventually they will become unnecessary, and a full and free entrance be obtained for Indians into the public school system of the country. It is to this end,” the “Rules” continued, that “all officers and employees of the Indian school service should work” (in Bremner, vol. ii, 1,354). Although a “full and free entrance” to all public schools in the United States was legally available to Native Americans—as it was not to African Americans—on those occasions when they availed themselves of the right to attend, they were not especially welcomed or well served. Indeed, as Wilbert Ahern has written, “The local public schools to which 53% of Indian children went in 1925, were even less responsive to Indian communities than the BIA schools” (1996, 88).

In her study of the St. Joseph’s boarding school in Kashena, Wisconsin, Sarah Shillinger affirms that “Assimilation was an important, if not a more important goal than education to the supporters of the boarding-school movement” (95). Her conclusion, however, is that the boarding schools’ “results were closer to an integration of both cultural systems [Indian and white] than . . . to assimilation into Euro-American society” (115). This seems to me accurate, and I will quote other writers on the subject who state roughly similar conclusions in different ways. But the degree to which any single individual could successfully integrate “both cultural systems” varied a good deal. As we will see, some boarding-school students had little trouble “living in two worlds,” as the metaphor is often given—a metaphor that is usually unexamined and one I will interrogate a bit further on. Others found the two “cultural systems,” Native and settler, to be in conflict in greater or lesser degree, so that “bridging the gap”—another largely unquestioned metaphor—was painful and difficult. Further complicating the matter is the fact that one of the “cultural systems” was backed by the overwhelming power of the colonial state.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, as Adams wrote, “Those responsible for the formulation of Indian policy were sure of one thing, the Indian could not continue to exist as an Indian.” Indian people, therefore, “had to choose . . . between civilization or extinction” (1995b, 28), and to become civilized, Indians needed to be educated. “By the early 1890s,” according to Wilbert Ahern, “Thomas Jefferson Morgan, commissioner of Indian affairs, had designed the means to extinguish American Indian cultures by going after the children, pulling them from their homes, and indoctrinating them with ‘American civilization’” (1996, 88). To cite Adams once more, “The boarding school, whether on or off the reservation, was the institutional manifestation of the government’s determination to completely restructure the Indians’ minds and personalities” (1995a, 97), to change them forever.

Although the aim may have been to provide the boarding-school students with—I cite the title of Adams’s important book—an “education *for* extinction,” (my emphasis) cultural extinction or ethnocide, that phrase does not adequately describe the reality of what went on at many of the schools. For example, as Joel Pfister wrote in his study of Richard Henry Pratt and his Carlisle Indian School—see just below—“Education for extinction does not appear to convey comprehensively what Carlisle was set up to do either during or after Pratt’s rule” (2004, 94) from 1879 to 1904, and until its closing in 1918. Further, although federal education policies for Indians assuredly were designed, as K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty state, “to erase and replace” Indian languages, cultures, and religions, eventually, they note, the schools did allow for “teaching Native arts and technologies,” and also engaged in the “production of bilingual primers, for use in bilingual classrooms in the 1940s” (xxii). This is only to say that any approximately accurate account of the Indian schools, as I will have occasion to say many times, cannot be based on reductive generalizations.



In the seventeenth century, the Reverend John Elliot had founded fourteen towns of “praying Indians” in the Massachusetts Bay Colony to separate his Indian converts from tribal members who had refused Christianity, providing lessons in “Latin and Greek for those he hoped would become teachers and missionaries” (Berry, 12). Indeed, two Wampanoag men, Caleb

Cheashahteamuck and Joel Hiacoomes both attended Harvard in the 1660s, and the College of William and Mary had about twenty Indian students by 1712. But we have no record of what any of these students thought of the educational experiences they underwent. In the eighteenth century, the Reverend Eleazar Wheelock established the Moors Charity School for Indians to train Native people to missionize among their brethren, and some of the letters written by “Wheelock’s Indians,” along with diaries and other writings by the Reverend Samson Ocom and Joseph Johnson, Wheelock’s star pupils, have been preserved. In the early nineteenth century, we find a number of mission schools among the Cherokees, and, after the Civil War, under President Grant’s “peace policy,” several Protestant denominations were permitted by the government to operate reservation schools. But it was only in 1879 that the bright light and pre-eminent model of the boarding-school movement, the off-reservation Carlisle Indian Industrial School (see figure 1), was founded by Captain Richard Henry Pratt.

Pratt was a complicated man and much has been written about him. The nearly hagiographic biography by Elaine Goodale Eastman named him “the Red Man’s Moses” (1935), a description first applied to him, she noted, in a 1900 commencement address given by Indian Commissioner Merrill Gates (219). More recently, there is Ward Churchill’s revisionist



1 Captain Richard Pratt with Navajos from New Mexico newly arrived at Carlisle Indian School. Photograph by John N. Choate. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, NAA INV 02292400.

account of Pratt as founder of a genocidal policy (2004). Pratt also wrote his own story.¹ Dr. Martin Luther King is said to have remarked that the white South loves individual black people but hates the race, while it is the reverse in the North. Pratt would seem to have had the South's view of Indians. He got along well with a great many individual Indians, at first some of the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Apache prisoners of war he oversaw at Fort Marion, Florida, where in the 1870s he was in charge, and over the years he showed affection for a considerable number of his Indian students, many of whom clearly reciprocated that affection.

But Pratt detested Indian cultures, so far as he knew them. His often-quoted motto was, "Kill the Indian and save the man!"² For all the violent determination of the slogan, in hindsight, it was a vain and naive oxymoron. Students took half a day of very basic instruction, mostly in literacy and simple arithmetic, along with half a day of manual instruction for the young men, and some form of "domestic science" for the women.³ Thus, although the celebrated Carlisle football team, with its star, Jim Thorpe, was, for the most part, made up of college-age men, and Carlisle competed against—and sometimes beat—some of the best American college teams, Carlisle was in no way a college, offering no more than an eighth-grade education. (Many of the boarding schools did not go past the sixth grade.) Moreover, it was "Not until 1889," ten years after Carlisle's founding, that Pratt awarded "any diplomas, and even then only 14 students graduated out of the 178 leaving for home!" (Adams 1995a, 290).

Pratt had been a soldier and he ran the school like a military academy; students marched, saluted, drilled, wore uniforms, and were punished for disciplinary infractions.⁴ This regimentation was a major part of the program to transform Native people, and it was not until the 1930s that the reformist commissioner of Indian affairs, John Collier, "ended the military system for all Indian boarding schools" (Gram, xiv). Along with basic instruction in gardening or farming, in handling cows, horses, and pigs, Carlisle's industrial programs instructed Indian boys in carpentry, blacksmithing, and harness-making—even as it was becoming clear that automobiles would soon replace the horse—and provided instruction in tinsmithing at a time when mass-produced metal products were coming widely into use even on the reservations.⁵ Worse yet, as the Indian school superintendent Leo Crane wrote as late as 1917, once the Indian student returned home, "He was in the ludicrous position of being a blacksmith where there were no forges,

a carpenter where lumber was scarce, a tailor where flour-sacks were used for clothes, a shoemaker where moccasins were worn, and a painter where there was nothing to paint” (in Adams 1995b, 42).

The training young Indian women received at Carlisle, as at the other boarding schools, consisted in such things as how to set a table and how to use stoves, irons, and washing machines—all of which were sure to be absent or rare once they returned home. And, too, once these students returned home having slept in what Polingaysi Qoyawayma’s chronicler, Vada Carlson, called a “real bed” (*No Turning Back*, 59), and once they had indeed worn tailored clothing (the shoes, not so much), had sat on chairs and eaten at tables made by skilled carpenters, how would they respond to the living conditions they found on their return home?

The general unavailability on the reservations of the white man’s cultural innovations, or indeed, the disapproval of them by relatives and friends when they were available, often led former students to “return to the blanket,” in the disparaging phrase of the boarding-school proponents. This referred to the fact that, in greater or lesser degree, some returned students reverted to speaking their Native languages rather than English, abandoned the Christianity on which the schools insisted, and even actively opposed government efforts to “civilize” Native peoples by means of boarding-school education—an education they had themselves experienced. Indeed, as Wilbert Ahern concluded, returned students often became “defenders of community interests” (in Reyhner and Eder, 202) rather than proponents of boarding-school education. In the great majority of cases, the situation of returned students was often a complex and difficult matter.

Important to Pratt’s program at Carlisle was what he called the “placing-out,” or, simply, the “outing” system, something he had begun to develop at his prior posting at Hampton Institute under General Samuel Armstrong.⁶ Pratt’s outing program at Carlisle sent a number of young Indian men and women to live for a time with local white families, to whom they provided labor or domestic service in return for their board and some very modest pay. This was not compulsory; students had to request or agree to an outing assignment, although it is not clear that they understood they had a choice in the matter. Most of the families to which Native students were “outed” were farm families. The theory was to expand these young people’s experience of white ways beyond the school grounds and to make them appreciate the jingle of a couple of quarters in their trouser or apron pockets. In practice,

for the most part, the outing system provided cheap labor for the host families with lessons primarily in subservience for the guest Indians. Although it soon became clear that the outing system was above all “a way for white families to obtain cheap servants” (Reyhner and Eder, 139) and that it “did more than any other [boarding-school practice] to reinforce the concept of the suitability of Indians for menial labor,” (Child, 81–82), it nonetheless was practiced by those off-reservation boarding schools whose location made it feasible.

By 1902, there were twenty-five off-reservation boarding schools (see figure 2). These were meant to be, as David Adams (among others) has termed them with reference to Erving Goffman, “total institutions” (1995a, 101) engaged in the surveillance and control of their students, who were treated in some measure as inmates.⁷ Nonetheless, as we know both theoretically and from a great many empirical studies, even “total institutions” rarely achieve total control; for the boarding schools, the documentation is overwhelming that students in a variety of ways escaped the totality. Still,



2 The boys' dormitory at the Albuquerque Indian School sometime between 1880 and 1890. Photograph by Ben Wittick. Courtesy of Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, Santa Fe, NM, #086869.

there is no question that, as John Fire/Lame Deer said, for many of the students, “The boarding schools leave a scar. We enter them confused and bewildered and we leave them the same way” (35). And, too, a fair number did not survive, as the school cemeteries make all too clear. This must be fully acknowledged, for all that it is not the whole story.

Pratt was dismissed from Carlisle in 1904 and the school closed for good in 1918, near the end of the World War I. Ten years later, the 1928 government survey, *The Problem of*

Indian Administration, generally known as the Meriam Report, was intensely critical of the boarding schools, and under John Collier's tenure as commissioner of Indian affairs (1933–45) some of them were closed while others were substantially altered. For example, under Collier's direction, the military system was abandoned, religious observances for students were no longer compulsory, and the curriculum, as I have noted, might include elements of Native culture and history and, on occasion, Native languages; some of the boarding schools became public high schools. Looking back some forty years, Brewton Berry would conclude that "the feeling is general" that the schools had failed "to meet the Indians' needs," and had failed to prepare the students "to participate effectively in American society" (41). A great many subsequent studies have confirmed Berry's assessment. Worse yet, having failed to prepare the students "to participate effectively in American society," the schools in many cases, as I have noted, succeeded in making it difficult for returned students "to participate effectively" in the Native societies to which they returned.

It was not until the 1990s, however, that some of the darkest aspects of the boarding schools would be brought to light. That the schools often provided inadequate nutrition, hygiene, and health care had been clear for some time and abundantly evidenced in the Meriam Report. But even that extremely critical 1928 account did not plumb the depths of some of the extreme corporal punishment meted out, nor did it look into the matter of sexual abuse at the schools. I won't attempt to offer anything like whatever might be the "whole story," but simply present a few examples. Others will appear as we consider individual narratives.

As noted, Pratt ran Carlisle as a military institution, and, to his credit, from the first insisted that if his students were to behave like soldiers, both young men and young women "should have the same food allowance as soldiers" (Reyner and Eder, 137). The degree to which this was carried out at Carlisle is unclear—and at any rate, as we will see further, even when food was adequate or approximately so, a good deal of it was strange and unpalatable to Indian students. A great many letters and interviews (e.g., in Child, Cobb, T. Lomawaima, Shillinger, Vuckovic) and a great many boarding-school autobiographers (cited in Coleman, B. Johnson, and in this volume) testified to the fact that students were often hungry.⁸ In that students frequently shared bath water and towels, there were many cases of trachoma, tuberculosis, measles, pneumonia, and influenza, some of which

proved fatal.⁹ The availability of chamber pots, privies, and, later, flush toilets varied considerably. Berenice Levchuk has poignantly described her late-twentieth-century visit to the cemetery at the Carlisle Barracks, then home to the U.S. Army War College and Military History Institute, and Jacqueline Fear-Segal has written about it as well (231ff). Myriam Vuckovic has given an account of the cemetery at Haskell (21, 33), and Clifford Trafzer and Jean Keller have published on the cemetery at the Sherman Indian School in Riverside, California. At the time I am writing (2016), members of the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition—more on the Coalition below—have just been to Washington to discuss the return of the remains of thirteen children buried in the Carlisle cemetery.

In his 1989 autobiography of more than 250 pages, *Indian School Days*, Basil Johnston mentioned no molestation or sexual abuse at St. Peter Clavier's Indian Residential School in Canada, which he attended. It was only in 2007, in an extraordinarily moving foreword to Sam McKegney's *Magic Weapons*, that Johnston told of having suffered these things. Tomson Highway's autobiographical novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, is very explicit about the sexual abuse of young boys by teaching brothers at the Catholic Residential School in Canada that he and his brother attended. Berenice Levchuk's recollections of her own boarding-school experiences in the United States include the memory of "a nine-year old girl [who] was raped in her dormitory bed during the night" and "a certain male teacher who stalked and molested girls" (184). Sarah Shillinger writes that "In July, 1993, former students at the Mount Pleasant Indian School in Mount Pleasant, Michigan, publicly accused teaching sisters at the school of sexually molesting them while they were students" (8). She also states that there was no evidence of such abuse at the St. Joseph's school, the subject of her study. Clyde Ellis found that two female teachers at the Rainy Mountain School left after admitting to having kept the company of male students at night (110). They claimed that the nature of their relationship was strictly friendship. Johnston also noted that older boys sexually abused younger boys. How common forced sexual relations between students and staff at the boarding schools might have been is almost surely beyond exact determination.

Sarah Shillinger discovered from her interviews with former boarding-school students that "A theme that runs through the students' remembrances is physical abuse" (14). That this occurred widely and well past the middle of the twentieth century is indisputable. It is a matter that will appear

frequently in the narratives I will examine, and it is worth considering here. In his 1903 attacks on Keam's Canyon School¹⁰ superintendent Charles Burton, Charles Lummis wrote that "'corporal punishment' and 'cruel or degrading measures' are absolutely prohibited by the rules and regulations of the Indian Service" (18). He makes reference to the 1900 edition of the Indian Service rules in which he quotes Rule 249 as stating that "In no case shall the school employees resort to corporal punishment" (75). I haven't been able to find the Indian Service Rules for the year Lummis cites. But in the 1890 "Rules for Indian Schools," Rule 53 reads: "Corporal punishment must be resorted to only in cases of grave violations of rules, and in no instances shall any person inflict it except under the direction of the superintendent, to whom all serious questions of discipline must be referred"¹¹ (in Bremner, vol. ii, 1,355–56). The same language appears in the 1892 "Rules for Indian Schools." Nonetheless, Burton used a rawhide whip at Keam's Canyon School, and Herman Kampmeier, principal teacher at the Orayvi Day School, "a man of violent and uncontrolled temper," according to Lummis, "had been guilty of repeated and intolerable brutalities" (76), as was his successor, John Ballenger. (Kampmeier and Ballenger were indeed dismissed from the Indian Service as unfit.) Margaret Jacobs's recent research cites an affidavit submitted in 1903 by Laura Dandridge, "a matron at Keams Canyon [School] between 1899 and 1902," alleging that two teachers there "each carried a club . . . when marching Hopi children to the school-room." For any misstep or trivial offense, Dandridge testified, "the offending boy or girl in the company would receive a whack from the club" (in Jacobs 2004, 40). Ms. Dandridge also reported a third teacher engaging in brutal practices. It seems doubtful that the 1890 and 1892 Rules were so radically changed as to permit these things some ten years later. But clearly the rules regulating corporal punishment were flouted on a daily basis, and I will cite the testimony of many students who endured it.¹²

Trennert says of the Phoenix Indian School that although it had a "jail as early as 1893, . . . and although the demand for strict discipline was constant, there was little overt brutality" (1989, 598). But he also observes that this changed "around 1917, soon after John B. Brown became superintendent" (1989, 599). Many schools used their jails as a substitute for corporal punishment, but "overt brutality" was nonetheless sufficiently widespread to have been noted in the Meriam Report. Shortly after its publication in 1928,

Indian Commissioner Burke “issued circular #2526 . . . forbidding corporal punishment altogether at Indian schools” (Trennert 1989, 603). This was not, however, before the Phoenix School’s disciplinarian, Jacob Duran, along with his assistants, had been accused of “periodically whipping, beating, and abusing Indian students” (Trennert 1989, 605), accusations that had been made against many disciplinarians and teachers employed by the Indian Service.

Anna Moore Shaw, a To’hono Akimel (Pima) woman who attended the Phoenix Indian School from 1908 to 1918, describes a matron who “was strict and frequently used her strap” (134) on the girls, in particular “strapping” them while they “were still on [their] hands and knees” (136) scrubbing floors. Scott Riney remarks the violent abuse of students by several women teachers at the Rapid City Indian School (147–48), some of whom frequently administered “a very good strapping” (160). As Riney observed, there were clearly instances where the “line between acceptable [physical] punishment and outright abuse was . . . crossed” (160), even by the standards of the period. Other boarding-school autobiographers have reported acts of sadism (e.g., Fred Kabotie: Mr. Buchanan’s “razor strop—it was leather, with a metal hook on the end” [12]) and demented savagery (e.g., Peter Razor’s knee cap was broken by a female teacher wielding a hammer (62).

Although government rules prescribed a careful regulation of corporal punishment, there is no question that it frequently occurred. Bad enough in itself, its infliction on Indian children, it has frequently been written, was made worse by the fact that Native American parents did not physically discipline their children. Not to mitigate the undeniable brutality of some of the punishments meted out at the schools, it must be said that this latter statement is an idealized overgeneralization. Although I have found no study surveying the disciplinary practices of any given tribal nation during any particular time period, my almost forty years of reading do indeed confirm that Native parents for the most part did *not* use physical means to discipline unruly children.¹³ Nonetheless, Hopi parents might call in a mother’s brother, the family authority figure, to give a child a swat, or they might pour water over them if they misbehaved.¹⁴ There are also anecdotal accounts of Native parents briefly holding an unruly child close to a smoky fire that would sting the eyes and nose.

It is also the case that the ritual whipping administered to Hopi boys and girls during their initiation into the Katsina society was partly to make

them mind their elders. This is something that might be alluded to by the *katsinam* (kachinas) themselves or by the godfathers of the initiates. Occasionally, as would be the case with Don Talayesva (see below), a child might receive more than the usual four strokes because they were “naughty.” Edward Curtis, at Walpi on First Mesa in 1921, reported one of the whipper *katsinam* saying, “We have come to whip the children that are bad” (170), and Julian Steward’s later (1927) account of an initiation, also on First Mesa, includes a *katsina* saying that part of the rationale for the whipping is that the children “do not obey their mothers and fathers”; thus the *katsinam* “are going to help you old people so that they will mind you” (64). Nonetheless, unlike what occurred at the boarding schools, there was indeed no systematic corporal punishment meted out to unruly children by adults in Native nations.

In regard to some of the more brutal boarding-school practices, Andrea Smith, in a chapter called “Boarding School Abuses and the Case for Reparations,” claims that on occasion or often the boarding schools went so far as to “violate [. . .] a number of human rights legal standards” (42). She has made the case for government reparations to boarding-school students and their descendants. A lengthy article in the *New York Times* for June 3, 2015, had the headline, “Report Details ‘Cultural Genocide’ at Schools for Aboriginal Canadians” (A7). “That is the conclusion reached by the country’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission after six years of extensive research” (A7). It notes for the Canadian schools, more often under religious auspices than was the case in the United States, many of the same abuses I have described in the American schools, along with some far worse. The article states that although the “Canadian Government apologized to former students in a landmark 2008 court settlement,” Justice Murray Sinclair, “an Ojibwa” who led the Commission, made the important point that more than an apology was needed, the Commission having found that “all too often, policies and programs are still based on faded notions of assimilation” (A7).

It is nonetheless important to acknowledge that the history of the Indian boarding schools is not exclusively a narrative of victimization and enforced suffering. Nor is it the case that all tribal nations were opposed to the schools. Clyde Ellis writes that when the Kiowas signed the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867, they asked that it include the requirement for the government to build schools for their children. By the end of the 1880s, when no schools had yet been built, the “tribe petitioned for a school of their own” (54). The Rainy Mountain School finally opened in 1893; when plans to

close it were announced after World War I, the tribe again protested. The Kiowas' petition to the Indian Office begins, "To discontinue the institution would mean the removal of the very backbone of the tribe" (in Ellis, 183). As we will see below, the 1868 Treaty between the Navajo nation and the U.S. government included the government's promise to build schools and the Navajos' promise to send children between the ages of six and sixteen.

The Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females, with "a curriculum equal to a junior college education" (Cobb 94) and controlled by the Chickasaw tribe (with federal government involvement) from 1865 to 1907, was not a typical boarding school, but it was one valued by its students and their families. This is true as well of the Cherokee Seminary for young women run by the Cherokee Nation and the federal government. Its curriculum was modeled on that of Mount Holyoke College, and it trained its young, affluent students "to become homemakers and teachers" (Mihesuah, 98) on a model "nearly identical to Victorian society's white women" (Mihesuah, 3). No Cherokee language, culture, or history was taught at the Seminary. K. Tsianina Lomawaima, acutely critical of the boarding schools, nonetheless found that in the twentieth century, "In the Indian Territory, education was by and large a desired commodity" (36).

In an 1885–86 petition, Hopis from First and Second Mesa wrote to Washington that

"We are also greatly concerned for our children. We pray that they may follow in their fathers' footsteps and grow up—good of heart and pure of breath. Yet we can see that things are changing around us. . . . We would like our children to learn the Americans' tongue and their ways of work. We pray you to assist in causing a school to be opened in our country, and we will gladly send our children to the on-reservation boarding school that opened at Keam's Canyon in 1887."¹⁵

There were no signatories from Orayvi on Third Mesa, where, as we will see further, opposition to the Americans was much stronger. Of course these thoughtful and concerned Native parents could not know whether it would indeed be possible for their children to "follow in their fathers' footsteps" once they had learned "the Americans' tongue and their ways of work," nor could they know the conditions their children would encounter at the schools. There is no question that even those parents who favored the schools wanted their children, as Brenda Child has written, to be "involved in the life of the family and the tribal community" (47). There is also no

question that the boarding schools systematically attempted to thwart such continued involvement.

Some of the Hopi children who attended Keam's Canyon School went on to the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California, and, as Diana Meyers Bahr has observed, "Even alumni whose memories are depressing or ambivalently fond and regretful retain an undeniable attachment to the school" (2014, 3). Miriam Vuckovic noted that Haskell's "indigenous students' reactions ranged from complete rejection to enthusiasm, and most felt ambivalent about their boarding school years" (2). It was also the case, as Ellis noted of the Rainy Mountain School—and this is true for other of the boarding schools—that "In times of family crisis," the school "became a child provider of last resort for Indian parents" (37). These few examples—there are many others—"compel [. . .] us," as he concludes, "to recognize the full complexity of the history of the Indian boarding schools."¹⁶

Although a great many students found the schools destructive, more than a few, as we have seen and will see further, did not. John Gram, for example, has written that in spite of Pratt's well-known slogan, "no Indian was killed at AIS [the Albuquerque Indian School]. Indeed, one may conclude that AIS was a happy and nurturing place. This is the pervading sentiment of its alumni" (xvi). If that is an exaggeration on the sunny side, it is nonetheless based on wide consultation with alumni. As Superintendent Cora Dunn of the Rainy Mountain School said in 1899, "'Our purpose is to change them forever'" (in Ellis, xiii), and I have adapted her words as the title for this book. But, as Clyde Ellis, who quoted Dunn, states, "The seeming incongruity of going to boarding school and staying Indian was not so much a conundrum as a fact of life" (196). That the schools in one degree or another "changed" their Indian students is indisputable. But "killing the Indian" by the process of cultural erasure and replacement was not easy to do—at least not if the man or the woman were actually to survive.

Just as many Native parents wanted schooling for their children, so, too, many students were grateful to the boarding schools for the education they received, appreciating what they had learned about Euro-American ways of living, while feeling their Indianness intensified, either in terms of an enhanced awareness of their national identities (Hopi, Chickasaw, Kiowa, Navajo, Apache, and so on), of the possibilities of pan-Indian identities,¹⁷ or both. As Amanda Cobb put it, "What U.S. policymakers had not counted

upon was the ability of Indian nations to adopt white ways without losing their own tribal identities”¹⁸ (32). I think her statement is supported by the evidence, but it must once more be noted that this “ability” was more pronounced on the part of some individuals than others, and, too, that all those who “adopted white ways” while also retaining their “tribal identities,” integrating the two, did so very differently from one another.

In her interviews with former Chilocco Indian School students, K. Tsianina Lomawaima asked them about a Miss McCormick, a particularly harsh head matron. What she found was that “The range and disparity within student responses to this one individual indicate the difficulty of making generalizations about key facets of boarding-school life” (48). This is the conclusion one would draw as well from Kim Brumley’s recent compilation of the recollections of twenty-nine Chilocco students from the class of 1933 to the class of 1980. Similarly, Scott Lyons has written that his Ojibwe grandfather, Aubrey Lyons, whipped at the Flandreau School in South Dakota, ran away four times, while his Dakota wife, Leona, loved Flandreau (23). Anna Moore Shaw, whom I quoted earlier, wrote that “we can never go back to the old ways of life. The white man and his cities surround us—we must embrace those of his ways which are good while keeping our pride in being Indian . . . a blending of the two” (7–8). A great many of the Navajo people who provided accounts of their lives for Broderick Johnson’s book voiced similar opinions (e.g., Mrs. Bob Martin: “Fort Lewis was a wonderful school, and I learned a lot there” (132), and many other boarding-school autobiographers have done so as well. David Adams, author of *Education for Extinction*, has more recently published “Beyond Bleakness: The Brighter Side of Boarding Schools, 1870–1940.”

This, let me repeat, is in no way to justify the ethnocidal boarding-school policies, their often cruel and truly savage practices, and some of the dire consequences to Indian students who experienced them. “Too few of the lessons [Indian students] learned,” Ahern writes, “were empowering; too many were destructive” (1996, 88). The National Native American Boarding School Healing Commission still has much work to do. Yet, as K. Tsianina Lomawaima put it, the “moral” of the Chilocco Indian School “falls somewhere between the depiction of boarding schools as irredeemably destructive institutions”¹⁹ and the opinion of one of the former students she interviewed that Chilocco “‘really was a marvelous school’” (164). After examining a very great number of Indian boarding-school autobiographies,

Michael Coleman concluded that “No Hopi or Navajo or Sioux response to the schools emerged” (194). Myriam Vuckovic’s attention to Haskell “students’ responses to their schooling [revealed] . . . there was no single boarding-school experience.” Instead, she found that the students’ “reactions ranged from complete rejection to enthusiasm, and most felt ambivalent about their boarding-school years” (2).

Of course students who “completely rejected” their boarding-school experience were not likely to memorialize it in writing. As Jeffrey Ostler has written, “Only the most resilient children later wrote”—or, for that matter, chose to discuss—“their experiences, whereas those who suffered deeper damage did not” (154). There is no question that although the record of boarding-school narratives is rich, those who have spoken or written of their experiences represent only a very small percentage of boarding-school students. Ruth Spack confirms that “The dearth of accounts reveals that the overwhelming majority of students remained silent” (109). We do not have the words of those who sickened and died at the schools, nor did any who succeeded in running away from the schools care to elaborate on what they had rejected. This is true as well of those who may have remained in school for several years only to turn their backs on their education on their return home. Even those more “resilient children” who did provide accounts, as we will see, presented a wide range of responses, all with at least a measure of “ambivalence,” as I have noted.

The boarding-school movement has, to date, received a considerable amount of scholarly attention.²⁰ The earliest studies worked largely from the perspective of the government—although many involved in teaching at or administering the schools were themselves extremely critical of that perspective. More recently, K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Brenda Child, Clyde Ellis, Clifford Trafzer, Myriam Vuckovic, and others have offered studies based on letters from and interviews with a great many boarding-school students themselves. In the third edition (1999) of her 1974 book, *Education and the American Indian*, Margaret Connell Szasz, writes that “Between the late 1970s and the late 1990s [she has] been moving away from an earlier focus on policy to a more recent focus on the Indian community itself” (xi). This is as well the orientation of this book in which the testimony of the boarding-school students themselves is central.

Coleman’s study, as some earlier studies had done, arranged the material by topics: curriculum, health, resistance, rebellion, identity, and so on;

Coleman quotes from a wide range of Native boarding-school autobiographers who addressed these matters. Ruth Spack, who examined all “of the one hundred autobiographies . . . Coleman found for his book” (109), read them specifically to determine how the students responded to the requirement that they learn English, what Spack calls in her title, *America’s Second Tongue*. Spack, like Coleman, Szasz, and others, is looking, as I have said, to balance a scale that had been weighted heavily toward the government and administrators’ accounts. But although the material they cite allows the reader to know what each autobiographer thought of one or another of the matters referenced, it gives no feel for any individual author’s boarding-school experience beyond these matters, no sense of his or her experience as even an approximate whole. This is not meant as a criticism of these fine books, all of which are histories.

But I am a literary worker in cultural studies, so this volume will, generally speaking, reverse the historians’ procedure. As I have quoted Coleman, “We still know relatively little about how Indian school children themselves saw things” (194), and one way to learn more about how the students “themselves saw things” is to look closely at what they themselves had to say in a range of autobiographical texts. It is in these texts that we may hear, as I have also quoted Tsianina Lomawaima, many of “the thousands of Indian voices who spoke the breath of boarding school life” (xii), and I will quote them at some length. As Lomawaima noted of the more than fifty former boarding-school students she interviewed for her study of the Chilocco Indian School, “for each of them, boarding school is only part of the story. For most of them, it is an important part” (159). And insofar as the texts exist, these student voices may still be heard.

Their voices speak of a range of experiences, yet they regularly reference what I will call a number of *scenes of initiation* or *initiatory loci*, and also a number of *topoi* (frequently the same “topics” the historians of the boarding schools had remarked) as they are encountered by one or another boarding-school autobiographer. Thus, for example, I consider the Dining Room to be an initiatory locus—new and strange things happen in this place—while Food—its kind and quality or lack thereof—is a topos. Discipline, frequently in the form of corporal punishment, is a topos, but one that has no particular locus in that it might be administered in the classroom, in a teacher’s office, in the dining room, or almost any other place—perhaps a jail—at a given school. The topos, Clock Time, or what Myriam Vuckovic

has termed, “Living by the Bell” (59), is also encountered everywhere: the dormitory, the dining room, the classroom, or the parade ground. In each of these loci students in the boarding schools woke, ate, studied, or marched according to the clock, its time signaled by the bell or bugle or whistle. Naming—that is, the de-individuating bestowal of Tom, Dick, Harry, and Sally to replace the highly distinctive names all students brought with them—is a topos,²¹ along with what I will call the Cleanup, the scrubbing and, in particular, the hair-cutting that took place almost immediately upon each student’s arrival. The Dormitory is the locus for the students’ nightly rest and also on occasion for the topos, Sex. But sexual relations among the students (or with others at the schools, when it occurred) are certainly not limited to the dormitory. The topos Outing Labor might have a family farm as locus—that was its rationale, based on the substantial farming community around Carlisle—but Native student workers might be housed in tents or otherwise transient, makeshift quarters. Identity is an important and complex topos, but what one can say about it for any particular student depends on shifting loci of home, family, school, and other matters, all of these varying over time. Not a single one of the many boarding-school students we will consider ever entirely abandoned a sense of being a Hopi, a Navajo, or an Apache, although each understood his or her tribal identity or, on occasion, a more nearly pan-Indian identity in a variety of ways.

Along with this introduction, *Changed Forever* consists of two parts and three appendices. Part I examines six book-length Hopi autobiographies that deal extensively with their subjects’ boarding-school experiences. All of these Hopi boarding-school students lived through a climactic event in Hopi history, the 1906 Orayvi Split, an event that was very much bound up with the government’s insistence that Hopi children attend the schools. Part II examines four full-length Navajo autobiographies and a collection of briefer Navajo life-history accounts, all of which treat the boarding-school experience of their subjects in greater or lesser detail. The two parts of the book are followed by three appendices of differing lengths. Appendix A discusses the Orayvi Split in 1906 on the Hopi Third Mesa in more historical and cultural detail than seemed appropriate for inclusion in the studies of—or the endnotes to—the individual autobiographies. Appendix B briefly describes what might be called the genre of Navajo life histories, including fictionalized ones and ones that do not include boarding-school experience. Because I know of only three Apache life histories that discuss their

subjects' boarding-school experience,²² and because only two of them offer many details, I discuss them in appendix C, rather than in what could have been a third part of the book.

This first volume of *Changed Forever* pays attention exclusively to the Southwest for the simple reason that there are more Hopi and Navajo (along with a couple of Apache) autobiographical texts representing their subjects' boarding-school experience in detail than there are from any other tribal nations. A second volume will consider Lakota boarding-school autobiographies and a range of boarding-school texts from various regions, along with the legacy of the boarding schools in Native American literature.



I'll close this introduction with a few words about methodology. *Changed Forever*, as the table of contents indicates, is divided into sections dealing with individual texts. As will soon be clear, the readings I offer for those texts proceed in something of a summary fashion; I quote and describe boarding-school materials from each book, providing cultural and historical background along with analytical and critical commentary. Both anonymous readers of my initial draft of this book expressed concerns about this procedure, noting the absence of what one called a "driving argument of the study." I want briefly to address these concerns.

First, it is likely that almost no reader of this book will have read all or even many of the boarding-school texts studied here. Most of them are little known, and many are out of print; I very much hope the attention given them here will remedy that, but such a remedy is for the future. The texts, then, have not received much scholarly or critical attention, and virtually none from literary scholars. Amelia Katanski's study of boarding-school writing, for example, mentions a few of them and offers a reading of none of them. This is not the usual case with the texts considered in most academic studies. To be sure, these texts are not "as good as" Shakespeare—or Silko or Vizenor, Welch or Erdrich. But I have found them interesting in all sorts of ways and I believe they deserve a contemporary audience. Thus, it seemed important to offer prospective readers of these books the historical and cultural materials needed to read them as fully as possible, and my discussions offer something like annotated critical editions of these autobiographies. Frank Mitchell's *Navajo Blessingway Singer* already has full and fine annotations by the editors, and Leo Simmons, editor of Don Talayesva's

Sun Chief, included a great deal of contextual information in that book. Both of those books are available in recent editions. But the others, those that are still in print and those that are not, have no such information. I do summarize—often more than I would like—but I also provide a great deal of historical and cultural context and critical commentary of a specifically literary kind. And, again, the summaries are all constructed from the words spoken or written by their boarding-school authors.

Second, it is true that there is no “driving argument” in this book, an absence that would constitute a near-fatal flaw for some academic studies, but not, I think, for this one. In a recent monograph I posited the genre of “Native American elegy.”²³ The two volumes projected for this study posit the genre of “American Indian boarding-school literature.” For the first study, I found a common thread in my examples of the genre that did allow for something like a “driving argument.” It seemed to me that all the performances and texts constituting the genre of Native elegy were marked by a sense—very different from that in Western elegy—of personal and individual loss as importantly social and communal loss. Elegiac performance or text was not so much “to praise famous men” as to console the people for their loss and thereby enable their “survivance,” to use a now-familiar term taken from Gerald Vizenor’s work. Each did this differently, and often in ways that were not immediately apparent, but each performance or text was guided by this principle whether or not the performer or writer was consciously aware of it.²⁴

The common thread in the texts that make up the genre of American Indian boarding-school literature is that every single one of them testifies to its subject’s retention of an ongoing Indian identity. But unlike the Native elegists all of whose performances or texts were—consciously or not—guided or undergirded by the principle of sustaining the ongoing communal life and health of the People, neither the Native boarding-school autobiographers nor their editors set out to show how Indian identities were retained. Instead, they had any number of purposes, sometimes no purpose other than to accommodate someone who had suggested that a record of their experience would be valuable.

Some of the boarding-school students went to the schools willingly and some by compulsion. Experiencing the topoi of the Cleanup, in particular the cutting of their hair, some were pleased with their new appearance

while others were horrified by it. After the Naming, some liked their new names, some found them of little concern, and more than a few were outraged at losing an important part of their identity. Among those who endured Corporal Punishment, many were deeply upset by their suffering, but some simply were not—or so they say. In the same way, while several Resisted or attempted to Run Away, others stayed long after the time for which they'd enrolled—or left and then returned. All of these experiences—and many more—went into the making of whatever sense of Indian identity these students retained, identities, as I have said, that were rich, complex, and variegated. But it simply is not the case that the texts constituting the genre of American Indian boarding-school literature are all guided by the principle of retaining Indian identity. Although their subjects, in one way or another, did retain a strong sense of Indian identity, describing how this came about is not what motivates the various accounts. And this is why this study does not have a “driving argument.”²⁵ Instead, I've taken seriously Tsianina Lomawaima's question: “What has become of the thousands of Indian voices who spoke the breath of boarding-school life?” (xii) and tried to present some of those voices as fully as I could, consistent with a critical study, to anyone wishing to listen.