

On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper stood in the House of Commons to issue an apology to former students of the residential school system for Aboriginal youth.ⁱ In addition to the Members of Parliament, Assembly of First Nations leader Phil Fontaine and hundreds of former attendees and church representatives were present for the speech. Harper described the two primary objectives of the residential school system to be the isolation of the child from their families, traditions and cultures, and their assimilation into the dominant culture. “Today” he said “we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.”

There is no question that the schools, and the policy of assimilation that they represent have caused harm. Over the one hundred and fifty years during which residential schools were in existence, approximately 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were removed from their families to live for the majority of the year in institutions isolated from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. There they were subjected to highly variable living conditions and systematically taught the inferiority of all aspects of their culture. Predictably, physical and emotional abuse occurred. Though accounts of experiences at the schools are not uniformly negative,ⁱⁱ these institutions have left behind an undeniable legacy of personal and communal pain, fragmentation and loss.

What *is* questionable about Harper’s apology is his statement that the policy they rested upon “has no place in our country.” To say so is to suggest that the policy of assimilation was part of a history that contemporary Canada has broken from entirely, as if the country Canada was when these schools were in existence can be considered a different social or political entity from the one that exists in the present. Or perhaps it is to suggest that this is a policy that Canada and Canadians are still purging; that the process of extracting actions, beliefs or behaviors related to the policy is on-going, as was demonstrated by his speech.

Indeed, my argument is that this policy of assimilation still has a place in our country, and that recognizing what this place is must be part of coming to terms with its consequences both in Canada’s past, and in present relations between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Canada. I will argue that the policies upon which residential schools were based are related to central tenets of liberal democratic social formations. These policies were not the by-products of wrong-headed decisions made by a few bad administrators or a now defunct partnership between church and state. Rather they are related to broader processes of constituting the subject of liberal democracies: to a conceptualization of social formations as subject to the willful manipulation of actors within them, and of a particular kind of subject as capable of this kind of manipulation.

Schooling for Aboriginal Children in Nineteenth Century Upper Canada

The nineteenth century was not the period in which schools for Aboriginal peoples were first introduced in the Canadas. As early as the seventeenth century there were Jesuit and Ursuline day and boarding schools for Aboriginal children in parts of present day eastern Canada, though by the seventeenth century these had been abandoned, largely due to Aboriginal resistance. These early schools shared some of the assumptions in evidence in the later institutions: a belief in the inferiority of Aboriginal culture and a commitment to the mission of civilizing the “savage”. However, they were

more inclined to teach and provide materials in the language of the students, and were the product of partnerships between Aboriginal peoples and the Church rather than the Church and the Crown.ⁱⁱⁱ

The experiment of operating church run schools for Aboriginal children was not taken up again until the late eighteenth century, and this time was propelled by Protestant denominations. A great deal had taken place in the intervening years. The Treaty of Paris had integrated lands formerly claimed by France into British North America, and the Constitutional Act of 1791 had split the massive province of Quebec into Upper Canada and Lower Canada. First Nations peoples in Upper Canada had been steadily diminished both in land and numbers by warfare, disease and settlement, and the Constitutional Act in combination with political unrest in the United States only increased the rapidity with which settlers loyal to the British throne entered Upper Canada as the eighteenth century came to a close. The Protestant origin of day schools in Upper Canada in this period is therefore partially attributable to the sequestering of French and Catholic influences in Lower Canada. However, a number of other factors were also at work in producing not only the Protestant nature of the schools emerging in this period, but the sudden re-emergence of schooling as an imperative in relation to the Aboriginal population.

While the Protestant Reformation had given rise to experiments in national systems of education,^{iv} the evangelical revolution powerfully combined the universality of the message of personal salvation through Christ with the command to proselytize and to expand through education what Vicki Tolar Burton has called “spiritual literacy.”^v Church run schools in Great Britain and North America prior to the influence of evangelicalism had been limited to members of social groups occupying one end or the other of the social spectrum – either the wealthy and deserving or the very poor and deserving (as in the case of the Charity School movement) – and were sporadically rather than systematically instituted.^{vi} While the Charity School movement in Great Britain had introduced the idea of lay people as teachers, up until the late eighteenth century, school instructors were still generally expected to have had some form of classical education, though they were not formally trained as educators. Evangelicalism changed both the specificity of the groups to whom educational opportunity was extended and the expectation of a particular class or educational background among instructors. As Burton writes, John Wesley’s extracurricular system of literacy “violated prevailing rules of eighteenth-century British propriety” by authorizing public speech by non-ordained and itinerant preachers, empowering women, and encouraging literacy and literary activity among lower and middle classes.^{vii} This idea of an expanded capacity to both teach and learn and a mandate to educate the uneducated migrated to Upper Canada with the influx of both British and American settlers, as well as First Nations peoples who were displaced in the United States and had migrated to Upper Canada.

Because of its continuing status as part of the British Empire, Upper Canada was officially Anglican, and indeed those in positions of political and religious authority belonged to the Church of England. However, as Nancy Christie points out, by 1812 over 80% of the estimated 80,000 inhabitants of Upper Canada were American loyalists or “late loyalists”, and were therefore significantly less likely to be Anglican, and more likely to have been influenced by evangelicalism or dissenting religions.^{viii} While the Anglicans may have been in theory opposed to schools being operated by non-Anglicans, particularly with financial support from Crown and provincial sources, in practice,

evangelicals in Upper Canada, and particularly Methodists, were more present among settler populations, more likely to travel to reach isolated populations, and more inclined to pursue universal educational access as a goal. In addition, by the early nineteenth century, tenets of evangelicalism had impacted even non-evangelical religious groups.

This was also a period during which the relationship between First Nations peoples in Upper Canada and settlers was changing. In early struggles between England and France and between European powers and American colonists for lands in North America, First Nations peoples had been either military adversaries or allies. Documents such as the Royal Proclamation of 1763 assigned the status of sovereignties to First Nations and suggested a somewhat more egalitarian rather than tutelary relationship. As problems of military conquest became problems of settlement during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the attitude of colonists towards First Nations peoples changed. Attempts to institute schools for Aboriginal students in the nineteenth century were a response to what was by this point discussed as the “Indian problem”. This problem was multi-faceted. It was a land problem, the problem of how to obtain land occupied by First Nations for the continuing influx of settlers while honoring agreements that promised that the land would be maintained for First Nations peoples. It was also a public relations problem. The mythology of the savages of North America had created an image problem for colonizing powers trying to lure new immigrants to the “New World”. It was a moral problem. As is evident in the documents under consideration here, there was a great deal of hand-wringing about the state of half-civilization of First Nations peoples touched by the hand of western imperial powers, but not guided past the dangers of the baggage colonization brought with it – in particular, devious traders, the immediate gratification of spending cash rather than saving or investing, and the temptations of European novelties such as liquor. Finally, as will be central to the argument in this dissertation, it was a problem for the emerging idea of the “people” of Upper Canada.

Finally, this was a period of educational systematization more generally in Great Britain, Europe and North America. The interest in schooling for Aboriginal children in Upper Canada was not unrelated to a more general interest in schooling for previously under-serviced populations, and in the systematization of existing educational institutions. To the grammar schools and charity schools already in existence in Great Britain and North America were added Sunday schools, training institutes for teachers, industrial schools and infant schools. The idea of combining manual labour with education had emerged in the previous century in Europe and the United States, and was accorded further support by the popularity of the Pestalozzi system in the early nineteenth century.^{ix}

Theorizing the Interest in Schooling in the Nineteenth Century

I seek to contribute to the existing body of literature on the residential school system by extending the analysis of the schools as a tool of imperialism and assimilation in order to consider how they demonstrate processes of democratization. I argue that the emergence of industrial schools in pre-Confederation Upper Canada did not merely reflect another stage in the efforts of the British Crown to release themselves from their obligations to their Aboriginal allies, to secure land rights, or to forward the goals of industrial capitalism, though all of these motivations were present. The schools are also representative of processes that served to bring into existence the new political entity that

would be known as, and that was coming to be known as “Canada”.^x More specifically, I argue that these were processes of democratization because they brought into being not just a political entity, but the body upon which that entity was founded: the “people” of Canada. As such, while this is a study in the particularities of how processes of democratization leading to the emergence of a Canadian state, rather than a British colonial satellite, were oriented towards, and responded to by Aboriginal Peoples, it can also be situated in the field of investigations into liberalism and democratization in nineteenth century Canada more generally.^{xi}

I have chosen to examine these political processes through the lens of industrial schooling for a number of reasons. If these schools are taken to be exemplary of aspects of the process of state formation in the case of liberal democratic states, rather than being viewed as anomalies or representing only minor or extreme facets of such processes, their ideational foundation, operations, and outcomes can shed light on how liberal democracies are formed and function. If the schools are taken to reflect processes of democratization more generally, rather than representing only an attempt to resolve relations between First Nations peoples and the Crown, then an investigation of the manner in which the schools were theorized and operationalized might help unpack important questions in relations to the grounds of liberal democracy in Canada. Each of the following questions can be asked equally of industrial schools for Aboriginal children and the emerging liberal democratic state formation in the Canadas. What was the significance of the partnership between religious organizations and the state (both imperial and provincial)? How and why was citizenship differently articulated for white European settlers and Aboriginals? What is the significance of the apparent contradiction between goals and practices – for instance, the production of a will to “self-civilize” through “training” to produce certain behaviors? Why was isolation from, and rejection of Aboriginal heritage such a prevailing theme? Why does the survival of the institution, and the bureaucracy associated with it, seem to become the ends rather than the means of the processes in question? And finally, and most importantly, why was co-existence not an option?

Because these are the questions guiding this work, this dissertation can be further situated within a theoretical approach to the study of liberal democratic state formations as examples of a particular kind of group formation. While I strongly believe that groups cannot be understood in the abstract and that an investigation of particularities is necessary, it is also the case that social and political processes cannot be understood in isolation from one another. The designation “liberal democracy” is taken here to signify a way of constituting relations between individuals within a collectivity whereby individuals relate to one another through an idea of the collectivity, but relate to the collectivity through processes of self-identification. Studies of liberalism in the tradition of political science have tended to focus on how the individual has been constituted theoretically or legally while studies of democracy and democratization have focused on the mechanisms of democracy: the legalities of participation, the relationship between rates of participation and classifications such as gender or ethnic background, mechanisms of engaging party support and so forth. What I am trying to investigate here is not liberalism or democracy as a theoretical framework (though as we will see, *that* it is constituted theoretically is significant) or as a set of practices brought into play only periodically, for instance, when it is time to vote or to engage in the production of social

change. Rather, this is an investigation of how individuals engage with one another as political beings within the framework of liberal democracies.

The premises upon which I will base this analysis of the emergence of the residential school in Upper Canada are therefore as follows. (1) Liberal democratic social formations are founded on the idea of the social body as constantly under construction – fluid in its form and subject to influence by its constituents. To say this is not necessarily to say that it *is* entirely fluid and subject to the influence of *every constituent equally*. However, the idea of the mutability of the social body must be taken seriously in analyses of educational institutions, as they are fundamentally oriented towards participation in processes of social formation. (2) This conceptualization of the perpetual forming and re-forming of the social body is related to the theorization of the social body: we theorize and try to enact theories because we see the social body as subject to theorization, and this theorization has effects. (3) We see the social body as subject to theorization because we see the subject as in the process of forming. (4) The effects of this theorizing are not just in the carrying out of theories but in the affective response evoked by a conceptualization of the social body as subject to theorization.

Representing the People: Lefort and Gauchet on Envisioning the Collectivity

Lefort writes that the relations that prevail within a collectivity rely upon the mode of a society's institution. Thinking of a society simply as a network of relations does not adequately address *how* these relations are established.^{xii} For this reason, Bernard Flynn describes Lefort's analysis as pointing towards an ontological dimension of the social, in the sense that it directs our attention to an instituting element of all collectivities: it can be conceived of as a point of view external to the collectivity, a point from which the whole of the collectivity can be conceptualized *as* a whole.^{xiii} Lefort calls this the sovereign principle of the collectivity, a Law that may take the form of God or divinities, or secular divinities such as Reason or Justice, principles upon which law and knowledge are based that are understood to transcend the collectivity and to stand in an instituting relation to it.^{xiv} This should not be understood as a claim that societies institute themselves through recourse to self-reflexive acts of identification and definition. Rather, what Lefort focuses on is the grounds upon which things may be known, and by whom. The separation of what is internal to, or external to a collectivity implies a point from which the society may be seen, or from which knowledge of the whole may be had. In investigating what is specific to democracies as political formations, Lefort argues that democratic political formations are characterized by the constitution of elements of collective life as discrete objects of inquiry, elements such as political, social and economic institutions, the foundation of the civil order, society, and history itself.^{xv} There is a shift in the manner of constituting that which is external to society, and which operates as a marker of certainty, leading to important repercussions for the second element of the shaping of collectivities referred to above – the staging of social relations.

In his reflection on the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, for instance, Lefort applauds de Tocqueville's rejection of power as necessarily localized and visible in favour of a notion of power better suited to the specificity of modern democracies: "a diffuse, invisible power, which is both internal and external to individuals; which is produced by individuals and which subjugates individuals; which is as imaginary as it is real; and which is imprinted on government, administration and opinion alike..."^{xvi} But

he goes on to write that de Tocqueville has not adequately appreciated the specific link between this administration of power, representations of such a diffusion of power, and modern democracy.^{xvii} It was not equality of condition that led to the downfall of aristocracies, Lefort argues. Both were rather part of a single process:^{xviii} a shift in the locus of the visibility of the collectivity, and an attendant shift in the institution of the individual from the visibility of the social body characteristic of medieval monarchies to the theoretical necessity of the absence of visible markers such as the monarch under democratic regimes.

In this, Lefort was influenced by Ernst Kantorowicz's analysis of the changing meaning of the "body politic" between the high middle ages and the early modern era, and the manner in which these representations of the king are shown to materialize the human relation to the Law in these periods.^{xix} The problematization of the relationship between the king as a man and the king as a representative of the Law means that the spectre of the interpretability of the Law has already been raised; the transition from the liturgical accounting – one intended to close the circle between the human and the divine – to one in which Grace resides in the Law rather than the man (rule by Divine Right) can only serve to further distance the king from the Law, to reinforce the possibility that the king might not stand in a unique position of authority in relation to the Law. What is at issue for Kantorowicz is the relationship between the Law – something conceived as standing in a founding relationship to the collectivity – and the collectivity: whether one person alone stands in a relationship to the Law, or whether others, such as jurists, will be conceived of as being in a position to influence its application and limits.

Foucault has similarly written of the significance of the body of the king in the Middle Ages. He notes, for instance, the juridical development of the twelfth century whereby the crimes previously understood as disputes between two individuals were reformulated as crimes against social order itself: the victim of the crime comes to be replaced by the real victim – the sovereign and political authority.^{xx} However, Foucault's interest in the relationship between the body of the king and the principality does not arise from a desire to establish the sovereign principle of the collectivity, or to understand how individuals are epistemologically situated in relation to it. His is not a question of how the subject sees within the collectivity, but how the subject is given within discourse.

It is not my intention to establish a false antagonism between the work of Lefort and that of Foucault, for as shall be seen, there is much that is complimentary between the theories of the two writers. But it is important to here point out that what is to be specifically analyzed in the case of the manual labour schools in Canada, an analysis for which Lefort and Gauchet provide the scaffolding, is the constituting of a people as something that is made and re-made, a process that is not historically necessary or universal, but specific in its mechanisms and with important implications. Furthermore, as Kantorowicz suggests in his analyses of the work of medieval jurists, and as is seen in the policy documents of nineteenth century colonists of Upper Canada, the problematization of something like the relationship between the king's body and the political body must be seen in part as a problem *for* subjects, not just a problem *of the* subject. Insofar as authors such as Lefort, Gauchet and Kantorowicz ask at what point such contradictions *become* crises for particular individuals or groups, theirs must be said to be subject-centered analyses. Lefort's primary interest is in asking what it would mean for a collectivity to posit *no* division between the collectivity and the constitutive

principles of its laws or of knowledge – for law and knowledge to be understood to emanate directly from the collectivity itself – as in the case of liberal democracies. One implication would be a society given to theorizing itself.

Constitutive Division and Liberal Democracies

In the case of liberal democratic societies, a relation of equality is instantiated in relation to what is. Every member of the collectivity is argued to be, or at least to have the potential to be, in a transformation position in relation to the collectivity for two reasons. Here, the Law is conceived of as emanating from the collective will of the collectivity: every member stands in a position of creation in relation to the Law. Second, the accessibility of the Law to members of the collectivity bespeaks a radical instability in the symbolic order. No particular individual may claim special knowledge of, or control over the collectivity as a whole because of the *accessibility* of the founding order: the claim to special or authoritative knowledge is a difficult claim to make insofar as it is a claim to knowledge of something emanating from the will of individuals who may have competing knowledge. One implication of this, as is one of Lefort's key theses, is a vacuum in the representation of the Law. If power was the power to dictate the shape of the collectivity (manifesting the gap between the collectivity and its foundational principles by acting as representative, or privileged interpreter of those principles), now "power belongs to no one;... those who exercise power do not possess it..."^{xxi}

Lefort is at pains to point out that this absence does not derive from the claim made on behalf of democracies by their representatives or members that there is no locus of power because it is diffused among the people. He writes that, "The idea that power belongs to no one is not... to be confused with the idea that it designates an empty place. The former idea may be formulated by political actors, but not the latter".^{xxii} Rather, the "empty place" that he refers to is the condition of the emergence of a power that is diffuse; it is the condition of the claim that the shape of the collectivity derives from the will of its members rather than a pre-determined order, and that the legitimacy of their determinations, or those of their representatives, may be subject to doubt. There is no longer a clearly identifiable other – a primordial order,^{xxiii} a divine sphere – upon which legitimation of the social order may be grounded. Modern democracy is the product of,

...the formation of a power which has lost its ability to be embodied and the ultimate basis of its legitimacy, and the simultaneous establishment of relations with law and knowledge which no longer depend upon relations with power, and which imply that it is henceforth impossible to refer to a sovereign principle transcending the order of human thought and human action.^{xxiv}

Democratic power is thus based on a challenge to authority; it is the institutionalization of conflict over the power to represent the collectivity.^{xxv} The legitimacy of expressions of authority within the collectivity, or of the laws around which the collectivity coheres, are to derive from within the collectivity itself rather than an external source of legitimacy. Yet the will of the collectivity is perpetually in flux, and impossible to determine absolutely at any point. For Lefort, this is nowhere more clearly expressed than at the moment of the expression of the will of the people during an

election; at no point is any given understood individual understood to be more alone, and at a greater separation from the collectivity than at the point at which they cast their vote. He refers to such instances as the quasi-dissolution of social relations at the moment of the expression of the will of the people.^{xxvi}

His suggestion that democratic power is constituted by the *institutionalization* of conflict points to the aspect of staging of relations; the way in which conflict is controlled, administered, *managed* in such a way as to materialize relations of domination while maintaining the claim to its absence. This articulation of processes of institutionalization is the point at which Lefort's argument meets that of Weber's in relation to the grounds of democratic state formations.^{xxvii} Weber argues that the introduction of singular power in the figure of the prince who monopolizes the means of administration is a signal development in the emergence of democratic state formations, but not because of questions of representation. Rather, it is the means of administration that are decisive; the allotting of power to the staff, to the administration surrounding the prince, which will gradually over time erode the power of the prince himself, but not by parceling it out among estates as before; rather through the effects of differentiation and submission to the duties and regulations of the office. For Weber, the characteristics of modern rationalism found in the West ultimately arise from the influence of rational legal thinking – the influence of the jurists and their normalized rules according to constitutions. Kantorowicz similarly argues that what calls forth the articulation of the two bodies of the king is a conceptualization after the thirteenth century of kingship as an office that outlives the person of the monarch:

Clearly and authoritatively, it has been stated here by Edward I that the Crown was not the king – or, at least, not the king alone. It was something that touched all and, therefore, was 'public,' and no less public than waters, highways, or *fiscus*. It served the common utility and thus was superior to both the king and the lords spiritual and secular including – a little later – the commons as well.... The Crown, therefore, was not something apart from the body politic and its individually changing constituents".^{xxviii}

While Lefort will argue as well that democracies are founded in a juridical elaboration, it is instead one that delimits and institutionalizes conflict. "The political" derives from the opening of a space of conflict in relation to determining the direction of the life of the collectivity. It is the moment at which the will of the people has become a question – a discreet object of inquiry^{xxix} – and that the field of politics as a field of competition over who can best represent the will of the people has been established.^{xxx} The process through which "the political" comes into existence is therefore the same process through which political theory is established and through which individuals are given as subjects of knowledge. The breakdown of the legitimacy of authority in relation to the group is inseparable from the breakdown of legitimacy in relation to representations of the world. Freed from a predetermined or organizing order, objects are rendered discreet (particularized), and knowable but indeterminate:

...any attempt to conceptualize the ways in which the combinations [of relating and re-uniting separate objects] vary derives from the

preliminary operation of breaking down social data in order to find something intelligible. And it is also true to say that that operation is inspired by a principle which erects the subject into being a pure subject of knowledge, gives it a scientific neutrality, and guarantees it its self-assurance by virtue of the coherence of its constructs or observations.^{xxxix}

Without such a subject of knowledge – a knowing subject, a subject understood to stand in a personal relationship of interpretation of the law and knowledge – there would be no conflict in relation to expressions of authority, or the legitimacy of interpretations or determinations.

Lefort argues that this is ultimately what is most hopeful about democratic state formations. However, the conditions of what he views as a positive and productive state of conflict are also the conditions of the administration of power within democracies, and of its limitlessness. Because this is no longer power administered on behalf of a monarch or some transcendental agency guaranteeing the power of the monarch, it is, as Lefort describes it, “the power society exercises over itself. When society no longer recognizes the existence of anything external to it, social power knows no bounds. . . .the boundaries of personal existences mean nothing to it because it purports to be the agent of all”.^{xxxix} It is precisely the de-personifying of power exemplified in this quote that is so dangerous. Those who wield power cannot claim to possess it because power is always wielded on behalf of others.^{xxxix} Yet the strength of this claim to dictate to others is that such a power is a power that emanates from those who are dictated to. It is a claim that when members of a collectivity are governed, they govern themselves via a representative who represents their wishes. As Gauchet and Swain write, here, there is a standpoint of power “that aims to know society inside out in order to be able to control it concretely, even in its limits and its depths – as if, to bring society into being, it were necessary to give shape to public power”.^{xxxix}

In addition to his concerns in relation to the limitlessness of power, Lefort speaks to what he describes as a kind of horror deriving from the “empty place” – the gap in representations – described above; it is a horror, on the one hand, of anonymity arising from a deeper need to identify with, and to be situated within a community, and on the other, of all those other anonymous others with which one cannot identify.^{xxxix} As he writes, “The emergence of the individual does not merely mean that he is destined to control his own destiny; he has also been dispossessed of his assurance as to his identity. . . . from the possibility of attaching himself to a legitimate authority”.^{xxxix} This loss of identification with a visible and stable representative of the group (not necessarily an individual) is inseparable from the associated loss of symbolic stability – the demand for a name.^{xxxix} The rationality of governance in liberal democracies is therefore founded upon a desire to identify with, and to find one’s identity within representations of the whole in a situation where the legitimacy of such a representation has been radically undermined.

Not every attempt to re-establish a representation of the whole that can make a claim to legitimacy is necessarily a step down the path to totalitarianism – the reason that the ideological must be separated from the symbolic. The establishment of and identification with a nation is not necessarily ideological, for the demand for a name

occurs at the register of the symbolic (232). What differentiates the symbolic and the ideological is the claim to totality. That which additionally differentiates the symbolic from the ideological is the allusion to the application of meaning that takes place at all times in the process of symbolic representation. The ideological relies upon a specific manner of reuniting the symbolic and the real; it is one possible outcome of the relationship posited between the symbolic and the real. The specific relation between the symbolic and the real that Lefort is interested in is established, as we have seen, through recourse to the external referent, or to the point of view from which a symbolic representation may be wrought. Lefort agrees with Tocqueville that the majority – the “people” – that is constitutive of democracies is not produced via the demand for obedience, a demand which cannot be made in the absence of an originary sovereign principle,^{xxxviii} but he argues that “the establishment of a principle of similarity governing both conduct and morals” in democracies relies upon “the establishment of the *point of view of the state*”.^{xxxix} In liberal democracies, individuals identify with a point of view rather than a figure. The institutions of liberal democracies do not aim to produce a subject capable of living in accordance with a vision that has been produced for them, but a subject capable of producing a satisfactory vision for themselves, a subject capable of acting as part of “the people”, and of willing into existence the collectivity.

Production of the position, homogenization, institutionalization

Democratic social formations can be understood as the result of the simultaneous freedom of release from the dictates of a sovereign principle, and horror at the resulting absence:

Our contemporaries are constantly excited by two conflicting passions: they want to be led, and they wish to remain free. As they cannot destroy either the one or the other of these contrary propensities, they strive to satisfy them both at once. They devise a sole, tutelary, and all-powerful government, but elected by the people. They combine the principle of centralization and that of popular sovereignty; this gives them a respite...^{xl}

Lefort shows that the liberal democratic claim to equality does not produce the erasure of the divisions and diversity within a collectivity simply by virtue of the constitution of the image of the “People-as-One”, as per Tocqueville’s argument. This occurs, rather, through the constitution of the idea of a shared perspective, or as Lefort puts it, the idea of the authority of society: “It is in this context that the notion of ‘social power’ begins to be deployed in systematic fashion. The notion is, it seems to me, an index of a new conception which means that the sphere of the political can no longer be circumscribed at a remove from the sphere of the social”.^{xli} Whereas political power was constitutive of hierarchy and relations of rule while standing at a remove from everyday practices, here it is through imposition into the everyday that the political finds its particular valance. This is at least in part recognized by theorists of liberalism such as Richard Bellamy. Bellamy argues that attempts to find a universal grounds for the enactment of political freedoms while ignoring the social situatedness of liberalism will be subject to inevitable failure because definitions of freedom are transient.^{xlii} In saying that what is specific to

liberal democratic societies is the importation of the social into the political, Lefort's work can be understood as involving not only discursive moves to articulate a perspective that ought to be shared by those included within a collectivity. Rather, as Bellamy argues, in the eyes of liberals, the political ascendancy of the masses could only be achieved through moral improvement achieved through the work of a network of institutions designed to reinforce particular practices.

The link between Lefort's analysis of democratic social formations and institutionalization is taken up by Marcel Gauchet and Gladys Swain in their interrogation of the theory and structuring of asylums in the nineteenth century. In their work *Madness and Democracy: The Modern Psychiatric Universe*, they begin with a consideration of Pinel's 1801 *Treatise on Insanity*, and early asylums such as Charenton and Hospice de la Salpêtrière (where Pinel was chief physician for almost thirty years), arguing that they are not aiming to represent the emergence of the asylum in its "full complexity" but rather to understand its "intelligible framework".^{xliii} What they are particularly interested in is the reorganization of representations of insanity in terms of curability and the renunciation of "curability/incurability" as a conceptual pair, and the institutional embodiment of this reconfiguration. Pointing out the paradoxical nature of an institution designed to designate difference in the name of the production of homogeneity, they argue that the role of the institution was to re-insert, and to bring the individual into harmony with the collectivity:

It is a matter of an institutional system capable... of getting individuals to think consistently of themselves from the place of the other, from the viewpoint of the impersonal, anonymous other constituted by the collectivity as a whole, so that, taken to the extreme, there is no more need for external control over subjective deviations from the 'harmony, order, and rule' of society... (Gauchet and Swain, 81)^{xliv}

The goals and processes implicated here are further argued to be inseparable from what they describe as the rupture at the origin of modern societies, a rupture Gauchet discusses extensively in his work *The Disenchantment of the World*.

The Fractured Self

While Gauchet's thesis is in keeping with Weber's developmental history of rationalization, he dismisses Weber's teleological framework of progression from subjection to willing, suggesting instead that the conflict between passive acceptance and active manipulation of the social order has been a constant in human societies.^{xlv} For Gauchet, there is no simple opposition between active and submissive responses to the mutability of the world. Rather, drawing on Claude Lefort's analysis of the symbolic constitution of the political, he argues that the forms and limits of agency are articulated in the epistemological situating of members of a collectivity in relation to symbolic representations of that which binds it together.^{xlvi} Whether a collectivity will wage a transformative offensive against the social order and the world around them depends largely on the location of the subject vis-à-vis religious representations of the social bond, or of normative guidelines uniting the collectivity.^{xlvii}

Gauchet extends Pierre Clastres's work on the conditions of the emergence of the state and hierarchized processes of political subjugation by showing how the articulation of a specifically political entity was co-extensive with a transition from divine immanence to divine transcendence. In the case of immanence, members of a collectivity exist with the sacred; while the subject is in possession of agency, he or she cannot act upon the world as a totality. Divine transcendence refers to the separation of the deity from the material world. Not only can the world be acted upon as a totality, there is no continuum between the present social order and time immemorial: the social order is made problematic and open to questioning and alteration according to various conceptualizations of the ideals around which the collectivity coheres. Bear Nicholas relates the consequent objectification of the natural world and certain groups and classes of people to justifications for the residential school system: "While Indigenous Peoples tend to view themselves and all of creation as part of an interconnected source of life, endowed with power and spirit, Judaeo-Christians see power and spirit as a single entity (God) existing outside of creation, and somehow having dominion over it. This latter conception of the world gave colonizing powers the perfect tool of empire insofar as it offered a rationale to exploit the natural world and the natural peoples within it".^{xlviii}

These elements constitute at least in part the conditions for the colonizing impulse as played out in the case of liberal democratic societies. The separation of God from the here-below objectifies the natural world, and produces a split within the individual between the part that is in communication with the divine, and the part that is confined to material existence. Gauchet writes that, "From now on, an inner being [exists] alongside or rather beneath the social being, an inner being ultimately completely independent of God. In every believer there coexists one actor fettered by the world and another unfettered through commitment to the other world".^{xlix} In liberal democracies, this is the context of the tension between individual autonomy and political belonging. While the autonomous individual is a product of socially constituted and reproduced practices and discourses, the *idea* of such an individual relies on the elision of external influences: the individual is believed to act according to dictates springing from and discovered within an unencumbered self. It is not only possible but *necessary* to overlook the imposition of dictates guiding action.¹ Furthermore, if normative action is expected to arise from the individual's self-awareness – an interrogation of some form of truth internal to the self but obscured by the demands and desires arising from bodily existence – it opens within the self an indeterminate space.^{li} By situating the other within the self in the form of concealed motivations, otherness is confronted not only in the variability of the world, other individuals in their unicity, the idea of indeterminateness, and so forth, but in our very being.^{lii} Gauchet suggests that the same horror with which humans have historically confronted alterity is now directed inwards both socially and individually. The response is the reproduction of homogeneity through the work on the self demanded in the name of maintaining order and predictability within the self and the collectivity: difference is countered with an approach that is transformative and assimilative. The violence of the practices employed in the residential school, and the contradictions they demonstrate are therefore not anomalous. They reflect the problematization of the subject and the constitution of political belonging within liberal democracies and exemplify the relationship between the political and the religious highlighted by Gauchet. However, this

is not to suggest that there was, or is, uniformity in the relationship between religion and governance wherever liberal democracies have come into existence.

Implications

The framework afforded by these writers is useful in considering the formation and failures of the manual labour school in the colonial context of nineteenth century Upper Canada for a number of reasons. It helps us to understand apparently conflicting elements of the schools, both in their conceptualization, and in their practices. For instance, *both* disciplined habits and an understanding of the intrinsic value of the habits to be inculcated were emphasized among policy makers, church representatives, and school officials. A framework focusing primarily on discipline tends to overlook the desire that these same subjects willingly submit to and demonstrate understanding of the principles that ostensibly lay behind the disciplinary tactics they were subjected to. It helps us also to understand the insistence upon the maintenance of these schools, even as they failed to achieve their objectives, spectacularly failed in many cases to meet even the most basic needs of attendees, and were openly criticized by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal representatives from very early in their histories. While it could be admitted that individual institutions had failed in their duties, to admit that the institution itself was a failure would be to acknowledge a foundational tension in the principles underlying the state structure more generally.

In addition, there are elements of the framework afforded by Lefort and Gauchet in particular which are somewhat more speculative, but nonetheless significant in a consideration of manual labour schools for Aboriginal children. Lefort's analysis of the role of what he terms the "empty place" necessitated by liberal democracy as a conceptual framework is highly significant in thinking through the violence of the manual labour schools alluded to above. The horror that he and Gauchet argues that this produces must be understood in order to comprehend some of the practices associated with liberal democratic states. This also helps us understand the particular focus on Aboriginal peoples in the use of this institution by colonizers. While analyses of colonial responses to the "other", to those who represent difference, or challenge the singularity of European thought and habits, are certainly applicable and important, Lefort's analysis allows us to see the persistence of Aboriginal communities within the national boundaries of the Canadian state to be a challenge not only to the hegemony of European interests, but to present a conceptual crisis for the state, and for those who identify with it. The persistence of Aboriginal communities, and the variety of distinct identities associated with them, served to (and continues to) highlight the radical instability in a conceptualization of a people that is founded in its interpretability. The manual labour school can be understood as a product of the tension between the drive to define, and the drive to maintain an openness integral to democratic liberalism.

Gauchet's extension of Lefort's work to include a consideration of the role of Christianity is significant in this case for two reasons. The discussion of the schools, their practices and goals were always couched within the language of salvation, even where they were produced by the state rather than by participating religious groups. Gauchet argues that this is not accidental, and that in order to understand the "empty place" Lefort refers to – the possibility of an undefined element at the core of a clearly delimited institution – attention must be paid to the role of the "fracture in being" he associates with

the rise of Christianity. Indeed, the central role of various religious institutions in the history of the manual labour schools and residential schools for Aboriginal children from their inceptions in the sixteenth century with the Jesuits to present efforts towards reparation indicates the importance of considering how religions and state formations are co-implicated.

ⁱ I will use the term “Indian” when referring to a legal status or representing the language used in a document, “First Nations Peoples” where referencing the peoples who populated North America prior to colonization and were not Inuit, and, otherwise, “Aboriginal” in order to acknowledge the relevance of this issue not only for First Nations Peoples but Inuit, Métis, and Non-status Indians.

ⁱⁱ Elizabeth Graham’s history of Mount Elgin Industrial Institute and Mohawk Institute includes transcripts of accounts given by attendees. Many of these highlight positive memories and experiences. Graham, Elizabeth, *The Mush Hole: Life at Two Indian Residential Schools* (Waterloo: Heffle Publishing, 1997).

ⁱⁱⁱ Carney, Robert, “Aboriginal Residential Schools Before Confederation: The Early Experience,” *Historical Studies* 61 (1995): 13-40; Dickason, Olive Patricia, *Canada’s First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd ed (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 142-143.

^{iv} Eighteenth century attempts were pioneered by Frederick V in Denmark, Maria Theresa in Austria, and Frederick the Great in Prussia. Green, Andy, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 1.

^v Burton, Vicki Tolar, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley’s Methodism: Reading, Writing, and Speaking to Believe* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008).

^{vi} Cliff, Philip B, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England, 1780-1980* (Surrey, UK: National Christian Education Council, 1986).

^{vii} Burton, 3.

^{viii} Christie, Nancy, “‘In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion’: Popular Religion and the Challenge to the Established Order 1760-1815,” in *The Canadian Protestant Experience: 1760-1990*, ed. Rawlyk, George A. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 10.

^{ix} “Manual Labor Schools in the South,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 16:3 (July 1917), 209-221.

^x I am aware of the danger of talking about the emergence of “Canada” during the five decades prior to confederation. It is the case that at this time, the Canadas were still colonies of the British empire, and that many individuals living in the Canadas would have considered themselves British. However, as is demonstrated in the documents that will be considered here, *the idea of a Canadian people*, and of the Canadas as polities independent of, partially independent of, or at least having an identity distinct from the British Crown did not suddenly emerge upon confederation.

^{xi} For instance: Christie (1990), and Nancy Christie’s more recent offering *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Curtis, Bruce, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).; Errington, Jane, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987); McNairn, Jeffrey, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada 1791-1854* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).; Dyck, Noel, “Tutelage, Resistance and Co-optation in Canadian Indian Administration,” *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 34.3 (1997): 333-348.; Ferry, Darren, *Uniting in Measures of Common Good: The Construction of Liberal Identities in Central Canada, 1830-1900* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008) ; and Valverde, Mariana. *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

^{xii} Lefort, Claude, *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Pr, 1989), 218.

^{xiii} Flynn, Bernard, “Democracy and Ontology,” *Research in Phenomenology*, 38 (2008): 223.

^{xiv} Lefort, 179.

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- ^{xv} Ibid, 213.
- ^{xvi} Ibid, 173-174.
- ^{xvii} Ibid, 179.
- ^{xviii} Ibid, 188.
- ^{xix} Kantorowicz, Ernst H., *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1957).
- ^{xx} Foucault, Michel, *Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Vol. 3*, ed. James D. Fabion, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 1994) 42-43. Also his comment on the relationship between the crime and the body of the ruler in *Discipline and Punish*: "An offence, according to the law of the classical age, quite apart from the damage it may produce, apart even from the rule that it breaks, offends the rectitude of those who abide by the law. Besides its immediate victim, the crime attacks the sovereign: it attacks him personally, since the law represents the will of the sovereign; it attacks him physically, since the force of the law is the force of the prince" (47).
- ^{xxi} Lefort, 225.
- ^{xxii} Ibid.
- ^{xxiii} As is reflected in Pierre Clastres' analysis of what he terms "societies against the state." Clastres, Pierre, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1998).
- ^{xxiv} Lefort, 179.
- ^{xxv} Ibid, 226-227.
- ^{xxvi} Ibid.
- ^{xxvii} Weber, Max, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).
- ^{xxviii} Kantorowicz, 362.
- ^{xxix} Lefort, 217.
- ^{xxx} Ibid, 227.
- ^{xxxi} Ibid, 217.
- ^{xxxii} Ibid, 167.
- ^{xxxiii} Ibid, 225.
- ^{xxxiv} Gauchet, Marcel and Gladys Swain. *Madness and Democracy: The Modern Psychiatric Universe*, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 50.
- ^{xxxv} Lefort, 180-181.
- ^{xxxvi} Ibid.
- ^{xxxvii} Ibid, 232.
- ^{xxxviii} Ibid, 166.
- ^{xxxix} Ibid, 242.
- ^{xl} Ibid, 207.
- ^{xli} Ibid, 205.
- ^{xlii} Bellamy, Richard, *Liberalism and Modern Society: A Historical Argument* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).
- ^{xliiii} Gauchet and Swain, 42.
- ^{xliv} Ibid, 81.
- ^{xlv} Gauchet, Marcel. *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion. Marcel Gauchet*, trans. Oscar Burge (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- ^{xlvi} Doyle, Natalie, "Democracy as Socio-Cultural Project of Individual and Collective Sovereignty: Claude Lefort, Marcel Gauchet and the French Debate on Modern Autonomy," *Thesis Eleven 75* (2003): 69-95.
- ^{xlvii} Gauchet, 32 and 73.
- ^{xlviii} Bear Nicholas, 22.
- ^{xlix} Gauchet, 64.
- ^l Ibid, 170-171.
- ^{li} Ibid, 47 and 169.
- ^{lii} Ibid, 166.