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MELISSA WEISS
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APPARITIONAL REPRESENTATIONS: DISABILITY HISTORY, REPARATIVE DESCRIPTIONS, AND ETHICAL FAILINGS IN A SPECIAL RESEARCH COLLECTION

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE

SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Ellen Rubenstein, Chair

Dr. June Abbas

Jackie Reese

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Abstract

Reparative description is a trend in archival scholarship that seeks to address past harms caused by archives that misrepresented and silenced historically marginalized communities in their collections. Identifying and better representing disability history in archives is a part of this trend with many archivists publishing either theoretical approaches or reparative description work that focus mostly on the end product. Few published works, whether a blog post or academic article, consider the challenges and potential failures of remediating descriptions in archives that do not have collections focused on disability history. For archives, such as the Western History Collections, disability history is a miniscule part of its collections, adding to the already difficult process of remediating descriptions. In this thesis, I outline my process for remediating descriptions using a variety of theories from archival, trauma, feminist, and disability studies in order to illustrate the professional and ethical challenges of crafting adequate descriptions that better represent the disabled subject in the Western History Collections. Using ghosts and haunting as a foundation for approaching reparative description work at a special collection that never focused on disability history, I consider the realities of bringing historically marginalized disabled persons to the forefront of archival descriptions while highlighting the importance of making the invisible work of remediation in archives visible.

Chapter One: Introduction

Apparitions and Aspirations

This thesis is a ghost story. While I anticipated sharing spaces with ghosts, glancing over my shoulder at the slightest move of shadow or disembodied voice, I was not prepared to write a ghost story. I expected my curiosity at the way archives are haunted to be a side project to the work I was doing as a graduate assistant at the Western History Collections (WHC) and research for this thesis. However, every item I reviewed during the process of writing this thesis had a spectral presence that was missing some tangible piece of information that would illuminate the haunting phantom in the item it was linked to. Ghosts frustrated my reparative description work. As they multiplied, I found myself looking to others who encountered ghosts before me and who used metaphors of haunting to describe their experiences working with archival apparitions.

Hartman's (1997, 2007, 2008) work often involves the specters of slavery and white supremacy as her two major publications focus on the transatlantic slave trade. One of her most notable encounters and contributions to the archival field is her description of the impulse to find and write the story of Venus, an alias assigned to two enslaved girls murdered by the ship's captain. Balancing an impulse to recover the voice of the subaltern with the realities that Venus, whose name is not a name but a placeholder, is just beyond reach, Hartman (2008) describes both the freeze response to being haunted and the call to action created by ghostly encounters. According to Gordon (2008), haunting brings the impact of "organized forces and systemic structures that appear removed from us" to light "in a way that confounds our analytic separations and confounds the societal separations themselves" (p. 19). Haunting makes apparent the power structures of everyday life felt through the presences of ghosts in the marginalia of archives. Power can make itself known in the minuscule aspects of everyday life and absences of

peoples, as Kumbier (2014) experienced while working with queer archival materials. Or, the presence of power can be loud and disruptive, such as state sanctioned violence, which lingers long after the violence ended in archives and other state or memory institutions (Harris 2002, 2021). Hartman's (2008) experiences and the experiences of others working with archival materials on or about historically marginalized communities, including mine, involve what Gordon (2008) calls sympathetic magic to translate ghosts. In archives, sympathetic magic to translate the paranormal encounter is the act of reparative description.

When I set out to write about reparative descriptive work, I did not consider the ghosts or that I would be writing ghost stories. Yet, as Gordon (2008) states, "to write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities is to write ghost stories" (p. 17). The process of researching and writing new descriptions, drafting this thesis, and coming to grips with the failures of my project is at its heart a ghost story. In this thesis there are ghosts whose names are still not available despite my best efforts to find them, and people whose lives are contained within a few words. Like the sudden appearance of a ghost in the doorway, I am startled but not surprised by the hauntings at WHC.

One could argue that haunting is another term for archival silence. Archival silence is so prolific there are entire subfields across multiple disciplines dedicated to the task of reviewing the footnotes and marginalia that apparitions of historically marginalized peoples occupy. In their efforts to identify the people on the margins, researchers become ghost hunters, reading along the archival grain (Stoler, 2009), looking for specters and other signs of hauntings. Sometimes the ghost hunts are victorious but often times the researcher can only deconstruct the power relationships that created the imbalances in the historical record in the first place. My experiences are no different from Harris (2002, 2021), Hartman (1997, 2007, 2008), Gordon

(2008), and Kumbier (2014). I find myself surrounded by ghosts and using the language of hauntings to account for the missing pieces of disability history in the WHC. In the process of remediating legacy finding aids of WHC collections, I inadvertently walked into a haunted house filled with the specters of the long gone and historically forgotten.

First Haunts

My first encounter with a ghost happened immediately. I found an old black and white photograph of a log cabin or shack, depending on how one views the small structure (**Figure A**). The cabin takes up most of the picture and has a single doorway that is the only visible entrance. A dog appears to be walking away from the entrance along the side of the home. In the middle ground, a stark line creates a sharp horizon dividing the earth and sky. Due to the close up shot of the cabin, little else is visible in the photograph. Something casts a shadow over the right corner of the home, but it is unclear if it is created by another structure, object, or person. Without context, the cabin and dog appear isolated and lonely. Around the photograph is a decorative border that seems out of place given the subject of the image. On the back of the photograph is a handwritten note that says: "Sept-Oct. 1933. Rebuilt by Indian family after disastrous flood. Logs moved from creek bottom to higher ground. No assistance from US Indian Department or other agencies. Family of 8—Father crippled." This sentence is also the description of the photograph in the finding aid.

I promise I did not leave out any details from this photograph. There are no people, just a dog. Yet, the family is mentioned in the description. When I first encountered this photograph, the description felt like a bait-and-switch. A family is described but there is no family. A father is described and presumably has some physical difference that prompted the describer to use the word "cripple." I oscillate between thinking of myself as naïve for assuming the father and

family would be there and accusing the original describer of trickery. Regardless, I join the long line of researchers and historians whose longing for the "golden key" in the archive that will "unlock the secret they are investigating" only to be "dismayed when the evidence does not exist or "when it does, does not provide the hoped-for 'Eureka!' moment" (Johnson, 2017, p. 101). My first apparitional encounter becomes my first encounter with failure. A new description for this photograph is available in Chapter Three. It is a compromise because the information I need to bring the family to the forefront, to make the invisible visible, is gone.

The unfortunate reality that I can only work with what I know makes the process of remediating this particularly photograph painful. I want to redescribe the family and the father in ways that highlight their humanness and their agency, demonstrated by the relocation of their home after a flood. Instead, I am stuck with a description of government inaction bordering on apathy and a vacant landscape of a house. I am forced to judge whether this particular photograph has enough information to be a part of disability history—retaining the unforgiving vagueness of the father's disability—or if I should omit the phrase "father crippled" altogether and further erase someone whose existence is probably only contained as a footnote in the description of a photograph of a house. I include this photograph here to illustrate the frustrations I experienced as I continued to encounter more ghosts and hauntings in each new item I assessed for remediation. What I learned through this process is the challenges an archivist faces when working at an institution whose scope and history were apathetic to non-White, male, able-bodied histories. Ultimately, power at the photographer level, the collector level, and the archivist level all cumulated to excise the ghosts of this photograph to the margins, making it improbable for me to redescribe it as the subject whose existence I need to see is left out of view.

Can the Archival Ghost Speak?

The mystique of archives and archivists as neutral preservers of history is gone, but the recognition that archives are institutions of social and political power does not mean the historically marginalized communities relegated to the marginalia and footnotes of history are suddenly visible and able to speak. Spivak (1988) poses the question "can the subaltern speak?" in her seminal essay of the same title, which centers on the location of agency in the actions and silences of the historically oppressed and marginalized. While the metaphor for speech privileges auditory communication, it also highlights the assumptions and privileges of looking in archival materials for the "voices" of ghosts. Looking for ghosts involves the process of seeing and hearing the haunting cries, as well as presumes the researcher can recognize them when they encounter the spectral. Conceptualizing the archive as a haunted house full of ghosts that cry out is one way to situate the archivist as ethical witness, which I will elaborate on further in Chapter Two, because it brings to the forefront the awareness that the "ghost" of the archive was once a person and once capable, whether verbally or not, of telling their story. At the same time, it raises the question of what constitutes speech and whether a body is capable of speech long after its physical existence is gone. Gordon (2008) asks: "what does the ghost say as it speaks, barely, in the interstices of the visible and invisible?" (p. 24). The conversation between the researcher or archivist and the ghost is unique for not everyone will translate the ghost's presence the same way. However, an integral question for the archivist when they encounter the ghost is: what does one do with ghostly speech?

Another way to ask this question, which is central to this thesis is: how does an archivist ethically represent apparitions? Or, what does it mean to redescribe (name) ethically when the ability to assign names is no longer there? Embedded in these questions is an uneasiness between

the relationships of power between the institutions and social influences that imposed silences on the ghosts, myself, and the apparitions that haunt WHC, along with the ethical dilemmas of working with specters.

Power, Praxis, and Archival Silence

Harris' (2002) metaphor of the "archival sliver" seems appropriate for understanding the magnitude of historical gaps in disability history. According to Harris (2002), archives are "constructed windows into personal and collective processes" (p. 63) of history making. As a witness to the atrocities of South Africa's apartheid and government efforts to destroy records of violence and oppression against Black people, Harris was one of the first archivists to outline the way archives operate as institutions of power that control the history of a nation and its people. Establishing the phrase "archival sliver" (p. 64) to describe the limited view archives provide on specific events and people, Harris (2002) pushes the metaphor further by noting that through intentional methods, such as document destruction, and unintentional means, such as the natural disintegration of paper, archives are not so much a sliver but "a sliver of a sliver of a sliver" (p. 65) into specific historical subjects and events. Many scholars recognize this aspect of historical research when trying to study the histories of women, African Americans, Indigenous, and Queer communities. Furthermore, few archives are dedicated to disability history and few historical disabled subjects had the means and privilege of documenting their own experiences. For disability history, a more appropriate metaphor would be "a sliver of a sliver of a sliver" (Harris, 2002, p. 65) through a cloudy window or even a fun house mirror that shows a distorted view of disability through ableist and/or eugenicist eyes.

Even among other historically marginalized communities, disability in history is a footnote due to views of disabled people as less than, inhuman, and burdensome. White

supremacy and eugenics use science to claim anyone who is not white, male, and heterosexual is deficient. Arguments for social rights among women, Black, and LGBTQ communities included defenses against the view that they were "deficient" and "handicapped" compared with white, heterosexual men. For example, queerness is steeped heavily in medicine and psychiatry and part of the fight for equal rights included de-pathologizing homosexual and queer desires. It is not surprising that those fighting for equality wanted to distance themselves from racist, sexist, homophobic, and harmful views; and yet, the rhetoric of distancing also used ableist views that maintained the binary that placed disabilities as the antithesis to acceptable forms of human variations (Bell, 2011; White, 2012). While the history of disability and how it was shunned from other historically marginalized groups is not the focus of this thesis, the complexity of identifying as disabled and locating disability in archives is steeped in views of disability as shameful and not worthy of remembering. Not acknowledging the silences in disability history is impossible. As Brilmyer (2022) states: "To grapple with archival erasure is to simultaneously attempt to tell an impossible history while realizing that such effort will never be complete" (p. 4).

Records, and the ghosts that accompany them, are the products of people and their preservation is under the control of a person or persons who act as gatekeepers to the remnants of history. How one enters the archive as a subject to be studied is greatly influenced by their worthiness on a societal level, or how much power one has over their own body and life story. In other words, as historian Hugh Ryan states in an interview, one enters the historical record either because they have the power to preserve their story on their terms or because "someone has power over you and you become the raw material for their entry into the historical record" (Newman, 2022, August 16, para. 8). Historically marginalized communities often occupy the

latter, functioning as the raw material of history either literally or metaphorically. Disability history, in particular, is rarely told through the perspective of a disabled subject. Most disabled subjects exist in the archive because they were someone else's raw material in the form of case studies, research, and medical notes and reports. In the WHC, disability history is not contained in specific collections but as snippets in random collections whose primary purpose was for something other than the documentation of a heavily marginalized community. In this way, the silence is magnified and the ghosts are scarce.

Reparative description is a balancing act between changing problematic and outdated terminology to make items findable while grappling with the vast gaps in the historical record that make not only finding but redescribing disabled subjects difficult. As work towards improving the findability of items on disability history at WHC, and across archival institutions continues, I cannot help but wonder what a disability history will look like when, and if, the process is complete and all items are findable. I return to the question Brilmyer asks (2022): "How can we tell a history of disability when there is little or no archival evidence or when the evidence that is presented is harmful, violent, or incomplete?" (p. 4). Likewise, I am haunted by the power that comes with efforts to redescribe items about disability. Archival description, the cornerstone for how items are discovered by users, seems innocuous, but decisions on how to name—describe, label, tag—items can reinforce oppressive structures, perpetuate stereotypes, and continue the marginalization and silences of the disability community (Brilmyer, 2018; Cline, 2022; Wright, 2019). Even when done with the best intentions, the power is still in the hands of the archive and archivist(s) to determine what new language will be used. Which begs the question—is it possible to fully decolonize, decentralize, and democratize archives? Can the ghosts of the archive speak?

Even when relying on input from the disability community, there are conflicts and tensions around how to name a specific group or what terminology, or even diagnoses, are preferable. Conflicts in naming conventions among the community will require archivists to make decisions on which names to use and, depending on the cataloging software used and documentation protocols in place, which to exclude. For some archives, accommodating more than one method for naming, describing, or tagging an item is feasible. However, control over controlled vocabularies, metadata tags, keywords, and even description and titles is not always possible. Thus, in the case of reparative description, how can we ethically change problematic and harmful terms while acknowledging the continued silences and harms within the records we are trying to address? Or, how do archivists ethically work with ghosts?

Following in Brilmyer's (2018, 2020b, 2022) and Gordon's (2008) footsteps, as I owe a lot to their work, I use hauntings as a starting point for exploring the theoretical, ethical, and practical ways I encounter ghosts in WHC archives while remediating finding aids. Essentially, I try to answer: How does an archivist name (describe) ethically? The question is simple, but working with ghosts is complicated and never straightforward. Guided by theoretical models of assemblage, complex embodiment, radical empathy, sickness, and hauntings, I align my process with the ethos of decentralizing the archive while acknowledging the failure of this project. Using samples from WHC, I create a living document to help others working in archives like WHC where disability history is barely present in the margins. At the same time, I document all the failures.

Author's Disclosure

In writing a story about ghosts, I acknowledge that ghosts are real and that there is a relational component that shapes my interaction with them (Gordon, 2008). Arguably, one cannot

see ghosts if one does not know how to look for them or does not believe in them. Ghost hunting does not just require academic training but an openness to the fantastical and awareness of the intersectional subjectivities that influence the processes of listening and translating. In many ways, I have always been a ghost hunter. My thesis takes an archival approach to remediation, but my process is influenced by my ghost hunting experiences in literature, feminism, and trauma studies as well as my new historical interest in the legacy of eugenics. One could argue my ghost hunting interests predate my scholarly interests, but I will not diverge there.

Likewise, I believe archivists have a responsibility to the dead. This is an obvious statement but one worth noting as I am working closely with apparitions whose voices come from the tangible trappings of someone's life, such as documents, photographs, and souvenirs. For me, archives are both institutions of power and gatekeepers of history responsible for the marginalization of peoples and one of the last places where their voices can be heard. Hearing the call of ghosts is a paradox between knowing how to find and listen to apparitions and knowing that the words ascribed to the apparitions is a failure because the truth of that person or event is long gone.

On a more personal note, my experiences and ambivalence towards my own disability greatly influenced the theoretical works I identified with the most and how I interpreted disability in WHC. While I do not consider myself disabled, I live with chronic pain. The pain does significantly impact my daily life, making basic tasks, such as cooking, difficult. My experiences run counter to many people I know living with chronic pain as I have not lost mobility or strength. Likewise, most people, including physicians, do not realize I live with chronic pain. Despite knowing and recognizing that my chronic pain does affect my ability to function in many ways, I struggle to see myself as disabled and as a part of the disability

community for a variety of reasons including the invisibility of my disability and the fact that my physical limitations feel insignificant in comparison to others I know who are disabled. Identifying as disabled is influenced by one's personal views and how society and institutions define disability (Brilmyer, 2018, 2020b; White, 2012). At the same time, identity is complicated and how one defines oneself can shift within a day, month, or year. Disability as a category is also subjected to the definitional restrictions of laws and government agencies, making it one of the few aspects of human identity where someone could define themselves one way and an institution with the authority to take away their personhood defines them as another.

A Note on Language

"Life is complicated," Gordon states at the beginning of her book (2008, p. 3). As with life, identifying and defining disability is complicated. How one defines or is defined by disability is influenced by medical, societal, institutional, and personal factors. Within the disability community, how to label or categorize a specific group can often be contested, as members even within a particular community may not agree on how to identify or define themselves. The medical community, under the patient-centered paradigm, as well as medical journalists and the majority of people without a disability prefer and even champion people-first language. According to those who prefer people-first language, the term "individual with a disability" (Adler et al., 2017, p. 127) places emphasis on the individual as opposed to their disability. However, several groups within the disability community consider people-first language just as problematic as referring to someone by their disability (Rinn, 2018). It presents the disability as something in need of a cure or to be fixed and does not recognize it as a part of someone's identity. The most notable critics of people-first language are the National Federation of the Blind and autistic communities (Rinn, 2018).

In my work, I use "disabled" first because it reflects the theories and a general consensus among various disabled groups and because disability as an identity—and community—is rarely recognized as a worthy form of "human variation" (White, 2012, p. 117). For this thesis, I use disabled subjects when referring to historical records because the people in question are now ghosts, such as the father in the aforementioned photograph, and their ability to speak to their experiences and subjectivity is barely or no longer available in the present. For me, disabled subject balances the presence of a disabled individual in the archival materials at WHC, which occupy extremely marginalized positions in the collections, while acknowledging that this subjectivity is not nor will ever be fully known. In addition, I refer to violent, harmful, oppressive, stereotypical, and dismissive terminology under the umbrella phrase problematic. My decision to use "problematic" reflects the spectrum of linguistic violence that can range from microaggressions to emotionally traumatic as well as acknowledge the affective differences experienced by people with disabilities encountering these terms. When I have to use problematic terms, I put them in quotes. As with life (Gordon, 2008), language is complicated.

Thesis Trajectory

How do archivists interpret the silences of ghosts? Or, to phrase the question another way, how do archivists describe (name) ethically? I attempt to answer this question in a variety of ways throughout this thesis although I am not sure I provide any satisfactory answers. In Chapter Two, I consider the current literature and theoretical models that guide remediation work in archives, focusing on disability studies, trauma studies, and radical empathy. I discuss the eugenic ideologies underpinning the organization of information in libraries and how such influences continue to support white supremacist structures of knowledge. Disability history is tangled with the history of slavery, genocide, and many forms of modern medicine we recognize

today, such as psychiatry. I provide a brief overview of the historical links of eugenics and its phantom presence in contemporary thought. The influence of eugenics in modern society cannot be overstated and recognizing its ghostly presence is as important as recognizing the ghosts of the historically marginalized as eugenic ideology is what put the ghosts in the margins in the first place. Not seeing it can leave the ghosts and the living who work with them vulnerable to the continuation of white supremacist and eugenic violence and oppression.

Chapter Three integrates the theoretical models outlined in the literature review with the practical work of remediation. I outline my processes for redescribing eight items in the WHC collections as well as describe my frustrations with working with ghosts. The eight examples I include represent the different formats and materials available at WHC and are reflective of the various challenges associated with remediating descriptions. I include new remediated descriptions in Chapter Three as well as in Appendix B to illustrate the invisible work and end product of the remediation process.

Chapter Four discusses the lessons and challenges of remediating descriptions as well as considerations for future reparative description work at WHC. I outline the guiding principles that helped me remediate the descriptions I selected for this thesis, which may help other archivists working with ghosts in the archive. Additionally, I suggest a few areas for future discussion among WHC staff based on the switch from print to digital finding aids. Hopefully, this thesis will prove useful to WHC archivists and others trying to do remediation work with limited time and staffing.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Archival Specters and Landscapes

The impetus for this project began while working on a book chapter with my supervisor at WHC and another colleague in the University of Oklahoma library system. In the soon-to-be-published book chapter, we crafted a list of problematic terms and used it to review the finding aids of collections at WHC. Our goal for the book chapter was to locate finding aids with descriptions that needed to be updated and begin the process of metadata reparation. However, we soon discovered the feasibility of remediating language at that stage was not possible due to the number of items that we most likely could not change and the complexity of the descriptions that needed to be changed. Ultimately, over 900 items with potential disability-related descriptions were found but only 144 appeared to need additional review before implementing changes and only 19 clearly needed updating (Weiss et al., 2024). While this number appears small, we noticed immediately that the work we needed to do to ethically remediate the finding aids was beyond the time frame we had to submit the book chapter. Even now, I feel the pressure of time to create new descriptions for eight items and the impending failure of inadequately representing the ghosts haunting their margins.

Current Remediation Work with Disability-Related Collections

Before discussing the historical and theoretical foundations of my work, I want to review the work of other archivists remediating disability-related collections in the United States. First, Jolicoeur (2022a, 2022b) remediated descriptive metadata of photographs of performers in the Ronald G. Becker Collection of Charles Eisenmann photographs from the Special Collections Research Center at Syracuse University Libraries. Using an ethics of care approach, Jolicoeur (2022a) illustrated how she changed negligent descriptions of performers with various

disabilities to ones that recentered the person in the photograph by incorporating information in descriptions that call attention to the way disabilities are portrayed in what is known as “freak” photography. “Freak” photography arose in popularity alongside the “freak” show at circuses. Many photographs were staged to frame disability under an exotic or aggrandized lens, essentially dehumanizing disabled subjects (Jolicoeur, 2022a). Descriptions of the photographs reflected the view of disability as exotic, different, and inhuman. For example, the original description of a photograph that underwent remediation was: “Midget woman standing next to table” (Jolicoeur, 2022b, para. 6). Jolicoeur (2022b), in what I might call supernatural intervention, found the woman’s full name among archival documents associated with Charles Eisenmann’s photographs. In the remediated description, Jolicoeur (2022b) recenters the person by including her full name and calling attention to the performative aspects of working in a circus as a part of “freak” shows. The new description is: “Full view of Rebecca Myers, a white woman who performed as a midget, standing with one arm resting on a table with a backdrop of an outdoor scene and gazebo behind her. She later married Reuben Steere and went by Rebecca Steere” (Jolicoeur, 2022b, para. 6). In the new description, Rebecca Myers is the subject of the photograph and not her physical difference. It contextualizes her life as a performer, centering what is known about her within the description and decentralizing whiteness by naming her race instead of treating it as a default category. By using an ethics of care approach, Jolicoeur (2022a, 2022b) acknowledges the humanity of the disabled subject while making the item easier to find for future users by providing more detailed information.

Similarly, Rinn (2018) illustrated how to use complex embodiment theory (defined in the disability studies section) to tag digital records that better reflect photographed disabled subjects. Rinn (2018) was also working with photographs of circus performers, but she ran into a problem

many archivists encounter when working with other archives to create a cross-institution repository. The P. T. Barnum Digital Collection was a part of a pilot program at the time Rinn (2018) was working there that required it to use cataloging software that used Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and did not allow for the creation of local metadata tags. As a result, Rinn (2018) relied heavily on complex embodiment theory to try and include LSCH metadata tags that reflected the complexity of identities of the disabled subjects in the photographs. For example, she utilized the "people with disabilities" tag across photographs and tried to include tags such as the disabled subject's performance art in order to added more contextual information about the person and their life (Rinn, 2018). Working with LSCH is limiting but using the complex embodiment theory can help bring the humanness of disabled subjects to the forefront in "freak" photography, or other records, that exoticize and dehumanize disabled subjects.

Some archives, like The Disability History Museum (Block, 2007), have the ability to create their own metadata. Using LCSH as a guide, the Disability History Museum established its own inclusive controlled vocabulary, which allowed for better control over and easier correction of problematic and outdated terminology as well as improve user accessibility (Block, 2007). Other ways archives are improving metadata tags specifically include the incorporation of community tagging. For example, many archives with Indigenous items and cultural institutions use community tagging to circumvent issues with biases in controlled vocabularies like LCSH, such as The People Plateau's Web Portal.

Web portals have the added challenge of not always having control over the content on their website as they are not the stewards of the items and do not always have control over the descriptive metadata. The People's Plateau Web Portal creates metadata for its portal by working

with tribal communities and the owning institution. Wright (2019) illustrates another way web portals can address harmful language even when the creators of the portal are not the stewards of the records. Find & Connect is a web portal created as part of the Apology to Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants that directs individuals who grew up in Australia's care institutions to the archives that house their records (Wright, 2019). Similar to the United States and Canada, the Australian government created policies that allowed the forcible removal of Indigenous children as well as legalized eugenic practices to eradicate Indigenous cultures through literal and cultural genocide. Records in these collections are filled with problematic terminology and ideologies, not to mention traumatic and violent events (Wright, 2019). While the web portal helped connect people to the archival materials they needed, there was no intermediary to help contextualize the words and violence in the record. Wright (2019) reported receiving feedback from angry users about the harmful language they found on the Find & Connect website (Wright, 2019). The angry feedback raised ethical questions about the web portal and its ability to prevent harm. According to Wright (2019), "the question becomes how to represent the potentially upsetting, affective, and offensive history and language contained within the records without obfuscating or hiding this language; without alienating, offending or traumatising (sic) users of the record" (p. 334). For the web portal, the solution was to create a language policy statement that acknowledged the offensive terms in records and crafted content warnings and context notes so users coming to the portal from search engines, like Google, could see that archivists were not only aware of the existence of this language but also did not condone its use (Wright, 2019). Likewise, Wright (2019) noted that titles and other metadata were reframed on the website, so users were not confronted with harmful language immediately. For example, titles with problematic terms were relocated to a field called "archival reference,"

which ensures the digital item record on the web portal with the new title was still connected to the original record housed in the owning institution's archive. In addition, all the decisions were recorded to improve the transparency of the archival decision-making process for both future archivists of the website and users (Wright, 2019).

Aside from the aforementioned articles, few archives and archivists have published detailed accounts of how they applied theoretical frameworks to their remediation practices for disability related materials. However, several have stated or published their commitments to better representing disabilities in their collections. For example, the Western Pennsylvania Disability History and Action Consortium devised a framework for improving its collection materials on disability history. Multiple archival and community networks participated in the consortium, which includes about 25 collections with disability related materials (Malley, 2021). They published their documentation strategy for processing materials about disability history, which stated they were going to establish procedures for evaluating the materials and standardize best practices across the 25 collections. Notably, the consortium follows contemporary trends in disability studies by not defining disability through one particular definition or model. Instead, they utilize community-based knowledge of steering committee members active within the disability community as well as disability community members to determine the way materials about disabled subjects fit into the scope of disability history (Malley, 2021).

The extent archives across the United States have access to original creators, historical context, names, and other information needed for complex descriptions is unclear. Having contextual information and access to prior accessioning and descriptive records can allow for better reparative descriptions, such as Jolicoeur's (2022a, 2022b) example, but not every archive or archivist is fortunate to have access to such information. WHC is one of, I am assuming, many

archives that lacks the information necessary for recentering disabled subjects in descriptions about them. I, and others working with WHC archival materials, am forced to work with the limited information I do have access to in archival records, scope notes, and the institutional knowledge of my supervisor. The frustrating process of crafting ethical descriptions without context is central to the question of what it means to represent disabled subjects ethically. What do I, or other archivists, do when the descriptions, archival documents, and metadata we have all fail to provide the necessary information to even begin to find historical information? This question is the reason the initial project of remediating disability-related terminology in the WHC went from a book chapter into a thesis.

Description as Representation

The title of this thesis plays on the concept of descriptions as representations of archival records. Archival representation is the process of arranging and describing collections as well as a continuous aspect of archival work (Yakel, 2003). Archival representation, similar to cataloging in libraries, is heavily guided by theories and praxes that focus on the relationship between the record being described and the subjectivity of the describer (Mallea, 2023; Millar, 2017; Wagner, 2022). Cataloging is also involved in descriptive practices in archives as many archives use subject headings in addition to descriptions in finding aids to help aid in the retrieval of relevant items. Thus, a record can be improperly described in at least two ways: through the finding aid description and through inappropriate subject headings. Within the last 20 years in archival literature, archivists have reframed, debated, and revolutionized many core concepts, such as provenance, respect de fonds, records, and even what constitutes an archive. For the sake of sanity and to ensure the ghosts do not get lost in the midst of the last two decades of archival regenerations, I am going to focus on the basic definitions of archives and descriptive practices

and not review the poststructuralist and postmodernist influences and changes that have altered how archivists see themselves and their work in the field. While this may be a limitation on my part for not fully considering how archivists can revolutionize descriptive practices, it does give me more space to consider the process of drafting new descriptions as well as consider the feasibility of doing so within an archive whose resources and staff are stretched thin.

Taken-For-Granted Definitions

An archive, for the sake of this thesis and authorial sanity, is the institution that holds and is responsible for the preservation of collections deemed of historical and cultural value (Millar, 2017; SAA, n.d., definition 1). Technically, the WHC is a special collection because it holds multiple, unrelated collections ranging from donated collections that are related in some capacity to the state of Oklahoma, history and cultural work of Indigenous tribes within and outside Oklahoma, and history of the Trans-Mississippi West to, at the time of this writing, the University of Oklahoma's bureaucratic records and professors' papers. However, for the sake of simplicity and because the nuances that distinguish an archive from a special collection are beyond the scope of this thesis, I will refer to WHC as an archive.

Likewise, the definition of records is widely contested. Thus far, there is no agreed upon meaning, with definitions ranging from records as simply physical objects to records as not just the physical object but the ways persons activate, or interact, with them (Tai et al., 2019). Records are, for the sake of this thesis, information stored on a medium, such as photograph, paper, or audio recording, and used as a way to remember a piece of knowledge, person, or event (Millar, 2017; SAA, n. d., definition 1). As a form of remembrance, records operate as tangible evidence of history.

In the revised International Council on Archives (ICA) consultation draft, the ICA establishes the Records in Contexts-Conceptual Model (RiC-CM), defining it as "a high-level conceptual model that focuses on intellectually identifying and describing records, the agents that created, used, or are documented in them, and the activities pursued by the agents that the records both facilitate and document" (2021, p. 2). The ICA (2021) RiC-CM situates records as products of the context that creates them and situates description work as the never-ending process of describing that context. The ICA (2021) divides the descriptive process into three sections: management, preservation, and ongoing use and reuse of records. The purpose of the RiC-CM is to present archival description as "an expression of the multidimensional web of relationships that exist among diverse records, collections, people, and function" (Messiner, 2019, p. 11). The Society of American Archivists (SAA; n.d.) defines description in two ways: "a set of data crafted to identify and represent an archival resource or component thereof" (definition 1), and "the process of creating a set of data representing an archival resource or component thereof" (definition 2). Millar (2017) defines description as "the act of establishing intellectual control over archives, by creating finding aids or other access tools, in order to identify the content, context, and structure of archives; their origins and relationship to the creating agency or individual; and the actions taken by the archival institution as custodian and caretaker to receive, appraise and process the archives" (p. 294). Likewise, Messiener (2019) defines description as "the process of analyzing, organizing, and recording details about the formal elements of a record or collection or records, such as creator, title, dates, extent, and contents, to facilitate the work's identification, management, and understanding" and "the product of such a process" (p. 2). All the definitions present description as both a product and process that contain the data of records.

Archivists create descriptions, whether they are recycling ones already available when the records are processed or write new ones, and the cumulation of these descriptions into finding aids become what I refer to throughout this thesis as archive-generated documents. Through archive-generated documents, both digital and paper, users locate items and collections that may be relevant to their search. It is these documents that I focus on as they facilitate discovery of items and collections as well as function as a type of authority for how records fit within histories. For archive-generated documents can "act as agents in the sense that their existence and features do have material consequences in enabling (affording) outcomes and further actions" (Buckland, 2018, p. 8). In other words, archive-generated documents are either haunted or translate the hauntings of ghosts in the archive.

Organization of Eugenic Knowledge

While this thesis is concerned with the haunting of archives and records by the ghosts of marginalized disabled subjects, I want to note that specters of the past are not just those who experienced violence and oppression but also the institutions and ideologies that created the structures of that violence and oppression (Gordon, 2008; Tai et al., 2019). Eugenic ideology is still present even as the United States and other countries continue to distance themselves from it. There are many efforts to exorcise eugenics from Institutions that focus on the removal of its language and practices, with some success at destabilizing the underlying ideology such as Jolicoeur's (2022b) new descriptions. Although whether eugenics can be fully removed from institutions with long histories of operating alongside dominant cultural power is debatable. Another option is to call attention to the haunting presence of eugenics, for example, through the lens of critical race theory (CRT). Snow and Dunbar (2022) succinctly summarize the value of integrating CRT into critical understandings of library organization systems, stating:

> [It] can frame current cataloging issues in terms of the larger, systemic impact and existing power dynamics rather than focusing on the choices of individual catalogers; CRT can inspire greater urgency in catalogers to interrogate and modernize cataloging and classification standards; CRT can provide evidence of the importance of diverse viewpoints, experiences of the disenfranchized (sic), and inclusive practices in cataloging work. (p. 666)

In other words, CRT is one of the ghost hunting tools that illuminate the presences of marginalized ghosts as well as the phantasmic reach of ideologies that defined the power dynamics that othered ghosts in the first place. The specter of eugenics is deeply embedded in library organizational systems and may be beyond the reach of exorcism similar to national historic archives and museums. Eugenic and white supremacist influences in libraries and archives can be attributed to their invisibility as many users are not aware of their presence in the organization and description of knowledge. However, the invisible power of eugenic structures is changing as more users, librarians, and archivists turn their attention to decolonizing their spaces.

Community archives offer a way for historically marginalized communities to reclaim their stories and histories. Extensive research in archival literature covers the ways community archives counter dominant narratives of history and give voice to marginalized communities (Caswell, 2014; Caswell, et al., 2016; Caswell, et al., 2017; Flinn, et al., 2009; Gabiola et al., 2022; Tai et al., 2019). Tai et al. (2019), in particular, note how users of community archives find identity and belonging while feeling the haunting absences of their people in mainstream archives. Thus, community archives can "be seen as the medium, bridging communities with the ghostly voices of the repressed, the misrepresented, and the marginalized" (Tai, et al., 2019, p. 18). Creating community archives is a powerful way to disrupt white supremacist and eugenic

power structures by creating spaces where historically marginalized communities' stories and histories become sharable and knowable. However, in institutions like WHC, the ability to destabilize eugenic power structures and illuminate marginalized histories is complicated by its close ties to these power structures and the lack of interest of previous archivists and curators to consider these histories worth documenting.

Additionally, with the push towards making collections accessible online, archives are considering or implementing standardized metadata practices to improve interoperability and searchability. LCSH, as the dominating controlled vocabulary, is used across cataloging software and web platforms for the creation of metadata in many archives. Despite its dominance, or because of it, LCSH imperfectly matches the collections and materials of archival collections (Bullard, et al., 2022; Rinn, 2018). In library studies, Berman (1971) published one of the first treatises lambasting the Library of Congress (LC) for perpetuating racism, sexism, homophobia, and repression of other historically marginalized communities. Many followed in Berman's (1971) footsteps, including Olson (2000, 2002), Adler (2017), and Drabinski (2013) to name a few. For disabilities, Sullivan (2021) and Hansen (2021) discussed the way LC and LSCH marginalize and perpetuate eugenics views of disability. Hansen (2021) notes that the progress made in using more inclusive language for physical disabilities has not made its way into subject headings for mental health conditions, with problematic terms such as "neuroses," "dangerously mentally ill," and "ex-mental patient" still used in LCSH (pp. 112-113). Petitions for changing LCSH can successfully alter white supremacist ideologies, such as the change from "Tulsa Race Riot" to Tulsa Race Massacre" in 2020 (Shorten & Antell, 2021) and make LCSH more inclusive, such as the addition of "asexuality" in 2016 (Watson, 2020). However, updating subject headings does not address the hierarchal knowledge structures of LC. Adler et al. (2017)

demonstrate the continued criminalization of disabled subjects under the LC class HV, which is for "Social pathology. Social and public welfare. Criminology" (p. 118). In the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) schema, disabilities are under "people with physical illnesses," which was once "Sick and Wounded. Incurables. Eye and Ear Infirmaries. Lying-in Hospitals. Dispensaries" (Adler, et al., 2017, p. 119). Racist ideologies still persist in DDC (Furner, 2017). The change in the DDC from classifying races to national and ethnic origins did little to address the systemic racism embedded in the classification schema and perpetuated color evasive ideology that race is a social construct and therefore is not important (Furner, 2017). Eugenics is not so easily removed because the bedrock on which much of modern institutions was built is white supremacist attitudes and European superiority (Berman, 1971; Gordon, 2008; Villarosa, 2022; Visperas, 2019). As seen in the case of DDC, changing the name does not erase the original structure of eugenics for disabilities or race, it just obscures it from view.

Possibilities of Repairing the Past

What does an archivist do with ghosts? Olson (2002) notes that "naming is the act of bestowing a name, of labelling, or creating identity. It is a means of structuring reality" (p. 4). Unlike libraries, which have standardized organizational systems, archives are a hodge-podge of old and new practices that structure the realities of records through their arrangement in a collection and descriptions. Essentially, archive-generated documents structure the realities of records. When redescribing records, the archivist is taking apart one reality to generate something new. The theories that support reparative descriptive practices in this thesis all in some way circle the ghosts of archives without naming them as ghosts. As Tai et al. (2019) discussed, users activate records, or call forth ghosts, in both historic archives and community archives. However, few studies have examined how archivists activate records and interpret

ghosts. Consider this thesis one answer to the question and one way of encountering and translating hauntings in archives.

A Cry for Action

The interplay between the desire to study and know disability history and the silences in archives haunts the reparative description work in this thesis. To capture a "sliver of a sliver of a sliver" of a historically marginalized community's history requires an awareness on the part of the archivist to this tension (Harris, 2002). Ghosts in archives speak, but not through the auditory sounds recognized as speech, but through their existence in the margins of history. There is a cry in the silence that mimics the "crying wound" that Caruth (1996) theorized in her work on trauma in literature ranging from Shakespeare to testimonies of the Holocaust and films about the aftermath of Hiroshima (p. 8). The concept of the "crying wound" is a metaphor for psychological trauma—the sound implying a lateness because the wound is not heard until after the traumatic moment (Caruth, 1996). According to Caruth (1996), trauma is more than a pathology or wounded psyche; "it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (p. 4). Archives have an "over and doneness" about them that comes from being viewed as historical institutions, where documents go when they are no longer needed (Gordon, 2008). However, the crying wound is a reminder that the archive is not over nor done but a haunted space where the living intersects with the dead and forgotten. A wound, as opposed to a gap in the historical record, illustrates the tension between archivists and ghosts whose existence is inadequately described or left out of archive-generated documents. Conceptually, a "crying wound" demands a witness and action, as ghosts

do (Gordon, 2008), which places the archivist in an ethical paradigm of witnessing and radical empathy.

Witnessing is a term I am stealing from psychoanalysis to discuss the archivist's responsibility to the cries of ghosts. Several archivists have used witnessing and other trauma-informed approaches to discuss the responsibility of archives as witnesses to atrocities and violence and as tools for social justice (Caswell & Cifor, 2016; Harris, 2002, 2021; Reghre et al., 2022). In reparative description, the archivist as witness is rarely called to act in a legal or activist capacity but instead to translate so others can act on the ghostly calls of the historically marginalized. Many psychoanalysts, historians, and philosophers have defined and addressed the theory of witnessing and the role of the witness. However, I chose Laub's (1992) concept of witnessing because it informs other works on trauma and because of its concern with the liminality of knowledge.

Laub published his theory of witnessing in 1992 after he assisted with the recording of oral histories of Holocaust survivors. A psychoanalyst by trade, Laub (1992) did not approach the stories of Holocaust survivors as a means to verify facts and prove or disprove the history, but as a dialectic between listener and speaker. Narrating trauma is different from other oral storytelling narration (Laub, 1992). In his work, Laub (1992) highlights the tension between what he terms the known and the unknown—speech and silence—as survivors narrate their trauma. He demonstrates this with the opening anecdote of a Holocaust survivor whose story both describes an important event—the rebellion in Auschwitz—while failing to describe the event accurately when compared with known historical facts about the uprising. Silence, according to Laub (1992), is a part of traumatic narration and is created by a lack of knowledge about the entirety of the event or an unwillingness of the survivor to share their knowledge with a listener. An ethical

witness, according to Laub (1992), is crucial for the narration of trauma because the witness is the one who holds the tension between silence and speech, representing the limits of knowledge. To put this in the context of haunting, the ghost has "a real presence and demands it due, your attention" (Gordon, 2008, p. xvi) in its belated cry from the margins that asks for the archivists to listen and bear witness to its call.

The witness paradigm is also an ethics of care paradigm, although the two models are not necessarily discussed in the same breath in the respective literatures. An archivist as witness enters the ethical dialectic between the self and the other, which demands a listener who does not ignore the crying wound. Radical empathy and ethics of care are feminist concepts that center on the self-other dialectic. As Caswell and Cifor (2016) define it, radical empathy is "a learned process of direct and deep connection between the self and another that emphasizes human commonality" by imagining "our body in the place of another" (p. 30). This form of empathy is considered radical because it emphasizes empathizing with those who are deemed the least deserving of empathy within a capitalist, white supremist, and ableist society (Caswell & Cifor, 2016). Caswell and Cifor (2016) argue that radical empathy "assumes that subjects are embodied, that we are inextricably bound to each other through relationships, that we live in complex relations to each other infused with power differences and inequities, and that we care about each other's well-being" (p. 31). Essentially, this form of empathy takes into account the bodies within archives, requiring a "closeness between research and subject" and that those working with records be "fully attuned to the complexities of the research context" (Caswell & Cifor, 2016, p. 31). As with witnessing, radical empathy is not the subsumption of another and assumption that everyone is the same. As Caswell and Cifor (2016) note, "empathy can easily become problematic in its potential erasure of the other" (p. 32). Thus, radical empathy maintains

the tension between self and other that is required of the listener witnessing traumatic narratives. In other words, "it is important to remind ourselves not to erase differences between bodies, not to turn a blind eye to power differentials" but to engage with "differences between self and other" while empathizing (Caswell & Cifor, 2016, p. 32).

Empathy is central to witnessing as the "absence of an empathic listener, or more radically, the absence of an *addressable other*, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story" (Laub, 1992, p. 68). In other words, to not perform radical empathy where the listener is "aware of the connections and disjunctions between the self and other" (Caswell & Cifor, 2016, p. 33) is to fail as a witness and to destroy the other's narrative sense of self. When handling a subject in archival records, acknowledging the silences and limitations of the historical documentation of marginalized others is vital to maintaining that tension between the knowable self and the unknowable other. Attempting to not meet the archives "where they are at" (Brilmyer, 2022, p. 3) is to perform another form of annihilation to already marginalized subjects because projecting and filling silences in an effort to create linear historical narratives does not take into account the power differentials that made those silences in the first place.

Haunted by the Past

The importance of reparative description is best summarized by two points made by Wright (2019). First, the reproduction and unquestioning use of problematic and harmful language in archival resources "implies that the archives and record holders are also accepting of this language" (Wright, 2019, p. 335). Second, "the use of historical language may also mean people do not find what they are searching for, or do not get expected search results, as they will search using current terms rather than outdated historical terms" (Wright, 2019, p. 340). Several

recent studies on affective experiences in archives illustrate the frustrations of trying to locate historical materials on disabilities in archives and the negative emotions elicited when working with historical documents about disability.

In two studies by Brilmyer (2020a, 2021), disabled scholars describe the negative affective experiences they had while researching disabilities. In the first study, 10 scholars recounted the difficulty of witnessing stereotypical representations of disability. At the same time, the scholars noted they were not surprised to find the negative and harmful portrayals of disabled subjects (Brilmyer, 2020a, p. 483). The second study also included 10 participants and reported similar results to the first with the addition of discussing how participants reflected on the temporal relationships between historical treatment of disabled subjects and their contemporary experiences as disabled people (Brilmyer, 2021). For example, many participants felt the fears and anxieties of being stigmatized and institutionalized as most of them experienced some form of stigma or institutionalization in their personal life. As one participant noted: “As I find more of my community, the more I think about it, at a certain point or a certain period in time, myself or my friends could have been in” (Brilmyer, 2020a, p. 484) an institution. According to Brilmyer (2021), the emotional toll participants experienced “is two-fold: through learning about the ways disabled people have been treated as well as how those attitudes are reflected within partial or absent records around the history of disability, disabled researchers describe feeling the harms of partial, inaccurate, and absent records on disability” (para. 33). In both studies, at least one participant reported not wanting to continue their research.

Negative affective experiences were reported by some of Koford’s (2014) participants in her study. She interviewed nine disability studies scholars, who were not asked whether they were disabled themselves, and found most participants reported feeling uncomfortable or other

negative affective emotions, such as “feeling forced” (Koford, 2014, p. 400), when working with disability related LCSH, such as the subject heading “handicapped.” However, a few participants did not find the LCSH terms problematic because they reflected historical views of disability. Despite mixed results, Koford’s (2014) study suggests that disability studies scholars preferred working with contemporary, nonproblematic terminology.

One way of interpreting the differences between Brilmyer’s (2020a, 2021) and Koford’s (2014) results is through the lens of haunting. In Brilmyer’s (2020a, 2021) studies, the participants are attuned to the ghosts of disabled subjects and are actively looking for any signs of haunting. It is unclear if Koford’s (2014) participants would recognize ghosts in the catalog. What is clear from these examples is how ghosts haunt differently and how everyone is not attuned or listening for their cries. Likewise, not everyone recognizes the phantoms of white supremacy and eugenics as users who reason that problematic terminology is just a symptom of an outdated era are ignoring the sign that its continued use signals the presences of violent systems of oppression.

In addition, Koford (2017) interviews disability rights and transgender rights advocate Eli Clare about the subject headings assigned to his book. The interview supports how problematic controlled vocabulary in LCSH directly harms the communities it classifies. In the interview, Eli Clare shared his disappointment with the subject headings used to label his book, which inadvertently separated it from the disability rights movement and queer community (Koford, 2017). The subject headings are either wrong or outright ableist, specifically the use of “Cerebral—palsied,” which inappropriately describes Clare’s disability and further separates his work from disability activists by grouping it with books about cerebral palsy and not disability activism (Koford, 2017). The separation of Clare from disability rights movements also reflects

Olson's (2000) criticism of LCSH as distorting marginalized books by locating them in disparate classes. Similar to Brilmyer's (2020a, 2021) studies, Koford's (2017) interview illustrates the continued harm of problematic language, which alienates and marginalizes living members of the disability community.

Interestingly, Tai et al.'s (2019) study of users who visited community archives found more positive associations with ghostly presences. Records were defined as performative agents capable of summoning both the ghosts of a marginalized community and the specter of white supremacy (Tai et al., 2019). In community archives, users reported how their interactions with records created meaningful connections with the histories of their community, resurrected ghosts of the departed, and highlighted the absences in historic archives that centered whiteness in history (Tai et al., 2019). According to Tai et al. (2019), "records are thus performative agents, facilitating critical connections within communities, as well as with those who are no longer with us" (p. 17).

While not the subject of most research, archivists are not immune to haunting emotions. A new study that included 20 archivists in Canada and the United States found all participants working with traumatic collections, such as Indigenous boarding schools, reported feelings of distress and helplessness (Regehr et al., 2022). While experiencing negative affective emotions, archivists felt a strong responsibility "towards people" (p. 576), both subjects of the records in their collection and the users working with the records as a part of their history and social justice projects. In addition, the archivists reported feeling a "profound sense of personal connection with the traumatic materials," which they reported as "disturbing" (Regehr et al., 2022, p. 572). One could argue the archivists felt haunted and were hearing the ghostly cries that demanded something of them.

Translating the Ghosts

Addressing problematic language, through reparative description or the addition of content warnings and context notes, works in two ways. First, it can mitigate the negative affective experiences of both archivists and researchers by establishing a space for the ghosts to exist without overwhelming the ghost hunter. Second, it illuminates the ghostly presence of the marginalized and the powerful. Reparative description is the work of turning hauntings into a recognizable language for others. Essentially, if the ghost speaks, then the archivist doing remediation of descriptions must translate that speech into archive-generated documents that guide researchers to the ghost's location in records.

According to Cline (2022), archivists are translators of the "language of context," defined as a "complex language comprised of text, circumstances, encounters, and behaviors through which the record speaks" (p. 128) in an effort to make the "contextual understandable" (p. 130). Similar to witnessing (Laub, 1992), Cline defines the archivist "as record maker, as cocreator, as author of the historical record," specifically the "shaper of knowledge and, to some degree, of what the future might know of the past and the brief present" (p. 137). For example, creating a finding aid requires the archivist to analyze the item, consider the collection the item is contained in, and consider the context of how the item was created and by who as well as past and current sociocultural dynamics and institutions of power that play into the creation or interpretation of the item by the archivists and users, especially for photographs. All of the contexts fit into a single description that may be a simple sentence or a small paragraph that both makes the item findable and shapes the meaning and context of an item for researchers. Like a witness, a translator is negotiating tension between the record and themself. For records on disabled subjects, the act of translation through reparative description involves understanding the

knowable and the unknowable, the silences both within and outside the record, and listening to the ghosts in order to negotiate the possibilities of new words and meanings that represent the disabled subject and improve accessibility.

Cline (2022) argues that transparency is the cornerstone to ethical translation in archives. Increased transparency around decision-making may not only illuminate the ghosts in archives but also create pathways for future ghost hunters to hear other ghosts. Brilmyer (2018, 2022) indirectly calls for transparency in archives through reconceptualizing the archival concepts of descriptive practices and provenance. Wright (2019) as well is concerned with transparency in the language used by archivists for traumatic records. Wright states "archives are not neutral, but instead, active agents in developing and perpetuating concepts and reality over time" (p. 331). Archivists have power over how materials are "arranged, described, and made available for access" (Wright, 2019, p. 332) as well as being witnesses to changes in language used for the materials they hold. Thus, transparency in any decisions regarding language is vital for current and future archivists, as well as users, to maintain an ethics of care over traumatic records and the people represented in them.

Transparency also helps mitigate the dangers radical empathy poses for the oppressed other. Without the ability to recognize oneself and iterate the reasons behind a decision, there is always a threat of projecting and creating stories that do not exist. Hartman (2008) illustrates the challenges of working with marginalized voices and the struggle to not fill the silences with her own narrative when she encountered the phantoms of two murdered slave girls, both named Venus. The name Venus is an alias assigned to the girl in "the barracoon, the hollow of the slave ship, the pest-house, the brothel, the cage, the surgeon's laboratory, the prison, the cane-field, the kitchen, the master's bedroom" (Hartman, 2008, p. 1). The name invokes the apathy towards the

girl's personhood and the racist hyper-sexualization of her body but does not provide much else in terms of locating the human girl in the ship logs and court records. Her voice is now a ghost haunting the archives. For Hartman (2008), the story of Venus is a story of loss, and that "the loss of stories sharpens the hunger for them" (pp. 8-9) and drives the temptation to fill in the gaps and trespass the boundaries of the archive. Yet, to fill in those gaps is to speak over the voice of the apparition that is calling for the archivist or historian's attention. In other words, as Hartman (2008) notes, projecting into the silence builds a narrative that does not and cannot hear the ghost's speech, essentially annihilating the ghost and their story. Projecting reflects the "translator" and their knowledge, not the knowledge and experiences of the marginalized other, who may simply be a peripheral note in a record, as the enslaved girls' murders were (Hartman, 2008).

In addition, overcorrecting misrepresentations and silences runs the risk of causing other forms of harm by turning dynamic and fluid understandings of humanness into static and stagnant definitions that do not account for the complexity of life. Drabinski (2013) calls attention to the risk of reparative descriptions for queer identities. According to Drabinski (2013), a "recuperative approach" to non-heterosexual identities of historical persons risks freezing identities in time and universalizing them, ultimately "erasing the real differences that accompany same-sex sexuality" (p. 96). A way to destabilize identity while calling attention to a person's potential gender or sexuality is to use body-oriented methods of cataloging. According to Wagner (2022), body-oriented cataloging involves decentralizing heteronormative understandings of both sex and gender. In regard to the question how does one describe gendered bodies without assuming heteronormative subjects in photographs, Wagner (2022) states: "the answer is not to identify the correct way a body is gendered within visual information but instead

to imagine the ways gender is being communicated as action and idea through a body" (p. 641). In opposition to the DDC, which chose to remove race instead of calling attention to white supremacy, Wagner (2022) not only raises questions about heteronormative assumptions about gender but also calls attention to the ghosts of nonheteronormative subjects who exist in archives but may be poorly described.

Additionally, Mallea (2023) advocates for descriptive metadata and contextualizing essays for photographs of violence and oppression. The ethical viewing and treatment of violent and traumatic photographs is a subfield within philosophy, literature, and film and media studies that focuses on what it means to witness atrocities. Photographs are the easiest medium to take and use out of context with the greatest amount of harm to the community and donors (Mallea, 2023). Through descriptive metadata and contextualizing essays, Mallea (2023) argues, archivists can ensure that digitized photographs of violence and oppression are situated within their histories. In opposition to libraries, which consider free access to information as a foundational principle to the rights of users, archives balance the freedom of access with the donor and historical subject's rights to privacy. In archives digitizing their photographic collections, violent photographs raise the ethical questions: should everyone be able to see this image? Will everyone view and use this photograph ethical or does it have the potential to be misused? According to Mallea (2023), "descriptive metadata and contextualizing essays can serve as counternarratives to the power dynamics implicit in archival photograph collections and can give voice to those silenced in the archival narrative" (p. 15). By providing information that destabilizes the violent forces behind the photograph, the archivist can control how a photograph is seen and interpreted by viewers. Translating ghosts then involves a dynamic approach that balances the silences with the available information.

Historicizing Disability

A part of understanding the complexity of disability is the awareness of how it was used historically to categorize peoples. While providing a full history of the ways disability was applied to various peoples across time is not within the scope of this thesis, there are particular aspects within medical and psychiatric history that complicate how archival records can be viewed, particularly when they include marginalized others. Power structures, such as government agencies and professional medical bodies, control who is or is not defined as disabled. By controlling the definition of disability, these structures also determine who and how someone is remembered within disability history and create ghosts of all those affected by its reach.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, although this trend dates back further, medicine and psychiatry were devoted to proving white supremacist and eugenic world views. Under eugenics and white supremacist paradigms, entire communities, such as Black people, queer people, Indigenous peoples, and women, were considered disabled or "deficient" in some capacity. Dozens of well-respected doctors and journals published papers and presented at conferences on the physical and mental differences between Black people and white people (Segrest, 2020; Thomas & Sillen, 1979). Views that Black people were "mentally deficient" and "underdeveloped" (Thomas & Sillen, 1979, p. 2) were used to justify slavery and established Black people as second-class citizens. In Virginia, the Central Lunatic Asylum for Colored Insane was established following the Civil War in preparation for an influx of people "[falling] into illness and insanity" (Peterson, 2021, para. 3) after the abolition of slavery. While many of the papers from this era were debunked, views that Black people are physically and mentally

different than white people persist in modern medicine and psychology (Geronimus, 2023; Villarosa, 2022).

The influence of white supremacist and eugenic views extends outside of medicine to education as well. Dis/Crit, a new subfield within CRT, was started to investigate the way disability functions as a new form of segregation, particularly for Black and Brown children (Connor et al., 2016). Dis/Crit addresses the lack of disabilities scholarship in Black studies and lack of Black studies in disabilities scholarship by bringing attention to how disabilities are still shaped by eugenic and white supremacist views of Blackness. For example, African American students are "three times as likely to be labeled mentally retarded, two times as likely to be labelled emotionally disturbed, and one and a half times as likely to be labeled learning disabled, compared to their white peers" (Peers, 2002 as cited in Connor et al., 2016, p. 11). Racist views influence how students are recognized as "disabled" by their teachers. As a result, segregation of students of color continues under the guise of special education. The definition and parameters for what constitutes a disability and who is considered disabled led Connor et al. (2016) to propose the term "dis/ability" to "[disrupt] misleading understandings of disability, as it simultaneously conveys the social construction of both ability and disability" (pp. 6-7). They state that the use of "dis/ability" calls "attention to the ways in which the latter overwhelmingly signals a specific inability to perform culturally defined expected tasks (such as learning or walking) that come to define the individual as primarily and generally unable to navigate society" (Connor et al., 2016, pp. 6-7). Benchmarks for determining who has a learning disability and who receives support following a diagnosis of learning disability are also influenced by race (Connor et al., 2016).

Within archives, the construct of a Black disability history is complicated by the long history of eugenics, white supremacy, and slavery. According to Visperas (2019), locating the Black disabled body in archives is a paradox because of the conditions of slavery and the predominant white supremacist views of Black people. She (2019) highlights an important consideration for both researchers and archivists who are combing archives for the subaltern voices of disabled individuals, stating: "one must take seriously the limits of seeing and naming disability in subjects who have been at the margins of its theorization and field-building" (p. 100). Her article opens with the questions: "What is an 'abled-bodied slave'? What is a 'disabled slave'?" (p. 93). Her questions, although straightforward, highlight the racial implications of trying to build a disability history. Coupled with white supremacist views of Black people's inferiority was the literal trauma of slavery, which left many African Americans with mental and physical scars. In this grotesque loop, disability was both a literal manifestation of slave plantations and the figment of white imagination. When considering contemporary theories of disability that treat "disability" as an identity one has some agency over, then the Black slave whose existence—and disability—is defined for them is already excluded. Thus, archivists working with communities whose histories are already marginalized by race, sexual orientation, and gender need to be aware of the complexity of identifying historical subjects as disabled.

Disability Studies as Archival Theory

Although Brilmyer (2018, 2020a, 2020b, 2022) introduced several disability studies theories to the archival field, it was originally White (2012) who published one of the first articles that integrated a disability studies framework into archival processes. In her seminal article, White (2012) argued that complex embodiment theory complemented appraisal and current views of provenance, suggesting archivists use it as a guiding principle for reviewing

new collections from disabled donors. Complex embodiment theory was developed by Siebers (2008) as a means to "give disabled people greater knowledge of and control over their bodies in situations where increased knowledge and control are possible" (p. 27). It differs from the two dominant views of disability that Siebers (2008) was writing against at the time—the medical model and the social model.

The medical model defined disability as a defect in need of a cure or to be fixed (White, 2012). During the Disability Civil Rights Movement, which started in the 1960s, activists advocated for equal treatment of disabled individuals and challenged predominant views of disabled individuals as weak, burdensome, and defective. The social model was developed to combat the predominant medical view of disability by calling attention to how society created barriers to access. Under the social model, ableism is the reason disabled bodies are unable to fit or function in society (White, 2012). Many advocates of the social model argued that disabilities were socially constructed through ableism, which privileged an ideal, normal body over bodies that did not fit the norm. For example, building entrances, hallways, and bathrooms are designed for able-bodied people. Within the social model of disability, it is the fault of the architect for not thinking about how to design a building to accommodate individuals who require wheelchairs or other assistive devices to move and not the person who requires assistive technology for being unable to enter spaces. Both the medical and social models define disability from an outside perspective and do not consider the unique ways people engage with or define their experiences with their disability. Complex embodiment theory allows disabled individuals to construct their own views and relationship with their disability while acknowledging the external and internal forces that influence that relationship (White, 2012). Essentially, complex embodiment theory

defines “disability as a form of human variation” (White, 2012, p. 117) as opposed to a human category.

In regard to archives, White (2012) suggests complex embodiment theory complements notions of provenance. Provenance is the “information regarding the origins, custody, and ownership of an item or collection” (SAA, definition 2). Within the past couple of decades, the concept of provenance was redefined through various lenses. White (2012) considers Wurl’s (2005) definition of provenance as “ethnicity” as applicable to viewing provenance as “disability” (p. 119). Ethnicity is a “product of complex social interaction” and “constantly being shaped and reshaped” (Wurl, 2005, p. 69). Under complex embodiment theory, disability is elastic and dependent on social context (White, 2012). For White (2012), disability as provenance allows archivists to appraise “disability from the angle of embodiment,” which “will help preserve and respect the context of collections and, consequently, accurately represent how individuals or groups experience disability” (p. 119). In this way, an archivist can accession a collection that reflects the life of a disabled donor as opposed to a singular view of them through their disability.

To illustrate how complex embodiment theory can be applied to a collection, White (2012) presents a hypothetical collection being donated to an archive by John Doe, a disability rights activist and man with paraplegia. The collection includes subject files, visual materials, and correspondence, not all of which are about John Doe’s disability (White, 2012). Under medical and social models, materials with no relationship to John Doe’s disability might not be considered of value to the archive. Archives must weigh a collection’s value against its scope and available space. All of John Doe’s collections could be incorporated into an archive focused on the lives of disabled individuals, or only parts of John Doe’s collections could be included in an

archive with a more limited scope or available physical space. When using complex embodiment theory to evaluate the collection, archivists working with vague or more limited scopes for the collections they add could view all of John Doe's items as valuable reflections of his lived experiences and accession them regardless of whether they are directly related to his disability. In addition, processing his collection using complex embodiment theory, which involves creating the finding aids, would take into account the complexity of John Doe's life and disability.

Not satisfied with White's (2012) introduction of complex embodiment theory into the field, Brilmyer (2018; 2020b) conceptualized disability in archives through two theoretical models—assemblage and sickness. Assemblage, translated from the French noun "agencement," which literally means "a construction, an arrangement, or a layout" (Nail, 2017), is the central theme of Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) work, *A Thousand Plateaus*, which Kafer (2013) borrows to redefine disability and Brilmyer (2018) uses to discuss already processed records. Using Kafer's (2013) model of assemblages, Brilmyer (2018) defines disability as an assemblage that emphasizes the multiplicity of identities defined through interactions with society and institutions throughout one's life, known as the process of *becoming*. According to Brilmyer (2018), "understanding archives as assemblages—of people, places, policies, attitudes, environments, and materials across time—we can draw in the multiple and expansive histories and entities that co-construct archival material and archives" (p. 102). As a process of *becoming*, the "assemblage of disability becomes a multiplicity: it is a fluid identity that shifts over time and in different situations" (Brilmyer, 2018, p. 102). Disability, then, is an identity *in flux*, constantly shifting due to both internal and external factors that influence how one defines oneself as disabled.

Following their theory of assemblages, Brilmyer (2020b) conceptualized a methodology that recognizes the politics of identifying as disabled while accounting for the absences of disabled peoples in archives. As an identity, the theory of sickness recognizes the *assemblage* of disability across time and space, adding another variation to *becoming*. Sickness recognizes that disability is an ongoing negotiation as not all disabled persons identify as disabled, not all disabled persons identify as sick, and not all sick persons identify as disabled (Brilmyer, 2020b). Likewise, sickness can help "conceptualize the ways that illness and pain are difficult to communicate to those who do not experience it and also how many aspects of sickness are illegible" (Brilmyer, 2020b, p. 34).

Sickness as a critical disability methodology, Brilmyer (2020b) argues, is a better framework for recognizing absences in archives through its ability to represent the intersection between lived experiences of sickness and institutions of power that limit, erase, or misrepresent disabled bodies. Using Maurice Tillet, a boxer with acromegaly who was depicted in anthropological studies as the "missing link" between humans and Neanderthals, Brilmyer (2020b) highlights the frustrations of researching disability history while illustrating how sickness accounts for Tillet's historical marginalization. As someone with a physically different body, Tillet is remarked upon and remembered through the documents of others in positions of power, such as doctors, anthropologists, and the people who profited from him. Tillet's own views of how he was treated, his relationship with his disability (if he saw it as a disability), medical professionals, etc. are not a part of the archival record. Brilmyer (2020b) states that the absences of Tillet's narrative are not only created through the records kept in archives, but also the decisions made thereafter in "how records are selected and accessioned into an archive (or not), organized and described by archivists, and therefore made accessible or inaccessible to

researchers like me, who encounter disabled people in history intentionally, accidentally, or unknowingly" (p. 32). Tillet is a ghost in his own story as the historical records Brilmyer (2020b) access to learn more about him were never from his point of view. By drawing attention to how decisions were made, even when those decisions merely replicate past language and processes for keeping records, the framework of sickness makes "absences and the systems that produce them palpable through a complex understanding around archival erasure and the surviving documentation of disability" (Brilmyer, 2020b, p. 32).

Furthermore, sickness resists the temptations of "fixing" or "rehabilitating" records as an ideal mode to address archival absences because it shifts "away from a simplified, universalized (medical model) approach and towards more radical, creative, and ongoing relationships with archival material and the inevitability of partiality in archives" (p. 37). Sickness is always *in flux*, which highlights the sliverness, to borrow Harris' (2002) term, of archives as history. Records, essentially, represent "moments [that] are spatially, temporally, and materially contingent" (p. 36). In other words, Brilmyer's (2020b) concept of sickness shows how "fixing records is not only impossible due to cultural and temporal shifts, but also an unrealistic misorientation to change and addressing absences or limits" (p. 37) in archives.

In addition to the theoretical lenses of disability in archives, Brilmyer (2022) reconceptualizes provenance through crip theory. Brilmyer (2022) defines crip provenance as "a method of resisting rehabilitative orientation to fonds—trying to reconstruct a straightforward 'clean' archive—by instead meeting archival materials where they are at" (p. 3). It provides a guiding framework for "how to tell a history of disability when there is little to no evidence" by recognizing the messiness and incompleteness of collections and records on disability (p. 13). Brilmyer (2022) emphasizes:

> *People*—not only creators, subject, and archivists but also the people who experience, interpret, and are impacted by records across time; *system*s—those that created the record and that influenced the creation of other records, which in turn influenced other systems, legislation, and archival processes, etc.; *materials*—those that are present in the record itself as well as parallel histories and practices that make discussing disability and ableism possible when they are not apparent; and finally *spaces*—the histories of colonialism and the affective ways in which accessibility is interwoven into all of the previous aspects (p. 19).

Although this thesis focuses on reparative description, Brilmyer's (2022) crip provenance is vital for recognizing that the ability to create context around records through descriptions is a balancing act between what is known and what is unknown within the archive's own documentation. Finding aids, deeds of gift, accession records, and other internal documentations created by archivists may not have the information necessary to identify a subject in a record or the original creators or owners. The incompleteness of records at all levels will influence the possibilities of filling in the silences through reparative description.

While the intricacies of complex embodiment theory, assemblage, and sickness differ, all three theories build on the notion that disability is not a static identity. The theories give agency to disabled individuals and acknowledge the complex decisions that go into defining oneself as disabled. Furthermore, Brilmyer's (2018; 2020b; 2022) theories of assemblage, sickness, and crip provenance build towards recognizing, understanding, and accepting incompleteness in disability in archives that will impact current and future endeavors to better represent disability history.

Interpreting the Ghosts

As I follow the ghosts in WHC, I consider Gordon's (2008) words:

> Following ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located. It is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look. It is sometimes about writing ghost stories, stories that not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a countermemory, for the future (p. 22).

Using the concept of witnessing (Laub, 1992) and radical empathy (Caswell & Cifor, 2016), I construct myself as an archival translator and ghost hunter. I place myself within the dialectic between my sense of self and the other whose ghostly presence is always lurking but never visible. I, as an archivist, must bear witness to the written representations in the archive-generated documents and records while also recognizing the limitations of these representations caused by institutional and personal biases, and time. In other words, acknowledging the sickness in archives by recognizing the incompleteness of records.

While working in this liminal position as translator/ghost hunter, I must balance the need of living users, who require descriptions and metadata tags to find items and collections of interest, with the responsibility towards the ghostly sounds of silence. Performing reparative description work means archivists are already working with marked bodies, bodies written on and deemed disabled in some way by the prior collector, agent, or archivist. To ignore those markings is to ignore the assemblages created by institutions; however, not acknowledging the individual is to ignore the human whose subjectivity is squashed into a marginal footnote. In this

work, I walk a tightrope between naming and renaming disability, both recognizing the "crying wound" as an ethical witness and failing as a witness because I am already too late.

Added to the struggle of being an ethical witness and listening to the ghosts is the invisibility of reparative descriptive work. Unless well-documented and shared among archivists and users, the process of updating problematic terminology is largely opaque. To be transparent, I attempt to document my processes in the following chapters for how I found the disabled subjects that haunt WHC, the information I could or could not find about them, and how I came to redescribe them. Documentation, as an act of transparency, provides future users and archivists with insight into my decisions and illustrates the ethical tensions between remediating problematic terms and creating more wholistic representations of disability history in archives. Without documentation, the beginning and end product of archival documents—the language used—exist in a black box for others who want to understand the process of remediation. By providing notes and context for the decisions I make, I operate within an ethics of care framework and make myself—as an archivist and agent who influences future views of historical records—transparent. What follows in the next two chapters are my attempts at interpreting the cries of ghosts in the WHC and the documentation of my professional failures.

Chapter Three: Methods

Methodology and the Monstrosity of Reparative Description

Currently, WHC has over 2,000 manuscript collections and 800 photograph collections that focus on the history of the Trans-Mississippi West and Native American cultures. In addition, WHC services the University of Oklahoma Archives (UA), which includes bureaucratic records related to the operations of the university under various presidents and internal documents of various departments. Many of the collections have legacy finding aids that use problematic language for historically marginalized communities; however, I am only focusing on disability-related terminology. Within the last three years, WHC moved the majority of its finding aids to the digital platform ArchivesSpace. The remediated descriptions in this thesis are written with the switch from print to digital finding aids in mind and follow WHC's description protocols, which are based on the SAA's *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS; 2020).

DACS defines 11 guiding principles for archival description and establishes rules for minimal processing that ensure "the creation of consistent, appropriate, and self-explanatory descriptions of archival material" (SAA, 2020, p. 1). DACS is designed to be compatible with other standards, such as Resource Description and Access and Machine-Readable Cataloging standards, as well as local description processes. Along with guiding principles, DACS lists several minimum requirements for description that include elements such as title, date, extent, and name of creator(s). WHC primarily uses the title element on ArchivesSpace for descriptions, as well as on legacy finding aids. In WHC, and for the purpose of this thesis, item descriptions and the title element field are interchangeable terms. According to DACS, a title provides "a word or phrase by which the material being described is known or can be identified. A title may

be devised or formal" (SAA, 2020, p. 13). A formal title is "one that appears prominently on or in the materials being described" (p. 13), such as the official title of a published article or book, unpublished reports, or photographs with captions. Devised titles are created by an archivist when no formal title is available for materials, such as letters. DACS recommends archivists use "professional judgment to determine when it is appropriate to devise a title rather than transcribe a label on a container that may be misleading" (SAA, 2020, p. 13).

While providing guidance on minimum requirements and formatting for archival description, DACS "does not attempt to define the proper level of description for any set of archival materials" (SAA, 2020, p. 4), leaving the decision to create detailed descriptions of boxes, folders, and items up to the institution. As a result, the WHC standard is to "take the file title from the creator's original files when it is present and sufficiently describes (sic) the file's contents," or to "devise a brief title using relevant creator names, subjects, and material types" if an original title is inaccurate or not present ("Description," n. d., para. 14). My focus is on item level remediation. Although I consulted DACS (SAA, 2020) for formatting standards for specific types of data, such as dates, I primarily refer to current local practices at WHC for crafting remediated descriptions for items.

In addition, archivists at WHC label the folders and photo sleeves of individual items, also known as physical containers. Labelling the physical container of an item is useful for researchers and archivists when searching collections, but can be challenging when updating descriptions. The amount of available space to write on or size of a file folder label can impact how much information from the finding aid description can be included on the container label. I note any differences between the container label and the finding aid description in the sections on remediation.

For my thesis, I selected eight items from the 144 items with descriptions identified as needing review (Weiss et al., 2024). Originally, I selected 26 items that represented a diverse range of problematic terminology, material types, and potential challenges for remediation. I narrowed it down to eight items in order to have a small but representative sample of material types, which I considered doable based on the timeframe I had for completing this thesis, and the potential challenges I thought I would encounter while remediating the problematic terms. Three items I selected were a top priority for remediation at WHC. As I worked through my list of items, my decision on what was or was not used changed slowly but drastically. The ghosts called from all directions and I followed as many of them as I could, but ultimately settled on the ones in this thesis because they spoke to me in a way that I cannot articulate fully. There was a *something* in their calls that I thought I could address and translate in this thesis. Each presented a unique challenge that required me to understand the record, the intent behind its original description, and its relationship to a white supremacist and sometimes overtly eugenic worldview. All remediated descriptions are available in Appendix B and include both the original and the new descriptions for comparison.

A Paradigm of Witnessing: The Foundations of Ghost Hunting

Gordon (2008) states, "when a ghost appears, it is making contact with you; all its forceful if perplexing enunciations are for you" (p. 208). When I am confronted with the "forceful if perplexing enunciations" (Gordon, 2008, p. 208) of ghosts in the archive, what I hear is: What will you do?

According to Gordon (2008), "we," being the ghost hunters, "are part of the story, for better or worse: the ghost must speak to me in some way sometimes similar to, sometimes distinct from how it may be speaking to the others" (p. 24). I cannot write a ghost story without

considering the part I play in that story and how I interpret the words of ghosts. My relationship with the ghost creates both the impetus for action and is the axis on which translating ghostly speech rests. In other words, hauntings are intimate. They often occur within the silent spaces of reading rooms, the storage facilities of archives, and even the home. When the ghosts speak to me, they ask for *something* and through that call we become intertwined. In my telling of a ghost story, I must define myself as a witness before I can begin translating ghostly speech. Using a hodgepodge of theories to form an assemblage-like framework, I describe myself as a witness to ghosts in order to avoid the mistake of writing the ghost out of its own story. For a ghost story requires a witness and a way of seeing that recognizes "what appears to be in the past, but is nonetheless powerfully present" (Gordon, 2008, p. 42). Defining myself as a witness requires me to name my relationship with a ghost and to call attention to how I am hearing its cry.

First, using Laub's (1992) concept of witnessing, I construct myself as an ethical witness whose responsibility is to create space for the knowable and unknowable within archival silences. As a witness, I "listen" to the constructed narratives and silences around the record and within the archivist-generated documents. By framing myself as a witness, I enter an ethical dialectic between myself and the other that is the silenced disabled subject in the record. As stated before in this thesis, I, as an archivist, must bear witness to the written representation of records and acknowledge the sickness of WHC's archive by recognizing its incompleteness both in collecting and describing disability history. A part of being an ethical witness is having radical empathy for the historically marginalized and silenced ghosts. Caswell and Cifor (2016) provide a structure for engaging in radical empathy where balancing one's sense of self with the other's desire to be heard recognizes the other's humanness without collapsing the border between the

self and other. Tension between the knowable and unknowable, both for witnessing and radical empathy, is key to contemplating and translating silences.

The liminal space between knowable and unknowable knowledge is where I begin constructing my descriptions. I use assemblages instead of complex embodiment theory, although a case could be made that I use both. An assemblage is "neither a part nor a whole" (Nail, 2017, p. 23), but a multiplicity that is fragmentary in nature and defined by its relations. Remediating descriptions does not, in my experience, create even a partial representation of a subject in a record. Instead, it is an amalgamation of fragments based on available historical information, information in the record, and the unknowable that is too vast to adequately fit into a complex embodiment model. Assemblages are the product of sickness (Brilmyer, 2021) in the archive created by "meeting archival materials where they are at" (p. 3). I am reluctant, however, to say that assemblages are translations of ghostly speech. An assemblage can be made without listening to ghosts and without needing to recognize hauntings.

Ordering the Disorderly: Ghost Hunting as Methodology

Haunting is and is not a methodology. Being haunted and to write ghost stories, according to Gordon (2008), "is not a methodology or a consciousness you can simply adopt or adapt as a set of rules or an identity; it produces its own insights and blindness" (p. 22). As with any other theoretical lens for viewing the world, ghosts can lead the ghost hunter towards something profound or divert them away from other avenues of inquiry. Despite the risk of being led astray, I follow the ghosts because "if you let it, the ghost can lead you toward what has been missing, which is sometimes everything" (Gordon, 2008, p. 58). Accepting the ghost means accepting a new kind of reality, or, better, making space for other kinds of realities. For "following the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are

located" (Gordon, 2008, p. 22). Hauntings are more than assemblages. They are catalysts for a *something* to occur. Articulating what that something is and why it must happen requires a reimagining of what a method is when working with ghosts. Gordon (2008) asks: "perhaps the key methodological question is not what method have you adopted for this research? But what paths have been disavowed, left behind, covered over and remain unseen?" (Gordon, 2008, p. 41). In other words, which ghosts did you follow, where did they lead, what did you find, and what avenues did you reject? In my thesis, I follow the ghosts and describe the paths they lead me down. I try to articulate what their presence means and their relationship to me, WHC, and a larger and incomplete disability history. Also, I consider what Gordon (2008) means by needing to invent:

> other forms of curiosity to engage those haunting moments that take us down the path of the helplessly repetitive, of the fictional pretense, of the contradictory, of the ghostly, in order to capture back all that must be circumscribed in order to produce the "adequate" version (p. 41).

The journey between the old and new description is what takes up the remainder of this thesis. Writing the journeys and paths I followed while following the ghost illustrates the process of reparative description and is an act of transparency. In tracing these paths, I attempt to articulate the insights I learned, describe what was covered over, and unseen in WHC. I try to illustrate the tension between what is known and what is not known, and the tension between myself as a witness and the ghost who is speaking. My efforts to be transparent and articulate what was sometimes inarticulable holds me accountable and makes me an ethical witness and archival translator. Cline (2022) argues that archives, "must 'represent' by archival translation all of the surrounding context, including their role in changing the record and, through that work of

translation, maintaining the authenticity of the record and expanding user trust that the meaning of the text can be discerned" (p. 136). In documenting myself and my role in translating records, I am not only translating ghosts but also myself and my experiences of hauntings. Through translating the ghost and process of remediation, I create meaning around an item and potentially influence, for better or worse (but hopefully better), the interpretation of items by future users.

So, how do you translate ghosts? Translation is itself a monumental task that requires transforming one text into another while still retaining the original's essence (Cline, 2022; Mandell, 2017). The impossibility of taking a literary text in one language and transforming it into another language, according to the translator Mandell (2017), is "the challenge and delight of translation: the translator engages in a sort of inner struggle between hopeless despair and optimistic industriousness in turning the text into Something Else but Still the Same" (para. 3). Remediating descriptions is the same. Transforming ghostly speech, which might not exist on the page, into usable text is an alchemic transformation of a record or old description into "Something Else but Still the Same" (Mandell, 2017, para. 3). While I cannot speak for other archivists remediating descriptions, I felt the oscillation between hopeless despair and optimistic industriousness as I worked with each description in this thesis. Likewise, translating myself and my actions while translating ghosts is another form of magic that requires me to be hyperaware of things that are sometimes unconscious and account for decisions that are not always documented.

The following sections combine the theoretical and the practical, which results in either "the 'adequate' version" (Gordon, 2008, p. 41) of the specters of white supremacy and eugenics or the implosion of knowledge and a new "Something Else but Still the Same" (Mandell, 2017, para. 3) description of ghosts that just barely acknowledge the existence of the supernatural. My

account and translation of myself and of the ghosts, hopefully, illuminate what occurs in the "black box" of remediation, holds me accountable for my decisions, and allows others to consider new paths that follow ghosts in the archive.

Now, finally, I can write the ghost story.

The Ghost Hunt Begins

This ghost story starts in the university's own archive, arguably one of the many nexuses of power that control who and how someone is remembered. In this section, I focus on two different UA Record Group (UARG) collections that include small pieces of disability history within the wider history of OU's operations. I start this ghost hunt within a university's archive to highlight the ways it can conceal the specters of white supremacist ideologies and to illustrate the challenge of applying theoretical definitions of disability to remediated descriptions in finding aids that are used by an institution with questionable relationships to disability communities.

UARG 45 Continuing Education and the Problem with Formal Titles

The UARG 45 Continuing Education collection includes publications from the College of Continuing Education, Oklahoma Center for Continuing Education, and Education Department, among other post-secondary educational programs at OU. Item publication dates range from 1958 through 1991. The collection is organized by department then year, with boxes and folders described using a mix of formal and devised titles based on the publications in the folders. Physical containers in this collection include labels that mostly correlate to what is on the finding aid. Box 2 in UARG 45 Continuing Education includes general subject files for the Education Department from 1960 through 1966, and is divided into two subgroups "Group Education" and "Special Students." The subgroup "Special Students" has two folder level descriptions under it,

which are “Disadvantaged Youth, 1968-69” (folder 2) and “Mentally Retarded Child, 1960” (folder 3). I remediated the description for box 2, folder 3, “Mentally Retarded Child, 1960.” In folder 3, there are two booklets titled *A Guide for Teachers of Educable Mentally Handicapped Children*, which were published in 1960. As the title suggests, the booklets were created to provide educators with activities and guidance for teaching children deemed mentally disabled at the intermediate and secondary levels. It reflects the push towards including disabled children in academic settings while maintaining an ableist, capitalist view of disability as something to overcome in order to be a productive member of society (Brilmyer, 2022; Connor, et al., 2016; Nourse, 2008; White 2012). I am remediating this description for three reasons: first, the outdated and harmful use of the word “retarded”; second, it does not follow current DACS (SAA, 2020) or WHC protocols; and, third, because the original finding aid description and folder label no longer make sense to contemporary users and archivists working with UA materials. For example, I work with UARG collections frequently but did not know what type of publication I would find in folder 3 due to the vague description.

The remediated finding aid description is:

> Two booklets titled, *A Guide for Teachers of Educable Mentally Handicapped Children,* written for teachers on educating children with intellectual disabilities at the intermediate and secondary level. Published in 1960.

The remediated description is an assemblage. It includes information about the amount and type of material in the folder, describes its purpose and the official title, as well as includes the publication date. Hopefully, this description makes the item more findable for users looking for education material related to disabilities. Likewise, the new description removes the word “retarded” from the finding aid all together. “Retarded,” was proposed as a neutral way of

categorizing people who were previously diagnosed as “idiots,” “feeble-minded,” and “mentally deficient” (“The Effects of the R-Word,” n. d.; Trent, 2017). Although, arguably, the “r-word” was never neutral because it was introduced during a period when forced institutionalization was still common and forced sterilization was still in practice, although not as widespread (Hansen & King, 2013). Likewise, the “r-word” is a widely used and harmful insult that is slowly disappearing from the popular lexicon (“The Effects of the R-Word,” n. d.). While the remediated finding aid description is longer than the original, ArchivesSpace can accommodate longer titles in the title element field.

The new description differs from current recommendations in DACS (SAA, 2020), which suggests using the formal title, in this case the title of the booklet, as the description of the item on the finding aid. I decided not to use only the formal title because the title of the booklet uses a problematic term, “mentally handicapped,” which is no longer used and reflects outdated views of disability. While I kept the formal title in the remediated description, I added the additional information about the booklets in order to include more contemporary terms users might use to search for items like the booklets. The contemporary terms for disability align more closely with current preferences and best practices for disabled individuals diagnosed with specific learning-based disabilities and also improves the findability of items for users looking for educational materials for disabled students from the 1960s.

In addition, the current folder label has both the finding aid description, “The Mentally Retarded Child,” and the finding aid group and subgroup “Education—Special Student.” I updated the description to: “Booklets on Teaching Children with Mental Disabilities, 1960.” The remediated folder label title is a shorter version of the remediated description on the finding aid and includes key information for archivists and users, such as the material type, date of

publication, and contents of the folder. It is one word longer than the original, which ensures that the new remediated folder label fits onto the current folder without adding more work to the process, such as re-foldering, which involves putting items into a new folder. The subgroup—"Education—Special Student"— is no longer on the folder label because it no longer adds any relevant contextual information for users who will not necessarily see it on ArchivesSpace because of how information is structured on digital finding aids, and the subgroup title will eventually need to be remediated.

In this remediated description, I made the conscious decision to use people-first language instead of disabled-first language. It occurred to me while I was working on the description for the booklets that there is a conflict between the theoretical definitions of disability I use and both items that reflect ableist views of disability, such as the booklets in folder 3, and institutions that house ableist views in their archive. OU, anecdotally, is not known for being disability friendly or accommodating (Duman, 2017; Moriak, 2008; Pratt, 2023; Sridhar, 2017). Remediating the description for folder 3, and working with an ableist specter, raised the question: who gets to use disabled-first language? In the words of ghostly matters, the phantoms in the booklets are not ghosts of disabled children but the specters of an ableist view of education and normative views of learning (Connor et al., 2016). The remediated description is not working to bring a marginalized ghost to the forefront necessarily because that ghost is not in this folder, but elsewhere. Furthermore, the original description uses disabled-first language. Should a remediated description include the original disabled-first language despite the booklet's ableist agenda? Can a eugenic specter or other dark apparition hide in the shadows of a remediated description if contemporary ways of viewing and thinking about disability are not used with care? Denying personhood is both a physical act and a linguistic act, which means using

disabled-first language in certain scenarios risks doing the opposite of celebrating a form of "human variation" (White, 2012, p. 117) and could perpetuate a potentially harmful ideology if used in the wrong way, by the wrong person or the wrong institution. Is it better to err on the side of caution because OU is an institution with a history of problematic behaviors towards historically marginalized communities and former professors with known ties to the Klu Klux Klan and eugenics movements? In response to this particularly haunting concern, I use people-first language for this and other remediated descriptions that have specters of white supremacy and eugenics lurking in the collections. However, I am not entirely confident in my justifications for people-first language.

UARG 03/01/08 Cross and the Specter of Ableism

The UARG 03/01/08 Cross collection holds documents related to the administration of the university under president George Lynn Cross. Materials range from 1944 to 1968 and cover several notable shifts at OU, including increase in student attendance following the end of World War II and enrollment of the first Black students. The collection is organized by year and alphabetically by topic. Box 431 includes interoffice communications and memoranda from 1949 to1968, with the documents described using a short (one to five word) description. I remediated the description for folder 69, which was "Physically Handicapped or Disabled Students." The memorandum in folder 69 is a brief announcement instructing faculty to direct any students with questions about the university's accommodations for disabilities to the Director of Student Health Services. It was published October 3, 1966, and sent to several departments by Pete Kyle McCarter, who was vice president under Cross. When remediating the description for box 69, I considered two different approaches. First, whether to include the word "memo" in the description. The folder is in a box described as "Office Notes," which indicates the format of the

documents in the box. However, users online, or even in print finding aids, might not see the box title before the folder title when searching for relevant pieces of disability history. Second, the memorandum itself does not reflect the ableist views or attitudes of OU. Unlike the booklet on teaching in UARG 45 Continuing Education, box 2, folder 3, the memorandum is not meant to stand in as the only form of communication between the Student Health Services department and other university departments; it is part of a longer narrative for users interested in how the university addressed the needs of disabled students during the 1960s. Again, the ghosts in this folder are not the marginalized but the creators of marginalization.

The remediated description that addresses the immediate needs of users, not necessarily the needs of ghosts, is:

> Memo Directing Faculty to Student Health Services for Accommodating Students with Disabilities. Sent to departments 1966, October 3.

ArchivesSpace does display a hierarchical structure that mimics a finding aid, but that information is only available in a sidebar that is not necessarily easy to read, particularly for users new to archival research. To account for the different ways users find items on ArchivesSpace, which is usually through third-party search engines like Google, I added "Memo" to the title. I devised a title for the memorandum because it lacked a formal title, and to address the same issues I identified when remediating UARG 45 Continuing Education, box 2, folder 3. The devised title improves the findability of the memo by using contemporary terms, removes an implied ableist view of disability, and makes the translated version of the item (the description) understandable for users unfamiliar with UARG collections. The original description," "Physically Handicapped or Disabled Students," is vague and does not reflect contemporary users who may be starting with people first-language "students with disabilities"

before searching for outdated terms like “physically handicapped.” The term, “Disabled Students,” is not necessarily problematic, and reflects the disabled-first language that many disability communities prefer. However, the context in which the term is used, accommodating students at an historically unaccommodating university (Duman, 2017; Moriak, 2008; Pratt, 2023; Sridhar, 2017), suggests that an ableist specter haunts the memorandum. Again, I switch to people-first language in an attempt to exorcise the specter or at the very least reframe a dehumanizing view of disability. Finally, the remediated description is more transparent in what the item is and its purpose within the university’s bureaucracy. Rather than wonder what “Physically Handicapped or Disabled Students” means, the user now knows that the folder contains a memo, the date the memo was distributed, and that it provides minimal information about how the university handled questions regarding accommodations for students with unspecified disabilities.

The label on the folder is the same as the original description on the finding aid. For the physical container, the remediated description is: “Memo for Directing Students to Services for Disabilities, 1966.” The label is a shorter version of the remediated description in the finding aid while retaining the remediated description’s new meaning. It provides enough information to ensure a user or archivist can match the folder to the description on the finding aid without oversimplifying or misidentifying the contents.

The UARG specters are not the ghosts I want to highlight in this thesis; however, they are the ghosts that fill most administrative archives. Their presence is what calls attention to the missing pieces of information or buried stories of disabled students struggling to attend a university that, arguably, is indifferent to them. The articles from the student newspaper are a microcosm of stories many students at OU have heard or experienced themselves. However, the

stories of disabled students are not in OU's official archive nor a part of any special research collection. Unfortunately, the specters of white supremacy are needed to see what is covered over before efforts to uncover can begin.

Challenging the Researcher as the Authority for Organization

WHC includes many collections established by independent or OU-affiliated researchers. As subject experts, researchers occupy a unique position within an archive by creating a repository of primary sources for other scholars to use, establishing what those items mean for themselves and other researchers, and operating as individual actors that either uphold or challenge the status quo of white supremacy. The two collections in this section feature researchers whose views of the marginalized communities they studied differ significantly. James Wyatt Marrs was a part of the eugenics movement while Alice Marriott was an anthropologist and prolific author of ethnographies on Native American cultures. Yet, their collections are described in a similar fashion, privileging an ableist and white supremacist view of marginalized identities, and obscuring any individual differences between who the researchers are and why they are collecting the items that formed their collections at WHC.

A Eugenic Scientist in the Archive: James Wyatt Marrs Collection

Eugenics is a traumatizing part of disability history that still exists within social, legal, and medical institutions. For example, contemporary conversations on welfare, genetics, and even certain aspects of the wellness industry invoke a eugenic ideology (Evans, 2021; Marcattilio-McCracken, 2023). Likewise, the sterilization programs that were common practice during the 1940s and 1950s were not only encouraged by a medical community concerned with "mental deficiency" and "delinquency" but were legalized (Hansen & King, 2013). Some states had laws that permitted the sterilization of people deemed "degenerate" even though the practice

is no longer considered ethical through the late 2000s (Hansen & King, 2013; Marcattilio-McCracken, 2023). The terms "defective" and "deficient" were, and are, used to define disabilities as antithetical to capitalist and ableist ideologies of "productivity" (Brilmyer, 2020b; Marcattilio-McCracken, 2023; Thomas & Sillen, 1979). Intellectual disabilities, for example, "are products of and contingent upon specific social and intellectual environments, and perform specific functions within those environments" (McDonagh et al., 2018, p. 1). Along with vague definitions on how someone was defined as "defective," eugenics and white supremacist writings constructed mental illnesses to illustrate how "so-called primitive cultures were inherently psychopathological" (Waldram, 2004, p. 109), such as Windigo Psychosis, Pibloktoq, and Ghost Sickness for Native Americans (Waldram, 2004) or Drapetomania and Dysaesthesia Aethiopica for enslaved Black people (Thomas & Sillen, 1972). Under a eugenics framework, a plethora of communities and people were "disabled" and "degenerate" because they did not conform to an ableist, white supremacist way of existing in the world. Though contemporary users and archivists alike might not recognize eugenics in certain words or phrases, such as "social parasitism," it is still present. Fortunately, the specters of eugenics are loud, making it easier to identify and name compared with ghosts the eugenics movement marginalized as "deviants" of human history.

The James Wyatt Marrs collection illustrates the ways eugenics remains a shadow within archives. Although eugenics is mentioned nine times in the Marrs' finding aid, it is not a part of the scope and content notes and the descriptions themselves do not indicate Marrs' affiliations with the eugenics movement. Marrs was a sociology professor at OU from 1922 until his death in 1963. He taught courses on eugenic ideology at the university and published the book *The Man on Your Back: A Preface to the Art of Living Without Producing in Modern Society* in 1958.

He was potentially involved in the American Eugenics Society (Eugenics Watch, n. d.), supported sterilization programs (Nourse, 2008), and his book was considered an important work in understanding "social parasitism" (Gilmore, 1958; Liguori, 1958). While "social parasitism" is the topic of Marrs' work, contemporary users may not realize it as one of the many subtopics within eugenics. Using a lesser-known term associated with the eugenics movement can hide the specter of white supremacy within the archive.

I focused on two folders that represented the ways eugenics is both prominent and hidden within Marrs' collection. The first folder description I remediated was box 31, folder 5, which had the original description, "Typed Manuscripts on Mental Deficiency. 1929-1932." The contents of box 31, folder 5 include copies of articles on eugenics and children defined as "defective," notes, and an invitation to a book reading of *Behind the Door of Delusion*, which was written by someone forcibly institutionalized for alcoholism by his friends. The second folder description I remediated was in box 47, folder 8, which had the original description, "Research Materials on the Defective Child. 1925-1930." The contents of box 47, folder 8 include an article and newspaper clippings about children with various disabilities, including deafness, speech impediments, and brain injuries. Many of the articles on children in Marrs' collection defined "defective" as unable to conform to socially expected behaviors.

The original description for box 31, folder 5, "Typed Manuscripts on Mental Deficiency. 1929-1932," highlights the social construction of "mental deficiency" as the essays included in the folder cover a wide range of people Marrs defined as "social parasites" because they do not conform to ableist views of productivity. A more fitting description, which brings the specter of eugenics to the forefront is: "Typed Manuscripts and notes on eugenics and eugenic views of disabilities, 1929-1932." Following DACS (SAA, 2020) and WHC guidelines for writing

descriptions, the remediated description acknowledges the format of the materials in the folder and names the specter that haunts them. I use "disabilities" rather than people-first or disabled-first language because the contents of the folder do not refer to people nor acknowledge the humanness of disability, but instead argue for an ideological construction of disabled people as burdensome and in need of eradication from society.

Ideally, a remediated scope and content note will include a content warning about the types of ideologically violent views of disability contained within the collection. Until the scope and content notes are addressed, I added the following sentence to the description of the items in box 31, folder 5: "The typed manuscripts represent harmful views of disabled people and use harmful and outdated language in titles." The whole description now reads:

> Typed manuscripts and notes on eugenics and eugenic views of disabilities, 1929-1932. The typed manuscripts represent harmful views of disabled people and use harmful and outdated language in titles.

The inclusion of a content warning adds more context to the description and alerts users to the potential harm they could experience while working with the items in folder 5 of box 31. Ultimately, it is a small and ethical act that could mediate the negative experiences Brilmyer (2020a, 2021) reported in their studies on affective experiences of disability scholars in archives.

Similarly, I remediated the description of box 47, folder 8 to emphasize eugenics. The original description was: "Research Materials on the Defective Child. 1925-1930." The folder mostly included newspaper articles about teaching children with various disabilities, including deafness, blindness, and speech impediments, with only one typed manuscript about population control that prominently promoted eugenic ideology. While the original description dates the articles between 1925 and 1932, the folder includes an article published in 1924. All the

newspaper articles, unsurprisingly, present condescending attitudes towards disabled children, and include treatments of disabled children that are harmful and outdated. The disabled children featured in the newspaper articles exist on the periphery as ghosts whose experiences and voices only mattered insofar as they could be used to promote an ableist and eugenic agenda. For example, Marrs kept a newspaper article titled "Teaching the Deaf by Radio," which suggests deaf children can learn how to hear through the use of radios. In a newspaper article titled "The Child's Disordered Speech," the columnist uses a quote from James Sonnet Green, a speech pathologist and founder of the National Hospital for Speech Disorders that states, "a stuttering child is a sick child" ("The Child's Disorder Speech," 1925). The front page includes a photograph with the caption that says "where little victims of speech defects are trained to talk properly" ("The Child's Disorder Speech," 1925). To address the, to put it mildly, problematic treatment of disabled children, the remediated description calls attention to the specter of eugenics and ableism:

> Newspaper articles and a typed manuscript about the treatment of children with various disabilities, 1924-1930. The articles and manuscript include eugenic views of children with disabilities and recommended treatments and approaches to care that are outdated. Topics include teaching deaf children and children with speech impediments to speak, and treating blind children.

While this new description is longer and may be cumbersome in the title field on ArchivesSpace, it includes a combination of keywords users may utilize, such as blind, and deaf, which will improve the findability of the collection. It situates the context of the articles within a eugenic ideology so users are aware that the contents of the folder present views that are both problematic and harmful. Likewise, the publication date is updated to reflect the full date range

of materials in the folder. Marrs' collection does not include labels on folders so I did not create a modified remediated description for the physical containers.

Both the remediated descriptions reflect an anti-eugenics bias and recenter the specter of eugenics. While recentering eugenics might seem counterintuitive for a project that seeks to decentralize white supremacy in archives, I consider casting a light on specters of white supremacy a part of ghost hunting. Ignoring the presence of eugenics allows it to infiltrate other aspects of remediation and archival work, allowing it to remain hidden and unquestioned within linguistic tricks and euphemisms, such as "social parasitism." As Gordon (2008) states, "haunting always harbors the violence, the *witchcraft* and *denial* that made it" (p. 207). To write a ghost story that does not acknowledge the specters—or even ghouls—that created the gaps and margins in history is to write a story that fails to understand the forces that marginalized the ghosts. By establishing eugenics as the center of the remediated descriptions for Marrs' collection, I bring the "organized forces and systemic structures that appear removed from us" to light "in a way that confounds our analytic separations and confounds the societal separations themselves" (Gordon, 2008, p. 19). In this way I ask, what will you do? to a specter that the United States' psyche seeks to conceal within the depths of history.

Alice Marriott and the Problems of Organizing by Research Notes

Alice Marriott was a respected anthropologist who studied Native American cultures, authored several books, and was the first woman inducted into the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame ("Alice L. Marriott," n.d.; Loughlin, 2010). Her manuscript collection includes research notes, drafts of her books and articles, and printed materials she accumulated over the years as a part of her work. Similar to the UARG examples above, Marriott's finding aid includes titles with each box and general topic titles for the contents of the folders. While I could not identify a

maleficent specter lurking within Marriott's collection, it is still haunted. One folder in particular, folder 11 in box 75, included a description that was identified as needing immediate remediation by WHC staff. The description for box 75 is: "Correspondence, Notes on Indians and Clippings." Folders in box 75 are described using a few keywords, such as "Quotes," "Random House, 1956-1957," and "Menstrual Customs, 1934," related to the contents of the folders. For folder 11, the description is: "Transvestites: Insane: Liars: Suicide, 1934."

The contents of folder 11 were unsurprisingly surprising. As should be expected with a researcher's collection, the folder contained pieces, sometimes literally quarter sheet scraps, of paper with incomplete interview transcripts and notes from conversations with various Modoc tribe members. The incomplete interviews and notes covered the topics listed in the folder description: how the Modoc tribe handled liars, their views on people with unspecified but primarily mental disabilities, and thoughts on gender nonconforming behaviors. Unlike Marrs, whose ideological agenda is clear and the context surrounding his collection easily articulatable, I could not determine the context of Marriott's collection based on the finding aid, internet searches, and the contents of the folder. Whatever research questions or reasons Marriott had for collecting the research notes and clippings related to lying, disabilities, and gender nonconforming behavior in the Modoc tribe are lost to time.

Remediating this description was difficult compared with remediating Marrs' or the UARG collections because Marriott's collection lacks a central framework due to the variety of her activities as a researcher and involvement with various tribal and governmental organizations. Marriott's collection represents the sickness of the archive, where trying to fix records is "impossible due to cultural and temporal shifts" (Brilmyer, 2020b, p. 37). It is tempting to try and guess Marriott's motives or research inquiries when examining her notes in

folder 11. Based on what I know about WHC and its processing protocols, the organization of folder 11, and Marriott's collection as a whole, follow the traditional rules of provenance and respect de fonds. Meaning, the boxes and folders were described based on the way they were put together by Marriott herself and not by an archivist. This is one of the challenges of working with research materials, particularly for archives using minimal processing. Marriott most likely organized and labeled the folders that held her research notes in a way that made sense to her. It is very likely she never considered the archive would use her own personal method to structure how her materials were cataloged and preserved for other researchers. As a result, the logic behind the organization and labels is not apparent to archivists or users who have to work with incomplete descriptions. Maintaining the original order and not questioning how the researcher organized their own collection creates gaps that grow as time progresses and insights that could be provided through the donor or their family member are lost. Rather than attempt to reconstruct Marriott's intentions in the folder, I instead meet the "archival materials where they are at" (Brilmyer, 2022, p. 3). However, meeting the "materials where they are at" (Brilmyer, 2022, p. 3) requires a sacrifice of the ghosts that haunt folder 11.

Within the contents of the folder are two groups of people: named interviewees and named people not involved in the interviews. In the interview transcripts, the people interviewed mention, sometimes offhandedly, disabled people and people who do not conform to traditional gender roles briefly. The notes and anecdotes are too short to provide any context about the lives of the people being interviewed or the ones mentioned in interview transcripts. In this way, there are two layers of ghosts—the ones speaking (interviewees) and the ones not present. The interviewees of Marriott's research exist within the liminal space of having a voice to share a particular story but not having the agency around how their voice and story are used. However,

the people not present are twofold ghosts that haunt the margins of fragmented interview transcripts and notes. Added to the complexity of navigating Marriott's interviews is the way her notes and transcripts construct the named but not present people in relation to topics on gender non-conformity, suicide, and disabilities. Remediating the folder's description is complicated by an inability to work with the marginalized ghosts being discussed by other marginalized ghosts. Would people discussed in interviews that Marriott labeled as "transvestites" identify themselves that way or would they describe themselves another way? Marriott includes narratives about blind people under the label "idiot," which is historically not inaccurate but is not useful for contemporary users who want to differentiate the treatment of blind people from the treatment of other disabled peoples. Furthermore, why Marriott included notes and interviews about liars in this folder is beyond my understanding.

Remediating this description is an act of creating "Something Else but Still the Same" (Mandell, 2017, para. 3). Unlike the remediated descriptions for UARG and Marrs collections, which worked to highlight the white supremacist ideologies while better describing the contents of the folders, the remediated descriptions for Marriott's collection focus more on how to direct users to this folder. My knowledge and what I know reached its limit while investigating Marriott, her work, and her collection. As a result, I am working with what I know and "meeting the archival materials where they are at" (Brilmyer, 2022, p. 3) in an effort to at least make the remediated description usable. I approached the remediation of this description in two ways. First, I assessed and remediated the folder label description. Marriott's folders are labeled in pencil using the descriptions from the finding aid. There is not a lot of room on the folder for a longer description so the remediated folder label uses a one-to-one approach for replacing an

existing term with a more appropriate and/or contemporary term. So, the original folder description:

"Transvestites: Insane: Liars: Suicide, 1934"

becomes:

"Gender Minorities: Disabilities: Liars: Suicide, 1934."

While the remediated description on the folder only includes two updated terms, it better reflects the contents of the folder without ascribing a particular identity to ghosts who were or were not active participants in Marriott's research.

For updating "Transvestites," I consulted the Homosaurus (2022) to avoid misidentifying persons who are not present in the interviews. From what I can tell from Marriott's notes, she was interviewing people about gender nonconforming people in the Modoc tribe. Interviewees name a few people who were described as not performing their assigned sex at birth through their clothes and jobs. However, it is difficult to tell if the people being described in the interviews would describe themselves the same way, not to mention whether they are alive at the time of the interview or living in the vicinity of the people Marriott was interviewing. The reference to how the person looked and what roles they took on, whether "man's work" or "women's work," came from second-hand or third-hand accounts, making it impossible to describe how the person being identified as gender non-conforming would identify or discuss their gender performance.

Originally, I considered using the term, "Gender Non-conforming Identity," defined as "gender identity that does not conform to the gender binary, not to be confused with gender non-conforming practices engaged in by cisgender people" (Homosaurus, 2022). I wanted to use "Gender Non-conforming Identity" over "Gender Non-conforming People" because, at the time,

identity seemed like a better way to describe people who were being described by other people as performing non-heteronormative behaviors without explicitly labeling them as gender non-conforming. However, I do not know if the people being identified as gender non-conforming engaged in other queer activities. The Homosaurus lists “Gender Minorities” as the broader term for “Transvestites” (Homosaurus, 2021). “Gender Minorities” is defined as “individuals whose gender identities and practices differ from those of the dominant culture” (Homosaurus, 2022). I used “Gender Minorities” because it is vague enough to label the folder accurately without ascribing a gender identity to the people discussed but not present in interviews. “Gender Minorities” also acknowledges the physical and temporal space between the interviews, the people being described in the interviews, and now.

Similarly, “Disabilities” replaced “Insane” because it is a broad term and the contents of the folder include interviews and anecdotes about blind people and people with undetermined mental or possibly physical disabilities. It also replaces the original term without disrupting the structure of the original description. Without attempting to project a particular understanding of gender or disabilities, the remediated description illustrates the contents of the folder with vague but more appropriate terms while recognizing that the ghosts (the interviewees) are talking about other ghosts (people not performing heteronormative gender roles) without their awareness or presence to a researcher.

For the finding aid, the remediated description is longer. However, there are still challenges for creating a more complex assemblage based on the contents of the folder. The lack of information about the interview transcripts, their contexts, where they came from, and if they were a part of other interviews on other topics restricts what I am able to do in a remediated description. Incidentally, most of pages in the folder focus on the Modoc tribe’s view of liars.

Based on the transcripts, gender nonconforming people and disabled people, and even suicide, were considered rare or unheard of among the Modoc tribe. It goes without saying that this folder is not representative of how the tribe thought about or treated disabled or gender nonconforming people. Yet, it is one of the few glimpses into how the Modoc people thought about disability and gender in WHC collections. As a ghost hunter, I can see the traces of people who exist on the periphery of research notes and can feel my empathy being stretched beyond the confines of the folder. In order to remediate the description, I have to accept that this is going to be a failure. Acknowledging ghosts, according to Gordon (2008), is not easy:

> because among other things, knowing ghosts often shows up not as professional success, but as failure: the one whose writing/not writing only came together as she came together with the object, with the reality of fictions and the unrealities of the facts; the slightly mad one who kept saying, "There's something in the room with us," as those bloodless reified categories became animated through wonder and vexation (p. 22).

I can see "something in the room with us" (Gordon, 2008, p. 22) in the contents of folder 11, but I cannot name these ghosts. The remediated description is a "Something Else but Still the Same" (Mandell, 2017, para. 3) because it is a reimagining of the original description that does not add to nor address the hauntings of folder 11. It is:

> Marriott's collection of notes about Modoc peoples' views of gender minorities, people who lie, blind people, people with a physical or mental disability, and members of the tribe who committed suicide.

I use people-first language in the remediated description due to the lack of voices from the disabled subjects discussed in Marriott's interviews. Marriott remains the central figure in this

description due to the lack of information about the contents and context of the folder. However, I included additional terms such as “blind,” “disability,” and “gender” in order to improve the findability of this folder on ArchivesSpace and search engines. Additionally, the remediated description calls attention to the incompleteness and messiness of folder 11 by referring to the items as “notes.” While the remediated description does not satisfy the calls of ghosts, it at least is “Something Else but Still the Same (Mandell, 2017, para. 3) while “meeting the archival materials where they are at” (Brilmyer, 2022, p. 3).

Phantoms in the Photographs

In this section, I cover the process of remediating postcards and photographs. Visual items in archives present a unique challenge for writing descriptions because they both capture a particular there, whether it be an event, gathering, or place, and at the same time are void of context. Wagner (2023) describes photographs as “a particularly messy site for description” (p. 626) due to the more subjective work of creating written texts out of a visual object. When considering the archivist as translator, Birkin (2021) suggests that an “archive-based image description can be perceived as a translation between two different media, comparable to inter-lingual translation in terms of rules and pre-defined procedures” (p. 107). The process of describing a photograph transforms a visual object into a text object. Birkin (2021) notes that archival description of a single photograph “has special significance because of the way in which the visual object is incorporated into the text-based recordkeeping ecosystem” (p. 106). Though, Birkin (2021) does wonder if it is possible for text to operate as a stand-in for an image, which is ultimately how archival descriptions of photographs function in finding aids. I wonder the same about transforming ghosts in photographs into useable text.

How photographs are described, if they are described at all in a finding aid, is dependent on the institution's guidelines for item level descriptions. Similar to manuscript items, archival descriptions of photographs are meant to be neutral and accurate. The WHC finding aids for photographs are inconsistent but often include descriptions that are written using the physical photograph or the information written on the back of the photograph. Unlike the manuscript finding aids, the print photograph finding aids do not include scope or content notes nor provide any biographical information about the collector. On ArchivesSpace, the photograph finding aids include a brief scope and content note about the collection but do not include any biographical information or other information that may be useful for understanding the context of the photographs. In addition, subject headings are included in photograph finding aids, but they are not consistently applied. For remediating visual items in WHC, the lack of contextual information, such as biographical notes, impacts remediation efforts as any contextual information that would help illuminate the ghosts in photographs is lost to time.

Lucille Clough Photograph Collection and the Conundrum of Postcards

Compared with the following photographs in this section, remediating Lucille Clough Photograph Collection, Image #432 was relatively easy because it was a postcard. During the early 20th century, at the height of the golden age of postcards, a variety of institutions, including churches, printed and sold postcards (Stokely, 2015). Postcards functioned as both mailed and privately-kept souvenirs and featured images that ranged from picturesque landscapes and buildings to the depiction of various peoples, such as Native Americans (Stokely, 2015). Interest in postcards waned but their historical significance ensured that those featuring historically marginalized peoples remain contextually situated within the long history of voyeurism affiliated with the commodification of non-white peoples in Europe and United States even if an archive

lacks the information. For example, Image #432 is featured in two books on Native Americans in the American Southwest (Koyiyumptewa et al., 2009; Nickens & Nickens, 2007). While WHC does not have any information about the postcard itself aside from the collector's name, I could find information about the postcard and the person featured in it because of its relevance to Native American history and Southwest Americana ephemera.

Image #432 features a man on a mule facing the camera with a stereotypical Arizona landscape of mesas and a blue sky in the background (Figure B). There is text on the front of the postcard, typed in small, red font, that reads: "Lamon Keone (the lame man), appointed by the Church as missionary to the Navajos on a salary of $5 a month. Second Mesa. Toreva, Arizona. Color." The back of the postcard includes a dotted-lined box on the top right corner for a stamp and a line down the middle that separates the message side from the address side. It also includes the publisher, Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society. There are no other typed or handwritten messages on the postcard. The item description on the finding aid is the same as the typed message on the front of the postcard.

Nickens and Nickens (2007) focused on postcards of the American Southwest and did not provide any additional details about Lamon Keone. However, Koyiyumptewa et al. (2009) wrote about the Hopi people in general and included a description of Lamon Keone, stating:

> [He was] severely "crippled" [quotation marks added by author] as a young man; consequently, he always rode a burro to get around. He was a Baptist convert and attended church faithfully. It was said that if he was ever too ill to attend church, his burro was known to go to the church alone and stand outside of the building until the meeting was over. He worked as a missionary to the Navajos and earned a salary of $5 a month for his work (p. 60).

In addition, a Baptist church newsletter published an article titled “Tidings from the Field” (1933). Although, the article uses the spelling “Lamonikeone,” the description of a devout man riding a burro to attend his son’s baptism suggests he is the same person as the man in the postcard (“Tidings from the Field,” 1933).

From the information I was able to find, I pieced together a sliver of Lamon Keone’s narrative, which I used in the remediated description of Image #432. The remediated description is an assemblage of the relationships and contexts surrounding the postcard:

> Postcard from the Women’s American Baptist Home Mission Society that features Lamon Keone, a Hopi missionary with the Baptist Church, on a mule. Lamon Keone was known to ride his mule because of a physical disability that limited his mobility. The writing on the postcard says: “Lamon Keone (the lame man), appointed by the Church as missionary to the Navajos on a salary of $5 a month. Second Mesa. Toreva, Arizona. Color.”

The remediated description includes the format of the image (postcard), which follows both DACS (SAA, 2020) and WHC protocols, and names the original publisher (Women’s American Baptist Home Mission Society). I included the publisher in the remediated description because it draws attention to the staged aspect of the postcard and highlights the power dynamics between Lamon Keone and the church. Rather than treat this item as a photograph of Lamon Keone that he may have exerted some control over, I treat it as an artifact created for the purpose of commercial distribution. While Lamon Keone still haunts the periphery of this postcard, the remediated description addresses two problematic aspects of the original description. First, it names Lamon Keone’s tribe, which challenges colonialist views of Native Americans as a homogenous group by acknowledging that he was a missionary to a different tribal community

(Waldram, 2004). Second, the remediated description refers to Lamon Keone as physically disabled without using an outdated term. I considered including "the lame man" in parenthesis next to Lamon Keone's name outside what was quoted from the postcard's original text, but decided against it. While the original postcard creator thought it important because including what appears to be a translation of Lamon Keone's name in English does not seem relevant to users nor an effective way of remembering him. The new description is an assemblage that shows the intersection between religious organizations, Native American tribes, and disability while still being readable for contemporary users.

Describing the Barely Visible: W. E. Tomlison Collection

W. E. Tomlison Photograph Collection includes black and white photographs of Lawton, Oklahoma from 1878 to 1902. The first photograph in the collection, Image #1 (Figure C) was a top priority for remediation. In the black and white photograph is a busy street with various activities in the foreground and background. Along the left side of the photograph is a line of men dressed in suits and wearing hats looking down towards the center of the photograph. On the right side is another line of men looking at the camera. The two lines of men make an aisle that goes directly from the center of the photograph towards the back where several large carts appear to be headed toward the "Feed and Sale" store or market. In the middle of the photograph, which functions as the focal point for the viewer and for the men on the left-hand side, is a youngish person, possibly a boy, sitting in a crouched position. He is holding a photograph in his right hand. The lower half of his left arm is shorter than his right and he does not appear to have a left hand. In the finding aid, the description of the photograph is: "Main Street in Lawton. A group of men looking at a deformed boy. Negative enclosed." The photograph has other descriptions on the photograph sleeve and on the back. On the photograph sleeve, the description

says: “Main Street in Lawton, Oklahoma. ca. 1902. Men lined up in the street, boy squatting and holding a photograph.” The back of the photograph has an identification label (Figure D), which includes the description: “Main Street in Lawton, Oklahoma” and has classification headings: “Cities and Towns,” “Clothing and Dress,” and “Cripples.” While the main details on the photograph sleeve and the description in the finding aid are similar, they differ on the date and how they describe the men and boy.

Image #1 in Tomlison is full of ghosts. While the description is arguably an accurate representation of the physical contents of the photograph, it does not provide much else. There are many unanswered questions, such as what is the purpose of this photograph? Were the men of any particular importance to each other or the boy, or was everyone strangers? Why are the men surrounding the boy and/or looking at him? Are the men meant to be threatening or amused by the boy or did the photographer just like the arrangement? Based on the way the men are standing, I assume the photograph is staged; however, I have no way of verifying this assumption. There is no context for this photograph, and no information about the photographer or his subjects.

The difficulty in redescribing photographs is the lack of context that is key to understanding how and why a photograph was taken and who participated in its creation. Sometimes, archivists are lucky and the photographer or collector note who was in the photograph and what it was for in their own descriptions before donating the images to the archive, such as Jolicoeur’s (2022a, 2022b) experience when she remediated descriptions of Charles Eisenmann photographs. However, WHC has inconsistent and often missing information for photograph collections. Occasionally, a collection creator or the photographer provides

descriptions of their items, but even those descriptions can fail to include information such as subject names, locations, and dates.

Remediating the description for W. E. Tomlison Image #1 required a "meeting archival materials where they are at" (Brilmyer, 2020b, p. 3) and a "Something Else but Still the Same" (Mandell, 2017, para. 3) approach. While I wanted to add names, they were unavailable. I wanted to add more information about the boy and his physical disability, but I do not have any viable information that would lead me down another haunted path. Instead, I am stuck with a plethora of phantoms who will remain nameless and continue haunting the periphery. The remediated description is:

> A boy with a physical disability is holding a photograph while crouching in the center of a group of men dressed in suits on Main Street in Lawton, Oklahoma. A "Feed and Sale" banner is in the background. Black and white photograph. circa 1902.

The remediated description is a translation of the photograph and the descriptions on the finding aid and photo sleeve. I used people-first language and the general term "physical disability" because the boy's arm is not completely in view and it is unclear how his disability fits into the narrative of this photograph. In the remediated description, the boy is the focal point, which reflects the structure of the photograph. Placing the boy first in the description also shifts the dynamics of the photograph. Instead of the men looking, turning the boy into a passive object, the boy is performing the action: holding a photograph and crouching. The men still operate as silent observers, but their part is now relegated to the middle ground in the description, similar to the arrangement in the photograph. Rather than create an assemblage, the new description is a

translation that "attempts to capture the essence or spirit" (Cline, 2022, p. 131) of the photograph.

Elizabeth Rosenthal Collection and the Missing Ghosts

I return to the first photograph mentioned in this thesis and the ghost that will haunt me for at least the next ten years, if not longer—Elizabeth Rosenthal Photograph Collection Image #290. The black and white photograph is of a lone cabin or shack, depending on your take on the small structure in what appears to be the middle of nowhere (Figure A). There is only a dog in the photograph, although there are a few shadows that suggest that the cabin is not the only structure. The finding aid description and the description on the back of the photograph is: "Sept-Oct. 1933. Rebuilt by Indian family after disastrous flood. Logs moved from creek bottom to higher ground. No assistance from US Indian Department or other agencies. Family of 8—Father crippled." The family, of course, is not in the photograph.

In addition to the photograph collection, Rosenthal has a corresponding manuscript collection. Elizabeth Clark Rosenthal was an anthropologist and worked as an Indian Advocate. Her manuscript collection includes both her parents, who were missionaries, and her research materials on Indians of the Southwest, and documents related to her involvement in various organizations, such as the Intercultural Studies Group and Episcopal Church. Rosenthal's collection spans several tribes and regions in the United States. Her photograph collection includes photographs she, or her parents, took or purchased as a part of her work. Similar to other photograph collections at WHC, the photographs in Rosenthal's collection include short descriptions or use descriptions written on the back of the photograph. It is difficult to connect Image #290 to other photographs in Rosenthal's collection because the picture itself is sparse and the description does not correspond to the others around it. There is a possibility that Rosenthal's

personal papers, including her diaries, mention the events surrounding this photograph but to learn more about them would require more time and resources than I have for this remediation project.

This photograph is frustrating.

Someone, presumably Rosenthal or one of her parents, wrote the context of the photograph on the back, which is more than what was available for Tomlison Image #1, but no one documented the name of the family. While I should be thankful that the person who wrote the finding aid description included the phrase "father crippled" instead of not writing it at all, which made the photograph findable, I am vexed by the deception I experienced when I looked at the photograph the first time. I want to redescribe the photograph so the father and his family are more than a single line in a description, even if it is only a surname. I want to be able to name the father's physical disability so I can feel more confident in declaring his presence.

As much as I want to write the ghosts into their own story, I am forced to consider the insurmountable knowledge that I do not know against the miniscule pieces of information I do know. I remediate the description by "meeting archival materials where they are at" (Brilmyer, 2020b, p. 3) and translating the original description into "Something Else but Still the Same" (Manell, 2017, para. 3). The remediated description for Rosenthal #290 is another example of how when the ghosts show up it is often not as a "professional success, but as failure" (Gordon, 2008, p. 22). It is an assemblage that balances the unknown with the known, translating the visual object and the non-existing family into useable text, but failing to translate the ghosts. It is:

> Black and white photograph of a Native American (tribe unspecified) family's home that was rebuilt on higher ground after a flood sometime between

> September and October, 1933. The family (not pictured) included 8 members; the father had a physical disability. Writing on the back of the photograph says: "Sept-Oct. 1933. Rebuilt by Indian family after disastrous flood. Logs moved from creek bottom to higher ground. No assistance from US Indian Department or other agencies. Family of 8—Father crippled."

The new description illustrates the "Something Else but Still the Same" (Mandell, 2017, para. 3) aspect of translating archival descriptions. It retains the details in the original description but gives additional context by declaring what is not known about the photograph through the use of parentheticals. A user will not necessarily learn more about the family or the father's disability, but they will at least know the basics of what the photograph is and why it was taken. Likewise, it meets the photograph "where it is at" (Brilmyer, 2020b, p. 3) and does not try to do more than is possible with the limited information that is available. It is both a success and a failure. I remediated the problematic word but did not create an appropriate assemblage that shows how this photograph fits into Native American and disability histories. I am not sure I even translated the ghosts appropriately. I am left at the end of this process asking: was this thesis really a ghost story or was it masquerading as one?

The Incomplete and Messiness of Remediating Archives

Each remediated description in this thesis is only a partial assemblage that functions to direct potential users to the ghosts that haunt WHC. The ghost stories of white supremacy were told first because their presence is important for understanding why the ghosts that haunt other collections that do not have overt white supremacist specters are difficult to identify and obscured from view. Ignoring or not prioritizing the specters of white supremacy and eugenics when telling ghost stories means writing an incomplete narrative that fails to acknowledge why

an historically marginalized ghost ended up in the periphery. I started with UARG and Marrs' collections to show how OU, as an institution, fostered ideologies of eugenics and white supremacy and then remained indifferent to their presence when identifying overtly with eugenic and white supremacist ideologies stopped being in vogue. An indifference to non-white and historically marginalized communities meant collections that featured these communities were not processed with an eye towards making the ghosts apparent in items and readily translatable in descriptions for users.

Marriott's collection illustrates the missing and fragmentary nature of collections created by researchers. The organization of her collection is not documented in a meaningful way for current or future staff or users who must navigate partial notes and transcripts to find the information and items that they seek. Now, it is impossible to determine the purpose of Marriott Collection, box 75, folder 11, or name the ghosts that haunt the margins. Likewise, Tomlison's photograph collection and Rosenthal's photograph collections harbor ghosts that are unidentifiable now. The photographer, collector, and later archivist did not include names of subjects in Tomlison Image #1 and Rosenthal Image #290, and Rosenthal did not provide the location for photograph #290. As a result, the ghosts captured in the photographs cannot be named. Even when the people in photographs are identifiable, such as Lamon Keone in image #432 in the Clough Collection, they remain ghosts because vital information and aspects about their life that would allow an archivist to create new, complex descriptions about them are missing. Unfortunately, the remediation work happening at WHC, and most likely at other archives, is occurring too late. I, and other archivists, will have to make do and meet the "archival materials where they are at" (Brilmyer, 2022, p. 3) while translating old descriptions into "Something Else but Still the Same" (Mandell, 2017, para. 3).

Chapter Four: Discussion and Conclusion

The End of a Ghost Story

This ghost story centered on the question: How do archivists describe (name) ethically? I am not sure I provide a satisfactory answer to the question because the remediated descriptions in this thesis never come close to naming or describing the disabled subject in the record. The first descriptions I remediated were not concerned with the marginalized ghosts, but the specters of eugenics and white supremacy. UARG and Marrs collections all hide, sometimes in plain sight, ableist and white supremacist ideologies that marginalized disabled subjects and ousted them to the periphery of history. The new remediated descriptions call attention to the eugenics and white supremacist specters' presence but cannot articulate the ghosts who exist beyond the contents of the folder. While the specters of oppressive systems should be named clearly and appropriately, the ethical conundrum of identifying those phantoms are not the same as the historically marginalized apparitions in the periphery. Naming an historically marginalized ghost requires an ethical understanding of their position within the fringes of an archive and an openness to their existence. It takes a framework of witnessing (Laub, 1992), radical empathy (Caswell & Cifor, 2016), a methodology of haunting (Gordon, 2008), and awareness of the messiness and incompleteness of archives (Brilmyer, 2022) to see the ghosts, hear their call, and ultimately do *something*. Even if that *something* is to acknowledge that they are lost and forgotten in the present.

Remediating descriptions that misrepresent or ignore the presence of ghosts are not always successful. At WHC, remediation work often occurs too late, after the collector and the subjects of their collection are gone. The Marriott, Clough, Tomlison, and Rosenthal collections are all missing vital pieces of information that would result in a meaningful repositioning of the

ghosts that haunt their collections. For example, Marriott's research notes are organized following a system that was not articulated for later users by Marriott or the original processing archivist. Clough's postcard is traceable, but the time I would need to track down more information about Lamon Keone, if it exists, exceeds what I or any other archivist can reasonably do for a remediation project that must be balanced in relation to other archival responsibilities. Additionally, the information needed to effectively remediate the photographs in the Tomlison and Rosenthal collections, to make the ghosts visible, is long gone. The remediated descriptions provided in this thesis are translations, but they are not translations of ghosts. Instead, they are a redescribing of what was already there in the original description and the photograph while acknowledging briefly the lost, covered over, and unseen. The remediated descriptions may prove to be more useful for users (at least I hope they are more useful), but they raise the question—what is the purpose of telling a ghost story if the final product is not much different than the original?

In my opinion, Gordon (2008) provides a succinct answer to this question, stating: "because ultimately haunting is about how to transform a shadow of life into an undiminished life whose shadows touch softly in the spirit of a peaceful reconciliation" (p. 208). Writing ghost stories, or remediating descriptions, might not be successful in the archive but that does not mean the project itself is not worth undertaking. To write a ghost story is to make amends for past harms and attempt to correct misrepresentations of disabled subjects whose existence in the margins of history borders on criminal. Regardless of the success of a remediated description to decolonize, decentralize, and democratize the archive, the project in and of itself is the transformation of "a shadow" into an act of "reconciliation" (Gordon, 2008, p. 208). Furthermore, descriptions are only one of the many ways archivists can deconstruct the power of

the archive. Users, both in the present and the future, bring knowledge to the materials they work with in the archive. They "activate" records (Tai et al., 2019) and tell stories that include, or sometimes exclude, ghosts in order to construct a history that has meaning for the present and future. For they can write "a history of the present" that stretches "toward the horizon of what cannot be seen with ordinary clarity yet" (Gordon, 2008, p. 195).

While archivists are the first to create the meaning of a record, I do not think the meaning rests solely within the archivist's hands. Particularly now, as more finding aids and records are digitized, more users are encountering records outside the reading rooms of archives. For better or worse, the hierarchical structure and authority of finding aids is crumbling. Newer models, such as the ICA's (2021) RiC-CM are reconceptualizing descriptive practice in the face of decentralized accessibility to archive-generated documents and digitized or digital-born records. Of course, archivists influence how an item is found and the initial contact between a user and record through web interfaces. But perhaps, instead of conceptualizing reparative descriptive work as the only method by which archivists lead ghosts away from the margins, even if only slightly, archivists might consider it as a possible way to connect with users who may be able to activate the record in a way that archivists cannot due to the limits of their knowledge. Several archives are using community created metadata for describing records, such as the Plateau People's Web Portal. It might be worth considering in conjunction with time, resources, and staffing the possibility of opening up the remediation process to the community as well.

Lessons and Challenges

The theoretical tools I utilized in this thesis helped me establish a framework for remediating descriptions. Conceptualizing descriptions as assemblages (Brilmyer, 2018; Delueze & Guattari, 1987; Nail, 2017) was useful for constructing descriptions that reflected complex

relationships. Lucille Clough Photograph #432, in particular, reflects an assemblage that illustrates the relationships between Lamon Keone and the church, the Navajo tribe, and his own disability. Similarly, UARG and Marrs' collection descriptions are assemblages that highlight the way institutions and ideologies interact with the historical disabled subject as an idea and not a person. Working with Marriott's collection required engaging in witnessing and radical empathy in a way that I had not experienced when working on the other remediated descriptions. While the remediated description for Marriott does not fully engage with the systems that silenced the ghosts, as it is hard to tell how the ghosts are silenced in her personal notes, it does acknowledge the complexities of historical disabled subjects and gender minority subjects as being "the raw material" for someone else's entry "into the historical record" (Newman, 2022, para. 8).

Remediating Rosenthal and Tomlison's photographs, however, led me down the path towards a new way of seeing. As I struggled to piece together an assemblage for both remediated descriptions, I kept encountering the similar but different lost and missing contexts of the photographs. What ended up being the most helpful in terms of translating the items were the axioms I adopted: "meeting the archival materials where they are at" (Brilmyer, 2022, p. 3) and "Something Else but Still the Same" (Mandell, 2017, para. 3). Navigating the unknowable is difficult and felt even more complicated as I was trying to articulate what was not known in a remediated description that would be both useful and ethical. The ghosts remain in these photographs, and other items at WHC, but they were at least acknowledged in the remediated descriptions.

The insurmountable challenge of the reparative descriptive process at WHC was time. Time between when the item was created and later described, time from when the item was first added to WHC to the remediation process, and time for doing remediation work in general all

conspired together and made the process of remediating descriptions difficult. Aside from Lucille Clough Photograph #432, researching each item took hours and often did not result in any notable findings that influenced how I rewrote the description. Throughout the process of researching and writing the remediated descriptions, I felt frustrated and lost. I consulted a friend of friend who researched Native American tribes about Rosenthal's photograph in the hopes that they might have or know something. They were as stumped as I was when looking at the photograph and description. I asked my supervisor at WHC about the documents and the administrative paperwork, such as accession records and donor correspondence, for most of the collections but those inquiries only resulted in exasperated sighs. Unfortunately, the challenges I faced in this thesis were not complicated nor varied but consisted of not being able to find or identify someone in the record and then having to decide whether the ghostly presence was enough to include them in a remediated description or to further obscure the ghost in the margins of history. Thus, many of the remediated descriptions became "Something Else but Still the Same" (Mandell, 2017, para. 3).

Recommendations for Ghost Hunting

The recommendations I provide in this section are primarily for WHC. WHC, and OU libraries in general, are working on other large reparative projects and are still in the process of establishing a guiding framework for remediating descriptions. For archives at the beginning of reparative descriptive work, I strongly encourage establishing ethical or guiding principles to ensure the remediation process follows the same framework. These can be similar to the principles developed by Yale (n.d.), and National Archives and Records Administration (2022), or, designed to align with the institutions' own strategic plan and values.

One of the struggles of remediating descriptions at WHC was the interchangeability of the item's description and the title field on ArchivesSpace. While several of the remediated descriptions are long, they still lack relevant information for users, especially ones using search engines. Rather than rely solely on the title field in ArchivesSpace for descriptions, I suggest WHC staff investigate and use other descriptive features if available in order to include more information for item level descriptions online. Using other fields would reduce the length of the title in the title field, which can be cumbersome to read even on desktops, and allow for the addition of other relevant information that is not necessarily relevant in the title, such as content warnings. Additionally, WHC should include scope and content notes and biographical information for all collections. While many of the manuscript finding aids include scope and content notes as well as biographical information, the photographs collections do not always have scope and content notes and none have biographical information that may be useful for users. Providing scope, content, and biographical information is helpful, especially for photographs, because they can provide more relevant information about the item's context or lack thereof.

Lastly, WHC should establish workflows and create a written protocol for remediation. Originally, I planned to create some type of working document that WHC staff could use in the future. However, as I remediated the terms and navigated ArchivesSpace, I realized that this project should be a group effort between the metadata archivists, processing archivists, catalogers, and WHC staff as it will take a village to determine what will be an effective method for remediation at WHC. Without a dedicated person or team, remediation work will always fall on the shoulders of multiple people. Thus, working together to determine the best course of action is far better than a graduate student attempting to write a guide for someone who has been

working in archives for ten or more years. I acknowledge that this is a copout for my thesis, and a broken promise, but my experiences remediating items across seven collections has demonstrated that time, skills and insight from other departments are needed to effectively update descriptions.

An Ending and A Beginning

I end where I began, unprepared for the process of writing a ghost story and frustrated by the ghosts' presence. How to end is difficult because the process of remediation is never finished. Even now, in my mind's eye I can see alterations I should make to the remediated descriptions I included in this thesis, the tiny adjustments to make a ghost more visible or a small tweak of language to make a eugenic specter more noticeable. The process never ends and yet it has to end at some point, otherwise users will be left with inadequate descriptions and items will remain improperly translated. While I wanted to remediate descriptions that brought out the ghosts and named them, I had to settle and use what I had in the already existing descriptions and the record itself to create an assemblage that at least used more appropriate terms. I hope this thesis is useful for archivists doing reparative description work, or even a few scholars in related fields. At the very least, I hope this thesis was a steppingstone towards a better way of thinking about and describing the disabled subject in the archive. Whether this thesis impacts the field in any meaningful way or disappears into the ether of OU's repository is difficult to say. However, I would like to think at least one person will see something, hear something, and do *something*. That at least one ghost somewhere will be seen and their call heard. We, both archivists and users, need as many ways of seeing, of being curious, and of writing as possible in order to fully reconcile the trauma of the past that still haunts the archive while creating a brighter future.

I return to a quote from Gordon (2008), whose work with ghosts was instrumental for me as I reconciled the challenges and failures of the remediated descriptions I created for this thesis. She ends her work on ghosts, stating:

> Because ultimately haunting is about how to transform a shadow of life into an undiminished life whose shadows touch softly in the spirit of a peaceful reconciliation. In this necessarily collective undertaking, the end, which is not an ending at all, belongs to everyone (p. 208).

And, this is where I will end too.

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Appendix A

Figures

Figure A: Elizabeth Rosenthal Photograph Collection, Image #290



Figure B: Lucille Clough Photograph Collection Image, #432

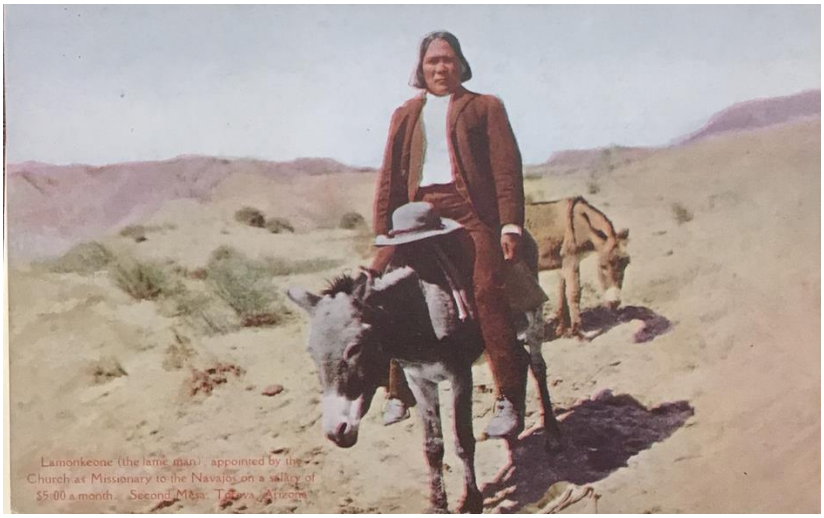
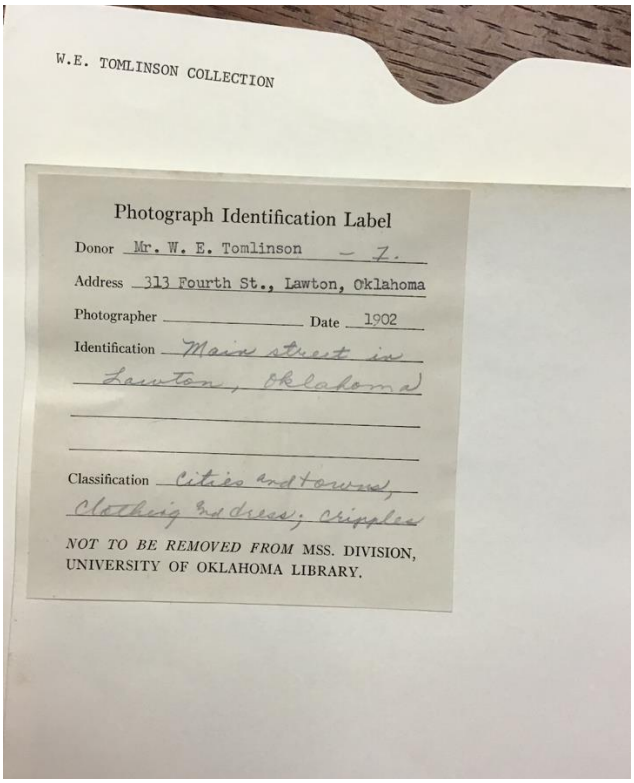


Figure C: W. E. Tomlison Collection, Image #1



Figure D: W. E. Tomlison Collection, Image #1 (Reserved)



Appendix B

Descriptions

Collection	Box	Folder	Image #	Original Description	Remediated Description
UARG 45 Continuing Education	2	3		Mentally Retarded Child, 1960	Two booklets titled, *A Guide for Teachers of Educable Mentally Handicapped Children,* written for teachers on educating children with intellectual disabilities at the intermediate and secondary level. Published in 1960.
UARG 03/01/08 Cross	431	69		Physically Handicapped or Disabled Students.	Memo Directing Faculty to Student Health Services for Accommodating Students with Disabilities. Sent to departments 1966, October 3.
James Wyatt Marrs Manuscript Collection	31	5		Typed Manuscripts on Mental Deficiency. 1929-1932.	Typed Manuscripts and notes on eugenics and eugenic views of disabilities, 1929-1932. The typed manuscripts represent harmful views of disabled people and use harmful and outdated language in titles.
James Wyatt Marrs Manuscript Collection	47	8		Research Materials on the Defective Child. 1925-1930.	Newspaper articles and a typed manuscript about the treatment of children with various disabilities, 1924-1930. The articles and manuscript include eugenic views of children with disabilities and recommended treatments and approaches to care that are outdated. Topics include teaching deaf children and children with speech impediments to speak, and treating blind children.
Alice Marriott Manuscript Collection	75	11		Transvestites: Insane: Liars: Suicide, 1934.	Marriott's collection of notes about Modoc peoples' views of gender minorities, people who lie, blind people, people with a physical or mental disability, and members of the tribe who committed suicide.

Lucille Clough Photograph Collection			432	Lamon Keone (the lame man), appointed by the Church as missionary to the Navajos on a salary of $5 a month. Second Mesa. Toreva, Arizona. Color.	Postcard from the Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society that features Lamon Keone, a Hopi missionary with the Baptist Church, on a mule. Lamon Keone was known to ride his mule because of a physical disability that limited his mobility. The writing on the postcard says: "Lamon Keone (the lame man), appointed by the Church as missionary to the Navajos on a salary of $5 a month. Second Mesa. Toreva, Arizona. Color.
W. E. Tomlison Photograph Collection	T-8		1	Main Street in Lawton. A group of men looking at a deformed boy. Negative enclosed.	A boy with a physical disability is holding a photograph while crouching in the center of a group of men dressed in suits on Main Street in Lawton, Oklahoma. A "Feed and Sale" banner is in the background. Black and white photograph. circa 1902.
Elizabeth Rosenthal Photograph Collection	R-17		290	Sept-Oct. 1933. Rebuilt by Indian family after disastrous flood. Logs moved from creek bottom to higher ground. No assistance from US Indian Department or other agencies. Family of 8—Father crippled.	Black and white photograph of a Native American (tribe unspecified) family's home that was rebuilt on higher ground after a flood sometime between September and October, 1933. The family (not pictured) included 8 members; the father had a physical disability. Writing on the back of the photograph says: "Sept-Oct. 1933. Rebuilt by Indian family after disastrous flood. Logs moved from creek bottom to higher ground. No assistance from US Indian Department or other agencies. Family of 8—Father crippled."