

Extended Research Journal Entry Three

On Thursday, I was in a group studying then-Alabama governor George Wallace's second visit to Dartmouth College. The incident that occurred in 1967 is now referred to as 'The Wallace Incident' because of the aftermath that occurred. A brief description of the incident is as follows. George Wallace, a pro-segregation governor of Alabama, visited Dartmouth for the first time in 1963. Though most of the campus received him well, a few students and faculty members orderly protested by picketing and wearing black armbands. When Wallace visited Dartmouth for the second time in 1967, he wasn't as welcomed as earlier. Numerous students, faculty, and Upper Valley residents protested in different forms, such as boycotting, picketing, heckling, and walking out during Wallace's speech. Protestors who walked out of Webster Hall rushed back in, which prompted Alabama State Troopers to rush Wallace off stage and into his car. Protestors then proceeded to surround the car, with some even pounding the roof and rocking the car back and forth. Wallace was able to leave 15 minutes later with the help of the police, and this incident made headlines in local and national news (Thomas).

In class, we had the opportunity to interact with archival material related to this incident. I felt powerful when holding the papers documenting The Wallace Incident and the numerous correspondences the administration had with George Wallace after the event. I could not believe that I was holding a piece of history in my hands. I could gauge a student's (or at least the author's) perspective of The Wallace Incident by reading the archived issues of The Dartmouth newspaper. In response to the event, the then-president of Dartmouth College, John Sloan Dickey, said, "Last night, we saw the worst of Dartmouth." (Seymour). Archived correspondences between the Dartmouth faculty and George Wallace showed me the administrative perspective and how they handled the incident. The public did not receive the incident well, and this response was evident in the college's handling and the negative tone/quotes used in the archived newspaper articles and correspondences.

Despite all this, I was surprised that none of the archived material had a quote or anything representative of a black person's response to this event despite segregation being the heart of The Wallace Incident. This exclusion of black perspectives is an ideal example of the 'conspicuous absence' that Dydia DeLyser discusses in her paper on tracing absence. She defines a conspicuous absence as an absence transformative of ideas and understanding (DeLyser 41). The exclusion of black perspectives in the media coverage greatly affected the way many members of the public perceived and understood this event. The repercussions

extend well into the future, influencing those who might use these archived materials later. We could identify this exclusion because society has become more aware of civil rights, unlike American society in the mid-twentieth century. Another piece of evidence identifying a more conservative society that did not take black perspectives into regard is the use of the word 'Negro' in The Dartmouth article covering this incident. Despite the word becoming derogatory (Jim Crow Museum), n***o was still used to describe a person of color. We can only work toward and pray that society in the future is more inclusive to people of all backgrounds. A more inclusive society would hear all voices/perspectives in response to an event and mindfully archive materials without silencing a particular group.

Another thing that stood out to me was the hegemony of archiving and history. Zeitlyn writes, "Think about the power plays affecting silences, determining which stories get told and which leave traces. Recognizing this, we can read the silences." (Zeitlyn 465). The powers in play in The Wallace Incident include white supremacy and segregation laws in the USA at the time of the incident. These powers silenced the blacks and others with anti-segregational views in this incident. When I first read the above line in Zeitlyn's paper, it reminded me of a quote I heard in middle school. My middle school history teacher said, "History is always written by the victors," when trying to highlight the history we learn is skewed and not an absolute truth. This quote compliments Zeitlyn's words to show how easy it is for the victors to impose their subjective views of events onto future generations as objective truths by claiming them historically accurate. This false narration of events silences the opposition in two ways. The first is the noninclusion of opposition perspectives when narrating events, and the second is through projections. While the victors highlight the positive aspects of their actions, they justify the negative aspects of their actions by projecting blame onto the vanquished. Some examples of this are colonialism/imperialism, the slave trade, and even World War Two, where one group took another's land/resources and justified their actions by projecting their flaws/insecurities as dehumanizations of the second group. This projection, after all, is a natural defense mechanism in humans (Costa 1), so it is hard to control/be aware of. Apart from silencing the opposition, the projections also create a skewed perception of reality for future generations through archival hegemony. While talking about archival hegemony, Zeiltyn writes, "There is no escape from archival hegemony; it is a way of thinking about memory...of repression as a type of archiving, a reversible form of forgetting." This archival hegemony ensures that the opposition's perspectives remain silent in the future and ultimately make the victor's subjective truths into absolute ones. The 'repressive', mental archiving of information causes the perspectives of the defeated to be gradually forgotten. The society initially forcibly disregards the opposition and their perspectives

by repressing memories of them. When archiving historical information later, archivists leave out materials regarding the opposition because they have forgotten about them. This silencing of opposition is problematic because it creates gaps or falsely represents knowledge that ultimately misrepresents the past. This silencing is absolute, as no information about an individual/group is present in any person's memories or archives. Zeitlyn conveys this message by saying, "...use of silences in history and making them speak, this process is not always possible." Once a group/idea has been silenced, even in the archives, it is hard for archivists to raise awareness/bring the group/idea back because they now operate in an altered reality.

Looking at The Wallace Incident, blacks/people of color and those with anti-segregational views were silenced in the media coverage by a white, conservative society. Due to their exclusion from the media, these individuals were also left out of the archives by the archivists archiving the incident. This exclusion shows the archival hegemony occurring on campus since one perspective of the incident was archived because of its importance while others were not. Morgan Swan, a Special Collections Librarian at Dartmouth, mentioned that Dartmouth is working on bringing back silenced perspectives in the archives to represent the archived events more accurately and objectively. My initial reaction to this article was curiosity about how the college handled such an event because The Wallace Incident had garnered national attention. Students who participated overtly in the protests, determined by the Judiciary Committee of the Undergraduate Council and the Faculty Committee on Administration, were conditionally suspended at the end of the term (Seymour). Since no archival records of the suspended students exist, even in the special collections, no particular student can be associated with protesting overtly in this incident. The internal handling of this event also shows us that no external records exist for the students who got suspended concerning The Wallace Incident. Similar to Hartman describing Black Venus, "No one remembered [their] name or recorded the things [they] said....[Their]s is an untimely story told by a failed witness." (Hartman 2). With no record of those who protested overtly, we now experience the altered reality of the incident. We will only know some students, instead of the particular students, who participated overtly in the protest against George Wallace and his segregational views/policies and then got suspended from Dartmouth College.

In conclusion, practicing archival research by learning about The Wallace Incident at Dartmouth College in 1967 was a memorable and insightful experience. I loved examining how contextual geographies influenced the media's portrayal of the incident while learning the contextual geography of Dartmouth and the US at that time. Now, I am more aware of the nature of the information I consume because I know the drawbacks and limitations of collecting

and archiving materials. This awareness would help me construct a more accurate representation of reality when collecting data from the field by ensuring I don't silence any voice/perspective and making my data collection methods more inclusive and as free from archival hegemonies as possible.

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