Gesa Mackenthun

Embattled Excavations

Colonial and Transcultural Constructions
of the American Deep Past

WAXMANN

Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship

Edited by
Gesa Mackenthun

Volume 11

This series seeks to stimulate fresh and critical perspectives on the interpretation of phenomena of cultural contact in both transhistorical and transdisciplinary ways. It brings together the research results of the graduate school “Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship,” located at Rostock University and sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG). One of the concerns of the volumes published in this series is to test and explore contemporary theoretical concepts and analytical tools used for the study of intercultural relations, from antiquity to the present. Aware of significant recent changes in the ways in which other cultures are represented, and “culture” as such is defined and described, the series seeks to promote a dialogical over a monological theoretical paradigm and advocates approaches to the study of cultural alterity that are conscious of the representational character of our knowledge about other cultures. It wants to strengthen a recognition of the interdependencies between the production of knowledge about unfamiliar peoples and societies in various scholarly disciplines and ideologies of nationality, empire, and globalization. In critically investigating the analytical potential of postcolonial key terms such as “hybridity,” “contact zone,” and “transculturation,” the series contributes to international scholarly debates in various fields oriented at finding more balanced and reciprocal ways of studying and writing about intercultural relations both past and present.

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Colonial and Transcultural Constructions of the American Deep Past

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To the memory of Annette Kolodny, who taught us to see the deep structures of colonial myths.

And to the memory of Amy Kaplan, who analyzed imperial mythology down to its bare bones.

Your intellectual excavations will endure.

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Acknowledgments

This book has been germinating for many years. It morphed from an investigation of the entanglements between the (proto-)science of American archaeology and empire in the nineteenth century into an unplanned deep dig into the language of Indigenous oral traditions. While starting off as an armchair investigation of the literature on ancient Mesoamerican cities – no research money was available for actually visiting those places – I ended up having to travel to Oregon to take a direct view at the landscape whose geological revolutions left such a deep impact on the historical knowledge of the Klamath and Modoc. I am deeply grateful to the tribal representatives I met for their warmhearted welcome and for allowing me a glimpse of their present concerns: while the mountains have stopped spewing fire (but may wake up again!), the tribes have to deal with the challenge of a long-distance liquid gas pipeline prospected to run through their volcanic territory. And they are still fighting the after-effects of Termination, one of the most vicious instruments that the colonial administration invented in the name of “assimilation.” I especially thank Taylor Tupper, Don and Mary Gentry, Perry Chocktoot, and Marvin Garcia of the Klamath-Modoc-Yahooskin tribes and Brent Florendo of the Wasco tribe for their hospitality and for sharing their knowledge. Chapter 4 of this book has been submitted to the tribal council for permission.

The desire to understand the role of science as a tool of empire forced me into terrains that I had hoped I would be able to avoid: news about ancient human remains discovered in America, or of previously discovered remains newly analyzed, appear almost on a monthly basis, and it was difficult to avoid being swallowed up by that current of information about mitochondrial DNA sequences, haplogroups, and the waning authority of Clovis First. I am extremely grateful to my two former research assistants, Stefan Livo and Alexander Bräuer, for doing much of that reading for me. Conversations with Michael Wilcox and Annette Kolodny, as well as reading their relevant work on this topic, convinced me that the current ancestry fad is a two-edged sword indeed: it may assist many people in finding out more about their culturally diverse ethnic background and thus defuse the seductive languages of racial exceptionalism and identity politics, but it also runs the risk of shedding the vinegar of racism into new “scientific” vessels. Serious analysis shows that our DNA does not contain any information about our “racial” heritage – “race” being a cultural invention of colonial discourse to legitimize social inequality. In a globalized world, imagined certainties about one’s “racial identity” are not the kind of information that is needed to ensure prosperity and peace. What is useful, however, is the preservation of “tribal” and

family stories to be added to well-researched historical narratives. Together, they allow us to understand our cultural and social provenance and to learn from historical examples and mistakes how best to shape the future.

As I argue in this book, the fascination with antiquity and “prehistory” more often than not disguises an anxiety about a lack of territorial legitimacy in the United States (and other settler colonies). Narrative reconstructions of ancient migrations and pre-Columbian Indigenous life in America are narrative emplotments based on a rather fragmentary empirical record. Plots like that of the ancients having caused the extinction of Pleistocene megafauna are just that, plots: Aristotle’s term for “plot” is “mythos.” In the last analysis, at issue is not the reconstruction of ancient history but attempts to legitimize and solidify existing colonial power structures relating to land ownership and ecological stewardship. The pervasive fascination with horror stories of Indigenous savagery is a symptom of settler colonial anxiety, of the tacit awareness that Indigenous land-rights and stewardship interests continue to be abused in the realms of education, cultural imagination, and legal discourse. The scientific and aesthetic preoccupation with the ruins of ancient monuments and human “ruins” arguably displaces a recognition of how an extractive economy devastates human and non-human life, in America and elsewhere. I am grateful to Ann Laura Stoler whose work on “imperial debris” is a powerful intervention into this (discursive) practice. Her work was an important inspiration for this book and will continue to inspire my future work.

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to the following institutions and individuals without whose support this book would either not exist at all or have a different shape. I thank the German Research Foundation (DFG) for financing a three year research project including one term off teaching that allowed me to write chapters 1 and 4 and to test out my results with colleagues and student groups in Germany, Sweden, and the United States; I thank the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester and the Library Company of Philadelphia for opening their stacks, vaults and archivists’ minds, and for financial support during my short-term research stays in Worcester and Philadelphia in 2005 and 2011. I thank Beate Plugge and her team at Waxmann: as so often before, it has been a pleasure working with you.

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for this project and the graduate school Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship that preceded it. I am filled with gratitude to my three wonderful British-diasporic “copy editors”: Lucy Cathrow, Claire Massey, and Heather Shay. The present section was not read by them and probably contains numerous errors. All errors remaining in – or added to – the rest of this book are my own.

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I am deeply grateful to Annette Kolodny, whose name was one of the first I encountered as an undergraduate reading *The Lay of the Land* (now a celebrated classic of ecofeminism) and who invited me to her home in 2017 to discuss our common interest in the ideological constructions of firstness. We ended up mostly discussing the crisis of education. We agreed that the Indigenous oral archive needs much more attention in the current debates about ecology and land rights. I wish she could have lived to see this book in print and to give her critical feedback. I dedicate this book to her, and to Amy Kaplan, whose cheerful and devastating critiques of imperialism will remain a continuing inspiration and whose voice I miss dearly.

Günter Lenz, colleague and friend from Frankfurt times, first taught me that one’s scholarship does not have to be compromised by one’s politics and how it can be inspired by it. Martin Christadler taught me to think outside of boxes, political ones and others. Hartmut Lutz confirmed me in deciding which box to be in in case boxes cannot altogether be avoided. I thank them for their lifelong academic and moral inspiration and for their “ancient” friendship.

CHAPTER ONE

Ruined Land. America's Foreign Past

An Introduction

The history of pre-Columbian America continues to exert fascination, both within academia and in popular cultural discourse. The history of the distant past is a notoriously seductive topic: only partially retrievable, it is an imaginary field subject to mystery and speculation. Within this general preoccupation with the distant past as one of the last foreign territories of a disenchanted modernized world, America has a fascination of its own. Until the Columbian moment, the history of the Americas had not been part of the European episteme at all. Knowledge was preserved on amate (fig bark paper), in story, stone, and song by the people inhabiting the western hemisphere, but these cultural expressions received a poor resonance within Euro-American discourse and were not accepted as coeval forms of documentation. Ignoring Indigenous forms of memory keeping was a key element in establishing colonial rule: political hegemony, after all, was not only achieved by direct control of territories, human bodies, and the social interaction between human beings, but also, significantly, by the control of human minds and communication. Early modern colonizers were well aware of this epistemic dimension and made sure that Indigenous traditions were destroyed, denounced, and interrupted. The destruction of Mexican codices by Franciscan friars, documented by the first-generation mestizo Diego Muñoz Camargo in his *Descripción de Tlaxcala* of 1585, illustrates this process (Fig. 1).

In their imperial ignorance, Europeans referred to Indigenous history as “pre-history” as it was unknown to them and preserved in archival technologies to which they lacked cognitive or ideological access. For them, American “prehistory” was profoundly strange and largely undocumented. Attempts to integrate America and its inhabitants into European historical narratives began immediately after the separate existence of the “new” continent became known to Europeans. As early as 1590, José de Acosta suggested that America's first inhabitants must have come from Asia. Today, the theory of human migration across the Bering land bridge is one among several theories of ancient settlement of the Americas. As with almost every other theory about America's ancient past, it is seriously embattled.

This book does not intend to make any propositions about when, from where and how humans first arrived in the Western Hemisphere. Rather, it seeks to disentangle – or “excavate” – some of the mythical narratives associated with these theories. While this introductory chapter sketches a contemporary framework,

Figure 1: Franciscan Friars Burning Indigenous Codices. Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala* (c. 1585).

referring to theories about American antiquity from the twentieth and twenty-first century, the bulk of the book (chapters 2 to 4) explores the changing discourse on the American deep past in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I am less interested in asserting ‘what really happened’ – assuming that our knowledge of these events will always remain uncertain and fragmentary – but rather in excavating the scientific (and less scientific) *constructions* of American antiquity (or the American deep past) and the ways in which these constructions respond to or in other ways interact with colonial and imperial designs. In other words, I am interested in what Walter Mignolo has called the “coloniality” of Western sci-

ence – in this case, the coloniality of assumptions about the early human history of America.

The theoretical framework of this book comes from an American Studies paradigm. Trained in Perry Miller's amnesiac thesis of the Puritans' "errand" into a "vacant wilderness" and in the methods introduced by American Studies scholars of the 1960s, I am also inspired by the title of Henry Nash Smith's trendsetting study *Virgin Land* (1950) which reiterates – ironically? – the language of early European colonizers like Sir Walter Raleigh, who in 1596 famously referred to Guiana as a country that "hath yet its Maidenhead." The cultural work of these colonial metaphors of vacancy and virginity, aptly analyzed by Annette Kolodny in *The Lay of the Land* (1975) – is to divert attention from the fact that America had been inhabited by humans for a very long time and was not in need of colonial defloration. This book looks at how American writers gradually began to understand for just how long America had been settled by peoples whom their society was (and still is) in the process of displacing and deporting.

A study dedicated to how colonial Americans related to the distant past of the continent seemingly runs counter to the predominant nationalist discourse of America as a country of the future, promoted by an endless list of European and American thinkers, from Hegel and Tocqueville to Kojève and Fukuyama. But antebellum temporalities, as John Hay argues, were more complex than suggested by this nationalist narrative. We are rather dealing with a "complex plurality of national narratives American antebellum authors adopted to historicize their own moment in time" (4), a "richly diverse" temporality that was experienced "in multiple overlapping forms" (6). This results from the uneasy coexistence of religiously inspired apocalyptic narratives of destruction and new beginnings with secular narratives – the Enlightenment's stadialist story of progress and its dark romantic companion, the narrative of impending destruction and the end of mankind.¹ The optimistic nationalist master narrative viewing America as the fulfillment of Enlightenment ideals, it is argued here, is concurrent with a nagging fascination with the shrouded distant past – a fascination aggravated by the challenge that geological knowledge continues to pose to the authority of biblical chronology and consequently to any historical narrative rooted in that time count. In spite of Charles Brockden Brown's, Ralph Waldo Emerson's, and other early republicans' calls to exorcize the ghosts of the European past and to shape American society in the name of enlightened values and Nature's God, United States culture has made profound investments into inventing itself as a nation with a deep historical past reaching back to a time well before the beginnings of Mediterranean antiquity. This desire seems to grow even as racial capitalism takes root in the most private realm. Ancestry DNA tests have developed into something more than a fad, replacing collective and individual identity narratives

1 Thomas Cole's magnificent painting cycle "The Course of Empire" (1833-36) is a good example of this romantic critique of national-imperial celebrations of civilizational progress.

with their 'scientific' but hardly more reliable constructions of geographical and racial origins (Kahn). New archaeological discoveries of ever older evidence of human occupation regularly fill the pages of scientific magazines and websites, while the Hollywood dream machine never seems to tire in its effort to enlarge the visual repertoire of fantasies about ghostly and cannibalistic predecessors of today's Native Americans.

This book offers, in exemplary form, a critical analysis of the ideological uses of imaginative representations of pre-Columbian cultures, populations, and monuments in U.S. texts between the nineteenth century and the present. It discusses the construction of American "prehistory," or antiquity, in the context of nineteenth-century imperial expansion and the nationalistic absorption of foreign cultural heritage; in the context of the discovery of geological time that gave rise to a conspicuous anxiety about antiquity more generally and American antiquity more particularly; and in the context of transcultural story-making in the Cascadian mountains of the Pacific Northwest between the 1870s and 1950s. As will be seen throughout this timeframe, Indigenous and transcultural narratives about America's distant past at times converge and at other times compete with imperial and savagist discourses deployed in both popular and academic texts about America's ancient populations.

Discourses about antiquity, in America and elsewhere, are ubiquitous in the contemporary cultural imagination. At a time when the world faces some of its greatest geological and anthropocentric challenges – marked by melting ice, rising sea levels, increased occurrence of droughts and storms, and the saturation of the planet with microplastics – we can observe a renewed interest in ancient times when a 'natural wilderness' still existed and when mankind began spreading throughout the earth. In the context of anthropogenic climate change and the impending catastrophic loss of biodiversity, renewed attention is given to mankind's early days on Earth when *homo sapiens* first began to settle the planet, but also to the beginnings of the modern period when Europe began its two-edged project of exporting its moral value system while fatally producing the greatest ecological catastrophe the earth has ever seen. Books and discovery channel documentaries promising to reveal – as in a deathbed confession – the whole history of mankind in one volume occupy special sections in real and virtual bookstores while the visual media, professional and homemade, rival each other in imagining and picturing stone age people and extinct megafauna.

Pleistocene Mist: DNA Mysteries

While the overall history of the spread of *homo sapiens* from its African origins around the globe is known, the time and route of humans' arrival in the Americas remains half-hidden in Pleistocene mist. The Clovis First consensus of the twentieth century assumed a crossing of the Bering land bridge not much earlier than

13,000 years ago, matching up with the carbon datings of the Folsom site. With the onset of more refined dating methods, the time of human arrival continues to recede further into the past (Becerra-Valdivia and Higham; Gruhn).

Back in 1996, however, the discovery of a 9,000 year old human skeleton on the banks of the Columbia River in Washington State created a stir. Discussion of the age of the skeleton of “Kennewick Man,” or the Ancient One (as the skeleton is called by the neighboring tribes), mingled with discussions of his ‘race’: the Ancient One’s skull had initially been identified as “caucasoid.” It took twenty-five years to settle that latter point. In July 2015, a group of Danish experts in Ancient DNA analysis around the archaeologist Morten Rasmussen and evolutionary geneticist Eske Willerslev determined that the closest genetic match to the genome sequence discovered in the bones of the Ancient One was the sample provided by members of the Colville tribe that live in the area of the skeleton’s discovery (Rasmussen). In 2017, after a twenty-year legal wrangle over the skeleton’s rightful ownership, it was finally repatriated to the Umatilla, Colville, and other tribes and ritually buried in an unknown place. The return of the bones to the tribes in fulfillment of the protocol defined by the Native American Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, released 1990) was the final act in a twenty year drama that epitomized the century-old “skull wars” (Thomas) between colonial scientists and Native Americans. The Indians finally prevailed over the attempt of eight non-Indian scientists trying to gain extended access to the bones by filing a legal claim against the United States (whose District Corps of Engineers was keeping the bones under lock and key). The scientists argued that preventing them from working on the skeleton was a violation of their First Amendment right to study and work with an object of scientific and aesthetic interest (Downey 48). In addition to their appeal to the Bill of Rights, the “Bonnichsen Eight” – all white, male and roughly of the same academic generation, having graduated in the late sixties and early seventies (Downey 51) – insisted on the remains’ lacking resemblance with the physical features of the Native Americans now inhabiting the area. By this strategy they sought to prevent the tribes from gaining access to the skeleton under NAGPRA (Downey 58). Their argument relied on the initial analysis of the skeleton, and especially the skull, by the first archaeologist working on the remains, James C. Chatters, who had insisted that the skull shape was “caucasoid.” The media had quickly turned this into the racial denomination “caucasian,” thereby suggesting a European ancestry. The Seattle journalist Roger Downey who wrote a book on the Kennewick case wonders that “it’s more than a little puzzling that the Department of Justice lawyers arguing for the defense failed to introduce countervailing evidence of any kind to put the assertion in the plaintiffs’ affidavits in context” (58). The “context” was that the eight professors rested their claim on the extraordinary assumption that “Kennewick Man”’s racial provenance was Eurasian rather than Native American or even Mongolian, a claim that fired old and new hypotheses about ancient migrations from Europe to the Americas that may have preceded the migrations of the ancestors of today’s

Indigenous inhabitants anywhere between 15,000 and 20,000 years ago. Downey points out that the term “caucasoid” was “politically inflammatory” and was simply not employed by responsible scientists anymore (59). He concludes from the scientists’ use of such antiquated racialized language that their motives may have been less committed to scientific truth than they claimed and that Chatters’s theory about “Kennewick Man”’s descent may at best have been an “exquisitely calculated provocation, a sophisticated political maneuver masquerading as cool scientific method” (60).

At worst, the “Caucasoid” claim brought grist to the mill of scientific racism. Indeed, while discussions about “alternative facts” and fake science fill the pages of cultural and academic magazines and websites, the archaeologists’ reconstructions of “Kennewick Man”’s head give some support to Downey’s suspicion. A first “caucasoid” reconstruction was followed by a second one in 2001 that was explicitly inspired by the face of Patrick Stewart (acting as Jean-Luc Picard in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) (Figs. 2 and 3). In 2006, Douglas Owsley and Richard Jantz commissioned another reconstruction that likened the face of the ancient skull to faces of Japanese Ainu which the scientists found on 100 year old photos (Figs. 4 and 5). The images of a bearded man, by which the authors are seeking to promote an ethnic origin with the Ainu/Jōmon peoples of Japan, are the ones now most frequently found in connection with “Kennewick Man.” Indeed, this skull reconstruction is the only context in which the Ainu photo appears in the internet. Cleverly exploiting contemporary culture’s obsession with visual representations and extravagant theories of stone age migrations, Owsley and Jantz wrote a glossy coffee table book in which they invent the story both of “Kennewick Man” himself and the archaeological thriller which his discovery caused. The book’s intention is clearly to suggest an ancient transpacific migration by people not genetically related to today’s Native Americans. To connoisseurs of historical racial myth, “Kennewick Man”’s identification as “Ainu” evokes the old racist theory of the “Aryan” origins of the Ainu/Jōmon peoples of Japan – which readers are now free to translate to one group of America’s early inhabitants in the desire to make them seem ethnically distinct from today’s Indigenous groups. Owsley and Jantz also establish a connection to another skeleton from the same period, the “Spirit Cave Mummy” of Nevada, with groups they call “European” and “Norse” (Jantz and Owsley 79).² With the ancient bones being made

2 Owsley and Jantz had been suggesting this link since 1997. In line with the craniologically established “Ainu” “evidence,” Owsley and Jantz received prominent support from Douglas Preston, the popular author of archaeological crime and horror novels, who wrote a long home story about the archaeologists, their find, and their book for the website of the Smithsonian Institution popularizing their ideas. Based on the accepted historical view that the Ainu were related to the “Jōmon culture” that had first arisen in Japan “at least 12,000 years ago and perhaps as early as 16,000 years ago, when the landmasses were still connected to the mainland,” Preston suggests: “The discovery of Kennewick Man adds a major piece of evidence to an alternative view of the peopling of North America. It, along with other evidence, suggests that the Jōmon or related peoples were the original settlers of the New World. If correct, the conclusion upends the traditional view that the first Americans

Figure 2: Cover of James Chatters's book (2001).

Figure 3: James Chatters's Reconstruction of the skull of "Kennewick Man" (2001).

available, previous to the final Ancient DNA analysis, for extravagant racialized readings inspired by associations with voluntaristically produced images (from baldheaded Picard to hairy Ainu), it is little surprising that access to the Kennewick skeleton was also demanded by a third group of claimants, the Asatru Folk Assembly, claiming that the skeleton actually belonged to one of *their* ancestors, not to an ancestor of modern Native Americans (Tsosie 590). The Asatru are a

came through central Asia and walked across the Bering Land Bridge and down through an ice-free corridor into North America." As Powell and Rose have pointed out, the Ainu form the historical link to the "Caucasoid" thesis: "If the Ainu are considered to be 'Caucasoids,' as they were first described in 19th-century anthropological literature, this might explain reports of 'Caucasoid' features in the Kennewick skull." The reference is to literature that regards the Ainu and Jōmon as descendants of the "race" called Aryans. The evocation of Kennewick Man's possible Ainu identity invites fanciful "alternative" historical speculation. The move from a Caucasian skull to an Ainu photo brings to mind the early twentieth-century theory, popularized by racist thinkers like Houston Stuart Chamberlain, which regarded the Ainu as an "Aryan" (i.e. Nordic) race that had invaded Asia many thousands of years ago. This piece of population science was an integral part of a good national socialist education in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s (personal information). Today's fringe science websites are more moderate in their terminology, pointing out the Ainu's "Caucasian" features and surmising whether they were a "lost caucasian race." See, e.g. <https://mysteriousuniverse.org/2015/06/the-mysterious-ainu-of-japan/>. On the linguistic Ainu-Aryan debate, see Refsing.

Figure 4: Reconstruction of the head of “Kennewick Man” in 2006. Brittney Tatchell.

Figure 5: Photo of a Japanese Ainu that served as inspiration for the reconstruction of “Kennewick Man” in 2006.

neo-paganist organization claiming a direct connection to pre-Christian cultures originating in Europe. On their website they state:

We may refer to ourselves as Americans or English, Germans or Canadians, but behind these labels lurks an older, more essential identity. Our forefathers were Angles and Saxons, Lombards and Heruli, Goths and Vikings – and, as sons and daughters of these peoples, we are united by ties of blood and culture undimmed by the centuries (Asatru Folk Assembly).

These adventurous speculations, “undimmed” by any consideration that the ancient man may have been the ancestor of the Colville, Haida, or Kwakiutl, are a perfect illustration of how a very fragmentary empirical situation may produce fanciful migration theories with disturbing connections to rightwing racial identity narratives. The “Kennewick Man” case impressively demonstrates some Americans’ deep uncertainty about their historical roots, mixed with a desire for full political legitimacy in response to decolonial demands for recognition, restitution, and political participation.³

What these random quotations from fringe science show is that discoveries of ancient human remains in America are inadvertently implicated in a discourse about racial migrations expressed in the modern scientific language of haplogroup distribution but ringing with ideas about racial purity and heredity. In the case of the Ancient One, the spectacle ended in October 2015, when the Danish Ancient DNA expert Eske Willerslev revealed the result of his analysis of the remains of the skeleton. In July of the same year, he also analyzed the “Spirit Cave Mummy” to find his earlier diagnosis confirmed: the mummy was, like the Ancient One,

3 See Heather Burke et al., *Kennewick Man*, for a polyvocal set of responses on the topic.

genetically most related to the tribe claiming repatriation of the bones (the Paiute-Shoshone) (Callaway).

These revisions suggest that with the rise of the new technology of Ancient DNA analysis, the residual racialism of one part of modern archaeological anthropology, which constantly plays with the idea that the American continent may have been peopled not by biological ancestors of today's Native Americans but by radically different people with racial links to Europe, can finally be put to rest. As anthropologist Michael Wilcox writes, DNA analyses are culturally empty: they reflect at best "new biofictional lineages" (Wilcox, "Colonizing" 126); they do not tell us anything about the "racial" or ethnic composition of humans nor are they historical measuring rods. Observing, with worry, that many narratives of the peopling of the Americas, especially in the scientifically uncontrolled media zone of fringe science, are still saturated with latent racist assumptions, Wilcox explains that "the geneticist controls the means, methods, and modes of racial authenticity, supported by an older scientific logic of research inherited from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century kinship anthropology" (126; see also TallBear; Tsosie/McGregor). Vine Deloria, Jr. puts the case succinctly:

We are living in a strange kind of dark ages where we have immense capability to bring together information but when we gather this data, we pigeonhole it in the old familiar framework of interpretation, sometimes even torturing the data to make it fit. (*Red Earth* 211)

Modern readings shedding the old wine of race science into the new bottles of DNA method exhibit what Jodi Byrd has called "blood logics" (*Transit* XXIII). Biologically fixed constructions of the human past and present rest on the belief that, as David Lowenthal writes, "we attribute what we are to *being*, which cannot be changed, rather than to *doing*, which can" (*Heritage Crusades* 196). "'Infallible' DNA tests," Lowenthal warns as the technology began entering the field of archaeology, "echo the magical power of sacred relics" while the "cult of genes, like that of blood, is overwhelmingly deterministic" (204, 206).

American craniology's obsession with the racial identity of contemporary Native Americans, as well as with establishing a disjunction between modern Indigenous Americans and Paleo-Indians, ignores the fact of historical change and population mixture. Thomas Dillehay, whose excavation of 18,500 year old human remains in the early 1980s at Monte Verde, Chile, revolutionized the archaeological chronology, summarizes the archaeological record thus:

Human evolution has been a continuous cycle of dispersals and migrations. Over millions of years, groups continually branched off, some moving on while others settled. The existence of many different cultures in the world today is witness to this history of human migration The diversity of the early archaeological, genetic, linguistic, and skeletal record suggests a shared American identity rooted in multiple migrations and ... no true categories of race or ethnicity. (*Settlement* 293).

Dillehay's account contradicts any essentialist notions of cultural purity or 'ethnopluralism' (i.e. the ideology that ethnic entities do or should exist in purity apart from one another). It is confirmed by more recent DNA-based narratives on ancient human remains in the Americas, whose many pages, filled with impressive scientific guesswork and numerical data, ultimately confirm what we knew all along: that all humans are related to one another, that they (i.e. *we*) once emerged from Africa and then spread in different directions, their genetic setup changing as they did. This is not precisely a new discovery since the scientific rejection of polygenism and the concurrent emergence of the "out of Africa" thesis some 150 years ago. The intensity with which DNA-based ancestry detection is currently conducted is symptomatic of a larger problem: a pervasive crisis of individual and collective identity, growing from the theoretical deconstruction of essentialist assertions of ethnic groups and the social hierarchies based on such essentialist notions. More specifically, the *querelle* about ancient American bones is a symptom of a categorically weak conceptualization of identity that has been gaining new traction in recent years: identity as inherited and inevitable (in accordance with the social-deterministic narrative in circulation since the late nineteenth century) rather than identity as something that is formed through work, education, and social accomplishment (as the Enlightenment narrative suggests).⁴ It is therefore sociologically troubling that an identitarian obsession with ethnified biological setups over extremely long stretches of time prevails in interpretations of DNA analyses, in spite of the fact that genetic codes and haplogroups cannot meaningfully be translated back into the arbitrary "animal" categories of an older identity discourse. The vast anthropological-archaeological literature on American Pleistocene and early Holocene bones unfortunately bears the imprint of the original purpose of these sciences, which was primarily to measure and rationalize, and thereby legitimize, the cultural superiority of industrialized Europeans and their colonial descendants over against non-white peoples – a discourse masterfully deconstructed by William Stanton, Reginald Horsman, Stephen Jay Gould, Bruce Dain, and Ann Fabian among others.

The Kennewick case, now closed, offers a few points of discussion that are crucially relevant for my project on colonial and transcultural constructions of American antiquity. First, it gives prominence to a pervasive discourse, which has existed since the earliest colonial encounters, suggesting that the Indigenous population of America who met with the Europeans was culturally and racially distinct from an earlier population which they displaced (Kolodny, *In Search* 24;

4 The current prioritizing of an understanding of identity as inherited and physical and therefore passive, over against identity as obtained through individual and collective social accomplishment, reflects a general dismissal of what Hannah Arendt called *vita activa* over against a mere animal existence (*The Human Condition*). It is in "acting and speaking" that humans "show who they are," Arendt writes, where they "reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice" (179).

33-35). In many nineteenth-century constructions, narratives of American settlement speak of a relatively civilized, agricultural population being displaced by marauding nomads – the ancestors of the groups encountered by the European colonizers. According to the logic of historical precedent, this narrative mitigated the moral problem of the colonial dispossession of Indigenous Americans by culturally superior Europeans. Not much imagination is required to see that this narrative of a pre-columbian population exchange projects settler colonialism's own 'nomadic' practice on 'prehistorical' times – a practice only thinly veiled by settler colonialism's narratives of the providential translation of empire and Malthusian-inspired Manifest Destiny that since the mid-nineteenth century fused with the Social Darwinist narrative of the American Indians' impending and unavoidable extinction.

Secondly, and related to this, the scientific arguments deployed during the Kennewick conflict rest on the popular colonial myth that Native Americans, being non-sedentary nomadic people, had and still have few emotional or material ties to the land they inhabit. This notion, too, has its roots in colonial discourse with its Lockean narrative of property acquisition by agricultural settlement (mixing of the soil with the labor of human hands). This narrative ignores the fact that nomadism is not the opposite of settlement but one of its forms, as Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out (*Thousand Plateaus* 419-27 *passim*).⁵ The Ancient DNA analyses of Kennewick Man, Spirit Cave Mummy, and other human remains have shown the erroneousness of this well-known ideogeme: they suggest an almost uncanny *territorial stability* of the population gene pool.⁶ This rather supports the argument Indigenous Americans have been making all along: that they are autochthonous to the land – assuming that autochthony is acquired at some stage during millennia-long settlement in the land.⁷

Third, the results from the Danish lab show that the U.S. archaeologists' racial readings of the bones were wrong. The skull was first misread as "caucasoid," then accordingly misreconstructed as "caucasian" and then again misreconstructed

5 Deleuze and Guattari give an accurate description of the difference between the territorial relations of settlers, nomads, and migrants: "The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.). Sedentary space, by comparison, is "striated, by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures, while nomad space is smooth, marked only by 'traits' that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory." The nomad "occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle" (419-20). Less interested in anthropological analysis than in sociological theory, Deleuze/Guattari use nomadism to express a social form or organization that escapes a fixed (state) order. Unfortunately, they also align the nomadic with the war machine, thereby limiting its potential range of social expression. Even more unfortunately, they regard Native Americans as having no "ancestry" (21).

6 See Jones, *Respect for the Ancestors*, who finds evidence of cultural affiliation between the tribes encountered by European newcomers in the Western Great Basin and the people who had lived there in the late Pleistocene and early Holocene.

7 In other words, the evidence suggests that Native Americans are as autochthonous to America as the British are to Britain, which was resettled by modern humans after the end of the last glacial maximum about 11,700 years ago.

as Ainu-Japanese, but the DNA identifies the ancient man as what we might call “Paleo-Colville” or “Paleo-Paiute-Shoshone.” Without putting ultimate trust in the infallibility of DNA technology, it is safe to say that the Kennewick “skull war” demonstrates the arbitrariness of the classifications of the racially based ‘science of man’ surviving in the practices of Chatters, Owsley, Jantz, and their supporters. By extension, it suggests the political subtext that is running through all colonial-scientific constructions of American antiquity: a subtext that suggests that Native Americans, unlike the Indigenous inhabitants of other countries, ought to show proof of their rightful ownership of the land by way of culturally, if not biologically, continuous occupation. The settlement of the Americas remains a politically embattled topic that cannot be regarded outside of the context of the ongoing contest over land ownership, as well as the tribes’ continued struggles for political self-determination and ecological stewardship.

Pleistocene Picnic Litter and a Colonial Supermyth

Antebellum writers “fashioned America as a new world in ruins” (Hay 13). The fact that those ruins of a foreign past were difficult to date and to decipher created some unease. The ancient cultures of America have consequently been constructed differently at different times. When the pre-Columbian mounds were discovered in Ohio, and ruins of Cahokia and other agricultural metropolises along the Mississippi River, Romantic intellectuals, impressed with Edward Gibbon’s classic about the decline and fall of the Roman empire, constructed a cultural gap between an older, culturally more refined agricultural population responsible for the erection of solid stone structures that resembled the pyramids of Mesoamerica, and the nomadic tribes that allegedly displaced this civilization (Kennedy). In the twentieth century, this theory of successive population groups gave way to a discussion about the character and antiquity of America’s first inhabitants the “Paleo Indians.” This shift in interest from the more immediate precursors of post-Columbian Indians to a more ancient population, the firstcomers to the continent, is conjoined by a shift of interest in the respective population’s means of survival: discussions about the agricultural skill of the Moundbuilders and the architectural eminence of the Hopewell and Mississippi structures and the Cliff Dwellers of the southwest gave way to a scientific interest in the weapons technology of a yet earlier population in the twentieth century. This was in part caused by the discovery of late Pleistocene/early Holocene man-made implements at Folsom and Clovis in the 1920s and 1930s in conjunction with the bones of extinct animals such as mammoth and ancient bison. A scientific consensus emerged that the Clovis culture, whose age was at first calculated as no older than 11,000 years, was the earliest evidence of a human presence in the Americas (Mann, 1491, 171). The major implement found is the Clovis point which has a particularly complex and artful shape. Since then, sites were discovered whose

human remains predate the original date of the Clovis evidence, and while the dating methods constantly improved, a scholarship willing to hold on to the primacy of Clovis, effectively creating a “Clovis barrier” (Rose, “Importance”), kept stretching its temporal frame to be able to subsume such ancient finds as the “Anzick Boy,” dated to 12,800 BP (Fiedel, “Origins”). This backward extension of the time frame, which is to cover the hiatus between the original dating of the first Clovis implements and more recent finds whose greater age is determined by refined testing methods (like Ancient DNA analysis),⁸ responded to evidence discovered by a team of archaeologists led by Thomas Dillehay at Monte Verde, Chile, in the early 1980s; at Meadowcroft Rockshelter in Pennsylvania in 1978, at the Paisley Caves in Oregon, in the 1930s and since 2002, and at Pedra Furada, Brazil, in 1973. All of these finds strongly point to a human presence in America that significantly precedes the original Clovis frame: 14,800 BP in the case of Monte Verde; 14,000 BP in Meadowcroft, 14,300 BP in the Paisley Caves of Oregon, and 12,000 BP in Pedra Furada.⁹ The greatest threat to the Clovis First theory remains Monte Verde in Chile whose age is among the oldest and whose location is at the same time most remote from the Bering crossing, suggesting migrations before the ice began covering today's Western Canada and/or naval migrations along the Pacific coast of North America. More sites that compromise the narrow Clovis chronology keep appearing, forcing the obvious gap between the original Clovis date and the more recent finds to be dealt with: either by ever more extending the Clovis timeframe or, alternatively, by dismissing the Clovis First theory altogether.

The one good job that the Clovis consensus did is that its hegemony marginalized diffusionist migration theories that were widespread throughout the nineteenth century and that keep resurfacing in recent years, aided by new communications technologies. The waning of Clovis First gives renewed evidence of colonial culture's deep-rooted desire for a non-Indian ancient peopling of America, whether by the Norse, the ancient Carthaginians, or the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, whose traces were, and are now again, discovered by diffusionists all over America. Compared with these highly speculative and fanciful ideas, the Clovis First theory indeed possesses a high degree of scientificity. But its adherents now have to concede that the human settlement of the Americas precedes the resettlement of England after the last glacial maximum (about 10,000 BC) by a few millennia. In the light of this evidence, Charles Mann suggests that perhaps the West-

8 This is also the result of more refined dating technologies. As Fiedel points out, the Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) method has produced earlier dates in the period before 9,000 BC than the older radium-thorium dates. The discrepancy between the real dates of the artefacts and the dates found by this technology may exceed a thousand years (*Prehistory* ix).

9 The Paisley Caves, first examined by Luther Cressman between 1938 and 1940 and then again meticulously analyzed, using the latest technology, between 2009 and 2011, not only revealed a greater antiquity of human presence than the Clovis sites but also a different hunting technology which coexisted with, or even preceded, the one identified as typically Clovis (Jenkins et al. “Clovis Age”; Jenkins, “NGBPP Research at the Paisley Caves”).

ern Hemisphere should no longer be described as the “New World” because “people were thriving from Alaska to Chile while much of northern Europe was still empty of mankind and its works” (1491, 196).

The academic contest between the promoters of Clovis First and those calling for a revision in the light of mounting evidence of a more ancient peopling of the Americas resembles the aggressive defense of the biblical historical account against scientists like James Hutton and Charles Lyell, who since the late eighteenth century began to introduce the notion of geological time. The comparison with discussions from the nineteenth century also shows, however, that the cultural emphasis in imagining those ancient peoples has shifted from picturing them as agricultural people to pre-agricultural hunters and gatherers. The fluted stone spear point after which the whole culture was named is a hunting tool, while the settlements and architectural structures in the American West and Southwest that caught the imagination of nineteenth-century Americans are remains of more advanced and potentially (so the colonial myth works) more peaceful peoples. The cultural image of America's first settlers changes again with the introduction of the coastal migration theory, an alternative to the theory of an immigration through an ice-free corridor which probably existed in the basin east of the Rocky Mountains: contrary to the big game hunters associated with the continental migration theory, seafaring humans reaching America by boat feeding off fish and sea mammals are imagined to have been of a different social temperament.

Yet the cultural image produced by the Clovis First theory – that of hunters following now-extinct megafauna from north to south – has had a lasting impact on the popular imagination, probably because it is consistent with the colonial image of Native Americans as savage hunters, gatherers, and nomads. In fact, this image is an essential part of the mythical complex formed by the Clovis First/Pleistocene Overkill hypothesis. Based on the known period of the disappearance of the Pleistocene megafauna and the assumed Clovis date of the arrival of America's first inhabitants, and aided by the fact that their hunting implements were found in conjunction with the bones of extinct animals, the powerful story of the Pleistocene Overkill emerged. The essence of this scientific narrative is that the first settlers killed off all the American megafauna across the whole continent within a few hundred years (Martin). In *The Third Chimpanzee* (1992), Jared Diamond counters the argument about the lack of evidence of such a vast human-caused mass slaughter – only about fifteen tell-tale kill sites were found – by claiming that the Paleo-Indians committed a “blitzkrieg,” a term he inherits from Paul Martin, the original promoter of the overkill hypothesis. The newcomers, the scientists claimed, “kept exterminating the mammal populations at the front of their advance. By the time the hunters’ front finally reached the south tip of South America, most of the big mammal species of the New World had been exterminated” (*Third Chimpanzee* 343). In order to account for the dimension of this mass slaughter, Diamond calculates that the immigrant population must have rapidly increased to reach the necessary killing size of 10 million within 340 years

of their arrival in America (“American Blitzkrieg”). The emerging narrative – of vastly growing hordes of human hunters swarming across the continent and killing off its charismatic megafauna within a few hundred years – was strongly contested by other scholars (e.g. Meltzer, “Kennewick Man”; Grayson) and caused the scholar-activist Vine Deloria to write a scathing and passionate critique of archaeology’s contribution to the endurance of the most negative of colonial stereotypes (*Red Earth White Lies*). Taking issue with the overkill hypothesis, Deloria points to the weakness of evidence: “after some 10 million Indians had been romping around the Western Hemisphere [, ... they] *should have left a little graffiti and picnic litter somewhere*” (145). And he expresses what he thinks is the latent issue in formulating such a hypothesis in the first place: “Advocating the extinction theory is a good way to support continued despoliation of the environment by suggesting that at *no* time were human beings careful of the lands upon which they lived” (97). The overkill scenario glaringly contradicts Native Americans’ self-representation as living and acting in respect with the non-human world which strongly shapes their reputation as nature’s keepers and stewards.

The further triumphal march of the overkill argument through the demimonde of popular science reinforces the impression that we are in the presence of a political myth. Obviously, the *Blitzkrieg* argument interdepends with the Clovis First argument: in order to retain the theory of the relatively late peopling of America from Asia, the mass extinctions *had* to be fast and excessively brutal.¹⁰ The alternative story – that Paleo-Indians were able to kill a few occasional mastodons over a much longer period of time and that the megafauna was diminished as primarily the result of the warming climate – fits much less neatly into the colonial myth of Indian savagery.

The archaeologists’ employment of the colonial savagist stereotype – so aptly dissected by Roy Harvey Pearce, Richard Slotkin, Richard Drinnon and many other scholars two generations ago – happens at a time of growing awareness for environmental issues, including the extinction of species. Modern readers are sensitive to the slaughter of charismatic animals, and for some reason it is easier to take exception to the “savage” deeds of ancient nomads than to those of modern mass meat producers. Both Elizabeth Kolbert (*The Sixth Extinction*, 230-35) and Yuval Harari (*Sapiens*) take the correctness of the overkill hypothesis as a giv-

10 Roger Downey points out that on the basis of these calculations the ancients must have spread from Canada to Mexico within 250 years, averaging fifty miles a year. “No hunter-gatherer people known to science or history had ever behaved so, particularly when they didn’t need to” (78). But savagist myth is traditionally resistant to such rational arguments. Popular images of savage hordes overrunning the steppe are not hard to come by, from the Mongolian hordes of Ghengis Khan to the hordes of Arabian horsemen familiar from *Lawrence of Arabia*. Downey himself compares the *Blitzkrieg* scenario with the frontier narrative (78-79). John L. O’Sullivan’s narrative of Americans’ Manifest Destiny “to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions” (1845) likewise comes to mind. The “Clovis macho-myth” (Downey 151) draws its cultural power from its reliance on, and continuation of, such well-established ideologemes.

en.¹¹ The Pleistocene Overkill hypothesis was extended into more recent historical times by Shepard Krech who argues that modern Native Americans were themselves largely responsible for the quasi-extirpation of the remaining American megafauna – some of which became extinct in the nineteenth century and one of which (the bison) just barely survived.¹² Viewed from a historical-critical perspective, the narrative analogy between ancient and historical extinctions works to divert attention from the spectacular ecocide committed as part of the official American policy of genocide. The displacement of the responsibility for the historically well-documented ecocide of the bison on to the ancestors of the victims of Euroamerican genocide, again, is facilitated by the similarity of this narrative with that about the “savage” extermination of Quarternary megafauna by Paleo-Indians. The empirical void of the Pleistocene proves useful as an ideological launderette; the general human tendency toward historical amnesia makes it possible to efface the previous certainty about who killed the buffalo (Hornaday, *The Extirpation*; Ranco, “Ecological Indian”; Zontek, *Buffalo Nation*; Taylor, “Buffalo Hunt”; Mackenthun, “Bisoncide”).

The writing of this book is based on the conviction that the Clovis First-Pleistocene Overkill supermyth is linked to a more general problem related to the coloniality of America's historiography. These twentieth-century debates were preceded by an earlier academic “war” about the time of the earliest first human presence in America. David Meltzer refers to this as the “Great Paleolithic War” and describes how it dominated American archaeology between the 1870s and the 1920s, only to be ended by the discovery of human implements in conjunction with the bones of extinct bison at Folsom in 1927. This heated debate was triggered by a combination of various causes: the great difficulty of dating human artefacts before introduction of the C14 method, joined by an antagonism against Darwinian theory in the religiously conservative United States. In *The Great Paleolithic War* (2015), Meltzer gives a full account of the fierce battles fought within the emerging field of American archaeology about how to reconcile the biblical historical narrative with the findings of Darwin and Lyell. While the sci-

11 Kolbert adds the computer simulations of the paleobiologist John Alroy who finds that “humans could have done in the megafauna with only modest effort. While smaller species were able to counter the killing by higher reproduction rates, the mammoth could not compete with man's speed. They eventually ‘became a luxury food, something you could enjoy once in a while, like a large truffle’” (quoted in Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction*, 233). An initial population of a hundred could, “over the course of a millennium or two, multiply sufficiently to account for pretty much all of the extinctions in the record” (234). In these narratives, America's first human inhabitants range culturally somewhere between decadent truffle-slurping gourmets and a plague of locusts.

12 Krech's argument is rather contorted; he admits the more commonly known fact that it was the Euro-American market which led to the killing off of the bison. Next to industrial capitalism's greed for the hides, to be turned into leather belts used in machines, the bison slaughter was motivated by the idea that the decimation of the bison would further decimate the tribes dependent on them for food. See Taylor, “Buffalo Hunt” on the industrial use of buffalo leather; and Mackenthun, “Bisoncide” for a longer discussion of the myth of the unecological Indian.

ence-religion debate will receive some further attention in chapter 3 of this book, I am more interested in the *colonial* problematic inherent in debates about human antiquity in America – a problematic that Meltzer somehow eschews in his magisterial study.¹³

Unquestionably, the neosavagist myth of Paleo-Indians overrunning the continent slaughtering megafauna at such a speed that the enterprise hardly left a trace¹⁴ would dwindle in the light of mounting evidence of a much earlier human presence in America, which would reduce the speed of the species extinction together with the extent of the human contribution to it. As Donald Grayson points out, the Clovis First narrative sustains itself through its entanglement with the narrative of Paleo-Indian inter-species savagery.¹⁵ It is not clear which assumption came first – that of the first Americans' despicable human nature or that of their late arrival. In any case, the two myths add up to a supermyth, presently redeployed as the planet is heating up from the fire produced by corporate and consumer savagery against less privileged fellow humans – and more-than-human companion species who face mass extinction as a result of an intensified industrial agriculture and the overproduction of meat.

While the Clovis First and Overkill scenarios are now rejected by serious scholarship, together with the “hypothetico-deductive” method its propagators employ (Kehoe, *Land of Prehistory* 227), they continue causing ideological havoc in the field of popular science. From a certain cosmic vantage point the distinctions between colonizers and colonized become meaningless. Thus the popular

13 Emphasizing the fierceness of the older Paleolithic debate – the geologically based thesis that America was already inhabited during the Ice Age more than 10,000 years ago in conflict with diffusionist theories about transatlantic migrations in “historical” times – Meltzer does not really explain the emotionality of the *querelle* – apart from the ubiquitous aspects of competition for reputation, funding and the like. He assumes that the “problem of human antiquity ... loomed so large because it cut so deep into American archaeology's conceptual core, forcing the nascent field to confront haziness in its theories, methods, and evidence, all while *past time* and all that flowed from it vital to understanding the prehistory of North America was held hostage” (Meltzer, *The Great Paleolithic War* 8). These methodical questions were solved among European archaeologists in a less venomous way. The problem may reside in the fact that not only were “past times” held “in hostage” but that the captivity involved the pasts and histories of *other* peoples whose presents and futures were destroyed in a savage war of extinction, concurrently with the scientific theorizing about their geographical provenance. The emotional factor firing the debate seems to have been, as Meltzer states later in his book, that the archaeologists found themselves “living in an *old New World*” (*Great Paleolithic War* 463; emphasis added).

14 The empirical situation is indeed sparse. As Grayson points out in his most recent assessment (*Giant Sloths*), there are only 13 archaeological finds that show human hunting tools in conjunction with the bones of extinct species (276). But Diamond uses the sparsity in support of his Blitzkrieg argument: it all happened at such a speed that hardly any trace remained. The circularity of the argument, which so unsettles Deloria (“should have left a little picnic litter”), should be obvious. It resembles Donald Rumsfeld's famous reply to the impossibility to find evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq: the absence of evidence is no evidence of absence.

15 “Martin was no fan of any pre-Clovis site in the Americas because such a site might damage the very argument on which he staked so much of his career – overkill” (Grayson, *Giant Sloths* 276).

historian Yuval Harari, who explains world history to the economic elite at international summits like Davos, boils down the research to the general thesis that humans are a species of imperial predators who will eventually destroy life on the planet as we know it but fortunately be replaced with artificial intelligence (*Sapiens*, esp. chapter 4).¹⁶ This biologist human-as-predator theory is a feasible perspective to explain history to a neoliberal elite whose economic system is based on predation. The Pleistocene Overkill hypothesis and its consort, the hypothesis of the bison-slaughtering unecological Indian, translate the colonial savagist myth into a cynical and apocalyptic biological determinism in Harari's text. James Cameron's Hollywood fantasy *Avatar* presents us with the opposite myth, that of the Indigenous inhabitants in league with the forces of nature. Certainly lacking historical and anthropological credibility, *Avatar* is a useful reminder of precisely *who* is the Blitzkrieg predator scavenging the universe for edibles and killing everything in its way.¹⁷

In spite of such more or less serious deconstructions, the Pleistocene Overkill myth appears frequently in popular representations of ancient Indigenous Americans and, to a lesser degree, Indigenous Australians who allegedly committed a similar species extinction when they had arrived in Australia a few ten thousand years earlier. It has become part of the standard repertoire of 'big' historical narratives seeking to tell the story that the environmental devastations of the past were caused by *all* humans, being part of *homo sapiens*' biological setup. This is far from the truth, as Elizabeth Povinelli importantly points out. She argues that the ecological disasters the world suffers from were caused not by humans in general but by a very *particular group* of humans (actually that group which cheers Harari's books): "*humans* did not create this problem. Rather, a specific mode of human society did, and even there, specific classes and races and regions of humans." The antagonism is not between humans and non-humans but "between various forms of human life-worlds and their different effects on the given world" (*Geontologies*, 12). The thinking deployed in *Sapiens* rests on a fiction of totality that, as Elizabeth deLoughrey writes, "necessarily obscure[s] the differences across Anthropos" (15). It is one of the dangers and disadvantages of 'big history' that it levels the distinctions between colonizers and colonized, between different classes, regions and genders, as well as between the perpetrators of modernity's ecological disasters and those who have to bear the brunt of these man-made calamities. Extremely popular because prophetically sounding books like those by Kolbert and Harari rely on narratives that revive colonial

16 Unlike the American promoters of the Pleistocene Overkill hypothesis, Harari at least shortly mentions that the mammoth also disappeared from Eurasia (74) – presumably hunted to extinction by European "savages." Martin and Diamond never make that comparison. Most scholars today agree that a combination of climate change, human hunting, and possibly a few additional factors such as bacteria killed off the megafauna worldwide.

17 In all its blue extravagance, *Avatar* is also a reminder of the philosophy of interspecies responsibility by which, in this fantastic plot, the high tech imperialists are temporarily defeated.

scientific myths, their success depending on their readers' limited and undifferentiated knowledge of historical conflicts and processes. Reductive and scientifically untenable notions of the deep past form a crucial part of these popular narratives.¹⁸ But a scientifically informed assessment of the past and present is a crucial precondition of adequate action. "Thin" historical knowledge will not suffice in meeting the many challenges of the near future.

Embattled Antiquity

A critical assessment of the discussions about the Ancient One, Clovis First, and Pleistocene Overkill hypotheses cannot but arrive at the conclusion that more is at stake in these academic *querelles* than the objective search for historical truth. In fact, the prehistory of America is an ideological battleground, with each new archaeological discovery falling into a churning narrative quagmire. The deployment of neo-savagist rhetoric on the part of modern scientists is accompanied by constant rumblings in the social media of ancient transatlantic migrations to America that may have preceded, or coincided with, the Bering crossing. Brought forth by Smithsonian archaeologist Dennis Stanford and Bruce Bradley (University of Exeter), the Solutrean migration hypothesis claims, on the basis of stone implements discovered in Chesapeake Bay, that Ice Age Europeans from the area of today's Southern France – people identified with as Solutré culture – migrated across the Atlantic ice in search of new lands and personal fortune, arriving in America in time to precede the migrants coming from the northwest or at least instructing them in superior hunting technology. Clovis spear points may originate, according to this hypothesis, not with Native Americans but with Ice Age immigrants from "Europe." In extension, the real original Americans would not be the ancestors of today's Indians, or at least not exclusively, but people who came from Europe. This thesis, which is about a hundred years old (Thomas, *Skull Wars*, 169-70), is based on the conversion of technological analogy (the primitive stone projectiles) into causality, and a significant amount of historical speculation. It shows some serious historical problems – among them the absence of convincing evidence and a chronological inconsistency of about 5,000 years.¹⁹

18 For a recent critique of *Sapiens* in conjunction with a reassessment of Vine Deloria's *Red Earth White Lies*, see Philip Deloria, "Red Earth, White Lies."

19 One of the leading experts on the European Solutré culture, Lawrence Guy Straus, co-authored an intervention with David Meltzer and Ted Goebel refuting Stanford/Bradley's thesis: "Bradley and Stanford (2004) have raised now, in several instances, the claim that European Upper Paleolithic Solutrean peoples colonized North America, and gave rise to the archaeological complex known as Clovis. They do so in the face of some obvious challenges – notably the several thousand miles of ocean and the 5,000 radiocarbon years that separate the two. And yet they argue in their recent paper that the archaeological evidence in support of a historical connection is 'overwhelming'. We are profoundly skeptical of this claim; we believe that the many differences between Solutrean and Clovis are far more significant than the few similarities, the latter being readily explained by the well-known

In another, less skillfully made, documentary featuring the conjectures of Stanford and Bradley, the promoters of this transatlantic Ice Age migration contend that “Stone-age Europeans were the first to set foot on North America, beating American Indians by some 10,000 years, new archaeological evidence suggests” (*Stone Age Columbus* 2002). The far-fetched hypothesis was attractive enough to be presented, using the advantages of dramatic filmic enactment, in the 2018 documentary *The Ice Bridge* by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC; dir. Robin Bicknell). Scientists quoted in the documentary, and critical of the thesis, have since complained that their dissent went unacknowledged by the film’s narrative (Raff).

The idea of a transatlantic “ice bridge” reads suspiciously like a *doppelgänger* of the Bering land bridge theory, a transparent attempt to declare an archaeological version of “white America first.” It has been refuted by a score of respected scholars on the basis of the lack of evidence as well on the basis of pure logic: if the transatlantic connection had been massive and “Europeans” (a term that makes no sense when applied to 20,000 BC) had indeed “beat” American Indians “by some 10,000 years,” there should be unmistakable material and genetic evidence – some “picnic litter,” to use Deloria’s words. If the transatlantic settlement was temporary as in the case of the Viking voyages, and the ‘Solutreans’ had been absorbed by the Indigenous population like scattered members of the Viking or “lost” Roanoke colonies, how would that story change the history of modern colonization? As in the case of “Kennewick Man” and Pleistocene Overkill, the amount of scientific speculation – not to say ludicrous invention – invested in the Solutrean hypothesis reveals a highly problematic *cultural* core of these debates: their roots in questions of the ethnic and racial identity of America’s first inhabitants. Although the scientists propagating these hypotheses emphatically reject any affiliation with white supremacist theories (which would in any case be meaningless given the historical and genetic distance involved), their “scientific” ideas are gratefully saluted by representatives of white supremacism, as numerous websites confirm (see, for example, de Nugent 2010). The racial element is *always* present in discussions of historical firstness and cultural legitimacy: Annette Kolodny and Karl Steel, among others, have shown how stories about American antiquity – in their case of the Viking origins of Americans – have been used in the interests of racial heritage politics.²⁰ As white supremacism is promoted by a significant

phenomenon of technological convergence or parallelism. The origin and arrival time of the first Americans remain uncertain, but not so uncertain that we need to look elsewhere other than north-east Asia” (Straus, Meltzer, Goebel). Stanford and Bradley dismiss all their arguments in their reply.

- 20 Annette Kolodny (*In Search*) traces the romantic discourse of a Viking past throughout American literature, giving a contrapuntal reading of the colonial texts by confronting them with reconstructions of early encounters in the tribal oral traditions; Steel discloses the ideological dimension of the popular fascination with Viking ancestors, whose connection with racial supremacist positions is fluid. In her most recent piece, Kolodny draws a link between DNA-based constructions of American ethnic genealogies, white supremacism, and the difficult struggle of the Penobscot Nation for the retention of their treaty fishing rights,

part of Western voters, even against substantial scientific knowledge testifying to the absurdity of such claims (not to speak of their moral and aesthetic offensiveness), the racial-historical subtext of these ideas requires more critical attention. Native American critics like Vine Deloria, Jr. have pointed out the political potential of such fake history-making, unfairly accusing the discipline of archaeology in toto of committing a form of scientific colonialism. Though weakened by its polemical style and lack of academic rigor, Deloria's principal critique can hardly be dismissed. Because whatever the conscious or unconscious motivations for spreading such neocolonial tales, their effect is clearly to produce historical uncertainty, reduce the credibility of the work of historically responsible scholars, undermine Indigenous rights claims, and (in the case of the overkill and predator scenarios) endanger environmentalist programs. In doing so, these hypotheses add to the inexhaustible repertoire of the mass-produced Hobbesian narrative of life on earth as a brute struggle for survival. This book intends to investigate one segment of the cultural history behind this ideological complex.

While awareness of the racial subtext of discourses of American antiquity is a constant concern of this study, the following chapters will not predominantly speak about race, DNA, or ancient skeletons – none of the archaeology-horror mystery paraphernalia. Instead, I want to trace the other two problems illustrated by the popular examples from the discourse about American antiquity: narratives about the date, continuity and discontinuity of the Indigenous presence in America, and representations of Indigenous relations to the land. In both cases, we can observe a varying and flexible deployment of combinations of empirical evidence and narrative invention in constructing versions of the deep American past that best suits the needs of colonial culture at different points in time. In other words, what can be seen in the ways American antiquity is imagined at different times in American history is how the syntagmatic sequence of narratives about the American deep past is adapted to changing paradigmatic requirements: scientific data are combined with preexisting mythical images and narratives involving the interactions between men, animals, and the environment, frequently with the effect of dismissing and disarticulating Indigenous claims. First, the discursive dissociation of America's Indigenous inhabitants into two separate (contiguous) groups, one of which violently displaced the other, mitigates the moral scandal of European colonialism, suggesting that the European immigrants merely reenacted a well-established historical script practiced by successive American populations. The European imperial master narrative of the translation of empire, errand into the wilderness, and mobile Frontier were (and sometimes still are) widely accepted in American society. And secondly, the savagist trope of the Indigenous populations as consisting of non-sedentary nomads deprives the contemporary Indigenous population of legally solid territorial claims when compared with the settled

being faced with the opinion that there were not indigenous to the Penobscot River ("Competing Narratives").

form of farming-as-property defined as economically and culturally superior by the transatlantic immigrant society.

Within a wider framework of an analysis of the coloniality of the production of knowledge about America's distant past between the mid-nineteenth century and now, the aforementioned mobile mythical-ideological complex is present in all three scenarios to be discussed in this book. Chapter 2 traces discourses of antiquity and imperialism in American mid-nineteenth century travel texts written at a time when the United States was involved in various military and commercial schemes in Mesoamerica. Chapter 3 examines how nineteenth-century American culture dealt with the epistemic uncertainty about the age of the world in general and the age of the human presence in America in particular. It will be shown how the uncanniness of the American deep past – expressed by writers like Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville – intersects with changing and ambivalent religious views but also how Indigenous knowledge about ancient times showed up in the ideologically uneven texture of Euroamerican cultural documents. Chapter 4 will take us into the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, exploring a particular case of the transcultural trafficking of ancient knowledge between colonial agents and representatives of the Klamath and Modoc tribes in the Cascadian Rockies. This chapter will confirm the heterogeneity of Euroamerican responses to such knowledge. The Epilogue will explore, in admittedly fragmentary and essayistic form, alternative ways of thinking about humans' long-term dwelling on the land and knowledge formations regarding the human and geological "prehistory" of the earth.

Theoretically, this study exploits the insights and methodologies of colonial discourse analysis, science and empire studies, and postcolonial and decolonial approaches to American history. Discourses on ancient migrations, ruins, geological cataclysms and the vastness of time will be examined from an American Studies perspective interested in the power that narrative and metaphor have in establishing hegemonic versions of the American ancient past. The intellectual battles about the nature and meaning of American antiquity resemble the more general controversies about the possession and meaning of cultural heritage (see chapter 2). As cultural historians of science well know, the narrativization of antiquity and heritage are deeply implicated in political discourses on national beginnings and imperial destinies. Archaeologist Margarita Díaz-Andreu argues that "archaeology is not a value-free and neutral social science" but operates within a "socio-political context" to which it makes socially meaningful contributions, especially in the context of nineteenth-century nationalism (*World History* 4). David Lowenthal touches on the imperial dimension of discourses on heritage (including antiquity) when he discusses the insistence on priority and precedence in these discourses: "Precedence evokes pride and proves title. To be first in a place warrants possession; to antedate others' origins or exploits shows superiority Descent from 'first peoples' validates tribal rights in America and the Antipodes" (*Heritage Crusades* 174). Prehistory, Lowenthal contends, has served as 'proof' for

chauvinistic agendas like that of the National Socialists (for whom “only their own antiquity counts”) while the length of genealogies adds to the prestige and privilege of the group making the claim (176). As we were able to see, *firstness*, *length* of occupation, and *continuity* are core elements in the historical assertions of nationalist and colonial archaeological thinking.

Lowenthal suggests the term “heritage mystique” to refer to popular constructions of heritage. While science is haunted by anxiety about lack of authenticity and hard evidence, the general public, he writes, is mostly “credulous, undemanding, ... and often laud the distortions, omissions, and fabrications central to heritage reconstruction.” The reason for this neglect of facts, Lowenthal assumes, is that the “attachment to heritage depends on feeling and faith, as opposed to history’s ascertained truths” (*Heritage Crusades* 249). As the examples above suggest, the divide between science and popular response is often fluid, especially where questions of cultural identity are concerned. In other words, narratives on American antiquity fall subject to what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have called the invention of tradition. As the antiquity of other nations, which have been constructing their epic pasts since the late sixteenth century,²¹ that of America was invented in the early national period, and the remains of pre-Columbian Indigenous cultures were readily integrated into said national narratives (see chapter 2). The study of these discursive constructions shows that the term “antiquity” is a quite flexible one, covering a very broad temporal spectrum. Depending on one’s sense of history and time one can apply it to the time of the Viking voyages in the tenth and eleventh centuries or to the time of the earliest humans crossing the Bering land bridge more than 16,000 years ago. The examples used in this book refer to notions of antiquity in the latter sense, and actually to the new idea of history being lost in the mists of the distant past itself, which only became the dominant paradigm in the mid-nineteenth century. In other words, I am interested in how and why the “mystique” of the American deep past is constructed at certain periods and places. Doubtless, these constructions of the distant past are related to questions of collective and individual identity at any given time. Here the study touches on the difficult issue of emotional and ideological needs and desires which are best accessible through literary texts. Interestingly, reflections about ancient times are most frequently articulated in the gothic mode, with a continuity reaching from Poe to modern archaeological horror stories.

“Every nation enhances its identity by sanctifying some mythic heritage in defiance of historical fact,” Lowenthal writes (“Stewarding” 37). The growth of

21 Think of projects like Richard Hakluyt’s massive *Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, written in support of the Elizabethan seaborne empire, which he began in 1589 (see Mackenthun, *Metaphors*, chapter 1). Or think of the epic poems of the American Early National Poets (Barlow, Freneau, Dwight) tracing America’s national beginnings thematically to Columbus and generically to the medieval epics. Had they had access to the translations of the Icelandic sagas, they would certainly have traced the American national beginnings to the Viking voyages, as later writers indeed did as soon as the translations became available in the 1830s. See Kolodny, *In Search*.

international heritage culture suggests that the experience of migration and mobility, which cause a dissociation from people's original environments, increase the emotional need for "tangible memorials of a collective past" (*Heritage Crusades* 9). As the above examples suggest, this diagnosis of individual emotional needs may also hold true for collective identities. This would mean that a heightened need for collective heritage or antiquity is the natural companion of expansive and mobile modernity. The appropriation of foreign monuments, bones, and stories by American museums and the American cultural archive may reflect a need for a surrogate heritage in the face of a historically uprooted, diasporic existence. As already noted, Ralph Waldo Emerson's and Young America's future optimism and their rejection of any cultural ties to Europe coexisted with a strong desire to obtain the symbolic icons of an ancient past of one's own. I will discuss this appropriative invention of a separate American past in chapter 2 in the context of John Lloyd Stephens's errand for Mesoamerican antiquities to fill the national museums of the United States.

Although, as I state at the beginning, the present excessive preoccupation with heritage and antiquity can be seen as a specifically European and Western symptom of cultural self-invention at a moment of historical crisis, this does not mean that Indigenous cultures had no need for representations of the ancient past. There is a general human need for tying one's knowledge to documents from the past and to meaningful places. Indigenous Americans, as Vine Deloria, Jr., Walter Echo-Hawk and others have pointed out, use natural landscape features as heritage sites. As non-literate societies, Native Americans north of Mexico used the land itself as a medium for inscribing cultural and historical meanings. In his chapter "Sacred Places and Moral Responsibility," added to the 1992 edition of *God is Red*, Deloria distinguishes between four categories of sacred places: sites of historical-mythical importance; sites of transcendental revelations in the deeper mythical past, sites that have an "inherent sacredness" and have been sought for spiritual inspiration by successive social groups; and, fourth, potential future sites of spiritual revelation which are yet unknown (*God is Red*, chapter 16). He declares sacred places to be the "foundation of all other beliefs and practices" of a culture "because they represent the presence of the sacred in our lives. They properly inform us that we are not larger than nature and that we have responsibilities to the rest of the natural world that transcend our own personal desires" (281). In a similar vein, Echo-Hawk compares Indigenous sacred places to the sacred heritage sites of Old World cultures in the Middle East and Hindu sites in India (*Courts* 330). Relying on categories formulated by Andrew Gulliford, he distinguishes between seven categories of sacred places: sites associated with ancient myths; pilgrimage routes; special gathering places where precious plants or minerals were found; man-made shrines and ancient ruins; burial grounds and battle sites; vision quest sites; and "the great American sacred centers where many spirits and divine beings live" (332). All of these sites commemorate recent and less recent historical knowledge. The same can be said about "landscapes of

origins,” creation narratives that connect ancient places to present communities. In the case of voluntary or forced migration, the stories are frequently tied to new landscape features reminiscent of the original ones, as Christopher Oakley shows. And he quotes the Irish-American journalist James Mooney who took stock of the situation of many tribes at the end of the nineteenth century and who writes about the Cherokee sites in their old homeland, the Great Smoky Mountains, that “almost every prominent rock and mountain, every deep bend in the river, in the old Cherokee country has its accompanying legend” (Mooney, qt. Oakley 13). We will see similar examples of the landscape as a mnemonic structure in the story archive of the Klamath and Modoc in chapter 4.

Oral cultures do not have calendrical chronologies as “highly developed” literate cultures do. This, however, does not mean that they have no sense of the distant past. The Indigenous method of preserving knowledge of the (deep) past reminds us that, considered with a sober mind, the (pseudo-)scientific battles about antiquity I have discussed above are in fact predominantly battles about territory. The territorial dimension of the American “heritage crusades” is frequently neglected in favor of historical genealogy. But even the growing desire for natural and “world” (often national) heritage sites in contemporary societies reminds us of the spatial aspect of discourses about firstness, priority, and ancient population movements. “The past is a foreign *country*” after all. And of course the underlying concern of all discussions about ancient migration to and within America is precisely the fact that Native Americans were in the country *first*, that they do indeed enjoy the right of priority regardless of how many (pseudo-)scientific contortions are performed to deprive them of this privilege. The “antiquity crusade” is really, as the original crusades of the Middle Ages, a contest over access to territories – only that, different from the medieval crusades, the sacredness of the territories in question is only ascertained by one party while the colonizing party, acting on the growth principle of capitalism, primarily intends to turn the land and its resources into cash while the aesthetic and spiritual appreciation of nature, though still present, has withered in Western cultures.

The Coloniality of “Prehistory”

It is with this knowledge in mind that we have to reassess the significance of the term “prehistory” and of conceptualizations of land. “Prehistory” is a term conventionally used to refer to societies without writing. In the imagination of the nineteenth century, this Hegelian division of humanity into peoples of history and peoples without history coincides with the notion that sojourns to remote places on earth are like time journeys into the ancient past – into the “land that time forgot” (Burroughs), the “night of first ages” (Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 62), or into the “land of prehistory” (in Alice Kehoe’s allusion to the former two). A term coined in 1851 by the Scottish-Canadian antiquarian-archaeologist Daniel Wilson

and popularized by John Lubbock in his book *Pre-Historic Man* (1865) (Kehoe, *Land of Prehistory* XIII), “prehistory” is a concept that serves to disarticulate the epistemic claims of societies apparently lacking writing and other technological achievements of Europe’s colonizing countries. The term demarcates the dividing line between societies that arrogate to themselves the right and the expertise to assess the character of societies unlike themselves and turn them into objects of scientific study. The discipline of anthropology owes its existence to this epistemological gaze; the complicity of early anthropology’s inventions of scientific classification systems with colonial policies has been critiqued by representatives of multicultural and postcolonial approaches in contemporary anthropology.²² Similarly, as Alice Beck Kehoe contends, the denial of cultural coevalness provided the epistemic framework for American “prehistoric” archaeology (*Land of Prehistory* 227).²³

Jack Goody, the renowned scholar of the sociology of print culture in Western and non-Western societies, investigated the politics of European historiography in three books, *The Theft of History* (2006), *Renaissances* (2009), and *The Eurasian Miracle* (2009). Goody critiques a pervasive Eurocentrism in classical accounts of the beginnings of Mediterranean civilization. Instead of tracing modernity back to ethnically purified Greek roots, as many other historians of science have done, he argues that until the early modern period, when European powers for various reasons gained the upper hand through key inventions and economic developments, the cultural progress of Europe was deeply entangled with that of Eurasia. He rejects the frequent “bifurcation between the dynamic west, passing through antiquity, and feudalism, to capitalism, and the east that produced a static, hydraulic, bureaucratic despotism, which was not about to modernize” (*Renaissances* 1). He questions the identification of the Renaissance – in which the seeds for later developments toward the Industrial Revolution, modernization, and global capitalism were sowed – as purely “European.” This general claim to an essentialized European origin of modernity, Goody states, amounts to a case of “ethnocentric teleology in so far as it attributed that European achievement to deep-rooted, quasi-permanent features of the west” (2). The narrative of the exceptionality of Western civilization, Goody maintains, forgets the fuzziness of the immediate prehistory of the early modern scientific expansion. This “prehistory,” he shows, was characterized by “alternation” – an intense exchange of ideas, forms of knowledge, and technologies between European societies and the “major civilizations of Eurasia” (2). Western Europe, Goody’s argument goes, “became ‘exceptional’ in the nineteenth century,” but

22 See the writing culture debate initiated by James Clifford, George Marcus, and Michael Fischer in the 1980s.

23 For a succinct critique of the coloniality of anthropology see Edward Said, “Representing the Colonized,” who also registers earlier critiques of the constructions of cultural hierarchies produced in the “science of man” and its modern descendants. Critics include Michael Taussig, Johannes Fabian, and Eric Wolf.

it is not apparent that earlier on it was out of line with other major civilizations, except in terms of its advantages in the era of the 'Great Voyages' perhaps related to technical developments in 'guns and sails' and following its adoption of printing[,] long practiced in China, to an alphabetic script using movable type. (*Theft of History* 66)

In other words, the historiography of the nineteenth century – a period of national and imperial self-definition – has greatly contributed to our present, homogenizing view of the early history of European cultural encounters as encounters between a superior print culture and inferior cultures without print.²⁴ Intercultural exchange of ideas and knowledge was often denied, which is another way of saying that processes of intellectual transculturation – Goody's term is "alternation" – were silenced in the process of inventing homogeneous national or "western" traditions.²⁵

In positing non-European cultures as "prehistorical," the colonial, Hegelian episteme denies them epistemic coevalness (Fabian) as well as historical equivalence, or what Lynn Hunt calls "historicality." Hunt contends that

[h]istory becomes less teleological when "historicality" (the definition of what constitutes the historical) is expanded in this way to make history the patrimony of all peoples and all times, rather than identifying it with the *discipline* taught in Western universities from the nineteenth century onward or the form of *writing* pioneered by Herodotus in the fifth century BC By extending our notions of historicality, then, we can retrace paths long effaced by the great superhighways of intellectual endeavor (Hegelianism, say, or modernization theory), thereby recovering alternative routes to the present and future (124).

Approaching the topic of the denial of historicality from a slightly different perspective, postcolonial intellectuals like Dipesh Chakrabarty, Kapil Rai, or, for the Americas, Walter Mignolo and Michel-Rolph Trouillot, are pushing towards a revision of Western accounts of historical and scientific development. The decolonization of the history of knowledge would include, as Sujit Sivasundaram writes, to "think beyond categories of colonized and colonial and to fragment traditions of knowledge on all sides" ("Sciences" 155). Such a fragmentation of knowledge would certainly have to include a disentanglement, or critical deconstruction, of received notions of time, temporality and history. In keeping with the decolonial critique of the exclusiveness of Western conceptions of time, Daniel Lord Smail, writing about deep history, proposes to include Neolithic and even Paleolithic

24 An impressive theoretical articulation of this colonial binarism is offered by Tzvetan Todorov in his *Conquest of America* (1987) in spite of that book's postcolonial professions.

25 I am using the concept of transculturation as formulated by Fernando Ortiz and Mary Louise Pratt – emphasizing the reciprocity of cultural exchange. The assumption is that during such processes, both, or all, cultures involved are changed, if often in highly asymmetrical ways.

peoples into accounts of history and abolish the distinction between the historical and the prehistorical altogether (*On Deep History* 2).

To be sure, these arguments are not new, having already been made by an earlier generation of critical historians and anthropologists. In *Time and the Other* (1983), Johannes Fabian critiques the scientific, especially anthropological, constructions of non-western temporality (or rather a-temporality), tracing them back to a substantial misunderstanding of Darwin's theory of evolution. Fabian shows how Darwin's theory of gradual adaptation was successively grafted upon a pre-existing teleological, respectively providential-progressive, conception of time. This reception did not register the consequences of, first, the vastness of geological time and, second, evolution theory's obliviousness of the dimension of time: apart from assuming long stretches of time for species to develop and adjust, human time is not the primary concern of evolutionary theory. "Unlike old sacred Time, or even its secularized form in the 'myth-history of reason'," Fabian writes,

the new naturalized Time was no longer the vehicle of a continuous, meaningful story; it was a way to order an essentially discontinuous and fragmentary geological and paleontological record. The social evolutionists ... had to emasculate the new vision on all of the three accounts in which it differed from earlier conceptions. They could not use its *vastness* because the history of mankind, recorded or reconstructed, occupied a negligible span on the scale of natural evolution ... Nor could the social evolutionists accept the stark *meaninglessness* of mere physical duration. They were too full of the conviction that Time "accomplished" or brought about things in the course of evolution. And finally, they had, as yet, no use for a purely abstract methodological chronology; theirs was a *preoccupation with stages leading to civilization*, each of them as meaningful as a sentence leading toward the conclusion of a story (*Time and the Other* 14-15; emphasis added).

I will return to this important statement about modernity's widespread inability to understand the radicality of Darwin's replacement of pre-modern concepts of time with his much less time-oriented theory of relationality in chapter 3, where I will discuss it in the context of its historical emergence.

"[T]he deep past, as usually understood by modern historians," write Andrew Shryock and Daniel Lord Smail, "is never deeper than antiquity," by which they mean biblical, Greek and Roman antiquity: "Awareness of a time before antiquity became acute only in the nineteenth century, as the Darwinian revolution displaced the widely shared belief that the world was only 6,000 years old." "Pre-history" is the term coined in response to the imperviousness of deep time to the methods of conventional historical writing (*Deep History* 10). While Shryock and Smail are interested in extending historical time backwards beyond classical antiquity, anthropologists Peter R. Schmidt and Stephen A. Mrozowski state in their edited volume *The Death of Prehistory* (2013) that the continued use of the concept of "prehistory" with reference to societies without the technology of

writing has politically harmful effects. Following Johannes Fabian, they identify the labelling of precolonial societies as “primitive, prehistorical, or mythological” as a cultural trope within the larger discursive formation of empire (3). There are societies today whose legal position is still impaired by this epistemic stigma and whose historical experience has taught them to regard archaeologists “as agents of an empirical imperialism that for centuries poked and prodded both the living and the dead with little thought about the welfare of the people whose histories are investigated.” For members of those societies, “the notion of prehistory is often an oppressive reminder of their political, cultural, and economic disenfranchisement” (3). Schmidt and Mrozowski refer in particular to the damage imposed by popular representations of those “prehistoric” peoples (7). Aided by the suggestive power of visuals and moving images, films in particular often reinforce scientific stereotypes. Aware of the fact that the trope of prehistory “continues to contribute to oppression today” (8), they express their hope for a “future without prehistory” (1). The empirical and epistemic imperialism inherent in the notion of “prehistory,” they contend, is related to the “academic silencing” of alternative approaches to the distant past, and the silencing of what Michel de Certeau calls the “unspoken conditions” that enable scientific discourse in the first place and that de Certeau aligns with the frequent use of the objectifying pronoun “we” in scientific discourse (12; de Certeau 62-63). It should be “impossible,” de Certeau writes, “to analyze historical discourse independently of the institution in respect to which its silence is organized” (63). The academic field of history has silenced certain kinds of knowledge by inscribing its divided temporality (into prehistory and history proper) into its own institutional logic, or “architecture” (Shryock/Smail, *Deep History* X), thus making it difficult to allow for historical narratives that bridge these two epochs. There are at least two serious consequences of this temporal silencing: First, it reiterates a “creationist” narrative of a human world suddenly emerging from a natural world to which it stands in opposition – a narrative inspired by belief, not science, and that should therefore be superseded (Shryock/Smail XI). Second, this process of silencing has led to a massive disavowal of Indigenous oral traditions, preserved by tribal knowledge keepers and collected by folklorists. Orally transmitted knowledge was frequently reduced to a primitive kind of literature and altogether dismissed as historically relevant knowledge. In fact, however, it can be regarded as a counter-archive to the imperial written record (Schmidt/Mrozowski 13-14).

The reason for this “subalternization of knowledges” (Mignolo, *Darker Side* 153) – of knowledge both preceding and external to the epistemic framework of Christian providentialism and empiricist modernity – is that this counter-archive consists of transcultural knowledge hard to categorize according to the conventional academic “architecture”: it was produced outside the academic centers by non-academic agents in the colonial contact zones and is consequently often regarded as messy and impure, provincial, and ahistorical (Schmidt/Mrozowski 13). Only recently have we begun to acknowledge that imperial archaeology is in

fact itself provincial because exclusively modeled on European historical scripts and temporalities. The project of provincializing colonial accounts of archaeology and anthropology forms part of the larger project of provincializing Europe and Europe-centered discourses, including the discourse of the Enlightenment (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing*; Carey/Festa), presently conducted by scholars committed to the decolonization of the history of science.²⁶

The scientific construction of Indigenous Americans was itself never consensual but subject to conflict and historical change. Take the above-mentioned narrative viewing the mounds and Mississippi structures as the remains of ancient settlers violently displaced by the “savage” Indians known to the Europeans. By the end of the nineteenth century, this narrative, which sits so well with the designs of U.S. settler colonialism, gave way to another interpretation. As the scientific study of American “prehistory” came to be institutionalized and as the conception of historical time expanded into the distant past, the story of successive and culturally unrelated populations came to be replaced with the view that the successive Indigenous populations were culturally continuous with one another (Meltzer, *Great Paleolithic War* 36). The latter notion was certainly in part owing to the theoretical predominance of Lyell’s geological theory of uniformitarianism and Darwin’s evolutionary theory, both of which speak of continuous and discontinuous *gradual* developments in natural history, a view that was now applied in the history of civilizations as well (5). However, this dominant scientific view coexisted with the continued deployment of diffusionist hypotheses of all kinds in the public sector. The shift in the perception of long stretches of time was accompanied by a shift away from readings of *cultural* artifacts to *technological* ones in attempts to assert age (especially stone tools) – another consequence of the new insight into humanity’s much greater age. The deep past tends to preserve bones

26 In keeping with the ambivalence of the concept of the postcolonial, the field contains studies devoted to including Indigenous contributions to colonial science, decolonial studies exploring discourses of science within the framework of struggles for independence from the colonial mother countries, and studies discussing the entanglements of science and empire in general. With reference to America see, for example, the essays by José Rabasa, Aníbal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, Fernando Coronil and others in Moraña, *Coloniality at Large*. For specific studies of the coloniality of science in America see, next to Mary Pratt’s chapter on Humboldt in *Imperial Eyes*, Neil Safier, *Measuring the New World*; Robert Young, *White Mythologies and Colonial Desire*; Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors*; and Natalie Zemon Davis’s chapter on Maria Sibylla Merian in *Women on the Margins*. In *How to Write the History of the New World*, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra discusses the “pre-history” of the development of modern science in eighteenth-century Spanish America, building on Antonello Gerbi’s magisterial discussion of the “dispute of the New World” between metropolitan imperial science and “postcolonial” Euroamerican epistemologies. For an investigation of the coloniality of British imperial science see Richard Drayton, *Nature’s Government* and James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew, *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World*. For the coloniality of the Western knowledge archive in general see Ann Laura Stoler’s Foucauldian readings of colonial and imperial formations in *Along the Archival Grain* (2009). In both her introduction of *Imperial Debris* and her monograph *Duress*, Stoler dissects the colonial and imperial legacy of contemporary epistemic practices. Jim McClellan explores crossovers between the fields of traditional science and empire studies with post-colonial studies.

and stones rather than more perishable things, with the side effect that “bones and stones,” evoking death and war, throw a selective view on ancient cultures, highlighting the more violent aspects of life. The discovery of deep time, together with the emergence of Social Darwinism, with its violent doctrine of the “natural” extinction of non-adapting “races” and “species,” led to a waning of the romantic narrative of successive empires, from “prehistorical” proto-Indians to “historical” Indians to Euroamericans displacing them. The legitimization by way of historical precedent, always a rather limping one, gave way to an uniformist view of all Indigenous peoples stemming from ancestors who have migrated to America via the Bering land bridge, having inhabited America for at least 10,000 years, and not having undergone much cultural change throughout the millennia. The scientific version of this view was provided by the new discipline of anthropology which largely construed Native Americans no longer as “prehistorical” people but as people living “outside the flow of history” (Meltzer, *Great Paleolithic War* 428), inhabiting a timeless ethnographic present.²⁷

In the popular perception, these two stereotypes of Native Americans – as savages eradicating earlier cultures and non-human creatures, and as unchanging societies outside of the flow of history, close to nature, condemned to failure – continue to coexist. They can be found in schoolbooks, Hollywood movies, museum collections, and in legal discourse. They form a mythical complex performing the cultural work of displacing attention from Indigenous realities in the late capitalist world, both as inhabitants of national sacrifice areas used for resource extraction and waste disposal, and as political agents of change.

Antiquity and Territoriality

Of course it would be much too easy to assume a causal connection between such cultural conceptions and narratives and economic-political interests. Political, scientific, and cultural discourses emerge in relative autonomy from one another and from the real to which they react and which they contribute to shape. Antiquity in the strict deep temporal sense is no component of the legal discourse managing the relations between tribes and the Euroamerican states. Major legal decisions acknowledge the priority or seniority of Indigenous inhabitants as well as their right of ownership, at least in theory. Thus the Marshall Court ruled in *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) that “[t]he Indian nations have always been considered as distinct, independent political communities, retaining their original natural rights, as the undisputed possessors of the soil, from time immemorial” (qt. Biolsi, “Imagined Geographies” 242). But as territorial encroachment continued, the theoretical existence of those time-honored rights receded behind a thicken-

27 Even Franz Boas, “who recognized that Native Americans had a history *and* a future, nonetheless perceived them as existing in the liminal space of the timeless ‘ethnographic present’” (Meltzer, *Great Paleolithic War* 429).

ing veil of colonial legal rhetoric. Thus in 1988 the US Supreme Court rejected a suit against the building of a logging road that would have impeded Northern Californian tribes' constitutionally granted free religious exercise, arguing that "whatever rights the Indians may have to the use of the area, ... those rights do not divest the Government of its right to use what is, after all *its* land" (*Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association*; qt. Carpenter, "Old Ground" 986).²⁸ In conflicts about territory, the general practice in the United States now is that tribes are allowed a certain amount of co-management of disputed territories outside reservations (Biolsi, "Imagined Geographies" 245-46), while encroachments on reservation lands continue with the help of social and biopolitical stratagems, as modern Indigenous writers like Linda Hogan and Louise Erdrich impressively document and dramatize in their fictional texts.²⁹ As we can see above, constructions of antiquity did play a crucial role in the "Kennewick Man" case because the NAGPRA-based return of human and cultural artifacts requires proof of "some relationship to a presently existing tribe, people, or culture to be considered Native American" (*Bonnichsen v. United States*, qt. Biolsi, "Imagined Geographies" 246). But the historical and anthropological assumptions about Native Americans sketched above indirectly play into legal decisions through their ideological presence in the minds of legal agents. Thus, in the famous Canadian *Delgamuukw* case (1991), Judge Allan McEachern of the British Columbia State Supreme Court rejected the oral traditions given as court testimony by the elders of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en tribes with a view to establish their tribes' ancestral relation to the land. He did so by resorting to the savagist trope, coined by Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century, describing the lives of Indigenous peoples as "nasty, brutish and short" (qt. Borrows, *Recovering Canada* 86). In 1997, the Canadian Supreme Court overturned this view in liberally granting ancestral rights to the tribes. But Chief Justice Antonio Lamer also ruled that the evidence necessary for obtaining Aboriginal title includes proof of "continuous" and "exclusive" occupation (*Delgamuukw* §§ 195, 196), aware of the fact that such continuity might have been interrupted by the effects of colonization. He also held that Aboriginal lands could not be used in a manner that was "inconsistent with [its] continued use by future generations of aboriginals" (*Delgamuukw* § 154), thus imposing certain limits on land use dependent on the significance of "aboriginal." Ultimately, the granting of land rights, based on proof of cultural and ethnic continuity and consistency, depends on a certain understanding of "Indianness" that does not seem to fully acknowledge historical change. The curse of colonial mythology – mythical narratives of Indian savagery and of Indians inhabiting a timeless present – is that it easily creeps into modern court decisions. For Native Americans, to have to move within the frame-

28 On *Lyng* see also Walter Echo-Hawk, chapter 12.

29 See Hogan's novel *Mean Spirit* (1990) based on the history of the Osage murders in Oklahoma in the 1920s, and Erdrich's *The Round House* (2012) inspired by historical cases of non-Indians seeking access to land via marriage and adoption in South and North Dakota.

work of such a mythology, which stretches from the earliest treaties to the education-dependent cultural assumptions in the minds of lawyers and judges, requires a significant amount of strategic skill. Discourses about antiquity, in the “courts of the conqueror” (Echo-Hawk), confront Indigenous claimants with an ideological trap consisting of Western historical timeframes, ethnopsychological notions about Native Americans’ culture and “character,” and parochial notions about non-Western claims to historicity.

The Lamer ruling of 1997 is a landmark decision in Indigenous rights legislation. For example, it explicitly admits oral evidence as proof of the required bond between the Indigenous claimants and the land. But although native voices are occasionally heard in colonial courts, they simply cannot accept, as John Borrows notes with reference to the *Delgamuukw* case, the “competing jurisprudential narrative that strained Canada’s claim to exclusive jurisdiction over Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en lands” (Borrows, *Recovering Canada* 89). And although the proof of occupation in this case does not go back to times before the assumption of British sovereignty, North American cultural discourses on the pre-colonial Native American presence in the land bespeak a pervasive obsession with the deep past. This is why even in the context of legal conflicts, assumptions about the ancient past are not irrelevant as they unwittingly feed into legal decisions (see the work of Robert A. Williams, Walter Echo-Hawk, and John Borrows). The widespread cultural notion of the prehistoricity of Indigenous peoples stands against legal expectations to show (historical) continuity of occupation. In addition, Indigenous forms of land tenure are imagined as diametrically opposed to Euroamerican settlement practices: as nomadic over against sedentary and as unchanging over against dynamic. Thus the legal parlance of settler colonial discourse distinguishes between Indian land ownership as “*occupation*” and Euroamerican ownership as “*property*” and “*possession*.” Thomas Jefferson and other early legal thinkers carefully distinguished between these three terms, usually evoking the Lockean argument of cultivation in favor of other forms of land use.³⁰ In theory, the legal logic of *corpus possessionis* – the effective display of possessive activities, like cultivation, establishment of a government, trade forts, military posts – asserted its power over against other visible forms of ownership (Milano 80-84).³¹

30 Thus Jefferson writes in his unpublished draft for a constitutional amendment (which he did not submit in the end): “The province of Louisiana is incorporated with the US. and made a part thereof. The rights of *occupying* in the soil, and of self government, are confirmed to the Indian inhabitants, as they now exist. Preemption only of the portions rightfully *occupied* by them, & a succession to the *occupancy* of such as they may abandon, with the *full rights of possession as well as of property & sovereignty*, in whatever is not or shall cease to be so rightfully *occupied* by them, shall belong to the US” (Kastor, *Louisiana Purchase* 193-94; emphasis added). “Full rights of possession” and “property” rhetorically follow directly upon abandonment by the previous inhabitants. In fact such areas would undergo an inchoate status as “territory” before fulfilling the preconditions of statehood.

31 See also my “Terror and Territoriality.” Métis writer Cherie Dimaline, celebrated author of *The Marrow Thieves* (2017), is thus right when she insists on Indigenous people making visible use of the land: “When we are not on our land, when we are not hunting and in ceremony, when there’s a lack of traditional land use, it’s easier for resource extraction com-

Yet, colonial reality rarely confirmed this distinction, apart from the fact that the discourse of settlement went hand in hand with an ideology and practice of geographical mobility and expansion, not sedentariness. The core idea of settler colonial ideology was less to create a continent of yeoman farmers but rather to transform an anarchic “wilderness” into a space responsive to the grid-format of racial capitalism. Apart from the fact that many Euroamerican settlers did not really settle in an agricultural way, the settler-nomad binary also erases the fact that many tribes actually practiced settled forms of agriculture. As the case of the Five Civilized Tribes blatantly illustrates, the legal discourse accompanying territorial dispossession – epitomized by the Marshall Court’s paradoxical phrase “domestic dependant nations” – is therefore full of uncertainties and contradictions, or what Ann Stoler would refer to as “epistemic murk” (Stoler, *Haunted by Empire* 9).

The aesthetic mode for expressing this epistemic murk is the uncanny, found in horror and gothic fictions. The acquisition of American real estate has been haunted from the very beginnings, as when Cotton Mather in *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1692), employing the full repertoire of settler colonial terminology, powerfully evoked an evil presence lurking in the land. He feels the devil himself to descend upon the “people of God” having “settled in those, which were once the devil’s *territories* I believe that never were more satanical devices used for the *unsettling* of any people under the sun, than what have been employed for the extirpation of the vine which God has here *planted*, casting out the heathen, and preparing a room before it, and causing it to *take deep root*, and *fill the land*” (Mather, *Wonders* 15; emphasis added). It continues to do so into the horror fictions of our own time – as when the cannibal spirit Wendigo takes his revenge on Maine settlers in Stephen King’s novel *Pet Sematary* (1983) (Mackenthun, “Haunted Real Estate”).³² These popular fictions are semantically inspired by earlier uses of the gothic aesthetic for expressing an uncanny awareness of territorial dispossession – above all H.P. Lovecraft’s racist and deeply disturbing evocations of an ancient monstrous presence in the land.

Ghostly stories, articulating colonial guilt while inscribing popular discourse with images of archaic savage violence, have existed since the beginnings of American literature.³³ In his preface to *Edgar Huntly*, Charles Brockden Brown famously proposed to exchange the castles and “chimeras” of the European

panies to get the permits they need for pipelines” (qtd. in Ramji). Dimaline indirectly refers to the legal trope of *corpus possessionis*.

32 The Maine Indian Claims Settlement of 1980, evoked in that novel, is presently occupying the courts again as the Penobscot Nation has filed a lawsuit against the State of Maine for being deprived of their sovereignty on the Penobscot River that surrounds their granted territory (islands in that river). Maine argues that the Claims settlement nowhere states explicitly that the territory includes the river itself and denies that the Penobscot have continuously been a riverine people. See Kolodny, “Competing Narratives.”

33 The American gothic is also frequently related to the history of slavery and the African presence in America. Toni Morrison has masterfully analyzed the use of the gothic mode for expressing the “unspeakable” presence of slavery and African Americans in the antebellum period.

gothic tradition for the “incidents of Indian hostility and the perils of the Western wilderness” (3). The novel’s murder mystery involves ghostly Indians haunting the frontier during their tribe’s westward removal whilst one old and ridiculed woman remains to articulate Indigenous territorial concerns. The temporality of American horror is often undefined but its ancient origins are frequently evoked – as in the Indiana Jones mysteries, or in the modern horror fictions of Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child. More often than not, American terror is related to questions of contested territoriality (Mackenthun, “Terror”). As Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush emphasize in their introduction to a volume on dead Indians and native ghosts in modern American culture, the hauntings are often related to particular places and landscapes, a fact that is frequently ignored in the analysis of these works (*Phantom Past* X). Historical evocations of Indian graves – whether Thomas Jefferson’s description of disorderly piles of bones in Virginian burial mounds in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) or Andrew Jackson’s assertions of the inevitability of the tribes’ disappearance uttered in defense of his removal policy in the 1820s, always take place in the rhetorical contexts of the themes of dispossession and extinction. Indeed the trope of the Vanishing Indian is a crucial ingredient of the American settler colonial narrative, as Lucy Maddox and other scholars of American literature have shown. Examinations of more recent materializations of the trope of native haunting in modern American literature and film (e.g. Boyd/Thrush; Bergland) argue that it is part and parcel of the expansionist legitimizing narrative, but they also show how modern Indigenous writers are appropriating the trope as a rhetorical weapon of decolonial self-empowerment.

One of the ideological functions of the trope of Indian haunting with which American popular culture can be said to be “obsessed” is thus to express the “un-homeliness” (*Unheimlichkeit*/uncanniness) of colonial settlements (Boyd/Thrush IX, quoting Renée Bergland). Un-homeliness in turn derives from the recognition that the place settled in had been inhabited and spiritually inscribed by forerunners and foreigners for a very long time, whose archaic and, from a non-Indian settler perspective, evil and vengeful spirits continue to lay claim to the ground.

While the haunted place of popular fantasies usually articulates a deep anxiety in American literature and culture about the antiquity of Indigenous settlement and is thus the modern version of earlier horrors expressed by Melville and Poe (see chapter 3), it often shares a semantic site with the image of the ancient ruin. An object of both romantic attraction and repulsion because of its unreadability, the pre-Columbian ruin is the haunted place par excellence. As I will discuss in chapter 2, the uncanniness of Native American ruins derives from the fact that both their age and their meaning were unknown to their non-Indigenous visitors like John Lloyd Stephens, Frederick Catherwood, and other adventurer-archaeologists stripping them free from shrubs and trees. Ancient Indigenous ruins confronted settler colonial cultures with the challenge of geological time which let the providentialist claims of imperial time seem negligible in comparison.

Ann Laura Stoler reads ruins not exclusively in terms of imperial nostalgia but also in conjunction with the practice of imperial “ruination” – a term she borrows from Michelle Cliff’s description of former Jamaican plantations being reclaimed by tropical weeds (*Imperial Debris* 19-20; Cliff 1).³⁴ But besides this ecological definition of “ruination,” Stoler is also inspired by Walter Benjamin, who regards ruins as “petrified life,” as “traces that mark the fragility of power and the force of destruction.” Ruins in her view are sites of imperial destruction but also “sites that condense alternative senses of history,” always attended by processes of “ruination as an ongoing corrosive process that weighs on the future” (9). This book suggests that the continuing construction of Indigenous societies as “prehistorical” and as not properly “settled,” expressed in terms of skeletons and haunted ruins, is such a corrosive process, especially as the characterization of Indigenous cultures as relics of empire is counterproductive to efforts by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups to keep the ruinous consequences of the modern extraction economy off their lands: *this* form of “ruination” runs counter to Cliff’s original meaning of the term, signaling destruction rather than (as Cliff does) floral revitalization.

Certainly no simple direct line can be drawn between the Maya city of Copán, which Stephens sought to acquire for the U.S. national museum for the sum of \$50, to the modern pipeline projects ruining sacred sites and ecotopes in the Dakotas, in Oregon, and in British Columbia. But as we will see in chapter 2, Stephens’ project of removing the ancient artifacts to be both preserved and exhibited in the United States indeed ran parallel to his engineering project of designing a canal and then building a railroad through the isthmus of Central America. The collection of ruins and the ruination of the land have been twin ventures from the very start. Conservation and muscular commercialization went hand in hand. Romantic nostalgia coexists in Stephens’ work with the imperial design of ‘developing’ the area in spite of its being external to United States territory. His texts are so insightful because they hold in common two impulses that would later assert different realms within the same discursive formation: the impulse to preserve the monuments of a foreign past and make them available for leisure culture, and the impulse to extract the commercially valuable products of foreign countries in the name of progress. This paradoxical concurrence of preservation and destruction remains crucial to modernity’s treatment of cultural heritage. Convinced that any investigation into the past is also reflecting a history of the present, I suggest to accept Stoler’s invitation to “think with ruins of empire”: not primarily out of a romantic or antiquarian impulse (though that impulse will demand its due as well) but “to attend to their reappropriations, neglect, and strategic and active positioning within the politics of the present” (11).³⁵ My read-

34 Cliff takes the term from Barry Floyd, *Jamaica: An Island Microcosm* (1979).

35 As seen, Stoler’s ruins are doubly connotated. While she refers in her introduction to the ruins of romantic imperialism, her and her co-writers’ analyses primarily refer to the ruins of modern industrial projects. *Imperial Debris* deals less with Copán or Chichen Itza

ings of American discourses on ancient ruins are inspired by a recognition of the continuing ruinous work of the extraction economy. I claim that there is an ideological genealogy that connects Stephens' design for a transoceanic canal through Nicaragua with the Keystone XL pipeline built through the Dakota aquifer.

Indigenous Knowledge and Scienticity

"In the United States, the Indian is the original enemy combatant who cannot be grieved," writes Jodi Byrd in *The Transit of Empire* (xviii). 120 years earlier, on January 3, 1891, L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wizard of Oz*,³⁶ wrote: "Our only safety depends upon the total extirmination [sic] of the Indians." His article in the South Dakota paper *Saturday Pioneer* was a direct response to the Wounded Knee Massacre. This is one in a myriad of similar statements promoting and sanctioning genocide (and promoting and sanctioning bisoncide as a facilitator of genocide) that can be found throughout the political discourse in the United States at the time of the Indian Wars. By implication, the survival of Native Americans means that they form a pervasive threat to national security ("safety" in Baum). This sense of threat was discursively transferred to external "aliens,"³⁷ including Islamic terrorists, as the name of the military operation that led to the killing of Osama Bin Laden – "Operation Geronimo" – reveals. The fierceness of the dispute about the possession of "Kennewick Man," and the fierceness of current struggles about national sacrifice areas like Standing Rock testify to the truth of Byrd's statement: in the American cultural imaginary, Indians remain a national threat, together with non-Indian "eco-terrorists."

Decades before this threat began to be domesticated by the film industry in stereotypical celluloid representations, the physical remains of Native Americans were scientifically collected and catalogued, together with those of other non-Caucasians, by the practitioners of anthropology – a science that only colonial nations have. The logic of anthropological research required that large quantities of skulls were needed to draw reliable conclusions about the differences between the world's "races," Anja Laukötter writes (189). The skull collection of the renowned anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička (1869-1943) amounted to more than 18,000 items (Ann Fabian 218). The "excesses" of nineteenth- and early twen-

than with Fordlandia and the "nuclear" or "radioactive colonialism" in Nevada. On this, see Kuletz, *Tainted Desert* 6 and Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 269-328. The imperial ruins Stoler is interested in are "racialized markers on a global scale": Agent Orange-infested Vietnam, radioactive Bikini (13) – or, one might add, the contaminated remains of the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal so skillfully brought back to global attention by Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People* (2007).

36 *The Wizard of Oz* features prominently in Stephen King's horror novel *Pet Sematary* (1983), as a kind of comic relief to the horror of the ungraspable Wendigo. Unlike the Wizard, the Wendigo is not a sham. It turns dead humans and pets into cannibals.

37 A term now fortunately to be removed from official parlance as part of the 2021 Citizenship Act. See Shoichet. Thanks to Claire Massey for this information.

tieth-century skull collecting that Ann Fabian documents in *The Skull Collectors* (213) are not limited to the vaults of the Smithsonian; there are similar collections in the metropolitan museum vaults of other imperial capitals.³⁸ From a certain time onward, as Laukötter documents with regard to turn of the century German skull collectors, the amassing of bones was no longer necessary for positivist science but developed into “an occupation sufficient unto itself” (191). The shocking report of a Northern Cheyenne man doing research at the Smithsonian in 1986 and who had asked to be shown the bone cabinet helped prompt the issuing of NAGPRA (Ann Fabian, *Skull Collectors*, 218). Without this legislation protecting the cultural and human remains of Native Americans the Ancient One would now have joined Hrdlička’s horror cabinet, testifying to the pathology of settler colonial culture.

The voicelessness of Indian ghosts in colonial texts, the muteness of Indian skulls in colonial museums, as well as the voicelessness of Indigenous claimants in the legal system, to a large extent reflect the enduring dismissal of Indigenous positions within critical discourse. This critical blindness toward contemporary Indigenous voices must be seen as a major reason for the anger that inspired Vine Deloria’s book *Red Earth White Lies* (1997). Fortunately, things have changed significantly within the past twenty years. The landmark volume *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, 1993) does register the cultural effects of settler colonialism even before the coinage of that term, although it is still comparatively mute about the continuing effect of colonial narratives and metaphors in contemporary United States “domestic” imperialism (which, from many Indigenous perspectives, is not “domestic” at all but a continuing process of foreign aggression).³⁹ Postcolonial Studies remains relatively mute about Indigenous concerns due to its focus on globalization, diaspora and migration. In 2002, Eric Cheyfitz still spoke of an “almost total eclipse” of Native Americans from the “firmament of the postcolonial” (406), while in 2011 Jodi Byrd pointed her finger at the differences in the disparity of the “geographical localities that fall within the purview of subaltern and indigenous theories.” The concerns of Indigenous studies were “overlooked by the metropole,” Byrd insists (XXXIII). The mists that enwrap Indigenous antiquity are at least in part the result of the invisibilization of Native American and First Nations knowledge traditions within modern critical discourse itself.

Certainly, as Glen Coulthard argues, recognition of Indigenous presences and grievances is not enough. The recent work of Native American scholars like Byrd, Coulthard, Phil Deloria, Mishuana Goeman, Audra Simpson, Robin Kimmerer, and Lisa Brooks testifies to a large field of knowledge that has been ignored for too long by the critical establishment. What is required is a reassessment of the basic certainties of scienticity itself. The belated recognition of Indigenous voices

38 For German skull collections of Africans, see Laukötter.

39 Continental colonialism is represented in *Cultures* by Cheyfitz’s reading of Cooper’s *Pioneers* in the context of the Marshall trilogy.

in critical discourse is a reminder of the uneven distribution of knowledge sites not only within colonial discourse but within critical discourse as well, whose urban perspective has frequently downplayed peripheral forms of knowledge.

“Peripheral” here refers both to epistemic marginality and quite literally to the geographical location, the rural periphery, home of many Indigenous people, where the toxic consequences of the extraction economy is visible in open daylight. Indigenous knowledge sites, as well as sacred sites, frequently coincide with the sites of the extraction industry invisible from the centers of academic knowledge. Disregard for these non-urban epistemic sites may lead to the loss of valuable knowledge relevant to practical fields of future survival such as agricultural change, environmental planning and resource management. Modern scholars working with Indigenous groups on archaeological sites have opened up to including orally transmitted knowledge about changes in the land. These recent developments challenge the conventional binarism distinguishing between “myth” and “science,” often falsely equated with another binarism, that between “fiction” and “truth.” These dichotomies are no longer tenable; critics are in each case thrown back upon the intellectual obligation to read the sources, whatever their truth claims are, with the methodologies of source criticism, including attention paid to conventions of narrative, imagery, speech situation, methods of observation, and motif – a task that is now increasingly also conducted by historians of science (see, for example, Latour, *Science in Action*; Shapin; Daston and Galison). As Western science’s claims to objectivity and disinterestedness increasingly come under revision and more and more scholars investigate the collusions between science and colonialism, non-western forms of knowledge generation and transmission are gaining ascendance in academic contexts.

But is Indigenous knowledge *science*? This very question was raised by the amateur scholar Ella Clark, discussed in chapter 4, who understood that many stories she collected in the Pacific Northwest contained ancient geological and geographic information. Clark refers to these stories as “science in infancy.” Although the metaphor unfortunately reiterates the paternal metaphor notorious of colonial rhetoric, her intellectual initiative, made from the margins of the scientific community which either ignored or ridiculed Clark’s work, is a serious demand for epistemic coevalness. It raises a number of further questions, as the term “science” is inextricably tied to the concept of Western modernity. It only came to be applied to theory-inspired and methodically guided empirical work during the period of its accelerating institutionalization in the nineteenth century; before that, the term simply signified “knowledge” and people who systematically studied nature called themselves natural philosophers. The critical history of knowledge that emerged since the 1980s usefully distinguishes between “information,” which Malinowski referred to as “the brute material” that surrounds us (qt. Peter Burke, vol. 2: 5); “knowledge,” which Peter Burke, following Lévi-Strauss, calls “cooked” information in the sense that it includes processes of “verification, criticism, measurement, comparison and systematization” (5); and finally “sci-

ence,” which adds the aspect of the official authorization of knowledge by way of social institutions like the academy, museums, educational journals, and foundations. All levels bear the socially engendered danger of solidifying certain knowledges and methodologies while rejecting others.

When assessing the social history of knowledge from an intercultural perspective, it becomes especially necessary to acknowledge the plurality and multiplicity of knowledges and epistemic cultures (Peter Burke, Vol. 1: 13 and vol. 2: 4). The rise of postcolonial theory and feminist theory have engendered revised views of the Western myth of science and its deep rootedness in discourses of modernization and development. As Sandra Harding asserts, claims to science are socially and geopolitically tied to the Global North (*Sciences From Below* 7, passim). And in an earlier critique of the self-image of hegemonic (Northern, Western) science discourse, Laura Nader argues: “Because ethnocentrism runs deep, creative ideas in the practices of indigenous people and our own folk are routinely overlooked, as are ways in which modern science responds to financial and intellectual reward initiatives.” Referring to an essay by Robert Young, she concludes, “Modern Western science is a habit of mind that mirrors the compartmentalized societies in which it is embedded” (*Naked Science* 3). Not only should the epithet “science” in these readings not be restricted to the scientific centers of the “developed” Global North but its umbilical relationship to the concept of “modernity” should also be questioned. Because, as Arjun Appadurai and Shmuel Eisenstadt remind us, there is not only one modernity but a plurality of modernities, and further, Latour provocatively claims that “we have never been modern.” In fact, Harding is probably not the only one who presently sees modernity to be “shrinking, not expanding as the classical theorists predicted” (12). As the Epilogue will suggest, the denial of historicity and scientificity is not only directed against the inhabitants of the peripheries of empires but also at citizens inhabiting the internal peripheries of those empires. In search for the past, that foreign country, it is not always necessary to cross oceans and mountains: it can begin in front of one’s threshold.

What really happened during the long millennia of the American deep past will remain largely unknown. As an empirical void, that historical period keeps being “settled” with stories nurtured on Indigenous, imperial, and transcultural narrative repertoires. Each of these narratives, in addition to the little they can tell us about what happened many millennia ago, reflect cultural knowledges, ideological agendas, and secret desires of their own respective moments in history. Read adequately, interactively, transculturally, and in respect for the other’s truth, the human and geological documents of ancient times, in America and elsewhere, may set free beneficial social powers and help us come “down to earth” (Holtdorf/Fairclough; Latour, *Down to Earth*). The sharing of stories about the ancient past is not least a linguistic and literary dialogue that may evoke notions of home and belonging. Cross-cultural storytelling about by-gone times may turn former rivals into members of the same community and the desire to possess the earth into a desire to imaginatively “own” it.

Imperial Archaeology. Ancient Ruins and the American Isthmus

At the beginning of his *Ansichten der Cordilleren und Monumente der eingeborenen Völker Amerikas* (1810-13), the Prussian polymath Alexander von Humboldt refers to the absence of proof that humans appeared in the Americas much later than on other continents (*Views of the Cordilleras* 8). Humboldt, one of the key scientists of the Enlightenment who was also considered an “atheist,” reconstructs the Mexican calendric chronology amounting to a count of around 20,000 years, which he finds “very remarkable” (248). Passing by biblical authority, he established deep cultural links between pre-Columbian and Tibetan peoples and was apparently untroubled by the vastness of the time count. In Query XI of his *Notes on Virginia* (1785), Humboldt’s American correspondent Thomas Jefferson likewise assumes, on the basis of comparative linguistics, that Native Americans must have had a long history in America because their languages had become radically different from one another – a lengthy process, “perhaps not less than many people give to the age of the earth” (102).¹ Besides such remarks, which fly in the face of both Christian and Clovis First fundamentalists, Jefferson has also left us with his elaborate description of the ancient mound in his home state of Virginia, whose skeletal contents he finds fascinating but in great disorder (97-100). Said passage gives evidence of early European Americans’ general fascination with America’s archaeological record. During the process of American settlement, the remains of Indigenous cultures were literally plowed under in the clearing of fields for farming and the construction of roads and bridges. Before the 1830s, only a small group of Euroamerican settlers took a scientific interest in the tumuli, stone works, and human relics they discovered around their towns and villages. Some of these settlers became “antiquarian entrepreneurs” and “relic hunters” (Snead 84, *passim*). Others had a genuine interest in the “pre-history” of the land they inhabited, whose foreignness was a constant reminder of the social upheaval caused by the U.S. American removal policy. The Indigenous past, writes James Snead, was omnipresent in the nineteenth-century “American terrain”:

Stone gouges were discovered on riverbanks. Holes opened up under the feet of farmers and their horses, exposing buried relics. Trees blown down in windstorms had pottery tangled in their roots. Brick pavements came to light. Heads carved from ivory appeared in foundation trenches,

1 Jefferson assumes the languages of America to be “of greater antiquity than those of Asia” (102).

ceramics were exposed while sinking mine shafts. Stone ornaments were uncovered beneath new cotton presses. (Snead 84)

Given the plenitude of the recent cultural presence of a disappearing – that is, dispossessed – people, it is no wonder that many local antiquarian societies sprang up whose members, of various first- or multi-generational immigrant backgrounds, came together collecting and discussing the material artifacts, measuring tumuli and stone works, and exhibiting the finds in small museums (Snead). Ruminating on the bones and ruins, Jefferson regrets “that we have *suffered so many of the Indian tribes already to extinguish*, without our having previously collected and deposited in the records of literature, the general rudiments at least of the languages they spoke” (*Notes* 101; emphasis added). His transitive use of “to extinguish” – implying that the demise of the Indigenous population was somehow of their own making – is remarkable in such a linguistically aware writer. Placing the agency for extinction with the Indians themselves, Jefferson’s sentence erases the part colonial society played in this not-quite-so-natural process. His linguistic slip is symptomatic of a long rhetorical tradition of naturalizing the dispossession and disappearance of Native Americans. The imagery of settlers treading on the graves of disappearing Indians was widely used in the context of the Jacksonian Indian Removal. It gave rise to the powerful metaphor of the Vanishing Indian that prepared the social-Darwinist explanation for colonial displacement and dispossession used later in the nineteenth century.

“Antiquity” and “Extinction” entertain an intricate relationship with one another in American colonial discourse. Theories of a succession of populations replacing one another, either as a result of natural processes or as the result of wars, coexist with colonial nations’ desire to obtain evidence of antiquity – their own or of conquered peoples or from areas of national interest such as the Mediterranean and Latin America. The concurrent rise of (colonial) nationalism and of archaeology in the late eighteenth century is not a mere chronological coincidence. Rather, archaeology is one of the cultural practices producing hegemonic knowledge about the past of colonized places and peoples. The search for human antiquities both on the local and international scale would contribute to the project of the historiographic self-invention of modern nation-states. As part of the larger field of historical scholarship, archaeology flourished in the soil of nationalist inventions of cultural traditions and a nostalgic search for the mysterious origins of modern nations in the mists of antiquity.

Archaeologists, in the words of Margarita Díaz-Andreu, “produce a narrative of power which is based on the authority of the observer and consigns the non-European to a secondary status” (8). It is a very effective strategy of “surveillance and observation,” of the “symbolic violence” by which Europeans established their imperial domination over others (8, quoting Pierre Bourdieu). The rhetorical twin formation of “antiquity” and “extinction” is part of the imperial knowledge perspective (or what Mary Louise Pratt calls the “imperial eye”) establishing

itself on foreign ground. Absorbing the ancient monuments of displaced people was part of that strategy.

It is therefore no coincidence that the nationalization of archaeological practice and discourse that began in 1820 with the founding of the American Antiquarian Society gained speed, as Snead observes, in the late 1830s and early 1840s with the founding of the American Ethnological Society in 1842 and, after a long process of “gestation,” the Smithsonian in 1846. This process was synchronous with the expansion into new territories: the Indian Removal of the 1830s and the beginning of America’s maritime expansion initiated by the United States Exploring Expedition starting in 1842 under the leadership of Charles Wilkes to survey the Pacific (Snead 133-34). Some writers on North American “prehistory” established a direct connection between the fate of lost ancient civilizations, such as the builders of the Ohio mounds, and the desire to remove all Indigenous people to a new territory west of the Mississippi River. Thus, William Henry Harrison, who had defeated the combined forces led by the Shawnee Tecumseh in 1810, entered the discussion about the mysterious Moundbuilders by suggesting that that ancient civilization must have been violently displaced by later, culturally less refined arrivants (Harrison 7, 10). One of their successors were the Seneca, one of the tribes in whose involuntary removal to the Indian territory west of the Mississippi River, obtained by a fake treaty, Harrison was presently involved, as Edward Everett writes in a comment of Harrison’s text (Harrison 42; see also Timmerman 83). During the Removal era, the local antiquarians interested in preserving the remains of the cultural past of their places of residence in little town museums came increasingly to be joined by a new type of surveyor-antiquarians mining imperial frontier areas for monuments and artifacts of *national* interest.

The nineteenth-century protagonists of this chapter – the American adventurer-archaeologists John Lloyd Stephens and George Ephraim Squier – are part of this nationalization of antiquities research. What Eric Sundquist writes of Stephens is likewise true of Squier: his “monumental works cannot be disconnected from the imperial vision that put historical research into the service of contemporary political power” (38). Both explicitly acted as agents of the burgeoning American empire, combining this role with that of amateur archaeologists. As I will argue in this chapter, the imperial archaeologists’ actions and writings consist of a hybrid mix of tropical adventure and scientific reflection in the spirit of Humboldt. The mid-nineteenth century archaeological expeditions of Stephens and Squier encapsulate the doubly articulated character of early American archaeology as both scientific and imperial. Apart from concurrent explorations of earthen structures within the territory of the United States and that covered by the Louisiana Purchase (1803), mid-century archaeological and political attention was directed toward the area to the south that offered both hidden cultural treasures (in the form of Maya ruins) and a future trade route connecting the two oceans. In the cultural discourse of the time, the area of the ancient Maya culture was a contested scientific and economic contact zone; romantic dreams of hidden civ-

ilizations coexisted with pragmatic plans for establishing railroads and canals. As the buttonwood tree of Wall Street had to make room for the building of the New York stock exchange district, trees in Yucatán were removed to lay bare ancient Maya ruins, parts of which were to be transported into the newly established national museum in Washington. Yet, next to their authors' masculine bravado and cosmopolitan jingoism, the writings of these expansionist archaeologists betray a subtle sense of belatedness with respect to their imperial contenders, especially the British and the French harvesting antiquities in the Mediterranean. This sense of imperial belatedness is one of the key aspects of the postheroic mode that Bruce Harvey detected in Stephens' and Squier's texts (*American Geographics*, chapter 4). Other concurrent travelers to the Yucatán, like the French aristocrat Arthur de Morelet, still pursued the Humboldtian intellectual project – ranging closer to what Mary Pratt termed an “anti-conquest” mode, a cosmopolitan and pantheistic celebration of the magnificence and the mystery of the natural world.

New York – Potsdam

The liaison between archaeology and imperial politics extends beyond these hemispheric concurrences. There is a transatlantic connection as well. One way to tell the story begins in the summer of 1847, linking events in Mexico and Prussia. In that summer, the U.S. armies of Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott, were on their way to conquering Mexico City, their soldiers' saddle bags weighted with William Prescott's “books about Mexican antiquities” and using them “as guides for reconnaissance” as the invaders followed the route of Prescott's hero Hernán Cortés from Veracruz to Mexico City (Kennedy 36). In that same year, John Lloyd Stephens, another admirer of Cortés and by then himself a renowned “discoverer” of many Maya ruins, joined the first U.S. steamship voyage from Boston to Bremerhaven, being the official representative of the Ocean Steam Navigating Company to whom the ship belonged. The steamer was beaten by its British rival, the *Britannia*, but Stephens landed safely in Bremen, attended official dinners in celebration of the revolutionary technology that would introduce a new age of transportation, and went on a one-day trip to Berlin before continuing his journey to the Rhine river. As he writes, he only had one purpose in Berlin. With a written recommendation from the former Prussian minister to Washington in his pocket, he passed through the Brandenburg Gate and traveled on to Potsdam, where he heard to his chagrin that the object of his detour, the 78 year-old Alexander von Humboldt, was indisposed and would not receive visitors. Stephens left his card nevertheless, upon which he was instantly invited into an adjoining apartment where Humboldt greeted him, saying that no introduction would have

been necessary.² Stephens, the expert at discovering the monuments of American antiquity, compares the aged aristocrat-scholar himself with a monument or ancient Maya king:

He was recorded in the annals of a past generation. Indeed, his reign had been so long, and his fame went back so far, that until I saw him bodily, I had almost regarded him as a part of history, and belonging to the past; even then, alone and in the stillness of the palace, I could hardly keep from looking at him as something monumental, receiving the tribute of posthumous fame. (Stephens, "An Hour" 152)

Stephens' impression of Humboldt himself as an ancient artifact was confirmed by Humboldt's manner of speech which reminded Stephens of the American senior scholar Albert Gallatin, "an old personal friend" of Humboldt, "and to whom he wished to be remembered" (152).

What Stephens expresses here is more than just the reverence paid to an elderly scholar. Having been a model for a whole generation of scientists, Humboldt, at mid-century, stood for a romantic, aesthetically nostalgic scientific approach to nature that was gradually giving way to more rationalistic-positivistic attitudes. The conversation between Stephens and Humboldt took place at a historical moment when the growing specialization and institutionalization of the sciences of man and nature were in the process of replacing the more holistic Enlightenment approach to the world. With industrialization gaining speed, commercial interests began to compete with a sense of spiritual reverence for creation that we associate with the name of Humboldt and that we would later find in Thoreau and Emerson. The cosmopolitan model was going out of fashion, along with the type of the aristocratic gentleman-scholar able to dedicate all his money and time to his chosen scientific project. It was being replaced with a nationalist-internationalist economy-driven model properly symbolized by Stephens' chosen vehicle of transportation, the coal-burning, un-elegant, heavy, but ultimately successful steamship that gradually replaced the beautiful but weather-dependent sailing ships. Alongside searching for unknown Maya ruins in the forests of Central America, Stephens had made himself renowned as an engineer who in 1847 was actively contributing to the construction of the Panama railway that was to connect the two oceans and greatly enhance global commerce.

During their meeting in Potsdam, the two men of worldly science concentrated on the themes offered by the new age. Their conversation circled around technological inventions and politics: the situation of political unrest in Europe on the eve of 1848, and the U.S. war against Mexico – that country outside Europe which seems to have interested Humboldt most. Praising Prescott's book on the Spanish conquest of Mexico, Humboldt "was full of our Mexican War," Stephens

2 The summary of Stephens' visit to Humboldt is based on his own account, "An Hour with Alexander von Humboldt," and on Victor von Hagen's additional information in *Maya Explorer*, 266-70.

writes. This certainly was a difficult topic for Stephens, as the general attitude in Europe – and that of a minority in the United States – was not in favor of this imperial aggression (Humboldt’s friend, Albert Gallatin, was one of its fiercest antagonists).³ Stephens evades the topic by emphasizing the United States’ “Prussian” values: even “in monarchical and anti-republican countries,” he writes, “a strong impression of our ability and power for war ... raises us to the rank of a ‘first rate power’, and makes us ‘respected’” (“An Hour” 152). Humboldt tells him that the Prussian king, together with his military advisors, had gone over all the military moves of the United States army and that Taylor’s action, “with a handful of regulars, and a small body of volunteers,” had

struck [them] with admiration at the daring and skill displayed at Buena Vista Amid the bitterness and malignity of the English press, it [sic] was grateful to hear from such lips, that the leading military men of a military nation did justice to the intrepidity and high military talents of General Taylor. (152)

This short meeting between the 42 year-old Stephens and the Prussian patriarch of natural science is striking on account of both the discrepancy between their Enlightenment ideals and Stephens’ jingoistic justification of imperial warfare, which seem to belong to different epochs altogether, and of the international social network that their scientific activity involved. Not space nor language, nor the fact that the two had never corresponded, prevented Stephens from being received at very short notice and in spite of Humboldt’s indisposition. In addition to their strong cosmopolitan spirit, both men were united by their “planetary consciousness,” the term Mary Louise Pratt uses to describe the desire to investigate the depths of the countries and cultures which a previous generation had merely mapped out but left largely unexplored (*Imperial Eyes* 15). But while Humboldt’s name generally stands for the utter dissociation between scientific and political pursuits – an attitude that Pratt refers to as “anti-conquest” – Stephens makes no qualms about his pride in the United States’ imperial and expansionist policy. Shortly after the conversation at Potsdam, the territory of the United States was enlarged by a third as a result of imperial war, documented in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848). The military leader Zachary Taylor became President of the United States, gold was discovered in California, and adventurers from the East Coast and Europe mass-migrated to the West Coast, many of them via the new railway line through Panama engineered by, among others, John Lloyd Stephens. The times of exclusively humanistic explorations à la Humboldt definitely seemed to be over.

This chapter takes a closer look at what appear to be two distinct scientific approaches to the natural world and to the antiquities of Central America in the middle of the nineteenth century: the Enlightenment natural history approach in the tradition of Humboldt, and the imperial approach reflecting the United States’

3 See Albert Gallatin’s critical assessment of the war in his leaflet *Peace with Mexico* (1847).

aggressive expansionism of the 1840s. Mary Pratt gives the following description of the difference between them:

[T]he system of nature as a descriptive paradigm was an utterly benign and abstract appropriation of the planet. Claiming no transformative potential whatsoever, it differed sharply from overtly imperial articulations of conquest, conversion, territorial appropriation, and enslavement. The system created ... a utopian, innocent vision of European global authority, which I refer to as an *anti-conquest*. The term is intended to emphasize the *relational* meaning of natural history, the extent to which it became meaningful specifically in contrast with an earlier imperial, and prebourgeois, European expansionist presence. (*Imperial Eyes* 38-39)

The passage raises the general question of whether it is really possible to define the two attitudes (“imperial” and “anti-conquest”) as oppositional paradigms or place them on a chronological scale (“imperial” assumedly followed by “utopian” and “bourgeois”). A look at the entanglements between science and imperialism in the nineteenth century, illustrated by the encounter in Potsdam, suggests that the natural history approach, rather than being a temporary phenomenon – a politically innocent episode preceded by an “earlier imperial” paradigm – was in fact coterminous with and dialectically related to imperialism. Some of the most representative expeditions of this kind (such as the Cook voyages or the Charles Wilkes expedition of the 1840s) were financed by imperial governments which assigned political and economic value to their scientific exploits. This becomes even more obvious as we enter the post-Napoleonic period during which the collection of information and artifacts in the colonial periphery increasingly came under state supervision.

While we may hesitate to assume a general innocence and disinterestedness of natural history at any time, the name of Alexander von Humboldt may indeed seduce us into believing that his particular kind of Enlightenment knowledge production served no interests except philosophical-epistemic ones. But as the encounter between Humboldt and Stephens in Potsdam shows, that ideal was giving way to more solid imperial interests. The period under critical review here, the early 1840s to late 1850s, was characterized by revolutionary changes around the Atlantic world, as well as transformations in the various fields of science – from improvements in transportation technology to the substantial intellectual shock waves caused by the publication of the work of Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin (see next chapter).

From the perspective of Central America, this was also a period of informal imperialism (Aguirre). The focus here is on the ways in which the imperial rivalry between the United States and Britain on the Gulf Coast affected the production of archaeological and other knowledge about the region of Yucatán, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. While textual examples taken from the writings of John Lloyd Stephens, Ephraim George Squier, and the Austrian scientific

traveler Carl Scherzer strongly partake of “imperial” discourse, the “natural history” approach is represented by a little-known travelogue of the French traveler and scholar, Chevalier Arthur de Morelet, whose style seems remarkably archaic and quaint compared with that of the other texts. The construction of American antiquity and the affective relation formulated vis-à-vis ancient places will be of crucial interest.

An Archaeological Monroe Doctrine

John Lloyd Stephens’ travels are the historical precursor of the intertwined geography of the Indiana Jones movies in mixing the “geographical notations” (to use Edward Said’s terms) of the Holy Land and the New World. Before his exploits in Mesoamerica in his double role as U.S. diplomat and archaeologist, he had traveled to the ancient sites in the Holy Land, reaching some fame for his fascinating account of the ruins of Petra, enthusiastically reviewed by Edgar Allan Poe. Like Indiana Jones, Stephens was quite a celebrity in his day. He undertook his two journeys to Central America at a politically critical time (1839-40 and 1841-42) both as a private adventurer and amateur archaeologist and as an official representative of the U.S. government. His trips are documented in two famous two-volume travelogues, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841), and, shortly later, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1843). Due to their low price, the volumes were widely distributed and consumed both in the U.S. and abroad. Having never been out of print since their first publication, they fired the imagination for the exotic world of archaeological adventure or, as Harvey calls it, the “archaeological sublime” (Harvey, *American Geographics* 158), in common readers.⁴

The more theoretically inspired studies of Stephens’ travelogues (see especially Evans; Harvey, *American Geographics*; Hay; Lenz) reflect the growing awareness within American Studies for issues of historical travel writing, colonialism, and empire as a result of a renewed transnational perspective on global connections within American history. Transnational relations have of course affected American cultural texts since the very beginnings but knowledge of these entanglements had for some time been kept at bay because of a strong domestic-exceptionalist research focus that only changed since the 1990s (Kaplan/Pease; Wertheimer; Rowe; Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire*; Murphy; Sundquist; Hsu). Works within the fields of postcolonial studies and critical globalization stud-

4 The fascination presently experiences a renaissance. William Carlsen’s recent physical and narrative retracing of Stephens’ journey joins the unbroken tradition of masculine adventure which turned Stephens’ books into such a success. Larzer Ziff, who reads Stephens alongside the adventures of John Ledyard, appreciates the literary qualities of Stephens’ travelogues (*Return Passages*, chapter 2). There are various other assessments of Stephens’ texts, some more and some less critical of his imperial involvement.

ies, too, invite reflections on earlier periods of global connectedness popularized by Enlightenment and Romantic writers – in the case of the Americas especially Alexander von Humboldt.⁵ More specifically, postcolonial and decolonial perspectives illuminate the dialectics between domestic issues within American political and scientific discourse and American interests abroad. The analysis of the texts of Stephens and Squier falls within this analytical paradigm because, as they provide rhetorical continuity to acts of internal colonialism and imperial expansion (the Indian Removal, the Mexican War), their texts are also part of the larger intellectual project of spelling out a national American cultural identity independent from that of Europe. A second framework of inquiry within which their writings deserve attention are the particular ideological circumstances of the institutionalization of the new historical sciences of archaeology, anthropology, and ethnology. Stephens' and Squier's activities are part of an epistemic formation giving rise to America's major historical societies and ethnological collections in the period before the Civil War. Part of that larger story will be discussed in the next chapter.

Together with his British partner, the architect, artist, and entrepreneur Frederick Catherwood, Stephens departed from New York for Belize in 1838. This was just one year after Emerson had published his famous speech "The American Scholar" appealing to countrymen's nationalistic sentiment and encouraging them to emancipate themselves from the intellectual grip of Europe by developing their own intellectual tradition. Stephens set out to accomplish something similar for American archaeology. He combined qualifications of a scholar with those of a politician; in his official function, he was sent on a diplomatic commission by the van Buren government to seek out the present government of Central America and establish diplomatic relations with it. As a private traveler and adventurer, he wanted to explore the Maya cities hidden in the vast jungles of Yucatán. In his travelogues, these two projects and identities frequently converge; in fact the whole first volume of his first travelogue, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*,⁶ is dominated by the diplomatic mission in which Stephens is engaged while Catherwood sketches the monuments. He left for the second journey right after completing his book in 1841 and published the results as

5 Ottmar Ette establishes a link between Humboldt's cosmopolitanism and our present discourses about globalization. Laura Dassow Walls traces the impact of Humboldt in America from Jefferson and the Romantics all the way to Boas and, outside the U.S., to (inter alia) Darwin and Kropotkin. Others, like the polygenists Agassiz, Nott, and Gliddon, Dassow writes, professed a Humboldtian legacy while subverting his cosmopolitan humanitarianism "into the ideology of slavery" (194). Aaron Sachs more specifically traces Humboldt's ecological ideas in later writers, noting how "Humboldtian humility and uncertainty" are during the nineteenth century "superseded by the confidence of positivism" for whose practitioners "empirical inquiry led not to modulated views but to the clear, deterministic laws that governed the universe" (237). Like Walls, he regards Stephens as a disciple of Humboldt (97). Andrea Wulf, who retraces Humboldt's adventures and writings, discovers his impact to twentieth-century concepts of ecological connectedness like Rachel Carson's work and James Lovelock's concept of Gaia (7).

6 abbreviated as ITC

Incidents of Travel in Yucatan,⁷ again in two volumes. Thus right from its inception, Stephens' project combines the discovery of American antiquities with the shaping of national identity and international relations.

Traveling to Central America almost forty years after Humboldt's and Bonpland's celebrated five year exploration journey to South America, Stephens and Catherwood manifest the "planetary consciousness" of their venture both in entering the interior of the Yucatán and in relying on their previous travels in the Middle East exploring the antiquities of that area. Their knowledge of that other hotspot of archaeological fascination furnished them with important comparative expertise. Ever since Napoleon's expedition to Egypt (1798–1801), Europe had been seized by a feverish digging for antiquities – not just in exotic countries but also all over Europe itself – which would gradually develop into a pervasive gentlemanly cultural practice, shared by both the professional and the amateur (Levine).

Stephens' texts partake in this subservience of archaeological discovery to national ends. As an official political envoy, he was the first American archaeologist to enter the former Spanish colonies which until 1820 had been shut off against the greedy gaze of other nations. Before independence from Spain, next to nothing was known about the deserted and ruined Maya cities in the jungle of Mesoamerica. Previously to Stephens' and Catherwood's trips only very few investigations of Mexican antiquities had been undertaken, and most of them had concentrated on Palenque, the most accessible site. A Spanish expedition under Captain Antonio del Río had taken place in 1787. In 1807 the Spanish government had sent the Mexican captain Guillermo Dupaix to explore the ruins of Palenque, but the results of this expedition, drawings by Luciano Castañeda, went unnoticed due to the revolutionary turmoil and were later discovered and published in 1834 in France (von Hagen, *Maya Explorer* 152). In the postcolonial period, the liberal government of Guatemala sent Juan Galindo to Copán in Honduras in 1834 whereupon he wrote the first report on the famous "idols" later sketched by Catherwood and published by the American Antiquarian Society in 1835. A few years earlier, in 1832–33, the illustrious "Count" Jean Frédéric Maximilien Waldeck spent some time living in the ruins of Palenque (a favorite romantic pastime at the time: Stephens and Catherwood did the same). Waldeck published his account in 1838 just before Stephens set out for Central America and there is reason to believe that Waldeck's book spurred Stephens to combine his political mission with an archaeological one (Coe 75–77; von Hagen, *Maya Explorer* 72–73; 152–53).

Stephen's texts differ from those of most of his precursors in that he denies any link between the antiquities of Central America and those of other countries and in that he more or less correctly dates the ruins to a relatively recent period (contradicting the antediluvian thesis of Captain Dupaix and others). He

7 abbreviated as ITY

also indirectly takes issue with Humboldt's argument in *Views of the Cordilleras and Monuments of the Indigenous Peoples of America* (1813) that the monuments of America were of a lower artistic quality than those of the classic Mediterranean civilizations. Humboldt had called the man-made structures of Mexico and Peru "picturesque" rather than allowing them the same civilizational status as Old World monuments due to the isolated position and the abundance of the natural surroundings in the Americas:

Isolated in the cloud regions of the world's highest plateaus, surrounded by volcanoes whose craters are ringed with eternal ice, they [American peoples] seem to admire, in the solitude of these deserts, only whatever strikes the imagination through the sheer grandeur of its dimensions. The works that they have produced bear the imprint of the wild nature of the Cordilleras. (*Views* 15)

Humboldt accordingly regards Mexican high cultures as "dark" and uncreative, not to be compared with the "arts" and the "sweet fictions" of Greece (12). Stephens contradicts these attempts to measure human artistic achievement exclusively in comparison with Greece, which provided the aesthetic model of classicism. He demands an equal position among human civilizations for the artifacts of the New World. In his view, the monuments of Palenque, Copán and other pre-Columbian sites are indigenous, autochthonous, *and* equally complex in artistic execution as those of the Hindus, Greeks, and Egyptians:

There is ... no resemblance in these ruins to those of the Egyptians; and, failing here, we look elsewhere in vain. They are different from the works of any other known people, of a new order, and entirely and absolutely anomalous: they stand alone [We] have a conclusion far more interesting and wonderful than that of connecting the builders of these cities with the Egyptians or any other people. It is the spectacle of a people skilled in architecture, sculpture, and drawing, and, beyond doubt, other more perishable arts, and possessing the cultivation and refinement attendant upon these, not derived from the Old World, but originating and growing up here, without models or masters, having a distinct, separate, independent existence; like the plants and fruits of the soil, indigenous. (Stephens, *ITC*, II: 442)

Stephens' thesis of an autochthonous development of civilizations in America was reinforced by Albert Gallatin a few years later who compares, in *On the Ancient Semi-Civilization of New Mexico and the Great Colorado of the West* (1845), the remains of Cahokia in the Mississippi Valley with the great pyramid of Cholula (Kennedy 37-38). Moreover, as early as 1820, the American Antiquarian Society in its *Transactions* takes verbal possession of the ruins:

[we] see a line of ancient works, reaching from the south side of Lake Ontario across this state, on to the banks of the Mississippi; along the

banks of that river, through the upper parts of the province of Texas, around the Mexican Gulph, quite into Mexico. The works left behind them are exactly similar to those in Mexico and Peru; and *our works* are continued quite into that country ... Thus we have traced the authors of *our ancient works*, from India to North and thence to South, America. Their works being few and small, rude and irregular at first, but increasing in number, improving in every respect as we have followed them; showing the increased numbers and improved condition of their authors, as they migrated towards the country where they finally settled. (Atwater 248, 250, emphasis added)

The theory of the north-to-south migration of America's Indigenous population had been spelled out as early as 1590 by José de Acosta. It had been reinforced by Jefferson, Humboldt and others, and the discovery of the remains of extensive ancient cities in Ohio and the Mississippi Valley gave scientific support to this idea. Within the context of Indian Removal and westward expansion, the unilinear north-to-south migration theory offered itself as a historical precedent for political designs on areas in Central America, expressed in ideas of the U.S. intervening into the postcolonial civil strife ravaging south of the Rio Grande. As Tripp Evans concludes, Caleb Atwater's text, "by insisting upon a north-to-south migration route, ... confirmed the Mesoamerican works' genesis within U.S. borders. In Mexico, this passage declares, 'our works are continued'" (48). Stephens' travelogue partakes in what Evans calls the "cultural enforcement of the newly established Monroe Doctrine" (48). He occasionally comments directly on the United States' politicking on the North American continent – for example, he complains about the difficulty of carrying out his diplomatic mission because of Mexican apprehension of further U.S. incursions after the gradual invasion of Texas: "We [the U.S.] were considered as bent upon the conquest of Mexico; and, of course, Guatemala would come next" (Stephens, *ITC*, I: 311). Recognizing Mesoamericans' understanding of the "odium of our ambitions" (311), Stephens confirmed their apprehensions with his own acquisitive behavior. His travelogue reveals that he utilized his official function as American envoy to try to buy various Maya cities. For example, in his resolve to acquire the whole city of Copán in Honduras, he unpacked his official paraphernalia to impress the local alcalde, Don Miguel, into selling the precious ruins to him. He writes that he showed Don Miguel letters that describe Stephens as, "Encargado de los Negocios de los Estados Unidos del Norte." For a "finale," he writes,

I opened my trunk, and put on a diplomatic coat, with a profusion of large eagle buttons. I had on a Panama hat, soaked with rain and spotted with mud, a check shirt, white pantaloons, yellow up to the knees with mud, and was about as outré as the negro king who received a company of British officers on the coast of Africa in a cocked hat and military coat ... but Don Jose Maria could not withstand the buttons on my

coat ... and Don Miguel, and his wife, ... realized fully that they had in their hut an illustrious incognito. (*ITC*, I: 123; 127-28)

Stephens' comparison of his hybrid apparel with that of an African slave trader at once underlines the motive of personal gain and illustrates the cosmopolitan context of his transnational transaction. His burlesque tone, which illustrates his post-heroic status described by Bruce Harvey, oddly contrasts with the admitted seriousness of the business venture. Being at the time "dull of sale," he continues in the same jocular manner, Copán sold at fifty dollars (128). His plan was to "remove the monuments of a by-gone-people from the desolate region in which they were buried, set them up in the 'great commercial emporium,' and found an institution to be the nucleus of a great national museum of American antiquities!" (115) (Fig. 6). In fact he intended to remove whole cities, or at least plaster casts of the monuments, ship them to New York and exhibit them there next to "Catlin's Indian Gallery, and every other memorial of the aboriginal races, whose history within our own borders has already become almost a romance and fable" (*ITC*, II: 474) .

Figure 6: Stephens and his men removing a stela from Kabah (Frederick Catherwood, *Views of Ancient Monuments*)

Later, when a set of plaster casts he had made of a few stele found in Palenque we detained by the Mexican authorities (who quickly became aware of the game), Stephens complains about not being allowed to export the monuments to New York. Rhetorically addressing America's competitors, Britain and France, he "entertains the belief" that

England and France, whose formidable competition has already been set up, as it were in terrorem, by one proprietor, having their capitals enriched by the remains of art collected throughout the Old World, will respect the rights of nations and discovery, and leave the field of American antiquities to us; that they will not deprive a destitute country of its only chance of contributing to the cause of science, but rather encourage it in the work of bringing together, from remote and almost inaccessible places, and retaining on its own soil, the architectural remains of its aboriginal inhabitants. (*ITC*, II: 474)

The quote encapsulates Stephens' "double-barreled campaign to claim the Mesoamerican past as the United States' cultural inheritance" (Evans 44). While European countries were ripping off the altars of the Mediterranean world to carry them to London, Paris, and Berlin, Stephens demands that the United States do the same with the antiquities of Mexico. His text performs an interesting semantic sliding of possessive pronouns: the "its" of "its own soil" refers to a different geographical area from the "its" in "its aboriginal inhabitants": the latter belong to the United States only in the same abstract and proleptic sense which Jefferson had once imagined when he envisioned a racially and culturally homogeneous empire that would "cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent" (qtd. Horsman 92-93). The seemingly inconspicuous possessive pronoun in Stephens' sentence articulates the theory elaborated in the above Caleb Atwater quote – that the builders of the civilizations in Mesoamerica had migrated down from the territory of the United States, there to "continue" "our works." Grammatically, Stephens' statement silently ingests the countries of Mesoamerica whose artifacts he would like to exhibit next to those of the recently removed members of America's own 'domestic dependent nations' in "Catlin's Indian Gallery."⁸ This continentalist view of American history rests, as Tripp Evans points out, on the homogenization and simultaneous dehistoricization of different Native American groups. With the museum as sole ordering logic, the decontextualized cultures can then be included in a historically sanitized narrative of American cultural origins (73).

Stephens' claim of an autochthonous origin of the Mesoamerican monuments is in line with the archaeological vision shared by historians of his time. The hemispheric continentalism deployed in these quotations indeed inspires all the transactions of American agents in Mexico and Central America at the time guided by a political and cultural Monroe Doctrine. The language of international law in the quote reinforces this rhetoric of different but equal. But implicitly, it also remembers the recent forced migration of the Five Civilized Tribes: the redefinition of the "right of discovery" – now made applicable not only to uninhabited land but also to land that was not used according to Protestant notions of efficiency – was a crucial element in the juridical discourse legitimating the Indian

8 "Domestic dependent nations" is Supreme Court Justice John Marshall's famous formulation in *Cherokee v. Georgia* (1831) to express the paradoxical legal status of Native American tribes in the United States.

Removal (Williams, *American Indian* 307). Stephens, who was a lawyer himself, could strictly speaking only appeal to the right of discovery on the basis that the ancient sites themselves were uninhabited and uncultivated and therefore free for the taking – a farcical version of the Lockean notion of possessive individualism that ignores the sovereignty of any territorial power. But then, as Stephens emphasizes again and again, the countries he traveled *had* no functioning governments; in today's parlance, they were failed states. Stephens' transnational property claim also evokes the argument of geographical adjacency or what Albert Weinberg calls "geographical predestination" that had dominated expansionist discourse since the acquisition of the Louisiana territory (Weinberg, chapter 2). As a continentalist, Stephens rhetorically treats the Mesoamerican countries, as some of his compatriots did, as natural appendices of the United States. As William E. Lenz, who reads Stephens' texts in the context of racial discourse and Manifest Destiny, writes, Stephens "constructs ... Central America and its various past histories as a newly discovered yet ancient slate upon which Americans can write a new chapter of their ever-expanding national mythology" (5).

Yet, Stephens' nationalistic jingoism is tarnished with expressions of cultural uncertainty. The analogy he creates between the Mexican ruins and the classical monuments of the Mediterranean is at once an expression of national self-pride and a sense of belatedness or, in his own terms, "destitution." Paradoxically, this uncertainty shines through at such points in the texts where Stephens' rhetoric seems most self-assertive. Insisting on the equality of the artifacts from Greece and Egypt with those of Mexico, he demands equal rights of access and symbolic commodification: "The casts of the Parthenon are regarded as precious memorials in the British Museum, and casts of Copán would be the same in New-York." Fearing that the Europeans might get the better of him and "get possession of them" for European museums, he emphasizes that

[they] belong of right to us, and, though we did not know how soon we might be kicked out ourselves, I resolved that ours they should be; with visions of glory and indistinct fancies of receiving the thanks of the corporation flitting before my eyes, I drew my blanket around me, and fell asleep (*ITC*, I: 115-16).

Evidently, Stephens was quite apprehensive of the unfeasibility of his planned property transactions. In his negotiations about purchasing Copán and Quiriguá for an American "national" museum, the line between private venture for fame and official mission for territorial expansion is constantly blurred. Not surprisingly, his business partners tend to confuse Stephens' two identities as well. Señor Payes, for example, the only available owner of the area on which the ruins of Quiriguá are located, "would consider me as acting for my government" and ensures him of his family's principal pride about presenting "the whole to the United States." He also indicates the actual impossibility to do so due to the political turmoil and financial difficulties (*ITC*, II: 124). Stephens' plan is fur-

ther impaired because Señor Payes gets it into his head to simultaneously consult the French consul general, “who put an exaggerated value upon the ruins, referring him to the expenditure of several hundred thousand dollars by the French government in transporting one of the obelisks of Luxor from Thebes to Paris.” The French representative, not adhering to the Monroe Doctrine, spoils the price! Had it not been for this impertinent intervention, Stephens believes, Payes “would have been glad to sell the whole tract, consisting of more than fifty thousand acres, with everything on it, known and unknown, for a few thousand dollars” (124). In his Appendix, Stephens informs the reader that once back home, with the help of some friends, he was able to “provide the sum of \$ 20,000” for purchasing the ruins of Quiriguá. Unfortunately though, the proprietors had meanwhile become aware of the real value of the ruins – ironically by reading a report by Catherwood published in the U.S. and republished in a Guatemalan paper – and refused the offer:

From vague conversations with foreigners who had never seen and knew nothing of them, he [Payes] conceived the idea that all the governments of Europe would vie with each other for their possession; and still entertaining the foolish belief that the author [Stephens] was acting on behalf of his government, said that, if the President of the United States wanted them, he must pay \$ 20,000 for them; in the mean time, he resolved to wait for offers from England and France. (Stephens, *ITC*, II: 469)

The compulsion and international competition for ownership of the ruins of other American countries, cast in the language of international law (“by right of nations and discovery”; “[they] belong of right to us”) but actually expressing the mentality of a rather unfortunate soldier of fortune, must be seen as an attempt to get the better of European nations in acquiring both monuments and large estates, and to execute the Monroe Doctrine in the field of archaeology. It is far from clear which proprietary legal status Stephens would claim to the “fifty thousand acres” once the buildings were removed. Given his official status as ambassador of the United States in Central America, the general political and legal uncertainty in Mesoamerican states at the time, and the contemporary piecemeal acquisition of Texas through gradual purchase of “private” land, it is little surprising that the local authorities were apprehensive about selling large tracts to a representative of the United States, a country that would within a few years send troops to Mexico City.

Although his plan to remove whole sites to the United States to exhibit them at the national museum failed, Stephens managed to transport a fair amount of artifacts to New York during his second journey (stone steles, wooden beams). They were stored at Catherwood’s panorama, which the artist normally used for entertaining metropolitan audiences with views of exotic places painted on large canvases and lit from behind. Unfortunately the rotunda caught fire in 1842 and the whole collection was destroyed (von Hagen, *Maya Explorer* 83).

Stephens' relocation plans largely ignore the international political and legal situation between the United States and the Mesoamerican republics he visited. He imaginatively dissolves political borders by his insistence on cultural continuity, commercial expediency, and traveler's right to purchase real estate wherever the opportunity offered itself. This attitude is aesthetically reflected in the construction, both verbally and iconographically, through Catherwood's lithographs of Mesoamerican countries as an "archaeological landscape" that appears "politically unaffiliated" thanks to the internal dynamics and apparent scientific neutrality of archaeological discourse (Evans 62). The juridically extravagant claim that the Maya ruins "belong of right to us" informs Stephens' perception of the historical succession of ruling powers – Indigenous, Spanish, potentially American – inhabiting Mesoamerica. But while his views of the future – a national museum, an international waterway – reflect the proverbial Yankee optimism of the period, his view of the past is surprisingly muddled. Again and again, Stephens voices his epistemic uncertainty about the nature of the people who had built these ruins:

Who were the people that built this city [Copán]? In the ruined cities of Egypt, even in the long-lost Petra, the stranger knows the story of the people whose vestiges are around him. America, say historians, was peopled by savages; but savages never reared these structures, savages never carved these stones. (*ITC*, I: 104).

Stephens' emphasis on the civilized character of the builders of the splendid ruins recalls Jefferson's defense of the morally superior character traits of the Native Americans in the United States (in comparing the oratory of Chief Logan with that of Cicero). Not only does Stephens insist that the lords of the ruins must have been civilized people, he also repeatedly declares that their disappearance must have taken place rather recently. This claim, however, is disturbed by a gap in the historical record that his text struggles to mend. What Stephens lacked was an American Rosetta Stone.

No American Rosetta Stone

In his second travelogue, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, Stephens expends much energy locating evidence for the continuous inhabitation of the ruined cities even beyond the period of the Spanish conquest. Although the cities are completely overgrown when he discovers them, he presupposes by the comparatively fast growth of the tropical trees and shrubs that they must have been inhabited until only a few generations ago (Stephens, *ITY*, I: 168-69). Cranial evidence, also introduced in the second travel account, suggests to him a profound similarity between the skulls "dug from the mounds of our western country" and those he digs up in Mexican graveyards to send to the eminent craniologist Samuel George Morton in Philadelphia. But the assumed similarity of size and shape was already

part of contemporary research logic. Morton, the undisputed authority on skulls at that time, had declared that on the basis of cranial measurements “all the aboriginal Americans of all known epochs belong to the same great and distinctive race,” thus suggesting hemispheric homogeneity and by implication a relatively short period in which the various groups could have differentiated themselves from one another (*ITY* 167). With another generous use of possessive pronouns, Stephens expresses his satisfaction about this “physical conformation with all the tribes of *our continent*” (my emphasis) which proves to him that

these crumbling bones declare, as with a voice from the grave, that we cannot go back to any ancient nation of the Old World for the builders of these cities; they are not the works of people who have passed away, and whose history is lost, but of the same great *race* which, changed, miserable, and degraded, still clings around their ruins (167-68).

Incidents of Travel in Yucatan presents abundant evidence to prove, first, that the ancient cities were of recent origin and had been inhabited even beyond the time of the Spanish conquest, and, secondly, that the civilized tribes who had built the gigantic stone structures had arrived from North America. For the latter thesis, Stephens relies on a Maya chronicle and calendar lent to him by a local antiquarian, Don Pio Perez. Stephens interprets said artifact’s great resemblance to the calendars of the Aztecs as evidence that the inhabitants of Yucatán had descended from the Aztecs or their precursors, the Toltecs (*ITY*, I: 74-76; 180-82; 323-27). According to the Aztec chronicles, the Toltecs had migrated south “from their native country, which was situated to the northwest of Mexico” and “proceeded southward ... for the space of one hundred and twenty-four years,” to settle down at Tula (312). The geographical ambivalence leaves room for much speculation. Stephens’ formulation includes the possibility that the Toltec’s place of origin was north of the borders of the present state of Mexico, i.e. probably within the territory then claimed by the United States.

Assuming the Toltecs to have been the most ancient of the high civilizations of Mexico, and their rule to have ended in 1052, Stephens logically concludes that the aboriginal cities of Yucatán – in his opinion the work of the “wretched remains” of the Toltecs (312) – cannot have been erected more than 800 years ago. This not only gives them much less antiquity than the antiquities of the Old World but it also contradicts the mentioned Maya manuscript of Don Perez, which gives much earlier dates (fourth century AD) for the founding of the great Maya cities like Chichén Itzá (181). Stephens is aware of the contradictions between the different degrees of antiquity suggested by his evidence. His migration theory cannot explain the great complexity of the artwork, as well as its visible difference from that of the Valley of Mexico. He thus arrives at the unsatisfactory conclusion that “the time when and the circumstances under which they were built, the rise, progress, and full development of the power, art, and skill

required for their construction, are all mysteries which will not easily be unraveled" (312). Again slipping into Jacksonian extinction rhetoric, he continues:

They rise like skeletons from the grave, wrapped in their burial shrouds; claiming no affinity with the works of any known people, but a distinct, independent, and separate existence. They stand alone, absolutely and entirely anomalous, perhaps the most interesting subject which at this day presents itself to the inquiring mind. (312-13)

The mystery Stephens was unable to solve at that point – lacking archaeological methods like carbon dating – is whether the structures were built by the ancestors of the present-day people he encountered, or by another and more ancient group altogether. His dependence on Morton's homogenism did not help in solving the riddle, as it greatly reduced the cultural and genetic complexity of Indigenous America.⁹ The unbroken continuity suggested by the craniological evidence between the builders of the cities and the present inhabitants of those areas radically contradicts Stephens' consistent perception of what he calls the "degenerate" state of the *indigenas* he meets: "Turning from those memorials of former power to the degraded race that now lingers round them, the stranger might run wild with speculation and conjecture" (*ITY*, II: 298). Stephens' numerous attempts to date the ruins with the help of extra-textual and circumstantial evidence must be seen to be inspired by a larger ideological – and not just an antiquarian – interest. Frederick Catherwood had a somewhat different, and more philosophical, opinion about the origin and migrations of cultural artifacts:

[the] idea that civilisation, and its attendant arts, is in every case *derivative*, and always owing to a *transmission* from a cultivated to an unpolished people, is eminently unphilosophical, as it only removes further back, without explaining the original difficulty of *invention*, which must somewhere have taken place (140).

As a Briton not interested in constructing a historical genealogy, and as an artist defending the idea of creative originality, Catherwood yet involves himself in contradictions regarding the age of the ruins in his own short account of the archaeological findings, *Views of Ancient Monuments in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (1844). Although he shares Stephens' opinion that the builders of the pyramids were "cognate ... to those who inhabited the country at the time of the conquest," he suggests 800-1,000 years as the possible age of the ruins (von Hagen, *Frederick Catherwood* 139). As Victor von Hagen remarks, this guess is surprisingly close (Uxmal, the city in question, was founded between AD 987 and 1007). Yet only one page later Catherwood assumes that the cities "were

9 Morton also concluded the degree of a man's intelligence from the amount of mustard seeds that would fill his skull: see Gould, *Mismeasure of Man* 85; 82-101. The battle about his scientific status continues into our own time. He has a group of defenders who adamantly stick to the correctness of his methods and deride Stephen Jay Gould's critique of Morton. For a summary see Michael.

occupied, *and possibly erected*, by the Indian tribes in possession of the country at the time of the Spanish conquest” (140; emphasis added). Both Stephens and Catherwood thus express a significant uncertainty with regard to the date of the construction of the Maya cities – up to the point that both repeatedly confuse the date of their abandonment with the period of their erection. Throughout both volumes runs the constant theme that the cities may still have been inhabited at the time of the Spanish conquest but that the Indigenous high cultures were completely eradicated by the cruel colonizers. Why was it so important to Stephens to believe in the existence of a highly civilized Indigenous population as far into the present as possible – in spite of his daily observation of the ‘degeneracy’ of the natives he met during his travels? The historian’s horror vacui of unrecorded periods may be one explanation. The radicalism and the intensity of Stephens’ rhetoric must in part be understood as a violent denial of contemporary theories of an antediluvian or non-American origin of the builders of the cities. Yet his insistence on a very recent or even continuous occupation of the cities conspicuously tries to cover up a ‘degenerational gap’ between the end of the living Mesoamerican high cultures and the arrival of Stephens, who fancies himself and his nation as the rightful heirs of that ancient civilization.

Stephens’ puzzlement about the age of the ruins was produced in part by the impossibility to decipher Maya writing. Stephens and Catherwood well understood that the figures on the monuments are texts, probably giving information about dynastic lineages and historical events. This recognition is reflected in Catherwood’s extremely precise engravings of the glyph-covered stela of Copán, attained with the help of a camera lucida, which remained valuable source material for the decipherers of the Maya script in the 1960s (Coe 93-94). Comparing the Mexican hieroglyphics with the Egyptian ones (one of many comparisons with Egypt), Stephens predicts that one day, “though not perhaps in our day, I feel persuaded that a key surer than that of the Rosetta stone will be discovered” (Stephens, *ITC*, II: 457).

No View From the Peak: Archaeological Sublime and Cosmopolitan Commerce

Frederick Catherwood’s lithograph compensated at least in some way for the two travelers’ pervasive recognition of their own belatedness, of having found no equivalent of Champollion’s Rosetta Stone. Bruce Harvey’s term for this textual and iconographic aesthetic is the “archaeological sublime” (*American Geographics*, chapter 4). The cultural work of this aesthetic consists of combining lingering romantic discourses of natural grandeur with the epistemic anxieties arising from the unknowability of the history of the continent. The anxious evocation of greatness is expressed in Catherwood’s painting of the ruined palace of Palenque, with a seemingly volcanic mountain forming the background to the scene, suggesting

further, and indeed gigantic, buildings yet to be freed from the embrace of nature (Fig. 7).

Figure 7: Frederick Catherwood “General View of Palenque.”

The image, with its suggestion of undiscovered grandeur either natural (volcanoes) or cultural (pyramids), can be seen as representative of Stephens’ and Cathers’ attempts to walk in the footsteps of earlier, more heroic “discoverers.” Stephens’ journey through civil war-torn Central America in search of official governments is frequently impeded by mudslides, earthquakes, and more especially the constant danger of volcanic eruptions. Along the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala he observes the results of the destructive force of these natural phenomena: ruined colossal churches and other colonial buildings.

Unlike Humboldt, who rhetorically groups Indigenous architecture with wondrous works of nature, Stephens distinguishes volcanoes from pyramids (but note their geometric similarity!). Yet natural and human structures entertain an interesting metaphorical relationship in his text. In fact, Stephens was a passionate mountain climber wherever the opportunity occurred. He points out that only in Honduras is there a mountain high enough to allow you to see both oceans at once. The mountains that most fascinated him, however, were the volcanoes, many of which he found in various states of activity and of which he gives fascinating descriptions. In his endeavor to emulate Humboldt’s famous attempt to climb Ecuador’s Chimborazo in 1802, Stephens (again) was to be a rather unfor-

tunate traveler and his expedition failed at a much more moderate height than Humboldt's (who, in spite of not making the top of the Americas' highest volcano, reached a greater height than probably any human before). Stephens' scientific instruments break quite early on, and he mostly wades knee-deep in mud, pestered by mosquitoes and attacks of fever. At some point his little group of mountaineers have to rest:

our clothes were saturated with rain and mud; and in a few moments the cold penetrated our very bones. We attempted to build a fire, but the sticks and leaves were wet, and would not burn. For a few moments we raised a feeble flame, and all crouched around it; but a sprinkling of rain came down, just enough to put it out. We could see nothing, and the shivering Indians begged me to return.

Just at this moment of extreme misery, Stephens sees inscriptions on a near-by rock. One of them bears the year 1548, and another one reads:

Alexandro Ldvert,
De San Petersbrgo;
Edvardo Legh Page,
De Inglaterra;
Jose Croskey,
De Fyladelfye,
Bibymos aqui unas Boteas
De Champana, el dia 26
de Agosto de 1834. (*ITC*, I: 275)

The memento of the cosmopolitan pleasure group apparently having enjoyed, unlike Stephens, a nice view painfully reminds him of his own belatedness and "destitution." The planetary pleasure party contrasts sharply with the frequency with which Stephens' group experience volcanic eruptions. Read in conjunction with his exhaustive comments on the complicated political situation in Central America, the volcano can be seen as a metaphor for the state of human affairs. Thus, Stephens' idealist and self-conscious construction of a continuous historical narrative is interrupted by another historical – and geologically inspired – narrative implicit in his travelogue, a narrative of discontinuity, revolutionary unrest, and impending social dissolution. Upon its very beginning, his text transfers a domestic anxiety about the social effects of slavery (rebellion, miscegenation) to the situation in Central America. Stephens frequently expresses his astonishment about the ethnic hybridity he encounters in Mesoamerica and the comparatively comfortable social position enjoyed by Blacks and mulattoes. His fanciful (we could also say compulsive) construction of a continuous and progressive historical narrative of successive New World empires can thus also be seen as a response to his constant confrontation with evidence suggesting another, more

“catastrophic,” model (reflecting the catastrophism of Georges Cuvier and anticipating that of later geologists like Clarence King).¹⁰

In spite of weather-induced setbacks, Stephens emerges from his texts as the typical polytropic Yankee of the post-Jacksonian age not content in laying bare ancient ruins: alongside his endeavors for the advancement of scientific knowledge, he also laid the groundwork for successive attempts to engineer a crossing through the isthmus of Central America. His first vision (before he began constructing the Panama railway) was that of a canal through Nicaragua.¹¹ In his description of this future transoceanic water route, his vision of international commerce converges with his half-satirical praise of the area as a site of luxury tourism:

I am persuaded that the time is not far distant when the attention of the whole civilized and mercantile world will be directed toward it; and steamboats will give the first impulse. In less than a year, English mailboats will be steaming to Cuba, Jamaica, and the principal ports of Spanish America, touching once a month at San Juan and Panama. To men of leisure and fortune, jaded with rambling over the ruins of the Old World, a new country will be opened. After a journey on the Nile, a day in Petra, and a bath in the Euphrates, English and American travellers will be bitten by moschetoës on the Lake of Nicaragua, and drink Champagne and Burton ale on the desolate shores of San Juan on the Pacific. The random remarks of the traveller for amusement, and the observations of careful and scientific men, will be brought together, a mass of knowledge will be accumulated and made public, and in my opinion the two oceans will be united. (*ITC*, I: 418)

The canal, Stephens claims, will unite the peoples of the earth and secure world peace. Echoing Adam Smith, he asserts that “a taste for making money ... does more to civilize and keep the world at peace than any other influence whatever” (419). His philosophical flight about mosquito-bitten and ale-drinking travelers culminates in a vision of a

great city [which] will grow up in the heart of the country, with streams issuing from it, fertilizing as they roll into the interior; her magnificent mountains, and valleys now weeping in desolation and waste, will smile and be glad. The commerce of the world will be changed, the barren region of Terra del Fuego be forgotten, Patagonia become a land of fable, and Cape Horn live only in the recollection of sailors and insurers.

- 10 On King as a “disciple” of Humboldt, see Sachs, chapter 7. The use of volcano imagery as a metaphor for racial and social unrest was quite widespread in antebellum political discourse. It was used by Herman Melville, Martin Delany, and Frederick Douglass, among others.
- 11 Stephens’ enthusiasm about canal building – there is a long section where he traces a previous surveyor’s canal route through Nicaragua – must have been inspired by the technological sublime of his age which also accompanied the documentation of the building of the Erie Canal by New York engineers in 1817–25 (Hay 3).

Steamboats will go smoking along the rich coasts of Chili, Peru, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, California, our own Oregon Territory, and the Russian possessions on the borders of Behring's Straits. New markets will be opened for products of agriculture and manufactures, and the intercourse and communion of numerous and immense bodies of the human race will assimilate and improve the character of nations. The whole world is interested in this work. I would not speak of it with sectional or even national feeling; but if Europe is indifferent, it would be glory surpassing the conquest of kingdoms to make this greatest enterprise ever attempted by human force entirely our own work ... to make it ... entirely the work of our city ... (*ITC*, I: 419-20)

Stephens' plan to send ships among the ruins, to fuse the exploration of Indigenous antiquities with the improvement of commercial activities, was not to remain an imaginary act of transgressing the line between scholarship and imperial expansion. Shortly after publishing his second journey travelogue, Stephens returned to Mesoamerica in the function of an engineer, to plan and supervise the construction of an interoceanic railroad – the building of a canal having proven incompatible with the technological standards of the time. As president of the American Ocean Steam Navigation Company and later, in 1848, as vice president of the Panama Railroad Company, Stephens supervised the beginning of the construction of a railroad through Panama (von Hagen, *Maya Explorer* 271-73). For a short time he was again joined by Frederick Catherwood who had likewise exchanged the archaeologist's gear for that of the engineer and had begun to construct the first railroad in South America in British Guiana (283). Both died shortly after their last meeting without seeing the results of their work.

Stephens' plans to remove large parts of Mesoamerican architecture to the United States uneasily coexist with romantic tales of the survival of remnants of the ancient Indigenous cultures. In his first travelogue, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, he tells of his and Catherwood's encounter with the *cura* of Santa Cruz del Quiché in Guatemala, an illustrious and humorous priest who tells them of the areas never really conquered by the Spaniards:

and at this day the northeastern section, bounded by the range of the Cordilleras and the State of Chiapas, is occupied by Candones or unbaptized Indians, who live as their fathers did, acknowledge no submission to the Spaniards, and the government of Central America does not pretend to exercise control over them. (Stephens, *ITC*, II, 195)

But what “roused” the explorers most was the report of a “living city” situated on the other side of the sierra, “large and populous, occupied by Indians, precisely in the same state as before the discovery of America.” The *cura* had heard of this city many years before and was told

that from the topmost ridge of the sierra this city was distinctly visible. He was then young, and with much labor climbed to the naked sum-

mit of the sierra, from which, at a height of ten or twelve thousand feet, he looked over an immense plain extending to Yucatan and the Gulf of Mexico, and saw at a great distance a large city spread over a great space, and with turrets white and glittering in the sun. The traditionary account of the Indians of Chajul is, that no white man has ever reached this city; that the inhabitants speak the Maya language, are aware that a race of strangers has conquered the whole country around, and murder any white man who attempts to enter their territory. (195-96)

The image of the unconquered city stays with Stephens on his second journey. Having reached the southernmost point of his expedition through Yucatán, the city of Iturbide, he abruptly announces the end of his journey in this direction, as he found himself “on the frontier of the inhabited part of Yucatan”:

Beyond was a wilderness, stretching off to the Lake of Peten, and that region of Lacandones, or unbaptized Indians, in which, according to the suggestion made in my previous volumes, lay that mysterious city never reached by a white man, but still occupied by Indians precisely in the same state as before the discovery of America. (Stephens, *ITY*, II, 128)

He mentions that his former account of the mysterious city was published in one of the Mexican papers during his present sojourn and that the response to it consisted in the assurance “that beyond the lake of Peten there was a region of unconverted Indians of whom nothing was known.” Stephens then reproduces a longish report by the Spanish governor of Yucatán, Don Martin Ursua, on the conquest of Itza in 1695. Allegedly the retreat of the remnant of the Maya metropolis Chichen Itza, this city, located on an island in the middle of the lake of Petén, had been conquered “but about one hundred and forty-five years ago, within the period of two lives” (133). No trace remains of the survivors of the Spanish invasion of Itza, and Stephens surmises that they

fled before the terrible Spaniard, plunged deeper into the wilderness, and are dimly connected in my mind with that mysterious city before referred to; in fact it is not difficult for me to believe that in the wild region beyond the lake of Peten, never yet penetrated by a white man, Indians are now living as they did before the discovery of America; and it is almost a part of this belief that they are using and occupying adatories and temples like those now seen in ruins in the wilderness of Yucatan (134).

Regretting that, although “it was always my intention to visit the island of Peten” but “that I was never able to do so,” Stephens turns north to visit the well-known site of Chichen Itza (133). As a reason for not going to Petén and “unravel all mystery, and establish a connecting link between the past and present” he mentions an unspecified “fear” and considers it “perhaps unfortunate” that no ruins were mentioned to him beyond Iturbide. This however, does not mean that none

exist (128-29). A similar wavering characterizes his earlier response to the *cura*'s report. He believes in the authenticity of the priest's information; he admits that he was most thrilled at the map which the priest drew for him, and he thinks that "[o]ne look at that city was worth ten years of an every-day life" (*ITC*, II: 196). Because if the *cura* was right, "a place is left where Indians and an Indian city exist as Cortez and Alvarado found them; there are living men who can solve the mystery that hangs over the ruined cities of America; perhaps who can go to Copan and read the inscriptions on its monuments We had a craving desire to reach the mysterious city" (196-97). But in spite of their craving, Stephens and Catherwood decide to leave the living city undiscovered. Most of the reasons Stephens gives are related to the problem of numbers and time. Although he had considered the bare sight of the city worth ten years of a normal life, he now argues that

[n]o man, even if willing to peril his life, could undertake the enterprise with any hope of success, without hovering for one or two years on the borders of the country, studying the language and characters of the adjoining Indians, and making acquaintance with some of the natives. Five hundred men could probably march directly to the city, and the invasion would be more justifiable than any ever made by the Spaniards; but the government is too much occupied with its own wars ... Two young men of good constitution, and who could afford to spare five years, might succeed As for ourselves, to attempt it alone, ignorant of the language, and with *mozos* [guides] who were a constant annoyance to us, was out of the question. The most we thought of was a climb to the top of the sierra, thence to look down upon the mysterious city; but we had difficulties enough in the road before us; it would add ten days to a journey already almost appalling in prospective; for days the sierra might be covered with clouds ... (197)

These are reasons enough to explain why they in the end "determined not to be diverted from the course we had marked out" (197-98). To attempt a peaceful cultural encounter – two to five years of tedious reconnaissance and diplomacy – is too time-consuming a business in Stephens' view, while even a detour of ten days to get a glimpse of the city from the sierra – before declared to be worth ten years of a normal life – is now out of the question. The most practical solution, the passage suggests, is the "direct" one: five hundred men to march to the city and take forceful possession of it with more justification than any made by the Spaniards. Stephens, a lawyer like Cortés, does not reveal the juridical basis for this astounding claim; as at other times when he fancies to tread in the footsteps of Alvarado and Cortés, Stephens blandly suggests to reiterate Cortés' conquest of Mexico, here indicated by the mythical number of "five hundred men." For him, the justification of conquest resides in the repetition of earlier, similarly "heroic" actions. Six years after the publication of this fantasy, the American army would

reenact the Cortesian march under Winfield Scott and Zachary Taylor and invade Mexico City.

Instead of presenting a direct encounter with Maya survivors, Stephens reproduces an “Indian map” of the year 1557 which he had discovered in the town archives of Mani, the Spanish village closest to the ancient ruins of Uxmal. This map shows various Spanish villages in the vicinity of Mani, all of which are marked with a church symbol – all except one: Uxmal, in the very south, is marked by a symbolic Indian edifice (Stephens, *ITY*, II: 173). Stephens finds additional textual evidence to the effect that Uxmal must have been ruled by native caciques, that it was in 1557 “an existing inhabited aboriginal town” (176). In and by itself this information may at best prove that the conquest of a country of the size of Mexico is a time-consuming affair and that Spanish rule was established only gradually in the more remote regions. However, Stephens uses the Uxmal map as additional evidence for his argument that unconquered Indian cities may yet exist in the recesses of the Mexican wilderness. He jokes with the local alcalde about removing the city of Uxmal to a fenced-in location along the Mississippi where “it would stand like Herculaneum and Pompeii, a place of pilgrimage for the curious” if they were willing to pay the admission fee (*ITY*, I: 136). The transatlantic and transhistorical comparison is indicative of Stephens’ understanding of the contribution of his activity to his nation’s greatness. The hemispheric ruin of Uxmal is compared with the recently discovered Italian ruins, witness of an ancient volcanic catastrophe, not with the recently discovered more humble and culturally illegible remains of the Mississippi pyramids.

Ephraim Squier’s Imaginary Contact Zones

In Stephens’ progressivist imagination, the fantasy of the elusive Maya city stands grotesquely next to the modern commercial city to be built alongside the prospected canal. A few years after Stephens had suggested the building of a canal through Nicaragua, the tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt would indeed begin exploring Nicaragua for precisely this purpose. The project misfired in the end, but U.S. attempts to gain control of the isthmus crossing continued after Stephens’ untimely death. He remains one of the pioneers of those isthmian plans.

The rumored hidden city went on a ghostly journey through the texts of another U.S. citizen whose scientific writings, in spite of adhering to current style and method, frankly state their political significance, inspired by their author’s position as American Chargé d’Affaires to the republics of Central America, first in Honduras and then in Nicaragua. Like Stephens, Ephraim George Squier, the renowned scholar of American antiquities, evokes the deeds of the Spanish invaders as the history of a heroic age, recently narrativized in romantic fashion by William Prescott in *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843) and *History of the Conquest of Peru* (1847). Arriving in Nicaragua in 1849, one year after the Treaty

of Guadalupe-Hidalgo had ended the U.S.-Mexican War, Squier geared his activities and writings at securing U.S. control of the isthmus and fending off British rivals. The story of the hidden city, which is widely circulated throughout Squier's writings of the 1850s, may be seen in conjunction with the British policy of gaining control of the Bay of Honduras (the entrance to the projected railway) by establishing an Indigenous puppet government called the "Kingdom of Mosquitia" to be run by Miskito Indians and considered as a British protectorate. As James Dunkerley describes in some detail (*Americana* 561-90), the policy of both Britain and the United States was rather contradictory, with local agents acting in stark discordance with official agreements between the two governments. Suffice it to say that dashing 28 year-old Squier cared little about the orders from Washington and entered into contracts with local governments in the name of the United States which were subsequently repealed by Washington.¹² Like Stephens before him, Squier was a great champion of U.S. expansionism. As he wrote in his first book based on his sojourn in Central America and in the light of the recent victory against Mexico:

The fortune of war has planted our eagles on the Pacific: across the entire continent ... our Republic is supreme. Our trim built ships of the deep ... sweep in the trade of Europe on one hand, and on the other bring to the mouth of the Sacramento the treasures of the Oriental world ... To gird the world as with a hoop, to pass a current of American Republicanism ... over the continents of the earth, it needs but one small spot should be left free from foreign threats and aggression. (Squier, *Nicaragua*, 1852, 8)

With a remarkable sweep, Squier's imperial vision moves from the newly extended national territory of the United States to an embrace of *all* continents – and from jingoistic aggression to the notion of the freedom of world trade to be benevolently defended by the United States against the threats of "foreigners." The diplomatic correspondence suggests that Squier did not limit the voicing of his opinions to his scientific texts. In order to avoid further irritation of the British representatives in Belize, U.S. Secretary of State Clayton withdrew Squier from the scene in June 1850. Yet in 1853 Squier returned to Central America, again on an official mission, this time to Honduras, in order to draw up the plans for the interoceanic railway planned there.¹³ In addition to two major books

12 According to his own account, Squier in 1850 negotiated a treaty with El Salvador which "secures to the citizens of the United States all the rights, privileges, and immunities of citizens of San Salvador in commerce, navigation, mining, and in respect of holding and transferring property in that state" (*The States of Central America* 313). In fact, Squier's private policy, unendorsed by Washington, amounted to an act of filibustering quite similar to William Walker's concurrent actions in Nicaragua (See May). For a "decolonial" reading of Walker's exploits, see Andreas Beer.

13 As well as the long quotations from Squier's diplomatic correspondence provided by Dunkerley, Squier's career is also described by Núñez Hague; Barnhart (chapters 7, 8, and 9); and Harvey (chapter 4).

on the history and archaeology of the states of Central America, very much based on the findings of Stephens (who had died of fever in New York in 1852), Squier also wrote a series of polemics against the British presence on the isthmus and on what he regarded as the fake kingdom of Mosquitia.¹⁴ The polemic particularly fed on Squier's description of the Miskitos as an abominable, hybrid, and degenerate "race" of "Sambos" – a description that fully exploited the scientific racism *en vogue* in the United States at the height of expansionism.¹⁵ In *The States of Central America* (1858), Squier distinguishes the mixedbloods in league with the British from three further groups of natives, at least one of which may turn out to be useful for the United States in the future. The first of these groups are the "Caribs," remnants of the "aboriginal inhabitants of San Vincent." In 1796, they had been carried to the island of Roatan, off the coast of Honduras, by the British, after which the displaced tribe founded new settlements on land granted them by the Spaniards near Truxillo. Though also racially mixed like the Miskitos, Squier views the Caribs in a much more positive light, mainly because they are known as good laborers, having long specialized in the cutting of mahogany (*States*, 232-34). Being skilled in the use of the axe, they already possess "some knowledge of the building of roads and bridges." In addition, they are "[f]rugal, patient, and docile" and "have many of the best qualities of a valuable laboring population." In short, "they must prove of the greatest service in the future development of the vast resources of that country [Honduras], and of the utmost importance in the construction of the proposed rail-way between the seas." He is convinced that about 3,000 laborers may be "procured for a reasonable compensation" (*States*, 234-40). By 1858, Squier had exchanged his promotion of a canal route through the Lake of Nicaragua for an intercoceanic railway leading through Honduras, which he develops at length in a separate treatise, *Honduras Interoceanic Railway*.¹⁶

While Squier's interest in the Caribs is of a very pragmatic nature, his scientific imagination is aroused by his discovery of various Indigenous groups in Nicaragua and neighboring states which he believes to be of Aztec stock. Although he propounds the theory that Yucatán was the original cultural center from which all of Mesoamerica was peopled (*States*, 315), he also speculates, on the basis of linguistic evidence gathered through his own conversations with natives and in the Spanish chronicles, that the Nahuatl speakers of Nicaragua and El Salvador were the remnant of former "colonies" of the Aztecs, about 2,000 miles distant from their imperial center, Anahuac (*States*, 318). In spite of the spuriousness

14 See, for example, Squier, "Our Foreign Relations" and "The Mosquito Question." See also Harvey, *American Geographics* 178.

15 Squier gives a historical account of the "Mosquitos" cum "Sambos" in *The States of Central America*, 228-31.

16 By the time of its publication, and in response to a rather ineffective truce between Britain and the United States concerning the Mosquito question in 1850, Squier had ended his previous anglophobia and now offered his services to the British. His proposal for the Honduras railway is preceded by a motto from Lord Clarendon and was published in London.

of his sources (few of the Spanish chroniclers had sufficient knowledge of Meso-american languages, let alone the methodological support of empirical linguistics), he authoritatively states that “[t]he science of ethnology is now happily so far advanced as to require a closer authentication of the facts upon which it proceeds than can always be derived from the vague and frequently obscure allusions and statements of the ancient chroniclers.” He claims to have found more recent evidence in a few towns near Sonsonate whose inhabitants seem to have retained ancient Aztec customs and racial integrity (*States*, 319).

Squier provides a more extensive discussion of his thesis of the Aztec remnant in Nicaragua in his essay “Observations on the Archaeology and Ethnology of Nicaragua” (1853) where he states that

this continent has not been exempt from those migrations, corresponding to the currents and tides of the ocean, which have earlier or later, swept over every part of the Old World, and affected so remarkably, by intermixture and change of soil and climate, the conditions and relations of its inhabitants We have then presented to us the extraordinary phenomenon of a fragment of a great aboriginal nation, widely separated from the parent stock, and intruded among other and hostile nations. (“Observations” 115)

As evidence Squier refers to a “tradition” among the Nahua speakers of having once migrated south because they had been overpowered by a hostile nation. They refer to their land of origin as “Ticomega Emeguatega” – a name that, Squier has to admit, “corresponds to none with which we are acquainted” (115). In the absence of evidence that would conform with his scholarly criteria quoted above, Squier resorts to some “obscure allusions and statements of the ancient chroniclers” and finds in the historical work of Juan de Torquemada corroboration for a tribe having migrated south in the early history of the Aztec rule in Mexico. According to this early seventeenth-century creole chronicler, the said tribe was well received in the area of Nicaragua but soon began to overpower the neighboring nations (116).

This is rather circumstantial evidence combined with speculation. What is striking about Squier’s migration theory is its close resemblance to the story of the Puritan migration, an analogy evoked by the naturalized image of the “ocean” as the agent of global migration. Like Squier’s Nicaraguan Nahua speakers, the Puritans formed a diasporic group turned invaders. The history of migration, according to Squier, is one of violent clashes between powerful rivals, not of peaceful interaction. The climate and soil may mix, colonies of pure-blooded “parent stocks” don’t. Without doubt, the Mexican chronicles which Squier uses to substantiate his case are full of migration stories, that of the Chichimecas, the later Aztecs, being the most significant one.¹⁷ But literary analogy cannot replace

17 As we now know, the Aztecs came to power by way of cultural and linguistic adaptation and by intermarriage into the remnant of the ancient Toltec dynasty.

empirical proof and scientific causality. Perhaps sensing that more evidence was needed to substantiate the case, Squier then places the migration of the assumed Aztec tribe within a global context of world-historical migrations caused by “persecution” – the “Mormons in the Valley of the Salt Lake, and that of the Jews in Palestine” (117). Like many of its historical siblings, this migration, too, was “undertaken in consequence of persecutions, through the midst of intervening nations, – an armed migration, giving war to the weak and the hostile, and negotiations with the friendly” (117).

Increasingly echoing the rhetoric of the originator of the concept of “manifest destiny,” John L. O’Sullivan, Squier uses the naturalizing imagery of irresistibly moving population masses to put his theory into world-historical perspective: “The descent of the Germans on Rome was no migration,” yet “it was the eddy, the outward flow of the great current, which afterwards swept over the ocean barrier, traversed a new world, and is now gathering its volumes on the golden shores of the Pacific” (119). Empire, having moved west since the times of the Roman Emperor Constantine, in America tends to move south as well – or at least there is a “tradition” of powerful nations in the north establishing colonies in the south. Clearly, the theory of the Aztec “remnant” inhabiting El Salvador and Nicaragua functions rhetorically as a historical precedent for the present activity of U.S. settlers, filibusters, and other privateering citizens seeping into Mexico and Central America after the acquisition of Texas – William Walker’s occupation of Nicaragua being the most glaring example (see Andreas Beer).

Next to Carib laborers to build the canal and pure-blooded Nahua speakers¹⁸ to guarantee an aristocratic and heroic lineage far beyond the cultural centers of Mesoamerica, Squier mentions a third group of natives who, as described by Stephens, may yet inhabit the unexplored regions of Petén as the last survivors of the ancient Maya. The Guatemala chapter of *The States of Central America* includes a long description of the district of Vera Paz, which,

containing in its midst the celebrated yet mysterious lake of Itza, or Peten, ... has the interest of an unsolved problem to geographers. Nor has it fewer claims upon the ethnologist and antiquary. Within its fastnesses, with habits, religion, and laws unchanged, still exist the remnants of the indomitable Lacandones, who figure so largely in the story of the Spanish Conquest, the cruel Itzaes, and the warlike Chols and Manches. Its forests hide numberless monuments of ancient art and superstition, and within their depths, far off on some unknown tributary of the Usumasinta, the popular tradition of Guatemala and Chiapa places that great aboriginal city, with its white temples shining like silver in the sun, which

18 In *States* (327), Squier mentions the tribe of the Pipiles who, according to Antonio de Herrera, spoke (at the time Herrera was writing, i.e. in the early seventeenth century) the Mexican tongue but also had a language peculiar to themselves. Although the Mexican empire never extended to San Salvador or Nicaragua, it may be possible that Nahuatl was used as a lingua franca for trading, which would explain the bilingualism.

the Cura of Quiché affirmed to Mr. Stephens he had seen with his own eyes from the summits of the mountains of Quetsaltenango. (*States*, 532)

The text subsequently summarizes a host of accounts to verify the existence of the rumored city “with large edifices, and many cattle in the pastures,” according to one version; a city inhabited, according to another, by the friendly and peaceful Itzas who are the “terror of the frontier Spanish provinces.” This is apparently Squier’s free translation of the account of the chronicler Juarros which also translates the Itzas of Guatemala into the “domestic” (U.S.-expansionist) language of frontier warfare (*States*, 532; 545; 548-49). The nature of the Itzas changes according to the sources quoted, but ultimately the representation of them as cruel idolators predominates. Deviating from his Spanish sources, Squier claims that the Itzas were recent intruders to the Lake Petén area, “colonists from the seats of the Mayas in Yucatan ... at the period of the Conquest” (*States*, 550). In other words, their behavior resembled that of American filibusters themselves.

Due to Squier’s habit of ignoring the impact of historical power on the lives of cultures other than European – a frequent tendency in early (and some contemporary) ethnographical writing – the identity of the natives does indeed become mysterious. The Itzas of Lake Petén, subdued by the Spaniards in 1698, are mixed together with the Lacandones of the recent Yucatán Caste War and declared a Maya remnant, analogously to the Nahuatl-speaking inhabitants of Nicaragua and El Salvador. Their “mystery” is merely the result of their semantic and ideological double-inscription as both savage and civilized which could answer to two requirements at once: a colonial discourse of the “natural” eradication of savagery by the powers of civilization, and a romantic (yet no less colonial) discourse of exotic splendor and civilizational continuity: a *translatio imperii* among noble races.

The legend of a Maya remnant still existing in the limitless forests of Guatemala or Yucatán recurs in Squier’s novel *Waikna, or, Adventures on the Mosquito Shore*, published under the pseudonym Samuel A. Bard in 1855. The novel, which must be seen as part of Squier’s above-mentioned anti-British campaign, at the same time expresses his racist views, cast in a battle of pure against impure blood, with the wretched “Mosquitos” (also called “Sambos”) representing the latter and threatening to overrun the former.¹⁹ As is revealed at the end of the novel, amid ancient ruins, the U.S. narrator’s Indigenous servant, Antonio, is a descendant of the ancient Maya nation which once ruled over this region. Written in the light – or rather the shadow – of the Caste War which shook all Yucatán at the time, Squier imagines Antonio to be part of a “secret organization” of Indian nations

19 For a discussion of the racial, as well as colonialist, discourse of the novel, see Harvey, *American Geographics* 180-89.

which all the disasters to which they have been subjected, have not destroyed. It is to its present existence that we may attribute those simultaneous movements of the aborigines of Mexico, Central America, and Peru, which have, more than once, threatened the complete subversion of the Spanish power. (*Waikna* 258)

Antonio, whose features are identical with those Bard finds on a bas-relief in the ruined city (confirming Morton's point about the long-term "racial" stability of native American phenotypes), is resolved to join the rebellion, as his own father "had gathered the descendants of the ancient Caziqes amid the ruins at Chichen-Itza, and there they had sworn, by the heart of Beelam Votan, to restore the rule of the Holy Men, and expel the Spaniards from the Peninsula" (330). The novel ends in a state of political stasis – the Indian rebellion begins but encounters failure – and with the narrator plunging, Natty Bumppo-like, into the "untracked wilderness" of Petén in order to accompany his former servant Antonio, now "the dreaded chieftain and victorious leader of the unrelenting Itzaes of Yucatan," to gather new strength at the "lake of the Itzaes" (332).

Squier's literary production of a mythical remnant of the Maya nation, with its nod to the current Viking cult ("Votan"), further develops the rumor found in Stephens' travelogue. It answers to the ideological requirements of both imperialism – in constructing an Indigenous ally in full possession of ancestral rights, and ready to fend off not only Spanish but also British imperial rule – and of romanticism, in adding one more item to the impressive stock of imperial romance: stories of hidden ancestral treasure and powerful ancient dynasties secretly surviving in remote places and subterranean palaces but equipped with powers of biblical dimension.²⁰ The cultural work of the novel as an imperial fantasy consists in integrating the Yankee newcomers into an ancient cultural order in which their role is that of the invited ally, devoid of any violent aggression of their own, defending the southern frontier in league with its ancient inhabitants against foreign invaders.

Colonial fantasies of hidden ancient cities, and of human remnants inhabiting them, continue into the literature of the twentieth century, from Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* (1925) whose Anglo-American protagonist indigenizes himself into the landscape of ancient ruins, to Lincoln Child and Douglas Preston's horror novel *Thunderhead* (2000) in which vengeful skinwalkers kill an archaeologist and disturb the peaceful exploration of ancient Anasazi ruins in a remote valley in Utah. The "skinwalkers" are human beings capable of articulation but they are doped with datura to the point of possessing superhuman powers. They get about two lines of dialogue in a 500 page novel ("The letter, or we rip your head off," 7). They turn out to be normal human beings – tribal members severely affected by their social disfranchisement who turned to "evil" powers as

20 The genre was later to be perfected by writers like Rider Haggard. See Brantlinger.

a result (525). The novel's "good Indian" is given a remarkable instance of talking back when he says,

"I have seen witches in Anglo society, too. They wear suits instead of wolfskins. And they carry briefcases instead of corpse powder. As a boy, they came and took me to boarding school. There I was beaten for speaking my own language. Later, I saw them come among our people with mining contracts and oil leases." (526)

These six sentences, speaking of colonial reeducation and environmental destruction, refer to the continued state of coloniality which such novels aestheticize rather than interrogate. Squier's novel, the blue print of contemporary archaeology thrillers à la Preston/Child, similarly lacks such a moment of lucidity. His natives are both fierce and noble, as required by the script. Like the horror novel's skinwalkers, however, they are ready to defend their homeland against nosy archaeologists. But in both cases, evil lurks in extremely remote places where the imperial eye has difficulty spotting it to the effect that Anglo readers may think that they are "left alone with America" (to borrow Amy Kaplan's insightful phrase). The horror aesthetic feeds on the pleasurable fear (the *Angstlust*) that control may not be absolute.

Imperialist Antiquity and Anti-Conquest

One last, and, from a transnational perspective, most interesting, example for Squier's ideological campaign in justifying a U.S. presence at the Isthmus is the translation of a French travelogue which he organized, engaging his multilingual wife as translator and peppering the text with his own comments. Pierre Marie Arthur Morelet is today remembered (if at all) as a naturalist specializing in molluscs, many of which still bear his name, as does a crocodile, *crocodylus moreletii*. Having taken part in a scientific expedition to Algeria in 1839, he subsequently collected specimens in Spain and Portugal and became one of Europe's best-known experts in the field of conchology. In 1846 and 1847 the aristocrat undertook a self-financed voyage to Yucatán whose scientific results he readily published for the Académie des Sciences in Paris. It was only in 1857 that he could be prevailed upon to also publish a narrative of his journey addressed to a broader readership. His *Voyage dans l'Amérique centrale, d'Ile de Cuba, et le Yucatan* sparked Squier's interest because Morelet had traveled to precisely the unexplored regions of the Petén district which so much preoccupied Squier's imagination. In fact it seems that Squier, in his description of the Lacandonese in *The States of Central America*, had made use of information he found in Morelet's account. But the textual borrowing went in both directions.

By the time he published the English translation of Morelet's narrative under two different titles in 1871, *Travels in Central America, Including Accounts of*

Some Regions Unexplored since the Conquest and the more sensationalist one, *Itza, or the unexplored regions of Central America*, Squier had made his truce with the British. In fact, he had offered his advice and expertise to the British government for building a railway line across Honduras, printed with the same London publisher (in 1857) as the later Morelet translations. The English version of Morelet's text, cut by several chapters (on the Atlantic crossing, on Cuba, on the route between the Pacific coast and Belize), is accompanied by Squier's introduction which expresses his major reason for making this text available for an anglophone public:

Whoever glances at the map of Central America will observe a vast region, lying between Chiapas, Tabasco, Yucatan, and the Republic of Guatemala, and comprising a considerable part of each of those States, which, if not entirely a blank, is only conjecturally filled up with mountains, lakes, and rivers. It is almost as unknown as the interior of Africa itself. (Squier, "Introduction," Morelet, *Travels* xi)

The proto-Conradian beginning quickly merges into an evocation of the well-known "remnants of the ancient Itzaes, Lacandones, Choles, and Manches" who have so far resisted colonization and still live according to the style of their ancestors. Within the depths of this untrodden region, Squier continues, only slightly modulating the text of his 1858 book,

the popular tradition of Guatemala and Chiapas places that great aboriginal city, with its white walls shining like silver in the sun, which the cura of Quiché affirmed to Mr. Stephens he had seen, with his own eyes, from the tops of the mountains of Quesaltenango.

It is a region, therefore, of singular interest, appealing equally to the geographer, the student of natural history, the antiquary and the ethnologist. And lying, moreover, almost at our own doors, rich in its resources and tempting in its natural wealth, it must soon appeal to that restless spirit of enterprise and commercial activity which, not content with its past triumphs, long for new conquests and a wider field of exercise. ("Introduction," Morelet, *Travels* xii)

Squier continues to describe the various attempts of the Spaniards to subdue the Itzaes, their success in doing so in 1698, and cites accounts of their descendants haunting the region ever since. "[O]nly the vaguest notion exists of the remote district of Peten, and of the great Lake of Itza" and of the former "metropolis of the Itzaes" (xiv). He describes the natural surroundings as a hostile "*terra incognita*" awaiting to be brought "within the circle of modern knowledge" by foreign exploration (xv). As a reason for his publication of Morelet's narrative he declares (momentarily forgetting that he publishes in Britain) the strong "appeal" it has "to American interests," too strong indeed to be "allowed to remain in the comparative obscurity to which the mistaken delicacy of its author would condemn it" (xvi). Less delicately, Squier himself bans to obscurity the chapter refer-

ring to Cuba – another interest zone of the United States – as being of “subordinate importance.”

A comparison with the French original shows that Squier tampered relatively little with the text in detail. But in the beginning, long narrative sections are replaced with Squier’s summaries and additional information. At the end of the second volume the reasons given for Morelet’s hasty departure upon receiving news from home that demanded his instant return in 1847 somewhat differ from the original.²¹ More interesting are the textual transactions that took place between the two travelers. Having finished his account of his journey across Guatemala, Morelet, in the French original, abandons his usual narrative style and, jumping ahead of time (a practice found nowhere else in his 600-page tome), gives a highly tendentious account of the British activities at the Mosquito Coast taken straight out of Squier’s anti-British writings – both a précis of Squier’s position published in Paris in 1856 and longer passages taken from his sensationalist novel, *Waikna* (*Voyage*, II, 300-06). Without being able to verify the impact that Squier had on that part of Morelet’s text, it is interesting to note that just these passages are missing from the British version of 1871. Since 1860, the diplomatic relations between Britain and the United States with regard to the isthmus area had developed into a collaborative effort to build a railway through Honduras or Nicaragua (Dunkerley, *Americana* 611). Apart from this anachronism, Morelet’s text offers little to substantiate Squier’s greatest desire – to offer proof for the existence of Maya living in the style of the ancients in Petén. Although the French traveler gives a detailed account of his journey to Flores, the district town located at the site of the ancient city of Itza, as well as lengthy summaries of all the knowledge he can find on the wild Lacandones and on ancient ruins nearby, he is ultimately unable to find out more due to the secretiveness of the local population and due to a prolonged fever which had bound him to his hammock while at Flores. On account of the natural spatial limitations of Flores he denies the possibility that this could ever have been an important establishment (or “metropolis,” as Squier has it). Directly addressing the local legend that migrates through the texts of Stephens and Squier, he adds:

As to the existence of a mysterious city, inhabited by the Indians who still live in the centre of Peten, as they did of old, pursuing all their ancient habits and practices – this is a notion which must take its place among the fancies of the imagination. This tale originated in Yucatan,

21 Without explaining what precisely demanded his return, the social unrest preceding the May revolutions of 1848 is referred to in both texts: while Squier reminds his readers of the remote events (“the flight of King Louis Philippe, [...] which [...] made the year 1848 one of the most memorable in history,” *Travels* 413), Morelet more explicitly articulates the sentiments of his own class. “Enfin, nous arrivâmes en France, le 22 février 1848, au début de cette révolution inouïe qui mit les destinées d’un grand pays entre les mains d’une poignée de conspirateurs et de factieux.” (“We finally arrived in France, on the 22nd of February 1848, at the beginning of that unheard of revolution which put the destinies of a great country into the hands of a handful of conspirators and insurgents.”) (*Voyage*, II, 307).

and travelers in relating it, have given it far too great prominence. The Indian villages of the district of Peten are small and squalid. The inhabitants are subject to the laws of the country, and if a few tribes escape from the Spanish jurisdiction, it is only at the price of dispersion and poverty that they enjoy their independence. (*Travels*, 242-3)

Although Squier adds a long footnote referring to yet more local legends about Itza, Morelet's suspicion of the myth is strengthened by the fact that he has himself been to the place; to him, there is nothing mysterious or inapproachable about it. He describes Flores as a remotely located, underdeveloped, and boring district town, fortunately – for Morelet the naturalist – surrounded by interesting fauna and flora, which he describes at length.

Yet, as neither Morelet apparently knew in 1846 nor Squier in 1871, a gigantic *ruined* Maya city *had* been found just a three-day journey away from Flores. The expedition to the ruins of Tikal, one of the largest sites of the pre-classical period (c. 600 BC – c. 600 AD), had started on its search in February 1848, just a few months after Morelet had left the area, and concurrently with the outbreak of the Caste War. The expedition was led by Modesto Méndez, the *corregidor* of the district of Petén in Guatemala. The party started from Flores on 23 February and reached Tikal after a three-day journey on foot. The members of the party undertook basic measurements of the buildings, caused some destruction while trying to break through a wall in search of treasure, enjoyed the view from the high towers of Tikal, copied some of the glyphs and images they found on bas-reliefs, found footprints and arrows of the Lacandonese, and took possession of the ruins in the name of the Republic of Guatemala by inscribing their names on the walls. One of the Indigenous officials, governor Tut, promised to show Méndez a stone engraved with the image of a bull some three leagues distant, which, they concluded, must be evidence that the ancient Maya did domesticate cattle (Méndez, “Über neue Entdeckungen” 61-68). The report was printed in the newspaper *Gaceta de Guatemala* (Aguirre 90 and 178n74). The discovery became known outside the Spanish-reading world through the publication of Méndez's report in German translation in the first edition of the *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Erdkunde*, edited by the famous German geographer Carl Ritter in 1853. In the German edition, it is accompanied by explanatory remarks and an appendix that betray a remarkable knowledge of the history and present exploration of ancient sites in Mesoamerica. While the “Geh.[eimer] Finanzrath Hesse,” the royal Prussian agent for Central America, demonstrates his expertise on both the history and the present state of the area, the appendix, written by the German-Baltic traveler Jégor von Sivers, summarizes all the relevant sources on Yucatán, from Villagutiérrez, Juarros, and Herrera to Waldeck, Kingsborough, and Stephens, and his U.S. epigone, Benjamin Moore Norman. Von Sivers' report, “Yucatan, seine Literatur und seine Alterthümer,” takes most of its information from Stephens' two travelogues. It ends with an account of the defeat of the inhabitants of Itza in 1698 and

with a reference to Stephens' as well as Squier's accounts of the living city. Von Sivers mentions that Squier, in a publication on the antiquities and linguistic situation in Nicaragua, writes of having sent a native pioneer to find out more about the ancient yet still inhabited Maya city. The man, according to von Sivers, confirmed the rumors of a *ruined* city, "thereby depriving the ghost of that ancient and allegedly still independent and inhabited city of its credibility" (192).²² The authors of these texts deem it likely that the rumors spread by Stephens, Squier, and others refer to Tikal, the "ghostly" metropolis which had been deserted for centuries even when the Spaniards arrived and whose very name had fallen prey to historical oblivion – "Tikal" simply means "ruined palaces" (Méndez/Hesse 175).

It seems that the year 1848 was rich in ghosts – spectral Maya cities keeping company with the specter of communism. As Robert Aguirre shows, the discovery of Tikal also became known to the masterminds of empire in London, either through the German translation or through direct information sent to the Foreign Office from Belize together with reports on the Caste War (*Informal Empire*, 178n73). Aguirre also shows that Britain was interested in acquiring one of the ancient Maya cities in order to transport its remains to London – thereby emulating John Lloyd Stephens' similar attempt to buy Copán. The scheme failed partly because of the difficulty in removing the ruins and partly because of an excess of communication and the resulting inertia of the British colonial bureaucracy (88-97).²³ As Stephens had written in legitimizing the intended removal of Maya cities to Washington, modern nations asserted their nationhood by possessing the ancient cultural artifacts of areas outside their national territories. All nations did this. Appropriative archaeology was so much part and parcel of national collective identities that the names of the provenance of those artifacts are frequently the names of Western museums, not the names of the places from where the cultural treasures had been removed.

From a transatlantic perspective, the translation of knowledge on the fabled Maya city between Guatemala, the United States, France, Great Britain, and Germany captures the attention. The fact that the scholars involved were multilingual (or, as in Squier's case, had a multilingual wife) did not prevent the partial blockage of important knowledge on some of the transnational information channels. Squier was apparently unaware of the German translation of the Tikal report, even though he was very much aware of the work of the editor of the journal in which it appeared: he had even dedicated his 1855 book *Notes on Central America* to Carl Ritter. The list of references appended to his introduction to his wife's translation of Morelet's *Voyage* contains several German texts (both in translation and in the original) by writers such as Carl Scherzer, Moritz Wagner, and Julius Froebel (Squier, "Introduction," Morelet, *Travels*, xvii).

22 "[...] wodurch das Gespenst jener alten angeblich noch frei bewohnten Stadt immer mehr an Glaubwürdigkeit verliert."

23 Two other candidates for removal were Quiriguá and, again, Copán.

In fact, the vicinity of the names of Carl Ritter (1779-1859), the founder of modern geography in the German lands, and Carl Scherzer (1821-1903), the Austrian scientific traveler and propagator of emigration, stresses the division that runs through the whole discourse on Mesoamerica – including the scientific discourse – at the time. While Ritter's geographical vision was strongly indebted to the holistic and humanistic approach of Humboldt, mixed with significant theological overtones (missing from Humboldt), Scherzer represents the very opposite approach: as a representative of the imperial Austrian government he was seeking to lay the ideological groundwork for mass emigration and colonization of the states of Central America, as well as the exploitation of their products, with apparently few qualms about legal or moral complexities. His two-volume report on his circumnavigation on board the imperial Austrian ship *Novara* in 1857-59 gives evidence of this new taxonomic and economic mentality, completely devoid of any residues of romantic imperial antiquity such as Stephens' and Squier's hidden city. Scherzer collects all available information on the size, number, and frequency of ships passing the isthmus, as well as all available and commercially useful data on the products of the countries he visits – just as Squier did when he made a proposal to the British for the joint construction of a railway across Honduras.²⁴ In spite of Scherzer's sober-minded approach to colonial commerce, the imperial myth of Maya antiquity retained its ideological power and survives in the popular imagination of the present.

Archaeological Creationism

This is a far cry from the philosophical approach to nature represented by Carl Ritter, to whom Squier surprisingly dedicated one of his books. Working as a school teacher most of his life, Ritter, inspired by and collaborating with Pestalozzi, made significant contributions to the reformation of school teaching, especially in the fields of geography and history. Dedicated to the holistic Humboldtian view, Ritter set out to write a definitive work on the geographical composition of the world, but he did not get beyond Africa (one volume) and Asia (20 volumes). Contrary to most of his contemporaries, Ritter did not subscribe to the doctrine of nationalism but viewed the spatial order of the world in terms of the “lawful order between space and the history of its populations” (Büttner/

24 Scherzer's activity falls into the imperial post-Habsburgian period when Austria was involved in various international conflicts, including the Crimean War and, in the 1860s, when Napoleon III sent the Habsburgian archduke Maximilian to Mexico to usurp the republican government of Benito Juárez. He was Mexican King for three years and then executed. Scherzer, infected with the germ of scientific racism, praises the great advantages of a “nordic emigration” to Mesoamerica, and *en passant* mentions that the Nicaraguan lead, gold, and gem mines are all controlled by United States companies (Scherzer, *Wanderungen* 170). All of this shows the intensity with which different colonial and imperial powers contended for the strategic control of that whole region.

Hoheisel 96). Retaining a pietist sense of creation as the work of a divine intelligence, Ritter sought to reconcile the notion of the shaping impact of the natural environment on human action with the idea of man's freedom of decision. In this he was, in the words of Büttner and Hoheisel, "a real possibilist" (102). Like many of his contemporaries, Ritter regarded North America as the place where human civilization would realize its best potential.

Not surprisingly, knowledge of Ritter's work faded shortly after his death in 1859 – the year that so shattered the Bible-based view of natural history. But while his ideas seemed antiquated in nationalist and industrializing Europe, they fell on fertile ground in the United States, especially through the impact of his pupil Arnold Guyot. This Swiss intellectual refugee of 1848 spread Ritter's geographical ideas during a celebrated lecture tour in Boston and other parts of New England and the subsequent publication of *Earth and Man* (1849) which would run through numerous editions in the United States for decades to come (Büttner/Hoheisel 104).²⁵ Obviously the difference in reception is related to the different reaction to – that is, rejection of – Darwinism in the United States. Ritter's and Guyot's concept of an organic unity between man and creation was doubtlessly favored by an intellectual world strongly influenced by the very similar ideas of transcendentalism, the United States' secular religion at mid-century.

As the circulation of knowledge about the expedition to Tikal and Squier's dedication of his work to Ritter suggest, the discourse about Central America and Yucatán at mid-nineteenth century must be seen as a complex transcultural and translational space, not only in the sense of literal translation but also as a site of traveling knowledges rhizomatically sprouting in different political and intellectual soils. In such a situation, anachronisms and ideological inconsistencies are predictable. Like Carl Ritter, Arthur Morelet belongs to that group of writers whose approach to nature and its beings is still guided by a humanistically inspired reverence for creation that has, in Pratt's words, a "utopian, innocent vision of European global authority" (*Imperial Eyes* 38-39). Pratt's name for this position is "anti-conquest"; a term appropriate to the writers discussed here would be "archaeological creationism." This poetic-philosophical attitude is readily, and very competently, translated by Miriam Squier, not without adding an occasional moralizing twist here and the full text of a psalm there.²⁶

25 In going to the United States, Guyot followed the call of his compatriot Louis Agassiz who had already left in 1846 and who introduced Guyot into the American scientific community. On Guyot's influence in the USA, see Harthorne/Gurgel.

26 When Morelet philosophically writes, "Les ruines de Palenque nous présentent, par le mystère impenétrable dont elles sont enveloppées, un exemple saisissant du néant de l'humanité" (*Voyage*, I, 273-74), Mrs. Squier supplements the reference to the "nothingness of humanity" with a remark on the "vanity of man's attempts to perpetuate his own glory" (*Travels*, 98) – a remark that may be read as a critique of her own husband's nationalist-chauvinistic pursuits. (She would force a divorce trial two years later.) Morelet finishes his text with an evocation of God's grandeur: "l'image du créateur m'est apparue dans toute sa majesté, et [...] je me suis écrié avec le Psalmiste: 'Seigneur, je vous louerai parce que votre grandeur a éclaté d'une manière étonnante; vos ouvrages sont admirables,

Though taking a scientific approach to American nature, Morelet's vision completely differs from the utilitarian (ir)rationality and imperial fantasies of Ephraim Squier. While spending a fortnight in the ruins of Palenque, together with his French servant Morin and the dog Fida who they had picked up in the nearby village, Morelet is enraptured by the sights and sounds of the surrounding nature:

When night fell, ... the ruins appeared to be enchanted, and I can well conceive that the superstitious terrors of the Indians would prevent their remaining here in the darkness. They imagine that the place is haunted by the spirits of its early occupants; that by moonlight the bas-reliefs become invested with life, and that the warriors step out of their stone frames and stalk through the sombre galleries.

For my own part, although without fear of these nocturnal visitors, there were times when I could not avoid some little superstitious emotion. Tiny, winged lamps seemed floating in the atmosphere, first with the brilliancy of a spark, then with a fugitive brightness which lost itself in a train of light; at the same time undefinable sounds seemed to proceed from all parts of the woods – not terrific ... but soft and sweet like the music of birds, and as mysterious as the accents of an unknown tongue. I seemed to detect life in all things around me; the plants, the trees, the old walls themselves, appeared imbued with its spirit, and to speak a language of their own Now it was like the silvery tinkle of a little bell, or a plaintive voice calling in the distance, then a rustling sound, and next a sob from the interior of the ruins. Again, it was like a thousand gentle whispers, a thousand little cadences, celebrating, in a universal concert, the coolness and magnificence of the night. At one time I surprised a frog on the staircase, whose croakings had mystified us, from its resemblance to the barking of a dog. Even Fida had been equally deceived with ourselves, and during our first night in the ruins had kept up a reciprocal chorus with this inhabitant of the stream. (*Travels*, 100-1; *Voyage*, I, 274-75)

The French original continues to describe the author's feeling of speechless awe in the presence of these nameless remains which fill him with respectful admiration toward this ungraspable intelligence that seems to have pulled this hitherto unknown world from nothingness: "le trouble inexprimable dont mon âme était agitée, en présence de ces débris sans nom et de cette nature inconnue, s'associaient à une admiration respectueuse pour l'intelligence toute-puissante, qui semblait tirer du néant un monde que j'avais ignoré" (*Voyage*, I, 276). But in spite of these spiritual reflections, Morelet was also a naturalist intent on advancing the knowledge of the world by defining new species. He thus excitedly leaves the ruined city the next morning and follows the sounds of a rare

et mon âme en est pénétrée' (Ps. 138)" (*Voyage*, II, 307). The translation contains the whole psalm (*Travels*, 414). For a summary of the public scandal that Squier's private life caused, see Barnhart, "Epilogue. Insanity and the 'Eclipse of Genius'," in *Ephraim George Squier* (317-32).

bird whose song, he writes, was “clear, limpid, and full of cadence, such as those produced by a musical box I shouldered my gun with the liveliest satisfaction, and started in pursuit of the unseen musician” (*Travels*, 101-2). Paying little attention to landmarks, he follows the enchanting bird farther and farther into the wilderness. But instead of getting a shot at it, he soon finds himself lost in the intractable forest. After several minutes of fearful paralysis, he musters his wit and begins to systematically explore the surroundings, always keeping his point of origin in sight and backtracking when the direction proves wrong. As the day moves toward dusk, having bruised his knee with a pointed rock during a fall, and beginning to seriously suffer from thirst, Morelet finally finds his way back to Palenque just before nightfall. His servant Morin, “in his anxiety for me, had forgotten to prepare supper, and as a crowning misfortune, Fido, disgusted with so long a fast, devoured greedily the collection of birds and insects which had cost me so dear” (*Travels*, 107). Morelet never hears the sound of the wonderful bird again, but the next morning he reestablishes his collector’s ego by killing “a superb *hocco* (*crax alector*, L.)”

Morelet offers several more such entertaining anecdotes of picaresque adventures whose literary effect is heightened by the frequent inclusion of dialogues with his uneducated but witty companions – his French servant and native guides. His text also offers sophisticated descriptions of the natural world, demonstrating his scholarly expertise and a sensibility for the more-than-human world not found in any of the other writers. What the text does not contain, however, is hard evidence for the existence of Stephens’ and Squier’s living Maya city. Rather the opposite: Morelet, who has spent several weeks in Flores due to a prolonged fever, knows for sure, from frequent conversations with the locals, that there is no such city nearby. Neither is there anything mysterious about the Lake Petén or the location of Itza, the site having been renamed Flores by the Spanish conquistadores after its destruction in 1698. It is now the seat of the district government of Vera Paz. He regrets not having been able to go and explore the surroundings of Flores himself due to his illness, thus not being able “to add any information to the knowledge which we possess concerning the antiquities of the country May some more fortunate traveller profit by my hints and fulfill the task which I had marked out, and save from oblivion ... the last vestiges of Maya civilization in these regions” (*Travels*, 241; *Voyage*, II, 65-66).

Though much more indebted to the romantic tradition of natural history than either Stephens or Squier, Morelet provides information that definitely transports their mysterious city to the world of colonial fairy tales. Yet, it is strange that he seems to have heard nothing about the existence of Tikal which, as mentioned above, is located only three days journey from Flores. Perhaps anticipating the consequences of divulging their knowledge to strangers, the natives of Petén knew how to keep their secret about their ancient temples and palaces with tops as high as to allow views of such faraway places as the Bay of Belize.

Neither is Morelet more successful in discovering durable evidence of the existence of survivors of the ancient Maya. He makes occasional contact with rebellious Caribs and Lacandones, without clearly distinguishing between the two groups (*Travels*, 155). While underway by boat he and his Indian guides encounter a canoe occupied by one of “the independent or unconquered Indians.” Being “deeply interested” in having “a nearer sight of this child of nature,” he orders to give chase. Having captured the man Morelet explains to him that he “had no hostile designs, but, on the contrary,” wanted to “elevate him to the dignity of our pilot, with liberal recompense for his services.” He notices, however, that his captive did not share his fondness for this plan, neither does he give away any useful information when asked. But the rum they give him to drink

acted at the same time upon his brain and the muscles of his tongue, which at last began to perform its functions. I questioned him concerning the ancient ruins which have been (erroneously I think) described as existing near this locality. Our Indian confirmed what I had previously heard at Tenosique, namely, that no ruins are to be found here. Perhaps the castellated rocks which I have before mentioned, have led to this error, and credit has thus been given to human industry for a simple freak of nature. It would indeed be astonishing if there existed ruins of importance on the upper course of the Usumasinta, since the annals of the new world do not mention any civilization or culture in all the mountainous region to the east of Peten. (*Travels*, 155; *Voyage I*, 317-18)

And he mentions, as he would again later, that “these unexplored Cordilleras” were inhabited by “poor, inoffensive savages” who avoid contact with the Spaniards and only occasionally come to the settlements for the purpose of trade. Not content with this sparse information, Squier, acting as editor, adds two long footnotes referring to other reports, one of which does mention large ruins in the very region visited by Morelet while the other emphasizes the unexplored state of that region, which “is at present as little known as the interior of Africa.”

Having questioned his prisoner, Morelet and his companions prepare for the night. After a rather comic dialogue assessing the dangers of a Carib attack, they decide to place their prisoner between them. On the next morning, the prisoner is gone, together with his boat and his knowledge (*Travels*, 158).

Topographies of Deep Space

Squier’s attempt to adapt Morelet’s travelogue to his ideological narrative about the existence of a hidden Maya city in the unexplored depths of Yucatán or the Petén may be regarded as a leftover from his earlier massive campaign in favor of an American intervention in the isthmus region in the 1850s. Since the conquests of Mexico and Peru, the lure of secret civilizations and secret treasure has,

after all, been one of the motors of the mythology of adventure and of imperial expansion.

The ideology of adventure celebrated one of its peaks in the Romantic historiography of the nineteenth century. The economic and political activities of the United States in Mesoamerica in the 1850s were ideologically aided by the circulation of Prescott's romanticized versions of the Spanish conquest of Mexico and Peru, which raised Hernán Cortés to the quintessential model of heroic imperial action.²⁷ In the context of modern global capitalism, adventure fictions, mixing the medieval knight and the early modern military leader with the contemporary figure of the adventure capitalist, mercenary, and (as, e.g., in the case of Poe and Verne) scholar, provided the necessary imaginary for an expansive transnational merchant empire. In the hands of Squier, owing to his strong emphasis on racial degeneration, romantic mystery is shot through with what Brantlinger has called the imperial gothic²⁸ – a lingering anxiety about the success and permanence of imperial control, as well as about the danger of cultural disintegration through biological degeneration. In fact, the fear of racial amalgamation was perhaps the major argument against a straightforward conquest of Mesoamerican states.²⁹

On a more subtle level, and as we shall further see in the following chapter, imperial anxiety reflects an incomplete understanding of geological time, which impacted the imperial insistence on its own antiquity. As Harvey states, the sublimity of the Mesoamerican monuments in the texts of Stephens and Squier resided above all “in their temporal opacity – their unfathomable historicity” (*American Geographics* 158). In the field of archaeology, the desire to lay open

27 Martin Green names the deeds of Cortés as one of three models for modern adventure literature, Robert Clive's battles in India in the 1750s and Napoleon's march on Egypt in 1798 being the other two (*Dreams of Adventure*, chapter 1).

28 Brantlinger regards the imperial gothic as expressing “anxieties about the waning of religious orthodoxy, but even more clearly it expresses anxieties about the ease with which civilization can revert to barbarism or savagery and thus about the weakening of Britain's imperial hegemony.” The principal themes of the imperial gothic are “individual regression or going native,” the “invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism,” and the “diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world” (*Rule of Darkness* 229-30).

29 Jefferson's famous evocation of a hemispheric Anglo-Saxon empire (in a letter to James Monroe, 1801) is coupled with the fear of racial mixture: “However our present interests may restrain us within our own limits, it is impossible not to look forward to distant times when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, and cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, and by similar laws; nor can we contemplate with satisfaction either blot or mixture on that surface” (qtd. in Merk, *Manifest Destiny* 9). The annexation of Texas in 1845 was applauded because the Mexican territory had been taken over by “Anglo-Saxon” settlers coming from the United States. The Mexicans were regarded as a mongrel race, indolent, irrational, and Catholic. The admission of such a population, it was believed, might endanger the principles of democracy just as it would threaten the racial integrity of the United States. Thus the fear of racial hybridization – the loss of Anglo-Saxon features due to racial amalgamation – inflected the desire for territorial expansion. Ironically, the major ideologemes of American imperial expansion, racial supremacy and quasi-religious civilizational mission, tended to impair each other out of a fear of racial mixing.

ruined cities ought to be viewed as part of the same desire to know and expose to view the “antique and exotic haunts of time” (Harvey, “Melville, Deep Time” 217) – not just of European, Christian time but also of the inscrutable, and therefore frightening, temporality of other cultures. The ruined cities of Mesoamerica confronted Western travelers and scholars with the challenge of an ‘other’ temporality which could not be contained in the language of racial savagism deployed in descriptions of Mesoamerica’s Indigenous and other non-white populations, regardless of its fundamental denial of historical coevalness. The encounter with illegible but apparently complex chronicles of a possibly very deep past carved into ancient monuments of unknown age seriously threatened the imperial self-image. Ancient certainties about the extent of space and time evaporated in the light of new scientific discoveries that, against the promise of shedding light on the unknown depths of the earth, showed that the earth, and the historical presence of humans in it, were much vaster than previously thought. Not many contemporaries at the time possessed minds large enough to contain such possibilities.

Panama – Petersburg

In February 1850, three years after Stephens’ meeting with Humboldt, a young merchant from Petersburg, Russia (but actually born in Mecklenburg, Germany) left from Liverpool on the steamer *Africa* for California in order to claim the inheritance of his dead brother who had followed the lure of gold but lost his life to the typhoid fever. According to his diary, after a most enjoyable time in New York our entrepreneur paid his respects to President Fillmore, who introduced him to Mr. Webster, Mr. Clay, and other leading politicians. We now know that the events described, like some others, were invented. As it is, our traveler left the United States by ship, passed the isthmus on Stephens’ semi-finished Panama railroad with some effort and was amazed at the improvised state of the infrastructure. He went to Sacramento to claim his brother’s money and increased it by way of intelligent loaning and speculation, being an expert in this field. “My purchases,” he writes, “go for the most part to the house of Rothschild at London, whose branch-establishment at San Francisco supplies me by every night’s steamer with the necessary Coin.” His bank “is from early till late constantly jammed, crammed and rammed full of people from all nations and I have to speak all the day long in 8 languages. In fact if I knew a hundred languages it would not be sufficient to speak to every one in his native tongue.” In spite of his great financial success, he decides to return to Petersburg out of fear of being robbed and out of homesickness. He nearly dies of fever and hunger during the return journey (the Panama rail link still being very unreliable), but returns a rich man, and increases his wealth by trading in colonial products before and during the American Civil War, especially in cotton, sugar, and indigo. Having amassed

a significant fortune by way of original accumulation, trade in the slave-based Atlantic economy, and speculation, our modern adventure-capitalist decided to give up the nerve-wrecking merchant life in favor of a life for the sciences. He returned to a childhood dream of a fabled ancient city whose location is unknown and thought to be purely poetic. Reading Homer's *Iliad* literally he discovered the remains of Troy in 1871-73.³⁰

John Lloyd Stephens and Heinrich Schliemann may have met, as Victor von Hagen suggests (*Maya Explorer* 296), or they may not – there is no mention of a meeting in Schliemann's travel diary. The co-presence of these two early imperial archaeologists at the site of capitalism and tropical fever exquisitely illustrates imperial science's cultural geography.

Imperial Dreams, Indigenous Deep Time

The mythical trope of the undiscovered Indigenous city connects the different sites of a transatlantic imperial archaeology. Contrary to John Lloyd Stephens' shining Maya city, forever hidden from his sight, Heinrich Schliemann, relying on the ancient, orally transmitted knowledge contained in Homer's *Iliad*, did in fact discover both the remains of the ancient city of Troy and ancient gold (e.g., "Priam's treasure"). Ever since Sir Walter Raleigh's rhetorically refined but empirically slim *Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Beautifull Empire of Guiana* (1596), the colonial dream of El Dorado has been kept alive in popular stories in print, on celluloid, and on the World Wide Web.

Raleigh claims to have seen a manuscript report in the possession of his prisoner, Don Antonio de Berrio, written by "Johannes Martinez" (Juan Martín de Albújar), master of munition to the Spanish explorer Diego Ordaz. Martinez had been captured by natives during Ordaz's expedition on the Orinoco in 1542 and claims to have been brought to Manoa, a densely populated city whose proportions were so vast that a whole day was needed to traverse it (Raleigh 87-88). After staying with the "Inga" in his city for seven months, Martinez, we read, returned loaded with gold but lost most of it when attacked by hostile Indians. Hundreds of adventurers since have gone in search of that magnificent city, rumored to be hidden in the midst of the Amazon forest. And numerous pre-Columbian sites in Bolivia, Peru and elsewhere were identified as possible origins of the myth of El Dorado. During the Age of Enlightenment, as Neil Whitehead has shown, the mythical narrative of the Amazon as an area of hidden gold and riches (and warlike women) transformed into a nostalgic narrative of vanished "pristine" landscapes and inhabitants:

30 The summary and quotations above are taken from Schliemann, *Schliemann's First Visit to America*, 21-82; quotations at 66, 67, and 68. For a good summary of Schliemann's early career, see Cobet, *Heinrich Schliemann* 30-54.

The pristine myth erases both the native population and the evidence of its past. It is also blind to the processes and consequences of conquest: the empty rivers and silent forests, the vast gloom and trackless glades are not in fact the pristine indications of an undisturbed domain of nature but rather the consequence of the violent and catastrophic actions of colonial culture on the ecology of the Amazon itself and on the native peoples who once lived there. (“South America” 131)

Indigenous Amazonians, Whitehead continues, are, in this process, “relegated to the status of an evanescent curiosity ... whose destiny is now extinction” (131). Later journeys into the interiors of Latin America – the Amazon Basin and the Petén further north – were undertaken and narrated in accordance with the primitivist idea that travels into the interior were like journeys into what Joseph Conrad called the “night of first ages” (*Heart of Darkness* 69; see Mackenthun, “Night of First Ages”). This powerful trope, which extends from popular discourse into academic writing (e.g. the ethnography of Claude Lévi-Strauss), ignores the lived realities of Indigenous people by freezing them in “deep time” and thus denying them cultural and historical coevalness (Whitehead, “South America” 134; Fabian, *Time and the Other*). The myth of the mysterious city is one of the most powerful manifestations of this denial of historicity.

One of the best known seekers of El Dorado is the British gentleman-adventurer Percy Fawcett, who, after many attempts to find the mysterious city which he called “Z,” disappeared somewhere between the outpost of Bakairi and the Xingu River (in the Brazilian Mato Grosso near the Bolivian border) in 1925. His expeditions have inspired the figure of Indiana Jones and numerous popular quest stories (Grann 253-54). As Stephens is to William Carlsen, Fawcett is one of the original adventurers whose journeys have caused another set of journeys – of modern-day travelers retracing earlier ones and rearticulating their narrativizations (Leavenworth). In his retracing of Fawcett’s journeys David Grann shows that the British gentleman’s imagination was fired by both historical accounts of El Dorado and contemporary Blavatskian spiritualist fantasies about an ancient Atlantean kingdom inhabited by perfect spiritual beings – a fantasy kept alive by modern esoteric cults in Brazil (Grann 299-300). The colonial fantasy of lost cities to be possessed continues into the present.

Recent archaeological expeditions have provided some substance to such rumors of large ancient settlements – found in some of the most remote areas of Latin America, and without golden streets and rulers. Thanks to intricate technology such as lidar aerial laser mapping and paleoecological analysis of plant distribution and soil characteristics, numerous large sites of former habitations have been revealed in Yucatán and the Petén, as well as in the Amazon Basin. In the Yucatán, scientists continue to find extensive remains of large urban centers and evidence of intense subsistence agriculture (“Scientists Discover”; “Oldest and Largest Maya Structure”). Bioarchaeologists like Clark Erickson, Michael Heckenberger, Eduardo Neves, Anna Roosevelt, Stéphen Rostain and others have dis-

closed the former existence of large agricultural settlements in various regions of the Amazon (the Basin, the Marajo floodplain at the mouth of the Amazon) whose “cultural forests” consisted of “cultivated anthropogenic landscapes rather than pristine or paradisiacal forests” (Safier, “Fugitive” 54).³¹ They proliferated in the Holocene period (i.e., the past 12,000 years) throughout the Amazon River Basin. Through a careful material analysis of plant distribution, soil characteristics, stylistic features of pottery, geoglyphs (intentional anthropogenic landscape modification), the presence of charcoal and pollen in the paleoecological record, and site locations of human domestic and mortuary remains, scholars revealed that the ancestors of today’s Amazonian population “proactively managed their local environments: Planting trees, cultivating species, domesticating animals, and otherwise organizing their domestic lives in direct relationship with the forests that surrounded them” (54). In addition to producing a very fertile soil, *terra preta do indio* – dark-earth consisting of natural soil mixed with organic materials and charcoal gained either through a “slash and char” method of low-intensity burning or through the century-long practice of mixing the charcoal from cooking fires with the kitchen debris – archaeologists also found evidence of human dispersal of seeds and fruits, extending to the past eight thousand years (Mann, 1491, 356).³² *Terra preta do indio* is today valued as one of the richest anthropogenic soils in the world.³³

This evidence, retrieved by modern scientists respectful of Indigenous cultural achievements from the deep past to the present, shows that humans had, not for hundreds but for thousands of years, consciously manipulated soils in the Amazon Basin. They produced compost in order to enhance soil fertility – a revelation that contradicts older assumptions about the tropical forest having a limited carrying capacity for a few thousand roaming hunter-gatherers. In fact, Safier argues, its ecosystem must have been much more malleable, offering subsistence to much larger populations than thought possible by an older generation of scholars limited by their view of America’s Indigenous population as hunter-gatherers in a “pristine” landscape (Safier, “Fugitive” 54-55). Once again, exact analysis shows that the “pristine,” just like the “prehistorical,” is a construction resulting from a dualistic ideology with no sense of the in-between and no eye for the unfamiliar.

At the end of his travelogue, *The Lost City of Z*, in which he traces the life and journeys of Percy Fawcett, David Grann relates his encounter with Michael Heckenberger, one of the archaeologists involved in revealing the ancient horticultural settlements in the Amazon Basin. He discovered the remains of large clusters of settlements inhabited by between two thousand to five thousand people, which equals the size of many medieval European cities (Grann 314). Heck-

31 For a summary of the research see Schaan.

32 Mann is referring to the work of Christoph Steiner; Clement et al. See also Glaser, Glaser and Woods.

33 *Terra preta*, produced after a recipe based on the research of the bioarchaeologist Bruno Glaser, can be bought and used in European gardens. It is now in my raised veggie bed. American antiquity restored!

enberger's, Eduardo Neves', Anna Roosevelt's and other scholars' reconstructions of the situation in the Amazon at the time of the first encounter with Europeans suggests that one of the most dismissed reports from the Spanish colonial archive, Gaspar de Carvajal's *Relación del Descubrimiento del Rio Grande de los Amazonas* (1541/42), was probably much closer to the truth than Western scholars had until recently considered possible. Carvajal was acting as chaplain to Francisco de Orellana's expedition down the Amazon from today's Bolivia in search of the land of cinnamon (Safier, "Fugitive" 51). Though written in 1541-42, i.e. while Raleigh's source Martinez presumably enjoyed golden dinners with the Inca of the Amazonian El Dorado, Carvajal's report remained in manuscript until 1895 and only saw print at a time when the colonial myth of the Amazon Indians' primitivity had been established for too long to be challenged. Carvajal's descriptions are less spectacular than Raleigh's renderings of the story of Johannes Martinez. But what he describes are large settlements abounding in many different foodstuffs and possessing an urban infrastructure, with roads, walls, and causeways (Safier, "Fugitive" 56-59).

While at the moment of the European arrival the Indigenous settlements were probably much larger and more intricately organized than so far assumed, some sites were also significantly older than thought. Anna Roosevelt concludes from carbon-dating settlement remains in the Amazon floodplains that some of them were at least ten thousand years old – "about twice as old as scientists had estimated the human presence in the Amazon." This once again challenges the Clovis First theory which dates the first arrival of humans across the Bering land bridge to eleven thousand years ago (Grann 315; Roosevelt). Or it challenges the theory that the Bering land bridge was the only migration route.

Thus modern archaeologists capable of shedding the ethnocentric blinders with which the vision of their discipline was dimmed, have finally found the mysterious cities of Latin America: the densely populated agricultural and horticultural communities they discovered in the Amazon and Petén areas are the 'fire' to the 'smoke' of Raleigh's, Stephens' and Squier's stories which greatly exaggerated their wealth and magnitude, as adventure stories are wont to do. The colonial trope of the mysterious Indigenous city encapsulates the imperial "sacred hunger" for gold and a life without toil, hiding the fact that life quite without toil is only possible by raising the workload of others.³⁴

While archaeologists are disclosing the deep historical roots of American agricultural knowledge, the Amazon is being destroyed by intentionally set fires – not slow-burning small fires needed in the production of *terra preta do indio* but cataclysmic fires to make room for the crops of a carnivorous clientele – soy beans and other monocultures produced for the world's growing "sacred" hunger for meat. Many of the violent executioners of the greedy designs of global agribusiness are themselves poor, "redundant" people displaced from Brazil's urban

34 "Sacred hunger for gold" is Edmund Spenser's (*Faerie Queene* V.xii.1-7). It provided the title for Barry Unsworth's historical novel on the British slave trade, *Sacred Hunger* (1992).

centers. Indigenous cultures are being displaced not by the Burton ale cosmopolitanism John Lloyd Stephens imagined to arise on the shores of Lake Nicaragua, but rather by a brutal and reckless economy based on fossil extraction and the reduction of animals to edible meat chunks.

Resistance movements like the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) and its nonmilitant arm, the Congreso Nacional Indígena (CNI), with their political center in Chiapas, are the Indigenous response to such practices. One of their most recent campaigns has been to prevent the construction of the “Tren Maya” (Maya train), a railroad planned by the Mexican government to connect the remote area between Cancún, Chetumal, and Escárcega to the rest of Yucatán. But besides the improved access to markets and rise of living standards promised to the local peasants, the train predominantly serves to enhance antiquity tourism: the plan is to transform Calakmul, presently a village near an archaeological site, into a city like Cancún – with 50,000 inhabitants and enough hotel space for harboring three million tourists per year. Critics of the project fear great disadvantages for the local peasant population and the biosphere (Paley).

Meanwhile, Nicaragua is planning to build a canal through its natural reserves. Financed by a Chinese state company, “El Gran Canal” would cause ecocide (Meyer and Huete-Pérez) and cultural genocide. In respect of the latter, the dispossession of at least 30,000 Indigenous inhabitants of Nicaragua is already underway and will be effected even if the canal is never built (Perry). As these recent developments show, John Lloyd Stephens’ dream of a gigantic city at the Isthmus, connecting ancient archaeological sites with modern commerce, continues to be actively pursued. For the Indigenous inhabitants, however, Stephens’ dream could easily turn into a social and ecological nightmare.

Spielberg’s *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), which begins with Indiana Jones bumping around in an ancient Maya ruin, ends with the ancient ark, source of global power, being stored away in the endless vaults of a government warehouse, a secure place not far from the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. Having caused a movie-load full of adventure, imperial competition, and human avarice involving latter-day Nazis and vengeful Egyptian spirits, the heroic protagonist is paid a fair sum by the U.S. government for having secured the valuable artifact. Once obtained, the sacred symbol becomes a profane commodity, and world power a bureaucratic burden.

Fossils and Immortality. Geological Time and Spiritual Crisis in Nineteenth-Century America

In chapter XXVI of his *Views of the Cordilleras and Monuments of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas* (1810-13), Alexander von Humboldt relates the Aztec count of worldly time as suggested by the Aztec calendar stone. His chapter “Epochs of Nature According to Aztec Mythology” continues his discussion of the Aztecs’ mythological history, as he finds it in *Codex Vaticanus* 3738, also known as the *Codex Rios*. Humboldt compares the illustrations of the four world ages in *Codex Rios* with descriptions of fossils discovered throughout the Americas which, according to Georges Cuvier, are the remains of extinct species (*Views* 230-31). The codex depicts the catastrophes that led to the end of each of the four epochs or “Suns”: according to the Aztec time count, the first age ended with mass starvation which destroyed all humans except for a race of giants who were devoured by jaguars. According to the calendric data, that age lasted 5204 years. The second age, lasting 4802 years, ended in a great conflagration: humans were transformed into birds and only one couple survived, in a cave. The third age (4010 years) ended with a great storm, culminating in some humans being transformed into monkeys. Humboldt speculates that because monkeys are rarely found in the Valley of Anahuac, this may be a reference to cataclysmic events such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions which may have driven monkeys into the Mexican valley from regions further south. As before, only one human couple is reported to have survived, again in a cave. The fourth age (4008 years), according to the *Codex Rios*, ended with a great flood. Humans were transformed into fish, and a couple took refuge inside the stem of an ahuahuate (a bald cypress). If we add the centuries that have passed since the fourth destruction in the current – fifth – Sun, Humboldt remarks, the people of the Valley of Mexico assume the age of the world to be more than 20,000 years. He finds it remarkable “to find an American people who, using the same calendar system that they employed when Cortés arrived, mark the days and the years of twenty centuries ago, when the world suffered great catastrophes” (*Views* 232).¹ Even so, the American world age, he muses, is dwarfed by the “four million three hundred twenty thousand years” of the Hindu world age. Humboldt is convinced that these calendrical

1 “... sich ein amerikanisches Volk findet, welches nach dem gleichen Kalendersystem, das noch bei Cortés’ Ankunft in Gebrauch war, mit Tagen und Jahren die Zeitpunkte angibt, zu denen die Welt vor über zwanzig Jahrhunderten große Katastrophen erlitten hat” (*Ansichten* 248).

counts are part of an “astronomical mythology” influenced by “vague recollections of some great revolution that our planet underwent or in accordance with theories about natural history and geology that the physical appearance of marine petrifications and fossilized remains inspires” (*Views* 232; *Ansichten* 249). Unlike many of his less enlightened contemporaries, the cosmopolitan thinker Humboldt is untroubled by the contrast between the Aztec and the biblical accounts of creation – his field of reference consists rather of the mythologies of Tibet, India, Egypt, and Greece. He seems to have no problem with the idea of a very great antiquity of the human presence in the Americas; elsewhere in the same volume he speculates, on the basis of linguistic comparisons and the differences between the two cultures’ architectural styles, that the separation between the populations of Asia and America may have happened a very long time ago. “There is no proof,” he writes, “that the existence of humankind is a much more recent phenomenon in the Americas than in other continents” (*Views* 5; *Ansichten* 14-15).

The antebellum United States was significantly more troubled than the Prussian scientist by such great antiquity of man’s presence in the territories that it was in the process of conquering, including those that were formerly part of Mexico. The contemporary controversies over the number of millennia and centuries to be admitted within the framework of the Clovis First theory have their nineteenth-century precedent in discussions about aligning the biblical creation narrative with theories of geology and archaeological discoveries of the bones of extinct animals, especially those mixed with proof of ancient human occupation. Both cases bear witness to the waning of a belief system which is gradually replaced by science-based knowledge.

This chapter explores, using specific examples, the discussion of the antiquity of man and the deep time of earth history in the context of Indian Removal and westward expansion. As in the previous chapter, I will take into consideration the transatlantic and hemispheric contact zones when discussing nineteenth-century American antiquity discourse. Our intellectual journey begins with the reception of a little known discovery made by the Danish-Brazilian natural historian Peter Wilhelm Lund; it takes us through Poe’s and Melville’s expressions of antiquity anxiety and existential doubt; it continues with the concurrent activities of the German-American fossil trader and exhibition curator Albert Koch; it makes a short stop at a spiritualist’s reflections on early mankind in America; and it ends, inevitably in a chapter dealing with long stretches of time, with Mark Twain’s iconoclastic writings about imperial, geological, and astronomical time.

Unthinkable Bones

The story of this chapter takes us to where the previous chapter ended: to Brazil, this time to the Sumidouro Cave of Lagoa Santa in the province of Minas Gerais. Here, in a glacial drift, the Danish naturalist Peter Wilhelm Lund discovered, in 1843, what he identified as the petrified bones of thirty human beings among the fossilized bones of extinct mammals, including those of the fear-inspiring sabre tooth tiger. Lund's discovery critically called into question Georges Cuvier's geological theory which reconciled the growing scientific knowledge about the age of the earth with the biblical time count by declaring a series of geological cataclysms previous to the creation of man to have been responsible for the destruction of the now-extinct species. The biblical chronology, which still enjoyed ideological hegemony around 1850, was based on the calculation of the Anglican Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1658) who, in 1650, had proclaimed that the world had been created on Tuesday, October 23, 4004 BC, at 9:30 in the morning. At the point when Lund undertook his research, this concept of time had for some years been powerfully contested by scientific conclusions drawn from geological research, especially that conducted by Cuvier's major rival Charles Lyell, culminating in Lyell's landmark study *Principles of Geology* (1830-33). Catastrophism and evolutionism, represented by these two scientists, were the two theoretical poles between which individual fossil finds and geological strata were read and interpreted.

Peter Lund (1801-1880), a former pupil of Cuvier but certainly also aware of the writings of Lyell on the great antiquity of the earth, dutifully reported his find to the Brazilian authorities, and a French summary of his report was subsequently published in the Danish scientific journal *Memoires de la Société Royale des Antiquitaires du Nord* in 1845-47 in Copenhagen. In this text, "Notice sur des ossements humains fossiles, trouvés dans une caverne de Brésil," Lund arrives at the conclusion that the American continent is geologically much older than had been believed so far, that it must have been inhabited by human beings since "very remote times" ("jusqu'aux temps les plus reculés"). There were good reasons to assume that his discovery, "placed side-by-side with less well-founded opinions," should lead to a conclusion that would effect the "complete inversion of the chronological account which has been established until this present day" about the relationship between the ancient world and the new world ("une opinion qui amènerait le renversement total du rapport chronologique qu'on a établi jusqu'à présent") (77).²

The French version of Lund's report, one may say, ends with a big bang. His discovery of petrified human remains mixed with those of extinct animals openly confronted received scientific wisdom but also flew in the face of biblical chronology. It was one of a series of geological-archaeological finds of human

remains in conjunction with the remains of extinct species that had begun to spark intellectual discussions in the 1820s (van Riper 60-66). This controversy was conducted between lesser known amateurs who had discovered the sites in Britain, Belgium, and France, and the scientific authorities who largely rejected their interpretations (63). “The prevalence of skepticism on the human antiquity question,” writes van Riper in *Men Among the Mammoths*,

reflected ... the minimal reputations of the most outspoken human antiquity advocates, the complexity of cave stratigraphy, and the disturbing philosophical implications of men among the mammoths. It also reflected the fact that revising estimates of the human race’s age meant revising the boundaries of the Quaternary period and, ultimately, of geology itself. (64)

While acceptance of the greater antiquity of mankind was still low in Europe – for reasons inherent in science as a cultural discourse but also for religious reasons – Lund’s discovery presented even more of a problem in the United States of America as it was in conflict with the widely accepted dogma that America was a young continent, geologically, anthropologically, and epistemologically. This conviction pervades Enlightenment discourse about the New World just as it does American self-conception as represented by leading philosophers such as Emerson.

Obviously, Lund gives no dates for the period he thought the human fossils belonged to, only mentioning that they were found in a glacial drift. In his day, lacking such analytical technologies as carbon dating, it was still impossible to make any reliable calculations about the age of fossils. Lund’s recurrent phrase “plus reculés” (“very remote”), however, makes clear that his discovery of petrified human skeletons among the bones of extinct species had opened the gates of time towards an unknown point of origin. The comfortable temporal system within which most western scientists and philosophers were still able to place their findings – imperial time, that is – was shaken to the bone by this discovery.

Notwithstanding the revolutionary character of Lund’s discovery, his revelation of the great antiquity of mankind in America went virtually unnoticed in the scientific community. This is partly his own fault. Not only did he fail to publish any further texts on his extraordinary find, but a year after his discovery he packed all his fossil bones and other finds into boxes and had them shipped to the Danish King to be preserved as a bequest to the Danish people. He gave up his investigation of the bone caves in order to concentrate exclusively on botany – a hands-on science, we might say, that allows one to avoid “big” historical ideas and cosmic epistemic dimensions. He never returned to Denmark, and admitted few visitors: some scientists on their way through his region were received, oth-

ers were not.³ Of an unhealthy constitution throughout his life, Lund would never again leave Brazil but continued to live there until his death at the age of 79.⁴

The reception of Lund's discovery and analysis was impeded by his decision to discontinue his research in the field of human antiquities, but there are additional reasons why his discovery was not appropriately channeled into official scholarship. Within the academic community in the United States, Lund's find was circulated through a short notice in the *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences* in Philadelphia, a journal produced under the auspices of the Philadelphia craniologist and polygenist Samuel George Morton whose work is one of the cornerstones of scientific racism. In a letter to Morton from Rio de Janeiro on 7 December, 1843, a new corresponding member of the society, the Navy captain Isaac G. Strain, gives a synopsis of a translation of the report which Lund wrote for the Historical and Geographical Society of Brazil. Unlike the French text published in the *Memoires de la Société Royale des Antiquitaires du Nord* two years later, in which Lund's is the only voice, Strain's letter is a polyvocal and multiply mediated text (a summary by Strain of a translation of a report originally in Portuguese). "The geological archives of the history of our planet," we read in Strain's published letter, are found in the bone caves of Minas Gerais (12). As the bones of the human beings were in the same state of petrification as those of the extinct mammals, Lund-Strain conclude that they must be of the same remote age: "*we take for them an age of thirty centuries and upwards. Admitting, then, the proofs of these documents, the population of Brazil is derived from very remote times, and undoubtedly anterior to the time of history*" (13; emphasis added). This date and claim contradict other statements in the text, such as the assumption that the animal bones, which are not identical with the bones of living species, must "belong to a distinct creation" (12). The notion of an ante-Adamic distinct creation, of course, was essential to theories like Cuvier's that

3 The famous American zoologist and convinced Cuvierian Louis Agassiz who was in Brazil in search of fossil fish in the 1860s ended up not meeting him. He sent an assistant instead (personal information Pedro de Luna). Lund and Agassiz belonged to the same generation and both had been influenced by Cuvier. Agassiz was also one of the first natural scientists to accept, in 1837, the theory that there had once been an ice age – a notion on which Lund rests his reading of the fossil find. Agassiz had "borrowed" the idea of an ice age from his German colleague Karl Schimper who, in 1837, had first used the term and the concept in a poem called "Eiszeit-Ode." As we can see, the formation of scientific knowledge was generically flexible. As it turned out, however, a poem is not the ideal genre for popularizing an important scientific discovery: Schimper is today hardly known as the originator of the idea while Agassiz popularized it (not always paying tribute to his colleague). See Hubmann 133.

4 As Pedro de Luna writes, it is impossible to completely reconstruct the events from 1852 to the end of the 1860s because of the elusiveness of the documentation. There is a "large gap in Lund's correspondences deposited at the Royal Library at Kobenhavn. Apparently no letter Lund received from abroad during this period was collected and sent back to Europe after his death" (personal information Pedro de Luna). Due to a lack of critical literature on Lund, the present summary is indebted to the Wikipedia entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Wilhelm_Lund (last accessed 21 May 2019). The most exhaustive critical work on Lund is de Luna's PhD dissertation.

still conceded to biblical temporality but also implied that important facts were suppressed by scripture. In Strain's letter, the length of time between the deposition of the skeletons and the present is specified to upwards of three thousand years. Whether it is Lund who holds these divergent interpretations at once (a statement like this is not found in the French scholarly piece) or whether his amateur American translator Strain slipped the time reference in of his own accord is impossible to determine. Inconsistencies, besides illustrating the epistemic uncertainty surrounding American antiquity, can be ideologically useful; they can even stabilize hegemonic knowledge systems by seemingly stretching their limits.

The excursion into remote "pre-historical" times is finally counteracted in Strain's letter with his ascertaining that the shape and size of the craniums Lund found were perfectly identical with those of all other American Indians (13). The owners of the skulls, Lund-Strain continue, "could not have occupied a high position in intellectual standing" (13). These statements are in full agreement with Samuel G. Morton's unshakeable opinion, reiterated and hammered into his readers' minds both by him and his epigones (including Nott and Gliddon), that anthropologically all Native Americans were identical, that their crania had not changed over time, and that their intellect was far below that of Caucasians.⁵ In other words, both statements, the denial of historical change and the assertion of mental inferiority, effectively pay tribute to Morton's teachings. In this context it must be considered that Isaac Strain was a recently admitted corresponding member eager to gain a good standing in the Academy. He may have tampered with the text. But the dual authorship also admits the possibility that Lund himself was reiterating Morton's craniological expertise or relying on his scholarly authority.⁶

What is significant in our context is that the further reception of Lund's discovery in the United States, with a few exceptions,⁷ virtually ignores the real sensation of his find – proof of the great antiquity of man in America – and instead emphasizes the interpretation of the shape and possible intellectual content of the

5 "He who has seen one tribe of Indians has seen it all," Morton stated in a speech in 1842 (qtd. Thomas, *Skull Wars* 42). His collection of Indian skulls effectively denies geographical variance and historical development, and it readily includes representations, found on Mesoamerican monuments, of artificially shaped Maya skulls in its evidence of American cranial uniformity, (13; see also Ann Fabian 82-83). Captain Strain confirms this view (13). Despite having identically shaped craniums, the original inhabitants of America, according to Morton, belonged to two groups, the "demi-civilized" builders of mounds and pyramids and the "barbarous nomads" who replaced them. Like John Lloyd Stephens (see chapter 2), Morton believed that indigenous Americans originated in America and were thus a separate creation, "having been planted here by the hand of Omnipotence," as he writes in a letter to George Ephraim Squier in 1847 (qt. Stanton 84). For an elaborate account of Morton, see Bieder (chapter 3) and Gould, *Mismeasure*.

6 There is an ongoing querelle as to the professionalism of Morton's measurements, not least in connection with his polygenist convictions and his vicinity to scientific racism. Stephen Jay Gould heavily criticized Morton's method, calling it fraudulent in *The Mismeasure of Man*. Shortly after Gould's death, however, Philadelphia scholars sought to demonstrate that Morton was right and that Gould had cheated. For a synopsis of the debate, see the work of Kenan Malik.

7 For example the Chicago scientist J.W. Foster (*Pre-Historic Races* 301).

skulls. The account of Lund's findings which appeared in the United States also ignored Lund's elaborate description and interpretation (present in the French report) of the dental evidence he found, which *contrasted* starkly with the dental structures of other Native Americans (Lund, "Notice" 74-75). In other words, the scholarly community reduced Lund's discovery to Samuel Morton's ideologically biased but hegemonic theory of the morphological uniformity of all Native American skulls, and it effaced that part of his text that was, in Bourdieu's terms, "unthinkable" at the time.⁸ News of Native Americans' great antiquity simply did not sit well with the ruling dogma that America was geologically, or at least in terms of human habitation, much more recent than Europe – to the extent that Morton, Gliddon/Nott, and also Agassiz promoted the polygenist idea that the inhabitants of America were a separate (later) creation. Even Darwin, whose *Origin of Species* (1859) would once and for all disprove the biblical chronology, mentions Lund only in connection with the shape of the skulls, not the age of the human fossils (*Descent of Man* 197).

Modern commentators find reason to believe that Lund himself had ceased his work on the bone caves because he could not bear the demolition of his Christian world order. As the Lund expert Pedro de Luna notes, Lund had been forced to question Cuvier's catastrophism before, during his extended analyses of the fossils of extinct animals in the 200 caves in Minas Gerais. The morphological resemblance between the bones of extinct and extant species contradicted Cuvier's theory of violent geological revolutions to explain the extinction of species. The discovery of human remains among those of extinct animals, according to de Luna, ultimately confirmed the unfeasibility of Cuvier's theories (of the brevity of time since Creation and of sudden revolutions leading to the emergence of new species). In a letter to his teacher Johannes Theodor Reinhardt in Kobenhavn in 1843, Lund describes the slow process by which he came to recognize the succession of extinct and living species, without being able to identify the natural principle that would explain how past and present are at variance yet connected.⁹ Pedro de Luna enumerates additional reasons besides the epistemic paradox that caused Peter Lund to abandon his field research: first, public attention was absorbed by other fossil collectors who were geographically better situated – especially the London naturalist and fossil expert Richard Owen who in 1838-40

8 As Pierre Bourdieu argues in *The Logic of Practice*, knowledge formations privilege some forms of knowledge and 'logics of research' while suppressing and marginalizing others, which then become, in Bourdieu's term, "unthinkable": "In what is unthinkable at a given time, there is not only everything that cannot be thought for lack of the ethical or political dispositions which tend to bring it into consideration, but also everything that cannot be thought for lack of instruments of thought such as problematics, concepts, methods and techniques" (5).

9 I owe many of the previous and following remarks on Lund to Pedro de Luna, who kindly summarized the most important findings of his Brazilian dissertation for me, both in personal communication and in an essay ("The Man"). For Lund's letter to Reinhardt – in the Danish original and a translation into Portuguese – see de Luna, "Peter Wilhelm Lund" 200-205.

had had the privilege of working with the fossils brought back by Charles Darwin from his journey on the *Beagle* and who became England's most famous specialist in ancient bones. Second, Lund's peripheral location worked against the punctual placement of his knowledge. While Owen could publish his papers immediately, Lund had to send his letters from Minas Gerais to Rio de Janeiro (a four-month mule ride), there to wait for the next ship to Denmark, where, according to Pedro de Luna, the papers would be revised and sent back for his final check, only *then* to be published.¹⁰ Finally, but perhaps not least importantly, Peter Wilhelm Lund went bankrupt shortly after his discovery of the human fossils. He had invested in a gold mining scheme which misfired and had to pay the debt incurred by the man who had originated the scheme, losing a lawsuit against this soldier of fortune who had by then become an important figure in the Brazilian government (Luna, "The Man" 174-76).¹¹ Thus the scientifically important discovery of ancient human remains in the caves of Minas Gerais literally remained a footnote in the history of archaeology.

Yet even without these additional complications, Lund did not do much to promote his discovery as the sensation that it indeed was: his formulations are over-correct, extremely cautious, his language exhibiting his pondering search for the yet unanswered questions about deep time and the development of species. This is not the kind of writing that would set off a scientific blast, even if it were more accessible.

In its opacity, the documentation of Lund's discovery is reminiscent of the reluctance with which James Hutton's theses about geological time had been formulated a few decades earlier. While Lund's style is over-correct and while he tends to bury his revolutionary formulations in a mass of meticulous description, Hutton's style, according to Stephen Jay Gould, precluded mass circulation because of its "rambling ... redundancy" (*Time's Arrow* 64). Although Hutton's *Theory of the Earth*, in which he argues that the earth is geologically ancient, was published in 1788 (part one) and 1795, his ideas only entered academic circulation more broadly after Hutton's friend and colleague, John Playfair, somewhat disentangled the facts from the knotty prose and made them linguistically digestible (Gould, *Time's Arrow* 61). Hutton is regarded as the "father of geology," yet many of his writings remain unpublished due to their lack of rhetorical finesse (64).¹² As early as 1788, Hutton had formulated the idea of geological time thus:

Time, which measures every thing in our idea, and is often deficient to our schemes, is to nature endless and as nothing If the succession

10 Thus Owen was first – if only by less than a month – with the first description of the extinct giant armadillo (*glyptodon*) and some ground-sloths. The only major species in whose scientific description Lund was first to the post is *Smilodon populator*, the saber tooth cat (de Luna, personal communication).

11 The colonial records are, to this very day, full of such illustrious careers and economic failures.

12 For a full discussion of Hutton, see Repcheck.

of worlds is established in the system of nature, *it is in vain to look for anything higher in the origin of the earth*. The result, therefore, of our present enquiry is, that *we find no vestige of a beginning, – no prospect of an end*. (Quoted in Gould, *Time's Arrow* 64-65; emphasis added)

Such a formulation was a slap in the face to biblical authority and to the dogma of a scientific community reluctant to leave the comfortable coordinates of the pre-classical episteme. As in the case of the reluctant reception of Hutton's theory, the communication of Lund's discovery lacked a few components that seem necessary for an idea to attain discursive power and hermeneutic hegemony.

The Limits of Thinkability

As the first step towards authorization, an idea needs an author and a text. In Lund's case both are precarious: the few texts in circulation are extracts, summaries, abstracts, or translations of what Lund said or wrote. We hardly have a document written by Lund himself on the issue in question which has not been edited in one way or another by other people. In other words, we have an "author" in the sense of what Foucault in "What is an Author?" calls an "author function" (127) – a name tagged to a text, not an *author* who would be a tangible presence in the scholarly community to continuously "authorize," promote and defend his new theory. Quite to the contrary, our author Peter Wilhelm Lund always expressed himself in very cautious terms, and he never returned to the academic community; he basically went native.

Secondly, in order to obtain discursive power, an idea needs publicity by way of widespread circulation, and an audience or group of recipients ready to accept the idea as true. For an idea to become powerful or to obtain hegemonic status, there would have to be disciples and pupils to spread the news throughout the scholarly community. Lund's idea had none of this; on the contrary, some of his European correspondents and colleagues (Johannes Theodor Reinhardt, M. Lütken) had doubts about the usefulness of Lund's evidence because both the complex positioning of the bones and their status raised questions.¹³ Lund's colleagues and friends – even those who discussed the age issue and did not merely concentrate on the craniological aspect – did not find his evidence to be conclusive. In this controversial climate, Lund himself ultimately prevented the further circulation of his ideas.

Thirdly, an idea has to be acceptable within the limits of the current epistemic formation or within what Foucault calls a society's "regime of truth" ("Truth and Power" 46). It has to be reconcilable with the existing order of knowledge.

13 The concept of *in situ* did not yet exist. Lund describes the bones as he found them but then transported them all away from the cave, with the result that his 'reading' is the only proof we have of their original constellation.

Lund's discovery clearly could not be squeezed into the straight-jacket of a regime of truth that was determined by the biblical chronology, scientific conservatism, and the scientific racism of colonial craniometrics.

Fourthly, in order to gain hermeneutic ascendancy over an existing knowledge system, an idea would have to offer alternative explanations for every major aspect of the existing system which it is about to replace. Lund could call into doubt the existing belief in earthly and even human time, as well as Cuvierian catastrophism, but he could not replace this epistemic system with a definitive alternative. In order to convincingly defeat biblical chronology and Cuvier's geological account, he would have had to provide a whole new *narrative* of the genealogy of the world and, additionally, of the deep human past in America. The means to do this were not available to him. In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, the implications of Lund's discovery were unthinkable on both epistemic and instrumental grounds, in that they could not "be thought for lack of instruments of thought such as problematics, concepts, methods and techniques" (Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice* 5). The new episteme would slowly take root – at different speeds on the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean – with the reception of the work of Charles Lyell (who converted late in life from a belief in the conformity of species to evolutionism) and Charles Darwin.

Lastly, ideas and theories are often more easily accepted if they are accompanied by attractive visualizations, as the example of John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood demonstrates (though other examples could be named¹⁴). Although Lund was accompanied by a painter, the Norwegian Peter Andreas Brandt, none of Brandt's paintings, according to my knowledge, feature the skeletons; few of his paintings went into circulation, and not many of them seem to have survived.¹⁵ Other visual or material evidence – like the bones themselves – was not publically exhibited or shown to experts; instead, the bones were packed off in boxes, sent to Denmark, and sunk into the vaults of the Royal collections there – not unlike the Mosaic Ark at the end of Spielberg's first *Indiana Jones* movie.¹⁶

Aware that his discovery could not be brought into accordance with the current regime of truth, Lund closed the file himself; those of his contemporaries

14 Ann Fabian emphasizes the decisive function of Morton's illustrator John Collins whose drawings of Morton's skulls in *Crania Americana* are indeed marvelously executed (85-87).

15 The limited quality and availability of Brandt's paintings on the internet (for example) is contrasted by the attention that Lund's scholarship receives in Brazil today, where we even find a TV documentary on him, complete with reenactments. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThepEhQSgvc> (31 July 2020).

On Brandt's paintings: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZQNBjz2S4E> (31 July 2020).

16 The story of what happened next is too long to tell here. Suffice it to say that some of the most important evidence vanished from the collections, reinforcing the impression that the knowledge the bones held was not wanted. For more recent archaeological results from expeditions to the caves of Lagoa Santa, see Neves and Hubbe, who argue that the Brazilian fossil remains provide evidence of an ancient migration across the Pacific or Atlantic oceans.

critical of the notion of great antiquity of the human presence in the Americas did not mind following suit. Maybe Lund was privately prepared to share his correspondent Søren Kierkegaard's dictum that what counted in making sense of the world was "to find a truth which is true for me" – as Kierkegaard wrote in a letter to Lund in 1835. Kierkegaard's expression of personal doubt can be read as a symptom of Western society's epistemic doubt at large, to which Lund's discovery added hard (petrified) evidence. It is difficult, almost two hundred years later, to understand the magnitude of the epistemic and spiritual uncertainty unleashed in people's minds by these new scientific theories based on intelligent readings of the soil and its contents. Having taken a glimpse down the funnel of 'geological time', having found "no vestige of a beginning" (Hutton), Lund turned his gaze to the more controllable soil of his colonial garden – whether in fear and horror or simply to avoid nauseating debates with his colleagues, we will probably never learn.

"Conscientious Popularizer": Reading the Signatures of Deep Time

In 1844, just around the time when Lund resigned from his geological research, the German immigrant Albert C. Koch was busy in Alabama securing one of the greatest fossil finds of the antebellum period. He had been informed about fossil bones appearing on the banks of the Sintabouge River in Alabama by a small white boy and a "Negro slave" at Old Washington Courthouse, and rushed to the place to claim the bones for himself (thereby denying the right of discovery of the Twainian duo) (Koch, *Missourium* 1841, 120). The creature whose skeleton he unearthed, a gigantic extinct whale, was given the name "hydrarchos" by Koch. Later it would also be known as "zeuglodon" and "basilosaurus."

Koch was an illustrious figure who embodied the hybrid status of antiquity research in the antebellum period. Having arrived in St. Louis probably in 1836, he became director of the St. Louis museum in 1838 and filled it with a mix of fossils and more recent historical exhibits. His real passion, however, was the field of geology and the discovery of ancient bones. In May 1839, Koch dug up the bones of a mastodon at Kimmswick (Sulphur Springs), Missouri, on the banks of the Mississippi River. This was followed by a similar find the following year at the Pomme de Terre River in Benton County, Missouri. These creatures he named "missourium" and exhibited them widely in various cities in the United States and across the Atlantic. In an addendum to a pamphlet accompanying his publication "Missourium" (1841), "Evidences of Human Existence Contemporary with Fossil Animals," he reflects on the possibility of the coexistence of men and missourium. One skeleton, he writes, contained stones which he assumes to have been removed from their original location nearby to strike the animal (Koch, *Missourium* 1841, 24). He found the animal partly burned, except for its lower legs which were stuck in the mud of the river – another factor giving rise to specula-

tion as to whether ancient hunters had tried to burn the animal. His second piece of evidence for the coexistence of man and mastodon is a large flint arrowhead he found in 1838 beneath the femur of his missourium at a site near the Bourbois (Bourbeuse) River, Gasconade County (now Phelps County – McMillan 39). Koch writes that he retrieved four more arrowheads (made of agate and blue flint, “indisputably the work of human hands”) nearby in the same stratum (Koch, *Missourium* 1841, 24).

As was to be expected, Koch’s claim, like Lund’s, regarding the historical copresence of men and mammoths was received with hostility (McMillan 41). The hostility was not limited to the United States but shared by most learned circles in Europe, as mentioned above (van Riper). It was one thing to imagine mammoths still roaming free in the Western territory, as Jefferson does in *Notes on Virginia* (1785). But it was quite another to imagine the ancestors of contemporary Native Americans having roamed the prairies together with Ice Age (or ‘antediluvian’) animals. As yet oblivious to the details of geological time, those interested in American antiquity were caught in an epistemic void, with ideological materials from other discursive fields likely to encroach on their interpretations of the distant past. Knowledge production was confronted with the difficulty of having to reconcile recent scientific findings with biblical and secular narratives of the historical succession of species and empires.

The controversy over the copresence of mammoth and men subsided after 1870 but was sparked anew with the discovery in 1927 of human implements in conjunction with extinct bison at Folsom, New Mexico – the find that laid the basis for the Clovis First theory. This discovery, according to Bruce McMillan, “rekindled the debate about the authenticity of Koch’s finds on the Bourbeuse and Pomme de Terre rivers” (41). In retrospect, McMillan continues, Koch “was correct in his conjecture that early human inhabitants and extinct megafauna occupied the same landscape” (41). In 1944, possibly responding to George Gaylord Simpson’s dismissive remarks about Koch,¹⁷ Ashley Montagu and Bernard Peterson likewise gave late credit to Koch’s preeminence. In his “earliest account of the association of human artifacts with the remains of fossil mammals in North America,” they write, “we have, oddly enough, one of the clearest and best evidences of the antiquity of man in North America that has ever been published. Yet Koch’s statements have nearly always been dismissed as unworthy of belief. He has been ridiculed and completely shut out of court” (qtd. Stadler XXXIII). Since the 1960s, the Kimmswick site has been listed as a “genuine Clovis mammoth kill site” (Mayor 205).

17 Simpson discredits Koch by describing him as having “no scientific ability,” his texts at best offering “comic relief” (168). His construction of a competition between the “colorful” Koch and the “able and honest American scientists” and fellow paleontologists has a bit of a wartime ring. After the war, Simpson was helpful in restoring Peale’s American mastodon which had survived the bombings in the Hessian State Museum in Darmstadt (von Koenigswald 30).

Albert Koch was neither the first nor the only collector to unearth fossil bones or to exhibit skeletal remains of the hydrarchos/basilosaurus/zeuglodon in the U.S. Another Alabama site he visited was the farm of Judge John G. Creagh who himself had sent bones of the “zeuglodon” (which Koch calls “zygodon”) to Timothy Abbot Conrad and Richard Harlan in 1834 and 1835 (Stadler in Koch, *Journey* 165n6). In 1842, three years before Koch, Samuel Botsford Buckley, an Alabama botanist and field naturalist, had paid a visit to Creagh’s plantation and ‘discovered’ the bones which had been pointed out to him by a “negro” who found them while ploughing the fields (Buckley 127). As in the case of Koch’s “hydrarchos,” the white authors tend to claim the privilege of discovery for themselves, at the same time admitting that their “discovery” was the result of the attention local inhabitants paid to the land and its “remarkable creatures.”¹⁸

In the explanatory texts accompanying his exhibitions of “missourium,” Koch refers to Indigenous stories as having helped guide his way to the bone sites. This Indigenous presence increases between the first edition of the *Missourium* pamphlet (*Missourium* 1841) and the fifth one, published in Dublin, which in addition moves the “Indian Traditions” further towards the beginning of the text (*Missourium* 1843). The most prominent story Koch relates in both editions is a tradition of the Osage Indians native to the county who had recently been “removed farther to the West, according to the arrangements of the American government” (*Missourium* 1843, 9). The Osage, we learn, call this river Big Bone River because it had once been the site of a battle between local animals and “many large and monstrous animals” who had come “from the eastward.” The local animals became so furious about “these intrusions” that the Indians “durst not venture out to hunt anymore” and were “consequently reduced to great distress” (10). During a great battle between the indigenous and foreign animals, many of both kinds were killed and the “remainder resumed their march towards the setting

18 I’m referring to Tracy Chevalier’s delightful novel *Remarkable Creatures* (2009) in which she reconstructs the agency of the British amateur geologist Mary Anning who discovered dinosaur bones in the chalk cliffs of Lyme Regis, Dorset, but whose contribution to science was largely eclipsed by the male scientists’ interpretations of her finds – interpretations to which she, being a woman, has to listen from the other side of the Royal Academy’s doors (in one of the novel’s key scenes). The history of American archaeology contains a similar case: the Minnesota schoolteacher Frances Eliza Babbitt, whose discovery of a paleolithic “ancient manufactory” (qtd. Meltzer, *Great Paleolithic War* 73) had made an important contribution to the reconstruction of a human presence during the glacial period, was not permitted to read her own paper at an archaeological meeting in Minnesota in 1883. Although she had discovered the remains of an ancient quartz workshop in a glacial drift near Little Falls, MN and also lived in Minnesota, she apparently was not invited to present her findings and her paper was read instead by Warren Upham, the assistant to the local Minnesota state geologist Newton Winchell (Chester 166-70). There is very little reference to Babbitt in the personal writings of her male collaborators, in spite of the significance of her contribution. She was, however, allowed to present her results a year later in Philadelphia at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and she was even elected one of that association’s fellows in 1887 (Chester 168; Meltzer, *Great Paleolithic War* 78). Throughout the 1880s, this lady citizen scientist’s work was crucial to the discussion of a human presence in America during the Pleistocene.

sun.” The Indians gathered together many of the slaughtered animals and offered them “as a burnt sacrifice to the Great Spirit; the remainder were buried by the Great Spirit himself in the before mentioned Pomme de Terre, ... as well as the Osage [River]” (10). The place became a sacred site where offerings were made at a nearby table rock, “which was held in great veneration, and considered holy ground.” This practice was kept up until a white settler arrived “with the intention of making himself and family a permanent residence on this fertile spot.” The Indians beheld the “intrusion of this venturesome settler on their sacred ground” with “indignation and astonishment.” But as they became “better acquainted” and as the settler gained “through much perseverance ... their good opinion,” they found a compromise and the Indians allowed the settlers to remain on their land, provided they “would not infringe on their sacred privileges” (11). The peace was disturbed when a few elders returned from a longer absence and, “exasperated to madness,” obliged the poor farmer to leave.

From that time this spot remained in the hands of the Indians, and no entreaty or allurements could be held out to induce them to resign it, until they were removed by the government; it then for the third time fell into the hands of the original settler, who joyfully took possession of the place he had so long desired to make his home. (11)

Evidently, the story about the ancient battle between the monsters is a prelude to a story of the Osage being dispossessed of their “holy ground.” The giant monsters overrun the earth from east to west.

Koch’s second story, a “Tradition of the Shawney Indians,” tells of frightful monsters who once spread fear and destruction throughout the land and were defeated by the Great Spirit in a great cataclysm of fire and lightning: “The loudest thunder rocked the globe; the bolts of heaven were hurled on the destroyers alone, and the mountains echoed with the bellowings of death.” Only one bull survives the conflagration caused by the “artillery of the skies,” climbs the highest mountain above the Monongahela valley, and “leaps over the waves of the west, and there reigns an uncontrolled monarch in the wilderness” (*Missourium* 1843, 13). Both stories share elements with, but have shifted the geographical location of, a story which Jefferson included in his *Notes on Virginia* and which he identifies as the testimony of a “delegation of warriors from the Delaware tribe.” This earlier version, occasioned by the discovery of the bones of “the Mammoth, or big buffalo” near the Saltlicks on the Ohio (Jefferson, *Notes* 43), combines several key elements of Koch’s two renditions – the visitation of the place by “these tremendous animals” in ancient times, the “Great Man” intervening in the ravages of the beasts among the “bear, deer, elks, buffaloes, and other animals, which had been created for the use of the Indians,” and the survival of a big bull which was able to escape by jumping “over the Ohio, over the Wabash, the Illinois, and finally over the great lakes, where he is living at this day” (43). Jefferson’s version adds the detail that while destroying the beasts

with thunder and lightning, the “Great Man” was seated on a mountain on which the imprint of his buttocks and feet can still be seen.

The usefulness of the Delaware story as part of Jefferson’s contestation of the Comte du Buffon’s thesis that the size of American animals was inferior to that of animals on other continents is debatable. Jefferson suggests, on the basis of the presence of “tusks, grinders, and skeletons of unparalleled magnitude” across the Missouri River, and on the basis of the account of a former captive of the Indians there, that those huge animals might still exist in the unexplored regions to the North and West (*Notes* 44; 54). The mammoth population, Jefferson surmises, may have shrunk further in recent times since the arrival of the Europeans, for the same reason that the populations of other species have also been reduced under colonial economic pressure (54).¹⁹ Jefferson’s version shares with Koch’s the element of the war among the animals as a blueprint for contemporary colonial warfare while providing little substance for the modern myth of the Pleistocene Overkill. For Jefferson, living mammoths were ideologically more valuable than extinct ones.

Koch’s use of (pre-circulated) Indian traditions, especially the “Osage” story, is interesting as these stories not only imagine the coexistence of men and extinct animals in the distant past but also connect this tale of human antiquity on the American continent with the current process of Indian Removal of which Koch was very much aware. The “Shawney” story contains a human narrative of forceful divine intervention to explain a natural catastrophe, thus reinforcing Koch’s assumption that the giant animals must have become extinct by way of a great disaster or “revolution of the earth” (*Missourium* 1841, 9). The stories he chooses are not American equivalents to the biblical story of Noah’s Flood, although stories of culture heroes recreating the world after a great flood existed throughout the oral traditions of the tribes east of the Mississippi (the Iroquoian creation story of Sky Woman and Earth Diver is also a post-flood story). The Pawnee of the Plains had traditions of a great flood which, as Adrienne Mayor suggests, may have been caused by the presence of marine fossils in the Plains (*Fossil Legends* 174-75, 180). As to most of his contemporaries, it was important to Koch to correlate his geological findings with the narratives of the Bible and historical records; he carefully places Indigenous traditions among the latter.²⁰ But in

19 One should think that both of his points – the presence of giant bones of *extinct* animals and the animals’ gradual shrinking in size – might add support to Buffon’s degeneration theory rather than contesting it.

20 He warns against overestimating the historical authenticity of these stories but holds that “it is equally true that generally these traditions are founded on events which have actually transpired, and according to their importance in relation to the welfare of the aborigines among whom they occurred, and in absence of any better method of perpetuating them, are transmitted with great care in their legends from generation to generation; but in the course of time, as might reasonably be expected, these traditions lose much in correctness and minuteness of detail” (*Missourium* 1841, 10-11). This occurs to be a quite “reasonable” description of the hermeneutic problems involved in using oral traditions for historical research.

his rendition of the catastrophe which caused the demise of the giant animals, he resorts to a dry land Cuvierian narrative rather than the Book of Genesis, although the latter would have been much more adequate for explaining the ubiquitous presence of giant marine fossils throughout the Ohio and Mississippi valleys and in Alabama. What is significant is that Koch evokes Indigenous traditions at all and that their textual presence even increases between the two editions of *Missourium* – in spite, or maybe because, of the recent forced removal of the bearers of this knowledge.

Albert Koch collaborated with Montrose Wilson Dickeson and the painter John J. Egan, an Irish immigrant, in the production of Egan's *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley*, which was exhibited in St. Louis in 1850. Dickeson had exhumed hundreds of burial mounds in the Mississippi and Ohio regions between 1837 and 1844 (Gniadek, "Seriality" 31). Various canvases of the 348 foot long and 8 foot high panorama show burial mounds and the excavation of fossil skeletons. One panorama shows Koch and Dickeson overseeing the excavation of the missourium at Kimmswick (Fig. 8); another the layers inside a burial mound (Fig. 9). Various canvases show Indian spectators and the remains of ancient settlements and mounds in conjunction with signs of colonial presence, such as huts and sailing ships (for example the canvas "Marietta Ancient Fortification"). The canvas "Ferguson Group; The Landing of General Jackson" (Fig. 10), which connects the Ferguson (or Feltus) group of Indian mounds in Jefferson County, Mississippi, with Andrew Jackson's campaign against the British and the Creek Indians in 1815 and his "landing" at Jackson, is devoid of any reference to living Indians; Jackson's steamer passes by Indian graves, thereby visualizing his removal rhetoric of settlers treading over the graves of the original inhabitants. The Mississippi steamer is an anachronistic element,²¹ actualizing Jackson's campaign for contemporary viewers. Furthermore, taken together, the scenes of the panorama "conflate temporal periods" and convey a multi-layered sense of historical time: its implied seriality is inconsistent with known historical chronology (Gniadek, "Seriality" 32). Gniadek argues that the images show "multiple" and "heterogeneous temporalities" imposed on "layered landscapes" (34). As cultural artifacts, the canvases enable us to "recognize articulations of settler colonialism not merely as 'forgetting'... previous claims on space ... to be combatted with the 'hauntings' or 'remembering' of postcolonial approaches, but ... [as] various, ongoing processes of 'in-betweenness'" (34). The panorama unwittingly dissects the master narrative of settlement – a linear movement from the civilizational centers of Europe and the American east coast to the western "wilderness" – as a story superimposed on a much more complex territorial situation which is, in Gniadek's words, "repetitious, persistently unsettled, and always multiple, even as it imagines and is structured by linearity" (34). There is no sense of the "imperial gothic" here (Brantlinger); rather,

21 Mississippi steamers before 1815 were much smaller than the one represented in the panorama. It looks more like one of the Natchez steamers which were built from 1823 onward.

Figure 8: John J. Egan, Ice Age mastodon peeled out of the cliff by Albert Koch's Black workers in Kimmswick, Missouri in 1840.

Figure 9: John J. Egan, Indian Burial Mound, showing strata on the inside and Black workers. The painting illustrates the division of labor between 'literate' Anglo-Americans and African-American field workers, probably slaves.

the images tell the deep story of the land and its various groups of inhabitants – aboriginal settlers, European immigrants, slaves laboring for economic security – as a richly textured copresence surrounded by exuberant vegetation. There is no denial of Indigenous historical priority; neither is there, though, a critique of their recent removal. Rather, the panorama reiterates, to a certain extent, the notion that nothing is lost, that the earth keeps a composite memory of its ancient as well as more recent pasts. Egan's popular art, just like Koch's integration of Indigenous oral traditions and his practice of "sciencetainment," significantly differ from the scientific establishment's tendencies to deny or belittle the cultural wealth of America's ancient Indigenous past. It directly articulates the double foundation of American wealth: free Black labor conducted on Indigenous land.

Figure 10: John J. Egan, Ferguson Group, *The Landing of General Jackson*.

Like his contemporaries John Lloyd Stephens and Peter Wilhelm Lund, Koch was, of necessity, a jack of all trades. At a time when state science funding was only slowly emerging, he was forced to earn money by showing and selling his fossils: the “missourium” ended up in the British Museum and the “hydrarchos” in the Imperial Museum at Berlin. Both museums hastened to restore the skeletons from Koch’s show size to their realistic size by removing supernumerary bones and vertebrae (Fig. 11).

But Koch’s travel journal for the years 1844-46 reveals that selling bones was not a sufficient source of income to support both himself and his family in distant Berlin. Koch expresses his delight at accidentally coming across a deserted lead mine near Golconda, Illinois. Buying this mine, he explains, helped secure his future income (*Journey* 83-86). Later, in the mid-1860s, Koch would join the geological exploration for iron, lead, coal, and petroleum in Tennessee, and he co-initiated the forming of the Knoxville Oil and Mining Company. His family settled in Golconda, where it possessed a significant amount of real estate (Stadler XXXII). The fossil hunter had turned into an early merchant in fossil fuels, combining the modernity of the riverboat steaming through Moundbuilder landscapes with residual romantic nostalgia about America’s pre-Columbian agrarian past.

His later career reveals that Koch was primarily, as he claims of himself, a “geognost” whose “cause” was “widening the knowledge of the geognosy of North America” (*Journey* 1). Geognosy, a term I will return to in the Epilogue, is the art of reading the earth – the empirical foundation of geology as a theoretical science (Rudwick, *Earth’s Deep History* 82). Koch’s success shows that he

Figure 11: Albert Koch's "Hydrarchos" discovered near the Sintabouge River, Alabama (1845).

read both the earth and other people's reports about fossil finds quite astutely. To dismiss his scientific expertise is to miss the point that the sciences under discussion here were still in the stage of emergence in the antebellum period. Despite his scathing criticism of Koch, George Gaylord Simpson readily concedes that the "popular acclaim and private profit" of Koch's transactions

are revealing as regards the social environment of American science toward the middle of the nineteenth century. Through the efforts of the great research museums, of scientific educators, and of astute but conscientious popularizers, the present generation of vertebrate paleontologists has inherited an environment in which paleontology is a relatively familiar and tolerated subject. (168)

Lacking state funding, scientifically minded individuals in the antebellum period had to resort to a strategy of "infotainment" in order to be able to conduct their research and publish their results. The educational effect was inextricably entangled with the entertainment aspect.

The Whale's Magnitude

Koch's exhibition in New York City in 1845 drew significant attention in the daily and scientific press. In his essay "On the Zeuglodon Remains in Alabama," published in the *American Journal of Science and Arts* (1846), the fossil expert Samuel Botsford Buckley pointed out that Koch had misarranged the skeleton of his "hydrarchos." Indeed, Richard Owen had arrived at the same diagnosis with regard to Koch's "missourium" when he saw it in London. Buckley's report,

together with newspaper articles and probably Koch's descriptions, are most likely sources used by Herman Melville in *Moby-Dick* (1851) and form the basis for Ishmael's account of the discovery of the "leviathan" on Judge Creagh's farm in Alabama.²² The excavations of the "zygodon"/"zeuglodon" on Judge Creagh's farm at Tattilaba Creek in Clarke County, Alabama, are referenced by Melville in his chapter on the fossil whale. On the question of the "antiquity of the whale" (*Moby-Dick* 381), Ishmael takes a straightforward view, first demonstrating his expertise in the science of geology:

Ere entering upon the subject of Fossil Whales, I present my credentials as a geologist, by stating that in my miscellaneous time I have been a stone-mason, and also a great digger of ditches, canals and wells, wine-vaults, cellars, and cisterns of all sorts. Likewise, by way of preliminary, I desire to remind the reader, that while in the earlier geological strata there are found the fossils of monsters now almost completely extinct; the subsequent relics discovered in what are called the Tertiary formations seem the connecting, or at any rate intercepted links, between the ante-chronical creatures, and those whose remote posterity are said to have entered the Ark; all the Fossil Whales hitherto discovered belong to the Tertiary period, which is the last preceding the superficial formations. And though none of them precisely answer to any known species of the present time, they are yet sufficiently akin to them in general respects, to justify their taking rank as Cetacean fossils. (379)

Ishmael lists the multiple places at which "detached broken fossils of pre-adamite whales" or fragments of them had been found in recent times. The finds include two made in the center of Paris and in the docks of Antwerp, both of which "Cuvier pronounced [...] to have belonged to some utterly unknown Leviathanic species" (380). But by far the most wonderful relic was "the almost complete vast skeleton of an extinct monster, found in the year 1842, on the plantation of Judge Creagh, in Alabama. The awe-stricken credulous slaves in the vicinity took it for the bones of one of the fallen angels" (380).

Albert Koch had himself toiled with the 'ignorant' inhabitants and other obstacles during his dig at Creagh's plantation:

Here is hard life and hard work. I sleep on a straw sack and have only salt pork and bread to eat. The heat is terrible, and at my work I am completely exposed to the burning rays of the sun. There is no fodder here for my horse; it is, therefore, enclosed in a sort of pasture, and I myself have to lead it twice a day ¼ of an English mile to the water.

Monday, the 28th of April. Today it was again very hot and especially oppressive for me because I worked almost all day in a hollow where lay the head parts of the *Zygodon*, which I have now undermined as far

22 Melville may have seen Koch's exhibition, too, as he was in New York City in the second half of 1845.

as I dared for the present; I have also already affixed a suitable scaffolding underneath it. The many curious who come every day and who in their ignorance could break the whole thing cause me no small worry.

Wednesday, the 30th of April. My anxiety concerning the *Zygodon* head was, alas, not without reason, because yesterday while I was busy packing fossils one of these inquisitive tampered with it and broke loose a considerable part of the lower jaw. It can be imagined how great my displeasure was. Today I took the whole thing apart, since there is no other way to take it out, and because the man who had helped me for a few days was drunk, I had to carry every single piece home on my back in the most terrible heat, which was so great that some iron tools which I had used and left lying in the sun were so hot that I almost burned my fingers when I tried to pick them up.

Thursday, the 1st of May. It is really singular in what way the vertebrae of the *Zygodon* were used and destroyed here. As I earlier found several of them instead of the so-called andirons in fireplaces, so one was buried in the ground, near Clarksville, to be used as a support for a garden gate. Another one I found cemented in as a cornerstone in a chimney. Here at this place where I am just writing one serves a Negro as a pillow. (*Journey* 106-7)

The passage is quoted here at some length to demonstrate the actual toil of removing fossil skeletons without breaking them. But above all it shows the dependence of all the fossil and ruin hunters mentioned in this book on the labor of others – Indios and mestizos in the case of Stephens, Indios and Black slaves in the case of Lund, and Osage, Shawnee and Blacks in the case of Koch and his contemporaries. Except for such small remarks on the creative uses they made of the giant bones and rare representations of their labor in the scenes depicted in Egan's panorama, these local figures only come to attention in the negative – when they are uncooperative (as in Stephens) or unavailable. With its burlesque detail, the Black man preferring to take a nap on an ancient whale vertebra while the fossil hunter gets on with his own business could be a figure out of Melville's novel, while the interpretation of the leviathan as "one of the fallen angels" (in Ishmael's account) points forward to the tall tale style of Mark Twain.

The jocular tone Melville uses in connection with the revelation of leviathan's antiquity contrasts markedly with Koch's tragicomic account of travail frustrated by his uncouth fellow humans' insouciance. Indeed, it is very similar to that used by a reporter commenting on Koch's "hydrarchos" exhibition for the *New York Evangelist*, one of several articles reproduced in Koch's pamphlet on the "hydrarchos." Ruminating on the implications of Koch's exhibition, the anonymous journalist writes: "It is not a little singular that these colossal remains should have been discovered just at a period when the unbelieving [illegible word] of our day are making such a noise with their theories about the vestiges of creation" and assuming that "the Vestiges' author ... fathers men upon monkies" (Koch,

Hydrarchos, 20). After a few witty remarks about the possibility of the creature being identical with Milton's figure Sin, this highly imaginative writer continues:

And this creature was born in the Antediluvian World! Who knows but he had seen the Ark? Who knows but Noah had seen *him* from the window? Who knows but he may have visited Ararat? Who knows how many dead and wicked giants of old he had swallowed and fed upon? Perhaps, when we now touch his ribs, we are touching the residuum of some of Cain's descendants, that perished in the deluge. (21)

Praising Koch for his lack of "trickery and ostentation" and his "true German simplicity and thoroughness," the reporter demands that the "hydrarchos" "ought to be retained in this country at all costs." He ends his article with a long quotation of the description of the leviathan taken from the Book of Job. The author of a second extract from a New York paper, the *New York Morning News*, comments on Koch's discovery of arrowheads

below the strata of antideluvian plants and shells, and *underneath the thigh bone of the gigantic fossilized Missouriium*, which Dr. Koch exhumed in the valley of the Mississippi! The bow which shot that arrow must have been bent by some 'hunter of Kentucky,' long before Noah entered the ark; and the 'Native American' who was on a still hunt after the Missouriium, instead of being a Tartar from the north of Asia, or a descendant of the lost tribes of Israel, must have been a true Alleghanian son of the soil, of a breed somewhat older than Nimrod. (*New York Morning News*, qtd. Koch, *Hydrarchos*, 23)

I suggest that the burlesque style shared by Melville and the New York reporters covers up a deeper level of epistemic anxiety. It is the unheard-of presence of "that arrow head!" which "knocks into a cocked hat the learning and philosophy of centuries ... !" (23). In *Moby-Dick*, standing among fossil bones so similar to those of "the annihilated ante-chronical Leviathans," Ishmael's mind is, "by a flood, borne back to that wondrous period, ere time itself can be said to have begun; for time began with man":

Here Saturn's grey chaos rolls over me, and I obtain dim, shuddering glimpses into those Polar eternities; when wedged bastions of ice pressed hard upon what are now the Tropics; and in all the 25,000 miles of this world's circumference, not an inhabitable hand's breadth of land was visible. Then the whole world was the whale's; and, king of creation, he left his wake along the present lines of the Andes and the Himalahs. Who can show a pedigree like Leviathan? *Ahab's harpoon had shed older blood than the Pharaohs'*. Metuselah seems a schoolboy. I look around to shake hands with Shem. I am horror-struck at this antemosaic, *unsourced existence* of the *unspeakable terrors* of the whale, which, having been before all time, must needs exist after all humane ages are over. (380; my emphasis)

Ishmael seems to have no clear notion of the length of earth time before genesis. His uncertainty fills him with remarkably more terror than it inspires in the playful New York journalist. Images of space abound in Ishmael's ruminations while markers of time are limited. The passage culminates in the notion that all of this "unsourced existence" took place "before all time" and that it will survive time. In this reading, the power with which Ahab took up battle, represented by the whale, cannot be defeated because it belongs to eternity itself. Ishmael imagines the whale to be the creature surviving from that eternity, symbolizing the revolutionary scientific idea that, as James Hutton had written in 1788 (quoted above), "we find no vestige of a beginning, – no prospect of an end."

The theme of the whale's infinitude is carried into the subsequent chapter, "Does the Whale's Magnitude Diminish? – Will he Perish?" – a clear parody of mid-nineteenth century discussions about the development and degeneration of the different human "races." Unlike other monstrous species, Ishmael asserts, "this Leviathan comes floundering down upon us from the head-waters of the Eternities" without having degenerated on the way: "not only are the whales of the present day superior in magnitude to those whose fossil remains are found in the Tertiary system (embracing a distinct geological period prior to man), but of the whales found in that Tertiary system, those belonging to its latter formations exceed in size those of its earlier ones" (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 381-82). To conclude the matter, Ishmael declares the whale

immortal in his species, however perishable in his individuality. He swam the seas before the continents broke water; he once swam over the site of the Tuileries, and Windsor Castle, and the Kremlin. In Noah's flood he despised Noah's Ark; and if ever the world is to be again flooded, like the Netherlands, to kill off its rats, then the eternal whale will still survive ... (385)

While Ishmael is merely stunned by the hermeneutic inaccessibility of the whale, Ahab compares the whale's undecipherable face (which to him is an "empty cipher," 358) to a mask through which he wants to strike in order to arrive at the meaning that may or may not lie behind; he pins a similarly unreadable gold doubloon on the main mast of the *Pequod* as a reward for the sailor who first sights the white whale. To Ishmael, as to Ahab, unintelligibility – the impossibility of making any sense of the features of the whale – is invested with a feeling of "dread" and horror. Throughout the novel, the incomprehensibility of the whale is frequently associated with the similarly mysterious cultures and religions of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Ishmael evokes biblical temporality at the very end of the novel: the last chapter before the Epilogue ends with the sentence "Now small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled *five thousand years ago*" (469: emphasis added). The conservative biblical temporality

here forms a contrast with the evocations of deep time in the chapters on the fossil whale, which are much closer to Ahab's calculation of time as potentially endless. Ahab seems to assume an immense stretch of time before the formation of the ocean on the third day of creation. Only ten pages before the end, Ahab expresses, in a memorable conversation with Starbuck which can be seen as a follow-up to their previous exchange in "The Symphony," his belief that the present drama, about to reach its conclusion, had been planned a long time ago: "This whole act's immutably decreed. 'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled" (459).

We may read this discrepancy between a biblical view and a geological view of the time of creation – between Ishmael's troubled reflections on time, ending with his conservative reference to biblical chronology, and Ahab's notion of deep time – as a contrast between the two different epistemic perspectives represented by these two figures (earth-bound Ishmael v. metaphysical Ahab). But the contradiction is also related to a pervasive conflict of meaning in Melville's narrative, and in American society in general, evidence of two competing hermeneutic systems. One of them is inspired by the Bible and the imperial temporality based on it; the other is science-inspired, admitting the possibility of deep geological time. This copresence of different historical, not to say cosmic, temporalities seems to be much more frequent in the literature of the antebellum period than national literary history was ready to acknowledge until quite recently (Hay 4-6). Ahab's conviction of the world's extreme age is one of the clearest manifestations of his dissent from Christian orthodoxy, and it conforms with his unspecific dread of that elusive power which he identifies with Moby Dick.

The Anxiety of Geological Time

Bruce Harvey reads the fascination of Melville and his contemporaries with deep time, and especially Melville's obsession with metaphors of depth, as part of an aesthetic of the sublime which emerged in response to religious disenchantment – the loss of a sense of a beginning and an end to natural history: "The paradox of the empirical uncovering of strata" suggests that "even as sacred history was replaced by the evidence of the rocks, the geological images of stratification or a succession of limits ultimately suggested a limitless, open-ended sublimity, a horror vacui" (Harvey, "Melville, Deep Time" 221, 217). As Johannes Fabian argued (see chapter 1), the ideological effects of the introduction of a geological sense of time and evolutionary theory on individual and collective senses of being in the world remained ill understood in the nineteenth century. As we know, both notions continue to be rejected by segments of Western society until this day. One of the reasons for this denial of scientific knowledge is an incapacity of the imagination: most humans do not usually think in such extreme temporal dimensions. The lack of a power of abstraction needed to think beyond the individual level

and beyond the limits of human time leads to a loss of cognitive control which can cause extreme discomfort. The biblical account of creation offered a satisfactory comfort zone, but during the nineteenth century it became crucially compromised by scientific discoveries. Some humans responded with fascination at the sublimity of the new, cosmic dimension of time, while others reacted with unease at the loss of comfort and old certainties. The discovery of deep time caused, or at least coincides with, the waning of biblical authority and of the institutions built on that authority. The seriousness of the epistemic crisis is hard to assess from our historical distance but should not be underestimated. In addition to this, the acceptance of the scientific truth of geological time diminishes the accomplishments of human civilizations, including the heroic narrative of the successive translation of empire since Mediterranean antiquity. Geology requires us to think beyond the human, to leave behind an anthropocentric perspective, and to humbly accept the insignificance of human activities within the larger cosmic framework. This is not a position that many imperially-minded pioneers of progress were (or are) ready to accept.

As well as articulating this crisis of temporality and imperiality, *Moby-Dick* is crucially concerned with the related problem of the impossibility of reading or otherwise representing (e.g. in painting) the whale: to Ishmael/Melville, the animal defies all attempts to measure it scientifically or read it allegorically; for each reading of *Moby Dick*, the text offers another one which is incommensurate with the previous one. Because the whale cannot be adequately observed or represented in its natural element, Ishmael suggests,

you must needs conclude that the great Leviathan is that one creature in the world which must remain unpainted to the last So there is no earthly way finding out precisely what the whale really looks like. And the only mode in which you can derive even a tolerable idea of his living contour, is by going a whaling yourself. (Melville, *Moby-Dick* 228)

Pondering on the gigantic “forehead” of the sperm whale, Ishmael shudders at its unintelligibility:

gazing ... on that full front view, you feel the Deity and the dread powers more forcibly than in beholding any other object in living nature Champollion deciphered the wrinkled granite hieroglyphics. But there is no Champollion to decipher the Egypt of every man's and every being's face. Physiognomy, like every other human science, is but a passing fable how may unlettered Ishmael hope to read the awful Chaldee of the Sperm Whale's brow? I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can. (292-93)

Like the “evidence of the rocks,” unsatisfactorily deciphered by geologists dedicated to competing theories of the age of the earth, and the undecipherable Maya

glyphs on the stelae at Copán and Palenque, the evidence of the whale's head remains mysterious to the skeptical lay reader.

Inacceptable temporality, the geological challenge to imperial time, and the crisis of representation caused by the illegibility of mysterious animals and artifacts, all contribute to a crisis of political legitimacy in a settler colonial society built on the denial of a deep historical presence to the societies it was in the process of removing from the land. The bones of the Indians' ancestors were symbolically crying out for recognition and justice from each glacial drift and from beneath each arrow-scratched mastodon bone, testifying both to their seniority and their antiquity as inhabitants of the land – or, in the words of the *New York Morning Post* journalist, to their being “son[s] of the soil, of a breed ... older than Nimrod,” that ancient rebel hunter.

Melville demonstrates this diffuse anxiety about antiquity again elsewhere in one of his journal entries from his tour of ancient Mediterranean sites in Egypt and the Holy Land in January 1857. Having arrived at the peak of the Cheops pyramid, he jokes about another traveler who apparently could not bear the exertion of the climb and fainted. But a little later, Melville admits that he himself was likewise overpowered by dizziness. His initial malice mutates into a fascinating associative chain:

Too much for him; oppressed by the massiveness & mystery of the pyramids. I myself too. A feeling of awe & terror came over me. Dread of the Arabs. Offering to lead me into a side-hole. The Dust. Long arched way, – then down as in a coal shaft. [At one moment seeming in the Mammoth Cave. [Subterranean gorges, &c. Then as in mines, under the sea. The stooping & doubling. I shudder at idea of ancient Egyptians. It was in these pyramids that was conceived the idea of Jehova. Terrible mixture of the cunning and awful. Moses learned in all the lore of the Egyptians. The idea of Jehova born here. – [When I was at top, thought it not so high – sat down on edge, looked below – gradual nervousness & final giddiness & terror. [Entrance of pyramids like shoot for coal or timber. Horrible place for assassination. As long as earth endures some vestige will remain of the pyramids. Nought but earthquake or geological revolution can obliterate them. (*Journal* 3 Jan. 1857, 75-6; brackets by Melville)

This rich passage mixes different semantic fields – from Melville's reflections about the antiquity of the place to his fear of imminent assassination by deceitful Arabs to claustrophobic images of coal mines and other subterranean and submarine places, including the “Mammoth Cave” of Kentucky (on which see Gniadek, “Pym”). Melville's ruminations culminate in the notion that the pyramids “might have been created with the creation” (76) – which means that they were not the work of men but of God or of nature. Besides reviving the old Renaissance idea (which once caused trouble to Christopher Marlow) that Moses was a “juggler” who had learned his art from Egyptian sorcerers, the passage articulates a mas-

sive uncertainty about the origins of the earth, of time, and of (the Christian) religion. The entanglement of reflections on the origin of religion with assumptions about the duplicity of the Egyptians (both ancient and contemporary) amounts to an expression of the ambivalence (in Freud's sense of "Gegensinn des Urworts") of the term "sacred" (*sacer*) as both holy and cursed.

As Bruce Harvey reminds us, Melville's texts here as elsewhere reflect the fundamental transformation of notions of time and space that his generation witnessed: "technological sciences of the early-to-mid nineteenth century ... offered ... *for the first time*, the very possibility of hidden subterranean strata. Melville's anxiety was exacerbated by nineteenth-century geology, which opened up a temporal corridor into an indefinite past" ("Melville, Deep Time" 220). Geological studies like Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) "offered the dim vista of endless strata upon strata of anterior time, which could not be calibrated by traditional scales of ... Biblical-Mosaic genealogy" (220). This epistemic crisis, I suggest, is reinforced by a crisis of conscience with regard to the exploitation of the labor of enslaved Africans in taking possession of the land, and with regard to that dispossession itself, which has caused the forced removal of the descendants of an ancient Indigenous population. A "shuddering" at the idea of the ancients finds verbal expression in mythical constructions which distance Native Americans from the land they inhabit (see chapter 1). Like gothic ghosts, the mythical "nomads" are haunting the living: Indian spirits rise up from their graves to take revenge – a trope that would be brought to horrible perfection in the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft at the early twentieth century. The ghostly presences of ancient peoples in imperial texts are signatures of colonial guilt and of the cultural disenfranchisement enacted upon the previous inhabitants of the territories conquered by colonial nations.

The nervous evocations of biblical antiquity in the burlesque wittiness of both the New York journalist's and Ishmael's remarks on the fossil whale cannot escape notice; Freud's theorization of the relationship between the comic mode and the unconscious is relevant for reading these passages.²³ But the predominant aesthetic response to epistemic uncertainty and colonial guilt, as many scholars have argued, is the literary mode of the imperial gothic.²⁴ Its American master, unquestionably, is Edgar Allan Poe.

23 Freud argues that the use of comic wit is part of the unconscious economy of the psychic apparatus. The comic mode offers the proverbial "relief"; it reduces and diverts epistemic and emotional stress, with collective laughter temporarily articulating and neutralizing repressed material, loosening the pressures of reality, and consequently reinstating a certain psychic balance. The result of this unconscious labor is pleasure.

24 Toni Morrison's argument about the "unspeakable" but "ornate" presence of Africanist figures in American literature is relevant here, too. For both American and British imperial discourse, see also Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*; Goddu, *Gothic America*; Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*; Boyd/Thrush, *Phantom Past*.

Evidence of the Rocks

Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1837) combines the themes of extraterritorial maritime exploration and domestic race relations. It exhibits white supremacism's pervasive fear of losing control to non-white agents, coupled with an anxiety about the superiority of the Western epistemic structure that also possesses Melville's texts.

After a series of extravagant discoveries and shipwrecks, the action of the novel culminates on the island Tsalal, which is inhabited by a tribe which has apparently never previously encountered white people. The interactions between the crew of the privateer ship *Jane Guy* and the Tsalalians – obviously both black and autochthonous to the island – condense and “convert” (Goddu 84) textual representations of encounters between white explorers and Indigenous people familiar to the colonial archive,²⁵ in which the natives are depicted as treacherous, duplicitous and unreadable. The leader of the Tsalalians bears the telling name “Too-wit.” Their quick-wittedness, ill-matched with their hysterical fear of everything white, is a projection of American culture's own hysteria about losing its racial purity, for instance by conquering too many ‘southern’ brown-skinned peoples at once. After the ‘savages’ prove wily enough to defend themselves against the white strangers’ inroads by causing a rock avalanche which kills most of them, the protagonist Pym and his mixed-race sidekick Dirk Peters are confronted with the unthinkable possibility that Tsalal was once a more ‘civilized’ place. They find themselves in a system of subterranean caves, a place which reminds Pym “of those dreary regions marking the site of degraded Babylon.” They behold what seem at first sight to be the remnants of ancient buildings, “huge tumuli, apparently the wreck of some gigantic structures of art.” But on second glance Pym authoritatively decides that “no semblance of art could be detected” (*Pym* 230). Moreover, they discover “a range of singularly looking indentures” in the cave wall that “might have been taken for the intentional, although rude, representation of a human figure standing erect, with outstretched arm,” with others, in Peters’ opinion, resembling “alphabetical characters.” Pym contradicts this “idle opinion,” regarding the marks “to have been the work of nature” (*Pym* 225). In his final “Note,” however, “Poe” the editor authoritatively declares that after extensive philological examination, the inscriptions must be concluded to be the product of humans, consisting of the Ethiopian verbal root “To be shady,” the Arabic verbal root “To be white,” and the Egyptian word for “The region of the south.” The editor ends his reflections with the enigmatic sentence “‘I have graven it within the hills, and my vengeance upon the dust within the rock’” (*Pym* 241-42).

25 For example the documents on the third voyage of Cook and his death on Hawaii, or Washington Irving's narrative of the eruption of violence at Astoria off Vancouver Island in 1811, including the explosion of the ship *Tonquin*. See Harold Beaver's comment in the old Penguin edition of *Pym*, 264-65.

As Dana Nelson remarks, the editor's acceptance of the inscriptions and stone formations as the work of human beings, contradicting Pym's previous claims to the opposite, destabilizes Pym's colonial self-image (*Word in Black and White* 104). This conflict between the two narrators, which reveals the arbitrariness of their scientific interpretation of the "evidence of the rocks" (Harvey, "Melville, Deep Time" 221), is reinforced by the general *grayness* of the vapor at the South Pole (*Pym* 236, 237). The presence of (white) flakes of marl at the island's geological and ancient historical center invites the interpretation that the black Tsali-ans had replaced an older population which, though its ethnic identity and its belief in the oppositionality of "white" and "shady" remain indeterminate, at least did not shy away from using a white rock for its inscriptions.

"Poe's" "Note" dismisses Pym's previous claim about the non-cultural origin of the mysterious petroglyphs while gesturing to contemporary discussions of cases of 'savage' writing in North America and elsewhere. The presence on Tsalal of quasi-biblical messages evokes the theories of ancient transatlantic cultural diffusion circulating in learned magazines at the time Poe wrote his novel. It also implies that Tsali-ian culture degenerated from a once-powerful civilization (possessing the arts of writing and prophecy) to arrive at the utterly savage state in which Pym and his companions find it. This conclusion would reflect common romantic assumptions about the transitoriness of empires, sparked by Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88) and Constantin de Volney's popular treatise *Ruins* (1796), as well as the discovery of ancient ruins of bygone civilizations in places like Egypt, Jordan, and the Yucatán.

The larger epistemic context of Poe's racial-geological fantasy concerns the position that Anglo-American civilization was thought to inhabit in a world-historical framework. Young America's pervasive discourse of newness was conspicuously coupled with equally strong attempts to construct a collective ancient past whose traces would not be lost in vague and undecipherable tribal oral traditions and burial mounds. The historical roots of Anglo-American settler colonialism were not easy to determine, and promoters of historical firstness were haunted by the double specter of historical belatedness and xenogenealogy.²⁶

While Poe was drafting his novel, the attention of American intellectuals was occupied by three topics: the discussion about the meaning of petroglyphs on what was known as Dighton Rock near Fall River, Massachusetts; the discovery in 1831 of a skeleton in armor close to the rock; and the long-announced publication of Christian Rafn's multilingual *Antiquitates Americanae* in 1837, in which the Danish scholar seeks to prove that the medieval Norsemen Thorfinn Karlsefne and Leif Eriksson had landed at Cape Cod, near enough to the mysterious rock

26 I suggest this term to refer to a view of one's lineage as including (culturally, biologically) "foreign" elements – ignoring the fact that ancestors are always foreign to their descendants to some degree, the further back in time the more foreign. Colonial stories about xenophilic Indian "princesses" (like Pocahontas) have their rationale in offering mythical solutions to the problem that immigrant society's historical roots did not go beyond 1492.

and skeleton to allow for a connection (Kolodny, *In Search of First Contact* 151-54). Rafn's publication was the culmination of his concerted effort to interpret the Icelandic sagas as evidence for a Norse colonization of New England. While the Norse discovery theory had been in the public sphere since the late eighteenth century, Rafn's book raised the first systematic claim with a precise geographical reference to New England/Cape Cod, arguing that the rock inscription was a reference to Thorfinn's landing (Moldenhauer 84). The scientific analysis of the skeleton regarded it accordingly as the remains of an ancient Norseman because of the copper plates found with it (Kolodny, *In Search* 151-54). Rafn's thesis circulated in U.S. magazines throughout the 1830s, including ones edited or contributed to by Poe (Moldenhauer 85), where it appeared next to speculations about the racial identity of the Moundbuilders whose cultural link to present-day Native Americans was a subject of current controversy (Kennedy, *Hidden Cities* 236-37).

In other words, *Antiquitates Americanae* burst into an intellectual arena that was already saturated with speculations about the foreign racial past of the continent, denying great antiquity to the tribes which were currently being dispossessed and deported while promoting European claimants for historical firstness in the hemisphere. Joseph Moldenhauer, who has established a connection between the final section of *Arthur Gordon Pym* and Rafn's Norse campaign, reads Poe's interpretation of the Tsalalian petroglyphs in the context of the Norse colonization debate (93) – with the ominous writing on the cave wall being an ornate reference to the feverish search in American society for ancient evidence of a racially acceptable first settlement. The Norse figured among other cultural-geographical groups as candidates for ethnic whiteness and became the favorite of white supremacism at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century. While the inscriptions in *Pym*, referring to “regions in the south” and speaking pseudo-biblically of “vengeance” (*Pym* 241-42), allude to the contemporary fear of slave revolts (Dayan 97), they also refer to the epistemic dilemma of establishing a rule of whiteness on the continent while disavowing the ancient presence of America's Indigenous population, including the denial of Indigenous forms of writing.²⁷

Hidden behind the mysterious allusion to black “vengeance,” *Arthur Gordon Pym* negotiates contemporary attempts to invent a “white” prehistory in North America that preceded the arrival of Columbus by 500 years and that was to discursively efface the much longer presence of the Indigenous population. The establishment of this “white” cultural heritage significantly rests on the epistemic power of reading and writing, and Poe's novel savagely documents the limits of this power: messages scribbled with blood; the incapacity to decipher the petroglyphs or to “read” the social performance of the Tsalalians; Pym's – and “Poe”'s – final inability to decipher the superhuman white figure appearing at the South

27 Only one contemporary critic, Edward Everett, notes the resemblance of the inscriptions to “the figures which the Indians paint on the smooth side of their buffalo skins” (qtd. Moldenhauer 87). George Catlin reported similar observations (Kolodny, *In Search* 25).

Pole. The novel's obsession with the illegibility of the "evidence of the rocks" was later refined by Melville in his evocation of the illegibility of the whale (as stated above), while in the chapter "The Whiteness of the Whale," Melville offers a splendid reflection on his contemporaries' obsession with the cultural meanings of color. If colonial power and legitimacy are established through the control of writing (as, for example, in the legal justification of the Indian Removal concurrent with the publication of *Pym*), Poe's novel attests to a nervous notation of incompetence about not being able to read the writing of non-white cultural texts.²⁸

Mimetically if not diegetically, Poe employed the mode of romance in *Arthur Gordon Pym* – a mode, as Toni Morrison asserts, that offered itself particularly well to exploring racial anxiety (*Playing in the Dark* 36). It is also the mode best suited to articulating the various forms of cultural overdetermination that the novel performs – especially in its direct link between allusions to the transatlantic slave trade (including a carnivalesque slaveship revolt) and the maritime exploration of the Pacific Ocean.²⁹ In spite of his imperialist bravado, Poe's invention of a fantastic, protean, and, as Wilson Harris suggests, "schizophrenic" sea³⁰ identifies him as the bard of the dissolution of the racial and masculine superiority lurking behind every rock and wave of white patriarchal scientific self-assertion. It would be none less than Fredrick Douglass, the master orator of abolitionism, to mount a head-on attack on America's scientific establishment in his critique of antebellum scientific racism, reminding Samuel George Morton and his colleagues that Egypt, which they considered to be the cradle of Western civilization, is located in Africa (286). "It is somewhat remarkable," he writes in "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered" (1854),

that, at a time when knowledge is so generally diffused, when the geography of the world is so well understood – when time and space, in the intercourse of nations, are almost annihilated – when oceans have become bridges – the earth a magnificent hall – the hollow sky a dome – under which a common humanity can meet in friendly conclave – when nationalities are being swallowed up and the ends of the earth brought together – I say it is remarkable – nay, it is strange that there should arise a phalanx of learned men – speaking in the name of *science* – to forbid the magnificent reunion of mankind in one brotherhood. A mortifying proof is here given, that the moral growth of a nation, or an age,

28 Of course Poe's and Melville's obsession with hieroglyphics and legibility has more semantic levels than the geological-archaeological one discussed here. For a particularly inspiring reading of *Pym*'s mysterious writing, see Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics* 195-205.

29 See Mackenthun, *Fictions of the Black Atlantic*, chapter 4. Poe wrote the novel in explicit support of the journalist Jeremiah Reynolds's lobbying for a Pacific exploring expedition that finally took place in the year the novel was published, with the departure from Chesapeake Bay of the massive US Exploring Expedition under Charles Wilkes (1838-42).

30 In his fascinating attempt to read *Pym* back into a pre-Columbian mythology of carnivalesque twinship, Wilson Harris identifies *Pym*'s first ship, the *Grampus*, as a symbolic slave ship ("Schizophrenic Sea" 104).

does not always keep pace with the increase of knowledge, and suggests the necessity of means to increase human love with human learning. (285)

Pym's Tsalal episode fantastically articulates contemporary debates about the racial origins of Western civilization (the "whiteness" of Egypt) and of America's first settlers (their possible Norse origins). These debates, and the cultural uncertainty they contain, would continue until our own day. Poe's diegetic message is likewise ambivalent: Pym the white lay scientist dies while Peters, his mixed-race ("Upsaroka" and African) companion, removes himself to the western wilderness. Like other resilient ghosts of American literature, he is a reminder of the unfinished national promise of America: full enfranchisement of all people of all colors. Yet, as the last sections will show, even the American Heaven remained racially segregated, while also commemorating the ravages of racial capitalism and genocide.

Deep Time and Spiritualism

A fascinating aspect of the antebellum discourse on human antiquity, especially the antiquity of man in America, is the phenomenon that, apparently untroubled by the epistemic anxiety connected with questions of geological time, the literature of American Spiritualism is much more relaxed about the topic of human antiquity than the post-Puritanical mainstream. The texts of Hudson Tuttle, though little known today, were in wide circulation in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1866, this uneducated young farmer from Berlin Heights, Ohio, contributed a book to the debate that had been kicked off with the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. In *The Origin and Antiquity of Physical Man Scientifically Considered*, Tuttle seeks to prove, as the subtitle states, that ancient Americans must have "been contemporary with the mastodon," coexisting with it during their "dispersion by great waves of emigration from Central Asia" (title page). The migration theory itself was hardly new; unlike most of his contemporaries, however, Tuttle was ready to grant an extremely old age to man – an age completely incommensurate with biblical authority. "The theological system supported by Christendom," he writes, "maintains that man was introduced on the globe about six thousand years ago by a direct miracle. However derived, this belief has exerted a baneful influence on the progress of geology, and the science of history" (38). He correctly identifies the conflict of meaning as one between a theory that insists on sudden creation and another claiming a slow development "from the lowest state through myriads of ages." The biblical doctrine, Tuttle writes, has so far muddled the scientific perception of such giants as Cuvier and Buckland (39). Now, however, the time has come to break the spell of religious dogma: "We are receiving, for the first time, positive knowl-

edge. We have lost the given date of man's advent; but we have ascertained that years are nothing when dealing with periods only expressed by *eons* or myriads of millions. We can only learn the order of events: their date is nothing." He also directly addresses the real cause of the widespread resistance to geological insight with regard to the antiquity of man: "Fossil man destroys chronological dates, man's fall; and then why, if not fallen, needs he redemption?" (39) Here indeed Tuttle jabs his finger into the wound, because what looks superficially like a debate about dating turns out on closer inspection to challenge the essence of Christian religion and moral hegemony: the doctrine of Original Sin and, dependent thereupon, the promise of redemption through the passion of Jesus Christ. Tuttle's questioning of the need for redemption bears the echo of Phillis Wheatley's ambivalent line, written almost a hundred years previously: "Once I redemption never sought nor knew" (1104).

But it would be too rash to identify Tuttle as a radical defender of the natural sciences – the only epistemic system claiming universal authority that remained in the Western world after the decline of Christianity. Quite surprisingly, his book contains sweeping criticism of book-based science as well. It begins with a denunciation of libraries as locations of knowledge (Preface) and continues with an extended critique of Louis Agassiz, one of the United States' leading zoologists but also one of the last defenders of the theory of polygenesis and "independent creation" (Tuttle, *Origin and Antiquity* 15). Rejecting a major part of American science (Agassiz, the "Pritchard school," 16), Tuttle identifies himself as a passionate adherent of Darwin and Lyell and champions the theories of geological strata, of natural selection through adaptation, of "transitional varieties" and of the "laws of hybridity and variation" (17). Following these thinkers, Tuttle is convinced, as is Ahab, that "[b]illions of ages rolled away into the past eternity before a single vertebrate animal came" (18).

Tuttle adds further arguments to Douglass's blistering portrayal of scientific racism – specific American scientific schools kept alive by the need to legitimize slavery and, after the Civil War, racial inequality and segregation – as another obstacle to knowledge. Contradicting the polygenists (who claimed that human "races" were actually different species created on different occasions, whose members could not mix) and contradicting the defenders of racial homogeneity, Tuttle voices his conviction that there are no "lines of demarcation" that can be clearly drawn between "the families of mankind [who] blend at their circumstances": "The various classifications which have been attempted are so many proofs of unity of origin; and their confliction shows the fallacy of the theory of diversity. There are no race marks which are reliable." To underscore even further the fallacy of racial categorization, he enumerates the number and diversity of the scientific claims that have been put forward in this field:

Buffon makes six varieties of mankind; viz., – Polar Negro [sic!], Tartar, American, Australian, Asiatic, European. Kant divides man into four varieties, white, black, copper, and olive; Hunter, into seven varieties; Netzau, into two; Virey, into three; Blumenbach, into five; Desmoulins, into sixteen *species*; Bury de St. Vincent, into fifteen; Morton, into twenty-two families; Pickering, into eleven *races*; Burke, into sixty-three; Jacquinnot, into three species of one genus. Such are the disagreements of those who have devoted themselves to this study. Granting that mankind are classified by any of these systems, I cannot see how knowledge is advanced. We cannot admit that mankind can have diversity of origin, while so united by one great plan. If a species or variety of the genus *Homo* sprang up in Europe, and another in America, by agency of conditions existing in those localities, it would be beyond probability that they should both be formed on the same plan: what then of the possibility of sixty-three or more species being formed on the same model? Deny we may, with plausibility, the origin of the diverse races from a single pair six thousand years ago; but the bond of union which exists between them points to a common source. (35)

Darwin liked this brilliant deconstruction of polygenist and ethnopluralist thought so much that he integrated it into his *Descent of Man* in 1871 (203).

Tuttle, demonstrating a vast knowledge of the relevant literature (somewhat surprising after his dismissal of book learning), gradually established his own theory about the antiquity of man based on geological and human fossil finds in Europe and America (including that by Lund). He roughly dates the appearance of man to before the glacial period (which he refers to as “drift” and dates back at least 40,000 years; *Origin and Antiquity* 60-1; 64). He knows that all such calculations must remain “rough approximations”:

All that geology contends for is the removal of his [i.e. man’s] advent from historic times to the first age of the past, – the drift. If his birth dates in that age, there is no difficulty in accounting for the great varieties of race, and his dispersal over the whole earth The facts furnished by geology extend the advent of man so far into the night of time, that the Pyramids, and ruins of ancient cities, even the rude stone columns of Stone-Henge, are of yesterday. (61-62)

Flying in the face of the theory used as legitimation by contemporary defenders of Indian removal and genocide that the Indians had themselves only arrived on the continent very recently, Tuttle concludes that, just as humans had been introduced to Europe well before the “drift, or pleistocene period,” “[t]he American Indian has inhabited this continent from immemorial time” (64, 63).

In its attempts to disprove both religious orthodoxy and scientific theories which tried to find a compromise between science and religion, Tuttle’s text appears most rational, even to the modern reader. But the modern reader may be puzzled to discover the intellectual context in which Tuttle’s tract was pub-

lished, which is paratextually established by the advertisements in the back of his book: “Books of Spiritualism, Published and for Sale by William White & Co., at the Banner of Light Office, No. 158 Washington Street, Boston, Mass.” (259). In fact the printer of *Origin and Antiquity of Physical Man* was also the printer of a long series of books and pamphlets dedicated to Spiritualism; it is the same press in which Andrew Jackson Davis, one of the most prominent exponents of Spiritualism, published his work. The publisher’s list contains personal accounts of spirit visitations and communications, together with religious tracts on “Evil,” “Jesus,” “Heaven” and “Harmony,” and Davis’s classic autobiography, *Magic Staff*. The list continues with Tuttle’s own earlier two-volume work *Arcana of Nature* (1859/60 and 1863), which consists of a “History and Laws of Creation” and “Philosophy of Spiritual Existence and of the Spirit-World.” That work, Tuttle claimed, was dictated to him by spirit presences and written without his ever consulting a single book or library.

Our knowledge of Hudson Tuttle and the way he conceived his books is largely based on a long letter he wrote to the editor of the 1908 reprint of *Arcana of Nature*. Emmet Densmore had asked Tuttle to provide “corroborating evidence” for the knowledge contained in his text which, Densmore was convinced, could hardly stem from mere spirit presences (Tuttle, *Arcana* 40). Tuttle, an old man by 1908 (he was born in 1836), gives a lengthy account of how he received the contents of his book in states of trance and spiritual excitement – brought about, as he puts it, by “mysterious influence” (51). Tuttle had witnessed the first generation of Spiritualists and was loosely connected to the circle involved in the Rochester Rappings of 1848. In his letter to Densmore he describes the dreary Calvinist upbringing he had to endure from his father, somewhat counterbalanced by his Scottish mother’s gift of second sight (41). Attending a spiritualist séance as a teenager, his spiritual energies seem to have been set free: he entered into a trance and began to write automatically. He quickly found that he could write ‘spirit messages’ even without taking part in a séance – with or without people gathering around a table in his vicinity (53). In his letter he emphasizes the absence of books from his father’s house (excepting the Bible) and the paucity of the school learning he had received (about 11 months altogether). The séances, he writes, were his substitute for regular schooling: he was taught directly by Nature, he claims, with the knowledge mediated by spirit “intelligences” (54). In this way he wrote the first version of his book *Arcana of Nature* at the age of eighteen, but the “intelligences” advised him to destroy the draft and rewrite it completely, which he did (56). Tuttle claims no authorship for his early texts, arguing, even fifty years after the fact, that they were conceived by the spirits, not by him. The book was immediately translated into German and published in Erlangen in 1860 (as *Geschichte und Gesetze des Schöpfungsvorganges*), and was widely received as a scientific text (58). In his letter, Tuttle also claims to have painted a panorama of the “geological history of the Earth” which was used by various professors and valued for its scientific accuracy before it was destroyed in a flood (60).

What is most remarkable, perhaps, is that Tuttle's text, and his story of how the text was written, were newly authorized by a rather skeptical editor (Densmore) fifty years after the text's first publication – at a time, that is, when Spiritualism had mostly, at least in the United States, deteriorated to the status of a mere society game.³¹

In his book on the antiquity of man, Tuttle, though just a poor farm boy with poor schooling who remained a farmer and kept his distance from metropolitan Spiritualist circles, does actually admit his indebtedness to the writings of scientists (not just the spirit messages of deceased scientists). The question is not whether he fibbed elsewhere about the sources of his knowledge (in the case of *Arcana* he does admit to having read scientific works *after* having been informed about their contents by the spirits). The question is what the existence of his books tells us about the authorization of knowledge about antiquity and deep time, and about the role of Spiritualism as a religious practice in filling a void that had opened up by the crisis of more orthodox denominations.

Clearly, Spiritualism was, for a while at least, a lifeline for a society in the process of being deprived of its spiritual certainties. Beginning with the visions of Swedenborg in the late eighteenth century and continuing as the spiritual practice of social reformers in the United States,³² Spiritualism could at least offer an answer to one of the two major questions asked of any religion: where do we come from and where will we go after death. Since the 1830s, geology had offered a plausible, yet highly abstract alternative to the Bible on the matter of where we come from; Spiritualism, in claiming to have a scientifically based method of communicating with the dead, offered a tangible answer to the second question. Hudson Tuttle combined the two.

In his book on the antiquity of man, Tuttle is particularly attentive to traces of ancient man's spiritual life. While he has few regrets about losing the safety net of Christian chronology and the biblical creation narrative, Tuttle, commenting on recent finds of human fossils in glacial drifts in the Pyrenees, points out that even these ancient men had performed funerary rites and had buried their dead. He exclaims: "Wonderful fact! We find the belief in immortal existence buried among the wrecks of animate forms fossilized in stone." Even more, though the size and number of animal species has diminished over the millennia, "the belief in immortal existence after death has grown brighter and clearer, and draws, as to a centre, more and more the activity of mankind" (*Origin and Antiquity* 60-61).

The belief in communication with the dead, via magnetic fluid, electricity, or collective trance, jumped into place to console Western men and women with regard to the question of an afterlife – of "immortality." *That* question could not

31 Obviously the timing was slightly different in England, where Spiritualism arrived after its first wave in the United States was over and where it retained a respectable reputation until the first decade of the twentieth century. For a historical-critical study of the phenomenon that Spiritualism was particularly strong in the British working class, see Barrow, *Independent Spirits*. I owe this reference to my colleague, the late H. Gustav Klaus.

32 See, for example, Carroll and Braude.

be answered by digging in geological strata or scrutinizing fossil bones, either in the late nineteenth century, as the scientific episteme began its victorious march, or even today, remaining as it does one of the few questions to which science can provide no adequate answer.

But while Spiritualism, as an alternative belief system, promised continued communication with the dead and consequently offered a comfortable vision of life after death (death being reduced to a transformation merely of the physical condition of the body), it lacked historical and systematic grounding. It consisted of a number of flexible elements ultimately based on Emmanuel Swedenborg's visions of heaven as written down in his opus magnum *De Caelo et Ejus Mirabilibus et de inferno* (1758). While the textual corpus was enriched by subsequent visions (like those of Andrew Jackson Davis and Tuttle himself), Spiritualism rested to a significant extent on the power of collective meditation, ever-refined technologies of communication (from knocking to automatic writing to visual materializations) and, perhaps most importantly, on the power of trance speech. Apart from keeping a record of their own historical emergence, Swedenborgianism and Spiritualism were not interested in historical chronology, and generally rejected the authority of the Bible, especially the notions of Original Sin and redemption (Carroll, Braude). Rather, their guiding logic was spatial in that it imagined the world of the dead to be entangled with that of the living (but still mostly imperceptible), and heaven itself to be organized into various spheres (at least in classic Swedenborgianism).

Spiritualism thus lacked a counter-master narrative of creation and world history. Its access to the mystery of creation was more systematic than historical. This is not to say that it lacked narrative, quite the contrary: in spite of the absence of a fixed historical master narrative, Spiritualist journals contain a multitude of individual, often orally transmitted, *petits rapports* of spirit communications. Spiritualism thus drew its authority from individual experiences which would add up to a constantly changing collective documentation. Its hermeneutic power may well rest on this democratic grassroots character and its complex network of mutual authentications by the various members of the Spiritualist community.

Emerging as it did as an alternative religious practice in the United States from the 1830s onward, the moment of its entrance onto the stage of history perfectly coincided with the rise of geology, which by the late nineteenth century would begin to replace the biblical narrative of creation and become the authoritative account of the earth's past. It is little surprising, therefore, that various leading scientists and intellectuals disenchanted with Christianity showed an affinity for Spiritualism.³³ The list includes Darwin's friend and rival Alfred Russel Wallace, the philosopher and psychologist William James, the chemist Robert Hare (Carroll 66-68), and the chemist-physicist Sir William Crookes, member

33 After all Swedenborg himself was a natural scientist, having written texts about minerals, mining, and astronomy.

of the British Royal Society and in the 1890s president of the Society for Psychical Research to which James also belonged. Among the leading intellectuals and writers associated with Spiritualist circles were Mark Twain in the United States and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in Britain. The latter broke off his visits to séances a year after the publication of his main work, *Primitive Culture* (1871), after a series of disconcerting mental experiences (Schüttpelz).

The thought presents itself that Hudson Tuttle was successful in mastering the intellectual crisis of his time because of his profession to Spiritualism. Like the confessionally non-doctrinaire Alexander von Humboldt, he was able to imagine the continent to have been inhabited by humans for a very long time. His temporal generosity was coupled with an appreciation of the global diversity of religious beliefs, another trait he shared with Humboldt. The scientific establishment in the United States, however, went in a different direction, increasingly denying any link between the ancient Moundbuilders and modern Indians. The leading academic expert on the issue of American “prehistory” was John Wells Foster, professor of natural history at Chicago University – after having worked on the Ohio geological survey in the 1830s and then for various ventures prospecting for fossil fuels and ores (coal, copper, iron), and a short stint in politics. Foster published his major work, *Pre-Historic Races of the United States of America*, in 1873 (and died later that year). Writing from a position close to the Frontier at the height of the Indian Wars, Foster concluded from his investigations of the Mississippi mounds that a “broad chasm is to be spanned before we can link the Moundbuilders to the North American Indians. They are essentially different in their form of government, their habits, and their daily pursuits” (347). While asserting that the Moundbuilders were a complex agricultural society, Foster regarded modern Indians, with whom he himself came into regular contact, as completely lacking any “Arcadian virtues, sung by the poets, as characteristic of primitive society.” Disregarding the Indians’ desperate attempts to retain their cultural and social integrity, Foster agreed with Cotton Mather that they were “the veriest ruins of mankind to be found on the face of the earth” (348). “To suppose that such a race threw up ... symmetrical mounds,” Foster wrote elsewhere, was “preposterous” (qtd. Kennedy 238). It was much more likely that the peaceful Moundbuilders “were expelled from the Mississippi Valley by a fierce and barbarous race, and that they found refuge in the more genial climate of Central America” where they perfected their civilizational skills (*Pre-Historic Races* 351). Foster’s narrative thus reiterates Caleb Atwater’s archaeological story of a north-south migration (see chapter 2); his idea of successive population groups violently displacing one another, which worked to justify the violent displacement currently under way, is just one more element of a powerful scientific myth that still holds sway in our own times. The “terminal creed” of a rupture between present-day Indians and the builders of the earthen and stone structures in the west and south coincided with diffusionist theories of ancient European settlements of

America that became widely accepted inside and outside academic discourse in the context of frontier warfare (see Kolodny, “Competing Narratives”).³⁴ On this fertile ground, late nineteenth-century Social Darwinism predicted the demise of Native Americans, who were considered culturally “unfit” to adapt to modernity. The narrative of the inevitability of Native American extinction became a powerful tool in the redistribution of real estate after the “closing of the frontier.”

A Pawnee Indian in Heaven and the Pinnacle of Paris

I want to conclude with a conjunction of cultural references to antiquity that through the discursive medium of Spiritualism relates colonial and Indigenous constructions of the ancient past with imaginings of the afterlife. Written between 1905 and 1909 in the period shortly before his death, Twain’s sketch “Was the World Made for Man?” and his short story “Extract from Captain Stormfield’s Visit to Heaven” pick up on the themes of the antiquity of humanity, as well as the vastness and infinity of time and space so eminent throughout the nineteenth century.³⁵ Feigning sympathy with his contemporaries’ opinion that the world was indeed made for man, while insisting on a lack of ultimate proof, the speaker of “Was the World Made for Man?” opens the book of geological time – that part of knowledge “where the evidence is not all in, yet. It is coming in, hourly, daily ... but naturally it comes with geological carefulness and deliberation, and we must not be impatient ... To lose our tranquility will not hurry geology; nothing hurries geology” (211). Assuming, with the highest ‘geological’ authorities of his time, Charles Lyell, the sociologist Herbert Spencer, and the physicist Lord Kelvin, that the world was not older than a hundred million years and man no older than 32,000 years at the most, the narrator logically concludes that the rest of the time – precisely 99,968,000 years – must have been spent preparing the world for the arrival of man. Because such a “large enterprise ... has to be conducted warily, painstakingly, logically,” the first preparation for the eventual appearance of man was the creation of the oyster, one of man’s staple foods (212). After a long period of trial and error, including the creation of “belemnites, tribolites, Jebusites, Amalekites, and that sort of fry,” the oyster was finally made, and since “an oyster had hardly any more reasoning power than a scientist has,” it naturally “jumped to the conclusion that the nineteen million years” it had taken to make it had been spent in “preparation for *him*.” The oyster could not have known that he “was only an incident in a scheme”: the making of man (213). On and on the creation process went, through all known geological periods, six glacial periods,

34 “Terminal creed” is a term coined by Michael Wilcox (“Indigenous Archaeology”). See also Mackenthun, “‘A Fearful Hope’.”

35 As John Kucich shows in *Ghostly Communion*, Twain had studied Amédée Guillemin’s book *The Heavens* (1868) when he was in Munich in 1878 and 1879 (85). Kucich draws information from research conducted by Baetzhold and McCullough.

from the pterodactyl, the giant sloth and the Irish elk on to the monkey. Once the monkey was created, it only took another five million years until the creation of man:

Such is the history of it. Man has been here 32,000 years. That it took a hundred million years to prepare the world for him is proof that that is what it was done for. I suppose it is. I dunno. If the Eiffel Tower were now representing the world's age, the skin of paint on the pinnacle-knob at its summit would represent man's share of that age; and anybody would perceive that that skin was what the tower was built for. I reckon they would, I dunno. (215-16)

Twain's satirical revision of the imperial, anthropocentric conception of time (time being tyrannically centered on human beings, or rather a particular kind of human being, imperial modern man) must be read in conjunction with his increasingly critical comments on the United States' imperial activities and ideologies, expressed in his essays on the Philippines War and his famous piece "To a Person Sitting in Darkness."

It is in his short story "Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven" where Twain additionally joins the topic of the vastness of time with the topics of space, America's human antiquity, and the afterlife. The speaker of that story is a recently deceased sea captain who tells a friend of his adventures in the endless galaxies of the universe and his final arrival in earth's (more precisely America's) part of heaven which, as he finds, is mostly inhabited by Native Americans. It takes a very long time to arrive at heaven's gate because the captain first has to spend a few millennia engaging in a race with a comet and then arrives in the wrong part of heaven where the Earth part is hardly known because of its diminutive size. Finally seeking entrance into the American sector of this apartheid heaven, Stormfield is greeted by an old friend, a Paiute Indian, who acts as gatekeeper. A new acquaintance, an angel named Sandy McWilliams, explains to the narrator why there are so few white angels in the American heaven. Stormfield notices that "where I run across one white angel, I strike as many as a hundred million copper-colored ones – people that can't speak English" ("Extract" 656). Sandy replies, "You see, America was occupied a billion years and more, by Injuns and Aztecs, and that sort of folks, before a white man ever set his foot in it" (656). Making a "liberal" calculation, Sandy counts that since the arrival of Columbus only about "fifty million whites have died in America ... make it sixty, if you want to; make it a hundred million – it's no difference about a few millions one way or t'other" (657). Learned men from other planets who visit the earth part of heaven return home and write travelogues which reserve only five lines for America, describing it as a "wilderness ... populated with a scattering few hundred thousand billions of red angels, with now and then a curiously compected *diseased* one. You see, they think we whites and the occasional nigger are

Injuns that have been bleached out or blackened by some leprous disease or other – for some peculiarly rascally *sin*, mind you” (657).

John Kucich reads “Captain Stormfield” as an “antistory” to the conventional bourgeois fictions of the popular magazines of the time (*Ghostly Communion* 90). It is an “antistory” both with regard to the space Twain gives to positive representations of Native Americans in this text, which differs markedly from his otherwise rather racist attitude, but also with regard to its formal openness. The story lacks closure, and the narrative position is anything but explicit – in fact, Stormfield speaks from the afterworld to an earthly listener Peters. In other words, he speaks as a spirit would, either directly to Peters or through a medium during a séance.

“Captain Stormfield” belongs to that group of Mark Twain’s late texts that Susan Gillman calls the “racial occult,” a mimetic mode that uses the means of spirit communication “as a means of revisiting the old terrain of U.S. slavery and linking it to the newer global imperialism, the worldwide nationalism, nativism, and racism of the late 1890s” (Gillman, qtd. in Kucich 87). Kucich adds that this story, with its strong emphasis on the Indian presence in heaven, has come a long way from Twain’s earlier resentment against Native Americans (90). More importantly, he discovers a remarkable openness in “Captain Stormfield” to the events surrounding the Indian Ghost Dance of the 1870s and its disastrous end with the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890 (88, 89). Beside the spiritualist element, there is a direct semantic link between Twain’s spirit story and the Ghost Dance in the fact that Stormfield’s friend is a Paiute Indian – a member of the same tribe as the Ghost Dance “prophet” Wovoka. It is here, with the Paiute tribe in Nevada and the teachings of the visionary Jack Wilson (alias Wovoka), that the Ghost Dance began in the 1870s, spreading throughout the Plains. In January 1889, when Wovoka was ill in his bed, he had a prophetic dream, as he says during a solar eclipse:

He ... was taken up to the other world. Here he saw God, with all the people who had died long ago engaged in their old-time sports and occupations, all happy and forever young. It was a pleasant land and full of game. After showing him all, God told him he must go back and tell his people they must be good and love one another, have no quarreling, and live in peace with the whites; that they must work, and not lie or steal; that they must put away all the old practices that savored of war; that if they faithfully obeyed his instructions, they would at last be reunited with their friends in the other world, where there would be no more death or sickness or old age. He was there given the dance which he was commanded to bring back to his people. By performing this dance at intervals, for five consecutive days each time, they would secure this happiness to themselves and hasten the event. (Mooney 14)

The dream contains an idea of the afterlife that is similar to Spiritualist notions of paradise as taught by Swedenborg; its central elements – life without toil, reunion with the dead – are largely identical with popular Christian ideas of the afterlife. God's instructions to Wovoka consist of rules for good social cohabitation, which formed the moral foundation of both Indigenous and Christian communities.

Semantically, Wovoka's announcement is rather unspectacular: the reunion with the dead is to take place in heaven, not in an apocalyptic scenario on earth. Yet his prophesy experienced a process of radicalization when it became translated into the cultural language of the Prairie tribes, heavily traumatized as they were by the American war of extermination. Its reception by the various Sioux tribes in particular endowed the prophesy with a militant quality. As the documents collected by the Irish-American ethnologist James Mooney in 1892 demonstrate, the motif of mourning the dead and mourning a way of life which had been destroyed fused with the element of a revolutionary reinstallment of the original condition, an undoing of the disruption caused by the intervention of the white settlers and soldiers: "we shall surely be put again (with our friends)," is one of the ritual phrases recorded by Mooney (no. 2). Another song announces that "the spirit army is approaching, /The whole world is moving onward" (Kucich 107). And yet another culminates in the powerful image: "When I met him [the messiah] approaching – [...] I then saw the multitude plainly" (Mooney, no. 9). The "spirit army" or "multitude" fuses the Christian images of the heavenly hosts of St. John's Revelation with the return of the dead relatives – the term "multitude" evoking Twain's "hundred thousand billions of red angels" in Captain Stormfield's report.

Not only are there similarities between the Ghost Dancers and American Spiritualism in their discrete images of heaven; both religious movements also reacted, as Kucich argues, upon similar social-psychological needs: the loss of loved ones through the Civil War and imperial wars, as well as through the death of infants. Thus a Sioux woman returned from her spirit journey is singing „E'yehe'ye! E'yehe'ye!/ It is my own child/ It is my own child" (qtd. Kucich 67). John Kucich concludes:

Twain, marked by the biases inherent in his location at an imperial metropole, may not fully comprehend the cultural positions of a Paiute prophet ... Nevertheless, *Captain Stormfield* illustrates that although the distances between these heavens and the cultures that gave them birth may seem, at times, light-years across, they can be encompassed in the pages of a single book. (90)

Both "Captain Stormfield" and the Ghost Dance visions resonate with orally submitted ideas about the Native American presence in the land as well as, in Twain's case, a strong emphasis on Native American antiquity. The reason America's heaven is peopled with billions of brown-skinned Indians is the fact that they have inhabited America for millions of years (in Twain's exaggerated numer-

ics). Peter Wilhelm Lund's ancient skeletons and Koch's mastodon kill site seem recent in comparison; "Metuselah seems a schoolboy," in Melville's words.

The anti-imperial stance of Twain's texts consists precisely in the way they "dig" to the depths of the ideological problem discussed in this book: that the deep historical temporality which the imperial episteme arrogates to itself is a mere sham or, as I will argue further down, an ideological trap used to dissociate the original inhabitants of the continent from the land they have inhabited for millennia, thereby seeking to compromise their claims of priority of settlement.

"Captain Stormfield" and "Was the World Made for Man?" can be seen to articulate the unconscious sense of uncertainty nibbling at the self-confident image of any imperial nation. Measured by the whole extent of historical time, these texts inform their readers, the epoch of empire is ridiculously small; on the grounds of geological deep time, Western empires are fleeting shadows. And millions of Indigenous people had been born, lived, and died in America before the first European set foot on an eastern shore.

As the century reached its end, the first phase of what Meltzer calls the "great paleolithic war" was also drawing to a close: by the late 1880s, and after much controversy over the interpretation of stone implements found at Little Falls, Minnesota by Frances Babbitt, in the Delaware River Valley near Trenton by Charles C. Abbott, and several other finds, the American scientific community settled on the compromise of a human presence in the late glacial period, roughly 10,000 years ago (Meltzer, *Great Paleolithic War* 71-84). The fierceness of the debate, including the spread of fake information by the dinosaur bone "warrior" Edward Cope – who claimed in a letter to Frederic Ward Putnam that Charles Abbott, the discoverer of the Trenton stone implements, had actually been seen burying them himself (76) – is explicable only when we add the battle over the legitimacy of colonial dispossession to the usual competition between hard-headed scientists. In the same period, the United States Geological Survey, founded in 1879, began to scan the land for resources and agricultural potential (89). Its scientists and engineers found ample evidence of ancient human habitation even as the last tribes were being forced into reservations. As Frederick Jackson Turner proclaimed the closing of the Frontier in 1893 and the Indigenous survivors faced their darkest collective trauma, science accompanied the genocidal policies of empire by promoting theories of natural selection and extinction. In the logic expressed by the *Codex Rios* (with which this chapter began), another world age had reached its end, and America's Indigenous people would begin to prepare for another remarkable transformation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ruins and Resilience. Re-Membering Gi'was

Nature's Ruins

At the beginning of her book *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015), Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing describes her trip to the Oregon Cascade Mountains in search of matsutake gourmet mushrooms. On the dry pumice ground she sees no plants other than the “thin sticks of lodgepole pine,” in a “broken” and “ruined Oregon industrial forest” that “seemed like a science fiction nightmare ... miraculously out of time and out of place – like something that might jump out of a fairy tale.” As Tsing later finds out, the matsutake mushroom, once introduced from Japan, is one of the few organisms able to survive in the man-made ruin of that particular forest, and, similarly to other mushrooms, it actually aids the pine trees in their struggle for survival (13-14).

The area around Crater Lake in the Cascades in southern Oregon had been a “ruined” landscape once, long before the arrival of the contemporary extraction industry which threatens the land with ecological death due to clearcutting and the imposition of monoculture. Furnished with a deep geological history, Cascadia is indeed a place commemorated in “fairy” tales – more precisely in Indigenous landmark stories, which is not quite the same thing. This chapter is dedicated to Crater Lake as both a “ruined” place and a storied place subject to transcultural inscription and contestation.

The knowledge archive about American “prehistory,” as this book argues, is primarily based on Euroamerican archaeological and geological reconstructions from which Indigenous knowledge has been largely effaced. Recent Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholarship promotes a more serious engagement with and inclusion of traditional Indigenous knowledge in reconstructions of the American deep past (Basso; Vine Deloria, *Red Earth*; Roger Echo-Hawk, “Ancient History”; Mayor; Cruikshank; Ludwin/Thrush; Mackenthun/Mucher). This chapter is a contribution to this ongoing discussion. Beginning with an account of the transcultural construction of an ancient geological event, it moves from an investigation of the narrative memory of that cataclysmic event to a narrative of multi-species awareness and place knowledge: from a story of catastrophe to a story of survival and resilience.

About 7,700 years ago,¹ a mountain in Southern Oregon exploded, dramatically altering the landscape in and around today's Crater Lake National Park. The first European pioneers marveled at the sublime landscape produced by this catastrophe and gradually arrived at the geological knowledge we have today. In his book *Fire Mountains of the West*, geologist Stephen Harris gives an account of the reconstructed eruption. Mount Mazama, the name given to the c. 9,000 feet high mountain that was destroyed by the eruption (creating the caldera for the lake), had been active for many millennia previous to the cataclysmic eruption of ca. 5,700 BC. Its awakening, Harris writes,

was abrupt and violent Explosions ripped open a new crater in the broad glacial basin that then occupied Mazama's north flank. Huge volumes of rhyodacite pumice were hurled high into the air, where the winds carried the ashcloud many miles to the east and southeast, blanketing a large area with pumiceous ash. After the magma had blown off steam, the vent flooded with rhyodacite lava, which overflowed the crater rim and oozed a mile downslope. (111-12)

Comparing the eruption of Mt. Mazama with the historically recent one of the Indonesian volcano Krakatau, which erupted and collapsed in 1883, Harris suggests that the climactic moment in Mazama's eruption began with its summit ejecting "a titanic mushroom cloud miles into the stratosphere," its pumice then "blanketing" the land for about 500,000 square miles. Even seventy miles north of the volcano, the initial ash fall was still a foot thick: "Thick sheets of rhyodacite pumice that fell from the plinian eruption column can be seen at the caldera rim" (115). The Mazama ash cloud, Harris calculates, "was certainly larger than that of any historic eruption," including those of Krakatau and, in 1980, Mount St. Helens. Its ash was spread "over a vastly larger area, including virtually all of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, northern California, western Montana, as well as parts of Nevada and Wyoming. Much of southern Canada also was blanketed, including southern British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan" (116). Although Harris does not mention the eruption of Tambora in Indonesia in 1815 – which, as we now know, caused the catastrophic "year without a summer" in 1816 –, he describes similar global effects of Mazama's activity: "The ash wafting through the stratosphere must have produced brilliant sunsets throughout the entire northern hemisphere. Ancestors of the Druids in England and Gaul may have observed this atmospheric phenomenon and wondered what it portended" (116). Nearby Native Americans "experienced the cataclysm more directly" – which is a way of saying that, like the inhabitants of the village Tambora, those close to the mountain all died and those farther away went through years of star-

1 Sources differ up to a thousand years about the date of the eruption. Dates range between 7,700 years ago and 6,600 years ago.

vation due to the destruction of the vegetation.² For the Klamath, Modoc, Warm Springs and other tribes inhabiting the area, Crater Lake – or Gi'was, as the Klamath call it – is a place of sacred terror, as their ancestors experienced the cataclysm and then preserved that experience in their stories.³

This chapter explores the concurrences between the two emerging story traditions – the western geological one and the Indigenous one as it is preserved in various more or less “transculturated” documents of European collectors of native “lore.” Investigation of the geological and narrative archives has produced additional stories of ruination – of man-made destruction of debatable sublimity – that of colonial war and deportation, of atomic bombs and termination programs that adds political significance to the geological ruins produced by nature thousands of years ago.

Mazama's Collapse in Colonial and Transcultural Archives

The most widespread version of the Klamath story about the destruction of Mt. Mazama was collected in the 1950s by Ella Clark, a white schoolteacher and university teacher in Washington State who had worked as a fire lookout during WWII and become interested in landmark stories explaining the landscape of the Cascadian Range in the Rocky Mountains. Seeing that almost none of these texts were in print, she began to collect them from forgotten books, local archives, private documents of local families, and not least from the Indigenous people themselves who soon offered additional stories for her to record after her first book appeared – *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest* (1953). She had obtained the Crater Lake story, she writes, from the “private papers of Judge Colvig,” using it with permission from his daughter, “Mrs. William Warner” (Clark, *Indian Legends* 218). William Colvig, she writes, recorded the story after the end of the Civil War following his arrival at Klamath Agency as a nineteen-year-old soldier. Colvig writes that he had received the story from Lalek, the elderly “peace chief” of the Klamath, during the time of the tribe’s forced social transformation (from independence to reservation life). Though certainly not a professional anthropologist, Colvig was pretty well prepared for documenting a native tradition, as he “had learned the Chinook jargon in childhood while playing with the Indian children who were his neighbors.” While at Fort Klamath, “he spent many hours with the friendly old chief, then about eighty years old, and from him learned much about Klamath Indian lore and legendry” (Clark, *Indian Legends* 53). Colvig’s retelling of the story is preceded by a dialogue between Lalek and himself con-

- 2 The Tambora eruption, according to Gillen d’Arcy Wood, had destroyed a population of about 100,000 people, the temperature of the fire exceeding that of Pompeii in 79 AD (17-19).
- 3 For the sake of readability, I have decided to use the variant Gi'was. Gatschet’s spelling is Gi'wash; Alatorre’s Gii-was. Other spellings are Gi-wash, Giiwas, Guiwas and more. On the semantics, see below.

cerning a taboo placed on the Klamath visiting the area of Crater Lake. In the hope of loosening Lalek's tongue, Colvig fills his pipe and asks him for the reason for this taboo. Colvig later heard the same story "with some variations" from other elders, Clark writes (53).

Though the way in which this record was created cannot be regarded as conventionally scientific, it comes pretty close to contemporary professional standards. Colvig and his interlocutor share a language: he has long been familiar with Native Americans, which is documented in his narrative framing, and – perhaps most importantly – Colvig receives confirmation for Lalek's version from other elders. In the version of Lalek's story popularized by Clark and Colvig, the volcanic eruption is rendered as a battle between two giant competitors for the favor of a human woman: "From their mountaintops the two chiefs" – the "Chief of the Below World" who inhabited the mountain now referred to as Mount Mazama and the "Chief of the Above World" who inhabited Mount Shasta to the south – "began a furious battle" (54). The battle culminates:

Mountains shook and crumbled. Red-hot rocks as large as the hills hurled through the skies. Burning ashes fell like rain. The Chief of the Below World spewed fire from his mouth. Like an ocean of flame it devoured the forests on the mountains and in the valleys. On and on the Curse of Fire swept until it reached the homes of the people. Fleeing in terror before it, the people found refuge in the waters of Klamath Lake. (54)

During this extreme crisis, two medicine men sacrifice themselves to rescue the people and walk into the mouth of the volcano, the "entrance of the Below World" (55). The "Chief of the Below World was driven into his home, and the top of the mountain fell upon him. When the morning sun rose, the high mountain was gone" (55). This popular version readily entered scientific writing as geologist Stephen Harris uses it in his description as well:

[The Native Americans'] ... myths interpreting the great eruption as a battle between Llao and his rival the sky god Skell preserved memories of the event for many generations. In the late 19th century an aged chief of the Klamath tribe recounted the tale, including the collapse of Llao's mountain, to a soldier at Fort Klamath. (116)

Alongside this traditional story about the eruption and collapse of Mount Mazama, which formed the caldera that gradually filled with water to create Crater Lake, there is a second story relating to the lake that was collected by Clark. This story explains the creation of Wizard Island, a volcanic cinder cone in the waters of Crater Lake, and Clark traces it back to an 1898 MS by Moray L. Applegate. According to this version, based on Klamath and Modoc oral tradition, the island is the result of another violent battle between the same mythical figures. Captain O.C. Applegate, an agent at the Klamath Indian Reservation,

recorded “The War Between Llao and Skell,” describing the battle between the antagonists who now bear their mythological names. First, Llao and his followers (monsters and giant crawfish) from Crater Lake obtain Skel’s heart and use it in a ball game on a field near Crater Lake. Skel’s followers attend the event and recapture their master’s heart during the ball game, bringing him back to life. Skel overpowers Llao and feeds the pieces of Llao’s body to the creatures in Crater Lake, making them believe that these are the remains of Skel. Only when Skel throws Llao’s head into Crater Lake do the creatures realize they have been consuming their master’s remains, and the head, which they leave behind in horror, is subsequently transformed into Wizard Island (Clark, *Indian Legends* 56-58). Two further stories relating to Crater Lake tell of the fate of Native American hunters who were punished for trying to swim in the hallowed lake, thereby ignoring the interdiction to do so. From then on, we learn, few people dared to look upon the lake again (58-61; 60). This story confirms the information Lalek gave to Colvig, that the place now called Crater Lake was a sacred place – too powerful to be visited by the uninitiated.

Douglas Deur, historian and author of *In the Footprints of Gmukamps*, a study of Klamath culture and Crater Lake, established a concurrence between Harris’ reconstruction of the collapse of Mount Mazama and the Colvig-Clark account. He is nonplussed because that account coincides “so closely with the eruption of Mount Mazama as described by geologists.” While many tribal members therefore “take this as evidence of their ancestors’ witness to these events” (*Footprints* 57), Deur is impressed by the remarkable similarity of the “descriptive detail” of the traditional narrative and Harris’s geological reconstruction of the event (58). Harris’ text, however, is obviously written with knowledge of the Klamath story; as the above quote shows, it makes direct reference to the version preserved in Ella Clark’s book. Indeed the “descriptive detail” is that element in the text that should cause doubt in readers even vaguely familiar with the language of myth.⁴ Vine Deloria Jr., who himself promotes the value of Indigenous, orally transmitted knowledge as a counter archive to the scientific record and who should therefore be greatly interested in the veracity of the Colvig-Clark version is also the one who notes the exceptionality of this seemingly precise account:

But did the Klamaths actually see this volcano erupt? The date of the explosion is estimated at 6,500 years ago, which would place these people at this particular location, as an identifiable group, for a longer period than any other group or nation of people that we know. Sandals and other evidence of human activity in the Crater Lake area have been found beneath the ash layers of this explosion, indicating that *some* humans were eyewitnesses to the event (*Red Earth* 178).

4 When analyzing Australian Aboriginal oral traditions relating to ancient meteor impacts, Hamacher and Goldsmith, referring to the various changes taking place within long-term oral memories, write “we would not expect to find ‘accurate’ details of a meteorite impact in oral tradition after thousands of years” (303).

“Did the Klamath see?” is of course shorthand for asking whether the ancestors of the tribes who now inhabit Klamath Marsh witnessed the eruption and formed stories about it to be passed down through millennia. Incredulous of the possibility that the text of the oral story remembering this event may have stayed in place for more than six millennia, Deloria then admits that “I personally don’t know”: “It is better to leave a few strings dangling against the day when we are given more information and can add to the story and extend its meaning. [...]he question of Indian knowledge of the sequence of geological events [...] is] intriguing” (178-79). It is the purpose of this chapter to add some reflection and knowledge to the dangling strings – not in order to dismiss the narrative most writers agree on, but to show the complexity of the transcultural interaction of which it is the result as well as dig a bit deeper into the Klamath and Modoc cultural universe. This will ultimately confirm the consensus about the antiquity of their collective knowledge but add a further epistemic dimension not considered by the widely circulated transcultural version.

The examination of this knowledge record carries us far beyond the brief versions printed by Clark and Harris and reproduced on the touristic plaques and texts explaining Crater Lake at the site and online. It carries us deeper into the epistemic world of the Klamath and Modoc while allowing us to see the extent of the damage – in Stoler’s terms, the *ruination* – left by colonialism in the field of knowledge, a ruination that persists today.

Before the 1953 publication of the two major Crater Lake stories outlined above – one involving a description of the collapse of Mount Mazama and lacking any reference to the lake, and the other narrating a battle between Llao and Skel that ends with the dumping of Llao’s body in Crater Lake and which does not mention a volcanic eruption, only the latter was in circulation. Both parts of this narrative diptych – the “lake monster” story and the “collapse” story – appeared in print for the first time in Clark’s collection. Taken together, they present questions about the antiquity of the oral tradition regarding Crater Lake. The age of the story referring to Crater Lake as the dumping site of Llao’s body as well as the point at which the punishment of the daring young men taking a swim has to remain unspecific, only ensuring that it post-dates the formation of the lake some time after the eruption 7,700 years ago. But what about the age of the collapse story?

The reason for Vine Deloria’s excitement about the Klamath remembering the eruption is twofold: first, it would be a unique, not to say fabulous case for a piece of knowledge to have survived within an oral tradition without the aid of writing. And second, the proof of such ancient knowledge would add support to the claim of the surrounding tribes, especially the Klamath and the Modoc, that their ancestors had inhabited their land for thousands of years without migrating. In other words, evidence of an oral memory of the eruption and collapse of Mount Mazama would defy colonial narratives of native nomadism and primitivism which, as the legal predominance of the concept of “continuous occupation”

demonstrates, still holds such sway in colonial discourse (see chapter 1). Deloria's reason for examining this material in the first place was to problematize the colonialist insistence on proof of antiquity – as if Indigenous seniority were in need of any proof.

Deloria also realizes that the Pacific Northwest “is the perfect area to match Indian traditions and geological knowledge because of its many unique geological features,” including volcanic eruptions, floods, and earthquakes (*Red Earth* 204). What he does not particularly consider is that the oral record has to be treated with much hermeneutic care as it survives only in colonial texts in a seriously fragmented and partially interrupted form. Academically, the narrativization of the eruption of Mount Mazama is a most captivating test case for the transcultural construction of American early history. All documents to be discussed in the following pages are the products of transculturation – some more and some less so. The task here is to burrow through a thicket of intercultural communication, translation and mistranslation, and colonial ideological inscription. Besides its obvious interest in pointing out the capacities of oral tradition as a medium, this chapter is also driven by the fascination with the processes of transcultural storytelling, of the transcultural creation of the myth of Mount Mazama or, to use its Klamath name, Gi'was.

Colonial-Scientific Narratives of Crater Lake

In spite of Deloria's and Deur's doubts, historians of Crater Lake assert that the eruption must have been observed by humans but that the whole region must have become uninhabitable for many centuries after the cataclysm.⁵ The websites of the Crater Lake Institute and the National Park Service are remarkably willing to accept the Indigenous narrative's great antiquity. It is not impossible, the National Park Service writes,

to suppose that human memory goes back several thousand years. Indians were known to have inhabited the area of Mount Mazama before its final eruption, and it is highly logical that the story of such a terrifying event could have become an integral part of tribal history and have been transmitted orally for thousands of years. Oral narration has always been an important part of Indian culture.

- 5 The text on the National Park Service website reads: “The eruption was undoubtedly witnessed by humans, a never-to-be-forgotten occurrence immortalized by detailed and descriptive legends. That man was nearby at the time is attested to by archeological investigations at Fort Rock Cave about fifty-five miles northeast of Mount Mazama in 1938 that uncovered one hundred woven-sagebrush sandals covered, baked, and charred by the mud flow and ashes from Mazama's eruption. For miles around plants would have been buried and burned and lakes and marshes clogged, suffocating the fish population and depriving upland game birds and waterfowl of sanctuary. With living conditions so difficult, human activity here probably ended for several centuries.” (National Park Service).

However, the writer is also aware of the effects of transculturation: “There is no way of telling, however, how much of the nineteenth-century rendition that Colvig first heard was Klamath history and how much it had been embellished through the years by the imagination of various storytellers” (National Park Service). The NPS text also assumes that the memory of the eruption was retained in spite of centuries spent out of sight of the Crater Lake area. None of these two factors – interruption of residence and transculturation – is conducive to the belief that the eruption story was passed on with the “descriptive detail” about which both Douglas Deur and Vine Deloria have expressed their surprise. By comparison, the biblical story of Noah’s ark is full of human drama but relatively weak in descriptive detail about the process of the post-glacial rise in sea levels.⁶

The Western geological archive reconstructing the eruption of Mount Mazama is hardly less interesting than the Indigenous story we have seen so far. The methods geologists employ in first reading the landscape and then translating the lay of the land into narratives of deep temporal geological processes requires considerable hermeneutic and linguistic skill. These narratives are cases of emplotment reminiscent of other scientific plots, such as the often poorly translated plot of Darwinian evolution (Gillian Beer).

The scientific narrative archive on Mount Mazama begins with Joseph Silas Diller, the first geologist who showed scientific proof for the former existence of a high mountain at the site of Crater Lake.⁷ In his field report for the Smithsonian in 1897 he reconstructs the former existence of a mountain during the glacial period by reading the landscape around the lake, the composition of the gravel consisting of pumice and lava “well rounded, smoothed, and striated by glacial action.” From the “polished” state of the rocks he concludes that the

glaciers armed with stones in their lower parts, that striated the crown of the rim, must have come down from above, and it is evident that the topographic conditions of to-day afford no such source of supply. The

- 6 The comparison with the biblical story of Noah may sensitize us to the temporal dimensions at stake: although some experts of “big” history tend to write about Neanderthals as if they lived around the corner until just last year, it is important to understand that the oral preservation of an event over 7,700 years would be an extremely rare case of collective memory, and inevitably culturally filtered and mythologized. The region around Ararat was first mentioned in conjunction with the Noah story in the Hebrew Bible around 1400 BC (as “*urru*”); the name “Ararat” was first used in that context in 425 AD by the church historian Philostorgius (NoahsArkSearch).
- 7 Diller confirms an earlier assumption by the military man Franklin B. Sprague who, observing the surroundings of “Lake Majesty” in 1865, had expressed the opinion that Crater Lake was the result of a volcanic eruption: “[Y]our thoughts wander back thousands of years to the time when, where now is a placid sheet of water, there was a lake of fire, throwing its cinders and ashes to vast distances in every direction. The whole surroundings prove this lake to be the crater of an extinct volcano.” His report was published in the *Oregon Sentinel* in 1869. One year later, Sprague returned to the topic, now mentioning a Klamath “tradition” of a “great monster” which “a long time ago ... caused the mountain to belch up fire, and that he ate up great numbers of their people” (Sprague, “Great Natural Curiosity”). See Truwe.

formation of glaciers requires an elevation extending above the snow line to afford a gathering ground for the snow that it may accumulate, and under the influence of gravity descend to develop glaciers lower down on the mountain slopes. During the glacial period Crater Lake did not exist. Its site must then have been occupied by a mountain to furnish the conditions necessary for the extensive glaciations of the rim, and of the magnitude of the glacial phenomena indicates that the peak was a large one, rivaling, apparently, the highest peaks of the range. (372)

All geological indicators, Diller writes, “tell the same story”: “we can reconstruct in fancy the great volcano, Mount Mazama, which once occupied the place of the lake, and, like Shasta or Rainier, formed a great landmark of the region” (374).

Diller’s relatively sober scientific descriptions soon gave way to romantic evocations of the former grandeur of the mountain. The Euroamerican descriptions of Crater Lake are dominated by the romantic language of the sublime. This discourse finds its highest expression in Stanton C. Lapham’s book *The Enchanted Lake. Mount Mazama and Crater Lake in Story, History and Legend* (1931). Introduced by a quote from Emerson,⁸ the book begins with, and continues to make frequent use of, the topos of indescribability:

Words fail us and all poetry of color and form seem lacking and inadequate when we attempt to depict the beauty and mystery of Crater Lake. Our emotions are strangely moved as we gaze upon the indescribable blue of the Lake and begin to comprehend its placid charm and natural loveliness, girded about by beetling, broken crags, fiercely riven walls and mighty reaching cliffs. Here is harmony – a symphony in color and exquisite beauty beyond words, yet pressed about by awesome volcanism, molten destruction and towering crags, where the very heart of a torn, splintered mountain is half filled with water more blue than the arching sky above. [...] Crater Lake is cupped in the melted-out heart of a mighty volcano, once proudly lifting its peak to the skies. From the towering, broken crests circling Crater Lake, there rose the sloping, icy sides of a great mountain, melted out, engulfed, vanished. (7-8)

Inspired by the nature spiritualism of John Muir (whom he quotes frequently), Lapham’s transcendentalist homage is also a declaration of affective ownership. The “intimate nearness” that the inspired wanderers feel for the mountains, he writes, turns the human observers into their owners: “We possess them. They are ours by right of discovery. No one can shut us from them. They are not subject to the scraps of paper upon which men inscribe their titles” (25). The language of spiritual or affective “possession” here mingles with the colonial language of rights and title deeds we have encountered in John Lloyd Stephens’ writings (chapter 2). No Native claimants disturb Lapham’s tête-à-tête with nature.

8 “Every press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections;/They scorn the best I can do to relate them.”

Here, as elsewhere (e.g. the writings of John Muir), the ecopoetic encounter with America's wild nature is made possible by the, at best, fleeting presence of Native contenders. Though Lapham elsewhere in his volume evokes Indigenous story traditions and emphasizes his familiarity with Native Americans, his claim of aesthetic discovery is as exclusivist as most romantic nature writing. His "geopiety," as Robert H. Winthrop writes on the website of the Crater Lake Institute (referring to Yu-Fu Tuan's concept), manifests

both strong similarities and differences with the Indian experience of the Crater Lake region. The similarities lie in the common recognition of an encounter with the alien, the weird, and the numinous in this ancient caldera. Yet the differences are also telling. For the American explorers and settlers, the encounter with Crater Lake appears to have yielded a deep emotional response, but not a deeper knowledge or transformation of self. Such testimonies as these suggest an awareness of the sacred, but it is a mute awareness, a matter of mood. Unlike the Indian visitors to Crater Lake, the Anglo-American travelers lacked the cultural models – the cognitive templates encompassing mythology, ritual practices, and knowledge of localized spirit beings – which allow such encounters to yield a message, to produce lasting understanding and personal change. ("Crater Lake")

As I will argue below, the difference between claims of possession that are affective and epistemically informed and those that are "mute" affective-material claims, is not only a difference in perception of natural sites considered sacred but also the result of the presence or lack of that "deeper knowledge" of the place, which was collectively available to the Indigenous peoples having lived in the area for millennia but unavailable to the newcomers who were only beginning to build up a relationship to the land (their relationship usually being of the extractive kind). The difference between Lapham's perception of Crater Lake and that of Indigenous people like Lalek is not merely the result of a different cultural attitude but an epistemic difference. Crater Lake could be a place of sublime beauty to the modern visitor oblivious of its history; to Indigenous people it was a place of sacred terror.

While Lapham dispenses with poetic evocations of the crashing of Mount Mazama (it is related in his summary of the Klamath legend of the battle between Llao and Skel: 130), the Oregon archaeologist Luther Cressman began unearthing the remains of ancient sandals underneath the ash of the Mazama eruption in the late 1930s. Revisiting his earlier text in his 1981 preface to *The Sandal and the Cave* (published originally 1962), Cressman states that continuous human presence in the caves at Fort Rock was most likely interrupted in a period between 7,700 and 5,000 years ago. He assumes the destruction of plant and animal life – the result of the eruption of Mount Mazama – to be the reason for this (7). Knowing the magnitude of the disaster for humans inhabiting the eruption zone, in the

first edition of his book Cressman is not aware of any tribal tradition referring to the disaster, although Clark's book had been out for almost a decade:

What suffering, what terror these catastrophic events induced in the Indian population we shall never know, for no authentical folk tales of the disaster have come down to us. It is unlikely, however, that such calamities passed without some effort by imaginative minds to establish a rationale for them. (34)⁹

Cressman was the chairman of the Condon Lectureship Committee of Oregon University, which organized a series of lectures with renowned Berkeley geologist Howel Williams. In various texts written in the 1940s and 1950s, Williams, expanding on the work of Diller, gives a full-fledged dramatic narrative of the eruption and collapse of Mount Mazama. His landmark study *The Ancient Volcanoes of Oregon* (1948) mentions no oral tradition or archaeological finds, but he imagines a human presence during the eruption based on knowledge of the archaeological digs Cressman had conducted at Fort Rock in the 1930s. Howel Williams assumes that the "Indians who occupied Oregon for thousands of years before the arrival of the white man must have witnessed countless eruptions," and he speaks of a "cataclysm seen from afar by the early Indians. They had long been familiar with the majestic ice-capped cone, for it rose to a height of 12,000 feet, a mile above its present ruins" (*Ancient Volcanoes* 45). His scientific report of the final eruption of Mt. Mazama makes use of a host of literary devices. The employment of narrative elements was not unusual in scientific texts at that time. Two of these devices are ekphrasis and metaphor: the animals, he writes, were "[a]larmed by the quakes" and fled while "the Indians, aware of the menace, withdrew to a safer distance":

Finally, a plume of white vapor rose from the summit. Within a few hours, it changed to a towering column, becoming darker and more ominous as the content of ash increased. At first, the eruptions were mild, and the fragments falling from the cloud were no larger than particles of sand. But day after day, the intensity of the explosions mounted. Huge cauliflower clouds rose higher into the sky, to be drifted eastward by the wind. Night after night, the clouds were more brightly lit by incandescent ejecta describing fiery arcs in their flight. The roars from the crater grew louder, and frenzied streaks of lightning multiplied in number. Many of the fragments were not as large as a clenched fist, and showers of fine ash began to fall hundreds of miles away, on the plateau east and northeast of the volcano. In lands thousands of miles distant, men mar-

9 He estimates the Mazama eruption to have been 8.5 times as strong as that of Mount St. Helens in 1980. Cressman is also convinced that Fort Rock had been occupied before the last glaciation about 10,000 years ago and that the population there developed independently from more recent groups coming from the north. This thesis has been confirmed by DNA analysis of human coprolites found in Oregon's Paisley Caves.

velled at the brilliant colors in the sky as the rays of the setting and rising sun shone through the dustladen air. (46)

The text continues in this vein. Williams produces this graphic description for his readers at a time when moving images of volcanic eruptions were still largely nonexistent. His text is written in the style of an eyewitness account and the detail included differs only slightly from the Colvig-Clark version in principle. Its style, however, vastly elaborates the language of the sublime. Not only that Williams' recreation of the eruption of Mount Mazama was a multimedia event: in his book – as in a popular short version of 1941 (reprinted 1963) also mentioned by Ella Clark – it is accompanied by illustrations of the ancient eruption (*Ancient Volcanoes* 45; *Crater Lake* 63). The images, unlike the drawings and photos included elsewhere in Williams' study, are reproductions of two paintings drawn in 1940 by a contemporary artist, Paul Rockwood (63) (figures 12 and 13).

Rockwood renders the volcanic event in the exquisite style of American landscape painting inaugurated by Thomas Cole and continued by Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran. Williams' descriptions of the geology at Crater Lake are in fact descriptions of Rockwood's paintings, which were in turn produced according to Williams' instructions. What captures our attention is the metaphor Williams uses to describe the Plinian column emerging from Mazama's top: he refers to it not as a Plinian cloud but as a "cauliflower cloud." This metaphor, I suggest, is an interesting case of semiotic slippage between two radically different cultural archives which nevertheless frequently intersect: it betrays the concurrence of the writing of Williams' geological story with photographs and moving pictures of another category of the sublime – representations of the "cauliflower" clouds of atomic blasts in Japan and, even closer to the publication of William's text, the hydrogen bombs dropped at Bikini atoll in 1946 (Fig. 14).¹⁰ The metaphor indicates that thinking about the deep past is always also inspired by the present – that a "ruinous" man-made mismanagement of the history of the present filters our perception of the distant past while preoccupation with geological time may displace our attention to the safer, natural ruins of the deep past.

The trope of romantic grandeur, displayed with reference to real or imagined volcanic eruptions, enjoys a long history in Euroamerican discourse, reaching back to Humboldt's famous description of his climb of the Chimborazo. In his study of volcanoes, Humboldt expected to approach the essence of the geological and climatic composition of the earth. The language of the geological sublime deployed in Euroamerican imaginings of such geologically impressive places and events is the romantic equivalent for expressing a similar awe as expressed by the interdiction which Indigenous people impose on such powerful and sacred

10 There is an intense semantic interaction between the languages describing volcanic clouds and atomic blasts. It is conspicuous that Williams does not use the volcanological term (Plinian cloud) or Pliny's own pine tree comparison. After initially referring to atomic clouds as "cauliflower clouds" the image was later replaced with the mushroom metaphor more familiar today.

Figure 12: Paul Rockwood, *Mt. Mazama Just Before the Destruction of Its Summit*, 1940.

Figure 13: Paul Rockwood, *Mt. Mazama Just After the Destruction of Its Summit*, 1940.

Figure 14: Atomic test “Able” Operation Crossroads, Bikini, 1 July 1946. Source: Underwood Archives.

places. Indeed the colonial linguistic register abounds in uses of the sublime in reference to Crater Lake. Scanning a selection of newspaper accounts from the period before and shortly after 1900,¹¹ the concurrence of the romantic trope of the sublime and the trope of “fearful reverence” becomes conspicuous. The *Chicago Tribune* in 1873, employing good post-romantic prose, claims that the Indians saw Crater Lake “with great awe, visited it in their inspired moments, and spoke of it as a sublime fact to be held in fear and reverence.”¹² The same article mentions that this “wildly majestic scene” was visited by Indians for reasons of spiritual devotion and to mourn the departed, leaving rock piles as tokens of their presence (5). But in the 1890s, as the geological history of the place became manifest, the topos of “Indian fear and reverence” began to be reduced and simplified into “Indian fear.” Thus the *Oregon Daily Statesmen* reports in an article in 1896 entitled “A Mighty Wound in the Brow of the Cascades” that “for a paltry sum the Indian will guide you thither but ere the lake be reached he will disappear amid the forests from whence he came.”¹³ This statement was repeated almost verbatim in *The Tennessean* and the *Wichita Daily Eagle* in 1900. In a subsection of that piece called “Indians Fear It” can be read: “From time immemorial no power has been strong enough to induce him [the Indian] to approach within sight of it. For a paltry sum he will engage to guide you thither but before you reach the mountain top will leave you to proceed alone.”¹⁴ This behavior,

11 A great many thanks to Ben Truwe of Medford for playing research assistant and freely providing me with numerous digital copies of newspaper accounts as well as translations from Chinook and knowledgeable comments on local history and geology.

12 3 August, 1873: 5, adopted from the *New York Times* of 27 July 1873.

13 29 August 1896: 5.

14 *The Tennessean*, Nashville, 12 Feb 1900: 8; *Wichita Daily Eagle*, 18 February, 1900: n.p.

the authors claim, is caused by a general fear of demons harbored by the savage mind as well as the legend of two young Klamath braves who once visited the lake. The first of them received spiritual powers but the other, who had followed the first seeking the same powers, abused the sacredness of the place and was thus killed by the monsters dwelling in the lake. This story, which can be found in almost all publications on Crater Lake, was told by "Allin Davy, chief of the Klamath tribe" (8).¹⁵ It was collected by William Gladstone Steel, a journalist and jack-of-all-trades, from chief Allen David in 1885; he published the story in 1907 in his own widely circulated magazine *Steel Points* (Steel 35-37). Steel had been one of the initiators of the petition to the U.S. Government to turn Crater Lake, that "unappropriated vacant domain of the government," into a National Park in 1885 – a petition that was finally granted in 1902 (Steel 68). "Unappropriated vacant" suggests that the land was not claimed and not inhabited and could thus pass over into American possession by right of discovery, even without paying a "paltry sum" to the neighboring tribes who, as these texts testify, used that area for spiritual renewal.

The story of the two youths and their experiences at Crater Lake (one of them being rewarded for his devotion, the other punished for his greed) is often combined with the story of the lake monsters, also reprinted by Ella Clark: the battle between Llao and Skel, the killing and revival of Skel with the help of animals, the defeat of Llao, the feeding of Llao's body to his unsuspecting children, and the transformation of his head into Wizard Island (see above). This story, which popular sources trace to the Indian agent O.C. Applegate (Steel 75; Clark, *Indian Legends* 56), can be found, with some variations, in other more scientifically executed collections by Albert Gatschet and Jeremiah Curtin (on which more below).

The topos of native fear increases around the time Crater Lake was turned into a National Park, and it coincides with the first scientific reports of the volcanic origin of Crater Lake trickling in from 1897 onward. In 1916, *The Evening Herald* writes that "*even today* the Indians look upon Crater Lake with uneasiness and fear" and that in the old time only their "conjurers" would approach the lake (emphasis added).¹⁶ In 1900, the already quoted pieces from *The Tennessean* and the *Wichita Daily Eagle* quote Allen David, the major Klamath source,

15 The *Oregon Daily Statesman* of 1896, quoting Professor Irving E. Vining, has a longer version of this story: The young brave falls asleep on the cliffs and hears strange voices. The next night he comes back to the lake, being irresistibly pulled to this place. Again he falls asleep and hears the soothing voices. After many times he descends to the water and bathes in the lake. He sees strange shapes gliding to the surface. After returning and swimming there many times he becomes harder, acquiring stronger powers than all the other members of his tribe. Other young men follow his example but when one of them kills a fish, the Laos arise from the lake, tear him to pieces and feed his body to their children in the water. Dread has haunted the Klamath since then and made them shun the lake. And again the known sentence echoing literary works of the imperial gothic: "For a paltry sum the Indian will guide you thither but ere the lake be reached he will disappear amid the forests from whence he came" (5).

16 *The Evening Herald*, Klamath Falls, OR 8 June 1916: 2.

as regarding the fate of the native swimmer as a warning to all Indians not to come near the lake (“and such shall be the fate of every Klamath brave who from that day to this dares to look upon the lake”). Phrased in this general way, the article excludes the further use of Crater Lake as a site for spiritual purposes as well, shunning native visitors from it forever and preparing it for the exclusive use of Euroamerican visitors. This prohibition is phrased at a time when the tribes inhabiting the area had been subjected to severe assimilation, reeducation, and deportation (in the case of the rebellious Modoc, who were deported to the Indian Territory after the Modoc War of 1872-73). Around 1900, Crater Lake is semantically declared a *tabula rasa*, indeed an “unappropriated, vacant domain,” reserved for the sole purpose of colonial science, tourism, and aesthetic enjoyment. It is semantically divided between its inscription with the trope of romantic grandeur on the one hand and the trope of Indian dread on the other.

There is no consideration in the colonial journalistic texts of the possibility that this place inspired a feeling of terror in the Indigenous population because in their collective memory it was connected with the knowledge of a terrible event. The discourse of Indian dread of the place is, at best, a case of transcultural misunderstanding (non-Indians not understanding the fact that the place was not shunned for fear of monstrous laos but because it was a sacred place only to be visited for spiritual purposes). At worst the opposition of Indian dread and white rapture imaginatively prepares the place for exclusive possession by the whites. During all this time, the proposal to turn Crater Lake into a national park was extant, to be decided positively, after 16 years, by Congress. “Indian dread” is a way of ignoring the fact that visitors from both cultures were affected similarly by the atmospheric uniqueness of the place, to which the knowledge of some deep historical catastrophe – inherited by one cultural group through stories and topological memory and scientifically reconstructed by the other – added affective substance. This double codification of the place (Indian “fear” leading to prohibition of access and taboo, and non-Indian sublime awe leading to touristic enjoyment) expresses the different forms of use of Crater Lake as a landmark which continues to exist in the present: It is a highly valued natural heritage site open for outdoor exercise and tourism while the local tribes continue to use it for spiritual purposes: a double-use that almost inevitably leads to conflicts. It should be conceded that the National Park Service has been able to handle the conflict relatively well, much better than in similar cases like Bear Butte in South Dakota where touristic and spiritual interests stand in brutal opposition. The Klamath, I was informed by their representatives, are able to carry out their spiritual ceremonies at certain times in the year without too much disturbance from hikers and other visitors.

I suggest reading the trope of Indian fear, whose function within colonial discourse is to divide the original inhabitants from their land, as pointing to a collective memory of a terrible event that once took place at Crater Lake. Alongside the stories already mentioned and those to be discussed below, that frequently noted

taboo is a strong cultural indicator of the existence of an ancient collective disaster experience. “Native fear,” readily welcomed by colonial society as a lack of territorial interest, is also evidence of the antiquity of that collective knowledge.¹⁷ Yi-Fu Tuan lists natural disasters such as floods and droughts among what he defines as “landscapes of fear” – manifestations of omnipresent forces of chaos as well as human efforts to control them. Following Tuan, stories are told and philosophical systems invented in part to domesticate the emotional consequences of such constant existential threats (6).¹⁸ Mental landscapes of fear are surrounded by stories just as human homes, fields and settlements are surrounded by protective boundaries. The stories about Crater Lake, then, may be viewed as hermeneutic enclosures of the landscape of fear which is also a sacred landscape (in accordance with the original semantic ambivalence of the Latin word “sacer” as both “sacred” and “damned”).

To the extent that the trope of native fear refers to Crater Lake as a place of spiritual renewal, its cultural meaning did not differ considerably from the one it held for whites whose admiration for the place, due to their lack of knowledge, was unmixed with any affect of terror. In surveying the media coverage of Crater Lake around 1900, it is conspicuous that the evocation of Indian fear happens concurrently with the emergence of stories of volcanic collapse. As early as 1896 (published in 1897), the year in which the Diller expedition confirmed the eruption and collapse theory, “Prof.” Irving E. Vining, after emphasizing that Indian guides will not go near the lake for fear, contributes the following romantic description to the *Oregon Daily Statesman* (29 August 1896):

“In ages past there arose on the present site of Crater Lake a mighty monarch of the mountains. Lifting his hoary head far into cloudland, he looked [sic!] down upon the snowy mantels of Hood and Shasta. A sentinel of the Westland, he cooled his brow in the air above Everest, the king of the East.

Perhaps no human eye measured his altitude, no voice bespoke his grandeur – a silent monarch, he ruled o’er the silent realm. Then came the mighty battle of nature’s forces. The bosom of the monarch heaved and trembled with the earthquake’s shock; streams of liquid fire seared his spotless brow. Great seas of lava were hurled upon his kingdom below. The elements seemed bent upon his destruction. There is a mighty quiver, his foundations give way – down, down, down plunges the

17 The show of fear may of course also have been a precaution taken by Indigenous informants to dissuade colonials from trespassing on that sacred area.

18 “In a sense, every human construction – whether mental or material – is a component in a landscape of fear because it exists to contain chaos. Thus children’s fairy tales as well as adults’ legends, cosmological myths, and indeed philosophical systems are shelters built by the mind in which humans can rest, at least temporarily, from the siege of inchoate experience and of doubt” (Tuan 6). Quite a few landscapes of fear could be added to Tuan’s list – among them all kinds of man-made “sacrifice areas” like pit mines, nuclear power plants, and poisonous garbage dumps. I owe the reference to Tuan’s book to Winthrop.

mountain monarch into the very bowels of the earth. Above him yawns a black, jagged, and smoky chasm – a veritable hell on earth. With his fall the elements become silent, the cliffs cooled, the pitying water gathered to lathe his scorched remains, filling the cavern to within two thousand feet of the top – twenty-three feet higher than the summit of Mt. Washington.

Thus was formed the beautiful, sublime, and awe-inspiring Crater Lake, one of the earth's greatest marvels. The ingenuity of nature never conceived a shrine of more impressive sublimity." ("A Mighty Wound in the Brow of the Cascades" 5)

As a professor of rhetoric and literature, as well as President of the Oregon State Chamber of Commerce, it seems Vining had advance access to the knowledge produced by the Diller expedition even before the official report was published. As early as August 21, 1896, the former mountain was ceremoniously christened "Mount Mazama" at Crater Lake by members of the climbing organization called The Mazamas.¹⁹ As Stanton Lapham reflects in his book *The Enchanted Lake* (1931):

There was enacted on that occasion one of the most unique ceremonies relative to geological fact and fancy ever witnessed in the naming and christening of a great ice-clasped, fiery volcano, once among the mightiest, consumed and fallen within the gulf containing Crater Lake. To dedicate a mountain whose great upper cliffs and peaks reached the heights of perpetual snow, upon its truncated slopes above the remaining awe-inspiring caldera, 4000 feet deep was as strange a scene as imagination might conjure. (120)

What is most interesting about this act of naming is that its object was no longer existent and had ceased to exist for about 7,700 years. The ceremony was a ritualistic evocation of an absent mountain top. It illustrates the need of the young western states to invent their own historical mythology which, in the seeming absence of human history (or in the presence of a human history from which the settlers could draw no identitarian capital) resorted to the language of superlative (comparing Mazama, the "sentinel of the Westland," with "Everest, the king of the East") and of the deep geological past of the earth on which they made their homes. Together Vining's text and the Mazama ritual suggest that geologically, if

19 "Mazama" is the name that was given to the former mountain by the mountaineering organization called the Mazamas (established 1894). Diller mentions the ceremony in his report for the Smithsonian, with due emphasis on the fact that the named object has disappeared (373). The word presents a case of semantic and geographical sliding – a process we will encounter again in this chapter. It is derived from the Nahua word "mazatl" for deer but was then applied to the local mountain goat found in the Rockies of the Pacific Northwest – a completely different animal (Wikipedia entry "Mazamas"). As in so many other cases of colonial naming processes, the climbers preferred transporting to their nonexistent mountain a Nahua word, misapplied to an Oregon goat, instead of trying to find out about the existing name for the place – Gi'was.

not politically, Oregon could compete with, if not outweigh, the achievements of other lands. With the slight complication that the “silent monarch,” like Jefferson’s mammoth, had disappeared millennia ago: another instance, we might say, of American belatedness reminiscent of John Lloyd Stephens’s unlucky ascent of the volcano in Mexico (see chapter 2).

The speed with which knowledge about the previous existence of the volcano was transmitted as well as the strange naming ceremony indicate the high value attached to this scientific discovery. But the geological cataclysm was also used to express resistance to colonial encroachments. *The Oregon Journal* of 24 March 1904 integrates the collapse of Mazama into a longer account of an old Modoc relating, to a group of white settlers, the story of a white woman who had disappeared during hostile activities in the 1850s and whose skeleton was discovered by a white scouting party in the Lava Fields during the Modoc war in 1872/73. The woman, as the old Indian reveals, had been taken captive by a brave but then killed by him when his other wives resented her presence. The narrator combines this story with a statement of rights, made in clear defiance of the situation of defeat caused by the recently lost war, as a result of which the rebellious Modoc leaders had been killed and their companions deported to the Indian Territory. Having chosen to remain in his ancestral land and to move to the Klamath reservation, the narrator tells his white listeners that the Indians

had inherited the land from their ancestors, and that it had descended from one generation to another for ages before the great Crater mountain whose snowy summit once pierced the clouds dissolved in flame and smoke and was blown away and left a deep, dangerous lake inhabited by a monster serpent, aye, long before the white man was, the Modocs possessed this goodly land, and it was theirs by every right of inheritance and prior occupancy. (“The Sad Fate”)

This use of the eruption story as support for a legally precise formulation of territorial rights is pitted against the well-known colonial mythology of female captivity which dominates the text and which has from its beginnings been used as a legitimizing strategy for territorial theft (see Kolodny, *Lay of the Land*). Whether the old Modoc himself inserted that volcanic story or whether the journalist did so, taking his poetic liberties: the article testifies to an understanding of the political significance of such ancient knowledge in the Western cultural contact zone. Whether or not these words were really spoken by the aged Modoc, the example shows the protean flexibility with which the collapse story entered into different narrative contexts – from narratives of natural grandeur and narratives of native fear all the way into this narrative of gendered colonial conflict and native defiance. With the Modoc conquered and deported, the Mazama story began to congeal into a romantic tale of a “race” facing extinction for its uncivilized deeds.

The Mount Mazama collapse story as handed down by William Colvig and Ella Clark still enjoys great popularity and has been frequently reprinted and

amended, both by the National Park Service and the Crater Lake Institute with their elaborate historical websites, and more recently also by the Klamath and Modoc tribes themselves. Some scholars express mild surprise at the precision of the geological details – the “red-hot rocks” being “hurled through the skies,” the “burning ashes” falling “like rain.” Perhaps most impressively, the pyroclastic flows are described as “an ocean of flame” that “devoured the forests on the mountains and in the valleys” (Clark, *Indian Legends* 54-5). The great ekphrastic precision, so untypical of ancient mythical texts, raises the question of whether the geological information was added to the story after Diller’s expedition.²⁰ It all depends on the precise date of Colvig’s report, later printed by Ella Clark.

The manuscript by William Colvig, which Clark used for her book, is still extant. It is in a box in the private possession of the Colvig family, now kept by Tim Colvig, a lawyer in Oakland, California.²¹ Surprisingly, the text is dated to 1921, not 1892, as Ella Clark had claimed. In that text, Judge Colvig relates how he had lost his Civil War diary in which he had recorded his conversation with Lalek in a boat accident in the Little Kanawha River near Burning Springs, OR. However, Tim Colvig confirms information we have from other sources that William Colvig kept telling the Crater Lake story publically and privately, to his children. The story had become part of his personal repertoire, even before 1921.

Unlike Clark’s print version, the MS contains quite a few Chinook expressions, which may function to authenticate the text. The similarities are numerous enough to allow us to assume that this is the MS that Clark consulted – if she had access to it.²² Her note on her manuscript materials certainly creates this impression (Clark, *Indian Legends* 218).²³

However, there is some confusion about the geological detail in the two versions. They appear in the scene when the Klamath medicine men, in order to save their people from the fire and rocks being hurled through the air as a result of the fight between the two chiefs, walk to the home of the Chief of the Below World in order to sacrifice themselves. While the Colvig MS here speaks of tumbling mountains in the plural, the text by Clark speaks of a single mountain. After the medicine men enter the fiery pit of the house of the Chief of the Below World,

20 The fact that the world generally seems to accept the Colvig-Clark account as a genuine historical memory shows how little it knows about the language of myth.

21 I am deeply grateful to Tim Colvig for opening the box for me, and for a wonderful conversation about his ancestor, stories, and politics. Also for the wonderful lunch at Lake Merritt.

22 The relevant passage relating to the battle between the two “chiefs” reads: “Then commenced a conflict between these gods in which all the gods of earth and sky took part. The mountains crumbled beneath the tread of the giants who from their summits hurled the *Curse of Fire* over all the land. Fire spewed from the mouth of Kequila Tyee, and *like an ocean of flame devoured the forests and swept on till it reached the homes of the people*. Red hot rocks, as large as the hills, went hurling athwart the midnight skies. Burning ashes fell like rain. The people rushed into the waters of the lake in order to escape the fiery curse” (Colvig, MS “The Legend of Crater Lake”; emphases added).

23 She writes that the MS and another one “are among the private papers of Judge Colvig and are used by permission of his daughter, Mrs. William Warner” (218).

“[t]he mountains were riven and the earth trembled upon its foundations. The God of Punishment was driven into his house below, the mountains fell upon him” (Colvig, “The Legend of Crater Lake”). In Clark we read: “This time the Chief of the Below World was driven into his home, and the top of the mountain fell upon him. When the morning sun rose, the high mountain was gone” (Clark, *Indian Legends* 55). Indeed the Colvig MS, although written in the knowledge of what had happened at Crater Lake, locates the Chief of the Below World both at Lao Rock, an elevation at Crater Lake that is part of the present layout, but also on top of a snow-capped mountain standing in that place. His home is the crater itself which, at the time of the narrated events, was still a cauldron of fire. Now of course Crater Lake is located at such an altitude that the rocks surrounding the caldera are at times clad in snow. In any case, Clark cleaned up some of the ambivalences of the Colvig text, but she also brought it into closer alignment with the account of the geologists.

Another possibility is that she based her text not directly on Colvig’s MS but on the account of Stanton Lapham in his book *The Enchanted Lake* which had been in print since 1931 (the “Crater Lake Legend” is on pages 126-32). Lapham, who gives a whole collection of different stories without trying to clarify their relationship or sort out the different identities of the mythical personnel, narrates the collapse of Lao’s mountain at two instances, both times as a consequence of the medicine men’s self-sacrifice (126, 132). Lapham makes very vague references to his sources but names a Colvig MS²⁴ and the published texts by Steel and Applegate, “together with information obtained by the author in the summer of 1930” (138) – a formulation that produces more questions than it offers answers. From whom did Lapham obtain this information? From Klamath elders? From other amateur story collectors like himself?

Taken together, these popular Westernized sources²⁵ lack serious attempts to do comparative investigations of the relevant mythological material. In modern terms, these texts, together with the newspaper versions mentioned earlier, did a good copy-and-paste job but lack scientific exactitude. They are examples of popular intercultural myth-making and as such entered the cultural discourse about Crater Lake in the form of various media, including most recently, the Internet. The modern Klamath readily, and very creatively, participate in this modern myth-making, re-inscribing their ancient mythical narratives of the battle between Llaol and Skel with the geological information adopted from Western scientific discourse (Alatorre). This is what myth does. In its many different forms, myth exists in order to explain phenomena that are otherwise inexplicable in a way that

24 Linguistic evidence supports the assumption that Lapham did have access to Colvig’s texts, probably the 1921 version. There are conspicuous similarities in naming (“Talima” as another name for Kmu’kamsh, “Tyee” spirits, etc.) (Lapham 126-32).

25 The Christian elements are somewhat toned down in the published versions but Colvig’s MS contains strong elements of a sin and punishment discourse which is not logically explicable in the story. At the same time he suspects his informant, ancient Lalek, of having let his story be intruded by the story of Genesis.

reconciles conflicting social interests, quenches social fears, and promotes social cohesion.

The dates are of course crucial for ascertaining the antiquity of the Indigenous geomyth.²⁶ We only have Colvig's assertion of its existence prior to 1897, when the geological theory of the volcanic origin of Crater Lake became widely known through Diller's text. There is only one piece corroborating the collapse story which predates the geological reconstruction, and that piece has remained invisible until recently. In 1870, one year after the publication of his article "Lake Majesty" (*Oregon Sentinel*, quoted above), the soldier Franklin B. Sprague did indeed mention the Klamath "tradition" about a volcanic eruption in a little known piece written for the *Delaware Gazette* ("A Great Natural Curiosity"). "The Klamath Indians who reside near Fort Klamath," Sprague writes, "have a tradition that a long time ago a great monster caused the mountain to belch up fire, and that he ate up great numbers of their people, and they assert that he still inhabits the mountain, and not one of them can be persuaded to go near the lake, fearing they will be destroyed." The article's title refers to the "sunken lake," not the eruption. This piece is significant as it confirms transmission of Klamath eruption-related knowledge to a colonial agent even before Albert Gatschet and Jeremiah Curtin collected their stories in the 1870s (see below). It's a classic case of invisibilized knowledge. Such a clear reference to an Indigenous eruption story before Diller's reconstruction of the volcanic event is exceptional. But Sprague is silent on this in the Oregon context while mentioning it, en passant, one year later in faraway Delaware.²⁷ With this one ignored exception, the story tradition before 1897 focuses on the lake monster, lacking a mountain collapse story.

This, of course, is no proof that Colvig invented the whole tale. Both Colvig himself and the newspapers corpus suggest that Klamath elders did possess knowledge of a collapsing mountain. The question remains how that information was transmitted – whether the elders had been informed about the geological theory by their interviewers, or whether the interviewers, in their romantic mood, put these stories into the mouths of the elders. We will never know. It appears conspicuous that Ella Clark, who was most certainly responsible for the date shift, must have considered the extraordinariness of the story's age when she printed it in her collection of Indian legends of the Pacific Northwest. Her publication allowed the story to enter the wide circulation that it enjoys today, indeed it turned it into a classic of Indigenous geomythology (to use Dorothy Vitaliano's term).

Today, the practice of shared knowledge is continued by the historians of the National Park Service and the Crater Lake Institute in charge of websites and

26 Dorothy Vitaliano distinguishes between two kinds of geomyth: first, "myths and legends" that register geological events which were actually witnessed by humans, and, second, "etiological" myths that explain geological features and "striking landforms" (*Legends of the Earth*, 1; see also her essay "Geomythology").

27 I am grateful to Ben Truwe for having discovered this "smoking gun" just before this book went into press.

print publications. The Indigenous aspect of the history of Crater Lake is widely documented, as is the conviction that the present-day Indigenous inhabitants' ancestors were witnesses of the eruption of Mount Mazama. The Klamath themselves contribute to the contemporary narrativization of Crater Lake by adding knowledge gained from the scientific reconstruction of their country's past, not to forget some gothic flavor, to their own traditions – whether orally transmitted or printed or both. This is how the modern Klamath storyteller Barbara Alatorre rendered the story in 2002 and how it appears on the website of the Crater Lake Institute:

One day, Great Spirit Beings pushed ice through a hole in the sky to build a great mountain, Moyaina (Mount Mazama). Then the spirits climbed down to Earth and created the Klamath terrain by digging tunnel-like caverns beneath the earth and pushing up the Cascade Range. Hundreds of rivers, marshes and lakes emerged from underground, and trees, meadows and plants sprang up everywhere.

All of the Spirits returned to the Nolis-Gaeni, the afterworld, except the Spirit chief Gmo'Kamc, who made a new home inside Mlaik-si (Mount Shasta). Gmo'Kamc created human beings to live on the lake shores around him: the Klamath Lake People, the Modoc Lake People (Modoc Lake is now called Tule Lake), and Yahooskin People on the water now known as Goose Lake.

Chief of the Below World, Monadalkni, envied Gmo'Kamc's beautiful Indian domain and return[ed] many times to watch the Ma'Klaks [i.e. the Modoc]. One day he spied an extraordinary maiden surrounded by brave warriors who wanted to marry her. Loha was the daughter of the Klamath chief, and she refused to marry anyone. Still, Monadalkni dispatched Skooks, his trusted emissary, to propose on his behalf.

On the night of the Ma'Klaks coming-out ceremony, Skooks suddenly appeared, hooded in dark wolf skin. Interrupting a ceremonial dance, he stepped before Loha and her family bearing lavish gifts: beaver pelts, valuable feathers of the red woodpecker, horses and white deerskins.

"My Chief sends these offerings for your hand in everlasting marriage," he said. "Eternal life will be yours as you become one and live in a big mountain abode forever."

As Skooks' hideous crimson red eyes gaped at the maiden, the Ma'Klaks of the village watched her other suitors disappear in a flash of orange light. Loha raced to her father's tule lodge crying out, "No, I don't want to live in a mountain!" The Klamath chief quickly called elders and medicine men to council in his lodge. They decided that Loha must be whisked away to their Modoc brothers to the south.

Skooks returned the next night demanding Loha's whereabouts, but no one in the tribe would speak. When Monadalkni learned of the maiden's disappearance, he shook with violent anger and threatened fiery

vengeance on Loha's people. Monadalkni began running back and forth in the passageways beneath Moy-yaina [sic!], throwing lightning bolts and causing the mountain to explode with such force that molten lava rained like hot pitch upon the People of the Lakes. Giant fireballs shot out of the mountain as it erupted in deafening booms – five times in succession! Women and children took refuge in Klamath Lake, crying and calling out for the Great Spirit to save them.

Monadalkni ran to the top of the mountain and faced Gmo'Kamc. They fought enraged, silhouetted against the red glow illuminating the rumbling Cascades. The good chief finally forced the Chief of the Below World back underground and collapsed the mountaintop onto the entrance of the underworld. A huge crater remained where the peak used to be.

Medicine men sang their sacred songs for rain to put out the fires. The rains came, filling the crater with water and creating the lake called Gii-was. Cradled in the bosom of Tum-sum-ne (Klamath/Modoc for “the big mountain with top cut off”), Gii-was became a holy place the Ma'Klaks kept secret for more than 7,000 years, until one day in 1852 when a white man accidentally discovered it.

In 1902, Gii-was became Crater Lake National Park. (Alatorre)

Alatorre's version includes a few of the elements known from the Colvig-Clark version, but it performs a much greater cultural work, integrating into her narrative scientific information about the geological formation of the landscape by the creator figure Gmo'Kamc (Kmu'kamsh).²⁸ The mountain-top battle here takes place between two figures – Gmo'Kamc and his antagonist Monadalkni (“Llao” in the other versions) – but involves only one mountain, not two as in the Colvig-Clark version. And this version readily includes post-conquest information, such as the addition of the Yahooskin to the tribal alliance of the Klamath and Modoc, which is the result of the colonial reordering of the tribes in that area, and of course the somewhat ironical reference to the “accidental discovery” of Gi'was in 1852, after having been commemorated for 6,000 years in Indigenous stories. “Gii-was” is the Indigenous name of Crater Lake already mentioned in 1931 by Lapham as “Gay-was ... a High Place and sacred to the tribe” (134; 126). The figure “Skooks” may have an origin in Klamath mythology but may also have been borrowed from modern popular gothic lore. Alatorre gives a particularly striking description of the eruptive event, illustrated by Monadalkni's running back and forth in the “passageways” within the mountain. Indeed one rock chasm

28 The integration of modern elements, including scientific knowledge, into ancient oral traditions has been observed by Hamacher and Goldsmith as well (306); it's a sign of the adaptability and vibrancy of oral record keeping. Obviously, this quality of storytelling (from oral to digital) does not make it easier to reconstruct which geological-historical knowledge existed before the scientific accounts became known. Hamacher and Goldsmith have no access to written documentation of such knowledge; in our case, such knowledge is available. If searched for in the right place. See below.

at the Crater Lake site is called “Llao’s Hallway.” The Colvig-Clark version has no equivalent for Alatorre’s “giant fireballs” shooting “out of the mountain as it erupted in deafening booms – five times in succession.” Lapham’s strongly westernized version mentions that the battle lasted for “seven days” (*Enchanted Lake*, 130). The strongest and most memorable image present in all three major versions introduced so far (Colvig-Clark’s, Lapham’s, and Alatorre’s) is that of the mythical figures fighting on top of the mountain, causing its collapse.

A Litany of Geomyths

There was never any doubt that Indigenous stories about Crater Lake were genuinely Indigenous, however modulated by intercultural misunderstandings and romantic aestheticization. These stories are not colonial inventions such as the myth of the “Lover’s leap” analyzed by Jared Farmer with regard to Mt. Timpanogos in Utah – a colonial story about an Indian “princess” jumping to her death for being rejected by her lover.²⁹ In 1953, the same year in which her story collection was published, Ella Clark published the first of two articles for the *Spokesman Review* of Portland: “Colorful Indian Legends are More Than Mere Fancy,” to be followed by “According to Tribal Legends, Coyote, Great Indian Spirit, Piled Up Rockies and by this Deed Carved Regions Rivers” in 1954. As the titles reveal, the main purpose of these essays was to raise awareness for the richness and in particular the historicity and scientificity of the traditions referring to geological landmarks in the Pacific Northwest.³⁰ Beginning with a comparison between the Crater Lake stories published in her book (especially the collapse story) and the reconstruction of the eruption of Mount Mazama by geologist Howel Williams in his booklet *Crater Lake. The Story of Its Origin* (1941), Clark, adopting a term from the folklorist Hartley B. Alexander, promotes the theory that these stories were indeed “science in infancy” (“Colorful Indian Legends”). Adopting Alexander’s definition, she writes: “‘Myths that detail causes are science in infancy, and they are perhaps the only stories that may properly be called myths Stories which satisfy curiosity about causes are true myths’” (“Colorful Indian Legends”; see Alexander, *Native American Mythology* xiv). Her con-

29 It would be surprising, however, if Mt. Timpanogos had never had any cultural significance for Indigenous inhabitants, as Farmer suspects, not having found any stories among the Ute (143). As in many other cases, though, such stories may have disappeared under the pressure of settlement, forced migration, and colonial reeducation. See Christie, ed., *Landscapes of Origin*.

30 Lynn Hunt defines historicity as “the definition of what constitutes the historical” (*Measuring Time* 124). Equivalently, “scientificity” would refer to the criteria for defining what is scientific.

cordance between the story as rendered by Colvig and Williams' quite colorful recreation of the event was later adopted by other writers.³¹

In promoting the theory of "science in infancy," Clark compares the Mazama case with the case of the "Bridge of the Gods" – a former natural dam across the Columbia River which was caused by a major geological revolution, probably including an earthquake and volcanic activity. There are Indigenous stories about such an event which destroyed the "bridge" (rather a land connection consisting of massive rocks in the Columbia River). The geological event that caused the destruction of the "Bridge of the Gods" is much more recent than the Mazama eruption, being dated to anywhere between 1450 and 1760 and possibly related to the great Cascadian earthquake of 1799 (see Krause, "Tanmahawis"). Based on the oral testimony, Clark assumes the mid-eighteenth century as the time of the destruction of the rock bridge – in which case this knowledge would fall into the category of oral history rather than oral tradition.³² An indicator of the former category is the fact that one of Clark's interlocutors said that when he was a small boy, "my grandfather, then an old man, remembered when it had happened" ("Colorful Indian Legends" 9). The latter category (oral tradition) is characterized by the related information (e.g., a geological event) already being culturally packaged – personified and rendered as a drama between mythical giant beings. We can see how difficult it is to keep these two categories separate in some cases.

In the second essay, "According to Tribal Legends," Clark continues her correlations between Indigenous stories and modern scientific reconstructions of the geological past of North America. She insists that there are indicators that the tribal stories remember geological revolutions causing the redirection of the Upper Yellowstone River in the Early Pleistocene as well as the flood-causing spills of the Pleistocene Lake Missoula. "Indian statements about these ancient lakes," she asserts, "are too old (one appears in a story published in 1863, said to have been related in 1853), too frequent, and too well integrated in the myths to be recent insertions" (10). Such source criticism as to age, frequency, and mythological coherence is indeed required – and very difficult to conduct under the circumstances of colonial dispossession, reeducation, and deportation.³³ Though not published in a scientific context and not formally scientific, Clark's essays show a substantial knowledge of both archives she seeks to bring into dialogue. While the geological knowledge has increased immensely since the 1950s, research of

31 Doug Deur, for example, gives a concordance, exchanging Williams with the more recent description of Stephen Harris which I used above (Deur, *Footprints* 58).

32 Experts of oral tradition distinguish between old mythical structures and more recent concerns separating oral tradition (reaching into the distant past) from oral history (reaching back up to about seven generations). They frequently identify a "floating gap" between the two (Bruce Granville Miller, *Oral History* 98-99).

33 Unfortunately, some of the original sources Clark names are virtually out of print and only accessible through later texts quoting them. One such text is G.P. Kuykendall's "extensive collection" of stories in *A Graphic Account of the Religions or Mythology of the Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, used by Elwood Evans in his *History of the Pacific Northwest* (1889) but unavailable itself.

the historicity of the Indigenous traditions she refers to is sadly lacking. Being familiar with the tribal people, many of whom she interviewed and some of who came to her on their own accord to have their stories recorded, Clark knows that these tribes took great effort in handing their knowledge down to the future generations. They had specially trained experts who ensured that their knowledge would be passed on to younger assistants (Clark's word is "understudy") who were selected on the basis of having a keen interest and a good memory ("According to Tribal Legends" 11). She makes a strong case for the geological reasoning informing the stories (their scientificity), comparing them to the way geological knowledge was formed in the Old World before the emergence of scientific method:

[T]he origin of these phenomena, which are of great interest to geologists, are explained by myths once told by Indians in the region. Their explanations may seem absurd in this scientific age, for again Coyote was the geologic wonder-worker. But we might remember that in spite of books and universities and laboratories, it has not been long since peoples of European culture thought that the world was flat, that tomatoes were poisonous, that the speed of falling bodies was determined by their weight and that the germ theory of disease was ridiculous or heretical The myths referred to here reveal that some Indians had two traits necessary in modern science: keen observation and the inquiring mind. From the mythmaking past have come the Indians' history of cataclysmic changes and their answers to the questions how? and why? about phenomena they observed. The imagination of some story tellers, in addition to entertaining the listening group, helped to satisfy curiosity about causes and to explain the majestic and mysterious world in which the Northwest Indians lived. ("According to Tribal Legends" 11)

While the Lake Missoula stories are today dateable due to reconstructions of the Pleistocene events when the gigantic lake spilled its contents and significantly changed the landscape of the Pacific Northwest, the stories certainly do not refer to one single event but to a series of events, according to the slowness of the emptying of the lake, which was intermittently melting and freezing up again. This was a process of many years. Things are different in the case of Mount Mazama, as geologists only record one single event leading to the caving in of the mountain. While the possibility of an oral tradition reaching back several hundred years (as in the case of the Bridge of the Gods) or condensing a series of catastrophic events from the more distant past (as in the case of Lake Missoula) is generally accepted, such a graphically specific memory as the one recorded by Colvig/Lapham/Clark, which refers to a specific event 7,700 years ago, is another matter altogether.

Clark is of course aware of the problem. She wonders whether Colvig may have taken his liberties with the story told him by Chief Lalek and whether he

may have sneaked in information from the geological reports. It is all a matter of chronology:

The Crater Lake area had been surveyed before 1892, but the report published in the Portland Oregonian in 1886 contains only an indirect reference to its origin. Not until 1897 does there seem to have been published a statement of the theory that the crater had been formed by engulfment of the top of an old volcano after copious eruptions of lava down the sides of the mountain. *The scientific investigations may have prompted Colvig to record the myth again, but they seem not to have affected what he wrote.* (“Colorful Indian Legends” 9; emphasis added)³⁴

The last sentence contains a significant paradox: it is to be assumed that a report that “prompts” Colvig to repeat the story also “affected what he wrote.” Due to the general non-reception of Sprague’s 1870 article in which he mentions a Klamath volcanic “tradition,” we have to leave the question open whether Lalek told Colvig of a collapsing mountain in 1865 (the existence of Sprague’s article supports this possibility) or whether Colvig added that part only later, in light of the geological investigations. What also has to remain unresolved is whether there ever existed an 1892 version of the Colvig text or whether Clark backdated the 1921 MS that is in the box today. She would have had a motivation for doing so, as her journalistic initiative in favor of the capacities of oral traditions make evident. She accordingly wonders: “Could any oral tradition, even one describing such a terrifying experience as the eruptions of volcanoes, be transmitted for nearly 6500 years?” (“Colorful Indian Legends” 9). Clark’s correspondence of the years 1950 and 1951 with other experts on Klamath mythology shows that she was very preoccupied with the question of the story’s authenticity.³⁵

Clark’s position in her *Spokesman Review* essays of 1953/54 is unexpectedly modern for her time. The dominant opinion about Native American knowledge was in the 1950s still ruled by the discourse of primitivist savagism. The idea that Indigenous storytelling might form “science in infancy” – that it may be equivalent to scientific knowledge, if in a different epistemic register – is much more prominent at our own time. It may connect with the recent work on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) or Nimachia Howe’s linguistically informed reading of the Blackfoot Naapi stories.³⁶ With reference to the geographical area discussed here, Julie Cruikshank, Ruth Ludwin, and Coll Thrush have provided elaborate investigations of the mnemonic qualities of Indigenous stories. The sociologist Julie Cruikshank, for example, has convincingly shown how the spatial

34 “1886” refers to the U.S. Geological Survey party led by Captain Clarence Dutton in 1886.

35 The correspondence also shows that in 1951 Clark had not yet had access to the Colvig MS. She must have found it shortly before her book went into print.

36 In her book *Retelling Trickster in Naapi Language* Howe argues that most trickster figures discussed today in the context of Native American Literature are products of colonial/transcultural invention. The Naapi figure, as her reading of oral Blackfoot traditions show, cannot be fitted into a binary model (112).

memories of the Indigenous inhabitants of the Yukon Territory cohere with scientific reconstructions of glacier movements, landslides and the like. In her celebrated book on topological stories from the Yukon, *Do Glaciers Listen?* (2005), Cruikshank treats all reports about geological events, whether written down or transmitted orally, whether cultural or scientific, as collective memory narratives. Similarly, Ruth Ludwin and Coll Thrush triangulate the science of geology and Indigenous oral traditions, rejecting the notion that science and stories form two separate and mutually exclusive archives but rather viewing them as two different ways of coming to terms with a very mobile landscape:

As the peoples of Cascadia struggled over millennia to come to terms with the geological realities of their homelands, they developed interpretations of seismic events that simultaneously reflected and shaped their lived experiences of place. Earthquakes and tsunamis were central components or relations between human beings and the other, nonhuman beings who inhabited the coastal regions [E]arthquakes and tsunamis were understood to be moral events reflective of relationships between and among human people and the other residents of Cascadia. ("Finding Fault" 6)

Following Ludwin and Thrush we can contend that all stories, whether scientific or not, are hybrid products of specific cultural constellations. They are hybrid, first, in themselves (their semantic reference is always to the real world *and* to a community's symbolic repertoire), and second, they are hybridized by the colonial epistemic encounter, being the result of cross-cultural exchange and transculturation. Oral traditions, then, require to be seriously investigated as part of a valuable cultural archive in their own right, not as alternatives or supplements to scientific accounts but as different narrativizations of an ever-changing earth. Though not technically equivalent to scientific reports because they are subject to different generic and mimetic rules and mnemonic processes, orally transmitted Indigenous traditions offer an alternative geo-epistemological access to the world of the past and the present.

While place can be an archive for remembering stories (as William Turkel writes), stories can also contain information about topological events of the (distant) past. Colonial science, however, more often than not discredited oral traditions as inaccurate evidence because they did not adhere to rationalistic logic and because their textual status was 'adulterated'. The fact that the analysis of traditional stories is in the domain of various disciplines (folklore studies, anthropology, literature, history) did not help to raise their status. Consequently, this very precious corpus remains today seriously understudied. In addition, non-Indigenous scholars (like myself) face the ethical problem of offering readings of Indigenous stories from outside the social groups involved, which may be seen as yet another act of colonial appropriation, regardless of the positive use of bringing these texts into circulation in an academic context.

Next to these epistemic reasons for neglecting the study of oral traditions, a colonial settler society may have additional ideological reasons for dismissing oral traditions which testify to alternative, and more ancient, forms of ownership of the land. As historian Edward Chamberlin titled his 2003 book, *If this is Your Land Where are Your Stories?*, stories express an affective and epistemic relationship to the land that is equivalent to imaginatively *owning* that land. He takes this sentence from a Gitskan (Tsimshian) elder of northwestern British Columbia who used this question in response to a government official offering to buy the tribe's land (1). The anecdote suggests that the state of 'owning' a place involves more than a commercial transaction; that it crucially depends on collective and deep historical knowledge of that place. Within a decolonial and historical-materialist research paradigm, this additional ideological reason urges a serious confrontation with these problems and asks that an attempt at filling the epistemic and archival gap be made.

Besides Sprague's short note of a Klamath eruption story (in 1870), my search for corroboration of Colvig's Mazama collapse story remained fruitless, except for another version of it (from 1912, also in the box) where Colvig himself claims ownership of the story ("Klamath Indian Legend"). The oral traditions of the tribes of the Pacific Basin and Northwest Coast are generally rich in catastrophic material due to the geological activity of that area, but no other Crater Lake story materialized. It was only when I broadened my perspective and searched for Klamath and Modoc stories more generally, and then read them over and over again, that my search was rewarded. I am now convinced that the corroborating evidence existed all along, in two meticulously collected books on Klamath and Modoc stories by the Euroamerican scholars Albert Gatschet and Jeremiah Curtin – books that were available to Ella Clark (she mentions Curtin's book in her correspondence) and that were widely in print and shelved in American and European libraries. Like Poe's purloined letter, these texts were not hidden at all physically but only hidden from our too narrow epistemic framework which makes it difficult for western-trained scholars to read mythological texts of non-Western origin.

Vine Deloria dreamed of the day when more information would become available on the narrative coverage of the Crater Lake cataclysm, but actually more information *has* been available for more than a hundred years. It simply has not been used properly, not even by Ella Clark, who includes the sources in her bibliography. The oral archive, as all oral archives, is culturally deep, complex, polyvocal, and at times, for an inexperienced reader, culturally unintelligible. It does have things to say about the history of Gi'was.

Cataclysmic Storytelling

As the oral historian Jan Vansina suggests, even deep-historical oral traditions can serve as historical evidence. For a long time discounted as mere myths and “fabulous tales,” certain Native American oral traditions, especially those relating to demographic and geological events, contain information that may confirm, but also contest, the epistemological claims of written colonial records. Both archives pose methodological challenges that have to be tackled by employing refined strategies of critical analysis. Oral sources can “testify despite themselves” in containing information that may be marginal to the story told but crucially relevant in other contexts. According to Vansina, this even makes the information revealed more reliable (27). He establishes certain criteria which an oral tradition has to fulfil in order to count as historical evidence, such as a temporal reference to the event related, as well as a link between observation and record (29, 30). Historians have to be aware of the length of time and number of removes that separate the tradition from the present (29). In dealing with recorded traditions (traditions not directly related to the historian) it is of utmost importance to investigate who the author of the recorded version was: “If he was a professional, did his performance belong to a genre reserved to professionals? Was he entitled to perform or not? Was he a ‘person of memory’ or not? That is, was he or she interested in the past history of that community to the point of having learned many traditions and having produced his or her own vision of the past?” (55). All of these facts will “influence the contents of the message performed” (55). Furthermore, the performativity of the recording has to be considered: was the recording “incidental” or is it the result of systematic research (57)?³⁷ Perhaps most difficult to assess in investigating oral tradition is the dimension of time because it is ephemeral and culture specific (173). Vansina introduces the concept of “ecological time” to refer to the relatedness of oral memories to seasonal cycles (174). Elsewhere he mentions the significance of landscape as a mnemonic prompter, a “powerful mnemonic device” (45). Finally, he holds that “[e]xtraordinary events, usually calamities which disrupted life,” were a mode of reckoning time: “One would say: before the drought, volcanic eruption, earthquake, epidemic, forest fire, comet, eclipse, or after” (175).³⁸ As to the length of time a historical event can be preserved in oral memory, Vansina is rather reluctant. He usually assumes that an event can be remembered for a few generations (175), but he knows of cases, for example in Polynesia, where a memory, though completely unaided by any form of writing, reached back sixty generations (176). Thus, Vansina and other experts of oral tradition do not exclude the possibility that a cataclysmic event can remain within the collective memory for millennia.

But one would not expect an account with such graphic detail. As anthropologist Rick Budhwa writes when comparing cataclysmic events and story tradi-

37 Ruth Finnegan adds the criterium of genre which Vansina somewhat neglects (*Oral Tradition* 142-44).

38 Calamities, according to Vansina, can be a device for temporal ordering (179).

tions in the Pacific Northwest, such events never existed in and by themselves but came to be integrated into existing stories involving supernatural beings, moral lessons and the like. Over time, those sections caused by the geological event may cease to signify as a concrete memory and become part of a seemingly streamlined tale whose composite character was no longer visible. This, of course, is a main function of all literature; it is called *emplotment*. “Eventually, over successive generations,” Budhwa writes, “the witnessed event may become fully integrated with the moral philosophy, giving the appearance that it only is part of the metaphoric tale, with no basis in scientific fact” (104). At other times, certain significant events may leave their traces in the traditions of various tribal groups, who exchanged their stories during long winter days when meeting in the winter camps. Over time, the contents of the stories adapted to new needs, elements might wander between stories or become condensed within one long story. Names and animal avatars might change while the protagonists’ actions remain the same. All of these features can be observed in the Klamath-Modoc corpus.

As a modern European reader of the Klamath and Modoc stories, I can confirm geologist Ruth Ludwin’s description of her reading experience. In an email to me, Ludwin described her hermeneutic process of “decoding” Indigenous stories for evidence of geological events:

in order to envision the context of the stories I took the flat page of all my knowledge and being and slipped it through a crack into another dimension. Another way of putting it is that I went back and forth and hither and thither through many resources and multiple forms of the same stories or different stories with the same figures until light dawned. This was not easy for me as a scientist trained in European conventional traditions. [...] the precepts that filtered down to me made indigenous knowledge perhaps more difficult to recognize.³⁹

The Klamath and Modoc tribes do possess a rich oral tradition containing numerous references to geological and cataclysmic events in the Cascadian range and basin located to the south and east. Most of their stories available in print contain a significant amount of geomythical material. As Leslie Spier, one of the early ethnologists of the Klamath, notices, “there is hardly a mile of Klamath territory but has its mythical reference [...O]ne looking over the countryside finds it rich in religious connotation” (100). Paradoxically, Spier then continues by virtually ignoring the imaginative wealth of Klamath mythology: “Klamath religion is quite unsystematized. There are no deities and the spirits as such hardly figure in the tales The Klamath lack all architectural feeling in conceiving their spiritual beings” (100). Adhering to a strict descriptive structure himself in his assess-

³⁹ Email to GM, 21 March, 2017.

ment of the tribes' material culture, Spier notices a lack of formal order in a historically grown mythology.⁴⁰

One of Spier's sources is the two-volume linguistic study of Albert Samuel Gatschet who makes a similar observation about the strong sense of place among the Klamath, reading it as a sign of their sedentariness:

This people belongs to the autochthonic nations of America, called so because they have lost all remembrances of earlier habitats or of migrations. [...]he first man is said to have been created by their national deity, K'mukmatchiksh, at the base of the lofty Cascade Range, upon the prairie drained by Wood River. (*Klamath Tribes*, I: xlii)

Indeed, the Klamath creator figure Kmu'kamsh (also called Skel or the Old Marten) is the protagonist of the traditions relating to Gi'was.

Our investigation into Indigenous knowledge about the collapse of ancient Mount Mazama thus leads us to two collections containing stories from the oral traditions of the Klamath and Modoc: Albert S. Gatschet's *The Klamath Indians of Southwestern Oregon* (1890), a two-volume grammar and ethnographic study of the Klamath conducted in the 1870s for the U.S. Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region; and *Myths of the Modocs*, a story collection assembled in 1884-85 by Jeremiah Curtin, a freelancing writer and translator. Curtin's volume was published posthumously in 1912. Gatschet's text had not yet been published when Curtin recorded his stories from Klamath and Modoc elders in Oregon and Oklahoma, but Gatschet's volume had been out when Curtin's was finally published. By then, both of them had died (Curtin in 1906; Gatschet in 1907).

The books by these two members of the colonial society – Gatschet, the Swiss immigrant with the typical scientific rigor of a linguist, and Curtin, the far-traveled polyglot collector of traditional stories around the globe, contain Klamath and Modoc cultural knowledge at a stage *before* the Diller expedition caused the geological reconstruction of what happened at Crater Lake in c. 5,700 BP. In fact they contain all the ingredients of a cataclysmic event having taken place at Gi'was/Crater Lake, with the exception that they do not offer the descriptive detail of the mountain's collapse reminiscent of the style of writing in geology and similar to the one we find in Colvig and Clark.

Though available in print, stories collected before the Diller expedition are hardly in circulation anymore. In Gatschet's case, the reason for this is certainly that the stories, though they are there, are really *not* there because they are practically unreadable: the linguist meticulously reproduced the original wording of the stories told to him by Dave Hill, Minnie Froben and other Klamath interlocutors, accompanied by interlinear translations of them printed directly underneath

40 It would be an interesting experiment to apply his categories to the Old Testament and other belief "systems" – a term that already articulates an absurd expectation. A mythology, after all, is not a sonnet.

SKÉLAMTCHAM SHASHAPKÉLÉASH.
MYTHIC TALE OF OLD MARTEN.

OBTAINED IN THE KLAMATH LAKE DIALECT FROM MINNIE FROBEN.

Wéwanuish mat tû'mi méya kä'sh shaigatat yáki shkä'shkatgaltk.
 Women, they say, many were dig- ing ipo on prairie, baskets carrying on back.

Shkä'lamtch mat tchia shetzé-unaltz Tchashgáyaks. Shkä'lamtch shtûli
 Old Marten, so they lived as the older brother of Little Weasel. Old Marten sent

tâ'pia m'na Tehásgayaks í'ktchatki giug kmä' shtchû'shtchzapkam. Tchúi
 younger his Weaslet to obtain the skull- caps of the one-eyed ones. And

Tcháshgayag géna; gátpnank í'tya shash nánuk kmä' ká-i shtchû'shtch-
 Weaslet went; coming there, he took from them all skull-caps. (but) not of the one.

zapksham tchi'sh, ítpampëli Tchashgáyak, shéwana Skélamtchash kmä'.
 eyed (women) also, brought Little Weasel (and) gave to Old Marten the caps.

Skélamtch háméxe: "táta m'ish nû tpéwa ká-i shtchûshzapkam epkatki
 Old Marten said: "when you I ordered not of the one-eyed to bring?

giug? lápûk mish nû épkatki gí'ula shtchû'shtchzapkam pí'l." Wéwanuish
 of both you I to bring had told of the one-eyed only." Females

nánuk gátpa Skélamtchamkshi shkashkátalk kä'sh. Skélamtch shewaná-
 all came to Old Marten's home carrying on back ipo. Old Marten re-

pële kmä' wéwan'shash, puákampële ladshéshtat, há'mëta Tchashgáyaksh:
 turned the caps to the women, threw (them) back out of his lodge, (and) said to Weaslet:

"táta mish nû tpä'wa tûm kmä' ä'pkatki giug? lápok ámsn nî ä'pkatki!"
 "when you I ordered many caps to bring? of both you I to bring (told)!"
 (only)

Wéwanuish tchík tchúi gémpële, lápuk shtchû'shtchzatki tchí'dsha.
 The women after this returned, (but) both one-eyed ones remained.

Tchúi hûk shtchû'shtchzatki wéwanuish wewä'kala. Shû'hank-shitk
 Then the one-eyed women bore children. At the same time when

mû'mkak gí'ulxa Skélamtch nteyakaliya, m'na ū'nakag mû'ak t'shí'sht.
 the infants were born Old Marten made a little bow, for his little son, taller when he would grow.

Tchashgáyak tchi'sh nteyakali'ya m'natak únakag. Tchúi tchatchákiag
 Little Weasel also made a little bow for his own little boy. And the little boys

lé-utcha; hí'shla nté-ishtka tatáldshiak. Léwatukuk tátakshni gatpámpëli;
 went to play; they shot with their bows little arrows. From the play the boys returned;
 at the mark

Tcháshkayagalam únakag heméxe: "hût án'sh tû' shlí'kshga." Tchash-
 Little Weasel's boy remarked: "he me out there well nigh shot." Little

gáyag wû'la m'na únakag: "tám hai tchi' m'sh hû'nk láyank téwi?"
 Weasel asked his young son: "really thus at you taking aim he shot?"

Figure 15: Albert Gatschet, *The Klamath Tribes of Southern Oregon* (1890), I. Beginning of the "Mythic Tale of Old Marten."

the Klamath texts but in a font size that makes the English version very difficult to read (Fig. 15). In fact those later scholars who are making use of Gatschet's volume (among them Barker, Harris and Deur) only use Gatschet's Introduction, where he summarizes the contents of the stories, as well as his extensive (mostly linguistic) notes placed after each story. Only one scholar whose work I have consulted – Claude Lévi-Strauss – shows knowledge of the contents of the stories themselves.⁴¹

Albert Gatschet (1832-1907), born in Switzerland and trained as a linguist in Bern and Berlin, is another transatlantic figure featuring in this book, after Arthur de Morelet, Peter Wilhelm Lund, and Albert Koch. He emigrated to the United States in 1868 where he became one of the leading experts for Indigenous languages. In Europe, he had already specialized in the study of toponymy and toponomastics (in relation to Swiss place-names) – an expertise he put to good use in his study of the Klamath language. In 1877, he was hired as an ethnologist for the United States Geological Survey; his linguistic studies, grammars, and dictionaries, which include many historical and mythological sections, were published for the Smithsonian Institution by the Department of the Interior. Gatschet's Indigenous interlocutors, or consultants, include Dave Hill and Minnie Froben, both of who must have been professional storytellers.

The other editor, Jeremiah Curtin (1835-1906), was an illustrious personality himself.⁴² He had spent time with the survivors of the Modoc War in 1884, both on the Klamath reservation in Oregon and in the Indian Territory (Oklahoma) where he met Modoc men and women who had been deported after their unsuccessful struggle against the colonial power, which had ended in the Lava Beds of northern California. Curtin names two main interlocutors. One of them is Ko-a-lak'-ak-a ("Hard Working Woman"), an elderly woman whom he interviewed in Oklahoma. His main consultant on the Klamath-Modoc reservation was Old Sconchen, the older brother of John Sconchen (one of the leaders of the Modoc war). Like Ko-a-lak'-ak-a, Sconchen was quite old when Curtin interviewed him, but "[t]hough old and infirm, his mind was still clear and active. For years, in the prime of his life, he was chief of his people, and in his old age they revered him"

41 The process of invisibilizing continues in the modern print-on-demand facsimile of Gatschet's first volume (whose original contains the stories) which only reproduces the Introduction and ends with the section "Hints for the Study of the Texts." No actual texts follow. Disinterest in the traditions of another people could hardly be more evident. However, the volumes are available online from Hathitrust, and there is even a copy at Rostock university library.

42 Curtin must have been a veritable language genius, said to have had command of seventy languages (Wikipedia). He spent thirteen years in Russia and became the translator of the historical works of the Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz, including his novel *Quo Vadis* (1897). Curtin wrote many other books, including travelogues on Russia as well as editing books on Russian and Irish mythology.

(ix). M.A. Curtin,⁴³ editor of the Modoc myths collected by Jeremiah, describes Ko-a-lak'-ak-a as

a woman who was then old and feeble, but who as late as Aug. 1, 1912 [the year of publication], was still living, the oldest woman of the Klamath-Modoc tribe of Indians. At the time she told the myths she was remarkable for her intelligence and her wonderful memory. In childhood her grandfather had instructed her in the religion of her people, in other words, taught her all the myths of the Modocs, and to old age her tenacious memory retained many of them. For years Ko-a-lak'-ak-a was the most unhappy of all the exiles. (viii-ix)

This comment takes up a fair space in the very short introduction. It expresses the editor's sympathy for this woman displaced from her homeland as well as admiration of her cognitive capacity. The first sentence reveals that Curtin's widow must have inquired after Ko-a-lak'-ak-a before taking the book to the printer, while the last sentence contains a hint as to why the Modoc elder entrusted Curtin with the stories: it may have been her last attempt to rescue her tribe's knowledge for a future time in which it was not certain whether her people would live. Curtin's posthumously published *Memoirs* confirm Ko-a-lak'-ak-a's expertise: she

was a woman who had in her mind all the lore her people possessed a hundred years ago. She was the daughter and granddaughter of a chief and when a child her grandfather taught her the wisdom of the Modocs. She had a wonderful memory. Though she was no longer young and her health was poor, she was willing to give me the myths and beliefs of her tribe. She had more stories in her head than I dreamed it [was] possible for any one to learn and keep without aid of books. (Curtin, *Memoirs* 331)

Oral traditions, as we know, have only the human body as their medium; they disappear when the bodies disappear, or when the human minds are being systematically "reeducated." The body is a very precarious medium (Bruchac). The destruction of oral traditions is thus a particularly vicious act of biopolitical control by physical or cultural erasure (what Fernando Ortiz called "deculturation"; 102). In deciding to enter into transcultural dialogue and to share their tribe's most sacred knowledge with strangers, Ko-a-lak'-ak-a, Sconchen and the other tribal savants laid the foundation for ensuring the cultural survival of their tribes. They knew that social identity and cohesion depend on a shared tradition and heritage, and they engaged representatives of the colonizing culture as curators of that heritage. It is important to view these so-called interlocutors as historical agents in their own right who understood the advantage of print technology and

43 This must be Alma Mary (Cardell) Curtin, his widow, who had already compiled part of his memoirs.

who hired the journalists and scientists (instead of just being hired by them) for the purpose of saving their ancient knowledge.

Mary Alma Curtin knew that the people her husband had talked to and whose stories he had collected were traumatized by the loss of their way of life, by war, and by deportation: "Exile for the Modocs was a crushing sorrow," she writes in her introduction. "When I saw them, in 1884, they were still mourning over their changed condition, and for the Klamath country, – the country Kumush created and gave to them" (viii).

Despite lacking the original Klamath script contained in Gatschet's texts, Curtin's volume remains a treasure trove of Indigenous storytelling, containing some stories that run up to fifteen pages and next to sixty interrelated stories altogether. Many mythical stories, plots, and materials are similar to those found in Gatschet's volume although names may differ. Mary Alma Curtin demonstrates her sensibility for the topophilia of the Indigenous people. What's more, she admits a lack of such affective relation to the land on the part of the settler culture. To the Modoc, she writes,

the valley of Lost River and the lands around Klamath and Tula Lake are sacred. We, who endeavor to trace our origin back to a monkey or, still farther, to a bit of protoplasm, or who believe in and search far and wide for the Garden of Eden, cannot revere a country which is ours simply by chance of birth as the Indian reveres the country where his tribe originated. We cannot estimate the love an Indian has for his country. His holy places are not in far-off Palestine; they are before his eyes in his own birthplace, where every river, hill and mountain has a story connected with it, an account of its origin. (vi)

Arguably, it is a certain nostalgia for a lifestyle that still knows and honors the surrounding non-human world that had caused Curtin (and to an unknown extent his wife) to collect the stories in the first place. Gatschet, as already mentioned, had even made human emotional and epistemic engagement with the land his first profession (before turning ethnologist as an emigré). Both Gatschet and Curtin, then, possessed sufficient linguistic knowledge, knowledge of other cultures, and a sense of the cultural significance of the land that these stories indeed transport. Though being members of the colonizing culture, they had the necessary empathy and motivation to listen to what their interlocutors had to say.

The books of both contain narrative sequences repeated in different stories, and especially the longer stories show the bricolage method by which narrative elements are combined in different contexts, some reaching further back than others, some continuing where others leave off. A further element that may be unsettling for a reader not skilled in mythical corpora are the many inversions and changes of personnel, as when the hero of one story becomes the culprit in another. But in spite of these variations, accountable to the passage of time and the divarication of the texts, it is surprising to find a fair amount of char-

acter continuity in this corpus. Especially the creator figure Kmu'kamsh (also called Shkă'lamtch/Skel/Tskel or Old Marten or Mink),⁴⁴ has a defined field of activity and personal characteristics typical of an "earthy," geological figure. His adopted son Aishish, and his younger brother and sidekick Weasel (also called Tchashgáyaks/Tcûskai), also appear with very similar characteristics in the various tales.⁴⁵ These figures belong to a massive tradition in no way less impressive than that of Nordic mythology or indeed, in some cases, the Spanish picaresque novels (Weasel in particular has the traits of a picaresque figure; most of them have trickster-transformer qualities). Kmu'kamsh's and, to a lesser degree, Weasel's main characteristic is their ability of disguise and their scheming disposition. Aishish, as will be seen, is a more human-like figure and one of the few figures in this mythology not bearing the name of an animal: his name means "the hidden one," the secreted or concealed one (Gatschet I: lxxxv; Lévi-Strauss 31). Besides relating the heroic and less heroic deeds of the ancients at a time before the division of "people" into animals and humans (many stories end with their transformation into animals), the stories in Curtin's volume also contain numerous references to topologically important sites and to geological events. Some of these events, as we shall see, are less topographically specific than others, which is perhaps the result of the Modoc's ancestors having moved from the area around Lower and Upper Klamath Lake, Crater Lake, and Klamath Marsh to an area further south, around Tule Lake and Mt. Shasta in today's Northern California.

How can these stories help us find answers to the question, articulated by Deloria, about Indigenous knowledge of the geological events around the eruption and collapse of Mount Mazama and the formation of Crater Lake about 5,700 BC? Some of the stories refer directly to a place called Gi'was (or Gi'wash), as the place now called Crater Lake, while others refer to cataclysmic events having taken place at Gi'was. But how, we may ask, can a mythical story contain historical and geographical information of this kind? After all it is not the principal function of myth to document historical events. As Greg Denning, the eminent expert on Polynesian history, writes, myth is always true but also never true ("Deep Time" 20); its truth is not the same as the truth of a positivist historical reconstruction or the truth of a police report (we know how true those can be!) but it rather inherits materials, both event-related and imaginative, from the past in the process of passing on important knowledge to future generations. As Claude Lévi-Strauss writes, mythical texts "can never be reduced to their appearance" only. While an older myth criticism practiced in the nineteenth and early twentieth century concentrated on establishing kinship lines and links between various mythical stories based on their surface similarities, Lévi-Strauss's own mythological method begins

44 I will use Gatschet's spelling "Skel." The variation used by Curtin is "Tskel."

45 To facilitate reading, I will use the names Kmu'kamsh/Marten and Weasel.

from the principle that a myth can never be reduced to its appearance. However diverse appearances may be, they conceal structures which, although probably less numerous [than surface similarities] are also more real. They present themselves as absolute objects, from which nothing can be subtracted and to which nothing can be added: they are matrices which, by means of successive deformations, engender types which can be arranged in series and should enable us to determine the most minute shades of meaning in each myth, considered as a concrete, individual entity.

This method does not always need to appeal to history, but neither does it completely disregard history. [...] [I]t raises historical problems suggesting hypotheses that history, left to itself, might otherwise not have thought of [...] (*Naked Man*, 38)

The mistake of an older generation of mythologists, Lévi-Strauss continues, was that they tried to understand the myths “by means of a single and exclusive code, when in fact several codes are always in operation simultaneously. It is impossible to reduce the myth to any one code, nor can it be explained as the sum of several codes” (44). Borrowing a term from psychoanalysis, we could say that mythical language is always semantically overdetermined; not unlike the language of the unconscious as described by Freud, the language of myth uses processes of semantic condensation and displacement as well as symbolism. Its meaning is never exhausted by merely understanding the plot of each individual story. In fact, following Freud’s concept of secondary revision (from his dream analysis), the plot of a myth may simply be the glue binding together the breccia fragments of the mythical material (*Vorlesungen* 188).

Lévi-Strauss concentrates on the transhistorical and translocal structures of these myths – in particular the recurring motifs of the hidden boy and what he calls the bird-nester. Both motifs are part of the Aishish cycle, as we will presently see. While there is very much to learn from Lévi-Strauss’s extensive discussion of the Klamath-Modoc corpus, his contention that mythical structures form “absolute objects” is not satisfactory to anyone interested in a historical investigation. Instead of declaring the mythical structure as a non plus ultra (nothing to subtract, nothing to add), we should make the attempt to historicize, that is further investigate, the very element that he identifies as the “absolute object.”

So no streamlined, organized, complete account of a historical past can emerge from a reading of the Klamath-Modoc corpus; rather, hopefully, a sense of how an oral tradition, already affected by the trauma of colonial ethnocide and documented under non-ideal conditions, would survive the cultural clash – at a time when neither the Western collectors nor the Indigenous interlocutors knew whether the tribal cultures, or even the tribal people, would survive the collapse of their way of life. These stories are part of their legacy. In addition to the imperative to remember, these texts forcefully present us with an immensely imaginative storyworld that is not the product of any single author but rather of a

millennia-old narrative tradition, suddenly stopped short by violent dispossession and deportation, which may have left the most recent trace on the texts (the sadness surrounding the disappearance of the culture hero Aishish may be a sign of this impact). The documents are products of what Richard White has called the middle ground, an intermediate period in which two or more cultures grappled with each other both physically and epistemologically; they are more likely to be records of misunderstanding or “misreading of meaning,” to use Greg Dening’s term, than any definite single “truth” (White, quoting Dening, in “Indian Peoples” 93). Although these records were made with the utmost care for precision by linguistic experts desiring to salvage the culture if not the human beings themselves, they are of course hybrid documents of the colonial contact zone. Above all, this mythology does communicate a sense of loss, in spite of the craftiness and the sheer liveliness of many of its characters.

We will start with two stories from Albert Gatschet’s *The Klamath Indians of Southwestern Oregon*. He picked up these stories in 1873 at Klamath Agency and in the Indian Territory to which Modoc survivors had been deported (I: lxxxv), but also uses manuscript versions of stories collected by Jeremiah Curtin. In his “Letter of Transmittal” (to the Smithsonian Institution) he writes that he considers “language to be the most important monument of the American Indian. Archaeology and ethnography are more apt to acquaint us with *facts* concerning the aborigines, but language, when properly investigated, gives us the *ideas* that were moving the Indian’s mind, not only recently but long before the historic period” (I: vii).⁴⁶ Gatschet’s main informant is the Klamath woman Minnie Froben, daughter of a Klamath woman and a French settler, who had worked as an assistant teacher at the boarding school for native children at Klamath Agency. Although Gatschet praises her and his other consultants’ excellence, the stories relayed by her are far exceeded in length by the Modoc corpus collected by Curtin.

From Minnie Froben, Gatschet has collected the “Mythic Tale of Old Marten” (Gatschet I: 109-18; see Fig. 15 above). The dramatis personae include Old Marten or the Pine Marten, one of the shapes of the creator deity Skel, also called Kmu’kamsh, the main transformer figure of Klamath mythology. Weasel, Kmu’kamsh’s younger brother, assistant and sidekick, frequently travels underground (being a weasel). In his behavior, he is one of the most human of all mythological figures and generally disrespectful of Kmu’kamsh’s orders.

46 The statement indicates the intellectual competition between various scientific discourses at the time; Gatschet’s antagonist can be seen in the ethnologist Leslie Spier who uses Gatschet’s text but, as most other recipients, not the stories themselves. Ignoring the wealth of the imaginative world of the Klamath, he can then state that they had no religion to speak of (100). Approaching the native tribe with the scientific ethnographic grid of kinship structures and economic customs, Spier seems not to have had access to their mythical world – either because he didn’t expect one and thus didn’t ask or because the Klamath didn’t want to share their knowledge with him.

The adventure of Old Marten (Shkā'lamtch) and his little brother Weasel (Tchashgáyaks) begins with women digging for ipo roots in the prairie. Marten advises Weasel to go and get the women's skull caps (their woven hats), but only those of the one-eyed women – a detail that Lévi-Strauss interprets as a reference to the lunar cycle (44). Weasel, who is generally of a disobedient disposition, brings the caps of all women upon which Marten scolds him (109, l. 6). All women, following their stolen caps, come to Marten's house but he sends all but two one-eyed women back. Soon both women bear a son to Marten and Weasel. The two boys, out to shoot squirrels, accidentally almost kill each other. Later, following their fathers' advice to shoot back if attacked, they do kill one another. Marten and Weasel discover the dead bodies, mourn over them and cremate them. After this moral lesson, dissuading the listeners from instigating their children to commit wanton acts of violence, a new section begins, its relationship to the previous one not clear: Marten entices Weasel to go and get the heads of the North Wind and the South Wind by going to their houses and chopping off their heads. After some discussion (Weasel wants to go to the same house as Marten/does not want to follow Marten's orders), they do as Marten had devised. Little Weasel "dies" (i.e. faints) when the South Wind rears its head so Marten has to chop off both heads. Marten then announces he will visit the Thunders ("Leméish"). On the way to their abode, they encounter a woman who asks for their help as she is being pursued by one of the Thunders. Marten locks her into a pitch pine log and continues on his way. The woman is discovered and killed by her persecutor. The rest of the English version of Gatschet's original interlinear translation is here rendered in grammatically correct syntax:

Old Marten then arrived at the lodge of the Thunders [Lemé-isham]. Two decrepit old Thunders, the parents of the Thunders, lived there. Old Marten stepped into the room wearing the North Wind's head upon which everything in the lodge/room froze to icicles. The inside ladder, too, became slippery with ice. Gray Wolf, Marten's kinsman, returned from the hunt, and he and his children did not freeze from the ice. The Thunders returned home, bringing many Indians. The Old Thunders reported and said to their sons, "some stranger with more power than us has come into the room!" The oldest Thunder said, "whatever stronger man has come, I can certainly enter where he is." He went out then, climbed up, stepped on one step only of the inside ladder and hurried out again, crying "tututu!" After running home this Thunder so reported, and another one said: "Some kind of stronger one is sitting inside." Going out over there he went on top of the winter lodge, put his foot on only two steps of the inside ladder and stepping on it he ran out again. Crying "tututu!" he skipped away. Joining the others in the *kayata* [the old Thunders' lodge], another went out there, mounted up the ladder, went in. Having climbed down he hurried out again while tutut-crying, "To be sure, this one is much stronger than we are!" The last one also

rushed out, "What kind of stranger is this?" Entering the lodge he sat down on his couch but starting up and ran out again.

After some time Gray Wolf came home, bringing some venison. The Thunders said to Gray Wolf, "Someone far stronger than us has come." Old Wolf climbed the lodge, he shouted to Old Marten, "Take off your hat!" And Marten, unhatting himself, laid down his hat; all the icicles disappeared again. Old Wolf and the Thunders entered the lodge, rebuilt the fire and had a meal. They heated the stones and threw in people, using a large flat bucket to stew the people. When the stones were hot they took them out and cooled them in *kála* water. As soon as [the people] were stewed the Thunders handed them as food to Marten. Old Marten with the little finger moved more Indians toward the *kála*. Then Old Marten began to eat; Weaslet pinched Old Marten insisting for human flesh. But Old Marten did not give him any, saying it was bad; he whispered to Little Weasel, "later on I will give you venison meat." Then he ate all up, not giving any to him. As he returned the bucket to them, Old Wolf also began roasting the meat [i.e. venison]. When it was done, putting it on a paddle, he gave it to Old Marten who gave some of it to Little Weasel. Having done eating, they went to bed, Old Marten feeling sleepy as soon as he lay down.

The (5) Thunders plotted how to kill Old Marten, constantly walking up and down. Only Blackbird observed the Thunders and was not asleep. And the Thunders approached to look at Old Marten, whether he was asleep, proposing to kill him. The Thunders pushed arrow-heads into Blackbird's eyes; from then on he would no longer go to sleep though looking as if sleeping [cf. explanation in Curtin: "Káhwás had bright eyes; when he was asleep the Leméís brothers thought he was awake" 79]. At midnight the Thunders went to sleep. Old Marten, awakening, went over to the Thunders' place, tied together the hair of the Thunders and put swords in their hands to make them believe that his younger brother was about to kill them. Then he ordered Gray Wolf and his children to leave the lodge. Old Marten set fire on the lodge, and standing on its top he waited for the Thunders to rush out. He hearkened standing outside; at last, when the fire blazed strongly, the Thunders awoke. They stabbed each other with the long blades, "Marten's younger brother is killing you!" But they stabbed only each other.

Then all perished by blazing up; one heart exploded while flying off. Looking on, Old Marten struck one heart in the fire; again one exploded. Old Marten struck again; and another one burst when Old Marten struck. Little Weasel said, "Old Marten! I will also strike one!" Then burst one again. But Weaslet missed and the heart went to the sky; Magpie and blackbird flew after it and picked it to pieces while it flew. Old Marten said, "You will be good for nothing; you will frighten the people in vain!"

Then Old Marten burned the Old Thunders [the parents]. (Gatschet I: 111-14; emphases added)

This story, which is a prime example for the condensed patchwork style of oral storytelling, addresses, among many other things, an existential conflict between figures protecting humans and evil monsters who kill and eat them. Kmu'kamsh/Skel/Old Marten intervenes in favor of preserving human beings and kills the Leméish/five Thunders. Although the place of the action is not indicated, we should assume the "lodge" of the Thunders to be of gigantic proportions. Already the North Wind and South Wind are references to mountains, the North Wind (Yámash) inhabiting Yámsi Mountain (Gatschet, I: xci). The thematically related story "Wind and Thunder" in Curtin's collection (*Myths* 76-80) adds the detail that the five Leméish brothers have their house "in a deep place, and there are great rocks around it. The tallest tree in the world wouldn't reach to the bottom of the house" (Curtin, *Myths* 78).⁴⁷ This "house" or "lodge" is clearly not a human-sized hut but a mountain. The culmination of the battle is reminiscent of the dramatic climax of Colvig's account of the battle between Llao and Skell hurling rocks as large as hills from their respective positions on top of Mount Shasta and Mount Mazama.⁴⁸ Comparing the texts, it also becomes clear that in the Colvig version, evil "Llao" occupies the same site as "Skell" in the Gatschet account: as in Alatorre's version, there is only one mountain. The "hearts" of the Gatschet version are rocks in Colvig's, written in the conviction that the story must relate to the Mount Mazama eruption.⁴⁹ In addition, the Gatschet version of the mythical battle shares elements with Alatorre's version but absent from Colvig's: the Thunders constantly walk up and down their lodge ("Monadalkni began running back and forth in the passageways beneath Moy-yaina" in Alatorre's rendering), which I read as suggesting the pre-eruption rumbling, and there are five of them. But above all, all versions share the iconic image of the super-human hero Kmu'kamsh/Skell standing on top of the "lodge" of the Thunders hurling fiery stones/hearts while they emerge "blazing" from the lodge.

47 In his dictionary part (volume II), Gatschet mentions under the keyword "lémé-ish" that the "large earth-lodge in which the five lived is represented as a black, dusky cave" (II: 187).

48 Colvig (1921 MS): "Then commenced a conflict between these gods in which all the gods of earth and sky took part. The mountains crumbled beneath the tread of the giants who from their summits hurled the Curse of Fire over all the land. Fire spewed from the mouth of Kequila Tyee, and like an ocean of flame devoured the forests and swept on till it reached the homes of the people. Red hot rocks, as large as the hills, went hurling athwart the midnight skies. Burning ashes fell like rain. The people rushed into the waters of the lake in order to escape the fiery curse." Cf. Clark: "From their mountaintops the two chiefs began a furious battle [...]"

49 We are beginning to understand that the Colvig text, though clearly influenced by European knowledge (heaven and hell; geological knowledge), is by far not irrelevant or 'false'. It is simply a product of transculturation. The two versions, no direct copies of each other, agree in important points. Colvig's account of how he obtained the story (filling Lalek's pipe to make him talk etc.) also rings authentic.

Gatschet, who in 1873 – when he collected the material – and in 1890 – when his book was published – had only vague information about the geological history of the area, reads the story as explaining the origin of thunder and lightning (116), and this reading is supported by Curtin's version ("Wind and Thunder" in *Myths* 76-80) which puts even more emphasis on the fact that Skell sets the Thunders' house on fire by filling all the holes in their house with pitch and piling pitch wood around it:

When the house began to burn, the five brothers sprang up; that made their hair pull and they began to fight one another with their long flint knives. Soon they were all dead. Their bodies were burned up, but their hearts flew out of the fire. Tcûskai and Tsekl were watching, and as soon as a heart came out they pushed it back into the fire. They did this till each heart burst and the spirit came out and went away. Four of the hearts were destroyed, but the heart of the youngest and strongest brother got away from Tskel. It went up to the sky and became Leméïs. Leméïs is up there yet; we hear him when he travels around.

Klamath Indians think that Thunder is a little fellow with very long hair. (Curtin, *Myths* 80)

The last remark is ambivalent: it may refer to a difference in the way the two tribes imagined the size of Thunder (as Curtin's consultants are Modoc, not Klamath); it may also refer to a reduction of fear among the people since the ancient times when thunder was created by Tskel. What both stories have in common is that they locate the origin of thunder deep down in the earth – regarding thunder as the result of volcanic activity.

Although the story could be read as a fictionalized account of a volcanic eruption – the "hearts" symbolizing rhyodacite rocks (which still scatter the landscape around Crater Lake as if they had been hurled last year); the giant figure of Kmu'kamsh/Skel/Marten standing on the top of the Thunders' "lodge" as a pictorial rendering of a Plinian column⁵⁰ – neither version contains a reference to Crater Lake. In fact there is no mention of any lake. As we know from the reconstructions of the geological history of the Cascade Mountains, there were other volcanoes which likely erupted after Mt. Mazama, namely Mt. Shasta in Modoc country which has been calculated by geologists to have last erupted in the eighteenth century.⁵¹ So even if the story of the killing of the Leméish had been inspired by witnessing a volcanic eruption, neither its place nor its rough date can be deduced from these narratives. We have to dig deeper into the surviving sources.

50 This reading was suggested to me by Rick Budhwa who did a close concordance between the oral accounts and the geological reconstruction.

51 "The record of eruptions over the last 10,000 years suggests that, on average, at least one eruption occurs every 800 to 600 years at Mt Shasta." The last eruption is calculated to have taken place "200 to 300 years ago" (U.S. Geological Survey, "Mount Shasta").

In his “Ethnographic Sketch,” under the entry for “Giants,” Albert Gatschet states that

[g]iants are often the originators of geological revolutions of the earth's crust. Thus, the giant Léwa represents the circular, lofty island lying within the waters of Crater Lake or Gíwash. He went by an underground passage (fissure?) from his seat over to Yámsi Mountain to wrestle with Skē'l, the all-powerful pine marten, whose home is at Yámsi. After conquering him, he carried him through the same passage again to Crater Lake for the purpose of feeding him to his children, and his daughter, Léwam pé-ip, struck him with a heavy flint-stone.

Like the walls of that lake and the whole Cascade range, the island in question is of volcanic origin. The natives avoid going near the lake or even ascending the surrounding heights. (Gatschet I: xcvi-xcvii)⁵²

In this unfinished version of the known lake story (in which Skel takes his revenge on Llao by feeding him to his children), the name of Skel's antagonist is Léwa. Both his personality and actions identify him with the figure Llao of Colvig's version and with the Leméish of Gatschet's and Curtin's versions. The island mentioned by Gatschet refers to today's Wizard Island, also referred to as Llao's Head. Léwa is one of the Leméish – the Klamath word for thunder, and the word used by both Gatschet and Curtin to refer to the Five Thunders.⁵³ Gatschet's additional remark about the volcanic origin of Wizard Island as well as the treatment of the place as off-limits for normal people (which some Western visitors erroneously interpreted as primitive fear) is also interesting. Writing in 1890, Gatschet was unaware of Diller's reconstruction of the collapse of Mount Mazama; he did not know that the lake area housed the ruins of a former peak but rather thought that the crater was the top of a submerged volcano and Wizard Island a remnant of the eruption (I: xviii). Interestingly, Gatschet's note mentions two mountains, as in the Colvig-Clark account: Gi'was and Kmu'kamsh's home, Yamsi (Yamsay Mountain east of Crater Lake; not Mt. Shasta).

Gatschet himself established no link between his little note on giants and his story of Kmu'kamsh/Skel/Marten killing the Thunders; rather he confirms the lake monster story of the Western reports to be of Klamath origin. In the dictionary section of his text, Gatschet reveals that Léwa is in fact a homonym. Alongside referring to the giant trying to feed his children with Skel, he reports that “léwa” also means “to play” and “to play a ball-game” (Gatschet II: 189). This is of course precisely what the giant Léwa is doing with Skel's head, which is why

52 The story “Wind and Thunder” also includes a small scene with Old Leméish's daughter who is even “meaner than her brothers,” wearing a “belt around her waist [...] made of men's bones” (Curtin 78).

53 Another part of this short version here refers to the story of Skel who has his head chopped off by Llao, followed by the gruesome ball-game with his head, and it being pieced back together with the help of various animals, Skel taking his revenge on Llao by feeding him to his own children in the lake.

the two words are not a case of homonymy but derivations of each other (which ever term came first we cannot tell). Léwa is an Evil Gambler – a common figure in North American mythology, from the Wendiigo of Anishinabe culture to the Ck'o'yo magician of the Southwest (immortalized by Leslie Marmon Silko in her novel *Ceremony*). Lla/Léwa is the Klamath/Modoc manifestation of this evil principle, and like the other Evil Gamblers in North American mythology, he eats humans.

It is only through the long sequential story “Mink and Weasel” collected by Curtin (288-309) that a link is established between the place Gi'was (site of the battle between Skel and Léwa which ends with Skel feeding the giant's children in Crater Lake) and the battle with the Thunders also involving Marten/Skel and Weasel/Tcûskai but devoid of any reference to the lake. In the Modoc version of the killing of the Leméis-Thunders, Skel and Tcûskai, after leaving that place, meet an old man who refers to himself as “kin” of the Leméis brothers and demands that Skel wrestle with him. In this Modoc version, the evil brothers had already forced Skel and his companions to join them in a wrestling match as soon as their lodge warmed up again (Curtin, *Myths* 293-94). Skel had defeated the evil Thunders with the assistance of Gäk (Crow) whom Skel had furnished with arm-twisting magical powers. The narrative element of the wrestling contest here replaces that of the incineration of the Thunders' lodge contained in the two stories quoted above. The mysterious old man whom Skel and Weasel/Tcûskai met after having defeated the Leméis tells them “I hear that he has killed all the Leméis people. I am their kin. I have come to wrestle with him” (295). In the narration of the myth, the old man then wrestles Skel down, wraps him in a blanket, puts him on his horns,

and carried him down in the water and off under the ground. He carried him a long distance, then came out near a large lake. He took Tskel off his horns, unrolled him, and said: “Look around, before I kill you.”

Tskel saw that they were on a narrow ridge of rock that ran, like a little trail, to the middle of the lake.

The old man said: “When I get to the end of this trail, I will cut you into small pieces and throw you to my children. They are hungry for your flesh ...” (Curtin, *Myths* 295)

But Skel outwits the monster and kills him with his stone knife just as the old man reaches the end of the trail leading into the lake:

Then he cut the body up and threw it piece by piece into the lake. As he threw the pieces, he called out: “Here is Tskel's shoulder! Here are Tskel's ribs! Here are his legs! Here are his arms!” As fast as he threw the pieces, the old man's children caught and ate them. At last he threw the head. It was an awful-looking thing, enough to scare any one. (296)

The same action is repeated with the monster's daughter (298-99). The action is largely identical with the widely circulated transcultural lake story, mentioned above, of Lla'o abducting Skel and Skel avenging himself of his opponent by feeding him to his children.

Though unnamed in this story, the figure of the old man has all the features of the one-legged giant Yahyahaäs who likewise confronts people by requesting them to wrestle with him (there are three more stories in Curtin's collection particularly dedicated to Yahyahaäs). Another story, "Frost and Thunder" (Curtin, *Myths* 145-47) has the same character stealing the wives of animal people. They take their revenge with the help of Frost (Tsasgips), a "little fellow" with great power as he freezes and cracks the five rocks protecting the giant's subterranean house. After breaking all five rocks, the people "killed Yahyahaäs with arrows, but his spirit went up in the air and became Thunder" (147).⁵⁴ The five brothers of the version already known are replaced here by five rocks, but both stories share the element of freezing the giants with Gatschet/Froben's story of Marten and Weasel outwitting and killing the five Thunders. The exploding Thunders version is found in "Wind and Thunder" (76-80), mentioned above, which is very similar to Gatschet's version but has the additional characters of Gäk (Crow) and Káwhas (Blackbird). Kaiutois (Gray Wolf) is also part of the action; as in the version recorded by Gatschet, he is a relative of Skel who offers his guests roasted deer meat which Skel and Tcũskai eat while Gäk and Káwhas eat the human flesh the Leméish offer them. The Leméish then go to sleep and are "fired," as in the Gatschet-Froben version.

We have two sets of stories then, one referring to the contest between a giant (Léwa, Yahyahaäs, the old man) and Skel, ending with the dumping of the giant's body parts in the waters identified by Gatschet as Gi'wash/Crater Lake. This story appears in diluted form in the colonial versions of Applegate and Steel. The figure of the evil giant links these stories to the second set, the stories about the destruction of the five Thunders/Lemeís(h) related by both Gatschet/Froben and Curtin. This of course does not "prove" that the latter actions are also spatially related to Gi'was – myths don't work that way. But there are sufficient circumstantial indicators that these two existential contests between Skel/Kmu'kamsh/Marten/Mink and the giants inhabiting deep underground places, though they may belong to different times, share the same geographical place, the place the Klamath today still call Gi'was (Alatorre).

The word "Gi'wash" deserves more attention, because, as Gatschet's dictionary reveals, the Klamath name of Crater Lake, like "léwa," has more than one meaning. There are two places named Gi'wash – "Gĩ'wash É-ush, meaning *Crater Lake*, a volcanic basin filled with water, having an island with a high peak in its southwestern part and no visible outlet; a short distance west of Crater Mountain"; and "Gĩ'wash" or "Gē'wash" meaning "*Crater Mountain*, 20 miles north of

54 Gatschet also identifies Yayayá-ash as one of the Thunders (I: xc).

Fort Klamath; an extinct volcano, height about 8000 feet” (Gatschet II: 49). Elsewhere in his section on place names, Gatschet identifies “Gi'wash/Géwash” with Mt. Scott, the peak just east of Crater Lake (I: xxx). In fact, one of the lower elevations in the Crater Lake area located north of the lake is called “Gaywas Peak” (6,700 ft., located about midway between Crater Lake and Mt. Thielsen). In other words, “Gi'wash” refers to the whole area surrounding today's lake; but the eruption and destruction of Mount Mazama is the only cataclysmic event of this magnitude that took place in that area during the Pleistocene (Harris 107).⁵⁵ All minor volcanic activity in that area has occurred within the caldera formed by the ruined mountain in a space of c. 750 years after the cataclysm.⁵⁶

Buried Storyworld: The Aishish Cycle

Although, as I am arguing here, knowledge of the Mazama eruption remained part of the Klamath and Modoc story tradition for more than 7,000 years, where over the centuries and millennia it “petrified,” fused with other cultural materials, and finally assumed a relatively stable form (the three main versions of the Marten and the Thunders story agree on crucial aspects), other ancient knowledge can be less coherently retrieved. One such element is the second signified of the signifier “Gi'wash.” According to Gatschet, the name of the Crater Lake area is also applied to a “*blueish-gray squirrel*, of the size of the marten: *Sciurus Douglassii*.” But to indicate a semantic difference, Gatschet adds that “in this term, the *g* is differently pronounced from the *g* in the word preceding” (II: 49) Elsewhere he insists that the similarity between the two words is a “paronym,” differing in one or two sounds (II: 245).⁵⁷ Apart from the possibility that a minor pronunciation shift may have taken place within 7,000 years of language history, the pine squirrel Gi'was, contrary to its name, leads a mythical life more worthy of the Weasel or Marten than of its own species. Both the pine marten and the Douglas species of the pine squirrel – “of the size of the marten” – seasonally change the color of their fur: probably one of the reasons why the marten is the animal shape of the wily transformer Kmu'kamsh. Both obviously live in pine trees; the squirrel

55 Mt. Scott “had become extinct long before Mazama's climactic eruptions” (Harris 106).

56 The former information is confirmed by the very elaborate Wikipedia entry for “Mount Mazama” – which also gives the Klamath name “Giiwas” for the whole area. For the eruption history of the past 7,700 years, see also U.S. Geological Survey, “Post-Caldera Volcanism and Crater Lake.” The part topped by Wizard Island remained active, but all of this activity “occurred within 750 years after the cataclysmic eruption The last known eruption at Crater Lake occurred when a small lava dome erupted underwater on the east flank of the base of Wizard Island about 4,800 years ago. Since that time, the volcano has remained quiet” (“Post-Caldera Volcanism”).

57 The present-day Klamath dictionary also distinguishes between the two terms, having “giiwas” for Crater Lake and “gi'was” for the pine squirrel. <http://klamathtribes.org/language/vocabulary/>

keeping its food stores in holes high up in the trees.⁵⁸ In *The Mountains of California* (1894), John Muir renders a delightful account of this animal, regarding it as one of the most impressive creatures of the Western mountain area. He emphasizes its transformative powers and its great impact on seed distribution which makes the pine squirrel appear as the “master forester” of the pine forest (chapter 9).

The squirrel Gi'was, then, shares certain qualities with the mythical pine marten Kmu'kamsh – especially the power to rebuild the world, which lay in waste for many decades, even centuries, after the catastrophic destruction. While Kmu'kamsh created the earth, its plants, animals, and (from a serviceberry bush) humans (Gatschet, *Klamath Indians*, I: 80) Gi'was the pine squirrel is a key figure associated with the vegetation. This is interesting since a squirrel plays an important part in the cycle about Kmu'kamsh and Aishish, which both Lévi-Strauss and Albert Gatschet regard as the spiritual center of the whole corpus. We will never learn whether the two squirrels were once mythologically related, at least not on the basis of this “frozen” archive interrupted by colonialism.

These stories concern the actions of Kmu'kamsh and his adopted son, Aishish, a beautiful and very attractive figure who is also a culture hero. As known from other belief systems, like the Mexica deities Huitzilopochtli and the mythologically younger culture hero Quetzalcoatl, Kmu'kamsh and Aishish can structurally be seen to represent the gradual emergence of a more refined culture deity from an original “geological” creator god whose frequently rough character traits match the occasional unreliability of his actions.⁵⁹ Translated to Christian mythology, Aishish is to Kmu'kamsh what Jesus Christ is to the Jehova of the Old Testament: a figure of love and suffering bringing great cultural gifts (in the case of Aishish, music, refined clothing, jewelry, and artful weaponry) but also the object of the primal god's jealousy and violence. No wonder then that, as Gatschet writes, Aishish is the figure from traditional Klamath mythology which Christian missionaries utilized in their conversion attempts (XX).

Gatschet has two Aishish stories which overlap due to having been collected from two different consultants. In “A Mythic Tale About Aishish,” collected from Dave Hill (Gatschet I, 99-101), Kmu'kamsh covets one of Aishish's wives and, in order to distract him, asks him to help look for an eagle's nest in a pine tree. Kmu'kamsh suggests that Aishish climb up the tree to obtain the young eagles, but the tree begins to grow. Instead of finding young eagles, Aishish finds “the young ones of a lark [skû'lelam]” (100). Meanwhile, Kmu'kamsh takes Aishish's clothes, dresses himself in them and seduces Aishish's wife Squirrel (Stû'kuaksh). Little Squirrel and Aishish's other wives become suspicious, assuming that their husband was in reality Kmu'kamsh. The next day Kmu'kamsh, still disguised as Aishish, leaves in order to go gambling with Aishish's gambling companions. According to Klamath tradition, on the way to the game grounds he lights a fire.

58 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pine_squirrel; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_squirrel

59 Gatschet, too, compares Aishish to Quetzalcoatl (I: lxxxvii).

As his fire is not clear, straight up and blue but rather smoky and flat, the other gamblers suspect that he is really Kmu'kamsh but they play with him nevertheless. They defeat Kmu'kamsh and then go home, "for they missed Aishish" (101). Meanwhile Aishish's wives mourn and search for their lost husband and two butterflies discover him, reduced to a skeleton, way up in the pine tree. They manage to rescue him with much ado. Aishish tells them his story of having been ordered to climb the tree but finding only larks instead of eagles. The butterflies spread a wildcat's skin in a basket and take Aishish down from the tree. Aishish recovers. Here the story, as related by Dave Hill, ends.

The version rendered by Minnie Froben, "K'múkamtsch Attempts the Destruction of his Son Aishish" (Gatschet I, 94-97), contains the continuation of the story. Froben narrates that Aishish, after his rescue, finds his wives as they dig for roots. He walks up to his wife Tshika (Snowbird) who does not recognize him. But their little son identifies him as his father. They go back home and Aishish gives his wives necklaces made of porcupine quills. When Kmu'kamsh comes back, Aishish orders his little son to snatch away Kmu'kamsh's pipe and throw it into the fire, which the boy manages to do after several attempts. By burning his pipe, they "kill" Kmu'kamsh (96). After a long time Kmu'kamsh comes to life again and continues his efforts against his son:

There (he) all over pitch daubed on the sky; then he set on fire the sky so after doing. For this reason Aishish a tray held extended; he said, "Not me he may kill ever" [...] The pitch turned into a lake all over the world, Aishish's home only remained dry. Then Mud Hen [one of Aishish's wives] put its head out, the pitch then to it dripped on forehead; which thing since then stuck on Mud Hen." (96-97; interlinear translation)

Here the story ends.

The general conflagration caused by Kmu'kamsh taking revenge on his son (whom he had almost killed before out of envy) returns in a version collected half a century later by Mohammed Barker and published in 1963. This version shows obvious signs of the impact of missionary activity, and the symbolically slippery "pipe" is exchanged for the heart:

The hero [Aishish] ordered his little son to throw Kmúkmach's hearts (the informant believed he had several) into the fire. They popped *up (out)* and dripped like pitch all over the earth. Aishish put his family into a cave, but Mudhen wanted to look out and see what was happening and brown spots dripped on to her nose. (Barker 49; quoted after Lévi-Strauss 52; emphasis added)

The storyteller does not remember what happened after this. The conflagration, the cave, and the curious wife are obviously elements familiar from the story of Sodom and Gomorrah to which the Klamath had probably been exposed in the

mission schools. Besides this interesting case of syncretism, however, we also see how Barker has difficulties making sense of some of the details, especially the plurality of hearts and the direction in which they popped from the fire – “up,” not “out.” What we have here is a complete reversal of Kmu'kamsh's heroic role as he is now the one experiencing the same punishment as the five Thunders while Aishish and his wives, like Lot and his daughters, survive the disaster by hiding in a cave. This story fuses the destruction of Kmu'kamsh at the hand of his grandson with the destruction of the Thunders which appears like an intrusion from another kind of story altogether. The pitch is now not daubed on the sky, eventually turning into a lake due to Kmu'kamsh's power, but it is dripping from his popped-up hearts. We are beginning to see how these stories relate to one another, how individual elements travel from one realm to the other and how they are combined into different narrative and semantic constellations, depending on the speaker, the degree of intercultural intervention, and the cause of narrating. We also see how elegantly the Klamath storytellers integrate new (biblical) elements where they fit the purpose: this is indeed what myths are known to do. The (lake of) pitch dripping all over the earth can be interpreted as a pyroclastic flow emitted by a volcanic eruption, or a lava flow coming from one of the shield volcanoes in the area of the Lava Beds. This power is adequate for the geological power that Kmu'kamsh evidently represents, and that passes on to his grandson in the Barker version. The more recent “geologized” versions of the Gi'was story are further examples of this imaginative creativity; they testify to the continuing vibrancy of the oral tradition (see Alatorre, above).

In order to get a clearer understanding of the spiritual significance of Gi'was in Klamath and Modoc culture we have to turn to two more stories, both taken from Curtin's collection. Because here we learn about the birth of Aishish and about how he becomes instructed as a spiritual person by Kmu'kamsh – how the older god, so to speak, passes the torch to his successor.

In “Látkakáwas,” the first story in Curtin's collection (in my view the most important of all stories, also discussed at length by Lévi-Strauss), we learn how Aishish came into the world and how he became Kmu'kamsh's son. The woman Látkakáwas lives on the south side of Klamath Lake with her five brothers. Every day her brothers go to fish from an island in the lake. The young men from the western shore sneak up on Látkakáwas when her brothers are gone, but she is beautiful only when outside of her house and old and ugly when at work inside (Curtin 1-2). One man does not take part in this activity: “a young man as blue and beautiful as Látkakáwas herself. His father kept him in an underground place; no one ever saw him except when he went out to bathe or swim” (2). Although the young man is not particularly motivated to go after her, his father takes him out of his underground place and gives him a particularly powerful “cap that could never be destroyed.” Putting on his clothes, the man is “beautiful beyond anything in the world; he was blue and gold and green [...] He could run in the air and under the ground. He had great power” (3). When he watches her

through a crack in the wall, she does not become old and ugly as usual. But then the brothers take Látkakáwas in their boat and out onto the lake. Without their knowledge the young man follows them in the shape of a salmon and the brothers accidentally kill him (4). Back on the shore, the siblings burn the body and discover a disk in the ashes. "The disk was as bright as the sun in the heavens. This was the crown of the young man's head" (4). Látkakáwas takes the disk to Kmu'kamsh who lives east of the lake, in order to ask him to bring her lover back to life. On the way to Kmu'kamsh's house, "just as the sun came up," she gives birth to a child. Kmu'kamsh brings the man back to life but kills him both out of jealousy and in order to obtain the disk for himself (5). When he burns the body of Látkakáwas' lover, the woman tells him to put more wood on the fire and then jumps into the pyre with her baby strapped to her back (5). Kmu'kamsh is just able to save the child and the disk. The baby chooses the name of Aishish (spelled "Isis" in Curtin), and Kmu'kamsh appropriates the disk by planting it into his own body claiming fatherhood for himself: "he was the father of Isis, for the disk was the father of Isis" (6). As Aishish grows up, Kmu'kamsh instructs him to undergo a series of cleansing rituals in all the powerful places of the world in order to obtain wisdom and strength. He sends him to various mountain lakes and ponds and teaches him how to pile up stones, swim in the ponds, fast and dream.⁶⁰ The aim is for Aishish "not to have riches in the world" but "to have mind" (8). One of the places he visits on his spiritual quest is "Gewásni, a pond deep down among the rocks on the summit of Giwásyaina" (8). Of all the "gauwams," or swimming places, this seems to be the most powerful. "Giwásyaina" means the mountain of Gi'was ("Yaina" is Klamath for "mountain"). As in Gatschet, who tentatively locates Gi'was at Mt. Scott, the place is here identical with the location of the mountain lake ("Gi'wash e-ush" according to Gatschet).⁶¹

Aishish continues on his topological quest and, when he is finished, he and Kmu'kamsh travel the land looking for the ideal spot for their home. They settle down on a mountain, away from the places where people settle (11). While Kmu'kamsh continues to travel around and do his usual creative work (i.e. to plant seeds by throwing them into different directions, etc.), Aishish becomes the favorite of many women, each of whom he marries until he has acquired about a dozen of them (12). Kmu'kamsh begins to desire the women for himself and sends Aishish to a tree to get eagles' feathers for his arrows. What follows is the bird-nester sequence as told above from the stories in Gatschet. Kmu'kamsh disguises himself as Aishish, enjoys his women, and then sets out for the gambling ground, lighting the wrong kind of fire. The wives, especially Wálwilegas (the butterflies), save Aishish from his prison in the tree and bring him back to

60 These places are still visited by Klamath people seeking wisdom and spiritual guidance. The story names many of them; here I will concentrate on the one of particular interest to this context.

61 The mountain and the lake share the same name because the lake is part of the mountain area to which Mt. Scott also belongs.

health. Aishish follows Kmu'kamsh who now feels guilty about his behavior. He takes revenge on his unfaithful wives by first burning their feet and then changing them into normal animals. He then throws Kmu'kamsh into the fire (15-16). But Kmu'kamsh, though burned to ashes, cannot die because he has the disk. He is awakened by the morning star and Aishish understands that Kmu'kamsh will "last as long as the disk and the morning star" (16). Acting on this insight, Aishish moves away, Kmu'kamsh following him. After many years he overtakes him but Aishish rejects his offer of kindness by saying, "'After what you did to me you may go wherever you want to in the world, and I will to where I want to. You are not my father. I feel that. I hope that of the people, who are to come into the world hereafter, no father will ever treat his son as you have treated me'." They move to different places (16).

Claude Lévi-Strauss emphasizes the geographical aspect of this story. The protagonists of stories such as this one, he writes, "modify the original landscape, leaving their mark as they travel by creating sources of food or surface irregularities, such as fish, vegetation and rocks, which are still in existence in each locality" (*Naked Man* 73). In other words, this story is, in one of its functions, a landmark story. It also shows a certain doubling of imaginative geography, as it partly refers to places in Klamath territory and partly to sites in Modoc land; in fact, as Lévi-Strauss shows, there is a certain topographical similarity between these two areas, with Klamath territory centering on the Upper Klamath Lake, Sprague River, Klamath Marsh and the mountains between today's Crater Lake and Mt. Yamsay (Yamsi, Kmu'kamsh's abode in Klamath mythology). Transferred to Modoc territory, about 40 miles further south, the same stories apply to a similar topological arrangement consisting of Lower Klamath Lake, Tule Lake, Lost River, and Mt. Shasta to the south (Lévi-Strauss 75). Many stories make reference to "Klamath Lake" without specifying whether Lower or Upper Klamath Lake is meant. These imaginative displacements produce and represent a certain topographical flexibility that is typical of mythical geographies.⁶² Nonetheless, the societies inhabiting Upper California and southern Oregon are among those most skilled in geographical knowledge. The displacements are not the result of a lack of geographical precision but rather an answer to the inherent dynamics of mythical discourse.

Lévi-Strauss shares earlier mythologists' readings of Aishish as an astronomical figure,⁶³ but his main interest lies in determining the deep structure of

62 See Oakley, "The Center of the World" for examples of "migrating" landmark myths. Another example is the mythical geography of the Modoc story "The Star Brothers" where the original setting is Klamath Lake but the heart of one of the Thunders, knocked out by the vindictive sister, though flying north, nevertheless becomes Mount Shasta (Curtin, *Myths* 98). Mount Shasta is located south of both Klamath lakes; the most conspicuous mountain range north of the lakes is Gi'was.

63 Gatschet, who summarizes the story under discussion here, reads him as a lunar figure (I: lxxxvii). Lévi-Strauss generally criticizes Gatschet's and other mythologists' reductions of these stories to cosmological, especially astronomical, meanings but still shares the notion that Aishish was on the lunar side (71, *passim*). His treatment of this mythology is a mind-

this myth cycle which he discovers in the recurring motif of the hidden child (Aishish's name is "the hidden one"), coupled with the motif of the bird-nester. He also speculates on the significance of various female bird-figures in the stories: the loon woman, an incestuous and vindictive sister seeking sexual union with her hidden brother;⁶⁴ the self-sacrificing Látkakáwas (the tanager, a black and red bird nesting in conifers), and the meadowlark who, in the Modoc story "The Star Brothers" (Curtin, *Myths* 95-117) protects her two unborn children from the loon woman's destructive fire and, in a version collected by Mohammed Barker in the 1950s, does so by bending over them while being herself burned to death (Lévi-Strauss 49-50). In fact, the daughter of the meadowlark woman is the equivalent of Látkakáwas in the Barker version – the woman who commits self-immolation and whose son is Aishish. Meadowlark can be read as the mother of Látkakáwas (86).

Confusingly, meadowlarks feature again in the same version (Barker, also in Gatschet I: 100) as the birds discovered by Aishish in the top of the tree to where Kmu'kamsh bans him (49). This is doubly confusing as meadowlarks are ground-breeders and never breed in trees. Ignoring this paradox and in spite of noting the zoological knowledge, Lévi-Strauss reads meadowlark woman and tanager woman as oppositions of the evil loon woman but also as opposing each other according to their breeding habits and their capacities as mothers (79). But this is how the language of myth functions: chunks from different times and places in the mythical universe become recombined and rearticulated while the personnel undergoes certain shifts as well.⁶⁵ This language can only be grasped incompletely through the lens of structuralist anthropology; its adaptability to changing sociocultural environments is much closer to the aesthetic described by Edouard Glissant: a relational aesthetics, a *poétique de la relation* (Glissant).⁶⁶

A symptomatic reading, alternatively, notes the contradiction of the bird discovered in the pine tree being the meadowlark instead of one of the species nor-

boggling exercise in structuralist scholarship and a fascinating example of his skill, but it also at times suffers from a tendency to construct binary oppositions and the general gesture of reading the different versions as part of one supermyth – not as historically contingent variations. What is so admirable in Lévi-Strauss, from a literary point of view, is how meticulously he is able to *read* the texts, thus showing the complexity and beauty of this story corpus.

64 Both Léwa's/Llao's daughters living in Gi'was lake and the mentioned daughter of the Lemeish brothers can be seen as manifestations of this unsympathetic personality.

65 In Freudian dream analysis, the names of these processes are: condensation (e.g. in fusing characteristics of different persons in one dream figure), displacement, and visual representation (applied to myth this means that a deity can take different animal shapes).

66 At the same time it is important to concede that Lévi-Strauss, as the master of structuralist anthropology, did indeed identify the hidden boy/bird-nester motif as a mythical deep element. As so often, the founder of a theoretical school by far supersedes the declared principles of that school in his own analytical practice. Lévi-Strauss pulls together all the registers of historical analysis – linguistics, history, geography – which makes his reading so fascinating. The structures he construes – concessions to the dominance of the mathematical sciences in academia – recede behind the sheer intelligence and scope of his investigation.

mally found there: the eagle, tanager, pine squirrel (Gi'was), or pine marten. The image of the children being born as a result of the meadowlark daughter's corpse lying in the ashes of the conflagration caused by one of the avatars of Léwa/Llao's evil daughter is compelling indeed, as are the repeated and frequent references to fires, immolations and self-immolations, including the "wrong" fire started by Kmu'kamsh after hiding his son in the pine tree. In comparison to Aishish's pure fire, that of his father, the original creator, is smoky and flat, reminiscent of the slash and burn technique used by agricultural societies in producing charcoal to enrich the soil (see end of chapter 1). If this is what the fire of Kmu'kamsh represents, and we simply cannot know for sure,⁶⁷ his power to destroy the world by a conflagration of pitch and fire, reminiscent of the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, is all the more impressive.

Pyroclastic Storytelling

Assessing the mythical corpus as a whole, there is a conspicuous multitude of references to destructive fires, people burned and children barely saved from the flames in order to effect the survival of the people. What if we read the motif of the son sent up the pine tree not as the *opposite* but a *repetition* or *variation* of that of the precious boy hidden away from his murderous sister? This frequency of deaths by fire and hairbreadth survivals from the all-consuming flames, the hiding away of the human offspring either in pits or caves or in high trees is in need of explanation. That explanation should be historical, not merely structural. Whether these stories remember one specific conflagration (the eruption of Gi'was yaina in c. 5,700 BC) or also subsequent smaller eruptions or both can no longer be ascertained; but volcanic eruptions – whether pyroclastic ones or the lava flows of the shield volcanoes east of Mt. Shasta – are a central element, if not *the* central geological element, in the storyworld of humans whose lives are existentially threatened by the presence of fire mountains and who yet decided to stay in the marsh areas east of the mountains because of their fertility.

As already indicated, modern geologists and archaeologists have reconstructed the process of the eruption as well as calculating the effects of the event on life around Gi'was. Archaeologists who have excavated the remains of human habitation underneath the ashes of Mount Mazama at Fort Rock offer different assessments of the magnitude of the eruption but they agree that it abruptly interrupted life in the vicinity of Crater Lake for many years to come. During and directly after the cataclysm, a radius of about 40 miles around Crater Lake was affected by pyroclastic flows which were, Stephen J. Harris writes,

67 There is growing archaeological evidence of plant cultivation techniques and soil management used in the Pacific Northwest. See Deur/Turner, *Keeping It Living*.

mowing down and incinerating thick stands of timber [...] Southeastward, the pyroclastic flows raced down Sand Creek, continuing for more than ten miles across the flatlands beyond Mazama's base. Some flows reached into Klamath Marsh, from which masses of floating pumice washed down the Williamson River into the Klamath Lakes. (Harris, *Fire Mountains* 119)

A thick layer of ash spread across the land, and men and animals must have been severely affected by volcanic fumes and acid rains, according to Stephen Bedwell's reconstruction of the eruption when comparing it with more recent and better documented events (*Fort Rock* 61-62). Dennis Jenkins, in his modern introduction to Luther Cresswell's archaeological classic, estimates the impact to have been somewhat less severe than assumed by Bedwell, but if you translate his scientific language into more humanistic terms, he still describes a human catastrophe.⁶⁸ The general barrenness of the land caused by the eruption of Mazama apparently combined with an extensive period of drought. Edible plants were burned, and ash that fell into the rivers and lakes may have killed off the fish (Bedwell 63). Bedwell also assumes that occupation of the caves in the Fort Rock area likely discontinued because of the "catastrophic effects of the Mazama eruption" rather than because of the gradual warming of the climate and the increase of aridity (67). He reasons that a number of fauna must have been drastically reduced, especially the big animals, while the smaller ones who better tolerated arid conditions probably endured (68). Of the flora, the piñon pine was probably most resistant when faced with the post-eruption conditions (68). Botanists today know that the Douglas fir, too, is relatively fire resistant and thrives in biotopes that have been ravaged by fires ("Douglas fir"). In the light of this information, it is perhaps no coincidence that the most resilient characters in Klamath and Modoc mythology are inhabitants of pine trees: pine squirrels and pine martens. Even more than that: as John Muir so acutely observes in *The Mountains of California* (1894), the pine squirrel, through its indefatigable activity, has the capacity to restore the forest:

Go where you will throughout the noble woods of the Sierra Nevada, among the giant pines and spruces of the lower zones, up through the towering Silver Firs to the storm-bent thickets of the summit peaks, you everywhere find this little squirrel the master-existence. Though only a few inches long, so intense is his fiery vigor and restlessness, he stirs every grove with wild life, and makes himself more important than even the huge bears that shuffle through the tangled underbrush beneath him. Every wind is fretted by his voice, almost every bole and branch feels

68 "[T]he thick shower of volcanic cinders from Mt. Mazama appears to have significantly reduced biodiversity across a large area between Crater Lake, the Fort Rock Basin, and the area south of Bend [...]. This loss of some important upland resources may have resulted in population reductions. When biotic diversity is reduced in an area there are more frequent periods when no food is available" (Jenkins, "Introduction" xx).

the sting of his sharp feet. *How much the growth of the trees is stimulated by this means it is not easy to learn, but his action in manipulating their seeds is more appreciable. Nature has made him master forester and committed most of her coniferous crops to his paws.* Probably over fifty per cent. of all the cones ripened on the Sierra are cut off and handled by the Douglas alone, and of those of the Big Trees perhaps ninety per cent pass through his hands: the greater portion is of course stored away for food to last during the winter and spring, but some of them are tucked separately into loosely covered holes, where some of the seeds germinate and become trees. But the Sierra is only one of the many provinces over which he holds sway, for his dominion extends over all the Redwood Belt of the Coast Mountains, and far northward throughout the majestic forests of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. (*Mountains of California*, chapter 9; emphasis added).

Muir's extensive description, which romantically personifies the pine squirrel, characterizes it as a creative, hard-working, powerful, smart and articulate animal that seems to directly address human intruders when they enter its territory. The pine or Douglas squirrel (gi'was) here appears like an animal gardener who ensures the increased propagation of the trees by collecting, forgetting, and thereby spreading their seeds. In other words, the pine squirrel possesses all the qualities of a culture hero. The post-eruptive forests owed their renewal to the activities of this animal, which survived in the relatively fire-resistant piñon pines and Douglas firs. Both the trees and the squirrel can be read as symbols of resilience and survival – a fact that the stories transport and which characterizes them as bearers of traditional ecological knowledge.

There is here a recurring story of a culture hero hidden away in a (pine) tree who escapes the conflagration caused by his irresponsible father, assisted by the examples of animals who are either adjusting to a life remote from the ground (meadowlark) or who live in trees and keep their food caches there (pine squirrels) or who can fly (butterflies). The motif of death by fire and the mysterious escape from conflagration may be regarded as a deep mythical element or root paradigm in this cultural area (to use the terminology of structuralist anthropology).⁶⁹ What makes it so difficult to grasp any specific meaning is both the age of the tradition and the nature of the oral medium itself, whose principal work is not to preserve a piece of knowledge in its original state and pass it down unchanged through the generations but which, rather, labors to constantly rearticulate and reform existing content in response to ever-changing social and natural conditions. The fact that in the sixty stories in Curtin's collection we find only a handful of references to the recent arrival of the white people, in turn, shows that stories do not change abruptly in the light of radically new events but that responsible storytellers (such as the women and men Curtin and Gatschet listened to) knew which "mix" was appropriate to meet present needs.

69 For "root paradigm" see Victor Turner (67-68).

One more story has to be included in this chapter to round things off, not least because it shows the bricolage method used in a mythical corpus of this age and size, the cultural success of which depends on its ability to shift plot segments and characters as necessary. The theme of the power quest so dominant in “Látkakáwas” is repeated in a story that could easily be missed because of its trivial-sounding title and non-classic characters. In the narrative “Wus Wants to Marry a Butterfly” (Curtin, *Myths* 214-18), Wus (Fox) is the protagonist. Middle-aged and living with his mother, he missed out on undertaking vision quests when still young enough to do so and now wants to gather power not for spiritual reasons but because he covets the beautiful Wálwilégas (butterfly) women (the women who save Aishish in the other stories). Under the guidance of the elderly and experienced Djaudjau (the Flying Squirrel), Wus completes a series of vision quests and cleansing rituals similar to those Aishish undertook in “Látkakáwas” under the guidance of Kmu'kamsh. However, in this case, the story has a less archaic and more modern ring to it. Although Djaudjau suspects that Wus is being dishonest about his motivation for undertaking the spiritual endeavor and is only interested in acquiring sexual gratification, he guides him through the series of quests, peppered with many injunctions and prohibitions. After conversing with the earth on a snow-capped mountain, Wus returns home to his mother. His arrival is announced by a big fire on top of the mountain built by the mountain itself (Curtin, *Myths* 216). After this experience, Curtin reports, “Wus was changed. He didn't look as he did when he went away; he looked better and stronger” (216). Then, after a ten-day fast, Wus finally encounters a group of Wálwilégas women. They are washing roots in a creek, reject his overtures and walk away. “Mad in his heart,” Wus leaves for his mother's house. On the way there he comes to a house inhabited by a couple called Guíwas who give him food to eat. The woman tells him that the butterfly girls are “bad” and proud girls, and Wus informs her that the girls will soon no longer be people but will instead be turned into conventional butterflies. This causes the Guíwas woman to become extremely fearful that Wus might turn her family into animals as well. Wus returns home to his mother and they subsequently move away from the foot of the mountain where they had been living. His elderly teacher Djaudjau, however, announces that he himself will stay: “‘I am named for the mountains and I will never leave them’. Old Djaudjau is hunting on those mountains yet. People who travel on high mountains often hear him calling his own name. Wus and his mother went to Klamath Lake, and people say that they live there now” (218).

Wus combines the action of the culture hero Aishish with the lecherousness of Kmu'kamsh, the wiliness of Weasel, and, of course, the craftiness of the animal after which he is named. According to Northrop Frye's typology, we would categorize him as a low mimetic or comic hero (in contrast to Kmu'kamsh, the mythical hero, and Aishish the hero of romance).⁷⁰ The story of Djaudjau and Wus, it

70 Wus could also be regarded as a trickster according to the popular contemporary figure in Native American literature. Especially his horniness would support such a reading.

seems, repeats, in a slightly comic register, Kmu'kamsh's spiritual teachings to Aishish by sending him to all the powerful places in the world. What is conspicuous about this short narrative is the presence of both the Flying Squirrel which shares its name with the mountains where he lives and the couple by the name of Guíwas, whose animal identity is not given and whose plot function seems limited to admonishing Wus to become a responsible member of society. The signifier "Guíwas," Klamath for both the location of Crater Lake and the pine squirrel, is here semiotically attached to a couple who live near the fire mountain and possibly share its name (the example of Djaudjau shows that proper names can be identical with place names). This story is evidence of the spiritual practice of swimming in the lakes, probably including Gi'was e-ush. Seemingly insignificant and unrelated to the Kmu'kamsh-Aishish cycle, it can be seen to spell out its crucial concern: the need for young men to overcome their primitive desires and to become initiated into the world by seeking dreams and listening to the mountains at sacred places, such as the fire mountains at Gi'was.

What also becomes obvious is that a story such as "Wus Wants to Marry a Butterfly" is not sufficiently described as oral *tradition*; it is a case of oral *literature*. Its function is not exhausted by passing on knowledge, it also dramatizes and aestheticizes relationships between human and non-human persons, and it gives its protagonist a novelistic (low mimetic) personality. In spite of its apparent simplicity and focus on entertainment value, it is full of wisdom and remembers important mythical figures and places.

The Gi'was stories of the Klamath and Modoc do carry knowledge of a catastrophe wrapped in plots that teach the art of resilience – expressing human's ability to defeat brute violence and take smart action, such as hiding from conflagration (Aishish in his cave). Gi'was is not a place of dread to the Indigenous people (as colonial sources claimed) but a sacred place, a site of power. There is nothing gothic about it for those who observe the rules. Rather, this special place is part of a larger attitude to an inhabited landscape far removed from the Christian ideology which assigns a hostile power to nature. To the Indigenous population, the non-human or more-than-human world is a force to be reckoned with, a force to know and to adapt to.

Gi'was and its Transcultural Raconteurs

At the end of a long "dig" into the storyworld of the Klamath and Modoc as it was transmitted at the moment of the colonial encounter, we may feel a bit like Wus: having set out on a particular quest – to find evidence, following Deloria's question, of ancient Indigenous knowledge of the eruption of Mount Mazama, we have not only discovered significant indicators of the existence of such knowledge, but we have also been initiated into a world of the imagination hitherto largely obscured by colonialism: a literature rich in ideas, mystery, moral les-

sons, historical knowledge, landmark knowledge, and wonderful characters. The Colvig-Clark version of the ancient cataclysm, in spite of its unsatisfactory empirical status, is now generally accepted as proof of the Klamath and Modoc having inherited and preserved a memory of the eruption. In tolerating that transcultural précis of a much larger tradition, however, we have missed to appreciate the epistemic complexity and literary wealth of the Klamath-Modoc storyworld that took shape around that region's cataclysmic events for millennia. Had these stories not been suddenly interrupted due to colonial society's cultural arrogance and assimilationist ideology, they would be retold today in the form of modern literature, comic strips, games, and movies. These stories could today serve as encouragement for coping with present and coming catastrophes such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

The polyvocality and the protean character of this transcultural archive is a challenge even for experienced literary critics – apart from the semi-readability of the Gatschet material mentioned above. Yet, a decolonial approach to the history of colonial interaction requires such labor against the grain of the archive – and sometimes with its grain, as Ann Stoler writes. A decolonial critic cannot expect the material to be laid out in perfect order; the messiness and semi-visibility of the archive is part of the imperial machine that has also driven the Modoc into the Lava Beds and then into exile in Oklahoma and the Klamath to cultural quasi-extinction through termination, against the effects of which they continue to struggle (David Lewis; Tsing 197-99; personal communication).

In spite of the recalcitrance of the archival situation, there is comprehensive evidence – both orally transmitted and documented in writing during the peak of colonial dispossession – that Gi'was is one of the oldest sacred places, still used as such, in human history. This is the historical dimension that has to be recognized: the temporal scope covered by this tradition indeed extends to 7,700 years. If the name and the stories can be traced back to the cataclysmic events around the eruption of Mount Mazama – and there is strong indication that they can – this would mean that the age of this sacred place can compete with that of the most ancient Old World churches and temples – unless future archaeologists will one day trace the original site of Noah's Ark (or the site of the Garden of Eden). Heinrich Schliemann's spectacular discovery of Troy on the basis of a topological reading of Homer's *Iliad* (based on oral traditions) is the only comparable Old World example that comes to mind (and that indeed came to Deloria's mind – *Red Earth* 167). The Kmu'kamsh-Gi'was story complex, connecting the destruction of the Thunders and an active fire mountain with the place where today Crater Lake is located, is cultural evidence for a collective memory whose long-term preservation was only possible because the Klamath and Modoc had resided in the area for many millennia: an almost uncanny example in sedentariness, unmatched by any European "tribe." It is also perhaps the oldest account of the cultural effects of a volcanic eruption in world history. Besides Pliny the Younger's short account of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79, the only other

case of such an impressive aesthetic coverage of the traumatizing effects of a collapsing volcano would be that of Mount Tambora, Java, in 1815, which caused starvation and disease throughout the world and has left its cultural imprint on poems by Lord Byron (“Darkness”) and especially Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (Wood).⁷¹ The whole oral tradition to which these stories belong can be seen as a cultural attempt to close the wound around a historical trauma – if not a spiritual trauma in response to the incomprehensible actions of the creator Kmu’kamsh who, like Jehova, is both creator and destroyer of the world inhabited by his sons and daughters, who are both animals and humans. In fact the stories represent an episteme that regards human and non-human animals as related; its non-anthropocentric logic offers an intellectual alternative to the colonial episteme’s anthropocentric perspective (whose ubiquity is hardly mitigated by the discourse of the Anthropocene).⁷²

The geological and volcanic situatedness of these cultural groups is demonstrated exceptionally by the fact that the Modoc, during their stand-off against the troops of the U.S. Cavalry in the winter of 1872/73, took shelter in the Lava Beds, south of Tule Lake and northeast of Mt. Shasta, in today’s northern California. The endurance of a small group of Modoc against the numerically and technologically superior American troops can be accredited to the Indians’ familiarity with the lava landscape and the particular features of that arid region. “The fortification,” writes Clifford Trafzer, is “an amazing geological phenomenon. Every feature of the most sophisticated man-made fortresses was formed by nature, and the Modocs knew every inch of it” (qtd. Sutton 9). Together with a heavy fog, their knowledge of this area enabled them to hold out. But it did not protect the survivors from deportation to the Indian Territory after their defeat and the execution of their leaders.⁷³

In the 1950s, after having survived the first brutal wave of colonization, the Klamath and Modoc tribes became subjected to the U.S. government’s Termination policy. Their economic independence was crushed, which led to “legal extinction” (Fixico, *Invasion*) and the loss of all tribal lands as non-Indian companies bought up their land and lumber mills. Even after the revocation of Termination, today the tribes continue to struggle for economic independence, the political recognition of their water rights, the return of tribal lands, and for restoration from social ruination (David Lewis; Fixico, *Invasion*, chapter 4).

71 The cause of the climate catastrophe was unknown at the time. Amazingly, Lord Byron’s poem “Darkness,” in which he describes the human suffering caused by the “year without a summer,” includes an imagined volcanic eruption. Byron evokes the volcano as a source of light, warmth, and “fearful hope.”

72 The anthropocentrism of Anthropocene discourse consists in its obliviousness to historical asymmetries in identifying the causes of contemporary ecocide and climate change, and in its frequent concentration on the activities of humans, ignoring the agency of non-human life. Indigenous mythologies can teach us humility toward the planet’s non-human inhabitants. In them, we are all “people.”

73 For a detailed account of the significance of the Lava Beds in Modoc culture and the Modoc War, including much oral history, see Deur, *Footprints* 157-214.

One of the results of reeducation and Termination was of course the death of language and oral tradition. Thus, Ella Clark writes that her search for corroboration of the printed versions of Indigenous stories she had found in archives saw her travel to meet the Indians themselves, visiting fourteen reservations (*Indian Legends* 2). She regrets the waning interest of the younger generation in preserving the stories: "In almost every village I visited, someone said, 'If you had only come last year! The person who could have helped you most died last winter'" (2). Clark worked intimately with Indigenous consultants, some of who contacted her after the publication of her first volume in order to entrust her with further stories that they knew.⁷⁴ Although her books never stood the test of science, they have been used by both scientists and government institutions. Clark made an important contribution to preserving Indigenous oral knowledge about landmarks and historical events at a time when anthropology was primarily interested in studying kinship systems, material culture, and religious ceremonies. Neither did Clark bend to the popular desire for funny stories about Coyote and other tricksters, which, more often than not, are deformations of serious stories that functioned to come to terms with collective transformation and trauma.⁷⁵ For Clark, as for the activist-scholar Vine Deloria, the land was the most crucial topic to address, and she dedicated much space in her collections to preserving Indigenous knowledge about the land. Today, her stories are used on tribal websites and printed publications.

Intellectually, Ella Clark positions herself in a way that anticipates the thought of a later generation of scholars working under the impact of postcolonial and decolonial theories that critique Western scientific discourse's denial of epistemic coevalness (Fabian) and make suggestions for fixing this serious error. Having no academic or theoretical aspirations in her own work, Clark nevertheless paved the way toward reactivating Indigenous knowledge today, as Deloria well understood and appreciated.

The other European-American agents might be divided into two groups – those who had a more or less scientific in-depth knowledge of the societies whose stories they recorded due to having learned their languages and having spent time with the Indigenous consultants, and those who worked as multipliers pop-

74 Thus, for example, George Nanamkin of the Moses Band of Columbia River Indians, who requested she record and publish the story about the Warm Wind Brothers' fight against the Cold Wind Brothers. The story bears quite a few similarities with the Klamath and Modoc stories about Kmu'kamsh's defeat of the North Wind and his killing of the five evil brothers. Both stories may be read as narrativizations of the gradual warming of the climate that took place after the end of the Last Glacial Maximum 10,000 years ago. "In his letter asking me for an interview, he wrote that the story he wanted recorded had been told by his people for many, many years. 'It shows that we had in Ice Age'" (Clark/Edmonds, *Voices* 26). The narrator of the Modoc story "Wind and Thunder" also draws a link between the killing of the North Wind and the warming of the climate (Curtin, *Myths* 77).

75 Kmu'kamsh, of course, is a trickster-transformer but lacks the funny elements of today's literary trickster figures; these are instead represented by his smart and cocky little brother, Weasel. For a critique of reductive readings of trickster figures (beginning with the English word itself), see Nimachia Howe.

ularizing the stories as part of the local lore of the states where they lived. The earlier generation of academically skilled Euroamericans – Albert Samuel Gatschet, Jeremiah Curtin, and Muhammad Abd-al-Rahman (née Phillip) Barker – are all illustrious personalities in their own right. Gatschet (born 1832 near Bern) was a recent immigrant from Switzerland where he had already worked on landmark knowledge. Being a linguist, his approach to another culture is necessarily through language, not the study of customs which, as he correctly remarks, are inevitably presentist and ahistorical. Language for him is the “most important monument of the American Indian.” Archaeology and ethnology are good for “facts,” “but language, when properly investigated, gives us the ideas that were moving the Indian’s mind, not only recently but long before the historical period” (I: vii). In other words, the language and the stories of a culture are for Gatschet historical archives, and it is only through its history – i.e. its language and its stories – that any culture can be properly known.⁷⁶ Jeremiah Curtin (born in Detroit in 1835) was not only a translator collecting perhaps the most extensive corpus of Modoc stories; he also translated Henryk Sienkiewicz novels, including his masterpiece *Quo Vadis*. He published various other volumes on mythological texts (e.g. from Ireland) (Wiki). Barker, born in Spokane, Washington, in 1929, converted to Islam on a trip to India while doing research on Urdu and Asian Studies of which he later became a professor; he wrote his dissertation on the Klamath language. He became probably best known as an inventor of games and an author of SciFi novels (Wiki).

What unites these three men is that all of them traveled extensively and that they had a genuine interest in other cultures and other languages. They were academically trained, which means that their approach was guided by a general knowledge of other cultures and earlier historical times.

In spite of his knowledge of the trade language Chinook, William Colvig seems to have retained less contact with tribal people than the aforementioned. His intention was primarily to contribute to the making of the history of the land newly settled by immigrants and in urgent need of a tradition and a heritage. Judge Colvig was actively engaged as a citizen; filling the land with stories was one expression of this, as is testified by his numerous accounts of Crater Lake legends, which he gave at various public occasions, as well as a radio interview in Chinook late in his life. In 1914, *The Morning Oregonian*, in its section “Locals and Personals,” praises Judge Colvig as a public persona

who knows more about Crater Lake than Will Steele, who put it on the map and had the Govt. make a park around it. An old Indian medicine-man [sic] once told the Judge the legend of the volcanic disturbance that made the lake. The Judge had probably improved on the story, like the

76 His phrase “long before the historical period” betrays his indebtedness to a Hegelian sense of historicity which has since been seriously questioned. See, for example, Smail, Hunt, Mackenthun/Mucher.

polished raconteur that he is but it's worth the price of admittance alone to hear him tell it. He is a skookum storyteller.⁷⁷

Regarded from a transcultural perspective, these personalities not only contributed to today's knowledge of Indigenous stories but they were also influenced by the stories they popularized. Colvig is known to have related them to his children; his public persona was significantly shaped by his early experience with the Klamath in the post-Civil War era.

And yet the notion of a peaceful transcultural construction of Crater Lake as a mythic site does not lack ideological conflict. William Colvig's box contains two typescripts from 1912 with a short and rather romanticized version of the Mt. Mazama story, preceded by Colvig's copyright claim: "The following legend is the personal property of Judge Wm.M. Colvig, who intends to make use of and copyright same. Meanwhile it should not be published." The name of Chief Lalek no longer appears (Colvig, "Klamath Indian Legend of Crater Lake").⁷⁸ As the United States held sway not only over its "domestic" former enemies but also over "savages" elsewhere in the world (Hawaii, the Philippines), the discursive conditions were seductive enough for appropriating an Indigenous story – apparently not for material reasons but explicable only on a more subliminal, psychological level. At the darkest time of cultural genocide, the colonial epistemic order secured possession of Indigenous knowledge archives while excluding the human beings from further serious consideration. Physical conquests, this example shows once again, are always accompanied by appropriations of intellectual heritage and the silencing of the defeated epistemic cultures.

One conclusion from the previous description could be that the stories about Gi'was are the products of friendly cultural interaction, of a story world made anew through intercultural interaction. My preferred reading, however, is that this was a process of painful transculturation – vastly asymmetrical, leading to an emptying out of the Indigenous peoples' symbolic claim to the land they inhabited.

77 *The Morning Oregonian*, 25 May 1914. "Skookum" is Chinook for "very big."

78 Colvig's ideological position within the colonial contact zone was consistent. In the 1870s, just a few years after his friendly chats with the Klamath chief Lalek, he had been a volunteer in the Modoc War. Much later, in a speech in support of William McKingley's presidential campaign in 1900, Colvig rejected the Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan's critique of the expansionist policy of the time with a full-fledged rendering of social Darwinist doctrine. "Every great nation," Colvig declared to the campaign crowd at the Medford opera house, "as had its growth through conquest and battlefields. National and racial expansion are based upon and grow out of natural laws which cannot be stayed or controlled by legislation. Intelligence is power and power will rule, and no consideration of moral, local or international law can prevent it. Men are free and equal only in theory; in fact, they are largely the creatures of heredity and environment. Hedge it about and handicap it as you will, Caucasian blood will rule. ("Medford's Big Demonstration"). ("Hotel Lobbies Furnish Tales").

Ruination

The less westernized versions of the Kmu'kamsh stories are – among other meanings – explanations of the geological layout of the land and the ecological interdependence of its inhabitants. They testify to the sacredness of the land and the more-than-human world. The disruption of the bond between humans and animals is always narrated as a moral punishment for some social misbehavior while the great majority of the stories show a conviction that the fates of humans and other animals are intricately related – that humans, animals, and plants are indeed “companion species” (Haraway) entangled with one another in intricate webs of mutual dependency. In this sense, this corpus connects with relationalist epistemologies as expressed by Arturo Escobar, Edouard Glissant, Elizabeth deLoughrey, and others – an ethical aesthetics seeking to integrate non-Western, Indigenous grassroots worldviews that “escape the division of nature and culture” and effect an ethical empowerment of non-human agents, including “mountains, water, soil, the forest” (Escobar, “Afterword” 397).⁷⁹ The ancient, fragmentary record of the cultural discourse about Crater Lake/Gi'was, based on the coevalness of all living creatures, reveals an aesthetic of “ruins” and “ruination” (Stoler; Cliff) that unites two radically different meanings: “ruins,” the colonial, anthropocentric repertoire for nostalgically dwelling on the catastrophic passing of empires; while “ruination” emphasizes the cyclical restorative force of nature. The critical assessment of the ruins of empire can provide the soil for cultural resilience: “To think with ruins of empire,” writes Stoler, “is to emphasize less the artifacts of empire as dead matter or remnants of a defunct regime than to attend to their reappropriations, neglect, and strategic and active positioning within the politics of the present” (*Imperial Debris* 11). In Cliff's understanding (more than in Stoler's), “ruination” refers to the new growth of vegetation gradually covering the physical ruins of colonial plantations in the Caribbean, to the way in which land formerly used for agriculture is lapsing back into “bush,” ensuring new life (Cliff 1). Indigenous and transcultural storytelling transports this utopian sense of resilience and repair in addition to remembering the processes of geological and man-made destructions of the land and its inhabitants.

In 1931, the ecopoetically minded Stanton Lapham reached out to the Indigenous inhabitants in evoking Crater Lake as the source of a common spirituality; he wished to “join our brothers, of the tribes of Klamath, in proclaiming it the shrine of the gods, Land of Gay-was, devoted to the sacred and beautiful, where we too may commune with the Great Spirit” (136). Lapham's offer to affectively “own” the land in transcultural piety is a welcome alternative to the continuing practices of ecocide and cultural genocide. To the Indigenous inhab-

79 I would like to thank Liz deLoughrey for strengthening my half-baked sense that the Klamath-Modoc corpus resonates with an ecopoetic energy that makes it signify in the present historical moment. It contains ancient knowledge with great potential for future world-building.

itants of the land, Gi'was had always been much more than a marvelous object of aesthetic contemplation. A place of terror and fear but also of resilience and renewal, Gi'was teaches a moral lesson about the stuff of survival. The fire, the exploding hearts, the ocean of pitch covering the land, and the recurrent motif of starvation, remember the disaster haunting this special place. But the story-world's many human-animal survivors – like the pine squirrel, the flying squirrel, the pine marten, and the weasel burrowing tunnels underneath the soil – make us remember Gi'was not only as a landscape of fear but of fertility and nurture. The ancient geological trauma, transmitted in the Indigenous story tradition for thousands of years, transports strategic knowledge about “staying with the trouble” (in Donna Haraway's words). They do so in the presence of contemporary devastations resulting from the fossil extraction economy fueled by an anthropocentric, proprietarian ideology whose “works” Anna Tsing observed while gathering mushrooms in the “ruined” Cascadian forests. The cross-species, storied landscape of Gi'was, in speaking of ruination, bears the signature of survival.

EPILOGUE

The Antiquity Trap

The evocation of great antiquity is an important ingredient of the colonial episteme – an episteme that favors writing over against orality and that asserts to privilege sedentariness over against a non-sedentary lifestyle. A closer look at the actions of colonial nations since the early modern period teaches us that their claims to antiquity are frequently connected to intrusions of foreign lands – the representative artifacts having been relocated from their countries of origin to the colonial and imperial metropolitan centers. In the United States, Indigenous artifacts were transported to colonial museums while Native Americans were driven off their lands – an activity justified by claiming that they had no specific relation to the land. Their stories, many of which testify to such a relation, were not considered as epistemically relevant. The previous chapter gave an example of how a whole knowledge archive has been cut off by Western scientific discourse. It has also shown that the storyworld of the Klamath and Modoc is saturated with memories of catastrophic geological events and with deep knowledge of their ancestral homeland.

My various examples in this volume have shown that the real bone of contention is not age or the length of historical memory but the land itself. In legal conflicts about possession of land, access to land, and ecological stewardship of land, evidence for length of tenure helps in establishing territorial claims. Proof of ancient and continuous occupation features prominently in the inofficial, and sometimes official, legal logic of colonial nations. Clearly, a legal argument based on age is less easy to defend if transmitted by oral tradition than if documented in writing. The “courts of the conqueror” (Walter Echo-Hawk) leave little room for a cultural logic outside their own epistemic framework; thus tribes have to act within that framework and play the essentialist game of blood logics and a Lockean conception of land ownership. Next to historical treaties, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA, 1978) and the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, 1990) offer some space for making claims to traditional territories. Cultural knowledge in the form of stories can be an important supporting element in such claims. Historian Robert Winthrop reminds us that

[t]he tenacity with which many Indian tribes struggle to preserve their sacred landscapes is understandable, for such areas offer the possibility of sustaining tradition and identity, thus linking the future with the past. The attempt by Karok, Yurok, and other Northwest California peoples to preserve the “High Country” of Del Norte County from logging – the

so-called G-O Road case, fought all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court – offers a recent example. (Winthrop, “Crater Lake”).

Winthrop refers to the famous case *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association* which was decided in favor of the logging industry in 1988 by the U.S. Supreme Court after a lower court had ruled in favor of the tribes’ spiritual rights to continue using the Siskiyou wilderness in Northern California as their sacred place of worship (Walter Echo-Hawk, chapter 12). The Supreme Court’s fear was that the granting of religious freedom might open the floodgates to future land claims by Indigenous tribes – that Indian entrepreneurs might acquire “de facto beneficial ownership of some rather spacious tracts of public property” and eventually “divest the Government of its right to use what is, after all, *its* land,” as Supreme Court Justice Sarah O’Connor writes (qtd. Walter Echo-Hawk 348). The question underlying many of the discussions about the antiquity of the Indigenous presence in America and their ancestral rights derives from the unvoiced knowledge that the process of territorial dispossession and the profit motif of the extraction economy were, and continues to be, disturbingly incompatible with Western moral standards. In his passionate dissenting opinion, Justice William Brennan praises the diligence with which the previous court, the California Federal District Court under Justice Stanley Weigel, had made sure to ascertain the spiritual centrality of the Siskiyou wilderness for the involved tribes by listening to the stories of the elders. The case, according to Brennan, “represents yet another stress point in the longstanding conflict between two disparate cultures – the dominant Western culture, which views land in terms of ownership and use, and that of Native Americans, in which concepts of private property are not only alien, but contrary to a belief system that holds land sacred” (*United States Supreme Court v. Lyng*).¹

As already mentioned in chapter 1, the Canadian Supreme Court took a radically different position toward Indigenous traditional land rights in 1997, nine years after its U.S. equivalent. In the *Delgamuukw* case, it overturned a previous decision by the Supreme Court of British Columbia rejecting the complaint filed by more than 100 Gitksan (Gitskan or Tsimshian) and Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs against the Province of British Columbia to prevent clear-cut logging on their traditional land.² Overturning the biased ruling of the B.C. judge, Canadian Supreme Court Chief Justice Antonio Lamer ruled, *inter alia*, that Aboriginal title is a right relating to land *sui generis*, held communally and distinct from other ancestral rights; that it encompasses exclusive use and occupation of terri-

1 Such work is actually demanded by the AIRFA. Brennan also refers to the conflict between land access and Native American religious freedom and how to deal with this: “Indeed, in the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), 42 U.S.C. § 1996 Congress expressly recognized the adverse impact land use decisions and other governmental actions frequently have on the site-specific religious practices of Native Americans, and the Act accordingly directs agencies to consult with Native American religious leaders before taking actions that might impair those practices.” (*United States Supreme Court v. Lyng*).

2 *Delgamuukw* is the Indigenous name of one of the claimants, Earl Muldon.

tory; and that the evidence necessary for obtaining this status includes proof that the claimants have occupied the territory in question continuously from the time before the declaration of Canadian sovereignty until the present. Sufficient proof of continuity would be the demonstration of substantial maintenance of the *bond* between the tribes and the territory, and oral evidence could be admitted as such proof (Supreme Court of Canada).³

Delgamuukw is a landmark decision honoring landmark knowledge. Yet it also defined strict criteria for making Indigenous land claims, among them the need to produce evidence of continuous occupation and of Indigenous “use” of the land: both requests – for use as for continuity – imply a somewhat nostalgic assumption about Indigenous culture being exempt from historical change. How difficult it is presently for tribes to act within the confines of an extraction-based colonial system became obvious in 2016 when it transpired that a few of the chiefs who had originally taken the province to court, including Chief Earl Muldon alias Delgamuukw, the name patron of the case, had now signed away the tribal rights for passage of a 900-kilometer gas pipeline – TransCanada’s proposed Prince Rupert Gas Transmission Project (PRGT) designed to carry liquid natural gas (LNG) from northeastern British Columbia to the LNG export terminal at Lelu Island (Jang). Muldon defends his decision by arguing that the money will be used to build an urgently needed decent school building and a home for the elderly of the tribe (Jang). Such are the vicious choices to be made by responsible tribal leaders acting under colonialism.

The idea of (archaeologically or orally substantiated) continuous occupation is at the heart of both cases. The radically different legal opinions show that no common consensus exists about the character and temporality of Indigenous land use. The texts of the rulings rather testify to the continuous existence of colonial stereotypes about Indigenous realities. Antiquity remains a trap in colonial legal discourse. Although few tribal groups have probably inhabited the same territory for as many millennia as the Klamath and Modoc (discussed in the previous chapter), all of them, we should assume, enjoy “seniority” in comparison with the time of occupation by colonial immigrants.⁴ As the cases discussed in this book show, however, colonial discourse is not always content with demonstrations of seniority and has successfully rechannelled the simple historical fact that “Indians discovered America” (as a 1970s Red Power bumper sticker said) into a discussion about either a lack of antiquity, a lack of continuity of owner-

3 Unfortunately, Lamer also ruled that Aboriginal lands could not be used in a manner that was inconsistent with Aboriginal title: if Indigenous people wished to use the land in ways that Aboriginal title did not permit, then the land must be surrendered to the Crown. Implicit in this view is the expectation that Indigenous land use methods were not subject to historical change – that a society would have to be culturally ‘consistent’ against the disruptions effected by colonialism.

4 This is the term used by Don Gentry, tribal chairman of the Klamath, Modoc and Yahoskin. At least in Oregon, he said, there is a general consensus about this fact (personal communication). But of course, as we know, things can change.

ship, or a lack of the “right kind” of ownership or racial identity. If push comes to shove, recognition of tribal rights depends on the willingness and the generosity of colonial society to respect tribal priority and the consequences that this entails. The frightful winding back on ecological and Indigenous rights during the Trump presidency suggests that the generous acceptance of Indigenous “seniority” may not always suffice as a foundation for retaining land ownership, fishing rights, and stewardship rights.⁵ It is also important to keep the historical account alive – a project to which this book was written to contribute.

Geognosis: Digging at Home

Having asserted the complicity of antiquity discourse with settler colonial dispossession, it is important to note that the desire to know about the Earth’s distant past and the cultural techniques used for arriving at such knowledge are not in themselves collusive with colonial and imperial violence. The wish to learn more about the character of one’s place of habitation is a matter of natural curiosity and of defining one’s place in the world.⁶ As this book showed, the uses of archaeological practice by imperial and colonialist powers, as its use of racialized classification systems, served the purpose of legitimating territorial appropriation and policies of cultural genocide. But not every permitted dig into the soil or other people’s traditional knowledge amounts to an act of imperial aggression. Quite the contrary, the sharing of knowledge is also a precondition for improving humans’ relationship to one another and the rest of creation and for building a common future on this planet.

The amateur story collectors mentioned in chapter 4 – like the schoolteacher Ella Clark – illustrate this point. Their work was virtually ignored by metropolitan science which likewise ignored or derided Indigenous oral traditions as sources of knowledge. The work of such marginal and transcultural figures, generated in cultural and colonial contact and conflict zones, deserves attention because it exemplifies the fractured nature of imperial knowledge and it aggravates imperial claims to hegemony. Running alongside a canon of institutionalized scientific knowledge about nature in general and its antiquity in particular, local experts

5 A recent case is the legal struggle between the Penobscot Nation and the State of Maine about stewardship rights in the Penobscot River. The state attorney of Maine denies the fact that colonial treaties managing land rights also included river rights as well as the fact that the tribe has a riverine culture. As the Penobscot oral tradition proves, the landscape of today’s Maine and Nova Scotia is filled with landmark stories that include a long river quest by the culture hero Glooskap (Klose-kur-beh). See Annette Kolodny, “Competing Narratives.”

6 This natural desire provides the theme for John Preston’s novel *The Dig* (2007; turned into a movie in 2021), based on the excavation of an early medieval Anglo Saxon royal grave at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, by a local archaeologist during the Second World War. Both novel and historical event testify to the tendency of such discoveries to ignite scientific controversy and personality conflicts.

lacking the sanction of official science busily produced alternative knowledge archives. Most often, their activities were and are geographically limited, focusing on specific fields of interest, but this does not mean that they lacked an understanding of the larger world. Their local radius allowed them to develop a particularly “thick” knowledge of the earth, its inhabitants, and its hidden secrets – by studying closely oral cultures and geological formations, by “digging” into those human and geological archives at their own expense, and by collecting valuable information about place and antiquity. To do this requires a specific kind of literacy and a skill of listening that enable one to detect historical meanings in stories about land and to discern notions about territorial ownership in stories about interactions between humans and non-humans. This practice – of “gentleman” (and “gentlewoman”) scholars, antiquarians, and cultural go-betweens – historically preceded the emergence of national scientific institutions, and it continued to exist as orthodox science first rivalled and then inherited religious institutions on its triumphal march toward epistemic authority.

In *Earth's Deep History*, Martin Rudwick calls attention to the work of *geognosts*, expert readers of the surface of the earth who were hired by mining academies to discover precious minerals, and who often relied on the “local knowledge of people of lower social class such as peasants, quarry-men, and miners to guide [them] to the most significant spots” (Rudwick, 82). Coined in 1787 by Abraham Werner, a geologist working at Saxony's mining academy in Freiberg, “geognosy” (the original term) literally means “knowledge of the earth” and referred to the surface analysis of geological strata and “fossil records” (130, 82-83, 144). Its practitioners, the geognosts, regarded themselves as archivists of strata and were more interested in the practical aspects of geological work (such as detecting strata with valuable minerals or sites for the openings of mine shafts) than in drawing universal theoretical conclusions. Once again, we find Earth science deeply entangled with the extractive activities of industrial modernity; indeed without the knowledge of geognosts, industrialization and modernity would probably have been impossible.

While they served the interests of the extraction industry to which the Western world owes much of its wealth and living standard, most geognosts remained intermediaries between the local people and the scientists proper: they did “not propose causal explanations of what they observed, let alone to reconstruct the Earth's past history. They often contrasted their own soberly factual investigations with ... the kind of theorizing [... called] ‘geology’, which they tended to dismiss as no better than fanciful speculation” (83). Geognosts, then, were the archivists of strata, the original readers of the land, whose down-to-earth activity provided the raw material for the emerging science of geology. In the field of cultural knowledge, the work of scientists like Albert Gatschet whose approach couples the exploration of human history with an assessment of place-knowledge (expressed in toponymy and toponomastics), confirms the importance of a chronotopical perspective that assigns equal importance to place as to history.

Geologists' and topo-linguists' readings of soil and place as meaningful and "storied" entities show affinities with Indigenous readings of the land which, for them, is filled with stories and knowable through stories (Basso).

I propose the term *geognosis* as a critical term to describe a tangible knowledge perspective on non-human nature, especially the land itself. Landmark stories – whether in Europe or in North America – contain knowledge about the structures of the land, the composition of the soil, and the habits of the creatures living in the various environments, without placing them in any hierarchical-appropriative knowledge structure. Geognostic knowledge can be seen as a form of aesthetic and affective ownership not to be confused with that kind of possession that expresses itself in title deeds and scientific classification systems. Geognosis refers to an ecopoetic, non-anthropocentric approach to the non-human world that Indigenous oral tradition, with its innumerable animal and geological stories, has preserved but which Western modernity gradually excluded from its repertoire, moving it to the section of children's literature (where it fortunately retained some of its vibrancy).

Geognosis, then, is a method of "thick" readings of rocks, earth strata, and the land as if they were texts. It describes an analytical practice that looks closely at textual and geological records, with an intimate understanding of their discrete "languages," and with the binary blinders – dividing the world into rational science and irrational myth, into culture and nature, into history and prehistory and so on – pulled off. The concept is inspired by what Walter Mignolo, himself inspired by the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, has termed "border gnosis," reminiscent of the fact that "border knowledge" is also a kind of territorial knowledge.⁷ Just as border gnosis will "help in imagining a world without rigid frontiers" (Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs* 310), geognosis might help removing the still-dominant dualisms dividing natural phenomena into "life" and "non-life" (Povinelli 5, *passim*) and recalibrate the critical perspective.

Local knowledge depends on landmarks and landscape to function as a mnemonic system, in conjunction with stories that preserve knowledge about the special qualities of the land. "Memory needs the earth in order to survive," writes Alain Schapp in his book on the history of archaeology: "Whether inscribed in stone, brick, or parchment, or flowing in human memory by the agency of bard or poet, a foundation narrative must root itself in the land, invest itself within that reality which is sealed within the soil" (24). Similarly, on their website the Confederated Colville tribes contend that these "landmark legends" "provide historic information, relate to resource management and provide moral and spiritual guidance. These stories and legends witness our ancestral claim to the land ... and to the resources found here. These landmark legends define our home" (Ferguson 6). This resonates with Martin Rudwick's claim that the Earth, inscribed as it is

7 In *Local Histories/Global Designs*, Mignolo defines border gnosis as "new loci of enunciation" occupied by "new forms of knowledge in which what has been subalternized and considered interesting only as object of study" (13).

with traces of past geological events, must itself be regarded as an agent of history: “the vast expanses of pre-human deep time, even on their own, turned out to have been filled with a history just as eventful and dramatic in its own way as human history. In short, it turned out that *nature has had a history of its own*” (*Earth’s Deep History* 2). If historicity is to be granted to organic agency – and the nature-culture and new materialist debates of the past decades would support such a view – then this statement is absolutely feasible because it introduces the Earth itself as a claimant with demands to be accounted for.⁸

In giving historical agency to the Earth itself, Rudwick unwittingly echoes discussions about the ambivalence of the concept of the Anthropocene whose critical potential lies in admitting, and acting upon, the fact that the present unhealthy condition of the Earth was largely caused by man’s geological interventions. But it also contains the grain of human hubris, an exaggeration of “man”’s general importance compared with non-human agents and of the soil itself.

Like the farm laborers discovering fossil bones and ancient structures while tilling the land, Ella Clark, Albert Gatschet, Jeremiah Curtin, and others began digging into Indigenous cultural archives “at home” – the only home they knew. But in doing so they reached out to those whose ancestors had lived in the land, appreciating them as knowledge keepers and as human beings. Did they commit acts of cultural appropriation? Or were they instrumental in preserving cultural knowledge, such as the wonderful deeds of Marten, Weasel, and their companions (discussed in chapter 4)? The question is hard to decide.

A decolonial approach to the production of knowledge about the American deep past and American nature would ideally combine a critique of the predominant colonialist mode with a documentation of a contrapuntal attitude toward time and place, as I tried to do in this book. Right from its beginnings in the eighteenth century, the narrative and practice of the classical episteme, built on a logic of classification and exclusion as well as an extractivist-rationalistic ideology, was disturbed by the dissenting voices of a “romantic” counterculture that promoted the recognition of a more humanistic and ecological perspective. The expansion of slavery was concurrent with the emergence of Humboldtian idealism; next to Jackson and Polk there were Melville and Thoreau, damning dollars and refusing to pay taxes to finance the war against Mexico. As society today, mid-nineteenth-century U.S. society was divided to bursting point about the issues of social inequality both at home and abroad. Discourses about the distant past continue to be harnessed to arguments about how to manage the society of the present and future.

The epistemic divide, then, never ran exclusively between Europe and the non-European world; rather, the Western episteme itself was always inherently

8 In the view of climate change, mass deforestation, the accelerating soil consolidation due to building activities, and the ecologically disastrous use of herbicides and pesticides, the idea that the earth should be granted rights may sound less radical than it at first appears. Various states have adopted such rights in their constitutions, Ecuador being one of them.

contradictory and heterogeneous. The split between a predominantly ecological-affective and a technological-exploitative attitude toward nature continues today as the industrialized societies are internally divided into two camps – one seeking to continue shaping the world in the name of the ideologies of growth and “development” while the other promotes an ecologically sustainable future respectful of generational justice. Traditional Ecological Knowledge, the promising approach inspired by Indigenous epistemic thinking (Menzies), converges with a decolonial-ecological style in Western academic thought, represented by the work of Bruno Latour, Philippe Descola, Arturo Escobar, Sandra Harding and other scholars from various fields suggesting how to supersede the intellectual inheritance of colonialism. These are scholars promoting a multiplicity of modernities and excavating epistemic material which the dialectics of Enlightenment had buried underneath a thick layer of aggressive, life-negating rationalism (Adorno/Horkheimer 101).

One such dissenting voice in the field of science was the Frankfurt-born painter and illustrator Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) whose representations of the nature of Suriname stands in clear contrast to the Linnean-taxonomic approach of her male contemporaries. Largely ignored until the 1990s, Merian’s work now stands as an exemplary realization of an ecological, holistic approach to America’s natural world. In *Women on the Margins* (1995), Natalie Zemon Davis speculates to what extent Merian’s images of various plant and insect species in reciprocal interaction with one another reflects local stories she may have picked up while in Suriname. With the present pluralization of the academy, the “silent gap” that the classical episteme, according to Foucault, had produced in shedding all kinds of intangible knowledge about the natural world (*Order of Things* 129-30; 132) is gradually filled by looking anew at such formerly effaced local knowledges and their representatives. Some of these unorthodox figures were featured in this book: seemingly anachronistic naturalists like Morelet, private geologists and collectors like Babbitt and Koch, emigré scholars like Gatschet, nonconformist schoolteachers like Ella Clark, and of course their Indigenous interlocutors of whose lives we know so little, often having only a name attached to the knowledge they shared.

A decolonial ethic of archaeology exists today in settler colonial nations as archaeologists involve Indigenous residents and knowledge keepers in preparing and conducting their digs and as Indigenous students are trained to become archaeologists themselves (see, e.g., Watkins; Oland/Hart/Frink; Panich/Gonzalez). While archaeology has recently begun to decolonize itself by moving in the direction of community and communication-oriented action archaeology (Holtorf/Fairclough), Kent Lightfoot suggests a project of “restoration ecology” to describe the use of historical examples of depletion and overharvesting with the intention of preventing similar mistakes in the future (Schmidt/Mrozowski 184-85). Such innovative projects can benefit from a geognostic ecopoetics, from imaginative ways of historically informed “placemaking” generated

from an affective relationship to the environment (Schmidt/Mrozowski 188; see Budhwa; Basso). As archaeology is moving in the direction of replacing the pre-history-history divide with a multivocal and multiscalar perspective that combines archaeological findings with traditionally transmitted knowledge (Oland et al. 11; Mackenthun/Mucher), geognostic ecopoetics accompanies these efforts by teaching a non-extractive, ecological attitude to the non-human world.

Figure 16: Otto Marseus van Schrieck, "Tiere am Waldrand." 1668. Florenz, Palazzo Pitti.

“Snuffelaer”

Non-conformist geognostic approaches to the world existed concurrently with modern scientific practice, leading a life on the margins, like Merian's early representations of ecological connectedness. The Dutch painter Otto Marseus van Schrieck (1619/20-1678) looked at the soil of night forests while his colleagues were painting the ancient ruins of the Italian landscape or the “embarrassment of riches” of the Dutch Golden Age. Nicknamed “Snuffelaer” (snooper), van Schrieck shunned early capitalist splendor, preferring to study the life of insects and reptiles in the woods. His paintings, which the art world calls “*sottobosco*,” show signs of a scientific interest in the non-human world quite similar to that exhibited by Merian a generation later. His painting “Animals at the Rim of the Forest” (“*Tiere am Waldrand*,” 1668, Fig. 16) is dominated by the butterflies enlightening the forest with their colors. On the ground, the right half of the painting shows a conversation between a marten and a weasel. Are they perhaps sorting out who should have privileged access to the beautiful butterflies? In the background we can see a plain and high mountain range. Are those clouds above the peaks? Or maybe smoke emerging from the top of a volcano? And what is the meaning of that snake approaching from the left, as if set on interrupting the dialogue between the two mythical animals?

We will never know how to explain the presence of these characters from Klamath and Modoc mythology in the extraordinary painting of Marseus, who never traveled to America. Maybe Kmu'kamsh and his younger brother Weasel traveled farther in the world than the oral record remembers? All we can do is admire the artist for his love of nature, and these animals for lightening up the shadows of Western modernity.

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- Figure 1: Franciscan Friars Burning Indigenous Codices. Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala* (c. 1585). Credit: Glasgow University Library, Special Collections. MS Hunter 242 (U.3.15) folio 242r. 14
- Figure 2: Cover of James Chatters’s book (2001). 19
- Figure 3: James Chatters’s Reconstruction of the skull of “Kennewick Man” (2001). Source: New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/science/new-dna-results-show-kennewick-man-was-native-american.html> (access 3/6/2021). 19
- Figure 4: Reconstruction of the head of “Kennewick Man” in 2006. Brittney Tatchell. *Smithsonian Institution*. <https://www.si.edu/newsdesk/photos/kennewick-man> (access 3/6/2021). 20
- Figure 5: Photo of a Japanese Ainu that served as inspiration for the reconstruction of “Kennewick Man” in 2006. The photo seems to belong to a series taken by Bronislaw Pilsudski in 1909. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/kennewick-man-finally-freed-share-his-secrets-180952462/> (access 3/6/2021). 21
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