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The Fossil and the Photograph:
Red Cloud, Prehistoric Media,
and Dispossession in Perpetuity

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ABSTRACT: Two late-nineteenth-century media technologies purportedly recording the evolutionary past—the fossil and the photograph—helped naturalize the spread of settler colonialism across the Northern Plains. Settler colonial biopower works in the spaces in between life and death to dispossess indigenous peoples of their land in perpetuity, seizing prehistory simultaneously with the present and the future. I uncover how Oglala leader Red Cloud drew on indigenous epistemologies of both fossils and photographs to negotiate the nuances of temporal and material dispossession, particularly through his work as a photographic subject. Red Cloud’s interventions with paleontologists and photographers illuminate how new approaches to media history that question the biopolitical divide between the organic and inorganic could be important components of denaturalizing settler colonialism.

An unlikely pair of superlatives decorates the name of Oglala Lakota leader Red Cloud (1821–1909) in contemporary scholarship. Red Cloud, or Makhpiya-Luta, is distinguished as the only Native leader to win a major war against the US government *and* as the most photographed Native American of the nineteenth century, having sat for more than 128 photographs with the nation’s leading photographers on at least 45 different occasions.¹ Of course, these two accomplish-

1. Robert W. Larson, *Red Cloud: Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), p. 117; Frank H. Goodyear III, *Red Cloud: Photographs of a Lakota Chief* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

ments are related. An extremely sophisticated strategist, Red Cloud gradually shifted his tactics on the heels of a series of military defeats from the armed defense of Oglala Lakota territory in present-day Wyoming, South Dakota, and Montana to negotiation with the US government. Red Cloud carefully bolstered his new position as a diplomatic leader of the Lakota through the emergent media of photography.² Red Cloud's body was a highly sought-after text, one whose meaning and audience he scripted and selected through strategic use of visual media. Evolutionary scientists regarded Native bodies as animated fossils and prized detailed photographs of indigenous physiognomy, which were deemed to reveal the prehistoric remnants of the origins of human evolution. In this paper, I argue that two new media technologies purportedly recording the evolutionary past—prehistoric fossils and photographs of Native Americans—helped naturalize the spread of settler colonialism across the Northern Plains, a process that Red Cloud counteracted through shaping the material and symbolic resonances of both fossils and photographs of his own body. I explore three specific snapshots of Red Cloud's engagement with the media of evolutionary theory in the 1870s and 1880s, moments that come to superimpose one another over time: paleontologist Othniel Charles Marsh's digs in Oglala reservation land, Red Cloud's visits to Carlisle Indian Industrial School, and finally, Marsh and Red Cloud's reunion in New Haven, Connecticut. Red Cloud insisted on his rightful place in shaping the visual cultures of the land and lives of the Lakota through both aesthetic and material means. These interventions illuminate how new approaches to media history that expand its purview into the realm of the geological could be important components of denaturalizing settler colonialism. Media functions as a key trope of biopower, and as such its decoding can reveal the operations of politics at the level of denoting the earth's matter.

An important new angle in media studies reconceives the category of media as an ecology made up of multiple non-human elements, confounding traditional divides between technology and nature. Jussi Parikka, for example, proposes "an alternative media history of matter" that understands the metals, minerals, and chemicals that comprise contemporary devices as part of media history and considers how geological materials function as media themselves.³ Parikka stretches the timescale of media back to the geological deep time of the earth and forward to the ever-increasing accumulation of elec-

2. Goodyear, *Red Cloud* (above, n. 1).

3. Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), p. 52.

tronic waste, the impact of which we cannot yet imagine. Parikka's approach is part of the current broad interest in geology in the humanities and of the ontological turn more generally, which seek to free humanist inquiry from its boundedness to humanness and materiality as given ontological categories. For media ecology scholar Jennifer Gabrys, digital culture leaves a profound material trace, its workings dependent upon the "processes of pollution, remainder, and decay."⁴ Her natural history of the digital analyzes how digital waste functions as commodity fossils in Walter Benjamin's sense, as accumulating objects that reveal the temporality and materiality of media and capitalism itself in sedimented forms.⁵ Fossils are particularly illustrative of the function of the earth's materials as a type of media—a communication device that brings the reverberations of the beasts of the past suddenly into the present and ruptures notions of the linear and steady progression of time.⁶

I seek to build on the expanded perspective of media that includes geological materials as part of media history, scholarship that emphasizes that the line between human and object is demarcated by political exigencies that scholars ought to expose, rather than take for granted. For Parikka, in addition to the relations of production, "media history is a story of relations between the organic and non-organic and the waste products emerging."⁷ Yet in this essay, I attend to the reverse process, in which the organic is rendered material. I build on new work in media ecology to ask inverse questions: what does it mean to categorize the human as media, to render life into a recording and communicative device of prehistory? What political exigencies does it serve to render a life into a media object? The spread of US settler colonialism across the continent and islands of North America during the nineteenth century makes particularly apparent that expanding our notions of media into the geological requires equally careful attention in turn to what has been deemed matter, to the finely tuned political process of denoting entities as lifeless, nearly extinct, or artifacts of the past. I suggest that settler colonialism and evolutionary science played central roles in the late nineteenth century in determining what and who is naturalized as earth, as part of prehistory and lacking a temporality of its own,

4. Jennifer Gabrys, *Digital Rubbish: A Natural History of Electronics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), p. vi.

5. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 58–74.

6. Parikka. *A Geology of Media* (above n. 3), pp. 116–117.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

relegated to the role of a resource. Contextualizing settler colonialism within deep time illuminates how nineteenth-century US empire drew on the earth's materials as media that would advance its spread while simultaneously treated members of Native tribes as fossilized remnants of the evolutionary past suitable for display alongside the newly discovered dinosaurs, trophies of the US conquest of prehistory. At the same time, Native peoples maintained their own conception of fossils and photographs, and drew upon this knowledge to negotiate settler colonialism's attempts at waging cultural and political annihilation through these very media. I uncover Red Cloud's engagements with late nineteenth-century evolutionary science and its media technologies, the fossil and the photograph, to explore how he recognized and engaged with the biopolitical functions of geological media, appropriating its function as a key determinant of political viability.

Excavating materiality and temporality as hinges of settler colonialism exposes the sedimentary layers of biopower that complicate Foucauldian-inspired binary schematics of the power that fosters life or forces death, a framework infamously inattentive to colonialism. The recursive movements of settler colonialism require that we learn how to tell the story of how the line between not only the organic and nonorganic, the living and the dead, the before and after, was drawn and redrawn, but also account for biopower's reach over the infinite intermediary states of space and time between these poles.⁸ As Mel Chen has argued, it is precisely through determining the degree to which an entity is alive and the degree to which it is dead that biopower enlists race, gender, and ability to carve up ecologies into populations.⁹ In other words, biopower works not only through identifying some populations whose life should be protected and others whose death will benefit the whole, but also through carving up the world into varying gradations of liveliness and fluctuating calibrations of death. First Nations political theorist Glen Sean Coulthard insightfully observes that "*settler-colonialism is territorially acquisitive in perpetuity.*"¹⁰ Moving forward and backward simultaneously, settler colonial regimes work in the reaches of eternity to

8. Dana Luciano similarly writes, "[T]he point of historicizing materiality, and the range of responses thereto, would ultimately be to question our own assumptions about what qualities count as 'material'" (Dana Luciano, "Sacred Theories of Earth: Matters of Spirit in *The Soul of Things*," *American Literature* 86:4 [2014]: 713–746, quote on p. 730).

9. Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

10. Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 152 (emphasis in original).

repeatedly and unendingly tear asunder a people's connection with the land and transform both into labor and material resources. The media forms of the fossil and the photograph, as images of prehistory, played a key role in settler colonialism's recursive attempts to attenuate the bond between occupied populations and their territory in the present by deterritorializing the past. Accordingly, the fossil and the photograph were deployed by natives such as Red Cloud as part of their own strategies to negotiate the nuances of temporal and material dispossession.

Episode One: O. C. Marsh at Pine Ridge

Prehistory functions as a trope of spatiotemporal enclosure, and the fossil is one of its premier relics. In the cultural politics of settler colonialism, unearthing the fossil record not only provided evidence of the new notion of paleontological prehistory, or the "deep time" of the earth; it did so performatively. Through naming imprints and the empty space surrounding them in rocks "fossils"—a term linked to once-living organisms only at the beginning of the nineteenth century—scientists laid claim to the present land as well as its historical past on behalf of the US government and deemed living land a kind of geological media that rendered the lives of the past a national resource.¹¹ For Coulthard, settler colonialism is a "form of structured dispossession" that exceeds the nation state, for it depends on the *continued* process of dispossession and privatization that proceeds into the future without end.¹² We might just as well consider how settler colonialism works recursively as well, dispossessing the past concomitantly with the present and the time to come. In this period, the new idea of prehistory worked to cast natives as a people without history and instead *as* history, as extant artifacts of the earth's past whose territorial dispossession depended on a multi-temporal colonial strategy.

Beginning in the 1860s, teams of paleontologists funded by the US Geological Survey and accompanied by US troops, officers, and scouts including General Custer, Wild Bill Hickock, and Buffalo Bill Cody, followed the trail of Indian conquest. They sought to lay claim to the fossil beds buried in what had *just been* Native land. At stake were both finding the transitional fossil record of evolutionary change and the nation's opportunity to use these findings to claim

11. Martin J. S. Rudwick, *The Meaning of Fossils: Episodes in the History of Paleontology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 2. Other scholars assert that the modern notion of fossil coalesced in the eighteenth century and point to fossil research in ancient Greece and Rome. See Adrienne Mayor, *The First Fossil Hunters: Paleontology in Greek and Roman Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

12. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* (above, n. 10), p. 7.

US ownership of what one prominent paleontologist called “the long history of the great West.”¹³ The coveted proof of the theory of species change, which Darwin had just published in 1859, would come in the form of a series of skeletons from the same animal over thousands of years that revealed this species gradually transforming into another. Many saw the great West as the world’s most promising bone yard. As Edward Drinker Cope reported in 1879, “[N]o portion of the earth offers greater promise of results than America. . . . If the types of life have originated independently, we will find evidence of it by studying American paleontology; if their origin has been through gradual modification, America should furnish us with many intermediate faunae.”¹⁴ Yet there were considerable barriers at midcentury to unearthing this visual record: the majority of fossils remained encased in rocks and bluff, which were largely scattered throughout Western lands outside of US sovereignty.¹⁵ The gradual conquest of the Plains Indians made the tremendous reserve of Western fossils available to European and US scientists for the very first time, kicking off the “bone rush” of 1864–1889.¹⁶

I approach the bone wars as a rich site to explore the settler colonial process of carving up the spatiotemporal gradations between nature and culture, earth and media, and past and present. News media accounts and scholarship in the wake of the “bone wars” has long celebrated the bone hunters as brave young explorers dedicated to the pursuit of science (and their reputations) in spite of active resistance by Natives, who failed to understand the significance of the bones interred in their land. This work also relates compelling yarns about O. C. Marsh and Cope’s highly public commitment to sabotaging each other: a fossil-laden train car and an excavation site were blown to pieces in the course of their war. But digging beneath that reportage uncovers a unique look at the politics of media formation and evolutionary science. Their expeditions brought teams of scientists, under the protection of the national army, into Lakota,

13. Henry Fairfield Osborn, “Prehistoric Quadrupeds of the Rockies,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* 52:5 (1896): 705–715, quote on p. 715.

14. E. D. Cope, “The Relations of the Horizons of Extinct Vertebrata of Europe and North America,” in *Department of the Interior, United States Geological and Geographical Survey*, ed. F. V. Hayden, 5:1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1879): 33–54, quote on p. 33.

15. Evolution in the nineteenth century was understood as a teleological trajectory toward greater complexity and progress, which contrasts with the post-1940s understanding of natural selection as a random, mutating process.

16. The battle for fossils between paleontologists Edward Drinker Cope and O. C. Marsh drove the bone rush years.

Kiowa, Comanche, and many other tribal lands. The scientific and social meanings of the fossil riches paleontologists uncovered from Native territory helped frame their treaty-encroaching explorations as the disinterested advancement of knowledge while simultaneously legitimating US ownership of Kansas, the Dakotas, Montana, Texas, New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, and Oregon.¹⁷ Bone hunting literally led the way for white settlers to move westward; several of Cope's Kansas paths were later used by wagon trains.¹⁸ Historian Adrienne Mayor notes many instances of the appropriations of fossils from tribal lands as trophies that deny native sovereignty over their lands that continue into the present. Despite the 2000 Congressional report *Fossils on Federal and Indian Lands*, there is no national policy governing ownership of fossils to this day.¹⁹

Montana and the Dakotas were initially identified as among the country's most promising sites for fossil discovery in the 1840s and '50s. Yet the Lakota held the upper hand against the US government and maintained control over their expansive gold- and fossil-rich territory until the late 1860s. The Lakota had rapidly acquired new lands in the first half of the nineteenth century, moving west from the Missouri River all the way to the Rockies and north into the present-day Dakotas. Red Cloud distinguished himself as an important warrior in these efforts. The Bozeman War (1866–1868), also known as Red Cloud's War, came to an abrupt end when Red Cloud's warriors killed Captain Fetterman and each of his eighty troops. The Fort Laramie Treaty acknowledged complete victory for the Oglala Lakota against the United States.²⁰ The US government unduly singled out the warrior Red Cloud as the leader of a complex effort waged by numerous Lakota leaders, many of whom held higher rankings in tribal councils than did the warrior himself.²¹ The dominant historical record,

17. Accounts that demonstrate the role paleontology played in dispossessing Native land include Allison Dussias, "Science, Sovereignty, and the Sacred Text: Paleontological Resources and Native American Rights," *Maryland Law Review* 55:1 (1996): 84–159.

18. Charles H. Sternberg, *The Life of a Fossil Hunter* (New York: Henry Holt, 1909), pp. 34–35.

19. Adrienne Mayor, *Fossil Legends of the First Americans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 307–308.

20. As a primary route to the goldfields of Montana, the Bozeman Trail was of vital interest to the US government.

21. In an exemplary study of Oglala political structure that prioritizes Native perspective, Catharine Price argues that Red Cloud never reached the highest levels of tribal or multi-tribal leadership, despite the United States' insistence on treating him as the "head chief" of the Lakota; see Catharine Price, *The Oglala People, 1841–1879: A Political History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

which perpetuates the unwillingness to recognize the communal nature of Lakota tribal structure, recognizes Red Cloud as the only Native American to ever win a major war against the United States.

It was not until the allied Sioux tribes began to lose power that Marsh and his rival, Cope, could outfit expeditions to the area. During the summer of 1869, the year following the signing of the Fort Laramie Treaty, Marsh (who held the nation's first university post in paleontology) wished to lead a Yale bone-hunting expedition near Lakota territory. He was advised against doing so on account of the strength of Cheyenne and Lakota resistance.²² By the summer of 1870, however, the allied Sioux tribes no longer maintained sovereignty over most of their lands. The Lakota relinquished the disputed borderlands of their designated territory and moved to the Red Cloud Indian Agency, located outside of Crawford, Nebraska at a bend in the White River. Desiring to threaten the Lakota into further retreat, the army seized upon Marsh's renewed plans for an expedition in the summer of 1870. "It will make it a little embarrassing to the Sioux, by sending a force south of their reservation," boasted western fort director Phil Sheridan.²³ The Yale expedition was backed by the head of the army, outfitted with no less than six army wagons, and at one point was accompanied by thirty troops and Buffalo Bill Cody.²⁴ Paleontologists often used military forts as their bases out West and hired local Native Americans who knew fossil-rich sites as scouts; Marsh hired two Pawnee men, Tucky-tee-lous and La-hoor-a-sac.²⁵ Marsh's trip met no resistance from Native leaders, though the expedition engaged in activities of blatant dispossession, such as robbing skulls from Lakota funeral platforms. The Yale expedition received wide publicity in papers across the country and catapulted both Marsh and the search for prehistoric fossils into the public eye. Looted skulls played well in the popular press, signifying both the rugged grit of the scientific explorers and the nation's gathering power over indigenous lives and ways of life. In the national imaginary, Lakota people were transforming from fearful opponents into natural history specimens.

Our analysis of the non-human as important participants in the production of media must attend to the unstable boundary that di-

22. Mark Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur: The Fossil War Between E. D. Cope and O.C. Marsh and the Rise of American Science* (New York: Crown, 2000), p. 27.

23. Quoted in Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur* (above, n. 22), p. 25.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 32. Buffalo Bill led the Yale Expedition of 1870 for a day. See David Wallace, *The Bonehunters' Revenge: Dinosaurs and Fate in the Gilded Age* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), p. 60.

25. Mayor, *Fossil Legends* (above, n. 19), p. 183.

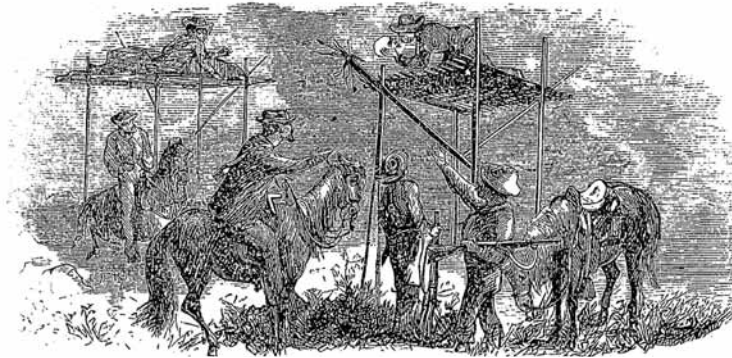


Figure 1. "Indian Graves." The illustration shows Marsh's Yale Expedition looting Lakota funeral platforms. Source: C. W. Betts, "Yale College Expedition of 1870," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 43:257 (1871): 665.

vides the earth's material from the human, and the different gradations of death. Marsh's 1870 expedition deemed the remains of both prehistoric megafauna and Lakota individuals as geological specimens subject to removal and possession. They were far from alone: the Smithsonian had already dispatched students to collect Lakota skulls further north the prior summer. Beginning in 1868, US soldiers were ordered to gather any Native skulls they encountered.²⁶ Historian Ann Fabian alerts us to the bustling national traffic in human remains in the late 1860s and early 1870s and juxtaposes the endeavor out West to disinter Native burial sites and dispatch bodies, but especially skulls, to the museums of Washington with the concomitant desperate efforts of Northern families and the Union army to identify and enumerate the bodies piled up on Southern battlefields and send them back North for a "proper burial."²⁷ In a manner akin to the discovery and naming of fossils, Native bodies were removed from the earth and transformed into a prehistoric object, "a souvenir, a curiosity, a specimen." Over 4,000 heads amassed in Eastern laboratories.²⁸ In contrast, the bodies of Northern soldiers assumed the ranks of the mourned dead and were given honorable final resting places in Northern soil.²⁹ Some of the earth's matter thus originated not from the geological past, but from ongoing mourning rituals bound to still-thriving communities. Giorgio Agamben offers

26. Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 170; Mayor, *Fossil Legends* (above, n. 19), p. 301.

27. Fabian, *Skull Collectors* (above, n. 26), pp. 170–171.

28. Mayor, *Fossil Legends* (above, n. 19), p. 301.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

the notion of the “anthropological machine,” which secures the notion of “man” through the elaborate categorization of groups whose humanity can be denied. Its taxonomic apparatus reserves the status of human for the civilized and casts all other humans and animals to an indistinguishable “zone of indifference,” made up of “bare life.”³⁰ Natural history practice in the US nineteenth century suggested the prominence of something we might call the “geological machine” that crosscuts similar anthropological work. The very practice of categorizing the gradations of death lie at the core of settler colonial politics. Lakota skulls, perhaps buried one year prior to their exhumation at the hands of Yale students, were stripped of their human temporality and assigned to the extensive timescales of the geological. They belonged to the earth, not to a people; their vitality belonged to the realm of natural history. Settler colonialism depends on dispossession in perpetuity.

Fossils, too, are situated objects whose meaning depends upon the conditions in which they are observed and disinterred. For settler colonial society, fossils were recording devices of past epochs of life on earth, a type of geological media that transmits the evolutionary past into the present. Yet paleontologists were far from the only people intent on listening to the messages that once-alive fossils contain: indigenous cultures too had their ears to the ground. The Lakota, of course, had long known of the existence of the tremendous prehistoric creatures, many of which lay partially exposed in the rugged outcroppings of their once-expansive land. “What you people call fossils, these too are used by us,” Lakota holy man Lame Deer commented in 1902.³¹ They referred to fossils as “stone bones” and regarded them as the remains of the *Unkcegiła*, the most powerful gods in Lakota theology, deities responsible for creating both earth and humankind.³² The Lakota instructed ethnologist James Owen Dorsey in the 1890s that the *Unkcegiła* resembled “buffalo,” were “horned water monsters with four legs each,” and still dwelled in the Missouri River, feeding on the spirits of local people.³³ For the Lakota, the geological resources spoke to the omnipresence of the gods, not of the prehistoric past.

30. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 38.

31. Quoted in Mayor, *Fossil Legends* (above, n. 19), p. 223.

32. James H. Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier as Cowboy, Hunter, Guide, Scout, and Ranchman* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957); James Owen Dorsey, “A Study of Siouan Cults,” *Eleventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1894): 353–553, quote on pp. 438–441.

33. Dorsey, “A Study of Siouan Cults” (above, n. 32), pp. 438–441.

Historian Adrienne Mayor argues that while numerous twentieth-century historians of science have claimed that Native Americans knew next to nothing about the existence of fossils, the Lakota in fact incorporated fossils into their religion, medicine, scientific, and historical accounts. The Lakota had a system of comparative anatomy and linked prehistoric fossils with contemporary plains creatures such as the buffalo and ox. She notes that fossils played a central role in Lakota origin stories, which understood these tremendous beasts to have once dwelled in an inland sea that covered the plains. In contrast, it seems that settlers knew little about prehistoric remains. Despite the rancher James Cook's extensive knowledge of what we now know to be his fossil-rich land, he had never heard of the prehistoric bones until his neighbors American Horse and other Oglala leaders taught him about the "stone bones" on the occasion of Marsh's controversial 1874 visit.³⁴ American Horse showed Cook "[a] piece of gigantic jawbone containing a molar three inches in diameter," explaining that it came from a "thunder horse," a creature that dwelled the plains many years before and had come to their ancestors' aid by chasing buffalo into their camps during times of starvation.³⁵ Cope, Marsh, and other paleontologists working in the northern plains were thus indebted to the Lakota people for their knowledge about fossil deposits, not only for access to their lands.³⁶ In this they were following a long paleontological tradition: Mayor documents how Cotton Mather, Thomas Jefferson, and Georges Cuvier each sought out local indigenous knowledge of vertebrate fossils; consequently, some Natives deem Jefferson "America's first scientific grave robber" for his excavation of human remains from indigenous earthen mounds.³⁷ Fossils were situated media, objects that recorded important planetary information. The key difference lay in who made the fossils speak.

When Marsh returned to northwest Nebraska in the fall of 1874, he was hot on the heels of General Custer's treaty-breaking discovery of gold in the Black Hills. In the escalated tensions of that year, native leaders including Red Cloud quickly identified his investigations as a substantial threat, and later as a significant negotiating weapon in their efforts to maintain political autonomy on the reservation. Custer's expedition, which included a representative Marsh sent in his stead, set off a flood of speculators and developers into Lakota

34. Today, Cook's ranch makes up a large part of Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.

35. Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier* (above, n. 32), p. 196.

36. Mayor, *Fossil Legends* (above, n. 19), pp. 220–295.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 31; David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennwick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 35.

territory that precipitated the loss of the sacred Paha Sapa three years later. Despite the risk involved in following Custer's heels so closely with another expedition that would assess the value of Lakota land to US interests, Marsh made haste to the Red Cloud Indian Agency in early November. He was accompanied by a team of soldiers for protection, as well as officers who volunteered to serve as fossil collectors. They soon found themselves in the middle of an important struggle for sovereignty on the reservation. Red Cloud and several other tribe leaders were actively resisting the power grabs of the hated bureau agent, J. J. Saville, including chopping up the flagpole Saville installed to fly the stars and stripes at the center of the stockade and refusing to show up for a census-enumeration of the people living and/or eating at the reservation. Upon Marsh's arrival, he solicited the tribal council for permission to pass through Lakota land on his trip north. Leaders including Red Cloud, Sitting Bull, and White Tail made it clear that they believed Marsh was actually in search of gold. Red Cloud's friend James Cook acted as an intermediary. As Cook notes in his autobiography, "I told [Red Cloud] that Professor Marsh was a friend of the Great Father at Washington; that, if he were allowed to hunt for stone bones, I thought he would be a good friend to the Sioux people . . . Red Cloud said that if Professor Marsh were a good man, he would help him and his people get rid of [Saville]."³⁸

Red Cloud and other tribal leaders, who had recently made their second delegation to Washington in order to determine the terms of the reservation system, saw an opportunity for a bit of leverage with the US government. Oglala leaders offered Marsh passage as long as he consented to two important conditions. First, Marsh must guarantee a substantial wage increase for the Lakota men hired by the expedition as scouts. The success of Marsh's hunt was dependent on both indigenous land and indigenous knowledge of prehistoric fossils. Second, he must bring the tribe's testimony of the corrupt activities of Agent Saville directly to Washington.³⁹ As Marsh later attested, "Red Cloud made specific charges of fraud against the agent and contractors, and urged me to make this known to the Great Father, and to carry him samples of the rations the Indians were then receiving. Mainly to gain consent for my expedition to proceed,

38. Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier* (above, n. 32), pp. 196–197.

39. Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur* (above, n. 22), p. 114. While Sitting Bull was chief of the Hunkpapa, a band of Indians who refused to live within the reservation grounds, he was present at the council that day on account of the ongoing resistance to Saville's displays of power.

I made Red Cloud the promise he desired."⁴⁰ After several days of bone collecting, Spider warned Wiscasa Pahi Huhu (the Oglala had dubbed Marsh "Man-That-Picks-Up-Bones") that the non-Agency Mijincou were preparing to ambush the fossil hunters.⁴¹ Marsh directed his party to quickly pack up the two tons of fossils already collected, and they narrowly missed the arrival of the war party the next day. Whether the Mijincou's threatened attack was part of Red Cloud's strategy or not is difficult to verify; it is certain, however, that Marsh felt that the chief saved his life. "We escaped a large war party of Indians in consequence of warning and assistance sent by Red Cloud," he later attested. "This act of kindness led me on my return to the Agency to make further investigations there."⁴² Red Cloud brought him samples of government-issued rations that were putrid or otherwise appallingly insufficient as testament to Saville's fraudulent management of the Agency and insisted that Marsh bring their complaints to President Grant. Marsh packed the rotten rations alongside his stone bones for the trip back to New Haven.

For five months, Marsh did nothing to complete his end of the bargain. Come spring, however, Marsh went first to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and then to the President. Three months of investigation into the so-called Indian Ring concluded with varied results that both the Bureau of Indian Affairs and advocates of Indian reform could interpret as victory. Although formally cleared of fraud, Saville resigned his post, and the commission noted a host of problems in the management of the Red Cloud Agency. As one of the first investigations into corruption at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as a scandal at what was arguably the most important agency in the West, Marsh's provocations had brought the failure of the Peace Policy into the public eye. As Marsh had noted, "That a chief of such note and ability as Red Cloud should be subjected to the caprices of such an agent, is in itself a gross indignity, and ill-calculated to inspire him or his people with respect for the advantages of civilization."⁴³ The next winter, Red Cloud approached Lieutenant Carpenter, who had served as one of Marsh's fossil-hunting employees, at his quarters at Fort Robinson. He asked Carpenter to send Marsh a peace pipe and dictated an accompanying letter recounting his relationship with Marsh: "He came here and I asked him to tell

40. O. C. Marsh, *A Statement of Affairs at Red Cloud Agency, Made to the President of the United States* (New Haven, CT: O. C. Marsh, 1875), p. 3.

41. Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier* (above, n. 32), p. 197.

42. Marsh, *A Statement of Affairs* (above, n. 40), p. 8.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

the Great Father something. He promised to do so, and I thought he would do like all white men, and forget me when he went away. But he did not. He told the Great Father everything just as he promised he would, and I think he is the best man I ever saw."⁴⁴ Red Cloud, it seems, felt that his alliance with Marsh had been a success. The two maintained a correspondence for years afterward, and one of Marsh's fossil collectors later married a daughter of Red Cloud's, solidifying their alliance and ensuring it would reproduce itself into the future.⁴⁵

Temporality was an important vector of the political struggle fossils helped wage: for the expansionist US state, fossils signified the possibility of dispossessing natives of their land within the deep time of prehistory, whereas for the Lakota, fossils linked the work of the gods with their contemporary political struggles in the anxious lead-up to the Black Hills War. As prehistoric media, fossils materialize traces of the past within the present and rupture the fantasy of the linear progression of national time. Fossils, for the Lakota, also functioned cyclically and could help ensure a viable future built on the past. Buried Lakota bodies-rendered-specimens clarify how prehistoric material is named according to political exigencies, and just as dinosaur bones foretold the strength of the coming empire, so too were Native lives enlisted to predict the dying sway of the indigenous past. In an evocative example of the intersection of geological and political history, fossils helped settler colonial biopower exceed the temporality of the present and of life and death to seize the time of pre-history and delegitimize Natives' claims to the future and the past.

Episode 2: The Lakota and Carlisle Indian Industrial School

Five years after Red Cloud's gamble with Marsh, the US Army seized upon a novel way to maintain the upper hand in its relations with the Lakota. In order to hold the children of the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Sioux "hostages for the good behavior of their people," the Army approved the unorthodox request made by an energetic Lieutenant to open an off-reservation boarding school for Native children in unused barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.⁴⁶ Richard Henry Pratt conceived of his plan for Carlisle Indian Industrial School on the

44. Quoted in Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur* (above, n. 22), p. 143.

45. Some years later, another of Marsh's fossil collectors by the name of Hank Clifford married one of Red Cloud's daughters. "The Yale College Scientific Expedition of 1873," Peabody.yale.edu, accessed March 28, 2016. <http://peabody.yale.edu/collections/archives/yale-college-scientific-expedition-1873>.

46. Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, ed. Robert M. Utley (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 220.

basis of an experiment in acculturation he conducted while serving as the prison keeper of insurgent leaders at the end of the Red River War at Fort Marion, Florida. Pratt approached both the school and the prison as laboratories for social evolution, aiming to demonstrate “the potency of environment” in solving the so-called Indian Problem.⁴⁷ Upon the War Department’s approval, Lieutenant Pratt set off to recruit students from the agencies in the winter of 1879. At the Rosebud reservation, Pratt successfully overturned Spotted Tail’s initial refusal to permit the agency’s children to learn the ways of “thieves and liars” at the boarding school by duplicitously insisting that the training would prepare the tribe’s youth to “look [after] their business affairs in Washington” so that a loss like the Black Hills could not be repeated.⁴⁸ Though delivering the same argument he had rehearsed with Spotted Tail’s people, Pratt had considerably less success in recruiting children at the Pine Ridge Agency, where “Red Cloud stood like a rock against the plan.”⁴⁹ (The Red Cloud Agency moved north and was renamed in 1871.) Even though American Horse relinquished three of his children, “the best [Pratt] could do was to enroll a party of sixteen, mostly boys.”⁵⁰ Carlisle Indian Industrial School opened that fall with more than 200 students from about twelve tribes, kicking off a trend in Indian education to “conquer the Indians with a standing army of school-teachers,” that would last until the Indian New Deal of the 1930s.⁵¹ The movement is well known for Pratt’s goal of the “total annihilation of the Indians, as Indians and tribes” through cultural assimilation.⁵²

At Carlisle, Red Cloud and the Lakota were once again experiencing settler colonial strategy that drew upon evolutionary science, but in this case they were the bodies targeted for extinction. Much has been written about Carlisle Indian Industrial School and the off-reservation boarding school movement it inspired. Here, I emphasize its function as another site of production of the visual media of

47. Richard Henry Pratt, “How to Deal with the Indians: The Potency of Environment” (Washington, DC: Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, 2006), n.p.

48. Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom* (above, n. 46), p. 223.

49. George Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), p. 52.

50. Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom* (above, n. 46), p. 226.

51. Quoted in David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), p. 27.

52. Richard Henry Pratt, Address to a weekly meeting of Protestant ministers in Baltimore, 1891. Richard Henry Pratt Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library.

evolution that underpinned settler colonialism, alongside the fossil bed: in this case, the Native American photograph. Carlisle was, among other things, an experiment in the Lamarckian model of evolution in which species change was driven by habit and environment.⁵³ Pratt embarked on a system of military drills, Christian education, and extensive menial labor to physically, psychically, and socially remake his subjects. Brulé student Luther Standing Bear recalled that youth were dispatched “to the school to copy, to imitate; not to exchange languages and ideas, and not to develop the best traits that had come out of uncountable experiences of hundreds and thousands of years living upon this continent.”⁵⁴ For Luther Standing Bear, native students were subjects of the evolutionary future. For Pratt, they were hollow remnants of the past he had dislodged from their sedimentary layers, whose forms he could now fill with civilization, thereby reassembling the antiquated body into a useful set of parts and setting it into motion.

Pratt infamously publicized Carlisle’s enforced somatic transformation from savagery to civilization through the deliberate staging and wide distribution of dramatic “before and after” photographs of the Natives under his charge. Through the apparatus of the camera, a technology that ethnographers vested with the capacity to capture the primitive essence of its subjects, the children’s altered clothing, hair, and posture figure as evidence that daily routine transformed the body. It is quite likely that Pratt and his team at Carlisle staged these before and after photographs to draw as stark a contrast as possible; this is a tactic he learned at Hampton Industrial School, where director Samuel Armstrong instructed him to obtain “first class photographs of the Indian youth you bring[,] letting them appear in the wildest and most barbarous costume.” Preferable to a Western photo session, however, were photos taken at Hampton itself, so Armstrong encouraged Pratt to “keep up their wild dress till you reach Hampton [so that] we can have the pictures taken there.”⁵⁵ Such directives make apparent that the strict temporal contrast of “before” and “after” were myths to the school directors themselves, for they were

53. The dominant mode of evolutionary thought in the late nineteenth-century was not Darwinian natural selection, in which competition and chance drive species change, but rather the Lamarckian notion that organisms acquire new characteristics in response to their circumstances and transmit these adaptations to their offspring.

54. Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), p. 236.

55. Samuel Armstrong to Richard Henry Pratt, 27 August [1878], Box 1, Richard Henry Pratt Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library.

conscious of keeping the “past” alive into their present in order to more visibly extinguish it. Working beyond the binaries of life and death and before and after, settler colonialism worked across time-spans to dispossess indigenous peoples of the past and substitute it with a useful fiction. Photography became central to the work of Carlisle, and students became accustomed with the technology as producers and subjects. John Leslie (Puyallup) was “placed out” into the school photographer’s studio and later sold his photographs and issued a book of photography in 1895; the school itself established a photography studio and offered classes beginning in 1906.⁵⁶

Under settler colonialism, broadly speaking, “primitive” peoples assumed their place next to dinosaurs as relics from the prehistoric past that retroactively predicted America’s dawning strength. The dinosaur fossil and the Vanishing American are co-constructed media phenomena.⁵⁷ Each gains coherence from the dramatic context the other provides of life rendered geological subject entirely to earthly demands, beyond the protection of the divine. While traces of prehistoric animals had long been known, the nineteenth century saw the new concept of the fossil as evidence of a species that no longer existed. In modern Europe, fossils were born of Cuvier’s concept of extinction, initially proposed in 1796.⁵⁸ Both fossils and indigenous peoples were enlisted to give the young nation the patina of a glorious yet primitive past that its contemporary civilization would quickly eclipse. The beginning of the end of the conquest of Native America was underway in the late 1870s, an event that Native Studies scholar Shari Huhndorf argues enabled the nation to strike a note of nostalgia for indigenous sovereignty. “Indians, now safely ‘vanishing,’ began to provide the symbols and myths upon which white Americans created a sense of historical authenticity, a ‘real’ national identity,” she notes.⁵⁹ The Western land surveys of the 1870s and 1880s commissioned studies of not only terrain and geological

56. Hulleah J. Tshinhnajinnie and Veronica Passalacqua, *Our People, Our Land, Our Images: International Indigenous Photographers* (Berkeley: Heyday Press, 2007), p. xi.

57. A number of art historians have analyzed the role of painting and photography in creating the notion of the Vanishing American. See for example Christopher Lyman, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis* (New York: Pantheon, 1982); and Tim Johnson, ed., *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1998).

58. Martin J.S. Rudwick, *Georges Cuvier, Fossil Bones, and Geological Catastrophes: New Translations and Interpretations of the Primary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 18–24.

59. Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 22.



Figure 2. "Tom Torlino." Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives [#53,599 and #53,599-A].

resources, but also the Native peoples of the West, whom the surveys positioned alongside fossils as fascinating evidence of the lingering persistence of another geological era into the present, one destined for rapid extinction. The Bureau of American Ethnology commissioned numerous photographic studies of indigenous peoples, and Red Cloud participated in several. The notion of "the primitive" is assuredly a constructed one, and both indigenous peoples and fossilized creatures were deployed within visual culture as relics of prehistory that confirmed the superiority of the civilization born in their wake.

Fossils and photographs of indigenous peoples both traffic in historical extinction narratives for contemporary political purposes. For cultural critic W. J. T. Mitchell, "the dinosaur is the object of a heroic paleontological quest in which the monster is brought back to life and displayed as a trophy of modern political and economic systems."⁶⁰ Yet as Dana Luciano observes, the uneven, recursive nature of the capacious and racialized new notion of prehistory, figured as a temporality that functions as both anterior to and synchronic

60. W. J. T. Mitchell, *The Last Dinosaur Book: The Life and Times of a Cultural Icon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 86.

with the present, profoundly destabilized the assumption of linear historical progress even as it underwrote it. "Prehistory," she writes, "entered the nineteenth century as, in effect, its dispossession."⁶¹ For Luciano, earth scientists' insistence on interpreting evolution as a linear progress narrative (versus the recursive theories of many paleontologists) strove to manage the persistent undeadness of the primitive, which allegedly continued to haunt the present in the form of fossilized footprints and bones and racialized peoples.⁶² The widespread belief among evolutionists, for example, that Native Americans were the still-lingering primitive remnants of the civilized races, was at odds with dominant readings of Darwin, Lamarck, and Herbert Spencer, which insisted that species change was the inexorable process of specialization and improvement. Literary critic Dana Seitler identifies atavism as a central strategy and epistemology of modernity, one that took particular form during this period in the shape of the scientific photograph, in which "the atavistic body was an artifact, a 'fossil,' that incarnated in the present the temporal signs of past ancestry."⁶³ The dinosaur functions as an important emblem of modernity's dependence on scrambling the temporal order, of retroactively mining the past for the conditions of a storied future. Similarly, the Native body was deemed a holdover from the racial past that both illustrated how far Anglo-Saxons had already advanced and predicted the further progress yet to come. Both fossils and photographs of indigenous peoples were thus central media of the simultaneous "disavowal and incorporation of the primitive so that primitivity becomes a resource to be drawn on," which Scott Morgensen identifies as central to US settler colonialism.⁶⁴ Extinction haunts official prehistory as a promise held within the future.

Anxious of showing tribal leaders the "progress" underway in Indian education, the Indian Office organized a large gathering of parents to visit the Carlisle and Hampton institutions in June of 1880. Spotted Tail had no qualms about pronouncing his horror at discovering

61. Dana Luciano, "Tracking Prehistory," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 3:1 (2015): 173–181, quote on p. 174.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

63. Dana Seitler, *Atavistic Tendencies: The Culture of Science in American Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 66.

64. Mitchell, *The Last Dinosaur* (above, n. 57), p. 86. Morgensen's comment sums up work by Philip Deloria and Amy Kaplan; see Scott Lauria Morgensen, "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities," *GLQ* 16:1–2 (2010): 119.

how Pratt had “made ‘a soldier place’ of Carlisle.”⁶⁵ He railed against finding their children clothed in military uniforms, suffering from insufficient room and board, and subject to a litany of menial labor tasks and a punitive environment—his son had been locked up in solitary confinement in the guardhouse for a week. Spotted Tail insisted on convening a meeting with all the Sioux children, the chiefs, and Carlisle officials to discuss the conduct of the school. Red Cloud made the kind of multivalent speech that had become his trademark in the years since he turned to negotiation as a means to fight for his people. Red Cloud declared, “[T]his land is ours. My friends, the pale faces, have a land across the ocean. The man stands before us who has our children all in charge. . . . We want to all shake hands with a good heart that in the future we may live in peace.”⁶⁶ Yet he threatened to remove all Lakota children. Deftly weaving flattering statements of goodwill with a clear declaration of the rightful inhabitants of North America, Red Cloud made it clear that the Natives’ participation in the school was a negotiated partnership hinging upon the leaders’ satisfaction with the proceedings at Carlisle.⁶⁷ In the end, only Spotted Tail was permitted to withdraw his children from Carlisle, at his own expense, but it was an unprecedented act of defiance in the Indian reform movement’s prized project. Subsequent dispatches from the Indian Office to Spotted Tail failed to convince the leader to reenroll his children, and succeeding recruiting trips failed to enlist even a single child from the Pine Ridge Agency.⁶⁸

Pratt often had parents who visited Carlisle pose with their uniformed children, images that collapse the “before” and “after” into the same frame. The pictures served an important public relations strategy in announcing the Native’s willingness to be “civilized,” as a tiny soldier sits on the knee of a feathered chief. Here too, the media objects of the fossil and photograph interpenetrate. For Luciano, fossils resonate with Derrida’s notion of hauntology, which in her words denotes “the presence of absence, of non self-identity, prior to every claim to presence.”⁶⁹ A fossil is the nominalization of the space left within rock material by an animal or plant body long since decomposed. Yet fossils came to be declared signs of the past presence of life, while Native American people only foreshadowed coming

65. Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle* (above, n. 49), p. 55.

66. Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom* (above, n. 46), p. 238.

67. Nonetheless, Red Cloud was not known as a great orator among the Oglala Lakota.

68. Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle* (above, n. 49), p. 57.

69. Luciano “Tracking Prehistory” (above, n. 61), p. 175.

death. Fossils mark the naming of the impression of one entity upon another as the preservation of life; they elevate contact to essence. Inversely, Pratt's photographs capture specters, evidence not of the linear "before" to "after" that was already a widespread visual trope of rescue and redemption, but of the history that he positioned as continually manifesting in the present. His photographs capture a moment of prehistoric contact between the past and present, in this case evidence of coming death. Pratt preserves extinction in the medium of light reflecting off vibrant human bodies while fossils come to mark an air-filled space trapped within rock as the proof of life.

Red Cloud made three visits to Carlisle and initially opted out of delegation portraits or any other pictures. Over the next decade, however, Red Cloud came to praise the work of Hampton and Carlisle for providing a basic formal education for Native children, and he managed to use Carlisle's publicity machine for his own benefit. On his final visit, during his seventh delegation East to meet with government officials in December 1882, he chose to be photographed by the school's photographer, John Nicholas Choate.⁷⁰ He posed only for solo portraits and images with his interpreter, Ed Laramie, his close friend Charles P. Jordan, and Agent Edward Townsend, a Bureau of Indian Affairs official who was an important ally in his fight against the oppressive Agent McGillicuddy at Pine Ridge.⁷¹ The portrait of Red Cloud, Laramie, and Townsend against a lavish backdrop frames Red Cloud as a political leader, not a school grandfather. Rather than a contrast between a "wild" Indian and a tamed student-worker, Red Cloud staged a photograph that would figure him temporally synchronic with civil servants and yet front and center, his firmly crossed forearms defiantly blocking visual access to his torso. His recently shorn hair, leather shoes, and pin-adorned cravat signal his fastidiousness in the adoption of Victorian norms. A parted jacket reveals his vest, an important component of his impeccable dress. Whereas Agent Townsend to his left looks wooden in front of the camera, Red Cloud—at this point a veteran photographic subject—appears at once formidable and calmly composed. Laramie's hand familiarly drapes on Townsend's shoulder, yet it is toward Red Cloud that his body leans, anchoring the Lakota leader's head and torso as the photograph's focal point. Art historian Frank Goodyear III writes that Red Cloud staged portraits with political allies to solidify these relationships; we might think of it as a collective, rather than individualist, use of the late nineteenth-century portrait's function

70. Goodyear, *Red Cloud* (above, n. 1), p. 64.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

of crafting the emergent self. Taking control over the rendering of his body as text, Red Cloud's selective participation in the ritual of Carlisle photography served to bolster rather than diminish his political aims. For Richard Henry Pratt, the "before" photograph would serve as a fossil impression, preserving the posture of death at the site of extinction. Yet Red Cloud, who collected photographs himself and decorated his dwelling with snapshots of himself and others, approaches the Carlisle photo session as a contested medium of the present, subject to its conditions of production.⁷²

By the early 1880s, Red Cloud had adopted a new strategy in leading the Lakota in the bitter aftermath of the Black Hills War, and photography played a crucial role. Goodyear has argued that Red Cloud embraced portrait photography as a tool to shape his public image in a flattering and respectful light. As Goodyear conveys, widely circulated photos of the chief shaking hands with statesmen and government officials on his ten delegations to Washington were important tools to maintain his political authority as a singular leader both on the East Coast and among the Oglala, who had a tribal political structure that recognized only collective leadership. Photographs from the 1880s show Red Cloud in formal suits with medium-length hair, often handing a peace pipe to a white official. His very physicality modeled his strategy to work with, rather than against, the US government as the best means to manage the Agency. Such a shift has earned Red Cloud numerous accusations of selling out, both in his time and in ours. Yet during an era in which the bodies of Native Americans were almost exclusively positioned by settler colonial culture as prehistoric media that faithfully transmitted the evolutionary past into the present, Red Cloud insisted that he shaped what his body broadcast, to whom it spoke, to what epoch it most properly belonged. In an important collection of indigenous photography, Hulleah J. Tshinahnajinnie and Veronica Passalacqua write that "[t]he very same medium that exacerbated colonial tensions is now used as a tool for indigenous empowerment and sovereignty by exerting an authority over how, when, and why indigenous peoples choose to be imaged."⁷³ As their work details, the work of Native photographers began at least in the 1880s; Red Cloud's images ask us to consider the photographic subject, not only the photographer, as part of the labor of the portrait. He negotiated how he would be remunerated for each photo session, including compensation in the form of money and horses. Red Cloud was continually subject to

72. On Red Cloud's photo collection see Goodyear, *Red Cloud* (above, n. 1), p. 8.

73. Tshinahnajinnie and Passalacqua, *Our People, Our Land, Our Images*, preface.



Figure 3. "Red Cloud, Ed Laramie, Agent Edward B. Townsend," 1882. Photograph by John Nicholas Choate. Courtesy of Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, PA.

the photographer's gaze because he chose to be, perhaps recognizing the biopolitical role of visual portraiture in simultaneously creating the settler colonial iconography of extinction, and in the country's middle class drawing rooms, the new psychological concept of the self.⁷⁴ The camera could render a body a specimen, or transform a person into a subject.

Photography was an important medium in settler colonial politics, and Red Cloud ensured that he was not merely an object of its gaze, but rather a producer of images. Eco-critic Monique Allewaert has analyzed the views on embodiment of enslaved people of African descent in the Caribbean, revealing a shared belief in the disaggregation of singular personhood in the midst of a vibrant ecological space, which she names an *oppositional ontology*.⁷⁵ Like Allewaert,

74. See Sarah Blackwood on the psychological functions of nineteenth-century portraiture, *The Portrait's Subject: Picturing Inner Life in Nineteenth-Century America*, forthcoming.

75. Monique Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology: Plantations, Personhood, and Colonialism in the American Tropics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

we might borrow one of Stuart Hall's terms for decoding media—in this case *negotiation*—to understand Red Cloud's engagement in a project of embodiment. Oppositional ontologies mark the creation of an alternative cosmology that entirely supplants the hegemonic views of personhood, something beyond Red Cloud's reach. Rather, Red Cloud crafted an intermediary position that worked within settler colonial tropes to produce divergent ends, a *negotiated ontology* in which his body signified in the media forms of settler colonialism yet simultaneously opened up space for his own political ends. The broad political goals of this strategy include not only his tribal authority—a position considerably weakened by his 1876 decision to surrender to US troops and revoke Lakota claims to all their lands, including the Black Hills, in order to bring the Black Hills War to a close—but also the meaning of the indigenous body as multiply situated text, rather than solely as a specimen.⁷⁶

For Walter Benjamin, the political potential of natural history artifacts such as the fossil and the panoramic photograph lies in their ability to expose, in Susan Buck-Morss's words, "the ideational elements of nature and history" by making visible "the gap between sign and referent."⁷⁷ As a dialectic, the notion of natural history reveals the interdependence of each half of the phrase, rupturing the mythic thinking which naturalizes modern capitalism. Benjamin called early twentieth-century consumers the "last dinosaurs of Europe," doomed to extinction via the evolution of the capitalism that birthed them in the first place; women's "fossilized hair curls" already bore the heavy trace of their archaic future upon the present. As dialectical images of urbanity, fossilized fashions and photographic montages for Benjamin revealed both the archaism of modernity and the transitory essence of nature and history, forces that the proletariat would refigure in the time to come. Red Cloud's photographs are another kind of dialectic that rupture the alleged contradiction between nature and technology, primitive and modern, civilized and native on which settler colonialism depended, inaugurating not a proletarian political subject, but a Native one that selectively drew upon available political constructs from Lakota and settler culture.

The fossil and the photograph bear striking similarities in the

76. Not all scholars agree that Red Cloud's use of photography benefitted his reputation. For example, R. Eli Paul writes, "The later image of Red Cloud is that of a weak, accommodating politician—reinforced by a procession of unflattering photographic portraits in his old age—who willingly chose the path of appeasement in exchange for fleeting power." R. Eli Paul, introduction to *Autobiography of Red Cloud: War Leader of the Oglala*, ed. R. Eli Paul (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 1997), p. 26.

77. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, (above, n. 5), 58–74.

late nineteenth century. Seemingly indexical, they are just as often iconic objects of mediation that, as for Benjamin, destabilize the mythical nature of their own construction.⁷⁸ Unstable artifacts, they have contested status as both objects of art and science and are often situated uncomfortably somewhere between these two alleged poles in the lucrative world of commerce. Each are made through the process of double impressions: flesh pressed upon the earth in the moment of death, leaving a trace that poured-in plaster later assumes; impressions of shadow and light rendered chemical, reproducible. The double impression process of construction of the fossil and the photograph hint at the way each is assigned the role of externalized memory, as if they did the work of the earth's own impressible and absorptive mind. They are a form of representation dependent upon a referent, and both media have been assigned the status of indexicals of faithful and causal evidence of the object world.⁷⁹ Yet both are complex translations, incarnated anew, that unsettle their own naturalness. As such, photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto provocatively considers fossils "the oldest form of art," a mode of "pre-photography."⁸⁰ A copy of either is qualitatively indistinguishable from the primary sample; the negative space of the fossil and the photographic negative render useless the notion of an original and a duplicate. Rather, each simultaneously marks an originary moment and its potential remaking in perpetuity.

Dinosaur models, for example, are typically comprised of material assembled from dozens of different animals (sometimes from distinct genera). Plaster casts of missing bones often outnumber the stone bones themselves; historian of science Lukas Rieppel considers dinosaur mounts "mixed-media installations."⁸¹ Like portraits, they must be assembled, posed, and set within a scene. Marsh's laboratory assistant Erwin Barbour complained that Marsh's fossil collection was "restored to deceive rather than instruct," for lab technicians mixed "bone-black, and gum acacia" into plaster of Paris, such that prehistoric fossils became indistinguishable from specimen born in

78. On the applicability of Charles Sanders Peirce's distinction between indexical and iconic representations—the contrast between an image that captures an object "as it really is" and a likeness that captures something of the essence of the object—to early twentieth-century dinosaur displays, see Lukas Rieppel, "Bringing Dinosaurs Back to Life: Exhibiting Prehistory at the American Museum of Natural History," *Isis* 103:3 (2012): 460–490.

79. Walter Benn Michaels, "Photography and Fossils," in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 431–447.

80. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 431.

81. Rieppel, "Bringing Dinosaurs Back" (above, n. 78), pp. 470, 465.

the lab.⁸² The arrangement of fossils into freestanding displays is similarly derived through the creative process, for the animals' anatomy was necessarily unknown.⁸³ Both the fossil and the photograph preserve impressions of an organic body in another material altogether, either stone or paper. Impressions of fleeting moments, the fossil and the photograph record the posture of death and a moment in life and embody them into the future, isolated from the original context. Naming a rock "fossil," after all, announces its distinct spatiotemporal status as *not-rock*, an incoherence the translated Lakota phrase "stone bones" nicely avoids. In this era, the fossil and the photograph materialize the movements of deep time and are similarly dependent on the extraction of resources from the earth's crust and atmosphere: W. Jerome Harrison's *History of Photography* (1887) describes the medium's dependence on tin, silver, carbon, uranium, and gold; Oliver Wendell Holmes famously referred to photography and stereoscopy as "sun-painting" and "sun-sculpture."⁸⁴ The evolutionary sciences used these materials of the earth in overlapping ways to body forth prehistory as technologies of the future.

Late-nineteenth-century photography helped invent indigeneity at the moment of its alleged disappearance. Nativeness in the national imaginary is less an identity or a discourse than it is a visual trope that can be fixed in time, suspended within the temporality of the nation as if an ammonite within rock. "The presence of the other is discovered in a single shot," Native Studies scholar Gerald Vizenor poetically writes of the turn-of-the-century ethnographic gaze, "the material reduction of a pose, the vanishing pose, and then invented once more in a collection of pictures. The simulation of a tribe in photographs."⁸⁵ For Vizenor, photography introduced a new kind of ontological demand upon Natives, such that "the tribes must prove with photographs the right to be seen and heard as the other."⁸⁶ At the same time, "[p]hotographs are the discoveries of the absence

82. Quoted in Rieppel, "Bringing Dinosaurs Back" (above, n. 78), p. 478. As Rieppel notes, while Barbour's charge was published in his bitter competitor's E. D. Cope's journal *American Naturalist*, Barbour was not the only person to criticize Marsh's restoration techniques.

83. Mitchell, *The Last Dinosaur*; Rieppel, "Bringing Dinosaurs Back" (above, n. 78), p. 470.

84. Quoted in Parikka, *Geology of Media* (above, n. 3), p. 55; Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Soundings from the Atlantic* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864), p. 166.

85. Gerald Vizenor, "Ishi Obscura," *Northwest Journal of Environmental Law & Policy* 7:3 (2000–2001): 299–305 quote on p. 300.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

of the tribes.”⁸⁷ This figures Natives akin to fossilized dinosaurs—legitimated only through a medium that perpetually declares extinction, Luciano’s “presence of absence.” While racial discourse foretold the elimination of the Indian, however, Native Americans were not merely passive specimens in front of the camera, as Red Cloud shows through his strategic use of photography. Yet Vizenor’s argument—that in contrast to the vanishing pose, “tribal stories . . . are mediations” that communicate vast meaning exceeding the imperial imaginary—rings true for Red Cloud as well.⁸⁸ Vizenor writes that Ishi, the Yana man deemed the last of his California tribe, who lived his final days at the University of California Museum of Anthropology, may have been captured by the camera, but his oral tales thwarted any attempt at recording.⁸⁹

Red Cloud’s life too suggests that oral tradition broke the visual conventions of settler colonial media and was therefore difficult to broadcast. In 1893, two white friends of Red Cloud’s collaborated to pump him for information for two to three hours a day on a bench outside the Pine Ridge post office and then surreptitiously translated and recorded the stories at the end of each session. Cook’s remembrance that Red Cloud “did not want to say anything for white men to write down in order to make money for themselves by selling his words” gives us some idea of how Red Cloud viewed the role available to Natives in the literary marketplace, a dynamic of dependence he presumably felt he could sidestep when selling his image directly.⁹⁰ The stories Red Cloud narrated outside the post office covered only the period from Red Cloud’s first battle to 1864, however—just before Red Cloud took up arms against the US government. As a result, the secretly composed “autobiography” provides an account of his maturation as a successful warrior and Lakota life on the Great Plains before the arrival of significant numbers of white immigrants; perhaps this was a strategic move on Red Cloud’s part to ensure its unmarketability. His conspiring friends were unable to find a publisher. The text was not printed until 1997.⁹¹ Red Cloud’s image may linger on indefinitely, but his reflections on his life after the conquest remain his alone.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

88. *Ibid.*

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 303–304.

90. Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier* (above, n. 32), p. 184.

91. The text was published following historian R. Eli Paul’s verification of the document.

Episode 3: Red Cloud in New Haven

The month after his final visit to Carlisle, Red Cloud traveled north to New Haven to visit an old ally. Professor Marsh, then president of the National Academy of the Sciences and head of the Peabody Museum of Natural History, greeted the chief among a fanfare of press anxious to capture the reunion of this seemingly unlikely pair. By this time, Marsh had unearthed a series of fossil horses that showed the species *Eohippus* transition into its descendent, *Equus*. Widely deemed to be the first proof of evolutionary change, Marsh's transitional fossil record legitimated the US as a major producer of scientific knowledge and "symbolises appropriately the emergence of American paleontology from its earlier quasi-colonial status into full intellectual maturity."⁹² During his four-day stay at Marsh's newly completed mansion, Red Cloud visited the Peabody to see the fossilized dinosaurs dug up from Red Cloud Agency and other locations. Marsh brought his guest to the Winchester Armory, the local firehouse, and the newest Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, but Red Cloud refused to attend a church service.⁹³ Newspaper accounts report that Red Cloud had no reaction to the fossils, but grinned at the rifle factory.⁹⁴ More than one hundred visitors sought Red Cloud's acquaintance on a single day of his visit, the mayor among them.⁹⁵ But the highlight of the visit for the press and for Marsh was a two-hour sitting at a local portrait studio. While Marsh bolstered his own reputation by informing a New Haven reporter that Red Cloud had only been subject to the lens once before and "was not at all inclined to sit . . . He only did so because I was anxious to have him," Goodyear stresses that the chief was by this point a consummate photographer's model.⁹⁶ Red Cloud posed with Marsh and in a trio with his interpreter. He also made solitary portraits in the ethnographic convention of profile and frontal torso shots, some of which provided close-up images of his physiognomy, which Marsh later had enlarged at the Museum's considerable expense.⁹⁷ Marsh approached Red Cloud's body as evidence and was now as interested in the bones beneath Red Cloud's skin as he had been in the fossils interred in Lakota lands. And yet,

92. Quoted in Rudwick, *The Meaning of Fossils* (above, n. 11), p. 254.

93. Goodyear, *Red Cloud* (above, n. 1), p. 73.

94. Mayor, *Fossil Legends* (above, n. 19), p. 305.

95. "Red Cloud in New-Haven," *New York Times*, January 21, 1883.

96. Goodyear, *Red Cloud* (above, n. 1), p. 76.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 80. Marsh paid Frank A. Bowman \$130 for photographs and enlargements.

Red Cloud again drew the line where he saw fit. When requested to submit to a plaster cast molding of his head, presumably for the use of Peabody ethnologists, Red Cloud resolutely refused.⁹⁸

Red Cloud repeatedly crafted his iconic image within a context that understood his significance to be indexical. The most duplicated image from the New Haven photo session shows Red Cloud and Marsh locked in a stately handshake. This one frame contains two distinct conventions of photographic genre: the portrait conventions that humanize Marsh and the ethnographic gaze that attempts to render Red Cloud a specimen. While Marsh stares intently in the three-quarter profile characteristic of the formal portrait at the camera and the viewer, Red Cloud, stationed in the shadows, keeps his gaze locked on Marsh himself. The professor seems poised to spring outside of the woodlands setting; his foot turns pointedly away from the towering frame before him and toward the presumably welcoming audience. Red Cloud, in contrast, stands in profile, reminiscent of the ethnographic pose which Marsh himself insisted upon. The scientist is centered in front of a halo created by the painted backdrop, the photographer's light reflecting off his expanse of forehead as if rays of knowledge emanating directly from his head. Yet the woodlands backdrop imagery and the hay strewn across the floor create the context of a natural history diorama, more than a formal portrait. The peace pipe and pipe bag, meant to be a symbol of Red Cloud's friendship, hang limply in the center of the photograph. They draw a visual gulf between them, rather than cement a moment of cross-cultural intimacy. That Marsh himself supplied these potent symbols of Native governance from his collection at the Peabody Museum underscores the paleontologist's enormous power over Red Cloud and his people.⁹⁹ These accessories—which were not even made by Lakota artisans—are a brutal reminder of the context of the visit in which friendship and political alliance went hand-in-hand with the attempt to relegate Native Americans to the realm of natural history.¹⁰⁰

We can see in this bifurcated image a snapshot of Red Cloud's negotiation with visual media in which the demands of the scientific photograph collide with the conventions of the formal portrait.¹⁰¹ Each half of this dialectical photograph acquires meaning within

98. "Red Cloud in New-Haven" (above, n. 95).

99. Goodyear, *Red Cloud* (above, n. 1), p. 79.

100. *Ibid.*

101. Brian Wallis addresses the collision of scientific photography and portraiture in "Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes," *American Art* 9:2 (1995): 38–61.



Figure 4. "Red Cloud and Othniel Marsh," 1883. Photograph by Frank A. Bowman. Courtesy of Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

the seriality of images, the visual record of settler colonialism that consolidated middle-class portraiture in the midst of the fossilized dinosaurs and photographs of Native Americans assembled alongside each other in natural history museums to this day. The poses of both Marsh and Red Cloud are fossilized traditions, a live gesture imprinted on matter that not only captures a moment long gone, but also exposes the unstable nature of each and the compound of "natural history." Marsh's bourgeois subjectivity in the image signifies him as a subject with a future, and Red Cloud's profile marks him as a representative of the past. Their coexistence in the same frame, however, ruptures the cyclical temporality of settler colonialism in

which the past is repeatedly exhumed in order to exonerate the present. Instead, it exposes its own workings, revealing the contradictory layers through which some bodies are marked as life and others as the persistent undead. Furthermore, images continue to accrue meaning whenever they are shown, ensuring that our own readings are part of their seriality. This gives us an opportunity to shift their meaning with historical analysis and a critical biopolitical lens attentive to the many-pronged strategies of indigenous resistance.

* * *

Settler colonialism and evolutionary science together compiled prehistoric creatures out of spaces submerged within rocks and depicted Native Americans from the ranks of actively resisting tribes as relics from another evolutionary time. Evidence of species change helped assert the authority of the settler colonial state as coming progress solidified through its discovery and conquest of prehistory. And yet, the act of conquest is never a unilateral victory. A leader of considerable ability and resources, Red Cloud recognized scientists' dependence on his land and life for evidence of the earth's past that would legitimate the nation's future. He succeeded in playing the needs of the paleontologists and reformers to his own advantage, however increasingly insignificant these moments of resistance became as the Lakota and the chief himself gradually lost power. Yet he never stopped learning, never stopped selectively drawing on settler culture modes of representation that could be useful to him and his people, qualities that ensure his own work lives on. His embrace of the teachings of Catholic missionaries in his old age at Pine Ridge made him "most responsible for bringing books and print to his nation," a feat to which an Oglala writer a century later pays tribute.¹⁰² "Walk frontward and learn of the white man's ways," Delphine Red Shirt writes in the 1990s, assuming Red Cloud's voice, "perhaps his books will tell you what you wish to know." Yet she concludes with summing up his eventual position: "[H]e said that when we Lakota relied only on our relationship with T'unkasila and lived according to the old beliefs . . . that we would live happily and die satisfied. He looked at what the wasicu [non-Indians] brought to us, after they put us on the reservation, and he saw how inadequate it was for the Lakota, how insufficient."¹⁰³ Native scholar Phillip H. Round stresses

102. Phillip H. Round, *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663–1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), p. 228.

103. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 229.

that for Red Cloud, “[b]ooks do not replace Lakota tradition. They only supplement it”—a position we might well extend to his views on photography.¹⁰⁴ Despite multi-temporal dispossession, Lakota traditions live on in perpetuity, emboldening the present with the still ongoing struggles of the past.

The media technologies of the fossil and the photograph illuminate the conventions through which nineteenth-century settler colonialism enacted not only the binary of the living and the dead, but also embarked upon a sprawling spatiotemporal project committed to dispossession in perpetuity. This vast dispossession functioned in part through the material and temporal construct of natural history. Settler colonialism requires prehistory that persists without end and demands continual and repeated disposal, requires the lingering gerund of the “vanishing” subject who is not yet gone and never will be, but nonetheless has already disappeared. Yet Red Cloud carefully managed access to the fossils in Lakota land and to his corporeal form, challenging the narrative of the vanishing primitive through negotiated ontologies and dialectical images that maintained some degree of cultural agency in the face of occupation. Evading the biopolitics of settler colonialism that cast him into a recursively undead, unalive state as a tactic of unending territorial dispossession, Red Cloud utilized the visual tropes of the settler state against its own ends.

Viewing the fossil and the photograph as co-constructed nineteenth-century media forms that allegedly captured the evolutionary past enables us to see how ecological information about epochs of prehistory—including just who and what is relegated to prehistory—plays a central role in settler colonial politics. While both seemingly preserve fleeting moments of contact for the future, in the context of the Indian Wars prehistoric fossils of extinct creatures attested to the strength of nation’s future while photographs of Native leaders and children allegedly captured the dying racial past. As Marsh’s lab assistant warned after his falling out with the paleontologist, not even an anatomist could “distinguish between the rusty, frost-cracked, weather-beaten, moss and lichen effects, craftily wrought in the plaster, and the conditions wrought by time on the specimens themselves.”¹⁰⁵ Specimen and media were interchangeable, the work of past death indistinguishable from that of the living hand. Similarly, it is difficult to draw a resolute boundary between

104. *Ibid.*

105. Quoted in Rieppel, “Bringing Dinosaurs Back” (above, n. 78), p. 478.

media of the earth and media of human creation; within the context of colonialism, humans have often been enumerated among the ecological past. We need not only recover the material history of media, but to do so within a framework that attends to the permeability of the categories of humanity, temporality, and materiality.¹⁰⁶

106. I extend my gratitude to the spectacularly helpful peer reviewers and to Dana Luciano, Sarah Blackwood, Lauren Klein, Karen Weingarten, Shari Huhndorf, and Chase Smith for their advice on this essay.