

Pseudohistory and the Demarcation Problem

By Douglas Hunter

Presented at the Canadian Historical Association annual meeting,

Brock University, May 2014

Space aliens building Egyptian pyramids. Global networks of astronomical henges encoding an advanced, esoteric knowledge predating recorded history. Templar Knights bringing the secret of the Holy Grail, the bloodline of Jesus, to the New World, centuries before Columbus. I could go on, but you get the idea. A near-infinity of examples of fringe theories fall under a variety of informal labels, including *cult history*, *pseudohistory*, *cryptohistory*, *pseudoarchaeology*, and *fantastic archaeology*, all of which are considered an intellectual kin of *pseudoscience*. With the examples I have given, it seems pitifully easy to distinguish the “real” from the “pseudo,” yet drawing a line of demarcation is not as simple as these examples would suggest. Like science (and archaeology), history has a “demarcation problem,” as philosopher Karl Popper defined it initially where science is concerned.¹ With history, part of the challenge in determining when the real begins shading over into the pseudo arises from the historical profession’s longstanding wont to position itself as a scientific

¹ “It was in 1919 that I first faced the problem of drawing a line of demarcation between those statements and systems of statements which could be properly described as belonging to empirical science, and others which might, perhaps, be described as ‘pseudo-scientific’ or (in certain contexts) as ‘metaphysical, or which belonged, perhaps, to pure logic or to pure mathematics.” p255 in Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968; original edition 1962).

discipline. History's demarcation problem also suffers from confusion over who—or rather what—is being demarcated.

Let me begin by saying why I think it is important to challenge pseudohistory rather than tune it out as irrelevant white-noise of popular culture and whatever might be on the History Channel right now. My dissertation research involves misinterpretations of Indigenous rock art of North America. For centuries, petroglyphs and pictographs have attracted what I call “anybody but the Indians” interpretations. These works have been attributed to a panoply of global cultures: Phoenicians, Egyptians, Chinese, Portuguese, the Norse and other Bronze Age Europeans, the Lost Tribes of Israel and the lost civilizations of Atlantis and Mu, to name a few. The refusal of theorists to acknowledge an Indigenous attribution often has been steeped in a not-so-subtle racism, what I call the “too lazy and stupid” theory, which holds that Indigenous people lacked the mental capacity and motivation to scratch or grind markings into a boulder. Denying or ignoring the Indigenous provenance for such materials has not been the exclusive domain of Internet eccentrics or fringe publishing hacks. Some proponents have been leading intellectuals and educators, including esteemed university professors. For example, thanks to a retired Harvard marine biologist, Barry Fell, and a retired Mayan specialist from the University of Calgary, David E. Kelley, untold numbers of people believe that the Peterborough Petroglyphs, which are among North America's most impressive examples of Indigenous rock art, are either an inscription recording a bronze-age visit by a Norse king around

1700 B.C. (Fell's idea, in 1982²), or a form of "proto-Tifinagh" that originated among the Berbers of North Africa and found its way to Scandinavia by means unknown and then to the Peterborough Petroglyphs (Kelley's idea, in 1990 and 1994³). Fell and Kelley are no longer alive, but their hyper-migrationist enthusiasms for the Peterborough Petroglyphs did not die with them. A retired lawyer named Andis Kaulins thinks these petroglyphs are a sky map produced by an ancient global culture centred in Europe around 3,000 BC.⁴ A Canadian writer, Michael Bradley, in 1998 alleged someone (he plainly suspected local Anishinaabeg) used a power grinder to remove a ship glyph that would support a European origin.⁵ A Canadian photographer, Robert Burcher, recently self-published a book called *The Leather Boat*⁶ that attributes the petroglyphs to Irish

² Barry Fell, *Bronze Age America* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1982). Fell's (mis)use of the Peterborough Petroglyphs is found throughout the book, but dominates chapters 4 through 6 (102–152).

³ David H. Kelley, "Proto-Tifinagh and Proto-Ogham in the Americas," *The Review of Archaeology* 11:1 (Spring 1990):1–10; David H. Kelley, "The Identification of the Proto-Tifinagh Script at Peterborough, Ontario," *NEARA Journal* 28:3-4 (Winter/Spring 1994): 86–99.

⁴ Andis Kaulins, *Stars, Stones and Scholars: The Decipherment of the Megaliths* (self-published with Trafford Publishing, 2003), 377–79. See also Kaulins' website, www.megaliths.uk. Accessed April 24, 2014.

⁵ Michael Bradley, *Grail Knights of North America: On the Trail of the Grail Legacy in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: Hounslow Press, 1998): 371. I have no idea what Bradley is referring to with respect to a missing glyph in the location he shows in a photograph. There is no such "Boslund looking" ship glyph in the Vastokases' 1973 site map, or for that matter in the preliminary site drawings made by Kenneth Sweetman in 1954. If an area of the rock surface was ever subjected to grinding in this spot, it would have been to remove graffiti or marks from the fencing initially installed to protect the site from further vandalism. Bradley wrote that when he arrived with a film crew they "discovered that this site had been turned over to the local aboriginal band as a 'sacred site.'" (371–372) It was hardly a secret that Petroglyphs Provincial Park is co-managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Curve Lake First Nation. Bradley continued sarcastically: "Our filming was interrupted so that a shaman could perform a necessary religious rite. He didn't deface any of the glyphs, so far as I could see. What do the aboriginals have against these glyphs?" (372) In a word: nothing.

⁶ Burcher's blog (<http://theleatherboat.wordpress.com>) indicates he quickly sold out his initial print run in 2012 and the book is not available. I have not been able to examine a copy, and promises of a second edition have yet to bear fruit. For some of the mainstream media attention he has garnered, see <http://theleatherboat.wordpress.com/press-2/>. Accessed April 24, 2014.

medieval wanderers. Burcher has been profiled enthusiastically in his local newspaper and interviewed uncritically about his pre-Columbian theories by CBC Radio in Newfoundland (which abided his self-awarded credentials of “archeomythologist”).⁷

Scientists have realized they must confront creationism in order to show that it is not scientific and should not be taught in science classrooms. I believe that in the same spirit, we must challenge pseudohistory (and encourage the media to be far more skeptical than they have been) and not allow it to flourish as innocent if misguided speculation. At the least, its implications for the general public’s impressions of Indigenous culture and sovereignty must be appreciated. For whatever motivating reason, the theorists in the cases I am studying have denied or ignored the overwhelming evidence of Indigenous provenance and effectively have erased an Indigenous past, and entire peoples along with it. We can also draw a direct line from erudite if eccentric theories about the origin of Dighton Rock in Massachusetts to the removal policy of President Andrew Jackson that led to an estimated 4,000 of 13,000 Cherokee dying on the Trail of Tears of 1838. It should not surprise anyone that the pseudohistorical bunk of the History Channel 2 program *Unearthing America*, hosted by Scott Wolter (“a real life Indiana Jones” in the program’s promotional materials), is popular on white-

⁷ See Rob Gowan, “Burcher has found more inscriptions.” *Sun Times* (Owen Sound), October 22, 2012; “St. Brendan's Boulder in St. Lunaire-Griquet may have been carved by the Tartessians,” July 11, 2012, CBC Newfoundland and Labrador, <http://www.cbc.ca/onthego/episodes/2012/07/11/st-brendans-boulder-in-st-lunairo-griquet-may-have-been-carved-by-the-tartessians/>. Accessed May 1, 2014.

supremacist websites.⁸ While fringe theorists are either in denial about or oblivious to the attractiveness of their theories to racist tastes, White Power types love the idea that Native Americans weren't here first and don't deserve their land claims, that relics like the mounds of the Ohio Valley were actually the work of advanced Old World colonizers, and that the 9,000-year-old skeleton in Washington State called Kennewick Man was a Caucasian European.⁹

But drawing the line between the real and pseudo, as I have said, is not always easy. Indeed, why should we not take seriously the proto-Tifinagh theory on the Peterborough Petroglyphs proposed by the late Professor Kelley? After all, unlike Barry Fell, a self-styled epigrapher who was wandering far out of his field of accredited expertise in writing books that conjured a Celtic/Norse Bronze Age America,¹⁰ Kelley had a PhD in anthropology from Harvard and was a highly

⁸ The pseudoscience/pseudohistory debunker, author and blogger Jason Colavito repeatedly has addressed links between racism and contemporary pseudohistorical theories, in particular where Scott Wolter's "America Unearthed" program is concerned. See "Racists Use 'America Unearthed' as Evidence," Dec. 6, 2013, Jason Colavito Blog, <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/1/post/2013/12/racists-use-america-unearthed-as-evidence.html>. Accessed April 24, 2014. See also "Scott Wolter Accepts 'Award' from Accused Racist. Declares Quetzalcoatl 'White' European," May 11, 2014, Jason Colavito Blog, <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/1/post/2014/05/scott-wolter-accepts-award-from-accused-racist-declares-quetzalcoatl-white-european.html>. Accessed May 12, 2014. As well, the prodigious promoter of notions of Old World Caucasian colonizers in American prehistory, who writes under the name Frank Joseph, is Frank Joseph Collin, a former leader of the National Socialist (aka Nazi) Party of America.

⁹ See David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for American Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 114–120, for a discussion of the consequences of labeling Kennewick Man's traits as "Caucasoid."

¹⁰ Fell helped himself to Joan Vastokas's site drawings, distorting them to suit his alphabetic requirements. Never having visited the site himself, he stated their work "is meticulous in its accurate portrayal of the inscriptions" but said the Vastokases "did not then recognize the inscribed alphabets or record them as such." Fell thus implied that the Vastokases might be open to an alphabetic interpretation, or had even come around to it already. Fell further alleged the Vastokases "like most archaeologists in North America, felt obliged to explain all American petroglyphs as being the work of native American artists." (*Bronze Age America*, 40) This suggestion that they knowingly suppressed a viable alternate explanation to a Native American provenance so as to toe the academic line was without foundation.

respected semiotician, one of the first to recognize in the 1960s that the undeciphered Mayan glyphs had a phonetic component. This “Kelley dilemma” denies us the option of deciding “real” history can only be produced within the ranks of accredited academia. As a professor emeritus of anthropology who should have known better, Kelley did not attempt to address the considerable evidence for Indigenous provenance of the Peterborough site documented by two anthropologists on the faculty of Trent University, Joan and Romas Vastokas, in their standard study (in fact, the only study of the site), *Sacred Art of the Algonkians*.¹¹ Kelley was arrogant enough to use Joan Vastokas’s site drawings as evidence of “proto-Tifinagh” script while scarcely recognizing the Vastokases’ associated research on the Indigenous cultural roots of the glyph field and ignoring their finds of Indigenous material culture on the site.¹²

¹¹ Joan M. Vastokas and Romas K. Vastokas, *Sacred Art of the Algonkians: A Study of the Peterborough Petroglyphs* (Peterborough ON: Mansard Press, 1973).

¹² See David H. Kelley, “Proto-Tifinagh and Proto-Ogham in the Americas.” Kelley cites or references 21 works in an essay substantially devoted to critiquing (sometimes harshly) Fell’s methods and theories related to the Peterborough Petroglyphs while supporting Fell’s general assertion that the glyphs are not Indigenous; the Vastokases’ standard study (the only one that exists) was not among the works Kelley cited. Kelley then attempted his own alphabetic interpretation of the Peterborough Petroglyphs as “Proto-Tifinagh” in “The Identification of the Proto-Tifinagh Script at Peterborough, Ontario.” Kelley therein states: “The inscriptions at Peterborough were carefully drawn by Joan Vastokas, who has kindly allowed me to use her drawings on the condition that I make it clear that she is not convinced that the inscriptions are alphabetic. At the time of the first extensive publications of the materials, by the Vastokases, they thought that all of the carving had been done by Algonquin Indians, a supposition which was certainly the most probable explanation *a priori*, and which seemed to agree with the use of equivalents of some of the symbols by modern Algonquians.” (88–89). Like Fell before him, Kelley wrongly implied that the Vastokases might be amenable to a different opinion as to provenance. Joan Vastokas condemned the work of both Fell and Kelley in “The Peterborough Petroglyphs: Native or Norse?” in *The Rock-Art of Eastern North America*, ed. Carol Diaz-Granados and James R. Duncan (Tuscaloosa AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 277–289. Vastokas notes that Fell never visited the site (and Kelley only briefly), did not secure permission to reproduce the drawings in *Sacred Art of the Algonkians*, and “based his conclusions entirely upon the illustrations and master map in our original site report (Vastokas and Vastokas 1973), freely altering and distorting our images in his publication to better suit his claims.” (277) She did not contest the fact that Kelley secured her permission to make use of her glyph drawings in his

Moreover, Alice Beck Kehoe, a professor of anthropology at Marquette University and the University of Wisconsin with a longstanding association with Kelley and a shared enthusiasm for theories of epic transoceanic migration-diffusion, applauded Kelley's and Fell's lines of inquiry in her "critical history" of American archaeology, *The Land of Prehistory*. Kehoe wrongly described the Peterborough site as a "massive light-colored granite dome"¹³ (it's actually a low outcropping of soft white crystalline limestone). While Kehoe briefly allowed that the rock may also have been inscribed by Algonquian peoples, she failed to acknowledge the existence of, let alone engage, the standard reference work of the Vastokases.

Archaeologist Stephen Williams, in *Fantastic Archaeology*, coined the term "rogue professor," for members of the academy, among whom he included Fell, whose work fell well short of professional standards. Williams explained:

Rogue professors have all the degrees and academic trappings of other professors; they even write and publish in the manner of other professors. Their papers and books have learned references and bibliographies and thus look the part, but they are not what they seem. These scholars have abandoned the appropriate standards of scholarly enterprise and can no longer make critical judgments about the evidence. They have the opportunity to "rogue" or defraud the public.¹⁴

work, but stated Kelley "completely overlooks or chooses to ignore" the Vastokases' key contextual analysis related to the so-called boat glyphs. (284) She concluded by condemning the "complete lack of scientific rigor" of Fell and Kelley. (289)

¹³ Alice Beck Kehoe, *The Land of Prehistory: A Critical History of American Archaeology* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 203.

¹⁴ Stephen Williams, *Fantastic Archaeology*, 285.

Archaeologist Garrett Fagan, in *Archaeological Fantasies*, similarly points out failings within academia, in particular those of a dominant Mayanist, Sir Eric Thompson (1898–1975), who sought to crush any approach to glyph decipherment that disagreed with his own. According to Fagan, “a case could be made that this much-honored figure crossed the line into pseudoarchaeology.”¹⁵ And so credentialism would—and did—privilege both the wrongheaded intellectual tyranny of Thompson over phonetic advocates like Kelley in the decipherment of Mayan glyphs, but at the same time would privilege the sheer wrongheadedness of Kelley in interpreting the Peterborough Petroglyphs as the relic of an Old World culture.

I think Williams’s charge that the rogue professor “defrauds” the public is a rhetorical bridge too far, as it negates the possibility of genuine belief or disillusion, however poor the scholarship. The misguided, or at least inadequate, theorizing of Kelley (and Kehoe) with respect to the Peterborough Petroglyphs further complicates the idea of the “rogue professor,” as it shows accredited academics are capable of producing rigorous work acclaimed by their peers as well as other work emphatically rejected by them. William H. Steibing, Jr. has proposed three basic features of cult archaeology: “(1) the unscientific nature of cult archaeology, (2) its tendency to provide simple, compact answers to complex, difficult issues, and (3) the presence of a persecution complex and [an]

¹⁵ Garrett G. Fagan, “Diagonosing Pseudoarchaeology,” in *Archaeological Fantasies*, ed. Garrett G. Fagan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 29.

ambivalent attitude toward the scientific Establishment.”¹⁶ However, we must question if the word “scientific” is applicable where history, if not archaeology, is concerned. Peter Novick in *That Noble Dream*¹⁷ identified “objectivity” as the main pursuit of the American historical discipline, but argued that Americans who were educated in Germany in the late nineteenth century and brought home the concept of *wissenschaftliche Objektivitat*, misinterpreted it to denote an unbiased, empirical scientific discipline.¹⁸ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Novick continued, when “science was never more highly regarded in the United States, was never more of a cult,”¹⁹ no group “was more prone to scientific imagery, and the assumption of the mantle of science, than the historians.”²⁰ The irony here is that historians, who have been wont to label fringe efforts as “cult history,” have themselves been inheritors of a professional tradition with a misguided attachment to a cultish worship of scientific objectivity. Indeed, historians and archaeologists can seem more confident of the ability of scientific method to distinguish between the real and the pseudo than scientists themselves.

By the measure of Popper’s classic consideration of the demarcation problem, “scientific” is not applicable to historical method. Popper argued that

¹⁶ William H. Steibing, Jr., “The Nature and Dangers of Cult Archaeology,” in *Cult Archaeology & Creationism*, eds. Francis B. Harold and Raymond A. Eve (Iowa City IA: University of Iowa Press, 1995), 2.

¹⁷ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹⁸ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 24–26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

“the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability”²¹—in other words, there must be some experimental way to prove a theory wrong, which it must pass, in order for it to retain scientific status. For this reason, Popper did not consider psychoanalysis, individual psychology and the Marxist theory of history to be scientific.²² History might try to take refuge in empiricism, but here again, Popper gives us problems, as he states that the principle of empiricism “asserts that in science, only observation and experience may decide upon the *acceptance or rejection* of scientific statements, including laws and theories.”²³ (original italics). And so empiricism is the means to testing a theory to ensure it meets the criterion of falsifiability. Must we then conclude that when historians, archaeologists and anthropologists argue their methods are scientific, they’re indulging in what Popper would have concluded is pseudoscience?

In attempting to answer his own question, “What is pseudohistory or pseudoscience?” Ronald Fritze in *Invented Knowledge* replied: “An easy answer would be to follow the lead of Justice Potter Stewart, who confessed the difficulty of defining obscenity, but said, ‘I know it when I see it.’”²⁴ For Fritze, the solution lay in defining instead what history is: “A simple and elegant definition for history is ‘a true story about the human past.’ The problem is that pseudohistorians insist that their ideas and writings are true stories about the human past. Critical

²¹ Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, 37.

²² Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, 34.

²³ Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, 54.

²⁴ Fritze, *Invented Knowledge*, 11.

scholars, of course, disagree. So how can a person know what is truth and fact, and what is lie and error in history, or science for that matter? The answer is evidence, including its quality and quantity.”²⁵

Fritze’s reliance on “evidence” as the measure of proper history will garner little dissent, but his confidence that proper history is “a true story” likely will strike many professional historians as an oversimplified and overoptimistic assessment of history’s certitude. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur stated in the 1940s: “It is perfectly acceptable that there are in history partial and multiple viewpoints. It is enough for us sometimes to discern and construct, here and there, islands of intelligibility.”²⁶ Ricoeur believed that history, as a discipline, must reject presenting itself as a science in the manner of other disciplines that aim to produce an objective description of reality.²⁷ I want to avoid getting lost in the thickets of hermeneutics, phenomenology and epistemology, but I agree that history is far from capable of being singularly “true,” which problematizes the common defense of proper historical method that draws directly on the analogue of science. History will always be an exercise in interpretation and argument, rather than a quest that has any hope of arriving at firm and irrefutable laws. Many histories can contradict each other and yet still be “true” (and scholarly) in having a foundation in evidence that can be verified and interrogated.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Il est parfaitement admissible qu’il y ait sur l’histoire des vues partielles et multiples. Il nous suffit parfois de discerner et de construire, ici et là, des îlots d’intelligibilité.” Simon Couillard, “Paul Ricoeur et le caractère politique de l’enseignement de l’histoire,” *Le Devoir*, May 11, 2013. <http://m.ledevoir.com/societe/le-devoir-de-philo/377935/paul-ricoeur-et-le-caractere-politique-de-l-enseignement-de-l-histoire>. Accessed April 24, 2014.

²⁷ “L’histoire, comme discipline, doit renoncer à se poser comme une science à la manière des autres qui visent une description objective de la réalité.” Ibid.

“Scientific” might be an acceptable gloss for processes in social sciences such as anthropology and its sub-discipline of archaeology. Archaeologist Kenneth Feder for one is comfortable applying the term “science” in broad terms to his field: “The techniques used to get at knowledge we can feel confident in—knowledge that is reliable, truthful, and factual—are referred to as *science*.”²⁸ But while the increasing use of data sets in historical research might also invite a label of “scientific” in adhering to standards of statistical analysis, I feel historians generally should avoid this problematic term and instead consider using *disciplined*. “Disciplined scholarship” (as opposed to “undisciplined scholarship”²⁹) conveys shared if not uniform standards of methodology and inquiry, and above all invites interrogation by peers of the conclusions arising from them, in a manner that is somewhat analogous to Popper’s testability of scientific *statements*. Novick’s definition of the concept of “historical objectivity,” while welded to a confidence in the emergence of singular truths, contains a kernel of useful guidance. As Joan Vastokas emphasized in criticizing the “complete lack of scientific rigor”³⁰ in the misuse of her glyph drawings by Barry Fell and David E. Kelley, her drawings were an *interpretation* of difficult-to-discern impressions in rock, and Novick’s summation of historical objectivity

²⁸ Kenneth Feder, *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology*, eighth edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2014), 23.

²⁹ The term “undisciplined scholarship” is used by Sumathi Ramaswamy to describe pseudohistorical and pseudoscientific theories in *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 2.

³⁰ Vastokas, “The Peterborough Petroglyphs,” 289.

states in part: “the value of an interpretation is judged by how well it accounts for facts; if contradicted by facts, it must be abandoned.”³¹

I prefer archaeologist Garrett G. Fagan’s approach to pseudoarchaeology as a model for defining pseudohistory. Fagan foremost views pseudoarchaeology in attitudinal terms: it is not a *what* but a *how*: Fagan argues that someone can be defined as a pseudoarcheologist “when he or she *willfully* ignores countervailing data instead of rethinking their position in the face of it, or when contextual considerations are *deliberately* bypassed or left unexplored for fear of destroying a preferred conclusion.”³² Similarly there are writers so at odds with principles of disciplined scholarship that they deserve to be called pseudohistorians. Pseudohistorians in my experience, are like Fagan’s pseudoarchaeologists, who seldom conduct field work: they have little familiarity with primary sources or academic research devoted to them, to the point of willfully ignoring research that would upset their arguments. No item of research is capable of putting a stake through the heart of a treasured relic’s pseudohistorical interpretation. Pseudohistorians tend to rely on and rework secondary sources, perpetuating and magnifying misinterpretations of fellow pseudohistorians and treating now-discredited works from centuries past as credible sources. They are attracted like moths to the same relics, which are repeatedly repurposed for wildly different theories without concern of

³¹ Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 2.

³² Fagan, “Diagnosing Pseudoarchaeology,” 28–29. Italics original.

contradiction.³³ They can be so revisionist as to be called ahistorical.³⁴ They are especially fond of conspiratorial scenarios in which the truth has been suppressed by academics, the Catholic church, Indigenous peoples, the Smithsonian institution, and monarchs and voyagers who wanted to keep their discoveries to themselves. Pseudohistorians display an aggressive hostility towards all academic expertise, which as I noted previously is a characteristic of cult archaeology according to Steibing.³⁵ Positions are defended by condemning

³³ A prime example is the Newport Tower, a stone ruin in Newport, Rhode Island. Since the early nineteenth century, it has been posited as a Norse church, a Portuguese watchtower, a Chinese lighthouse, and a Templar ruin, among other interpretations. The fact that it was well recognized as the remains of a 17th century colonial windmill in the nineteenth century has not impeded pseudohistorical enthusiasms. See Stephen Williams, *Fantastic Archaeology*, 217–219; and Kenneth Feder, *Frauds, Myths and Mysteries*, 149–150.

³⁴ This ahistorical bent is illustrated by Scott Wolter's contention in his May 2013 interview with Red Ice Radio that for 250 years before the arrival of Columbus, the Catholic Church had been sending Jesuit spies to the New World: "In fact, what I've been told is that there was a war that raged for 250 years before contact. The church was sending over Jesuit spies to try to eradicate the Templars, who had intermarried with the native people over here. And they shared rituals, because they shared the same basically, basically the same ideology, and it's a fascinating story. I flesh this out in great detail, it's supported by numerous facts, and I think it's going to really, it's going to shock the world..." It might shock Wolter to know that the Jesuit order was not founded until 1542. See "Scott Wolter — The Kensington Runestone, The Hooked X & Templars In America", <http://www.redicecreations.com/radio/2013/05/RIR-130514.php>, Accessed April 25, 2014,

³⁵ Pseudohistorians nevertheless tend to be sensitive about credentials. Wolter appended the initials P.G. to his name on the cover of *The Hooked X*, by which he presumably meant "professional geologist," which as far as I can gather is a nonexistent certification. The accreditation does not appear on the cover of his next book, *Akhenaten to the Founding Fathers*. Wolter has a bachelor's degree in geology from the University of Minnesota and runs a company, American Petrographic Services, in Saint Paul, Minnesota, that analyses concrete and other building materials. I do not know if he is a member of the American Institute of Professional Geologists, but members are either a Certified Professional Geologist (CPG) or a lesser Professional Member. Jason Colavito has called out Wolter on repeated claims of having an honorary master's degree in geology from the University of Minnesota, for which Colavito can find no evidence. (See "Scott Wolter's Apparently Non-Existent Degree," January 21, 2013, Jason Colavito Blog. <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/1/post/2013/01/scott-wolters-apparently-non-existent-degree.html>. Accessed April 24, 2014.) Andis Kaulins, a retired lawyer, appends the credentials "J.D. Stanford University" to his name on the cover of *Stars, Stones and Scholars*. The back cover of the 1978 paperback edition of *America B.C.* describes Barry Fell as a "Harvard Professor," which was true insofar he was a retired professor of biology. Michael Bradley has issued a variety of eccentric author bios. Among them is his claim on the back cover of *Grail Knights of North America* to have been a "former lecturer at Dalhousie University's Centre for African Studies" and having held guest lectureships at Yale, The Princeton Institute for Advanced Studies, Vanderbilt University, the University of Toronto, and York University.

academia as conspiratorially hostile to outsiders and new ideas, thus rendering the objections of disciplined scholarship irrelevant. Erich Von Däniken perfected this preemptive-strike strategy in *Chariots of the Gods*, opening with a tribute to his own scholarly bravery (“It took courage to write this book”) that also alluded to the persecution of free thinkers who had their works placed by the Vatican on its *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*.³⁶ There is a natural synergy between theories of secret conspiracies in history and theorists who want us to think they’re up against shadowy forces that don’t want them to publish or are bent on destroying their credibility. In an Afterword to Michael Bradley’s *Swords at Sunset*, publisher Robert Davie alleged the book was almost prevented from being published by unnamed “narrow-minded” and “influential interest groups.”³⁷ Scott Wolter routinely attacks academia as a body, dismissing tenured professors as

³⁶ “It took courage to write this book, and it will take courage to read it. Because its theories and proofs do not fit into the mosaic of traditional archaeology, constructed so laboriously and firmly cemented down, scholars will call it nonsense and put it on the Index of those books which are better left unmentioned,” p7 in Erich Von Däniken, *Chariots of the Gods?: Was God an Astronaut?* Original editions 1968 (*Erinnerungen an die Zukunft*, German), 1969 (English translation). Effone Electronic Press, 2012, Accessed at <http://www.wordscascade.com/chariots.pdf>, April 24, 2014.

³⁷ “Narrow-minded interest groups lobbied against its publication and the author’s views were subjected to an extraordinary degree of criticism and ridicule long before his the [sic] book ever saw the light of day in any bookstore... Influential individuals and groups very nearly had their way in dictating what is acceptable for you and me to read.” Michael Davie, “Afterword,” in Michael Bradley with Joelle Lauriol, *Swords at Sunset: Last Stand of North America’s Grail Knights* (Ancaster ON: Manor House, 2004), 235.

“clowns”³⁸ who lack his alleged scientific discipline as he posits a Templar-Knights interpretation of pre-Columbian American history.³⁹

In closing, while purveyors of extreme examples of pseudohistory may fairly be labeled pseudohistorians, the most promising efforts to draw the line of demarcation focus on the practice rather than the personality, on attitude rather than credential-based identity. Consequently, bona fide members of academia can succumb to episodic bouts of pseudohistory. I would also argue that disciplined historians should leave it to pseudohistorians to claim their methods are scientific, thereby placing themselves in the realm of the pseudo.

³⁸ In an interview with the Swedish-based Internet radio station Red Ice Radio on May 14, 2013, (“Scott Wolter — The Kensington Runestone, The Hooked X & Templars In America”, <http://www.redicecreations.com/radio/2013/05/RIR-130514.php>, accessed April 25, 2014), Wolter disparaged his chief nemesis, the “tenured professor,” complaining, “I have to listen to this garbage from these clowns?” In his foreword to pseudohistorian Rick Osmon’s *The Graves of the Golden Bear: Ancient Fortresses and Monuments of the Ohio Valley* (Nashville, TN: Grave Distractions Publications 2011), which posits a European presence hundreds of years before the arrival of Columbus, Wolter declared: “there’s no question that factions within the United States have been willfully denying, dismissing, ridiculing, obfuscating, and in many cases outright lying in an attempt to make the obvious and voluminous evidence of contact in the America’s [sic] prior to Columbus go away. Academia specifically is guilty of leading the charge to put down anything and anyone who dares step out of line.” (1) While beyond the scope of this paper, there is little to distinguish between the logic of some strains of American pseudohistory and “truther” conspiracy theories about 9-11.

³⁹ Scott F. Wolter, *The Hooked X: Key to the Secret History of North America* (St. Cloud MN: North Star Press, 2009); *Akhenaten to the Founding Fathers: The Mysteries of the Hooked X* (St. Cloud MN: North Star Press, 2013). Wolter also recently posted a blog rant against academic peer review in which he revisited his pet theme of his superior accountability standard. Wolter has a bachelor’s degree in geology and runs a company that analyses concrete and other masonry materials, and according to him: “the other major difference between academic and professional peer review is accountability. As licensed professionals we have taken an oath to perform our work professionally, ethically, and to protect the health and welfare of the public. If licensed professionals are found guilty of incompetent work or unethical practice, we risk losing our license to practice. Further, we are required to testify to our facts, interpretations and conclusions in a court of law under oath. What accountability does a tenured professor have? (“Scott Wolter Answers.” April 12, 2014. <http://scottwolteranswers.blogspot.ca/2014/04/reviewing-peer-review.html>. Accessed April 24, 2014.) Wolter tends to harp on the alleged sanctity and personal legal hazard of court testimony as an expert witness and the superior standards to which he is held in comparison to academics. It is not clear however what “license” he is talking about in this blog post.

Bibliography

Bradley, Michael. *Grail Knights of North America: On the Trail of the Grail Legacy in Canada and the United States*. Toronto: Hounslow Press, 1998.

[Burcher, Robert]. "The Leather Boat." <http://theleatherboat.wordpress.com>. Accessed April 24, 2014.

CBC Newfoundland and Labrador. "St. Brendan's Boulder in St. Lunaire-Griquet may have been carved by the Tartessians." July 11, 2012. <http://www.cbc.ca/onthego/episodes/2012/07/11/st-brendans-boulder-in-st-lunaire-griquet-may-have-been-carved-by-the-tartessians/>. Accessed May 1, 2014.

Colavito, Jason. "Racists Use 'America Unearthed' as Evidence." Jason Colavito Blog. Dec. 6, 2013. <http://www.jasoncolavito.com/1/post/2013/12/racists-use-america-unearthed-as-evidence.html>. Accessed April 24, 2014.

Couillard, Simon. "Paul Ricoeur et le caractère politique de l'enseignement de l'histoire." In *Le Devoir*, May 11, 2013. <http://m.ledevoir.com/societe/le-devoir-de-philo/377935/paul-ricoeur-et-le-caractere-politique-de-l-enseignement-de-l-histoire>. Accessed April 24, 2014.

Davie, Michael. "Afterword." In *Swords at Sunset: Last Stand of North America's Grail Knights*, by Michael Bradley, with Joelle Lauriol. Ancaster ON: Manor House, 2004.

Fagan, Garrett G. "Diagonosing Pseudoarchaeology." In *Archaeological Fantasies*, edited by Garrett G. Fagan, 23–46. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Feder, Kenneth. *Frauds, Myths, and Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology*, eighth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2014.

Fell, Barry. *Bronze Age America*. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1982.

Fritze, Ronald H. *Invented Knowledge: False History, Fake Science and Pseudo-religions*. London: Reaktion, 2009; paperback 2011.

Gowan, Rob. "Burcher has found more inscriptions." *Sun Times* (Owen Sound). October 22, 2012.

Kaulins, Andis. *Stars, Stones and Scholars: The Decipherment of the Megaliths*. Self-published with Trafford Publishing, 2003.

Kehoe, Alice Beck. *The Kensington Runestone: Approaching a Research Question Holistically*. Long Grove IL: Waveland Press, 2005.

—. *The Land of Prehistory: A Critical History of American Archaeology*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

—. “Scientific Creationism: World View, Not Science.” In *Cult Archaeology & Creationism*, edited by Francis B. Harrold and Raymond A. Eve, 11–20. Iowa City IA: University of Iowa Press, 1995.

Kelley, David H. “Proto-Tifinagh and Proto-Ogham in the Americas.” *The Review of Archaeology* 11:1 (Spring 1990):1–10.

—. “The Identification of the Proto-Tifinagh Script at Peterborough, Ontario.” *NEARA Journal* 28:3-4 (Winter/Spring 1994): 86–99.

Novick, Peter. *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Popper, Karl R. *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968; original edition 1962.

Ramaswamy, Sumathi. *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories*. Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 2004.

Red Ice Radio. “Scott Wolter — The Kensington Runestone, The Hooked X & Templars In America.” <http://www.redicecreations.com/radio/2013/05/RIR-130514.php>, accessed April 25, 2014),

Steibing, William H., Jr. “The Nature and Dangers of Cult Archaeology.” In *Cult Archaeology & Creationism*, edited by Francis B. Harold and Raymond A. Eve, 1–10. Iowa City IA: University of Iowa Press, 1995.

Sweetman, Paul W. “A Preliminary Report on the Peterborough Petroglyphs.” In *Ontario History* 47:3 (1955): 101–121.

Thomas, David Hurst. *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for American Identity*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Vastokas, Joan M., and Romas K. Vastokas. *Sacred Art of the Algonkians: A Study of the Peterborough Petroglyphs*. Peterborough ON: Mansard Press, 1973.

Vastokas, Joan M. “The Peterborough Petroglyphs: Native or Norse?” In *The Rock-Art of Eastern North America*, edited by Carol Diaz-Granados and James R. Duncan, 277–289. Tuscaloosa AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004.

Von Däniken, Erich. *Chariots of the Gods?: Was God an Astronaut?* Original editions 1968 (*Erinnerungen an die Zukunft*, German), 1969 (English translation). Effone Electronic Press, 2012, Accessed at <http://www.wordscascade.com/chariots.pdf>, April 24, 2014.

Wallace, Birgitta. Review of *The Kensington Runestone: Approaching a Research Question Holistically* by Alice B. Kehoe. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology / Journal Canadien d'Archéologie* 30:1 (2006): 143–149.

Williams, Stephen. *Fantastic Archaeology: The Wild Side of North American Prehistory*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

Wolter, Scott F. *Akhenaten to the Founding Fathers: The Mysteries of the Hooked X*. St. Cloud MN: North Star Press, 2013.

—. *The Hooked X: Key to the Secret History of North America*. St. Cloud MN: North Star Press, 2009.

—. "Scott Wolter Answers." April 12, 2014. <http://scottwolteranswers.blogspot.ca/2014/04/reviewing-peer-review.html>. Accessed April 24, 2014.