

Collecting Native America: John Lloyd Stephens and the Rhetorics of Archaeological Value

CHRISTEN MUCHER, Smith College

On the stormy night of July 29, 1842, the Rotunda on the corner of New York's Prince and Mercer Streets, home of "Catherwood's Panoramas," went up in flames.¹ Five years earlier, the English architect and artist Frederick Catherwood had built the circular brick-and-wood structure to house his popular "View of Jerusalem"; after the attraction opened in January of 1838, it was so successful that Catherwood added views of Niagara Falls, Thebes, and Lima to his worldly collection.² Located across from Niblo's Garden, and grouped with other nearby attractions like the "Fair of the American Institute" and George Catlin's "Indian Gallery" at the Stuyvesant Institute, by 1839 Catherwood's Panorama was considered one of New York's "most interesting and instructive places of amusement which can be visited."³ But on the morning of July 30, 1842, it was clear that the destruction was total: Catherwood's famous panoramas were lost, and with them a new attraction as yet unexhibited, described by Mayor Philip Hone as "a large collection of curiosities and relicks, sketches and other precious things collected by Messrs. Stephens and Catherwood in their recent travels in Central America."⁴

During their "travels in Central America" from 1839 to 1841, US writer and diplomat John Lloyd Stephens and his associate Catherwood sent sculptures and other artifacts to the Panorama for storage, awaiting transformation from mere "curiosities and relicks" into a spectacular "museum of American antiquities." Stephens planned to gather Indigenous objects—from North American "Indians," Central American Maya, Caribbean Caribs, South American Incas—into one publicly accessible location that would, much like the Panorama, give visitors access to the expansive sights of a world tour within the confines of a single building. The collection's individual parts would all add up to one "American" whole, housing statues from Copán (Honduras) and Quirigúa (Guatemala) alongside plaster casts made in Palenque (Chiapas) as well

as wooden carvings taken from Uxmal (Yucatán), all “Classic Maya Civilization” cities. Stephens’s vision for the project was expansive, and he hoped it “might deserve the countenance of the [US] General Government, and draw to it Catlin’s Indian Gallery, and every other memorial of the aboriginal races, whose history within our own borders has already become almost a romance and fable.”⁵ Accordingly, the team “deposited all their valuable collection of curiosities, pieces of the ruins, specimens, drawings, plans, and every thing that they had collected in their faithful and perilous tour” at Catherwood’s popular location.⁶

One of the items in this “valuable collection” was a wooden “beam of hieroglyphics,” recently transported to New York from the corn-studded ruins of Uxmal. In his travel narrative, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (1841), Stephens had described deciding to save this “mystical beam,” which he believed represented the “only link” connecting the chain of ancient American history to the Copán and Palenque sculptures (II: 432). What is more, he was concerned that the “improvident” and “indolent” *labradores*—Maya workers from the hacienda who had carried him to Uxmal on their backs in return for poverty wages—would be unable to recognize the beam’s value (II: 415, 416). Protecting such a precious part of the “aboriginal races” from the “wanton machete of an Indian” necessitated the beam’s wholesale removal; however, unable to arrange transport, Stephens was forced to leave it at Uxmal “with an Indian at the moment sitting upon it” (II: 433). Two years later, he detailed his triumph in *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (1843), written after the fire: “It left Uxmal on the shoulders of ten Indians ... reached this city uninjured, and was deposited in Mr. Catherwood’s Panorama.”⁷ Stephens lost the precious beam anew, however, when,

... in the general conflagration of Jerusalem and Thebes, this part of Uxmal was consumed, and with it other beams afterward discovered, much more curious and interesting; as also the whole collection of vases, figures, idols, and other relics gathered upon this journey. The collecting, packing, and transporting of these things had given me more trouble and annoyance than any other circumstance in the journey, and their loss cannot be replaced; for, being first on the ground, and having all at my choice, I of course selected only those objects which were most curious and valuable and if I were to go over the whole ground again, I could not find others equal to them.⁸

The lost money, effort, and objects Stephens placed alongside a more totalizing loss: Not only was “part of Uxmal” consumed, but so were all the “beams afterward discovered,” as well as the “whole collection of vases, figures, idols, and other relics” (my emphasis). The destroyed specimens echoed the desolated “whole ground” of Central America and Mexico, which first the Spanish and then Stephens had cleared of

all its “most curious and valuable” objects. Though melancholic, Stephens recognized that the lasting consequence of the Rotunda’s destruction was a deprived public, not a personal reversal. Overnight, Stephens’s “valuable collection” had merely been transformed from one of stone and wood into one of paper and ink. And while the fire destroyed the “only link” between the archaeological heritage objects and their subsequent reproductions, establishing the value and ownership of the former had always caused Stephens considerable trouble, whereas the value, ownership, and beneficiaries of the latter were never in doubt.

In fact, from the very beginning, Stephens had imagined that his “great object and effort was to procure true copies of the originals,” although he did exert himself to procure the originals as well (I: 137). Anticipating the value of Catherwood’s copies while still in New York, Stephens had his collaborator sign a contract assigning to him the exclusive “use and benefit” of all “the information, drawings, and material collected” on their tour, thus already propertizing a version of the collection before ever leaving the US.⁹ Moreover, Stephens consistently minimized the difference between originals and copies: he boasted that *Incidents’s* illustrations were “as true copies as can be presented; and except the stones themselves, the reader cannot have better materials for speculation and study” (I: 137). When publication of *Incidents* was initially delayed, Stephens told his colleague William H. Prescott that the postponement was due to “a scheme for bringing to this country some very interesting monuments” (I: 137–38). In *Incidents’s* preface, however, Stephens blamed the engravings for having slowed the schedule (I: 1). Had his scheme been to bring to the US “very interesting monuments” of stone or of paper?

The Rotunda fire of 1842 that replaced Stephens’s collection of “American antiquities” with two-dimensional paper copies makes apparent the value of *Incidents’s* textual objects—and textual Indigenous objects more generally—over its archaeological referents. Tracing what William Lenz has called the “visual texts” of Stephens’s *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (1841), this essay assesses the images’ evidentiary, pecuniary, and ideological value.¹⁰ It claims that *Incidents’s* illustrations set a pattern for evaluating Native American “culture”—as if that were a single thing—that was predicated on the replacement of physical objects by textual ones, the result of which was the replacement of material parts of “the Maya past” with a wholly reimagined “American” culture.¹¹ Whereas Stephens’s travel writings have often been studied in the context of mid-century US hemispheric aggression, examining the representational value created by the transnational circulation of Stephens’s textual collection reveals the ways in which the developing concept of American culture and nineteenth-century Americanist Studies traveled along rhetorical itineraries of imperial power.¹² Building on Latin Americanist scholarship of the “imagined” Americas—by the likes of Edmundo O’Gorman, María-Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, Walter Mignolo, and others—while emphasizing the *figural* quality of this “imagination,” the essay views Stephens’s work in the context of Maya communities across borders and American “Indianness” across the Rio Grande and

Atlantic to show an early version of transnational American Studies that transformed particularized Indigenous subjects into totalizing American textual objects.¹³

Identifying Value

Before stopping at the Uxmal hacienda in Yucatán where they first saw the “mystical beam,” Stephens and Catherwood had already spent time at sites in Chiapas, Guatemala, and Honduras.¹⁴ One site on their itinerary was Copán, “an ancient city” filled with intricately carved stone statues “on whose history books throw but little light” (I: 96). Their guide, a villager named Jose, led them through the jungle to view Copán’s sculptures, including a stone carving that “our guide called an ‘Idol’” (I: 102). Stephens well knew the Black Legend staple wherein sixteenth-century archbishop Diego de Landa had ordered Maya statues and manuscripts destroyed due to their supposed idolatrous import.¹⁵ But seeing this Copán statue convinced Stephens not of its artisans’ “idolatry”—which had been a sign to the Spanish of their charges’ “uncivilized” state—but instead that the “people who once occupied the continent of America were not savages” (I: 102). In the intricate carving, Stephens saw proof of an autochthonous American civilization. Casting the statues as similar to, but not quite identical with, historical documents, Stephens explained that Copán’s objects were “like newly-discovered historical records” of “the people who once occupied the continent of America” (I: 102).¹⁶ The value of the “idols” was something he derived from their association with, but not their actual standing as, historical records.

Not everyone shared Stephens’s evaluation of the “idols.” Indeed, many of his contemporaries believed—also through analogical reasoning—that the statues had been made by Old World colonists.¹⁷ Neither was Stephens entirely free from this appraisal: At Copán, he looked past the living, machete-wielding work crew to imagined guides who “laid bare the city to their view” (I: 146). Picturing a sculptor of stone rather than one of vegetation, Stephens put himself in his fantasy artisan’s place: “Little did he imagine that the time would come when his works would perish, his race be extinct, his city a desolation and abode for reptiles, for strangers to gaze at and wonder by what race it had once been inhabited” (I: 146). Projecting an invented “vanishing Indian” onto the landscape—as US writers had been doing for years—Stephens imagined the Copán “idols” before him as “memorials of their [the imagined race’s] footsteps upon earth,” and he assessed the statues’ value in terms of commemorating a mystical past rather than considering their transhistorical social roles in the present (II: 356).¹⁸

On a stop at the Lacandón Maya city of Chajul, Stephens learned that, just beyond the mountains, “was a living city, large and populous, occupied by Indians, precisely in the same state as before the discovery of America” (II: 195). Though he never attempted to visit the city that “no white man has ever reached” and where “the inhabitants speak the Maya language,” this did not keep Stephens from speculating that “[o]ne look at that city was worth ten years of an every-day life” (II: 195, 196).

Even the mere vision of this “mysterious city” was valuable (II: 196). Unlike many of his contemporaries, Stephens believed that “a place is left where Indians and an Indian city exist as Cortez and Alvarado found them; there are living men who can solve the mystery that hangs over the ruined cities of America; perhaps who can go to Copan and read the inscriptions on its monuments” (II: 196). Stephens imagined these remnant “Indians” as transregional Mayan speakers who could “solve the mystery” of their own supposed disappearance by going to Copán and “read[ing] the inscriptions on its monuments.” Contrary to Stephens’s fantasy, however, the Maya populations of Chajul, Copán, Quirigúa, Palenque, Uxmal, etc., were not “extinct,” although the residents might not have resembled Stephens’s expected sixteenth-century facsimiles. And even if contemporary Maya had not known how to “read” the classical Mayan inscriptions, that did not mean that they knew nothing—or valued nothing—about the “ruined cities” in which they made their homes.

That Stephens searched for vestiges of a supposedly vanished race on the path from Belize to Honduras to Guatemala to Mexico—regions overwhelmingly Indigenous and where descendants of preinvasion peoples were actively resisting outside rule—reveals the extent of his own self-mystification.¹⁹ The few times Stephens seemed to recognize the local populations’ ongoing connections to the pasts of their homelands he instead identified them as evidence of alleged Indigenous inferiority, as in his description of the *labradores* at Uxmal: “[T]hey inherit all the indolences of their ancestors, are wedded to old usages, and unwilling to be taught anything new” (II: 416). Although Stephens interpreted the regional wars as a desire “awakened among the Indians to make a bloody offering to the spirits of their fathers, and recover their inheritance”—despite this very clear statement of the value of land, heritage, and self-determination to the Indigenous populations around him—he nonetheless gave no indication of connecting that desire for retribution to his own attempts to remove the material legacy “of their fathers” (II: 135). At Copán, in assuming that “[n]o remnant of this race hangs round the ruins, with traditions handed down from father to son, and from generation to generation,” Stephens foreclosed the possibility of learning anything from the people who had guided him to the supposedly hidden city. When he asked the “Indian workmen” about the identity of the statues’ carvers, Stephens recorded that “their dull answer was ‘Quien sabe?’ ‘who knows?’” (I: 105, 104). Although the laborers were not necessarily Ch’orti’ Maya—descendants of the people who had lived in the great city a millennium before—Stephens accepted their “dull answer” as an expression of general disinterest and depreciation on the part of all “Indians.” Like his dismissal of the “wild superstitions of Indians” at Uxmal and his presumed right to remove the “beam of hieroglyphics,” Stephens believed that the laborers at Copán did not properly appreciate what they had, either (II: 414). His plan to take Maya “idols” from ostensibly idle Maya relies on the assumption that objects from the “aboriginal races” should be propertized by those who recognized their true value as “the monuments of a by-gone people” (I: 115–16).

Yet if Indigenous groups did not know how to value the objects before them, neither, apparently, did other local populations. At Copán, when confronted by the mestizo resident Don Jose Maria Asebedo, who “said that he was the owner of ‘the idols,’” Stephens responded by asking him: “What will you take for the ruins?” (I: 107, 126). The proposition of payment was so surprising that Asebedo “seemed to doubt which of us was out of his senses. The property was so utterly worthless that my wanting to buy it seemed very suspicious” (I: 126). Stephens’s guess that Asebedo undervalued the property was confirmed by Asebedo’s reaction: “not more surprised than if I had asked to buy his poor old wife” (I: 126). Although “anxious to convert unproductive property into money,” Asebedo initially hesitated for fear that selling to a foreigner might cause “difficulty with the government” (I: 127). He changed his mind, however, after seeing Stephens in his “diplomatic coat, with a profusion of large eagle buttons” (I: 128). An agreement was reached: “I paid fifty dollars for Copan. There was never any difficulty about price. I offered that sum, for which Don Jose Maria thought me only a fool; if I had offered more, he would probably have considered me something worse” (I: 128).²⁰ Confirming that Asebedo thought the land “so utterly worthless”—just like his wife—Stephens reckoned the fifty-dollar offer as more than fair, writing that transforming the “unproductive property into money” should have been worth it to Asebedo at any price.²¹

Originally, Stephens had planned to purchase entire stretches of Mexico and Central America so as to dismantle and re-install in the US whatever he found desirable there. From his Honduran property, he would “remove the monuments of a by-gone people from the desolate region in which they were buried, set them up in the ‘great commercial emporium,’ and found an institution to be the nucleus of a great national museum of American antiquities!” (I: 115–16). He was going to reproduce the cities of ancient America in an appropriately commercial setting where they could be properly appreciated. In Guatemala, as well, Stephens considered purchasing the entirety of Quirigúa, so that “the city might be transported bodily and set up in New-York,” but his plan was blocked when the owners “consulted with the French consul general, who put an exaggerated value upon the ruins” (II: 124). Disgusted by the missed opportunity to profit from the owners’ undervaluation, Stephens lamented: “Probably, before the speculating scheme referred to, the owners would have been glad to sell the whole tract, consisting of more than fifty thousand acres, with everything on it, known and unknown, for a few thousand dollars” (II: 124). Instead, the owners eventually asked, but did not receive, twenty thousand dollars (II: 469).

Stephens even attempted to obtain the valuables from lands he could not acquire: As it turned out, he bought not the title to Copán’s land but instead only the right to remove its ruins.²² This he considered an act of excessive caution: After all, the objects on the land “belonged by right to us, and though we did not know how soon we might be kicked out ourselves, [we] resolved that ours they should be” (I: 115–16). Although this self-proclaimed “right” was conferred by his proper estimation of

Copán's value, it was ultimately secured by his "profusion of large eagle buttons" and their promise of the Monroe Doctrine's might.²³

Exchange Value

In November 1840, US citizen Henry Pawling was in Palenque making plaster casts of the ruins while Stephens attempted to purchase title to the land (II: 361–65). On November 30, Pawling received the following copy of an official decree sent to the local authorities: "His excellency the governor, having read your information of the 15th inst., orders me to tell you to keep a watchful eye upon the strangers who visit the ruins; and when any of them arrive, to give notice of it to this government without delay, expressing their numbers, whence they come, and what is their object, without allowing them to make any operation or excavation, and much less to remove anything whatever, however insignificant it may appear" (II: 472). Upon receipt, Pawling was obliged to leave off casting the "antiquities of the ruins," surrender his completed molds, and vacate the area (II: 471–72). The official decree, along with the referenced October 15, 1840 petition to the governor approved by the "departmental junta," was reprinted in the appendix to *Incidents of Travel in Central America* (1841) seven months later (II: 471). The petitioners, three inhabitants of the nearby town, reported that Pawling had, for three months, "fixed his residence on the ruins in this district, with the view of making moulds of every monument and precious thing that there is on them; as, in fact, he is making them, since, upon to this date; he has already made something like thirty moulds of plaster of Paris, including two which he took to the town of Carmen, without giving notice to anybody, and with the object of shipping them for the North" (II: 470). The subscribed authors Santiago Froncoso, Bartolo Bravo, and Miguel Castillo complained that, without compensation, the locals wanted Pawling gone.

The presence of "strangers" like Pawling and Stephens roaming unobserved and uncounted in Palenque's ruins clearly provoked concern on both local and official levels. In fact, Chiapas's Governor Sandoval was already aware that an armed entourage had accompanied "the vice-governor of Balize"—Britons Patrick Walker and Captain John Caddy—on their visit to "explore the ruins" the winter before, and he also knew of this recent appearance of "some citizens of the United States of the North" (II: 470).²⁴ While his message implied that the apparently "insignificant" objects were made important by the strangers' desire to "remove" them, Froncoso, Bravo, and Castillo—already recognizing their value—were concerned that the reproductions would enable Pawling to "supply the world with these precious things without a six cents' piece expense" (II: 470). Pawling's casts were so well executed, the petitioners reported, that they "may be taken for second originals" (II: 470). The three men were asking for a fair price, not for outright restriction: "Let the visitors [*sic*] of these ruins make moulds, drawings, &c., but let them also contribute with sums proportionate to their operations" (II: 471). Indeed, they protested, "if this treasure is

ours, and by right belongs to our town, why should it not be benefited by it?" (II: 471). In exchange for Pawling's access to the site, the petitioners demanded "four or five thousand dollars ... or else let him in no manner take away with him any of the moulds of plaster of Paris he has made and continues making" (II: 417). The Palenqueños had already been offered twice that sum from a competitor, so they knew the outside value of their "treasure" (II: 470). They closed their petition with the following plea: "This is, sir, if we are not mistaken, a business of a great speculation. The persons concerned in this affair are men of importance. Therefore we beg of you most earnestly, and in virtue of our legal right, not to permit the removal of any of the said moulds of plaster of Paris from this town without the said sums being paid, grounded on the great utility that the extractors may derive from it ..." (II: 471). The petitioners asserted their communal ownership of the ruins and emphasized their practice of deriving mutual benefit from the commons; they asked the governor to uphold their traditional land rights as guaranteed by the Mexican state. Yet despite the townspeople's concerns, the governor's response instead only stipulated measures to protect the ruins against copycat invasions.

Stephens had always expected to be denied access to Palenque. Recently, the Mexican government had "issued a peremptory order to prevent all strangers [from] visiting the ruins" and had lately denied access to three Belgian antiquaries (thus the reason for Walker and Caddy's show of arms) (II: 250). Yet with the "sanguinary civil war" raging across Central America, fighting on the Guatemala border, and uprisings in nearby Tabasco, Campeche, and Yucatán, Stephens did not believe "the government had any spare soldiers to station there as a guard" (I: iii; II: 251). So, he decided to invade Palenque—to "be on the ground before any one knew we were in the neighborhood, and then make terms either to remain or evacuate"—which he determined would be "worth the risk if we got one day's quiet possession" (II: 36, 252). The troupe of foreigners, their local guide Juan, and countless burden-bearing Maya workers eventually made it to Palenque in late May of 1840, and they clandestinely camped in "a building erected by the aboriginal inhabitants, standing before the Europeans knew of the existence of this continent" until July (II: 292). Soon afterward, Pawling returned to the site to begin taking casts (II: 292).

At the point of Stephens's visit, many of Chiapas's Indigenous residents would not only have lost their communally held *ejido* lands due to Mexico's recent "land reforms," but they also would potentially have found themselves in conditions of servitude due to the country's strict new "anti-vagrancy" laws.²⁵ By extension, the removal of Maya people from the lands on which they lived and worked, and the removal of the antiquities thereon, participated in the same logic of entitlement (as in securing property through land title), labor, and value that enforced the nation's imperial boundaries.²⁶ In this light, Governor Sandoval's decree against "strangers" reveals the Mexican government's concern not only regarding invading US or European strangers, but also the *extranjero* Indigenous population, particularly in places like Chiapas and the Yucatán that were only officially—but not popularly or

ethnically—integrated into the Mexican Republic. The governor’s request for oversight—numbering, surveilling, restricting—was a muscular assertion of Mexican control over the boundaries of national–territorial belonging in the form of “Mexican” property.

Ultimately, Pawling was only able to send Stephens two casts; all the rest were “seized and detained by the prefect” (II: 472). Nonetheless, at the end of *Incidents*, Stephens boasted that he and Catherwood had taken away copies after all: His made with words and Catherwood’s with pencil and *camera lucida*. Unlike Pawling, they had not been caught. Referring to himself, Stephens summarized: “Perhaps, instead of unavailing regrets, he ought rather to congratulate himself that he had left the ruins, and that Mr. Catherwood’s drawings were safe, before the news of their visit reached the capital” (II: 472). Indeed, with the casts impounded and the ruins out of reach, “Mr. Catherwood’s drawings” became the “precious things” that Stephens had already predicted his readers would treasure.

Circulation Value

When *Incidents of Travel in Central America* finally appeared at booksellers in June of 1841, it was heralded by rave reviews: “Wonderful, wonderful!” cried the *Knickerbocker*.²⁷ Another lauded *Incidents*’s “originality and raciness of style” and “admirable descriptive power.”²⁸ Edgar Allan Poe at *Graham’s* issued praise despite having not yet received the volumes: “The work is certainly a magnificent one—perhaps the most interesting book of travel ever published.”²⁹ Possibly alluding to Stephens’s original charge, *The New World* pronounced *Incidents* “quite as acceptable as a treaty drawn up in the nicest skill of diplomacy.”³⁰ The *New York Review* assured readers that *Incidents* would “find its way into libraries of all persons who ever read anything else than a novel.”³¹ Across the board, the US reviewers emphasized the importance of Stephens’s work, often in the idiom of economic value. *The Ladies’ Repository*, for example, proclaimed it “more interesting than any novel, and withal, may be read with real profit.”³² *The New World* wrote that its imagery “gives to the book a value, which is only inferior to that imparted by the happy pen of the author,” and the *United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* declared it “a valuable and delightful book.”³³ The two-volume set was moderately priced but, at five dollars, not inexpensive; nonetheless, it was so popular that twenty thousand copies sold within the first three months.³⁴

Critics unanimously agreed that *Incidents*’s engravings were indispensable to the volumes’ worth. The *Southern Quarterly Review* counted the book “chiefly valuable, for the plain and unpretending account, as well as for the elegant engravings of the city of Copan which they contain.”³⁵ Likewise, *The Ladies’ Repository* described them as contributing “exceedingly to the interest of the work.”³⁶ In particular, reviews described Catherwood’s “idol” engravings as “really magnificent,” “superbly-executed,” and even “elegant.”³⁷ The *North American Review* reported that the

statues' "character can only be understood from drawings, and according to the *Southern Quarterly Review*, "no language can, without the aid of engravings, or other copies, convey adequate and correct ideas of these ruins."³⁸ Even from the outside, the gilt-stamped "hieroglyphs" on the brown-cloth binding promised the book's visual contents as something special.³⁹

In fact, Catherwood's engravings incited so much interest that the images began to multiply: That summer, numerous outlets ran approximated illustrations until it seemed that the entire value of Stephens's two-volume travel narrative had been distilled into a few stock images. For example, on the pages of its June 26, 1841 issue—which came out the day after *Incidents* did—*The Albion* printed a copy of a "stone monument found near the city of Copan" (see Figure 1). That same day, *The New World* also printed a Copán "idol" and promised another illustration "even more remarkable than this" in the issue to follow.⁴⁰ Keeping to its word, *The New World's* subsequent front page featured images of "Front View of an idol discovered at Copan" and "rear view of the same," along with the following caption: "We introduce the reader directly into Copan by means of the engravings which precede this article. They are upon wood, and were executed by English artists of the first reputation. Those in the book itself are upon steel and very fine; but we cannot think them much superior in effect, though they doubtless are in detail, to those which we have the pleasure to present in this paper."⁴¹ Substituting its own woodcuts for the steel-engraved originals, *The New World* nevertheless deemed them sufficient to "introduce the reader directly into Copan," almost as if the mass-produced image dominating its newsheet was Copán itself.⁴²



Figure 1: "Stone Monument Found Near the City of Copan," *The Albion* (June 26, 1841).

Before the text was published, Stephens and Catherwood delivered lectures on their travels at which displays of Catherwood's drawings—not archaeological “specimens”—blurred the line between original and reproduction. A report in *The Albion* mentioned Catherwood's sketch of a “temple of Copan” at one of these events with particular interest:

The explorers have possessed themselves of many curious specimens, and as it is their intention to forward them to the United States, their arrival will give ample scope to persons conversant in antiquarian lore to investigate, compare, and make their several conclusions on this interesting topic. It is much to be regretted that many of these specimens, apparently of great historical importance, are much too bulky, and situated too far inland to be removed. We can, therefore, only hope for the present that the able Pioneers in American Antiquities will go as far as possible into minute details of what they must leave behind them, so as to enable such as cannot examine them personally to proceed in their own considerations on the subject.⁴³

This report served as one of the first indications that Stephens's words and Catherwood's drawings were always meant as replacements for the otherwise “much too bulky” objects that the pioneers “must leave behind.”

After the Panorama's destruction and Harper's refusal to publish *American Antiquities*, a limited-edition folio proposed by the duo, Catherwood self-published in London *Views of Ancient Monuments in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* (1844).⁴⁴ In the tradition of Humboldt and Waldeck, Catherwood's *Views* comprised a portfolio of twenty-five sepia lithographs—a few of which Catherwood colored himself—accompanied by a brief pamphlet.⁴⁵ To Catherwood, the sculptures in Central America attested “to the prevalence of an indigenous and well established system of design” unlike any in the Old World, and he “appeal[ed] to the following Drawings for its confirmation.”⁴⁶ Catherwood's words imply the superfluity of the original “specimens,” for in his view the images sufficiently confirmed “Anti-Columbian [*sic*] History.” Thus like the extravagant hand-colored folio, the “precious things” of Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatán appeared on the page, not “on the ground.”

In an article dedicated to the study of Mayan glyphs appearing in *The Century Magazine* almost forty years later, author Edward S. Holden claimed that *Incidents* still stood as the authority on the visual representation of Maya antiquities.⁴⁷ Within his article, which was excerpted from an 1880 report to the Smithsonian Institution, Holden reproduced Catherwood's now-familiar engravings of Copán and Palenque (see Figure 2). Explaining *Incidents*'s credentials by way of introduction, Holden wrote: “It is safe to say that nearly all of the current information on the subject of Central American archaeology is still derived from this work, which has not been superseded

by any of the writings of later explorers, although it has been admirably supplemented by the photographs of De Charnay and others.”⁴⁸ Although supplemented by the photography of “Charnay and others,” the images in *Incidents* had not been replaced.⁴⁹ Even in 1880, Catherwood’s representations remained the material of reference, serving as the “paper museum”—as Leonardo López Luján has called similar antiquities publications—replacing the lost physical one that Stephens had planned over forty years before.⁵⁰



Figure 2: “Fig. 50.—Statue at Copan” (Holden 1880)

Rhetorical Value

Like other Indigenous heritage object collections—especially those gathered in venues such as Catherwood’s Panorama and private “Indian corners”—Stephens’s paper museum produced an imaginative “Indianness” that while supposedly indexing an authentic original elsewhere in fact referenced illusory objects of its own creation.⁵¹

Nowhere is it clear in *Incidents* that the homogenous “Indians” represented by Stephens are Maya—and certainly not that Maya identities vary by region, language, history and tradition—because for Stephens the Maya people around him were a synecdoche for all “Indians.”⁵² The closed rhetorical loop of imagined indigeneity replaced particularized, actually existing Indigenous peoples and their histories with uniform, two-dimensional representations.⁵³ In *Incidents*, in the press, or on individual plates, this collection of Maya heritage objects circulated as interchangeable “Indian”—and “American”—commodities.

In *Capital, Vol. I* (1867), Marx explained the commodity form in terms of spiritual mysticism, describing its mystical ability to disguise labor as exchange-value. This mechanism of mystification, through which the social relations of workers took on the “fantastic form of a relation between things,” Marx referred to as “fetishism.”⁵⁴ Inspired by the way he understood a “fetish”—originally a West African religious object—to be inhabited by something else (spirit, power, divinity, etc.), so too did he see the commodity form as inhabited by labor. Thus upon exchange, a commodity’s “social character” (labor) fully disappeared behind the “common character” of uniform value; one commodity became interchangeable for another.⁵⁵ In this sense, a commodity’s exchange-value is attained through analogous relationships to others of *like* value, which is to say, commodities gain value rhetorically—through metaphor, *like for like*—rather than through social meaning.⁵⁶

The way that Stephens values archaeological objects as historical evidence—which typically depends on social meaning, including history, heirloom status, and cumulative identity—is at odds with the way he imagines them, metaphorically, to be *like* other things.⁵⁷ “In Central America,” Stephens explained, “antiquities sell according to the dictates of the market. *Like* other articles of trade, they are regulated by quantity in market” (I: 128, my emphasis). In order to place the commodities in circulation, Stephens has to remove their valuable particularity and cast them instead as “American” antiquities. Stephens does not see the “idols” as imbued with the social relationships of Maya communities, instead the only form he sees is their uniform, exchangeable value.

For discrete Indigenous heritage objects like the ones Stephens collected—relics, “idols,” ruins—to become representative of entire peoples and histories, they must also lose their *individual*, not just social, particularity. In figurative terms, as “parts” of what is now called “ancient Maya Civilization”—or the atemporal, nontechnical “Maya culture”—the objects assembled in the Rotunda initially appeared to operate as a synecdoche, according to a logic of contiguity or association in which a *part* characterizes a *whole*.⁵⁸ At first, the Uxmal beam may be recognized as evidence of “Maya culture” in that it evokes a contiguous relationship between crafted object and crafting people, but the beam itself is not understood as analogous to “Maya civilization.” So too may the beam’s inscriptions reference other Indigenous objects and by association other Indigenous peoples: Thus for Stephens, the carving at Uxmal served to link the statues and artisans at Copán and Palenque. Or, for example, when

faced with the difficulty of removing Copán's heavy statues—even ones located “on the banks of a river that emptied into the same ocean by which the docks of New-York are washed”—Stephens considered making an “exhibit by sample” instead: “to cut one up and remove it in pieces, and make casts of the others” (I: 115). This part-to-whole relationship underpins the rhetorical function of culture (or, as it was more frequently termed, “civilization”) in the nineteenth century, a generalized category that emerged to name, as a whole, a pattern of discrete practices, products, or other component social “parts.”⁵⁹ In this way, one part—the beam from Uxmal, statue from Copán, or “whole collection of vases, figures, idols, and other relics”—indexes a larger, whole “culture.”

Before the fire, Stephens dismissed the idea of exhibiting parts for wholes not because it was undesirable but because—paralleling the Palenqueños's line of thought—it may have affected the value of the originals: “The casts of the Parthenon are regarded as precious memorials in the British Museum, and casts of Copan would be the same in New-York. Other ruins might be discovered even more interesting and more accessible. Very soon their existence would become known and their value appreciated, and the friends of science and the arts in Europe would get possession of them. They belonged of right to us ...” (I: 115–16). The idea that Europeans would take possession of the originals while US Americans held only copies was unacceptable. To Stephens, the Copán statues stood for all the potential “even more interesting and more accessible” objects to be uncovered in the future, and he decided to take the originals not only to protect them but also to assure future custody. After the fire, however, the images from Stephens's collection took on a vitality, repeatability, and interchangeability of their own, transformed from representative parts of the text to the main attraction itself. Freed from a contiguous relationship with the physical objects, the printed reproductions assumed a metaphorical relationship of substitution; that is to say, the textual objects were not just *like* Maya culture, they *were* Maya culture.

In predicting that the copies could ultimately result in the absence of, and thereby supersede, their originals, Stephens unwittingly articulated the rhetorical process through which singular objects came to characterize—through substitution—entire cultures. It was not only the case that the objects Stephens left behind in Central America were exposed to the elements; not only did the sites become specific targets for “looters” and subsequent archaeologists after their locations became known; not only were many of the objects Stephens sent to the US lost in the fire of 1842; not only did Catherwood's images provide the blueprints for twentieth-century restoration projects: The textual objects—circulating as widely as they did—also quickly became defining images of (Native) American culture. By the early nineteenth-century in the United States, the term “American” had almost wholly ceased to carry an Indigenous reference in contemporary use; Native was presented, mystically, as American.⁶⁰ When the collection that Stephens amassed within the Rotunda was destroyed, then, the descriptions and drawings in *Incidents* ceased to synecdochally characterize their

composite physical referents and instead tautologically indexed the imaginative scenes made by Catherwood and Stephens. The real people with real claims to the land and heritage objects taken by Stephens disappeared into the form of paper “American antiquities.”

Cultural Value

That the museum Stephens had planned ended up in its eventual textual realization instantiating an invented Pan-American “Indianness” centered south of the United States border testifies both to US expansionism and to how seemingly exotic Native peoples had become to eastern US readers by the 1840s. After decades of official and unofficial slaughter, persecution, and removal in the old Northwest, Saint Lawrence River Valley, and the South, most areas east of the Mississippi—and especially in the urban centers of Boston, Albany, New York, and Philadelphia—seemed to non-Native residents as altogether “Indian”-less.⁶¹ As Stephens put it, Indigenous peoples and histories were considered “almost a romance and fable” (II: 473). Moreover, those figures and symbols most readily identified as “Indian” in the 1830s and 1840s were often traced to lands far from these centers: In addition to Catherwood’s and Stephens’s materials from the Yucatán and Central America, Catlin’s Indian Gallery—exhibited from 1837 to 1839 mere blocks from the Rotunda—mainly comprised portraits of Native leaders from the trans-Mississippi West. These displays made a purportedly invisible and far-off population interpretable in a circumscribed manner that borrowed not a little from coincident Orientalist tropes of the undifferentiated “exotic.” What emerged was a synthetic vision of “Indianness” devoid of specific cultural or political detail, an image that in turn helped perpetuate the popular framework through which the non-Native, “American” public claimed “Indianness” for themselves.⁶²

Across the Atlantic, where collecting Indigenous objects had been part of the colonial project since at least Cortés’s first shipment to Charles V, their mystifying transformation into “American antiquities” was, if perhaps less noticeable, no less motivated by commercial and imperial supremacy. After years of focusing on “l’Amérique Septentrional” (today’s North America without Mexico), France’s “American” interest under Napoleon III began to shift southward. In 1825, when the French Geography Society sponsored a contest for the best new work on “antiquités américaines,” the word *américain* referred both to the United States and to all indigenes of the Americas (although the latter was implied for this contest). By the time the *Société américaine de France* was founded in Paris in 1857, however, “American” was increasingly designating a specific set of Indigenous “civilizations” originating in the region that would come to be known as “Latin America.”⁶³ When the Louvre put on a special exhibition of Mexican and Peruvian objects in its *Salle des antiquités américaines* in 1850, for example, the adjective denoted the Mexica, Maya, and Inca societies that the curator Adrién de Longpérier called “Transatlantic

civilizations.”⁶⁴ Napoléon III’s administration included *américanistes*—beside himself who, as a young man, had studied the transoceanic canal prospects of Nicaragua—such as economic advisor Michel Chevalier, who had spent time in the US and Mexico and who had authored the influential *La liberté aux États-Unis d’Amérique* (1849). In 1863, at the beginning of the French Occupation of Mexico (1862–1867), Chevalier argued in *Le Mexique ancien et moderne* for Mexico’s “regeneration” by France on the grounds of their shared “Latin” civilization, thus giving a cultural angle to the Occupation.⁶⁵ Not dissimilar to the way in which Stephens’s “museum of American antiquities” served the interests of hemispheric expansionism, *les études américanistes* (Americanist studies) also helped France claim Mexico—ancient and modern—as its own.

Before the Occupation, in 1857, French photographer Désiré Charnay traveled to Mexico as part of a worldwide “artistic mission” endorsed by Napoleon III. When he returned to France in 1860, he brought negatives, prints, copious travel notes, and various specimens “acquired” while abroad. Twenty years later, Charnay went back to collect more. In an 1880 *New York Times* article, Charnay explained that he had requested permission to export antiquities from the Mexican government, but “if they were to withhold the permission, he would confine himself to taking photographs, impressions of the hieroglyphics and engravings, and making facsimiles of the antiquities.”⁶⁶ Take photographs and impressions—lightweight papier mâché moldings, a vast technological improvement on Pawling’s heavy plaster—he did, and took all of it back to France.⁶⁷

In 1884, Charnay’s voyage was reported in the French illustrated travel magazine *Le tour du monde*, which, like Charnay’s inspiration *Incidents*, featured engravings of the objects and scenery he described.⁶⁸ Charnay’s debt to Stephens was clear from the start: “It is Stephens who will serve as our guide in this study,” he explained, “and we shall borrow from him the drawings so true to the monuments reproduced by camera obscura by Catherwood making them, in fact, indeed like photographs.”⁶⁹ Charnay himself had taken hundreds of actual photographs, but instead he reproduced Catherwood’s drawings, which he understood to be “like photographs.” He deemed the drawings, “so true to the monuments,” to be adequate visual replacements for his readers, exchangeable either for the true monuments or for the photographic representations. That Charnay used Catherwood’s reproductions over his own photographs was almost as if providing *Incidents*’s images was analogous, for him, to providing the originals.

When Charnay released a new version of his 1862 travelogue and photographic album *Cités et ruines américaines: Mitla, Palenque, Izamal, Chichen-Itza, Uxmal* in 1885 (and an English translation *Ancient Cities of the New World* in 1887), its penultimate chapter, “Peten, Taysal, Tikal, and Copan,” included a familiar engraving with the caption “Idoles à Copan ... Dessin de P. Sellier, d’après John Stephens.” [Copán Idols, Drawn by P. Sellier after John Stephens]. The English caption was far simpler: “Idols of

Copan (From Stephens)” (see Figure 3).⁷⁰ Both versions, of course, credited the images’ origin in *Incidents*.



signification, but a large portion is quite familiar and has been already reproduced by us. The most important figure of all is that to the top of the bas-relief, above the central figure. It is a mask with protruding tongue representing the sun, like

Figure 3: “Idols of Copan (From Stephens),” (Charnay, 1887)

Ultimately, Catherwood’s engravings have received the most enduring attention of all of Stephens’s work, which has otherwise mostly disappeared from the US literary canon. Quite differently, the Catherwood-Stephens images have become a touchstone for Maya, Mexican, and Central American archaeological subjects into the present, holding such a crucial spot in the popular imaginary that they have inspired multiple tribute projects as well as travel books, tourism copy, novels, and at least one volume of young adult fiction.⁷¹ Travel writer Steve Glassman notes that “[e]ven today, nearly every book on the Maya includes some of Catherwood’s prints.”⁷² This includes archaeologist Michael D. Coe’s textbook, *The Maya* (2005), which uses Catherwood’s images as illustrations of “the Maya” rather than as specimens of nineteenth-century

archaeological methods.⁷³ Moreover, almost every current-day English-language archaeology textbook or guidebook—such as *Lonely Planet, Mexico*—conveys the sense that Stephens “discovered” Maya culture for the modern world, rather than the fact that he and his drawings were the producers, or re-producers, of Maya studies and its objects.⁷⁴ Even in these more recent texts, contemporary Maya people and lifeways are replaced by the antiquated image of “Maya civilization” that *Incidents* invented. Its illustrations reiterate a version of Maya culture that is hardly Maya-created or Maya-centered, although as literary scholar Brian Gollnick highlights, present-day Maya-produced images have no need for the paradigm of “Maya civilization” that was discovered in the nineteenth century.⁷⁵ Unlike the Palenqueños, to whom controlling how their heritage was used was the most valuable right, or the Copán Maya who challenged Stephens for the right to local knowledge (“Quien sabe? Who knows”), or the Uxmal *labradores* for whom the ruins served as a communal field for growing food and as the means to earn wages, Stephens only valued the Indigenous heritage objects as commodities into which the communities’ labor and contemporary social histories disappeared. Those wooden and stone parts, once transformed into a circulating collection of paper “idols,” thereafter represented a whole category of American studies that referenced transnational expansionist ambitions rather than specific parts of Native America.

Notes

I would like to thank Christine Barthes and Angèle Martin at the Musée du quai Branly and Pascal Mongne of the École du Louvre.

¹ “A Great Loss,” *New York Evangelist*, August 4, 1842, 123; “Destruction of Catherwood’s Panoramas,” *The New World*, August 6, 1842, 95.

² Bernard Comment, *Panorama* (New York: Reaktion Books, 1999), 56.

³ “The New Panorama,” *The New-Yorker*, June 23, 1838, 222; “Things Worth Seeing,” *The Corsair*, October 19, 1839, 508. For a detailed analysis of Catherwood’s Panorama and “Maya” representation as entertainment, see Khristaan D. Villela, “Beyond Stephens and Catherwood: Ancient Mesoamerica as Public Entertainment in the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Past Presented: Archaeological Illustration and the Ancient Americas*, ed. Joanne Pillsbury (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection: Washington, D.C., 2012): 143–71.

⁴ Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828–1851* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1927), II: 380.

⁵ John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1841), II: 473. Hereafter cited in-text.

⁶ “The Fire at Catherwood’s,” *New York Herald*, August 1, 1842.

⁷ John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843), I:

179.

⁸ Stephens, *Yucatan*, I: 179–80.

⁹ Qtd. in Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, *Maya Explorer: John Lloyd Stephens and the Lost Cities of Central America and the Yucatán* (New York: Chronicle Books, 1990), xlii.

¹⁰ William Lenz, “Seeing the Maya in the American Parlor: Illustrations as a Parallel Text in John Lloyd Stephens’ *Incidents of Travel in Central America* (1841),” *Journal of Popular Studies* 46, no. 3 (2013): 604–25; 606. The scholarship on representation is immense, but two key texts of reference here are Jacques Derrida, *On Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976 [1967]) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 271–313.

¹¹ In the 1950s, Juan Antonio Ortega y Medina made a similar argument about Stephens’s use of “el pasado Maya” in the creation of a monolithic Pan-America supporting US hemispheric imperialism. See “Monroísmo arqueológico: Un intent de compensación de americanidad insuficiente,” *Ensayos, tareas y estudios históricos* (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana, 1953): 37–86. I thank my anonymous reader for pointing me to this crucial source.

¹² As have, for example, Gesa Mackenthun in “The Conquest of Antiquity: The Travelling Empire of John Lloyd Stephens,” *American Travel and Empire*, ed. Susan Castillo and David Seed (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 99–128; and Brian Gollnick, *Reinventing the Lacandón: Subaltern Representation in the Rain Forest of Chiapas* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press), 2008.

¹³ Edmundo O’Gorman, *La invención de América* (Mexico D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958); José Rabasa, *Inventing America: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); María-Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005).

¹⁴ As the sovereignty of Chiapas and Yucatán was contested, it is conventional to list the two Mexican states alongside the Central American nations.

¹⁵ For Stephens’s own reading material, see Ortega, “Monroísmo,” 47–52.

¹⁶ Metaphor implies commonality between two otherwise unrelated things or ideas: an operation where like substitutes for like. Paul de Man suggested that the figurative language of the metaphor was based on a paradigmatic structure of analogy or substitution and metonymy on an axiomatic structure of contingency or association (*Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979]), 15. “Synecdoche,” he writes, “is one of the borderline figures that create an ambivalent zone between metaphor and metonymy and that, by its spatial nature, creates the illusion of a synthesis by totalization” (de Man, *Allegories*, 63n8). Although de Man examines the “metaphorical synecdoche” in *Allegories*, here I am considering the trope in its classical

rhetorical sense.

¹⁷ By Stephens's second text, he was convinced that the statues had been made by "the same great race which, changed, miserable, and degraded, still clings around their ruins" (*Yucatan*, I: 167–68).

¹⁸ For some Maya, these were active votive sites and spaces. For evidence of Stephens and Catherwood witnessing contemporary spiritual uses of Tulum, see Mathieu Picas's forthcoming article on Maya uses of "pre-Hispanic" sites in Quintana Roo. See also Nancy Farriss, "Remembering the Future, Anticipating the Past: History, Time, and Cosmology Among the Maya of Yucatán." *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 29, no. 3 (July 1987): 566–93. The workers were not necessarily Maya, either: They could have been Lenca or Nahua descendants.

¹⁹ Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land, a Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas*. Revised ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 5.

²⁰ For a repetition of the myth, see Michael Coe's *The Maya* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 115. Stephens's original mission was to negotiate with the short-lived Central American government for special rights of passage and navigation for US citizens.

²¹ Legally, Asebedo "did not own the fee, but held [it] under a lease from Don Bernardo de Aguila, of which three years were unexpired" (I: 127). Stephens thus purchased his debt.

²² The contract afforded Stephens the right "to take away drawings of the aforementioned stones" ["para que saquen los dibujos (*sic*)... y no para otras cosas"] as well as to "take away plaster portraits of the carved stones that are in this country." John Lloyd Stephens papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Box 1, f60 (Gollnick, *Reinventing*, 57–58, 191n36).

²³ Ortega, "Monroísmo," 62–64, 80.

²⁴ Peter O. Koch, *John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood: Pioneers of Archaeology* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 161.

²⁵ Benjamin, *Rich Land*, 13, 14; Robert Wasserstrom, *Class and Society in Central Chiapas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 119.

²⁶ "Removal" (*sacar*, "taking away") links Stephens's localized project to imperial projects more generally, revealing the "removal" of one as contingent on the removal of the other. "Sacar" is a particularly important word, as Robert Aguirre has shown, because it shares the same Latin root *saccare*, as in "to sack," meaning to destroy, plunder, or pillage (*Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005]), 59.

²⁷ Qtd. in Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, *Maya Explorer: John Lloyd Stephens and the Lost Cities of Central America and the Yucatán* (New York: Chronicle Books, 1990), 196–98; "Literary Notices," *The Knickerbocker; or New York Monthly Magazine*, July 1841, 70.

²⁸ “Incidents of Travel in Central America ...,” *Southern Literary Messenger: Devoted to Every Department of Literature, and the Fine Arts* (July/August 1841): 589.

²⁹ “Review 3,” *Graham’s Lady’s and Gentleman’s Magazine* (August 1841): 94.

³⁰ “Incidents of Travel in Central America ...,” *The New World* (July 3, 1841): 1.

³¹ “Article X—Incidents of Travel in Central America ...,” *The New York Review* (July 1841): 225.

³² *The New York Review, Ladies’ Repository, and Gatherings of the West* (Sept 1841): 287.

³³ “Stephen’s New Work: Central America,” *The New World*, June 26, 1841, 2; “The Antiquities of Central America,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (August 1841): 162.

³⁴ von Hagen, *Maya Explorer*, 197.

³⁵ “Article VIII—Incidents of Travel in Central America ...,” *The Southern Quarterly Review* (January 1842): 246.

³⁶ *The New York Review, Ladies’ Repository, and Gatherings of the West* (September 1841): 287.

³⁷ “Literary Notices,” *The Knickerbocker* (July 1841): 70; *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (August 1841); *Southern Quarterly Review* (January 1842).

³⁸ “Article VII—Incidents of Travel in Central America ...,” *The North American Review*, (Oct 1841): 479; *Southern Quarterly Review* (January 1842).

³⁹ For more on *Incidents’s* materiality, see Lenz, “American Parlor.”

⁴⁰ *The New World* (June 26, 1841): 1.

⁴¹ *The New World* (July 3, 1841): 1.

⁴² *The New World* (July 3, 1841): 1.

⁴³ “Antiquities in Central America,” *The Albion* 2, no. 28 (July 11, 1840): 227.

⁴⁴ Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, *F. Catherwood, Architect–Explorer of Two Worlds* (Barre, MS: Barre Publishers, 1968), 51–52.

⁴⁵ See Alexander von Humboldt’s *Vues des Cordillères, et monumens de l’Amérique* (1810) and Frédéric Waldeck’s *Voyage pittoresque et archéologique dans la province d’Yucatan (Amérique Centrale), pendant les années 1834 et 1836* (1838).

⁴⁶ Catherwood, 1844, 1.

⁴⁷ Edward S. Holden, “The Hieroglyphs of Central America,” *The Century Magazine* (December 1882): 228–40.

⁴⁸ Holden, “Hieroglyphs,” 228.

⁴⁹ Neither were they replaced by the illustrations in Benjamin Norman’s *Rambles in Yucatan*

(New York: J. and H. G. Langley, 1843).

⁵⁰ López Luján uses the phrase “museos de papel” in “El capitán Guillermo Dupais y su Álbum Arqueológico de 1794,” *Arqueología Mexicana* 19 no. 109 (May–June, 2011): 71–81.

⁵¹ By the mid-nineteenth century, there was already a long history of Europeans and their descendants collecting and displaying Indigenous materials. For a late-century take on “Indian corners” see Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890–1915* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). The text of reference on Western supremacy, representation, and the creation of “the Orient” is Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

⁵² To be clear, nineteenth-century as well as current-day Maya peoples who live(d) across areas now known as Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, and El Salvador have, although related in different and complicated ways, differentiated ethno-cultural identities, languages, and political affiliations: i.e., Cholan Maya are not Lancadones, and Chontal Maya in the Yucatán are not the same as Ch’orti’ Maya people from Copán. The umbrella term “Maya” itself is an artifact of the colonial-era administrative distribution of Indigenous peoples into “Mexican” and “Maya” regions (Laura E. Matthew, *Memories of Conquest: Becoming Mexicano in Colonial Guatemala*, [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012], 16).

⁵³ The phrase is adapted from Scott R. Lyon’s “Actually Existing Indian Nations: Modernity, Diversity, and the Future of Native American Studies,” *The American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 294–312.

⁵⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 164, 165.

⁵⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 166.

⁵⁶ Marx, *Capital*, 166. See also Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 3–63.

⁵⁷ Peter Stallybrass, “Marx’s Coat,” in *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*, ed. Patricia Spyer (New York: Routledge, 1998), 83–207, 186, 195.

⁵⁸ De Man, *Allegories*, 11, 63, 183. The absurdity of this rhetorical operation precludes any assumption of replacement (i.e., a crown is never understood as the actual sovereign).

⁵⁹ The use of “culture” as similar to “civilization” is usually dated to 1860. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “culture, n.,” accessed January 2018, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45746?rskey=CL4M7W&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

⁶⁰ As an example, Noah Webster’s *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828) explained that the word was “originally applied to the aboriginals, or copper-colored races, found here by the Europeans; but [is] now applied to the descendants of Europeans born in America” (“American, n.”).

⁶¹ Or, conversely, they saw “Indian” as spectacle: This was, after all, the era not only of multiple ethnographic portrait projects but also of live “Indian shows.” See, for example, Brian Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990) and Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁶² The history of reference is Philip Deloria’s *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁶³ Mignolo, *Idea*, 57–59.

⁶⁴ Adrien de Longpérier, *Notice des monuments exposés dans la salle des antiquités Américaines (Mexique et Pérou), au Musée du Louvre* (Paris: Vinchon imprimeur, 1850), 10.

⁶⁵ Michel Chevalier, *Le Mexique ancien et modern* (Paris: L. Hachette et cie., 1863), 585.

⁶⁶ “Lorillard’s Aztec Expedition: Mexican and South American Ruins to be Explored by Prof. Charnay,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1880.

⁶⁷ The five cases of specimens Charnay collected on his 1881–1882 travels were detained by the Mexican authorities until 1900 (Letter from Charnay, [February 24, 1900], D002738_SC_0011_0001, Musée du quai Branly, Paris).

⁶⁸ Désiré Charnay, “Mes découvertes au Mexique et dans l’Amérique du centre,” *Le Tour du Monde* 42, no.1086–89 (1880): 273–336.

⁶⁹ Désiré Charnay, “Voyage au Yucatan et au pays des Lacandons,” *Le Tour du Monde* 48, no.1228 (1884), 33–49, 38–39.

⁷⁰ Désiré Charnay, *The Ancient Cities of the New World; Being Voyages and Explorations in Mexico and Central America from 1857–1882* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1887), 471.

⁷¹ Tribute projects include 1, 2, 3 *del Mundo Maya: Antes, durante y después de la vista de Stephens y Catherwood: Reconstruya con acetatos las 3 épocas del Mundo Maya* (Merida: Dante, 2009) or Leandro Katz’s “The Catherwood Project” (1985–1993), which comprises photographs taken from the same vantage as Catherwood’s as well as ones framing Catherwood’s prints alongside the original monuments. Robert Smithson’s photograph series and essay “Incidents of Mirror Travel in the Yucatán” (1969) is a similar project; see Jennifer Roberts’s “Landscapes of Indifference: Robert Smithson and John Lloyd Stephens in Yucatan,” *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 3 (September 2009): 544–67.

⁷² Steve Glassman, *On the Trail of the Maya Explorer: Tracing the Epic Journey of John Lloyd Stephens* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 164.

⁷³ Coe, *The Maya*, 32n1; 117n65.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Richard Preston, “America’s Egypt: John Lloyd Stephens and the Discovery of the Maya,” *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 53, no. 3 (1992): 143–63, and William Carlsen, *Jungle of Stone: The True Story of Two Men, Their Extraordinary Journey, and the Discovery of the Lost Civilization of the Maya* (New York: William Morrow, 2016). In considering

Stephens and Catherwood to have invented “Maya culture” and Mayanist studies, I draw on a whole body of work on the “invention” of the New World, including O’Gorman, Rabasa, J. Michael Dash (*The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* [Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998]), Quetzil Castañeda (*In the Museum of Maya Culture: Touring Chichén Itzá* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996]), and Gollnick, *Reinventing*, 41–70.

⁷⁵ Gollnick, *Reinventing*, 70. In contrast, Castañeda examines current-day Maya as agents in the creation of ancient Maya culture (*Museum of Maya Culture*, 12, 8).

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