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*“Never trust the artist. Trust the tale  
An artist is usually a damned liar  
But his art will tell you the truth of his day  
And that is all that matter”*

**D.H. Lawrence**

# Foreword

By using diverse alternative academic texts to fill the “gaps” left out (intentionally or unintentionally) about Americas’ natives and other important events by mainstream American history texts, I touch upon the idea throughout this book, that sometimes we should also focus on what these history texts do not say, rather than what they do. It is my belief that if we focus on the gaps within those texts, we can discover the ideological inconsistencies of these mainstream texts that unearth the whole truth. This is a technique which the French acclaimed literary critic Pierre Macherey called the *Decentered Form*. Macherey believed that the silences and the gaps within the texts should be examined, especially in mainstream history texts, and that readers should always be aware of them. Because, in this way, readers can understand and reveal the full circumstances in which the literary text was produced, as well as its (ideological) significance: “It is in the significant *silences* of a text, in its gaps and absences, that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt,” wrote Macherey. “It is these silences which the critic must make ‘speak.’ The text is, as it were, ideologically forbidden to say certain things...[and] a text containing these gaps and silences, is always *incomplete*.”<sup>1</sup> Revealing the gaps and silences of history texts can be liberating, because it makes us able to recognize the ideological basis and the framework for the text in which it was written. By utilizing Macherey’s theory, and by reading many history texts against the grain, I came to the realization that there is a significant difference between factual reality and the American history as presented by the texts of Franklin, Paine, Crèvecoeur, Jefferson and other (modern) mainstream writers and historians. I also realized that there are many important gaps and silences; many hidden truths about the Native-Americans and the history of the Americas which I believe need to be addressed.

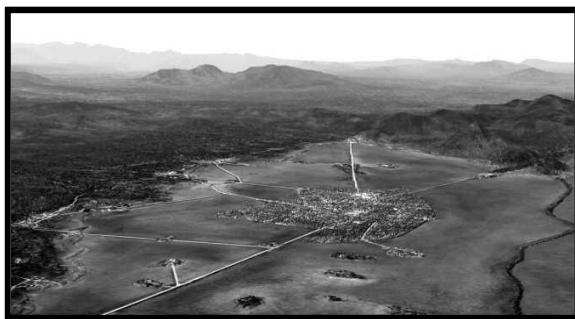
# *Chapter I*

## *“Paradise”*

*“Mother of peace and the arbiter of virtue  
I gather up today all these wonders in my spirit  
I lift it up in ravishing extasies  
Wherein I savour deeply a foretaste of the joys of Paradise”*  
**Antoine-Simon Le Page du Pratz**  
*(on American landscapes)*

When Christopher Columbus, a former African slave-trader, sailed from Spain west across the Atlantic Ocean in order to find a shorter passage to India, he had no idea that the Americas existed in between. Even when he landed (most probably) in the island of San Salvador on October 12, 1492 and made first contact with the native Taino, he was still convinced that he had reached his original destination. That is why he mistakenly named these natives “Indians,” coining the term. Columbus was also not aware that there were more people living in the Americas than in Europe at that time. More than hundred-million people lived scattered throughout these continents in hundreds of nations that had many diverse cultures. Moreover, while still “all of Europe has just 4 language families—Indo-European, Finno-Ugric, Basque, and Turkic—with the great majority of Europeans speaking an Indo-European tongue[...]Across the Americas, Indians spoke some 1,200 separate languages that have been classified into as many as 180 linguistic families.”<sup>2</sup>

These indigenous people lived in clans, villages, towns, and even in great cities. Most of these great cities existed centuries before Columbus arrived there. Some of them were: Cahokia, Palenque, Teotihuacan, Tollan,



**1.1. Tenochtitlan**

Tenochtitlan, etc. The latter was a great Aztec city-state and was one of the largest metropolises in the world back then. It was built on an island of a big lake, which the indigenous Aztecs called the Lake of the Moon. It was located in today’s (almost drained) Lake Texcoco, and the Valley of Mexico City. This great Aztec capital had by the early sixteenth-century more than 200,000 people living in it. This was (estimated) more than five times the population of large cities then, like for instance London. It was a city with beautiful houses, markets, boulevards, temples, palaces, and gardens. These gardens were filled with exotic flowers, plants, animals, and birds of many different species. “According to Hernando Cortés, one of the first Europeans to set eyes upon it, it was far and away the most beautiful city on earth.”<sup>3</sup>

When the conquistador Cortés approached Tenochtitlan with his army in 1519, instead of being met with fear or hostility, he was greeted and welcomed in friendship according to their customs by the emperor of the city, Moctezuma II. Commander Cortés and his soldiers were

amazed how clean and beautiful this city looked from the inside. Tenochtitlan had fresh drinking water, which was piped throughout the city, and there were soaps everywhere near the fountains. The whole city was kept clean by hundreds of cleaners.

To the amazement of the Spanish army, this island city was a city with many causeways which were built for trade and transportation, that led to the mainland. The causeways also served like bridges, which allowed canoes to pass underneath, but more importantly these bridges could be taken off in case of an attack on the city. “We were astounded,” wrote a Spanish soldier when he entered and saw the great city of Tenochtitlan and its architecture. “The majestic towers and houses all of massive stone and rising out of the waters we had read of in books. Indeed, some of our men even asked if what we saw was not a dream.”<sup>4</sup>

After Cortés entered the city, it did not take him long to do what he had done to many other villages and cities in the Americas before, namely destroy it. Cortés who had also recruited at least 80,000 native troops in the region, (mainly Huexotzingo) ordered his army to take Moctezuma hostage and to capture all the passages that led to the mainland, cutting the people of Tenochtitlan off from any



1.2. “Conquista de México por Cortés” - Unknown Artist

provisions or reinforcement. There were many Aztecs and other ally tribes who lived in the near mainland that tried to send food and soldiers to the city in order to defend it. However, they were all viciously slaughtered by Cortés’s men purposefully as an example to warn

and frighten the others not to join the Aztec army. While the people of Tenochtitlan could not receive any help from the outside, the Spanish army could. They received reinforcement and other supplies from their base, Veracruz (which a few years later became a strategic Spanish city in the New World).

The Aztec people of Tenochtitlan fought day and night - ferociously against the Spanish army on the land and on the water in their canoes for more than three months, until they run out of food and water. “I intended to attack and slay them all,” Cortés wrote after the war with the Aztec capital. “The people of the city had to walk upon their dead while others swam or drowned in the waters of that wide lake where they had their canoes; indeed, so great was their suffering that it was beyond

our understanding how they could endure it[...]we came across such piles of the dead that we were forced to walk upon them.”<sup>5</sup> Starved, exhausted, and sick from dysentery and other diseases, the people of Tenochtitlan, in the end, surrendered. They “lamented their fall of their capital to Cortés in the following lines:

*Broken spears lie in the road;  
we have torn our hair in our grief.  
The houses are roofless now,  
and their walls are red with blood”*<sup>6</sup>

In the ruins of Tenochtitlan, Cortés established a new city; today’s Mexico City.

In Cortés’ (and his men’s) view, the mass genocide they committed towards the Aztecs was justified because of their Biblical (Old-Testament) beliefs. They also justified the massacres to the Spanish public later “by claiming [that] the Aztecs were savages who engaged in human sacrifice on a grand scale. This activity had to be stopped, they argued.” However, Professor Michael Smith indicated that although there were some human sacrifice ceremonies among them (and the Mayans), the “faulty impression of the bloodthirsty Aztecs does not have a historic origin.” Smith believes that the reason why many people still have faulty impressions of Aztecs has mainly to do with the media. In his opinion, “the media promotes this [negative] image, with re-enactments of sacrificial ceremonies on television, in Hollywood movies[...]and in magazine articles about the bloodthirsty Aztecs...[Therefore] when people hear the word Aztec, most think immediately of human sacrifice.”<sup>7</sup>

The battle of Tenochtitlan was the decisive battle that led to the downfall of the Aztec empire. For after the fall of the capital, Spanish armies conquered the rest of Mesoamerica without much difficulty. However, when Cortés eventually left the Aztec region with his army, he left behind something far more heinous than the 200,000 dead bodies of the Aztec people. He left behind an invisible and unknown vicious killer which would reduce the indigenous populations by millions. It would also wipe out many other native tribes across the Americas. This killer would cripple the Aztec empire and other indigenous nations in the region for many more decades, by causing mass continuous (horrible) deaths. This was the microscopic variola virus, or as it is commonly now known: smallpox.

## *“The Red Plague”*

Since many contagious European viruses like cholera, typhus, tuberculosis, smallpox and others did not exist in the Americas, this meant that the indigenous inhabitants across these continents were extremely susceptible to these dangerous plagues. Within a few weeks in many Aztec regions smallpox spread like “wildfire.” The Aztec population declined by more than ninety percent, while in some regions some tribes were completely annihilated. As this disease mainly continued southward, the same fate befell the neighboring Mayan Empire and then the Incan Empire around 1525; killing at least one-third of their people, and consequently making it easy for the Spaniards to conquer them. The rest of the South-American continent was also not spared by other Europeans, as “in the 1563, Portuguese colonizers brought smallpox to Brazil, where it wiped out entire indigenous tribes. Importation of smallpox also decimated the native peoples of North America, facilitating the European colonization of the continent.”<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, in the beginning of the seventeenth century smallpox had reached the entire North American continent as well, spreading and obliterating the Amerindians there. The virus was brought there by Europeans as well. The leader of the British pilgrim newcomers, John Winthrop, ascribed the smallpox epidemics in this continent to a divine intervention. “God hath consumed the natives with such a great plague in these parts, so as there be few inhabitants left,” he wrote.<sup>9</sup> A few years later, the English writer William Wood supported Winthrop’s claims with his book “New England’s Prospect (1634),” by arguing that the infection and the deaths of the Native-Americans was God’s will to “make room for the following part of his army.”<sup>10</sup> However, in their texts, the Englishmen Wood and Winthrop “did not mention that they took direct action to assist and speed up ‘Divine’ intervention. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, provided concrete examples of germ warfare, in which blankets infected with the smallpox virus were given by Anglo-settlers to the Indians.”<sup>11</sup>

Since the Puritan settlers constantly referred to the indigenous inhabitants as beasts, heathens, devil worshipers, they, (consciously or sub-consciously) used counter-images of the natives to define themselves and their theocratic community. Therefore, “if the Puritans, for example, could project their own sins upon people they called savages, then the



extermination of the Indian became a cleansing of those sins from their own midst as well as the destruction of a feared enemy.”<sup>12</sup> During the times that the Puritans lived close to the American natives, they often misinterpreted the Bible in order to justify their own bloodlust and their killings.

The extermination of the Native-Americans continued during the seventeenth-century to be perceived by most of the pre-destination believing Puritans as acts of divinity and catharsis, and not as (human caused) genocide.

Infecting the North-American natives with smallpox by the British continued in the eighteenth-century North-Ameica, as they deliberately gave smallpox-contaminated blankets to



**1.3. Unknown Artist-Smallpox, Colonial Massachusetts**

Shawnee and Lenape tribes. This was done by the orders of the British officers Sir Jeffery Amherst and (his replacement) General Thomas Gage: “We gave them two Blankets and an Handkerchief out of the Small Pox Hospital. I hope it will have the desired effect,” wrote captain Simeon Ecuyer in his journal in June 24, 1763.<sup>13</sup> The scourge of smallpox infestation across the North-American continent from seventeenth until nineteenth-century was chronologically documented by the writer Phillip M. White in his book “American Indian Chronology: Chronologies of the American Mosaic (2006),” as he reveals the devastating effects this disease had on the North-American native tribes:

1616

*A massive smallpox epidemic strikes New England tribes during a three-year period. As many as 90 percent of the Indian population of the region between Narragansett Bay and the Penobscot River dies, with some tribes virtually ceasing to exist*

1633-1635

*A widespread epidemic of smallpox spreads among Indians throughout[...]northeastern United States and southeastern Canada, killing huge numbers. The Huron tribe alone loses more than 10, 000 members*

1738

*Smallpox spreads to the Cherokee Indians in North Carolina from white settlements in South Carolina. The disease spreads in the Southeast, killing almost half the Cherokee population, and also reaching tribes in western Canada*

1763

*In June, British soldiers at fort Pitt (present day Pittsburgh) g[a]ve Indians blankets that belonged to smallpox victims, spreading smallpox[...]killing much of their population. This idea of biological warfare [was] the work of Sir Jeffrey Amherst, the command-in-chief- of the British colonies, who suggested the idea in a letter to an officer at the fort*

1780-1782

*Smallpox spreads north from Mexico to the Great Plains, wiping out thousands of Cree, Assiniboine, Chipewyan, Gros Ventre, and Shoshone*

1788

*A smallpox epidemic virtually wipes out Pecos Pueblo in New Mexico, with survivors relocation to Jemez Pueblo*

1779-1800

*A smallpox epidemic decimates the Cree and Chipewyan Indian tribes in the Lake Athabasca region of Canada*

*Smallpox and measles spreads among the Indians in Texas and New Mexico, decimating tribes.*

1837

*A smallpox epidemic occurs along the upper Missouri River killing 15, 000 Indians and nearly wiping out the Arikara, Hidatsa, and Mandan*

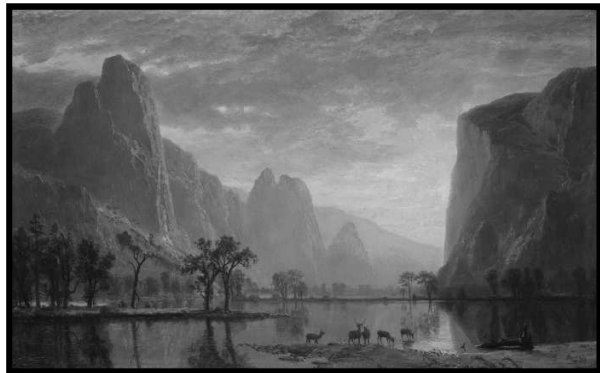
1862

*A smallpox epidemic sweeps through the Fort Victoria area and down the length of the Northwest Coast, killing an estimated 200, 000 Indian people<sup>14</sup>*

Although the smallpox vaccine was created in 1798, it was not until 1832 that the American government decided to distribute the vaccine to Native-Americans (The Indian Vaccination Act of 1832). This was the first federal program created to address major health problems of indigenous Americans.

## *“Paradise on Earth”*

As I argued in the beginning of this chapter, long before any white Europeans came to the Americas; many Amerindian civilizations had developed their own unique languages and cultures. They had also cultivated their own architecture, mathematics, astronomy, farming, trade, art, and priesthood. Some of these nations had also their own royalty. A few of them had even built great pyramids, far greater than the ones in Egypt. The nations living in the Americas had also developed flourishing agricultural and hunting/gathering economies. They also possessed complex mythological and religious beliefs and diverse political systems.



1.4. Albert Bierstadt-Valley of the Yosemite, California

The landscapes across the Americas were beautiful. So much so, that they were often described by the first explorers as majestic. To Columbus they were so pristine and magnificent that he “mistook the mouth of the Orinoco river in modern-day Venezuela for the entrance to the Earthly Paradise, in accordance with a theological tradition that God had not destroyed the Garden of Eden but preserved it, somewhere on earth, as a haven free from suffering and death.”<sup>15</sup> Columbus must have thought that if Adam and Eve were expelled by God from the “Garden of Eden,” than the indigenous people of the Americas were still living in it. Some of these descriptions of the New World in Columbus’s journals resembled somewhat the Greek myths of the Golden Age.

Christopher Columbus came to an unknown world where the majority of the native tribes lived in peace with each other. This had to do with the fact that most indigenous tribes had respect for all individual life. This was one of the reasons why many tribes spoke only of their own dead during their wars and never celebrate their victories of the people they killed when they came home. The expression of this exceptional respect for individual life was

depicted in the journals of the Spanish explorer Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca in the 1500's, after his observation of today's American South and Mesoamerican native tribes. One of these tribes was one which he greatly came to admire was the Opata tribe. De Vaca was amazed about how self-restrain the Opata men were when they became angry with each other. No matter how furious they were with one another, or how severe their dispute was, the Opata men only fist-fought with each other, without ever using any lethal weapons. "When Indian men get into an argument in their villages, they fist-fight until exhausted, then separate[d]," de Vaca wrote in his journals. De Vaca admiringly described the Opata's respect for their fellowmen, by arguing: "No matter what the disaffection, they do not resort to bows and arrows. After a fight, the disputants take their houses (and families) and go live apart from each other in the scrub wood until they have cooled off; then they return and from that moment are friends as if nothing had happened. No intermediary is needed to mend their friendship."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, when Christopher Columbus and other Europeans first came to the Americas, were not coming into empty or savage continents. On the contrary, they were coming to a world much larger and more inhabited with people than Europe "where the culture was complex, where human relations were more egalitarian than in Europe, and where the relations among men, women, children, and nature were more beautifully worked out than perhaps any place in the world."<sup>17</sup> The nations living throughout this world unknown to the Europeans were civilized nations "with their own laws, their poetry, their history kept in memory and passed on, in an oral vocabulary more complex than Europe's, accompanied by song, dance, and ceremonial drama. They paid careful attention to the development of personality, intensity of will, independence and flexibility, passion and potency, to their partnership with one another and with nature."<sup>18</sup> One of these indigenous nations was the first nation that Columbus encountered when he landed in this New World, the (Arawak language group) Taíno.