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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY Parinaz Adib of works by unknown graffiti artists

William Curtis Farabee

Ethnographic explorer and museum anthropologist

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There has been very little written about the anthropological career of William Curtis Farabee (1865–1925). The primary aim of this article is to fill this lacuna in the literature. Farabee was one of the first anthropologists from the United States to undertake extensive ethnographic explorations in South America. He undertook research with many Amazonian societies in Peru, Brazil, and Guyana. This article considers his explorations and writings within the institutional and theoretical context of the “museum period” in the history of anthropology. Farabee was a transitional figure between the anthropology of the museum and that of the academic department of anthropology. His writings articulate an interest in detailed descriptions of material culture with broader interests in ethnographic, linguistic, and physical anthropology. His theoretical writings regarding environmental influence evince an early and inchoate conception of ecological anthropology.

KEY WORDS history of anthropology, William Curtis Farabee, museum period

Museums have played a central role in the history of anthropology. Their significance was greatest during anthropology’s “museum period”¹ (Balée 2009:36; Stocking 1985a; Stocking 1988:20; Sturtevant 1969; Wissler 1942), which began between 1840 and 1860, peaked in the late nineteenth century, and continued to some extent until the rapid growth of academic anthropology departments after World War II. Although he was an important scholar during this period, William Curtis Farabee remains a relatively obscure historical figure in anthropology. Farabee was one of the first scholars from the United States to receive a doctorate in the discipline and to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in South America. He was not a member of the Boasian school and, although his texts are notably referenced in the ethnographic literature on Guyana (Alemán & Whitehead 2009:264; Mentore 2005:74–78; Rivière 1984:116), his overall contribution to anthropology remains poorly known, in contrast to other anthropologists from his generation such as Alfred Kroeber. This paper will consider Farabee’s place in the history of anthropology.

Farabee’s writings, particularly his three books, will be considered in the context of the “museum period.” During this period, there was an identifiable, albeit shifting and equivocal, research paradigm—the “museum paradigm”—whose dominance must be

understood within the nineteenth and early-twentieth century institutional context of museums. This museum paradigm was comprised of the cultural ontology and epistemology of the museum². I argue that Farabee's alignment with this paradigm was considerable.

William Curtis Farabee (1865–1925)

William Curtis Farabee was a four-field anthropologist with specialization in physical anthropology³ (Hrdlička 1943:64). In 1903, he was one of the first to receive his doctorate from Harvard University,⁴ with a dissertation entitled “Hereditary and Sexual Influence in Meristic Variation: A Study of Digital Malformations in Man” (Balée 2009:41; Browman 2002:511; Farabee 1903a:69; Farabee 1905; Putnam 1905).⁵ Stern (1965:217) writes that Farabee's dissertation contained “a description of a large Pennsylvania kindred with brachydactyly and demonstrated convincingly that the trait followed the transmission of a dominant gene.” Frederic W. Putnam, his supervisor, would remain an influence throughout his professional life.

At various times, Farabee served as secretary (Farabee 1918b:79, 83), treasurer (AAA 1919a:104), and president of the American Anthropological Association (AAA 1921; AAA 1922a; AAA 1922b; Farabee 1921b:774). He was elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia (AAA 1919b:219) and was a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS 1914). He received membership in French anthropological societies and was at the Peace Congress in Paris (1918–1919) “as one of the ethnographers to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace” (AAA 1919b:219; GR 1925:675). Farabee worked in military intelligence for the United States during the First World War⁶ (AAA 1919a:104). He received the Explorers Club Medal (AGS 1925:674) and the Geographical Society of Philadelphia's Elisha Kent Kane Medal in 1917 (AGS 1917:154). He had an interest in ethnohistorical research (Farabee 1921b:773) and was elected to be “a corresponding member of the National Academy of History, Ecuador” (AAA 1921:390). Farabee received an “appointment as an honorary member of the Faculty of the University of San Marcos” and was selected “by President Harding as one of the American Commission to the Peruvian Centennial with the rank of Envoy Extraordinary” (de Milhau 1922:ix). At the time of his death, he was employed as Curator of the American Section by the University Museum in Philadelphia (GR 1925:675; Balée 2009:41). Farabee died in 1925 from what his obituary describes as “pernicious anemia consequent on hardships sustained in his several South American journeys” (GR 1925:675). Farabee's career in anthropology, from 1903 to 1925, overlaps with a period of rapid professionalization in the discipline and the beginning of a transition from the anthropology of the museum to that of the academic department of anthropology.

The minting of Farabee's Ph.D in 1903 situates him within the first wave of professional American anthropologists whilst his museum-oriented ethnographic explorations place him within a context of museum research. At the time, university departments relied on museums⁷. William Balée (2009:36) writes that:

In the 19th century, anthropology in the United States had developed in the context of societies and museums. It became professionalized in the university setting from 1901 to about 1920, and in this period of professionalization, museum research actually grew at a faster rate than it had before.

Although museum research remained vibrant in the early twentieth-century, anthropologists were generally orienting themselves more in relation to academic departments than to museums (Bernstein 2002:552). Balée's (2009:36) demarcation of a professionalization period, from around 1901–1920, is similar to Clark Wissler's (1942:190, 199) demarcation of an “academic period”, which began around 1900, or perhaps 1890. Although Wissler (1942:190) demarcates an “exploratory or survey period” of anthropology from 1492 to 1800, it can be argued that elements of this period continued in some remote geographical regions of ethnographic study. Farabee was both an ethnographer and an explorer⁸; he was a transitional figure between the anthropology of the museum, with its emphasis on collection and classification, and the anthropology of the academic department, with its emphasis on professional academic fieldwork and cultural context.

I refer to Farabee's fieldwork expeditions as “ethnographic explorations.” Although he conducted groundbreaking fieldwork, his research was museum-oriented, object-centred, and exploratory. He did not conduct long-term observational fieldwork of the Malinowskian or Boasian varieties (Balée 2009:41). Farabee briefly visited many societies in the Amazon region and his work possesses a comparative survey quality. He did not generally spend long periods of time studying particular societies in depth. This practice is in keeping with the collection-oriented research of the museum period. At times, he referred to his own fieldwork as exploration. In 1917, for example, Farabee gave speeches entitled “Recent Explorations in Northern Brazil” (AGS 1917:146) and “Explorations in the Amazon Valley and in the Unknown Guianas, 1913–1916” (AGS 1917:154). Furthermore, the *Geographical Review* referred to him as a “wilderness explorer” (AGS 1917:146, 149). On one occasion, Farabee (1917c:70) attempted to differentiate exploration from ethnology and wrote that:

the explorer sets out to make a definite journey and bends all his energies to that one definite task. The ethnologist on the contrary only sets out, the journey develops and its direction is determined by the presence or absence of friendly or unfriendly tribes.

However, his fieldwork in South America was conducted around both of these pursuits.

Farabee went on at least three ethnographic explorations to South America. The first was to Peru with the de Milhau–Harvard Expedition of 1906 to 1908; the results were published in 1922 as *Indian Tribes of Eastern Peru* (GR 1925:675; Farabee 1922). A shorter paper was published, based on data from this exploration, entitled “Some Customs of the Macheyengas”⁹ (Farabee 1909). His second ethnographic exploration, in conjunction with the University Museum, was undertaken between 1913 and 1916¹⁰. He resigned from Harvard in order to lead this expedition (Hrdlička et al. 1912:699), which included archaeological excavations of mounds on Marajó Island¹¹ (AGS 1917:149; Farabee 1921f; The University Museum 1915a:21, 54; The University Museum 1915b:184) and was closely chronicled in the publications of the American Geographical Society (AGS 1913; AGS 1914a; AGS 1914b; AGS 1916; AGS 1917). Farabee (1921:157) notes the accompaniment of his wife on at least part of this exploration. *The Museum Journal* published an account of this exploration, which includes fragments of Farabee's correspondences from the field (The University Museum 1915a). Farabee (1917b) wrote a related travelogue-style article, which contains ethnographic observations from this exploration, in addition to commentary on rubber

gathering and environment/geography. The results of this fieldwork were published in 1918 as *The Central Arawaks* and, in 1924, as *The Central Caribs* (GR 1925:675; Farabee 1918a; Farabee 1924). In 1915, Farabee (1921f:156-157) noticed in the Santarém region—what is now known as Amazonian Dark Earth¹² (ADE) (Balée 2010:11; Myers et al. 2003:23; Woods & Denevan 2009:6). His third ethnographic exploration, undertaken between 1921 and 1923, was again to Peru; these data had not been published at the time of his death (GR 1925:675; Rowe 1962:403). In addition to these South American travels, Farabee also made explorations in Iceland and in the Southwestern United States (de Milhau 1908:356; de Milhau 1922:v). Towards the end of his life, Farabee published such articles as “Dress Among Plains Indian Women” (1921c), “The Use of Metals in Prehistoric America” (1921d), and “A Golden Hoard from Ecuador” (1921e). All three of these publications involved research on objects of material culture held by The University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania.

The influence of the museum paradigm is reflected in Farabee’s writings. This is particularly evident in the emphasis that he places on material culture and description over theory and explanation. Object collection was a high priority and many references are made to his collecting objects of natural history and material culture (AGS 1913:369; AGS 1914b:530–531; de Milhau 1922:viii; Farabee 1922:88, 181; Farabee 1924:9–10; Mooney & Hodge 1915:219). During his second ethnographic exploration, *The Museum Journal* reported in March 1915 that Farabee had sent five shipments of “collections made by the expedition during its several explorations” in addition to various notebooks and photographs (The University Museum 1915a:1). One of these collections included Conibo (Conebo) ceramics (Farabee 1917b:67; The University Museum 1915a:21). At one point, a house was built in the field to protect the expedition’s object collections in preparation for shipping (Farabee 1921f:154, 157). During this temporary storage, termites ate “the labels and notes” that had been packed with at least one set of these collections (Farabee 1921:157–158). In keeping with the naturalistic exploratory tradition, Farabee (1917b:68) notes that he sent zoological specimens from the Amazon to the Philadelphia Zoological Gardens. This range of interests is indicative of his continuity with the natural science orientation of nineteenth century anthropological practice. He exhibits a certain eccentricity in writing that “one of the jaguars was a great pet and was allowed to run about the launch at will” (Farabee 1917b:69). This jaguar seems to have been a pet of the expedition group in general. Such eccentricity has a long history of exhibition among gentleman explorers of a natural history orientation in South America, for example, Charles Waterton (Waterton in Aldington 1949). Farabee’s emphasis on the collection of material culture and natural specimens is evidence of the influence of the museum paradigm on his ethnographic explorations.

Farabee and the Institutional Context of Museums

Although anthropology began to develop professional organizations, graduate programmes, publication venues, and more rigorous fieldwork methodology during its period of professionalisation (Gleach 2002:499), the institutional context of museums remained significant (Balée 2009:36). The influence of the museum paradigm was maintained through anthropology’s institutional reliance on museums, particularly in the areas of funding, employment, and publishing¹³. Stocking (1985b:113–115) notes the financial, institutional, and intellectual contexts associated with the “object orientation” of anthropology during the “museum period”—this orientation led to an object-centred study of people and

their cultures. Material things were used to represent and to understand culture. When the status of museums as financial and institutional centres of anthropology receded, the “object orientation” of the discipline likewise diminished (Stocking 1985b:141). Thus, the hegemony of the cultural ontology and epistemology of the museum existed within an institutional context during the “museum period” in the history of anthropology.

The things in museum collections were important to anthropological research at this time, both as objects of study and as fieldwork desiderata. Farabee’s object collections demonstrate the importance of the museum context to fieldwork activities and goals¹⁴. His explorations were mostly in conjunction with museum expeditions, which were funded either by museums or by donors and sometimes involved his working under the supervision of others (Farabee 1918a:9; Farabee 1924:9). All three of his ethnographic books were published by museums. Farabee was exposed to the museum paradigm through his training under Putnam at Harvard University and his employment at the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, both of which held a strong museum tradition¹⁵ (Balée 2009:41). Farabee was greatly influenced both by his former mentor and by the institutional context in which he worked.

Cultural Ontology and Epistemology in the Museum

The institutional context of the “museum period” helped to shape both anthropology and its concept of culture. I am using the phrase “cultural ontology” to refer to the ways that anthropology understood the nature and being of culture during this period. The cultural ontology of the “museum period” conflated “culture” with the “things” of material culture¹⁶. This frequently resulted in an object-centred fieldwork practice. The degree of emphasis on and detailed treatment of material culture may have been partially a result of the empirically oriented natural history education of many of the museum anthropologists of the time. Farabee’s training under Putnam, who was educated in natural science at Harvard University (Browman 2002:509), is an example of this. Concerning the relationship between anthropology and natural history museums, Balée (2009:36) writes that “anthropologists of the 19th century were essentially natural historians.” Furthermore, Leslie (1963:486) claims that the anthropological tradition “was shaped in the atmosphere of museums of natural history”¹⁷ (Leslie in Balée 2009:36; Bernstein 2002:552). The natural history background of many anthropologists may have led to “a strong emphasis on descriptive and comparative studies of material culture” (Collier & Tschopik 1954:771). Thus, culture was frequently understood within an object-centred relation to things. However, the emphasis on things also fit within the institutional structure of museums, which rely on visual objects to produce their exhibitions. Material culture was easily exhibited, as well as easily accommodated to an intellectual framework that centred around natural history.

The cultural ontology of the “museum period” is reflected in Farabee’s emphasis on material culture and things in two of his books, *The Central Arawaks* and *The Central Caribs* (Farabee 1918a; Farabee 1924). Although he describes both material and non-material culture, Farabee frequently emphasizes “things.” As noted above, this may reflect his reliance on the University Museum for funding, employment, and publishing. The University Museum undoubtedly had a strong interest in the things that would eventually be on display as a result of his ethnographic explorations.

I am using the phrase “museum epistemology” to refer to the ways that anthropology approached, analyzed, and understood its knowledge of cultures and societies. There were

different epistemological tendencies in anthropology during the “museum period” in the United States. The “museum paradigm” was somewhat heterogeneous in form. Museum exhibitions tended to be oriented around typological or geographical displays (Collier & Tschopik 1954:769). In other words, things were displayed according to either their type or their place of origin. Unilinear cultural evolutionism was also common to “museum period” anthropology (Balée 1999:35). Each of these three tendencies involved a different way of approaching, analyzing, and understanding material culture¹⁸.

The cultural-evolutionist tendency, which modeled a theory of cultural difference and unilinear change on naturalistic (Darwinian) evolution, particularly resonated with the natural history and object-centred orientations of the “museum period.”¹⁹ However, these orientations were attached to each of the epistemological tendencies in different ways. Although anthropological and museum opinion turned against cultural evolutionism in the early twentieth century, there was “a considerable retention of the natural history approach of the nineteenth century” (Bernstein 2002:553; Collier & Tschopik 1954:771). For example, Frederic Ward Putnam, who retained a natural history orientation, emphasized history and geography over theories of cultural evolution (Browman 2002:509–510, 517). Farabee (1917a) argued that environmental conditions shape human beings physically, psychologically, and culturally. He adhered both to a form of cultural evolutionism and to environmental determinism. As a professional anthropologist, Farabee was thinking beyond curatorial concerns and saw the need to orient his work, as was increasingly becoming the case, to a broader theoretical framework. His emphasis on the environment, in relation to the development of culture, resonated with the museum paradigm’s natural history orientation whilst moving beyond general museum concerns.

Reading the Museum Influence in Farabee’s Texts

Farabee emphasizes the things of material culture in his writings. His three books reflect the influence of both the ontological and the epistemological aspects of the museum paradigm. In *The Central Arawaks*, Farabee (1918a:12) takes the Wapisiana society of Northeastern Brazil and Guiana to be the representative —“characteristic”—culture of the regional Arawakan societies. Smaller sections are devoted to other regional Arawakan societies. Farabee (1918a:9) claims that this book, which is primarily descriptive and lacking in explanatory content, is the first instance of “any detailed account of this group of tribes.”²⁰ He argues that public opinion is the main form of their social control (Farabee 1918a:87; cf. Farabee 1918c:432). In the first section, the topics transition from geography and the history of exploration, to material culture, through subsistence, to sociology and ideology. Despite the emphasis that Farabee (1917a) places on the environment elsewhere, he only devotes two pages to geography and environment in *The Central Arawaks* (1918a). Material culture is particularly emphasized, given its own subheading, and treated in detail. The book makes contributions to all four fields of anthropology and contains geographical, sociocultural, linguistic, physical, and photographic content. There is a small section on regional petroglyphs, in which he refers to his previous scholarship on South American petroglyphs (Farabee 1916; Farabee 1918a:167). He claims that the petroglyphs “are the results of primitive man’s first efforts at artistic presentation”²¹ (Farabee 1918a:169). Although an explicit argument for cultural evolution is not presented, *The Central Arawaks* contains rhetoric that suggests such. For example, Farabee (1918a:105) describes indigenous religious beliefs as

“very primitive and undeveloped.” He also describes the “wholesome influence” of a colonial administrator in the region named H. P. C. Melville²², who taught the indigenous peoples “the value of continuous labor and the use of money” (Farabee 1918a:15). However, at times, Farabee (1918a:94, 169) displays sentiments that suggest an ethnographic romanticism, such as his claims that indigenous “social relations are perfect and illegitimacy is unknown among them” and that, in relation to bathing, “all are scrupulously clean in their habits of life.” Overall, *The Central Arawaks* comes across primarily as a differentiated set of collections of discrete ethnographic domains. The immediate presentation of ethnographic data is emphasized and very little comparison or theoretical explanation occurs. There is no overarching theoretical framework in which the text is situated. It reads as an ethnographic text produced in the form of a museum exhibit.

Reception to *The Central Arawaks* was mixed. It began somewhat favorably with Herbert Spinden’s review (1919). However, in 1920, Walter Roth—a British colonial figure who produced a considerable record of scholarship in Australia and British Guiana (Herskovits 1934; Roth 1915, 1924, 1929, 2010)—published an excoriating review in *American Anthropologist*. Roth (1920) makes criticisms that primarily pertain to technical data, such as plant identifications and detailed descriptions of hunting implements. For example, Roth (1920:292) writes that Farabee’s “illustration of the birdtrap lacks the upper portion of the peg supporting the structure, and upon which the whole delicacy of the trap depends.” In criticizing his inclusion in Farabee’s bibliography, Roth (1920:292) claims of himself that he “so far has published nothing concerning the three tribes under review.” Farabee (1921a) defended his work against Roth’s criticism the next year in *American Anthropologist*. He describes the tenor of this criticism as “unexplainable animus” (Farabee 1921a:230). Roth (1922) struck back the following year—again in *American Anthropologist* (Roth 1922)—and ended the interchange. This debate highlights the “museum period” emphasis on material culture and the meticulous description of minutiae and things. The debate also highlights the porous quality of anthropology’s professional boundaries during this period of increasing professionalisation.

In *The Central Caribs*, Farabee (1924) treats the Makushi (Macusis) as the representative Cariban society of the region; smaller sections pertain to other Cariban societies. After the section on the Makushi, the book reads somewhat like a travelogue and stresses the themes of arrival and departure. In places, *The Central Caribs* reads as the textual counterpart to a museum exhibit. Many of the organizational features of *The Central Arawaks* are replicated in *The Central Caribs*. Material culture is emphasized, given its own subheading, and presented towards the beginning in great detail; subsequent sections on sociology, ideology, and language are not as well formulated in content and writing. Farabee (1924:10) explicitly notes that his expedition was making “natural history collections.” A section on physical data, which includes anthropometric graphs, is presented last. Farabee (1924:276–277) attempts to explain anthropometric differences in relation to environment and diet—this suggests that his emphasis on environmental influence may have partially come from his specialization in physical anthropology. The discussion of kinship terminology consists of less than two pages and is presented in neither a systematic nor well-organized manner, although the indigenous terms for various kinship relations are given (Farabee 1924:80–81). Lowie (1937:6) later criticized Farabee’s attempts to write about kinship (cited in Balée, 2009:41). It should be noted that Farabee died in 1925; there is a notice written by G. B. Gordon (Director of the University Museum and Farabee’s supervisor) in *The Central*

Caribs stating that Farabee was ill during this book's preparation and "had no opportunity of reading the proofs or preparing the plates or supervising the publication" (Farabee 1924:7, 9). Thus, it is unclear to what extent Farabee is responsible for the quality of the text.

At times, Farabee relies on second-hand information from missionaries and various colonial figures (e.g., Farabee 1924:96). Melville is again referenced in *The Central Caribs*, as is a missionary named Christopher Davis (Farabee 1924:10, 96, 279). Regarding their supposed obedience in social relations, Farabee (1924:71) comments on "the moral character of the [Makushi] Indians." Farabee may have been following the lead of the German explorer Robert Schomburgk (1840:173), who travelled throughout British Guiana during the 1830s and 1840s under the direction of the Royal Geographical Society and the British Government, in his praise of the Makushi. He was aware of Schomburgk's explorations and writings (Farabee 1917c). Frank Speck (1926:270) describes Farabee's romanticism, which seems paternalistic at times, as evincing an "avowed sympathy" and a "sincere appreciation" of the virtues of the Cariban societies.

In 1926, three reviews were published of *The Central Caribs*. In *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Frank Speck (1926:269) notes that "material culture is the most widely treated topic" in Farabee's book. Speck (1926:270) claims the book as "another literary landmark in the field of American exploration." These comments emphasize material culture and Farabee's role as an ethnographic explorer. Both Walter Hough's review in *American Anthropologist* (1926) and H.O.F.'s review in *The Geographical Journal* (1926) were also generally positive.

In *Indian Tribes of Eastern Peru*, Farabee (1922) writes about Arawakan, Panoan, Jivaroan, Witotoan, Miranhan, and Tupian groups in eastern Peru and Ecuador. This is the most four-field and ethnographically wide-ranging of his books. It seems to be his best book overall. There are separate sections on physical and archaeological themes, in addition to those on culture and linguistics. The sections on material culture, whilst thorough and detailed, are less emphasized than in Farabee's other books; sections on social organization tend to be placed prior to those on material culture. As with *The Central Caribs* and *The Central Arawaks* (Farabee 1918:9; Farabee 1924:9), in addition to first-hand ethnographic data collection, Farabee relies on secondary reports from both indigenous and non-indigenous persons. In this book, the orientation is decidedly more pro-indigenous. Farabee (1922:2, 38, 62, 148) comes out strongly against abusive treatment of the Indians. However, this text also evinces problematic tendencies. When writing about Piro "personal habits" and their honesty in trading, Farabee (1922:61) writes that "the Piro were the most manly savages we had encountered, and most worthy of being treated as our equals." This quotation appears to again show Farabee's ethnocentric thinking. This fieldwork appears to have been funded by Louis John de Milhau, who also wrote the introduction to the book. De Milhau, along with his friend John Hastings, was given a diplomatic letter by President Theodore Roosevelt prior to the expedition²³ (de Milhau 1922:v). Whilst a student at Harvard, de Milhau had accompanied Farabee on a research trip to Iceland in 1905 (de Milhau 1922:v). Putnam is also acknowledged for "instruction and hearty cooperation" (Farabee 1922). Farabee's museum collecting is mentioned in this book and a paragraph in the archaeological section is devoted to "collections" (de Milhau 1922:viii; Farabee 1922:181). Walter Hough's 1923 review in *American Anthropologist* was decidedly favourable. From an overall analysis of these three books, one is made strongly cognizant

of the object-centred orientation of Farabee's work and the influence of the ontological and epistemological orientations of the "museum paradigm."

Farabee's Theory of Environmental Influence

Farabee (1917a) argued that the environment plays a strong role in shaping human beings. He writes in *The Central Caribs* that "many similarities of culture will be observed among the tribes of these two linguistic stocks [Cariban and Arawakan]—similarities which may be due in part to contact and in part to the influence of the environment" (Farabee 1924:9). Farabee (1924:276–277) also suggests that physical differences between the forest and savannah groups "must be traced directly to the influence of the environment with all that such a statement implies" and that "the whole question [of physical difference] then may be one of diet alone." His assertions of environmental influence and determinism extend to both physical and cultural differences (Farabee 1924:12).

Farabee writes that changes in culture "reveal the effects of a change of environment" (Farabee 1917a:288). Elsewhere, he emphasizes the role of the environment in the development of indigenous art²⁴ (Farabee 1918d). Although he notes the importance of "organized ritualistic religion" (art's "greatest inspiration") and social life to artistic creation, he claims that "the art of any region more correctly reflects the character of the environment than the character of the people" (Farabee 1918d:61). Farabee (1918e) attempts to show how at least one Amazonian myth—"the marriage of the electric eel"—is linked to environmental factors. In positing material explanations for art and myth, he makes bold claims concerning the influence of the environment. These claims differentiate his work from both the historical-particularist strain of American anthropology and the functionalist strains of British social anthropology. These claims share substance with the intellectual framework of the museum period and, although they are frequently expressed in more ethnocentric terms, prefigure later cultural-materialist and ecological-determinist orientations. However, Farabee blends these orientations with a rhetoric that strongly evinces cultural evolutionism.

With regard to Amazonian art, Farabee (1918d:71) writes that "the art is so simple and in such an early stage of development that all the steps in its evolution may be traced with certainty." His terminology strongly evinces cultural-evolutionist sentiments (Farabee 1917a). For example, although Farabee (1917a:281, 283) eschews the concept of "primitive culture," he makes references to low, high, and advanced cultures. Although historical "developments were not necessarily from a lower to a higher plane" (Farabee 1917a:282), he describes some peoples as "backward" and refers to "stages" of "cultural development" (Farabee 1917a:282, 287). He seems to have viewed both culture and social psychology as being developmental. Farabee (1917c:83) describes a certain practice of an indigenous society as giving "a good idea of their stage of mental development." Farabee (1909:128) claims that, for the Macheyengas, "wants are few and so easily supplied that the daily routine of life requires very little thought." He goes on to make the more extreme claim that this group lives with neither custom nor religion (Farabee 1909:131). He (1917b:68) writes of "contact with civilized men" destroying "primitive peoples." Farabee describes the discoveries on Marajó island as evincing a "high state of culture" and claims that "there is no evidence in the material found of a development from a lower culture" (Farabee 1921f:150). He writes that the past inhabitants of Marajó island "achieved a higher civilization as

indicated by the development of their arts than that of any other tribes in South America east of the Andes Mountains” (Farabee 1921f:142). These comments suggest a general adherence to cultural evolutionism.

Although Farabee did not systematically present his views on environmental influence and determinism until 1917, he seems to have developed these views at a relatively early point in his career. Farabee’s strong interest in environmental influence may have been partially a result of his doctoral research in physical anthropology. Only six years after completing his dissertation, Farabee (1909:127) writes that:

Primitive man—not earliest man, but man in a low stage of cultural development—is to so large an extent a creature of his environment that any study of his customs must be preceded by some account of the conditions under which he has lived and developed these particular customs.

Later, in his systematic presentation of his views, Farabee (1917a:281) writes that:

We sometimes speak of primitive men but we mean men in a low stage of culture without any reference whatever to time or age. There are no primitive men, neither is there primitive culture. Both have been so modified by their environment that they give us very little idea of what the first men and their culture were like. From the beginning both have developed in complete agreement with their environment.

The differentiation of “primitive man” from “earliest man” appears to be Farabee’s way of differentiating natural and cultural evolution. However, such statements evince an adherence to cultural evolution—albeit alongside a more forcefully stated adherence to environmental determinism. Although Farabee does not view indigenous peoples as representative of an original state of humanity, he argues that their cultures have been environmentally conditioned. Additionally, it seems that Farabee saw indigenous thought itself as constrained by environmental variables.

Farabee’s theoretical emphasis on environmental influence sometimes leads him to make seemingly degenerationist claims. For example, he writes that in tropical climates the human being “is deprived of energy and ambition and degenerates” (Farabee 1917a:281). These degenerationist comments occur within the context of an adherence to environmental determinism. Rather than positing human societies as progressing through an ineluctable series of developmental stages, he theoretically ties their development to the environment in which they live. He repeatedly uses the terminology of lower and higher stages and argues that environmental conditions allow or prevent movement between these stages. His degenerationist comments reflect a belief that environmental conditions could lead to retrograde or limited movement on the scale of cultural evolution. Farabee (1918d:61) argues that “where there is a constant struggle for existence or where there is a debilitating climate art cannot develop to a high degree of perfection.” Thus, Farabee conditions the developmental stages of cultural evolutionism with environmental variables.

Farabee’s epistemological framework for understanding cultural difference was categorical and involved the use of developmental stages. He adapted his emphasis on environmental variables to this framework. This adaptation demonstrates the influence of the museum paradigm on Farabee’s theoretical ideas. However, this type of cultural

classification had more relevance for museum curation than for the growing anthropology of the academic department. Farabee was a transitional figure between these institutional contexts. His rhetoric of cultural evolutionism appears to have been largely a vestige of the language of nineteenth century anthropologists and explorers who wrote within a natural history framework and were influenced in their ethnographic observations by biological concepts of adaptation, natural selection, and evolution. Farabee can be viewed as an early ecological anthropologist and his positions overlap to some limited degree with later theories of cultural ecology and cultural materialism. In contemporary ecological anthropology, which is now largely influenced by historical ecology, the relationship between culture and the environment is seen as mutually influential (Balée & Erickson 2006). In general, culture is no longer reduced nor determinately conditioned to environmental variables. Similarly, cultural evolutionism has been generally eschewed in favour of more agentic and particularistic interpretations.

Conclusion

Farabee was a transitional figure between the anthropology of the museum and that of the academic department of anthropology. His extended visits to South America involved exploration, museum collections, and ethnographic research. Farabee was both an ethnographic explorer and a museum anthropologist. His contributions were primarily made within the context of the natural history and object-centred orientations of museum anthropology in the United States. Farabee's publications reflect his adherence to the "museum paradigm," although he sometimes goes beyond the constraints of this paradigm. His work shows the influence of the ontological and epistemological orientations of the museum period of anthropology. His primary theoretical contribution to anthropology was his emphasis on environmental determinism. However, Farabee seems to have adhered to both environmental determinism and a form of cultural evolutionism. His combination of these theoretical positions was idiosyncratic and reflects the transitional nature of the intellectual milieu in which his career was situated.

Many of Farabee's writings seem to hover in a transitional space between an emerging professional anthropology and the literature of explorers. With the exception of his programmatic statements concerning environmental influence, Farabee wrote very little on theoretical matters and his texts are mostly comprised of detailed descriptions and travel accounts. His descriptions of material culture resonate with the emphasis during the "museum period" on natural history. He made much use of his training under Putnam in his explorations in South America and Putnam's influence can be ascertained throughout his career.

Farabee primarily contributed to the ethnographic and ethnological literature through his detailed descriptions of indigenous societies in South America. His publications are still frequently referenced in this literature (Alemán & Whitehead 2009:264; Mentore 2005:74–78; Rivière 1984:116). In fact, it was within the context of reviewing the literature of South American ethnography, towards the goal of developing an ethnographic research project with the Makushi society of Guyana, that I first encountered Farabee's writings. In developing this project, I have found his highly descriptive accounts to be very useful.

Farabee was one of the first American ethnographers to do wide-ranging fieldwork in South America. His texts regarding indigenous societies in this region are more ethnographically focused than earlier explorers, yet more survey-oriented and ethnographically

limited than later professional anthropologists. However, although Farabee is now a somewhat obscure figure in the history of anthropology, his contributions remain substantial. His current obscurity seems to be partially a result of his early death and the subsequent fame and relative dominance of the Boasian school, which came to eclipse much of the anthropology that came before it in the United States. One unfortunate result of the Boasian hegemony was that other historical traditions of anthropology in the United States gradually became poorly known. Anthropologists working within the older contexts of the museum and natural history fell into obscurity as the anthropology of the academic department rose in prominence. However, earlier anthropologists, such as William Curtis Farabee, were well-known during their time and made contributions that are significant to the history and development of anthropology.

The somewhat inchoate nature of Farabee's oeuvre may also be due to his early death. It is unclear at times whether the quality of some of his publications is due to the poor status of his health, which suffered as a result of his ethnographic explorations in South America. Some of his writings were edited by others and may lack the authorial attention that Farabee could have provided. Furthermore, he did not have the opportunity to produce the kinds of late career theoretical texts that frequently serve to articulate anthropologists' early work.

Farabee went to great lengths in his research. He overcame much adversity—sickness, dietary privations, and physical danger—to carry out original ethnographic research in South America. The results of this research were of relevance for both museum and departmental anthropology. For anthropologists in academic departments, Farabee's visits to little-known Amerindian societies, such as that of the Mundurucu of Brazil, would provide a broad range of ethnographic data upon which more particularistic and long-term fieldworkers could draw in developing fieldwork projects with societies relatively unknown to anthropologists. Although his own fieldwork and methodology was less rigorous and more concerned with object collections than that of many who would follow, the breadth of his ethnographic explorations provided a substantial foundation for the development of subsequent research in South America. His writings are filled with descriptive ethnographic data that allow for comparisons with the present and that provide a contrastive historical dimension for contemporary writers. The fact that this data has not been used as often as perhaps it could have been further highlights the eclipsing effects of the Boasian hegemony. In considering his overall contribution to anthropology, Farabee's writings remain a broad, useful, and primary source of ethnographic data on South American indigenous societies and reflect a transitional practice of fieldwork that bridges between the museum and departmental periods in the history of anthropology.

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Notes

- 1 According to Sturtevant (1969:622), the "museum period" lasted from the 1840s to 1890. Wissler (1942:190, 194, 202) dates this period, during which professional positions began to

appear in anthropology, from 1860 to 1900; this was the period when “the greatest contributions to anthropology came from men in museum positions or in bureaus and academies closely associated with museum collections.” According to Collier & Tschopik (1954:769), the general framework for anthropological museums was established by the 1890s. However, Stocking (1985a:8) claims that “from the point of view of both the employment of anthropological personnel and the support of field research, the great period of museum anthropology only really began in the 1890s.” Balée (2009:42) notes the embedding of anthropology in universities during the Great Depression. Although some disagree, such as Samuel Redman (2011:43), many scholars “argue that before the close of the 1930s, universities largely replaced museums at the forefront of academic research.” By the beginning of World War II, museum anthropology was “stranded in an institutional, methodological, and theoretical backwater” (Stocking 1985a:8).

- 2 I am using the concept of a “paradigm” to refer to an identifiable theoretical and methodological style of research. This is similar to Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) use (Osley 1985:72).
- 3 Farabee published physical anthropological data in his dissertation (1903a), books (1921a; 1922; 1924), and *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* article (1918c) on Arawakan societies. He also published on the topic of human albinism (Castle 1903; Farabee 1903b; Stern 1965:217). Although archaeology seems to have been his least published field, as it also was for Boas (Balée 2009:41), Farabee (1912) reviewed Thomas Joyce’s *South American Archaeology*. He excavated in South America (AGS 1917:149; Farabee 1921f) and in Coahoma County, Mississippi (Farabee 1903b). Farabee’s work in Mississippi involved the excavation of mounds and the discovery of human remains (Farabee 1921f:148).
- 4 In 1890, Harvard developed an anthropology graduate programme under Putnam in association with the Peabody Museum (Collier & Tschopik 1954:769; Stocking 1988:17–18). Prior to Farabee, in 1894, George Dorsey, a student of Frederic W. Putnam, received a Ph.D from Harvard in “American archaeology and ethnology” (Balée 2009:40; Bernstein 2002:557; Hinsley 1985:72).
- 5 At various times, Farabee, Boas, and Kroeber worked under Putnam (Browman 2002:511, 514–515; Buckley 1996:274; Freed & Freed 1983:805; Hinsley 1991:346–350; Jacknis 1996:190; Jacknis 2002:524). Wissler (1942:199) describes Putnam as “... a great organizer, a builder of museums and university departments, staffed with men chosen chiefly for their ability in field collecting and museum house-keeping.” Professionally trained anthropologists, such as Farabee, began to displace amateurs as curators “... during the period of Putnam’s museum-building activity...” (Collier & Tschopik 1954:769). In 1890, Harvard developed an anthropology graduate programme under Putnam in association with the Peabody Museum (Collier & Tschopik 1954:769; Stocking 1988:17–18). Farabee obtained his doctorate through this programme. Professionally trained anthropologists, such as Farabee, began to displace amateurs as curators “... during the period of Putnam’s museum-building activity...” (Collier & Tschopik 1954:769).
- 6 Farabee (1917b:65) writes that, when he was near Iquitos, Peru, the English consul informed him “that war had been declared in Europe the day before.” In Farabee’s article in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* (1918c:427), he is noted as “Capt. Wm Curtis Farabee, U.S.A.” and as “formerly with the University Museum, Philadelphia.” In a note in *American Anthropologist*, B. W. Merwin writes that Farabee was “called by the Government [in 1918] as Captain in the Intelligence Department of the Army” (AAA 1919a:104; Sullivan 1989:241, note 12). However, David Price (2008:285) claims that Farabee “did not use field-work as a cover for espionage, but ... [he] did collect intelligence during the First World War.” Price (2008:9) claims that Farabee conducted “espionage in Central America during the war.”
- 7 Collier & Tschopik (1954:771) write that “museums during this period were the centers of anthropological teaching, or rather, museum curators formed the core of university teaching staffs. The major university departments drew heavily on the staffs of their anthropological

museums or established a working relation with a nearby large museum. Most of the important teachers were museum men or former museum men.”

- 8 Several of Farabee’s texts particularly evince his status as an ethnographic explorer (Farabee 1917c; Farabee 1921f). These texts weave travelogue-style narrative and stories of personal experiences in the field with ethnographic data, object descriptions, and geographic information. The ethnographic depictions are not generally presented in a systematic manner. Rather, they are comprised of various summary observations. These texts resemble the writings of nineteenth-century explorers. However, Farabee makes an attempt to distinguish himself from explorers. Nevertheless, his field activities appear to have been frequently oriented around exploration.
- 9 The Macheyenga society is now known as the Matsigenka society.
- 10 According to a note that appeared in 1917 in the *Geographical Review*, Farabee visited the highlands of Guiana, Marajó Island, the central Brazilian Amazon, and the Peruvian Amazon during this expedition (AGS 1917:149). He spent varying amounts of time in these regions—for example, four months in central Brazil (AGS 1916:143)—and was concerned with a variety of research questions. In central Brazil, Farabee conducted research with the Mundurucu society in an attempt “to settle absolutely the long-vexed question of the relation of this tribe to the Tupi” (AAA 1915:778). A note in *The Museum Journal* comments on the completion of Farabee’s “trip to the head villages of the Mundurucu Indians” (*The University Museum* 1915b). According to a lecture schedule found in *The Museum Journal*, Farabee gave lectures on November 25, 1916 (“The Amazon Expedition of the University Museum. In the Lower Amazon and Across the Unknown Guianas”), February 10, 1917 (“The Amazon Expedition of the University Museum. A Journey in Search of the Amazon Head Hunters”), and February 28, 1917 (“My Three Years with the Indians of the Amazon Forest”) (*The University Museum* 1916:199–200).
- 11 Farabee (1921f:145) notes that large trees are “often found growing on and about the mounds.” Unfortunately, he does not substantiate this landscape observation with a species name or with some other data to indicate a type of tree.
- 12 In 1915, Farabee claims (1921f:156–157, cited in Woods & Denevan 2009:6) that he found “black earth” (ADE) sites with pottery sherds. Farabee (1921f:156, cited in Woods & Denevan 2009:6) writes that “[t]he black earth marking these sites was found to be from one to two feet deep and covered in some cases, as much as ten acres of surface.” Farabee (1924:29) notes elsewhere the use of burning by the Makushi (Macusi) to increase soil fertility.
- 13 Prior to “the period of the great philanthropic foundations,... [museums] marshaled the financial support that made possible the steady growth of anthropology” (Collier & Tschopik 1954:772). They also provided employment for many of the early professional anthropologists (Balée 2009:40).
- 14 Farabee was not alone in his institutional reliance during this period. The orientation of some of Boas’ research also necessarily fell “along lines consistent with the orientations of the institutions funding his research” (Jacknis 1996:192).
- 15 The Harvard anthropology department is the oldest in the United States (Jacknis 2002:529). The Peabody Museum and Harvard merged in 1897 (Browman 2002:510). The Peabody museum dates to 1866 and developed teaching during the 1890s; The University Museum dates to before 1900 and developed teaching around 1909; Columbia University had a long-standing relationship with the American Museum of Natural History and developed teaching during the 1890s (Kroeber 1954:765).
- 16 The emphasis on things eventually gave way to an emphasis on cultural contexts. Early traces of this shift are perceptible in the famous debate between Franz Boas and Otis Mason, in which Boas argued for a strategy of exhibition that emphasized the historical and cultural contexts of things (Adams 1998:241; Boas 1887; Bunzl 1996:56–57; Jacknis 1985:77–79; Jacknis 1996:185, 201, 206; Stocking 1974:57–58). This is in contrast to Mason’s (1887:534, cited in

- Bunzl 1996:58) argument that curators should privilege “the methods and instrumentalities of the biologist.” Boas (1974 [1905]:122–123, cited in Jacknis 1996:185–186) helped to shift the ontological and epistemological emphases in anthropology away from things. The museum paradigm was largely supplanted over time as the research emphasis moved away from things and the institutional centre moved from museums to university departments of anthropology.
- 17 According to Kroeber (1954:764), “anthropology is in part natural science, in part humanity, only secondarily social science.” Hinsley (1985:50–51) notes the shift from a humanistic to a naturalistic study of humankind during the mid-to-late nineteenth century.
 - 18 The debate between Franz Boas and Otis Mason highlights the tension that was present between the different tendencies in museum epistemology. Browman (2002:517) writes that “Boas advocated the kind of geographic focus on ethnological exhibits that Agassiz had imparted to Putnam, and it appears that Putnam may have passed this on to Boas or encouraged him to write about it.” Putnam emphasized the arrangement of artifacts according to “historic context and geographic areas rather than by evolutionary schema or industry” (Browman 2002:510).
 - 19 Balée (2009:36) suggests that the emphasis on things “appears to have fit better with natural history than other academic consolidations.”
 - 20 Farabee (1918c) also published an article in 1918 on Arawakan societies. Therein, non-material culture and sociological themes are emphasized more than material culture. Environmental influence on culture is mentioned (Farabee 1918c:430).
 - 21 Elsewhere, Farabee (1917c:91) writes that the petroglyphs provide “the only evidence remaining of an extinct culture and represent the first efforts towards artistic presentation.”
 - 22 H.P.C. Melville was a colonial figure who lived in British Guiana; he had some level of fluency in the local indigenous languages and “spent twenty-four years among the Indians” of southern Guiana (The University Museum 1915a:5). Farabee (1917b:77) claims that Melville “introduced irrigation [to British Guiana] by means of American windmills.” Farabee received considerable assistance from Melville and John Ogilvie (Farabee 1917c; The University Museum 1915a:5). They are mentioned repeatedly in his writings. Ogilvie accompanied Farabee into the interior of what was then British Guiana (Farabee 1917c:70). Ogilvie (1940) later published a text of indigenous creation myths. Farabee seems to have also met with the Governor of British Guiana, who was very interested in the geographical data collected by Farabee’s team on the colonial territory (The University Museum 1915a:21).
 - 23 Farabee (1917c:103) notes that he spent a day with Roosevelt in Barbados whilst exploring South America.
 - 24 Farabee (1918d: 59) claims that the art of “primitive peoples” is “instinctive in the beginning and confined in their use to decorative purposes.” Farabee (1918d: 61) writes that “decorative art is so directly conditioned by its environment that one must know all the elements of climatic, physical and social conditions before he can begin to understand or to appreciate the art.”

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