



Dem bones Dem bones

DEM DRY BONES: Goyathlay of the Bedonkohe band of the Chiricahua Apache was born in 1829 in Mexico at Gila River in a region subsequently annexed by the United States and renamed, New Mexico. He was a great military leader in the struggles between the Apache and those who would take over their lands, raiding and killing, often with great brutality, Mexican, Texican, and American farmers and settlers. In March 1851 soldiers of the Mexican Republic attacked Goyathlay camp while he and his men were away in the nearby town of Janos. The soldiers murdered his mother, his wife, Alope, and their three children. This did not do too much for Goyathlay's peace of mind. Indeed, he became so relentless in his slaughter of Mexicans that legend reports that the pleas of his terrified and dying victims to "St Jerome" resulted in their nemesis being renamed "*Geronimo*".

Geronimo's more or less perpetual warfare against the settlers and their respective armies resulted in his final surrender to the forces of the United States in 1886 at the aptly named Skeleton Canyon in Arizona. Thereafter he was imprisoned in a string of different barracks and forts, finally ending up at Fort Sill in Oklahoma in 1894. He was exhibited at the World's Fair in St Louis in 1904 selling trinkets and posing for photographs, and he rode in Theodore Roosevelt's inaugural parade in 1905. In his latter days Geronimo even became a professing member of the Dutch Reformed Church, but was expelled in 1907 after he

was caught gambling. So, it is not at all clear how reformed or how Christian the old warrior became. He died two years later and was buried at the Apache Indian Prisoner of War Cemetery at Fort Sill.

There he remained until 1918 when George W. Bush's grandfather, Prescott Bush, robbed the grave, stealing the skull and some other bones, and lodging them at the Tomb, the clubhouse of *Skull and Bones*, the leading student society at Yale University, the second oldest in the *Ivy League*. I learned of all this, Geronimo's incarceration as an "unlawful combatant", his death, and the theft of his bones, only last week because US Attorney General Ramsey Clark has just filed a lawsuit on behalf of twenty of Geronimo's descendants naming *Skull and Bones*, President Obama, and Secretary of Defence, Robert Gates. They want the bones back. They want to hold a proper funeral on Goyathlay's ancestral lands at Gila River in New Mexico.

Skull and Bones is a secret society, consisting of fifteen students selected each year to be members in their last or senior year at Yale; the fifteen graduating members select the new crop in time-honoured secrecy, picking the wealthiest, the most well-connected, or simply the smartest, from amongst those eligible. Since at least 1918 they have apparently been ritually kissing Goyathlay's skull during initiation ceremonies in the hope no doubt that their conquests will be perpetual. Formed in 1832 or thereabouts, *Skull and Bones*, was initially funded by the opium merchant, Russell and Company, and is now funded and sustained by a fund of several million dollars held by the Russell Trust Association which owns the society's buildings and land; *Skull and Bones* represented, and still does, the attempt, by the rich and influential, to resist the spontaneous and perpetual erosion and destruction of elites, inherent in the development and workings of capitalist society.

Their biggest *open secret* is their baneful hostility to the egalitarian spirit of America. Their motto, *Bari Quippe Boni*, "Nature makes only a few who are

good”, says it all. Perhaps in the kissing of Goyathlay’s skull they are including him among the brightest and the best. Perhaps? What is more striking is that they selected George W. Bush who is known in the society as “Temporary” because he could not think up a suitable occult name in time for his initiation. Does this early example of incompetence and lack of preparation ring any bells?

I think it probably does.

Still, this fascination with the *illuminati* and the secret societies formed by nineteenth century German students is interesting. The iconographical meaning of the piratical, scull and crossed bones, subsequently adopted by the Schutztaffel of the Nazi state, no doubt has some kind of occult meaning, intended to imply that members are not ordinary or to be bound by ordinary moral or Christian sensibilities or commitments. Their loyalty and honour is towards each other and to their order rather than to society at large; this is a commitment that George W. Bush, despite being known simply as “Temporary”, has managed to fulfil very well.

All this malarkeying with bones and skulls, and particularly those belonging to the vanquished reminds me of the enormous collections of bones held by august institutions like London’s Natural History Museum, great charnel houses in which cardboard boxes, stacked from floor to ceiling, contain the bones of Aboriginal people from Australia and Tasmania, silently awaiting the completion of a complete taxonomic table of mankind in which they would be accorded a place between modern nineteenth-century man and the eagerly anticipated discovery of our missing link with the ‘animal kingdom’.

Like phrenology, that other bony enterprise, this bone collecting business is now all but forgotten. All that remains, in numerous storerooms in Europe and America, are the bones of literally thousands of people who belonged to the clans and tribes who lived for millennia on lands that were subsequently colonised or annexed by Spain, the United States, or the British

Empire. Many of these peoples are now entirely vanished, represented only by the mixed blood survivors of cultural and racial policies designed to wipe them from the face of the earth.

This occurred simply because these peoples were 'racially inferior' and thought of as morally degenerate. In a specimen hunting expedition in 1900 along the Victoria River in Australia's Northern Territory, two Allura tribesmen were hunted down and killed. The records of the Royal Society of Surgeons show that their skins were boiled off them "on the spot"; their bones ended up in cardboard boxes as part of the national collection in London.

Since at least the beginning of this century the battle to return these remains has been met with some limited success – some curators have offered up a skull or two and some bones for return and burial. It is really about time that this ghastly history is finally laid to rest. And it is about time too that the President, Provost, and Corporation of Yale University finally buried *Scull and Bones*, and the other secret societies, *Scroll and Key*, and the *Wolf's Head*, by declaring membership of such societies incompatible with membership of the university's undergraduate programmes.

If people want to play *hocus pocus* in secret societies let them join *Opus Dei*, a freemasons' lodge, a witches' coven, or even a lodge of the rather more benign Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, but they should not be given house room in the universities or the public institutions of a democratic society.