UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES IN THE DESERT: SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPES IN THE CULTURAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO, 1920-1939

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ABSTRACT

What does Mexico mean to the cultural imagination of the United States? What has it meant in the past? In what ways has the U.S. incorporated aspects of Mexican culture into its own? This dissertation explores these questions of cultural and intellectual exchange between the U.S. and Mexico during the 1920s and 1930s by positioning itself amid the present "transnational" and "hemispheric" turn in U.S. literary study. Its subject matter ranges from architecture and urbanism to journalism and travel writing to short stories and novels to muralism and the visual arts. Such an interdisciplinary approach is bolstered by crossing scales of geography from the international to the continental, the national, the regional and the local. Positioning the discussion in geographic terms allows one to see how the possibilities for cultural exchange could never be fully realized, as the ways in which U.S. writers and intellectuals understood Mexico-- then and now-- can rarely be separated from either the physical proximity or the cultural dissimilarity of the two countries, a relationship that has been described as one of "distant neighbors." This dissertation takes the spatial components of culture seriously, employing useful concepts from the disciplines of human geography and cultural landscape studies to inform its understanding of how diverse figures ranging from Conrad Aiken, Stuart Chase, José Clemente Orozco, Katherine Anne Porter, Sophie Treadwell, William Carlos Williams-- among others less widely known-- understood Mexico and presented it to a U.S. audience during the interwar period. Their narratives often employ the symbolic landscape of Mexico to communicate the qualities of Mexican culture while unwittingly obscuring the reality of what the country itself. Nonetheless, each example points to possible correctives in the pattern, offering a hemispheric perspective from which much can still be learned today.

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"One of these days/ I'm gonna sit down and write a long letter/ to all the good friends/ I've known …" Neil Young wrote that. For now, a list of those-- from near and far-- who have provided support in various ways throughout the many years of my education will have to suffice: Dan Ballantine, Eric Boehm, Jared Brey, Douglas Dilhomick, Terrence Dobrowsky, Patrick Grossi, Tricia R. Lauducci, Mary M. Lodewyck, Jorge Murakami, Justin O'Neill, James Ollen-Smith, John Pacer, Giovanni Paquin, Jacob Ritchie. I ought also to mention Kelly Craig,

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The writing of a dissertation is not an easy process and the Monday telephone calls from my sister, Ashley, were the best way to start the week-- and throughout our lives she has offered invaluable advice and perspective with optimism and humor. I'd like to thank her and her husband, Rex, for the fun family vacations, as well as my niece and nephew, Zelda and Zeke, who always put a smile on my face. Without my folks, Michael and Kathy Racine, none of my education would have been possible. Their unwavering support and encouragement over the

years gave me untold opportunities, offering an example I can only hope to imitate for children of my own someday. I could not have done any of this without them. As meandering as my route has been, I know I'll be back home in Vermont someday soon-- like Robbie Robertson wrote, "I got winter in my blood."

For now, as I plan to leave Philadelphia, I will resist the temptation to quote W. C. Fields. In the end, I find myself suppressing an impulse to stay, as it has been my home for nine years-- but there are more places to see and people assure me that I'm still young. Thanks.

Nathaniel R. Racine
Philadelphia, November 2017

For My Folks

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INTRODUCTION

TOWARD A GEOGRAPHY OF THE IMAGINATION

Upon arriving in Mexico in 1938, the French surrealist poet, André Breton, described it as "the surrealist country par excellence." As art historian Jacqueline Barnitz writes, "He was, of course, projecting a Eurocentric vision on a culture that seemed to fulfill his dreams of the marvelous and exotic" (103). Breton's proclamation well captures the sentiment of many foreign travelers to Mexico, including those from the United States. A year later, U.S. author Conrad Aiken would compare the Mexican landscape to "the enchanted mesa of Krazy Kat." By invoking the surreal desert environment of a popular comic strip, Aiken echoes this perspective. As Aiken's imagination attempts to understand Mexico, he connects the unknown land with a known reference point-- no matter if the images from *Krazy Kat* are the stuff of fantasy. When the imaginary world of one's mind obscures the real world of one's surroundings, however, the possibility for understanding another place and culture becomes difficult, if not impossible.

Despite the proximity of the two countries, such characterizations are not uncommon, demonstrating just how far removed Mexico is from the United States. There are significant differences between the histories and cultures of the two countries, but it is in these less tangible barriers of the cultural imagination that prevent a fully realized cultural exchange. In this dissertation, the perennial question of what Mexico has meant to U.S. culture and what it might mean today is re-examined through a geographical framework, taking these ideas about Mexico and understanding them with the aid of human geography. Somewhere between the mythical landscapes of the imagination and the real landscapes of the continent's physical environment, there is a "symbolic landscape." The symbolic landscape is an image that solidifies over time, an impression that is held in the collective imagination. Symbolic landscapes are what geographer

D. W. Meinig describes as "the kinds of landscape images widely employed because they are assumed to convey certain meanings" (164). The image of Mexico as a "colorful," or "exotic," or "primitive" place has more to do with what Mexico means to visitors from outside. It functions on the level of the symbolic, as "a projection from an actual landscape and society" (165)-- and so Mexico remains a "distant neighbor"[1] to the United States, inexorably involved with its northern neighbor who, in turn, largely ignores its reality in favor of the fantasy.

Both Aiken and Breton were in Mexico the end of the 1930s, a time that marked the end of a two-decade-long period that would bring many travelers to Mexico for the first time.[2] Increased contact became possible in 1920, which marked the end of the Mexican Revolution's violent decade (1910-20). The following interwar period was relatively peaceful by contrast, allowing for a tentative camaraderie and mutual enthusiasm between the two countries not seen before. The informal exchange of culture through the U.S. expatriate community centered in Mexico City would slowly become complemented by programs sponsored by private interests and museums followed, eventually, by official governmental programs and initiatives. Despite the enormous possibilities, however, the central argument in this dissertation is that, despite these promising beginnings, the possibility of a rich cultural exchange between the U.S. and Mexico during the 1920s and 30s was never fully realized.

The "enchanted mesa of Krazy Kat" is not the only desert landscape found in the pages that follow. So too does the discussion visit the desert wilderness of colonial New England, which settlers saw as having been given by God to cultivate and improve-- and so they built their

[1] The phrase is borrowed from the title of Alan Riding's book, *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans* (1984).

[2] One could trace the exchange, in a much different form, to the early Spanish exploration of the contemporary Southwest. So too could this story begin with the Mexican-American War (1845-1848) and through the *Porfiriato*, the dictatorship of President Porfirio Díaz and his reign over an extended period of peace and prosperity (1876-1911). Several works mentioned below take this longer view of history. The project here focuses on the interwar period for methodological reasons that will become clear below.

villages in accordance with their theological imagination. Whether one is surrounded by pine trees of saguaro cacti, the desert is a place the imagination inhabits in whatever manner is most useful. There is a difference in the examples of Aiken and Breton, however. Both travel into an imaginary Mexico, never fully arriving in the real Mexico. While the individual imagination cannot compare to the collective imagination of hundreds of people over hundreds of years, to continue holding the symbolic landscape in one's mind while nonetheless observing the actual landscape reveals the pervasiveness of the barriers to intercultural exchange and understanding.

In Guy Davenport's lecture, "The Geography of the Imagination" (1978), he defines the imagination-- an often elusive concept-- in explicit terms. He writes: "The imagination, that is, the way we shape and use the world, indeed the way we *see* the world, has geographical boundaries like islands, continents, and countries. These boundaries can be crossed" (4).[3] As he continues, Davenport also considers disciplinary boundaries: "History and geography are inextricable disciplines. They have different shelves in the library, and different offices at the university, but they cannot get along for a minute without consulting the other" (4).[4] In his discussion, the imagination becomes not only the way in which human beings see the world around them, but also how that vision is applied in ways that use and shape the world. Davenport considers the "metamorphic" quality of the imagination that relies on a physical

[3] Compare this with the more traditional definition of "imagination" from the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "The power or capacity to form internal images or ideas of objects and situations not actually present to the senses, including remembered objects and situations, and those constructed by mentally combining or projecting images of previously experienced qualities, objects, and situations. Also (esp. in modern philosophy): the power or capacity by which the mind integrates sensory data in the process of perception."

[4] Davenport also writes, "Geography is the wife of history, as space is the wife of time" (4). In such moments, the reader hears echoes of John Dewey who, in *Democracy and Education* (1916), writes: "While history makes human implications explicit and geography natural connections, these subjects are two phases of the same living whole, since the life of men in association goes on in nature, not as an accidental setting, but as the material and medium of development" (218). The events of history always occur within the context of geography. Rather than being incidental, geography is always a contributing factor.

place-- a geography-- to find its expression.[5] The imagination is a resourceful, responsive and creative component of culture, re-adapting old ideas while borrowing some that are new, simultaneously active and reactive, inspired by and changing with the surrounding environment over time. Davenport's "geography of the imagination," then, attempts to map the history of culture, to trace the ways in which cultures metamorphose and join with others, moving through time and space.

Davenport reminds his readers that those who came to the shores of the Americas brought certain things and left others behind, "a critical choice to live with forever" (5). More than material objects, immigrants bring with them "the imagination of other countries [and] transplant it in a different geography" (5). Inspired by Davenport, this dissertation takes this idea and uses concepts from various branches of human geography to explore the cultural relationship between the U.S. and Mexico.

Patterns of Critical Approach:

The following discussion will follow these influences across disciplinary boundaries as well as geographical regions. Each chapter examines a different area of U.S. culture that provides an opportunity to expand the dominant narrative of the country's history. Much of the discussion is rooted in literature-- journalism, travel writing, fiction-- and the ways in which U.S. authors approach Mexico from its northern deserts to its Central Highlands, presenting the vision of a shared hemisphere, but one requiring more reciprocity than they or their compatriots can concede (Chapters 2 and 4). At the same time, many artists and intellectuals envisioned the U.S.

[5] To do so, Davenport pays attention to the etymological implications of the word "culture": "The Latin word for the sacredness of a place is *cultus*, the dwelling of a god, the place where a rite is valid. *Cultus* becomes our word *culture*, not in the portentous sense it now has, but in a much humbler sense. For ancient people the sacred was the vernacular ordinariness of things: the hearth, primarily; the bed, the wall around the yard. The temple was too sacred to be entered. Washing the feet of a guest was as religious an act as sharing one's meals with the gods" (4).

from abroad as the place where the New World could find inspiration. Architects from around the world saw possibilities for a Mesoamerican-influenced design for New York City skyscrapers (Chapter 1) and Mexican muralist painters found patronage-- as well as wall space-- across the U.S. in places from California to New York and New England (Chapter 3). That California and the Southwest contain expressions of a shared, hybrid culture is no real surprise. The evidence of exchange that is scattered across the country, however, is understood here as part of the larger, complex network of exchange between the U.S. and Mexico. Different cultures have influenced and borrowed from one another through history and across geography. To comprehend the larger patterns is not an easy task and the failure to do so can be seen throughout the twentieth-century.

Before considering the nature of this literary and artistic interpretation, it is important to understand the sheer scope of the cultural exchange and mutual interest between the two countries during the interwar period. The following project includes works by archaeologists, anthropologists, architects, art historians, economists, geographers, journalists, politicians, sociologists, urbanists and others-- but the list could be extended to include those from the world of agriculture, business, industry, engineering-- as well as any of the natural or medical sciences.[6] The exchange was, in short, what might be expected of any relationship between two neighboring countries at different phases of modernization in a rapidly changing world. Here, materials from outside the traditional boundaries of arts and letters are considered while maintaining focus on some of the key literary figures. Doing so recognizes that, together, a wide range of written material creates the commonly held ideas, or *topoi*, of a given destination. Susan Noakes writes that "A topos is a commonly held notion about someone or something

[6] One such example is that of Hans Zinsser, the bacteriologist, known for his work with typhus fever. His fictionalized memoir, *As I Remember Him: The Biography of R.S.* (1931), includes details of his visit to Mexico.

which is accepted as true virtually without question and carries rhetorical weight because of this special status accorded it by a particular audience. It is intelligible because it embodies an *old* idea, although it may be embedded in a text the thrust of which is to present ideas or facts which are *new*" (141). What the student discovers is that old ideas about Mexico held in U.S. culture are perpetuated into the new, modern context of the interwar period. Although many of those who visited Mexico did so with every intention of understanding Mexican culture and communicating its complexities to a U.S. audience,[7] their work often unwittingly added layers to the preexisting image of Mexico in the popular imagination. The *topoi* of Mexico that work within the U.S. imagination help to better understand the appeal of Mexico at this cultural moment. A broad survey is necessary, Noakes writes, one that "undertake[s] an extensive and *indiscriminate* bibliographical search … which mention[s] the place or people in question" and recognizes that "travel literature is seen to occupy a very broad terrain, the borders of which are not to be fixed *a priori*, but only after a thorough scouting of *all* examples of pertinent literature, not only ethnographic but belle-lettristic as well" (142, 147). Fortunately for the contemporary student, over the past forty years there has been a great deal of scholarship on U.S. writers in Mexico based on exactly these types of surveys.

The first was Cecil Robinson's *With the Ears of Strangers: The Mexican in American Literature* (1963), revised over a decade later as *Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest in American Literature* (1977).[8] Robinson explores his subject through traditional literary examples, while also delving into notebooks, journals and newspaper coverage to understand the patterns in the

[7] As art historian James Oles writes, "most visiting American artists did not set out to criticize or demean Mexican culture; on the contrary, their deep respect for it readily appears in the records they left for posterity" (1993, 49).
[8] There are other, earlier examples that do not treat Mexico exclusively, but include it as part of a larger study. One pertinent example is *America in Fiction: An Annotated List of Novels That Interpret Aspects of Life in the United States, Canada, and Mexico* (1967) by Otis W. Coan and Richard G. Lillard, first published in 1941.

various treatments of Mexico by U.S. writers. One of Robinson's major assertions is that many U.S. writers have "colored the portrait of Mexico in American letters" by using the Mexican setting to confront "the preconceptions, preoccupations, and generally the 'axes to grind'" (209) they bring with them from the U.S. Critical of their own society, they often "felt that Mexican culture can provide a salutary example in important areas of human experience" (209). This is a central focus even today as historian and art critic, Karen Cordero Reiman, writes: "To understand why Americans, and particularly American artists, were interested in Mexican art and in Mexico … is not necessarily to understand Mexican art of the time. Foreigners attracted to Mexican art have generally been drawn to the 'exotic,' to what they consider 'typically Mexican' and different from their own culture" (11). The *topoi* of Mexico play a symbolic role in U.S. culture-- one that frequently interrupts the potential for fruitful cultural exchange.

During the same period of scholarship, Drewey Wayne Gunn would broaden the scope of inquiry to include British writers, as suggested by the title of his own book, *American and British Writers in Mexico, 1556-1973* (1974) and its accompanying bibliography, *Mexico in American and British Letters* (1974). Finding common ground among the British and U.S. treatment of Mexico, he writes that portrayals of Mexico are "either a multifaceted symbol or a concrete reality [that] has stirred the imaginations of American and British writers since shortly after the Spanish Conquest" (1974a, ix). Gunn identifies the prominent responses to Mexico-- writers viewed it "as a dangerous place" or an "alien world" or "a kind of paradise" and, surprisingly, "some writers even managed to stay fairly balanced in their appraisals." Equally prevalent, however, is the image of Mexico "as a place of escape from his own culture or as at least 'another country' from which to review his past" (1974b, vi). At the end of his study, Gunn concludes: "In moving through Mexico the writer generally gained a moment of freedom in

which to explore himself and his own background. As a result, Mexico more often became a symbol, a sort of microcosm, than a real place" (1974a, 254).

Together, Robinson and Gunn would set the stage for further study on certain eras of history. The interwar period itself is the focus of *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (1992), by Helen Delpar. A major contribution to the field, Delpar's study ranges broadly and her research is perhaps the most "extensive and indiscriminate" in its interdisciplinarity.[9] Amid the descriptions of Mexico as colorful or exotic or primitive, Delpar traces the cultural exchange from the "political pilgrims" who sought the promise of a new post-revolutionary socialist government to the fixation on native Mexican and Mesoamerican cultures to the artistic and intellectual communities active among the cultural elite on both sides of the border. The interwar period is important as cultural relations "unfolded against a background of favorable cultural, political, and social conditions of the two countries" (193). Furthermore, at that time the U.S. was included in a new Pan-American vision of hemispheric integration.[10] After the destruction of Europe and subsequent disillusion with the legacy of Western European culture following World War I, this became a particularly attractive vision. This was especially true for those who are now seen as belonging among the "modernists," those writers and artists who tended to deliberately and radically depart from established custom, rebelling against traditional forms of structure, narrative, expression and subject matter. Mexico would provide a particularly rich

[9] Noakes's concepts of *topoi* in travel writing are cited by Delpar in the conclusion to her book (200-201).
[10] Pan-Americanism has gained recent academic attention. Some of the sources that influenced the thinking in this dissertation are: Claire F. Fox, *Making Art Panamerican: Cultural Policy and the Cold War* (2013); Frederick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (1992); and Ricardo D. Salvatore, "Imperial Mechanics: South America's Hemispheric Integration in the Machine Age" (2006).

environment for those who traveled there and, since then, Gunn writes, "Mexico has still had a steady, small but significant influence upon our literature … (1974b, v).[11]

Modernism between the Regional and the Cosmopolitan:

Qualifying the influence of Mexico on U.S. letters as "small but significant" points to the conventions that have dominated the criticism of U.S. literature. That Katherine Anne Porter found it necessary to write a letter defending her choice of Mexican setting and subject matter is telling. Titled "Why I Write about Mexico" (1923), she writes that she has been "accused … of a taste for the exotic, for foreign flavors" and she responds by retorting: "Maybe so, for New York is the most foreign place I know, and I like it very much" (356). Porter defends herself against those critics who would preclude her Mexican stories from serious consideration, but also emphasizes the relativity of their own geographical perspective. Doing so, Porter confronts divisions between regionalism and cosmopolitanism.[12]

Typically associated with the rural and rustic, the regional is usually defined as the distinct culture of a remote area of a country, which remains backward and chauvinistic in its isolation from "cosmopolitan" cultural centers. Associated with the city and sophistication, the cosmopolitan is usually defined as transcending specific localities and belonging to the world, characterized by its universal quality. Defined as such, "regionalism" and "cosmopolitanism" are irreconcilable, even antagonistic. Traditionally, "modernist" works are associated with cosmopolitanism and the "international" culture of expatriate artists and intellectuals active in

[11] This passage continues by making the case for including the colonial era and nineteenth-century alongside the more commonly known works of the early twentieth-century. Gunn writes that the trends of Mexican influence in U.S. and British literature have been consistently present "since the country was opened to visitors as a result of the War for Independence, 1810-1821. Even during the three hundred years in which Spain had sealed off her empire, writers often darted in for a look" (1974b, v). The bibliography is referred to as "A Checklist"-- and, across the field of recent scholarship, it is certain that most studies have used it as just that. This dissertation is no exception.

[12] Robinson's book is concerned with this same issue, which he considers in his final chapter: "The Southwest as a Literary Region: Local Color or Belles Lettres?"

major European cities. Correlating "modernism" in such geographic terms manufactures a problematic foundation for understanding historical tensions and creative endeavors of these decades, especially given the role regionalism plays in mitigating the totalizing tendencies of modernity. Such a regionalist vision was held by many like-minded architects, planners and geographers active during the interwar period. In contrast to its pejorative sense, thinkers such as Howard W. Odum and Harry Estill Moored emphasized the integrative, "unifying function" of regions (39), vital to the functioning of the country as a coherent whole.[13] No culture, however isolated it may seem, is ever divorced from the more general interaction of cultures. The shared processes of exchange result in widespread diversity, the local expressions of which are "regional" and frequently cross geopolitical boundaries. Hybridity becomes intrinsic to all culture and the historical narratives created make these composites legible.

The intellectual history of regionalism is one that confronts the problems of increased cultural standardization resulting from industrialization and mechanization in the modern era.[14] Ideas from cultural critics of that time have found new expression through current thinkers.[15] "Critical regionalism" is a term coined by architectural theorists Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre.[16] They use the phrase to emphasize the ongoing struggle between the modern and the anti-modern, relating contemporary anxieties over competing forces of innovation to those found

[13] Odum and Moore's discussion is extensive and can be found in *American Regionalism: A Cultural-Historical Approach to National Integration* (1938), a comprehensive, interdisciplinary study of regionalism.
[14] One of the most useful in understanding the intellectual foundations of regionalism in the U.S. is Robert L. Dorman's *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945* (1993).
[15] Foremost among these are members of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA), whose most important writings are collected by Carl Sussman in *Planning the Fourth Migration: The Neglected Vision of the Regional Planning Association of America* (1976). The most influential member of the RPAA was Lewis Mumford, whose prolific works also include cultural criticism on literature, art and architecture.
[16] First used in their essay "The Grid and the Pathway" (1981), they have continued to use it as a central tenet in subsequent works. Another architectural theorist, Kenneth Frampton, expounded upon the term in the collection, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983), edited by Hal Foster. Fredric Jameson was the first to apply "critical regionalism" literary study, which can be found in a series of lectures collected under the title *The Seeds of Time* (1994).

in the modernist period. For them, regionalism can become a contemporary corrective to the "global 'flattening,'" of diverse cultures and ecologies seen today (Lefaivre and Tzonis 2012, 2).

A closely related term, "regional modernism" is based on the premise that, properly understood, regionalist subject matter need not preclude modernist experimentation.[17] An established term in the fields of architecture and urbanism, it brings together the simultaneously regional and cosmopolitan perspectives on display in the modernist negotiation of the cultural tensions described above. While Mexico's influence on U.S. culture has typically been discussed in the context of its distinctively "colorful," "exotic," and "primitive" regional setting, "regional modernism," emphasizes connections among local cultures across national or continental scales.

Rearranging the study of North American literature in terms consistent with these geographic sensibilities, a recent book by Rachel Adams, *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America* (2009), explores the overlapping histories and cultures of Canada, Mexico and the U.S. By doing so, Adams rethinks the way scholars in the humanities have organized knowledge and prioritized methodologies. Adams's study is committed to analyzing cultural exchanges across international, national, regional and local boundaries, aware of the spatial perspective provided by the field of geography. As such, her book marks a particularly interesting extension of earlier work and it is "inspired by, and seeks to contribute to, what has been called the 'transnational turn' in American literary and cultural studies'" (18).[18] It is an important critical context to consider and this dissertation partakes in it as well.

[17] The term is widely applicable, as explored in the recent publication edited by Vincent B. Canizaro, *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition* (2007). For its growing attraction to literary critics, see the special issue of *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies*, 55.1 (2009) on "Regional Modernism."

[18] While Adams demonstrates a commitment to pushing the discipline forward, she maintains a balanced perspective and recognizes the contributions of her forbears, writing: "there is a tendency to overstate the newness of these approaches and a corresponding tendency to caricature the allegedly nationalist horizons of previous scholarship in

The "Hemispheric Turn" in U.S. Literary Study:

The recent generation of scholarship has pushed toward the "transnational" study of U.S. culture and a strong component of this has focused more specifically on its hemispheric qualities. Not all that long ago, the Presidential Address to the American Studies Association delivered by Shelly Fisher Fishkin was titled: "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies" (2004). In it, Fishkin repeatedly predicts the areas of study that will be opened "As the transnational becomes more central to American Studies" (22). Fishkin sees this as an opportunity to understand the U.S. as inherently being at "a transnational crossroads of cultures" (43). Tracing the ways in which different ideas merge and subsequently split suggests the ways in which U.S. literature can be read as part of a complex network of cultural interaction.

Fishkin's call for a "hemispheric turn" was not altogether new. Ten years prior, Carolyn Porter discussed the limits and boundaries of the discipline in her article, "What We Know That We Don't Know: Remapping American Literary Studies" (1994). One of Porter's central concerns is with the "hyphenated American literatures" (471) and the ways in which the study of literature has fragmented into many different academic departments. Porter advocates those working "to dissolve the disciplinary and departmental lines," seeking scholarship that "offers the promise of approaching America's literatures as the very opposite of parochial or insulated or exceptional, without thereby assuming a global or imperialist perspective" (521). Porter implies that U.S. literature can be read in multiple contexts at the same time.

Now decades old, the discussion is only beginning to find a fully coherent and genuinely interdisciplinary approach. In her article, "Literature, Geography, and the Space of

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the field … the fact remains that American studies has never been as invested in American exceptionalism, or as nationalistic, as some recent assessments of the field would suggest" (19).

Interdisciplinarity" (2011), Laura Dassow Walls describes the importance of considering literary study across disciplines. Walls writes that "the boundary separating the disciplines of literature and geography is itself a geographical question, a problem of form which is simultaneously a problem of history" (871). In calling for literary studies to incorporate a geographic perspective, then, Walls cautions against thinking that larger scales, such as the international, are dominant over the smaller scales, such as the local and regional. Walls calls this idea "scale-jumping," as it requires an awareness that these different "scales" of human association exist simultaneously and only through one another. It is geography that serves to illustrate the ways in which these scales constantly intersect.

The Perspective of Geography:

To fully embrace the sort of interdisciplinary "scale-jumping" advocated by Walls, geography cannot be treated as an abstract concept-- it must be recognized as a discipline with its own theories and methodologies from which the student can gain perspective. Although frequently ignored by literary study, geography belongs alongside the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology, all three of which "share a keen interest in the material culture of human civilizations," as one textbook puts it (Oakes and Price 5). The growing attention paid to material culture in the humanities can comfortably include geography. In a phrase, geography "attempts to understand and map … the relationship between the conditions of [the] physical world and human societies" (5). Within the U.S., the early twentieth-century marked a shift in the discipline from a deterministic viewpoint to one of possibilism, an attitude that sees a given culture as defined by the possibilities that it finds and makes in an environment rather than seeing that culture's characteristics as having been somehow predetermined by the environment itself.

This shift is clearly articulated in the work of Carl O. Sauer. In one of his earlier essays,[19] "The Morphology of Landscape" (1925), Sauer makes one of his more influential contributions to the discipline. Here, he refocuses the geographer's attention on human beings. He writes: "Geography is distinctly anthropocentric, in the sense of value or use of the earth to man. We are interested in that part of the areal scene that concerns us as human beings because we are part of it, live with it, are limited by it, and modify it" (325). In this way, geography is humanistic-- and Sauer moves away from a deterministic conception of the environment. The conclusion of his essay provides a succinct overview of his reasoning; environmental determinism, he writes, is based on a "narrowly rationalistic thesis." He continues:

> [It] conceives of environment as process, and some of the qualities and activities of man as products. The agency is physical nature; man responds or adapts himself. Simple as the thesis sounds, it incurs continually grave difficulties in the matching of specific response to specific stimulus or inhibition. … What man does in an area because of tabu or totemism or because of his own will involves use of environment rather than the active agency of the environment. (349)

Through his focus on human activity, Sauer "came to view the idea of environmental determinants of human behavior as unfounded scientifically and even questionable morally" (Oakes and Price 97). Central to "The Morphology of Landscape" is the concept of the "cultural landscape."[20] This phrase captures the idea that, before understanding a physical landscape, the geographer must understand the culture that inhabits it. He writes that such an approach offers

[19] Sauer's major period of work and influence was from the 1920s through the 1950s, but he was active through the 1960s and into the early 1970s until his death in 1975.

[20] Sauer uses this idea to demonstrate that the relationship between human beings and the environment, which requires a methodical approach to gather data. Sauer illustrates these processes through two charts. The first, which shows how the natural landscape comes into being, shows how different environmental factors (such as geology, climate and vegetation) over time, create different forms (climate, vegetation, sea and coast and land-- including surface, soil, drainage, mineral resources) which, in turn, create the natural landscape as human beings know it upon their first encounter with it (337). The second chart, which shows how the cultural landscape comes into being, shows how the factor of culture, over time and through the use of the medium that is the natural landscape, takes different forms (of population density and mobility; housing plans and structures; as well as production and communication) which combine to create the discernible cultural landscape (343). Here, the reader notices connections between Sauer and his contemporary, John Dewey (footnoted above), as well as the abstract "mapping" proposed by Davenport.

"a strictly geographic way of thinking of culture; namely, as the impress of the works of man upon the area" (Sauer 326). The "area" is the physical site of a culture-- it is "the sum of all natural resources that man has at his disposal" (325-326).

By extension, the idea of the "cultural landscape" incorporates the ways in which a given culture understands, describes and characterizes the landscape it inhabits as well as those which surround its perimeters. In the modernizing world of the early twentieth-century, competing views of the same landscape would inevitably encounter one another. The interpretation of a given landscape enters the realm of abstract myth and symbol (incorporating "tabu" and "totemism"). Such uses are as significant for a culture as are the ways in which it makes physical interventions that change the landscape.

By considering these disciplinary shifts in geography, a broader context is established through which to explore the art and literature of the interwar period. Modernist writers and intellectuals employed geography to orient their own departure from conventional literary paradigms through an engagement with scientific discourse. In one recent study, *The Geopoetics of Modernism* (2015), Rebecca Walsh explores the ways "in which literary modernism and geographical knowledge co-evolved" (3) during the period at hand in this dissertation. Focusing her analysis on modernist poetry,[21] Walsh examines the pervasiveness of environmental determinism,[22] emphasizing how the shift from determinism to possibilism reflect the difficulty in breaking away from causal understandings of environment that suggest "landscape first,

[21] Walsh's central figures are Walt Whitman, Helene Johnson, Langston Hughes, Gertrude Stein and H.D.
[22] Walsh demonstrates this by looking to *National Geographic Magazine*, which continued in this vein during the interwar period, as its writers and editors perpetuated "some of environmental determinism's fundamental assumptions when they approach various global cultures first and foremost through their environmental circumstances and hence their environmental influences" (15). She also traces this through other periodicals and popular media, as well as textbooks through mid-century.

culture second" (15).[23] One begins to see how this change would have held great appeal to those modernist writers who placed human agency and subjectivity at the foundation of their work.

Geography, Context and the Imagination:

It is William Carlos Williams who brings together these many strands of thought. The modernist imperative to break with tradition, to see the world differently in a new and different era is captured by Williams in a collection of essays on the history of North America titled *In the American Grain* (1925). Writing about English colonists in New England alongside French and Spanish colonists in other parts of the continent, he shifts his perspective away from the dominant Anglo-European narrative of the continent's history, seeking "to re-name the things seen, now, lost in chaos of borrowed titles, many of them inappropriate, under which the true character lies hid" (5). The historical figures of Williams's essays are portrayed as men of action, willing to encounter the material reality of the New World. This has many facets for Williams, including the idea that U.S. history has celebrated the wrong figures-- and to its detriment. There are many reasons the Puritans came to be hated by modernist thinkers but, for Williams, it is because they represent, as Alan Holder writes: "a blindness to the American earth, the wilderness, the Indian, a blindness bred out of fear of the new and the vast" (505).

When Williams writes in his essay, "The Voyage of the Mayflower," that the individual Puritan "shrank from an imagination that would sever him from the rest" (80), his criticism is of their insular community that excludes any contact with the New World, from which they isolated themselves towards religious purposes imported from Europe rather than embracing the possibilities of their new continent. Their errand in the wilderness was not of the New World, as

[23] The final chapter of her analysis gestures towards the influence of Sauer and possibilism on twentieth-century writers, leaving it as a question for future research, doing so through a short discussion of William Carlos Williams's *Paterson* (1946-1958). Although that poem is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the importance of Williams's poetics are discussed below.

the wilderness simply signified a theological abstraction rather than its own material reality and the possibilities therein.[24] For Williams, understanding the Puritans as democratic forbears does too much to temper their actual character and "Their religious zeal, mistaken for a thrust up toward the sun, was a stroke in, in, in-- not toward germination but the confinements of a tomb" (80). By embracing men such as these for the basis of a national myth, contemporary culture is now impoverished. The result is that contemporary U.S. culture has squandered the opportunity to create something new through a real encounter with things and people.

This dissertation uses Williams's essays as a hermeneutic for understanding the role of Mexico in the cultural imagination of the U.S., as they also demonstrate his conception of the imagination and how it works. Williams describes the imagination in *Spring and All* (1923) as a dynamic force that grows out of the destruction of the past. He writes:

> The imagination, intoxicated by prohibitions, rises to drunken heights to destroy the world. Let it rage. Let it kill. … Then at last will the world be made anew. Houses will crumble to ruin, cities disappear giving place to mounds of soil blown thither by the winds, small bushes and grass give way to trees which grow old and are succeeded by other trees for countless generations. (90-91)

In Williams's essay, "The Destruction of Tenochtitlan,"[25] from *In the American Grain,* he takes a much different attitude toward Hernán Cortez than he does toward the Puritans. Early in the essay, Williams writes of the Spanish Conquest:

> They moved out across the seas stirred by instincts, ancient beyond thought as the depths they were crossing, which they obeyed under the names of King or Christ or whatever it might be, while they watched the recreative New unfolding itself miraculously before them, before *them*, deafened and blinded. … And bitter as the thought may be that Tenochtitlan, the barbaric city, its people, its genius wherever found should have been crushed out because of the awkward names men give their emptiness, yet is was no man's fault. It was the force of the pack whom the

[24] This is well-documented in various studies of the settlement patterns of the New England colonies which will be revisited later in this dissertation (Chapter 4).
[25] Tenochtitlán was the capital of the Mexica (or Aztec) empire in what is now Mexico City.

> dead drive. Cortez was neither malicious, stupid, nor blind, but a conqueror like other conquerors. (44)

Although Williams writes of the Conquest, Stephen M. Park notes, he "does not invoke Tenochtitlan for the purpose of reviving it, of forcing it into the twentieth century. All that is 'beside the point.' Tenochtitlan cannot be separated from its moment of destruction, and it is this vision of indigenous America that Williams wants to keep 'alive in thought'" (Park 26). That the Spanish failed in certain ways upon meeting the native Mesoamericans is the "inevitable result of European civilization encountering a culture it could not comprehend" (41). This is why Williams remarks that "it was no man's fault" and that Cortez was "a conqueror like other conquerors." The cultures did encounter one another and much of the essay recovers the sense of wonder and amazement with which Cortez saw "a city as large as Cordova or Seville" (Williams 1971, 47) in all its majesty and with all its riches. The destruction was an inevitability and, however much one may yearn to recover the past, all that can be done is to come to a new understanding of it and bring this knowledge forward into the present age.[26]

While the Puritans succeeded in their endeavor, they did so by applying abstract theological ideas to the reality they encountered and established a legacy that could never be fully part of the New World. The Spanish, on the other hand, fully embraced the material realities of the cultures they encountered in the New World, while destroying them in the

[26] Williams's poem, "A Sort of a Song" (1944), frequently serves as a hermeneutic to his poetry, but is also relevant to the impressionistic, prose essays of *In the American Grain*. It is in this poem that a reader encounters his famous and concise dictum, "no ideas but in things." Its second stanza reads:

> --through metaphor to reconcile
> the people and the stones.
> Compose. (No ideas
> but in things) Invent!
> Saxifrage is my flower that splits
> the rocks. (7-12)

It is poetry-- and written language more generally-- that transcends, but first it must find inspiration and it does so in the material world of things. Composition becomes invention if it presents those known things in a new way, it is through ideas that perception of the material world changes. Just as "the rocks" will someday "split" to allow for new growth and evolution, today's civilization will someday crumble as history advances.

process. There are failures in both accounts, but of different sorts-- what is important is that "Williams appears to be trying to make his fellow Americans perceive that failure is as much a part of existence as success, trying to rid them of the innocence that proclaims otherwise" (Holder 503).

It is in these moments that the reader must recognize possibility; to see the crumbling ruins, but also to help cultivate the small bushes and grass into the trees that will propagate "for countless generations." Williams would like to see early twentieth-century U.S. culture adopt this "atemporal way of thinking that operates by juxtaposing past and present and creating something new from the undeniable and irreversible fact of the past's destruction" (Park 26). A new conception of culture is necessary. By accounting for history as such, Williams points toward the imperative created by the chaos of modernity. Modern society must learn from the past but also push forward, finding a better situation. The spirit necessary for the New World to usher in the modern age is found by employing the imagination which will, in turn, allow for the rewriting of history from a continental perspective.[27]

This dissertation documents moments of possibility in the cultural exchange between the U.S. and Mexico that were never fully realized-- moments of failure that provide examples of what Williams thought might be overcome during his era. The cross-cultural inventions borne from the imagination's full engagement with reality-- seeing possibilities in the New World environment, using it as a setting in which to make the world anew in a new age.

Chapter 1 explores those architects who looked beyond the "exotic" and "primitive" pyramids and ruins found in Mexico's Teotihuacán or Chichén Itzá, to envision an urban future

[27] In *A Homemade World*, Hugh Kenner writes of Williams's concept of the imagination that "It is the place where mental clarities occur, for you no more experience clarities in your head than you experience vision in your eye. Where is the seen world? it is behind the eye, in a space you have learned to create. And where, likewise, is the clarified world (where 'so much depends')? Ah, in the Imagination" (60).

for the entire American continent. Practitioner-theorists such as Francisco Mujica and Alfred C. Bossom would see solutions to the new "skyscraper cities" that were being built in the U.S. in these ancient pyramids; they "found" the ancient Maya and Aztec civilizations as useful to the future construction of the New World as the classical civilizations of the ancient Mediterranean were to the past construction of the Old World. Although most of their ideas remain theoretical, never being built, they illustrate the ways in which the modern-day pyramids of New York City, Chicago and elsewhere might find an organic, native source for design inspiration. Not unlike the "critical regionalism" advocated by today's architects, the debate over architectural style and "modern" U.S. culture, the discussion reveals the close alignment between regionalism and modernism-- but the Mesoamerican-influenced designs would lose their appeal only to become overshadowed by the very different type of "international style" seen in the architecture of high modernism.

In Chapter 2, the symbolic landscape is one of villages and their handicraft economies-- places where "authentic" expressions of culture can still be found. Many supposed that the regional villages of Mexico could provide an antidote to the increased mechanization seen throughout the Middle West of the U.S. This search for the ideal in Mexico would begin when sympathetic journalists such as Jack Reed, Carleton Beals and Sophie Treadwell came to document the Mexican Revolution's socialist government and land-reform, seeking to find the promise of the new society. Travel writing, popular history and short fiction would come to seek similar idealized visions made tangible through sociological studies and reportage. Through this constellation of genres, Mexico's symbolic role in the U.S. imagination would be solidified and travelers would be guided to those places where they could confirm their preexisting notions about Mexico. Writers such as Katherine Anne Porter were dismayed. Having once acted as

genuine appreciators of Mexican culture, much of their work would be coopted by unreflective tourists. As they watched the socialist promise fade from view amid the industrialization and political maneuvering of the post-revolutionary period, Porter and others would become ambivalent toward Mexico and the resulting disillusionment evident in essays and short stories reflects that they, too, could see the promise of cultural exchange slipping away.

Chapter 3 stretches from the Central Highlands of Mexico back through New York City and further beyond, into rural New Hampshire, where José Clemente Orozco would paint *The Epic of American Civilization* (1932-1934) on the walls of the new Baker Library (1928). Here, the project takes the opportunity to explore how a Mexican artist incorporated the U.S. into his own work. Together, the architecture, the campus setting and the New England location all form a complex network of symbols that informs Orozco's mural cycle. In it, Orozco uses ancient and modern Mexican history to critique international cultural trends. The chapter argues that the spatial arrangement of his murals offers a vision that condemns the complicit role of formalized education in perpetuating dubious ideologies. His mural panels are arranged to engage the subjectivity of individual students while also invoking important symbolic landscapes of both Mexico and the U.S., forcing the viewer to reckon with the idea that Mexico-- and Latin America more generally-- is part of the international community and any role that the Americas will play in the modern world must necessarily include the entire hemisphere.

Finally, Chapter 4 again returns to Mexico, leaving the New England landscape behind, traveling back into Central Mexico alongside Conrad Aiken in his short novel, *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* (1939). A fictionalized account of his own 1937 journey, Aiken's narrative reveals that the further he travels from his home in Boston, the narrower his perspective becomes. For most, such a journey would reveal a continental cross-section, visibly

demonstrating the complex ways in which the many regions seen along the route are connected despite the vast distance traveled. Nevertheless, the stiff, intellectual characters of the book are incapable of translating what R. P. Blackmur calls their "local knowledge" beyond their regional environment, betraying that their cosmopolitanism is intimately tied to their own New England landscape. Aiken's characters are at odds with themselves, but Malcolm Lowry (Aiken's friend who lived in Mexico) provides a counterexample in *Under the Volcano* (1947). Lowry offers an international perspective from within a remote region of Central Mexico. In Aiken's book, the reader sees the possibility of cultural exchange thwarted by an inability to understand the continent he observes from the train car on his journey. More than an argument for "multiculturalism," this chapter is intended to illustrate the richness that can be revealed in literary texts through international, geographic "scale-jumping."

Although primarily focused on two extreme points of North America-- the Central Highlands of Mexico and the Northeast United States-- the following discussion moves back-and-forth between the two countries, encouraging readers to draw further connections among the many regions (and across the many borders) found between. In Davenport's essay, he remarks that the amount of information contained by a given work of art might well go overlooked by an audience "blinded by familiarity and parody" (12). The same can be said for how Mexico looks from within the U.S. One feels that it is a familiar country, but so too is it a "distant neighbor." The following chapters, in exploring the connections and the possibilities that were never fully achieved, also demonstrates that the relationship between the two countries is a dynamic one, never static, but never finding a fully comfortable vision of a shared future. Whatever the current political rhetoric may be in 2017, Mexico and the U.S. are inexorably involved with one

another and it is the hope that this dissertation might contribute to the ways in which that might be better understood.

CHAPTER 1

THE TALL BUILDING HEMISPHERICALLY CONSIDERED

Teotihuacán, the ancient Mesoamerican city whose ruins are some fifty kilometers from the center of modern day Mexico City, is most famous for its Pyramid of the Sun and Pyramid of the Moon. These two structures dominate the landscape even today, surrounded by numerous other stepped pyramids that line the Avenue of the Dead, the central artery of the city's ceremonial center. The names are almost certainly not those originally used but are instead those imagined by later civilizations and contemporary archaeologists. Even the ancient culture that designed the city and built these structures remains unknown. The name itself, "Teotihuacán," was given to it long after the city fell and means "Place of the Gods." Anita Brenner, the writer, anthropologist and early folklorist of Mexico active in the decades after the Mexican Revolution, translates it as such (47) in her important work, *Idols Behind Altars: Modern Mexican Art and Its Cultural Roots* (1929). Part of a larger fascination with Mexican culture that will be explored throughout this dissertation, Brenner's book was written for a popular audience, to introduce her readers to the rich culture of contemporary Mexico through the ancient roots of the North American continent. The attraction to Mexican culture was wide-ranging throughout the arts and society and, because of the pyramids at Teotihucán and elsewhere, became integral to how a small set of architects came to approach a modern problem: the skyscraper.

The spirit behind these ideas is captured in a short story by Stephen Vincent Benét, originally titled, curiously enough, "The Place of the Gods" (1937). Later republished as "By the Waters of Babylon" (1943), it is a post-apocalyptic story in which a young man from a nomadic tribe goes on a vision quest in a forbidden region made desolate by a war long ago. During this

journey, he arrives at “the Place of the Gods” which the reader slowly comes to recognize as the ruins of New York City. He recognizes the buildings as being “too big to be houses” (11), describing the “god roads” as leading to “the ruins of the high towers of the gods” in what is now “a great Dead Place” (59). These buildings are the ruins of Manhattan skyscrapers and as the young man explores the city and one of these buildings, he looks out from a window on a high floor, having a vision of the war and that destroyed the city and the moment when “the towers began to fall” (60). It is at this moment that the narrator realizes that the “gods” were men. From this, he takes his imperative, writing that own tribe will someday regain the knowledge that was lost in the war-- and he closes his story: “They were men who were here before us. We must build again” (60).

The title allows the reader to speculate that Benét may have found inspiration in ancient Mesoamerica, as the *Saturday Evening Post* illustrated the story’s final page with a photograph of “The East ‘Face’ of New York’s Skyline as Seen From Brooklyn,” at the center of which is a skyscraper designed as a modern stepped pyramid (see figs. 01 and 02).[28]

Fig. 01. Leo. J. Heffernan, “The East ‘Face’ of New York’s Skyline as Seen From Brooklyn.”

[28] The building is 120 Wall Street (1930), designed by Ely Jacques Kahn.

The story also fully grasps the general attitudes toward tall buildings at that time: exemplifying the possibilities afforded by modern technology, or emblematic of the inevitable destruction of a mechanized, industrial society that "ate knowledge too fast" (60).

Fig. 02. Henry Clarence Pitz, "It is a Great Dead Place-- …"

This chapter will focus on architects who belong to the former group, those who not only believed in the prospect of tall buildings, but who also found inspiration in the pyramids of Mesoamerica. Although the lessons they learned from Mesoamerican architecture were often retroactively applied to preexisting building forms, these architects demonstrate the importance of Mexico in imagining a New World freed from the strictures placed on it by the Old World and its architectural traditions that, along with the rest of European culture after World War I, was frequently seen as a cultural dead-end for the American continent.

Among the many movements and revivals in U.S. architectural history, the so-called "Mayan Revival" is distinct in finding its origins wholly within North and South America. This

chapter will focus on Alfred C. Bossom and Francisco Mujica, two of the more compelling figures who sought architectural inspiration for the U.S. skyscraper in ancient Mesoamerica. Neither was from the U.S., but both sought a coherent hemispheric architecture inspired by the promise they could see in the New World metropolis. Mujica, a Chilean architect and professor, was inspired by years of archaeological research that coalesced in 1927 when he wrote of the connections between the modern tall building and the Mesoamerican pyramids of modern-day Mexico and Central America. Although Mujica's *History of the Skyscraper* was the first history of the building type ever written, he is generally relegated to the footnotes of contemporary scholarship. His book includes one-hundred-thirty-four plates that illustrate both the interiors and exteriors of the skyscraper throughout the U.S. Of equal interest, however, is that the first eighteen of these deal exclusively with the architecture of the ancient Mesoamericans, which precede his first chapter, titled "Origin of the Skyscraper." The final sequence of four plates applies these earlier design studies to the lessons learned from modern architecture in the pages and plates between. Whatever may have led to the actual development of the skyscraper in the late-nineteenth-century, Mujica sees these pyramids as a source to be excavated for inspiration and application after the fact-- a way of making the skyscraper true to the continent which gave rise to it through other means.

While Mujica has been largely forgotten, Bossom, an English architect, practiced extensively in the U.S. and is still remembered for the many low-rise bank buildings he designed, as well as for his own tall buildings designed for corporations in Buffalo, Dallas and Houston. An active practitioner, Bossom's fascination with ancient and colonial Mexican architecture can be found in *An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico* (1924) and his ideas, sketches and proposals along these lines are scattered throughout trade publications of the 1920s, which he

finally synthesized in *Building to the Skies: The Romance of the Skyscraper* (1934), a work still cited and given more credence than Mujica's.

Bossom and Mujica serve as two examples of how the incorporation of Mesoamerican architecture into a larger "American"[29] aesthetic found unique expression in the debate over the place of skyscrapers in the growing urban centers of the U.S. in the period between the two World Wars. The strong hemispheric component to modernism in the Americas and such ideas for skyscraper design during this era can serve as a model for understanding how creative influences travelled between the U.S. and Mexico, contributing to complexities of culture that are sometimes overlooked. The thinkers discussed in this chapter offer insight into larger cultural processes that integrate the "regional" with the "international" and the "traditional" with the "modern," balancing well-known transatlantic aspects of modernism with equally important hemispheric components.

The skyscraper provides one of the most direct ways to rewrite the history of the Americas in architectural terms. Whatever the source of a skyscraper's funding, it is public architecture, inextricable from the civic environment. This is why, despite the proliferation of Mesoamerican design ideas in domestic architecture, this chapter avoids a discussion of domestic architecture, such as those houses designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in the Los Angeles area.[30] Such examples, while interesting, are of limited influence due to their distance, socioeconomically and geographically (i.e. both figuratively and literally) from the lives of everyday people. Furthermore, they are not part of the same type of urban fabric as the

[29] One of the second title page, Mujica includes the following message: "VERY IMPORTANT: *In the present text the terms 'America' and 'American' do not refer to the United States of America, but to the entire American Continent*" (4).
[30] These include: Ennis House (1924), Hollyhock House (1921), Milliard House (1923) and Storer House (1923), among others.

skyscrapers of Chicago or New York City-- the morphology of Los Angeles is simply too different in its history and development. However far removed the owners of a skyscraper might be from the daily life of the city, the building itself is fully a part of its surroundings. Whatever function skyscrapers may serve as emblems of corporate capitalism, as much advertisements as they are functional structures, they cannot avoid being part of the larger built environment. Whether collectively symbolic of a city's identity from afar, as in a skyline, or symbolic as individual structures visible from the street level, skyscrapers contribute to a sense of order-- or disorder, depending upon one's sensibilities-- within the fabric of the city.

The history of the skyscraper in the U.S. does not need retelling, but the skyscraper was an integral part of the vision of the modern metropolis in the New World. In the well-documented early history of this building type, however, its development is rarely considered outside of its larger social context of U.S. capitalism, industrialization, mechanization and standardization. Whatever specific aspects of these trends a given study might choose to emphasize, the skyscraper is now considered one of the primary architectural expressions of modernity and-- for good or ill-- a major cultural symbol of these developments. The historic and cultural beginnings of the skyscraper, together with its geographic origins, make it the one unique contribution the U.S. has made to architecture. In this sense, the skyscraper is one point of departure from traditional European influences in the quest for a national, New World architecture in the U.S. The use of monumental Mesoamerican architecture as a model for the contemporary skyscraper city was not widespread among architects of the time and met with mixed reviews. Both Mujica and Bossom, however, conceived of contemporary trends in New York and ancient principles in Mexico as assimilable into a new, hemispheric aesthetic and wrote impassioned pleas on its behalf. This design strategy can be understood as participating in

the larger debate over the search for a "usable past" which, for some, necessitated reconceiving U.S. history in a continental scope.

The influence of Mesoamerican design on modern architecture displays how the cultural moment allowed for Mujica and Bossom to integrate these sources of inspiration into their skyscraper designs. Not far removed from their work was the so-called "Mayan Revival" in U.S. architecture, reflective of the growing enthusiasm toward Mexico then taking hold in many areas of U.S. culture. One of the more eccentric trends among the revivalist or traditionalist architectural movements of the period, the Mayan Revival is generally categorized stylistically as a manifestation of Art Deco which, as a term, can imply any number of stylistic approaches to architectural design. In their study of the larger movement, *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York* (1975), Cervin Robinson and Rosemarie Haag Bletter write that Art Deco "has been named variously … Modernistic, Jazz Modern, Zigzag Modern, Style 1925, the Twenties Style, the Thirties Style, Streamlined Modern, etc." (41).[31] Whichever moniker one prefers, Art Deco is an eclectic style and their more important point is that it "should not be defined in terms of its newer aspects … but must be seen together with its conservative elements" (40); to borrow the words of historian Richard Striner,[32] the defining quality of Art Deco is the "impulse to synthesize, to bridge antagonistic realms-- past and future, conservative and radical" (24). Art Deco was fully a part of its moment, striving, in its various aesthetic iterations, to be an expression of its times by borrowing from diverse contemporary movements as well as past traditions.

Although no absolute definition of Art Deco is possible, it provides a backdrop against which to examine modern architecture. A given set of influences on the design of one building

[31] Revisiting the topic a decade later, Norbert Messler describes Art Deco in terms of larger artistic movements and writes that it created an "alliance of eclecticism, Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, classicism, and streamlined modernism" (8).
[32] Striner is also a former president of the Art Deco Society of Washington, D.C.

gains complexity as each influence in such a grouping comes, in turn, with its own set of influences. Tracing these patterns back across places, times and cultures is a daunting task. The best that one can hope for is to find and explore certain observable elements within this larger composite. As Norbert Messler writes: "No Art Deco manifestos were ever published" and Art Deco was never "a movement with a formal program" (30). Whether consciously or unconsciously inspired, those architects now affiliated with Art Deco never formed a coherent school of thought. The application of Mesoamerican architecture to skyscraper design in New York City identifies one chain of influence on Art Deco architecture, as well as a deeper understanding of the inner workings and practices of modernism.

In architecture, aesthetic concerns are always balanced with structural possibilities as dictated by available technology in terms of societal needs. In *The ABC of Architecture* (1998),[33] a short primer for the layperson, James F. O'Gorman describes how the function, structure and beauty of a building correspond,[34] respectively, with the three actors in the contemporary building process: the client, the builder and the architect (11). As such, the architectural endeavor "stands at the intersection of societal need, available technology, and artistic theory" (16) and this, in turn, within a larger process stands within its specific historical context. Just as societal needs and available technologies will shift over time, so too will aesthetic preferences change from one generation to the next. For this reason, it is the balance among these three aspects "moving through time [that] creates architecture and its history" (14). While this is all

[33] O'Gorman is cited in the spirit of some of the thinkers mentioned later in this chapter, such as Claude Bragdon and G. H. Edgell. Architects across generations have carefully explained their field to laypeople in compelling and readable ways.

[34] These three basic aspects of architecture are traced back to Vitruvius and his *De architectura* or, *The Ten Books on Architecture* (c. 30-15 BC). The terms Vitruvius uses are: *utilitas, firmitas, venustas*.

rather straightforward, these basic realities are at the root of architectural analysis regardless of a building's aesthetic categorization.

This provides a methodical framework with which to explore the skyscrapers at hand. While the second facet, structure, will be of less immediate concern to this chapter,[35] much of the history of the skyscraper has been focused on the technological processes that allowed for these buildings to grow taller and taller quite rapidly in the first decades of the twentieth-century. Elsewhere, the history of the skyscraper is generally traced in terms of developments in its form.[36] The two are closely connected-- as it was often technology that allowed architects to explore new forms-- but of equal importance is how the increase in building height created new social problems which, in turn, mandated the reevaluation of modern architectural aesthetics.

The urban scenario in the early part of the twentieth-century presented a unique set of social circumstances to which architecture responded and the debate over the tall building and its possibilities begins a few decades before those at hand. Around the turn-of-the-century new, taller buildings became the subject of much deliberation by architects, urban planners and social reformers. Architects generally agreed that one of the most pressing considerations was how to strike a balance between the building and the city. Several years before his more famous essay, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered" (1896), Louis H. Sullivan, one of the recognized pioneers of early skyscraper design, wrote a short and now-obscure essay entitled "The High-Building Question" (1891). In it, he identifies the importance of maintaining "the equities both of the individual and of the public" (qtd. in D. Hoffman 186). By individual interests, Sullivan specifically refers to the owners of the building who seek profit by

[35] Histories that focus on the early phases of the skyscraper as a building type tend to emphasize these aspects. One useful example is *Rise of the New York Skyscraper: 1865-1913* (1996), by Sarah Bradford Landau and Carl W. Condit.
[36] See Rosemarie Haag Bletter's article, "The Invention of the Skyscraper: Notes on its Diverse Histories" (1987).

maximizing rentable space; by public interests, Sullivan refers to the provision of light and air to the rest of the urban population-- both to the crowds on the streets as well as other building owners. To maintain an amenable urban environment, the form of the buildings can be modified while still providing sufficient rentable space. Sullivan envisions a gradual reduction in the width of stories as mitigating the negative effects of height. Donald Hoffman, the architectural historian responsible for republishing this once-lost essay, writes that Sullivan proposes "a vision of a setback skyscraper city, boldly ahead of its time" that "stands as perhaps the most significant document from his entire career in testifying to his notions of urban planning" (181). Sullivan's essay takes the entire city as its subject matter, a scope that implies the reciprocal relationship between buildings and the urban environment. While Sullivan is typically associated with the design of commercial office buildings, his preoccupation here is with the practical problems these buildings pose for the survival of the city, which is dependent on appropriate growth and development in complex ways (see fig. 03).

Fig. 03. Louis Sullivan, "Setback Skyscraper City Concept, 1891."

At the end of the same decade, architect Irving K. Pond wrote a series of articles regarding the design and function of taller apartment buildings. He writes that the height of apartment buildings has no limit except as determined "by local conditions, the width of

contiguous streets or alleys, the size of the building lot, the character of the locality, and so on" (1898b, 249). Insofar as the aesthetic design of tall apartment buildings, Pond is not greatly concerned. He writes:

> as to the architectural style which shall be adopted for the treatment of apartment buildings, little need be said. Greatly to be desired is a dignified yet domestic feeling, quietly handled in any style which is real style and which may prevail at the time and in the locality. When ideals of domesticity and home life change, style will change and no amount of argumentation will alter the course. (252)

While Pond believes that the function and aesthetic of a building should correspond, the shift in stylistic preferences over time is taken to be a given-- and the same can be said for any type of building (a point well taken in this discussion). Pond's concerns are with the same practical problems of fitting a building into the context of its surrounding urban environment. This is for the benefit of both the building's occupants as well as the preservation of the character of the locality. He recognizes the realities of continued urbanization and densification and offers several different building forms that might be applied to U.S. cities. He suggests models based upon the European precedent of open, central courtyards, but also considers designs arranged around a central airshaft incorporating elevators and stairways combined with periodic setbacks on the building's exterior, pointing to the increasing verticality of buildings at that time and attentive to the appropriate ratios between building height and lot sizes. It would take another generation, however, before such ideas became officially codified into the now well-known 1916 Building Zone Resolution of the City of New York.

Sullivan and Pond were only two architects involved in the much larger discussion over the skyscraper's role in shaping the future of the city that established precedents for both design and typology in the early history of the tall building. Visions of fantastical, technologically

advanced, futuristic skyscraper cities drove the cultural imagination at that time (see fig. 04),[37] but there were many detractors who saw them as modern towers of Babel, the skyscraper as symbolic of the depravity of urban society.[38]

Fig. 04. Richard Rummell, from *King's Views of New York*.

Somewhere between the hopeful and the gloomy, however, practical and rational solutions were being applied to these structures, dutifully trying to create a mutually beneficial system between skyscraper and city. Beyond the aesthetics of the façade, beyond the technology of the structure, beyond the powerful symbolism of these buildings-- and the grand narratives of New York, Chicago and elsewhere in the mythology of this country's history-- is the simple reality that cities were not functioning well and needed improvement in several areas of their development.

[37] For an analysis of some examples of these visions, see Carol Willis's "Zoning and Zeitgeist" (49-52).
[38] Early examples include: *Caesar's Column* (1890) by Ignatius L. Donnelly and *The Cliff Dwellers* (1893) by Henry B. Fuller. Later examples are extensive and a worthwhile analysis by Schleier (1986) identifies some of these from the 1920s, including: *Flamingo* (1927) by Mary Borden, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) by John Dos Passos, *The Cubicle City* (1926) by Janet Flanner, as well as *The Skyscraper Murder* (1928) by Samuel Spewack, among others.

It was during this time period that modern urban planning was beginning to emerge as a profession. Then the purview of various other disciplines-- architecture, landscape architecture, developers, policy makers and social reformers, among others-- the inevitable growth of the metropolis formed a new discipline around the premise of cities as systems of changing, interconnected elements. The modern cultural movement toward universal standards and norms is found in urban planning's movement toward the orderly control of urban growth. The expansion of the U.S. city through the first half of the twentieth-century would require the continuous attention of architects as skyscrapers would not only grow taller, but would proliferate and further affect the morphology of the metropolis.

One of the most frequently cited events in the history of the skyscraper is the 1916 Building Zone Resolution of the City of New York. Within this law were stipulations on skyscraper form based on new urban planning ideas then developing. The resolution gives equal weight to the three categories around which it is organized. These are use districts, height districts and area districts.[39] The resolution opens with the following paragraph:

> A resolution regulating and limiting the height and bulk of buildings hereafter erected and regulating and determining the area of yards, courts and other open spaces, and regulating and restricting the location of trades and industries and the location of buildings designed for specified uses and establishing the boundaries of districts for the said purposes.

The basic concerns of the resolution are with buildings in context. Keith D. Revell, an urban historian and professor of public administration, writes that it "emerged from the intersection of three key debates: the first addressed regulating building height; the second, planning the modern metropolis; and the third, the limits of the police power" (44). In terms of the formation, development and articulation of modern urban planning practices, writes planner and professor,

[39] Mujica's *History* cites extensively from each of the three articles stipulating these three types of districts (37-44).

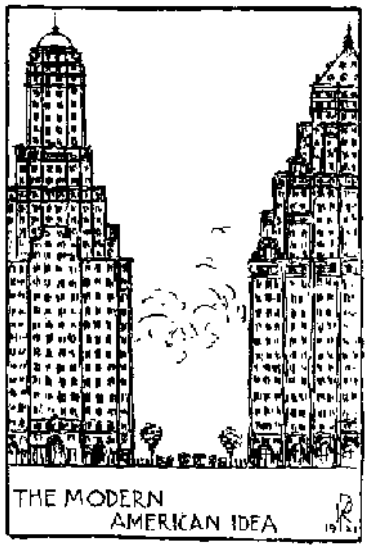
Raphaël Fischler, this resolution in New York is even more significant as "a mechanism for the rational control of urban development" (182) rather than purely a response to the growth of tall buildings. It presents an understanding of New York City as a complex system spread across five boroughs, of which the skyscrapers of the central business districts in Manhattan are only a part. The resolution is equally concerned with the "outlying" areas of the growing city. The crowded streets, housing problems and outdated, inefficient infrastructure and public works were systemic and not confined to any one area. The 1916 Building Zone Resolution confronted practical as well as aesthetic concerns and allowed for visions of the modern metropolis that "considered the possibility of creating a planned city of skyscrapers, rather than eliminating skyscrapers from the ideal of the planned city" (Revell 44-45).

Through the stipulations that the Building Zone Resolution placed on building height, the idea of a "planned city of skyscrapers" could be achieved. The third article of the resolution directly states that, "For the purpose of regulating and limiting the height and bulk of buildings hereafter erected, the City of New York is hereby divided into eight classes of districts" and continues by articulating in great detail the types and height restrictions of these different districts, as well as how and where exceptions to the district regulations will be determined and applied (art. 10). Each type of district specified in this article is directly based upon "the width of the street" and the "street line," both of which are clearly defined in the first article, among other important terms used throughout the resolution. For example, the eighth type of district, called the "two and one-half times district," is defined as one in which "no building shall be erected to a height in excess of two and one-half times the width of the street, but for each one foot that the building or a portion of it sets back from the street line five feet shall be added to the height limit of such building or such portion thereof" (art. 10). Importantly, "Where a street

borders a public place, public park or navigable body of water the width of the street is the mean width of such street plus the width, measured at right angles to the street line, of such public place, public park or body of water" (art. 1 sec. C). A good deal of time might be spent discussing the intricacies of the resolution, but these few examples show how buildings could not only achieve great height, but also how the ratio between horizontal set-backs and vertical height increases are also in direct proportion to the existing urban street fabric and the building's position within its lot. The proliferation of skyscrapers and their increased heights is accepted as a reality. The problems such height presents in terms of real estate concerns and the provision of light and air are balanced with and mitigated by the implementation of height districts. In terms of the triad of function, structure and beauty, then, this leaves the question of beauty and the aesthetic tastes of the era.

So, in effect, pyramids were already being built. The upper stories of skyscrapers, set-back from the lower floors, resembled the stepped pyramids of Babylon and Sumer and, importantly, Mesoamerica. What the Building Zone Resolution accomplished was the codification of the setback form and, as Fischler writes, "Although the 'ziggurat' architecture that proliferated in the 1920s and 30s can be ascribed to the setback requirements imposed on higher floors, the model of the tower on its base had already become state-of-the-art practice by the time the new prescriptions came into law; here, too, practice shaped prescription" (182). This is an important point. As with the form of the tall building, so too with the aesthetic design. The set-back skyscraper form attempts to respect the existing urban morphology while recognizing that it is causing irreversible changes to that environment as it embraces the inevitability of the future metropolis. It is the difference between what Pond calls the "American

Renaissance"[40] of Sullivan and others and what he calls the "Modern American Idea" (1921, 132, 133) (see figs. 05 and 06).



Figs. 05 and 06. Irving K. Pond, "American Renaissance" and "The Modern American Idea."

The development of the set-back skyscraper as a building type fits Art Deco aesthetics. Furthermore, the spirit of Art Deco is appropriate for the skyscraper in its own impulse to balance the new with the traditional through design. In addition to synthesizing past and future, Art Deco architects had another shared principle: "the aspiration to create the monumental metropolis of tomorrow. Skyscraper projects in New York metamorphosed into powerful expressions of an urban enterprise. Architects linked the skyscraper city to national expectations and dreams" (Messler 26-27). Ancient Mesoamerican architecture became a central point of inspiration to Bossom, Mujica and others not only for the methods and motifs of its form and design, but also because it came from fully urbanized civilizations of the American continent. The skyscraper visions of Bossom and Mujica were of the future metropolis in the New World, structurally representative of the very latest technologies and aesthetically of their own time and

[40] Others use this term as well, including Mujica, who remarks on it toward the end of his manifesto.

place. The enthusiasm these two architects showed toward Mesoamerican architecture was based in the complex architectural balance between function, structure and beauty-- and was not just a change in style.

The details of Bossom's and Mujica's urban visions and skyscraper designs are elaborated upon below, but they were part of a larger intellectual climate. One might write that the tall building-- from whatever period, at whatever height and in whatever style-- strove to express the spirit of its times. Such statements are common in discussions of the skyscraper, but only present a truism of all architecture, as it is difficult to argue that a skyscraper, or any work of architecture, is not of its time. As Hugh Ferriss-- one of the more influential architects and visionaries behind the U.S. skyscraper in the first half of the twentieth-century-- wrote in his well-known book, *The Metropolis of Tomorrow* (1929): "Architecture never lies. Architecture invariably expresses its age correctly" (16). However far it may reach back into the past for inspiration or however far it may look into the future so as to be "ahead of its time," architecture always responds to its present moment, designing in terms of its client's perceived needs in the context of the foreseeable future.

A range of architectural thinkers and practitioners have said, along with Ferriss, that architecture cannot help but be an expression of its age. The task of the architect was seen as creative rather than imitative, actively building and designing to capture the spirit of the age rather than defereing to tradition. Many would argue for what amounted to an outright rejection of traditional styles, as does critic Sheldon Cheney in *The New World Architecture* (1936), where he writes:

> Architecture is a fixation of man's thinking and a record of his activity. Thus it may be locally circumscribed or broadly expressive, mean and cramped or imaginatively aspiring, tricky or honest, timid or bold, shallowly pretentious or truly glorious. We may be sure that the future will judge the architecture of the

> first half-thousand years prior to 1900 as bad: weak, unoriginal, vacillating, showy. For the spiritual chaos and the will-to-power and the strife of those centuries are truly mirrored in the buildings. (2)

Cheney's main objection is to the proliferation of styles and their subsequent revival or adaptation and contemporary eclecticism, as he will later advocate what he calls "honesty" in architecture, which he sees expressed through limited decoration (14-15, 18). For Cheney and others, the modern age can express itself in an entirely new architecture, one that reflects the progressive global, universalizing tendencies of the present, which free architecture from the regional, culturally-specific influences that dominated its past expression.

Cheney comes later, though, after many other architects with more balanced perspectives on the relationship between their present age and the traditions of the past. Aware of this temporal position in *The American Architecture of To-Day* (1928), G. H. Edgell writes, "Never should we lose sight of the past and its benefits, but never should we let it tyrannise us" (84). The architect must take from the past that which best applies to the development of the present into the foreseeable future. As Philip N. Youtz writes in *The Sounding Stones of Architecture* (1929), "in history it is hard to tell when one is gazing in a mirror and when one sees an actual picture in the past. The image of the present protrudes itself into the past in amazing ways" (39). This is perhaps the most honest understanding of architecture-- and culture more generally-- in terms of its temporality and how it is always necessarily situated between the traditional and the modern.

In *The Frozen Fountain* (1932), U.S. architect and designer Claude Bragdon puts it like this: "For architecture is always and inevitably the handwriting on space of the soul of a people or of a period, and if that soul be frivolous, bombastic, mendacious, the very falsity of the architecture will constitute its essential truth-- truth to the thing it stands for and represents" (6). Bragdon here points to a tension between the realization that architecture cannot help but express

the “spirit of the age” and the insistence that one style of architecture is somehow a better expression of the age than others. Such statements reveal the ideological motivations behind the posturing that claims aesthetic expression to be “traditional” or “modern” or calls it either “regional” or “international.” Among those who recognized the relevance of tradition to the present at this time were those who actively sought a “usable past”-- those aspects of tradition that could be made significant in the current moment.

The term “usable past” was first coined by Van Wyck Brooks in his 1918 essay, “On Creating a Usable Past.” In it, Brooks writes an entreaty on behalf of the current state of literary study in the academy. His primary concern is with professors of the “old guard” and the deadening effect of their writings and lectures on the contemporary critical imagination. Brooks writes of a disconnect between the past and the present, the older generation of critics doing little to fully relate tradition relevant to the current generation. For Brooks, the U.S. is a place with “no cumulative culture” and it is the making available of the past to the present generation that Brooks has in mind when he advocates re-discovering the past in order to create a common identity derived from what he calls the “inherited resources” (213) of the U.S. To have living value the past must be made relevant. As “the spiritual past has no objective reality,” the critic must ask what is important for the present generation, finding those tendencies from the history of culture and ideas that are applicable to modern society. This is what he means by a “usable past.” He writes, “Discover, invent a usable past we certainly can, and that is what a vital criticism always does” (215). Brooks envisions this process of discovery becoming cyclical, recurring from generation to generation and propelling U.S. culture into the future by way of reimagining its past in the present era.

Lewis Mumford, the influential cultural critic whose wide-ranging interests spanned disciplines from literature and the arts, to technology, architecture and urbanism, was the first to apply the idea of a "usable past" to concerns over contemporary U.S. architecture. In his pioneering study of U.S. architecture, *Sticks and Stones: A Study of American Architecture and Civilization* (1924), Mumford writes, "The future of our civilization depends upon our ability to select and control our heritage from the past, to alter our present attitudes and habits, and to project fresh forms into which our energies may be freely poured" (92). Throughout his work, Mumford follows Brooks by tethering his social criticism to literary study, but in the work cited here he focuses on an assessment of the history behind the state of U.S. architecture. He looks back upon the 1910s and 1920s as a period of U.S. intellectual history in his 1955 preface to the second edition of *Sticks and Stones*, writing that "While a new generation of literary critics, headed by Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, was awakening American interest in the unsuspected richness of our literary past, no equivalent movement was yet visible in architecture" (v). The first comprehensive study of U.S. architectural history, *Sticks and Stones* is more than the now-typical survey cataloging notable structures and their architects. Instead, Mumford writes a contextualized study of architectural trends and tendencies throughout U.S. history. As with the writers mentioned above, Mumford's concern is with how civilization can be seen reflected in its architecture. Yet, his project is not without motive. Confident in the ideas that he was developing concurrently in his work with the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) regarding the roles that urban and community planning should play in society, Mumford approaches historical and contemporary trends in U.S. architecture and urbanization with an ideal vision in mind. He writes against the centralized city and its seemingly unchecked expansion, favoring instead the regional pattern of the garden city and the ideals of community

that it strives to embody.[41] Undoubtedly progressive in his politics and vision of a better future, Mumford's narrative nonetheless sees the built landscape of the U.S. as in decline and finds a usable past in the model provided by the Puritan villages of New England. For him, these villages are archetypal, harkening back to the sophistication of European culture now lost to U.S. civilization. Mumford sees the smaller scale of these villages as one in which agricultural, economic and political ideals were in harmony, fully expressed by their patterns of development. In them Mumford finds justification for the tenets of the garden city movement, "a distinct achievement of modern thought" (10) that Mumford thinks might recapture the "complete and intelligent partnership between the earth and man" that is embodied in "the old New England village" (9). Mumford's usable past is intertwined with the now traditional understanding of U.S. history and culture as rooted in Anglo-New England culture.

In their "quest for a usable past," Brooks, Mumford and others tend to perpetuate parts of the myth that they ostensibly seek to overturn. Just as Brooks' "usable past" for U.S. literature relies heavily upon what would soon become known as the "American Renaissance," so too does Mumford's ideal architecture and urban planning rely upon the idealized New England village of the nineteenth century.[42] Mumford and the RPAA saw the garden city movement as a way of decentralizing the built environment through modern technology (rather than the continued concentration of these technologies in the growing metropolis), offering a progressive vision of how the past might be updated for the present era. By turning to a version of the nineteenth-century ideal of the New England village, however, one might argue that Mumford's progressive

[41] Mumford was integral in popularizing the "garden city" idea in the U.S. would later write an introduction to Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (1898) upon its re-publication in 1945.

[42] The problem with this is that the New England villages of the Romantic era were largely creations of that generation's own "usable past" and bore very little resemblance with the Puritan settlements from which they grew. The historical geographer James S. Wood writes convincingly on this topic (see Wood [1991] and Wood and Steinitz [1992]).

ideals fail to challenge the preexisting cultural assumptions that have created the need for a "usable past" in the first place.[43] In writing against the metropolis and against the skyscraper, Mumford takes these to be emblematic of the corruption of U.S. society and culture-- the technology that has built these cities could be put to better use.

William Carlos Williams also searches for a "usable past," but any similarities between his *In the American Grain* (1925) and the works of Brooks, Mumford and others are, according to Vera M. Kutzinski, "as superficial as they are deceiving" (3). Instead, he actively seeks other traditions, as Williams "recognized that while modern America was indeed a waste land, the New World most certainly was not" (5).[44] The idea of the "New World" in the first half of the twentieth-century becomes the place of promise it once was and, as a phrase, functions to imply "a comparative as well as cross-cultural perspective; it is a system that depends on the differences of its constituents, rather than relying on their similarity" (11). Such writings foresee a unified hemisphere strengthened by its regional components. This central idea behind *In the American Grain* can be applied to the architects at hand. Bossom and Mujica are both careful to position their architectural visions and theories in a hemispheric context, incorporating North, Central and South America. They see U.S. architecture as embodying the promise of the New World as imagined by the first European explorers, now taken up by those turning from the Old World after World War I. For these architects, Mesoamerican influences provide a "usable past"

[43] As comparative literature scholar Vera M. Kutzinski writes, however, "While on the one hand profoundly disturbed by the ways in which their society had corrupted its founding ideals" (7) Brooks and Mumford did not articulate "a reformulation of fundamental goals and basic social ideals. Confronted with what they perceived as a process of 'cultural dissolution,' their intention was to offer a stabilizing mechanism that would reaffirm those ideals and generate some sense of cohesion in the face of impending chaos. This stabilizing mechanism was precisely the idea of a 'usable past,' usable and useful in that it made history perform as myth" (7). Despite its progressive qualities, then, their "usable past" becomes an extension of the myths and traditions it is trying to discredit.
[44] For a sustained discussion on William Carlos Williams, see the Introduction to this dissertation.

for modern U.S. architecture in these terms, particularly when applied to the skyscraper, the one truly "American" contribution to architectural form.

Mujica first published his *History of the Skyscraper* in 1929, when the understanding and appreciation of ancient Mesoamerican civilization in its own cultural terms was part of the larger trend wherein U.S. society began to gravitate toward Mexico and Central America for cultural inspiration. The violent period of the Mexican Revolution ended in 1920, allowing for increased travel from the U.S. to Mexico which led to a cultural phenomenon that Helen Delpar identifies as "the enormous vogue of things Mexican," which peaked between 1927 and 1935 (55). Of particular interest were the archaeological discoveries that captured the U.S. imagination. While there had long been "a tradition of cooperation between Mexico and the investigators and scientific institutions of other countries," the Mexican government gained more control and oversight over archaeological excavations during the 1920s, but during this period "only institutions from the United States were in a position to undertake major projects in Mexico" (99). This was linked to a "strong popular interest in archaeology, which was bolstered by the massive publicity given to the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamon in Egypt in 1922" (99), as well as the parallel political, popular and artistic interests in Native America which, in turn, dovetailed with artistic primitivism and found unique expression in Mexican *indigenismo*. All of this contributed to the growing interest modern U.S. culture found in ancient Mesoamerica, indiscriminately referred to as Mayan-- hence the "Mayan Revival"-- although the Aztec, Toltec and Mixtec cultures were included in this broader term.

Gregory Mason, an important U.S. archaeologist whose career best represents "The combination of scholarship and popularization that characterized American Maya studies during the 1920s" (Delpar 109), reminds his readers that these ancient American cultures are relevant to

the present day. He writes that "Archaeology is more than a concern about the past for its own sake. The study of prehistory is a religious, scientific, artistic, *practical* pursuit. Primarily, it is concerned with answering the question: 'Who am I, what am I, whence have I come?'" (1940, 9). The concerns of contemporaneous architectural thinkers discussed above are similar. Mason also seeks to better define the present through knowledge of the past. He writes:

> It behooves us to know and understand more about the earlier America of the Mayas, Aztecs, Toltecs, Incas, and Taironas. They were our predecessors in this hemisphere; they lived here a long, long time before we did, and perhaps their experiences and accomplishments may point to some new conclusions about our America and how we can best live in it and develop it. (6)

Mason's understanding of these ancient cultures is never far removed from their geographical place. In learning from the Mesoamericans and other earlier inhabitants one becomes aware that their ways of life "were geared to the continent and the climate which we … have inherited" (10). Mason, as an archaeologist, has a more empirically grounded methodology than that of literary study and Mason all but directly confronts the search for a "usable past" and the tradition advocated by Brooks and Mumford. He continues:

> Which were the best of our early American immigrants? Were they those who stayed in the uncomfortable climate of the far north, and thereby showed their vigor? Were they those who imagined something better and went on southward until they found the Caribbean Bowl? Perhaps we have overdone our admiration for the Puritan-- the man who makes the most of a bad situation. Perhaps we have underestimated the man who goes on until he finds a better situation-- like the Mayans of Yucatan and Guatemala. (10-11)

By speculating along these lines, Mason draws attention to a hemispheric "usable past" that was then being overlooked. It is another tradition, one based on the continent's regional geography rather than on conceptions of a transatlantic European diaspora.[45] This is the vision shared in

[45] On this topic Mason is quite adamant. He writes: "Our unsuccessful Americans are the groups which fail to cut off connection with the Old World and cling, morbidly, to the idea of 'race' fostered in the curious, confused lands from which they have come" (10).

part by William Carlos Williams. For Williams, U.S. history celebrates the wrong figures and he would like to see modern society learning from its entire past and rewriting its history, moving into the future with a fully continental perspective. To borrow Mason's words, "Go South, young man, go South!" (15).

This is the invitation accepted by both Mujica and Bossom in terms of designing a truly "American" skyscraper. Mujica sees a series of lost opportunities in the history of U.S. architecture wherein there could have been "a renaissance by developing primitive architectural styles of America: the first vanished with the beginning of colonization; the second was just after the period of decadence following American independence; and the third is the present which is more propitious than any preceding period" (35). He documents these developments in a chart that shows an oscillation between the divergent trajectories of European and American architectural development. Before the sixteenth-century, both were entirely isolated from one another, progressing in their own courses. With the arrival of European influence, the evolution of contemporary American architecture would have only turned slightly toward the European if it had not been for the destruction of American art during the conquest, which caused contemporary American art to become, instead, an offshoot of the contemporary European with a slight turn toward the American. With the advent of the twentieth-century, however, Mujica sees the "necessary reaction" embodied in the revival of primitive design and modern architectural developments when applied to the skyscraper and the metropolis it makes possible. With such an alignment of native forms-- i.e. the Mesoamerican and the skyscraper-- this reaction makes possible the "future American" by restoring, as much as possible, the divergent trajectory of American architecture apart from European as was inevitable after the encounters of the two traditions on this continent (Plate I).

For Mujica, the speedy development of the skyscraper was fortunate. As the skyscraper is "an entirely new problem it is only logical that its architecture seeks entirely new paths," which is what new ideas in modern art and architecture could offer (35). Modern movements in architecture sought inspiration through "alien styles of architecture closely resembling our primitive style" in America (and Mujica references the Assyrian, Babylonian and Chaldean influences being adopted by French architects) and so "Primitive American architecture has approached us miraculously through modern skyscrapers" (35).

Just as the skyscraper recreated the urban fabric and created a new set of social circumstances that needed to be addressed by architects, so too did the mass and height of these structures create a unique set of challenges for aesthetic design. For Mujica, if the spirit of the New World was to be articulated, the problem that skyscraper design must solve is the effective expression of height. He describes the history of the skyscraper in terms of physical forms and stylistic tendencies. Mujica identifies three primary forms: the prism, the tower and the "set-backed" pyramid. Similarly, he identifies three styles: the classical, the gothic and the modern.[46] These tendencies reveal a progressive history of the skyscraper. For Mujica, the setback form allows for the exploration of a modern style and meets the changing conditions of the modern city in terms of the discussion detailed above and to articulate this opportunity, Mujica includes extensive citations from the New York City Building Zone Resolution of 1916. For Mujica, the modern style must be a New World style-- and he provides ample evidence that Old World styles, typified by the classical and the gothic, cannot be fully applied to the skyscraper. The former fails because of its horizontal orientation and it "tries to solve the problem [of height] by superimposing, as it were, one structure upon another, until the desired height is attained" and,

[46] The history is told in the same terms by Walter Raymond Agard in *The New Architectural Sculpture* (44-47).

ultimately, "The result suffers from a total lack of *unity* to such a degree that its component parts could easily be pulled down and each by itself form a building of less height" (18-19). The gothic, on the other hand, provides a historical example "which had formerly solved problems of great height," but this "succeeded in solving only the problem of unity" (19) and cannot appropriately express the modern scale of the height and is too much of the past in its aesthetic. For this reason, Mujica turns to ancient Mesoamerican pyramids for inspiration in skyscraper design. Visions of skyscraper cities from turn-of-the-century do not provide a rich enough precedent for modern tall buildings. Mesoamerican heritage, on the other hand, was being explored, excavated, appreciated and better understood as having built great civilizations contemporary with the classical civilizations of the ancient Mediterranean. For Mujica, then, it is serendipitous that their pyramids, the first skyscrapers on this continent,[47] provide both a practical and aesthetic precedent for the setback innovations already required by the 1916 Building Zone Resolution.[48] It is the search for and discovery of a workable precedent to meet the existing demands of tall building form.

Five years before Mujica published his *History*, Bossom published his *Architectural Pilgrimage*. Notably, however, this publication does not include any substantial consideration of Mesoamerican architecture. Rather, it focuses on the Spanish colonial and the possible lessons of these structures. A part of the larger architectural debate, his opening passage reads as follows: "All that an age signifies is written on the open book of its architecture. The architect is, at best, the conscious recorder of the culture of a race; the thrall of his times. Chief builder he

[47] Mujica uses such language himself, but other contemporaries thought of the pyramids in similar terms. Mason writes, for example: "Near the palaces are the pyramidal temples, topped with the sort of towers which, today, we call 'set-back' skyscrapers" (16).
[48] As Fischler writes, "the significance of the ordinance, then, is mostly historical. It helped to diffuse the practice of comprehensive zoning throughout the country" (182).

may be, but even though he direct a thousand pairs of skillful hands, he is but the interpreter of the progress and aspirations of his fellowmen. A nation without buildings can leave no vivid transcript of the ideals and temperament of its people" (ix). The indigenous cultures of the American continent, despite their exploitation by European colonizers, nevertheless contributed to the development of culture in the hemisphere. Any attempt to interpret the present age does well to value such composite characteristics and, architecturally, the significant source of inspiration in these terms is to be found in Mexico.

Bossom's search is first and foremost concerned with context. To build in the modern spirit of the New World requires that strict attention be paid to physical and material contexts. These contexts also make new cultural demands of architecture. He writes:

> Where shall the pilgrim go on such a quest? This is the query which often came to me, a New York Architect of English birth and training, and for years remained unanswered. Surely the soul of America is not truly to be found in its Colonial architecture, which is modified Georgian, in turn founded on Greek and Roman models, through the Italian Renaissance. The search of the United States only called for further study. The aborigines who dwelt within its borders left no architectural remains. They were dwellers in tents of skin, builders of lodges made from poles and boughs. Their materials were temporary, their structural art that of nomads. Even the cliff dwellings of the colorful southwest are unrelated clusters of dwellings, which owed whatever form they had to conditions which do not carry on. Mounds and tombs and shell heaps abound. Yet what they hold is material only for the anthropologist. The architect who would know what America was and is finds in such memorials only ghosts and wraiths. (ix)

If architecture is to provide a "transcript of the ideals and temperament of its people," then Bossom is in search of a lasting architecture that also fits the continent on which it is built, rather than simply transplanting a European one. An architecture for the New World and of its civilization must reflect both the European aspects of modern culture and the native roots-- however distant-- on which it was grafted. The materials of native North American architecture had no longevity and whatever the degree or quality of contact the French and English may have had with the native inhabitants, the degree to which foreign ideas found any unity with native

styles of architectural expression is dubious. Bossom writes of his exploration as guided by "the logic of facts" (x). If there is to be an American architecture for his time-- and for posterity-- inspiration must be sought further afield in seemingly foreign and unexpected climes.

Turning to Mexico, Bossom exclaims: "Mexico! Not to visit Mexico is not to know the Western Hemisphere. Not to have viewed the monuments of its romantic past is not to sense the inner meaning of American traditions, nor to fully grasp the development of the American people" (x). It is an American architecture that Bossom finds in Mexico, a cultural hybrid of the Spanish and the Mesoamerican made possible in a large part because of the construction materials used in the advanced Mesoamerican civilizations encountered by the Spanish. It was a lasting, monumental architecture that the Spanish, "with all their ideas of beauty inherited from tradition-bound Spain found upon their arrival a complete architecture with craftsmanship of a very high standard flourishing in Mexico" (3). Despite the ruthless and merciless destruction wrought by the Conquest, Bossom observes, the Spanish "could not remain unaffected by the existing work they found, and the influence of the early Mexican art is easily seen in the Spaniards' first efforts in construction on a new soil" (4). This observation becomes the fundamental principle in Bossom's understanding of Mexican architecture and, consequently, to his vision for hemispheric American architecture more generally.

Although not mentioned in his *Architectural Pilgrimage* and its implicit exploration of the precedent of a hybrid architecture offered by the Spanish colonial, Bossom was adapting forms from Mesoamerican architecture, particularly from the Maya. In *Building to the Skies*, he synthesizes these ideas in practical terms. In his new hybrid skyscraper architecture, Bossom allows practical concerns to dictate aesthetic concerns. He uses the example of natural sunlight and its effects on architecture, writing:

> in North America the light is particularly hard and white and the shadows uninteresting. The Mayans in Mexico accordingly evolved an architecture of simple surface decorations with no cornices but with a strong emphasis on ornamented angles to form a towering silhouette. The designers in Chicago and New York, working under identical conditions of light, did the same. It was almost a law of architectural necessity that the Americans in stretching their buildings skywards should come to use the same treatments of flat surfaces, set-backs and ornamented silhouettes. (15)

That these similarities in design, separated by over one-thousand years, developed completely independently from one another is of little importance. What Bossom offers is a "usable" architecture from the past made congruent with the modern era (18-19) (see fig. 07).

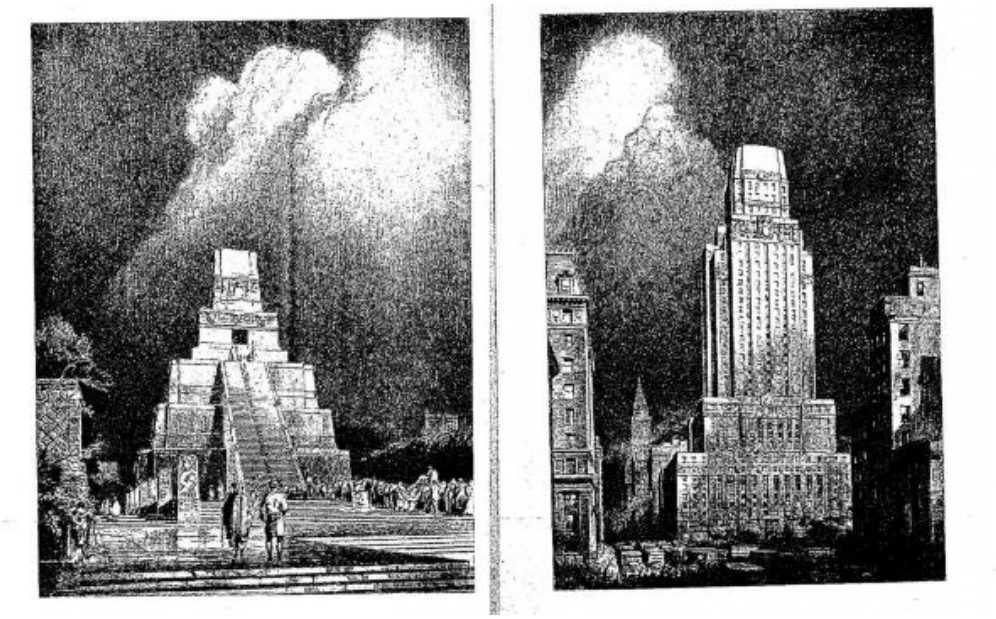


Fig. 07. Alfred C. Bossom, "The Original American Skyscraper" and "The 35 Storey Building of Today."

Bossom's chapters are written for other practitioners, ranging in subject matter from "Ventilation, Heating, Lighting and Plumbing" to "Costs, Wages and Finance" and "Building to Schedule." Due to these practical concerns, his observations along aesthetic lines are scattered throughout the book, as his primary concern is to defend the skyscraper as a necessary and progressive building type in more general terms.

The professional sensibility found in Bossom's *Building to the Skies*, is also found in Mujica's *History of the Skyscraper*, which develops a similar set of ideas with an equal amount of practical concern. Alongside this, however, Mujica explicitly emphasizes Mesoamerican components useful for skyscraper architecture for a fully re-imagined twentieth-century city. Working independently from Bossom, Mujica's was the first history of the skyscraper to be written. The *History of the Skyscraper* considers innovations and developments from Chicago and New York and is profusely illustrated with drawings of tall buildings from the 1880s through his present moment, cataloging the styles and forms contributing to its development in the U.S. One reviewer discusses the publication history of Mujica's book, noting that few copies ever arrived in the U.S. and those that did were relegated to libraries and architectural societies.[49] Given its extensive cataloging of U.S. skyscrapers, "its principal influence may have been as a source book for students" (Corbett 225). Nevertheless, it was largely forgotten until its rediscovery and republication in the late-1970s. Given Mujica's aesthetic preferences, however, "Like many books of its time, it has been overlooked during a long period of scholarly concentration on the modern movement," which came to be synonymous with the "International Style" as defined by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in their exhibition of the same name at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1932.

Given the historical fate of Mujica's *History*, it is difficult to judge just how well it would have been received amid the architectural debate of his time. Thoroughly modern in his outlook, Mujica writes:

> Let our architecture be modern, let us stress the tendency to simplify which so perfectly suits the spirit of speed and utility of our century. Let us interpret the new building systems and materials and express the soul of our age in decorative art. But in so doing let us not cease to contemplate our environment, nor forget the history of our architecture which we must not copy slavishly but penetrate into

[49] Originally published in France on a small scale of 500 copies, the majority were lost during World War II.

> with the ardor and love due our heritage. Thus our work will bear the clear and unequivocal imprint of a period of evolution, and not of a capricious and decadent period. (35)

Certainly these ideas find resonance with the broader theorizations of contemporary architecture, as in the examples cited earlier from Agard, Bragdon, Cheney and Edgell, among others. At the same time, however, Mujica comes perilously close to adopting some of the more mystical and unconventional notions regarding ancient Mesoamerican peoples that were not uncommon among architects and enthusiasts of a Mayan Revival. In the introductory chapter, Mujica references some of the competing explanations for the American pyramids and concludes these thoughts by writing, "no matter how difficult it may be to determine the birth-process of the American civilizations, one fact can not be gainsaid, namely that they have a certain connection with the civilizations of the borders of the Nile" (15). Even with the respect and admiration for Mujica's work voiced by critics upon its republication, his novel theories for an American architecture derived from the serendipitous meeting of ancient Mesoamerican archaeological finds with the 1916 Building Zone Resolution, are read as "naive, resting more on romantic and nationalistic fancies than on historical fact" (Condit 533). Although Mujica's narrative does at times sound romantic, he refuses to entertain the more fantastical theories of the Mesoamerican civilizations finding their origins in the lost continent of Atlantis-- a confused history that found an early articulation in Ignatius L. Donnelly's *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World* (1882)-- which was adopted by one of the more famous architects of the Mayan Revival, Robert B. Stacy-Judd. Luckily, Mujica has the wherewithal to hedge this discussion by writing that,

> No matter what the origin of the American peoples and their relations with the Egyptians, Assyrians and some of the other Asiatic peoples may be, what interests us is the fact that when America was discovered independent civilizations flourished there using an architecture that was completely different from that prevailing in Europe and which met the material and spiritual needs of the American peoples with admirable sincerity. (16)

Mujica is first and foremost concerned with an architecture "that reflects modern American life, and not only modern cosmopolitan life" (36).

The Mayan Revival is a style of architecture that Marjorie Ingle defines as "the product of the playful pilferings of architectural and decorative elements of the Mayan and Aztec ruins and their incorporation into the contemporary environment" (1). The alliterative cheerfulness in Ingle's definition fits the eccentric architects with whom the style is primarily associated. Their unconventional buildings ranged in type and use,[50] but within a larger stylistic movement, they "became symbols of the hubric pride of a new, twentieth-century America, one of cities with pyramid-like skyscrapers, enthusiasm for the exotic, and the playful abandoning of our European mother culture" (72). While much of Stacy-Judd's work continues to capture the public imagination even today, his "designs … in the Mayan Revival style ranged from aesthetic incoherency to sleek refinement," although they grew increasingly "restrained and rational" later in his career (62, 65). One of his earlier and more famous works, the Aztec Hotel (1924-25) in Monrovia, California, Ingle reflects, "had fascinated him, [but] the completed product 'lacked reason'" (57).[51] The same could be said for much architecture of the Mayan Revival. Yet, both Bossom and Mujica are notably more restrained and sober in the application of Mesoamerican design elements to their architectural renderings. Furthermore, while perhaps these cultures were "exotic" and "playful" in popular culture or in contrast to the International Style, neither Mujica nor Bossom regarded them as such but, instead, actively treated them as legitimate components of a New World culture. In Bossom's words, their work as architects serves "in strengthening the affinities of culture and tradition which unite the Anglo-Saxons and the Latins in a better

[50] Ingle's bibliography provides a useful, if partial, list of "Selected Buildings" that ranges from hotels and theaters to houses of worship and private clubs, to schools and research centers (86-87).
[51] For an interesting discussion of the Mayan Revival in relation to William Carlos Williams's poetics, see Stephen M. Park's article, "Mesoamerican Modernism" (2011).

understanding" (1924, x). For these reasons, a more extensive consideration of Stacy-Judd, whose designs were frequently of buildings on a smaller-scale, are excluded here and, as mentioned above the concern here is with public architecture and civic spaces rather than with domestic-scale architecture or residential areas of the city.

The influence of modern, "international" design on the regional is an accepted phenomenon, but the intersection of the Mayan Revival style with the skyscraper and the urban scene demonstrates how local, "regional" sources were also central to modern design. The aesthetic appeal of ancient-- and seemingly far-flung-- Mesoamerica met the technological and societal needs of the modernizing U.S. metropolis. The practical appeal of Mesoamerican architecture goes beyond its contours and ready-made application to the setbacks mandated for new tall buildings. The design elements of these pyramids were similarly seen as relevant to the size, scale and mass of the newer skyscrapers. An integral part of their practical appeal for Mujica and Bossom is that they were central structures in urban civilizations.[52] Archaeological expeditions throughout the 1920s revealed the urban nature of these civilizations. Although later discoveries have revealed more in the exact nature of the Mesoamerican city, major excavations had occurred at various sites and the task of imagining their restoration was well underway. Both Mujica and Bossom include sketches, plans and elevations of restored buildings and cities in their work, offering visions of a magnificent and orderly civilization for the once and future American continent (see fig. 08).

[52] On the subject of city planning in ancient Mesoamerica, see Mason (1940, 44) and Sanford (37-41). A recent exploration of the direct influence of ancient city planning on the colonial Spanish model and the modern Mexican city can be found in *Ancient Origins of the Mexican Plaza* (2013) by Wagner, et al.

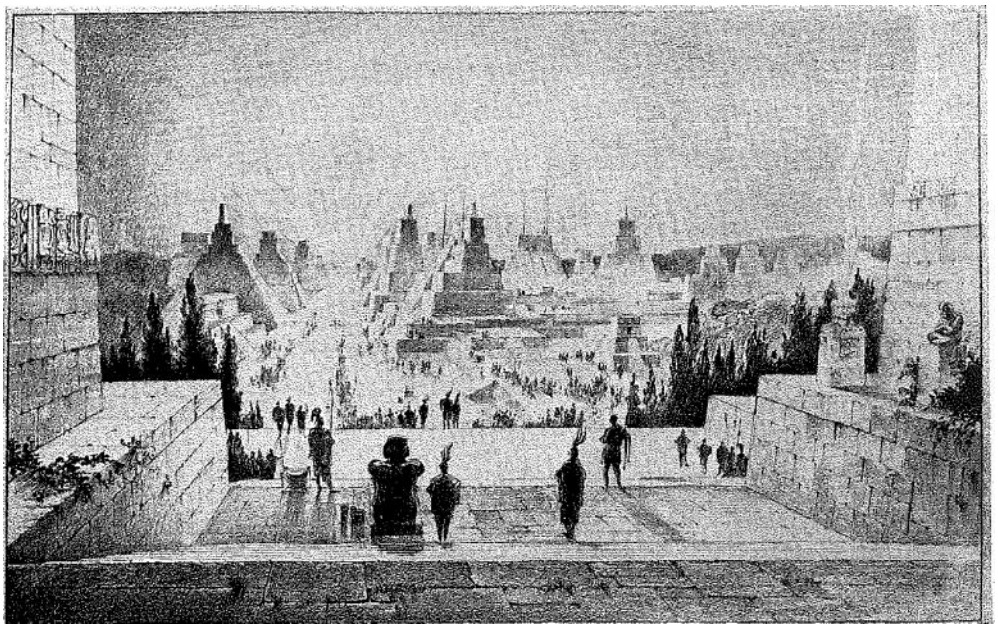


Fig. 08. Alfred C. Bossom, "Restoration of Ancient City of Tikal, Guatemala."

In this sense, Mujica's *History* becomes a manifesto for the modern American metropolis. Although he does not see the skyscraper as a building type relevant only to cities, Mujica is among those who see the future of the U.S. city directly tied to the success of skyscraper architecture. Many others saw the future success of U.S. cities through decentralization, as found in the ideas of Mumford, the RPAA and the garden city movement. A contemporaneous art critic, Walter Raymond Agard, summarizes the larger sentiment as follows: "It is probably true, as many architects and social planners now predict, that the day of the skyscraper is past; that those great buildings belong to a boom period which will not soon come again, and the future trend will be toward a decentralization of industry into suburban and country units, occupying buildings of a more modest sort" (44). However prescient Agard may have been, Mujica's vision is directly opposed to this. He writes: "To be hostile to skyscrapers because they constitute a problem to present-day cities is to oppose all progress that necessitates changes in these cities" (51). Mujica agrees that the city needs be rethought but he sees the answer in the skyscraper. The evidence is, simply, that many have already been built. To

abandon these structures would be to move backwards in time. The skyscraper is here to stay, as it "is rapidly gaining ground all over the world. In Havana, Buenos Aires, Santiago (Chile) skyscrapers are being erected, and in Paris-- sanctuary of tradition-- there are already voices who advocate reservation of ground for skyscrapers in the new residential districts under construction" (52). During its rapid development,

> The skyscraper has had to conquer practically insurmountable obstacles in order to solve its own architecture. Now remains the other part: solving the architectural problem of the city that is about to be created, that is in its formative stage, the vertical city, that will bring about a maximum of economy in this century of speed, and at the same time offer the best possible hygienic conditions. (52)

Within the increasing verticality of the city and the morphological shifts this this creates, Mujica's ideas for the future metropolis could be brought to fruition through "a profound study of the ruins" of Mesoamerica (20). Here one finds a specifically architectural analogue with Williams's literary and cultural imagination. It is the role of the architectural imagination to make the past "usable." Mujica writes: "The conditions which have prevailed since the Conquest have caused to spring up within the architecture of America a great number of buildings that respond to modern needs completely alien to primitive times" (20). It is the task of the architect to meet modern needs while recognizing the relevance of native and ancient architecture to the contemporary endeavor. The resulting architecture is what Mujica calls "Neo-American." He urges his audience:

> meet the future halfway, be modern-- without breaking with the past-- let us be practical, yet setting aside a few moments each day for daydreaming… and thus work for the development of the modern city, giving it fully the mechanical and practical stamp of our century, yet not forgetting in our planning that each part of this gigantic human machine has a heart capable of soaring high and loving… (52)

The daydream is fulfilled and the heart is satisfied through the imagination, which finds inspiration in the authentic and material world of its own local geography. This is why the "Neo-

American" architecture "requires profound study of the primitive American architecture and of the geometrical and mechanical elements of the regional nature" (20). Modernity, in this sense, need not mean "international" in geopolitical terms. It would be better defined through its rational combination of regional variations; from this continental, hemispheric perspective, it becomes "inter-regional." The skyscraper may become a universal building type, allowing cities to remain connected to their local geographies while partaking in global culture. Mujica writes, "The skyscraper being an entirely new problem it is only logical that its architecture seeks entirely new paths" (35). The "new" paths are the unexcavated ruins of ancient cultures and the new, modern city can be physically constructed from the ideas found there.

The popularization of Mexican culture in the U.S. is also found in literary works of the period. The cultural connections range from historical romances that treat the conquest or the Revolution, to travelogues that explore ancient Mesoamerica, along with the enthusiastic collection of folk tales and traditions. Much of this material is obscured by the dominance of transatlantic U.S. modernism, relegating these works-- as popular as they once were-- to the level of regionalist, provincial curiosities. There is one novel, titled *The Leaning Tower* (1934), which is unique, as it takes-on the exact topic of the discussion here: the New York City skyscraper and the Neo-American style. In *The Leaning Tower*, author Fred Rothermell offers a literary dramatization of the architectural visions offered by Bossom and Mujica.[53]

The brief biography of Rothermell included in the front matter of his book describes the author as a failed medical student, failed reporter and holder of various odd jobs between his home in San Francisco and settling in New York City. Little known today, Rothermell has at

[53] Rothermell dedicates his novel to Timothy Pflueger, a San Francisco architect working in similar veins, but the book's U.S. settings are exclusively in the region surrounding New York City. For this reason, a direct discussion of Pflueger has been omitted from the brief discussion of Rothermell's novel.

least two novels and a short story collection to his name. *The Leaning Tower* tells the story of Paul DeMuth, fictional architect and partner in the fiction firm, Walldron and DeMuth. The book opens with DeMuth having recently returned to his offices in New York City from a research expedition in Mexico where he visited many ancient Mesoamerican archaeological ruins in search of inspiration for the decoration of his current project,[54] a seventy-two-story skyscraper on 42nd Street in Midtown Manhattan, to be named "The Aztec Tower." The novel includes frequent musings by DeMuth on both skyscrapers and ancient Mesoamerican pyramids. DeMuth is a restless middle-aged man who feels removed from the modern materialism of his daughter, Muriel, while also becoming increasingly estranged from his wife, Helen, after his return. In the central chapters of the book, DeMuth removes to Mexico once again, living in anonymity with a mistress in the fictional town of Sierra Verde, far from any of the preoccupations of modernity. He is recalled suddenly to New York as an emergency has transpired with the Aztec Tower: the structural integrity of the foundation has been compromised and the building has begun to lean at an alarming rate, threatening both the project itself and the city blocks surrounding it. Although the book ends on an uncertain note, the reader is led to believe that the project will be saved and so too is there renewed hope for DeMuth's personal relationships.

In contrast to other literary treatments of the skyscraper, Rothermell's is captivated by the possibilities of the skyscraper in the modern era, although the end of the novel leaves the reader with a sense of ambivalence toward the skyscraper's future role in New York City and the U.S.

[54] The sites that DeMuth references throughout the book are many. A complete list is as follows: Mitla, Teotihuacán, Xochicalco, Chichén Itzá, Uxmal, Palenque and Copán. All are in Mexico except for Copán, which is relatively far removed from the others and in modern-day Honduras. Chichén Itzá is by far the most important site in the book and merits some fourteen individual references.

more generally, given the context of the Great Depression.[55] Nonetheless, the book presents the skyscraper through the perspective of an architect fully enchanted by the "enormous vogue of things Mexican."

DeMuth is fascinated by Mexico and, upon his return to the U.S. at the outset of the novel, shares his romanticized vision of the country and its people with anyone who will listen, having found architectural influences in ancient Mesoamerican pyramids and mystical poetry. Despite the overly enthusiastic quality of DeMuth's speeches on the subject, he is a sincere character and the book is written in a serious tone, despite its sometimes strained and cumbersome prose.[56]

Whatever the literary merits of *The Leaning Tower*, it is perceptive in its understanding of the building processes behind the skyscrapers of the era. Any number of possible skyscrapers from the area and period might be Rothermell's source of inspiration here,[57] but the novel is punctuated at significant moments with the reality of skyscraper construction in terms of need, structure and aesthetics, within the context of an already densely populated city.

In the opening chapter, DeMuth is confronted by aesthetic questions over his choice of style in design. His interrogator is Gus Weeks, a young, Greenwich Village-intellectual-type of the era. Weeks asks, "'what part of Mayan or Aztec architecture can logically play in the modern skyscraper'" and then, taking a more direct line of questioning, asks whether or not

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[55] In *The Power Broker*, a history of New York City in the years of urban planner, Robert Moses, author Robert Caro offers a striking image that is relevant here: "New York in 1932 was half-constructed skyscrapers, work on them long since halted for lack of funds, that glared down on the city from glassless windows" (323). So too is the reader reminded of Benét's short story with which this discussion began.

[56] *The Leaning Tower* is also a prime example of how U.S. culture, despite the popular interest in the "enormous vogue of things Mexican," had little actual knowledge of these cultures and a tendency to completely confuse the differences among Mesoamerican civilizations. The same is true in the use of the blanket term "Mayan Revival."

[57] Including, but not limited to, such Midtown structures as The American Radiator Building (1924), The Chanin Building (1929), The Chrysler Building (1931), The Daily News Building (1929-1930)-- and The RCA Building (1933), with which some compelling parallels can be drawn.

"'The application of Aztec design to modern building isn't another fad?'" (27). DeMuth answers the first question quite literally, responding that the ancient Mesoamerican construction methods could never possibly reach the seventy-two stories of his current project and that the fundamentals of the building types have little in common. He replies, however:

> 'The design of the cruciform of the tower was suggested by the cruciform tomb at Mitla in Mexico, and placed vertically in the form of a winged shaft, the four wings are exposed to light and air and meet the zoning requirements. Which means that the form has followed the function. I merely took the cruciform design and raised it in a vertical cross which, with sufficient base, could stand any height.' (28).

The steel frame of the building provides for a height that the load-bearing masonry of Mesoamerica could never achieve. At the same time, it is the basic form of the building that allows it to "meet the zoning requirements." The cruciform design will make the building amenable to tenants and so, by allowing for inspiration to come from the archaeological site at Mitla, DeMuth can carry forward the appropriate decorative elements in which he has also found inspiration. Significantly, DeMuth places his building and the logic of its design in what is now, after the twentieth-century, a tired architectural cliché. It was Louis Sullivan who originally wrote, "form ever follows function" in "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," but by the 1930s (via other intermediate architectural theories), had been adopted by those practitioners of what is now considered "High Modernism." At the time of Rothermell's writing, the phrase would imply the rejection of all ornament and decoration in favor of what had been defined as the "International Style" by Hitchcock and Johnson at MoMA in 1932.

The subtext of the conversation between Weeks and DeMuth echoes the general architectural debate of the era.[58] The implication of Weeks' questions is that the motifs and

[58] While DeMuth is depicted as misunderstood by his partner and the architectural community at large, he sees himself as keeping company with real-life architects such as Raymond Hood (29) and Hugh Ferriss (92), both of

design elements of DeMuth's Aztec Tower are merely the current fashion. From this perspective, any lasting architectural contribution will represent and transcend its age through the rejection of superficial ornamentation. DeMuth's response, then, is a direct challenge to such thinking. There is nothing inherently ancient or modern in the cruciform structure and it might evolve into a Mayan Revival skyscraper as sincerely as it might inspire the towers of Le Corbusier's *Ville Contemporaine*. From this perspective, the lack of ornamentation does not offer aesthetic transcendence but is, instead, merely another aesthetic variant.[59] The technology, speed and mechanization of the era no more resemble the clean lines and right angles of the international style than the curves and zigzagged lines of Art Deco. Nor can there be any purely logical application of design practices to architecture. As the French architects Michel Roux-Spitz and Jean Porcher write in 1929:

> Le Corbusier's architecture belongs to a system. In the case of the architecture of tradition, it leads to the pursuit of arbitrary form and formula. It is the contrary of, and nor more realist than, academicism. Whether he wishes to or not, he is impelled to design facades or ornaments to correspond with his ideal of 'modern' form…. Instead of curves, he may have straight lines; in place of masses more or less elegantly rounded-- cubes; he may multiply unnecessarily the angles, corner windows, details not plumb, and substitute wherever possible the vertical for the horizontal. And these new forms he will name 'modern.' (qtd. in Striner 32)

By the 1930s, however, there was an "intellectual hegemony, if not intellectual tyranny, achieved by the purist international style" (Striner 25).

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whom were influential at the time and are now widely accepted as visionaries in the history of the modern skyscraper.

[59] The architect and theorist, Alan Colquhoun, has written on the complexities of modern architecture in terms of rationalism and regionalism-- whether it should be "conditioned by a universal technology" or by "local customs, climates, etc." (2007, 144). What is ignored in this binary, which comes from Le Corbusier, is that it ignores "the possibility that universal technology and local custom are intimately connected, so that a change in one necessarily produces a change in the other" (144). More directly to the point mentioned above: in Le Corbusier "reference to the Mediterranean vernacular (cubic form, white walls, etc.) was just as prominent as the idea of industrial standardization" (147-148).

The transience and temporality of all architecture-- even skyscrapers-- is important to DeMuth and the first glimpse of this is found in the same passage. It is no mistake that the architectural inspiration found at Mitla is a tomb. The Aztec Tower will later become a tomb for at least one worker, whose body is left buried in its foundation. While DeMuth is haunted by this incident throughout the book, it is always connected to his preoccupation with the permanency of the building endeavor. The Aztec Tower becomes the eponymous "leaning tower," threatening to destroy its neighboring buildings.

The question of the building's permanence also relates to the rupture DeMuth begins to feel between the Mesoamerican culture which inspires him and the culture in which he lives-- and for which he builds. He reflects upon this during his return to Mexico in the middle of the novel: "DeMuth felt everything in Mexico waited: there was no tomorrow, no towers for tomorrow, but the crumbling white and yellow towers of yesterday" (273). The sentiment stands in almost direct contrast to the typical idea of the U.S. city and its character-- always being built, always building higher, always looking toward the future and its promise. The RCA Building, the most likely source of inspiration for Rothermell, incorporates this attitude into its design with a brief passage from Isaiah that adorns one of its entryways: "Wisdom and knowledge shall be stability of thy times" (33:6).[60] It is part of a larger sequence of passages in the book that describe God's protection of his chosen people in Zion before the judgment and destruction of enemies. The careful selection of a passage from this prophecy for the RCA building maintains confidence in the future and the present age, but emphasizes the human capacity to preserve and uphold it. In the bas-relief sculpture above the passage, a god-like figure holds in his hand a compass and seems to suggest the power of mankind to shape and maintain its fate.

[60] The King James Version of the Bible is used here and throughout the dissertation.

DeMuth has a passage from a significant pre-Columbian poet, Nezahualcoyotl-- or, as translated by Rothermell, "Famishing Coyote"-- which he imagines carved into the walls of the lobby of his Aztec Tower. It reads: "That Which Was Yesterday Is Not Today And Let Not That Which Is Today Trust To Live To Tomorrow" (78). Part of a much longer passage, this captures the central meaning of the poem, which dwells on the fleeting, temporal quality of the material world from which mankind cannot escape.[61] DeMuth remarks that the passage from Nezahualcoyotl is "Beautiful as ominous," and, despite the irony of engraving this in the lobby of a seventy-two story skyscraper in New York City, he muses that "the Syndicate wouldn't understand. Poetry is out of scale in an office building and the architect is mad enough" (6). The prophecy will fall on deaf ears and unthinking minds, as will any such words in the modern city.

The Leaning Tower offers a critique of the hubris behind the skyscraper endeavor but, at the same time, Rothermell does not imagine an alternative to the vertical city, nor do the characters choose to flee. Rather, the vision is that these towers, while perhaps representative of human pride and vanity, also connect with the spirit of all great civilizations, present, past and future. So, while DeMuth's optimism is frequently punctuated by melancholic reflections on the disconnect between the architectural style he has found and the culture for which he is trying to build, a full vision that blends his mystical reflections and realistic realizations is found through his wife, Helen. In the novel's final scene, it is New Year's Eve 1933 and prohibition has been repealed. The couple goes to the quiet observation deck of the Aztec Tower to get away from the raucous celebration on the city streets. As they look out over Manhattan from the building's observation deck, Helen's thoughts dwell on the other buildings of Manhattan-- real and

[61] A similar passage from the Bible might be, "For dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

fictional-- shrouded by the mist of a damp winter night. The architecture becomes universalized as she imagines the ancient temples of Indonesia, but she is recalled immediately to the present moment:

> The fog rose as incense might have risen in Java, and the spires of the temples which she knew were the spires of the Empire State and Chrysler and Chanin and Lincoln and American Safe and Vault and Weissendorfer buildings became spires in Java for her; lights flickered through the opaque mist and far down the fine yellow eyes of cars traced angular patterns of light against the black mirror of the streets as they turned the corner where the building rose in three decks to the converging shaft, too near and hard and real to have been anything but the Aztec Tower in New York, from which one might look upon Java. (355)

Although the buildings around her can only be the skyscrapers of Manhattan, as expressions of a civilization they stand alongside the temples of Prambanan in Java or the Mayan pyramids of Tikal-- built for eternity, but built by man and destined to crumble all the same. When Helen's mind returns to New York and the skyscraper atop which she stands, she and the reader become aware that, as one might now look back upon the ruins of formerly great civilizations, so too will future civilizations look back upon the ruins of her own.

As with the final lines of Benét's short story: "We must build again." This position should not be hopeless, but instead urge the contemporary architect toward imagining the possibility of the present moment in a way that resembles Williams's composition of his essay on "The Destruction of Tenochtitlan."[62] It is the creation of order out of the confusion of history, of making sense of the present moment. This is embodied in Art Deco generally-- and the Mayan Revival more specifically. The larger impulse represents:

> [a] simultaneous reaching out to the past and future [that] was symptomatic of concerns of the interwar period. Here was a design that sought to 'locate' itself symbolically-- and by extension to offer a commentary on its times and its cultural milieu-- using extremes in historical imagery as points of emotional reference. What better way to 'get one's bearings,' so to speak, to conjure with

[62] See the Introduction to this dissertation for a discussion of this essay.

> the question, Who, and where, are we, in this turbulent age of the machine? (Striner 22)

The ideas of Mujica, Bossom and Rothermell correspond with the archaeologist's exploration of the past as articulated by Mason, who wrote that the central questions of archaeology are "Who am I, what am I, whence have I come?"

Reading Mujica's *History* as a manifesto for a future aesthetic, a "Neo-American" style developed from what he sees as a contemporary American Renaissance in architecture, gives a sense of who the American people are in terms of the history of the New World-- the promise, failure and restoration of the encounter between Europe and America. Through careful study, Mujica treats the architectural achievements of Mesoamerica *qua* architecture, uncovering a "usable past" for the New World and its future. It is a reconstruction of the New World in its own terms: "When all the forms peculiar to us have germinated in our minds and can follow the summons of our imagination we will be prepared to create this new architecture and to produce designs and plans embodying reminiscences of their primitive origin, but at the same time revealing their modern character clearly and powerfully" (20). From this, Mujica is able to present a vision for contemporary urban planning, "The City of the Future: Hundred Story City in Neo-American Style" (Plate CXXXIV) (see fig. 09), which fits comfortably next to such achievements as *The Metropolis of Tomorrow* (1929) by Hugh Ferriss or even *The City of To-Morrow and its Planning* by Le Corbusier (1929).

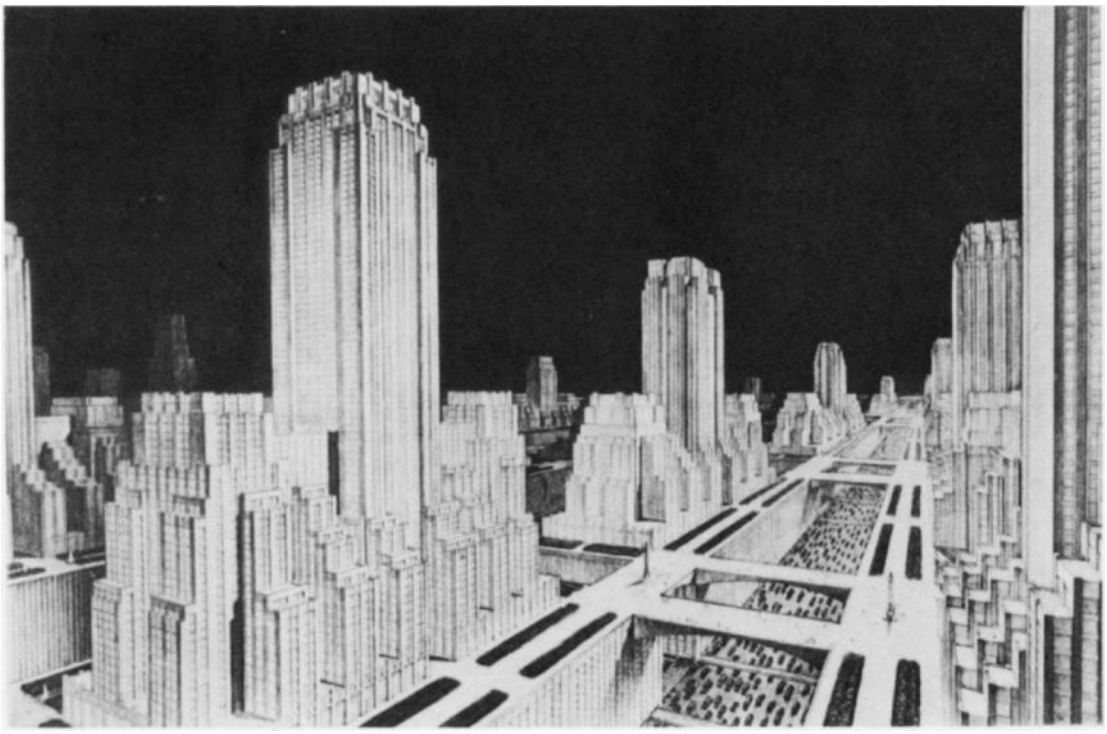

Fig. 09. "The City of the Future: Hundred Story City in Neo-American Style"

Mujica's aesthetic finds a style that is both modern and yet decidedly regional and hemispheric in its conception and execution.

From a contemporary perspective such visions seem overly rigid and controlling in their totalizing vision of the metropolis. Yet, by paying close attention to its various elements, one can observe the regional roots of the aesthetic. The lines, height and form of the structures seek to satisfy the needs of the growing modern metropolis, balanced with a conscious application of design to create a style that is recognizably "American"-- international and inter-regional in its relevance to the New World and its possibilities in the twentieth-century.

Although post-dating the era of this discussion, the concept of "critical regionalism" in architecture brings forward the importance of maintaining this duality in understanding modernist architecture that was not of the International Style. Developed in the 1980s by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, the concept of "critical regionalism" signifies an attempt

to “avoid becoming entangled within the modernist versus postmodernist debate,” instead choosing to “shift the focus of the discussion towards what seemed … a more imperative subject with long-term significance: the modern-anti-modern struggle” (2003, 10). Despite the decades and shifts in architectural aesthetic that made critical regionalism necessary for its proponents, its tenets can be applied to the architectural projects explored above. One of the foremost historians of modern architecture, Kenneth Frampton, describes the strategy of critical regionalism as attempting “to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived *indirectly* from the peculiarities of a particular space” (1983b, 21). As seen, architects such as Bossom and Mujica were very much of their moment, engaging with the rapidly modernizing metropolis and observable shift toward universal architectural aesthetic imported primarily from Europe.

Both Mujica and Bossom attempt to mitigate the totalizing and controlling vision of architecture and urban planning present in the growing esteem granted the International Style. While there is plenty in this architecture to which critical regionalists may object (such as the quasi-nationalistic reasoning behind the search for a truly “American” style), architectural historian Spyros Amourgis writes that the essence of critical regionalism is opposed to “meaningless modernization and vernacular sentimentalism” and, as such, it “emphasizes context, sensitivity to the environment, history and culture. Thereby, it strives through a ‘defamiliarization’ process to strengthen the particular versus the anonymous thrust of universal civilization” (IX). If these skyscraper designs belong to the larger Art Deco phenomenon, then they also “represent an unprecedented search for Americanisms in architecture. Regional elements in the form of building materials and ornamental motifs like the American Indian” (Messler 54-55) are as indicative of the continent as any part of the modern technology of mechanized society.

These many sources, in concert with the rest of the industrialized world, allowed the skyscraper to be both a fully international building type that originated in the U.S. Although now overshadowed, architects such as Mujica and Bossom attempted to make their tall buildings relevant both internationally and locally-- truly modern and capable of finding variation in expression throughout the hemisphere.

CHAPTER 2

TRAVELERS AS GEOGRAPHERS IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY MEXICO

While the Mexican Revolution is perhaps most popularly known as the ten-year civil war that began with the toppling of the regime of dictator, Porfirio Díaz (1876-1910), the subsequent twenty-year span (1920-1940) is part of a larger revolutionary period in the country, during which the many factions that fought in battle during the violent period continued to fight in the political arena-- through elections, coups, interim administrations and assassinations-- in order to consolidate the government and the Constitution of 1917. Part of this larger process of consolidation and institutionalization of revolutionary ideas would be the modernization and industrialization of the country, which came with a new degree of foreign influence and, importantly, an increase in tourist travel given the relative stability of this later era.

The following chapter is arranged to highlight the ways in which the image of Mexico in the U.S. would evolve during the interwar period. Given the circumstances of the Mexican Revolution, the earliest knowledge of Mexico at that time arrived in the U.S. via journalism-- and many reporters went to Mexico in search of the socialist ideals espoused by the revolutionary cause. The hopes for socio-political change were also connected with the idea of an "authentic" folk culture. For most of the artists and intellectuals who would follow the journalists, it is here that the image of Mexico would solidify. For them, Mexico would provide an escape from U.S. culture and, for the optimists, a possible corrective to the rapid modernization north of the border. Their enthusiasm would be instrumental to introducing the U.S. to Mexico and Latin America more generally, but would also inevitably lead to the misrepresentation of Mexico as an idealized image.

For those artists and writers who were fully conscious of the post-revolutionary modernization of the country, Mexico could lead only to disillusionment, never capable of becoming the idealized vision. Part of the problem was that Mexico came to represent, in the popular imagination, a place that could not exist apart from a more complex reality. The tensions revealed are generally related to a sincere desire for genuine cultural exchange between the two countries, to learn from Mexico something that might provide inspiration in their own search for a "usable past" in a broader hemispheric context. Despite these efforts, many of those who went to Mexico would abandon it when they could no longer overlook its complexities. Mexico would be left in the realm of the imaginary, valued for its symbolic role in the popular imagination.

The tension between the real and the imaginary is, in part, why Mexico is a "distant neighbor"[63] to the U.S.-- kept much further away mentally than its physical proximity to the U.S. should reasonably allow. The phrase "distant neighbor" suggests a spatial component that is as important to the discussion here as elsewhere in this dissertation. Much of the failure of the cultural exchange between the two countries has to do with habits of travel in U.S. culture at the time which stem from how regions and cities are understood in the different cultures.

In *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (1985), geographer John A. Jakle writes:

> The region, as a concept, provided tourists with a means of organizing the diversity of sights encountered in travel. Different kinds of people, economies, and physical environments produced different kinds of landscapes from one part of North America to another. Thus, the North was stereotyped in one way, the South, the East, and the West in other ways. An important purpose in travel was to verify these stereotypes firsthand, and to make one's own regional discoveries. (199)

[63] See the Introduction to this dissertation for a brief discussion of this term.

While regions were important distinctions through which travelers might organize their understanding of the vast expanse of the continent, they did so in a dubious and superficial way that relied upon preconceived notions. Jakle continues by writing that "The majority of travelers sought the obvious, ignoring the subtleties of place. They looked for traditional stereotypes rooted in sectional history and were often wont to overlook modernization in its distinctive regional forms. In comparing regions, most tourists sought to deal with extreme differences, overlooking shades of divergence" (200). The tendency toward selective interpretation of the landscape through the emphasis on differences "rooted in sectional history" is significant. For geographers, "regionalism" and "sectionalism" are at odds in a fundamental way and that travel might resemble an affinity toward the latter is troublesome.

In their comprehensive, contemporaneous study of the topic, *American Regionalism: A Cultural-Historical Approach to National Integration* (1938), sociologists Howard W. Odum and Harry Estill Moore write that "the essential quality of sectionalism … is the idea of separatism and isolation; of separate units with separate interests" (39). They continue: "It must be clear that, since the very definition of regionalism implies a unifying function, it must be different from sectionalism as everywhere defined by historians. Here the distinctions are clear between the divisive power of self-seeking *sections* and the integrating power of co-ordinate *regions* fabricated into a united whole" (39). Odum and Moore are writing in the vein of what they call the "new regionalism," a movement premised on the assumption "that the United States must not, either because of its bigness and complexity or because of conflicting interests, become a federation of conflicting sections but a homogeneity of varying regions" (39). So, while the many U.S. writers visiting Mexico recognized the various regions that composed the country,

they simultaneously "overlooked modernity" and the complications that arise from the variety of cultural landscapes presented, turning Mexico into just another "section" of the continent.

Among U.S. intellectuals of the era, however, the stereotyping of sections in the manner described by Jakle was being actively challenged via the "new regionalism" and its integrative potential. The integration of regions within the U.S. was one of the central tenets of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA),[64] a group of individuals dedicated to "a new culture" that "would begin with a migration from the metropolis into stable and balanced communities. This population movement had none of the trappings of a retreat toward a primitive life style; it would depend instead on the wise use of new and emergent technologies" (Sussman 30).[65] Such a vision was based in a stronger geographical awareness of the surrounding landscape, as explained by the RPAA's most prominent member, Lewis Mumford. In a 1931 essay titled, simply, "Regional Planning," he wrote, "Many of our states are even 'defined' by river boundaries despite the fact, which the geographers of the nineteenth century were to establish, that the river is a highway and a means of intercourse, not a barrier" (1976, 200). The concept of the river as an organizing landscape feature speaks to the integrated vision of regionalism proposed by the RPAA. Treating rivers as boundaries functions in a sectionalist worldview, whereas the treatment of rivers as the confluence of human activity-- useful in understanding settlement patterns-- functions in a regionalist worldview. For Odum and Moore, the example of the "river valley and other natural regions" offered by the RPAA provide "an important distinction … through which the national whole is envisaged as being better promoted by

[64] Other prominent members included: Frederick L. Ackerman, Alexander Bing, Stuart Chase (to be discussed at some length below), Benton MacKaye, Clarence Stein and Henry Wright.
[65] It was the May 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic*, titled *The Regional Community*, that introduced the platform of the RPAA to a wider audience. The number was published after the International Town, City and Regional Planning Conference hosted by the RPAA in New York that April and, in an interesting historical coincidence, this issue was released exactly one year after the publication of the *Survey Graphic* number on Mexico, mentioned below.

regional rather than state action, implies a definite meaning of the region quite different from the section" (51). River valleys and other natural landscapes, together with the built landscapes of human beings in such locations create a complex network of regions that overlap with one another rather than walling themselves off from one another. Although the RPAA was instrumental in promoting practical design ideas for the construction and organization of human settlement patterns in the landscape,[66] the greater contribution-- although unrealized-- would have been the cultivation of a major shift in how the geographical expanse of the U.S. can be understood as an organic whole composed of regions, rather than an inorganic federation of artificial political units.[67]

Despite the growing presence of the "new regionalism" among geographers and concerned cultural critics, however, the integrated vision it offered is rarely evident among the authors of this period-- eclipsed by the desire to seek the confirmation of expectations central to tourism and travel in North America at that time. As mentioned in the opening paragraphs, this began with those who first arrived, the journalists.

On 28 August 1921, soon after the violence of the Mexican Revolution's first decade subsided, the *New York Tribune* published an exclusive, extended interview with Mexican revolutionary leader, Francisco "Pancho" Villa. Written by their correspondent, the journalist

[66] The most well-known embodiments of this are the "garden cities" of Radburn, New Jersey and Greenbelt, Maryland. Perhaps the best articulation of their ideas can be found in their unrealized proposal for future development in the State of New York as written in their *Report of the Commission of Housing and Regional Planning to Governor Alfred E. Smith* (1926).

[67] In his recent study on "Critical Regionalism" (2007) Douglas Reichert Powell argues that contemporary understandings of regionalism lose sight of these important aspects of the RPAA's message: "the integrative way they theorized and used the term to connote the relationship among different types of landforms, settlements, and patterns of material extraction, production, and circulation, and simultaneously to denote the generative interaction of different types of human endeavor" (148). For this reason, he argues for a "critical regionalism" as a way of recovering some tenets of the RPAA. The term "critical regionalism" was coined by architects Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre. It has been popularized and applied in many fields that emphasize spatial aspects of culture and some of its concepts are applied to the discussion of skyscraper architecture in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

and playwright, Sophie Treadwell,[68] the article was titled "A Visit to Villa: A 'Bad Man' Not so Bad." In it, one of the most recognizable figures of the Mexican Revolution, Villa was reassessed by and for an audience from the United States. In their prefatory note, the editors of the *Tribune* write of their feature: "This story of Villa, the most picturesque figure of modern Mexico, reveals a Villa hitherto a stranger to the American press" (44). Introducing Villa as the "famed so-called bandit," Treadwell details her two-day stay with Villa on his hacienda near Canutillo, in the state of Durango in northern Mexico. While there, she is won-over by Villa's earnest good nature and the general hospitality of the hacienda. Treadwell brings a new image of Villa to the attention of the U.S. newspaper audience, demonstrating how he had been misrepresented and, whatever his reputation during the preceding decade of revolutionary activity, he is unique. Treadwell distills her thoughts on Villa's qualities toward the end of her article: "Of ignorant men come to power there have been plenty. Of revolutionarios, plenty. Of generals, plenty. But there never has been one of these willing to lay down his arms for the good of all and to retire in peace to an inglorious life of toil" (66). Alone among revolutionary leaders, Villa did not lay down his arms for political power, but to become a rancher. His "life of toil" on the hacienda is, for Treadwell, central to Mexico's revolutionary promise, as the hacienda is one of the most distinctive built landscapes found in Mexico.

Treadwell's reassessment of Villa as "not so bad" relies upon the hacienda at Canutillo as the literal setting of the interview, as well as the symbolic role of haciendas in the cultural landscape of Mexico. Important as built environments of architectural significance as well as places that structured the socio-economic life of the country for over three-hundred years, the significance of the hacienda cannot be underestimated. Traditionally, the hacienda is a type of

[68] Treadwell is largely overlooked in literary study today with the possible exception of her most famous play, *Machinal* (1928).

estate that controlled vast amounts of productive land dedicated to farming, ranching, mining or factory production. The resources, production and economic wealth were controlled and managed by the *hacendado* and his family. It was around these estates that the system of land control in Mexico was centered and to which the deep socio-economic stratification of Mexico was linked.

The overthrow of the hacienda system and the redistribution of property through agrarian land reform was one of the primary objectives of the Mexican Revolution. In his classic study of Mexican culture and history, *Many Mexicos* (1941), Lesley Byrd Simpson traces the system back to its European roots, writing that "One of the most grievous of the ills bequeathed by the Spaniards to the New World was this passion of the white men to grab land and set themselves up as semi-independent feudal lords over vast estates-- known as the institution of *latifundismo*" (257). The arrangement of these lands and associated architectural elements came to resemble "little principalities." Simpson continues:

> the masters lived in full enjoyment of the traditional privileges of the noble caste. The center of the hacienda was the 'big house,' walled and fortified like any mediaeval castle. The Indian population of the hacienda, although nominally hired for wages, was, in effect, a body of retainers, tied to their lord by the intangible spiritual and material bonds characteristic of the feudal relationship. The hacendado was the patriarch. (260)

There is an irony in Villa's newfound role as the head of the hacienda, as a central goal of the revolution was the destruction of this system of land ownership. Throughout Treadwell's article, the workers all treat Villa as a patriarchal figure, referring to him with the phrase *mi general*-- and Treadwell herself continuously refers to him as the *jefe*. So too does Villa act the part, remarking to Treadwell: "'We have not drinking here, señorita. No gambling. No disorderly houses. Not even a *baile*. Nothing but work-- *puro trabajo*'" (59). Presiding over his estate run by revolutionaries-turned-farmhands, Villa is a charming advocate for his current endeavor.

Referring to himself as "'a simple farmer who knows nothing of what is going on in the outside world'" (50), his removal to the hacienda distinguishes him from other former revolutionary leaders and Treadwell remarks, "Villa, alone, stays with his land-- and works!" (66). It is a life of industry and ethic that would appeal to the sensibilities of a skeptical U.S. audience. Treadwell becomes a proponent of Villa and, in speculating on his abilities as a leader of men, returns to his patriarchal "gifts amounting to genius-- for organization, for order, for command. This and a supreme instinct for handling common men" (66-67). The qualities of Villa's leadership and his position as the head of the hacienda are well-matched. In him, Treadwell places her hopes for a post-revolutionary Mexico that reimagines the past landscape under a new and progressive political system,[69] fostered by men like Villa. In the end, Treadwell is carried-away by the promise of the revolutionary project, as the violence had then subsided. She concludes her newspaper article by exclaiming, "Viva Villa!" (67)-- and she is not alone among journalists who espoused sympathy with the socialist revolutions around the world at that time.[70]

The combination of factors embodied by Treadwell-- her literary ambition, past reportage and travel, as well as her socialist sympathies-- are the basis for two of Treadwell's works published in the following decade: a play, *Gringo* (1922) and a novel, *Lusita* (1931).[71] The example provided by Treadwell illustrates how images of Mexico came to enter the popular

[69] In the introduction to Paul Alexander Bartlett's study of haciendas, Gisela von Wobeser writes that "the disintegration of the haciendas began as a result of the Mexican Revolution," but that it would not be until the 1930s and 40s that these "huge rural estates" would be fully "fragmented and converted into *ejidos* or *minifundios*" (xxiii).
[70] Throughout the piece, Treadwell consistently describes Villa in sympathetic terms, some of which are bizarre. One particularly odd description is of his voice. She writes: "It is difficult to describe Villa's voice. It has an even, singing quality and seems to come from far off, to be detached; something like Ethel Barrymore's-- only booming and powerful" (1). Strangely enough, although his career would never match that of "the first lady of American theater," Villa had appeared as himself in several Hollywood films that documented events of the Mexican Revolution. Perhaps the most famous example is *The Life of General Villa* (1914), directed by Christy Cabanne and Raoul Walsh. The movie is from the silent era, however, so the audience would not have had the pleasure of hearing such a voice.
[71] The play, *Gringo*, has long been out of publication and had a limited Broadway run; the novel, *Lusita*, will be considered later in this chapter next to other works by U.S. writers in the early 1930s.

imagination of U.S. culture at large. Few tourists went to Mexico during the Revolution's violent decade, but it was actively reported on by the press. Along with Treadwell, two other notable reporters were John "Jack" Reed and Carleton Beals. Both Reed and Beals were unabashed sympathizers with the revolutionary cause and the socialist ideals behind it. So too would both authors meditate upon their experiences by translating their reportage into literary reflection. Preceding his well-known account of Russia's October Revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1917), Reed's history of the Mexican Revolution, *Insurgent Mexico* (1914) led the way in analyzing the current events across the southern border of the U.S., although his literary output on Mexico is limited to a pair of short stories and two vignettes published under the title "Mexican Pictures" (1914).[72] Beals would write prolifically on Mexico. In addition to his book-length works of Mexican history and culture, among which *Mexico: An Interpretation* (1923), *Mexican Maze* (1931) and *Porfirio Díaz, Dictator of Mexico* (1932) are notable contributions, his memoirs include several anecdotal stories relating his life and adventures as a reporter during the Revolution.[73] Beals also wrote novels, two of which dramatize the plight of common Mexicans: *Black River* (1934) and *The Stones Awoke* (1936), the former dealing with the exploitation of Mexican citizens by U.S. oil interests and the latter exploring the role of women in the Mexican Revolution.[74] The range of publication dates of these few works, from soon after-- or, in the case of Reed, during-- the Mexican Revolution through the middle-1930s, hints at a period of intense interest in Mexico throughout U.S. culture. One newspaper columnist

[72] The two short stories are "Mac--American" and Endymion: or On the Border." Both, along with the two "Mexican Pictures" ("Soldiers of Fortune" and "Peons") are now known primarily due to their inclusion in the collection, *Daughter of the Revolution and other Stories* (1927).
[73] The memoirs by Beals from this period are: *Brimstone and Chili: A Book of Personal Experiences in the Southwest and in Mexico* (1927), *Glass Houses: Ten Years of Free-Lancing* (1938) and *The Great Circle: Further Adventures in Free-Lancing* (1940). A later book, *House in Mexico* (1958), would look back at his years living within the art community in Mexico City.
[74] Female revolutionary soldiers, known as *soldaderas* (or sometimes *Adelitas*), were an integral part of the revolutionary effort, particularly within the revolutionary armies of northern Mexico.

referred to it as "the enormous vogue of things Mexican," a phrase borrowed by Helen Delpar for her extensive study of this period, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (1992).[75] Written works on the subject can be found across genres and were wide-ranging, covering all areas of art and culture.

Perhaps the most famous specialized publication was *Mexican Folkways*, published under the direction of author, anthropologist and ethnographer, Frances Toor. The magazine gathered a diverse set of interested parties, demonstrating the wide interest in Mexico that would cut across political sympathies and ideologies-- as well as academic and amateur interest in sociology, anthropology and folklife. Toor's magazine included essays, articles, photographs and drawings ranging across the many cultures of Mexico, exploring the various traditions, beliefs, myths, folklore, handicrafts, costumes, cuisine, songs, dances and other customs of Mexico and the diverse peoples and indigenous groups that the country included. Mexico entered the U.S. imagination as an accessible neighboring country with a vibrant, indigenous folk culture-- in many ways, a more exotic extension of the southwestern U.S.

While *Mexican Folkways* was dedicated to the folk culture of Mexico, various other publications partook in-- and contributed to-- its "enormous vogue" in the U.S. at that time. One such example is *The Survey*, a journal primarily concerned with social reform and the professional field of social work, which also published monthly "graphic numbers" for a more general audience. Covering many areas of interest, these "graphic numbers" were given over to extensive consideration of a timely subject, issue or theme.[76] The May 1924 issue of *The*

[75] Delpar writes: "In 1933 the *New York Times* noted the phenomenon in a reference to 'the present enormous vogue of things Mexican,' adding: 'It came into being at the height of our prosperity when people gave signs of being fed up with material comforts and turned, for a respite from the Machine Age, to primitive cultures. Mexico lay close at hand'" (55).

[76] Perhaps the most famous example of this publication's importance is the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic*, titled *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro*, guest-edited by Alain Locke.

Survey: Graphic Number is titled *Mexico -- A Promise*. The titular essay of the issue was written by historian and sociologist, Frank Tannenbaum, who would later publish *The Mexican Agrarian Revolution* (1930) and *Peace by Revolution: An Interpretation of Mexico* (1933), both of which are among the more influential histories of Mexico written before World War II. In his essay, Tannenbaum writes: "To the United States Mexico is more than a neighbor, more than a different country, more than a field of commercial and industrial exploitation. It is the gateway to a continent, not only physically, but spiritually, culturally-- the gateway to an understanding of a hundred million people who inhabit the mountains and the valleys from the Rio Grande to the Straits of Magellan" (129). For Tannenbaum, Mexico is important as a neighbor in the larger scope of a new Pan-American vision at that time. As Tannenbaum indicates, however, the U.S. should be as much interested with the cultures of Latin America as it is with the practical geopolitical concerns. Each issue of *The Survey* opens with a summary of contents titled "The Gist of It" which, in this case, begins as follows: "Like our Irish number which some two years ago was brought out the week that saw the dream of an Irish Free State first realized, this Mexican issue is rarely opportune; and like it, it breaks away from the traditional lines of diplomatic and religious controversy to the aspirations of a people as set forth very largely by themselves" (127). The writers included political figures, such as former revolutionary and then-current president of Mexico, Plutarco Elías Calles;[77] artists such as Dr. Atl and Diego Rivera; the anthropologist and archaeologist Manuel Gamio; as well as the writers Esperanza Valazquez Bringas, Carleton Beals, Robert N. McLean and Katherine Anne Porter, all of whom, like Tannenbaum, would go on to publish books about Mexican history and culture and its relationship with the U.S. The sincere desire to let Mexican culture represent itself is reflected in

[77] Two other political contributors were both opposed to the Calles presidency: former Secretary of Public Education, José Vasconcelos and the then-recently assassinated governor of the State of Yucatán, Felipe Carillo.

those commissioned by *The Survey*, revealing the future that Mexico envisioned for itself. *Mexican Folkways*, on the other hand, spoke to a vision of the past which its U.S. audience would maintain as the "real" Mexico, whatever Toor's intentions may have been.

Throughout the mid-1920s, one sees the influence of popular publications on the U.S. cultural imagination and, through these reports, many writers would begin their later inquiries that would take the form of book-length, non-fictional accounts and literary fiction. As interest in Mexico grew, so too did the number of publications. In the period identified by Delpar, lists of fictional books would double and works of non-fiction very nearly so.[78] The way this new information affected the imagination, however, is harder to determine. Delpar writes: "Why Mexico made such a strong impression on travelers' senses is not completely clear. Psychologists and others agree that an individual's perception of an environment depends not only on its material reality but also on variables such as his or her expectations, imagination, training, and receptivity" (200). As seen, these factors would all but predetermine the course of travel for many U.S. visitors to Mexico, revealing a confirmation bias and resulting in the self-fulfillment of their expectations through travel. Delpar continues: "American visitors to Mexico undoubtedly anticipated great sensory and especially visual stimulation because of conventional affirmations of the country's picturesqueness and the artistry of its people" (200). She continues: "Mexico's visual power was so frequently asserted that it can be classified as a *topos*," a term she defines with the help of Susan Noakes' ideas about the rhetoric of travel writing.[79] Noakes defines *topos* as follows: "a commonly held notion about someone or something which is

[78] Delpar includes two tables indicating this phenomenon, dividing the period from 1920-1935 into two equal spans, one from 1920-1927 and the second from 1928-1935. The total number of fictional books published were fourteen and thirty-one, respectively; likewise, the total number of non-fiction books published were thirty-five and sixty-five (56, 176).

[79] A fuller account of Noakes's essay and its application to this dissertation is considered in the Introduction to this dissertation.

accepted as true virtually without question and carries rhetorical weight because of this special status accorded it by a particular audience" (qtd. in Delpar 200-201). What, then, is the *topos* of Mexico? In her analysis, Delpar describes how most writers focused on "the country's picturesqueness and the artistry of its people" and that "only rarely did an American visitor fail to mention the Mexican landscape or its sounds and smells" (200).[80] One would be hard-pressed to find a place on this earth lacking landscape, sound, or smell-- but the implications go further. The more important observation is that through this perspective, Mexico becomes flattened into another large, continental section south of the Rio Grande. Despite crossing an international boundary, "Mexico" becomes another region to visit, encouraging tourists to verify existing stereotypes firsthand.

This is not to say that the writers surveying Mexico for a U.S. audience ignored regional variations within Mexico. Most took time to draw distinctions among the major geographical and climatic regions. Important, broad distinctions are made among the border region, Baja California and the northern deserts of Mexico, as well as the tropical forests of the Yucatan Peninsula and Isthmus of Tehuantepec-- although writers tended to spend less time in those areas than in the Central Highlands. Different groups and traditions are also identified with their regional points of origin and it is not the diligence of anthropologists or ethnographers that is in question. Publications such as *Mexican Folkways* were essential "in the formation of the new Mexican attitude toward the Indian by making known his customs and art; and for the same reason the magazine has had an important influence on the modern art movement," as Toor herself writes in looking back on the early years of publication (1932, 230). The educative role that Toor identifies is important, but so too is her observation regarding the influence of folk

[80] Delpar cites the 1930 edition of *Terry's Guide to Mexico* and its description of Mexico as "a winsome, sunlit land; artistic, intellectual, extraordinarily picturesque" (qtd. in Delpar 201).

culture on modern art. As Oliver Debroise writes in his essay, "Mexican Art on Display" (2001), however, from the late-1920s onward, "curators and writers mainly would emphasize the adoption of 'primitive' forms and styles, and the continuity of such forms and styles, while practically denying more important and obvious formal ruptures. The 'primitive' began to overshadow the 'avant-garde,' counter to most artists' intentions" (29).[81] The trouble is not the flattening of Mexico into a single physical and cultural region, or into a single cultural region, but into a single type of culture-- one composed of local communities in non-urbanized, non-industrialized settings living in almost utopian harmony with their environment.

The idea of Mexico as being a country predominantly characterized by its indigenous folk culture contributes to the *topos* of Mexico for travelers at that time. Not only evident in travel guides, this idea of Mexico was perpetuated as most writers actively avoided the urban areas of the country, especially the capital. While forced to recognize Mexico City's presence, they dismissed the metropolis as being a poor representation of "authentic" Mexican culture. In the aptly-titled *Other Mexicos*,[82] the editors introduce the question of regional Mexican history by writing: "Taking the nation apart to examine its regions, to see how they have changed over time, and to explore their interrelationships and their connections to national and international developments is ultimately a powerful way to broaden our understanding of Mexico as a nation and as a region itself within the larger global community. Regional history need not be provincial" (3-4). If regionalism is an integrative concept, the landscape presents a larger urban-rural continuum-- the diversity of human settlement patterns that is only revealed by taking a substantial cross-section of the larger geographic expanse.

[81] See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for a more expansive discussion of Mexican visual art from this period.
[82] Edited by Thomas Benjamin and William McNellie.

Mumford touches upon the role of internationalism in his regionalist perspective-- and how the regionalist perspective is also a cosmopolitan one. In his essay, "Regional Planning" (cited above), he writes:

> The lanes of international travel and trade, the spread of a universal religion … or of a universal technique, like that of western science and mechanical invention, the existence of a common fund of ideas and interests tends to break down regional differentiations and to establish a universal basis for the common life. A regionalism that affected to ignore these forces would be absurd and stultifying for the presence of universal agencies does not wipe out the realities of regional life: it merely unites them to a greater whole. One must create an identity, a center of one's own, before one can have fruitful intercourse with other personalities. This holds true, too, for the relations between regions. (202)

In this sense, then, Jakle's travelers who have gone in search of "discoveries" hoping for the firsthand verification of stereotypes demonstrate a profound lack of imagination in understanding the relationship between their own home-regions and the places they would visit. As Mumford suggests, it demonstrates a lack of self-awareness, which is at the heart of cultural misunderstanding. As suggested above, such self-awareness is rarely evident in travel writing on Mexico, even among those who should know better.

Although Mumford and the RPAA would never achieve their regionalist vision for the U.S., their concerns over the totalizing effects of modernity would become part of the larger debate of their time. It is not surprising that one of their members would sojourn to Mexico, given the general interest in the country that had taken hold in the U.S. at that time. The economist, Stuart Chase, a well-known member of the RPAA, would write a book on Mexico rooted in the regionalist thinking of the RPAA, attempting to synthesize aspects of industrialized culture in the U.S. with the handicraft economy of Mexico. His book, *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas*,[83] was a way of expanding upon ideas he had first explored in a series of articles

[83] The book was co-written between Chase and his second wife, Marian Tyler. The title page recognizes her contribution, reading: "By Stuart Chase" followed, on a separate line, with the words: "In Collaboration with Marian

published in the *New Republic*, collected under the title, *Men and Machines* (1929). In it, Chase sought to understand the ways in which human society was changing along with improvements in modern science and technology. His conclusions "were far from comforting," writes Richard H. Pells, who describes Chase as being "appalled by the paradox of a situation in which technological improvements meant human catastrophe. Production was no longer socially useful" (28). Chase's concluding remarks offer a choice between two existing formulae, "government by business" or "state socialism" (347), neither of which, based on recent history, were desirable options. He imagines an alternative to these two, writing: "Or we can face the full implications of the machine, relying on no formulas because none adequate have been created, with nothing to guide us but our naked intelligence and a will to conquer" (347-348). The problem, for Chase, is that society lacks the ideas and ingenuity to find a better option.

The possible solution, he believes, is in a combination of the attributes found in the two very different societies. In searching for this solution, he relies heavily upon two contemporaneous studies. The first is *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (1929), by Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd; the second is *Tepoztlán, A Mexican Village: A Study of Folk Life* (1930), by Robert Redfield. Both are sociological studies and both are primarily concerned with life outside the major cities in their respective countries. Throughout the work, Chase is concerned with the "dramatic contrast," beginning with his observation that "The typical community in the United States is urban and industrialized; the typical community in Mexico is rural and lives from the soil and the forests" (16). Chase writes that, in the Mexican villages, "I saw a handicraft economy functioning much as it did in the middle ages, and so a

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Tyler." The exact degree of collaboration is never revealed and the narrative is alternatingly told from the perspective of the first-person-plural and -singular. The voice and style are consistent with the other works by Chase discussed in this chapter and elsewhere. Given these factors, the present consideration will follow the pattern of criticism over the past decades and will refer to the primary author, Chase, in the following discussion.

bench mark with which to compare my machines" (v). To do so, Chase brings his readers to a land of "Machineless Men," exploring many aspects of the daily life in a Mexican village in terms of this primary characteristic.[84] Searching for a balance between U.S. and Mexican culture-- one that preserves the indigenous traditions he has seen in practice while including modern developments (particularly in medicine, public health, infrastructure and education). He remarks on this wistfully in his final chapter when he writes: "If we could but take the manifest assets of Tepoztlan and the manifest assets of Middletown, and combine them. …" (311). A few pages later, he continues: "Mexico has unparalleled opportunity to evolve a master plan whereby the machine is admitted only on good behavior" (315). Chase imagines a Mexico in which remote communities are integrated into what he elsewhere calls an "economic region," an area in which there is a "unity of soil, climate, general topography, and racial mixture"[85] which, through proper planning, can be made "self-sustaining, less susceptible to the ebb and flow of external economic forces than they now are" (1931, 212 and 216). Although Chase promotes a hemispheric perspective and uses his regionalist hypotheses to understand Mexico, he does so in a rather peculiar way-- by largely ignoring the cities of Mexico, particularly the capital, Mexico City.

As seen, Chase was not alone in this. His book is one of many published on Mexico from that era and is representative of the type, which combined many genres and to a specific effect. Henry C. Schmidt describes the popular "discovery" of Mexico by a U.S. audience in these terms: "Much of the American discovery of Mexico in the 1920's was crystallized in its own

[84] These are chapters seven through eleven, each titled "Machineless Men" and subtitled, consecutively: "Their Food and Drink," "Their Shelter, Clothing and Health," "Their Work," "Their Play," "The Basic Pattern."
[85] Although race is not the focus of this chapter, it must be noted that it played a major role in the thinking of some of these writers, especially Chase. Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, cited elsewhere, writes of a racial "typological mania in both sympathetic intellectuals and Mexico bashers" (160). Chase belongs to the former group and, for Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas* provides "an emblematic case" of this (158).

special literature-- the travel essay, distinguished for its good writing, insight, and sensitivity to Mexican life. The authors of this genre combined adventure, travel, and ethnographical description" in a pattern of works written by foreigners about Mexico that dates to the nineteenth-century (and persists today).[86] Many of these were written for popular consumption, although there was a range in quality; Schmidt continues: "A more sophisticated interpretive literature joined elements of the travel account, essay, and monographic study; while at the scholarly level Americans wrote a spate of significant works on Mexico during this period" (344-345). Chase's book fits in this category, but the aspects of travelogue are what create a strange tension in the book that cannot be ignored. His intellectual ideas about Mexico and its role in testing his theories of economic regions is at odds with his role as a traveler and tourist revealing that, even this type of interested and sympathetic writer would travel "to verify these stereotypes firsthand," convinced of having made his own "discoveries." In this sense, Redfield's *Tepoztlán* provides Chase's interpretive model. On the very first page, Redfield informs his reader that what follows, a study of "The ways of the folk, largely unwritten and unremarked, constitute the real Mexico" (1).

The contradictory impulses are evident in the foreword of Chase's book, where he identifies himself as a tourist, writing: "I wanted a rest and I wanted to see paintings to which no process of reproduction in black and white can do justice. I went, then, for relaxation … I stayed-- and a few months later went again-- because so many things excited me" (v). He continues to emphasize the role that travel played in what became a small research project and one passage is particularly revealing:

> We kept away from the border states, and so far as possible, from Mexico City. The interest and excitement lay in the smaller towns and villages of central and

[86] Schmidt cites the well-known, best-selling work of John Lloyd Stephens, illustrated by British explorer Frederick Catherwood, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatán* (1841).

> southern Mexico. Here the Aztec and Maya traditions prevail with least corruption; here a handicraft culture may be best observed. … Our transportation included train, plane, motor car, motor boat, horse, burro, and human feet-- no little of the latter. (vi)

Written in the vein of the travelogue, Chase's book also maintains the same tendencies and preferences of travelers noted by Jakle. Chase's concern with "the smaller towns and villages" of Mexico reminds the reader that U.S. travelers typically "sought the obvious" and "looked for traditional stereotypes" and were "wont to overlook modernization in its distinctive regional forms." The paradox of this is that Chase-- and many others -- discuss the regional variations within Mexico at great length. The effect of his opening comments, however, reduce all Mexico to a single section (apart from the "border states"): the Central Highlands and its mountain villages, far from the capital and metropolis in the Valley of Mexico.

The way in which this pattern perpetuated itself in travel to Mexico is the same as that within the U.S. itself-- by focusing on those places where they could seek "the obvious, ignoring the subtleties of place." While not "rooted in sectional history" (although Mexico does have its own persistent regional stereotypes and identities), they travelled "in the search for place experience" (Jakle 224) that could recreate what they saw as "authentic" expressions of Mexican culture, examples of which could be found on a regular basis in the pages of *Mexican Folkways*, or in any of the many books published on or about Mexico.

Schmidt elaborates on his thoughts regarding the hybrid genre into which Chase's book falls, he writes:

> It was in the interpretive studies and travel essays that the American identity with Mexico was most clearly revealed. A dominant theme was the search for New World community which entailed a flight from the machine age and an encounter with nature and simplicity … In different degrees, these works manifested the interest in socialism, the rebellion against philistine America, a New World esthetic, and the return to native origins that interested the American intellectuals of the period from 1912 to the 1930's. As these authors were swept up in the

> 'spiritual' aspect of the Mexican Revolution, their works reflected an American *mexicanidad*, or expression of Mexican-ness. (345)

Through such works, then, what was considered "Mexican" by the U.S. traveler was already determined. Writers put their hopes and aspirations into Mexico, its revolution, its handicraft culture and the grounded but spiritual characteristics of its indigenous population. If they did not find potential solutions to the problems of their modernizing society, then they would find an "authentic" culture that would provide a brief respite from their own. These expectations and idealizations, however, would also prove to be at the root of later disappointments. It may be problematic that authors ignored much of the country in favor of the Central Highlands, but more importantly, they ignored Mexico City, without which Mexico cannot be fully understood.

The irony is that what these travelers found in Mexico City was the future-- a large, capital city in the process of industrialization and modernization that provided a strong center from which the government coordinated its revolutionary projects elsewhere in the country. The importance of centralism in understanding both urban and rural Mexico is described in an essay by Fernando Núñez. In it, he defines centralism as "an inward-looking force that can be seen as the tendency of systems, organizations, and structures to be grouped into one main element with secondary elements arranged around it. This in contrast to *federalism*, which tends to give all elements equal importance" (16). This concept is essential to any understanding of Mexico:

> Centralism has played such an important role in Mexico that it has, to a great extent, defined national economic development through a central government that dictates the rules for concentration and distribution of resources. The geography of the country also reinforces centralism. The highlands are located between two mountain ridges along a volcanic axis, and they enjoy a benign climate that supports the image of a 'central Mexico, the historic and geographic heart, along with valleys and canyons supported at a great height over the volcanic axis.'[87] (17)

[87] Núñez is citing D. García Ramos, *Iniciación al Urbanismo* (1965).

Centralism is critical to any understanding of Mexico City's role in Mexico, but it is also the dominant pattern of development for ancient Mesoamericans as much as it was for the Spanish colonial cities built on the ancient and preexisting patterns. Throughout his essay, Núñez is careful to note that this pattern exists both within the cities themselves and within the regions of Mexico. In this latter, it is the role played by cities in organizing their local surroundings, but also extends to the role played by free villages and hacienda villages within the rural landscape. Furthermore, centralism was reinforced by the entrenched hierarchy of political and socio-economic systems of both the Mesoamerican and the Spanish authorities in this long history (16-19). If one thinks of the integrated regionalism of the U.S. in these terms, then one can see the important differences between the general tendencies in cultural and spatial practice between the societies of the U.S. and Mexico.

Arriving in Mexico with a divergent worldview inevitably creates room for misunderstanding and misinterpretation among foreign writers. In his survey, "Latin American Intellectuals and the City," one of the foremost historians of urbanism in Latin America, Richard M. Morse, writes that "the historic role of cities in Latin America as an instrument for appropriating territory and for ordering society" is a given, operating in a way akin to "the old Mediterranean notion that the city … is one with 'civilization' (1978, 219).[88] For this reason, he continues by marking that the pro- and anti-urban attitudes of North American thinkers were, in Latin America, "an artificial dichotomy" and that theories of the city in former Spanish colonies treated it "not as an isolated element but as symptom and focal point of the ills of the larger

[88] Richard M. Morse traces much of Latin American urbanism to Ancient Roman roots, specifically to Aristotle via early Catholic thought found in St. Thomas Aquinas. These patterns of Latin American intellectualism and the city lead him to draw clear distinctions between the U.S. tradition and that of Latin America more generally.

economy, society, and polity" (227). In this way, the city was integral to any sort of larger regional or country-wide understanding of, or solution to, social problems.

What this points to is the problematic quality of Chase's extensive discussion of Tepoztlán and the "real" Mexico, as he lived in Mexico City,[89] a point made by Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo in his recent book, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (2012).[90] Chase makes no indication of this, except when he writes "I feel myself ill at ease in the capital, and spend most of my time mapping out the next trip into the provinces" (253). His critique of Mexico City is that, despite its long history and role as the capital, it lacks "the real spirit of Mexico" as, in his view, "it has denied its own inheritance and held out its arms to Madrid, to Paris, to London, and now … to Hollywood" (253). In effect, for Chase, Mexico City was not enough like the Mexico he wanted it to be. Where modern life could be found in Mexico, then, it had to be avoided, even while in Mexico City itself. The reader understands that, if modernization arrives in "the provinces," without the balance that Chase so desires, he will be left searching for a new country in which to test his hypotheses and reinvigorate his theories. Tenorio-Trillo writes: "By the 1920s Mexico City was a refuge and a reliable escape, not only from the draft in New York City or from the Great Depression, but also from Mexico City itself. The escape continued toward Tepoztlán or Tehuantepec, wherever the city was not, for as a utopia of harmony and beauty" the idealized, romantic Mexico of the foreign intellectual was "inevitably conceived in the city without being urban" (164-165). For Tenorio-Trillo, the

[89] The paradox of the period of the "enormous vogue" of Mexico is identified by Tenorio-Trillo as the "Brown Atlantis," the forces of intellectual romanticization that would sojourn into the rural areas while living in urban centers, such as Mexico City. Tenorio-Trillo's disgust at the hypocrisy is palpable. He writes:

> the Brown Atlantis was especially visible in urban personalities. It was Stuart Chase living in Mexico City, but talking about Tepoztlán. Or it was [Manuel] Gamio in Mexico City, or Columbia University, writing about Teotihucán. Or it was poet Hart Crane getting drunk in downtown Mexico City, searching for lovers among the city's brown male servants (and brown meant Indian for him), only to then search for poetic inspiration in Taxco or Tepoztlán when writing a poem on the Conquista. (166)

[90] The title is taken from a poem by Octavio Paz, "Hablo de la ciudad" from *Árbol Adentro* (1987).

constant excursions from Mexico City into the smaller towns and villages of the Central Highlands and further afield are demonstrative of "the search for authenticity vis-à-vis the fakeness surrounding modern daily life, especially modern life in places like Mexico condemned-- by modern Western thought-- to be immune to modernity" (165). In this way, for many writers, travel to "postrevolutionary Mexico became what they expected it to be from the beginning" (158), a self-fulfilling prophecy, overlooking modernization in order guarantee a discovery of "the real Mexico" they had set out to find.

In this sense, then, Mexico might be anywhere in the world, a point made in one review of Chase's book. Satirizing the habits of the expatriate scene-- and of U.S. travelers in general-- the reviewer points-out that these are common practices among all travelers in search of "authenticity." For these reasons, it is worth quoting here in full:

> Now that enough ex-soldiers, tourists and art-students have gone to Paris and found out if Paris was really so, many of them are searching for a new Utopia of the imagination. Bordering on what its natives are fond of calling the *Colossus of the North*, lies Mexico. Primitive types of culture, a general opposition to industrial civilization except some of its more accessible products such as Mr. Ford's, and a superficial acceptance of communistic doctrine, congenial both to the feeling of the villages and the thought of the cities, together with an incredible luxuriance of nature, a brilliance of coloring and a tragic, Indian pessimism,-- all these things attract the dissatisfied and the restless across our southern border. This book is one well deserving its success. Its pictures, by Diego Rivera, are in complete harmony with the point of view of those who are going to Mexico as the present equivalent of Tahiti, or wish they could go there. The authors write with understanding and humor of the fantastic paradox that Mexico actually is. Whether, as inheritors of the accumulated traditions of European art and the system by which goods are so lavishly produced though not so evenly distributed, we are willing to trade it for the blessing of savagery, is a dilemma to the solution of which this volume offers much material. (McMahon 35)

Whatever the seriousness of the questions Chase asks regarding technology, progress and civilization, those seeking authentic experience in exotic locales-- whether Paris, Tahiti or Mexico-- are interested in such questions only insofar as their answers tell of "unspoiled" lands to "discover." The inclusion of Paris in such a list should not go unnoticed, as these same

patterns of travel identified by Jakle are as easily seen in sojourns to the capitals of Europe as in those to regional "provinces" on the American continent. It is all in the mind and this type of travel belies any language of cultural "exchange."

Such considerations are taken up in an article titled, "Southwestern Culture: An Artificial or a Natural Growth?" (1931), by critic T. M. Pearce. Here, Pearce considers the vogue of his own region of the country, New Mexico and the Southwest, from a similar perspective as others were then writing about Mexico.[91] He observes, "In recent years, the migration of painters, poets, archaeologists, and linguists, examining the region for the color of its rocks, the legends of its people, the sounds of its speech, has promoted a regional consciousness behind which is the political, economic, and social consciousness produced by four centuries of self sufficiency" and continues by asking, "Is this regional attitude, this business of being Southwestern, founded upon any authentic elements to which English speaking Americans can lay claim?" (195). For Pearce, it is a question of cultural geography; he later makes direct reference to the larger debate over regionalism in the U.S. at that time when he writes: "in a debate of this sort, the partisans, whether their comments issue from Santa Fe or from Chapel Hill, are nearly always 'outdwellers' … all are speaking of a culture given to, rather than created by, them" (197). By referring to Chapel Hill, Pearce implies the work of Howard W. Odum (cited earlier), whose influential research and scholarship was based out of the University of North Carolina. Pearce recognizes that he is simultaneously in the state of New Mexico, in the region of the Southwest, in the country of the United States. In contemplating the U.S. "claim" over Southwestern culture, he also implies that the Southwest has a great deal to offer the country at large -- that the

[91] Many of the artists and intellectuals of this era active in Mexico also visited the Southwest, specifically the artists' colonies in Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico. As Gunn notes in his bibliography, *Mexico in American and British Letters*, many of those who were "writing about Texas and the Southwest generally resided in the area, but probably only those in New Mexico could find the old culture somewhat intact" (vi).

region might add as much to the country as the country might offer it in return.[92] As an integrative vision of regionalism, Pearce's vision offers a sense of how culture moves across geographic scale.

By positioning himself this way, Pearce demonstrates a rare awareness of what Douglas Reichert Powell describes as "locatedness" in his recent book, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (2007). He writes: "generally, in contemporary United States culture, cosmopolitanism is taken to be a positive virtue just as regionalism assumes a culture deficit. While cosmopolitanism ostensibly provides a perspective on all places and all things, it has one important blind spot: its own locatedness" (20). In his own way, Pearce describes the same phenomenon, adopting a cosmopolitan viewpoint of U.S. culture while remaining aware of his own location. His position confuses the typical understanding of what it means to be "cosmopolitan" and what it means to be "regional" and he seems to do so intentionally. He also considers the penchants of expatriate writers abroad, noting: "In the over-weening zest to be regional, it is difficult to see how Americans here differ from Americans becoming regional in Paris or Athens or anywhere else where one people assumes the outer trappings of another people-- borrowing its architecture, wearing its ornaments, buying the products of its looms and of its artisans" (197). Pearce continues: "This, one may add, is not entirely a fault. It indicates a very definite critical and appreciative sense in a people that it admires the best in the art and culture of other groups and desires to purchase, seize, or reproduce it for its own" (197). The expatriate writers, artists and intellectuals active in European cities who dominated the marketplace of that time are the obvious target of Pearce's comments. For them and most literary critics, the notion of "becoming regional" in Paris would

[92] New Mexico had gained statehood only two decades earlier, in 1912.

be an impossibility, so too in London or Berlin or New York. Becoming attuned to the world around oneself, recognizing one's own "locatedness" in a specific setting at a specific time, will reveal regional attributes that support the supposedly international qualities of any given metropolis.

The difficulty of achieving this perspective is a question with which Katherine Anne Porter would wrestle throughout her career. Perhaps the foremost author to be active in Mexico during any period of U.S. literary history, Porter was a native Texan and felt a deep connection to Mexico since her childhood. For her, the question of the cultural exchange between the U.S. and Mexico was not an intellectual one, but one of deeply-felt experience and her short stories reflect this. Responding to the same prejudices as Pearce, Porter wrote a letter to the editors of *The Century* magazine, titled "Why I Write about Mexico" (1923). She opens with a simple and declarative sentence: "I write about Mexico because that is my familiar country" (355) and she continues in this vein, addressing the "locatedness" of the editors and critics and their own lack of self-awareness. She later writes: "I have been accused by Americans of a taste for the exotic, for foreign flavors. Maybe so, for New York is the most foreign place I know, and I like it very much" (356). Beyond rhetorical flourish, Porter's statement speaks to a very real quandary that visitors such as Chase would not have to confront. As her "familiar country," Mexico is for Porter not something to be researched, but a place where people live. On this, she is adamant, writing: "I cannot say, 'I gathered material' for it; there was nothing so mechanical as that, but the process of absorption went on almost unconsciously, and my impressions remain not merely as of places visited and people known, but as of a moving experience in my own life that is now a part of me" (356). Critics do not typically accuse writers living in Paris or New York as being guilty of pursuits so unromantic as research-- and the idea that Porter would have gone to

Mexico to "gather material" offends her for the same reason. She concludes her letter with an affirmation of the legitimacy of her own lived experience: "All the things I write of I have first known, and they are real to me" (356). Experience is what matters to both the critics and to Porter. The difference is that the cosmopolitan publishing world-- centered in New York then as it is now-- fails to recognize its own "locatedness," while Porter cannot pretend to be anything other than a "provincial" writer from Texas. The discussion will return to Porter and several of her Mexican short stories, but before doing so it is worth considering how such a standpoint fits into the larger intellectual discussion of regionalism discussed earlier in this chapter.

Odum and Moore include a discussion on this topic, dedicating an entire chapter to a survey of what they call "Literary and Aesthetic Regionalism." As they remark: "the public has been keenly interested in the portraiture of the various folk groups and differing localities in the nation, it has happened that the most common characterization of regionalism, as of sectionalism, has been that of provincialism, of local interest and color" (168). They cite an editorial column from the *Saturday Review of Literature* sympathetic to Porter's position. The editorial remarks that, if conceived differently, "regional novels, regional poetry, regional plays take on some of the functioning of a national literature. They assert the vitality of a part which is independent though indispensable to the whole. They are positive where 'local color' was negative, they are dynamic instead or archaeological and static" (qtd. in Odum and Moore 180). Today, literary study is somewhat better situated to confront this, as Richard H. Brodhead writes in *Cultures of Letters* (1993): "regionalism's representation of vernacular cultures as enclaves of tradition insulated from larger cultural contact is palpably a fiction. This would suggest that its public function was not just to mourn lost cultures but to purvey a certain story of contemporary cultures and of the relations among them" (121). As such, it might be better to see the spirit of

literary critics in terms of sectionalists and regionalists, the former being sympathetic toward maintaining a strong sense of demarcation among the observable differences in regional culture, rooted in some of the same nostalgia as found in works of "local color." Regionalist writing that fully meets the challenge of the name in geographic terms, therefore, takes an integrative view of regions in terms of larger cultural patterns.

Perhaps the one novel that attempts to bring Mexico into a more fully integrated understanding of North America from this time is *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), the first volume of John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* trilogy. Reichert Powell uses the trilogy to demonstrate how regionalism can be used as an organizing concept in understanding the seemingly irreconcilable diversity and vast expanse of the American continent (157). Throughout the three novels of *U.S.A.*, Dos Passos provides a chronicle of contemporary life in the U.S. before, during and after World War I. The many story lines traced in the trilogy follow characters who move throughout the country, from east to west and back again, caught-up in the movement and supposed progress of the times. Characters and their plotlines appear for one chapter only to disappear for hundreds of pages, often reappearing only in subsequent volumes.

While considerations of foreign affairs in these books are primarily focused on Europe and the ways in which the war affects the lives of its U.S. characters, Dos Passos does incorporate Mexico into the trilogy in a compelling and subtle way. Among the many story lines, there is only one character, Fenian McCreary, or "Mac," who disappears from the trilogy altogether. Appearing in *The 42nd Parallel*, Mac's is the story of a union worker and itinerant labor organizer who, in middle age, succumbs to bourgeois married life in Southern California. Nonetheless, he is soon inspired to wander again, travelling south to join Pancho Villa's forces in the Mexican Revolution. Eventually, however, Mac visits the capital, takes a mistress and once

again yields to a comfortable, domestic life, disappearing into Mexico City. Citing him as an important example, Reichert Powell writes that Mac's life "is marked by twin impulses: the first to settle down and get married, the second to dedicate his life to the labor struggles he encounters at almost every stop on his journey" (159). In terms of the progressive politics of the trilogy, then, the "value of wanderlust … is that it breaks down the stifling ties of family, which the novel suggests is a purely hegemonic, middle-class institution" (161). The constant movement that defines the trilogy brings the idea of place to the fore in Reichert Powell's reading. He writes that, for Dos Passos, "There is no place for place, it seems, in the visions of progressive, alternative social worlds that inform these sweeping political novels. In these novels of restless, agitated, and agitating movement, place is stopping, giving up, selling out" (166). Such is the ending of the trilogy, as Reichert Powell later remarks:

> The restlessness of *The 42nd Parallel* comes to rest in New York City, which is the dominant setting of *The Big Money* [1934]. The action, the cultural and economic power, comes to be centered on that city (much as it is in real life) by way of the First World War … a pattern of movement connected to national crisis, a symptom of the consolidation of a national culture in the United States. In sum, *U.S.A.* shows how American culture emerges in the period between world wars to have a strong, metropolitan center to its public life, as the energy spent in the internal migrations of *The 42nd Parallel* are channeled through the war effort into a stable, centered structure. (168-169)

Reichert Powell writes that the trilogy is "in both form and content … dedicated to illuminating the cultural connections that thread a broad and variegated landscape" and that, furthermore, this is central to Dos Passos's project, as there is deliberate emphasis placed on "the nature and degree of interconnection among disparate places through a series of fictional narrative strands organized around individual characters, each of which is autonomous but each of which overlaps with other characters" (157). In exploring the geographic expanse of the continent, *U.S.A.* presents a progressive, integrative vision of the many regions of the country, departing from an

older, sectionalist viewpoint by exploring different parts of the country and how they all fit together by weaving the seemingly disparate character threads.[93]

Part of what makes geographical regionalism a compelling framework through which to read Dos Passos's trilogy is the way in which it fits with the form of prose that Dos Passos was developing. Engaged with questions of experimental fiction throughout his career, Dos Passos used elements of journalism from both print and visual news-media to structure the style, pace and delivery in his novels, which find their first expression in the *U.S.A.* trilogy in what he calls the "newsreel" and "camera eye" segments of these novels. Dos Passos uses these devices to chronicle the era, fragmenting and punctuating the plotlines of his many characters by using real-life events and figures. These stylistic developments come into the book in his prefatory remarks to the *U.S.A.* trilogy, which end with a paragraph defining the "U.S.A." in a Whitmanesque listing of what the country and his series of books contains. He begins this paragraph by writing: "U.S.A. is the slice of the continent" and ends it with the following two sentences: "U.S.A. is the letters at the end of an address when you are away from home. But mostly U.S.A. is the speech of the people" (vi). The implications-- a "slice of the continent"-- are both social and geographic and, at least metaphorically, congruent with the idea of integrative regionalism as an organizing principle in understanding and synthesizing the national culture a decade earlier.

Dos Passos travelled to Mexico in 1926, although Rubén Gallo notes that the author "first became interested in Mexico in 1914, when he read John Reed's *Insurgent Mexico*" (2007, 329). In any event, Dos Passos pays homage to the journalist by incorporating a profile of him in *Nineteen Nineteen* (1932), the second volume of the trilogy.[94] These short biographies, read as

[93] Such a perspective can also be gained through a study of landscape by "cross-section," an idea promoted by Grady Clay-- and the subject of some discussion in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

[94] Part of a much longer biographical sketch of the socialist reporter, the passage dealing with Reed's life in Mexico reads as follows:

avant-garde obituaries,[95] together with the "newsreel" and "camera eye" sections, add an interesting component to the reportage on society, but even when acting as the chronicler of the times, he too was equally susceptible to the self-fulfilling expectations of travel at that time. Gallo also writes that "Dos Passos had come to Mexico hoping to meet peasants whose lives had been transformed by the Revolution-- the type of citizens portrayed in Rivera's murals-- and who could tell him about land reform, revolutionary politics, and socialist art" (330). The hopes of discovering a theory-in-practice meet with reality. From his perspective, Mexico City was "a third-world town inhabited by displaced peasant and exploited by unsympathetic foreigners … [and] would have seen the billboards and slogans as an incursion of American and European capitalism, an intrusion into an otherwise traditional society" (333). Upon incorporating Mexico into *The 42nd Parallel*, however, Dos Passos's expectations of Mexico affect Mac's trajectory while there. Mac's disappearance in Mexico City provides the same end for his plotline as New York will for the trilogy as a whole: a "centered structure" in which revolutionary dreams disappear in the face of the capitalist, bourgeoise life of comfort. Part of what John Dos Passos accomplishes through Mac in *The 42nd Parallel* is to offer a continental and hemispheric perspective, however briefly, that expands the integrative aspects of regionalism across international boundaries. Nonetheless, stereotype and prejudice play a role in directing the search for supposedly "authentic" travel experience in Mexico. In the context of *U.S.A.*, Mexico

> The *Metropolitan Magazine* sent him to Mexico
> to write up Pancho Villa.
> Pancho Villa taught him to write and the skeleton mountains and the tall organ cactus and the armored trains and the bands playing in little plazas full of dark girls and blue scarfs
> and the bloody dust and the ping of rifleshots
> in the enormous night of the desert, and the brown quietvoiced peons dying starving killing for liberty for land for water for schools.
> Mexico taught him to write. (12)

[95] In some cases, premature obituaries. Dos Passos includes a similar homage to Frank Lloyd Wright, for example, who was still very much alive and entering a productive phase of his career. Reed, however, died young in 1920.

proves to be a dead-end for socialist ideals, incapable of becoming he workers' utopia he saw in the murals of Diego Rivera; it was, instead, a traditional society spoiled by the intrusions of capitalism.

Mexico's desire for progress and modernity was meeting with a foreign longing that its picturesque traditions be maintained. The nuisance of foreigners from the U.S. in searching for the "real" Mexico and their seeming lack of self-awareness was also occasionally the subject of parody. Novelist and playwright Edna Ferber makes good use of these themes and the larger body of literature to which Chase's book belongs in her short story, "They Brought Their Women" (1933). In it, she lightly satirizes the "enormous vogue" that Mexico had for U.S. travelers. Writing about this story in the introduction to his anthology of short fiction, *Gringos in Mexico* (1988), Edward Simmen notes that Ferber visited Mexico City in 1931 as a vacation between writing projects (xli)[96] and that the story is "typically Ferber: a group of interesting characters are placed in a setting which is alive and different and act out the human comedy as Ferber knew it" (xlii). In it, the reader follows a group of three travelers from Chicago to Mexico City. Ostensibly, the reason for the trip is business-- buying raw metals for processing at the mill run by Leonard Starrett, where his friend Jeff Boyd is an engineer. In reality, the trip is devised by Jeff to separate Leonard from his wife, Muriel, if only briefly, as the adventurous Jeff sees her as a stifling influence on Leonard's artistic aspirations-- and on his life in general. Despite Leonard's objections, however, Muriel insists that she accompany the two men. Her argument reads as follows: "'I know more about it that you do,' Muriel retorted. 'I've been reading [Ernest] Gruening and Stuart Chase and Beals and all of them. I wouldn't let you go

[96] Other than the story at hand, Mexico would not figure again in Ferber's work.

down there for a million dollars, with your indigestion and your colds and your--'" (200).[97] Not only does Muriel know her husband better than he himself, but the reader also understands that Muriel "knows" Mexico long before her arrival, whether through Greuning, Chase or Beals-- or Brenner, or Reed, or Tannenbaum, or Toor, or Treadwell. Muriel and her husband are strangers in a strange land and she will shield herself and her husband from any real contact with the country while there.

As Simmen writes, "Of the three main characters, one, a snob, is totally repulsed by Mexico. Her husband is fascinated by it but can't leave his wife to 'try it out'" (xlii). Jeff, however, is free to "try it out."[98] While he does come down with dysentery, he also attempts to see and experience as much of the country as he can. When Muriel demands that she and Leonard take an apartment shortly after their arrival, Jeff chooses to stay on at the hotel. To their invitation to share the apartment, Jeff replies: "I kind of like to bum around the restaurants and cafés and streets. I like to see the way people live, and talk to them" (210-211). Lest the reader get the impression that Jeff is the ideal cultured traveler, however, it is made clear that he, although never having read any of Muriel's books, is following the typical pattern of those culture-enthusiasts discussed above, romanticizing the smaller towns and folk traditions and "magnificent Indians" (210).

While his adventures all happen offstage, what the reader witnesses are typical activities "that visiting Gringos would have done and still do" and Mexico is seen "from the train or from a

[97] Muriel refers to Ernest Gruening's *Mexico and Its Heritage* (1928). Although not discussed here, it was written contemporaneously and would have been known by the authors and artists found throughout this dissertation.
[98] It should be noted that the expression has sexual connotations. Throughout the story it is implied that Jeff's business trips to regional areas have included no small degree of extracurricular activity. As Muriel remarks: "Well, then! And the way Jeff looked last time. Remember? Though you can't tell me that was only the hardship of the trip" (212). The idea of sexual communion with Native (Meso)American women as being essential for European explorers to more authentically experience and understand the New World is a central theme found in William Carlos Williams's *In the American Grain* (1925), which is discussed at greater length in the Introduction to this dissertation.

table at Sanborn's, the 'American' restaurant" in the colonial center of Mexico City (Simmen, xlii). One night over dinner, Leonard remarks that "this isn't Mexico" (206). Although they will see many significant tourist sites, including the pyramids at Teotihuacán,[99] the reader understands that Leonard's remark, while referring directly to Sanborn's,[100] will describe his entire experience in Mexico.

Writing about trends of tourism in Mexico, Persephone Braham describes the "search for authenticity" that is embodied in the tourist guidebook. Such a search is ironic and "is an inherently self-defeating one: the tourist follows the topography-- both physical and cultural-- represented in his guidebook, ultimately tracing, in the most prosaic and complete sense, his own image contained therein" (382). One readily recognizes that neither Muriel nor her husband will discover anything about Mexico that they could not have read in books or seen in pictures. Given her preparations for and actions during the trip, one understands that for Muriel, this is by design. Along with her incurious worldview, she is incapable of self-reflection.[101] At the same time, however, Jeff's experience is no more authentic, as it relies upon Mexico City for contrast and one imagines him, like Chase, mapping out his "next trip to the provinces." As Tenorio-Trillo writes that such experiences "took advantage of the moment, the streets, comfort, bohemia, and rich cultural environment that the city offered" and that the enthusiasts of "authentic" Mexico could only speak enthusiastically about the "*campo*, *milpa*, sombrero, serape, fiesta, pueblito, and *communities*" from the comfortable surroundings offered by the capital (166). The reader gets the impression that should Jeff write a book recounting his

[99] Chapter One of this dissertation discusses the significance of ancient Mesoamerican architecture for intellectuals during the 1920s and 30s.
[100] Referred to by Dos Passos as "Sanborn's tearoom, drugstore, department store, citadel of Yanquilandia" (1934, 75-76).
[101] Muriel's limited worldview is also variously captured in her cultural assumptions and use of racist language.

Mexican excursions, it would fit quite neatly on the shelf alongside those that Muriel lists and that have been discussed above. The entire endeavor of travel puts the traveler-as-writer and the reader-as-traveler in an impossible position.

The contrast between Jeff and Muriel, with Leonard wavering in the center, is a comic portrayal of themes that become the cause of anguish for Porter throughout her career. Porter would experience a disillusionment with Mexico akin to that of Dos Passos but, as one might imagine, on a much deeper and more personal level given her intimate knowledge of the country since her childhood. Although her "familiar country" throughout her formative years and into the early 1920s, the continuous and growing "vogue" of Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s would, in Porter's eyes, irrevocably change the country for the worse. In her own unpublished review of Chase's *Mexico,* Porter writes: "Mexico is not really a place to visit any more, or to live in. The land has fallen prey to its friends … its arts and customs are in the dreadful convulsions of being saved, preserved, advertised and exploited by a horde of appreciators, amateur and professional" (1993, 253). Written in 1931 and tentatively titled "Parvenu," Porter's review takes direct aim at the final chapter of Chase's *Mexico*,[102] which is titled, "Advice from a Parvenu Cousin." Her penultimate paragraph is worth quoting in full:

> Mr. Chase winds up by some extraordinary advice to the Mexicans from a parvenu cousin. I know better than to give advice to Mexicans, after living here for four years over a period of ten. But I should like to seize this opportunity for a little advice to my fellow authors who come here. You would do well to visit Mexico quite as you visit other countries, without meddling, without presuming that you are a natural candidate for official favor, and without that condescending kindness which is so infuriating to intelligent Mexicans. If you really love the way of life you find here, keep your hands off it. All this uproar of publicity helps to change, commercialize, falsify it. Do not apologize for Mexican political corruption, any more than you would for your own rotten politicians. Mexicans are quick to resent this. The Indian arts are very beautiful, but so are the folk arts

[102] Porter's review of Chase would go unpublished largely due to the bitterness and negativity of its position. Another complicating aspect is that the review made explicit mention of other writers then active in Mexico, making it a difficult essay to negotiate within the personal politics of the publishing industry (Alvarez and Walsh 252).

> of other countries, and there is no special occult value to them. Their fiestas have about the same degree of meaning as popular fiestas in other countries. The nature of the Indian is as complicated and mysterious as human nature is, and if one of you would take the time and trouble to be well acquainted with even one of them, I think you might be ashamed to talk of him always as a problem, a spectacle, a kind of picturesque social monstrosity to be approached always in this arty-scientific-sociological manner. Americans, travelling, seem to believe there is nothing so integral, so good of its kind, but can be improved by their pawing and fumbling it over a little. It is better, when you visit here, to leave your superiorities at home, and if possible to shed your ignorances here, before you write a book interpreting Mexico. (255)

Porter then concludes: "With these farewell words, I sit back and wait for the next flood of books written by this year's crop of seminarists, folk lorists, prophets, students, friends of Mexico, propagandists, art enthusiasts, and the common carriers of good will. But I shall not read them" (255).[103] Acerbic in tone, Porter seems to take personal offense at the entire body of literature-- from travel guide to travelogue to sociological study to popular history and especially those that attempt to blend all three-- that has been published on Mexico in its pursuit of "authenticity." Her disillusionment is not only with her fellow countrymen, however, it is also with Mexico itself. In her hemispheric study of North American literature, Rachel Adams writes: "Initially drawn to Mexico by the revolution's promise of social reform, Porter quickly became disillusioned with Mexican politics" (114). The reader clearly sees this throughout Porter's fiction set in Mexico, in manners that are alternatingly serious and comic.

Perhaps her most famous treatment of the subject matter is the frequently anthologized story, "Flowering Judas" (1929), in which Laura, a young woman from the U.S., is living in

[103] Porter's wholesale dismissal of all such participants is unfortunate in this context, as the year prior, in a short essay titled "The Fine Art of Understanding" (1930) delivered to the Committee on Cultural Relations with Latin America held in Mexico, Hubert C. Herring, one of the conference organizers, urges his audience to "shake free from your own enthusiasms, from your own special reforms, from your own convictions as to what a people and a nation should be," remarking that by engaging with their host country on its own terms, each individual will be better equipped "to return to the United States as an interpreter of people to people, as an agent for the hastening of that interchange of spirit and culture in which none are impoverished, but in which all are enriched" (331).

Mexico and teaching English to schoolchildren in the years after the revolution. Braggioni, a corrupt and lustful revolutionary visits Laura with frequency, trying to court her although he is already married. Described as a "gluttonous bulk," Braggioni has, for Laura, "become a symbol of her many disillusions, for a revolutionist should be lean, animated by heroic faith, a vessel of abstract virtues" (91). Braggioni is a grotesque caricature of the revolutionary who profits off the revolution, but he forces Laura to reflect upon her own failures as a committed socialist and to question the higher cause that brought her to Mexico. Although she realizes that, as her friends tell her, she is "full of romantic error," she nonetheless "cannot help feeling that she has been betrayed irreparably by the disunion between her way of living and her feeling of what life should be" (91). In the face of Braggioni's hypocrisy, Laura's virtue is her self-awareness and dissatisfaction with the failed promises of both the revolution and her role in it.

It is in a lighter mode that Porter writes "That Tree" (1934), which confronts the expatriate scene in Mexico City through the character of a U.S. journalist. Told as a barroom reminiscence, the story recounts the recent events in the life of the unnamed man, who is preparing to reunite with his estranged wife. The opening paragraph introduces him before he found his current occupation, however and, as critic Thomas F. Walsh writes, as a parody it is "more humorous than malicious" (171). The character description reads:

> He had really wanted to be a cheerful bum lying under a tree in a good climate, writing poetry. He wrote bushel basketful of poetry and it was all no good and he knew it, even while he was writing it. Knowing his poetry was no good did not take away much from his pleasure in it. He would have enjoyed just that kind of life: no respectability, no responsibility … lying under a tree writing poetry. That was why he had come to Mexico in the first place. He had felt in his bones that it was the country for him. (66).

After his wife, Miriam, leaves him on account of his lack of ambition, however, he sets about reforming himself in order to win her back. He begins working earnestly in journalism, a line of work that "would impress his wife" and "was just intellectual enough to save his self-respect,

such as it was" (67). Over the course of several years he becomes successful, as "a recognized authority on revolutions in twenty-odd Latin-American countries, and his sympathies happened to fall in exactly right with the high-priced magazines of a liberal humanitarian slant which paid him well for telling the world about the oppressed peoples" (78). Perhaps the most cutting line in the story, it again demonstrates Porter's distaste for the parvenu traveler-writer.

As James T. F. Tanner observes, "the style of the story is Hemingway-burlesque. Everything takes place within a bar … [and] evoke[s] the worst aspects of the wasted life of expatriates" (152). Less biting than her unpublished review of Chase's *Mexico*, "That Tree" still denounces the entirety of the "enormous vogue of things Mexican." As Porter herself would explain, that the story "has for its hero something like ten thousand wistful American boys who … are infected with the notion that romance and glory lie in other places … I didn't give this boy a name, because it should justly have been Legion" and, making her point explicit, Porter adds, "I laid the scene in Mexico because I felt at home there, and because so many persons of this sort were there then" (qtd. in T. Walsh 169). Although there are several historical figures who resemble the unnamed hero of "That Tree,"[104] it is the larger implication that is important-- the journalist, however well-informed he may be, is part of the larger "crop of seminarists, folk lorists, prophets, students, friends of Mexico, propagandists, art enthusiasts, and the common carriers of good will," writing for the uninformed masses north of the border, all those "searching for a new utopia of the imagination" or those whose "liberal humanitarian slant" suggests they visit this exotic neighbor to the south. In speaking to the same themes as her

[104] From all the various details throughout the story, he most closely resembles Carleton Beals (T. Walsh 171-172)-- and John A. Britton's *Carleton Beals: A Radical Journalist in Latin America* (1987), one of the few biographies written of Beals, agrees in this assessment (32-33).

review of Chase's book, the reader senses that Porter is wistful over Mexico having "fallen prey to its friends."

It is in her final Mexican story, "Hacienda" (1934), however, that Porter articulates her many anxieties over the state of her "familiar country" at greatest length. So too does it bring-together the many strands of this discussion. Published in *Flowering Judas and Other Stories* (1935),[105] an initial version had appeared two years prior, in the October 1932 issue of *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. The story is based on her personal experiences travelling with Russian filmmaker, Segei Eisenstein, along with his crew, to shoot scenes for his unfinished film, *¡Que viva México!* (1932),[106] which was to have been a sort of collage-history of Mexico from ancient Mesoamerica through the Revolution. The location was on the Hacienda Tetlapayac, a maguey plantation and pulque distillery in the state of Hidalgo, Mexico. Rearranged for narrative effect, the events related in the story are almost identical to those which Porter observed while traveling with Eisenstein. The hacienda has been chosen not only for its picturesque architecture and surrounding landscape, but for the ways in which its life and socio-economic system still reflect those of the *Porfiriato* (1876-1910). The filmmakers, named Uspensky and Andreyev, have chosen it because "it was really an old-fashioned feudal estate … no modern improvements to speak of, and with the purest type of peons" (Porter, 142). Very little happens in the story and, "what does happen happens offstage and is reported to the narrator by different characters" (T. Walsh 153). The set of circumstances around which the story circles are as follows: a young indigenous man who works on the hacienda, Justino, has accidentally shot and killed his sister, Rosalita. Justino has been captured and imprisoned. For

[105] As the title indicates, "Flowering Judas" also belongs to this collection, which was first published as *Flowering Judas* (1930). The second edition added four stories, including "Hacienda," to its pages.
[106] In yet another underexplored facet of U.S. interest in Mexico, the project was produced by Upton Sinclair.

the filmmakers, this presents a problem, as these same individuals were to have been cast in their film and their production has been suspended for an indefinite amount of time until Justino's release can be negotiated by the *hacendado*'s influence with the local judge. The surreal irony is that these very same individuals were to have acted-out a murder for the film, adding a dramatic element to the depiction of historical life on an hacienda before the Revolution. As Thomas F. Walsh writes, "as Porter might be accused of inventing a preposterous story in which reality copies art which in turn copies reality," she instead "explored the surreal possibilities of that reality, making it seem as if the lives of Justino and his sister were predetermined by some supernatural filmmaker" (155).

While these events swirl around them, the characters in the story remain distant, content to play cards and billiards, to be entertained by the singing of *corridos*, to admire the architecture of the hacienda and the folk art and handicrafts found within. Little concern is shown for the plight of the people they have come to film and, whatever the political motivations of their project, one is left with a sense that it will make very little difference for the Mexican people. History has become stagnant and the larger thematic implications of the story are clear: the Mexican Revolution has achieved little in terms of social justice and equality for most Mexicans.

In this way, an hacienda provides the ideal setting for such a story, as much of Porter's critique rests on the choice of the hacienda by Uspensky and Andreyev. It is the unchanged quality of the estate and the unimproved condition of its laborers that marks it as a filming location and as a potent symbolic landscape in Porter's story. Andreyev excitedly describes their discovery and selection of the Hacienda Tetlapayac to the narrator:

> They had chosen it carefully, he said; it was really an old-fashioned feudal estate with the right kind of architecture, no modern improvements to speak of, and with the purest type of peons. Naturally a pulque hacienda would be just such a place. Pulque-making had not changed from the beginning, since the time the first

> Indian set up a rawhide vat to ferment the liquor and pierced and hollowed the first gourd to draw with his mouth the juice from the heart of the maguey. Nothing had happened since, nothing could happen. Apparently there was no better way to make pulque. The whole thing, he said, was almost too good to be true. An old Spanish gentleman had revisited the hacienda after an absence of fifty years, and had gone about looking at everything with delight. 'Nothing has changed,' he said, 'nothing at all!' (142)

It is only the hacienda that has not changed, however, as the film crew and their hosts are all beneficiaries of modern society and its conveniences. Andreyev seems willfully blind to this, however, as he continues describing his research and preparations for filming at the hacienda and showing still photographs of shooting locations. The narrator comments:

> We turned over the pictures again, looked at some of them twice. In the fields, among the maguey, the Indian in his hopeless rags; in the hacienda house, theatrically luxurious persons, posed usually with a large chromo print of Porfirio Díaz looming from a gaudy frame on the walls. 'That is to show,' said Andreyev, 'that all this really happened in the time of Díaz, and that all this,' he tapped the pictures of the Indians, 'has been swept away by the revolution. It was the first requirement of our agreement here.' This without cracking a smile or meeting my eye. (145)

The irony is apparent to both narrator and reader, but the characters are seemingly oblivious. While the setting of the film is during the *Porfiriato*, the events of the story occur some thirty years later-- and the narration of these events is roughly contemporaneous to their occurrence. Everything about the place in which the characters find themselves, however, is reminiscent of the *Porfiriato*. Suspended in time, the characters replay the same roles as their socio-economic counterparts from an earlier generation and a strict hierarchy remains. This factor is only compounded as the story continues and its events are punctuated by explicit references to modernity and the way it is slowly entering the landscape of the hacienda-- but only for the *hacendado* and well outside the frame of the camera eye.

Don Genaro, the *hacendado*, for instance, is rather taken by modern machinery and the conveniences and entertainments they can provide him. He is particularly fond of his new automobile, and, the narrator relates:

> He had for one thing a habit of stepping on the accelerator and bounding across tracks before approaching trains. Speed, he said, was 'modern' and it was everyone's duty to be as modern as one's means allowed. … He could afford high-powered automobiles that simply frightened other drivers off the road before him; he was thinking of an airplane to cut distance between the hacienda and the capital; speed and lightness at great expense was his ideal. (154-155)

The story relies upon the bizarre juxtaposition of such scenes as this with those of the daily operation of the hacienda. They point to the seeming impotence of the Mexican Revolution and corruption of the revolutionary ideals in the halls of government, but so too do they signify the slow encroachment of modernization into the regional countryside. As an *hacendado*, don Genaro is an easy target and the reader does not waste any sympathy on him. In a strange way, his association with technology, speed and mechanization, while signifying Mexico's political stagnancy, put Porter and her narrator-- and the reader-- in too close company with the old Spanish gentleman who delights in how little the hacienda has changed. It is not that Porter fails to understand the paradoxical quality of the hacienda or to identify with the side of the underprivileged whom the revolution had seemingly failed; it is that she also reveals her preference for the "authentic" Mexico free of modernity and, while she knows better than to give advice, the reader glimpses her nostalgia for the Mexico of a bygone era. Combined with her visceral response to Chase, the reader senses that Porter recognizes her role among those "friends" to whom "the land has fallen prey." For this reason, it is difficult to separate Porter from her narrator.

In her book-length study of Porter's career, Janis P. Stout writes that this long short story is "fiction in only a highly qualified sense" (81). Drewey Wayne Gunn agrees, noting that the

narrative of the first version is told "in the historical present" and that Porter "gives no indication that it is not simply a reminiscence" (115).[107] The final, extended version of the story, however, was published with the following disclaimer: "'All characters and situations in this story are entirely fictional and do not portray an actual person.' A reviewer retorted that 'these nervous protests have come to be an unfailing sign that they aren't'" (qtd. in Gunn 1974, 115). Given the role of Mexico in Porter's writing, from her letter, "Why I Write about Mexico" to her many short stories and non-fictional reports and, finally, to her review of Chase's book, the biographical resonance should not be overlooked. Much time has been spent identifying the different characters as a key to understanding the story more fully. In Porter's own words, the initial version was, "a piece on Tetlapayac, but with names and such disguised. It would be necessary" (qtd. in Alvarez and Walsh 256).[108] One could spend a great deal of time explicating the significance of the thinly-disguised, real figures found in Porter's story,[109] but more important to the discussion here are the ways in which the story reveals Porter's changed attitude regarding Mexico.

In this instance, understanding the narrator as a proxy for Porter carries forward the continuous sense of disillusionment found in stories such as "Flowering Judas" and "That Tree," as well as in her unpublished review of Chase's *Mexico*. Stout writes that this is part of Porter's motivation for the disclaimer, which becomes "an effort to establish its larger and directly political and social implications" (83). Tanner takes a biographical perspective in his analysis of

[107] Between the earlier 1932 version and the final 1934 version, the point-of-view shifts from the first-person plural to the first-person singular.
[108] The editors cite a letter to Malcolm Cowley, dated 22 July 1931.
[109] The cast of characters in this short-story-*à-clef* contains Segei Eisenstein, Grigori Alexandrov, Hunter Kimbrough, Eduard Tissé and Adolfo Best-Maugard, among many others. This is elaborated upon to varying degrees by most critics who have written about the story. The list includes: Alvarez and Walsh (256-259), Delpar (178), Gunn (115-119), Simmen (xxxvii), Stout (81-85), Titus (158-161), T. Walsh (154). There is also a general agreement among these critics that the narrator can be identified with Porter herself.

Porter's career, writing that "Hacienda," presents a "Penetrating, pitiless observation and journalistic objectivity in reportage of scene" (146). Tanner is not alone in seeing a strong component of "reportage" in "Hacienda"[110] and this quality in the narration is important. By situating the story in journalistic terms (Porter herself referred to the first version as "only an article" [qtd. in Alvarez and Walsh 256]), the ways in which it corresponds with some of the accounts of Mexico in U.S. periodicals suggests a continuance of the conversation begun in Treadwell's interview with Villa from a decade earlier. Porter's "directly political intention" (Stout 81) in writing the piece and her "despairing mood" toward Mexico (T. Walsh 153), is enhanced in the final version of "Hacienda," "Although the point of both versions of this story is that the Mexican revolution has changed nothing, the revised version is both more despairing and more personal" (Alvarez and Walsh 259). There is a sense of lament in the final scene, when the narrator decides to leave the film crew waiting for the resolution of Justino's situation and to continue their project. The narrator sadly thinks to herself, "I could not wait for tomorrow in this deathly air," when one of the indigenous laborers remarks to her, "'If you should come back in about ten days … you would see a different place. It is very sad here now. But then the green corn will be ready, and ah, there will be enough to eat again!'" (170). Although hopeful, that such optimism need be maintained by the laboring population speaks to the frustratingly slow process of political reform in the post-revolutionary era. Furthermore, it seamlessly blends Porter's disillusionment with the revolution and with the "enormous vogue," providing a fitting end to her final story about Mexico.

Porter's own writing on Mexico began with works of reportage and early articles for various periodicals demonstrate a deep knowledge of and genuine connection with Mexican folk

[110] The term is used consistently by most critics. Stout provides a representative example: "Even in this original [1932] version, though, the distinction between reportage and fiction is somewhat blurred" (81).

culture.[111] As a reporter, she was "instrumental in introducing Mexican arts and letters to audiences in the United States at a time of widespread ignorance about Latin America" (Adams 114). The ultimately conflicting position in which Porter would find herself was that "she recognized that the renaissance was responsible for introducing the best of Mexico's popular culture to the world; on the other, she believed that such attention exerted a corrosive effect on the pristine folk she had so admired" (117-118). For this reason, many critics describe the tone of this story as one of "despair"-- and it is a fitting word. At this point in history, the violent period of the Mexican Revolution had ended, but the tumultuous sphere of revolutionary politics had yet to stabilize. In Porter's story, "All the characters seem caught in a doomed landscape where nothing reaches conclusion" (T. Walsh 154). So too is Mexico more generally, being caught in a state of suspended animation as the political world was punctuated by elections, assassinations, resignations and interim administrations. Although far removed from the sphere of political action, the Hacienda Tetlapayac comes to represent Mexico itself, its picturesque qualities masking an uncomfortable reality. For this reason, haciendas cannot be idealized, given that they are embodiments of Mexico's past inequality. At the same time, however, they provide a picturesque setting that is synonymous with the rural Mexico of the Central Highlands. As such, they become ideal settings in which to explore the disillusionment with the Mexican revolution. It provides the ideal metaphor for those travelers keeping away from Mexico City. For Chase, the "hacienda village" provides a foil to the "free village"-- Tepoztlán being an example of the latter-- and the current promise of hope that he sees in contemporary Mexico. So too does it provide the ideal metaphor for Porter as a way of pointing to the larger problems that

[111] Some of Porter's more significant early articles and short works not discussed in this chapter are: *Outline of Mexican Popular Arts and Crafts* (1922), "Where Presidents Have No Friends" (1922) and "Corridos" (1924).

she has identified while also allowing the reader to understand that her final ambivalence toward Mexico is not academic, but deeply personal.

Remembering the centrality of Mexico City in the cultural landscape of Mexico, one begins to understand how difficult it was for political actors to establish permanent change in the years following the revolution. So too does one better understand the source of the frustration found in the pages of Porter's later writings on Mexico, as well as Chase's quixotic vision of the Central Highlands as a proving-ground for the regional visions of the RPAA. The future of change in Mexico relied upon the modern, industrializing city that would destroy the vision of a folk culture suspended in time that they had cultivated and expected the agrarian-based revolution to have preserved.

The strong centralist component of Mexican society is implicitly recognized by Tannenbaum in his *Peace by Revolution* (1933), which is exactly contemporaneous with Porter's revisions and eventual publication of "Hacienda." Although traditional sources of hierarchical authority (namely the traditional ruling classes and the Catholic Church) waned after the revolution, the dominant ideals behind the rhetoric of the revolution were "the awakening of nationalism, the emergence of racial consciousness, the rising power of labor, the abolition of peonage, the widening base of the government" (187), all of which can be understood as depending simultaneously on strong centralized authority supported by regional actors. It is through the coordination of these much larger systems of ideas by a strong centralized government located in Mexico City that this was to come about. This spatial organization of the country is what lies behind Tannenbaum's unequivocal statement that "The impact of the movement upon the Mexican *hacienda* will be the measure of the Revolution" (187). When Tannenbaum was writing, he recognized that the *hacienda* system of land organization was still

"the chief feature of the landscape and the root of the political, social and economic structure of Mexico" (187). Nevertheless, Tannenbaum is optimistic, seeing the possibilities inherent in the central government's still-nascent initiatives in reforming and creating policies regarding land, labor and education. It is in the promise of these processes, combined with the newfound historic awareness of Mexican heritage that he finds "the main source of the Mexico of tomorrow" (308), the upbeat phrase with which he ends his study.

So, while Tannenbaum sees the Revolution as still very much in-process a decade after its initial violent decade, it is clear from Porter's attitude that it did not take hold quite soon enough and the political corruption that mired 1920s Mexico was, along with foreign influence and misunderstanding, too dispiriting for her. The metaphor provided by an hacienda's landscape is all the more powerful in her story for having been misused. Denying the humanity of the laborers on the hacienda, the filmmakers focus on the symbolic landscape of the scene:

> The camera had seen this unchanged world as a landscape with figures, but figures under a doom imposed by the landscape. The closed dark faces were full of instinctive suffering, without individual memory, or only the kind of memory animals may have, who when they feel the whip know they suffer but do not know why and cannot imagine a remedy… (Porter 1972,142)[112]

The suspended animation of the larger political situation in Mexico is embodied in the built landscape of the hacienda which, in concert with its surrounding natural landscape, becomes "doomed." In contrast to Tannenbaum's history, Porter's story leaves very little hope for the future of the country as long as foreigners continue "meddling" and "presuming" and "pawing and fumbling it over." The filmmakers see what is convenient to them, while Porter and her

[112] Compare this language to that from one of Porter's earliest articles on Mexico, "The Mexican Trinity" (1921). In it, her description of the indigenous Mexican population reads as follows: "they are the very life of the country, this inert and slow-breathing mass, these lost people who move in the oblivion of sleepwalkers under their incredible burdens these silent and reproachful figures in rags, bowed face to face with the earth … Leagued against the Indian are four centuries of servitude" (1970, 401-402).

narrator see the lost promise of the Revolution. Both are visions of knowledgeable and sympathetic observers, but foreign observers nonetheless.

The reader feels that the narrator is not only leaving the hacienda, but leaving Mexico behind as well. Here again, one must connect Porter with her narrator, as in this context "Porter left Mexico having developed a theory of artistic integrity, out of the paradoxical nature of art as an expression at once of localized specificity and universal commonality, and of the artist's role both in and outside of social experience. She had developed, as well, a measure of detachment toward her native region" (Stout 85). Porter is caught in a predicament, as the sense of guilt at being partially responsible for the negative effects that foreign interest has had on "authentic" Mexican culture. For this reason, Tanner writes that "Hacienda" is representative of Porter's Mexican stories, as "there is in this story a powerful representation of the inability of foreigners to understand Mexican culture; the gringos (Americans, Russians, whoever) who gaze upon Mexico simply remain *unaware*" (148). The narrator separates herself from the others and leaves the hacienda before the rest, as she is aware-- and painfully so-- given that she might well be part of this larger problem.

Porter was not alone in becoming disillusioned with Mexico and one sees evidence of this in the two works by Treadwell mentioned at the beginning of this discussion. The novel, *Lusita*, is clearly inspired by her 1921 interview with Villa-- and contains a Villa-esque figure. While Treadwell's novel is not the literary equivalent of Porter's long short story, written ten years after her Villa interview, it does subtly reject some of her earlier optimism. What makes this particularly interesting is the way in which Treadwell also treats the landscape of the hacienda in ways that clearly parallel her earlier interview. *Lusita*'s central character is a journalist from San

Francisco.[113] The story of *Lusita* follows him to Mexico on assignment to cover the story of the eponymous Lusita, a young noblewoman who has been kidnapped by a famed bandit, "Pancho Zateca."[114] The kidnapping proves to be a fabrication, however, as the young woman joined Zateca willingly, captivated by "the violent though gentlemanly bandit, as he offered her a life of freedom and adventure" (López-Rodríguez 201). Given the privilege and protection of her socio-economic status in the country, such a life would otherwise remain unknown to her. In the story, Zateca's headquarters are located at an hacienda-- advantageous in its remoteness and in its vantage point overlooking the surrounding countryside. The narrator describes it as being one with the landscape:

> Its loveliness stretched on mile after mile without any sign of man or any of his works to once break the illusion; for the house, and all the other hacienda buildings, lay down in the shelter of the cliff on the other side. The silence, the vastness and the beauty seemed that of eternity, of infinity, of God. So perfect its spell, it seemed an unknown paradise not yet discovered by any angel. And here dwelt Zateca, the bandit! (115)

The reader recognizes the similarity between Treadwell's interview with Villa from a decade before. There she describes the far reaches of the estate in much the same way: "We spent the morning going around the hacienda. How endless it was! Not a ranch. Not a little town. But a separate State" (59). This sense of awe continues from an earlier passage, where she writes: "It does not look much like a ranch. It looks like a small town. Several blocks of adobe houses along well-laid-out streets. Larger indiscriminate buildings on all sides. There is a church, big and beautiful enough to hold the worship of a large community. Beyond the church lies the hacienda house, the dwelling of the *patrón*" (49). It is at the hacienda that Treadwell the reporter

[113] In one of the few critical works to revisit Treadwell's career, co-editor Miriam López-Rodríguez agrees, writing that she was "clearly inspired" (201) to translate her Mexican reportage into a more literary output.
[114] This name combines "Pancho Villa" with a sort of portmanteau combining "Zacatecas" (the scene of a major victory led by Villa's troops in 1914) with the surname of Emiliano Zapata, the leader of revolutionary forces in southern Mexico.

is captivated by a landscape that was constructed for the exploitation of natural resources and human labor, a built landscape synonymous with the oppression that the Revolution had promised to overthrow. Furthermore, the hacienda is now overseen by a revolutionary who now occupies the comfortable seat of his former oppressors. This dissonance does not go unrecognized by Treadwell and she expresses this discomfort by noting that the atmosphere is unnatural. She asks:

> How to explain this strange, unreal stillness that hangs over the hacienda of Canutillo? Is it but the natural hush of vast, empty, low hills stretching out endlessly in clear, high air? Or is there, too, some curious repression in the souls of the people now living there? The repression of men moving dumbly through unaccustomed tasks? The oppression of heart of Villistas turned farmers? (59)

Although Treadwell seems confident enough in Villa's character to modify his bandit-like image for the 1921 interview, in 1931 the Zateca of *Lusita* cannot escape the label. Instead, the journalist-narrator must rescue Lusita from Zateca's hacienda and flee with her through the countryside. While Treadwell may be pandering to her audience's desire for romance and adventure, an equally reasonable explanation would put Treadwell in the category of foreign sympathizers disillusioned with the slow process of the sweeping reforms promised by the Revolution. The inkling that revolutionary soldiers might have assumed the role of hacienda laborers is a possibility that Treadwell considers-- however briefly-- in her earlier article and these uneasy questions return the reader's mind to the long socio-economic history of the hacienda in Mexico and the durability of the hacienda's role as a symbolic landscape.[115]

The scenic depictions in *Lusita* clearly echo those found in Treadwell's original interview with Villa ten years before,[116] revealing the same political corruption and stagnancy found in

[115] For a full discussion of symbolic landscapes and how they function in the collective imagination, see the Introduction and Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

[116] Treadwell's meeting with Villa taking place one year after the assassination of Mexican president Venustiano Carranza and Villa's subsequent retirement from guerilla warfare. These events marked the end of the violent

Porter's stories, as well as the willful blindness of the foreign correspondent. When the narrator of *Lusita* remarks on the "loveliness" of the Mexican countryside surrounding the hacienda, it extends for miles "without any sign of man or any of his works to once break the illusion," as the reality of the hacienda and the life of the laborers there would spoil the divine beauty of the scene, as they would closely resemble the "closed dark faces … full of instinctive suffering" that Porter's narrator witnesses at the Hacienda Tetlapayac. The reader of both *Lusita* and "Hacienda" sense that it is only too tempting to pretend that the illusion is real.

In a way, all of Mexico has been an illusion for these writers-- an illusion of their own creation that the circumstances of history allowed them to create. In many ways, the foreign imagination encountered Mexico *in medias res*-- after the violent decade that began with the toppling of the Díaz regime, but too early in the twenty-year span of political turmoil that would slowly lead to the political consolidation that followed the laying-down of arms by Villa and the other actors. This slow process inevitably disappointed many of the writers and intellectuals who went to Mexico. Whatever they may have felt about it, Mexico owed them nothing and was pursuing its own vision of its own future in its own terms.

From the regionalist perspective proposed by Reichert Powell, scholarship should shift "emphasis away from the products of regional culture, the definitions of regions themselves and all their representative artifacts, to the processes by which ideas about regions come into being and become influential" (7). The treatment of Mexico by a foreign perspective fundamentally at odds with its current history and the distinct, centralized settlement pattern of the country, the

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period of the Mexican Revolution, which lasted a full decade, from the overthrow of Díaz, in 1911, until the presidency of Álvaro Obregón in 1920, which followed the abdication and subsequent assassination of Carranza. In total, twelve separate individuals held the office of the President of Mexico from 1911 to 1934, a period that ended with the election of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934, whose administration, which would last through 1940 (as the first contemporary six-year presidency of Mexico), is largely responsible for a more fully realized consolidation of revolutionary ideals into a stabilized government.

complex relationship among Mexican places was ignored in favor of the "new utopia of the imagination" based in folk culture. Rejecting Mexico City and overlooking modernization would preclude the possibility of a more creative understanding of what Mexico could be and was trying to become. Beyond the various levels of accuracy or inaccuracy in U.S. writings about Mexico, attention should be paid to "whose interests are served" (7) by the vision they presented. Inevitably, what one discovers is that while Mexico was their subject matter, their primary concerns had more to do with their own home culture and personal interests than with those of Mexico.

Expressing his frustration over the treatment of Mexico by writers from the U.S., Mexican poet Octavio Paz once wrote, "In general, American writers have not looked for Mexico in Mexico; they have looked for their obsessions, enthusiasms, phobias, hopes, and interests-- and these are what they have found" (qtd. in Simmen, l-li). In many ways, the survey of materials above demonstrates the same point, but a writer such as Porter complicates this understanding. What the reader discovers is that sometimes these competing desires-- to better understand both Mexico and oneself-- are inseparable. If Mexico was Porter's "familiar country," then it is because its lands meet with those of her native state, Texas, at the Rio Grande-- or, travelling from the south, the *Río Bravo del Norte*. The river is not a border, but signifies the presence of one region among many others and the ways in which each contributes to a larger, integrated whole in which the cultural exchange between the two countries should be a natural process. What Porter also shows her readers, however, is that this is easier said than done-- a difficult task that has yet to succeed.

CHAPTER 3

FRESCOES FOR REV. WHEELOCK'S LIBRARY: JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO AT DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

In August 1933, a short column in *The New Yorker* surveyed the showings at the galleries around New York City. More interesting to the article's author, Lewis Mumford, was the idea of leaving the city and, "If I were arranging a busman's holiday," he wrote, "I could think of nothing more pleasant than a motor trip through the Connecticut Valley, stopping only to look at the pictures" (26). Working his way east from New York City, Mumford recommends stopping in Westport and New Haven, Connecticut, but moves inland, following the Connecticut River to Northampton, Massachusetts and, eventually, to Hanover, New Hampshire, as "The final goal of such a trip might be the new frescoes that Orozco has done for Dartmouth College in the reading-room of the Baker Library" (26). The frescoes are now known as *The Epic of American Civilization* (1932-1934)[117] and the artist, José Clemente Orozco, was-- along with Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros-- one of the so-called *tres grandes* of Mexican muralism. In the context of the early-1930s, bringing Mexican muralists to the United States was, for many, an exciting addition to the national art scene. Even today, the murals painted during this period are among the most well-known expressions of Mexican culture in the U.S.[118]

Northern New England is about as far as one can get from Mexico while remaining within the continental U.S. and, both then and now, there is a certain novelty in seeing a prominent work of Mexican muralism in a quintessentially New England environment. Not only does half of *The Epic of American Civilization* take ancient Mesoamerica as its subject matter,

[117] Although designated a national historical landmark in 2013, this mural cycle was not always the object of affection among the Dartmouth community, as will be explored below.
[118] For a full discussion of what has been called the "enormous vogue of things Mexican" in the 1920s and 30s, see the discussion in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Orozco uses this material to criticize Western Civilization while also incorporating a critique of institutionalized education. For many, such a mural in such a setting was less an oddity than an affront to the Baker Library, Dartmouth College, the New England tradition and, by extension, the United States itself. Such reactions fail to understand that Orozco's critique encompasses both the U.S. and Mexico, presenting a hemispheric critique of Western Civilization at large. One of the primary points that Orozco is making in the mural is that Mexico-- and Latin America more generally-- is a branch of Western Civilization, for good or ill. While making specific references to traditions of as well as modern conditions in the U.S. and Mexico, Orozco abstracts these subjects to indicate the shared challenges all cultures faced by all cultures in the modern era. So, while the content and critique found in *The Epic of American Civilization* point to the possibilities found in the cultural exchange between the U.S. and Mexico, the reactions against it point to the failure to fully realize these possibilities and the desire to preserve the centrality of New England in the traditional narrative of U.S. history.

Maintaining distance among cultures prevents the synthesis of historical narratives, which was the goal of those figures who embraced a hemispheric understanding of U.S. culture. Nonetheless, while Orozco incorporates a harsh critique of modernity and institutionalized education, his work places its faith in its primary audience, the students of Dartmouth College, celebrating the potential of their education as critical inquiry-- an education that might be inspired, through *The Epic of American Civilization*, to see the ways in which its small corner of New England is not so far removed from the world after all.

The importance of tradition is central to much of the early, negative criticism levelled against Orozco's mural cycle. While Dartmouth professor Mary K. Coffey writes that "Students and faculty, alike, seem to have been equally smitten with Orozco and his cycle," the reactions of

alumni tended to be vehemently negative (2011, 90). Any research conducted in the Dartmouth archives on *The Epic of American Civilization* will reveal dozens of newspaper clippings from around the country that gave voice to this controversy, which continues in the private correspondence of Dartmouth's then-President, Ernest M. Hopkins. Many make some mention of these landscapes, directly referring to Orozco's murals as inappropriate and foreign to the Dartmouth environment. While such rhetoric can-- and should-- be easily dismissed for its nativism, what it does reveal is the very real influence of the symbolic landscape on the cultural imagination. Examples range from hyperbolic exclamations that "Baker Library had been ravished - that violence of some sort had been done to it,"[119] to the somewhat more nuanced idea "that murals in the Mexican style of painting are wholly out of keeping with Dartmouth College buildings in general and the Baker Library in particular."[120] In another letter the author writes that Orozco's work is as out of place in Baker Library as "it would be out of place in the White Church if that were still standing. Probably I am wrong but the type of architecture and the type of painting involved seem to me to be like oil and water - they will not mix."[121] Finally, another letter from one of Hopkins' acquaintances from around the same period cites New England and the Dartmouth campus environment at some length to the same ends. He writes:

> Orozco's art is, first of all, inappropriate in Dartmouth's buildings. The fine Colonial architecture of early Dartmouth has been the key to the building policy of the college for over one hundred years, with the result that her campus is a single architectural unit, something to be extremely proud of in America. It is the tradition of centuries of Anglo-Saxon culture, and in that culture I can find no justification for a work of art that springs from Central American and Latin sources. A mural decoration becomes an integral part of the building it decorates, and must conform to the building as closely as a door must conform to the facade surrounding it. There is no more reason for an important part of Baker Library to be Central American, than there is reason to build an adobe dormitory on the campus. … Not only in spirit does Orozco's work not harmonize with Dartmouth

[119] See personal correspondence between President Hopkins and Clarence G. "Mac" McDavitt of 14 June 1932.
[120] See personal correspondence between President Hopkins and Matt B. Jones of 26 May 1932.
[121] Ibid., 03 June 1932. The original "White Church" on Dartmouth's Green was constructed in 1795.

> architecture, but it is equally foreign in style. From a purely technical point of view it is a violation of architectural scale and artistic fitness to incorporate the crude bulbous forms of his frescoes in the delicate and refined detail of Colonial buildings. The architecture at Dartmouth is the manifestation of the taste, intelligence and strength of England and North America, particularly appropriate to an institution of higher learning: the painting at Dartmouth should not be the crude and untutored strength of a foreign peasant people.[122]

Unfortunately, one hears echoes of such retrograde attitudes coming from major figures of U.S. politics even today. Such rank bigotry is clearly visible through the superficial theorizations on architecture and design.

Briefly suspending the clear prejudices found in the above letter, however, one can understand the logic employed, which relies upon an understanding of art as decorative rather than experiential. The construction of Baker Library was a relatively recent event, having been completed in 1928-- and the internal *Report of the Faculty Committee on the New Library, 1929*, contains several sections showing how much thought and care were put into the decisions made regarding the building's interior décor.[123] Much of the recent campus construction at that point had been "of a Colonial Georgian type and had been planned by Mr. [Jens Frederick] Larson," the committee wrote, deciding that "It was therefore natural and desirable that the architecture of the new library should conform with this type" (IV-1).[124] The level of detail in which the new library would display such architectural and decorative consistency was carried through to the fullest extent, including the wood trim and finishing of the building's furniture.

While these details were visible throughout the building, the basement reading room where Orozco would paint *The Epic of American Civilization* was, as Mumford then observed, "was not 'for show': hence it could be left undecorated. The bare wall … appeared in this

[122] See personal correspondence between President Hopkins and David K. Rubins of 11 June 1932.
[123] Of interest here are Sections IV and X: "Type of Architecture" and "Furniture and Equipment," respectively.
[124] Larson was a prominent architect and campus planner during that era and Baker Library would remain one of his most renowned achievements.

Georgian museum-piece by default" (1934, 232). Despite Mumford's editorializing on the library's architectural style, his point stands. The library's designers never could have anticipated Orozco's project. While the mural's style may juxtapose with the rest of the building, it was nonetheless painted on walls that had been left blank, cloistered in the long basement room largely free of the neo-colonial building's otherwise "delicate and refined detail" so admired by Hopkins's correspondent. If referring to Mexicans as "foreign peasant people" were not enough, the logic of the objection is spurious. It is a position that privileges art as decorative rather than experiential.

Such positions are based not only in attitudes about art and culture, but so too are they related to the role of symbolic landscapes in the collective imagination of the U.S. The landscapes of New England and of the college campus are important as specific built environments that developed over hundreds of years, but so too are they important as symbolic landscapes, those places that represent and communicate "something which is widely appreciated" and suggest "not just something important in our past, but a visible bond between past and present" (Meinig 165).[125] This will be the topic of further discussion in this chapter, but before elaborating on these contexts, some background to Orozco's residence at Dartmouth is necessary.

Although Orozco's presence at Dartmouth struck some as unusual-- and unwanted-- the story of his arrival is no great mystery (and one imagines him taking much the same route through southern New England as Mumford would recommend a few years later). Coffey, writes that "It was the new federal commitment to public art during the Depression that spurred art professors to lobby their academic administrations for the funds to bring Mexican artists to U.S.

[125] For a full discussion of the term, see the Introduction to this dissertation.

colleges. … the Mexican muralists were the logical choice for training young art students in the use of this medium" (2011, 86-87). In this context, members of Dartmouth's art department, led by their chairman, Artemas Packard, as well as fellow faculty member Churchill P. Lathrop, "began a campaign to realize their vision of obtaining for the college the services of one of the two important Mexican muralists then working in the United States" (Baas 148). At that time, both Orozco and Rivera were active in New York City. To help convince the college administration of their idea-- and to confront the financial challenges of bringing the artist to Hanover-- Orozco was scheduled to give a "lecture-demonstration on fresco painting" (152). Through this visit, the art department hoped to convince the college and to secure funds to bring Orozco back for a larger project.

Two of Orozco's earlier commissions in the U.S. before painting *The Epic of American Civilization* were mural projects, and both were located at institutions of higher education. Earlier in the same decade, Orozoco completed the fresco *Prometheus* (1930) at Pomona College near Los Angles, California. Shortly thereafter, he painted several mural panels at The New School for Social Research in New York City, a cycle depicting imagined scenes from world politics, now simply referred to as "The New School Murals" (1930-1931). Upon arriving at Dartmouth College, Orozco gave his "lecture-demonstration" of the fresco technique, which resulted in a panel titled *Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life* (1932). In it, Orozco returns to themes from classical mythology that he had explored at Pomona, rather than continuing to ruminate over contemporary geopolitics as he had at the New School. Commonly abbreviated as "*Release*," Jacquelynn Baas, former director of the Hood Museum of Art at

Dartmouth College, writes that it was part of "a larger mural cycle built around the theme of Daedalus" (157) that would never come to fruition at Dartmouth or elsewhere.[126]

Release is located above a door that leads from a basement service corridor into the northwest corner of a long room used as the reserve book reading room of Baker Library,[127] which suggests the importance of the library's structure as an important context to consider when analyzing *The Epic of American Civilization*. This room stretches the full width of the library building, and it is the tremendous amount of wall space available on the north side of this room which became the object of contemplation for Orozco while painting *Release*. It was here that members of the art department eventually negotiated as the setting for the much larger mural project over the course of the next two years.

Orozco revised the concept and layout of *The Epic of American Civilization* several times during its execution,[128] combining panels and imagery that slowly transformed the cycle from a linear sequence of events into an impressionistic and experiential depiction of both history and the modern world.[129] Although Orozco worked on the many panels out of sequence, when the November 1933 issue of the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (*DAM*) was published, the overall

[126] This trial-panel depicts a young man, reaching upward and out from a pile of mangled machinery and implements of war. His gaze is fixed toward a future that promises to be shaped by his own hands rather than by industrialization or war machines, both of which threaten destruction. According to a press release from the same year, Orozco considered it to have a "post-war" theme: "[*Release*] 'represents man emerging form a heap of destructive machinery symbolizing slavery, automatism, and the converting of a human being into a robot, without brain, heart, or free will, under the control of another machine. Man is now shown in command of his own hands and he is at last free to shape his own destiny'" (qtd. in Baas 2002, 156).

[127] Shortly after naming *The Epic of American Civilization* as a national historical landmark in 2013, the reserve reading room was formally named "The Orozco Room" and is so designated by a plaque recognizing its patron.

[128] The first thing that Orozco abandoned was the mythology of the ancient Mediterranean, choosing instead the mythology native to Mesoamerica and its larger hemispheric relevance.

[129] This can be seen in a draft document titled "Proposed for the Library Corridor Walls" located in the Dartmouth College Library Papers on the Orozco Murals. The draft describes the sequence of planned panels as having two parts, "Pre-Columbian" and "Post Conquest." The latter lists the following unrealized panels: "New Culture," "New Religion," "New Art," "New Architecture." These correspond with Orozco's ideas in his 1929 manifesto, "New World, New Races and New Art." The panels that he actually painted thus show a development of the project, as well as a development of Orozco's ideas themselves.

schema for the reading room's mural was established. Joined by Orozco, Artemas Packard contributed a short essay detailing the unifying ideas of the room's design: The west and east sides of the reading room's north wall were to be divided into depictions of past and present, of the ancient and the modern iterations of culture on the American continent, while the west and east walls themselves would further depict the parallels between ancient and modern civilization through symbolic imagery. One set of panels, located in the center of the room, were completely redesigned by Orozco, consequently removing any direct reference to Dartmouth College or traditional conceptions of U.S. history that had been articulated in the original plans, a matter that would prove contentious in years to follow.[130]

Consisting of twenty panels covering a total of 3,200 square feet of wall space, *The Epic of American Civilization* incorporates parts of all four sides of this large rectangular room, which is approximately twenty-six feet wide and ninety-two feet long. The main entrances to the room are located on the far west and far east walls, with other service entrances located in the northwest,[131] northeast and southeast corners of the room. (There are also two doorways on the north wall in the central part of the room; these flank the reserve book desk, granting access to its offices and other facilities.) The panels are evenly distributed on the west and east wings of the long north wall, but the reserve book reading room is not without its irregularities. One significant feature is an alcove at the far east end of the room that structurally creates a sort of apse that Orozco used to paint four religio-nationalistic panels that offer a summation of his larger pan-ideological critique.[132] At the center of the room, one finds the reserve book desk

[130] According to Packard's contribution to the November 1933 *DAM* article, these panels were to be titled "The Missionaries-- Dartmouth College," "Missionaries and Explorers," "Settlers" and "19th Century Immigrants."
[131] It is through the northwest entrance, in a service corridor, that Orozco's first panel, *Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life* (1932), was painted at Dartmouth as a demonstration of the fresco technique.
[132] It was in a conversation in Baker Library that Dr. Mary K. Coffey suggested that Orozco's depiction of Christ in this alcove has a strong correlation with Byzantine Catholic iconography. In this sense, his use of the library's architecture might turn this alcove into a sort of secular apse in the contexts of the larger reading room.

itself, which protrudes into the long corridor-like space. Coupled with a recessed space in the wall opposite, the reserve book desk creates a separate area that narrows the path of movement along the length of the room. This area is further enclosed by narrow vertical walls which cover the building's structural support system. Orozco used these narrow vertical walls to paint panels which serve as visual cues, acting as entry points to each wing of the room while also bookmarking each wing's own pattern of symbolism. In terms of the Baker Library's symmetrical floorplan, the reserve book desk sits below the central architectural feature of the building, its clock-tower, at the ground level of which is the main entrance to the library.

Central to any mural's impact on its viewers is its spatial arrangement within its architectural setting-- how the mural relates to the open space in which it is visible. There is a complex network of relationships involved in observing a mural, which are fundamental to the way a viewer will experience it. In his book, *Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico* (1998), Leonard Folgarait explains this phenomenon. The title of his second chapter is "What is a Mural?" and to define the medium he stresses the mural's relationship with space and the viewer's place in that space. He writes: "murals describe, construct, and somewhat control the human viewing subject. Upon crossing into a mural's field of engagement, the status of the viewer changes from spectator to participant and her or his action within this spatial envelope is then seen in terms of that state of envelopment" (28). Any mural cycle would further complicate this "envelope," as multiple panels are incorporated into the wall-space and architecture of a building. Murals in large rooms allow the viewer to move among the many panels in many directions. This is also part of how murals generally "describe, construct and somewhat control," according to Folgarait. He continues:

> This is all possible in front of murals and not easel paintings because of the mere size difference. Whereas moving closer or farther from an especially fuzzy

> Monet is essentially the movement of a set of eyes to find the ideal viewing distance, the movements in front of a mural are those of a body moving through space, to and from an image of proportions that can fully occupy the field of vision to become a 'place.' (28)

This is a useful way to understand how viewers move through the reading room at Dartmouth's Baker Library and why it is worth emphasizing the importance of place-based analysis in the study of any mural.

Scholars consistently remark upon this quality of Orozco's mural cycles. One of the foremost contemporary scholars of Mexican muralism, Anna Indych-López, notes that in some of his earliest cycles painted in colonial and neo-colonial buildings in Mexico, "No particular sequence of viewing is privileged or encouraged. In order to digest the cycle … viewers must carry over the narrative from inset to inset and from wall to wall, in effect, creating their own configuration. In this abstract process, thematic unity and close iconographic reading are often temporarily sacrificed" (2007, 301). This is as much built-in to the architecture as it is in Orozco's process.

Although the walls of the Baker Library's reading room are less complex in form than the courtyards, vaults, ceilings and other architectural details of the colonial and neo-colonial buildings of Mexico where Orozco painted much of his other work, Orozco still uses the library's architecture to his advantage. Creating an "envelope" in the reading room, Orozco divides the mural cycle into what Mexican art historian and critic Justino Fernández labels *el mundo indigena*-- "the indigenous world"-- and *El mundo americano*-- "the American world" (61-70), while Baas describes the two wings of the room as the "indigenous and the European" (2002, 146).[133] This central division simultaneously points to the conceptual unity of the mural,

[133] There are other ways to label the two sides of the room. At the time of its completion, for example, the "long wall, west wing" was referred to as "Part I" with the title *The Coming of Quetzalcoatl*, whereas the "long wall, east

as well as the many parallels, points of symmetry and echoes evoked by the imagery carried across its two wings. Given Orozco's concern with *mestizaje* and the New World, the phrases used by Fernández are appropriate, the sense of the term "American" being closer to Orozco's own use of the term. Given the basic structure of the reading room, a brief overview of the panels can now be situated in the context of the room itself.

The mural cycle is overwhelming in its sheer size and scope and the following summary does not pretend to be exhaustive.[134] As will be detailed below, Orozco's writings suggest correspondences and patterns among individual panels that contribute to the central idea of *The Epic of American Civilization* and the perspectival experience of the viewer while in the room and on the campus. The viewer is pulled in many directions at once by the many panels and the shapes around which they are organized: a chaotic scene centered on a central vertical figure. The viewer walks past more than two-thousand years of history on the American continent-- and it is a past composed primarily of junkheaps. Piles of rubble are strewn-about through many of the most prominent panels and, standing guard over these ash-heaps of history are totemic figures of its given age.

The generally accepted approach to *The Epic of American Civilization* is to read the mural cycle linearly-- from west-to-east and from left-to-right-- but there is nothing about the room that dictates this approach for the viewer, who might approach the panels from any number of directions, through any of the eight doors that grant access to the room. A further complication is that, while the viewer is able to move about freely, the mural can never be seen

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wing" was referred to as "Part II" with the title, *The Return of Quetzalcoatl* (Dickerson 1934). These titles seem to be invested in reading the cycle as an "epic history."

[134] Some (nearly) exhaustive summaries of *The Epic of American Civilization* do exist. Jacquelynn Baas' essay in the collection *José Clemente Orozco in the United States, 1927-1934* provides one such overview. One of the best examples can be found in Hurlburt's *The Mexican Muralists in the United States* (1989). The entire first chapter is dedicated to Orozco, with an extensive section on the mural cycle at Dartmouth.

in its entirety given the size and architectural features of the room. If the viewer enters from the service corridor in which Orozco painted *Release*, he will face the study tables lined-up below the windows on the south wall of the reading room.[135] There are no mural panels on this section of the south wall and the mass of the mural will be behind this viewer. Nevertheless, the panels on the west wall would loom above the viewer's right-hand shoulder, depicting *Migration*,[136] the prehistoric representation of Asian peoples migrating across the Bearing Strait-- or the Aztecs who came to the Valley of Mexico where they founded their capital, Tenochtitlán, at the site of modern-day Mexico City.[137] *Migration* is on the left-hand side of the western entrance to the reading room, while *Ancient Human Sacrifice* is on its right. Here, a group of masked figures are involved in the human sacrifice rituals common among ancient Mesoamerican cultures.[138]

Turning around, the viewer will then face the west wing of the long north wall. While both *Migration* and *Ancient Human Sacrifice* each have a strong vertical orientation, the subsequent five panels reinforce this aspect, which will carry across the entirety of the cycle. *Aztec Warriors* is located above the door that takes the visitor into the service corridor where *Release* was painted. Depicting warriors in full regalia, their bellicose figures face three subsequent panels: *Coming of Quetzalcoatl*, *The Pre-Columbian Golden Age* and *Departure of Quetzalcoatl*. These panels illustrate the myth of the god-king Quetzalcoatl and his influence on

[135] Although not the entrance a contemporary tourist would take upon visiting the library, using this entrance speaks to the daily life of the university, whether used as an access point by the college staff or as a shortcut by the students.
[136] The titles of individual panels used in the following summary correspond to the "official" titles found on the website *Dartmouth Digital Orozco* published online by the Hood Museum of Art.
[137] These interpretations are not mutually exclusive-- and this possibility indicates the complexity of meanings found in *The Epic of American Civilization*. In terms of what Orozco calls an "organic idea," they are both.
[138] These two panels are linked by a central panel above the doorway itself. Seemingly decorative, *Snake and Spears* brings some important symbolism to the west wall. It reminds the viewer that these civilizations were established through conquest and reinforced through ideology, as the snake recalls the Mexican coat of arms and the mythology surrounding the founding of Tenochtitlán on the site where, according to legend, a golden eagle was seen perched on a nopal cactus with a snake in its talons. By including a snake without an eagle or a cactus, but among spears that point both to the left and to the right, the panel becomes a keystone in the larger cycle.

Mesoamerican culture at large. In *Idols Behind Altars* (1929), Anita Brenner's well-known and contemporaneous study of Mexican culture, she details the legend of Quetzalcoatl, an ancient ruler who played the roles of "teacher, astronomer, priest, king, and ordinary wise person. As king he taught the people agriculture and how to measure time and the stars" (16).[139] The culture brought forth by Quetzalcoatl is embodied in the Aztec figures of *The Pre-Columbian Golden Age* (see fig. 10). They represent agriculture, artistry and contemplation.[140]

Fig. 10. José Clemente Orozco, *The Pre-Columbian Golden Age*. Photograph by the author.

On either side of *The Pre-Columbian Golden Age* the story of Quetzalcoatl himself is told. In *Coming of Quetzalcoatl*, he stands in front of the older pantheon of gods who symbolize

[139] As Brenner herself notes, "*Idols Behind Altars* was not planned as a reference book" (353), nonetheless, it was a popularly and well-known historical and cultural study that serves here to summarize the general knowledge of ancient Mesoamerican history disseminated at that time.

[140] The explication of these panels in the 1933 issue of *DAM* gives this panel the title "Agriculturalist, Sculptor, and Astronomer," noting that it is the positive vision of "the outstanding accomplishments" of Ancient Mesoamerica. The three figures are again vertically oriented, raising corn up out of the ground, building up toward the sky and stretching an arm upward toward the heavens, aspiring toward the culture's full potential. At the same time, however, this idyllic vision is qualified by the panels surrounding it.

Greed, Magic, Rain (and Storm), Death, War and Fire (see fig. 11).[141] The pyramids of Teotihuacán are depicted nearby-- and pictured in front of them are sleeping and torpid figures who are engaged in conversation and education, sheltered by "a Toltec house, a symbol of the beginnings of co-operation and understanding without which no society can exist" (Packard 1933, 11).

Fig. 11. José Clemente Orozco, *Coming of Quetzalcoatl*. Photograph by the author.

As Laurance P. Hurlburt, another influential voice in the discussion, writes, "The vital civilizing force Quetzalcoatl symbolizes overcomes the malevolent, unproductive qualities represented by the other gods, and mankind now lives and works in a more meaningful and creative manner" (65). It is the middle ground of this panel where the viewer sees the pyramids of Teotihuacán. Clearly positioned to suggest the connection between the men on the ground and the gods in the sky, the combination of scenes in this panel serves as the point of intersection between the vertical orientation of the partial Mesoamerican pantheon in the background and the horizontal

[141] These gods are, respectively: Xipe Totec, Tezcatlipoca, Tlaloc, Mictlantecuhtli, Huitzilopochtlie and Huehueteotl (Baas 165).

orientation of the scene of human education in the foreground. The pyramids are emphasized not as structures, but as hulking masses, robbing them of majesty and Orozco makes no attempt to re-imagine their original splendor,[142] instead presenting them akin to earthen mounds. Without paint or adornment, they more closely resemble the monochrome earthen ruins one might have seen during a contemporaneous excavation, signifying a civilization already in decay.

The same can be said for the pyramid in *Departure of Quetzalcoatl*, the panel that completes Orozco's retelling of the myth of Quetzalcoatl's reign. This panel depicts two scenes which were identified separately in 1933 as "The Reactionaries" and "The Prophecy of Quetzalcoatl" (Packard 11) (see fig. 12).

Fig. 12. *Departure of Quetzalcoatl*. Photograph by the author.

In the former, a group of treacherous individuals, hostile to Quetzalcoatl's teachings, move to reestablish the old religion and its associated witchcraft and human sacrifice. These reactionaries are shown in front of a Mayan pyramid, easily identified in contrast to those of Teotihuacán in

[142] Such imagery would be painted by Rivera in his "corridor murals" for the Palacio Nacional in Mexico City, completed between 1945 and 1950 and depicting imagined scenes incorporating the pyramids of Tenochtitlán, as well as Totonac civilization at El Tajín in the modern-day state of Veracruz.

Coming of Quetzalcoatl by its architectural features.[143] An architectural form shared throughout the many cultures of ancient Mesoamerica, Orozco uses the different pyramid types to signify the collective failure of these societies to fully embrace the teachings of this god-king and the aspirational "golden age" depicted at the center of the western wing of the north wall. So too did these cultures fail in the face of the Spanish Conquest, which is the "prophecy" of Quetzalcoatl alluded to in the original title-- and which is depicted in the final panel on the western wall to which Quetzalcoatl is pointing in *Departure of Quetzalcoatl*. The westernmost panel is titled *The Prophecy* and depicts a scene of the coming European invasion of the New World. Like *Aztec Warriors*, *The Prophecy* is positioned above a doorway and these two smaller panels look toward one another across the three scenes of ancient Mesoamerica described above and, in so doing, evoke an equivalency that questions the moral superiority so often granted those ancient peoples that were defeated by the conquistadores.

The idea that the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas fulfilled the prophecy of Quetzalcoatl was the once widely accepted explanation for the relative ease with which the native peoples were conquered. Today, however, that narrative has been challenged by contemporary research and is now understood to be an inaccurate conflation of cultural myths-- both Spanish and Mesoamerican. Although Orozco was working with a now-dated conception

[143] In the mythology, Quetzalcoatl left Teotihuacán to live among the Maya in Yucatán and Guatemala before leaving Mesoamerica altogether as a "disappointed messiah," he departs eastward on a raft of serpents, promising to return to destroy those who have forsaken him (Packard 11).

of ancient history,[144] in the context of a "usable past"[145] this interpretation contributes to the idea of a New World unique and separate from the Old World as imagined by many Mexican artists at that time. *The Prophecy* gets its name from this interpretation of the myths and history of ancient Mesoamerica. As mentioned, it is the reserve book desk itself that occupies the center of the north wall of the reading room. Walking past this desk from west to east, another five panels cover the east wing of the long north wall-- and it is here that the viewer sees the culmination of the Spanish Conquest foreshadowed in *The Prophecy* and the subsequent modern era in which the viewer lives.

Titled *Cortez and the Cross*, the first panel offers an expressionistic portrayal of the historical actions that define the Spanish Conquest. In front of the fire and destruction wrought the Spanish, Cortez stands stoically alongside a priest and a cross erected amid the desolation (see fig. 13). From here, there is a major historical leap forward into the modern industrial era. This subsequent panel, simply titled *The Machine* (see fig. 14), is a chaotic and expressionistic mass of rods and shafts and cranks and bolts and chains and gears. Hulking and powerful, *The Machine* nonetheless abstracts these components beyond recognizable use, creating a junkheap that overlaps with the slaughter of the Conquest to its left. Backgrounded by conceptual representations of factories and industrial silos, at the center of this panel is a black metal

[144] As Coffey writes: "Orozco's version of the myth is heavily indebted to post-Conquest Spanish sources that were widely accepted in his day but which have now been largely debunked. According to this story the Spanish Conquest was understood by its victims as the fulfillment of Quetzalcoatl's prophecy, and Hernán Cortés, because of his white pallor and beard, was perceived as Quetzalcoatl returned (2011, 80). The now-debunked Spanish interpretation of the Conquest can be found in Brenner's *Idols Behind Altars*, particularly in the third chapter, titled "The White Redeemers" (60-77). Coffey's remarks regarding the structure of Orozco's mural cycle echo the 1934 pamphlet edited by Dickerson. The continued relevance of some of the early interpretations and criticism of *The Epic of American Civilization* to contemporary scholarship should not be underestimated.

[145] For an extended discussion of the debate over the "usable past" in this period of U.S. intellectual history, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

monolith of unspecified function. Alongside Cortez, this totem continues the strong vertical orientations of the panels seen in the west wing of the north wall, a pattern reiterated to its east.

Fig. 13. *Cortez and the Cross*. Photograph by the author.

Fig. 14. *The Machine*. Photograph by the author.

These subsequent panels are *Anglo-America* and *Hispano-America* (see figs. 15 and 16), the two most often-studied panels from *The Epic of American Civilization* whose central figures are a sullen-looking schoolmarm and a Mexican revolutionary.

Figs. 15 and 16. *Anglo-America* and *Hispano-America*. Photographs by the author.

The scenes around them stand in stark contrast. The schoolmarm is surrounded by robotic-looking pupils, a demoralizing view of education reflected in the equally mechanical-looking adults in the panel's middle-ground. The red barn and meetinghouse in the far background emphasize that this scene belongs to the northern United States. Behind the meetinghouse, however, are a jumble of crumbling white marble structures and steel-framed skyscrapers and buildings with shattered windows, a chaos that provides a background for Mexican revolutionary who stands amid a jumble of politicians and military generals grabbing at a spilled bag of gold coins. Amid the confusion, a military general lurches forward with his knife drawn, on the verge of assassinating this figure of Mexico's newfound freedom.

The proximity of these two panels, along with their congruent titles and-- more importantly-- their shared pattern of composition, design and general arrangement, encourage the viewer to see them as foils. Baas interprets them in terms that contrast the central, vertical figures of the schoolteacher and the revolutionary with their surrounding backgrounds. In terms of *Anglo-America*, she writes that, in this panel, "Orozco fuses critiques of American Puritanism and of organization-man anonymity, blending them into the life-denying gray that extends across the entire wall" (175). Not only does the figure stand apart from the crowd in her blue dress, but so too do her efforts seem to be for naught, as the children surrounding her seem destined for a banal adulthood in gray-flannel suits. The conclusion that Baas draws from *Hispano-America* is a positive one, however, as she writes that "Orozco's rebel is a hero standing alone against foreign capitalistic greed and imperialism" (177). Yet, the heroic quality of the revolutionary is tempered by his impending assassination,[146] as well as the forlorn look on his face. Heroic, perhaps, but as with the schoolteacher standing only feet away, a martyr in what has become a lost cause.

The easternmost panel on the long north wall is *Gods of the Modern World* (see fig. 17). Here, atop a pile of books, a skeleton gives birth with the aid of another skeleton who is dressed in a black robe and mortarboard. The child is one of many, all of whom are crowned with black mortarboards and placed in test-tubes. Overlooking the scene are another six skeletons dressed in academic regalia. They loom sternly over the scene while an inferno blazes in the background. These are the titular "Gods" of modern society, whose arrangement and posture

[146] While the rebel resembles Emiliano Zapata, Baas suggests that the rebel might more closely resemble Pancho Villa, or could be a composite of both (176-177, 352n88). Whether it resembles one or the other or both, it should be remembered that these heroes would both meet their demise through treachery and deceit, which contributed to their subsequent celebration as folk heroes, as described by Enrique Krauze in *Mexico: A Biography of Power*, who describes the deaths of Zapata (302-304) and Villa (332-333).

resemble the ancient Mesoamerican pantheon in the west wing. These modern "gods" are responsible for perpetuating meaningless tradition and dead knowledge.

Fig. 17. *Gods of the Modern World*. Photograph by the author.

They offer no progress, only serving to perpetuate past failures. When higher education formalizes ideology, it needs to be questioned; this is the message found in *Gods of the Modern World*.[147]

At this point, one has reached the eastern end of the north wall of the reading room. To the right of *Gods of the Modern World* is the eastern alcove mentioned earlier. Two decorative panels, *Symbols of Nationalism* and *Chains of the Spirit* present the viewer with a critique of political and religious ideology, respectively. These two panels face one another from opposite walls in the alcove and, like *Aztec Warriors* and *The Prophecy*, look toward one another across two major panels, *Modern Human Sacrifice* and *Modern Migration of the Spirit*. Corresponding

[147] The fire behind them reminds the viewer of Orozco's *Prometheus* painted a few years before at Pomona College. These skeletal dons stand between their students and this fire. If it is a gift of the gods to mankind as in the myth of Prometheus, they are obstructing the development of the arts of civilization. If, conversely, the fire is another iteration of the holocaust unleashed by Cortez and the cross, then they are the harbingers of social mayhem.

to their counterparts (*Ancient Human Sacrifice* and *Migration*) opposite them on the western wall, the former depicts a fallen human skeleton amid the pomp and circumstance of a military commemoration in his honor, suggesting the unnatural logic that presumes death as necessary for the life of the nation. *Modern Migration of the Spirit*, on the other hand, depicts a Christ-figure come down from the cross which he has cut down with the axe he still holds, standing before yet another pile of refuse. While this junk heap largely contains implements of mechanized warfare, so too are there symbols of religion and architecture. In contrast with its counterpart, however, this is an individual spiritual migration. Orozco's Christ, complete with stigmata, has only taken the first step in demolishing iconography, symbol and other totems that have been used to dictate human action through the use and appropriation of ideology.

In this grouping, Orozco uses preexisting structural aspects of Baker Library to create a sort of apse for the reading room. Rather than the setting for an altar or a place for worship, however, Orozco's alcove creates a space removed from the rest of the room which asks for the viewer's critical reflection upon the violent juxtaposition of imagery. Set apart from the rest of the room, it is here that Orozco offers a fusion of the themes scattered throughout the mural cycle, producing a cumulative effect that rewards a sinistrodextral reading. Orozco's Christ offers a true spirituality, one apart from organized religion and those material concerns that so often compromise its integrity-- but the viewer must recognize that this spiritual migration is in process. The way forward involves personal enlightenment for the benefit of the individual, but within the context of a cooperative society. The final mural panels in such a reading, then, brings the viewer to the center of the room and the room's central alcove below the clock tower and across from the reserve book desk.

Before looking at a final set of panels in the center of the room, it is worth noting the shared arrangement of these dominant panels of *The Epic of American Civilization*. This survey emphasized the totemic qualities of the vertical figures who are surrounded by contextualizing details of their historical epoch. In the middle-ground of these scenes, the viewer finds the piles of rubble and debris from fallen civilizations. These junkheaps are prevalent throughout the eastern wing of the reading room, but so too are they present in the Mesoamerican scenes in the room's western wing, but in a different form: pyramids.[148] These elements are arranged in various ways, all of which demonstrate Orozco's concern with the impediments created by the past for present and future progress. The pattern of imagery upsets any progressive vision of the historical episodes depicted. The episodic quality of *The Epic of American Civilization* is due, in part, to Orozco's non-sequential approach in painting the various panels and the liberty he took with the chronology of historical events (Baas 164-165). More importantly, although easily overlooked, is Orozco's need to create distinct panels on walls where they did not already exist architecturally.[149] Orozco employed such juxtaposition strategically, better communicating his central critique of Western civilization and the ways in which its educational practices have strayed from critical inquiry.

It is the viewer's movement within the "envelope" of *The Epic of American Civilization* that changes the viewer's perspective. When standing in the west wing of the reading room, the

[148] Seemingly unrelated to the other mounds of the discarded past, the excavation of a Mesoamerican pyramid reveals that the most impressive and monumental structures were frequently built atop other, older, smaller pyramids. The exteriors were built of stone and stucco-- taking whatever stylistic form was characteristic to a given regional culture-- and the mass between the old and the new façade was largely composed of densely-packed stone, rubble, or other available debris.

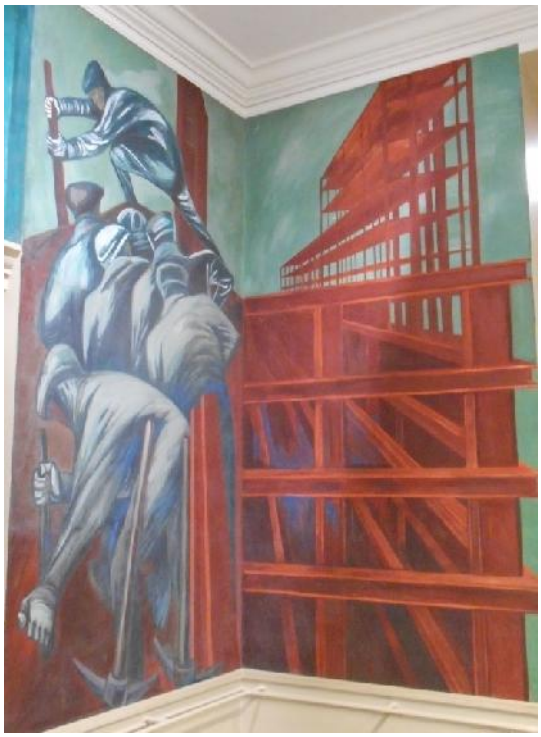
[149] It is with these interruptions and juxtapositions among panels that Coffey begins the discussion of *The Epic of American Civilization* in her forthcoming book, parts of which I first read in 2016 when it was a manuscript under the working title, *Jose Clemente Orozco's Epic of American Civilization: Myth, History, and the Redemptive Play of Mourning*. Much of Coffey's theoretical perspective is based in the work of Walter Benjamin, including his unfinished *Arcades Project* (1927-1940), which shares points of overlap with the spatial perspective taken in this chapter.

mural seems to be "about" ancient Mesoamerica and the coming Spanish Conquest. Yet, when standing in the east wing of the reading room, the mural seems to be "about" the failures of modern civilization. When standing in the alcove on the east end, the mural seems to be "about" politics, war and religion in the modern era. The problem with standing in one place is that the viewer only fully discerns those panels in the immediate vicinity; the viewer cannot draw the many connections afforded by the mural. Reading the panels by moving from one end to the other only partially overcomes this problem, offering a false sense of progress that leaves the past behind. True progress can only be had through critical inquiry and it is the episodic scenes of education that the typical, linear reading of the cycle can be taken and bent back upon itself.

The position from which one can best do so is in the center of the room, facing the reserve desk positioned in the middle of the long northern wall. Doing so puts the viewer's back up against the only panels located on the south wall of the reserve book room, a triptych, *Modern Industrial Man*. If Orozco rewards a sinistrodextral reading of the mural cycle in the eastern apse mentioned above, it is in this alcove that he provides a positive, forward-looking vision. By facing north, the central figure of these panels surveys the past misdeeds of his civilization. These three panels use this area, slightly offset from the rest of the room, to show scenes of workers involved in the construction of the steel frame of a modern building, perhaps a skyscraper. The two side panels create a visual support system for a central panel in the triptych, where Orozco has painted a worker at rest, reclining in front of the steel framework of the building and reading a book. This central image is a long horizontal panel (see fig. 18). This worker and the others are of indeterminate race and involved in a collective enterprise but, as with the rest of the panels in *The Epic of American Civilization*, there is no clear declaration of a specific ideology. Orozco here does not preach a specific dogma, but celebrates the individual

and the collective as supporting one another (see figs. 19 and 20). As the vertical side-panels visually support the central horizontal panel, so too should society support critical inquiry through education, rather than asking for blind submission to dead creeds.

Fig. 18. *Modern Industrial Man* (central panel). Photograph by the author.



Figs. 19 and 20. *Modern Industrial Man* (east and west panels). Photographs by the author.

Reiterating this point are the two sets of panels that further set *Modern Industrial Man* apart. These are *Totem Poles* and *Machine Totems*. Despite their seemingly decorative role, in terms of the viewer's perspective of the reserve reading room, these panels mask the literal structural pillars of the library and form important figurative pillars of Orozco's composition. These are vertical panels painted on the structural walls that separate the central area of the room from its two wings. When walking to the east, the *Totem Poles* of Native American cultures frames the spectator's progression into modernity. When walking to the west, the *Machine Totems* of modern machinery and technology frame the spectator's progression into the past. There are two ways to interpret this. The totem panels first serve as a boundary, enclosing the visual language of the wings of the room which they face. Passing through the totems can provide closure, leaving the respective wing and its imagery behind. At the same time, however, when moving through the space of the room, *Totem Poles* provides an entryway into the "modern world" of the east wing and *Machine Totems* provides an entryway into the pre-Columbian west wing. The visual juxtaposition cannot be escaped. In Baas' essay on *The Epic of American Civilization*, she points to the critical role of these panels in the thematic analysis of the cycle. She writes that the first pair of "totem poles representing caricatures of Northwest Coast bird images symbolize the fetishism of native religion in North America" (170) and that "no part of the mural better clarifies the artist's uncompromising humanism, which condemns primitive religion as absurd fetishism. Far from idealizing tribal societies, Orozco here implies that they too contribute to the authoritarian legacy of humankind" (170). The viewer remembers these when observing *Machine Totems*, realizing that modern technology is also fetishized to an equally absurd extent. The same can be said of the gods-- ancient and modern-- and the heroic,

celebrated figures of popular culture.[150] Those few panels with a foreground oriented horizontally draw the viewer's attention not only visually, but also stand apart thematically as scenes of how fragile the educative process is in the face of ideology and its totalizing effects, as even these panels-- with the possible exception of *Modern Industrial Man*-- are dominated by totemic figures that create, sustain and perpetuate the network of beliefs and ideologies that stand in the way of any individual or collective renewal in society.

It is from this position that the viewer is presented with the most expansive view of the mural possible within the confines of the room. A good starting point from which to move about the room, allowing oneself to be drawn into the separate wings to explore their individual panels more closely. Even still, every major critical work written about *The Epic of American Civilization* begins with the far west wall, following the overarching historical narrative implied by a linear reading, ending with the far east wall and regarding the triptych, *Modern Industrial Man*, as a sort of "epilogue" (Hurlburt 75) or "Coda" (Baas 2002, 181-183; Coffey 2007, 12-15; Coffey 2011, 80). Given the spatial arrangement of the panels and the possibilities inherent in viewing the mural, however, *Modern Industrial Man* provides an equally appropriate starting point as *Migration* did in the summary provided above. Facing the reserve book desk from the vantage point of the modern industrial man, the viewer has a limited view of both the east and west wings of the long north wall. For the spectator to actively engage with the murals requires movement through the space of the reserve reading room. It is no great revelation that the details visible in each panel increase as the spectator approaches and finally stands before it. Walking through the reading room is a dynamic experience, each individual panel revealing its own detailed patterns up close and resonating with others in the larger pattern that unites the mural as

[150] Although not discussed here at great length, one can one say the same about the cross and the column, two totem-like symbols that Orozco uses repeatedly throughout the cycle.

a cycle. While each wing contains its own coherent language of ancient and modern history, neither depends upon the other for its meaning. The unity of subject matter and symbolic content depends upon variety.

If there is an optimistic panel, this is it. *Modern Industrial Man* surveys the reading room generally while facing the reserve desk specifically. It suggests the position of the student viewer embarking upon an educational endeavor. As one student of the murals, Nichola Tucker, points-out, what the viewer sees in this central panel is "his or her reflection as epic hero-- and self-educating, book reading library visitor" (98). Tucker sees the international, cosmopolitan implications of this and writes later that it is "Through this radical mixed race vision of the Dartmouth student as self-educated worker, Orozco collapses ethnic, socioeconomic, and nationalist boundaries" (108). The positive future imagined by Tucker here is certainly one possibility, but there is no guarantee that any such future will be utopic; Orozco is deeply skeptical of modern technology. So, while *Modern Industrial Man* may inspire optimism, this optimism needs to be qualified. On either side of *Modern Industrial Man* are five large windows (ten in total), which carry a sense of symmetry from the first-floor façade into the basement level. More importantly, they are an abundant source of natural light, making the room suitable for its dedicated purpose: reading and research. By joining the Dartmouth College student and the self-educated worker in a single figure, Orozco seems instead to challenge the student to look at the walls opposite, to consider history and current events from a critical perspective. The long north wall presents the educated viewer with choices. In looking at the past, what does one see? Does one focus on the significant individuals, the totemic figures made heroic through time and mythopoeia? Does one trust the gods, the myths and legends passed-down through history? Or, does one scrutinize the creeds and systems for which they stand or which have been appropriated

toward dubious ends? Is one drawn closer to the mural panels to inspect the worlds over which these figures preside? Starting from the position shared with the modern industrial man, the Dartmouth student stands before the reserve book desk of the reading room. Approaching it, the student simultaneously nears the north wall and the span of the mural can be seen, although not yet in detail. Just as a student approaches a new subject matter with a general impression of its substance, it is through concerted effort that nuances, details and contradictions are found in the material. No true education is without such depth and complexity. For this reason, the worker in *Modern Industrial Man* is reading a book, but has only gotten through the first few pages (Folgarait 2012, 104-105). What he learns and the extent to which he pursues his education-- whether he even finishes reading the book-- is his own choice.

In equating the self-educated student-worker to the epic hero, the imperative to education emphasizes the spatial envelope of *The Epic of American Civilization*. Rather than move directly and unwaveringly from one panel to the next, the student must allow himself to be pushed and pulled in different directions as patterns found among the panels begin to emerge. This is not to say that the student's movement through the reading room is random or aimless; instead, it is a dynamic experience, guided by patterns of imagery along the wall with the end goal of sifting through the scenes presented, finding meaning through the experience.[151] *The Epic of American Civilization* puts a great deal of weight on education in a conceptual way to organize the mural, as it relies upon the free-thinking student who is simultaneously the observer and one of the central themes of Orozco's mural project. At Dartmouth, the viewer sees this theme joined with the theme of the potentially destructive process of modernization (during any era), exploited by

[151] In terms of this conception of the viewer or student as epic hero, one need only think of Odysseus and the distance travelled from Troy-- meeting countless obstacles and sailing back and forth across the smaller seas within the Mediterranean-- to return home to Ithaca, his original destination. It is, after all, only when Odysseus tells his story to the Phaeacians that his journey is given order, form and sense.

ideological forces that use the processes of both education and modernization into an integrated assault on individual and collective freedoms.

The above reading is fully reliant upon a physical, spatial engagement with the work stressed that Folgarait stresses as fundamental to the experience of the medium. Such considerations point to the importance of muralism as a medium during the period between the two world wars. In *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* (1990), Kirk Varnedoe reexamines the unifying characteristics of modernism in visual art. A wide category, modern art spans a period from the late-1800s through the post-World War II era but, Varnedoe reminds his readers, despite the variety of work that falls under this umbrella, the modernist tradition "has to do with something very simple." He continues: "It has to do with basic operations of the human mind, that have the effect of making the world anew by bringing us back to familiarity with it, by paying attention to what we are doing … that if you want to do something really important, the answer is not over the horizon. It is often right under your nose" (277). While the measured linearity of Rivera's mural cycle offers a discernible narrative to the audience, providing both a vision of an unrealized future that is nonetheless "familiar," Orozco's mural cycle present constellations of related images without dictating a narrative to the audience. Instead, it provides a vision of the present that is fragmented and chaotic, but that can be understood through the careful consideration of its many competing images.

The *tres grandes* and their contemporaries all "make the world anew" by deliberately manipulating the structure within the envelope their medium creates. It is through this control of space that they offer to bring their audience "back to familiarity" with the world, but not only

that.[152] As Indych-López writes, "most of the murals in the United States featured iconography adapted to the specific circumstances and environments of the commissions" (2007, 287). It is, then, the combination of spatial awareness across the scales-- both interior and exterior-- that contributes to a given mural's effectiveness in creating an experience for the viewer.

Both Orozco and Rivera (the two of the *tres grandes* then active in the U.S.) approach mural painting in ways that appeal to "the basic operations of the human mind" and actively engage the perceptive faculties of the viewer, but their strategies of representation are also indicative of their radically different attitudes towards the relationship between the artist and his audience, as well as the role of the artist in society more generally. Their differing philosophies developed over many years, but were first given a venue by José Vasconcelos, the first Secretary of the Mexican Government's *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP). In 1921, the recently-elected president of Mexico, Álvaro Obregón, established the SEP and named Vasconcelos as its first director. In his position, according to Folgarait, Vasconcelos

> promoted and realized the propagandistic force of the regime. Under his direction, the government was presented as cultured, humane, and progressive. Its subjects, on the other hand, were depicted as undernourished in education, national consciousness, and social behavior, and in desperate need of the interventionist attentions of the Secretariat. Vasconcelos surrounded himself with the most talented and ambitious intellectuals, artists, and musicians and commissioned them to produce works representative and reproductive of official ideology. (1998, 16)

Curator, critic and art historian, Karen Cordero Reiman, describes this context as important to understanding Mexican muralism more generally, as it provided "The impetus to the production of monumental public murals with didactic themes" (21). Under Vasconcelos, the SEP promoted a larger nationalist and populist project through its patronage of the arts, which were

[152] While Siqueiros will not be discussed here, his own work provides many compelling examples of a keen spatial awareness, particularly in his *Portrait of the Bourgeoisie* (1939-40), painted in the main stairwell of the Mexican Electrician's Syndicate headquarters in Mexico City.

"at the service of the progress of legitimation of the postrevolutionary regime, and openly adopted a propagandistic function: to conform a vision of modern Mexico and propose a visual discourse that would unify the different social sectors fragmented by the civil war" (19-21). The explicitly political motivation of such educational projects cannot be ignored. As Folgarait points-out, they were designed, in part, "to assist the government in creating a system of political control through the unification and classification of the masses … a propaganda project of homogenizing purpose" (19). In many ways, then, the SEP became the mechanism by which the revolutionary government in Mexico City attempted to distribute an official ideology through national education in order to "institutionalize" the party for the benefit of the political elite.

Nonetheless, the institutional setting also provided a forum through which artists could debate the larger concerns over society and aesthetics.[153] As Cordero Reiman notes, the advent of this governmental office has, for historians, "conveniently associated the transformation of Mexican visual culture with the consolidation of postrevolutionary regimes" (11).[154] Such an understanding of Mexican artists, however, treats them "as a homogeneous phenomenon, conveniently encompassed by the epithet 'The Mexican School'" while, in reality, there was "a variety of positions and aesthetic strategies regarding the role, form, and content of the visual arts appropriate for modern Mexico" (13). Mexican artists of all media partook in "a fresh influx of visual strategies, generating the rich artistic panorama of the early twenties" (21) that involved both local and global models and influences. The context of the Mexican Revolution provides an

[153] It is also important to understand the role that the revolutionary educational system played in the development of modern Mexico through this period and beyond, a subject discussed later in this chapter.

[154] Cordero Reiman makes the important point that, although Mexican Muralism and its practitioners may dominate the contemporary understanding of the period, "If we can speak of an 'official art' of the Obregón -Vasconcelos period … it would not be the varied muralism of the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria but the decorative style, based on selective use and recontextualization of motifs of popular art, present in the theories and art work of [Adolfo] Best Maugard" (21). Best-Maugard is perhaps best known for *A Method for Creative Design* (1926), which was to serve as a guide for art education in Mexican public schools during this period.

important regional backdrop from which universal concerns over the intersection of aesthetics and ideology could be addressed.

Throughout his career, Orozco stood apart from other muralists in his wariness toward espousing any specific ideology in either his personal politics or in his artistic practice. While Orozco signed the "Manifesto of the Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors Union of Mexico" (1923), in which the early muralists at the SEP first articulated their ideals, he never committed to their brand of partisanship. Published in *El Machete*, the official publication of the Mexican Communist Party, the manifesto is explicitly ideological-- dedicated to the promises of the Mexican Revolution and dogmatically opposed to any perceived perversion of revolutionary ideals by political or bureaucratic actors. Addressed to all facets of this new society: "the indigenous people," "the soldiers," "the laborers and peasants" and "the intellectuals," the document also invokes the ethnic unity known as *mestizaje* (Siqueiros et al. 461).[155] Connecting a unified, authentic Mexican identity with the political concept of the collective, the manifesto continues by outlining the requisite artistic project. Its authors write that the "basic aesthetic goal must be to socialize these individual artistic expressions" and, for this reason, they reject "as aristocratic all the so-called easel-painting and art of the ultra-intellectual clique, and extol the expressions of monumental art as being of real use to the general public" (461).[156]

[155] *Mestizaje* is a unique characteristic of the Mexican people born from the cultural hybridity of the Native Mesoamericans and Spanish colonizers. At this time, *mestizaje* was idealized as transcendent of divisions among the different groups of Mexico, as indicated in this manifesto which includes the following passage: "the art of the people of Mexico is the greatest, healthiest spiritual expression in the whole world, and its indigenous tradition is simply the best of them all. The reason for this greatness is that, being a popular expression, it is collective" (Siqueiros et al. 461).

[156] Orozco would pen his own manifesto, "New World, New Races and New Art" in 1929. In it, he agrees with the premise of a public art, specifically muralism, to be "for the people" (322). The logic is the same, but Orozco maintains a position apart from the larger syndicate of artists. As will be explored below, Orozco paints "for the people" to encourage the individual to partake in education through critical inquiry rather than blindly following the educational programs dictated through the initiatives of any revolutionary government.

Given who its signatories were-- and that the document was written within the larger context of Vasconcelos' initiatives at the SEP-- what "monumental art" indicates is primarily muralism.[157] The appeal of murals is their public quality. In contrast to "easel-painting," it is rather difficult to remove a mural from its public setting for private display. While this creates problems for museum curators today, their original locations were chosen deliberately for their public significance and symbolic importance. Near the document's conclusion, the syndicate of artists calls for "all Mexican intellectual revolutionaries to … join us in the social and aesthetic-educational struggle we are undertaking" (461). This is an emphatic endorsement of muralism's potential role in the revolutionary government's efforts to socialize the great number of illiterate viewers in society. The belief that muralism could offer a political and historical education for the Mexican people would be carried forward by many of these practitioners in their own ways, outlasting Vasconcelos' tenure at the SEP. The ideology of such murals and their propagandistic qualities can be clearly seen in much of Rivera's and Siqueiros' work, particularly when contrasted with Orozco's which never follows any particular party line.

In his essay, "The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art" (1932), Rivera celebrates the artist's role as an ideological partisan. Inspired by the success of the Russian Revolution and its art program, Rivera saw new opportunities in the "proletarian regime" (327) of the Mexican Revolution. A committed Communist, Rivera dedicated himself to creating revolutionary art in the service of his ideological beliefs, writing that "no painting can reach its highest development or be truly revolutionary unless it is truly Communist" (329). Looking back upon the early days of the mural project under the SEP, he writes of the artists' attempts "to develop and remake

[157] The signatories of the document are listed as follows: David Alfaro Siqueiros ("Secretary-general"), Diego Rivera ("First member"), Xavier Guerrero, Fermín Revueltas, José Clemente Orozco, Ramon Alva Guadarrama, Germán Cueto, Carlos Mérida ("Second members"). While many of these artists practiced in various media, each one also made significant contributions to Mexican muralism in the decades following the Mexican Revolution.

mural paintings in the direction of the needs of the proletariat" and, in doing so, to "judge whether that form of painting would be an effective instrument of the proletariat in power" (327). He takes these ideas a step further when, in the penultimate paragraph of the essay, he declares: "Every strong artist has been a propagandist. I want to be a propagandist and I want to be nothing else. I want to be a propagandist of Communism and I want to be it in all that I can think, in all that I can speak, in all that I can write, in all that I can paint. I want to use my art as a weapon" (330). On the one hand, it is undeniable that some central idea will be communicated and made visible in the work of any given artist. On the other hand, it is a different matter entirely-- especially for Orozco-- to use the public wall as a place to persuade observers of any ideological perspective, to dictate any predetermined political position for the audience. Orozco sees such fiercely-held ideologies as having played a central role in the violence of the previous decade and the repeated counterrevolutionary efforts against the institutionalized revolutionary government of Mexico that solidified its hold on power in the 1930s.

One of the most insightful treatments of Orozco is also one of the earliest. In this book, *Mexican Painters: Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros and Other Artist of the Social Realist School* (1941), author MacKinley Helm writes of Orozco as Rivera's "chief adversary," who "was intellectually indifferent to the common ideas of his time. He cared for them only as they were susceptible of translation into pictorial and emotional values" (198). Rivera's partisan propaganda stands in direct contrast to Orozco's anti-didacticism. By privileging the political statements of artists, the viewer risks reducing a painting to a discernible "story" which, for Orozco, is antithetical to the medium of muralism. In his autobiography, Orozco writes about this when looking back on the "Manifesto of the Technical Workers, Painters, and Sculptors Union of Mexico." He writes that the manifesto reduced art "to purely illustrative, descriptive

painting … to literary painting, which neglects form in order to declaim or tell stories-- to anecdotal painting, that is" (1962, 98). Orozco then poses a rhetorical question: "is the artist going to impose his work upon the collectivity … or is the collectivity going to impose its tastes and preferences on the artist?" (99).

For Orozco, neither is desirable and, throughout his work, there is a critique of ideology in all forms, with little concern for the ways in which his different paintings might seem to contradict one another. As Helm writes, "Today he will appear to be a revolutionary, tomorrow, an antirevolutionary. Set beside the overtly propagandizing painting of Rivera, Orozco's work is a little confusing unless this principle is recognized" (1941, 67). Orozco is not telling a story, is not relating an easily articulated anecdote, is neither taking-up nor distributing an ideological viewpoint. Instead, to quote Helm once again, "if Orozco is a passionate painter, he is not a patriotic politician. He is not a missionary, he preaches no gospel. He is, if he is more than a painter, a not very profound commentator upon current ideas. He is certainly not a calculating exponent of them" (81).

Orozco's aversion toward propagandizing and toward "descriptive painting" is found throughout his writings, perhaps most directly in an essay her wrote at the request of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) to accompany *Dive Bomber and Tank* (1940), a mural he painted there.[158] He fittingly titled the essay "Orozco 'Explains'" and, in it, he is noticeably frustrated by the request that he clarify his work in the pages of the bulletin. The first full paragraph reads: "The public wants explanations about a painting. What the artist had in mind when he did it. What he was thinking of. What is the exact name of the picture, and what the

[158] *Dive Bomber and Tank* would be Orozco's last mural commission in the U.S. There is much to be said about the arrangement of this "portable fresco," which is composed of six interchangeable panels. In the conversation I had with Mary K. Coffey while visiting Dartmouth College, we discussed its possible role as a hermeneutic for *The Epic of American Civilization*, an approach she had already developed for her forthcoming book (footnoted above).

artist means by that. If he is glorifying or cursing. If he believes in Democracy" (3).[159] Throughout his essay, Orozco refuses to answer these questions, explaining instead that it is the role of the individual museum-goer to engage with the artwork on its own terms. Somewhat baffled, but not without a sense of humor, he asks: "Meanings? Names? Significance? Short Stories? Well, let's invent them afterwards. The public refuses TO SEE painting. They want TO HEAR painting. They don't care for the show itself, they prefer TO LISTEN to the barker outside. Free lectures every hour for the blind, around the Museum" (6). While the most important individual in the creation of art is the artist, the most important individual for the experience of art is the viewer. To want to hear or read about visual art instead of seeing it for oneself is at odds with any visual medium.

Orozco's essay for MoMA closely relates to what he wrote about *The Epic of American Civilization* in a booklet titled *The Orozco Frescoes at Dartmouth* (1934), indicating that he was of the same mindset almost a decade beforehand.[160] In his prefatory remarks, Orozco writes: "In every painting, as in any other work of art, there is always an IDEA, never a STORY. The idea is the point of departure, the first cause of the plastic construction, and it is present all the time as energy creating matter. The stories and other literary associations exist only in the mind of the spectator, the painting acting as stimulus." The experience of a work of art is foremost in Orozco's mind. He continues by writing, "to write a story and to say that it is actually TOLD by a painting is wrong and untrue" what matters, Orozco insists, is what he calls "the ORGANIC

[159] One sentence precedes this opening paragraph and reads as follows: *"This 'explanation' was written by Mr. Orozco. The quotation marks in his title indicate his feeling that explanations are unnecessary"* (3).
[160] The pamphlet was originally published the year before, as an article from the November 1933 issue of *The Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (*DAM*). There, its title was: "The Dartmouth Frescoes: Their Significance" (7-8). At that time, the mural cycle was not yet complete. This statement was printed alongside a brief history of the project and biographical sketch of the artist, written by Professor Artemas Packard, who was then Chairman of the Department of Art. The 1934 booklet, edited by Albert I. Dickerson, has no pagination. Orozco's signature below his prefatory remarks suggest that he approved the use of these same words for the later publication.

IDEA of every painting" which cannot go unnoticed by "the average spectator with normal mind and normal sight." The only thing that he has to say about the specific frescoes at Baker Library is that "it is an AMERICAN idea developed into American forms, American feeling, and, as a consequence, into American style." What the viewer experiences among the many panels is a unity of a new idea that is also new in form, new in feeling and new in style. For Orozco, this is the same idea that he called for in "New World, New Races and New Art" in 1929; "the quality of the idea that initiates and organizes the whole structure" of *The Epic of American Civilization* is what matters. The diversity of stories that viewers find in them should only come to mind after experiencing the mural itself and understanding its central critique, the "organic idea" that collective social progress can only be achieved through the critical inquiry of enlightened individuals.

If his writing is idiosyncratic and evasive, at times coy and satirical and seemingly irreverent in his attitude toward museum-goers and others who puzzle over the meaning of modern art, Orozco is always mindful of their importance. When he teases MoMA visitors, it is because they are unable to recognize their own critical role as witnesses-- and if, as Siqueiros once remarked, Orozco is "a great painter, but … a lousy philosopher" (qtd. in Helm 1941, 67), then this is one of the few consistencies the reader will notice across his writings. Orozco reliably upholds the role of the viewer in responding to artwork-- and from a point very early in his career. Fellow artist and muralist Jean Charlot cites an unpublished manuscript from 1923 in which Orozco declares:

> A painting should not be a commentary but the fact itself, not a reflection but the source of light, not an interpretation but the very thing to be interpreted. It should not imply any theory or anecdote, story or history, of any kind. It should not take sides on religious, political, or social happenings; it should consist of absolutely nothing but the plastic fact in its particular, concrete, and rigorously precise statement; it should provoke in the onlooker neither pity nor admiration for the

> objects, animals, or personages that are part of the theme. The only emotion that it may lawfully generate and transmit should be derived from the strictly plastic, geometric, coldly geometric phenomenon, engineered by a scientific technique. (qtd. in Charlot 239)[161]

Despite his contrarian tone, Orozco's emphasis on geometry and mathematics and "mechanical laws" are indicative of the many sides of the man and his past trades, for whom "there is not mental cleavage between the agricultural engineer, the architect's draftsman, the mathematical student, and the muralist" (Charlot 238). For Charlot, "the results of art are emotional and the making of art is mechanical" (240). The proper balance of the two is what the "organic idea" depends upon to be experienced. The "coldly geometric" attention to mural panels in three-dimensional space is how Orozco conceives of his projects and is a unique quality of muralism. As a medium, the mural and the experience of it-- "the fact itself" that is "the very thing to be interpreted"-- is an experience that depends entirely upon geometry and how the painter can guide the viewer through a mural cycle. A mural requires the cooperation of its viewers in that they will allow themselves to be guided through the envelope of the mural while also trusting themselves to understand the larger, "organic idea" evoked by their emotional response to this movement. In *The Epic of American Civilization*, this emotional response is created by being pulled in several directions at once, toward panels that cannot be seen simultaneously and in seeing one's own image in *Modern Industrial Man*.

So, although Orozco signed the syndicate's manifesto, he remained apart and, unlike Rivera and Siqueiros, was hesitant to articulate any exact meaning in his paintings. Indych-López reminds the viewer that "… artists such as Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros varied greatly in their aesthetic and political positions and often clashed" (2016, 340). While all three of these

[161] This document is also included in the posthumous collection of Orozco writings, *The Artist in New York: Letters to Jean Charlot and Unpublished Writings, 1925-1929* (1974).

famous muralists were critical of modern society in both the U.S. and Mexico, Hurlburt is careful to explain that "Orozco did not, as Rivera and Siqueiros did, advocate Marxism as the panacea for Mexico's problems … retaining his fiercely independent and basically anarchic point of view" throughout his career (248-249).[162]

Helm writes that Orozco "said he was afraid that putting his aesthetic ideas in order would be a matter of as many hours as the painting of a picture" (65).[163] For Helm, Orozco is a prime example of one who has "the supreme gift of translating experienced emotion into works of art which give off emotion" (200). Orozco's ideas are best communicated through his paintings-- and an emotional response evoked, in part, by the envelope provided for the viewer. Perhaps the most important aspect of Orozco's muddled philosophy is that it is not essential to understanding his critique of society. He does not-- and quite possibly cannot-- offer any solutions to the horrors of the modern world. Instead, his murals depict his own "experienced emotion" in hopes of bringing the viewer's attention to the reality of the world around them. His style may sometimes act against him, resulting in the negative reactions from the alumni mentioned earlier. As Mumford writes, this is the risk one takes in submitting such abstract, impressionistic depictions of uncomfortable truths "when the country at large is complacently throwing art and literature and education to the pursuing wolves" and, as such it "marks in itself an act of courage worthy of the painting that it has begotten" (1934, 28). His central message, however, is irrefutable. Whatever the solution to society's past and present ills, the future depends upon those who are students today. Better to give them a space in which to reflect upon

[162] Seeing Orozco as holding a "basically anarchic point of view" is the closest one really gets to identifying his political persuasion. Alejandro Anreus, for example, places this at the center of his understanding, placing Orozco among "theistic anarchists" influenced by William Blake (2001, 11).

[163] Helm then continues: "When he does talk-- he is not a logician but an artist-- he speaks so much out of considered judgments as out of current emotional states. His feelings lead him into contradictions and sometimes into sheer unintelligibility" (65-66).

the world outside. If there is a dogma to be found here, it is a staunch belief in the value of education as critical inquiry.

Whatever his philosophy, Orozco's ideas are realized through the physical arrangement of his murals. Here again, some comparison between Orozco and Rivera is illustrative. In her comments on Rivera's *Ballad of the Revolution* (one of his early mural cycles painted for the SEP in Mexico), Helen Delpar writes: "The murals in the education building which depicted industrial and agricultural labor also inspired optimistic comments about the present and future impact of machinery on Mexican life" (149). This optimism is carried forward into his *Detroit Industry* murals at the Detroit Institute of Arts, which Delpar calls "a sensuous exploration of science and technology" (153). Rivera depicts machines with incredible detail, having conducted extensive research, visiting and sketching factories and their mechanized assembly line processes. In these murals, Helm sees "literal blueprints of mechanical contrivances in Detroit" (1941, 76), but contemporary art historian, Barbara Braun, argues that "Rivera attributed to technology a formal as well as substantive power. Modern machinery was for him as aesthetically convincing as Aztec sculpture, and modern engineers the equals of pre-Hispanic artists" (219). The narrative in Rivera's murals is one of progress, always looking to a better future, overcoming the past through science and technology, as reason overcomes superstition, leading to what seems to be the inevitable workers' utopia. Braun writes, in ancient Mesoamerica "priests sacrificed human hearts atop pyramids to sustain the sun; in the modern era, laborers offer up raw materials to be transformed into fuel for the new superpowers, machines" (219).[164] For Rivera, the celebration of industrialization and the possibilities it creates

[164] Braun writes earlier that the oversized machines in *Detroit Industry* are actually "Disguised Pre-Columbian 'deities' [that] preside over the contrasting technological process depicted in the lower registers: on the north, overscale spindles (related to engine blocks) recall giant, blocky Toltec Atlantean figures-- architectonic representations of ancestral warriors … that once supported a temple roof atop a pyramid at Tula; on the south, huge

is as much about the laborers who run the machines as it is about those whose lives are made easier by them.

Cruz Porchini also notes that this imagery "clearly foreshadows" (275) his fresco in the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, which is known in Spanish as *El hombre controlador del universo* ("*Man, Controller of the Universe*" [1934]) and is a recreated version of his *Man at the Crossroads* originally created for the RCA Building in Rockefeller Center (see fig. 21).[165]

Fig. 21. Diego Rivera, *Man, Controller of the Universe*.

Rivera's mural can be used as an almost exactly contemporaneous foil to Orozco's *Epic of American Civilization*. The viewer will find both titles applicable: man is both at a crossroads and in control of the universe in this mural in which "A worker controlling the levers of a machine … in a composition consisting of two intercrossed central diagonal wings, one containing planetary formations, the other, bacteria" (Barnitz 79). This figure represents the promise of the worker, one capable of controlling the universe at all scales of existence from his central dashboard. The betterment of humankind through mechanization and technology is

stamping presses resemble the muscular, dynamic forms of the monstrous cult image of Coatlicue … Rivera has translated the colossal figure of the goddess … into an anthropomorphic machine…" (216).

[165] This is a shortened version of the title first proposed for the RCA mural, *Man at the Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future* (Barnitz 324n10).

found throughout Rivera's work, but the choices regarding the use of these machines must be carefully made. In the foreground is a cross-section of society, racially and socio-economically diverse-- and all are attentively watching the man at the control panel in appreciation of his awesome responsibility which is, in the end, shared by all. Will humankind be led into war and a deepening of the Great Depression through plutocratic indifference, as suggested by the imagery to the controller's left? Or will a harmonious world of fellowship be established through solidarity among the workers, as shown on the right? It is clear that Rivera prefers the latter, presenting a clear vision and narrative of how Marxism can bring about this better future.

In the context of *The Epic of American Civilization*, Orozco's *Modern Industrial Man* is in three-dimensions what the central figure of Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads* is in two. Contrasted with Rivera's vision, "Orozco's machines are malignant abstractions" (Helm 1941, 76) and he "made abstract drawings of quasi-mechanical figures and combined them in a dismaying and well-nigh sentient complex that spelled death and destruction rather than the leisure and amplitude promised to men at the commencement of the industrial era" (Helm 1953, 62). This is what the viewer sees in *The Machine* from *The Epic of American Civilization*. Situated where it is, this junkheap would seem to suggest that the machine is the inevitable result of the savage mindset of the conquistadores depicted in *Cortez and the Cross*; the benefits of industrialization to mankind are dubious at best, the streamlined society dominated by the machine will only turn human beings into the automatons seen in *Anglo-America*. Yet, the relationship is not necessarily causal. While it may work in a linear sequence, the panel remains part of a larger visual pattern of iteration. The totem amid the junkheap also suggests that the real problem might be the modern idolatry of the machine, the foolish belief that technology could possibly solve the problems of modern civilization without any risk or danger.

Thematically, it better corresponds with the panel in the hallway outside the reading room proper, *Release*, Orozco's trial panel from his first visit to Dartmouth.

It is fair to say that Orozco is skeptical of Rivera's generally celebratory vision and, by rejecting the idea that any narrative or "story" of the future can be told, Orozco does not pretend to know what it may bring-- and certainly does not endorse one brought about by an ideology as dubious as Communism was then already known to be. Instead of incorporating such a vision in the reading room at Baker Library, the central figure of *Modern Industrial Man* is laying down, reading a book. He has set his tools aside, not physically at work, though active in thought. Orozco presents a figure in a position of introspection, while Rivera presents one who necessarily looks out on the world, seeing and knowing all, from the microscopic to the interstellar. Both figures represent human potential. The difference in vision shown has as much to do with the differing styles of the two artists as with the ways in which they use the walls on which their murals can be found. Typifying the larger debate among modern artists and intellectuals, Orozco and Rivera are as unalike in their treatment of men and machines as they are in their treatment of education and ideology or in the related ideas about history and progress.

More than a comparative exercise, the contrast between the works of Orozco and Rivera reveals as much about their aesthetics and competing ideas as it does the relationship each has with his audience. Through a peculiar coincidence of history, February 1934 would see both the completion of Orozco's *Epic of American Civilization* and the ultimate destruction of Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads*. While Orozco was working at Dartmouth, Rivera was working at the RCA Building at Rockefeller Center in New York City. Although Orozco's mural cycle would receive a great deal of criticism from the Dartmouth community, Rivera's mural received negative press of a different magnitude and was "By far the most highly publicized event

surrounding the Mexicans' activities in the United States" (Hurlburt 172). The intense critique and ultimate destruction of Rivera's RCA mural was due to the sympathetic portrayal of communism, as near its center it contained a favorable depiction of Vladimir Lenin.

In its time, the controversy surrounding *Man at the Crossroads* was immortalized by two famous poets of the era, E. B. White and Archibald Macleish. In his poem, *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City* (1933), MacLeish reacts to the destruction of Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads* in the lobby of the RCA Building.[166] Although a well-known figure in his time, neither MacLeish nor his poetry are of much concern in contemporary discussions of U.S. literature. Yet, some scholars see much of MacLeish's work, including *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City*,[167] as embodying a critique of "High Modernism" which, in the words of John Timberman Newcomb, put forward "an aristocratic ideal of culture for the few who deserved and revered it; that poetry was fundamentally an act of self-expression rather than communication or persuasion" (10). *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City* provides a critique of modernism's ideology. Dorothy van Ghent, a contemporary of MacLeish's, writes that these two poems take for their theme the "the anonymous men" who are primarily responsible for the course of human events on the North American continent. For van Ghent, this is central to MacLeish's *Frescoes*, which celebrates "those who laid the ties and the steel for the railroads" (507), rather than the capitalists who funded these and other industries as speculative enterprises.

While *Frescoes* is concerned-- if at times indirectly-- with Rivera's situation at Rockefeller Center, its fifth section, "Empire Builders," can also provide a literary parallel for

[166] White's poem, "I Paint What I See [A Ballad of Artistic Integrity]" (1933), was published in *The New Yorker* and is a straightforward defense of Rivera's moral and political rectitude in the face of the censorship of his patrons, specifically Nelson Rockefeller.
[167] Discussions of *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City* are frequently paired with MacLeish's *Conquistador* (1932), an epic poem of the Spanish Conquest.

The Epic of American Civilization at Dartmouth. As Newcomb writes, this section "is a formally ingenious illustration" of "poetry as a powerful critic of established ideologies" (19) which shares the spirit of Orozco's pan-ideological critique. In the first part of "Empire Builders," the reader is guided by the voice of "The Museum Attendant," who "attempts to 'become his audience's seeing eyes' by directing them what to 'observe'" (Newcomb 19). In this way, the attendant recalls the "barker outside" Orozco's gallery. The Museum Attendant's introductory speech is composed of six stanzas. Each celebrates an individual giant of nineteenth-century industry and they are presented in the following order: "Mister Harriman," "Commodore Vanderbilt," "J. P. Morgan," "Mister Mellon," "Bruce the Barton."[168] In the context of the poem, each one of these tycoons has his own panel in the larger mural.[169] The Museum Attendant briefly explains the important symbolic elements-- related to their various respective industries-- of each panel in a manner that is celebratory, but only in a superficial way. The tone of "Empire Builders," as with the entirety of *Frescoes*, is ironic, as MacLeish critiques the capitalists, but so too does he rebuke the Marxist critique of these same individuals. Instead, MacLeish represents an "anti-communist liberalism" (Newcomb 21), in favor of democratic ideals generally, rather than any specific political ideology. This can be seen in the second section of "Empire Builders," where the reader-- as opposed to the unseeing museum-goer who relies upon the Museum Attendant's rehearsed interpretation-- is allowed to see "The Original Document under the Panel Paint." This document is a letter from Captain Merriweather Lewis to President Thomas Jefferson. The letter describes the vastness of the continent, looking back

[168] i.e. Edward H. Harriman, Cornelius Vanderbilt, John Pierpont Morgan, Andrew W. Mellon, Bruce Fairchild Barton.

[169] While reminiscent of other murals painted during this era, these seem to be largely products of MacLeish's imagination. At the same time, they have a prescient similarity of theme-- if not substance-- in their resemblance to Josep Maria Sert's *American Progress* (1937), which would eventually replace Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads*.

East from the shores of the Pacific Ocean, noting the people, animals and sights encountered by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806).

The self-serving ideology of the Gilded Age and its robber barons has immortalized itself in murals dedicated to the memory of their own prowess. The letter is bookended by the Museum Attendant's speeches, which are revealed to be something altogether different. The sixth stanza closes the speech at the first part of the poem and reads as follows:

> You have just beheld the Makers making America:
> This is The Making of America in Five Panels:
> America lies to the west-southwest of the switch-towers:
> There is nothing to see of America but land. (lines 18-21)

The stanza that follows the second section's painted-over letter to Jefferson begins with the same line but, given its position in the poem, becomes an antidote to the dogma of the first speech. It is severe in its critique, reading:

> You have just beheld the Makers Making America:
> They screwed her scrawny and gaunt with their seven-year panics:
> They bought her back on their mortgages old-whore-cheap:
> They fattened their bonds at her breasts till the thin blood ran from them.
> Men have forgotten how full clear and deep
> The Yellowstone moved on the gravel and the grass grew
> When the land lay waiting for her westward people! (60-66)

As the final stanza of "Empire Builders," the message is only discernible by ignoring the scripted "bark" of the Museum Attendant. It instead suggests the realization of the thinking viewer-- the viewer who can see that the panels mask a deeper, original truth: that there is a landscape being raped by an ideological system that sells itself as the only way toward future progress. Through undemocratic means, the "builders" of the U.S. "empire," have taken for themselves what should have been the birthright of all living beings on the continent. Here, the poet presents an alternative view, but it is one that belongs to the people, "the anonymous men" who brought it within reach of the eastern cities for all their fellow citizens.

Bringing these ideas together, the viewer can see *Modern Industrial Man* as Orozco's more dynamic version of the idea found in Rivera's ill-fated mural for the RCA Building. Rather than relying upon vanguard parties, revolutionary governments and other supposedly requisite precursors for an enlightened society, Orozco simultaneously celebrates man's capacity for collective work, but emphasizes the necessity of individual awareness and critique of deadening ideological systems. By giving *Modern Industrial Man* a privileged position overlooking past and present events in the Americas, he is able to critique the "narrative" that is implied by these events-- it is a position of critical distance, both literally and figuratively. While an admirable figure, Orozco denies him the mythical status that society has granted to other totemic figures of historical and contemporary merit. Not only is the modern industrial man a "radical mixed race vision," so too is he reclining. His horizontal orientation triangulates with the two other panels that foreground a horizontal human figure. These are, as mentioned, *Coming of Quetzalcoatl* and *Gods of the Modern World*. Both scenes depict the fragility of education and the way in which it is threatened by ideological forces that span the socio-religio-political spectrum. His position is the closest that one can get to surveying the whole scene of the reading room and it is what allows for this critique. Although the viewer most likely entered from one of the doorways on the far east or west walls, any traverse of the long room necessitates at least a momentary pause here-- whether because of the scope of the view offered in front or behind him, or because of the narrowing of the pathway due to the physical obstruction of the reserve book desk.

Here, *Modern Industrial Man* offers another possibility for reading the mural. Although there is no basement entryway here (the door below him leads to a utility closet), he is located directly below the main entrance to Baker Library on the ground floor. His location can

therefore imply a starting point for the viewer. Given the vantage point provided, the viewer can survey the scene and subsequently decide which way to go. The world will be constructed and given new form through the work of enlightened, educated individuals acting together. The building behind the worker, with its horizontal orientation in the panel, might well be Baker Library itself, under construction a few short years before. Regardless of the neo-Georgian design of its exterior, Baker Library has a steel frame and could, in principle, be covered with a façade of any sort. It is as if Orozco is deliberately removing architectural references to the Federal Era in its exterior design, inviting the viewer to join the "new races" of the New World to recognize their "unavoidable duty to produce a *New Art* in a new spiritual and physical medium" (1929, 322). The physical media are the plastic arts, the spiritual medium is the society it fosters and that will foster it in return. The viewer's perspective expands indefinitely here, simultaneously integrating the mural into the library and the library into the mural through the many reflections and inversions made possible by *Modern Industrial Man*. If Orozco's worker is reclining with his book in front of a Baker Library under construction, then he is facing away from the library's façade, south across the green and toward the town of Hanover. There is an interplay across the physical scales of the reading room, Baker Library, Dartmouth College-- and New England more generally.

The use of architecture to symbolically embody a cultural ideology is an old story-- and one with which Orozco was surely familiar, given the ways in which Vasconcelos actively used and repurposed neo-colonial architecture for the SEP. In his larger survey of the subject, *Art and Architecture in Mexico* (2013), Oles writes that Vasconcelos emphasized the institution's "secularized colonial buildings … And to the extent that there was an official state architecture (funds for new buildings being quite limited), the chosen style was neo-colonial" (235). While

unremarkable in and of itself, Vasconcelos' choice is deliberate and contrasts with the architecture of public buildings during the dictatorship toppled by the revolution. The *Porfiriato* was eclectic in its architectural taste, importing European architects and designs for its public buildings, which included internationally-accepted styles such as the Neoclassical, Baroque Revival, Beaux Arts and Art Nouveau that, together, offered "the illusion of living in a modern city" (206-209, 206). Instead, the selection of colonial buildings and construction of neo-colonial architecture for the SEP "focused on local sources," a decision that

> perfectly embodied the concept of mestizaje, since its forms and materials were based on centuries of cultural blending and adaptions to Mexico's specific environment. Neo-colonial architecture also confirmed Vasconcelos' self-image as heir to the sixteenth-century friars, encouraging parallels between the evangelization of the indigenous population and the Ministry's equally transformative programs. (236)

Vasconcelos' own remarks on the headquarters building of the SEP are also revealing. As Folgarait writes in his chapter dealing with the early history of Mexican muralism:

> On the day of its inauguration, in July 1922, he described its qualities in a public address: 'We needed very large halls to allow for open and free discussion, and very high ceilings to let ideas expand without obstacle.' These are words that declare a trust in form, space, material, style and size to not only express meaning, but to have meaning inherent in their very being. Ideology, in other words, could be made by piling bricks in certain ways. (1998, 75-76)

The attention paid to the metaphorical-- and, for Vasconcelos, apparently mystical and deterministic-- qualities of architecture are here emphasized to an extent that is remarkable. A deliberate use of architecture to articulate a new Mexican identity, coupled with the revolutionary educational program being implemented at this time, have obvious implications for the socialization of a student population in a new political environment.

The deliberate evocation of political and national ideologies observable in the architectural choices of the SEP finds an analogue in both the landscape and architecture of Dartmouth College, specifically Baker Library. It is hard to imagine Orozco being oblivious to

the symbolic qualities of the New England landscape and campus architecture-- however different the northern aesthetic may have been-- given the atmosphere in which he and other muralists had been working in Mexico and his proclivity to criticize ideology in all its forms. Moving through the New England landscape, into Hanover, onto Dartmouth's campus and towards Baker Library at its center, there is little that prepares the viewer to experience the ideas found in these murals, a prospect in which one imagines Orozco would delight-- and which creates a context of equal importance as the interior walls on which frescoes are painted.

What one sees when looking out from Baker Library is the iconic Dartmouth Green and town of Hanover. There is some irony in the limits to this vista from the student's perspective upon leaving the library. A collegiate education prepares an individual for much more than the supposedly provincial and traditional landscape that lies outside the library's front door. If, however, the student turns toward the library, looking inside-- as from the perspective of Orozco's modern industrial man-- the world is paradoxically much larger. The world contained within a library's walls is infinite, while being confined to a limited space. The world outside, by contrast, contains an infinity of possibility over the horizon, but is by contrast limited by the viewer's field of vision.

The implications are profound. One's perspective within a library can only be restricted by the imagination whereas one's perspective in the outside world is restricted by the field of vision. By painting *Modern Industrial Man* facing outward from what very well could be Baker Library on an inside wall that faces inward and opposite, Orozco is using the library's architecture and the spatial arrangement of his panels in the reading room to further the "organic idea" of *The Epic of American Civilization*. One need only remember his remarks upon Dartmouth library's collection of Spanish-language books in his *Autobiography*, where he

writes: “The College preserves Wheelock’s grammar, his Bible, and his drum. It now has great halls, stadiums, and laboratories, which are worth millions of dollars. In the midst of it all stands Baker Library, the pride of the College, with a collection of books in Spanish which by itself is greater than many very important libraries in Spanish America” (158). The implication is clear: for those who look, the Dartmouth library provides ample opportunity for a worldly education that is in no way confined to New England, the U.S. or the dominant Anglo-European narrative of its culture.

Given the inherently spatial quality of a mural and Orozco’s specific arrangement of the panels within the reading room, one begins to see how the viewer’s movements among the panels of the mural cycle are akin to the viewer’s movements through the townscape of Hanover,[170] which, in turn, combines two symbolic landscapes-- the New England village and the Dartmouth campus. One of the first studies of the university campus as an important type of landscape in the U.S. is by Paul Venable Turner. In it, he provides a comprehensive history of the U.S. educational campus from its roots in the Oxbridge colleges of England through the present era. The campus, like any built landscape, is the product of conscious design and embodies certain ideals. While generalizations can be made, the types of campus environments are various, as they were built “responding to local needs rather than centralized in one or two universities” (17). Scattered evenly about the colonies, the nine degree-granting institutions founded before the American Revolution were primarily located near colonial population centers, with the notable exception of Dartmouth College.[171] That Dartmouth was located on the

[170] The term “townscape” is deliberately used, referencing the title of Gordon Cullen’s *Townscape* (1961), in which he explores the importance of considering the relationship between buildings and the spaces between them as integral to understanding any built environment.

[171] To cite Turner: “These were Harvard College in Massachusetts, founded in 1636; the College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1693; Yale College in Connecticut, 1701; the College of New Jersey (later Princeton), 1746; King's College (later Columbia) in New York, 1754; the College of Philadelphia (later the University of

frontier, in the wilderness, removed from the urban environments of its early peers, remains a point of pride today.

Much of this is embodied in the College's motto, "*vox clamantis in deserto*," Latin for "a voice crying in the wilderness." There is hope in the motto's implications, as it alludes to a longer verse from the Book of Isaiah: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (40:3).[172] The Biblical passage uses such terms as "wilderness" and "desert" as metaphors for the role of the prophet in society, making ready the people for God's divine intercession on their behalf.[173] For Dartmouth College, however, this is also literal. The college's place in the wilderness was intentional-- its founder, Eleazar Wheelock, established Dartmouth for the education of the Native Americans of the region. The mission of the college was conversion, to "make straight in the desert" of New Hampshire a way for Christianity. Such were the "local needs," as understood by Wheelock, at the time of Dartmouth's founding.

Given this context, "The first buildings of Dartmouth College were … wilderness necessities, [and] formed a village-like compound" (Turner 21). As Dartmouth and other institutions grew, however, they did not shed their histories. Instead, they came to embody what Turner calls the "ironic combination of primitive purity and higher learning" which "held a fascination for Americans, becoming common images in collegiate mythology" (18).[174] The

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Pennsylvania), 1755; the College of Rhode Island (later Brown), 1765; Queen's College (later Rutgers) in New Jersey, 1766; and Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, 1769" (17).

[172] The King James Version is used. Explicit reference is made to this passage in the New Testament by each of the four Gospels: Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4 and John 1:23.

[173] The expectation was that God would soon intervene on behalf of his chosen people, freeing them from captivity in Babylon. The first two verses of this chapter of Isaiah read: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God./ Speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins" (40:1-2).

[174] Turner continues: "The romantic ideal of the college in nature, removed from the distractions of civilization, has persisted up to the present time and has determined the locations of countless institutions" (18). The ideal is well defined in Charles Thwing's *American Colleges: Their Students and Work* (1878). Referring to this "popular

development of Dartmouth's campus landscape grew from "wilderness necessities" into a consciously-designed collection of buildings, eventually becoming the quintessential college campus visible today. This is no accident. Rather, it is an example of how the cultural iconography of landscapes develop over time.

As such, Dartmouth's campus is best understood as part of a larger cultural trend that re-imagined its past in terms of contemporary ideals, actively constructing the built landscape, making congruent two disparate periods of history. This is evident in the very idea of the New England village. In his essential work in the field of U.S. urban history, *The Making of Urban America* (1965), John W. Reps writes that the tradition and image of the New England village was effectually invented-- romanticized and mythologized-- by the culture of the nineteenth century. He writes:

> the stereotype image of the New England village with its lofty meetinghouse spire rising from a crisply painted, green-shuttered building fronting a central green and dominating a cluster of large, comfortable 'colonial' houses does not fairly represent conditions during the early years of settlement. The grace and charm of the New England village was long in the making. (127)

The Puritans who built the first settlements, much like Eleazar Wheelock arriving in the wilderness of New Hampshire in the next century, were pioneers-- and the architecture and living conditions of their settlements reflected the "stern requirements of a frontier experience" (127). The hardscrabble lives of the first English settlers on the shores of New England extended to the construction of their settlements which grew "from the combination of buildings and plant materials that developed by semi-accident many years after their layout." So, while the New

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nineteenth-century book on American colleges," Turner writes: "Often the aesthetic and moral advantages of nature were cited together, as when [Thwing] claimed, 'if Yale were located at Williamstown, Harvard at Hanover, and Columbia at Ithaca, the moral character of their students would be elevated in as great degree as the natural scenery … would be increased in beauty'" (qtd. in Turner 101). The qualities embodied in such images were so pervasive that visual representations of colleges played upon this appeal, regardless of their surroundings. As Turner observes, "in the nineteenth century a pictorial manner became common that emphasized the natural environment" and some institutions "that were actually in cities were often pictured falsely as being in nature" (101, 106).

England village does have a "very real visual distinction" (128), it is not one that could have been articulated by those who drew the original plans.

Both the collegiate campus and the New England village are powerful examples of symbolic landscapes.[175] As Meinig writes: "Every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the iconography of nationhood, part of the shared set of ideas and memories and feelings which bind a people together" (164). It is important to remember, however, that this iconography does not simply appear as active propaganda in some universal form, readily applicable to all parts of the country. Instead, Meinig reminds his readers,

> In geography it is axiomatic that social movements do not upwell all across a continent with simultaneous and uniform effect. Rather they arise in a particular place or kind of place, and are subsequently diffused unevenly. We may expect that the national landscape in the future will be shaped, as in the past, by the influence of a pattern which can first be identified as typical of a particular region. (185)

Historical geographers J. S. Wood and M. Steinitz describe New England's distinctive landscape as follows: "The ensemble of substantial house, town common, and center village encountered in New England reflects an invented tradition" that involved the "Erasure of memory of a rude, pre-Revolutionary landscape of dispersed farms and cramped cottage dwellings" (105-106) in favor of one that embodied the ideals of "community, cultural enlightenment, and democratic self-government" (105) during a period of U.S. history marked by rapid change. Significant among these were an increase in industrialization and urbanization, forces that were cause for much concern culturally as they changed not only the ways in which people were living, but where they were living and society's relationship to nature and agriculture-- important components of the environment with which the New England village is, supposedly, in greater physical harmony. As Wood writes elsewhere, "Romantic New Englanders … invented a tradition of

[175] For further discussion of this term, see the Introduction and Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Puritan antecedence, in which villages served as geographical metaphor for inherited pastoral ideals" (1991, 32). The tradition is one that is wrapped-up in some of the most cherished images and deeply-held convictions about democracy in the U.S. The iconography and symbolic associations of the New England village created a tradition and the "usable past" [176] found during the mid-nineteenth-century is a past more fitting to the vision of the future shared at that time.

Campus environments, as Turner suggests, are not immune from these same dynamics. Dartmouth College is unique in that it has actively cultivated the image of an idealized New England in a composite form with its campus environment. The historical essays on Dartmouth College collected by historian and preservationist, Ralph Nading Hill, suggest as much from its very title, *The College on the Hill* (1964).[177] In an essay titled, "The Place," Dartmouth professor and administrator, Stearns Morse, emphasizes that "Of all the colleges established in the colonies prior to the Revolution, Dartmouth alone was situated in the wilderness" (88) and by the mid-1800s, "the scenic and romantic aspects of the mountains had been discovered" (94) and incorporated into the college's scenic portrayal. Just as important to Dartmouth's identity as its location in the "wilderness," however, is its integration with the town of Hanover. Visually, the College Green played the role of the town common,[178] as "the Church and the row of white houses north of the Green greeted the visitor as he came up Main Street from the south; white houses likewise lined the west side of the Green" (95-96). Dartmouth's White Church was not only a visual marker tying the campus to Hanover, but also a matter of the civic identity of

[176] For a discussion of the implication of a "usable past" in U.S. literary and cultural study, see the Introduction and Chapter One of this dissertation.
[177] The reference is to the sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity," delivered by the Puritan settler, John Winthrop. It foresees the mission of the Puritans in the New World as bringing-forth an exemplary society for the rest of the world to follow. The phrase itself comes from the Gospel according to Matthew which reads: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (5:14).
[178] The town shared multiple sides of the Green with Dartmouth. As Stearns Morse writes later: "With the clearing of the ground for Baker Library in 1927 the last dwelling house disappeared from the edge of the Green" (112).

Hanover as a New England village: while "other denominations had churches in the town, the dominant church was the Congregational Church-- the White Church at the head of the College Green" (97). Since 1928, however, the building that greets visitors from Hanover's Main Street is Baker Library and is to this day an integral part of the townscape there.

At its opening, Baker Library was heralded in terms of the history of U.S. higher education, explicitly evoking the ideals embodied in the iconography of both the campus and the New England village. The August issue of the *DAM* from that year reports that in the dedicatory address spoke of the new library as part of a history of New England, tracing "the earliest education and ideals of self-government which found their conception in New England and enumerated the great gifts to the political thoughts of the time which were made by New Englanders." Citing the speaker directly,[179] the article continues: "'All over the hills of New England spread colleges and universities which were once only log cabins. These are the soul of New England cities. It is still true that sound education is the foundation for society'" (823). The audience of this speech heard what had by that time been successfully codified and established as history. Such are the processes through which symbolic landscapes function in the perpetuation of ideology.[180]

[179] The dedicatory speaker was President Woodrow Wilson's former Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, of apparently no relation to the library's namesake, philanthropist George F. Baker. The title of the *DAM* article is: "Baker Library Dedicated June 16."

[180] Geographer M. J. Bowden charts the ways in which this happens through four distinct phases that build upon one another. He describes them as follows: The first phase is "that of image formation" in which "an indistinct image of what later became a complex set of symbols was formed," allowing for the second, "myth creation," in which "Readers and writers lead each other to and fro in a trial and error process to the definition of an historically suitable myth." The third phase, "invented tradition," signifies "a body or belief that is so deeply internalized by a nation/group that is practically impervious to scholarship that shows it to be largely factitious." Finally, the fourth phase that comes about is "universalization, a later stage of elaboration in which tradition was incorporated into history and geography books at all levels and was later even used as superstructure, paradigm, and ideology by academics" (4). A version of this process can be seen at play in the landscapes discussed here.

As evident in Dartmouth's inaugural celebrations for the Baker Library, the symbolic landscape of the New England village and of the college campus were being reinforced in the larger "iconography of nationhood" throughout the broader period during which Orozco was at Dartmouth. The landscape of the New England village was prevalent in the arts of the 1930s. As one student of the Orozco murals writes, "Depression-era publications focused a great deal on New England as a model for the nation as a result of artists' and writers' promotion of the region" and that "New England's small towns quickly became a source of tranquil photographs of strong, self-reliant communities published across the country … to lift the spirits of the nation" (Cooper 83-84). As Coffey writes, "*Anglo-America*, engages with the Colonial Revival and contemporary debates over the national importance of the New England town hall meeting as the core of U.S.-American democracy" and that Orozco "includes all the hallmarks of an iconic rural America: the red barn, the white, Protestant church/schoolhouse, the bale of wheat, the town hall meeting, and universal elementary education presented as the origin of a stoic adult citizenship" (2011, 87). These hallmarks are the complex network of images that create the symbolic landscape and which, in turn, allows for the invention of tradition.

Orozco critiques an ideology by up-ending its mythology and complex symbolism and the ideology of the symbolic landscape of the New England village is no different. He relies upon the viewer's recognition of the pattern of symbols in a different form but, as he writes, "there are as many literary interpretations as spectators" (1933, 7). The ideas are on the wall, but the story is put together by the spectator. In terms of Dartmouth, Orozco's evocation of the New England landscape and the democratic ideals it has come to represent visually, *Anglo-America* serves as a critique of not only the culture of the village ideal, but also of Dartmouth which is--locally and nationally-- synonymous with the culture of the ideals of U.S. education.

A few years after Orozco's stay at Dartmouth, one of the more vocal alumni-critics, Walter Beach Humphrey (Class of 1914), would give full expression to these complaints by painting a mural cycle in direct reaction to the expressionistic and experimental frescoes by Orozco. This set of murals depicts an inaccurate, romanticized myth of the college's founding. Having once adorned the now-closed Thayer Dining Hall (or "Hovey Grill") they found their principal inspiration in a nineteenth-century college drinking song composed by Dartmouth alumnus, Richard Hovey (Class of 1885). Known as the "Hovey Murals" (1938-39) for this reason, the lyrics to the old drinking song are incorporated into the composition, framing their lower border through unfurling scrollwork that unites the four major panels of the mural. Straightforward in content, each of the four scenes elaborates on the song's narrative account of the arrival of Reverend Eleazar Wheelock, the founder of Dartmouth College, in the woods of New Hampshire. The lyrics begin: "Oh. Eleazar Wheelock was a very pious man:/ He went into the Wilderness to teach the Indian./ With a *Gradus ad Parnassum*, a Bible and a drum,/ And five hundred gallons of New England rum" (qtd. in McGrath 21). After including a chorus calling for the drinkers to "Fill the bowl up!" and to "Drink to Eleazar," the song briefly tells of Wheelock's meeting with the "Sachem of the Wah-hoo-wahs." The song then concludes: "Eleazar and the big chief harangued and gesticulated./ They founded Dartmouth College and the big chief matriculated./ Eleazar was the faculty, and the whole curriculum/ Was five hundred gallons of New England rum" (qtd. in McGrath 21-22). It is a racist and sophomoric celebration of the drink and merriment that upend the story of the school's founding and Wheelock's mission to educate the Native American people of the region. Both Hovey's lyrics and Humphrey's murals, however, provide a problematic and offensive portrayal of Native Americans and women and are the source of continued controversy today (the murals themselves

have not been open to public viewing since the 1970s). In Humphrey's visual telling of the story, Wheelock is, in the first panel, lost in the North Woods, surrounded by stealthy Native American scouts, but is greeted in the second panel by the group's leader who is surrounded by a harem luxuriating in various stages of undress within the idyllic woodland setting. In the third panel, Wheelock has shared his keg of rum with the Native Americans, pages of books scattered about on the forest floor, Wheelock and the chief are drunk, the latter having painted a green Dartmouth "D" on his bare chest. The fourth and final panel in the mural's sequence is the "Chorus Panel," in which the revelry continues, Wheelock calling his new friends around to drink from a bowl filled with rum which he is pouring and/or spilling into the waiting steins of the Native Americans (see fig. 22).

Fig. 22. Walter Beach Humphrey, "Chorus Panel" from the "Hovey Murals."

Humphrey, an illustrator and frequent contributor to such magazines as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's*, wrote that he endeavored to paint "a real Dartmouth mural" (qtd. in McGrath 19) and, in some doggerel of his own creation published in the *DAM*, Humphrey

specifically cites the landscape as a source for his reaction to Orozco: "I've got some idears--have had them for years/ That belong to the Hanover scene;/ And I have a hunch they'd appeal to the bunch/ That boasts a real love for the Green," remembering "the haunts that as students we knew" while also vowing to "… do a design that will never malign/ All learning as skeletal dust" (qtd. in McGrath 20). The affected vernacularity of Humphrey's phrasing ("idears"), blends with over(t)ly sentimental memories of his alma mater. While he makes good on his promise to exclude dusty skeletons from his own walls, he has perhaps erred too far the other way, given the over-saturated state of both Wheelock and the Native Americans in the murals. In any event, Humphrey's murals rely upon a traditional, sentimental and idyllic myth of North American civilization. In the context of *The Epic of American Civilization*, an analysis of the Hovey Murals is as much a part of contemporaneous attitudes toward Latin American and modern art as it is a part of the immediate environment in which both Humphry and Orozco were operating.

Humphrey's direct reaction to Orozco's mural belies the superficially nostalgic, regionalist character of the Hovey Murals and both can be understood as engaging with the complex tensions of the modern era in radically different ways. While regionalism plays a sometimes-unseen role in Orozco's mural cycle, so too does internationalism seem to be absent from Humphrey's reaction. In her essay on the "Hovey Murals," Rayna Green writes:

> Humphrey's parody of the epic of civilization does it with just a dab here and there from every visual and dramatic cliché attached to The Indian since precontact. A little Rousseau, a little Neoclassicist Orientalism, a little Art Deco, Art Nouveau, Wild West Show, a bit of Social(ist) Realism and Disney, and a lot of movie Western … all blended in the Hovey mural panels, which do know exactly what Indians look like, and how Dartmouth Indians behave. (60-61)

What makes these scenes "provincial" in character is not necessarily their subject matter or bigoted presentation thereof, their stylistic proclivities or straightforward narrative structure. Instead, it is the way in which Humphrey shrinks his perspective. The learning and education so

obviously evident in the stylistic richness of his murals are committed to a narrow message and line of reasoning. Humphrey offers not only a fanciful history, but one that willingly obscures the truth. Furthermore, he does a disservice to the institution and its educational goals by feigning ignorance despite holding a degree from the same institution he claims to hold dear.

The irony is that Orozco's vision is truer to the founding principles of Dartmouth. To remove oneself from society never meant the rejection of society, but a physical emulation of the critical distance needed for study and contemplation. It is Orozco who maintains the ideals of the campus setting through his cosmopolitan vision. *The Epic of American Civilization* offers a perspective not bound by conceptual or geographical scales. It is a perspective that moves through different scales fluidly-- capable of seeing his native Mexico in the context of New England and vice-versa. This should underscore the importance of the changing perspective the viewer experiences while moving about the envelope of space created by *The Epic of American Civilization*, allowing for new connections to be made in the viewer's mind. In following the themes of modernization, industrialization and education described above, *Anglo-America* and *Hispano-America* provide one of the primary lessons in the importance of using spatial awareness to analyze the complex arrangement of Orozco's work at Dartmouth, isolated on the east wing of the north wall, they seem to stand apart as a balanced critique of civilization both north and south of the Rio Grande.

Education in the service of any ideology is propaganda and such controlled systems of thought are what give permanence to the totemic figures scattered throughout the mural cycle and elsewhere in Orozco's larger body of work. Both *Gods of the Modern World* and *Anglo-America* offer a critique of education, but it is the direction in which it is read that can change its particular "story" while maintaining its core idea. Reading the panels in a sinistrodextral

progression, the world of *The Machine* seems to produce the society seen in *Anglo-America*, *Hispano-America* and *Gods of the Modern World*. Yet, if one reads them in a dextrosinistral progression, the newly birthed skeleton representing stillborn knowledge in *Gods of the Modern World*, is a product of a system that fortifies political leaders and their ideologies. Higher education produces the thought leaders and generals of the counterrevolution seen in *Hispano-America* which, after the revolution is over-- and the government establishes its own grammar and secondary schools-- runs the risk of producing its own society of automatons that are seen in *Anglo-America*. Such unthinking people, fully indoctrinated, think nothing of the machines that they continue to build and operate which, eventually, lead to the destruction of their own society. Both the revolutionary and the schoolteacher are doomed to be martyrs-- each in their own lost cause-- but their acolytes can see only the promise enacted through their own celebrated, but ultimately totemic cultural figures.

The Mexican revolutionary project and its formal institutionalization through governmental programs involved various educational initiatives. The SEP was central to the Revolution and invested in this project on a level far beyond its mural projects in converted colonial buildings. The educational project of the Mexican Revolution is directly tied to the imperative for educating the far-removed, native populations of Mexico as identified by Vasconcelos and others.

While there are readily identifiable symbols of northern U.S. culture in *Anglo-America*, the image of this schoolteacher also reflects the iconography of the revolutionary school system then developing in Mexico. A prime example of this can be found among Rivera's early murals for the SEP. One panel places a scene of education within the context of the violent period of Mexican Revolution itself, *The Rural Teacher* (1923-24)-- and the same scene is reiterated by

Rivera in his *Open Air School* (1932). Both depict an outdoor scene on a wide-open field, sheltered by mountains, presumably somewhere in the Central Highlands of Mexico (see figs. 23 and 24).

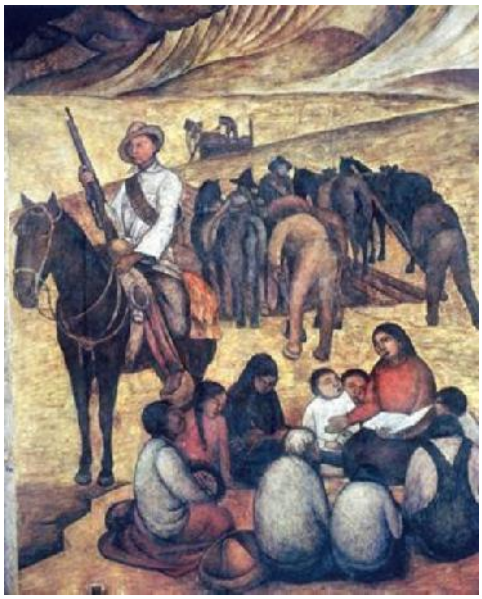

Fig. 23. Diego Rivera, *Rural Teacher*.

Fig. 24. Diego Rivera, *Open Air School*.

In the foreground and at the center of the panel is a group of students of all ages, who are seated in a circle with their teacher, who reads to them from a book. Beside this group, in a stance of protection, is an armed and mounted revolutionary soldier. In the middle-ground is a group of men and horses who are working the land, apparently in the process of plowing a new field. Finally, in the background are two men who are involved in constructing one of the many rural schoolhouses that were part of Vasconcelos' larger project. Each component contributes to the panel's larger message regarding the importance of education to the Mexican Revolutionary project. As Folgarait writes:

> These are apparently a free people, exercising their options, building their houses, tilling their land, teaching their own. The armed discipline of the guard is intended not to control the figures, but to prevent others from doing so. His presence points to the hard-won and vulnerable state of this liberated society. The entire scene is a picture-perfect rendition of Vasconcelos's mission to educate the countryside with his shock-troop teachers, to build schools, and to increase the yield of the land with scientific instruction. (1998, 79)

Within the idealized image of local, regional culture being bettered by the revolutionary education system, there remains the question of what is being taught and what can be learned. As with his other murals, Rivera reveals his commitment to the partisan revolutionary project.[181] It should be clear that Orozco would be made uncomfortable by the heavy-handed message in Rivera's murals. At question is not the value of education, but the methods of the educators.

Viewing *Anglo-America* in this larger intertextual framework, Orozco's use of similar pictorial language to Rivera's seems deliberate. Orozco was not alone in his skepticism of organized education-- even that of the revolutionary government in which so many others saw

[181] Folgarait notes that the viewer does not know what book is being read in *The Rural Teacher*, but that there were few options sanctioned by the curriculum under Vasconcelos at that time-- and it is important that "With instruction flowing in only one direction, from the city to the countryside" the educational project simply becomes one of "assimilation" (1998, 79).

promise. One contemporaneous articulation of this critique is by Mexican philosopher Samuel Ramos in his influential book, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico* (1934). Ramos writes:

> If schooling is good only for the instruction of material techniques, that means it is preparing individuals to be devoured all the more easily by civilization. This is indeed a monstrous concept of schooling. In contrast, education must be thought of as the vigor of life itself, fighting off a civilization which by converting men into foolproof automatons creates the illusion that it has adequately prepared them for life-- though without will, or intelligence, or feeling. In short, without a soul. (Ramos 100)

Ramos writes that "Practicality, money, machines, and speed are the thing which provoke the greatest enthusiasm in modern men" (98) and that the Mexican educational system was then being guided by "Individual instruction aimed at technical specialization and even professional careers can have no other result" (98-99). As such, Ramos laments the Mexican educational system's penchant to follow the example set by the U.S.

In this way, *Anglo-America* can also be read as a critique of Mexican education-- or a warning against what Mexican education might become. With *Hispano-America* on its right and *The Machine* on its left, one sees how the central totemic figures perpetuate an instrumental conception of man: the revolutionary hero becomes the stern schoolmarm who, in turn, becomes the mechanical monolith. Individually, they play their own role in organizing each panel but each one mimics the role played by the other. As the more contemporary poet and cultural critic Octavio Paz points-out in his essay on Orozco, however, "mechanization is only one aspect of the universal dehumanization. The other is ideology: the mechanical age is also the century of ideologies" (1993, 192). The implications clearly relate to Orozco's work at Dartmouth and elsewhere. The ideology espoused by the Mexican revolutionary may be different from that taught by the New England schoolmarm, but each is mechanical and, just as "the robot repeats the same gestures," according to Paz, in any form "the ideologue [repeats] the same formulas." Paz writes that "If the machine is the caricature of life, ideology is the caricature of religion"

(192) and this seems to be exactly the point. This is what becomes explicit in the de-facto apse of the reading room that enshrines *Symbols of Nationalism, Modern Human Sacrifice, Modern Migration of the Spirit* and *Chains of the Spirit*. After following a linear progression from west-to-east through the reading room, the viewer feels a nagging sense that many ideologues have been passed along the way-- whether the priests and gods of ancient Mesoamerica, the academic "gods of the modern world" or any of the totemic figures that seek to organize a system and to perpetuate it *ad infinitum*. The viewer sees caricature playing a critical role in Orozco's work. One must upend anyone who pretends to know and who perpetuates dangerous fictions. Education should be above such impulses, but, as one can see, Orozco does not trust the institutional powers that be.

While Orozco takes his audience's interpretive abilities seriously, he also makes fun of their inability to recognize these same interpretive abilities and to take their own role seriously. If Orozco does not trust the academic faculty, he is nonetheless earnest in recognizing his real audience: the student body-- a group of individuals best positioned, in age and temperament, to see both the gravity and the humor of his mural cycle.

The criticism received by the president and administrators from concerned citizens, alumni and art critics with which this discussion began are filled with the tone of righteous indignation, much of which stems from their adherence to the myth of New England and its symbolic landscape. In reviewing archival materials from this era, one finds the best responses to Orozco's *Epic of American Civilization* in the pages of *The Dartmouth Jack-O-Lantern*, the campus humor magazine. Supporters of the murals in the press and among academics, art critics and alumni, offer a predictable and necessary defense in the spirit of academic inquiry and freedom of expression. Scattered throughout the pages of what is commonly referred to as the

Jacko, however, are various cartoons and other comic references to the murals that, placed alongside the regular duty to satirize the institution of Dartmouth, reveal a deeper understanding of the murals than their cheerful irreverence would initially suggest.

In one article from the February 1933 issue of the *Jacko*, titled "Red Man and White,"[182] the author tackles questions posed by critics of the murals at that time, but in a lighthearted way: "Why Quetzalcoatl? query those who can pronounce his name. Why Aztecs on the walls of Dartmouth College? Why Mexican Art in New England, center of American culture?" Finally, however, he reminds his readers: "Time has a way of making 'justifications' disturbingly unnecessary" (30). The short piece is in good company with the ideas of Orozco himself, invoking the history and traditions of Dartmouth College: "if we consider the true America to be a fusion of the cultures of the red man and the white, then symbols of native life are particularly fitting for this college. Dartmouth alone of the larger New England schools possesses a dual heritage, from Indian and from colonist; her very existence derives from the contact of these two cultures" (30, 33). It is essentially a serious reflection on current events at Dartmouth during the early days of Orozco's project, its humor being hidden in turns-of-phrase that shed light on some of the hang-ups of the Dartmouth community.

The article's parody continues in its two accompanying illustrations, which juxtapose an image of *Ancient Human Sacrifice* with a cartoon titled "What Dartmouth Expected to See" (Silverman 31) (see fig. 25). This latter depicts a ridiculous combination of symbolic figures. At its center is the figure of George Washington crossing the Delaware River and behind him stand allegorical figures borrowed from classical antiquity. These central figures are surrounded by an odd assortment of iconography, including a winged Declaration of Independence, a castle, a

[182] The article is attributed to an "S. H. Silverman." The *DAM* issue in which Orozco first published his thoughts rejecting the idea of looking for "stories" in paintings, was published later that year, in November.

crusading knight on horseback, along with two cherubs and two Greek gods-- Poseidon with his trident and Pan with his flute. The caption for this cartoon reads, simply: "*Jack-o-Lantern*'s conception of the old style frescoes and their spurious symbolism, from which Orozco has definitely broken away" (31).

Fig. 25. "What Dartmouth Expected to See" from *The Dartmouth Jack-O-Lantern*.

The humor in this cartoon relies upon the intentional mixing of metaphors in the excess of images offered. Combined with its title and this caption, the reader understands that the caricature targets not only Dartmouth, but also satirizes an entire mode of muralism then popular at the time.[183] The "spurious symbolism" of the cartoon-mural invokes too many cultures that are far more distant-- temporally, geographically, culturally-- from the indigenous cultures of the Americas at the heart of Orozco's interpretation. It critiques the nationalistic impulse of U.S. muralists active at that time.[184] Just as Orozco references the New England village to question the quality of democratic society in the age of drab businessmen and the crushing

[183] One need look no further than Sert's mural for the RCA Building, *American Progress*, that replaced Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads*. Sert depicts Abraham Lincoln building the railroads in the company of the Titans and Graces from ancient Greek mythology.
[184] Again, Mary Cooper's article details specific aspects of this phenomenon.

industrialization, so does this seemingly insignificant cartoon point to the counterfeit imagery of Classical Antiquity and U.S. Federalism around which the campus iconography has become rooted in its fusion of the New England and collegiate landscapes. The message is clear: for both the cartoonist and the author, Orozco's mural is more closely tied to the history and mission of the college-- if anything, he is more honest in reckoning with the processes of mythopoeia and the creation of a "usable past" that were then in vogue. That *The Epic of American Civilization* is painted on the walls of a New England library in the neo-Georgian style is no more anachronistic than the placement of the same neo-Georgian library on a New England village green.[185]

As seen, the symbolic landscapes of New England and the U.S. college campus are deeply connected with larger ideas about U.S. society and democracy. While the neo-Georgian style might be anachronistic to the New England village, this does not necessarily mean that it should be rejected out-of-hand. Baker Library is a handsome building by any number of standards and its symbolism is congruent with certain ideals and mores of the college. The steel skeleton of the building, while designed to carry the façade it does, could be clothed in any number of styles. So too does it work well with the surrounding town, creating a strong visual landmark when moving north along Main Street in Hanover. It is sometimes the case, however, that the symbolism of such a structure can work so well that it becomes an undue burden.

In a short document containing some remarks on the character of Dartmouth's campus titled, simply, "Type of Architecture,"[186] President Ernest M. Hopkins writes: "It is evident that

[185] So too, for that matter, the enshrining of Independence Hall in the context of Philadelphia's Independence Mall, the construction of which began in the 1940s. In that sense it is equally anachronistic, although perhaps reversed-- bringing the iconography of the village green (or of the Mall in Washington D.C.) to city of Philadelphia. The original site of Independence Hall would have been a densely-populated urban center.

[186] The document is apparently an earlier-- and more strongly worded-- draft for a portion of the *Report of the Faculty Committee on the New Library*.

future construction should not give rise to offensive discontinuities, but the committee would raise the question as to whether the architecture of the college plant as a whole in so far as it may be influenced by future construction, should not in some way reflect the further evolution of the intellectual life of the college" (1).[187] He writes that, essentially, all recent construction at that time had been of neo-Georgian design and "It was therefore natural that the architecture of the new library building should conform to this type, and the committee saw no reason for recommending any other." The sheer practicality of the choice in keeping up with the times is revealing. Hopkins continues by listing the many different architectural styles represented on the campus, returning to the Post-World War I architecture and concluding that: "In externals they represent the Philadelphia of 1776, not the Hanover of 1776, of 1926, or of any intermediate period" and continues, "The architecture, then, of the college as a whole, is now either representative or symbolical of its development. It should continue to be so…" (2). The entire document works towards this point, as his concluding sentences read: "In any case, the architecture of the college should no more be bound to the architecture of 1776 than should its habits of thought be restricted to those of that period. Unless the college is a growing organism it dies. Its architecture, if it fails to symbolize this growth[,] no longer inspires. A continuous function is not necessarily a constant" (3). Hopkins' remarks on the subject of architecture and the symbolism inherent in a campus landscape are congruent with his defense of *The Epic of American Civilization* and Orozco's place in the college's history. The growing eclecticism of the architecture on the campus of Dartmouth College is emblematic of the physical growth and changing needs of the school across generations. Whatever pretensions an institution of higher

[187] This document is from the presidential papers of Dartmouth College and, while not dated, indicates that it was written after two additional wings were added to Baker Library, Sanborn House and Carpenter Hall. These structures were completed in 1929, so too was the *Report* cited earlier.

education may have towards removing itself from society, it cannot escape.[188] The education of Dartmouth students as future citizens in a democratic society was celebrated at the dedication ceremony of Baker Library. Baker Library and any other structure-- no matter how grand or humble-- is inevitably and in some way a product of the society's standards and principles. As geographer Edward Relph reminds his readers, "Landscapes are substantial if intangible things. They should not be thought of as mirrors which happen to catch the otherwise invisible image of the spirit of the times. They are, however, made within a context of well-attested ideas and beliefs about how the world works, and how it might be improved" (1987, 8). On a collegiate campus, the central belief is-- ostensibly-- in the value of education and the site chosen for Baker Library at Dartmouth is clearly deliberate. Constructed at the center of campus on the main quadrangle, which doubles as the Hanover's village green, the seriousness of educational pursuits is compounded with their role in democratic society. To note the beliefs behind the symbolism and the intentional construction of these environments is not to disparage them but, rather, to become aware of the profundity of what is otherwise overlooked as ordinary.

In this sense it is worth citing John Dewey, who was thinking about these same issues around the same time.[189] In his lectures on aesthetics first delivered at Harvard University in 1932, later collected under the title *Art as Experience* (1934), he writes that one of the great problems of art critics is that they present their judgements as final and, for this reason, are "more congenial to unregenerate human nature" (312). What Dewey wants is for artistic judgement to be "an act of controlled inquiry [that] demands a rich background and a disciplined

[188] Today, one need only walk to the north side of Baker Library to see its postmodern extension, the Berry Library, completed in 2002 and designed by none other than Robert Venturi. The library complex is now referred to as Baker-Berry Library. The old and the new are literally joined-- architecturally fused and institutionally inseparable.
[189] Dewey's educational philosophy and pragmatism is often at odds with the attitudes of Mexican intellectuals during this period, particularly Vasconcelos, which is the subject of some discussion by Luis E. Carranza in his book, *Architecture as Revolution* (2010).

insight. It is much easier to 'tell' people what they should believe than to discriminate and unify. And an audience that is itself habituated to being told, rather than schooled in thoughtful inquiry, likes to be told" (312). Here again, Orozco's "barker" can be found in the wings of the gallery-- and he is accompanied by Paz's robotic ideologue. Both have been attending to the visitors outside of museum galleries for several generations and their presence reveals what Varnedoe describes as a "discomfort with the vagaries of artistic license, and with the uncertainties of any art that is not didactic," an impulse that "is profoundly antimodern" (18). Part of why *The Epic of American Civilization* remains compelling today is the way in which Orozco consistently eschews any revolutionary call for didactic art and, furthermore, ignored the public's habitual desire "to be told."

Instead, Orozco places his trust in the audience's ability to experience his artwork as the impetus for a critical reflection on the ideas it contains. Despite some of its bleak pessimism, his mural cycle at Dartmouth betrays a deep trust in the possibility of art, "without attendant documents, to be intelligible in any worthwhile way" (Varnedoe 18)-- a point on which Varnedoe is emphatic: "If the only real meanings of the work are those that we derive from understanding its original context, then the merely 'visual' is to be mistrusted and must be heavily framed with research" (18-19). Dartmouth College and Hanover have taken great pains to actively maintain the same sense of place evident in their symbolic landscapes. The "heavily framed" discussion contained in the above pages emphasizes the profundity of detail and meaning in contexts that might otherwise be overlooked as ordinary. When the ordinary is accepted as such, it goes unquestioned-- or, worse, can be manipulated by ideologues. It is one of the delightful paradoxes of the university setting that, although students by vocation, college types are perhaps temperamentally best suited to reject didacticism, to question their

environment-- and to pursue thoughtful inquiry. It is the college student who is likely to simultaneously rebel against the strictures of tradition and make the world anew. The critique of the modern condition that is central to the mural cycle is universal-- as much a part of post-revolutionary Mexico as it is of the industrialized U.S. The shared challenges demand a hemispheric, if not a global, awareness. It is through the critical inquiry of the individual that such a perspective can be gained and through such a perspective that any success for future human progress-- to say nothing of the cultural exchange between the U.S. and Mexico-- will have to rely.

CHAPTER 4

THE HOMESICK COSMOPOLITAN: CONRAD AIKEN IN MEXICO

The Introduction to this dissertation began with a comment made by French surrealist poet, André Breton who saw Mexico as "the surrealist country par excellence" (qtd. in Barnitz 103). As seen in Chapter 2, however, such projections can yield only self-fulfilling prophecies. It is a general attitude shared by those who traveled to Mexico during the 1920s and 1930s who arrived from Europe and the United States with romanticized or otherwise preconceived notions of what they would encounter-- and an important part of the subsequent artistic reflection would involve confronting the reality of Mexico as it shattered their illusions or, perhaps, simply revealed itself to be unexpectedly complex and at times beyond their own personal comprehension.

The failed possibility of genuine cross-cultural exchange and understanding on a hemispheric scale during the interwar period can, in many ways, be attributed to the ways in which travelers failed to understand Mexico in its own terms. Instead, they generally chose to import systems of thought that, while suitable to understand other regions of North America, could not be logically extended south of the Rio Grande or, in some cases, west of the Mississippi River. Such is the example provided by Conrad Aiken in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* (1939), a short novel that presents a narrator whose astute cultural sensibilities among the elite, intellectual culture of Boston only contributes to his sustained ignorance of-- and refusal to engage with-- Mexico and the world he encounters there. Marked by successes and failures as a literary endeavor, *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* engages with the American continent in terms of its vast geography. As such, it incorporates the many scales of perception and understanding, providing a case-study with a fully continental scope through which the reader can understand the tensions in between the U.S. and Mexico, its "distant neighbor."

A Heart for the Gods of Mexico is a fictionalized account of Aiken's own trip to Mexico in 1937. Aiken was never satisfied with this work and, much later in his career, would explore the reasons why in his autobiographical narrative, *Ushant: An Essay* (1952). *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* has been largely ignored in the study of U.S. literature, in part due to the negative assessment by Aiken and his critics alike-- long before Aiken's poetry and short stories lost popularity and were removed from the anthologies. While the lack of critical attention is reason enough to revisit this novel, so too is the way it embodies certain tensions and preoccupations of the interwar period. The narrative not only concerns Mexico, but provides a cross-section of North America, taking the reader from Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts to Cuernavaca in the state of Morelos, Mexico.

The novel presents a group of three friends, Noni, Gil and Blomberg-- or "Blom," as he is called-- who travel to Mexico in order to secure a "Mexican divorce" for Noni so that she can marry Gil. Legal nuances and difficulty of travel notwithstanding, such divorces were a common enough occurrence and the rather direct slur, "to Mexican it," at that time meant, quite simply, "to get a Mexican divorce" (Roback 53). The logic for petitioning for divorce before a Mexican court, Blom says, is that "apparently [it] is much quicker than any other, and cheaper" (Aiken 1964, 424). The idea is to take advantage of certain loopholes in the legal system-- and the slang turn-of-phrase points to the relatively ordinary premise of the novel and the reasoning behind the journey undertaken, although the background of the situation is a bit more convoluted.[190]

Gil, a widower from a loveless marriage, has long pined over Noni, whose estranged husband left Boston after some illegal business dealings and has been living somewhere "out

[190] By going to certain states in Mexico, including Morelos ("Mexican Divorce-- A Survey" 452n32)-- where the characters will be staying in the city of Cuernavaca-- the plaintiff could find a court to take action when "one party appeared physically and the other by counsel," in this way subverting the jurisdictional interests of U.S. state governments where "a suit for divorce is a three-party action in which the state is always involved" (450).

West" (419) and cannot be found. While Gil's wife died some time ago and Noni's husband has been gone for ten years, Noni now wants to marry Gil, "the old faithful" (419), before it is too late, as her doctors have told her she is dying of a heart condition. In her logic, she decides that "she owed it to Gil, after holding him off all these years, to get a divorce, and marry him-- she wanted to make it up to him, all that lost life, she wanted to *give* him something-- in fact the best thing she had: herself" (424).[191] To further complicate the situation, Noni asks Blom to keep her condition a secret from Gil and to purchase the train tickets to Mexico. While this background is improbable or, as Blom himself points-out, "It might be *unspeakably* cruel to Gil" (425),[192] the three are bound for Mexico and the book opens with Blom asking his friend, Key, for a loan to buy the tickets.

What a brief outline of the book's organization reveals is its lopsided structure, detailing much of the journey to Mexico, but spending little time in Mexico itself. Part I finds Blom with Key, discussing his upcoming trip to Mexico and Noni's reasoning for the journey. Part II opens with the characters traveling by rail across New York State into the Middle West of the U.S. and to St. Louis, where they wait to change trains. The train ride continues in Part III, taking them through Mexico and to their final destination in Cuernavaca, where they will stay with Hambo, an expatriate friend of Blom's. Part IV presents a brief sketch of Cuernavaca and the climactic moment when Noni suddenly dies, with Part V leaving the characters in disbelief and feeling stranded in a foreign land.

[191] In one of the first book-length studies of Aiken's work, Jay Martin interprets Noni allegorically: "She lives her life lovingly. With an acceptance beyond mere understanding she incarnates *caritas* … And in this way she transforms the terrors of reality … into something communicably good" (160).
[192] Or, to borrow the words of Blom's friend, Key, "it's insane" (424).

These five sections decrease in length as the book progresses and *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* presents another view of Mexico as a "distant neighbor,"[193] its structure presenting chapters that are inversely proportional to the distance the characters have traveled.[194] The reader watches as they become detached from their surroundings and increasingly introspective. This narrative strategy has as much to do with the inherent difficulties of entering a new and unfamiliar world as it does with the failure of the cosmopolitan imagination and potential limits of the "usable past" as a way to interpret the present world and the failed possibility of genuine cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

The initial response to *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is limited to British reviews, as it was not published in the United States until 1964 when it was included in *The Collected Novels of Conrad Aiken*, a volume also containing *Blue Voyage* (1927), *Great Circle* (1933), *King Coffin* (1935) and *Conversation* (1940).[195] Generally these reviews are mixed-- praising Aiken's prose and condemning his characters and plotting (all of which are cited in contemporary criticisms of the novel). Before all else, however, the British reviewers identify *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* as an "American" work in terms of its subject matter and in its temperament.

In his review for the *Spectator*, English novelist Graham Greene writes that it is "downright bad," asking, "Was there ever a more make-shift plot to excuse the pleasant description of a journey?" (141). Greene places Aiken's other works alongside F. Scott Fitzgerald's in considering a contemporary lineage for the "Great American Novel," but finds that *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* instead marks the decline of the novel in the U.S., as "a

[193] See the Introduction to this dissertation for notes on this phrase's importance.
[194] The lengths of each section of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* are as follows: Part I, sixteen pages; Part II, seventeen pages; Part III, thirteen pages; Part IV, six pages; Part V, four pages.
[195] In his 1964 review of *The Collected Novels* for *The New York Times*, Frederick C. Crews refers to *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* as an "outright failure," but this is the extent of his commentary and it is otherwise ignored in favor of discussing Aiken's three earlier novels.

smoke-cloud of rhetoric … hiding what is wrong all the time with the Great American Novel--the inability to see life in any shape at all, whether religious or political" (141).[196] In a review for the *London Mercury*, Austin Clarke identifies this lack of clarity in more productive terms, characterizing it as "the rather frantic American search for a myth" in a country marked by "the abeyance of the Christian ethic, the attempt to define a Fate striking between sky-scrapers and giving a cruel dignity to its tiny victims" (461). Importantly, Clarke identifies the need for myth as a modern one in which traditional beliefs are suspended amid the proliferation of new technologies. Clarke agrees with Greene to some extent, remarking that Aiken's book does not contain a mythopoeic resolution to the modern condition. Nonetheless, he sees an ongoing "search for a myth" that attempts to give meaning and definition to modern U.S. culture.[197]

An anonymous review from *The Scotsman*,[198] however, recognizes the novel's weaknesses, but is kinder in its final assessment. Although for this reviewer "the plot appears trivial, almost banal," praise should be given to the "sense of the continental vastness of America" and the corresponding narration: "The contrast between the journey in imagination and in fact is developed, and the effects of endless distance and the heartless rebuffs of travel are magnificently contrived. The three travelers are seen as clinging precariously to a raft in the midst of a tumultuous ocean" (13). What *The Scotsman* review points to is the way in which the continent and its many landscapes can simultaneously sustain and thwart the failed search for myth that other critics saw as one of the primary faults of the novel.

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[196] Anyone familiar with Greene's own work is readily aware of the way in which he sees the world in the religious and political shapes he mentions here. His own books on Mexico, *The Lawless Roads* (1939) and *The Power and the Glory* (1940) are no exception. The former is Greene's own travelogue on Mexico and was published the same year as Aiken's novel.

[197] In Reuel Denney's pamphlet, *Conrad Aiken* (1964), for the *University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers*, the sole mention of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* refers to its "quest motif" (17). Otherwise, Denney's overview focuses on Aiken's poetry.

[198] The review's title is: "New Novels: Journey Across a Continent."

Although Aiken's preoccupation with modern human experience and the need for a sustaining national myth in the U.S. is not fully resolved in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*, Aiken nonetheless offers his readers the sense that the "continental vastness of America" plays a critical role in creating such a national narrative. These concerns correspond with his own entry to the ongoing search by U.S. intellectuals for a "usable past,"[199] a 1937 essay entitled "Literature in Massachusetts," a short but significant contribution. Written for the Federal Writers' Project guide to Massachusetts,[200] Aiken's essay can be situated amid the foundational texts of U.S. literary study and it shares the same thematic preoccupations.[201] The primary figure in "Literature in Massachusetts" is William Blackstone, in whom Aiken sees "the first exemplar, the prototype of that profound individualism which has so deeply marked the American character ever since, and of which Massachusetts-- especially in the field of letters-- has been the most prodigal and brilliant source" (83). According to Aiken, Blackstone lived a solitary existence with his library in a small dwelling amid an orchard and garden near present-day Boston. With the influx of Puritan settlers, however, Blackstone removed himself further west, in what Aiken describes as a "perpetual centrifugal retreat from civilization" (83) from England to Massachusetts and eventually to Rhode Island. For Aiken, without the emblematic Blackstone and others like him, literature in the U.S. would be unrecognizable, given the theocratic society the Puritans founded. He writes: "though the theocrats had their way a good deal, they did not have it entirely: and this for the very simple reason that the Protestantism of New England, as it

[199] For a more detailed discussion of Van Wyck Brooks and his entreaty on this topic, see the Introduction and Chapter 1 of this dissertation

[200] The full title is: *Massachusetts: A Guide to its Places and People* (1937).

[201] Already mentioned in this dissertation are Van Wyck Brooks' "On Creating a Usable Past" (1918) and William Carlos Williams's *In the American Grain* (1925). Aiken's essay (and its theme of American individualism) fits with the larger constellation of criticism that includes essays and monographs by Lewis Mumford, V. L. Parrington, Granville Hicks, Perry Miller, F. O. Matthiessen, Henry Nash Smith and R. W. B. Lewis, among others.

had been based to begin with on the passionate belief of the individual in his right to believe and worship in his own way, still carried in itself these stubborn seeds of freedom" (85).

For Aiken, the result is the "Massachusetts renaissance" in which one can find an "individualist attitude" equally present in works by "the conservative Boston and Cambridge group-- Longfellow, Holmes, and Lowell-- as in that of the Concord radicals" (90). The second group importantly includes the transcendental optimism of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, whom Aiken sees as being balanced by the pessimistic warnings in the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne who, in turn, brings Herman Melville (a New Yorker) into the Massachusetts group by proxy. Reading Aiken's essay reminds the student of U.S. literature of F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1941),[202] which would be published a few years later, expanding the importance of mid-nineteenth-century Massachusetts in forming what scholars and critics of Aiken's time viewed as key components of the national culture and the "usable past."

Aiken writes that it is impossible to know the story of Blackstone "without visualizing him as a symbol" whose geographic frontiers would become, for future generations, the "most perilous of all" frontiers, that which is found "within man's consciousness where the soul turns and looks fearlessly into itself, where the individual, like a diver, plunges into his own depths to sound them, and in so doing believes himself effectually to have sounded the world" (1958, 88). Aiken ties the literary endeavor to the goal of self-awareness by way of Sigmund Freud's theories of psychoanalysis,[203] which point to the ways in which Aiken situates the characters of *A*

[202] Alongside Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and Melville, Matthiessen includes Walt Whitman, another New Yorker, although Melville was from New York City while Whitman was originally from Suffolk County, Long Island.

[203] Joseph C. Voelker goes so far as to argue that *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is "an exposition of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [1920] and an explicit acceptance of Freud's pessimism concerning the possibilities of individual perfectibility" (72). While the larger relevance of Mexico to Freudian psychoanalysis is beyond the scope of this

Heart for the Gods of Mexico between the imaginary and the real. The route of the metaphorical journey into the self serves as an overlay to the map of the physical journey's route across the continent.

The geographic significance of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is not only an account of a journey through the physical landscape of North America, but also through the cultural, symbolic landscapes of the United States as defined by geographer D. W. Meinig.[204] The meaning of a given landscape is the product of the collective imagination. Meinig writes:

> Every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes. They are part of the iconography of nationhood, part of the shared set of ideas and memories and feelings which bind a people together … One need not argue for some mystical bond … one need only point to the kinds of landscape images widely employed because they are assumed to convey certain meanings. (164)

By their nature, symbols imply something different from reality and, while a truism, this key component of the symbolic is sometimes forgotten. Meinig reminds his readers that if they are "fundamentally concerned with environments and places," it is best to "start with the landscape itself to see what we can find there of how substance is shaped by the symbolic … to deal with results rather than opinions, with the past as well as the present" (176). As such, the structure of the built landscape is as much a part of the "usable past" as the organization of literary history. The many landscapes of North America all conjure images and characteristics based upon regional variation and there is a long history of trying to re-map the continent along these and other lines.[205] It is the organization of the adjacencies and contrasts of regional cultures into a coherent whole that creates the shared sense of identity amid the diversity of cultures in the U.S.

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dissertation, in *Freud's Mexico* (2011), Rubén Gallo explores the impact of Freud on Mexican intellectuals and Mexico's influence on Freud, although he never visited the country. (Aiken is not mentioned in Gallo's study.)

[204] For a fuller discussion of this term and Meinig's essay, "Symbolic landscapes: Some Idealizations of American Communities" (1974), see the Introduction and Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

[205] One interesting work that re-maps U.S. literary study is Rachel Adams' *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America* (2009), discussed in this dissertation's Introduction.

The symbolic landscape helps to inform any study of Aiken's novels-- and most critics recognize Aiken's adept descriptions and understanding of the places found throughout his writing. Catherine F. Seigel's study, *The Fictive World of Conrad Aiken* (1993), emphasizes the language of travel and geography in discussing a character's search for self-awareness. She writes that, while Aiken's fiction "appeal[s] primarily to the intellect," it does so by presenting the possibility that self-knowledge will reveal "an order that may at least temporarily lend meaning to existence. Aiken's five novels and his autobiography stand as literary logs of his own journeys into consciousness, and, as such, they are souvenirs of the hazardous terrain, appropriately reflective of the sensitive pilgrim who traveled them" (186). As a narrative, however, *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* functions by blending the effects of the characters' journey into a real, physical environment with Blom's more individual "journey into consciousness." In this process, however, the landscape is never presented realistically, but always filtered through the Blom's mind and presented as a dreamscape combined with lived experiences blended with presuppositions.

Throughout his work, Aiken portrays the cities of Boston and Cambridge with remarkable accuracy, so much so that a contemporaneous review of his novel, *King Coffin*, from the "Bookshelf" column of the *Harvard Crimson* considers the place-specific quality of some of Aiken's fiction as a potential hazard. The review reads: "from a purely external point of view we wonder how much the background of this novel, which is Cambridge and Boston and especially the region of Harvard Square, will mean to the outside. The story is full of touches and names, many of them literal … which accentuate the horror of the story by their very familiarity." With the benefit offered by some thirty years of hindsight, however, R. P. Blackmur considers the

place-specific quality of Aiken's fiction somewhat differently. In the introduction to *The Collected Novels of Conrad Aiken,* he writes:

> In Aiken's novels, Cambridge, Boston, and … Cape Cod are full of … observations and recognitions. Anyone who has lived in these places between 1905 and 1940 (as I have myself) knows where he is, and knows within the harder knowledge of change; and each will add his own knowledges of contour and monument … Of course, most people don't dine with Aiken and most of his readers will not have lived in Boston and Cambridge the greater part of the years from 1905 to 1940. The point is, they will nevertheless be *placed*, and with intimacy, in Aiken's ambience of fresh and familiar observation. Local knowledge invites and commands general response reinforced and provisioned by the reader's own alien local knowledge. A 'local habitation and a name' are among our most precious objects; possessed and tended they make a faith possible. (6)

Blackmur's comments point the reader toward Aiken's cosmopolitan credentials as a writer. The "alien local knowledge" of the reader corresponds with Aiken's intimate "local knowledge" of the Boston area.

What the reader of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* notices, however, is that Aiken's characters, as intimately acquainted with Boston as they may be, are incapable of using their own "local knowledge" of Boston and applying it as "alien local knowledge" upon their arrival in Cuernavaca. It is a form of literacy-- if one can understand one's own home environment and what gives it a sense of place, then these interpretive skills will serve to understand other environments and what lends them their own sense of place.

The phrase "sense of place" tends to be overused by both academics and real-estate developers alike and, if not defined, becomes relatively meaningless. Perhaps the best definition can be found in Kevin Lynch's seminal work of urban planning and design, *Good City Form* (1981). Lynch dedicates an entire chapter to sense of place or "settlement." He defines the term as follows:

> By the sense of a settlement, I mean the clarity with which it can be perceived and identified, and the ease with which its elements can be linked with other events

> and places in a coherent mental representation of time and space and that representation can be connected with nonspatial concepts and values. This is the join between the form of the environment and the human processes of perception. (131)

While Lynch is primarily concerned with understanding perception in ways useful to the field of urban design, there are connections among these practical ideas and literary study. The "local knowledge" that Blackmur finds in Aiken's work is, in terms of human perception, the "sense of a settlement" defined by Lynch. Wherever an individual's home may be, he can understand other places, using his "local knowledge" in an "alien" environment (i.e. his "alien local knowledge") to get his bearings and to find his way. To do so requires him to make connections among different places, putting his own lived experiences into a larger context.

The failure to make these connections is related to the sometimes-paradoxical nature of cosmopolitanism which, as Douglas Reichert Powell writes, "ostensibly provides a perspective on all places and all things, [although] it has one important blind spot: its own locatedness" (20). The cosmopolitan perspective implicitly understands its own "local knowledge" to be applicable in "alien" environments. Nonetheless, it all too often forgets its primary characteristic as being derived first and foremost from place-specific (i.e. "local") experiences in New York, Paris or anywhere else.

This is why Lynch later writes that "Perception is a creative act, not a passive reception" (1981, 131). Genuine cosmopolitanism requires such perception-- to feel at home in the world, amid cultures different from one's own, one must work to connect the many contexts through which one has traveled. It requires sustained effort. *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* functions in these terms, but illustrates a failure. The book begins with the intimately known streets of Boston and ends in foreign Cuernavaca, a place that remains foreign, as Blom is incapable-- or

unwilling-- to extrapolate from his own "local knowledge" of Boston, applying it to the "alien" city of Cuernavaca-- a place new to him, but one that is entirely legible.[206]

In the context of Aiken's journey to Mexico, Boston and Cambridge give the reader a starting point-- both literally and figuratively-- to understand how the real and the imagined aspects of landscape inform Aiken's understanding of himself and the relative quality of his privileged position as a cosmopolitan man-of-letters in a world that bears little resemblance to his own. Yet, Boston and Cambridge cannot do this alone. Just as the surrounding wilderness was of great importance in the worldview of the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts, so too is the "wilderness" of Mexico of the utmost importance to the mythic landscape of the American continent for the cultured U.S. intellectual.

The overly complicated backstory to which the novel's early critics objected is explained in Part I of the novel, though the conversation Blom has with his wealthy friend, Key. While the reader might be first inclined to see this opening as "attempt[ing] to forestall the reader's objections to an outrageously implausible plot" (Voelker 72), the conversation takes place against the background of a real and known city, Boston, forming an important first impression for the reader. The physical landscape of Boston is meticulously recreated in the book's opening sequence. Harry Marten's book on Aiken, *The Art of Knowing* (1988), is appropriately titled, as Aiken's knowledge of place is always present in his fiction and, in the case of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*, Marten writes that the first impressions of Boston "are almost stiflingly comfortable and familiar, despite the great potential for discomforting dramatic tension in the events surrounding a moment of crisis" (129). While the immediate concern is with procuring

[206] The legibility of the Mexican city is the topic of an essay by Fernando Núñez, "The Interaction of Space and Place: The Mexican Mixture" from *Space and Place in the Mexican Landscape* (2007), mentioned in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

train tickets to Mexico, the greater cause of anxiety is Noni's medical diagnosis and probable death. At the same time, however, the feelings of loss and of being lost at the end of the novel are dependent upon the familiarity of the first chapter. As the known and familiar landscape gives way to the unknown and exotic landscapes of the continent's interior, Blom will become increasingly detached from the world around him, more and more preoccupied with the emotional and metaphysical aspects of his journey.

Blom slowly reveals the backstory to Key as they drink and sup through several of their favorite establishments on their way from Boston Common to North Station, where Key must catch a train to Concord later that evening.[207] Their route begins at the Frog Pond where Blom waits for Key. They then walk towards Charles Street and "They veered by tacit agreement to the left" (418), towards Boylston Street, avoiding traffic by a shortcut through the subway and to the Little Building, which puts them "in the alert position for a quick one at the Nip," a bar somewhere on Tremont Street near the post office (419). Their conversation continues to be punctuated by such detail as they move along to an oyster house down the block and then to "the Greeks" further down Tremont, near Stuart Street, where their table window looks onto the back of the Metropolitan Theater (421). As with the Nip, where they avoid "the odor of sanctity at the back" of the room (420), they know this place and why they like it, each ordering lamb in their preferred style and making conversation with the waiter through the familiar exchange of regular patrons. While they eat, "The little Italian newsboy came by as usual with his *Evening Records*" (425) and frequent mentions of other places pepper their conversation and structure the rest of their evening walk-- the Public Gardens, Joy Street, Copp's Hill, Beacon Hill, Washington Street and Canal Street, among others. These only add the continued feeling of attachment and comfort

[207] The significance of Concord as a place in U.S. literary history is not lost on the reader. By the end of the novel, one senses that Blom would have been better suited for a trip to there instead of Mexico.

felt by the characters in their native Boston.[208] Even the mahogany, "horseshoe-shaped" (430) bar in North Station is ensconced with a feeling of familiarity.

For Marten, the way in which this backstory unfolds-- meandering its way through streets and bars, further punctuated by Blom's anxiety over the impending trip-- creates a necessary juxtaposition between the known streets of Boston and the unknown continent beyond their own region of southern New England. Their leisurely pace within Boston and the overhanging seriousness of the situation "turns the comfort into discomfort even as we experience the old familiar places and people" (Marten 129). Marten offers a close reading, suggesting that the narration creates "an environment without inwardness or depth, a world of organized sounds, geometric patterns, and mirrored reflections" that are sometimes tinged by "their impressionistic suggestions" (130). Marten emphasizes that the narrative description allows the reader to sense that "something is askew" (131). The characters seem to be aware that the familiar environs of Boston will soon be abandoned for the strange and foreign continent that lies to the west. By emphasizing the sense of foreboding, however, Marten ignores the importance of Blom and Key's skillful navigation. To say that the Boston of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is "without depth" is to miss how the meandering of the two friends reveals the strong sense of place upon which the novel hinges. Although he may be distracted in the opening scenes, Blom trades stability and permanence for the rapid and constant motion of modern railroad travel in Parts II and III and, ultimately, for the unknown streets of Cuernavaca, some three-thousand miles from Boston.

[208] Invited into an oyster house, The Nip, and "the Greeks," the reader also becomes privy to the best booths and alcoves to sit, and that when drinking with these two, it will be dry martinis through the main course. And when the jukebox plays "In the Chapel in the Moonlight" (a popular tune from 1936, first performed by big band leader, Shep Fields), the reader shares the feeling of being oppressed by the incessant playing of a popular song, spoiling the atmosphere in what is otherwise a favorite spot (419).

While Blom tries to stay upbeat in his appeal to Key, at the chapter's end he can only smile "grimly" upon finally procuring the tickets, anticipating his journey the next day and "The wheels, the bells, the whistles, the sliding and whirling land, the centripetal and tumultuous descent into the Inferno, the descent into Mexico-- Oh God, how were they ever going to endure it?" (433). This is more than nerves. Blom is confronting, in a real way and for the first time, the unknown. It is the almost-conscious realization that New England occupies a small corner of the North American Continent and that, outside, he will soon encounter many other cultures and traditions of which he actually knows very little. Blom is intellectually underequipped for the journey, despite his elite and worldly education.

The ways in which Aiken incorporates the city of Boston into his narrative can be further understood with the help of another book by Lynch, *The Image of the City* (1960). A slim volume of practical theory concerning the application of spatial perception to urban planning, it offers a means of thinking concretely about cities in terms of their seemingly intangible "images." To do so, Lynch identifies five physical elements of city form which can generally be found in any concept of a city held by any individual-- a process commonly referred to as "mental mapping." These five aspects are paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks.[209] Lynch writes that these give a city "legibility," or an "ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern" (1960, 2-3). As abstract terms, they aid in theorizing urban design generally, but they also, importantly, correspond to the practical concerns of people

[209] These elements are defined by Lynch as follows: Paths "are the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves" (47); edges "are the linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer. They are the boundaries between two phases, linear breaks in continuity" (47); districts "are the medium-to-large sections of the city, conceived of as having two-dimensional extent, which the observer mentally enters 'inside of,' and which are recognizable as having some common, identifying character" (47); nodes are "strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling" (47); landmarks also serve as reference points, "but in this case the observer does not enter within them, they are external. They are usually a rather simply defined physical object" (48).

walking the streets of any city, whatever its specificities and however large or small. It is a conceptual framework that allows individuals to mentally organize their physical surroundings. In this way, the material and the metaphorical become intertwined. Lynch writes that, however useful these five elements may be, they "must be considered simply as convenient empirical categories, within and around which it has been possible to group a mass of information," creating a sense of the whole (109). The whole is the city and its corresponding "sense of place" is known to individuals and the collective population alike. This understanding of the built environment reveals Aiken's treatment of Boston to be the "local knowledge" that should equip him to understand an "alien" landscape.

Revisiting the route taken by Blom and Key around Boston, the reader immediately notices the paths along which they move, the familiar trail through Boston Common which they follow "by tacit agreement." Potential paths are sometimes avoided in favor of others, easily navigating obstacles through known shortcuts in the city fabric. The reader is let in on the secret route through the subway station-- which, like the North Station, is an example of a node, from which many other citizens meet and depart on a daily basis. The Little Building, like the Frog Pond and post office branch, serves as a landmark. Their circuit is bounded by edges, past which it is too far to walk to the North Station, to which they travel by subway.[210] This brief sketch of how paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks interact in the first chapter of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* also demonstrates these elements give structure to the "image" of an urban environment. Lynch's study shows how all individuals arrange their "mental maps" of the city in these same general terms. These elements are what make any city "legible" and Lynch provides a well-tested, practical way of reiterating Blackmur's point that the reader is "*placed*,

[210] On what today would be the "Green Line" of the "T" (the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority), Boston's public transit system.

and with intimacy, in Aiken's ambience of fresh and familiar observation." Readers unfamiliar with Boston, past or present, may not be able to draw an exact map from these details, but can use their own "local knowledge" and, whatever readers' various personal experiences may be, they can imagine the circuitous route, the streets and shortcuts, the buildings, the restaurants and bars in a manner that will stand in direct and intentional contrast with the rest of the novel's rapid, linear travel by locomotive.

One of the most significant elements from Lynch's *Image of the City* that can be used to understand the first chapter of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is the district. This is, perhaps, an obvious example for those familiar with the city of Boston. Boylston and Tremont are major streets in the Boston Theater District,[211] intersecting at the southeast corner of Boston Common. For the reader unfamiliar with Boston, the "common, identifying character" (Lynch 1960, 47) of the district, is its concentration of performing arts venues, emphasized by the presence of the Metropolitan Theater. It is from Blom's vantage point near the window at "the Greeks" that one can see "the fantastic lamplit rear walls-- smooth and sinister as precipices-- of the Metropolitan Theater-- a view which unaccountably always made Blomberg think of Hamlet and Elsinore" (421). Theater, in the abstract, is important to the larger themes of the story discussed here. It a marker of sophisticated culture, as Blom is "unaccountably" reminded of Shakespearean tragedy (given his background and education). In the context of Boston's history, theater was forbidden by the Puritans through much of the eighteenth-century. In this way, Aiken's narrative of a journey to Mexico is not only a fanciful, modern-day reenactment of William Blackstone's physical removal to the wilderness on the frontiers of civilization, to "define a Fate" (as Clarke puts it) away from "the gray-flanneled figures" (Aiken 1964, 418) and "the senseless hurry and

[211] In the present day, the Washington Street Theater District-- part of the larger Boston Theater District-- is on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

confusion" (430) that mark the commercial concerns of everyday life in Boston. Blom holds himself apart, scorning the crassness of such mundane activities.[212] Furthermore, the travelers are equipped with cultural knowledge-- whatever strange places may lay in store for the trio of friends, they should be able to negotiate "alien" lands by understanding the applicability of their own "local knowledge" with a little bit of imagination. By anyone's estimate, after all, they are educated, intelligent and well-equipped to do so.

In direct contrast to the opening chapter is the linear trajectory of the railroad journey, punctuated in the narrative by the rapid listing of place names along their route. Frequently set apart on the page, they are given a typographic quality that, through the use of italics, suggests movement. The same typographic features are used in the "*Whoooo-whoooo-whoo-whoo-- --!*" (455) of the train whistle and in the counters and ascenders of the letters on the page-- connected by dashes-- the reader sees the driving wheels and coupling rods of the locomotive. At the beginning of the trip, the place-names are repeated, indicating a regularly traveled, well-known local route. These give way to mentions of individual cities which, slowly, become the vague outlines of the vast Middle West. The names that merit mention in the narrative are known places in Massachusetts and the familiar-sounding, although unknown, places in northern New York State.

The first example of this echoes the voice of a conductor calling-out the stops to the train's passengers. It reads:

> *Boston and Albany--Boston and Albany-- Boston and Albany-- --*
> *Boston--Springfield--Westfield--Pittsfield-- --.* (433)

[212] Although never mentioned explicitly, Blom has a vocational call to his occupation that transcends monetary interests. The reader is led to assume that he is not quite a starving artist, but perhaps an underappreciated translator and occasional academic, as is Andrew Cather, the central charater in Aiken's *Great Circle* (1935). As Key remarks, "'Why in hell don't you go to work? I mean, at a job that *pays* you something?'" (417).

Although Blom remarks earlier that "none of us ever went west of the Hudson before" (431), northern New York state is not all that foreign. The place-names remain specific as the cities listed are: "*Schenectady*, *Utica*, *Syracuse*, *Rome*" (436). Unknown to Blom, Noni and Gil, the reader nonetheless senses that the Mediterranean origins of these last three are known references to the intellectual set to which they belong. Schenectady, although derived from a Mohawk word meaning "beyond-pines" (Stewart 1970, 429) keeps company with cities from classical antiquity. The sense is that "Schenectady" is not such a foreign term or, if it is, it is easier to accept or to simply not think about than the Native American place-names of the Southwest and Mexico which are mispronounced or mocked and dismissed as altogether foreign, as when Noni remarks "so we're off to Clixl Claxl-- and a new world!" (432) or "Clixl Claxl, Ixl Oxl and Popocatepetl" (436); the only real place among these being the volcano Popocatépetl which, along with Iztaccíhuatl, are two snow-capped mountains that feature prominently in the landscape, history and mythology of Mexico. Unfortunately for Noni and her companions, their knowledge of Mexico is the stuff of hearsay, aware of Popocatépetl simply because "that's where Hart Crane went, just before he drowned himself in the Caribbean--" (436).[213]

In his essay, "Classical Town Names in the United States," (1967), geographer Wilbur Zelinsky writes that the naming of U.S. cities after those from the ancient Mediterranean can be found in a region that he calls "New England Extended." This region includes-- with some areas of exception-- the state of New York, northern Pennsylvania, northern New Jersey and, to a lesser extent, the Upper Middle West. Upon mapping these cities, the historical geographer will

[213] Aside from Katherine Anne Porter (discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation), Hart Crane is probably the most prominent writer active in Mexico during the Modernist period. Crane was inspired to travel to Mexico, in part, by William Carlos Williams's *In the American Grain* and would write his last completed poem, "The Broken Tower" (1932), while there. It was on his return voyage on a ship departing from Veracruz where he would commit suicide by throwing himself overboard.

note “the primacy of ‘New England Extended’ in the cultural, social, and economic evolution of the nation, despite the paucity of classical terms in nuclear New England” and that it was:

> A practice originating and flourishing along the growing edge of the culture area that was clearly the intellectual pacemaker of the young Republic spread vigorously outward to the farther reaches of the expanding region. Eventually, like many another idea and innovation of similar nativity, only a few of which have been studied, it diffused throughout the country and became continental in scope. (466)

In this way, the places that the train route passes are “known” through the symbolism of their toponymy, natural outgrowths of the cultural scene to which the three friends belong. As they travel past the reaches of this “culture area,” however, there is a juxtaposition with the Middle West as the place-names shift to lesser-known towns and, eventually, to the abstract outlines designating states. The following example is illustrative:

> *Galion--Marion--Sidney--Muncie-- --:*
> *Ohio--Indiana--Illinois-- --:* (441)

Somewhere in Ohio-- or, rather, at a very specific place in Ohio-- the above pattern no longer holds. The city of Galion is important here. A conductor indicates to the three travelers that they are to change trains there. Upon hearing this, a man mentions to Blom that he “used to be a citizen of Galion,” lending a sense of gravitas to an otherwise unremarkable location. This causes Blom to reflect: “A citizen of Galion. But what was Galion? Galion, Galion, Galion” (437). While the repetition of the name “Galion” echoes the rhythm of the moving locomotive, it also draws the reader’s attention to the arbitrary quality of language. The word becomes abstracted beyond meaning and so too is the actual name “Galion” arbitrary. In his entry for “Galion” in *American Place Names* (1970), historian and toponymist George R. Stewart writes that “In 1824 the settlers requested a post office under the name Goshen: this was rejected and the present name was suggested as a substitute by the Post Office Dept. Its origin is uncertain,

but it has a general resemblance to Goshen" (175).[214] Significantly, Galion marks a point after which the novel is characterized by increasing foreignness encountered in the landscape and in the people.

St. Louis is, if not the exact geographic midpoint of their journey, the midpoint of the novel. It is upon their arrival here that Blom pauses to reflect upon the supposed cultural poverty of the Middle West through which they have travelled. He remarks to the others:

> 'They've gone to seed. There's nothing left. No juice in them, not a particle: this infernal vampire continent has sucked them dry. They'll blow away like tumbleweed. I've never been so impressed-- and *de*pressed-- in my life: it's given me a new and not so very attractive, I'm bound to say, picture of America. Think of those pathetic Hoosiers on the train-- those bleached and weather-worn countryfolk, animated scraps of skin and leather-- good God, their eyes were a quarter of an inch apart, they'd never felt anything or seen anything in their lives. Why, you could as soon expect understanding-- *understanding*, illumination, awareness, call it what you want-- of an ox or goat. No mind, no spirit, not a spark . . .' (448-449)

This is the vision of the Middle West as offered by the cosmopolitan, urban intellectual. While St. Louis may be the "Gateway to the West," it might as well be the Gates of Hell insofar as Blom is concerned. For him, the only value that the city seems to have is its place on the banks of the Mississippi River and the mythic, symbolic role the river plays in the national consciousness. It is only from this perspective that Blom can find any redeeming qualities in it, reminding himself that "Here and there, an old ruin which had once been a thriving river hotel, full of violent life, the life of the Mississippi. Here Mark Twain had walked" (447). The irony goes unnoticed by Aiken or his characters: without the "countryfolk," without the "Hoosiers"-- or Buckeyes, Hawkeyes, Sooners, Cornhuskers, Corn-crackers, Tar Heels, among others-- there is no source material for Mark Twain or any other "regional" writer raised to any level of

[214] According to Stewart, as a place-name "Goshen" would have kept company with towns in both Connecticut and Massachusetts, both named in the 1700s (184).

prominence by literary tastemakers; Mark Twain's works are as much a product of Hannibal as of St. Louis. Amid the ruins of more prosperous times, Blom laments an idealized past and imagines a city worthy of producing a Mark Twain rather than recognizing the profundity of the local region and the people who make Mark Twains works so compelling.

For Blom, what has been lost is the mythic past of the Mississippi River and the wilderness that once defined the American continent in the eyes of European colonists. As they wait to change trains in St. Louis, the three travelers visit the banks of the river, which is juxtaposed with the rundown city around them. Blom cannot ignore the "lines of withered flotsam-- driftwood, barrel staves, empty bottles, tin cans, slivers of wood silvered with age, peeled branches polished like horn, eggshells, orange peels…" (448). While Blom surveys the demise of civilization, Noni is more imaginative, dipping her hands in the water, remarking "'Now I'm baptized, Blom, in this continent. Now I've got Indian blood'" (448). Noni literally touches the world around her and, despite her whimsicality, approaches reality without the weight of expectation. The landscape of myth and the landscape of experience are one and the same for an instant, but only for that instant, as there is more to see and the journey-- to Mexico and through her life-- is not yet complete. Her morose male companions look upon her uncomprehendingly when she remarks that "'Life gets very sudden, sometimes, but isn't it *fun! Isn't* it, Blom?'" (448). Gil isn't quite as sullen, though, making fun of Blom's jeremiad against the citizenry of the Middle West, remarking, "'Blom, you sometimes become really biblical. By the waters of Mississippi we sat down and wept; yea, we wept, when we remembered Boston!" (449). Blom continues to lament the lost past, but his scope soon encompasses the American continent as a whole:

> The profound river, the strange sad city-- what a pair these made, with their so casual conjunction of the magnificent and the trivial, the fecund and the sterile! A

> whole continent pouring itself out lavishly to the sea, in superb everlasting waste, an immense creative giving, power that could afford to be careless both of means and end-- and mankind beside it become as spiritually empty as the locust, and as parasitic. (449)

The mythic potential of the continent-- the vast natural landscape and its resources that first inspired the mythology-- has been squandered. Blom thinks:

> Surely the Indians had been better than this, and the Frenchmen, too, who had first explored these savage waters: in either had been a dignity, a virtue, now lost. And the Mexican Indians, to whom they were going-- what of those? Lawrence said-- and all the psychoanalysts said-- and the guidebooks said--
>
> It was as if he had heard a bell, suddenly, from a deep valley, a jungle valley, inviting to the sacrifice, whether pagan or Christian: there, there were still gods. But here, in this melancholy wreckage of a meager past, in this sloven street, spangled with tin beer caps, which they were climbing slowly again, past stinking cellars and boarded windows, here there was no longer even a true love of earth. This people was lost…. (449)

It is in this central portion of the book that the literary, cultural and philosophical quests for myth meet the physical reality of the American continent. The dignity of the North American Indians and the French explorers is the same that William Carlos Williams senses and attempts to recover in essays on Samuel de Champlain, Père Sebastian Rasles, Jacataqua, Hernando de Soto, Hernán Cortés and Moctezuma from *In the American Grain* (1925). None are perfect examples, but they are all individuals acting or learning to act with the environment of the American continent rather than seeing it and its wilderness as something to combat.[215] Yet, the present age cannot be saved from its current lot-- even through the exoticization and mysticism of D. H. Lawrence.[216] Blom's vision of a culture safely harbored away from civilization in a wilderness

[215] See the Introduction and Chapter 1 of this dissertation for further discussion of Williams's book.
[216] Aiken refers to two of Lawrence's works, *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) and *Mornings in Mexico* (1927). Although Aiken previously praised Lawrence, his opinions of the English writer changed over the years, as evident in the shift in Aiken's tone in his reviews of Lawrence-- and with specific reference to Lawrence's Mexican writings. These reviews are among those collected in *A Reviewer's ABC* (1958).

of still mythic proportions is arrested by the ugly reality of modern civilization. Such a place must be deep within the wilderness of the continent, if a wilderness still exists at all.

If it is the "search for a myth" that characterizes *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*, it helps to ask, as Meinig put it, "how substance is shaped by the symbolic." The meaning of a given landscape is a product of mythopoeia and the collective imagination. In Aiken's novel, the symbolic landscapes of New England, the Middle West, the Mississippi River and the Desert Southwest play an important role in structuring the narrative and in understanding the characters and their dilemmas. Natural landscapes are as much a part of the symbolic landscapes as the "ordinary" man-man landscapes with which Meinig is primarily concerned. The perspective of historical geography does well to remind the observer that no landscape-- built or natural-- has any innate meaning. Meanings are given to landscapes by a culture, whether conscious, physical embodiments of a world-view or the imagined symbolic meanings of the organic world.

"Cultural landscape" is a not uncommon term that is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a landscape modified by the effects of human activity, such as farming, building, etc. (as opposed to a natural landscape)." The phrase implies the observable results of direct human action on the landscape. More recently, geographers have come to expand this definition to suggest that any landscape, whether built or natural, is part of the cultural landscape and, in the words of one textbook, "Landscape itself is a cultural image; a way of symbolizing, representing, and structuring our surroundings" (Cloke, Crang and Goodwin 922).[217] Cultural landscape suggests the symbolic roles played by both the built and the natural landscapes in the cultural imagination.

[217] The term "cultural landscape" and its history as it relates to the field of geography is discussed in the Introduction of this dissertation.

A trio of landscape types defined by another geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, help to expand the set of ideas found in the terms "symbolic landscape" and "cultural landscape." These are: mythical space, pragmatic space and theoretical space. These three types of space overlap, but the discussion here focuses on "mythical space." In his book, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), Tuan writes: "Two principal kinds of mythical space may be distinguished. In the one, mythical space is a fuzzy area of defective knowledge surrounding the empirically known; it frames pragmatic space. In the other, it is the spatial component of a world view, a conception of localized values within which people carry on their practical activities" (86). Although the continent no longer contains any mythical spaces of the first kind, the *terra incognita* in which "worlds of fantasy have been built on meager knowledge and much yearning" (86), the second is part of daily experience. The Seven Cities of Gold and other European myths belong to the first set and demonstrate a yearning for the possibilities of the New World, however implausible they might seem today. With the so-called closing of the frontier, however, the country replaced its *terra incognita* with the abstractions of national character-- such concepts as the "pioneer spirit" that supposedly brought the unknown into the realm of the knowable. Such a process is part of the second kind of myth, which is, according to Tuan, "a people's more or less systematic attempt to make sense of environment. To be livable, nature and society must show order and display a harmonious relationship. All people require a sense of order and fitness in their environment" which become elaborated into worldviews, into "coherent cosmic system[s]" and can be understood as "attempts to answer the question of man's place in nature" (88). The first European settlements in New England, the townships and villages of the Puritans, provide an example of this second type of mythical space infused with the first type of mythical space.

Both the reality of their situation and their religious views merged upon the arrival of the Puritans in the New World. As Peter N. Carroll writes in his book, *Puritanism in the Wilderness* (1969), "The idea of the wilderness as a wasteland which had to be cultivated and improved led logically to the notion that America, if not the New Eden, was, at least, a potential paradise. Such a view … implicitly anticipated a struggle in transforming the waste places into habitable grounds" (Carroll 15). Their village fortifications were symbolic of their covenant with God and His grace that protected them from the exterior world and maintained the coherence of their spiritual community (17) by marking those on the interior as "the Lord's Saints," distinguishing them "from the reprobate of the world and preserve[ing] the churches from unorthodox incursions" (Carroll 109). The cosmic order of the Puritans required that they remain ignorant of the wilderness outside their settlements, as it was-- both metaphorically and quite literally-- a place on the earth where one might encounter the Devil. The New England desert is one example of how mythical space shaped the early symbolic landscape of the American continent. Carroll continues: "The Puritans combined this idea of the wilderness as a place of intense religious perceptivity with its antithesis, the notion of the wilderness as a state of sin, to produce a significant intellectual synthesis: the desire among New England Puritans to spiritually transform the wilderness into a garden by expanding the range of the gospel" (119). These metaphors were not drawn from analogies with American forests, but were direct Biblical allusions found in the Christian tradition (111) and it was this that made the natural environment of the New World meaningful and congruent with their religious project; the transformation of "the wilderness into a garden required both the importation of religious institutions and the extension of the area of the gospel by erecting churches in new plantations. Frontier expansion and church settlement went hand in hand in New England as each inland town provided for the

spiritual solace of the saints in the wilderness" (120-121). To not settle structured, permanent settlements in the New World would have marked a regression to the "Israelites in the Sinai wilderness" (111) and a loss of religious faith. Despite the coarse simplicity of their settlements, one can understand how their villages were imagined to be the "New Jerusalem." While lacking grandeur, they marked a return to true religion and symbolized a community of the elect, toiling in this world while waiting for the coming of the next.[218]

Placed alongside Aiken's essay on Blackstone, the reader sees the outline of how the mythical landscape contributed to the symbolic landscape that helped shape the dominant Anglo-centric narrative of U.S. history. Through the early part of the twentieth-century, as the vast lands within the country's borders seemed to shrink as they grew more accessible through modern transportation, Mexico would come to play a similar role as that of the wilderness of Puritan New England had long before. It is a place of great mystery not only because of its vastness and the heat-induced mirages that one might experience in its northern deserts, but equally so because of the way the imagination transformed its seemingly alien appearance and natural phenomena into a potent symbolic landscape for literary and artistic purposes. Mexico, with its desert landscape, is "the surrealist country par excellence" for precisely this reason.

Blom's reflections in St. Louis suggest a nagging sense that he knows he will not escape and that he will not find any deeper meaning in Mexico. When Blom hears the metaphorical bell in the jungle, summoning him to a place where "there were still gods," both he and the reader recognize it as the stuff of fantasy. Yet, the adventure continues and Blom never ceases searching for what he already knows he will not find. This central scene in St. Louis gains further significance in contrast with the number of places through which the travelers pass along

[218] For further discussion of the New England village as a built environment and symbolic landscape, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

the way. A full list of place names, arranged geographically from northeast to southwest, mentioned in the book are as follows: Boston, Springfield, Westfield, Pittsfield, Albany, Schenectady, Utica, Rome, Syracuse, Galion, Marion, Sidney, Muncie, East St. Louis, St. Louis, Little Rock, Texarcana, Troup, Palestine, San Antonio, Laredo, Anahuac, Lampazos, Villaldama, Monterey [sic], Saltillo, Mexico City, Cuernavaca. Along this course, however, from St. Louis onward, the trip progresses rapidly. In direct contrast to the earlier part of the book, there are no italicized place-names imitating a conductor's call. Arkansas, Texas and northern Mexico are given little consideration, except in terms of the vast expanse of their topography-- and the cities from Little Rock to Monterrey are mentioned in the course of a single sentence (Aiken 1964, 449). Only passing mention is made of the border and none at all of the Rio Grande. It is, as Marten writes, "as if the travellers have fallen over the edge of the known world after being suddenly released from a state of suspended animation in St. Louis" (137).

In addition to the rapidity with which the journey progresses, the increasingly foreign quality of the landscape is, for them, beyond the "known world." While not unknowable in and of itself, Blom cannot see it in its own terms, choosing instead to gaze at it through his cultured but myopic perspective. If one treats the American continent as a whole, regions come to complement one another and any given cross-section of the vast landscape reveals how regions interact and function together.[219]

As geographer Grady Clay writes, landscape cross-sections are useful "learning tools," as they gain "explanatory strength by revealing adjacencies and contrasts; they set up juxtapositions that spark our awareness and suggest analyses" (110). The narrative of Aiken's transcontinental journey presents an interesting application of the geographical cross-section to literature. If the

[219] See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for a discussion of regionalism and the shifting focus of geographers contemporaneous with Aiken's writing between the wars.

narrator of such a work remains unaware of the "adjacencies and contrasts" during the journey, the reader would surely lose interest in the story at hand. Without such observations, *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* would lose one of its strongest attributes-- in the words of *The Scotsman* reviewer, its "sense of the continental vastness of America and of the colourful cruelty and stern indifference of nature to human passion provides a strong continual under-current" (13). One expects the cosmopolitan observer to be charged by a desire to understand the entirety of what he sees, to engage fully with the continuum along which he travels. One would expect the cosmopolitan to have such curiosity and it points to one benefit of transcontinental travel-- the idea that, to quote David M. Steele, "Provincialism is not a thing, but a way of looking at things" (196). [220] The constant interplay among geographic scales reveals a relationship and a perspective necessary in placing oneself despite the rapidity of modernized travel that seemingly denies geography while also making it more accessible.

The enormity of the continent and the navigation thereof is essential to mythmaking in the U.S. both in striving to find meaning in the modern age and in understanding the vast continent during the age of European exploration. Encouraging his fellow countrymen to "see America first," Steele reminds the reader of early narratives and the mythical places that were imagined to be hidden deep within the Americas. He writes: "While this continent was unknown, imagination peopled it with a wealth immeasurable. It was the Orient; in it were Elixir and the Philosopher's Stone; El Dorado, Coronado, Bonanza, Cibola, and the Seven Cities" (194-195). Steele continues: "Now that it has been explored the facts outrun all former fancies. Its size, its wealth, its growth are fairly fabulous" (195). While Steele is undoubtedly correct in referring to the natural resources and production capacities of the country things that "put the

[220] From Steele's *Going Abroad Overland* (1917). For a discussion of tourist travel during this era, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

legends of mythology to shame," this does not, on the other hand, negate the mythical quality of these regions in the U.S. or anywhere else in the Americas.

The question of symbols and myths, of the way in which the landscape enters the collective imagination, plays as much a role in the study of U.S. literature as it does in geography. In his post-World War II defense of American Studies as a discipline, Leo Marx discusses the role that different myths have played in the U.S. in terms of the narrative of westward expansion that makes possible any discussion of transcontinental travel. Marx writes that "Emigration, as described in the myth, was a voyage of spiritual and political regeneration" derived from a combination of pastoralism, Christianity and "the pervasive … myth of America as the land of a new beginning" (1969, 86). The many traditions and their mythologies combine to form a new and salient myth for the New World. Yet, Marx notes that "myth" is not easily defined,

> for it refers to a more complex mental construct that belongs on the continuum … that leads from image to symbol. If a symbol may be defined as an image invested with significance beyond that required for referential purposes, then a myth is a combination of symbols, held together by a narrative, which embodies the virtually all-encompassing conception of reality-- the world-view-- of a group. (86)

Aiken's novel resembles the pattern described here by Marx and his generation, but one also hears echoes of the critics cited earlier, specifically Greene and what he sees as the struggle and ultimate failure of Aiken to create meaning, or "to see life in any shape at all" in the modern U.S. Recognizing that there is a process by which images become symbols, Marx derives these terms from literary criticism, writing that the image is "a verbal recording of a simple sense perception" and becomes a symbol, something that "is made to carry a burden of implication … beyond that which is required for a mere reference" (83-84). These are straightforward definitions, but they should remind the reader of Meinig's discussion of the symbolism found in

"ordinary landscapes"[221] and Tuan's articulation of mythical, pragmatic and theoretical space. What these geographers share with literary scholars is an interest in narrative-- how the "world-view" of a group is articulated and how such articulations are carried forward.

As such, the reader can understand a transcontinental travel narrative as involving an "all-encompassing conception of reality," reliant upon the physical reality of a given route. Whatever the local reference value of individual sights, they gain further significance as parts of a larger whole. The importance of these routes-- whether road or rail-- is central to understanding the continental landscape in a meaningful way; they present "the commonplace along with the spectacular, seeing the people and the country, too, taking the good with the bad and the beautiful with the ugly" (Stewart 1953, 300). This is what Blom and his companions are forced to confront along the cross-section that they trace from New England into central Mexico.

Returning to Clay's essay, the cross-section is a "learning tool" for precisely this reason: "it forces us to confront changes and differences that we might not see in everyday life" (110). It is the responsibility of the observer to engage with the "explanatory strength" of a route's "adjacencies and contrasts" through analysis. In *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*, the "group" whose world-view is articulated is that of the educated elite, who have theorized and normalized popular conceptions of the frontier and westward expansion, through the codification of its origins in New England as the unifying story of the continent's history. The narrator accepts this history and, after Galion and St. Louis, near the outer reaches of "New England Extended" the narrative turns inward, seeking refuge from the unrecognizable landscapes outside the windows of the day coach. The travelers are largely incapable of seeing the reality of the landscape and how it is part of the same continuum they have previously seen. The emphasis in the narrative is

[221] This phrase comes from the title of the same volume Meinig edited and in which his essay appears, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (1979).

on "contrasts" rather than "adjacencies" and the narratives of French, Spanish and Native American cultures that might complement and support the Anglo-New England narrative are ignored by both Blom and the narrator.

Apart from the scene in St. Louis, one of the most important moments in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* takes place during a brief pause in the rapid movement of the novel's second half. In the vast, seemingly empty expanse of desert along the last leg of their journey, somewhere in the more than eight-hundred kilometers from Saltillo to Mexico City, the still half-dreaming Blom awakes at a siding. The passage reads:

> … but when he awoke, and saw the great gray fan of dawn behind and over the mountains, and the brown twilight close against his window, it was to find that the train had stopped at a tiny little station, a mere adobe hut, white-walled and deserted in the wilderness, and on its front, painted in large black letters, the incredible name: Encantada. Encantada! Enchanted, the Enchanted Town. It was the enchanted mesa of Krazy Kat. (460)

This passing but direct reference to "the enchanted mesa of Krazy Kat" is telling. *Krazy Kat* was a nationally syndicated comic strip written by George Harriman that ran from 1913-1944. The strip tells of the adventures and misadventures of an anthropomorphized cat, the eponymous "Krazy," and mouse, named "Ignatz," whose shenanigans frequently meet up against the law enforcement efforts of a police-officer dog, "Officer Bill Pupp."[222] The events of the comic strip take place against a constantly shifting desert landscape, which is a surreal version of Coconino County, Arizona. Topographically, a contemporary reviewer described it as "somewhat like our own Southwest, or rather, as our own Southwest might better be … a fabled … land of shifting desert scenes" (Tashlin 161). In E. E. Cummings's 1946 essay, "A Forward to Krazy," he describes it as "a strictly irrational landscape in perpetual metamorphosis" (216). Here, most

[222] To complicate matters, Krazy is in love with Ignatz, whose primary concern is with throwing bricks at Krazy. Officer Bill Pupp attempts to thwart Ignatz's efforts as he, in turn, is in love with Krazy. It is as outlandish and wonderful as it sounds.

plants grow in decorative terra cotta pots and a linear conversation or sequence of actions might unfold chronologically from one panel to another, but with an entirely different canyon, precipice, butte, mesa or other such landform giving definition to the scene's background. It is a stylized landscape that is nonsensical, having internal coherence and logic only as a dream. The desert of the Southwest is the real place that, in its symbolic meaning for the culture at large, can offer a plausibly exotic location for the unusual occurrences in the desert of the comic strip.

Jeet Heer, a contemporary journalist and cultural critic, writes in his article, "Cartoonists in Navajo Country" (2006), "The Grand Canyon was created twice: first over millions of years by nature and then over many centuries by the human imagination" (41). After World War II, Heer writes, "the West was losing its final vestiges of isolation," but shortly before then, in the 1920s and 1930s, Harriman and other cartoonists

> worked in a peculiar bubble of time: the West had been opened up to the general population by the railway and early automobiles, but it was still remote enough to be geographically distinctive. Over time, as development took hold, this remoteness faded. While the topography of the area will always be unique, the region doesn't feel as alien as it did not too long ago. (46-47)

What Heer describes is, in effect, the development of the Southwest from a mythical landscape-- a *terra incognita*-- to a symbolic landscape in the collective imagination of the U.S., a process contemporaneous with Aiken's novel. As Blom, Noni and Gil cross the continent, their days and nights begin to run together, surreal moments between dreaming and waking come to define their journey, as with Blom's waking dream of "Encantada." The way in which they experience the landscape thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy due to the landscape's symbolic role in the culture. The three friends are nowhere near the "real" Coconino County where Krazy Kat's enchanted mesa might be "found," but this is the nature of symbolic landscapes, as they encompass vast territories in the imagination when they occupy much less space-- or are, more likely, non-existent-- in the real world.

There is some further, structural significance to the comic strip that echoes with the plot of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*. Joseph C. Voelker describes the plotting as "a sequence of static panels" (72), writing that Aiken's "segmented" narration supports "an important theme in the novella, a longing to question the *a priori* status of time and space, and the ontological sureness of identity. The predominant question for every Aiken hero is 'to what degree is it really *now*?' 'To what extent am I really here?'" (75). Voelker uses the term "Collideorscape"[223] to signify "a landscape of random collisions, Freud's field of external stimuli which the ego works to wall out. It is also a kaleidoscope, a machine that arranges random stones into a sequence of illusions of radial symmetry, order, beauty" (68). These two competing psychological processes disregard the unknown, attempting instead to organize its seeming randomness through unrelated experiences. Insofar as Blom is concerned, the detailed reality of Mexico and the Southwest can be largely ignored, safely filtered and given order by the ideals codified by the educated, elite urban culture. As such, the Southwest helps him to gain greater knowledge of his own consciousness without ever engaging with its reality. The regions after St. Louis remain a "phantasmagoria" and Blom always seems to be elsewhere-- preferably Boston-- in his mind. As Voelker notes, the novel is composed of segments of narration, shrinking in length as the journey progresses. Neither action nor description gain much elaboration toward the end of the novel. It is a tacit admission that Blom has seen very little and so there is very little for him to say.

The passing reference to the comic strip is coupled with an indirect reference to the Galapagos Islands, filtered through Herman Melville, whose rediscovery began in earnest during this period.[224] The imaginary town's name, "Encantada" calls to mind Melville's collection of

[223] A concept borrowed from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939).
[224] One of the earliest studies being Lewis Mumford's, *Herman Melville: A Study of His Life and Vision* (1929).

sketches entitled *The Encantadas or Enchanted Isles* (1854). While the Galapagos Islands themselves are of little importance to this discussion (aside from their location in Spanish America and, more generally, as an exotic and inhospitable locale), the description provided by Melville is worth comparing to Aiken's depictions of Mexico. Within his longer introduction to the islands, Melville writes:

> But the special curse, as one may call it, of the Encantadas, that which exalts them in desolation … is, that to them change never comes; neither the change of seasons nor of sorrows. Cut by the Equator, they know not autumn, and they know not spring; while already reduced to the lees of fire, ruin itself can work little more upon them. The showers refresh the deserts; but in these isles, rain never falls. (70)

Echoes of this can be heard in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* when Noni remarks to Blom that "This year we shall have no spring" (446) a comment that, although said in levity, results in melancholy when they think of how, in Massachusetts-- from Stockbridge to Boston-- spring will come as it does every year and that, in Mexico, there will be no cycle of seasons to bring them comfort-- to reassure them of the larger patterns of life and death in the world as they know it. Melville continues his description of the Encantadas with the following passage:

> Another feature of these isles is their emphatic unihabitableness. It is deemed a fit type of all-forsaken overthrow, that the jackal should den in the wastes of weedy Babylon; but the Encantadas refuse to harbor even the outcasts of beasts. Man and wolf alike disown them. Little but reptile life is here found: tortoises, lizards, immense spiders, snakes, and that strangest anomaly of outlandish nature, the *aguano* [iguana]. No voice, no low, no howl is heard; the chief sound of life here is a hiss. (71)

What for Melville is in part a conscientious description of ecological reality is not without its exotic and threatening implications and becomes, for Aiken, language useful in the filtering of unfamiliar experience in Latin America.

The problem revealed is the same paradox of cosmopolitanism mentioned earlier. One may relate real-world experiences to one's formal education-- and literature is nothing if it is not

a critical exploration of life itself. To fully connect, however, one must move beyond experience-through-analogy. What Blom's perspective offers is an all-but "passive reception" rather than the "creative act" of perception. In this way, the literary and cultural connections made by the travelers present a superficial cosmopolitanism, without using their "alien local knowledge." The proof is in Blom's specific reactions upon finally setting foot on the ground and spending some time in the Mexican city of Cuernavaca.

This is where Part IV begins-- and it seems that Blom will soon come to know something of his destination. He is appreciative of the landscape, "with its great red and brown mountains, everywhere visible round the sprawling white-walled mountain town, was all very handsome; and so … was Popocatepetl; and so were the savage unfamiliar trees and flowers. It was everything that Hambo said for it. Yes, indeed!" (463). The reader senses that he has finally arrived and will be taken into Cuernavaca-- Part I promises as much from its presentation of Boston and such keenly perceptive narration will provide an ideal perspective on this new city. Yet, Blom will disappoint the reader in this sense as the following paragraph begins: "He had been walking a long time; exploring, with an indifferent eye, the sights of Cuernavaca; getting himself lost in the narrow streets, and finding himself again" (463). Along with the "savage" flora, the operative language here is "with an indifferent eye" and Blom quickly reveals just how apathetic he is: "The streets were all alike, the Indians were all alike; the truth was that he hated everything, everything was wrong. The market bored and irritated him; so did the sound of a foreign language, Spanish; so did the rows of stalls and barrows in the two little squares that formed the center of the town" (464). Although the reader does not expect an intimate map of Cuernavaca-- and Aiken is at pains to avoid becoming "a kind of literary Baedeker"[225]-- nor does

[225] This insult is the first sentence of Aiken's own review of D. H. Lawrence's *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), collected in *A Reviewer's ABC* as "Lawrence, D. H." (263-266). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term "Baedeker"

the reader expect such hateful commentary from the astute observer Blom once proved himself to be.

The elements of Lynch's urban imagery are almost completely absent from the final two sections that take place in Mexico. The paths are "narrow," but otherwise "all alike," the few landmarks are mentioned in conjunction with the nodes of activity and there do not seem to be any edges or districts to this Cuernavaca. Consequently, the reader has no sense of distance, only that Hambo's house is outside the center of town, as he and Blom meet for a drink before taking a taxi to get there. The only distinguishing feature mentioned is a *barranca*, one of many ravines that distinguish the terrain in and around Cuernavaca, above which Hambo's house sits.

Even Charlie's, the café where Hambo and Blom meet to drink, is derided. While it is a landmark, it is a gaudy one-- perhaps in an attempt to attract foreign tourists, but the reader is given no real explanation as to why they meet there, only that it stands in contrast with the rest of the city. Blom thinks to himself:

> Charlie's, anyway, was unmistakable-- you could see the sign a mile off, a little corner café with open stone arches and red-covered tables, facing the palace square. Cafés, in fact, were everywhere. There was another one next door, and outside this was a crowd of Indians, in their white and pink cottons, trying to get into-- or out of, it was difficult to say which-- a ramshackle bus. (464)

Its garish appearance is undermined by it being, in the end, only one of many, whereas in Boston the favorite drinking establishments are given an atmosphere of sanctity. Instead, the places are ignored and the drinking rituals gain emphasis, although they have little to do with the place in which they find themselves. Blom watches Hambo's tequila drinking ritual: "He tipped the little glass of pale *tequila* into the tumbler of cracked ice, squeezed half a green lime into it with

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as referring to "Any of the series of guide-books issued by Baedeker at Coblenz, or by his successors; also applied loosely to any guide-book." One might also connect this with the travelogues and popular histories of Mexico discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

awkward fingers" (466). This is almost identical to the way Key drinks his nightcap at the end of Part I, which is described as follows: "Key sipped water through the sparkling cracked ice, then neatly tipped into it the bright jigger of liquor" (431). Even the unique taste of tequila is negated and for Blom it is "a good deal like prohibition alcohol" (466). That is, however, the extent of the connection Blom forms with Mexico. Instead, to use Voelker's phrasing, Blom "works to wall out" almost everything he sees in the setting of Cuernavaca and in Mexico more broadly.

After Noni's sudden death later that evening, Blom pieces together some vague reflections on the significance of death in Mexico: "Of course. It was the heart torn from the victim's breast, the head spitted on the *tzompantli*, the dark underworld current of destructive and creative blood-- just as simple as that, no more complex than that" (469). These forced references to ancient ritual might as well be borrowed from an anthropology textbook. Literally, the victim is Josefina, the wife of Hambo's gardener, Pablo, who stabbed her in a fit of rage. This is the offstage scene which causes Noni to go into the shock that kills her due to the heart condition warned of at the novel's beginning. Noni, however, is pushed to the background and largely forgotten. Blom's metaphors ring hollow, as there is no real sense that the three friends have arrived in Mexico to begin with. Blom remarks at one point that "*everything* here seems poisonous" (467) and so the country is kept at a distance, "walled out" of his mind and, consequently, the narrative. The next morning, Blom remarks to Hambo that, after helping Gil arrange for Noni's remains, he plans to "go right back" (471) to Boston.

The final words of the novel are given to Blom, who can only muster enough wherewithal to exclaim, "Christ, but I'm a long way from home!" (472). He seems unaware of his capacity to understand the complexity of his environment. It is perhaps understandable,

given that he is distraught over Noni's death and, earlier in the narrative, preoccupied by the fragility of her condition. Nonetheless, he eschews the productive and progressive possibilities of a cosmopolitan perspective, turning entirely inward. For Blom, it is better to return to Boston where the mythic and symbolic landscapes are more closely aligned with the "real" landscape. Instead, the symbolic place that Mexico holds in the U.S. imagination is maintained to the extent that it precludes any serious consideration of Cuernavaca or Mexico-- or anything west of the Hudson, really-- from Blom's understanding of the world.

The concern with and cultivation of self-knowledge can be found throughout the narrative. Beyond its autobiographical content, there are important intertextual components to this-- both within Aiken's own writing and in terms of the "American Renaissance." Throughout *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* the reader encounters the phrase "great circle," which can be found with some frequency elsewhere in Aiken's larger body of work. It echoes Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), which begins with his remark: "I have travelled a good deal in Concord" (6). In the concluding chapter of that book, Thoreau muses that, no matter how far a man might travel, he will never escape himself and, in effect, will be led back to his starting point. He writes: "Our voyaging is only great-circle sailing … One hastens to South Africa to chase the giraffe; but surely that is not the game he would be after … What does Africa-- what does the West stand for? Is not our own interior white on the chart?" (257).[226] Jay Martin comments on the presence of Thoreau's "great circle" throughout Aiken's work, writing that most references to it are "are testimonies to the fruitfulness of Thoreau's insistence … we return always to our starting point, the self. In her journey Noni moves both outward and inward" (160). This is true for Blom as

[226] The greater relevance of life as "great-circle sailing" to other writers of the "American Renaissance," namely Emerson and Whitman, is elaborated upon in two short essays by William J. Scheick (1996, 223; 2002, 83).

much as it is for Noni, although Blom, still alive, will literally return to Boston, his starting point, as soon as he can.[227]

Even before their departure, Blom's imagination puts the novel's route to Mexico into the larger context of exploration-- the metaphor drawn is with circumnavigation. While in conversation with Key, he envisions "the transcontinental track, the curved parallel rails embracing the three-thousand-mile-long curve of the submissive and infinitely various earth, from night into day, into night again." It is on this curve of track that he sees "Noni, … on the great circle to Mexico" (427-428). As the novel progresses, however, the railroad route to Mexico loses its significance as a personal journey for Noni, her predicament slowly fading into the background. Instead, the novel comes to be about Blom's journey toward self-knowledge that ultimately fails as his lived experiences are subsumed, negated and rejected by his limited imagination.[228]

As they near Mexico City, Blom notices, outside the window of the train car, "here, by the tracks, grew goldenrod, already in bloom, strayed all the way from New England" (462). For Martin, the presence of goldenrod helps to reiterate the centrality of Noni and her larger allegorical significance in the narrative, as their arrival in Mexico will complete "Noni's great circle in her death, but also the great circle of the symbolic American journey in their discovery that the end is identical with the beginning" (194). Martin is correct to emphasize the significance of goldenrod in terms of the novel's structure, but there is more to be said.

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[227] Aiken is fond of the "great circle" as an expression, using it strategically throughout his works to depict the physical and psychological journeys of central characters. He uses it as a metaphor for the larger cycle of life which was for him "a curve of motion towards an ineluctably tragic end" (51), to borrow a phrase from critic Frederick J. Hoffman's discussion of the book.

[228] The pursuit of self-knowledge as an interior journey is inextricable from Aiken's fiction and, as the title would suggest, his earlier novel, *Great Circle* (1933). The phrase "great circle" seems to have been a popular phrase at the time, as *The Great Circle* (1940) is also the title of Carleton Beals' second collection of autobiographical essays, mentioned in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Goldenrod can be found in both New England and central Mexico and everywhere in between, but for the simple reason that goldenrod is native to both countries and is not an invasive species in Latin America.[229] It is an imperfect metaphor for the journey, as it is only Blom, Noni and Gil who have "strayed all the way from New England." While unfair to expect Aiken or his characters to have any real knowledge of botany, the casual assumption is nonetheless telling. Martin's interpretation of this passage points to larger patterns of significance found amid the literature of U.S. travel in Latin America. Again, one sees the effects of privileging the "contrasts" among regions of North America-- there is a certain amount of surprise in finding goldenrod in Mexico.[230] While providing an unexpected but useful literary symbol for the interior journey, however, it completely disregards other readings-- namely that these foreign, "alien" lands might be knowable through "adjacencies" after all.

The journey by rail and its general route from Boston through the Middle West and south into Mexico finds parallels in other works of fiction and non-fiction, but perhaps the most readily applicable is *The Old Patagonian Express* (1979) in which the inveterate travel writer, Paul Theroux, travels by train from Boston to Patagonia in Argentina. Beyond the superficial resemblance of their itineraries, however, what Theroux offers to this discussion is a general mood toward Mexico-- and Latin America in general-- that has been pervasive in U.S. literature throughout the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries. In his essay on the topic, David E. Johnson writes that Theroux's book

> beaches the traveler in the heart of 'nowhere,' securing his 'I' against the emptiness of the Latin Americas. Yet, like so many novels … *The Old Patagonian Express* appears in the end to leave the traveler far from the

[229] "Goldenrod," the common term for plants in the genus *Solidago*, incorporates many similar-looking species and can be found throughout North America, including Mexico, as well as in South America and Eurasia (see Semple and Cook 2005).

[230] It might be equally interesting-- and more accurate-- to note how the genus morphs from region to region, as such a perspective would emphasize both the contrasts and the adjacencies of the continent's geography.

> beginning. *The Old Patagonian Express* ends in Patagonia, but in order to produce itself as travel narrative, the journey must end where it began. Travel writing takes place, begins and ends, in the same 'place,' within the same temporal horizon, 'the past tense.' (7)

While *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is not "travel writing" in the same sense as Theroux's work, it does share this same attitudinal characteristic. The final sentence of Theroux's narrative reads: "The nothingness itself, a beginning for some intrepid traveler, was an ending for me. I had arrived in Patagonia, and I laughed when I remembered I had come here from Boston, on the subway train that people took to work" (404). Similarly, Aiken's novel ends in its destination, with Blom exclaiming: "Christ, but I'm a long way from home!" What Johnson points-out, though, is much more than the negotiation of the travel narrative's necessity to begin and end in the same physical place. It is, Johnson writes, different from being "lost" in a strange place and coming to terms with one's surroundings. Instead, the focus in *The Old Patagonian Express* is on the narrator's assertion of his own position against the landscapes through which he moves. Johnson continues:

> These two textual effects result from the places of travel: it is bearable to be lost 'in' the Old World, in Europe and Asia, but it would be unendurable to be lost in the 'nowhere' of Latin America, because in the Latin Americas, unlike in Europe, there is nothing-- outside of itself-- for the eye/I to see. … for the eye/I cannot see what the imagination, spurred by books, fails to conjure." (7)

Theroux reads on the train and his imagination is "spurred by books."[231] What his mind frequently "fails to conjure" is any reason to get off the train to observe the world around him more closely, as he insists from the first pages that his book seeks to explore departures and "the journey itself" (5), writing that "the going is often as fascinating as the arrival" (5).

[231] Theroux's choices include works by William Faulkner, Dashiell Hammett, Ambrose Bierce, Mark Twain and James Boswell.

Although published some forty years earlier, Aiken's novel can be informed by Theroux's writing. Returning to Graham Greene's otherwise negative review of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*, he also writes that Aiken's book does express "the modern poetry of departure: the changing trains at night in obscure towns: engine calls across a vibrating countryside: the shaving in little lavatories: the beer out of the bottle, and the seasons changing as you drive south" (141).[232] Given that Blom's primary concern is to arrive in Cuernavaca as quickly and inexpensively as possible, the narrative necessarily chronicles constant movement. Throughout their journey, Blom cannot see the world around him as real. In Aiken's book, Mexico becomes a "nowhere" for these same reasons.[233] One might even argue that Aiken's novel extends the "nowhere" of Latin America into the territory of the U.S. as far as St. Louis-- or even Galion. As "New England Extended" dissipates upon entering the Upper Middle West, one can imagine another cultural area extending north from Mexico and dissipating as it approaches the Great Plains. Following such a trajectory would, conversely, reveal northern climes as strange, foreign and dream-like. Instead, *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is largely concerned with the cultivation of self-knowledge within a mythic wilderness of a continent and everything that it symbolizes from the distant standpoint of coastal New England.

The feeling of being stranded in the middle of "nowhere" in Latin America is entirely a matter of perspective and there is no essential quality to those regions of the world that should suggest otherwise. Malcolm Lowry-- the inspiration for Aiken's "Hambo"-- achieves exactly the

[232] Greene's account of travel through Mexico in *The Lawless Roads* is also punctuated by reading. Among the books he brings with him are the complete works of Anthony Trollope, which he explains in the following remarks: "What books to take on a journey? It is an interesting-- and important-- problem. In West Africa once I had made the mistake of taking *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, with the idea that it would, as it were, match the mood. It matched all right, but what one really needs is contrast … And one did want, I found, an *English* book in this hating and hateful country" (124).

[233] The one book given explicit mention is Noni's copy of *The Cloud Messenger*, by the Sanskrit poet Kalidasa.

opposite effect in *Under the Volcano* (1947). The relationship between Aiken and Lowry was one of master and protégé, respectively but, in his treatment of Mexico at least, Lowry surpasses Aiken.

The opening chapter of *Under the Volcano* could otherwise serve as an epilogue. The central character, British ex-Consul Geoffrey Firmin, is dead. The last day of his life is the story of the eleven chapters which follow, occurring exactly one year before the opening chapter on the Mexican "Day of the Dead," a holiday connected with the Christian celebrations of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. The narrator refers to Firmin as "the Consul" and, given its structure, he is simultaneously dead and alive throughout the course of the novel. Introduced to the Consul through the memories of his close friend, M. Jacques Laruelle, the reader enters Quauhnahuac and is given a tour of sorts as Laruelle wanders through town with his memories, from the (formerly) luxurious, touristic Mexico at the Casino de la Selva to the decidedly lower-class cantina, Cervecería XX, where the first chapter ends with the sunset. The subsequent chapters of the novel are constructed around the linear progress of a day, the last day of the Consul's life, from sunup to sundown, but plotted through the use of flashbacks and memories, further scrambled by the Consul's alcoholic hallucinations and tragicomic perceptions. The day tells the story of the return of the Consul's estranged wife, Yvonne, as well as his half-brother, Hugh. Hoping to intervene in the Consul's self-destructive behavior, Yvonne and Hugh can only look on as he slowly drinks himself to death, first at home and around Quauhnahuac, then to Tomalín for a bullfight and Parián, a fictional town where the Consul will cause a scene in a local house of ill-repute, El Farolito. Outside the brothel, a group of corrupt local policemen catch-up to the Consul regarding his role as a witness in the murder of an Indian peasant earlier

in the day. After confronting him, they execute the Consul unceremoniously and throw his body into a ravine along with the corpse of a stray dog.

The element of time in Lowry's novel fuses structure and theme through flashbacks, memory, foreshadowing and overlapping, non-linear plot development. The individual's journey through life and, in this case, the Consul's final day among the living, is central and the novel ends where it begins-- or begins where it ends, as the case may be. While a very different novel from Aiken's in many ways, the close relationship between the two writers and the shared thematic concerns merits at least some cursory discussion of *Under the Volcano* in any discussion of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*. There are several points of overlap between the two, as Lowry's novel is, in its own way, preoccupied with both the landscape of Mexico and the figure of William Blackstone. To begin with the landscape, the opening passage of *Under the Volcano* describes Quauhnahuac, a fictionalized Cuernavaca, in the following terms:

> Two mountain chains traverse the republic roughly from north to south, forming between them a number of valleys, which is dominated by two volcanoes, lies, six thousand feet above sea-level, the town of Quauhnahuac. It is situated well south of the Tropic of Cancer, to be exact, on the nineteenth parallel, in about the same latitude as the Revillagigedo Islands to the west in the Pacific, or very much farther west, the southernmost tip of Hawaii-- and as the port of Tzucox to the east on the Atlantic seaboard of the Yucatan near the border of British Honduras, or very much farther east, the town of Juggernaut, in India, on the Bay of Bengal. (3)

As the reader is led into the local level of Quauhnahuac, its physical layout is noted: "The walls of the town, which is built upon a hill, are high, the streets and lanes tortuous and broken, the roads winding. A fine American-style highway leads in from the north but is lost in its narrow streets and comes out a goat track" (3).

By moving west from Quauhnahuac to the Pacific, re-crossing Central Mexico in order to move East to the Yucatan Peninsula and then to India, the reader quickly realizes that there was no need to re-cross Mexico. The earth is round and east meets west, but west also meets east

along the same path. The arbitrariness of the course charted in this passage points to the recursive nature of any individual path and the recurrent nature of history and of time itself, which is important to the structure of the novel which, as noted, begins a year later in the chronology of the story.

In Lowry's book, in contrast to Aiken's (and Theroux's), Mexico is very much not "nowhere," but somewhere. The knowable attributes of Quauhnahuac are scattered throughout the book and one gets the sense that Juggernaut-- or the even more foreign-sounding, but real, Tzucox-- might prove to be equally knowable as unique places. *Under the Volcano* begins with its own "great circle" by tracing the nineteenth parallel, but the narrator quickly eschews travel along a route of any kind by focusing on the specific qualities of Quauhnahuac. Real places in Cuernavaca can be found in Quauhnahuac and one could place an overlay of the latter onto a map of the former with little difficulty, tracing the Consul's steps through the real city. At the same time, the re-naming of Cuernavaca as "Quauhnahuac" is not accidental or any sort of playful-- yet vaguely bigoted-- gibberish invented by Noni on the train ride in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*. Rather, it substitutes the Spanish colonial name with the original Nahuatl name, meaning "near the wood" (Ackerly and Clipper 3). Throughout the novel, the reader encounters a sympathetic attitude toward the plight of Native Mesoamericans, which becomes intertwined with the Consul's romanticized image of William Blackstone among the Native Americans in Massachusetts.

Lowry most likely learned of Blackstone from Aiken, as it was in 1937 that Aiken visited Mexico, the same year he wrote "Literature in Massachusetts." The Consul identifies himself with Blackstone, coming to see his life in Mexico as emulating that of a man who lived a solitary life "among the Indians" (Lowry 51, 82, 126, 135, 358). He explains on several occasions, in a

somewhat disjointed way, who Blackstone is, which reiterates the motif of the solitary man in the wilderness, apart from "the people with ideas" (358). In the Blackstone mythology that Aiken helped to create and that Lowry perpetuates, the "people with ideas" are the Puritans who "'settled on the other side of the river. They invited him [Blackstone] over; they said it was healthier on that side, you see. Ah, these people, these fellows with ideas … old William didn't like them-- no he didn't-- so he went back to live among the Indians, so he did'" (135). This description of Blackstone occurs in one important scene where the Consul's alcoholism meets with the disgust of his neighbor, the aptly-named Mr. Quincey. The Consul remarks that he is speaking metaphorically, that these Indians are in his heart-- he does not mean Indians as human beings, but as a concept, tapping his chest to emphasize the point, saying "'Yes, just the final frontier of consciousness, that's all'" (135). Mr. Quincey, is a "person with ideas" akin to the Puritans from whom Blackstone fled and whose judgmental gaze the Consul wishes to escape.

In his essay, on the "Puritan Theme" in Lowry's novel, Michael Cripps writes: "Whatever great challenges Aiken found in the uncharted areas of human experience, for Lowry Blackstone's path led only to the desolation and madness found by the Consul" (458). In this way, the "final frontier of consciousness" is the search for obscurity and oblivion. Such a quest can result only result in death. The Consul, Cripps writes,

> may be seen as a 'wayward Puritan,' rebelling against a crushing legacy of repression and cant. But at a deeper level, the drinking that leads the Consul to the 'final frontier of consciousness' is pursued as an errand into the last wilderness, where he has become hopelessly lost and unable to find his deliverance. Still he must go on, deeper into the desert, like Blackstone, never to return. (461)

In this sense, "it is not by turning away from Blackstone's path that Firmin becomes lost, but by following in his footsteps" (460). The impending fate of the Consul's death that is present throughout the novel is tied to this figure, as the first mention of him is when the Consul remarks

that he would like to be buried beside Blackstone (Lowry 51). Simply put, there is no way to fully remove oneself from the world of men without confronting mortality.

Cripps identifies the writer's exploration of consciousness as being the source of an important split between Aiken and Lowry. He notes that it is central to Aiken's work in which "the representation of consciousness was the modern writer's 'final frontier,' but for Lowry it was just the end of the road" (437). Cripps elaborates on this point, writing that Lowry's adoption of the Blackstone myth in the character of the Consul is a reflection of Lowry's career as a writer, characterized as "essentially a struggle against solipsism." Lowry felt that "Aiken's attitude toward writing, and to life" was solipsistic and to be avoided (437). While a strong indictment of Aiken's work, the reader remembers *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*. The way Blom situates himself within the landscape reveals his individual failure to experience the physical and cultural landscapes on their own terms. The reason for this failure is due to his inability to escape his own mind and his reliance upon mythical space as an interpretive lens. Upon entering the physical expanse of real landscapes, the mythical landscape is negated and retreats to ancient texts that hypothesize what monsters might be contained in such *terra incognita*.

An individual cannot "experience" mythical space, as its place in the imagination relies upon being beyond the known world. El Dorado and Cíbola never existed, but were created and elaborated upon by the imagination-- a way to fill-in the vast expanses of unknown territory. Lacking cities of gold, the landscape of the Desert Southwest and Mexico-- or of anywhere else-- are not impoverished, but can be appreciated for what they do possess, whether it be their hidden natural resources or the awesome power of the vast, remote and geographically distinctive qualities of the landscape itself.

The reader can relate to Blom when he imagines that he has stumbled upon the "enchanted mesa of Krazy Kat." Relating the unknown to a known literary or cultural experience is natural enough when confronted by the unfamiliar. This is the role symbolic imagery plays in the larger collective imagination. The "enchanted mesa" and his reflections on goldenrod, however, are Blom's only attempts to see the Mexican environment. Such superficial connections should serve as initial points of contact with the foreign world, subsequently expanding into an intimate awareness and knowledge of the region into which he has traveled. If *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is characterized by the "search for a myth" for U.S. culture in an era of rapid modernization, then the reader can come to understand Blom's "inability to see life in any shape at all" as symptomatic of this pursuit.

Aiken, as Blom's creator, is invested in the mythopoeia that will give definition to U.S. culture, as evident in Aiken's contributions to the critical material surrounding the "American Renaissance" and the early forging of the U.S. literary canon. Carried forward by Blom on his journey into the American continent, such knowledge proves a good starting point, but does not suffice. Taking him so far as the Mississippi River with Mark Twain, his learning leads him halfway across the continent, but fails to deliver him any further as his journey curves further south and into Mexico. From that point onward, Blom imagines the mythical spaces that exist beyond the frontier despite having already crossed this same frontier into the supposed "wilderness." The wilderness must remain "wild" for Blom, as it helps to maintain the mythology of New England's primacy in U.S. culture. Rather than partaking in the creation of myths for a new and modern age of increased contact among world cultures through new transportation and communications technologies, Blom demonstrates the Puritan reaction of men made uncomfortable upon encountering the exotic and unknown.

To negotiate the exotic is the mark of the cosmopolitan. Rather than retreating into the comfortable worldview provided by one's native origins, the true cosmopolitan will reject ignorance by using his "alien local knowledge" to understand the previously unknown. This is what separates the Consul (and Lowry) from Blom (and Aiken). Acting in the landscape, the Consul's obsession with Blackstone may be the fanciful product of his education-- Blackstone is particularly relatable as the Consul is, after all, an Englishman in the Americas. At the same time, however, this and the other intensely literary web of connections that Lowry draws in the novel act to transcend the landscape rather than to avoid contact with it.

In his essay on *Under the Volcano*, novelist William H. Gass writes that "Fiction … is incurably figurative, and the world the novelist makes is always a metaphorical model of our own" (60). Here, the reader can re-phrase William Carlos Williams's aphorism, "no ideas but in things,"[234] by writing: "no fictional settings but from real places." Although more cumbersome than Williams's original, it should serve to remind the reader of the novelist's relationship to place. Gass appropriately begins his essay in the same place that Lowry begins his novel, with the landscape. He considers how the role of the real landscape differs from the symbolic role of the landscape in the novel, writing:

> And the real mountains of Mexico, those two chains which traverse the republic, exist despite us and all our feelings. But the Popocatepetl of the novel is yet another mountain, and when, in the first chapter, we are taken on a tour of the town, the facts we are given have quite a different function. Lowry is constructing a place, not describing one; he is making a Mexico for the mind where, strictly speaking, there are no menacing volcanoes, only menacing phrases, where complex chains of concepts traverse our consciousness, and where, unlike history, events take place in the moment that we read them-- over and over as it may be, irregularly even, at widely separated times … In this conceptual country there are no mere details, nothing is a simple happenstance, everything has meaning, is part of a net of essential relations. (57-58)

[234] For a fuller account of Williams's concept, see the Introduction and Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

What Lowry achieves in *Under the Volcano*-- and what Aiken fails to accomplish in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*-- is the creation of a "net of essential relations" that the Consul and the world share with this otherwise provincial city. Whether it is Quauhnahuac's place on the nineteenth parallel or the frequent references to the Spanish Civil War (the Consul dies in the year 1938) or the looming specter of World War II, neither Mexico nor Quauhnahuac are removed from the world, as both fascism and communism will find expression within the Mexican context. In terms of the geographical connections and the Consul's cosmopolitan credentials, his point of origin is clearly written in his diplomatic title and he maintains certain British character traits, while nonetheless adapting quite well to his adopted home. In this way, the Consul's affinity for Blackstone becomes a way of explaining his connections with Mexican culture and the level of comfort he feels within it.

In *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*, however, Aiken offers only a parody of this. The initial description of "Hambo" upon their arrival in Mexico City is as follows: "The round red face glared up at them affectionately, the fat fist lifted a forked stick towards them in signal; he was walking slowly alongside the train, grinning" (463). In subsequent scenes, Hambo is never without his forked stick and this, in combination with his "red face" leave the reader with very little impression of who he is other than an alcoholic, expatriate European with certain curious habits-- perhaps even the Puritan image of the devil lurking outside Plymouth Plantation. The morning after Noni dies, Blom takes a walk with Hambo and his reaction to the landscape continues in the earlier vein of indifference:

> Brilliance everywhere-- as they turned a bend in the road, and looked downward into the extravagant richness of the valley, with its cornfields, its terraced groves of papayas and bananas, and the morning sunlight already hot as honey over everything, he couldn't help, for just an instant, thinking it was all an outrage. Brilliant, yes, but meaningless! As meaningless as a tomb. (471)

These feelings, while felt in direct response to the death of a loved friend, nonetheless suggest the greater problem faced by Blom. The inability to give meaning to his surroundings or to find significance in them outside of his own self. The real, living landscape around him has no meaning given his personal preoccupation with death and individual state of consciousness. Yet, nor can he create any metaphorical significance for the landscape beyond the rather forced image of a tomb. Here, the "Gods" of the book's title are not given their due, there is no *tzompantli*, nor any "blood-soaked" altar either literally or metaphorically. Even the mythical aspects of Mexico that drove Blom's imagination earlier in the novel have been lost.

For the Consul, there is no tomb-- no burial-place beside Blackstone-- there is only the ravine into which his body is tossed in the final scene. As Cripps notes, by identifying with Blackstone, "the incognito he has adopted is fatal to body as well as soul, because it is this last mad jest of identifying himself to the Fascists as William Blackstone that precipitates his murder" (470). Becoming dimly aware of this shortly before he is killed, the Consul identifies himself as Blackstone-- for the last time-- in the final scenes of the novel, answering "gravely, and indeed, he asked himself, accepting another mescal, had he not and with a vengeance come to live among the Indians? The only trouble was one was very much afraid with these particular Indians might turn out to be people with ideas too" (358). While these "particular Indians" are fascist sympathizers whose "ideas" first lead a bystander to jest that the Consul must be Trotsky (Lowry 358) and to then mistake him for a Jewish man, "being an ominous reflection of the atrocities already beginning in Europe and the anti-Semitic campaign in Mexico City" (Ackerly and Clipper 434). More broadly, the implication is that no man stands alone. While the Puritan worldview might not have been entirely congruent with that of Blackstone, the uninhabited wilderness outside of the New England townships was inhabited and not entirely wild.

Blackstone could not have lived "alone" among the Indians and his role in the U.S. national myth might be better served by considering what his removal from Boston actually entailed.

While it is tempting to see the Consul as a proxy for Lowry in much the same way as Blom acts as a proxy for Aiken, given the considerations above, such a resemblance seems superficial. Lowry keeps the Consul at arm's length, his perspective being more closely tied to the position of the narrator. This is why Gass carefully considers the role of metaphor, writing that, "In a metaphor that's meant, the descent to the literal can never be made," as "such a book says to each of its readers more than that two mountain chains traverse the republic" (76). The treatment of the landscape by Lowry's narrator creates "a Mexico for the mind" where "nothing is a simple happenstance." It is a Mexico constructed, in part, from the mythical and symbolic roles it plays in the foreigner's imagination. While the Consul's inebriation might, in a certain sense, serve as an appropriate lens for a foreigner to view "the surrealist country par excellence," the disorder of the Consul's mind belies the "net of essential relations" through which he wanders in his search for obscurity. What Lowry offers through the narrative as a whole is a more complete way of seeing these relations, an implicit recognition, through the positioning and navigation of Quauhnahuac and its environs, that the reader's own "alien local knowledge" will serve him, bringing meaning to the "brilliant but [only seemingly] meaningless" landscape of Mexico as Aiken cannot.

The way in which Aiken incorporates Lowry into his "autobiographical narrative," *Ushant*, further emphasizes the differences between *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* and *Under the Volcano*. Aiken uses the same fictionalized name, Hambo, as part of the larger schema in a stream-of-consciousness memoir infused with aspects of a *roman à clef*.[235] In *Ushant*, Aiken

[235] To this end, a later edition, published by Oxford University Press (1971), includes a "Key" listing the corresponding real and fictional personae, as well as place-names, used throughout the narrative.

tells his life story by shuttling from one memory to another, watching "D.," Aiken's pseudonymous self, re-examine his life and career. It is yet another path that Aiken takes in his continuous search for understanding and self-knowledge, re-telling several stories that he felt were failures when first written. Throughout his autobiography, Aiken asks questions about consciousness and the role of the author, as when he writes:

> for if it was the writer's business, or the poet's, to be as conscious as possible, and his primary obligation, wouldn't this impose upon him the still deeper obligation of being conscious of his *own* workings … and along with the work itself, to present, as it were, the *explication*--? Wouldn't this be the next mandatory step, the artist's plain duty? that he take the machine apart, and show how it worked? (1952, 246)

This is Aiken's plan in *Ushant*-- to provide the explication of his life and his work which are, in the end, inseparable. As Mary Martin Rountree writes in her essay, "Conrad Aiken's Heroes: Portrait of the Artist as Middle-Aged Failure" (1980), Aiken sees his own career as a journey and "*Ushant* marks a culmination of a process, a completion of Aiken's own great circle, which his fictive portraits of the artist had adumbrated and, in a sense, urged forward" (82). These retellings are part of a larger process of reflecting on his literary career in ways both revealing and poignant. The following passage from *Ushant* reflects upon *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*:[236]

> It looked almost disconcertingly easy: it looked like the ripe fruit ready to drop into one's receptive hand. It looked as if one would scarcely need to touch it. Wouldn't that scene-- the long hypnotic train-ride through unknown America, and across the unknown Mississippi, and among such people as one had never seen in one's life, and then through Texas, past its ghostly oil-flares, like blond beacons in the night, and so into the raw, ancient, and almost reptilian, primitivism of Mexico-- wouldn't that progress simply write itself--? No such thing. It had proved to be no more than a fatal temptation to fine writing. (343)

[236] Referred to in *Ushant* as *A Heart for the Barranca*.

The subsequent re-telling of the story in *Ushant* maintains this apologetic tone due to what Aiken describes as a "betrayal" (347) to those real-life individuals who inspired the characters found in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*. For Voelker, "There is an odor of red herring about Aiken's sudden elevation of fact over fictional rearrangement" and the tone in *Ushant* "seems deliberately naïve" (78). Voelker writes that "*A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* fails because it does not go far enough in abandoning personal identities" (78). The emphasis on facts and personal identities is what Aiken continues to pursue in *Ushant* and he laments that "not even Hambo had been given anything like his due: he too had been oversimplified and romanticized" (348).[237] Aiken uses Mexico as a way of moving towards the conclusion of *Ushant*, recalling his earlier use of the "great circle" discussed above. The final section of the chapter-- and final pages of the book (361-365)-- return to metaphors of travel while continuing to ask rhetorical questions. Ruminating on the real people of his life, the narrator asks: "Where would they all get to? Would they arrive-- now or ever-- at anything in the least resembling what they had hoped for? Would anyone? Or did it matter, provided one had at least set out on that voyage, made the endeavor? Or did it matter if what one arrived at wasn't *quite* what one had envisioned?" (362). Aiken asks these questions of his own life, striving "to be as conscious as possible," by explicating the events he put on the page earlier in his career. It is through fiction that Aiken seeks order in his own life and in the general chaos of human existence, moving toward some divinity. The final sentence of *Ushant* reads: "and towards this as yet unseen face we rise, we rise, ourselves now like notes of music arranging themselves into a divine harmony, a divine unison, which, as it had no beginning, can have no end----" (365). For Aiken, the author

[237] Most of the time *Ushant* spends revisiting Mexico consists of a difficult but poignant re-telling of Lowry's real-life alcoholism and self-destruction through Hambo, while casting "D." as father-figure (348-361), a role played much earlier in life by Aiken, who acted as both tutor and guardian *in loco parentis* for Lowry in beginning in 1929 (Sugars, xviii-xix).

completes the circle through the representation of consciousness which is, perhaps, a fool's errand, as a circle is always already complete.

Writing on Aiken's use of language, Michael North emphasizes the "unintended irony" (83) of Aiken's Blackstone which is the same as the irony of the Consul's situation. North writes: "Blackstone repudiates English culture in two ways, by living alone and by joining the Indians, but Aiken perceives no contradiction here because he is quite capable of imagining life among the Indians as life alone. He considers the Indians as mere context or landscape, like the trees of the forest in which Blackstone hides" (82-83). For Aiken, the "great circle" from birth to death comes to resemble the Puritan search for signs of individual election. It is a way of living alone among others and a way of treating the outside world in a manner instrumental to one's own individual needs-- it is uncannily like the physical expression of the Puritan worldview found in the arrangement of townships of early New England in which only the center is known and the surrounding wilderness is rejected and remains unknown in order to support this same worldview.

The elevation of consciousness and negation of the outside world that one finds in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is taken even further in *Ushant*. Aiken remains self-critical of his treatment of the journey and the continental landscape, writing that "the fake train made its way through a fake America to an even falser-- if that were possible-- Mexico" (347). Yet, the attempt made to correct the "oversimplified and romanticized" Hambo of *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is not matched by any similar attention to that novel's "fake" and "false" treatment of the Mexican landscape. So, while for Marten, *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* marks Aiken's work as "increasingly interested in confronting and absorbing material reality," as he also points-out, Aiken "continues to portray nature as the expression of states of mind" (159). The two are

not mutually exclusive, but Aiken seems incapable of reconciling them. Shrinking the story to a few pages in his autobiography, Aiken emphasizes the disconnect he felt while in Mexico through brevity and omission. Aiken's commentary in *Ushant* regards many of the scenes from his visit to Mexico as unusable in his short novel, writing that "even with 'filler,' or local color … the enterprise was a dubious one" (360).

Along with the other faults he identifies in the novel is that his own writing was too much influenced by the imaginary Mexico and its symbolic role, evidenced when he writes that there was too much "blood-madness, blood-worship and blood-sickness" (1952, 344) in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*. In *Ushant*, it is the same language that continues to echo Melville's *Encantadas*, as when he writes of his journey as being "into the raw, ancient, and almost reptilian, primitivism of Mexico" (343). In *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* the same imagery describes the trip as a "descent" into "the brown and blood-soaked sierras of this dark nocturnal Spain" and "the dreadful silence of the wilderness that lay outside" the train (1964, 455) a place where "everything seems poisonous" that it is "Nature red in tooth and claw" (467).[238] Blom relies too heavily on the symbolic and mythical landscapes that reinforce U.S. culture rather than ever fully coming to terms with the physical landscape and the moments of true reflection it might offer. Better to return to Boston where, for him, the two are more closely aligned. It is a remarkably insular and provincial reaction for the worldly cosmopolitan traveler to have, but such a reaction helps point to the importance of geographical awareness in the orientation of the self in the larger world.

A Heart for the Gods of Mexico ends with an implicit recognition of this idea and is well-matched with the mistaken assumption that his experience in traveling to Mexico would "write

[238] The intertextuality of the latter phrase echoes Melville and Lawrence both, but it was first a line borrowed directly from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam A.H.H." (1849).

itself." Blom's final words of the novel, "Christ, but I'm a long way from home!" are uttered in a wilderness akin to that created by the Puritans to sustain their worldview some three-hundred years prior. It is the wilderness created by the same underprepared mind that is tormented by it. Dismissing it as "meaningless" can only preclude the applicability of Aiken's otherwise strong and well-developed "alien local knowledge" to this environment. It is not enough that the reader is invited into Aiken's Boston and Cambridge, Aiken must in turn allow himself to be invited into Lowry's Cuernavaca and Mexico. Blackmur celebrates Aiken's ability to give his readers "a local habitation and a name" and Aiken would surely appreciate this assessment. It seems that his attempt to explore the "final frontier of consciousness" itself echoes Shakespeare's lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to which Blackmur alludes in his Introduction to Aiken's *Collected Novels*: "And as imagination bodies forth/ The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen/ Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing/ A local habitation and a name" (V.i.15-18). Aiken undoubtedly believed that "the poet's pen" could write with such power but, in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico*, was seemingly unaware that both subjective experience and objective reality must play a role in any such endeavor.

The result is not as dire as Aiken's assessment might have it. Returning to Marten's analysis of Aiken's novels, "By the time *Ushant* was published in 1952, Aiken had joined the vox populi in concluding the works [*A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* and *Conversation*] to be failures. Perhaps he overreacted to criticism" (125). At the same time, when Martin writes that much of the novel "turns out to be mere local color, especially in Aiken's descriptions, midway through the book, of St. Louis … and later, those of the torrid and torpid Mexicans …" (158-159),[239] the evaluation relies too heavily on Aiken's own assessment. In a certain sense,

[239] Chapter 2 of this dissertation provides a brief discussion of how "local color" and other pejoratives can contribute to understanding the more general bias against U.S. literature with a Mexican setting.

Martin's critique resembles many others that ignore the novel's geography along with the ways in which its narrative is entirely place-based, both despite and because of its movement across the landscape. The novel's structure requires the local description of cities and landscapes, which work in tandem with the progression of the arc of the railroad journey. While the harsh criticism of the prose and characterization is sometimes warranted, it usually fails to see the correlations among theme, structure and biography. Unrecognized by Aiken himself, *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* provides the reader with a depiction of how cultural influences are dispersed in geographical terms. Specifically, it demonstrates how the Puritan myth-- a single thread of U.S. culture-- is not as all-encompassing as assumed and can only be strengthened through an infusion of other such narratives.

While the book remains dissatisfying in many ways, even Greene is willing to admit that it does suggest "the modern poetry of departure." Remembering the anonymous review from *The Scotsman*, what Aiken develops is "The contrast between the journey in imagination and in fact" as well as "the effects of endless distance." As the travelers journey further from Boston and the sections gradually shrink, this contrast becomes a dominant characteristic. Blom's imagination reveals his personal limitations-- he can only reckon with facts via the Puritan myth. As this perspective becomes less relevant, he fails to apply his native "local knowledge" to an alien environment. He has less to say and less to think and, consequently, less to write. Forced to confront reality upon Noni's death, Blom's final words reveal the homesickness of the formerly self-assured cosmopolitan.

Unwittingly, then, what Aiken achieves in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is an implicit recognition that the "usable past" found in Puritan New England has a limited "usability." While important to any understanding of U.S. history and culture, it is only one of the cultures through

which a national history might be constructed and it is certainly not the only British one either.[240] So, while Williams's essays from *In the American Grain* offer to expand the range of cultural influences considered in this national narrative, what Aiken offers is equally valuable-- the extreme difficulty faced by the intellectual in understanding the original "locatedness"[241] of his own cosmopolitanism. The failure can be found in the subsequent narrowing of perspective. Instead, what Blom does is to import his own "alien" worldview, insisting that the "alien" quality is native to the Mexican environment. While Blom and Aiken both view the world around them by using Blackstone as an interpretive aid-- an emblem of New England's "usable past"-- they also fail to recognize that there are other, equally "usable" pasts that might help them understand Mexico. The very concept of a "usable past" suggests as much and one's "alien local knowledge" need not apply exclusively to the experience of physical place, but should be recognized for its relevance to the symbolic and mythical landscapes specific to other cultures and localities. In Aiken's works, Mexico and the Desert Southwest operate as the symbolic and mythical wilderness against which the individual can cultivate self-knowledge. As indicated, however, there is no essential cultural barrier between the Boston cosmopolitan and any other

[240] This is the subject of David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (1989). Fischer expands beyond Puritan New England to include the Quakers who settled the Middle-Atlantic colonies, the Cavaliers who settled Virginia, as well as the immigrants who flocked to North America's "Borderlands" and "Backcountry" for a variety of reasons, but primarily for "material betterment" (611). The intricacies of these migrations and the regionally-specific British folk traditions from which they stemmed are beyond the scope of this discussion, but Fischer's important conclusion is that "Independence did not mark the end of the four British folkways in America, or of the regional cultures which they inspired. The history of the United States is, in many ways the story of their continuing interaction" (783). Recognizing the importance of both physical and cultural geography, Fischer points to the ways in which regional characteristics of the U.S. can be traced back through time to their regional points of origin in Britain. His brief consideration of "Other Colonial Cultures" gives cursory consideration to the Dutch and the Scots, identifying the larger region of "Southern California" (including southern Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico) as "a hybrid" that includes Hispanic culture (888). Otherwise, the Spanish and French colonies are beyond the scope of Fischer's book. *Albion's Seed* can only introduce the complex interactions of culture over time and space while confined to four sub-groups of what is typically considered to be one homogeneous group of people. No single narrative can fully account for the patterns of cultural exchange in the American hemisphere.

[241] The term is borrowed from Douglas Reichert Powell's book, *Critical Regionalism* (2007), which is discussed at some length in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

culture on the American continent. Such an argument belies the very nature of cosmopolitanism. To be a "citizen of the world," one cannot pick-and-choose the regions with which one will commune but, instead, be open to the possibility of intimacy with all. To do so, however, one must be inclined to see such places as real and not as the "expression of states of mind."

Aiken inadvertently gives his reader is an example of what happens when the symbolic imagination encounters and refuses sensory experience-- or when sensory experience can only find articulation through symbolic interpretation. Blom has already adopted a mythical understanding of Mexico to his lived reality. Working toward the landscape from that point, he cannot separate the non-referential symbolism of these regions that serve his own regional worldview in order to see the place on its own terms, the things as they are. His own alien local knowledge is not applied and he does not connect with the world around him. There is no balance between the two and Blom's experience reveals how, in J. Nicholas Entrikin's words, "To ignore either aspect of this dualism is to misunderstand the modern experience of place." The geographic imagination helps to see both sides, as in it "We gain a sense of both being 'in a place' and 'at a location,' of being at the center and being at a point in a centerless world" (1991, 134). So, what one sees in *A Heart for the Gods of Mexico* is that despite being "in a place" in Mexico and in Cuernavaca, Blom only has the feeling of being "at a location" that is a long way from Boston and Cambridge.

The geographers that have aided in approaching the questions of this chapter all share this impulse toward qualitative analysis with the aid of quantitative methods. Zelinsky's historical research and Stewart's toponymy both help the student of U.S. culture to understand that concepts such as "New England Extended" find real, physical, observable expression in the ordinary landscape that most take for granted. The "interpretation of ordinary landscapes" brings

the everyday, lived experience into contact with the mythical "truths" that hold a society together. This is, in part, what is implied when Entrikin writes of the "betweenness of place." If the modern condition reveals simultaneous human needs to be "a part of a place and period" as well as "to transcend the here and now," one must live as much in the landscape of reality as in the mythical landscapes of the cultural mindset.

Without stable points of reference, Blom remains in the wilderness, on the periphery of the worldview then being constructed in Boston and Cambridge from the "usable past" of Puritan Massachusetts. The narrowness of Blom's imagination in Mexico results, paradoxically, from the boundless potential of the "American Renaissance." With the current hemispheric turn in the discipline of U.S. literary study, then, it makes sense to engage with geography and the interplay among regions as a legitimate source of cosmopolitan culture and a "geography of the imagination." To do otherwise would undermine the very project of a hemispheric, transcultural or any other enlargement of the project of U.S. literary study.

The failure of Aiken's narrative to "write itself," the assumption that some essence in Mexico will imbue the writer's or artist's sensibilities with some quality-- that it is "the surrealist country par excellence" or some such and will guide one's inspiration -- will only lead to disappointment. In observing this failure of the cosmopolitan imagination, then, the reader also finds a possible corrective.

CODA

Scattered among the many short stories of Ray Bradbury, the reader will encounter a select few that are set in Mexico, two of which can be found in *The Illustrated Man* (1951). In one of these,[242] "The Fox in the Forest,"[243] the reader meets William and Susan Travis, a husband and wife who have fled New York City to Mexico and are on the run from the law. As with many Bradbury stories, however, this straightforward premise is complicated by elements of science fiction.[244] The couple has fled the future, escaping the year 2155 where they work for a dystopian government on the brink of nuclear war. Having escaped via a time-travel agency, they choose to spend their vacation in New York City in 1938 as a pretext. Before their trip, Susan thinks to herself: "Perhaps there is a chance for us to escape, to run for centuries into a wild country of years where they will never find and bring us back to burn our books, censor our thoughts, scald our minds with fear, march us, scream at us with radios …" (176). After playing the role of inconspicuous tourists, they then "changed their clothes, their names, and had flown off to hide in Mexico!" (177). The story opens with the couple having arrived in Mexico, but not without being tracked there by secret police from their own society. By the end of the story they are captured and brought back to the future to face punishment. One of the ironies of the story is that, had William and Susan successfully evaded the secret police while in Mexico, they would not have escaped nuclear war. Early in the narrative, William comments that 1938 is "A good

[242] The other is "The Highway," which also contemplates worldwide nuclear war from the context of Mexico.
[243] First published in *Collier's* as "To the Future" (1950).
[244] These are the only two of Bradbury's stories set in Mexico that operate in this genre, however. As Drewey Wayne Gunn notes, while "Bradbury is generally thought of as a science fiction writer; these [other] tales show how wrong that assumption is" (1974a, 243). The others that Gunn includes are: "The Next in Line" (1947), "Sun and Shadow" (1953), "El Día de Muerte" (1964) and "The Life Work of Juan Díaz" (1964).

year" (172) and for a mid-century reader, the meaning is clear-- before 1939, the atomic bomb had not yet been tested, much less used.

One of Bradbury's themes is that the modern world cannot escape the realities of the atomic age-- just as there will be no avoiding the consequences of nuclear war, should it come. Choosing Mexico as a setting reinforces Bradbury's critique, as trying to escape one's historical moment, even figuratively, is futile. The long-standing role of Mexico as a symbolic landscape of escape is understood implicitly by Bradbury's reader. The advertisement Susan Travis receives from the time-travel agency offers customers the ability to vacation "in *Time* as well as Place!" (176), the reader-- already transported to Mexico-- senses the seeming appropriateness of the setting. Part of the Mexico's appeal, even today, is that it seems frozen in time, a place where one can escape modernity and find a more "authentic" existence and culture. This is all part of a symbolic interpretation of Mexico, revealing more about the U.S. audience than it does about the cultural complexities and material reality of Mexico.

As seen, it is a well-travelled route to Mexico that William and Susan Travis follow, one readily available to them in 1938, toward the end of the era under discussion-- and the symbolic landscape that attracts the couple in Bradbury's story is the same one that continues to draw travelers there still.[245] Bradbury's story captures many of the key themes from this dissertation-- and it points to prospects for future research.[246] The mid-century offers an abundance of literary

[245] One recent publication edited by Sara Nicklès, *Escape to Mexico: An Anthology of Great Fiction* (2002), explicitly uses this idea to market itself. The introduction reads: "Mexico has long been viewed not only as a place but also as a state of mind. It is a land of possibilities and extremes, of passion and intrigue, a land where you can find yourself or lose yourself, depending upon what you desire" (1). The motivation for its publication, Nicklès writes, is for the reader to "join in the varieties of experience" but also, tellingly, "so that we can compare them with our own fantasies of flight, so that we can escape vicariously" (2). While the collection does contain some notable literary works, its marketing is revealing, as it perpetuates this mindset in a manner that is unironic and oblivious.
[246] One could trace the exchange, in a much different form, to the early Spanish exploration of the contemporary Southwest. So too could this story begin with the Mexican-American War (1845-1848) and through the *Porfiriato*, the dictatorship of President Porfirio Díaz and his reign over an extended period of peace and prosperity (1876-

examples that go underappreciated and unread, although the same trends of journalism and reportage, travel writing and literary fiction move forward into the postwar era, through recent decades and into today. Mexico's role in the symbolic imagination of the U.S. is carried forward, remaining consistent but gaining nuance through subsequent historical events.

Before approaching mid-century, however, there is much more to be said about the interwar period itself. The ways in which the student might further expand the project here is to continue the fully "extensive and indiscriminate search" that Susan Noakes advocates as necessary to understand the *topos* of any symbolic landscape. The visual arts are perhaps the best way to continue the exploration of Mexico's role in the U.S. imagination, particularly through photography and film of the 1920s and 30s.[247] These are compelling media through which the project can enlarge its interdisciplinary scope, while further extending the themes seen above. Photographers active during the period at hand were significant figures in the artistic community in Mexico City as much as the painters, journalists and writers. The Mexican works of Edward Weston and Tina Modotti are well-known-- and so too is that of Paul Strand. These three form an interesting place to start, as each demonstrates a belief in the socialist ideals of the Mexican Revolution and an affinity for the folk culture of the country-- as well as the landscape of Mexico. Alongside literature, accounts of photography and film could chronicle the ways in which these fields developed through World War II and into the postwar decades. Art and architecture would further add to a sense of continuity and, throughout all of this, interesting questions of periodization come about, particularly given the physical isolation of the Americas

1911). As mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation, this is the scope taken by both Cecil Robinson and Drewey Wayne Gunn.

[247] The so-called "golden age" of Mexican cinema overlaps with the period explored above while also bringing these same issues into the mid-century.

in the context of World War II and how these factors contribute to the character of literary and artistic production at that time.

The perspective gained in crossing these boundaries of disciplinarity and periodization can be furthered by crossing more geographical boundaries. There is much to add from beyond North America to take a fully hemispheric perspective that includes Central America, South America and the Caribbean. To do so, one might begin with Waldo Frank who, although not discussed in the pages above but who was an important contributor to the "usable past" and a well-traveled advocate of its hemispheric application.[248] Alternatively, one might begin with names now familiar from the above discussion, such as Carleton Beals, whose reportage, essays and book-length studies that would include *The Crime of Cuba* (1933), as well as travelogues such as *Banana Gold* (1932) which took readers to Central America and *Rio Grande to Cape Horn* (1943) which, as its title suggests, is an account of all mainland Latin America.[249] This third book approaches these countries in the context of the Good Neighbor Policy and the specific policies the U.S. Beals provides an example of how one might begin to map the cultural relations between the U.S. and each individual country. Beals travels to educate his audience, attempting to understand how the U.S. is perceived in Latin America.[250]

In these terms, an equally exciting possibility is a fully comparative study that considers how the symbolic landscapes of the U.S., Europe and elsewhere have factored in the work of writers from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. The significance of specific locations--

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[248] One informative article is Irene Rostagno's "Waldo Frank's Crusade for Latin American Literature" (1989). Book-length examples that include Frank's meditations of these themes include *Our America* (1919) and *The Rediscovery of America* (1929), as well as *South of Us* [*América Hispana*] (1931).

[249] Beals was well-travelled and prolific and there is room for a book-length study of his work in Latin America and elsewhere. The only such publication is John A. Britton's *Carleton Beals: A Radical Journalist in Latin America* (1987).

[250] An in-depth consideration of domestic and international politics in both Mexico and the U.S. is also absent in this dissertation, but has been used to contextualize the discussion elsewhere. One recent example is Gilbert G. González's *Culture of Empire* (2004).

such as Mexico City-- to literary study would be greatly altered by considering such contrasting impressions. One of the omissions in this dissertation is that, with a few exceptions, its primary focus remained with U.S. impressions of Mexico, providing only a partial consideration of its titular "cultural exchange." Although there is room to expand on these grounds, the above chapters provide a good basis from which to begin.

The four chapters above were conceived as being essayistic and speculative, using spatial and material concerns to ground an exploration into a humanistic study of how Mexico fits into the larger symbolic framework of the U.S. imagination. Each is an attempt at bringing together diverse disciplinary concerns to see how they might inform one another in unexpected and productive ways. Each is an attempt to be self-aware as a student, recognizing the "locatedness" of academic disciplines but embracing the concept of "scale-jumping" proposed by Laura Dassow Walls; each chapter an attempt to balance different approaches to broaden and improve the understanding of the symbolic landscape of the U.S. imagination and Mexico's place in it.

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When the research and writing of this project began, there was little indication that the rhetoric heard during the 2016 U.S. election-- and subsequent presidential administration-- would reach its current pitch of xenophobia and overt prejudice. Whatever one may think about the proposed construction of a border-wall between the U.S. and Mexico, it is first and foremost symbolic. It is a tangible expression of a mindset that envisions a world in which countries stand apart as distinct sections. Such a worldview is weak and untenable. In one respect, the U.S. and Mexico might remain "distant neighbors" due to the different histories and cultures each has developed. Nonetheless, there is room to understand that, despite such outward differences, there is a great deal of shared history-- a pattern certain to mark the future as well.

Understanding this relationship has been a perennial struggle in U.S. society. One recent and sincere example can be found in an episode of Anthony Bourdain's culinary television program, *Parts Unknown*, in which he travels to various regions of the world to explore unique aspects of the cuisine. Produced before the current shift in U.S. political rhetoric, in one episode from 2014, Bourdain travels to Mexico, offering a heartfelt prologue that speaks to the current socio-political crisis that unites the U.S. and Mexico-- the so-called "war on drugs." In speaking of the "war on drugs" in the U.S., Bourdain remarks that, perhaps one of the reasons that the U.S. favors the escapist vision of Mexico, choosing to ignore the reality of Mexico's recent corruption and violence that plagues country today, is due to complicity in these problems-- providing the demand side of the supply-and-demand equation. Primarily focused on culinary issues, Bourdain is always socially aware and the episode's undercurrent is deeply concerned with the fragile state of U.S.-Mexican relations. So, when he remarks that "we have barely scratched the surface of what Mexican food really is. … It could be, should be, one of the most exciting cuisines on the planet. If we paid attention," the viewer knows what he means. "Paying attention" here means overcoming the stereotype, it means looking past the accepted images and knowing that whatever Mexico might "mean" to a U.S. audience, so too does the U.S. "mean" something to Mexico. "Paying attention" means recognizing that Mexico is "A country, with whom, like it or not, we are inexorably, deeply involved." At some point the U.S. must reach beyond the symbolic imagery to confront the reality of Mexico. It is as much a practical imperative as it is an ethical one.

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