

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: TRANSLATING THE “OTHER”: A HISTORY OF  
MODERNIST LITERATURE IN THE AMERICAN  
SOUTHWEST, 1903-1945

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William Carlos Williams wrote, “The classic is the local fully realized, words marked by a place.” There are now significant studies celebrating the “classic” regional literatures of Ireland, New England, and the American South. But what if the place is out-of-the way, and what if the words that mark it are difficult if not impossible to translate? The American Southwest is one such place, a literary region only recently coming into view. My dissertation forwards this project by focusing on how cultural work produced in the Southwest might represent the region despite the many difficulties of translation involved. Biographical, literary, historical, and archival materials allow for an interdisciplinary approach positioning Southwestern texts within the broader traditions of European and American modernism.

My chapters explore the limits of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural understanding. As with Pound’s approach to translating Chinese poetry, which did not

entail learning Chinese, Mary Austin argues that she need not master an indigenous language in order to translate Native American texts. Instead, she claims to mystically comprehend their essential meaning, thereby enabling and limiting her insights into the region. While Espinoza's *El sol de Texas* emphasizes the challenges faced by immigrants fleeing the Mexican revolution, Venegas's *Las aventuras de don Chipote* offers a model for how to cope with such challenges by a process I term "transnational mimicry." The lexical switching between English and Spanish provides numerous opportunities to mimic and mock southwestern cultural traditions, a strategy linking the region to other colonized spaces throughout the world. The texts of Luhan and Lawrence constitute spectacularly failed attempts at translating otherness. Luhan romanticized the local cultural geography, whereas Lawrence interpreted it through a Eurocentric point-of-view. Together, their work represents the epistemological limits of a vision dominated by Anglo power structures.

I conclude with Cather's southwestern novels and suggest that while *Death Comes for the Archbishop* is a novelistic illustration of Benjamin's argument that all translations are marked by at least some degree of incommunicability, it also illustrates Ricoeur's contention that a belief in translatability is foundational to any act of interpreting a text produced by an "other" human being.

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IN THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST, 1903-1945

by

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## DEDICATION

For to and because of Catherine

And now, also Issa

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## Introduction

### On the Grounds of Southwestern American Literature

The heroes and anti-heroes that organize *In the American Grain* (1925) are the scaffolds through which William Carlos Williams unearths his spectral history of American identity. The first of these haunting and slippery essays begins tellingly with a meditation on evil. Just as his father was once exiled from Norway, Eric the Red is banished from Iceland and settles in Greenland. His son, Leif Erikson, sails even farther West. There he discovers Vinland—contemporary Newfoundland—and its inhabitants, the “Skrellings,” which is Old Norse for barbarian or foreigner. Swords and axes quickly become bloodied. For Williams, the story of first contact thus involves a family of outlaws and the “barbarians” they encounter, and the violence that erupts is set against the harshest of New World environments.

The question here raised—what might it mean to kill?—is gradually transformed throughout the essays that follow, so that when Abraham Lincoln appears on the final page, the question has become, what does it mean to be killed? Agents become objects throughout these essays, many of which end with scenes of death. Such a transformation is embodied in the considerable number of corpses that haunt the text: Montezuma is stoned to death, De Soto’s men kill thousands in Florida, Sir Walter Raleigh is executed, Alexander Hamilton dies in a duel, witches are burned at the stake in Salem, Native American women are left unclothed and decapitated, Rasles’s body is mutilated, and even children meet the most brutal of ends. Williams writes that the sixteenth-century

Caribbean was stained with an “orgy of blood” (41), but such a description would have been equally a propos of how he envisioned the entire New World throughout much of the post-contact era.

Corpses quite obviously signify the destruction of lives—“What are we but poor doomed carcasses, any one of us?” (178)—but their burial also represents an American landscape in the process of being contaminated: “It [New World] was to them a carcass from which to tear pieces for their belly’s sake, a colony, a place to despise a little” (108). Williams’s obsessive notion of “ground” begins as a spatial concept rooted to the land; it is the place where the violence of American history, that “atrocious thing” (115), is literally buried. In the unearthing of that haunted history, the ground becomes an articulation of our textual traditions:

That unless everything that is, proclaim a ground on which it stand, it has no worth; and that what has been morally, aesthetically worth while [sic] in America has rested on peculiar and discoverable ground. But they think that they get it out of the air or the rivers, or from the Grand Banks or wherever it may be, instead of by word of mouth or from records contained for us in books—and that, aesthetically, morally we are deformed unless we read. (109)

While most writers in the modernist era were concerned with an expansion of identity—think here of Picasso’s African masks, Pound’s encyclopedic references, the Stein salon in Paris, T. S. Eliot’s inclusion of the entire Indo-European tradition in his notion of individual talent, and the global travels of Hemingway and Lawrence—Williams turned to the ground of American history as the primary source of his poetic inspiration. In his view, a poet “wants to have the feet of his understanding on the ground, his ground, *the* ground, the only ground that he knows, that which *is* under his

feet. I speak of aesthetic satisfaction. This want, in America, can only be filled by knowledge, a poetic knowledge, of that ground” (213).

Only when violence becomes regenerative can history transform into poetry. The texts of Christopher Columbus, Sir Walter Raleigh, Cotton Mather, and Benjamin Franklin, amongst others, all lay the groundwork for Edgar Allen Poe, who emerges as a hero to Williams for his ability to see the uniqueness of America:

It is the New World, or to leave that for the better term, it is a *new locality* that is in Poe assertive; it is America, the first great burst through to expression of a re-awakened genius of *place*. Poe gives the sense for the first time in America, that literature is *serious*, not a matter of courtesy but of truth . . . It is a movement first and last to clear the GROUND. (216)

Williams did not believe Poe was America’s first great writer because of the eccentricities of his texts, but rather because his short fiction and poetry strenuously rejected the imitation of European forms: “On him is FOUNDED a LITERATURE” (223). Poe was of course widely read and thus familiar with European texts, but according to Williams, he didn’t seek to reproduce them. Instead he allowed his critical and aesthetic vision to be shaped by that which was local. Already part of a tradition ripe for cultivation, he tapped deep into the hostile and violent vein of American history, bearing not only his own “soul,” to use Williams’s term, but the nation’s as well. Thus the ubiquitous terror in Poe’s narratives. Williams saw him as the literary expression of Daniel Boone; both pioneers faced the uniqueness of their crude culture in their own, organically developed terms.

*In the American Grain*'s grand argument is that Poe, the nation's foundational writer, must be understood through the tragic lives and failed texts that preceded him. Implicit in the claim is that American literature is mediated by a "ground," and for Williams's reading of Poe, the ground consists of English and Spanish language texts generated mostly from cultural encounters throughout the Caribbean and the Atlantic coast of North America. The geography here is telling, for Poe was born in Boston, raised in Richmond, and he later worked in New York City, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Williams's text stretches out geographically from the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions in every cardinal direction save one. He writes about Quebec and Newfoundland (North), England and France (East), and Mexico and the Caribbean (South). Daniel Boone's Kentucky and Sam Houston's Arkansas, however, constitute the western edge of his imagination. Whatever cultural otherness lies beyond the American frontier, Williams cannot read it.

Implicit in his discussion of Daniel Boone are interrelated sets of binaries that mask this blind spot: Anglo versus Native American, city versus wilderness, Old World civilization versus New World experience, etc. The West seems to appear as a kind of opening for the transformation of identity, a place so free that a man with a sufficient degree of courage and willpower can become a national hero. However, the appearance of such a spatial chimera is dependent on a set of negatives: not Anglo, not urban, not civilized. The West turns out to be little more than "not East." The logic is derived from Frederick Jackson Turner, whose essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893), followed in the footsteps of J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's letter,

“What Is an American” (1782), by arguing that the frontier was the “meeting point between savagery and civilization” (32). It served as a repository of organic American cultural traits that he thereby attempted to elucidate. His “frontier thesis” argued that the culture of westward-moving settlers best revealed the country’s unique character, celebrated the rough individualism of the Anglo male inhabitants of the region, and simultaneously claimed that the U.S. frontier was and would forever remain closed, yielding instead to a process of increasing industrialization and national unity. The frontier created the conditions necessary for a kind of democratic utopia, which relied upon the will, resourcefulness, and freedom of the individual settlers to transform the wildness of the landscape. Again, the emphasis here is on how the West first transforms, and then subsequently becomes, the East. The uniqueness of the region remains concealed.

The literature of the American West personalizes this history. From James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* (1823-1841) to Mark Twain’s *Roughing It* (1872), Bret Harte’s numerous vignettes, Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* (1902), and Zane Grey’s *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912), nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American literature often envisioned the West by constructing scenarios in which Anglo men became heroes by encountering otherness. There was an underlying formula to these narratives: the hero relied on his inventiveness, courage, individualism, etc.—all traits that Turner alleged were organically American—whereas otherness was sometimes represented by class, gender, and religion, but most often it was marked through racial and geographical differences. Race and geography became linked through the concept of

the frontier, a mode of cultural demarcation that concealed the violence of westward American imperialism by fetishizing acts of alleged Anglo heroism. The Anglo hero is changed through his experiences, but the transformation of those he meets is either ignored or dealt with rather superficially.

As any number of “New Western” historians have now pointed out, Turner’s thesis masked an ideology of conquest and colonialism, and his bifurcations were rife with inconsistencies. On the one hand, the frontier was where civilization encountered savagery, and yet it was also where the corroding civilization of the East yielded to a more natural world infused with Edenic goodness. And while the frontier was a space where democracy apparently flourished, at least for Anglos, it was simultaneously threatened by the advancements of new people in search of land that was free only if one ignored the presence of Native Americans and Hispanics already living there. Because they would challenge the descriptive power of Turner’s frontier thesis, the developed towns throughout the Southwest, such as Santa Fe (founded in 1610) and Acoma Pueblo (founded in the thirteenth century), were never mentioned by him.

Turner’s nostalgia about the closure of the frontier, echoed in Williams, was part of a transnational awareness that the age of exploration was coming to an end. Joseph Conrad, to take one representative example, lamented in his preface to Richard Curle’s *Into the East* that “the days of heroic travel are gone” (67). In the United States, this meant the otherness beyond the frontier, which again, neither Turner nor Conrad could envision without relying heavily on a worldview mediated by conditions outside the

region, would now be part of the nation. In other words, the ground of American literature was about to shift seismically westward.

In the Southwest, the literature prior to 1893 consisted mostly of government documents and travel narratives, the most important of which were Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies* (1844), John Wesley Powell's *Exploration of the Colorado River of the West and Its Tributaries* (1875), and the Nevada sections of Mark Twain's *Roughing It* (1872). Ethnographic texts began to appear with regularity by the late nineteenth century, from the amateurish writings of John Gregory Bourke to the more sophisticated treatises of Washington Matthews and Adolph Bandelier. The latter also wrote a novel about Pueblo culture, *The Delight Makers* (1890), a form also explored by Eusebio Chacón in *El hijo de la tempestad* (1892) and *Tras la tormenta la calma* (1892). Dime novels, which sometimes dealt with the Southwest, especially through sensationalist narratives involving the U.S.-Mexican War, were also quite common.

These texts, however, were unable to find much of an audience and thus did little to alter the ground of American literature. The situation began to change when Charles Lummis published a number of books about the region throughout the 1890s. He was the most popular early modernist to think about the Southwest as a region, finding ways to promote it despite the growing Anglo distrust of Hispanics that culminated with the advent of the Spanish-American War. *The Land of Poco Tiempo* (1893) was a historically important text; its tropes served as precursors for much of the early twentieth-century regionalist and modernist writing about the Southwest. He envisioned the region as a space of otherness that was both a part of, and yet also separate from, the rest of the

country. New Mexico, for example, was “the Great American Mystery—the National Rip Van Winkle—the United States which is *not* Unties States” (3). It would be a theme later explored most significantly by Mabel Dodge Luhan in the 1930s. She argued that Taos, New Mexico not only served as a personal site of healing in that it reversed the failed relationships, sexual dissatisfaction, and depression that had plagued her throughout her life, but also that it had the potential to become a place of renewal for the psychological and artistic fragmentation of the post-War era. For both Luhan and Lummis, the desert geography and cultural diversity of the Southwest functioned as an alternative space inside the nation with both material and conceptual components, and as such it offered rich possibilities for aesthetic novelty and identity formation.

Another rhetorical tactic Lummis used to strengthen his position as a popular interpreter of the Southwest was an argument that without his expert knowledge, the region’s mysteries would remain hidden from the majority of Anglos. This would become a dominant theme in early twentieth-century southwestern literature and anthropology, one that reached its modernist apex with the career of Mary Austin. Her first book, *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), was based on her observations of the cultural geography of the Californian desert, and while it empowered Paiute culture, it simultaneously authorized Austin to be their cultural translator because they were unable to articulate the significance of their traditions: “Every Indian woman is an artist,—sees, feels, creates, but does not philosophize about her processes” (95). Only Austin, a transplant to California from Illinois, can complete the narrative. She would later theorize the relationship between Native artist and Anglo interpreter in *The American Rhythm*



(1923) and *Earth Horizons* (1932), works in which she explained her mystical ability to psychically understand Native American songs and stories without necessarily knowing the original languages.

Austin's claims test the limits of cross-cultural knowledge and also raise an issue germane to all of the texts under consideration in the present study—the issue of *translation*. Both Luhan and Austin claimed in different ways to “speak” for the Native American, yet neither of them were fluent in any of the Tanoan or Numic languages. On the other hand, texts by Native Americans from the region, such as Geronimo's *His Own Story* (1905), Hosteen K'ha's *Navajo Creation Myth* (1942), and Don Talayesva's *Sun Chief* (1942), often had to rely on Anglo intermediaries to transcribe and translate their texts into English. In fact, some anthropological translations of Native American songs were made without tribal permission. Most of the Spanish-language literature in the Southwest was simply left untranslated and unread, and this helped to permit Anglo intermediaries such as Charles Lummis to write about Hispanic culture with an assumed authority they did not possess. Again, very few of these intermediaries were fluent in Spanish. The central question concerning the modernist era literature of the Southwest, then, is how might a Native American, Hispanic, or Anglo writer “carry over”—*transmit*—his or her knowledge of the region when that knowledge is obscured by a language gap.

Such epistemological issues were part of a larger modernist movement of artists and writers that turned away from purely Western European models of representation. By the 1870s, a large number of African sculptures arrived in Europe, and they were initially

treated as colonial artifacts instead of aesthetic objects. However, early modernists such as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso in Paris, and Paul Klee in Munich, were soon drawn to the ways in which these sculptures abstractly represented the human figure, thereby providing an alternative to the naturalism that had dominated European art. The colonialist logic embedded in the distinction between civilized and primitive cultures thus seemingly became inverted, and this was symptomatic of widespread cultural changes that were on the horizon. As Virginia Woolf famously commented on the exhibition, “Manet and the Post-Impressionists” (1924), which introduced the work of Picasso and Matisse to the British public, “in or about December, 1910, human character changed” (320).

Gertrude Stein, whose salon at 27 rue de Fleurus was a gathering place for vanguard writers and artists prior to the outbreak of World War I, was similarly influenced by racial otherness. She utilized an African American dialect in “Melanctha” (1909), an act that critic Michael North has termed “racial ventriloquism” (v). North goes on to note that Joseph Conrad engaged in a similar linguistic project with his depiction of James Wait, a dying West Indian black sailor, in the novella, *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”* (1897). T. S. Eliot draws on a number of linguistic traditions in *The Waste Land* (1922), including untranslated phrases from French, German, Sanskrit, Italian, Greek, and Latin. His poem famously ends with “Shantih, shantih, shantih” (1431), a Sanskrit mantra found in numerous Hindu texts, including the *Upanishads*, which Eliot studied at Harvard under the guidance of the famous American Indologist, Charles Lanman.

Other writers didn't rely quite so heavily on dialect or textual source material, but they nevertheless tacitly claimed to speak from a point-of-view that was older than their culture. After the trauma of World War I, D. H. Lawrence embarked on what he termed a "savage pilgrimage" in a letter to John Middleton Murry. Except for a pair of brief visits to Britain, he spent the rest of life in voluntary exile, travelling to Australia, Italy, Sri Lanka, the United States, Mexico, and France. His novel about Mexico, *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), thinks through what it might mean for a Western woman to convert to a pre-Christian cult.

While critics of Ernest Hemingway have often focused their attention on representations of masculinity, it is also true that Native Americans, African Americans, and Africans make recurring appearances throughout his canon. Furthermore, the issue of racial otherness complicated Hemingway's very identity. At times he publicized the fiction that his grandmother was one-eighth Cheyenne, and in 1953 during his second trip to Africa, he shaved his head, tanned his skin, and considered scarring his face with tribal designs. At various times throughout his career, Hemingway seems to have felt trapped in an inauthentic culture, and he attempted to escape this alienation by self-identifying with "primitive" identities. As Gina M. Rossetti has argued in *Imagining the Primitive in Naturalist and Modernist Literature*, this type of posturing offered a seeming kind of escape from the numerous difficulties of early twentieth-century life.

Modernist figures in other fields also turned to an interest in the "primitive." Relying on the fieldwork of others, James Frazer's offered the last great metanarrative of the nineteenth century with his massive anthropological study of religion and folklore,

*The Golden Bough* (1890). He detailed belief systems from around the world in order to argue that all cultures could be located within one of three phases of evolution depending on whether their worldviews were mostly governed by magical, religious, or scientific thinking. Sigmund Freud's interest also stretched backwards in time, and he collected more than 2000 antiquities from ancient Rome, Greece, Assyria, Egypt, and other cultures. Viewing history's "buried treasures" could be seen as a representation of a patient gradually becoming aware of her previously unconscious thoughts.

The career of Ezra Pound provides one of the most dramatic literary attempts to translate an ancient culture into a modern idiom. In 1913, the recently widowed Mary Fenollosa gave to Pound the unpublished notebooks of her husband, Ernest Fenollosa, the late Orientalist scholar. Fenollosa's various notes on Li Bo became the source material for the poems that appeared in Pound's *Cathay* (1915). Four years later, Pound would cement his theory of translation with the publication of an essay, written mostly by Fenollosa, on the poetic importance of the ideogram entitled, "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" (1919). It should be noted that the essay is inconsistent, and so while in one section Fenollosa argues for the primacy of verbs in Chinese, elsewhere he suggests that the language functions without any parts of speech: "The fact is that almost every written Chinese word is properly just such an underlying word, and yet it is *not* abstract. It is not exclusive of parts of speech, but comprehensive; not something which is neither a noun, verb, or adjective, but something which is all of them at once and at all times" (51). This latter point-of-view is seemingly reflected in the very architecture of the Chinese character, which consists of juxtaposed elements that

lack any connecting grammatical linkages. Such a perspective not only affects how a translator should approach her work—"In translating Chinese, verse especially, we must hold as closely as possible to the concrete force of the original, eschewing adjectives, nouns, and intransitive forms wherever we can, and seeking instead strong and individual verbs" (50)—but it also would later become the theoretical foundation for the development of English-language Imagism. Mirroring the construction of a Chinese character, Imagist poems typically relied on the combination of concrete images, which would gradually become synthesized into a metaphoric abstraction. This was a radical model of poetics in that it turned away from previous Western modes, and instead privileged the linguistic tradition of China.

Pound would later expand on his theory of translation in his essay, "Guido's Relations" (1929). He differentiated between an "interpretative translation," which could be read along with a foreign text for the purposes of linguistic elucidation, and "the other sort" of translation constituting an entirely new poem that "falls simply in the domain of original writing, or if it does not it must be censured according to equal standards, and praised with some sort of just deduction, assessable only in the particular case" (93). A similar distinction has more recently been made by Lawrence Venuti, who has noted that the history of translation theory can be chronicled as a "set of changing relationships between the relative autonomy of the translated text, or the translator's actions, and two other categories: equivalence and function" (5). Equivalence here is akin to linguistic accuracy, and function refers to the ways in which the translated text is read. While there has been disagreement as to whether or not equivalence ought to amount to a word-for-

word literalism, its importance in the history of translation theory has been emphasized by everyone from Cicero to Quintilian, Jerome, Dryden, Schleiermacher, and Arnold. What makes Pound's theory of translation so novel is his general resistance to this genealogy. For him, one need not actually be able to read Chinese, or presumably any other language, in order to translate it.

Many sinologists have objected to Pound's translations by arguing that his obsession with ideographs amounted to a significant misunderstanding of written Chinese. He wrongly believed, for example, that Chinese characters were pictographically self-evident. Furthermore, he felt free to elaborate on, and at times elide, aspects of the original poem. This resulted in very little China being present in Pound's Chinese poems, a point R. John Williams makes when he observes the ambiguity in T.S. Eliot's claim that Pound was "the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time" (147). Other critics have not been so dismissive. Zhaoming Qian, for example, argues that Pound's heightened intuition allowed him to accurately understand the original poems, and Xiaomei Chen has suggested that Pound should not be singled out for ridicule since all translations are necessarily mistranslations.

Regardless of how one ultimately interprets Pound's Chinese poetry, it was a remarkable attempt to "carry over," and its importance in the literary history of modernism is unquestionable. Other major writers were also either engaged in acts of translation, or they required their readers to interpret more than one language. Both Yeats and H. D. translated Greek, Wallace Stevens titled some of his work in French, William Carlos Williams used Spanish, *Finnegan's Wake* (1939) contains sixty or so languages,

and *The Waste Land* is similarly multilingual. In his 1929 essay, "How to Read," Pound actually asserted that "English literature lives on translation, it is fed by translation; every new exuberance, every new heave is stimulated by translation, every allegedly great age is an age of translations" (34-35). As Steven G. Yao argued, literary translation is not a minor method of literary creation, but rather constitutes the central act of modernist cultural productions. If this is true, however, then areas of concentrated linguistic hybridity, such as the American Southwest, become key sites in the narrative of modernism.

Given that numerous modernist texts were helixed around issues of translation, it is perhaps not surprising that Mary Austin found it necessary to develop her own theory of translation in order to adequately represent the cultural landscapes of the Southwest. Like William Carlos Williams, she was interested in uncovering the ground of American literature, but like Ezra Pound, her translations were creative to the point that anthropologists trained in various Native American languages accused her of significant linguistic distortion. She claims, for example, that "Earth Horizon," a central metaphysical concept that she explores throughout her autobiography of the same name, comes directly from a Pueblo rain song; however, there is no evidence this is true. Instead, it appears Earth Horizon is her own invention, and thus she ends up translating herself more than any Pueblo text. She articulates her theory of translation in *The American Rhythm* (1923), where she argues, much like Zhaoming Qian's reading of Pound, that she need not master an indigenous language because she is able to utilize her

genius in order to intuit the meaning of Native songs, stories, and poems. My first chapter traces how this position altered the trajectory of her career.

Although Mary Austin attempts to speak for Native Americans, other southwestern writers would come to resist the power structures that allowed her this privilege. Within this oscillation, the literature of the Southwest is a specific, historical instance of what Günter H. Lenz has called “border discourses”:

These border discourses that explore the analytical and political potential of concepts such as cultural translation, transculturation, border cultures, *mestizaje/mestiza* consciousness, cultural hybridity, creolization, and diaspora address the processes of the construction of cultural difference and otherness in the encounters of cultures and elaborate the various dimensions of inter- and intracultural difference in the constitution and reconstitution of multiple, plurivocal cultural identities and communities. (12)

Lenz goes on to suggest that border discourses gesture towards the effects of colonialism and imperialism, but they also highlight the processes of resistance, and this is discernible in the region’s literary texts. If Surprise Valley in *Riders of the Purple Sage* engaged in a utopic construction that inverted American history in such a way that ethical innocence could be created and maintained throughout the processes of U.S. imperial expansion, there also existed textual counter-sites that doubted, counteracted, and resisted certain sets of national cultural linkages.

My second chapter explores an example of this resistance by turning to a trio of Spanish language texts that deal with the processes of immigration and emigration between Mexico and the United States during the Mexican revolution. I argue that Conrado Espinoza’s novel, *El sol de Texas* (1926), envisioned the United States as a



Gothic hellscape for new immigrants, a situation that Francisco Madero alluded to in his political treatise, *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* (1908). However, Daniel Venegas's *Las aventuras de don Chipote, o cuando los pericos mamen* (1928) offers a model for how to resist such challenges by employing a strategy I term "transnational mimicry." He constructs a binational, comic character who could switch between Spanish and English, and thus he was able both to mimic and mock the racist sentiments of the United States.

By tracing the connections between Mexican, Mexican American, and Anglo literary productions in the Southwest, this project intervenes in the transnational turn of modernist studies that was largely initiated with the publication of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*. Gilroy offers one of the more lucid accounts of modernism's encounter with alterity by elaborating on W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of double consciousness to include a strategy for those who are both European and black through a critical positioning that is clearly influenced by Homi K. Bhabha. Resisting the idea that ethnic difference entails an absolute break in the histories of "blacks" and "whites," Gilroy offers a hybrid theory of creolization and goes on to suggest that we must read black experiences, specifically the African diaspora, into the concepts of modernism and postmodernism if they are to carry adequate explanatory weight.

*The Black Atlantic* is a worthwhile challenge to the holistic view of modernity as conceptualized within the discourse of the master race, for it inverts the relationship between margin and center that appear within Eurocentric theories. Since its publication, modernist studies scholars have become increasingly engaged in rethinking the relationships between "high modernism" and those texts, authors, strategies, and spaces

that have previously been of peripheral concern. Following Raymond Williams, who famously asked, “When was modernism?,” effectively altering the modernist canon with the infusion of an elastic historicity, Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker have recently asked the questions: Where was modernism, and how did its North Atlantic ideology of artistic novelty contrast with the alleged provincialism in more racially diverse spaces? Yet despite this geographical turn, relatively little scholarship has been produced that focuses on the American Southwest. One question that I will return to throughout this study: if Ortega y Gasset was correct in “The Dehumanization of Art” (1924) about the margins of modernity being a more interesting site of cultural production than the metropolises, how then would the contours of modernist studies change were we to locate more centrally the previously marginalized American Southwest?

My final chapter returns to Williams Carlos Williams’s notion of ground. By arguing that the first 350 years of hemispheric American literature set the groundwork for the success of the continent’s first great writer, Edgar Allen Poe, Williams implies that a good deal of literature constituted a failure. The failures were interesting, of course, especially when they expressed the desire to belong to the New World, but literary excellence could not be achieved without first inventing a tradition, and this process was generations in the making. Southwestern literature has a similar history; until the publication of Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* (1968), and Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* (1977), the region lacked great writers, in part because such figures would have the complex task of navigating between Native American, Hispanic, Mexican, and Anglo cultural traditions. For the

writers that preceded Anaya, Momaday, and Silko, their work is most generously interpreted through a preparatory lens. Their failures, of course, were deeply felt by their authors, and this was nowhere truer than in the texts and life of Mabel Dodge Luhan. She helped transform Taos into the most important art colony in the Southwest, but as Geneva M. Gano has noted about her colleagues in Carmel, she oscillated between modernist and, to use a term by T. J. Jackson Lears, “antimodernist” (xv) forms of expression. Her story is intimately entwined with D. H. Lawrence, and it comprises the final chapter in my study.

“Translating the Other: A History of Modernist Literature in the American Southwest, 1903-1945” is thus a history of regional literature prior to its emergence as “high art,” and it situates this history within the broader tradition of modernism. Indeed, as Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel have demonstrated in *Geomodernisms*, modernism is now understood as a global, divergent, and multidirectional set of projects that varies widely depending on local cultural conditions. And yet, with the exception of Audrey Goodman’s *Translating Southwestern Landscapes*, which deals only with Anglo writers, and Chris Schedler’s *Border Modernism*, which doesn’t specifically focus on southwestern writers, no critic has analyzed the texts, forms, and practices of modernism by locating them with the specific space of the Southwest. Instead, many critics have limited their studies of early twentieth-century southwestern literature to one particular ethnic group. For example, Mary Pat Brady’s *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies* traces how Chicana literature has contested the terms of capitalist spatial formations, Eric Gary Anderson discusses Apache resistance and migration in *American Indian*

*Literatures and the Southwest*, and Genaro M. Padilla offers socio-cultural readings of formative Mexican American narratives in *My History, Not Yours*. As important as these studies are, my study fills in an interpretive gap by mapping out the issues of translation and failure in the Southwest during a time of uncontrollable change and discontinuity, thereby recovering the literary traditions of a multicultural space that has been neglected for far too long by modernist studies scholars.

## Chapter 1

### Mary Austin's Theories of Translation

Here is the standard précis of Mary Austin's biography: her mother was cold, her childhood in Illinois lonely, and later, after she moved to California, her family life remained troubled. She left her husband, who could not seem to find steady work, and subsequently placed her daughter in an institution because she could no longer solely care for her special needs. Originally a regional outsider, she relied on a sharp empiricism to become a prolific and sympathetic interpreter of the Southwest's cultural landscape. Although her presence in the desert was part of the nineteenth-century colonization of the American West, she nevertheless became a great activist in her day for Hispanics and especially Native Americans, even if the latest generation of scholars now argues that her writing suffers from a certain degree of cultural appropriation. Her books, especially those published early in her career, employed sparse, yet beautifully cadenced prose to describe the specificities of desert life. Locating the cultural heart of the nation in the Southwest, she was one of the great regional writers of the early twentieth century. Always more than a field guide, she allowed herself to be changed by her new environment, and this transformation resulted in a new, hybridized identity serving as a feminist model for other women.

It is a life story that has been told and retold in conference papers, articles, dissertations, critical books, and five different biographies: T. M. Pearce's *Mary Hunter Austin* (1965), Augusta Fink's *I-Mary* (1983), Esther Lanigan Stineman's *Mary Austin:*

*Song of a Maverick* (1989), Peggy Pond Church's *Wind's Trail: The Early Life of Mary Austin* (1990), and most recently, Susan Goodman's and Carl Dawson's *Mary Austin and the American West* (2009). Due to the overlap and repetition of material in these biographies, the contours of Austin's life story now seem to be a given, and thus serve as a virtual starting place for most contemporary critical readings of her texts. Of course, any biography is bound to gloss over, convert, and elide certain details. However, in Austin's case, a rather significant omission has occurred. While her critics are in agreement that she came to see herself as someone who could translate Native American texts and belief systems to the rest of the country, the ramifications of this interpretive position have not yet been adequately appreciated.

In order to correct this critical blind spot, I will trace out the ways in which Austin's attempts to speak for the "other" resulted in increasingly radical translations. This will raise a series of problems to be explored in detail: what is her theory of translation; how did it change throughout the course of her career; and how do these changes shape and reflect the texts that she ultimately wrote? To answer these questions, I will provide a close reading of her first and most successful book, *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), supplementing it with a brief analysis of *Lost Borders* (1909). I will then discuss how her theory of translation changed with the publication of *American Rhythm: Studies and Reëxpressions of Amerindian Songs* (1923). Finally, I will critique the fruits of this change in *One-Smoke Stories* (1934). When necessary, I will also draw on her autobiography, *Earth Horizon* (1932).

## Mary Austin's Early Theory of Translation

Octavio Paz noted that translations once illustrated the essential similarities within humanity—think here of how translated religious texts were once thought to perfectly replicate the originals—but this began to change in the modern, scientific era: “A plurality of languages and societies: each language is a view of the world, each civilization is a world. The sun praised in an Aztec poem is not the sun of the Egyptian hymn, although both speak of the same star” (153). Paz argued that by the eighteenth century, individual languages came to be understood as a way of seeing and interpreting the world in entirely unique manners. Translation was subsequently concerned with differences, not similarities.

Austin's legacy in the Southwest began when she found a language that could describe the desert like no other previous writer had managed to do. *The Land of Little Rain* blurred the boundaries between music and prose. It was a beautifully written text describing isolated places that few people in 1903 could access. The severity of the climate instilled a deep sense of smallness and alienation in those who lived there. Every chapter invoked a separate place, such as “Shoshone Land,” “Jimville,” “The Mesa Trail,” and “The Little Town of the Grape Vines,” and she arranged her collection in such a way that the effect of the whole became more than the sum of the individual essays. “Truth” is embedded in the minutia of each particular narrative, and it thus remained partial. In the preface, she wrote:

I confess to a great liking for the Indian fashion of name-giving: every man known by that phrase which best expresses him to whoso names him. Thus he may be Mighty-Hunter, of Man-Afraid-of-a-Bear, according as he is called by friend or enemy, and Scar-Face to those who knew him by the eye's grasp only. No other fashion, I think, sets so well with the various natures that inhabit in us, and if you agree with me you will understand why so few names are written here as they appear in the geography . . . But if the Indians have been there before me, you shall have their name, which is always beautifully fit and does not originate in the poor human desire for perpetuity . . . And I am in no mind to direct you to delectable places toward which you will hold yourself less tenderly than I. So by this fashion of naming I keep faith with the land and *annex* (italics mine) to my own estate a very great territory to which none has a surer title. (3-4)

Austin defers to Native American names, a gesture that seems to respect indigenous culture while simultaneously alerting her reader to the ethnographic knowledge that she possesses. Lois Rudnick has suggested that despite writing in English, Austin nevertheless discarded Anglo names because the Native American languages “express the land’s natural characteristics rather than the individual discoverer’s ego” (16). Actually, Austin still managed to “annex” a certain territory—the land of little rain—as her own.

The concept of annexation seems to be carefully chosen; she was obviously aware of her family’s participation in the movement West, a movement that led to indigenous disenfranchisements. Unlike the more violent forms of western expansion committed by Anglo colonizers, Austin, to return here to Paz, relied on Native American names as a way to see and interpret the desert differently than her Anglo predecessors. Her preface constructs a relationship between the social geography of the landscape, the narrator, and the audience, and as Beth Harrison has persuasively argued, the complexities of these relationships are one of Austin’s central concerns. Austin essentially presents herself as a



conduit; Native Americans will speak through her, and she will accurately deliver the message to her readers, or so she claims.

The structure of the first chapter reflects Austin's own personal adaptation to the landscape over a number of years. In the opening pages, she sees it as a dangerous wasteland, a "land of lost rivers, with little in it to love" (10-11), but then there is a rather telling transition that transpires approximately halfway through the chapter when she comes to find beauty in the barrenness: "If one is inclined to wonder at first how so many dwellers came to be in the loneliest land that ever came out of God's hands, what they do there and why stay, one does not wonder so much after having lived there. None other than this long brown land lays such a hold on the affections" (15). By the end of the chapter, the mysterious land has come to possess great beauty. It has the potential to provide spiritual refuge: "for all the toll the desert takes of a man it gives compensations, deep breaths, deep sleep, and the communion of the stars" (17). Austin thus presents herself as having been transformed from a regional outsider to an adept interpreter of the landscape, all within the opening chapter.

She then moves to a discussion of animals and their ability to interpret the world in ways that surpass human recognition. They are not guided "from any mechanical promptings of instinct" (24); rather, these desert animals possess secrets that humans can decode through careful observation: "the coyote is your true water-witch, one who snuffs and paws, snuffs and paws again at the smallest spot of moisture-scented earth until he has freed the blind water from the soil" (22). Beverly A. Hume has suggested that Austin's animals "live in a complex interdependence" (404) that allows them to be

seemingly more conscious of their fellow animals than humans are to one another. At the very least, Austin is a careful observer of the hawk, the coyote, and the quail.

Later, in one of the most intimate scenes in the book, a pocket hunter is caught in a knee-deep snowstorm on Waban. He stumbles into a cedar shelter where a flock of wild sheep was spending the night and snuggles in with them to survive: “[The] morning woke him shining on a white world. Then the very soul of him shook to see the wild sheep of God stand up about him, nodding their great horns beneath the cedar roof, looking out on the wonder of the snow” (48). What is true about the pocket hunter is true for Austin as well—he is at home amongst the plants and animals of the desert—but the difference is that Austin also needs to hear his story. She is, in fact, as much an ethnographer as a naturalist.

Austin’s representations of Anglo men consistently resist the romanticizations of Bret Harte, a point she explicitly makes in “Jimville—a Bret Harte Town” when she distinguishes her own form of regionalism from that of her predecessor. “If it had been in mediæval times you would have had a legend or a ballad. Bret Harte would have given you a tale. You see in me a mere recorder, for I know what is best for you; you shall blow out this bubble from your own breath” (68). She goes on to criticize those Western writers who dramatize the lawlessness of the region: “Life, its performance, cessation, is no new thing to gape and wonder at” (72). The tacit argument here is that whereas Harte marginalizes the Native American to celebrate the miner in a most dramatic fashion, she intends to write about both groups, not romantically, but as she actually encounters them.

Austin's depictions of Native Americans in "Shoshone Land" and "The Basket Maker," and Hispanics in "The Little Town of the Grapevines," were at the foreground of a radical shift in ethnographical writing. Late-nineteenth-century anthropology was primarily comparativist in approach, and the field tried to place cultural differences within various teleological frameworks. For example, James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890) detailed belief systems from around the world in order to argue that all cultures could be located within one of three phases of evolution depending on whether their worldviews were mostly governed by magical, religious, or scientific thinking. Austin rejected such an approach, instead adopting the point-of-view that Europe and North America were no more advanced than indigenous societies. Her approach prefigured Franz Boas's cultural relativism in *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911) as well as Bronislaw Malinowski's participant-observation method, which he developed in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922).

In "Shoshone Land," Austin relies entirely on Winnenap for her narrative. He first taught her about the land, and it is his story that she attempts to recreate. Like other Paiute medicine men, he is killed because he is unable to heal his people against the new diseases brought by Anglos, including measles and smallpox. The essay does not sentimentally pause to mourn what this death might mean in terms of larger historical trends; rather, Austin claims for herself a certain degree of power when she writes that "there was never any but Winnenap who could tell and make it worth telling about Shoshone Land" (59). It is no longer possible to speak with the original storyteller, so the reader must rely on the next best thing, which is Austin's rendition of Winnenap and his

storied relationship to the land. She is thus a translator, and to return to Octavio Paz's argument that translation in the modern era was primarily concerned with differences, she alone could give her readers epistemic access to the particularities of Winnemá's Shoshone Land.

This is a dynamic that later becomes amplified in "The Basket Maker," which narrates the life of Seyavi, who is blind and immobile from old age. Austin is able to spend time with her and with the other elderly women of the village. The details of her biography are representative of the struggles many Native Americans had experienced in the latter half of the twentieth century: "she lost her mate in the dying struggle of his race" (93) and she was subsequently raped by Anglo hunters. Seyavi was an artist. Her bowls were "wonders of technical precision, inside and out, the palm finds no fault with them, but the subtlest appeal is in the sense that warns us of humanness in the way the design spreads into the flare of the bowl" (95). Such baskets can be read, and thus also translated. Austin proceeds accordingly, detailing not only the physical processes involved—the cutting of willow, the ritualistic recitation of songs, etc.—but also suggesting that the baskets actually represent a "philosophy of life" (95). The essay can thus be read as an attempt to understand and translate that philosophy. It ends with an allusion to the death that awaits Seyavi in the very near future, and again, the implication here is that the original storyteller has been lost to history. When Austin writes that "every Indian woman is an artist,—sees, feels, creates, but does not philosophize about her process" (95), she is implying that Native Americans are either unable or unwilling to translate their cultural values and worldviews in such a way that the rest of the country

can understand. Communication must therefore occur through Austin, who is effectively the sole person able to retell these stories, folktales, and biographies so that Anglos can appreciate them. Again, she sees herself as a bridge, a go-between, and a translator. The seemingly omniscient point-of-view of this essay functions structurally to strengthen her as an authority.

The beauty of her language becomes part of the argument. Indeed, her rhythmic prose is clear, precise, powerfully expressive, and sounds as if it has been influenced by an oral tradition. Like Seyavi, her worldview is delivered through the medium of her art. David Wyatt has noted that “*The Land of Little Rain* is a book of great sentences” (82), and that Austin utilizes syntax for “relief from a world of minute particulars” (84).

Consider, for example, this passage from “Shoshone Land”:

Just as the mesa twilights have their vocal note in the love call of the burrowing owl, so the desert spring is voiced by the mourning doves. Welcome and sweet they sound in the smoky mornings before breeding time, and where they frequent in any great numbers water is confidently looked for. Still by the springs one finds the cunning brush shelters from which the Shoshones shot arrows at them when the doves came to drink. (58)

The rhythm of these declarative sentences actually mimics the variations between the songs of the burrowing owl and the mourning dove. The vowels in the first sentence are all short, mirroring the high pitched calls of the burrowing owls, and the repetition of the labial m’s and v’s creates pauses that are similar to the owl’s fleeting gaps between notes. Likewise, the second sentence consists of five sibilants and four long e’s, which gestures towards the softer, more drawn out “coo’oos” of the mourning dove. The Shoshones in the third sentence are an integral part of the landscape, blending in so well

that the doves could not actually see them. Austin briefly alludes to the birds' deaths, but as in Seyavi's characterization in "The Basket Maker," she does not sentimentally hover over the moment. Death is part of life, and the desert here is thus depicted in all its beauty and harshness.

Her essays are filled with rich descriptions—the stink of buzzards, lizards panting in the heat, and the bathing practices of the roadrunner—and this empiricism proves her expertise as a translator of the desert's cultural geography. At this early date in her career, her theory of translation is akin to a poetic form of ethnography. Through careful study and observation, she gradually comes to know the land and its people, and she utilizes her knowledge to translate the lived experiences in this part of the world to outsiders. For her, what matters most is that her writing accurately reflects the depth of her experiences and observations.

Austin's theory of translation became progressively more interpretive, and there is a hint of this in her collection of essays, *Lost Borders*. "The Woman at the Eighteen-Mile" opens around a campfire. Austin listens to a tale about a dead man in Death Valley, but the storyteller doesn't know the full story. Over the course of seven years, Austin must gather other fragments of the story from other storytellers, but the full scope of the narrative eludes her until she meets the Woman at the Eighteen-Mile:

She had the desert mark upon her—lean figure, wasted bosom, the sharp, upright furrow between the eyes, the burned tawny skin, with the pallid streak of the dropped eyelids, and of course I suppose she knew her husband from among the lean, sidling, vacuous-looking borderers; but I couldn't have identified him, so like he was to the other feckless men whom the desert sucks dry and keeps dangling like gourds on a string. (205)

Austin's eye for detail is on full display here, and the passage is a remarkable blend of regionalism's local color and modernism's tendency to play with narrative forms. The Woman at the Eighteen-Mile will help Austin finally stitch together the story of the dead man, but her version of the story requires Austin to revise some of her previous beliefs and assumptions. However, the importance of the original story slowly fades as the friendship between the two women starts to grow. The focus of the story shifts from an adventure tale about a dead man to how two women bond through story. In the process, Austin comes to realize the true value and importance of the narrative. The woman's "story was all she had" (210), but it was nevertheless enough, somehow, to keep her emotionally nourished out in the extreme solitude and isolation of the Californian desert.

There is yet one additional twist. The Woman at the Eighteen-Mile reminds Austin that she has promised not to tell her story because it would dishonor the man she had once loved. Austin agrees to keep her word, but only for as long as the woman is alive. She never explicitly mentions it, but the publication of her essay entails that the woman has passed away.

"The Woman at the Eighteen-Mile" is a remarkable piece of writing that marks a shift in Austin's approach to translation. Whereas the essays that comprise *The Land of Little Rain* grow out of Austin's direct observations of the landscape, "The Woman at the Eighteen-Mile" shows Austin in the processes of collecting, imagining, editing, arranging, and revising her work. She stands in the middle of an interpretive process that has suddenly been revealed to her readers. Her method of translation becomes part of the

story, and it is a development that eventually results in the publication of her most theoretical study, *The American Rhythm*.

### Mary Austin's Later Theory of Translation

*The American Rhythm* was published just five years after George Cronyn's groundbreaking anthology, *The Path on the Rainbow* (1918). Austin contributed the introduction to Cronyn's volume, which treated Native American poetry for the first time as something that was actually part of American poetry. *The American Rhythm* extends Austin's thoughts on the subject. It consists of a long, speculative essay followed a number of loose translations of poems and songs from various Native American groups throughout the country. *The American Rhythm* has received scant critical attention. Except for a lone article written by Thomas Ford, which was concerned with whether or not the relationship between American and Native American poetry was valid, no other extended analyses have been written. This is probably because the book suffers in comparison to her other work, as this brief excerpt makes clear:

There was an American race singing in tune with the beloved environment, to the measures of life-sustaining gestures, taking the material of their songs out of the common human occasions, out of the democratic experience and the profound desire of man to assimilate himself to the Allness as it is displayed to him in all the peacock splendor of the American continent. (18-19)

Gone are the graceful sentences that comprise *The Land of Little Rain* and *Lost Borders*. They are replaced instead by an abstract prose and highly theoretical arguments.



“The beloved environment” here indicates that her project grows out of her belief that artistic productions are influenced by geography. She subsequently claims in the text, for example, that she could listen to unidentified Native American languages on the phonograph and determine their geographical origins simply by scrutinizing the rhythm of their verses (19). In fact, she expands on this point nine years later in her essay “Regionalism in American Fiction” (1932), where she made the suggestion that “the region must enter constructively into the story, as another character, as the instigator of plot” (76).

She goes on in *The American Rhythm* to praise several Anglo poets by name—Edgar Lee Masters, Robert Frost, and Carl Sandburg—for their attempts to reflect the relationships between culture and nature, thereby effectively divorcing the American tradition from its European roots. American literature ought to more warmly embrace its indigenous heritage, Austin suggests, because Native American literature is more accomplished with regards to representing the American experiences that have been shaped by the environment: the “Indian sees no better than the white man, but he sees more, registers through every sense, some of which have atrophied in us, infinitely more” (29).

The “Allness” that Austin references above is a word that appears several times throughout *American Rhythm*, and it references the hyper-sensual experience of the landscape in all its totality. This Allness includes all five senses—taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight—but it also comprises memories, such as the effects of changes in the topography or food supply, for example. By definition, Allness includes the performance

of indigenous forms of poetry, which, unlike most Anglo poetry, includes the melodic rhythms, songs, rituals, and dance that accompany the spoken words. Because such performances are part of the landscape, Native American poetry becomes a useful tool for affecting objects and conditions in space and time. Austin specifically mentions the efficacy of rain songs as an example of such power.

As the title of *American Rhythm* indicates, Austin views rhythm as the most important feature of indigenous poetry, and that is because it has the ability to raise one's awareness of the landscape for both the performer and listener alike. She writes about it in metaphoric terms. The rhythms heard at Zuñi and Oraibi, for example, are "the very pulse of emerging American consciousness (11). She also describes it in minute detail: "The fringes of his consciousness are lapped by ripples of energy that proceed from the life process going on within himself and that he attempts to exteriorize them in rhythmic movements or sounds produced by the orchestration of his members" (30). This psychological reading of rhythm strengthens her claim that she did not merely study linguistic aspects of Native American poetry; rather, she thought she experienced them in all their cultural richness.

When I say that I am not a translator, I mean that I have not approached the work of giving English form to Amerind songs by any such traditional literary posture . . . My method has been, by preference, to saturate myself in the poem, in the life that produced it and the environment that cradled that life, so that when the point of crystallization is reached, I myself give forth a poem which bears, I hope, a genetic resemblance to the Amerind song that was my point of contact. (37-38)

Rather than master an indigenous language, she instead "saturates" herself in the poetic performance, the landscape, and the culture. In other words, she first becomes

familiar with the tribe(s) within a given landscape, and then, after participating in their poetic performances, “re-reexpresses” the meaning that she discovers during the experiences. As she puts it elsewhere in the text, her goal is to “reexpress Amerindian poetry in American values” (58), a goal that extends the way in which she positioned herself as a cultural conduit between Anglo and Native American cultures in *The Land of Little Rain*. In fact, she goes so far as to say that “I do not wish to have it understood that I may not, at times, have succeeded in being an Indian” (41). Arguing that without first becoming fluent in the languages, she is nevertheless able to re-express Native American poetry constitutes the most radical suggestion of her career, and it is worth pausing over in order to map out the theoretical implications.

In *Translation and the Languages of Modernism*, Steven G. Yao extends Walter Benjamin’s arguments about translation by suggesting that in the modernist era, literary translation became a central creative act. Constructing his theory of modernist translation around Ezra Pound’s *Cathay* (1915), Yao argues that even a partial knowledge of the source language is not a necessary precondition for the modernist practice of translation: “Modernist writers repeatedly engaged in translation, and sometimes achieved remarkable results, with partial, imprecise, faulty, and sometimes even no formal understanding of the languages in which the texts they translated were originally written” (11). Pound’s knowledge of Chinese was quite limited, which helps to explain his note on the title page of *Cathay*: “Cathay / Translations by Ezra Pound / *For the Most Part from the Chinese*” (italics mine).

For Pound and Austin, translation does not primarily convey a text from one language to another. Rather, it is a process of textual production that foregrounds the engagements of the translator with texts in a second language she need not be able to fully comprehend. Instead of mastering a second language, Pound and Austin read scholarship, collaborated with others who had a better understanding of the language, and spent an extensive amount of time travelling and living in China and the Southwest, respectively.

The cultural field of southwestern modernism has been inscribed by a focus on individual authors: Willa Cather, Alice Corbin, and Frank Waters, to name but a few. A counter model to one that focuses on the “genius” of individual authors, to use one of Austin’s favorite concepts, could be sketched out utilizing Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of a “literary field.” Instead of foregrounding authors, Bourdieu explains that a literary field delineates “the structural relations—invisible, or visible only through their effects—between social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups or institutions” (29). He recognizes that literature is collaboratively produced by various agents: individual authors, translators, editors, etc. Furthermore, they can simultaneously be influenced by history, politics, and economics, and yet also interact within cultural fields that proliferate in relatively autochthonous systems.

When examined in relation to Pound and Bourdieu, Austin’s notion of rëexpression becomes more comprehensible. It implies that an authentic understanding of the region is only possible with a polyvocal approach that promotes transculturation and

avoids any single point-of-view. Were it to be properly theorized, Southwestern art and literature might indeed emerge as the center of American literature because of the region's indigenous, Hispanic, and Anglo assemblages and heterogeneous cultural practices. Of course, the model is not without its problems. For example, the privilege of being able to witness, say, Native American poetic performances transforms into the privilege to write about one's experiences. Austin's name is after all the one on the book. She is performing the reexpressions, and although she claims that song-borrowing is frequent, there nevertheless arises the serious issues of ownership, plagiarism, and cultural appropriation.

Similarly, there is the problem of authenticity. In *The American Rhythm*, Austin writes, "Though I have no 'ear' for language, I have an exceedingly quick sense of language structure, and the underlying thought pattern of all Amerind tongues is the same" (39). Her claim is obviously untrue, and it raises the question of how much knowledge or experience one must possess in order to maintain an appropriate degree of responsibility to the author and culture that it is being translated. Arnold Krupat has argued there are two conditions for accurately translating Native American texts. First, the translation must be based on an actual Native American performance, not merely the transcriptions made by another scholar. Second, the translator must have at least a working knowledge of the indigenous language in question (128-129). Austin would clearly reject these criteria, but it is not clear what she might put forward to distinguish an authentic reexpression from a phony one, other than her own genius. Unfortunately, this leaves her critics unable to discern whether or not her reexpressions have any value. In

fact, based on Austin's own model of reëxpression, it is extremely difficult to discern exactly how her translations constitute something other than inauthentic cultural appropriations.

The clearest example of this is her use of the term "Earth Horizon" in her autobiography, which was published just two years before her death. In the book's final pages, she makes an important claim about her identity as a writer: "I realize that practically all my books have been done in this fashion; they come out of the arc of the Earth Horizon from which, for me, 'all its people and its thoughts' come to me" (367). For Austin, "Earth Horizon" is a converging zone where earth and sky unite, but it also the space through which she comes to speak about the Southwest and on behalf of Native Americans.

Earlier in the book, she claims the term comes from the Keresan language: "In the Rain Song of the Sia, Earth Horizon is the incalculable blue ring of sky meeting earth, which is the source of experience" (33). The Zia are a Pueblo tribe that lives in the Jemez River Valley, less than one hundred miles from Austin's home in Santa Fe. She does not tell us if she directly heard the term Earth Horizon in a song, or if she read about it in a particular text, and so it is impossible to trace her exact source. However, the ethnographer Matilda Coxe Stevenson transcribed and translated six different Zia rain songs, which were collected in her 1894 study "The Sia." The following short piece, "A Rain Song of the Quer'-rännä Chai'ân," is representative of the group, and it provides a general sense of what Austin was referencing:

Hěn'-na-ti he'äsh O'shats Ta'wae Mo'kaite ko'hai Tu-o'-pi Ka'kan Ti-ä'-mi Mai-tu-bo Ma'-a-se-we Uyuuyewě Sa'-mai-hai-a Shi'-no-hai-a Yu'-ma-hai-a Ah'-wahai-a Pe'-ah-hai-a Sa'-ra-hai-a Wai-ti-chän-ni ai-wan-na-tuon-ñi Hi-shi-ko-ya'sas-pa sho'-pok-ti-ii-ma Sûs'-sîs-tin-na-ko ya'-ya ko'-chi-na-ko Měr'-ri-na-ko kûr'-kan-ñi-na-ko Ka'-shi-na-ko quĩs-sěr-ri-na-ko mu-naì-na-ko. (130)

Stevenson provided definitions for each of these words, and then translated the entire passage as follows:

White floating clouds. Clouds like the plains come and water the earth. Sun embrace the earth that she may be fruitful. Moon, lion of the north, bear of the west, badger of the south, wolf of the east, eagle of the heavens, shrew of the earth, elder war hero, younger war hero, warriors of the six mountains of the world, intercede with the cloud people for us, that they may water the earth. Medicine bowl, cloud bowl, and water vase give us your hearts, that the earth may be watered, I make the ancient road of meal, that my song may pass straight over it—the ancient road. White shell bead woman who lives where the sun goes down, mother whirlwind, father Sûs'sîstinnako, mother Ya'ya, creator of good thoughts, yellow woman of the north, blue woman of the west, red woman of the south, white woman of the east, slightly yellow woman of the zenith, and dark woman of the nadir, I ask your intercession with the cloud people. (130)

In this particular song—it could also be designated as a prayer—the four cardinal directions are mentioned twice: the first references animals, the second colors. As Jill D. Sweet has noted, Pueblo cosmology foregrounds spatial classifications of the world, and this helps to explain the repetition of the cardinal directions (29). Rich with symbolic meaning, the center of the world is essentially marked by the intersection of these cardinal directions, and rain constitutes a linkage between earth and sky. The ritual elements—the bowl and vase—are a reminder that this song would have been performed as part of a larger ritual, which tended to be performed seasonally.

In *The Tewa World: Space, Time Being and Becoming in a Pueblo Society*, Alfonso Ortiz, an anthropologist whose ethnographical research focused on his own people, explained that Pueblo culture has six metaphysical classifications, three of which are designated as human, and the other three are understood to be supernatural. These classifications are subsequently linked as pairs, so that when a human dies, she becomes part of her linked supernatural category. A person's soul therefore moves between the human and supernatural realms; they are not the separate realms of the Judeo-Christian tradition. This dualistic cycle of life is why Pueblo texts, such as the songs translated by Stevenson, describe geographical features through metaphysical terminology. Just as the physical world is laced with spirituality, so too is the supernatural world connected to our shared physical space. Gertrude P. Kurath has explained that the supernatural beings who live in the sky can be summoned to produce rain and snow here on Earth (312). Rain is thus a linkage between these two realms. Performed in ceremonies that involve song, dance, and rituals, rain songs therefore constitute a spiritual technology that results in the water necessary for Pueblo agriculture. It is important to note that especially for the Keresan-speaking Zia, rain songs take on an added importance because their villages are located in more arid landscapes, and rainfall occurs more sporadically than in other Pueblo villages.

Obviously, the term Earth Horizon does not appear in "A Rain Song of the Quer'-rännna Chai'ân," nor have I discovered it in transcriptions of other Pueblo rain songs. It is, of course, possible that the term did appear in one of the form's many other iterations, and the record of it has now been lost, or perhaps it is the result of one of Austin's



uniquely creative translations. Regardless, it is clear in the final pages of *Earth Horizon* that much of the original cultural context has been stripped away. For example, the cardinal directions in Pueblo cosmology are associated with particular colors and seasons: North with winter and yellow; West with spring and blue; South with summer and red and East with fall and white. But these kinds of culturally specific details do not particularly interest Austin. If *Land of the Little Rain* and *Lost Borders* bear a striking resemblance to the participant-observation methods in the ethnographies of her time, this was no longer true by the late 1920s and early 1930s. Instead, the imprecise generalizations made throughout this time revealed the extent to which her cultural translations had degenerated into little more than the most obvious of cultural appropriations. No longer interested in the careful empiricism that marked her early career, Austin instead became more interested in articulating the ways in which she interacted and interpreted the world. In other words, she herself became a central object of study.

Perhaps if such issues concerning authenticity, ownership, plagiarism, and cultural appropriation could somehow be worked out, the result would be an interesting alternative model for approaching the field of southwestern modernism. However, one issue would nevertheless remain in regards to Austin, and it is the one that casts a shadow over her overall career: the quality of the texts produced out of her theory of reëxpression. The problem initially escapes notice. Although the songs that she has re-expressed in the latter half of *The American Rhythm* are certainly not as intriguing as the

poetry in Pound's *Cathay*, they are at the very least readable. However, the same cannot be said about all of her late-career work.

For example, *Taos Pueblo* (1930) is a hybrid, co-authored text that consists of a short essay by Austin and a series of photographs by Ansel Adams. Both the written text and the photographs envision Taos as a foil for World War I: "The real mystery of creation resides in things, in the mystery of invisible energies which all our science struggles now to resolve, spiritual energies which by their coalition constitute the Thing Itself" (n. pag). It is unclear what Austin exactly means by "Thing Itself," and it is not the only example of vague terminology: "Everywhere peace, impenetrable timelessness of peace, as though the pueblo and all it contains were shut in a glassy fourth dimension, near and at the same time inaccessibly remote" (n. pag). Again, Austin does not clarify what she means by "a glassy fourth dimension," but what is obvious is that she has moved away from the careful empiricism of her earliest texts. Her quasi-spiritual language and vague generalizations echo some of the worst tendencies in Mabel Dodge Luhan.

Another problem associated with translation appears in the least successful book in her canon, *One-Smoke Stories*, which she published just months before her death. As reviewer Vincent Engels wrote shortly after the volume was initially published, "This latest book by Mary Austin contains thirty-two stories, of which about half can be described conveniently as folk-lore, and the rest cannot be described conveniently at all" (qtd. in Lape xxxii).

*One-Smoke Stories* is a collection of Southwestern folk tales, cultural translations, juxtaposed sayings, and reexpressions, at least some of which are based on Native American and Hispanic source material. The heterogeneous text seems to be a blend of fiction, memoir, oral history, and folklore. Austin says in her introduction to the book that the title derives from the Native American tradition of telling a story within the time it takes to smoke a single, corn-husk cigarette, after which “another takes up the dropped stitch of narrative and weaves it into the pattern of the talk” (2). It is telling that she does not see these as separate, individual stories, but rather a single narrative with multiple “authors,” which is perhaps her way of justifying her acts of cultural appropriation, since she is simply the latest in a long genealogy of authors.

In her critical introduction to the reprint of *One-Smoke Stories*, Noreen Groover Lape does an excellent job of comparing the individual chapters to existing Native American and Hispanic folklore. However, it is not always possible to trace out these relationships with scholarly clarity, and it also seems likely that Austin entirely invented at least some of the individual chapters. Lape goes on to summarize the various themes in the book, including humanity’s relationship to nature, minority resistance to Anglo power structures, critiques of assimilation, and the exploration of spirituality. She is right to concentrate on the issues of authenticity and ownership that *One-Smoke Stories* raises, especially because Austin herself claims in a letter to Ferris Greenslet, editor in chief of trade books at Houghton Mifflin, that her work is somehow genuine: “I am actually the only person who is doing authentic translations from original Indian material” (qtd. in Lape xlvii).

Perhaps the most significant issue about *One-Smoke Stories* is that the text appears to be the writing of an amateur. To give one example, this is the opening to “Wolf People”: “Said Antelope-Over-the-Hill to the teacher of the Indian School: ‘Mamaita, I have come to tell you that this is not true what you are telling my children in the school, how the Dog is a Wolf cub tamed by a woman and bred up to be another with the children’” (106). One could perhaps argue that what is at stake here are competing ecocritical worldviews, but such a theoretical reading would blunt the fact that Austin’s execution is most unsatisfying. The dialogue here is wooden, and the prose of the remaining piece is equally stiff. Furthermore, the lesson is rather didactic one; Antelope-Over-the-Hill resists the “educational” lessons that his children have received at the government school. Additional close readings of other stories in *One-Smoke Stories* are not necessary because each and every story in the collection suffers from similar deficiencies.

Despite the ways in which her theory of translation negatively affected the kinds of texts she produced, Austin still saw herself as an effective translator and cultural mediator at the end of her life. In her essay, “Regional Culture in the Southwest” (1929), she addresses the possibility of whether or not the region’s landscape can develop a distinctive culture now that Anglos have moved into the area, and though she remains skeptical, what is most interesting is how she positions herself as the lone authority of authentic regional expression: “But I see everywhere too much disposition to overlay the [Native American and Hispanic] tradition[s] with complacencies of the present hour and disregard the subtleties of the scene for imitations of what has been conspicuously

praised elsewhere, to feel confident of an immediate rise of cultural response” (94). Similarly, in her essay “Regionalism in American Fiction” (1932) she writes, “Our Southwest, though actually the longest-lived-in section of the country, has not yet achieved its authentic literary expression in English” (73). The tacit argument here is that her books alone are capable of filling in this gap.

Unfortunately, these passages reveal the irony of her career. It began so brilliantly with the publication of *The Land of Little Rain*, but as her theory of translation became more radical, she became less interested in the kind of empiricism that first garnered her success. Early in her career, she was a brilliant observer of the natural world, and the language she found to describe the desert was on par with the best of John Muir or Henry David Thoreau. However, she was never the great interpreter of Native Americans that she claimed to be. She was actually quite misinformed about their languages, cultural expressions, and worldviews. In the latter half of her career, her writing about Native Americans became increasingly radical, and in the process, her work became a caricature of itself.

## Chapter 2

### The Specter of Nations: Immigration, Gothicism, and Transnational Mimicry in Two Post-Revolutionary Mexican American Novels

In response to President Porfirio Díaz's announcement in 1908 that Mexico was ready to embrace democracy, Francisco Madero wrote *La sucesión presidencial en 1910*, a political treatise that became a highly influential bestseller and effectively launched his political campaign for the presidency. Madero argued that Díaz's despotism was the latest historical example of the militarism that had plagued Mexico since the Colonial Era, and thus a transformation more radical than simply a presidential change was needed. He called on his compatriots to form a political party dedicated to the principles of "real suffrage" and "no re-election," and later codified these ideas in the "Plan de San Luis Potosí" (1910), a short document released while he was exiled in San Antonio that served as a blueprint for the government he was attempting to assemble. Madero was finally elected president in 1911, but his short term in office was characterized by an inability to govern effectively. Many of his supporters felt quite betrayed when he was unable to initiate the social, political, and economic reforms they were anticipating. They began to see him as an impractical ideologue, and he was assassinated on February 22, 1913.

Although most historians have focused on the foundational relationship between Madero's text and the Mexican revolution, his work can also be read as a literary precursor to a pair of post-Revolutionary Mexican American immigrant novels, Conrado

Espinoza's *El sol de Texas* (1926) and Daniel Venegas's *Las aventuras de don Chipote, o cuando los pericos mamen* (1928). Two of Madero's most significant tropes, namely, the employment of Gothic imagery and his rhetorical usage of what I will call "transnational mimicry," became transformed in the texts of Espinoza and Venegas, respectively, through the prism of immigration.<sup>1</sup>

While these novels are not in ideological agreement, they are both situated within the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, and thus need to be historically understood not only as a narratives that document the experiences of immigrating to the United States, but also as responses to the mass emigration caused by the Mexican revolution. Reading these near contemporaneous texts against Francisco Madero's *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* therefore reveals the multiple logics of Mexican emigration and immigration in the aftermath of the revolution. Furthermore, by disclosing the transnational trajectory from Madero's political treatise to the novels of Espinoza and Venegas, my essay highlights the ways in which these Mexican American novelists responded to the paradox of citizenship, and in the process reveals how Mexican American immigrant literature began to theorize the American Southwest as an alternative space of nationalist critique. In the case of Venegas, such a paradox was intimately linked to the issues of translation that helped define the region's literature throughout the early twentieth century.

#### Madero, Espinoza, and the Gothic

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<sup>1</sup> By the term "Gothic," I intend to reference a strategy of representation that has its roots in the attention to mysterious circumstances and fascination with horror as developed throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and subsequently became characterized in various guises and genres by its focus upon the return of repressed Otherness.

*La sucesión presidencial en 1910*'s intended audience was the Mexican populace, and given Madero's familiarity with American political theory, it can be read as a translation of American notions of freedom and democracy. Though Madero explicitly condemned absolute power in his text, he nevertheless faced a rhetorical requirement to justify his qualifications for the presidency, a conflict that he resolved by constructing a modernist persona wherein he became *the* leading populist messenger who would guide Mexico toward a new and utopic future. Madero's political vision was thus liberatory; he believed that the establishment of his political party would help to insure the "salvation of our institutions, of our freedom, and perhaps even our national integrity" (19).<sup>2</sup>

*La sucesión presidencial en 1910* contains a dozen other occurrences of the terms "salvar" and "salvación," and thus Madero linguistically constructed for himself a Christ-like persona in his rejection of absolute power, concern for the poor, and willingness to die for the Mexican people. This implication was reinforced by the ever-present references to blood throughout the text, which were usually employed to signify either the victims or perpetrators of Mexico's revolutions. The first sentence, for example, reads in part, "I dedicate this book to the heroes who won the independence of our country with their blood" (1). Madero's ubiquitous references to blood throughout the text gradually transform it into a multivalent symbol, for not only did blood remind his readers of the violence that Díaz would like to bury from Mexico's collective memory, but it

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<sup>2</sup> All translations throughout this essay are my own.



simultaneously reemerged as a symbol for the Christ-like redemption that Madero offered in the guise of political salvation.

If Madero was *the* redeemer, Díaz was a “semi-dios” (85) who functions throughout the text as an uncanny doppelgänger. “To see him, even in a photograph, one can discern the appearance of a sphinx; it seems that he is enclosed within a great mystery; that he hides carefully in the depth of his soul a thought, a fixed idea, which will only become manifest through the transcendental events that control his entire life” (112). Madero’s representation of Díaz as a “great mystery” relied on a linkage between the president and the haunted history of Mexico, a Gothic past marked by a troubled hybridity between colonizers and the colonized. In his excellent discussion of the inter-American Gothic, Jesse Alemán has argued, “In much the same way that the ‘Africanist presence’ accounts for the U.S. Gothic, the inter-American Gothic emerges when the hemispheric horrors of the Spanish conquest of Mexico return in narratives, such as Prescott’s [*History of the Conquest of Mexico*], that sense how the United States stands to inherit the monstrous race war hidden beneath the romantic veneer of Mexico’s history” (84).

A similar disinterment, albeit a strictly nationalist one, is at work in Madero’s text, which intimated that when Díaz repeated the transgressions of the Spanish conquest, for example by deporting and enslaving the Yaqui from Sonora, he became possessed by the moral excesses of Mexico’s colonial history.<sup>3</sup> While Madero acknowledged the

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of Mexico’s wars with the Yaqui, Seri, Mayo, and Apache tribes, see Salas.

horrors of that history, his treatment was rather concise, as if he were unwilling or unable to envision the full devastation experienced by generations of indigenous persons in Mexico. He instead relied on Gothic imagery as a way simply to gesture toward these transgressions, thereby quickly allowing him to assure his readers that unlike Díaz, he would not repeat them.

By representing Díaz as a “great mystery,” a socially invisible individual, isolated, and cutoff from his fellow countrymen, Madero not only rendered him indifferent to the plight of the Mexican people, but more subtly, Díaz also became a spectral embodiment of the country’s social inequality. In *Specters of Marx* (1994), Derrida positioned the figure of the specter, which is neither dead nor alive, neither present nor absent, as a central figure in his theory of hauntology, a philosophy of history that resists the linear progression of time by asserting that the present is saturated with the past. As Frederic Jameson has explained, spectrality suggests that “the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us” (39). The present is thus disrupted by the reemergence of past events, a position that parallels Gothic concerns with the ways in which the past returns through the repressed, disallowed, or buried. Spectrality thus subverts those secrets that the present refuses to acknowledge.

Understood in this way, the Díaz presidency, as described by Madero, was a specter of the economic conditions that continued to plague the country. This might seem like a counterintuitive argument given the modernization in late nineteenth-century

Mexico, including capital investments in science, technology, manufacturing, and mining. The infrastructure of the country admittedly improved, especially the roads, railroads, and ports, and there were also gains made in education as well as a growing middle class. However, as Robert M. Buffington and William E. French have acutely pointed out, despite a remarkable eight percent growth between 1884 and 1900, most Mexicans, perhaps as many as ninety percent, did not experience a general improvement in economic conditions. Elites mostly profited from Díaz's agenda of modernization, which is why Madero was rhetorically able to portray him as a mere apparition, a president in absentia who was entirely unconcerned with the plight of his fellow Mexican citizens.

The distinction between Díaz's embodiment of a Gothic past and elitist present with Madero's populist salvation and democratic path to a utopic future reveals a teleological argument rooted in Madero's foregrounding of the temporal over the spatial, which is not surprising given his rhetorical objective, namely, to attain Mexican unity and support for his transition into the presidency. However, as Mexican immigrants began to flee the chaos of the ensuing revolution by crossing over to the United States, Madero's strategies of Gothic representation became spatialized, and his rhetorical mimicking of American style freedom and democracy rang hollow.

Instead of differentiating between a Gothic past and a modernist future, Conrado Espinoza's *El sol de Texas* depicts Texas as a kind of Gothic hellscape for heterogeneous groups of Mexicanos, including immigrants who remain permanently in the United States, those who intend to return to Mexico, and Texas Mexicans with deep historic

roots in the state.<sup>4</sup> For Espinoza and other Mexican emigrants, Gothic conditions were not merely remnants of a colonial past, but were rather encountered throughout the hegemonic and “bedeviled” spaces (187), to use José E. Limón’s term, of the borderlands and the western United States that had once belonged to Mexico.<sup>5</sup> The troubled language switching between Spanish and English linguistically reflects this haunted present.

Espinoza’s novel opens with the García family crossing into “Laredo gringo” (8) to escape the tribulations of the revolution. On their way to San Antonio, they befriend Don Serapio and his two sons, Matías and José, and while everyone is optimistic about the future, Espinoza alludes to the landscape in Gothic terms to foreshadow the journeys that await them: “Deep down there in their heart of hearts, they all felt a suspicion, an inexplicable fear that rose with the view of that mountainless land without the rapid and prodigious variations of their native country” (10). The landscape unnerves them precisely where American language and civilization are most present, and they become even more afraid upon actually encountering English-speaking Anglos.

Espinoza then describes San Antonio’s Spanish ruins in detail, supporting his cultural excavation by subsequently interpreting the Mexicans in Haymarket Square to be incarnations of various characters in *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. The nostalgic linkage between lost land and the lost Spanish Golden Age effectively marks San Antonio as a

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<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of the diverse categories of immigrants in Mexican American literature, see Kanellos (2009).

<sup>5</sup> A supporter of Adolfo de la Huerta, Espinoza immigrated to the United States in 1924 and lived in various parts of the country, including San Antonio. He worked mostly as a reporter before returning to Mexico in 1930. For more biographical information, see Cortés.

haunted space, where the city's Spanish roots have not been expunged despite the continued encroachment of Anglo society and its nativism.

Once the two families arrive in San Antonio, they find an employment contractor, a fellow Mexican, and stand before him like “skeletons” (22). Though they are reliant on his linguistic and cultural knowledge, he nevertheless makes them feel uneasy, which they attempt to “bury under their effort to overcome adversity” (21). This is a clear indication that Espinoza's narrative will resist the cultural processes of assimilation, and he goes on to critique the man's role as a mediator by describing him as a deformed devil who misspells even the most basic words. Economic conditions soon force the two families to separate, a reminder that the bonds between immigrant communities in the United States are fragile. While the Garcías barely subsist doing odd jobs around San Antonio, at one point even falling into homelessness, Don Serapio and his sons leave to work on the railroad. However, tragedy soon befalls them when José is crushed by a train: “For a moment, haloed by an intense flash, they [the workers] saw José's silhouette above the tracks, then nothing” (33).

José's silhouette is a Gothic image in its allusion to the metaphysical differences between life and death, a point later strengthened by the description of a pair of starving musicians as two “ungainly shadows” (53), but Espinoza also complicates this distinction by envisioning his characters as silhouettes of one another. For example, when Don Serapio and Matías leave their railroad jobs “in the darkness of the night,” unable to walk along the train tracks because Don Serapio was haunted there by the final scream of his son, they do so as “grief-stricken silhouettes” (39), which is to imply that they have

become shadows of José. Similarly, when the families reunite back in San Antonio, a city that after José's death now appears "disfigured" (46), Matías essentially sees Juana García as a mere shadow of Toribia, the young woman in Mexico that he hopes one day to marry.

Silhouettes and shadows allow Espinoza to conceive of uncanny resemblances between the identities of certain characters, but the imagery of these concepts—dark shapes against light backgrounds where the border between the two is distinct—can also be read as a spatialization of Gothic attributes. For example, San Antonio was a hub of Mexican immigration, and through the return of Don Serapio and Matías to the city, Espinoza characterizes it as a place to which immigrants "would always return" (40).<sup>6</sup> San Antonio in particular, and Texas in general, are thus linguistic and cultural shadows of Mexico in that they constitute a second, albeit denigrated, homeland.

Similarly, the Mexican immigrants that pass through and live in these areas struggle terribly to become more than mere shadows in American society. The racial component of this image becomes clear when both families get jobs picking cotton near Houston, a city "completely ornamented with vivid points of light" (89). Quico, the patriarch of the Garcías, "dreamt of harvesting a lot of cotton, filling sack after sack with that rich whiteness, living a soft life, as soft as those cotton balls" (64). Whiteness here denotes economic and racial advantage, and it contrasts with the "dark tragedies" (64) that engulf the lives of immigrants as they are forced to toil "under that fiery sun, on that burning land, between those [Anglo] men who know only how to despise and squeeze out

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, after escaping his Porfirian captors in 1910, Francisco Madero spent most of his time in exile in San Antonio, where he composed his "Plan de San Luis Potosí."

life” (5). The comparison between brownness and whiteness exposes Quico’s naivety about the United States, a place Espinoza suggests is primarily concerned with exteriority because one’s character is often buried beneath a binary system of supposedly discernable racial attributes.

Again, the spatialization of Gothic imagery is significant, for it reinforces the strict racial bifurcation of the text. Irrationally fearful of being murdered by immigrants (41), most Anglo characters force Mexican Americans to survive on the periphery of society where they are to remain hidden from view until they are needed for cheap labor. Their fears are manifestations of a racist ideology, but they also signify that the presence of Mexican Americans subverts the “American Dream,” a national metanarrative that envisions the United States as having the potential to become a kind of New World promised land.

On the other hand, for Mexican Americans who slowly realized that they would be permitted neither social nor economic advancement, the United States became a place of Gothic encounters, a hellish nightmare where white men were “devils” (59) and the fate that awaited them after all of their work was death, or at best, mere subsistence living where poverty and even emaciation, a particularly apt image given its gesture toward invisibility, were inevitable (68). While many Anglos continued to view Mexico as a pre-modern country trapped in a Gothic past, Espinoza’s novel suggests that it is the “modern” United States that most tenaciously evokes death. The Gothic tradition and its focus on repressed crimes thus becomes a rather useful model through which to examine

the trauma inflicted upon Mexican Americans throughout the spaces of the American Southwest.

As the novel reaches its conclusion, the families separate one final time; their divergence is geographical, but it is cultural as well, and their differences contrast so sharply that they imply yet another level to Espinoza's figurative use of shadows. Quico finds a relatively high paying job at an oil refinery in "Poraza" (Port Arthur), a "strange place" (96) that left him and the rest of the García family feeling disconcerted despite their considerable economic improvement. These Gothic insinuations presage the family's final tragedy, for by the end of the novel, Quico's older children have become so thoroughly Americanized that he considers them to be lost. His son, Doroteo, has become a lazy drunkard, and Juana, his daughter, has run away with a man out of wedlock and might eventually be reduced to working in a brothel. Ironically, it was Quico, more so than any other character, who had previously celebrated cultural hybridization, refusing for example to continue smoking cigarettes rolled in corn husks, and then gleefully demanding that his wife serve him "sirope," "jat queiques," and "bisquetes" for breakfast (76).<sup>7</sup>

Espinoza's message here is a rather didactic one: Mexicans who assimilate into the United States, including flappers and *pochos*, will become moral and cultural degenerates, or to put this assessment in the Gothic articulation of the novel, they are to be left for dead. "He [Quico] had one wish: his little children. He would watch over them.

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<sup>7</sup> I.e., syrup, hotcakes, and biscuits.



If he could manage to save them, if he knew how to point them in a better direction, then perhaps they would return to their homeland. The others [Doroteo and Juana] already were dead” (110).

In contrast to the Garcías, Don Serapio and Matías are unsettled by José’s death and eventually decide to return to Mexico. However, they first want to mark José’s grave with a tombstone, but are shocked to discover that the Mexican cemetery has been desecrated; crosses have been removed, corpses dismembered. Espinoza uses this act of racial hatred to challenge U.S. nativism in the Southwest, which defined American civilization against the alleged barbarism of Mexicans and various Native tribes.

Furthermore, the scene also functions as the apex of the Gothic storyline: for immigrants, the United States is a place of such horror that they are unable to find peace even after being segregated in death. Don Serapio and Matías exhume José’s body and carry the remains back to Mexico. Quico meets them in Laredo to say goodbye one final time, and he accompanies them across the border. Don Serapio and Matías prepare to take a train back to their home in Michoacán, a mode of transportation they had refused to use in the United States after José’s death. Like Don Quijote, their journey has left them extremely disillusioned, and the novel ends with them watching Quico return north to the United States to chase, much like Sancho Panza once did, his materialistic ambitions: “In the darkness of the night, his silhouette was lost like just another shadow” (110).

For Espinoza, class and racial differences are characterized by the ever-present threat of Gothic violence. His narrative solves a double problematic in that both families

attempted to escape the horrors of the Mexican revolution only to encounter a different set of horrors in the United States. The solution in *El Sol de Texas* is tenuous: given the economic necessity of leaving Mexico at the beginning of the novel, it remains unclear how Don Serapio and Matías will survive after they return, which is perhaps why the novel concludes on the border. If Gothic texts reveal those secrets that society tries to ignore, then the secret of Espinoza's *El sol de Texas* is that there were tragic situations in Mexico and the United States after the advent of the revolution that could not be escaped by crossing over linguistic barriers and/or national borders.

By envisioning U.S. language and geography through the attributes of the Gothic novel, Espinoza constructs a border that is more complex than a mere delineation of national boundaries, marking instead the place where Mexicans would trade one set of horrors for another. This partially explains the references to *Don Quijote*, a meta-text for *El sol de Texas*, in that Espinoza's characters "lived epically" (81) by enduring to what amounted to a series of heroic battles, and it also accounts for how the spatialization of the Gothic imagery of the text assists in the construction of a strict binary logic that resists hybridity.

Although Espinoza's novel is more concerned with exploring race and identity than experimenting with formal innovation, by reading its rich exploration of ethnic and linguistic contact zones as a response to Madero's *La sucesión presidencial en 1910*, the text's modernist features become clearly discernible, most notably concerning the issues of spatiality, the underlying anxiety over the permeability of the Gothic body across national lines, the language switching that occurs throughout the text, and the fact that

both texts were dependent on various kinds of transnational crossings for their compositions.<sup>8</sup>

The unease that permeates Espinoza's exploration of immigration and emigration also constitutes a historical extension on the work of José Martí. During the final fourteen years of his life, Martí mostly lived in New York, and he wrote numerous essays and columns about the United States for various Latin American publications. Although he was initially impressed with U.S. democratic institutions, he soon became disillusioned with capitalist economic exploitations against the working classes, and he also grew anxious about the imperialist threat posed by U.S. interests in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In his final, unfinished letter, written one day before he died in battle, he famously wrote :

It is my duty—inasmuch as I realize it and have the spirit to fulfill it—to prevent, by the independence of Cuba, the United States from spreading over the West Indies and falling, with that added weight, upon other lands of our America. All I have done up to now, and shall do hereafter, is to that end . . . I have lived inside the monster and know its entrails—and my weapon is only the slingshot of David. (Epigraph)

Like Espinoza, Martí's characterization of Anglo-America as monstrous derived from his lived experiences, and thus his writing is a precursor to the Gothic elaborations found in *El sol de Texas*.

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<sup>8</sup> For an argument that *El sol de Texas* should be read as a realist/naturalist novel, see Brammer de Gonzales.

## Madero, Venegas, and Transnational Mimicry

Despite Espinoza's rich linguistic hybridity, his narrative occurs within a strictly nationalist framework, resulting in representations of Mexican American subject positions that remain rigid throughout. His racial and nationalist divisions begin to be unfixed through Daniel Venegas's use of transnational mimicry in *Las aventuras de don Chipote*. Mimicry actually serves a dual function, for just as one copies those in power in order eventually to access that power, it can also be a subversive act to mock and resist hegemony. As Homi K. Bhabha has rather subtly observed, the uninterrupted oscillation between repetition and rebellion "does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty" (86).

Mimicry therefore constitutes an ambivalent act, and in Venegas's novel, this ambivalence has transnational characteristics. To be more specific, his utilization of transnational mimicry both echoes the mimicry in Madero's text in ways that undermine its implied utopia while simultaneously resisting the hegemony faced by Mexican immigrants to the United States, resulting in an ambivalence toward both nation states. In other words, just as Espinoza's text engages with the Gothic imagery of Madero through the optics of immigration and emigration, Venegas similarly reorients Madero's use of mimicry so that it becomes more transnational in scope.

To return briefly to Madero, the two principles at the center of his texts, "real suffrage" and "no re-election," had previously been articulated by Díaz during his presidential run in 1876. Furthermore, just as Díaz had published the "Plan de Tuxtepec"

after he had “lost” the 1876 presidential election to Lerdo de Tejada, Madero responded to the presidential election of 1910, which was similarly fraudulent, with his “Plan de San Luis Potosí.” Both documents upheld the constitution of 1857, declared the governments of their rivals to be null, and called for an end to reelections. Madero’s mimicry served to mock Díaz’s inability to follow through on his political ideals while also implying a historical trajectory to his hopeful followers, for just as Díaz obtained eventual success when he declared himself president on November 29, 1876, so too did Madero want to suggest that he would ultimately win the presidency. However, once this event finally occurred and Díaz was removed from power, Madero was no longer able to craft a persuasive political message; the ambivalence of his discourse consisted in the necessity of using Díaz as a political foil. Ironically, without Díaz, Madero actually had little to say.

There are also transnational aspects within the mimicry of the text. Influenced by the procedural democracy of the United States, Madero implied in *La sucesión presidencial en 1910* that he wanted to imitate American jurisprudence: “The increasing greatness of the United States is very well known to us, and we should imitate its practices, above all that attachment to the law, which its officials exemplify, in order to become as great as it is” (50).

As the undertone of this passage reveals, Madero was anxious about the possibility of yet more U.S. expansion into Mexican territory, and he asserted that the best way to prevent such an invasion would not be through military fortification of the northern border, but rather through increased education and democracy. Such a

development would rupture U.S. colonial discourse that attempted to justify territorial expansion by postulating the existence of fundamental differences between the United States, Mexico, and their respective citizenries.

There is, however, an inconsistency here, for while Madero used the strategy of mimicry on a national level to resist further U.S. colonial expansion, he seemed unable to recognize its rhetorical importance for individuals crossing the Mexico-U.S. border, despite his own period of exile in San Antonio. In fact, he was silent on the issue of Mexican emigration except to note that they endured humiliation because of the potential for financial gains, a situation that he intended to reverse upon taking office by improving the socio-economic conditions of the country.

Madero's elision of Mexican emigrants from his text was due in part to his running for president, an office that seemingly demands from its candidates an allegiance to nationalism, but it also marked the limits of his political vision. Just as Madero needed to differentiate himself from Díaz, he also needed to distinguish Mexico from the United States, thereby making it rather impossible for his political philosophy to include those emigrants who challenged his strict nationalist ideology.<sup>9</sup> These elisions can be understood as structural components of mimicry, for as Bhabha perceived:

[T]he visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction. It is a form of colonial discourse that is uttered *inter dicta*: a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against the rules and within them." (89)

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, the enthusiasm with which Madero articulated his nationalism must also be seen as a response to the criticism that he had received for relying too heavily on foreign assistance during the revolution.

If Madero's primary political message was a promise to actualize Díaz's 1876 platform via the re-articulation and celebration of an American style democracy, then what needed to be concealed consisted, first of all, in an ambivalence of identities, for Madero's political persona was dependent in its construction on Díaz, and secondly, Madero's strictly nationalist ideology was threatened by the fluid geographical and cultural borders between Mexico and the United States. These concealments in Madero's transnational mimicry became increasingly visible after he was removed from the presidency. He was not only unable to enact his political platform, but more importantly, the violence and economic deterioration of the Mexican revolution caused a sharp increase in emigration to the United States. This gap in Madero's transnational mimicry is precisely where Daniel Venegas's novel intervenes.

There have primarily been two critical responses to *Las aventuras de don Chipote*, both of which stem from Nicolás Kanellos, who first discovered the text in the National Library of Mexico and subsequently edited it for publication in both Mexico and the United States. The first has sought to map out the relationships between Venegas's novel and the subsequent boom in Chicano literature that began in the 1960s.<sup>10</sup> The second has contended that Venegas's novel satirized the processes of cultural hybridization and that he was therefore espousing the principles of *El Mexico de Afuera*, a movement of Mexican exiles in the United States who maintained their Mexican

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<sup>10</sup> For an expansion on this interpretation, see Cabrera. See Melendez for an argument that Venegas's novel is a direct precursor to the post-1965 Chicano novel. For the connections between Venegas and subsequent Chicano writers, see Martínez, and also Herrera.

citizenship and attempted to keep their culture free from Anglo influence in the hopes of one day returning to their homeland.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, the latter approach is unable to deal with the linguistic novelty of the text, much of which was written in a vernacular style that contains extensive use of Anglicisms in order to capture the dialect of Mexican American laborers in the 1920s. For example, soon after Don Chipote and his friend Policarpo cross the U.S.-Mexico border, they must rely on Chicano intermediaries with a knowledge of “toquingles” (39) to help them order a meal at an El Paso restaurant. Afterwards, on the street and in search of a job, they ask a person who “looks Mexican” (42) if he knows where they can find work. The man responds, “Ai du no tok spanish” (43), and proceeds to make fun of the “poor compatriots” (43), an expression that highlights both the economic and linguistic disparities between the men. Venegas’s narrator then offers a critical assessment of those who use their knowledge of “tok ingles” (43) to disparage braceros, many of whom have only recently arrived to the United States in search of employment. However, the lexical differences between “toquingles” and “tok ingles” in this particular scene indicate a fissure in the text’s representation of Mexicano intermediaries; whereas the former term is a lexeme that signifies the possibility of translation, the latter is bifurcated with a velar stop and visually marks the occasion of an unbridgeable cultural divide.

The distinction between “toquingles” and “tok ingles” suggests an alternative reading of *Las aventuras de don Chipote*. The repetitive pronunciation of these

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<sup>11</sup> For an analysis of how Venegas’s novel functions as a form of cultural resistance, see Reyna. For an argument that Venegas employed what Mikhail Bakhtin called “the carnivalesque” to subvert the American dream, see Ventura.



homophones alludes to a kind of sonic mimicry, which is reflected in the reference to parrots in the subtitle of the novel, “Or When Parrots Breast-Feed.” Similarly, just as the name “Don Chipote” alludes to “Don Quijote,” it also, as Rita E. Urquijo-Ruiz notes, derives from the Nahuatl word, “xipotli,” which means the resulting bump caused by a blow to the head (65). Don Chipote is thus situated between the classical and the bawdry, the European and the Native, the epic and the comic, and this trope of hybridization is developed throughout the novel as the protagonist increasingly attempts to mimic Los Angeles culture.

Interestingly, this process is related to spatiality, for Venegas re-scripted subject formation based on political issues in the three American locations where he successively set his novel: the medicalization of the border in El Paso, labor on “el traque” in Arizona, and the cultural mimicry that finds its fullest articulation in the Mexican American theaters of Los Angeles. Thus, eleven years prior to the publication of John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, Don Chipote’s journey from Texas to California allowed Venegas to revise what it meant for an individual in the United States to move westward. No longer was the Southwest to be seen simply as the space through which individualistic Anglo men grew into larger than life heroic symbols of empire à la Charles Lummis. Instead, the region became a space through which Venegas’s theory of transnational mimicry could achieve its dual project of articulating a cultural hybridity that resisted both Mexican and U.S. nationalism, while simultaneously rupturing U.S. nativism and its helixing together of race and nationality.

Although Venegas's novel shares similar features with Espinoza's *El sol de Texas*, including a comparable plot and meta-textual allusions to *Don Quijote*, one of the key differences is that the novel's comic tone allows Venegas to mock the ways in which his protagonist mimics U.S. culture. For example, at the end of an already grueling day, Don Chipote thinks it is still his turn to work the pushcart, and thus he becomes an unknowing volunteer. This scene depicts him as a victim of exploitative working conditions, but it also provides comic relief in the face of economic adversity. Yet Venegas's novel is not simply a comedy, for it also relies on the form of the picaresque novel and the Hispanic theatrical tradition. The narrator's interpretive viewpoints are therefore in flux, which are reflected in his descriptions of Don Chipote and Policarpo; on the one hand they are los "verdes," but elsewhere they are referred to as "paisanos." These shifts are a sign that Venegas was redefining what it meant to be a Mexican American immigrant by creating representational flexibility in the subject formation of his characters.

The novel opens in Mexico, but instead of suggesting, as Espinoza does, that the revolution is the primary reason why his protagonist must emigrate, Don Chipote is instead deceived by a neighbor's false accounts of his recent journey to the United States, which he embellishes for several days in order to obtain as many free meals as possible. Don Chipote's journey to the United States therefore acts as a corrective narrative. When it is time for him to say goodbye to his family, "he cried with hanging snot [from his nose]" (22). From the very beginning, Venegas eschews a histrionic portrayal of the

Mexican immigrant experience, a rhetorical strategy that was helpful in re-imagining subject formation in the American Southwest.

When Don Chipote tries to cross from Ciudad Juárez to El Paso, a U.S. official directs him into a disinfecting station where he must shower while his clothes are sanitized. He seemingly enjoys “the first humiliation that the gringos force Mexican emigrants to suffer” (27). The passage reveals a distance between the narrator and the protagonist, and it also suggests that Don Chipote, though perhaps unrefined, nevertheless remains self-possessed when encountering Anglo hegemony. However, the humiliation continues: he is eventually refused entry into the United States because he is illiterate and cannot pay the eight dollar fee. He considers the possibility of returning home, but instead he simply hires a coyote and crosses the Río Bravo to El Paso without incident.

By depicting the relative ease with which Don Chipote is able to cross the border illegally, Venegas was undermining the “disinfection” practices instituted by United States Public Health Service (USPHS) officials shortly after the Mexican revolution entered its second and more violent phase with the assassination of Madero in 1913. U.S. health and government officials were fearful of a typhus epidemic, which could have spread by body fleas or lice; prior to the development of the first vaccine in the 1930s by Rudolf Stefan Weigl and the refinements later made by Harold Cox, the bacterial disease had historically reached epidemic levels following certain wars, famines, and other events that caused mass casualties. As Elinor G. K. Melville has documented, while typhus had been in Mexico since Spaniard colonists first introduced it in the sixteenth

century, it was not until the Mexican revolution displaced large portions of the population, some of whom crossed the border into the United States, that USPH officials began classifying the disease as a public health threat.

In 1916, Claude C. Pierce, a surgeon with the USPHS, was sent to El Paso to oversee the renovation of a building that had originally been designed simply to provide showers for those who crossed into the United States.<sup>12</sup> The government spent \$6,000 on the installation of boilers and other equipment in order to streamline what would soon become a mandatory process of “disinfection.” In January 1917, Pierce announced the implementation of a quarantine that would be required for anyone entering the United States from Ciudad Juárez because, as he wrote in a report just two months later, they were “considered as likely to be vermin infested” (427). Although less than ten people from El Paso had died from typhus between 1915-1917, Pierce nevertheless justified the new policy by arguing the following:

The disturbed political conditions in Mexico for the past five years and the consequent migration of refugees, soldiers, and their families, with the attendant misery, poverty, and absolute lack of sanitary measures, have resulted in spreading typhus fever to all parts of Mexico, its prevalence in border towns near the States being a recognized menace. (426)

The medical inspections that Pierce initiated required men and women first to be separated, and then stripped naked. Their clothes were laundered with hydrocyanic acid, and U.S. attendants checked the scalps, armpits, pubic areas, and anuses for lice. For any

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<sup>12</sup> My discussion of “disinfecting” plants along the border is largely indebted to the scholarship of Leyva, Markel and Stern, Romo, and Stern.

man who was found to have lice, his hair was shaved; for women, their hair was treated with a mixture of vinegar and kerosene. The border crossers were subsequently required to take showers where they were sprayed with water, soap, and gasoline, and then if it was deemed necessary, they were forced to be vaccinated against smallpox. They were then allowed to dress, but still had to undergo a general medical exam where they might yet be denied entry for any number of physical or mental “deficiencies,” including a low I.Q., clubbed feet, or trachoma, which required medical examiners to invert the eyelids of border crossers.

The medical exam, which Don Chipote fails, also constituted psychological profiling, as the Immigration Act of 1917 stipulated that anyone suspected of “psychopathic inferiority,” such as vagrants, liars, and homosexuals, were sent back to Mexico. In order to continue crossing into the United States, Mexicans were required to undergo this process of “disinfection” every eight days, and thus unlike Ellis Island, the medical assault on their bodies was continuous. Furthermore, the procedure constituted sexual assault; less than one month after the inspections had begun, Pierce informed his superiors in Washington, D.C. that he was investigating reports of women being photographed while nude.

In June 1917, Pierce reported that there had not been any new cases of typhus in El Paso since the quarantine began in January. However, as Alexandra Minna Stern notes, there were actually only thirty-one cases of new typhus reported throughout the entire United States during this period of time; despite the actual low threat of a typhus epidemic, the numbers of people affected by the quarantine was quite large: through

June, 871,639 bodies were inspected, and 69,674 were forced to be “disinfected” (47). For the entire year 1917, the *El Paso Herald* reported that 127,174 bodies were “sanitized.”

The reason why there was such a substantial disjunct between actual and perceived threats of contamination was that the U.S.-Mexico border underwent important transformations during the Mexican revolution. Rather than the nineteenth-century’s abstract and often meaningless line of demarcation, the border became a modern construct, a kind of membrane separating the body politic of “healthy Americans” from the threat of Mexican bodies, which came to be understood as little more than embodied sites of potential disease and infection. By medicalizing the border, Anglos were able to utilize a scientific rhetoric whereby their fears of being both culturally and bacteriologically contaminated could be cleansed.

For this model to work, it did not require empirical evidence about, for example, whether or not typhus posed an actual epidemic threat; rather, it necessitated an ideological system of exclusion that fetishized bodily difference as if race and nationality were biological entities. Intertwined with the Eugenics movement, this cultural technology attempted to transform diseased bodies into desired laborers by relying on a process whereby government officials examined, counted, racialized, and classified the bodies of potential entrants.

Xenophobia along the border was not of course novel; the term “greaser” was used since the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> However, never before had racism manifested

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<sup>13</sup> For more on the history and meaning of this term, see Bender.

itself through the medicalization of power, which resulted not only in the use of pseudo-scientific discourse to mark Mexicans as contaminants, but also involved the physical transformation of the border through the dual processes of industrial development and bureaucratic oversight.<sup>14</sup> For Mexicans, the physical and cultural construction of the border constituted a new set of obstacles. A “here” and a “there” now existed, an “us” and a “them,” and just as it became more difficult to pass the physical border, it similarly became more difficult to pass the cultural borders congealing around concepts of race and cleanliness. Whereas there once had been freedom of movement, getting to *el otro lado* now required repeatedly passing through a space characterized by violating medical procedures.

Lisa Lowe’s *Immigrant Acts*, a groundbreaking study of Asian American cultural politics, is concerned with an archive separate from the one considered here, but her methodological and theoretical insights are nevertheless helpful in addressing issues related to Mexican American immigration. She theorizes,

the *contradictions* of Asian immigration, which at different moments in the last century and a half of Asian entry into the United States have placed Asians ‘within’ the U.S. nation-state, its workplaces, and its markets, yet linguistically, culturally, and racially marked Asians as ‘foreign’ and ‘outside’ the national polity. (8) (*italics in original*)

Asian Americans were economically admitted into the nation, but they were simultaneously excluded from citizenship along racial lines. This distance therefore

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<sup>14</sup> For an argument that medical perception does not constitute pure knowledge, but is rather based on cultural attitudes that contain interests in power, see Foucault.

prevented Asian American entry into the American national culture, resulting in an alternate set of cultural expressions where the contradictions of immigration were performed.

Mexican American immigrants faced a similar situation, for they were also both of and not of the nation. Shortly after the turn of the century, large numbers of Mexican immigrants began entering the United States, their labor being essential to agriculture and infrastructural development. As they initially tended to remain in isolated regions of the Southwest, most Anglos remained unaware of their presence. However, their numbers grew dramatically after the Mexican revolution, reaching a peak of ninety thousand in 1924, the result of a limited domestic economy coupled with the U.S. need for cheap labor after its entrance into World War I in 1917, and as Mark Reisler has shown, they eventually entered the urban centers of the East and Midwest in larger numbers. With the advent of the depression, there was an Anglo xenophobic backlash that led to the Great Relocation where hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and Mexican Americans were forcibly relocated to Mexico throughout the 1930s.<sup>15</sup> And as the concluding chapters of *El sol de Texas* and *Las aventuras de don Chipote* reveal, a number of Mexicans simply left the United States after enduring racial discrimination and exploitative economic conditions.

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<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed analysis on this, see Balderrama and Rodríguez.



That Don Chipote was able simply to evade the authorities, then, constitutes an important counter-narrative to U.S. attempts to medicalize the border.<sup>16</sup> Like Espinoza, who recognizes the Alamo as a site of U.S. triumphalism in order to resist it with an account of the connections between San Antonio and Spain, Venegas similarly acknowledges the existence of “disinfection stations,” but then quickly renders them completely ineffective in that they could not even prevent the foolish Don Chipote from entering the country. Later in the novel, Venegas further undermines the power structure involving American medical bureaucracy and Mexican bodies when Don Chipote stays for an extended period of time in a Los Angeles hospital, a point I will return to momentarily.

In El Paso, Don Chipote and Policarpo are hired to work on the Santa Fe railroad, or “el traque,” and soon they are packed onto a train with other workers and sent to a small camp in northwest Arizona. Along the way, the men take turns singing corridos, and when it is Don Chipote’s and Policarpo’s turn, they choose a corrido that relates many of the odd things that they have encountered. In Ethriam Cash Brammer’s English translation, this includes the line, “But the one thing I ain’t never seen/Is a parrot that could breast-feed” (63).

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<sup>16</sup> Four other primary texts offered similar resistance. As far as I have been able to discover in my research, Olga Beatriz Torres was the first published writer to depict the process of being “disinfected” along the U.S.-Mexico border during the Mexican revolution; see Torres for that narrative. For a novelistic account of an “Old Western” cowboy who assists a Hispanic family suffering from diphtheria, which was published during the same year as Espinoza’s novel, see Rhodes. For an account of an American physician who assisted in caring for wounded insurrectos, see Bush. Finally, for a feminist and transnational approach to nursing during the Mexican Revolution, see the Spanish (1994) and English (2000) versions of Villegas de Magnón.

As Paul Fallon rightly points out, the original Spanish language version of the text does not contain these words (117). One assumes that Brammer's addendum is an attempt to connect this part of the text with the last line of the novel where Don Chipote comes to the realization that "Mexicans will become rich in the United States WHEN PARROTS BREAST-FEED" (159), which is, of course, to say never. Rather than attempt to find unity in a text that actually eschews it, not out of aesthetic shortcomings but because such an approach allows for greater flexibility in the representation of subject formation, a more accurate approach to this scene would be to recognize that Venegas was subtly revising modernism's association between trains and trauma in order to allow for human bonding amongst various members of the working class, including Mexican immigrants and African Americans. Although their community is short-lived, for Don Chipote is injured and taken to a hospital in Los Angeles, it is an important step in Venegas's unfixing of the subject positions available to Mexican Americans, and it also revises the individualism that had become fetishized in the westerns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Like *El sol de Texas*, *Las aventuras de don Chipote* initially expresses an anxiety about railroad travel. This is not surprising, for such unease was ubiquitous in modernist texts. Lynne Kirby has added a nuanced psychological component to Wolfgang Schivelbusch's classic, *The Railway Journey The Industrialization and Perception of Time and Space*, arguing that early twentieth-century films often focused on railroad accident victims because of the cultural anxiety that still surrounded the dangers of train travel. Unlike other forms of hysteria, which many Freudians thought affected only

women, the shock and trauma of the train collision was experienced by filmgoers of all genders, and thus it was emblematic of the dislocation associated with modernism. If trains were an unstoppable modern invention, death by train was one of the great modernist fears.

Whereas Espinoza's *El sol de Texas* depiction of José's death entirely supports the modernist linkage between trauma and displacement, Venegas's narrative, after acknowledging this fear, goes on to envision train travel as a site through which new cultural connections can be created. Toward the end of the corrido mentioned above, Don Chipote's dog, who was hiding in a knapsack because the contractor didn't allow workers to bring their animals with them, joins in the singing. The contractor threatens to throw the dog off the train, but the other workers warn him that he would suffer a similar fate were he to follow through on such a vow. Because trains imply displacement and the formation of new communities, they constitute a type of space through which immigrants have the power to resist various injustices, including racism and hegemonic working conditions.

In spite of this important revision, the narrative is still operating within the logic of "tok ingles" wherein the disjunct between working class Mexican American immigrants and the cultural intermediary, in this case the work contractor, is severe. However, unlike Don Serapio and Matías in Espinoza's *El sol de Texas*, the cultural and linguistic separations are temporary. The transition begins to occur after Don Chipote accidentally drives a pick into his foot while working on "el traque." Bleeding profusely, he becomes delirious and goes into shock; the foreman decides to put him on the next

train to Los Angeles so that he can acquire proper medical attention. Policarpo accompanies him, and they travel ahead together “at full speed” (81). The narrative temporarily shifts to Policarpo’s point-of-view because Don Chipote’s untreated injury keeps him rather sedated, but again, this constitutes a novel development from the shock and trauma that had been associated with train travel: “With half-closed eyes, Policarpo saw the passing stations, the towns, and the cities. In the stations, he saw his fellow Mexicans doubled over, axes in hand, working like camel, raising their sight only to see the passing train” (83-84).

For Mexican American immigrants, train travel initially registers not as emblematic of psychological illnesses, but rather as a manifestation of class distinctions, a point strengthened when the other Anglo passengers refuse to sit with Don Chipote and Policarpo. The latter, however, befriends an African American cook en route, and thus Venegas’s text not only satirizes Anglo conceptualizations of Mexican American immigrants through the caricature of Don Chipote, he also undermines nativist ideology about the American Southwest by revealing the similar social positions of working class African Americans and Mexican immigrants, suggesting sympathy between these groups. Don Chipote’s journey westward can thus be envisioned as a movement from the fixed cultural bifurcation of “tok ingles” and the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez border to “toquingles” and the possibilities for cultural translation and the radical new subject formations that Los Angeles offers.

In Los Angeles, Don Chipote is hospitalized for an extended period of time, and his experiences there sharply contrast with the medical procedures instituted by the

USPHS along the U.S.-Mexico border. The hospital proffers an abundant time to recover, which allows him to rest, probably for the first time in his life. After he is finally released, he looks for work and eventually finds a job as a dishwasher, earning enough money to begin routinely attending the Spanish language theaters and cinemas.<sup>17</sup> Ignoring his family back in Mexico, he begins a one-sided attempt to court an Anglo flapper. One of the major reasons he is unsuccessful is that while he tries to mimic American popular culture, he is nevertheless unable to accurately reproduce it: “As the readers have understood, although Don Chipote thought he looked very elegant, in reality he looked ridiculous” (126).

In order to impress this woman, he goes on stage at one of the theaters and performs for her in a talent show. However, his wife and their children, who have traveled from Mexico to Los Angeles in order to find him, happen to be in the audience. At first, many of the spectators believe the resulting confrontation between Don and Doña Chipote is simply part of the vaudeville act, and they enjoy it immensely, but once they realize that what they are witnessing is a real argument, they expect the theater management to intervene. The entire family is arrested and eventually deported back to Mexico, and the last line of the novel is a reminder that neither wealth nor contentment are guaranteed to U.S. immigrants.

As Manuel M. Martín Rodríguez has noted, because the overall novel is more concerned with urban Mexican American immigrants than with Mexican society, the ending “should not be taken literally, since it is clearly undermined by Venegas’s

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<sup>17</sup> For an analysis of the growth in the early twentieth century Mexican American theater in Los Angeles, see Nicolás Kanellos (1990).

solidarity with those who have been uprooted from Mexico” (49). While I agree with Rodríguez that the novel is more concerned with addressing the wrongs done to Mexican immigrants than with supporting Mexican nationalism, I would add that although the racism that Don Chipote overcomes makes much of his narrative a laudable one, the novel nevertheless accomplishes more than a mere portrayal of those racist practices that were rampant in the United States during the 1920s.<sup>18</sup>

If Don Quijote is about a man who cannot adapt to the modern world, *Las aventuras de don Chipote* tells the story of how one person deals with the complexities of immigration and begins to embody different subject positions through his growing infatuation with American popular culture.<sup>19</sup> Of course, Don Chipote’s assimilation is not complete, but that is hardly the point. Although he fails to completely remake himself, at the end of the novel he nevertheless remembers his journey to the United States, which provides him with a mental respite as he endures the drudgery of hard labor back in Mexico. These memories, which seem like a movie to Don Chipote, are the only significant characteristics that distinguish the first chapter from the epilogue. So while he is still poor, he is not bitter about his economic plight because he is now able to imagine a different identity for himself, one that is mediated by his movie-like journey to Los Angeles.

Again, many critics have interpreted Don Chipote’s attempt to forge a new identity through the process of mimicry to be a failure, but as Paul Fallon has noted, the

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<sup>18</sup> It should also be noted, however, that *Las aventuras de don Chipote* also suffers from sexist and anti-Semitic rhetoric.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the relationship between Don Quijote and Don Chipote, see Gonzales-Berry and Rodríguez.

conflicting features of the text resist a single point-of-view (116). The narrator's pronoun usage slips throughout the text; at times, he aligns himself with the reader through a "nosotros," though at other times he speaks from the position of the sole subject. He also calls himself both a Mexican and Chicano, and seems to use these terms interchangeably. The text thus shifts between linguistic tones and registers just as the narrator changes his points-of-view because Venegas's narrator spoke for a social group that was undergoing radical cultural changes.

To return to an earlier point, the separation signified by "Tok Ingles" never quite manages to fully morph into the translational fluency of "Toquinglis" within the character Don Chipote. However, by constructing a novel rich in the lexical switching between English and Spanish, which is set in both Mexico and the United States and alludes to classical literature and the pop culture of the cinema, Venegas was able to create a transnational character who both mimicked and mocked the nationalist sentiments of both the United States and Mexico. In the process, Venegas was able simultaneously revise the story of the Southwest to include economically disadvantaged Mexican American immigrants. Were we simply to point out the myriad ways in which Don Chipote fails to reproduce American culture, we would be committing an interpretive error similar to that of the theater's audience when they reject the entire Chipote family the moment their struggles become genuine, for we would be focused only on the performance of Don Chipote.

Again, Bhabha asserts that the discourse of mimicry includes that which must remain concealed, and in the case of *Las aventuras de don Chipote*, this hidden discourse

is metafictional: despite the limitations of the protagonist, the novel itself achieves such cultural and linguistic fluency that it challenges strict nationalist bifurcations. While Don Chipotle and the other characters remain trapped in a “Tok Inglis” binary, the novel itself operates within the logic of “Toquinglis.” The novel’s great achievement is the articulation of this hybridity, for it effectively unfixes the extremely rigid subject positions that had previously been available to Mexican American immigrants throughout the 1920s.

Following Andrew Thacker, who argued that modernist texts created metaphorical spaces that tried to make sense of modernity’s changing material spaces, my reading of Espinoza’s *El sol de Texas* and Venegas’s *Las aventuras de don Chipote* suggests that in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, the region of the American Southwest became an alternative, transnational space that allowed for rich possibilities in linguistic novelty and identity formation. Part of the reason these particular novels can be put in fruitful dialogue with one another is that they both function to reveal cultural insights that would have otherwise been ignored or forgotten; Espinoza’s use of Gothic spatialization demonstrated that the suffering caused by the Mexican Revolution couldn’t be escaped simply by immigrating to the United States, and Venegas’s transnational mimicry translated a complex and entirely novel form of cultural hybridity. However, as the writings of Manuel Gamio should remind us, a necessary note of caution is here needed.

From 1926-1927, Gamio, one of Mexico’s first anthropologists, conducted fieldwork on Mexican and Mexican Americans living in the United States. His research



led to the publication of two books, *Mexican Immigration to the United States* (1930), an ethnography infused with a Mexican nationalist ideology and concerned with the issues of repatriation, and *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life Story* (1931), a transcribed collection of biographical narratives as told by immigrants themselves.

José E Limón has rightfully noted the inconsistencies in these narratives, for Gamio's nation-building project was undercut by the heterogeneity in his informants' points of view. Although many protested the racial obstacles that they encountered in the United States, and although many maintained a proud and patriotic attitude toward Mexico, many nevertheless remained doubtful that the political and economic conditions at home would improve to such an extent that would allow them to return. My point here is not to criticize Gamio, for as Limón has observed, he effectively provided a platform for early twentieth-century Mexican American immigrants to tell their stories with their own voices, even when these narratives challenged his own particular nationalist project; rather, I want to highlight the methodological problems that arise when one tries to account for the complexities of Mexican American immigration with a single metanarrative.

While this chapter has sketched out a historical trajectory from the cultural segregation of Conrado Espinoza to the exploration of cultural hybridity by Daniel Venegas, it is important for me to emphasize that this is not a universal model for approaching all Mexican American immigrant texts from this particular period. The multiplicity of subject formations represented in this diverse literature demands numerous, heterogeneous interpretive approaches. Rather than offer an exhaustive history

of Mexican American immigrant literature in the aftermath of the Mexican revolution, my reading has attempted instead to develop a methodology of location that rethinks and revises the issues of cultural and linguistic translation associated with the American Southwest, its interstitial spaces, and its patterns of uncontrollable change and ongoing discontinuity.

### Chapter 3

#### D. H. Lawrence, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and the Failure of New Mexican Modernism

Following the lead of Bert Geer Phillips and Ernest L. Blumenschein, two painters who first visited Taos in 1898 and subsequently founded the Taos Society of Artists, writers and artists from all over the world began flocking to New Mexico. Its high deserts and Pueblo cultures fed their imaginations, and what they tended to imagine was a place where the problems of modernity could somehow be resolved. Their visions were often desperately utopian and sought out Native American or Hispanic worldviews as a kind cultural salve. Their attempt to move back in time with pre-lapsarian fantasies concerning local cultures is a story as old as Columbus's search for paradise up the Orinoco River, but despite a passionate enthusiasm for New Mexico, the literary representations arising out of this period failed to find much resonance outside the Southwest.

From Frank Applegate and Ross Calvin to Cleofas Jaramillo and the Fergussons, New Mexican writers of the modernist period have never garnered the same critical attention as their colleagues associated with the Carmel-by-the-Sea artist colony, the American South, or the Harlem Renaissance. Texts that had once found at least a small readership, such as Alice Corbin Henderson's *Red Earth* (1920), Oliver La Farge's *Laughing Boy* (1929), and Frank Waters's *The Man Who Killed the Deer* (1942), to name just a few, are now read almost solely by scholars of western regionalism. Mary Austin is one of the more accomplished modernists to call New Mexico home, and yet her best

work, *The Land of Little Rain* (1903) and *Lost Borders* (1909), explores the small towns and desert on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California. Her brilliant autobiography, *Earth Horizons* (1932), was written in Santa Fe, but New Mexico emerges only in the final three chapters, almost as an afterthought. D. H. Lawrence called New Mexico home, though only for a total of eleven months between 1922 and 1925. He avoided setting much of his work in New Mexico, opting instead to place *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) south of the U.S.-Mexico border. Though *St. Mawr* (1925) did conclude near Taos, most of the novel was set in England. Similarly, Jean Toomer spent the summer of 1935 in Taos, but the play he worked on during that time, *A Drama of the Southwest*, was never completed, and it was only published for the first time in 2016. With the exception of Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* (1925) and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), literary representations of New Mexico have been excluded by scholars from the highest ranks of modernist literature.

Given New Mexico's status as a cultural hub for a number of prominent writers in the modernist period, a difficult and uncomfortable series of questions arises: why were writers unable to transform their material into more powerful narratives that captured the attention of those living elsewhere? Why was their work mediocre in comparison to the success achieved by a number of visual artists, Andrew Dasburg and Georgia O'Keeffe chief among them? Why were they unable to capitalize on the nation's interest in the region, which had been growing ever since the close of the frontier? Most importantly, what can be learned from their failed attempts to translate the cultural "otherness" of Taos? These questions are central to understanding early twentieth-century New Mexican

literature, and they can best be answered by closely examining the writings of Mabel Dodge Luhan and D. H. Lawrence.

### The Texts of D. H. Lawrence

Today, the Mabel Dodge Luhan House mixes elegance together with rusticity. The placita outside is shaded with elm, beech, and cottonwood trees, and on the east side of the house there are views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. You can walk to the nearby Kit Carson Cemetery to visit Luhan's grave, or pass through the white double Dutch front door and into one of the bedrooms named after the many famous artists who had once been houseguests. The historic inn is a place for "creative reflection," as the promotional material puts it, and thus there are a number of artistic workshops offered throughout the year, such as "lavender and sage mixed media," "tracking wonder," and "electric skies and creative thunder." Everything about the management of the house is designed to suggest that this is a mystical place that will allow for greater creativity, provided of course that you can pay for it, a message not incompatible with Luhan's own worldview.

Hidden about twenty miles outside of Taos on a twisting dirt road just past a cattle guard and a "No Trespassing" sign, the D. H. Lawrence ranch stands in sharp contrast to the Luhan house. Luhan originally gave Lawrence the ranch in exchange for the original copy of *Sons and Lovers* (1913), and his wife, Frieda, bequeathed the property to the University of New Mexico after her death in 1956. Most of the rundown structures were

actually built after Lawrence's death, but you can still peek through the windows into the Lawrences's three-room log cabin. Built in the late 1800s from pine and adobe, the dirt floor of Lawrence's time was since replaced with wood. Towering outside the front door is the ponderosa pine that Georgia O'Keeffe made famous in her 1929 painting, "The Lawrence Tree." Walking around the property nowadays, the general sense is one of neglect.

The current state of the Luhan house and Lawrence ranch are representative of how literary historians have read these writers' New Mexico texts. The texts Lawrence produced about New Mexico have been understudied and neglected, and many critics have argued that Luhan elided numerous intercultural challenges in order to sell to literary tourists what Barbara Babcock has referred to as an invented Southwest. They are thus seen in opposition: Lawrence was a major literary figure with few significant ties to New Mexico, and Luhan was a minor writer who devoted her limited abilities to romanticizing the cultural importance of the state. Their literary representations of New Mexico were nevertheless intertwined.

After reading *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Sea and Sardinia* (1921), Mabel Dodge Luhan wrote to D. H. Lawrence and invited him to her home in Taos, where she had moved to in 1917. She had responded to Lawrence's concerns over capitalism and industrialization and very much wanted him to convey "the invisible but powerful spirit that hovered over the Taos Valley" (Lorenzo 12) before development and tourism ruined the uniqueness of her new home. She became convinced that he alone could discern and subsequently reveal the importance of Pueblo

culture to the rest of the world. He was “the only one who can really *see* this Taos country and the Indians, and who can describe it so that it is as much alive between the covers of a book as it is in reality” (*Lorenzo* 3). She was not, however, particularly interested in Lawrence formulating a response to Taos independent of her vision; rather, she expected his “genius” to articulate her particular worldview of the place: “I wanted Lawrence to understand things for me. To take *my* experience, *my* material, *my* Taos, and to formulate it all into a magnificent creation” (70). From a feminist perspective, her invitation is a paradoxical one, situated as it is between her Victorian upbringing and her more modernist sensibilities. On the one hand, she deferred to a male writer in order to capture and preserve Taos culture from the growing Anglo influence that threatened its cultural authenticity, while on the other she wanted Lawrence merely to channel her own vision.

Lawrence agreed to visit Luhan in Taos, and he and Frieda arrived there on September 11, 1922, which was his thirty-seventh birthday. It was the first of three visits that Lawrence made to New Mexico. Although Luhan and Lawrence both shared a general belief that at least some aspects of regional American culture would play an important role in a postwar cultural renewal, there were significant differences between their interpretations of the Southwest. Luhan’s interest in Taos amounted to a faith centered on the Pueblo relationship with the natural world, which she believed could act as a corrective to modernity’s veneration of money, progress, and mechanization. Lawrence, on the other hand, tended to emphasize that in the early twentieth century, Native Americans were often under the gaze of Anglo spectators. Any narrative account

of Native American culture, including the Pueblo interpretations of the natural world, must therefore acknowledge the observer's possible distortions and idiosyncrasies within the description, a position that allowed him to emphasize his own feelings in his encounters with Native Americans.

Lawrence's focus on the mediating role of the Anglo gaze colored almost all of his writings about the Southwest. Immediately after arriving in Taos, Luhan sent him on a five-day trip to an Apache gathering, which he described in "Indians and an Englishman" (1923). He compared the strangeness of New Mexico to being on the moon and admitted that he felt out of place: "Don't let me for a moment pretend to *know* anything. I know less than nothing" (93). Without providing context or interpretation, he lists what he encounters through the repeated use of a conjunction, as if he is trying to ground himself with a processional, yet loosely paratactic, ordering of concrete details:

And this shallow upland basin, dotted with Indian tents, and the fires flickering in front, and crouching blanketed figures, and horsemen crossing the dusk from tent to tent, horsemen in big steeple hats sitting glued on their ponies, and bells tinkling, and dogs yapping and tilted wagons trailing in on the trail below, and a smell of wood-smoke and of cooking, and wagons coming in from far off, and tents pricking on the ridge of the round *vallum*, and horsemen dipping down and emerging again, and more red sparks of fires glittering, and crouching bundles of women's figures squatting at a fire before a little tent made of boughs, and little girls in full petticoats hovering, and wild barefoot boys throwing bones at thin-tailed dogs, and tents away in the distance, in the growing dark, on the slopes, and the trail crossing the floor of the hollows in the low dusk. (93-94)



For the first half of “Indians and an Englishman,” Lawrence expresses dismay at the differences between the Apache gathering and the West that he had read about in the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, but then the men began to chant and play the drums.

The music powerfully affects Lawrence:

I shall never forget that first evening when I first came into contact with Red Men, away in the Apache country. It was not what I had thought it would be. It was something of a shock. Again something in my soul broke down, letting in a bitterer dark, a pungent awakening to the lost past, old darkness, new terror, new root-griefs, old root-richnesses. (95)

He feels nostalgia for a primal past that he had forgotten existed, and thus a connection between Anglos and Native Americans, albeit a primitivist one, seems to be possible. However, the bond is quickly broken, for later that night he stumbles upon a kiva where an elderly man is giving a religious oration. Lawrence is not allowed to enter, but he watches from outside the kiva, fascinated by the performance: “As for me, standing outside, beyond the open entrance, I was no enemy of theirs; far from it. The voice out of the far-off time was not for my ears. Its language was unknown to me. And I did not wish to know . . . It was not for me, and I knew it” (98-99). Lawrence is not particularly interested in understanding the Apaches on their own terms. At one point, he even declares that “I am no ethnologist” (95). However, he is committed to exploring his own emotional responses in minute detail whenever he encounters Native American culture.

Upon returning to Taos, Lawrence asked Luhan to collaborate on a novel with him. Luhan was delighted: “He said he wanted to write an American novel that would express the life, the spirit, of America and he wanted to write it around me—my life from the time I left New York to come out to New Mexico; my life, from civilization to the bright, strange world of Taos . . . I was thrilled at the thought of this” (*Lorenzo* 52). The project was soon abandoned, however, because Frieda objected to the two of them working so closely together. At only five pages, the short text that Lawrence wrote with Luhan, “The Willful Woman,” is fragmentary and incomplete. If Luhan wanted to express her vision of Taos, she would eventually have to write about it entirely by herself.

The next essay that Lawrence wrote, “Taos” (1923), compares the pueblo to the monasteries in Europe, suggesting that although the place is deeply rooted in history, it is still in a sense alive. However, the cultural differences are now described in a more negative tone: “And yet, the old nodality of the pueblo still holding, like a dark ganglion spinning invisible threads of consciousness . . . It brings a sick sort of feeling over me, always, to get into the Indian vibration. Like breathing chlorine” (101). Whereas previously he had accepted being a cultural outsider in “Indians and an Englishman,” in “Taos” he strenuously objects to Anglos being excluded from the pueblo’s Catholic Church and then angrily declares that he is not interested in witnessing their religious “spectacle” (102).

It is clear, however, that he does not completely feel this way, for he goes on to describe a religious performance in the square, ending his essay by noting that the

Pueblos seemed to be “grinning at being there in all that white crowd of inquisitives. It must have been a sort of ordeal to sing and tread the slow dance between that solid wall of silent, impassive white faces. But the Indians seemed to take no notice. And the crowd only silently impassively watched. Watched with that strange, static American quality of *laissez-faire* and of indomitable curiosity” (103). “Taos” therefore extends Lawrence’s initial sense in “Indians and an Englishman” that Native Americans are unknowable, although the differences are more negatively described, but he is also gradually becoming more attuned to the power structures that influence Anglo-Pueblo interactions.

Lawrence next published an essay against the Bursum Bill, which would have deprived many Pueblos of their land rights by granting all non-Indians any land that they had settled on prior to 1902. He also began revising his *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923). In the first version of the book, he often argues against the romanticization of nature. In the final version this position was expressed with much more bitterness, at least in part because of his relationship with Mabel Dodge Luhan. In his essay on J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Lawrence charges the French-American author of *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) with sentimentalizing the natural world: "Absolutely the safest thing to get your emotional reactions over is NATURE" (29). Although Lawrence applauds Crèvecoeur for at least admitting, albeit briefly, that the natural world is at times brutal, he nevertheless charges him with dishonesty: “He’s a liar” (37).

He goes on to satirically note that while Crèvecoeur claimed in his writings to live in communion with both Native Americans and the natural world, in reality he escaped

the toil, drudgery, and violence of frontier life by returning to the salons of Europe: “He didn’t go too near the wigwam. Because he must have suspected that the moment he saw as the savages saw, all his fraternity and equality would go up in smoke, and his ideal world of pure sweet goodness along with it” (36). He touches on this point again in his first essay on Herman Melville with language that closely resembles “Indians and an Englishman” and “Taos”:

We can’t go back. We can’t go back to the savages: not a stride. We can be in sympathy with them. We can take a great curve in their direction, onwards. But we cannot turn the current of our life backwards, back towards their soft warm twilight and uncreate mud. Not for a moment. If we do it for a moment, it makes us sick. (145)

The positing of cross-cultural understanding, which was first described in “Indians and an Englishman,” has now taken on a much more curved and circuitous route.

Lawrence believed in the duality of creation: light against dark, male against female, flesh against spirit. It is therefore not surprising to read him criticizing American writers for being idealists who sentimentalized Native Americans, but in *Studies in Classic American Literature* he was also indirectly objecting to the relationship between Tony and Mabel Dodge Luhan, a point that becomes clear at the end of his essay on Crèvecoeur: “White Americans do try hard to intellectualize themselves. Especially white women Americans. And the latest stunt is this ‘savage’ stunt again. White savages, with motor-cars, telephones, incomes and ideals! Savages fast inside the machine; yet savage enough, ye gods!” (39). It was a position that must have been formed at least partially

through his relationship with Tony and Mabel Dodge Luhan, the only interracial couple that he befriended while in the United States. He took up the issue again on his Cooper essay, claiming that Native American men will always resist Anglo women in their relationships because the cultural divide between them will always remain incommensurable.

Less than three months after arriving in Taos, Lawrence realized that he could not live so close to the Luhans and moved to the abandoned ranch twenty miles north of town. He and Frieda stayed there for four months until they left for Mexico on March 18, 1923. New Mexico had not provided the place of creative expression that he had been hoping for, and like most places that he had visited, he left feeling disillusioned about it. And yet one year later, still in search of experiences that would help him to articulate a cultural and aesthetic regeneration in the post-war era, he invited several friends to accompany him back to Taos in order to start a colony. His second stay in Taos would last only six months, from March 22, 1924 to October 8, 1924, but it would be the most creative writing period of all his visits.

Lawrence again turned to the genre of the essay, initially writing two pieces that served as extensions of his earlier thoughts regarding Taos. In “Indians and Entertainment” (1924), he compares different cultural expressions of entertainment, suggesting that while Anglos enjoy theater because of the sense of detachment it provides the observer, there is no similar divide for Native American performances. He goes on to argue that these Native American performances are not representative of anything; rather, they are being something: “There is no God. There is no Onlooker. There is no Mind.

There is no dominant idea. And finally, there is no judgment: absolutely no judgment” (53).

If Native American entertainment is about reconnecting with pure being, the meaning of such expression is impossible for Anglos to know because there is an epistemological gap that cannot be traversed: “The two ways, the two streams are never to be united. They are not even to be reconciled. There is no bridge, no canal of connection” (46). Attempts to bridge this cultural and linguistic gap between Anglos and Native Americans are doomed either to sentimentality or distortion. Therefore, instead of attempting to interpret the cultural meanings associated with Native American performance, he instead reduces the dances to a fetishized focus on the physicality of Native American bodies: “It is the dance of the naked blood-being” (49). Because his focus is always on the Anglo observer, his argument that Native American performances can never be more than a mere exercise in physicality is colored with voyeuristic undertones.

While “Indians and Entertainment” outlines a theory of Native performance entwined with primitive sexuality, “Dance of the Sprouting Corn” (1924) operates as a descriptive case study. In this dance, Lawrence finds the men to be “mindless” (58), the women submissive. Again, there is a voyeuristic pleasure in his symbolic undressing of the dancers: “The bare-armed, bare-legged, barefoot women with streaming hair . . . women clad in the black, prehistoric short gown fastened over one shoulder, leaving the other shoulder bare, and showing at the arm-place a bit of pink or white undershirt” (57). Other dancers, who are almost entirely nude, their skin smeared with mud and their hair

decorated with cornhusks, “complete the fantasy” (59). Thus, a dance about spring germination becomes, for Lawrence, an intensely sexualized performance, a fantasy that links men to phallic symbols and women to the landscape: “The earth has its reddened body, its invisible hot heart, its inner waters and many juices and unaccountable stuffs” (60).

Both “Indians and Entertainment” and “Dance of the Sprouting Corn” were published at a time when Pueblo dances were generating a great deal of controversy. As Margaret Jacobs has noted, four years earlier, E. M. Sweet, a U.S. government inspector, began to compile a number of statements from both Hopis and Anglos about the supposed immorality of these performances. This two hundred page document came to be referred to in Indian reform circles as the “Secret Dance File.” In it, eyewitnesses claimed, in rather graphic descriptions, that Pueblo dancers acted as if they were engaged in various types of sexual activity. The accuracy of these descriptions is impossible to determine, since many informants were culturally biased and some even admitted to relying on hearsay. Regardless, both Anglo and Pueblo responses to the report were quite varied.

Pueblos who argued in favor of the dances tended to be those in power, using the rhetoric of Anglo romanticism towards Native Americans in their arguments. Those Pueblos who fought against the dances were often outside of the religious hierarchy, and were therefore possibly resisting traditional leadership. Anglos were also divided. Some of them, especially missionaries, denounced these dances as primitive activities that impeded the process of assimilation. Other Anglos, including Mary Austin and Emma

Fergusson, supported the performances, arguing that the depictions of sexuality represented a healthier disposition than could be found in Anglo society. These arguments revealed that for Anglos, one of the key conflicts in the Pueblo dancing controversy involved the depiction of Pueblo sexual practices, especially the staging and performance of female sexuality. D. H. Lawrence's essays intervened in this debate by canonizing the gaze of the western tourist, exoticizing Pueblo sexuality, and constructing a primitivism foregrounding nude bodies over cultural understanding, all positions that Mabel Dodge Luhan would later contest.

The next essay that he wrote, "Pan in America" (1924), reveals an important shift in his thinking. At the beginning of the essay, Lawrence notes that the formerly great Pan survived the Christian era by morphing into a different type of God, a "sort of fugitive, hidden among leaves," which is to say an "outlaw" (22). Eventually, Pan became the devil in Christianity, but by the eighteenth century he had changed once again, aligned this time with Wordsworth and other pantheists. Lawrence then makes an interesting claim, one that is somewhat outside the European religious history that he had just described, arguing that Pan is still alive in America. To illustrate his novel interpretation, he offers an extended meditation on a particular pine tree outside his cabin, and while it might appear by daylight to be just another tree, at night he is mystically able to experience the power of its mystery: "It vibrates its presence into my soul, and I am with Pan" (25).

Lawrence pledges to remain as receptive as possible to this power, linking it to his willingness to remain open to Native Americans: "It is what, in a way, the aboriginal



Indians still say, and still *mean*, intensely: especially when they dance the sacred dance, with the tree; or with the spruce twigs tied above their elbows” (26). However, Native Americans will never discuss this relationship, for “speech is the death of Pan” (27), and yet Lawrence clearly needed to articulate the contours of the budding connections. He says that he felt a “psychic attraction” (28) towards Pan, Native Americans, and nature, and at this point in the essay, he offers his own working designation of pantheism in the twentieth century:

What can a man do with his life but live it? And what does life consist in, save a vivid relatedness between the man and the living universe that surrounds him? Yet man insulates himself more and more into mechanism, and repudiates everything but the machine and the contrivance of which he himself is master, god in the machine. (27)

It might appear that Lawrence is here channeling Crèvecoeur, but his notion of Pan does not suffer from the same sentimental interpretation of the natural world. He remarks that Pan represents the violent struggle for life: “There is no boredom, because *everything* is alive and active, and danger is inherent in all movement” (30). He ends his essay pessimistically, arguing that although Native Americans are still in communion with Pan, modernity, and especially the automobile, is changing that relationship. The lamentation that Native Americans ought always to exist outside of history was of course common in the early twentieth century. Despite Lawrence’s persistent Eurocentrism, the linkage between Greek, Celtic, and Native American religiosity, specifically the similar ways in which they filled out the gap in the Christian notion of God, was a novel

development in his worldview, and one that he would continue to cultivate throughout his fiction.

Lawrence wrote short stories and a novella during his second stay in Taos. Although some critics have suggested the protagonist in “The Woman Who Rode Away” was based on Mabel Dodge Luhan, Lawrence also seemed to put much of himself into the character, and in any event the story was actually set in Mexico. “The Princess” was based on a journey Lawrence had taken into the mountains behind his ranch outside Taos, and its narrative logic depends on the contrast between the aristocratic sexual frigidity of Mary Henrietta Urquhart, “the princess,” and Domingo Romero, a Mexican incarnation of Pan who “panted like an animal with desire” (189). Domingo is eventually killed, implying that Pan cannot exist in the modern world, but the argument rests on characterizations that are rigid and unidimensional. *St. Mawr* is the subtler narrative, and it is the finest of Lawrence’s numerous New Mexico texts.

This is how the novella begins: “Lou Witt had had her own way so long, that by the age of twenty-five she didn’t know where she was. Having one’s own way landed one completely at sea. To be sure for a while she had failed in her grand love affair with Rico. And then she had had something *really* to despair about” (21) (italics mine). If *St. Mawr* is read in conjunction with “Pan in America,” then it becomes clear that Louise initially feels lost because her privilege has allowed her a degree of social dominance, which has thus far inhibited her ability to discover the power of Pan. What “really” troubles her is not her constrictive relationship with Rico, for she finds his lifestyle to be fundamentally inauthentic; rather, she is primarily concerned with how to lead a genuinely real life. As

critic Paul Poplawski has argued, the question of “what is real?” is the central question of the book (93), and it is a question that Lou can answer only after she encounters Pan, who is embodied here in the form of an unbreakable horse, St. Mawr:

“Pan was the hidden mystery—the hidden cause. That’s how it was a great God. Pan wasn’t *He* at all: not even a great God. He was Pan, All: what you see when you see in full. In the daytime you see the thing. But if your third eye is open, which sees only the things that can’t be seen, you may see Pan within the thing, hidden: you may see with your third eye, which is darkness.”  
“Do you think I might see Pan in a horse, for example?” [asked Lou].  
“Easily. In St. Mawr!” (65)

Although this third eye is darkness, it is nevertheless able to see that which could not otherwise be seen. Lou’s third eye is able to see the figure of Pan in St. Mawr, thus presenting her with an authentic vision of reality that stands in opposition to the effete Rico: “At the middle of his [Rico’s] eyes was a central powerlessness, that left him anxious . . . But now, since she [Lou] had seen the full, dark, passionate blaze of power and of different life, in the eyes of the thwarted horse, the anxious powerlessness of the man drove her mad” (31). Rico is an artist, and is thus concerned with visual perception, but he ironically lacks the ability to see beyond two dimensional surfaces. He observes life, but St. Mawr is able to live it, which is what ends up engaging Lou on a deeply emotional level.

At the novel’s turning point, St. Mawr injures Rico in a riding accident. Rico wants the horse destroyed, or at least gelded, but Lou’s rejection of the idea is also a fundamental denial of Rico’s limited abilities to perceive reality. She and St. Mawr

escape and accompany her mother to a Texas ranch, but Lawrence wants his readers to recognize that Lou soon sees the place for what it truly is:

Lou could not get over the feeling that it all meant nothing. There were no roots of reality at all. No consciousness below the surface, no meaning in anything save the obvious, the blatantly obvious. It was like life enacted in a mirror. Visually, it was wildly vital. But there was nothing behind it . . . No deeper consciousness . . . One moved from dream to dream, from phantasm to phantasm. (131)

Lawrence goes on to compare the self-consciousness of the Texas cowboys to a Zane Grey novel, and thus the realness of the Texas ranch is thus just as ethereal as England. Lou leaves it behind and continues westward, stopping finally at Las Chivas, an abandoned ranch on the outskirts of Taos where “the stillness simply speaks” (151). Social norms are nonexistent here; they have been erased by a desert filled with “uncanny significance” (146). Finally, here is the place where Lou can most intimately encounter Pan and awaken completely to the deeper reality that surrounds her:

It was always beauty, *always!* It was always great, and splendid, and, for some reason, natural. It was never grandiose or theatrical. Always, for some reason, perfect. And quite simple, in spite of it all.

So it was, when you watched the vast and living landscape. The landscape lived, and lived as the world of the gods, unsullied and unconcerned. (146)

In some of the finest prose that Lawrence ever wrote, he describes the New Mexican desert in vivid detail. It is where Lou emerges from the shadows of reality and reconnects with a pantheistic worldview, essentially rejecting the notion of social and scientific progress of her era. Lou’s worldview mirrored Lawrence’s in that neither was metaphysically Christ-centered, but there was an important difference, for Lawrence was

at times ambivalent or worse in his attitude towards New Mexico. Lawrence never shared in his protagonist's discovery of a place where she could live a more meaningful existence:

There's something else even that loves me and wants me. I can't tell you what it is. It's a spirit. And it's here, on this ranch. It's here, in this landscape. It's something more real to me than men are, and it soothes me, and it holds me up. I don't know what it is, definitely. It's something wild, that will hurt me sometimes and will wear me down sometimes. I know it. But it's something big, bigger than men, bigger than people, bigger than religion. It's something to do with wild America. And it's something to do with me. It's a mission, if you like. (155)

The last important text that Lawrence wrote during his second stay in Taos was an essay entitled, "Hopi Snake Dance," which he produced after Luhan took him to the Hopi reservation in August 1924. In the first version of the essay, Lawrence merely mocked the event, but his revision is notable not only for the ethnographic information that he relays, but also because the confusion and uncertainty that marked "Indians and an Englishman" and "Taos" is now gone. His observations were still colored by a primitivist lens, but his interpretations of the socio-cultural characteristics of the Southwest were so solidified that it turned out he had little else to declare about the region.

Lawrence's third trip to Taos occurred from April to September 1925. During this time, he mostly concentrated his attention on revising a novel, which at the time was entitled *Quetzalcoatl*, though it would be published the following year as *The Plumed Serpent*. This novel would garner much more critical attention than anything he wrote about New Mexico. Just as his pantheistic interpretation of the Southwest has been underappreciated by most critics, his role in helping to launch the writing career of Mabel

Dodge Luhan has been similarly neglected, perhaps because few critics have read Luhan's writing with any degree of seriousness.

### The Texts of Mabel Dodge Luhan

Part of the issue surrounding Luhan is that her writings are so vast, few critics have been able to read all of her work, resulting in partial and skewed readings of selected texts. *Intimate Memories*, her epic, sixteen hundred page memoir, was published in the following four volumes: *Background* (1933), *European Experiences* (1935), *Movers and Shakers* (1936), and *Edge of Taos Desert: An Escape to Reality* (1937). She also published a memoir about her relationship with D. H. Lawrence, *Lorenzo in Taos* (1932), as well as an additional memoir about Taos, *Winter in Taos* (1935). The last text she published in her lifetime, *Taos and Its Artists* (1947), consists of photographs by Laura Gilpin and fifty-six black and white reproductions of paintings by Taosño artists. Luhan herself contributed the captions to these images, and she also wrote a brief introduction to the book.

In addition to these published works, a number of unpublished texts are housed at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Most of this collection was closed to researchers until 2000 because Luhan and then her son, John Evans, feared offending those friends and colleagues she had written about. These manuscripts include five additional volumes originally designed to be a part of *Intimate Memories: Green Horses*, a narrative continuation of Luhan's early life in Buffalo, *Una and Robin*, an

examination of Robinson Jeffers and his wife, *Notes on Awareness*, which is addressed to Jiddu Krisnamurti, *The Doomed*, a brief account of Millicent Rogers, a fellow socialite and Southwestern aficionado, and *The Statue of Liberty: An Old Fashioned Story of Taboos*. Furthermore, Luhan deposited four supplementary volumes of autobiographical writings: *Doctors: Fifty Years of Experience*, *Family Affairs: A Recapitulation*, *Mexico in 1930*, and *On Human Relations: A Personal Interpretation*. She also donated her post-1914 correspondence—her letters prior to this date were accidentally burned—and two novels: *Water of Life*, which was set in Europe, and *Let's Get Away Together*, an important southwestern narrative in the Luhan canon that I discuss extensively in the pages that follow.

Despite her productivity, Luhan is currently considered to be little more than an obscure literary footnote. Once at the center of the literary and cultural avant-garde, she is remembered now, if at all, for her key part in constructing certain artistic communities in Florence, New York City, and especially Taos. As demonstrated by several accounts of her role in helping to organize the groundbreaking Armory Show in 1913, the first large exhibit of modern art in the United States, critics see her mostly through the numerous relationships that she fostered with various artists, social activists, and intellectuals. She has thus been read as a site of intersection through which scholars can trace the key political and artistic ideas of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but her individual contributions to such cultural productions have rarely been recognized.

For example, Christopher Lasch represents a standard critical response. In his critical assessment of her memoirs, he writes that they seemed, even at the time of publication,

as dated as Mah-Jongg, relics of a period which the depression had made ancient history. At a time when political involvement was the fashion among intellectuals, Mrs. Luhan's painstaking investigations of the intricacies of personal intercourse could hardly have commanded a following. The confessional had gone out of vogue . . . She had no sins to confess except those which were bound up with a devotion to the private life as frivolous, it seemed now, as it was impossibly selfish. (107)

Similar assessments by Flannery Burke, Margaret Jacobs, and Marianna Torgovnik, among others, indicate that Luhan has been seen more as a facilitator than an agent of cultural production. Nowhere is this more problematic than the way Luhan is remembered for her role towards challenging assimilationist pressures on Native Americans. Most historians have concentrated solely on her role in inviting John Collier to Taos. No doubt her relationship with Collier is important. He relied heavily on her when he began to study Native American peoples and cultures in earnest from 1919-1921, an interest that eventually resulted in him becoming an influential Commissioner of Indian Affairs during the Roosevelt administration. However, Luhan also married Tony Luhan, a Tiwa Pueblo man from Taos, and wrote in detail about their interracial relationship in numerous texts. Unfortunately, this part of her story has been underappreciated by many historians.

There are, of course, critical issues that cannot be ignored with Luhan. Not only was she in desperate need of an editor to pare down the many thousands of pages she



produced, she was, more importantly, never quite able to discard her nineteenth-century views on race. Furthermore, as Maureen E. Reed has shown by reading Luhan's unpublished letters against various historical records, Luhan both romanticized and distorted some of the events that occurred in Taos. If Luhan's writings relied upon various nineteenth-century concerns with place and cultural difference, they also revealed her anxieties with the modernist problem of representation, an aspect of her work that has gone unrecognized by many of her critics. Although she was a mediocre writer, her shortcomings nevertheless provide a fascinating prism through which to view New Mexican modernist literature.

Configured as a long letter to Robinson Jeffers, *Lorenzo in Taos* (1932) was Luhan's first published book, and the memoir centered on her relationship with D. H. Lawrence. She composed the text quickly so that she could be one of the first to publish a book on him after his death in 1930, and the writing suffers from her haste. The central argument of the book is that Lawrence was a kind of anti-hero who could not overcome his many limitations, thereby failing to properly interpret the importance of Taos to the world. For Luhan, what made Taos such a post-war refuge was the culture of the Pueblos and its high regard for nature, though these justifications are more clearly worked out in her later texts.

Critics such as John Worthen have derided Luhan for her occult claim that the sheer force of her will actually forced Lawrence to visit Taos. At night, she says she engaged in a type of mediation and "leaped through space, joining myself to the central core of Lawrence, where he was in India, in Australia" (35). She learned such "magic"

from Tony, who assisted her even though he doubted Luhan's assertion that a writer could help his people (35). Whatever one might make of Luhan's claims, it is clear she was positioning herself as a bridge between two men, two languages, and two completely different worldviews.

After Lawrence finally agreed to visit Taos with his wife, Frieda, the Luhans picked them up at the train station twenty miles south of Santa Fe, thereby commencing one of the more interesting relationships in the history of twentieth-century American literature. Upon first meeting Lawrence, Luhan thought he was "agitated, fussy, distraught, and giggling with nervous grimaces" (36). His behavior sharply contrasted against Tony's stolidity, indicating that the two men were seen by Luhan as oppositional. In the car, "Frieda immediately saw Tony and me sexually, visualizing our relationship . . . In that first moment I saw how her encounters passed through her to Lawrence—how he was keyed to her so that he felt things through her and was obliged to receive life through her" (37).

Whether or not such wordless thoughts were actually being shared, this passage reveals Luhan's intense desire to replace Frieda as Lawrence's muse, which is reinforced later in the text when Luhan claims that she and Lawrence became psychically intimate (60). Whereas Frieda freely offers him her sexuality, Luhan would present the "womb behind the womb—the significant, extended, and transformed power that succeeds primary sex . . . I longed to help him with that—to be used—to be put to his purpose" (37). In other words, Luhan is tendering her spirit to Lawrence, which she believes will channel him towards a more sophisticated understanding of the world in general, but

especially of Taos. As if rejecting these plans, Lawrence quickly hides behind Frieda, using “her big body” as a shield against Luhan (37).

When the car breaks down on the road to Santa Fe, Frieda asks Lawrence to help Tony fix it. Lawrence angrily tells his wife that he does not know how to work on cars. They get into an argument, and after Tony finally gets the car started, Lawrence says, “I am a failure. I am a failure as a man in the world of men” (39). By dramatizing Lawrence’s emasculation, Luhan initiates the pattern that will shape the rest of the book: Lawrence is not the right person to write about Taos, represented here and throughout much of the text by Tony, precisely because he is unwilling to allow Luhan to serve as his primary muse. Her intentions are not simply to disparage Lawrence, who she feels betrayed her by never writing a substantial work about Taos, but also to rhetorically persuade Robinson Jeffers to take up the cause of Taos. Of course, she offers to be his guide.

At the end of the night when they are together in bed, Luhan asks Tony whether or not he likes Lawrence. “‘I don’t know yet,’ said Tony, but he made a face” (39). Luhan does not tell us what kind of a face he made, so the reader is unsure how to interpret Tony’s response. Perhaps he recognized the difficulties inherent in Luhan’s worldview: “to bring Lawrence and the Indians together was like an impulse of the evolutionary will, apart from me, using me for its own purposes” (48). Indeed, soon after this exchange Luhan reads Lawrence’s first article about the Southwest, “Indians and an Englishman.” She declares straightforwardly that “it does not seem to me to be very good” (52).

Tensions between Luhan and Lawrence soon arose, in large part having to do with gender. Louise Rudnick has claimed that Luhan was *the* model of the “new woman” in the modernist era, but Lawrence’s views on women, especially as they are presented in *Lorenzo in Taos*, were antiquated. For example, he says that the “burden of consciousness is too great for a woman to carry. She has enough to bear with her ever-recurring menstruation” (61). Despite *Lorenzo in Taos*’s many flaws, it is notable that Luhan was able to reject not only Lawrence’s patriarchal worldview, but also her own, in large part because Lawrence and the other male writers that she had solicited either failed or refused to write about Taos in the ways she deemed necessary. Simply put, she was ultimately unsatisfied with the ways in which they represented Taos Pueblo and its populace to the world at large. Their shortcomings prompted her to create her own narrative expressions. Although at one point in *Lorenzo in Taos* she says, “I was not a *writer*” (66), that sentiment is ironically expressed in her first published text. Moving forward, if anyone was going to give voice to her interpretations, it would have to be her own.

The next book Luhan wrote about Taos, *Winter in Taos*, was the finest of her career. It offers readers her clearest vision of Taos’s significance, and the interplay between form and content is quite sophisticated. Thematically, it continues the tradition of American nature writing as developed by Thoreau. Like him, she uses a two-part structure so that in describing one day in Taos, she simultaneously describes an entire year and the changing of the seasons therein. Her text oscillates between an exploration of the domestic and the wild, a duality that she attempts to unify vis-à-vis the place she is

finally able to call home. The narrative focuses more on the natural environment than people, and whenever individual characters do happen to make an appearance, they are depicted as living in harmony with each other and the environment. Like other texts in the pastoral tradition, *Winter in Taos* utilizes a number of techniques to conceal the complexity of the narrator's life, opting instead for a seemingly more straightforward representation.

One morning in February, Luhan awakes with a cold and determines that she will stay in bed for a day or two in order to get over it. She plans to spend her time reading Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, a foundational text in the genre of modern biography and an interesting choice of reading material given that Boswell's idealized, near mythic account elided the more off-putting aspects of Johnson's life. However, the meta-textual connections are left mostly implied because soon Luhan is distracted by the sound of Tony leaving in his car. She visualizes him as he drives across the valley to trade his produce, and the rest of the narrative oscillates between descriptions of their house and the surrounding environment. This two-part structure is a strong strategic choice because it allows Luhan to explore two of her most significant tropes: the differences between wildness and domesticity, and Tony's fundamental role in trying to unite her fractured self.

Initially depressed by his absence, she writes, "But where he was, I thought, speeding along the road to Arroyo Seco, everything looked more vivid and real than this place where I was left alone" (71). Luhan is praising Tony as those in love are wont to do, but her claim that her husband's imagined journey is somehow more real to her than

her actual physical surroundings is indicative of Luhan's most significant shortcoming as a writer. If she at times struggles in her texts to articulate a clear vision of why Taos is so important to the modern world, it is because she often writes about the idea of Taos, not the actual place.

Often in a Luhan text, we find her thinking about Taos, or if she does happen to be experiencing something directly, her prose tends quickly to gesture towards a philosophical explanation of some kind. Taos is thus "more vivid and real" (71), one of its mountains is "Sacred" (34), and the voice of its community is singular as it somehow "penetrates [one's] consciousness" (53). In a sense, she inverts William Carlos Williams' invective that there should be "no ideas but in things," instead imbibing Taos with a number of mystical qualities that never quite seem to generate the concrete meaning she had probably intended. This rarely gives her readers an opportunity to formulate their own interpretations, other than noting that the idea of Taos is seemingly more interesting to Luhan than the actual place.

Nevertheless, the reason that *Winter in Taos* is so important in the Luhan canon is that it contains far fewer of these abstract passages than her other texts. More so than anything else she ever wrote, she allows the specific details of *Winter in Taos* to create narrative significance. After Tony leaves, for example, Luhan imagines the route that he takes and proceeds to describe the social landscape along the way. The prose here is as vivid as it is elegant: "The winter landscape is vast and pale with blue shadows lying upon it, and the tender, smoldering red of the willow clumps beside the stream" (73).

At one point, Tony passes by the house of Spud Johnson, an Anglo friend of Luhan's who also relocated to Taos and edited the small literary journal, *Laughing Horse*. His small adobe house does not have electricity and it is arranged quite simply: "[T]he dim old ceiling made of ancient cedar strips laid on beams, which comes weightily close to one's head, and the dirt floor, which provides a constant veil of fine dust that softens every outline and subdues every surface" (76). By juxtaposing the quaintness of Johnson's house against Tony driving by in his Cadillac, Luhan brilliantly reveals the ways in which the Pueblo and Anglo cultures in Taos were in the process of affecting one another. Unlike many of contemporaries, she understood that Pueblos did not exist in a state of prelapsarian timelessness; rather, their lives were shaped as much by modernity as their new Anglo neighbors.

Whenever *Winter in Taos* strays from the domestic space of Luhan's home, the narrator finds the landscape to be quite wondrous. Yet, she acknowledges that there is also a wild and dangerous aspect to nature. The central metaphor of the book, as critic Jane Nelson first noticed, is the notion of the black panther:

In the spring, there is a black panther hidden behind all the appearances of Nature. He crouches in us when we are at bay among the chairs and tables of houses; he is clinging to the tree tops and lashing out, teeth bared among the young leaves, and he is riding down the streams on the sparkling brown water, sleek and black with the white light in his eyes. He is the master. Out of his ruthless ferocity there pours the soft foam of wild plum blossoms all over the valley; the orchards are pink and blond with the beneficence borne out of his cruelty; and along the borders of the garden, the large purple iris blossoms touch their heads together gently and breathe out a perfume that fills all our rooms; and each flower carries a drop of the stinging blood of the black panther in its heart. (120-121)

Luhan here recognizes an enigmatic aspect of nature, which is connected both to irrationality and death. Of those who live in Taos—Anglos, Hispanics, and Pueblos—Luhan theorized that the latter best knew how to deal with the black panther and the mysteriousness that it symbolized because they accepted everything about nature. As Luhan moves forward in her narrative, she comes to identify with the panther, describing in rich detail the slaughter of a calf, the bleating of a newborn lamb, and the doom of the pig. These farm animals will all be sacrificed for Luhan's family, and she thus sees herself as an accomplice to the panther's animalistic need to hunt. Luhan recognizes an enigmatic aspect of her deeper self, one that is closely tied to nature. Growing up in Buffalo, she feared death, but this fear became transformed in Taos; rather than pointing towards psychological anxiety, it now came to represent a union with the environment while simultaneously gesturing towards a Pueblo inspired worldview that accepts nature's violent characteristics.

The use of the first-person plural here would seem to include everyone who lives in Taos, but this is misleading because later she writes, "[I]f we, struggling in our Christian coil, succeed in casting him [the panther] out, he prowls behind us, waiting for an entrance" (121). In other words, Anglos and Mexicans are products of a Western metaphysical tradition that divides good from evil, and thus it is only the Pueblos and their students who are able to accept everything about nature, including the black panther. The "we" thus refers to Tony and herself, but what makes this point-of-view so interesting is that the entire narrative is defined by Tony's absence. Much like the black panther, he lingers in the periphery of the narrative and remains mysterious throughout.



He returns home only at the very end of the book to comfort Luhan, who was afraid he might have perhaps been injured in a violent storm that was wreaking havoc on the valley.

The ending of the narrative physically restores the “we” that had been separated by Luhan’s narrative device, but it is clear that Tony will always be more at home in the natural world. No matter how much Luhan tries to mimic his belief system, she will never be able to entirely transcend her own point-of-view. The underlying tension in the book, then, is that the “we” is always threatening to fracture. Were that to occur, the question would then become how might Luhan handle the black panther that lives within her.

*Winter in Taos* is thus not a mere utopian attempt to return to Eden, as some of Luhan’s critics have suggested. Hers was a more complicated vision, one that did not celebrate nature as something that existed separate from communities. She instead opted for a multi-cultural communalism that drew heavily on Anglo women writers’ views on the frontier. As Annette Kolodny has argued, women from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries tended to theorize the frontier in very different ways than their male counterparts: “[W]omen claimed the frontiers as a potential sanctuary for an idealized domesticity. Massive exploitation and alteration of the continent do not seem to have been part of women’s fantasies” (xiii). *Winter in Taos* continues this tradition of articulating a feminist frontier. In Taos, Luhan was able to discover the perfect place for her to build a house, set down roots, and finally commence idealizing her intercultural marriage.

If *Winter in Taos* was structured around the seasons, the year it described nevertheless gestures towards a synchronic notion of time. The history of Taos is ignored, as are the personal histories of both Tony and Mabel Luhan, and the descriptions of the natural world tend to be the culmination of numerous and repeated encounters with the desert rather than a singular description of, say, a particular moment, event, or day. Her next project marked an important development in her thinking about Taos because it added a necessary historical dimension to her work.

*Edge of Taos Desert: An Escape to Reality* was the fourth and final volume of her published memoirs, *Intimate Memories*. Each volume focuses on a locale: the first volume covers her childhood in Buffalo, the second her time abroad in Florence, the third her period in New York City, and the fourth her early years in Taos. Taos is the most significant for it serves as a kind of foil against the failed relationships, sexual dissatisfaction, and depression that had plagued Luhan throughout much of her life. Taos is thus situated diachronically in *Edge of Taos Desert* as a place of existential reversal, and so before the conversion narrative, as Lois Rudnick has described it in her biography, can be appreciated in its full complexity, a reading of the first three volumes of her memoirs is absolutely essential (256).

Oscillating between nostalgia and resentment, *Background* is filled with descriptions of how unhappy she was growing up in Buffalo, and it was her emotional isolation that would prompt, as literary critic Jane Nelson has delicately phrased it, “her epic search for a home” (27). Unfortunately for the young Luhan, there was “hardly any real intimacy between friends, and people had no confidence in each other” (5). Despite

friends and the advantages of wealth, she claimed not to have a single happy hour in her childhood, in part because she received very little affection from her parents. Her father, his mind “burning” and “disordered,” routinely erupted into rages (98). He is the “blackest-natured man” she has ever seen, which is perhaps why she asserted that he never loved her (106). She found her mother to be reserved and mysterious, “a creature of secrets,” and was more traumatized by her emotional coldness than by her father’s outbursts (59).

Like Mary Austin, Luhan desperately yearned for a maternal bond, but since that never occurred, the issue became a source of anger and confusion. This is revealed through a metaphorical image of the breast. One day, Luhan spies a servant “rip open the front of her dress and drag her great breast out from the shelving corset that supported it. With a quick pressure she directed a stream of pale milk right across the room on to the three squawking servant girls, who hid their faces from this shower” (30). There is nothing maternal in the way Luhan describes this image, although she is fascinated by it “because it stirred something hidden inside me and gave me new feelings” (30). The sexual undertone here becomes explicit when she later attempts to recreate the experience one night with a different servant. The young woman is asleep, or is perhaps pretending to sleep, when Luhan “leaned over her and seized her big warm breast in both hands . . . I leaned to it and fondled it . . . I rolled it ecstatically from side to side and slathered it with my dripping lips. As my sudden new, delicious pleasure increased, I grew rougher. I longed now to hurt it and wring something from it. I wanted to pound it and burst it” (31). Initially, breasts represent Luhan’s lack of familial love, but they quickly become the

object of a sexually tinged assault, and they also foreshadow the lesbian encounters she would later experience.

Because both women worked for her family, these incidents bring up the issue of class, which is ever-present in Luhan's memoirs. Her need to act destructively towards those people who work for her family reaches an apex later in the memoir when she becomes enraged at one of the girls her mother has hired. Luhan tries to kill her by pushing her off of a cliff, but the young woman lands on a rock several yards below. Luhan confesses, "Watching her from above, I felt very embarrassed. I didn't know what to do, so I didn't do anything. I watched her sob for a moment or two, her face in her hands, her brown hair all tumbling over her shoulders, and then I turned and walked home alone" (165).

At this early point in Luhan's life, she conceives of difference in terms of class and reacts violently against it, which allows her to structure her memoir in such a way that her adult life becomes an escape from the emotional vacuity of her childhood. Taos would thus become the place where difference, which in New Mexico becomes ethnic rather than class-based, is finally celebrated.

If Buffalo is where Luhan becomes emotionally and physically traumatized, Europe offers her a new space for personal transformation and healing. At the age of twenty-seven, during her first European tour, she befriended a young woman named Violet Shillito, and it is the development of this friendship that functions as the climax of *Background*. Whether or not the two friends became lovers—she claims that their physical relationship never moved beyond the touching of each other's breasts—it is

clear that Violet had a profound impact on Luhan, who believed that she was a genius. A refined student, she was studying Greek and higher mathematics at the Sorbonne. Sharing her classical education and knowledge of the history of music with Luhan allowed her finally to begin the rather long and intense process of emotional recovery: “Nothing had ever deepened me or opened such wide gates as Violet and what she gave me” (248).

Biographer Lois Rudnick contends that Violet was the first woman Luhan modeled herself after. Writing from a point-of-view of retrospection, however, Luhan implies that the European past cannot offer her a similar emancipation. There is thus an epistemological gap, for if Violet belonged to the classical past, Luhan comes to see herself as a twentieth-century modernist:

all her [Violet’s] living was of the intuition—a culture that she and her psychic ancestors had created and cultivated, carrying its increasing weight through endless generations, and that I and my kind would take over and perhaps painlessly, without effort, carry over into the new life in which she would have no part, her work being ended. (249)

Luhan represents this chasm between old and new through a concert by Wagner that she attends with Violet. Together they witness “the spectacle of the demolition of form, of the disintegration of the persistent classical pattern that had lived itself out” (267). The music is “fiery” (268) and filled with “energy” (268), and Luhan recognizes Wagner’s music as ushering in the rise of modernist cultural productions. The classically trained Violet has no place in this world, and it is not exactly surprising that she finally dies shortly thereafter. Interestingly, Luhan sees this paradigmatic shift mostly in terms of race: “Wagner was the disorganizer of this time that marks the end of what has been

called the Aryan civilization. Wagner voiced for the white race its desire for annihilation, its need to destroy and to be destroyed—the triumphant and despairing cry of imminent natural decadence” (269). This statement actually says more about Luhan’s worldview than it does Wagner’s, for she seems to be reading her own destructive tendencies into the music.

Luhan’s second volume, *European Experiences*, is largely concerned with the restoration of the Villa Curonia to its Renaissance grandeur. By accentuating the decadence of her estate in Florence, she deliberately creates a superficial self-portrait: “I knew quite well the kind of queen I wanted to be and the type of royal residence in which I would immolate myself . . . It would allow one to be both majestic and careless, spontaneous and picturesque” (134-135). Surrounding herself with artwork and the most luxurious of furnishings, she also mingles with other wealthy ex-patriots and artists. Her memoir offers detailed impressions of these encounters, thereby initiating her lifelong interest in parties and social gatherings. Yet, most of her relationships remained shallow, as if the presence of these people in her villa amounts to little more than yet another fashionable accessory. Despite the pleasure she initially enjoys at home, the villa soon becomes little more than an extravagant shell, and this is a sign that her idle life is devoid of any inner richness. Eventually, she comes to feel trapped in what she has created.

Whatever opulence Luhan initially boasts about, then, must be understood in the narrative context of her gradual awakening to the realization that her life had become superficial, a point that Gertrude Stein seems to have recognized. While visiting Luhan in 1912, she wrote “Portrait of Mabel Dodge at Villa Curonia,” a text that Patricia R.

Everett has likened to an “abstract word portrait” (3). Three hundred copies were originally printed on Florentine wallpaper, and Luhan herself helped disseminate it to her avant-garde friends throughout New York and Europe before eventually reprinting it in *European Experiences*. When Luhan became involved with the infamous Armory Show in New York City that introduced many Americans to the modernist art then being generated in Europe, she wrote an essay, “Speculations, or Post-Impressions in Prose,” which praised Stein by claiming that she “is doing with words what Picasso is doing with paint” (qtd. in Everett 269). Luhan argued that both Stein and Picasso revealed artistic pathways to new states of consciousness, and she went on to suggest that if one reads Stein aloud, her repetitious language has a hypnotic effect wherein the seemingly nonsensical aspects of her prose yield to deeper meanings that eventually become graspable.

“Portrait of Mabel Dodge at Villa Curonia” is now remembered mostly for launching Stein’s reputation in the United States as a writer, but it was also significant because it reflected the superficiality of Luhan’s lifeless estate: “There is all that place. There is that desire and there is no pleasure and the place is filling the only space that is placed where all the piling is not adjoining” (331). For Stein, the prevailing affect of being in the Villa Curonia was one of emptiness, and this was heightened by eliding any reference to Luhan’s personhood beyond the title.

Although Stein’s text is critical of the Villa Curonia, Luhan nevertheless celebrated the piece, probably because by the time she had left Italy to return to New York, she had come to view her home in Florence as a place devoid of much significance.

Set within the overall trajectory of Luhan's transformative path to Taos, Florence represents a setback following her separation from Violet. A relationship with genuine affection had been replaced by the formation of an identity through thing accumulation. Returning to the United States by boat, Luhan ends her volume by looking "backward to the Old World," implying that in order try to heal her fractured sense of self, she would need to leave Europe, where its cultural spaces were about to be devastated by World War I (453).

*Movers and Shakers*, the third volume of *Intimate Memories*, contains reprints of numerous documents that Luhan had collected throughout the years, including love letters, newspaper articles, an assortment of correspondence regarding the many projects that she was involved in, and poems from John Reed. At times, Luhan's approach encumbers her narrative, but she nevertheless sustains the confessional mode in her first two volumes. In Europe, she was fascinated with the past, but in New York City she becomes engrossed in the present. Violet's world had disappeared, and instead of gathering together stale antiques and becoming engrossed in history, she now assembled intellectuals, artists, and social activists in weekly "Evenings," providing her apartment as a safe place where these men and women could discuss their ideas without restraint or censorship. As Jane Nelson has said of Luhan's time in New York, she tries "to make history rather than to recover it" (35).

Luhan became a leading social figure during this time. She was an emancipated model for the "New Woman," as Rudnick has argued, and the press often reported and gossiped about her various engagements, especially since she divorced Edwin Dodge, her



second husband, thereby rejecting traditional Victorian values associated with marriage. While in New York, her interest in the occult blossomed, and she became convinced that there was a deeper reality beyond this world. Yet, despite the intense social, spiritual, and intellectual stimulation, Luhan soon became tired in the new role that she had formed for herself: “Little by little I ceased to attend meetings that required my presence as an influence for Change. I just lost interest in that fabricated puppet, Mabel Dodge, as a Creature of Importance in her Time, and I longed only for peace and more peace” (344).

The title, *Movers and Shakers*, is thus ironic. Writing from the perspective of Taos, she concludes that the alleged “New World” is not so new after all; rather, it actually constitutes the final annihilation of the “Old World.” The third volume of her memoir is a long extension of the second whereby she details her own psychological fragmentation, and her life in New York thus comes to be a symbolic representation of the final fall of western civilization.

Luhan visited her third husband, the artist Maurice Sterne, in New Mexico in December, 1917, and she became so intrigued with the place that she settled down in Taos for the rest of her life. As explored in her fourth and final published memoir, *Edge of Taos Desert: An Escape to Reality*, her new home provided her with the most radical opportunity yet to revise her sense of self and the crushing sense of romantic failures. Perhaps most importantly, Taos also allowed her finally to discover her own writing voice. Her previously sophisticated persona is gradually discarded throughout the narrative, as is the complex sentence structure of her prose, resulting in a more intimate self-portrait.

Her description of the train to Santa Fe echoes the opening of Wister's *The Virginian*, except that for Luhan there is no Anglo male to serve as a guide. She says that her spirit arrives in Santa Fe before her body, which is a humorous way of complaining about the number of delays she experienced, but it is also a subtle reminder that her identity prior to New Mexico is fractured and incomplete. On her first day in New Mexico, she is astounded by the landscape: "I felt a sudden recognition of the reality of natural life that was so strong and so unfamiliar that it made me feel unreal. I caught a fleeting glimpse of my own spoiled and distorted nature, seen against the purity and freshness of these undomesticated surroundings" (33).

She rents a house on her first day in Taos, and within six months she buys land in which to build a home. Tony Luhan, the man she would eventually marry in 1923, oversaw the construction. Like *Winter in Taos*, Tony remains an enigmatic figure, but unlike her previous husbands, he is never the object of her mockery. Instead, he teaches her how to be empathetic by encouraging her to focus less on her own self-interest and desires. She writes that he "was the first one I ever knew who broke open in me the capacity to actually share the feeling of another person" (218). Again, the language here is one of destruction linked to creation, but unlike her experiences in Buffalo, this breaking apart leads Luhan to a sense of wholeness gleaned from this "fresh, beautiful world" (12).

Early in the narrative, she hears a group of eighty or ninety Taosño musicians. Unlike Lawrence, who is initially confused by the cultural difference of Anglos and

Native Americans, Luhan immediately interprets the communal aspects of Native American performance:

Communal music is not the voice of the individual; it has in its totality more than the sum of its parts; it reveals the over-soul of the tribe, the entity that is invisibly made up of many single units. It is easy to believe that a tribe composes the body of some vast Being, and that its health and strength must depend upon unison in the tribe. There is a group-spirit in the flock, in the herd, and in the swarm. And in the tribe there is one. For the first time in my life, then, I heard the voice of the One coming from the Many (62).

Although Luhan romanticizes Native American culture, she nevertheless effectively sets up the narrative logic for the rest of the memoir, which details her growing knowledge about Native American culture through her idealized romantic relationship with Tony Luhan: “It was the Indian life I was entering, very slowly, a step at a time” (177). She must first, however, leave her old life behind, which is symbolized when she cuts her hair short, an event that infuriates her husband at the time, Maurice Sterne. To the extent that her memoir details her personal transformation through Native American culture, her story is a kind of epic in the southwestern tradition of Cabeza de Vaca *La Relación*; however, given the nativism in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, the details of her relationship with Tony are simultaneously reminiscent of the confessional.

Tony serves as a cultural mediator, not only helping her to understand the land and culture of Taos, but also helping her to secure land outside the pueblo. He guides her towards a “new world” (219), culminating in the use of peyote and a trip to Blue Lake. On the way there, the entourage camps close to a cave that Pueblos believed was

inhabited evil spirits, and Luhan becomes ill. The next night, Tony gives her a medicinal drink in bed that turns out to be peyote, which not only cures her immediate pain, but also heals her deeper injuries:

It acted like an organizing medium co-ordinating one part with another, so all the elements that were combined in me shifted like the particles in a kaleidoscope and fell into an orderly pattern. Beginning with the inmost central point in my own organism, the whole universe fell into place . . . I was not separate and isolated any more. The magical drink had revealed the irresistible delight of spiritual composition; the regulated relationship of one to all and all to one. (310)

Luhan claims to have felt this new reality throughout her entire body, and she not only felt better physically, but she also wanted to join the others singing around the campfire. Listening to the Pueblo singers collectively riff off of individual phrases, she begins to recognize a “secret knowledge” (312), namely, that each person can maintain their individuality, and yet everyone can also be dependent on the group. The next morning, Luhan vows to be both an actor and an observer of her new life, and there does seem to be a new emotional detachment in the prose that follows. At the very least, she hints that she has a newfound respect for Pueblo silence and stoicism.

She never enters the lake’s water because of a Pueblo directive, but the allusion to baptism is clear even though in the context of Pueblo metaphysics, salvation does not mean an escape from the world, but rather, as the subtitle to her memoir indicates, a movement toward it. Whereas Western civilization and its celebration of technology, progress, and individualism was headed for destruction, Luhan sentimentally suggests that Tony teaches her how to engage with the natural world in a deeper, less artificial

manner, and it is this lesson that allegedly reflects the communal unity of Pueblo social culture.

Luhan's direct mode of perceiving reality differs from other forms of knowledge in that it is incommunicable: "One could really learn only by being, by awakening gradually to more and more consciousness" (314). If the failure of language becomes a trope towards the end of *Edge of Taos Desert*, it is a paradoxical one since it took her over one thousand pages to work out the idea. In a sense, however, Luhan's mystical experience illustrates her courage, for it required her to admit that much of her life had been spent in profound confusion. That she was not only able, but also willing to confess this in such a public medium makes her voluminous memoirs worthy of the time needed to read them.

Luhan's narrative finally ends with an allusion to the couple's first sexual encounter:

For the first time in my life I had discovered I could trust someone always and that I could be trustworthy to someone always and that this would be true in spite of anything we could do!

He [Tony] bent a firm, gentle look down upon me and held out his hand, and I took it.

"I comin' here to this tepee tonight," he said, "when darkness here. That be right?"

"Yes, Tony," I said, "that will be right."

And it was right. (334)

Her personal transformation is symbolically completed through the intimacy of sexual union. Earlier in the text, when she had first visited Tony's house, she had been reminded of a castle room where she had slept with Violet Shillito, and so this final act

marks Tony and, by extension, Pueblo culture, as actualizing the potential of Violet Shillito and her European heritage. Their relationship becomes a model for re-imagining the dynamics of gender and marriage. As Rudnick has noted, “Luhan wrote within the tradition of Americans who apotheosized their dreams of settlement in the New World . . . . But in her eschatology the white man was the devil and the Indian, godly” (Re-Naming 15). By the time she completed *Intimate Memories*, she had not only conceived of an American Eden, but she had also historically placed it as the final culmination of her life story.

Luhan’s utopic vision of Taos stood in contrast to Lawrence’s writings. Her sexual relationship with Tony was clearly implied, and yet his sexuality was often veiled behind a Victorian sense of decency. Instead, she focused on and celebrated Pueblo metaphysics with such enthusiasm that soon scores of writers, artists, and intellectuals were visiting the area. However, towards the end of her life, Taos became a more troubled place for her. One of the last texts that she ever wrote, *Let’s Get Away Together*, is an unpublished novel about discharged World War II soldiers who eventually establish a cooperative community just outside Taos. The question at the center of the narrative is whether or not the protagonist, Johnny Carruthers, will be broken by the problems of modernity, including war, sexual confusion, emotional isolation, and a nomadic lifestyle that threatens to leave him drifting from place to meaningless place. Luhan’s interpretation of Taos is once again optimistic throughout much of the narrative; however, the climax of the novel marks an important and fundamental shift in her thinking.

Many of the details in the novel are clearly autobiographical. Much like Luhan, Johnny grew up in New England, was raised by a distant mother, and he yearns, even from an early age, to discard his life in favor of something entirely new. At Cambridge, one of his professors asks if he finds himself “Between two worlds? Could that be it?” (27). This question echoes the crucial scene in *Edge of Taos Desert* when Luhan leaves her apartment at 23 Fifth Avenue in New York for Santa Fe with the realization that “My life broke in two right then, and I entered into the second half, a new world that replaced all the ways I had known with others, more strange and terrible and sweet than any I had ever been able to imagine” (6). Furthermore, it can also be read as an obvious reference to one of the stanzas in Matthew Arnold’s infamous poem, “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse”:

Wandering between two worlds, one dead  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—  
I come to shed them at their side. (1495)

Arnold’s “two worlds” reflects the Victorian cultural paradox of trying to navigate between religious philosophy and the new, groundbreaking discoveries in science and technology. Whereas he is unable to offer a clear solution to these contradictions, ending his poem instead with the aspiration that faith will not be entirely discarded in further stages of the industrial revolution, *Let’s Get Away Together* does attempt to articulate a resolution to the four major dichotomies that organize the text. Of

course, Luhan's major concerns, while certainly related to Arnold's, are nevertheless her own.

The most important dichotomy in the first half of the novel concerns sexuality. Much like Luhan's memoirs, there are frequent allusions to homosexual orientations throughout the narrative, although nothing explicit actually occurs. When Johnny vacations with his family in the Catskill Mountains, he has "long queer talks" with a boyhood friend (19). At Cambridge, he befriends a jockey named Steve who is then hit by a car. Johnny unbuckles his pants, bathes him, and nurses him back to health. Soon thereafter, Steve similarly heals Johnny after he is diagnosed with a sub-thyroid deficiency. Focusing only on the physical ailments, Johnny's medical treatment can not seem to help him "improve in spirit" (60), and soon he simply wants to give up and die. However, Steve arrives before it is too late, and fortunately he "had the magic that was more potent than adrenalin for he had the live touch" (62). Precisely what this means is unclear, though it should be noted that one of the nurses has strong reservations about Steve for fear that he will somehow "contaminate" Johnny (64). Regardless, after the two friends reunite, Johnny is once again able to find his will to live and soon begins feeling better.

After Johnny enlists in the military, he and his fellow young compatriots are examined together by various physicians: "He stood with them, self-possessed and unselfconscious in his nakedness, for the gym and the shower room of the crew at Harvard had long since accustomed him to bodies" (92-93). Later, he has the opportunity to sleep with a young woman, but he is uninterested and quickly falls asleep. Such apathy



stands in contrast to the scene where Bob, a new friend of his from the military, spends the night and the two stay up late talking anxiously together in the same bed. In the morning, a servant “looked down discreetly trying not to see the companion Mr. Johnny had beside him in bed, clad only in a bright pink silk undershirt. Both the boys were lying there smoking cigarettes with their hair standing on end” (216).

Luhan herself engaged in sexual acts with women. An unpublished section of *European Experiences* discusses her affair with the British historian Maud Cruttwell, and fifty-eight pages of notes by her first analyst, Smith Ely Jelliffe, confirm her sexual experiences with women (Rudnick 31-32). Her Victorian era secrecy and shame surrounding her sexuality were reflected in *Let's Get Away Together*. Despite the many allusions to queerness throughout the first half of the novel, the narrative nevertheless suggests that such an identity is problematical. After Johnny confides to a new friend that “I've never fallen for that girl business much” (112), he quickly denies that he has “the sickness,” i.e., he is not “queer” (113).

In the second half of the novel, Johnny moves with Bob, Steve, and his new wife to Taos. Previously, he seemed to be romantically interested in both of his friends, but once the group arrives in Taos, there are no further insinuations about Johnny's complicated sexuality, which mirrors Tony Luhan's culmination of Violet Shillito in Luhan's life. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that Taos has the power to subdue queer sexuality, which Luhan tacitly conceives of an unnatural extension of the psychological confusion produced by modernist culture.

Luhan's novel also explores class. Johnny grows up in one of the wealthiest families in New England, but he comes to find the culture and customs of the American aristocracy to be emotionally sterile. Unsure of what to do professionally, his uncle secures a job for him on Wall Street, though this "great machine" ultimately leaves him unfulfilled (73). The woman he eventually marries, Gretchen, is the daughter of a bartender, and he is attracted to her family's boisterousness and *joie de vivre*, which stand in contrast to the ritualized decorum demanded from his own family. When he first takes Gretchen to his mother's house, he knows that she will not be welcome, and so the two of them must tiptoe about like trespassers. Upon meeting Gretchen, Johnny's mother quickly becomes ashamed, and speculates at one point that the different social classes will stop mingling once the war is over.

Able to traverse among both the rich and the poor, Luhan writes that her protagonist embodies a "double consciousness" (222). However, Johnny is not content with mere social fluidity; after the war is over, he wants to entirely change the class system in the United States. Once again, Taos acts as a site of unification, for it will be a "place far away from wars and politicians and the social system" (290). This turns out not to be entirely true, for already there are a number of wealthy artists who have moved to Taos, but they remain almost completely in the periphery of the story. Once Johnny, Steve, Bob, and Gretchen settle in Taos, they are eventually able, despite a number of initial setbacks, to establish a "New World Co-op" where Anglos, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans can all barter and trade together outside the capitalist reliance on profitability and the consequent establishment of social classes (414). Once again, Luhan

solves one of the pressing divisions in her narrative by positing Taos as the place where Arnold's "two worlds" become one.

Johnny's refusal to share in his family's capitalistic values leads to the emergence of the third dichotomy that organizes Luhan's novel: racial difference. Interpreting Johnny's lack of interest in the accumulation of power and wealth to be a rejection of nationalist values, since he refuses to "uphold the American way of life," his family nevertheless hopes that his eccentricities will be muted by joining the military in the wake of Pearl Harbor (81). This plan fails immediately in training camp when Johnny befriends Jerry Tejada, a Pueblo man from Taos whose spirituality seemingly allows him to navigate the physical, emotional, and spiritual dangers of the modern world without being existentially destroyed. Johnny thus passes through two archetypal American institutions, Wall Street and the Army, but it the promise of understanding Pueblo culture and identity that most excites him.

Jerry's character initially reflects the primitivist rhetoric found in some of Lawrence's essays on the Southwest. Appearing to be unknowable, he "had an impenetrable, deep, black expression in his eyes though his face was as calm" (157), a sentiment that is reiterated later in the story when an Anglo in Taos tells Johnny that it is "Very hard to know 'em" (328). Spending time with Jerry was "like being with a nice child" (161), perhaps because he speaks a pidgin English that nevertheless reveals a mystical epistemology: "Thinking no good . . . Seeing is all . . . All the thinking just tire you. No good" (158). At one point in the narrative, the two young men spend the night together, but unlike the previous two scenes, there is no sexual undertone. Instead, Jerry

acts as a kind of spiritual teacher to Johnny, again suggesting that Pueblo men have the power to heal the “sickness” of gay sexual orientations.

The racially prejudiced descriptions of Jerry occur in the first half of the novel. Once he is Taos, his characterization becomes more appealingly complex, and thus perhaps the primitivism of the novel was a deliberate construct that Luhan utilized to reveal the racial shortcomings of Euro-American modernist worldviews, which she effectively undermined when the novel subsequently shifts to Taos. Back home, Jerry acts as a cultural mediator, educating Johnny, Bob, Steve, and Gretchen about Pueblo culture and helping them to adjust to their new surroundings. In a sense, however, he also teaches them how to live more fulfilling lives centered on the Pueblo concepts of social communalism and spiritual peace.

The group finally begins to understand these lessons after they are invited into the home of Jerry’s parents. A simple place free from materialistic clutter, the house represents the attainment of inner tranquility and thus symbolizes Luhan’s belief that the Pueblo culture of Taos had the potential to heal the psychological and artistic fragmentation of the post-War era, if only Anglos were willing to open themselves up to racial and cultural differences.

If Taos is *the* place for Johnny and his friends to respond to the psychological fragmentation, environmental degradation, nomadism, and existential meaninglessness that had shaped their lives in the aftermath of world war, it is because the novel, like Luhan’s published memoirs, is structured around a spatial teleology where Taos comes to function as a utopia. Johnny had always felt out of place, whether he was at his parents’ house, at

college in Cambridge, or at training camp. This sense of displacement was heightened when he was sent to war in Europe: “The world had turned into a hideous place” (270). The machines of war here are a capitalistic extension Wall Street, both of which have threatened at different times to overwhelm Johnny’s emotional and psychological sense of self. The war so affects Johnny that his own self-identity becomes as poisoned as the post-war landscape that he yearns somehow to escape, and when it is finally drawing to a close, he is unsure how to go about healing himself, at one point asking, “Where do we go? Seems like there’s no place left. We’re so foul inside” (275, emphasis in the original).

Eventually, Johnny and his friends supplant this sense of dislocation by settling down in Taos, which makes spatiality the last and most important dichotomy that Luhan uses to organize her novel. At first, Taos is simply “a *Place* far away from *Wars* and *Politicians* and the *Social System*” (290, emphasis in the original), and yet very quickly it becomes the “One Place” (292) where Johnny and his friends can become actualized subjects. One day after exploring the area, one of Johnny’s friends wondrously asks where they are, and the answer is quite telling: “Does it matter?” (337).

The important point here is not that the entourage is lost in the topographical sense, though it is true that they have no maps and are not exactly sure where they are; instead, Taos has come to represent a spatial liminality where the problems associated with modernism no longer threaten to overwhelm the individual. Thus, Taos is “perfect” (320), which is to say that it represents a complete reversal from the numerous places that

preceded it in the novel. As Gretchen shrewdly realizes, Taos is “Just like another world” (320).

By portraying Taos as a kind of utopic destination, *Let's Get Away Together* intervenes in one of the more pervasive tropes in American literature: westering. A mapping out of Luhan's relationship with this lineage would require more space than I have here, but a brief comparison with a near contemporaneous fictional text, John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*, will reveal the novelty of Luhan's contribution. In the final part of Steinbeck's novella, “The Leader of the People,” Jody's grandfather talks with him about crossing the Great Plains and says that the most important part of the journey was the act of leading the people he was with. Jody says that he too will someday be a leader of people, but his grandfather responds that the days of exploration are over: “There's no place to go. There's the ocean to stop you. There's a line of old men along the shore hating the ocean because it stopped them . . . No place to go, Jody. Every place is taken. But that's not the worst - no, not the worst. Westering has died out of the people. Westering isn't a hunger any more. It's all done” (94).

The grandfather believes that the cultural desire to go West has died, but that is not exactly true. Jody steadily looks West at the mountainous peaks, and he is even interested in exploring them. The reason that he stays in his house is not because the ocean is stopping him, but rather because the land has already been settled. The West in Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* can no longer function as the backdrop for a heroic coming of age story, and thus Jody's sense of longing, heightened by the confined domestic space in

the final scene involving the making of lemonade, is a reaction to the closure of the frontier.

Steinbeck's nostalgia for the Old West is representative of other Anglo male artists and writers throughout the early twentieth century. In comparison, Luhan offers a more radical vision. By organizing *Let's Get Away Together* around four sets of interconnected dichotomies—sexual orientation, class, race, and space—the novel suggests that although the frontier might indeed be closed, the psychic geography of Taos nevertheless presents great potential for self-invention and social change. For Luhan, westering is no longer concerned with the freedom of movement through space; rather, it is about creating the kind of social space that will permit individuals to create new identities. In this sense, Taos offers a remedy for at least some of the crises associated with modernism, especially but not limited to psychological fragmentation and spatial dislocation.

Thus far, it might appear that *Let's Get Away Together* is merely a novelistic extension of Luhan's nonfiction writings, but the ending in this particular text is unlike anything else that she ever wrote. Its complete novelty in the Luhan catalog therefore demands notice. In Taos, Steve, the jockey who befriended Johnny at the beginning of the novel, wants to race the Pueblo men during the San Geronimo Festival. His need for competition and individual achievement indicates a resistance towards the new lifestyle that his friends are trying to build in Taos: "He could hardly live through the long slow Indian day with its leisure, its delays, its moments of beauty and boredom" (430). He actually becomes dumbfounded when Jerry tells him that the Pueblo men are not racing

to win. Unable to adapt to communitarian Pueblo social customs, he nevertheless tries to competitively race the men, breaking his neck in the process. Johnny afterwards inherits his friend's money, which he subsequently uses to help open the co-op after Steve's funeral.

This ending raises an important question: how does Steve's death by falling from a horse impact the depiction of Taos as a utopia? His death represents a turn towards a more feminist appreciation of nature, his broken neck being the consequence of a severed connection between one's inner state and the external world. Furthermore, although Steve is no cowboy, his occupation as a jockey makes him at least a close cousin, and thus his death corresponds to the post-World War II reinterpretation of the cowboy figurehead. Alf H. Walle has noted that Owen Wister's mythical formulation of the cowboy as a lone folk hero was reformulated by Zane Grey, who often depicted the cowboy as a person defeated by society. The changing social conditions that resulted from World War II allowed for Grey's fatalism to become a staple of the genre, and Luhan seems to have picked up on this paradigm change. If Wister's hero became passé and implausible by 1945, Johnny, the hero in *Let's Get Away Together*, avoids similar objections because the narrative includes the death of his close friend. He might be able to save himself, but Luhan implies that does not necessarily mean he is able to save everybody, especially someone like Steve who died as a result of his competitive tendencies. Given the ubiquitous critiques on capitalism throughout the novel, Luhan's early interest in socialism might have been revived.



By drawing on Western American literary tropes and imagery in her portrayal of Steve's death, Luhan's Taos in *Let's Get Away Together* becomes a very different kind of "contact zone," to borrow a term from Mary Louise Pratt, than the Taos of her previous texts. The tragedy of Steve's death is tantamount to a seismic revision, the most important in her career, for it indicates that by 1945, Luhan would have agreed with the postcolonial objections of her future critics, including Maureen E. Reed, Flannery Burke, and Lynn Cline, that her depictions of Taos suffered from being too heavily romanticized.

Luhan's novel raises a number of interrelated questions that would seem to indicate that she was starting beginning to feel a sense of ambivalence towards her adopted home. Given Steve's death, to what extent does Taos become a reflection of violence, rather than an escape from it? Assuming that Steve and Johnny had been lovers, could Taos truly repress homosexual desire, or was it yet another social space where gays and lesbians were not welcome? And finally, what might it actually say about the hybridity between Pueblo and Anglo cultures that Steve distorts the meaning of the San Geronimo festivities?

It was not accidental that Steve's death was one of Luhan's last depictions of Taos. Yes, she occasionally wrote for the local newspaper, and she also sometimes wrote shorter pieces, including *The Statue of Liberty* (1947), a nuanced account of the pain and difficulties that she and Tony had created for one another, but she never wrote another monograph on Taos. Her biographers explain the textual silence that enveloped her final years by bringing up her alcoholism, strokes, and growing senility throughout the 1950s,

and while their arguments are no doubt valid, they are nevertheless incomplete. Steve's death was a clear indication that Luhan no longer entirely believed in the utopic possibilities of Taos, which she had spent an entire career attempting to articulate. Her dream that Taos could somehow act as an anecdote to all that ails humanity in the early twentieth century was finally beginning to fade, and with it so too her vigorous will to write.

The promise of Taos turned out to be the greatest of chimeras in Luhan's quest to counter the psychological alienation that she had experienced for much of her life. Taos was her home, but towards the end of her life it was not the utopia that she had written about throughout her career. She had wanted to become a "bridge between cultures" (qtd. in Rudnick, *Mabel Dodge Luhan* 183), but her writings on Native Americans were naïvely celebratory. Like Charles Lummis a generation before her, she promoted the region better than she interpreted it, and thus it seems appropriate that her home is now so heavily visited by tourists. Much of her work, then, constitutes a mistranslation the otherness she encountered in Taos.

Given Luhan's importance in the history of New Mexican letters, her shortcomings as a cultural translator raise a broader: what relevance does New Mexican literature of the early twentieth century have in the contemporary United States. Although Luhan was not a great writer, her failures were noteworthy, and when we read her against the work of D. H. Lawrence, an interesting historical route towards Americanization begins to emerge.

Unlike Luhan, Lawrence did not struggle to explain the importance of northern New Mexico in the twentieth century. His initial confusion about Native American cultures gradually yielded towards his final vision of the region as the primal place wherein one could most intimately encounter Pan. Few critics read *St. Mawr* as his finest work, in part because it idiosyncratically relied more on European mythology than anything having to do with the social landscape of New Mexico. In other words, Lawrence's writings on the Southwest reveal a trajectory that begins with an initial cultural confusion and ends with a Eurocentric interpretation of the physical and social landscape of New Mexico. Luhan's writings also expose a dramatic change in her worldview wherein a sentimental and utopian view of Native American culture deteriorates into a tacit acknowledgment that Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo interactions are wrought with the problems of cultural untranslatability.

What is missing in the accounts of Lawrence and Luhan are literary expressions of the region that draw on, rather than distort, the local Native American, Chicano/a, and Anglo cultural and linguistic traditions. It would take another two generations before this kind of rich literature would be published by writers such as Rudolfo Anaya, N. Scott Momaday, Tomás Rivera, and Leslie Marmon Silko. Nevertheless, Lawrence and Luhan are important because they were able to articulate certain stages in the process of Americanization in the Southwest.

They wrote during a time when representations of the region were exploding. Previously constricted mostly to newspaper accounts and the occasional cultural artifact, often involving pottery, Americans began to encounter the Southwest through new forms,

including photography, tourist brochures, movies, and literature. The United States might have claimed the Southwest from Mexico in 1848, but it was not until the early twentieth century that the cultural logic of this imperialist expansion began to be worked out in great detail. Perhaps Lawrence and Luhan were ultimately unable to answer what it meant for New Mexico to be a part of the United States, but they were at least able to raise the question for future writers.

## Conclusion

### Willa Cather and the Limits of Translation in the American Southwest

Willa Cather's first novelistic attempt at representing the Southwest is a rather unremarkable one. *The Song of the Lark* (1915) is a conventionally plotted novel that tells the story of how Thea Kronborg grows up in a small town in Colorado and subsequently becomes an opera star performing in cities throughout Europe and the United States. The story's timeline is chronological, and the events and characters that appear are important only insofar as they relate to Thea's development as an artist. While in Arizona, she spends most of her time amongst the cliff-dweller ruins of Panther Canyon, a place that allows her to transcend her previous limitations as an artist by tapping into her "subconscious self" (179):

It [music] had always been a thing to be struggled with, had always brought anxiety and exaltation and chagrin—never content and indolence . . . And now her power to think seemed converted into a power of sustained sensation. She could become a mere receptacle for heat, or become a color, like the bright lizards that darted about on the hot stones outside her door; or she could become a continuous repetition of sound, like the cicadas. (178-179)

Thea's aesthetic transformation is rooted in her fantasies about the Native Americans who once lived in Panther Canyon, and she comes to envision her singing as an extension of the pottery shards that pepper the ground around her. Because she knows so little about the pre-contact cultures of the region, she does not discover another artistic tradition; rather, she imagines one. Such a creation nevertheless allows her, through the

power of fantasy, to fully realize her power as a singer. As Cather succinctly notes, “The Cliff-Dwellers had lengthened her past” (183).

Thea’s rebirth in the chimeras of the Southwest mirrors the sense of regeneration that Cather herself experienced during her first trip to the region in 1912. When she wrote *The Song of the Lark* three years later, her knowledge of the Southwest was still akin to that of a tourist; her depictions were colored with the kind of romanticism that was used in advertisements by the Fred Harvey Company at that time to entice would be travelers to the area. To return again to Barbara Babcock’s term, Cather was translating an “invented Southwest” to her readers, and like many other early twentieth-century Anglo newcomers to region, her interpretations reflected a romantic disposition towards an exotic landscape and a genuine, albeit it naïve, interest in Native American culture. Her interpretive strategy, colored by primitivist assumptions, left her characters unable to see the ways in which Native American cultures were adapting to the changes of the twentieth century. The culture that Thea discovered in Panther Canyon had perished prior to European contact, and so it thereby remained entirely within a pure, prelapsarian timelessness that was untouched, and simultaneously unsullied by, modernity.

Cather made four more trips to the Southwest throughout the course of her career, which gradually changed her understanding of the region. The first of these was to the newly opened Mesa Verde national park in 1915, where she encountered the thirteenth-century Anasazi cliff dwellings that she would later write about in *The Professor’s House* (1925). Tom Outland’s story was largely based on Dick Wetherill, a local rancher, who re-discover the most spectacular of the Cliff Palace Ruins in 1888. Unlike the

traditionalism of her previous southwestern novel, *The Professor's House* offered a ruptured narrative that was centered on the figure of Professor Godfrey St. Peter. The novel is split into a triptych—"The Family," "Tom Outland's Story," and "The Professor"—and this fractured structure reflected the epistemological uncertainties of global modernism in the post-*Waste Land* period.

*The Professor's House* deals with the issue of translators in a much more sophisticated manner than *The Song of the Lark*. Instead of translating yet another touristic fantasy of a long lost Edenic culture, a rather common vision that could be found in the latest Zane Grey text of the era, *The Professor's House* gestures towards a double translation of North America's Spanish and indigenous histories. It attempts to accomplish this through a pair of excavations; one is based on the histories of St. Peter, and the other on the archaeological discoveries of Tom Outland.

St. Peter spends fifteen years writing his eight-volume *Spanish Adventurers in North America*, and the idea for the books first occurred to him while he was with his wife and children in France. He sends them away so that he can make plans for carrying out his massive research project, which eventually takes him to various sites and archives in Spain, the American Southwest, and Mexico. Thus begins one of the central conflicts in the novel as St. Peter repeatedly chooses his work over his family. The tension is symbolized in the very title of the book. He refuses to move into a new house with his family, instead returning to his old house whenever possible and hiding away in his office although much of his work has been completed. His research has always been more of a priority to him than his family, so that once his magnum opus is complete, there is little

reason left for him to live. Preferring to be alone, there is a sadness that permeates his final days: “All the afternoon he had sat there at the table where now Augusta was reading, thinking over his life, trying to see where he had made his mistake” (257).

St. Peter’s family life is a conventional one in that it is based on an Anglo, heterosexual marriage, and the children come along only after the wedding. The family lives in the Midwest and maintains strong cultural ties with Europe. This order becomes disrupted both by St. Peter’s work on the Spanish Americas and by the arrival of Tom Outland, whose archaeological discoveries of the Pueblos fascinate the professor. Both men are translators of America’s forgotten histories, and they complement one another in their approaches. St. Peter’s expertise is with Spanish American history, whereas Tom’s focus is on the indigenous past. St. Peter produces narratives, but Tom unearths objects. When considered together, Cather seems to be suggesting that these text-object and Spanish-indigenous bifurcations have the transformational power to disrupt traditional American life. The role of the translator is thus a radical one in Cather’s novel.

All of this raises an interesting question: what is it that is being translated by St. Peter and Tom Outland? Cather tells us very little about *Spanish Adventurers in North America* other than it was considered a professional success. The project itself—who were the main characters, what were their stories, why should they be remembered, etc.—remains a cipher throughout the novel. In this sense, the novel echoes back to *The Song of Lark* in that the object of translation is not particularly clear. We do know, however, that St. Peter is planning to edit, annotate, and introduce Tom’s diary for publication, and it is evident that remembering his student in the proper way is crucial:



I've encountered just one remarkable mind; but for that, I'd consider my good years largely wasted. And there can be no question of money between me and Tom Outland. I can't explain just how I feel about it, but it would somehow damage my recollections of him, would make that episode in my life commonplace like everything else. And that would be a great loss to me . . . my friendship with Outland is the one thing I will not have translated into the vulgar tongue. (50)

“Translated” is here used loosely by Cather, for St. Peter is explaining to his daughter why he has refused any monetary gain from Tom's subsequent invention. However, even if the term does not reference a textual transformation from one to language to another, it is nevertheless telling that St. Peter is concerned about the cheapening of the original source. This is an ironic view because Tom Outland actually functions as a descendent of those earlier, unnamed Spanish adventurers. He is a contemporary embodiment of the history that St. Peter studies. Tom's story is thus a simulation of sorts, and yet he represents a development in Cather's thinking about translation because he is closer to his source material than either St. Peter or Thea Kronborg. His section of the novel actually functions as an ethnography that attempts to translate the meaning of Native American ruins.

There is, however, a modernist twist, for “Tom Outland's Story” is supposed to be St. Peter's memory of Outland's oral storytelling, which is in turn based on what he himself wrote in his diary. This is a more complicated puzzle than Kronborg's ruins or St. Peter's history, but what unifies all three characters are the epistemological issues that trouble any attempt to translate “the other.” As Christopher Schedler has noted, we are unable to directly grasp Native Americans' worldview because the meaning of their

artifacts is subsumed within Tom's story, which is then filtered through the memory of St. Peter. In order to get to the original source material, i.e. the social significance of the artifacts and ruins, we would have to work through St. Peter's memory of Tom's translations and mistranslations. The cultural reality of the Native Americans is thus out of reach, and this is symbolized by what appears to be the silent screaming of Mother Eve, one of the mummies that Rodney Blake and Tom Outland discover on the Blue Mesa.

The role of translators in *The Professor's House* is more complex than *The Song of the Lark*, but both novels are concerned with how the cultural meaning of "the other" can be salvaged in translation. It is an issue that culminates in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), a landmark text in the regional literature of the American Southwest that is surrounded in controversy. Despite hosting Cather in her Santa Fe home while she worked on the novel, Mary Austin was one of the text's earliest critics. Assuming the role of a cultural insider In *Earth Horizon*, she wrote that "It was a calamity to the local culture. We have never got over it" (359). She expanded on this criticism in her essay, "Regionalism in American Fiction" (1932). Beginning with what she deemed a self-evident truth—that the regional environment has always been one of the most important elements in the production of any genre of Art, and this is true throughout the world—she then went on to define what makes regionalism "genuine" (71) with the following criteria: "the environment entering constructively into the story, and the story reflecting in some fashion the essential qualities of the land" (78). According to Austin, *Death*

*Comes for the Archbishop* met the first of these conditions. However, it fell short with the second:

The hero is a missionary arriving here at an age when the major patterns of his life are already set; a Frenchman by birth, a Catholic by conviction and practice, a priest by vocation, there is little that New Mexico can do for him besides providing him an interesting backdrop against which to play out his missionary part. Miss Cather selects her backgrounds with care, draws them with consummate artistry, in this case perverting the scene from historical accuracy, and omitting—probably, herself, in complete ignorance of it—the tragic implications of its most significant item. (77)

Cather based her protagonist, father Jean Marie Latour, on the historical first bishop of Santa Fe, Archbishop Jean-Baptist Lamy. Austin objected because in her view, neither Lamy nor Cather recognized the disastrous cultural changes that the French priests inflicted on Spanish New Mexican culture throughout the nineteenth century. Austin was also troubled by Cather's depiction of the New Mexican priest, Antonio José Martínez. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, he appears to be little more than a corrupt religious figure; however, he is still celebrated to this day as a folk hero in New Mexico for his willingness to fight for the rights of Hispanos after U.S. annexation. Historian David Lavender has more recently extended this aspect of Austin's argument. He has charged Cather with a colonialistic misrepresentation of history by obscuring "the true nature of the difficulties involved in the working out of an accommodation between the vanquished Hispanic peoples of the Southwest and their American conquerors" (68). In other words, she is guilty of elevating the "heroism" of the Anglo missionary in such a way that discredits the local Hispanic population. Walter Benn Michaels has similarly

commented on this racial essentialism, noting that for Cather, “race marks the point beyond which no transformation is possible” (78).

Such criticism is warranted, but there is another aspect of the novel that nevertheless deserves attention. Prior to writing *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather took two additional trips to the region in the summers of 1926 and 1927. She spent a great deal of time with Tony Luhan, the Tiwa man who had married Mabel Dodge Luhan. According to Edith Lewis, Cather might have actually based the character of Eusabio on Tony Luhan (143). Regardless, the novel marks a departure in Cather’s work because it depicts nearly contemporary Native American societies, rather than extinct ones, and a good deal of the narrative deals with how the Pueblos both adapted to and resisted Spanish colonialism and Roman Catholicism.

Despite the many cultural negotiations that Cather describes, there is nevertheless a difficult language barrier between Europeans and Native Americans. At one point in the novel, Latour thinks that “There was no way in which he could transfer his own memories of European civilization into the Indian mind, and he was quite willing to believe that behind Jacinto there was a long tradition, a story of experience, which no language could translate to him” (92). This seeming untranslatability is later dramatized in the infamous chapter, “Stone Lips,” where Latour suffers his most alienating experience in New Mexico.

Due to the dangers of an oncoming snowstorm, Jacinto and Latour take refuge in a hidden cave that was used in Native American ceremonies. They entered through “two great stone lips” (127), and later passages complete the association of the cave as the lips,

tongue, and throat of the Earth. Jacinto proceeds to engage in a series of rituals that Latour cannot interpret. He finally digs out a crack in the floor and invites Latour to listen:

Father Latour lay with his ear to this crack for a long while, despite the cold that arose from it. He told himself he was listening to one of the oldest voices of the earth. What he heard was the sound of a great underground river, flowing through a resounding cavern. The water was far, far below, perhaps as deep as the foot of the mountain, a flood moving in utter blackness under ribs of antediluvian rock . . . 'It is terrible,' he [Latour] said at last, as he rose. (130)

What Latour hears is indeed something terrible: it is the sound of a world he can never seem to comprehend. Such a problem brings to mind Benjamin's arguments regarding translation. In "The Task of the Translator" (1923), he writes, "In all language and linguistic creations, there remains in addition to what can be conveyed something that cannot be communicated" (261). His argument goes beyond Pound's insistence that the original text does not contain an authorized meaning that must be transmitted in any given translation, which thereby allowed him to freely translate texts according to his own subjective aesthetics. Instead, Benjamin posits that certain qualities of a given text can never be translated, and thus there is an incommunicability that cannot ever be overcome. From this point-of-view, Latour and Jacinto are forever unable to move beyond their cultural and linguistic differences. Instead, Latour witnesses Jacinto stretched out against the rock, "listening with supersensual ear" (132), and he simply cannot translate the meaning.

There is, however, another way to read this particular scene. Throughout much of his life, Paul Ricoeur was concerned with how people could relate to one another even if

they were separated by time, space, language, and culture. At the end of his career, he turned to the epistemic problems of translation as a way to think through the issues surrounding this type of mediation between self and other. He was familiar with Benjamin's arguments, and in *On Translation*, he similarly wrote about the presumption of untranslatability, or as he put it while discussing how translators necessarily work through approximation, the relationship between translated texts contained a "paradox of an equivalence without adequacy" (7).

He went on to analyze different aspects of what he termed "the untranslatable" (30), eventually arguing that by focusing on the incommensurable aspects of any two given languages, certain theoretical problems, such as the existence of a universal language, or the actual impossibility of translation, took attention away from more "practical" perspectives:

[W]e need to get beyond these theoretical alternatives, translatable versus untranslatable, and to replace them with practical alternatives, stemming from the very exercise of translation, the faithfulness versus betrayal alternatives, even if it means admitting that the practice of translation remains a risky operation which is always in search of its theory. (14)

Having engaged in the praxis of translation throughout his career, Ricoeur suggested that the work of a translator is what linked one language to another. He proposed two necessary conditions for a successful translation: the "work of remembering" and the "work of mourning" (4). The former is concerned with how to find the proper syntax for translating one language into another, and it requires remembering those forgotten details of one's own language in order to discover the best possible

translation. The latter is the recognition that an ideal linguistic duplication is an utter impossibility, and therefore no perfect translation can ever occur. The work of remembering and mourning form the foundation for what he termed the “linguistic hospitality”:

The happiness associated with translating is a gain when, tied to the loss of the linguistic absolute, it acknowledges the difference between adequacy and equivalence, equivalence without adequacy. There is its happiness. When the translator acknowledges and assumes the irreducibility of the pair, the peculiar and the foreign, he finds his reward in the recognition of the impassible status of the dialogicality of the act of translating as the reasonable horizon of the desire to translate. In spite of the agonistics that make a drama of the translator’s task, he can find his happiness in what I would like to call linguistic hospitality. (10)

In other words, the process of translation yields an understanding of how each author, text, and language is singular and unique. The full meaning of a given text is thus partially dependent on translation because without this process, its peculiarities will be overlooked. This position blurs the distinction between translation and interpretation, and the creativity of the translator is highlighted because she now plays a central role in a given text’s production of meaning.

While this is an important theory of translation, as critic James Taylor has pointed out, the scope of Ricoeur’s linguistic hospitality “can serve as a general ethical paradigm.” A perfect understanding between self and other will never occur; instead, one must work towards a generous hospitality, which not only requires an attempt to understand another person in her own terms whenever possible, but also necessitates a willingness to allow oneself to change as a result of this encounter.

From this point-of-view, although the problem of untranslatability is not solved in the novel, Father Latour's awareness of the epistemological gap between self and other separates him from Thea Kronborg, Tom Outland, and Godfrey St. Peter. He tries his best to listen to Jacinto. He attempts to understand him on his own terms, and he becomes a changed man through the experience. What matters most, though, is that Father Latour comes to understand that his perspective is limited. Such awareness is the best that can be hoped for in the Southwest's modernist era.

While James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) are the modernist texts most often associated with issues surrounding the untranslatable, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* also deserves recognition. Furthermore, it offers the clearest dramatization of a regional literature that is struggling to find its voice. Willa Cather, Mary Austin, Mabel Dodge Luhan, D. H. Lawrence, Charles Lummis, Conrado Espinoza, Daniel Venegas, and many other writers all attempted to represent the cultural richness of the American Southwest, but as I have argued throughout this dissertation, they all either failed or were, at best, partially successful, for reasons centering on the problems of translation.

Otherness in the Southwest would in fact remain untranslatable until three writers—Rudolfo Anaya, Leslie Marmon Silko, and N. Scott Momaday—began to publish their work in the 1960s and 1970s. Still, their success would not have been possible were it not for “the ground,” to return to William Carlos Williams's term, that was cultivated throughout the modernist era. Even if Cather's hero was unable to hear whatever it was that Jacinto heard in the cave, she was successful in constructing a



literary foundation for a later generation of authors that could articulate such a previously unknowable message.

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