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Border Ends: Anti-Imperialism, Settler Colonialism, And The Mexican Revolution In U.s. Modernism

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**BORDER ENDS: ANTI-IMPERIALISM, SETTLER COLONIALISM, AND THE
MEXICAN REVOLUTION IN U.S. MODERNISM**

by

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DISSERTATION

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Advisor

Date

DEDICATION

for Til

and for my family

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INTRODUCTION: BORDER ENDS: ANTI-IMPERIALISM, SETTLER COLONIALISM, AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION IN U.S. MODERNISM

While the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20 was perceived by many U.S. observers, particularly in the yellow journalism of the period, as evidence of the violent and ungovernable “nature” of those who lived outside the U.S. border on the continent, to several U.S. modernists, the revolution was indicative of a more generally emergent spirit of revolution, change, and newness that characterized various political and cultural outbreaks across the globe in that decade. Often fixated on the generative symbolic power of “the revolutionary,” modernist artists and authors at times appropriated the language of revolution in order to describe and promote their aesthetic innovations. They also looked toward (or at times participated in) the political revolutions that erupted across a variety of global terrains during the early twentieth century. For example, to some U.S. American artists, Russia’s Bolshevik revolutions provided a model of revolutionary fervor and art that stoked an interest in how the new Soviet regime cultivated artistic practice and allowed artists a participatory role in the production of a utopian and national cultural messaging. However, revolutionary uproar was not only a feature of the political landscape overseas. U.S. newspapers reported closely and frequently on the ongoing revolutionary war south of their border in Mexico. From 1910-20, the Mexican Revolution became a source of anxiety, interest, and inspiration to those who paid attention to its political turmoil. It would lead to the reinvigorating of a debate about U.S. intervention in the political affairs of Mexico, indeed, for some, the question was one of annexation. It was a national conversation that played out in the press, and one that would not have been lost on the literati of the era. Compared to the allure of the 1917 Russian Revolution, however, which inspired many U.S. writers to travel to the burgeoning Soviet state in search of an art and politics that might inspire audiences back home, the Mexican Revolution was, for the most part, largely peripheral

to the concerns of U.S. modernists.¹

The contrast in modernist interest between revolutionary Russia and Mexico has had an obvious effect on the scholarship of U.S. modernism: while very little has been written about the Mexican Revolution and U.S. modernism, the scholarship on revolutionary Russia and U.S. modernism is a clearly developed sub-focus. Recent studies by Mark Steven, Adam McKible, and Steven S. Lee have each sought to unpack that interest and investment of U.S. modernists in Soviet revolutionary culture.² The result has been an energetic and useful exploration of how myths about the apolitical nature of modernist formalism are undermined in view of the international exchange that occurred between Russian and American artists, not all of whom could be easily placed in terms of a specific political affiliation. However, some of this deserved emphasis potentially obscures alternative readings of modernist interest in the Mexican revolution or other political revolt in the Americas and the degree to which geographies peripheral to cosmopolitan centers of cultural production were looked upon not only as primitive and exotic Other-space but also, in some contexts, as sites of alternative modernity.

One useful example of a potentially overreaching interpretation of William Carlos Williams against the backdrop of the Russian Revolution is Mark Steven's *Red Modernism: American Poetry and the Spirit of Communism* (2007). There he sets out to correlate the "revolutionary imagination" of Williams's *Paterson* "in relation to the Russian Revolution and to the USSR" (98). More precisely, Steven argues, "the social and aesthetic notions that cohere with Williams's concept of 'imagination' [of the 1920s] respond to the Russian Revolution and that this concept might therefore secure a link between communism and the nativist aesthetic that

¹ A state-sponsored aesthetic program of revolutionary art would emerge in Mexico and, similar to the Russian example of 1917, would attract the interest of U.S.-based artists and curators. Because the fighting was not resolved until 1920, however, this influence and effect would not present itself clearly

² Steven (2017); McKible (2002); Lee (2015).

would eventually be taken up for *Paterson*” (98). Elsewhere he claims that Williams harbors in his texts a “hypothetical communist subjectivity” as early as the 1920s and then for the remainder of his career (it’s important to note that Williams never identifies as a Communist). Some of his evidence for this “hypothetical communist subjectivity” is illuminating. Steven cites the Williams text *Spring & All*, published in 1923, where Williams makes a fleeting but sympathetic reference to the Russian Revolution. Steven also points to Williams’s attendance at the Greenwich Village soirees of Lola Ridge, frequented by artists and writers who in part held Communist affiliation, including John Reed. There’s no doubting that Steven makes a good case for the proximity of communist Russia to Williams’s cultural orbit and for Williams’s ongoing interest in the USSR. But the exact same constellation of evidences might just as well direct us to Williams’s interest in revolutionary Mexico, from where John Reed would have just returned before attending the parties of Lola Ridge. Mexico is also mentioned in the same passage of *Spring & All* that refers to Russia. In fact, Steven remarks of the *Spring & All* passage that there may be an additional allusion to the American Expeditionary Forces and their use in World War I abroad, while not catching that the same forces had been sent into Mexico during 1916-17 in pursuit of Pancho Villa, a Mexican revolutionary leader about whom Williams had intended to write a book chapter. Finally, with his emphasis on Russia instead of Mexico, Steven has no need to point out how Williams continued to rework the material in *Spring & All* across several books, including *The Great American Novel*, also published in 1923, where Williams writes about the Mexican Revolution at some length. Suffice to say, Steven makes almost no mention of Mexico as a source of revolutionary inspiration except to point to a reference in *Paterson* about Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein’s aborted film *Que Viva Mexico*, which Steven uses only as further evidence of Williams’s “proletarian portraiture.” He continually overlooks the

potential to explore Mexico itself as a significant and alternative site of cultural engagement or as a source of “utopian imaginings,” and in doing so overstates, perhaps, his conjecture on Williams’s “communist subjectivity” rather than his interest in cultural revolution more broadly conceived. My point is simply that Russia was not the only revolution American artists were looking at and bringing into their writing, and that by changing our geographic reference point from a transatlantic one to a hemispheric one, different questions and concerns, exchanges and influences, possibilities and problems, rise to the surface.

In locating instances where U.S. authors use modernist practices to represent the Mexican Revolution, I began to observe a consistent double tendency. In the writing of William Carlos Williams, Gertrude Stein, and John Reed and Max Eastman of *The Masses*, on the one hand, the war in Mexico is presented to their respective audiences as a space of transformative modernity— desires about future possibility are projected onto an imagined social and cultural geography of conflict south of the border. These representations also stand in contrast to racist depictions of Mexico in the same period as either a space of inherent violence or of indigenous antiquity in ruin. At times they appear to voice a hopeful support for and solidarity with Mexicans engaged in the internal struggle to define a national identity and an external struggle against international domination as an indicator of its very modernity— that modernity is predicated upon anti-imperialist struggle, and in this particular case against the imperialist tendencies of the United States. On the other hand, and as an extension of this logic, each author brings into their text a concern with the historical violence of U.S. settler colonialism, and in particular the vexing (vexing to these modernists and their desire for narratives of historical break) presence of indigenous populations.

This dissertation explores the discursive interplay between U.S. modernism and anti-

imperialism through representations of the Mexican Revolution, in writing itself conceptualized as “revolutionary.” Symbolic or metaphoric “revolution” was often a discourse picked up by U.S. modernists and aimed at European cultural production, at times perceived as exerting a stultifying and atrophying effect on U.S. artists struggling to define their own distinct nationally defined literature. However, the occasion to locate anti-imperialist desire from within Mexico also forced these modernist writers to contend with or puzzle over the U.S.’s longer history of imperial expansion, colonial violence, and racism, a history that proved ultimately incompatible with their anti-imperialism. In key texts written by Stein, Williams, Reed, and Eastman that include references to the Mexican Revolution, references to a history of U.S. settler colonialism and the presence of the American Indian emerge as a limit to their anti-imperialist poetics. Each of these writers in their own way *explicitly* connects an interest in the aesthetics of the “new” with the colonial history of the “New World” and not as an absolute break between the modern and the past. Mexico, for reasons I will attempt to investigate, became a mediating and projective space for the writers to confront this relation. While the writers that I take up in this study each, though in different ways, represented Mexico as a site of revolutionary modernity that points to a shared, transnational cultural affinity toward constructions of “the new” as the basis of an anti-imperialist politics, each also, by coincidence or not, confronts in their writing the disrupting presence of the American Indian within this anti-imperialist vision. As these U.S. modernists participated in an early twentieth century discourse of anti-imperialism with reference to Mexico, they register self-consciously in their texts the contradiction of using this discourse to consolidate national identity in the face of ongoing settler colonialism: the appropriation and occupation of native land, the genocide of native peoples, and the erasure of native culture.

Tracing these various forms of anti-imperialist discourse in a sample of modernist text

presents challenges to offering a coherent and singular definition of anti-imperialism, but this problem is not restricted to, or because of, modernism per se. As Ian Tyrrell and Jay Sexton have pointed out in *Empire's Twin: U.S. Anti-Imperialism from the Founding Era to the Age of Terrorism* (2015), throughout the history of the U.S., anti-imperialist discourse was various and ideologically inconsistent, and these inconsistencies mirror to some degree the various manifestations of empire itself, oftentimes divided between formal and informal variants (a division perhaps too rigidly adhered to in the scholarship, the authors suggest). If at its root empire has always been a program of instituting unequal social relations across uneven geographies, anti-imperialism has sought to name or make visible the conditions of that inequality. But articulations of anti-imperialism in any given instance do not, or perhaps can never, attend to the complex variety of ways that empire manifests and exerts power differentially. Proponents of anti-imperialism, while often linked by a belief in the fundamental right to self-governance, frequently adopt the discourse to criticize one set of imperialist actions only to ignore or condone others. Tyrrell and Sexton notice that the discourse of “human rights could be a reason for nonintervention in the affairs of others, including nonwhites, but they could also be construed by imperialists to require U.S. intrusion to help along the process of universal freedom. That, ironically, could lead to an imperialist form of anti-imperialism” (2). And so they find overlapping though different advances of anti-imperialism between the tradition of what they deem “minority protest” (women, African Americans, the political Left) and the tradition of anti-imperialism which arises from “within the corridors of power” itself.

The modernists I focus on fall somewhere between these two poles. Though they are writing in different geographical locations, as U.S. Americans writing about U.S. imperialism from various “centers” of power, so to speak, theirs are surely not the voices of the colonized

making demands on account of their own self-determination and cultural autonomy. On the other hand, these writers' anti-imperialist articulations are informed by their marginal subject positions under white supremacist, capitalist, heteropatriarchy. Williams writes as a Latino with Puerto Rican roots whose relationship to "whiteness" (and by extension, to U.S. national belonging) is periodically contested by his peers. Stein writes as a Jewish lesbian whose performative masculinity was an accepted component of her public persona but whose same-sex desires needed to be couched in language games and coded references within her writing. John Reed and Max Eastman write as Marxist Socialists whose class-based critique of U.S. militarism provoked the federal government to charge the writers under the Espionage Act of 1917. These are not writers whose anti-imperialism stems from "within the corridors of power" exactly either, and each of those subject positions emerge within their writing as relevant to their critique of U.S. empire. Tyrrell and Sexton remind their reader that "the meaning of anti-imperialism is contingent upon historical context... the challenge confronting the historian of anti-imperialism... is to keep in view the particularism of specific anti-imperialisms" (5).

There is, then, no singular definition of "anti-imperialism" that can account of all the various historical instances of its mobilizing political speech, activism, and public policy. The use of "anti-imperialism" is useful though in marking these modernists' clear desire to contain the U.S. within its already existing borders, and their variously expressed desire for a national cultural identity rooted in the border as a stable and fixed line of demarcation. I use "anti-imperialism" in this dissertation to point to their investment in the fixity of the border. To be opposed to U.S. empire, for these writers, meant to be opposed to further expansion and outwardly directed encroachment into the cultural or political affairs of other nations. In each of these writers' texts, some form of anti-militarism is announced, but again these writers direct that

critique toward military engagement abroad. Looking at imperial violence within the boundaries within the U.S. is perceptible to these writers but, ultimately, condoned, erased, or overlooked.

A final point to draw out of Tyrrell and Sexton's collection of essays is their claim that "U.S. anti-imperialists, far from opposing all forms of empire, were inextricably bound up in imperialist processes and structures" (7). To that end, my project seeks to unpack my chosen writers' engagement with anti-imperial discourse as a component of their modernism, just as I attempt to trace the limitations to these anti-imperialist expressions - to make a case for what lay outside the conceptualizing horizon of "nation" contained within an already established national boundary and the desire for its constructive capacities to be directed inwardly rather than outwardly. As it turns out, for these modernists, that which falls outside their anti-imperialist desires was the American Indian and an enduring program of settler colonialism that each of these writers could acknowledge but not meaningfully link back to their anti-imperialist discourse. By contrast, the violent colonial legacy of American empire arises as an obstacle for these writers' investments in contributing toward a cultural nationalism rooted in a geographically bounded "fact" of the nation state's existence. Anti-imperialism for these writers was not synonymous with, nor could it include, anticolonialism even as each is brought by their own work to consider the U.S. as a colonizing instrument. What's intriguing in the texts I've collected for this project is that each writer uses Mexico as a space in which to instigate their anti-imperialist commentary and colonialist curiosities. In each, Mexico is understood as a space where violent revolt is a part of the process of articulating a renewed national identity that was seen as analogous to the aims of their modernist writing practices, but at the same time, Mexico is perceived as a space where U.S. Americans are also inhabiting, traversing, and occupying. And it's from that latter vantage point that these authors are brought to consider both the

imperialist encroachments of the U.S. into other nationally defined geographies, but also to link that outward imperialist drive with the colonization of the Americas and Manifest Destiny. In this way, the Mexican Revolution activated in the U.S. writer's literary modernism a contradictory entanglement between possible liberatory futures and lingering colonial histories that could not be resolved.

This project's interest in U.S. modernist engagement with imperialist and colonialist discourse builds on an increasing emphasis in modernist studies on analytic frameworks largely borrowed from postcolonial studies and American studies that emerged in the 1990s. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease's anthology *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993) critiques historical narratives which posited the U.S. as exceptional to histories of imperialism, while also demanding a correction to the absence of culture in works that did attempt to examine legacies of U.S. imperialism. That demand was largely taken up and diversified into the twenty-first century. In Shelley Fisher Fishkin's 2004 address to the American Studies Association, published in "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies" (2005), she posits a need to undo "the national paradigm of the United States as a clearly bordered geographical and political space" (20). Citing the writing of Gloria Anzaldúa as breaking ground in valuing borders and borderlands as less "nationally intact" spaces worth investigating, Fishkin announces a desire to continue "increasing attention to the historical roots of multidirectional flows of people, ideas, goods and the social, political, linguistic, cultural, and economic crossroads generated in the process. These crossroads might just as easily be outside the geographical and political boundaries of the United States" (22). A large impetus for defining and embracing this "transnational turn" across disciplines in the humanities has been to redirect how scholars locate archives, trace multinational integrations, and construct meaningful lines of inquiry into

historical texts. Modernist studies has not been adverse to these developments. More recently, in their article “The New Modernist Studies” (2008), Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz trace several “expansions” in modernist studies, notably the temporal and spatial expansions in terms of where modernism is to be located or delineated, which they similarly designate as a corresponding transnational turn in their own field. One of the three features of this transnational turn is an ongoing emphasis on the impacts of imperialism on modernist culture as well as anticolonial cultural projects and transnational community formation. This has led to interdisciplinary debate on the relationship between modernism and postcolonial literature. Scholars do not agreed on whether the two canons of texts are to be seen as enmeshed, interactive, or rigidly separate, and whether one addresses or critiques the failings of the other or instead if postcolonial literature should be seen as a competitive successor of modernism. For example, Simon Gikandi, in “Preface: Modernism in the World” (2006) argued that postcolonial literature is best conceived as a body of literature “enabled” by modernism and which subsequently improves and capitalizes on the formal innovations of modernism because of the particular postcolonial contexts in which these texts originate.

However, postcolonial studies’ most pronounced influence on modernist studies is, perhaps, the reception of Edward Said’s ideas in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), not least because of his transforming of James Joyce scholarship. For example, Peter Kalliney, in *Modernism in a Global Context* (2016), unpacks Said’s influence on modernist studies specifically in how Joyce criticism has fundamentally shifted away from reading him in a European tradition of apolitical High Modernist aesthetics to being reinterpreted as a “peripheral” writer in the context of Irish colonialism. Though Said begins *Culture and Imperialism* with a two-pronged definition of culture — as aesthetic formal practices and

tradition, and also as a discourse of identity configuration— throughout the work he clarifies that literature is a medium where ideology is contested in order to trace within modernism “the external pressures on culture from the *imperium*” (188), and that could be measured by what does or doesn’t enter into the frame of the story. For Said, as with many who have followed his example, modernism and its relation to imperialism was primarily a narrative concern. While positioning narrative fiction as a privileged genre of analysis in his book-length study, Said writes that the novel was “immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences. I do not mean that only the novel was important, but that I consider it *the* aesthetic object whose connection to the expanding societies of Britain and France is particularly interesting to study” (xii). This is because, in his view, narrative fiction serves as a technology of colonial ideology dissemination. Said adds, “narrative is crucial to my argument here, my basic point being that stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (xii). His interest in the novel and narrative fiction, however, assumes no specific aesthetic limitation, and he moves easily between readings of Victorian realism and twentieth century modernism alike, though the latter is not a major point of emphasis in his study. The relaxing of periodizing and aesthetic borders suits Said’s critical projects because his continued emphasis is on how colonial cultures used narrative to define what the nation was in relation to expanding and waning imperial projects. Concluding his short section on modernism, Said asserts, “Nations themselves *are* narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them” (xiii).

What is the value, then, of modernist nonnarrative in the face of such a premise? Said did

in fact look at works of poetry, briefly, to elaborate on his argument about imperialist culture in modernist work. Mentions of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Ezra Pound's *The Cantos* in this book occur in a list of various modernist examples but are left unexplored. He does pick-up the poetry of W.B. Yeats in *Culture and Imperialism* as exemplary of Irish anticolonial writing, yet his fixation there is on themes and types discernible across poems as patterns of reference. Even more stark is Said's earlier essay, "Yeats and Decolonization" (1990), when observing just how little of Yeats's verse is actually analyzed (or needed) across the entire argument. Said's privileging of narration results in a distinct lack of use for poetic particulars, formal specificities, and aesthetic materiality as relevant to the analysis of imperialism or cultural politics outside the text, even when the object of analysis is a poem. Summations of what poems are "about" suffice for his purposes. Where, in his brief "Note on Modernism" in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said takes up the issue of formal aesthetic strategies that meaningfully bridge modernist form with imperial culture— dislocation, fragmentation, displacement, discontinuity— these observations of form lead the author back to novelists like D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster and not to poetry, where those very kinds of formal devices are more prevalent, constitutive, and obvious.

To be sure, work on narrative fiction continues to produce a rich field of study identifying the vastly different ways that imperialism might insinuate itself into cultural text not only through narrative representation of colonized-colonizer relations or as a "structure of feeling" inscribed into narrative plot, but also as the "crucial limitations of vision" of these writers, to borrow another phrase from Said and perhaps an idea that gets him closest to the material poetics I'm interested in exploring. Modernist studies, largely built on close reading strategies of narrative and verse forms, has still tended to privilege the novel where analyses of imperialism and culture are concerned. Many have taken up the novel as the privileged artefact of modernist

cultural production in order to address the issue of resistance to and complicity with imperialism. Laura Doyle's *Freedom's Empire: Race and the Rise of the Novel in Atlantic Modernity, 1640-1940* (2008), for instance, follows the model of transnational analysis pioneered by Paul Gilroy in his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) in her contention that transatlantic relations served as a "liberty plot" for modernist novelists, a plot that was battled over for its representational significances between black and white transatlantic writers.

Attempts to assert the value of studying poetry in the early "transnational turn" of modernist studies can be teased out of the disciplinary history. While not U.S.-centric, Fredric Jameson's "Modernism & Imperialism" (1990) argues that the spatial disjunctions of colonialism and capitalism were reflected or "captured" in poetic modernism's formal ambiguities, gaps, contrasts, and silences and indicate the inability of these metropole thinkers to imagine or represent a global whole that observably influenced their home environments. Modernism, in this view, was a symptom of this imperial world system, beyond the "cognitive mapping" capacity of a singular subjective point of view. Modernism for Jameson is a crisis of representation generated out from the politics of global capitalism. Jameson's theory of modernism in this text suggests that direct representations of colonized spaces in narration need not occur in order to analyze imperialism but that the effects of imperialism are perceptible in the formal aesthetic choices of the authors. This essay opened room to look at cultural texts outside the novel form in order to address the imperial culture; however, like Said, Jameson's tendency is to discuss poetic modernism in broad strokes. It is not a particular poem's formal peculiarities that interest him, but poetic disjunction and parataxis themselves and in general which stand in for the kinds of conceptual representational limits that he sees as symptoms of a world under capitalist crisis. Though in *A Singular Modernity* he does make an important distinction between the modernist

avant-garde practitioners and later High Modernists, differentiation across specific modernist texts, or within single modernist poems, is not a line of interest that Jameson pursues. It is not by coincidence that Jameson's book *The Political Unconscious* (1981) is accompanied by the subtitle *Narrative As a Socially Symbolic Act*.

What, until more recently, has been left out of these explorations into the intersection of culture and imperialism is a closer examination of the aesthetic particulars of nonnarrative texts. Attention to aesthetic particulars is too often relegated to the margins and to footnotes in much of the work following Said, Jameson, Kaplan, and Pease. Even as analysis addressing imperialism in modernist studies began to coalesce, the emphasis has been traditionally on a set of now core modernist novelists: Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf. Part of my interest in extending the issue of imperialism and modernism is to contribute to the smaller body of work that has sought to make meaning out of modernism's equally recognizable nonnarrative texts: those works of poetry, prose, playwriting, and poetics that do not rely on narrative device to drive the urgency of the work. Part of my own interest, instead, is to look at modernist works that were deliberately resisting generic norms and narrative coherence. While I turn to writers known for being modernist poets—Williams, Stein, Max Eastman (and to a lesser extent, admittedly, John Reed, though he did publish verse)—I focus not on their more canonical books of poetry but instead on particular texts that these authors themselves recognized as being difficult to categorize, resistant to conventions of genre, revolutionary, even.

Instead of prefiguring the novel as *the* aesthetic object that best captures or reflects imperialist structures of feeling, I'm inclined to turn to those texts which were constructed in their social moment with a self-awareness of their "break" from the author's own personal previous output, but also too as a part of a cultural moment that placed value on breaking or

revolt from already received cultural forms, especially significant for these American authors who each saw their writing as a kind of national cultural product in contrast to European models of writing. What of the *imperium* is registered in these texts that eschew narrative for other forms of cultural representation *and* that make anti-imperialist revolt an explicit political orientation? How do we locate or dislocate the mark of that imperial moment from text which also, with some self-awareness, attempt to enter into a much larger cultural conversation about U.S. imperial expansion, influence, and investment abroad? What do these nonnarrative texts reveal and what do they obscure differently from their narrative counterparts? How does a history of imperialism in the Americas alter how we discuss modernism?

My dissertation hopes to highlight ways that some modernist nonnarrative texts attempted to map transnational relations as an important facet of an anti-imperialist politics. None of the authors I look at abandon the project of national identity building or consolidation. The idea of a bordered and bounded “U.S.A.” was central to their individual poetics, but they were also compelled to construct histories of the nation that valued and highlighted transnational exchange and interaction. By highlighting the political events taking place in Mexico during 1910-20, and seeking out modernists texts that attempt to record, however briefly or peripherally, those events, we can gather an archive of work that itself sought to “locate” the Mexican Revolution alongside various other national geographies and cultural spaces within the U.S., producing modernist art objects that traced transnational networks and relations that were seen as important markers of national identity building and containment. Gertrude Stein’s writing on the Mexican Revolution, composed in Europe, links cultural migrations from Spain and the Mediterranean to Mexico City while also putting into relation the revolution in Mexico with the front lines of WWI in France and the history of missionary work in colonial California. William

Carlos Williams's text on Mexico triangulates the industrial city of Paterson, New Jersey, the rural subsistence farming of the Appalachian foothills, and the uprising of indigenous hacienda workers in the northern state of Sinaloa, Mexico. John Reed's journalistic accounts of the Mexican Revolution connect outside militarist influences on the development of the war in Chihuahua, Mexico to anti-black lynch mobs of the U.S. southeast and equally to governmentally sanctioned antinative displacement campaigns of the Canadian northwest.

None of these textual projects offer up these relational geographies as the fortuitous effects of chance operation or artistic collage, but rather, each author attempts differently to construct a national cultural identity out of a recognition of the transnational political and cultural networks of their moment. These texts refute, partially, the idea that modernist texts merely reflect "dislocations" in the culture or suffer blindness to transnational, imperial even, relations. For example, in *Specters of Conquest: Indigenous Absence in Transatlantic Literatures* (2010), Adam Lifshey looks at Williams's historical study *In The American Grain* (1925) and charges Williams with authoring "a script of colonization" because of the way that Williams brings into his narrative rewritings of colonial-era texts the "unproblematized presence" of submissive indigenous bodies, and that Williams deliberately erases the "persistent oppositionality" of American Indians. Even though I agree with Lifshey that we can, and must, read Williams in a context of ongoing settler colonialism, I think there are several ways he entirely misreads that relationship between modernism and colonialism. For one, Lifshey ignores other texts by Williams where he is more explicit in representing contemporary Indian resistance to colonization. But more to the point being made here, I think Lifshey's misreadings also stem from his seeing "behind" Williams's "radically idiosyncratic... temporal and geographic and stylistic juxtapositions" "a decidedly national narrative" (11). Lifshey makes a familiar

miscalculation, in my view, in his handling of Williams's aesthetic modernism: the insistence on narrative rather than, or despite, nonnarrative aesthetic particulars. Rather, individual aesthetic elements and decisions are deployed by modernist authors in order to construct particular relations that don't rely on narrative sequence or resolution. Jameson's idea of a "cognitive mapping" "rift" between lived experience and global flows of capital, culture, and bodies is perhaps not as absolute a representational dilemma as has been made out. If a global "totality" is always beyond the capacity of an individual (or individual text) to see fully let alone to represent, these modernist texts demonstrate at least the desire to comprehend social relations structured through larger integrated systems of global domination that operate beyond the lived experience of one individual actor protagonist. Instead of the products of storytelling, these nonnarrative texts work more like archives as they attempt to organize, rather than narrate, a simultaneity of event and the multiple trajectories of populations and cultural artefacts crossing the border in and out of the U.S., and in doing so they put into contact transnational geographies that might otherwise be invisibly linked.

A part of the goal of this dissertation is to recognize how modernist aesthetic practice itself modestly anticipated some of the later transnational emphases of American and modernist studies as disciplinary fields of knowledge production. My greater claim is this: theirs is an anti-imperial discourse that reveals an emergent awareness of ongoing settler colonialism as a crisis of national coherence, and that their modernist aesthetics were implicated. Modernist authors were not merely putting up reflecting mirrors to their cultural environments but also sought to produce knowledge about the increasingly globalized world they found themselves traversing, and they believed that the formal inventions (or interventions) of their writing practices were essential to developing that knowledge. And so we gain by recognizing that their attention to the

details of their local environments were arranged within linguistic “landscapes” (as Stein would call her works) that called attention to wider geographic relations of culture and imperialism. Their textual “mapping” strategies allowed them to recognize (though not contend with) American Indian resistance as a counter-claim to both territory and national definition. A critical emphasis on the intentionality of modernists’ relational “mapping” through aesthetic form invites us to continue putting into dialogue the close reading practices of modernist studies with the contextualizing historicism of American studies where questions of imperialism and colonialism are of concern.

This emphasis recuperates authorial agency at the level of form so that these writers are not reduced to symptoms of global or national zeitgeist. Such an emphasis might contend with critical work on Williams that reads him as emblematic of variously defined American “localisms” standing against the imperialist tendencies of other cosmopolitan modernists, as Sarah Davidson has recently argued in *Modernist Literatures* (2015). The concept of “the local” is useful to such critics who perceive Williams’s work as intrinsically opposed to Eliot’s or Pound’s colonialist “ex-patriot modernism” with their “civilizational approach” to knowledge production. But using the “local” to foreclose the broader intent and reach of the authors themselves and how they perceived their writing to be in conversation with “non-local” authors, or how these works, despite their authors’ intent, negotiate broader discourses at the national and transnational level, misses something crucial. It also presumes an inherently positive cultural-political achievement by being opposed to the “universalizing” gestures of Pound’s or Eliot’s version of historical curation. Instead, we need to insist on a value-neutral approach to reading modernist form that does not determine in advance its political success or violence. What is useful about Gikandi’s model of reading modernist form, whether one agrees with his ultimate

assessment or not, is that the value of the form is historically contingent and requires a contextual reading of its authoring, circulation, and use. I might follow Barrett Watten's suggestion of "radical particularity," rather than "localism" or "locality," as a formal concept common to much work across the aesthetic avant-garde as having a critical potential that is the beginning, not the end, of its politics since the limiting of the work of Williams to interpretive frames of the "local" prevent or limit the deliberate ways that Williams attempts to relate dispersed geographies as essential to his conceptualization of an American cultural field. In much of Williams's work (his long-form writing on the city of Paterson included), we see an interest in transnational relations forged into both the thematic and the formal particulars of the text. The abandonment of purely formalist valuations of modernist text should not necessitate an utter disregard to the formal features of a text which defines it in the context of an individual author's oeuvre and of the wider body of works read under the category of modernism as a whole. As Watten suggests, "what remains is to focus precisely on how the *radical particularity* that is so ubiquitous across many kinds of poetry and art practice does its work, or fails to. And for that, one must step outside the limits of form and merge with discussions of context, history, person, politics." An attunement to the radical particulars of modernist texts, then, does not preclude the work of contextualizing and historicizing modernism but demands it.

The "transnational turn" has also furthered the debilitating if necessary debate on what modernism is exactly. As Mao and Walkowitz have pointed out, recent redefinitions of modernism have varied depending on where one chooses to locate examples of the concept. As temporal and spatial boundaries for finding instances of modernist practice push ever outwards, the term has been fraught with definitional inconsistencies just as outdated attempts to fine tune lists of the formal features or particular cliques of practitioners of modernism has been largely

abandoned. Increasingly, modernism is being defined in terms of “responses” to various global phenomena (positive or negative) rather than as a recognizable style. Critics have looked to pluralize competing or alternative modernisms, while also seeking to understand modernism as a periodizing discourse more than a particular kind of art. Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel’s 2005 anthology *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* seeks to “de-Westernize” modernism by locating cultural expressions of modernity across a series of interlocking global engagements largely outside the U.S and Europe, and what’s sometimes named “alternative modernities.” The book makes the case that modernism is simply the cultural response to the various global crises that emerged throughout the late 19th and 20th century, and thus can be located in different global regions across several decades, each particular regional culture experiencing its own particular modernity unevenly. At the most extreme extension of this logic, Susan Stanford Friedman’s *Planetary Modernisms* (2015) makes the case that “modernity is a planetary phenomenon across the millennia... understood as multiple, polycentric, and recurrent instances of transformational rupture” (ix) between and among interlocking societies of any period, while modernism is understood in the most elastic terms as “the aesthetic dimension of any given modernity” (x). She sees her project as “diametrically opposed” to Jameson’s own definitional project in *A Singular Modernity* where, for him, the “only satisfactory semantic meaning of modernity lies in its association with capitalism” which required a discourse of rupture and break from a perceived historical past defined by the concept of “tradition.” Modernism becomes the moniker used to market and legitimate a body of aesthetic texts written by those who develop the field of early modernist criticism as a particular cultural expression of capitalist modernity, what he sees as High Modernism. Friedman counters that “Jameson’s notion of singularity impoverishes what needs to be a complex approach to overdeterminations of history and the

enmeshments of different systems of power in understanding modernity” (59).

The two theorists leave ample room for anyone entering the definitional melee to take up middle ground. Despite the incredible and useful labor Friedman has put into tracing decades of exactly contradictory definitions of “modernism” and “modernity” over the last several decades, I’m not as enthusiastic about her end point and believe there’s value in *limiting* what we’re calling “modernism.” For myself, “modernism” is a useful category of cultural production that responds by way of “cultural parataxis” (Friedman’s term) to the pluralism forged out of settler colonialism’s capitalist logics in the Americas, and as such, is not an aesthetic domain restricted to Euro-American art practitioners of the early twentieth century. The kind of pluralism I am imagining here refers to the abrupt reorganization of group adjacencies that extend out of the colonial logics of exclusion and elimination that informed the transatlantic slave trade and native genocide and assimilation. In *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (2016), Iyko Day emphasizes the historical triangulation between native, alien, and colonial settler populations that prefigured racialized labor forces that capitalist expansion in the Americas required and that cultural production served to rationalize. This helps to counter ideas of globalization or cosmopolitanism as a set of proliferating networks of ideas and population flows by exposing how pluralistic populations, and their divisions or erasures of difference and identity, were produced in order to rationalize colonial violence. “Modernism” then is a “cultural parataxis” attendant to those productive violences and fissures. It is a category dependant on the development of colonialism. This is a position that has been taken up and defended by several scholars already. For example, Walter D. Mignolo in *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2000) writes, “there is no modernity without coloniality,” specifically with a Latin American context in mind, whereas Andreas Huyssen sees colonialism as the

precondition for aesthetic modernism in his article “Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World” (2007).

It’s important to recognize that much of the groundwork for exploring modernism in terms of colonialism has stemmed from scholars who have sought to build counternarratives of modernism from Latin America or as an exchange between the U.S. and Latin American writers. Edouard Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* (1997) argues that the crises of colonialism have left us without recourse to universalizing unities (be they global or national) and that the emergence of *relation* across diversity is a necessary frame for understanding cultural production and belonging after colonialism, best exemplified in Creole culture and language in the Caribbean. He offers an understanding of “relation” as an engagement between self and Other where the self avoids the desire to appropriate or dominate that Other but that develops a sense of interconnectedness with and openness toward the opacities of Other culture, a dynamic that he finds exemplified in some works of modernism. Interestingly, Glissant makes repeated returns to the work of William Faulkner as exemplary of a relational modernism, a product of the Americas, that has Caribbean correlatives in the works of Aime Cesaire and Bob Marley, among others. So Faulkner’s modernism is brought out of a strictly U.S.-national context and put *into relation* with Caribbean practitioners whose works are not aligned by style or form but how they operate in terms of registering difference. Just as the Modernist Studies Association was taking shape, the work collected by Anthony L. Geist and Jose Monleon in *Modernism and Its Margins: Reinscribing Cultural Modernity from Spain and Latin America* (1999) also set out to question the assumption that modernity is experienced, and modernism best expressed, from the centers of economic power and imperialism. As such, these essays attempted to establish value at the “margins” of imperial power, or to question the centrality of such imperial “centers” by reversing

Jameson's problem of the unimaginable. These authors suggest that from the colonies and colonial peripheries, imperial metropolitan culture was not only imaginable but familiar. Similarly, these texts suggested that not just aesthetic modernists, but also the knowledge producers involved in hegemonic productions of "modernism" studies continue to appropriate the knowledges and cultures of marginal communities in order to sustain their field of study, while at the same time excluding outside challenges to that authority or hegemony. José D. Saldívar similarly sets out to revalue what had previously been considered "marginal" spaces and cultures in order to recalculate the geographical coordinates of studying modernism in his book *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (1997). Drawing on Anzaldúa and Mary Louise Pratt's notion of the "contact zone," Saldívar uses the concepts of "borderlands" and "border discourse" to downplay the centrality of national traditions in favor of transnational engagement. The isolating of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands allows Saldívar to challenge periodizing terms already established in Anglo-American scholarship, resisting the adoption of "the postmodern" in order to rethink mid-century modernism in spaces like the Tijuana-San Diego corridor and the creation of Chicano identity and Chicano cultural studies as ongoing legacies of modernist discourse. Saldívar challenges uncritical valuations of "cultural hybridity" as an inherently liberatory hermeneutic. Iris M. Zavala, in *Colonialism and Culture: Hispanic Modernisms and the Social Imaginary* (1992), can also be counted among the writers who place the emergence of modernism as a self-consciously named cultural production within a Latin American geography. Like Matei Calinescu and Perry Anderson, she observes a contrast in the characterization of Anglo-American modernist discourse of violent progress and the discourses of collective destiny and geographically distinct modes of cultural knowledge that accompany modernism's origin in Latin America. Zavala, at the forefront of a now more common tendency

in modernist studies, rejects the definition of modernism as a prescribed set of formal textual features (parataxis, collage, dissonance) and instead promotes a definition of modernism as a narrative of liberation formally embedded into a wide-array of writing strategies that, in Latin America, represents a contestation over signification practices in order to emphasize a heteroglossia inherent in modernity. She sees Latin American modernism as a negotiation between globalizing forces of capitalism and projects of announcing decolonized national cultures.

“Decentering” projects have continued into the twenty-first century and especially value the study of authors and their cultural products as they circulated across uneven political geographies beyond metropole centers of artistic production and in the service of trying to expand what might be visible under the idea of “border spaces.” Among these projects, authors have either tried to indicate transnational exchange, or else to complicate emphasis on the national by insisting on other regional configurations, such as the hemispheric. Julio Ramos, in *Divergent Modernities: Culture and Politics in 19th Century Latin America* (2001), adapts the political discourse of uneven development in order to frame what he sees as the “uneven aesthetic modernity” of Latin America. He suggests that Latin American modernism is “transnationally local” in the way it mediated between various modernist discursive practices, and as such must be defined and interpreted in terms and through a context that differ from the received norms about modernism established in an Anglo-American context. For example, he points to the Cuban José Martí as typical of the way that Latin American modernism was neither fully sympathetic to popular mass culture (as they perceived U.S. mass culture as an impinging force of commodification and racialization that threatened local culture and identity) nor an autonomous aesthetic field (since it also attacked Latin American writers of belle lettres, *los*

letrados, as institutionalized literary roles with financial ties to state consolidation). He points to Martí's work in newspaper journalism in New York City, where modernist style and gesture pushed at the boundary of normative news journalism (consequently constructing "the chronicle" as a distinctly modernist genre) as one way that his literary ambitions were always fully formed within a public and political function across a variegated transnational landscape.

Other writers have developed theories of "border modernisms" that retain a critical use for center-periphery models of analysis. George Yúdice's "Rethinking the Theory of the Avant-Garde from the Periphery" (1999) points out, with specific emphasis on Latin America, that uncritical championing of modernisms constituted in "peripheral" spaces can misread the ways in which these spaces negotiated and constructed their own center-periphery models of art production, particularly in the service of national identity building. In other words, the move to critically attend to spaces seen as peripheral from the perspective of some disciplinary archives does not itself constitute a resolution to or dissolution of center-periphery relations. Yúdice characterizes center-periphery relations as an imperialist ideology, but also recognizes the "double bind" that Latin American modernists found themselves with as they chose to either adopt or resist the definitions of these relations already prefigured in imperialist encounter. In *Border Modernism: Intercultural Readings in American Literary Modernism* (2002), Christopher Schedler wants to understand multiple modernisms in terms of their sites of production, and so contends an elemental difference between "metropolitan modernism" and "border modernism"—the latter defined as an ideological worldview where "the external world [beyond the metropole] is seen as constitutive of itself, and identity is explored through association with those defined as culturally, racially, or linguistically 'other'...through an emphasis on historical context" and local culture (xiii). Through this framework, Schedler posits that "border modernists" include

Lawrence, Williams, and Willa Cather as well as Americo Paredes, Mariano Azuela, and John Joseph Mathews, a set of authors who should be viewed as “intercultural counterparts” and whose insistence on an aesthetic practice distinct from those popularized by metropolitan avant-gardes define the works of these authors as postcolonial acts of resistance to European cultural authorities (xiii-iv).

This dissertation participates in the advancing of transnational frameworks for analyzing modernism, but attempts to reign in the “ever outward” expanse or reach of modernist studies by looking at how political events, specifically the Mexican Revolution, crossed the cultural and geographical borders between Mexico into the U.S. and entered into the worldview of these U.S. American writers as a significant and signifying event— that the Mexican Revolution could be a sign of modernity, a view opposed to the perceived threat to national security and coherence that motivated public conversations about intervention and annexation. This project is not tracing cross-border cultural exchange, and deliberately does not emphasize focus on Mexican writers or their responses to U.S. intervention of imperialist threat (though those writers and voices are not completely absent from the project either). Instead it seeks to understand how some U.S. modernists entered into dialogue about revolutionary Mexico as those events circulated through news journalism, magazine editorials, and modernist art practices. I’m interested in how modernist responses to these political events outside the national borders of the U.S. provided potentially useful forms of engagement (anti-imperialist critique, cross-border cross-class solidarities). But I’m also interested in how these same modernist texts potentially registered some self-awareness of the difficulty of announcing a critique of U.S. imperialism from within cultural spaces authorized by U.S. political power or citizenship status, power and status that continues to be rooted in the occupation of indigenous territory and native erasure.

Modernism continues to offer an alluring variety of aesthetic possibilities for those seeking to critique U.S. imperialism and announce solidarity with populations inside and outside the border of the nation. The beginning of each of my chapters attempts to show the lingering, residual presence of modernism in contemporary pop culture through the kinds of cultural objects that are critically oriented in opposition to U.S. empire. Questions remain today about how the form of anti-imperialist critique, critique popularly expressed and ubiquitous across U.S. American pop culture, is able to productively activate transnational solidarity without reproducing colonial scripts that limit or erase those without access to the amplifiers of mass culture. How can writers meaningfully represent, or identify with, those who suffer under the imperialist violence that's the target of the writers' critique, if these writers are not, in fact, the ones standing under a drone's remote control or the weight of boiler-plate austerity measures? This dissertation's interest in the anti-imperialist politics of some U.S. modernist writers representing revolutionary Mexico and American Indians seeks to question whether modernist responses to global crises offer any meaningful lessons for continued anti-imperialist politics in the face of seemingly unstoppable U.S. Empire. Does the culture of hegemony have anything useful to offer to ongoing anti-imperial and anti-colonial struggle?

CHAPTER 1: SEEING RED: ILLUSTRATION, RACE, AND RADICAL SOLIDARITY IN *THE MASSES*

On the morning of January 8, 2016 in a pre-dawn raid of a nondescript house in Los Mochis, Sinaloa, Mexican federal security officers recaptured notorious drug kingpin Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán—leader of the Sinaloa drug-trafficking cartel—after his having escaped from maximum security prison twice before. News of El Chapo’s arrest circulated swiftly in sensationalized accounts of heroic Mexican marines—whose deadly gun battle with Guzman’s own security personnel was captured on body-cam video footage—and too the possibility of Guzmán’s extradition to the United States where he was also wanted for trafficking-related crimes. The political and legal intricacies of El Chapo’s arrest, however, were somewhat overshadowed the next day, January 9, when *Rolling Stone* magazine published online a gossipy exposé of the long-time fugitive titled, “El Chapo Speaks: A secret visit with the most wanted man in the world.” The article turned into a media bombshell over how *Rolling Stone* managed to garner interview access—the first and only of its kind—with a man who had mostly eluded capture by federal law enforcement for over two decades, but it wasn’t the article’s subject matter alone that had journalists and pundits debating the justification for a drug lord “tell all” in the wake of Guzmán’s arrest. Almost all attention provoked by the piece centered around its author, U.S. American and Academy Award-winning actor Sean Penn and the shock of his meeting, accompanied by Mexican actress Kate del Castillo, with El Chapo. The online article was accompanied by photos of El Chapo and Penn shaking hands and a video of Chapo answering some of Penn’s questions as follow-up to the sit-down interview, which is not transcribed but described. The article itself is written in a highly stylized, “gonzo journalism” narration of events leading up to Penn’s encounter with Guzmán, while his rags-to-riches representation of Guzman is mostly sympathetic—“El Chapo is a businessman first, and only

resorts to violence when he deems it advantageous to himself or his business interests”—and his narrative is interrupted frequently with rhetorical questioning meant to instigate the guilt of culpability among the magazine’s predominantly white, middle-class male readership.³ “Are we, the American public, not indeed complicit in what we demonize [narco-trafficking]? We are the consumers, and as such, we are complicit in every murder... [a]re we saying that what’s systemic in our culture, and out of our direct hands and view, shares no moral equivalency to those abominations in Juarez?” Finally, while the piece presumes to philosophize the ethics of a U.S. mainstream media’s dominant portrayals of Guzman and the North American drug trade as scary “Other” and “out there,” it also makes a deliberate performance of Penn’s contact with and knowledge of Mexican (and sometimes specifically Sinaloa) regional culture. Throughout the article are aside references to “narco corrido ballads so popular throughout the country,” “mothers papooing infants,” and of course food, “A local family caters a buffet of tacos, enchiladas, chicken, rice, beans, fresh salsa, and... carne asada. ‘Carne Asada,’ an oft-used cartel term describing the decimated bodies in cities like Juarez after mass narco executions. Hence, I go for the tacos.” Elsewhere, Penn’s use of the sometime racial designator, sometime racial slur “gringo”—“With his dramatic capture [in 2014], and, perhaps, the illusion of safe dealings now that El Chapo was locked up, the gringos were scrambling to tell his story”—in a way both acknowledges its application to (white) American journalists like Penn himself and distances himself from *that kind* of gringo—the cowardly, ignorant gringo who scrambles to pen the sensational tale of the fallen villain foreigner. He writes of himself as “[t]he lone gringo among my colleagues” as though to signal his singular “insider” position with the group of Chapo’s associates who join the meeting while emphasizing a self-consciousness of his racial difference.

³ “Rolling Stone 2016 Reader Profile” Rolling Stone Media Kit. Dec. 11, 2015.
 <<https://www.srds.com/mediakits/rollingstone/demographics.html>>

Critical responses to the his article ranged from serious attacks on Penn’s journalistic credentials to expressions of bewilderment given his surreal melange of the deadly serious and the can’t-be-taken-seriously. Eileen Truax, in her article “Sean Penn, the Ugly American,” published just days following the Rolling Stone piece, related her feelings of bemused incredulity: “Tal vez era una nota de uno de esos sitios de información paródica como *The Onion* o *El Deforma*; o quizá era un artículo de ficción en el que Penn, haciendo alarde de creatividad, imaginaba una conversación con el recién capturado capo” [Maybe it was a column from one of those parody news sites like *The Onion* or *El Deforma*; or maybe it was a piece of fiction in which Penn, making a show of his creative prowess, imagined a conversation with the recently captured capo]. Once the reality of the encounter sinks in for Truax, enough for her to finish reading the piece, she relates her queasy recognition of the tone and perspective from which Penn’s piece had originated—that of the “ugly American” (the english phrase is used in Truax’s Spanish text), that stereotype of the boorish and self-centered American abroad (“la actitud del gringo que viaja a otros sitios cargado de prejuicios y clichés, y no hace más que reproducirlos en su intento por ‘conocer,’ en un afán aventurero, o incluso salvador” [the attitude of the gringo who travels to other places loaded with prejudices and clichés, which he can’t help reproducing in his effort “to get to know,” as an eager adventurer, or even savior]. Truax traces several hallmarks of the “ugly American” trope in Penn’s narrative: frequent references to tequila and *cerveza*, the strained (if not racist) comparison of Chapo to various Hollywood creations of Latino hypermasculinity, his comparative references to other distant cities, an emphasis on the elaborate risks and dangers he has bravely undertaken to reach his exoticized destination, and his repeated anxieties that he could be assassinated or even castrated by his hosts. Truax further skewers Penn for posing as a hard-hitting journalist braving dangers in order to say what the U.S.

mainstream media refuses to, against the backdrop of actual danger wrought upon local Mexican journalists (“asesinados, descuartizados, desaparecidos”) [murdered, mutilated, disappeared], who attempt to report on the ongoing realities of narco-trafficking as they affect local community life. She further points to Penn’s passport as a crucial insulator both from actual harm on his escapade and from truly understanding the pain and trauma experienced by Mexican citizens in the face of the cartels’ punishingly violent industry. Truax is unrelenting in her critique, accusing Penn of being a total fraud, “Penn pretendió acercarse y conocer, pero en realidad no vio nada” [Penn expected to get up close and personal, to really know, but in reality he saw nothing]. She offers, in place of the English phrase “the ugly American,” the Spanish “el gringo culero” [the asshole gringo] to describe the stereotype that Penn performs in his text. Something not quite identical to the loud and obnoxious tourist that’s often evoked with the English term “ugly American,” Truax’s “gringo culero” points to the American interloper who performs for his native audience the role of informed cultural insider and cultural translator in order to offer a kind of liberal self-criticism of that home audience in contrast.⁴ And examples of this kind of translative-critical performance in U.S. entertainment media are abundant enough (for example, with Michael Moore or Anthony Bourdain).

In historicizing Penn-as-journalist within the longer critical narrative of the “gringo culero,” Truax follows in the trajectory of critical texts like Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and George Yúdice’s “We Are Not the World” as it questions the capacity of the U.S.

⁴ In a sense, Truax’s use of “gringo culero” in place of “Ugly American” does the work of pointing to the characteristics of the cultural interloper that the original “Ugly American” was intended to refer to. In their 1958 book of the same title, Burdick and Lederer’s *Ugly American* was in fact in reference to the character Homer Atkins, an American engineer who works with the local villagers of an imaginary country in Southeast Asia. His “ugliness,” the result of his physical labor alongside the host inhabitants with whom he worked, was put in contrast with the more official and bureaucratic Americans who invested in development projects removed from consultation with native citizens and largely for their own profit. As the novel gained popularity throughout the 1960s, the term “ugly American” came to refer to the qualities of those Americans that Atkins defines himself against. In the novel, Atkins is depicted as a sympathetic hero, whereas for Truax, those same characteristics are the objects of her critique.

American (Western) subject's testimony abroad to understand, recognize, or perceive the "local conditions" in foreign nations as they are for the "outer" space's indigenous and local inhabitants, or the levels of mediation that inform the capacity to represent foreign culture for a U.S. audience. Truax challenges the performance not only of the intellectual, but of the witness or reporter abroad as an informed reader of the local environment. Her charge that Penn "saw nothing" challenges the positivism of the Western subject's testimony. In her critique of Penn, her conclusion is not just that the privilege of the actor's American citizenship insulates him from the real violences Mexican journalists are exposed to daily in their routine exercise of news reporting, but that his subject-position allows him to project imagined and fictionalized violences at his audience while at the same time "seeing nothing." Penn's (and by extension *Rolling Stone's*) hopeful aim of critiquing U.S. American complicity in the drug-related violence south of the border, and his self-consciousness of his racialized gringo-ness (and his attempt to distinguish his gringo-ness from the foibles of other gringos unlike him) are not enough to spare him from Truax's recognition of the "gringo culero" at work. For her, Penn's article seems to make the most minimal effort to locate himself within the racial logic of being "gringo" in Mexico and while his narrative fails to offer something missed by most other "gringos scrambling to tell his [Chapo's] story," despite his intention to include a degree of self-awareness within his critique of American economic imperialism. One's politics or personal sympathies are not what legitimate knowledge in representing foreign culture, as the Penn case shows us, nor is merely marking one's racial subject position sufficient to address attendant problems of representation and race involved in transnational reportage.

In looking at earlier historical examples of political journalism that self-consciously inquired into forms of representation that could enable international working-class solidarities,

and that reflected on the problems of “whiteness,” we might pause at the legacy of *The Masses*, a socialist arts and commentary journal of the 1910s that emerged out of the context of New York City’s Greenwich Village modernism. Vociferously anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, pro-feminist, and with internationalist affinities, the periodical covered workers’ issues while relying on a biting, satirical style in both writing and art—particularly among its illustrators—to call out the abuses of a capitalist system and its boosters. Because the periodical’s run (1911-17) coincided with the events of the Mexican Revolution (1910-20), coverage of that conflict featured regularly within its pages. In this chapter, I argue that through an engagement with the modernism of its time, *The Masses*, in covering the Mexican Revolution, reveals both limits and possibilities for continuing left engagement in anti-imperialist, international solidarity. The editors and writers were at times critically aware of their own “whiteness” as entangled in broader national narratives about race and borders. The magazine’s openness to various, if not competing aesthetic practices coupled with a critique of white supremacist notions of “race superiority” demonstrate an attention to the difficulties of configuring subaltern populations (as detailed by Spivak) and how they might be negotiated through modernist representational strategies. These modernist critiques of race and representation fail, however, to undo the erasure of American Indians from an attempted interracial, international anti-imperialism.

Carlos de Fornaro, Socialist Literacies, and Representational Authority

The Masses had taken an interest in the political unrest south of the border since its inception, under founding editor Piet Vlag, with an article by political cartoonist and leftist writer Carlo de Fornaro in the third issue (March 1911), “Revolutionary Mexico.” With its titular subscript, “A monthly magazine devoted to the interests of the working people,” the magazine defined itself as a Socialist periodical and the revolution in Mexico provided an early opportunity

to display its commitment to class-based political analysis and international solidarity. The overthrow of Porfirio Diaz had only occurred a few months earlier, and these analytical reports were timely, if a little dry, written in a style consistent with political news journalism. The editors included a brief preface to this first article on Mexico by writing:

The series of articles to which this is an introduction will deal with the conditions and events in Mexico that led up to the revolution, with the various Mexican parties fighting to overthrow the present regime, with the complications that are likely to arise therefrom, and with the relation of the United States to Mexico. Fornaro is in close touch with the leaders of the Mexican revolution and is well posted as to the very latest happenings.

The preface makes clear that the magazine's primary intention is to offer its readership an analysis of the war in Mexico, though its highlighting of the author's proximity to "leaders of the Mexican revolution" (a proximity never clearly defined in the article or the preface) was one way the magazine hoped to frame its possession of an exclusive access to authoritative information in Mexico. Under Vlag, *The Masses* hired Fornaro to provide ongoing political analysis of the Mexican revolution. Born in Calcutta to Swiss and Italian parents before pursuing studies in Germany, Fornaro eventually migrated to the United States and later into Mexico, where he would establish a small publishing venture through which he wrote articles that sharply criticized the Diaz regime for its corruption. The Diaz regime, in response, worked to censor his publications. As a result, Fornaro returned to the United States to write a book-length critical portrait of the Mexican leader, *Diaz, Czar of Mexico* (1909), that would trigger a libel suit that ended with Fornaro's conviction and his serving a year in prison after refusing to accept a pardon by publicly apologizing for his published criticisms.

His reputation for being a hardened leftist reporter unmoved by the influence and power of the Mexican state made Fornaro ideal for the fledgling *Masses* under Vlag. They introduced the author ahead of his first article by claiming, "Probably no writer in America can speak with

more authority on Mexico than Carlo de Fornaro... the owner and editor of a liberal paper in which he kept up a fearless campaign against the government in a fight for Mexican liberty... It was striking in the trial that the big American interests and persons close to high American officials showed extraordinary zeal in helping Diaz convict Fornaro.” The David and Goliath narrative of Fornaro taking on the Mexican state, the narrative which establishes his ultimate “authority,” made a convenient parallel with *The Masses*’ positioning of itself as a bearer of truth standing against the corrupting narrative influence of the State. “Authority” built on small-but-mighty “fearlessness” to speak truth to power was a common attribution here.

Similarly, in a 1916 issue of *Bruno’s Weekly*, another Greenwich Village small magazine that published modernists like Djuna Barnes and Alfred Kreymborg, Bernard Gallant, who also wrote articles for *The Masses*, presented Fornaro in the following terms, “Among the writers who are introducing Mexico to the American reading public, the Mexico of social strife and revolutionary upheaval—the land of the struggling peon and Indian—Carlo de Fornaro occupies an important place... he exposed the Machiavellian methods of Porfirio Diaz and gave the American public to understand what is transpiring in the land of the Aztec, Mayo, and Yaqui Indians. For his troubles he was rewarded with bitter persecution, a suit for criminal libel and a sentence of years to Blackwell’s Island” (927). Useful to note here is how Fornaro is framed as an evangelist of truth about a war principally fought between the Mexican government and American Indians, which is emphasized twice in the quote. He is presented as a gatekeeper to knowledge about Mexico and its native populations. The article adds that he “came to this country twenty years ago. When he grew tired of dear, old New York with its glittering electric signs, he went to Mexico. That was in 1906. Instead of painting the picturesque scenes of that marvelous country, as he contemplated, he published a newspaper for more than three years,

giving the Mexicans a taste of *real Metropolitan journalism*” [italics mine]. This last validation of Fornero is also noteworthy, as it not only repeats the linking of his authority with his physical presence in Mexico, but represents him as bearer of “the real” with the suggestion that, at last, “real” journalism lands in Mexico as a gift extending from his press and editorial practices, which are opposed to “painting” and “picturesque scenes.” It is not that Fornaro has better access to information by being in Mexico as he reports on its political dramas, but rather that he himself is the origin of news that is “real” because of his stance against the aesthetic and decorative, and that he enlightens his Mexican counterparts (which the article defines as “peon and Indian”) with a “taste” of “Metropolitan journalism” which the article does not go on to define for its readers.

For his part, Fornaro advanced his own persona as “authoritative” and “real” via his persistent characterization of mainstream media as one infused with corruption and complicity with monied interests. A refrain in Fornaro’s articles and their editorial framing is the influence of Mexican and American business interests—particularly the oil industry—on the press. Fornaro is consistent in his Mexican reporting on characterizing the anti-Mexican and anti-revolutionary sentiments of the mainstream corporate press industry, in particular those of the Associated Press, as originating from the perspective of a small group of elite businessmen who stood to lose the most after the war was over. In his March 1911 article, “Revolutionary Mexico,” he writes that “American newspapers and magazines rushed to the rescue of the dear name and fame of Diaz” in the wake of a John Kenneth Turner article titled “Barbarous Mexico” that charged Diaz with the brutal repression of an indigenous workforce exploited primarily for foreign investment and resource extraction.⁵ Fornaro points to the idea that Diaz “sold concessions to foreigners, and gave away land to prominent [U.S.] Americans” as a relevant influence upon the printed defenses of Diaz (6).

⁵ The article would become the basis of his influential book by the same name.

Fornaro's linking the press to invested commercial interests was not restricted to his articles in *The Masses*. Throughout the 1910s, in fact, Fornaro's Mexican coverage and recountings of his libel trial persisted in New York's small and mainstream press alike, as did his insistence on his own authority as a conveyor of political insight who had "been there" and so could assess political developments with a first-hand understanding. For instance, a 1919 article "A Plot Against Mexico - II" in *The Nation* credits Fornaro for exposing links between American oil interests in Mexico and unfavorable press coverage of the revolution in the American mainstream press, while debunking the claim that Francisco "Pancho" Villa kept an American press agent at his side who was paid to write letters and manifestoes on Villa's behalf for the American press. Fornaro was not wrong, of course. There had been long-standing and direct ties between several large American newspapers and the economic exploitation of Mexican territory and its natural resources that was encouraged under Diaz. Writing on the mechanisms by which anti-Diaz sentiment was repressed in the U.S., Edward J. Escobar notes, "The owners of four of the five major Los Angeles daily newspapers held large tracts of land in Mexico. Harrison Gray Otis, the owner of the *Los Angeles Times*, was the president of a company that controlled 85,000 acres of Mexican land, and the owner of *The Herald*, T.E. Gibbons, held stock in the same company. E.T. Earl, owner of *The Express*, was the director of the Sinaloa Land and Water Company, and William Randolph Hearst, owner of the *Los Angeles Examiner*, also had large landholdings in Mexico" (54).⁶ It was common for periodicals which sought to attract readers with depictions of the "truth" about Mexico to emphasize Fornaro's credentials as someone with the fortitude to expose connections between conservative news media's coverage of the

⁶ Not by coincidence, in this regard, John Reed, upon first arriving in El Paso to begin his Mexican crossing to report on the revolution, made personal notes regarding the competitive atmosphere among a cabal of reporters who, like Reed, descended upon the border city to create articles on border-area skirmishes or character pieces on Pancho Villa. One of Reed's notes mentions, "cigar-smoking representatives of William Randolph Hearst and the Guggenheims discuss impossible plans and slip mysterious checks to equally mysterious persons" (quoted in Lehman 109).

Revolution and their profiting from Mexican land ownership. By including Fornaro among its staff, *The Nation* could claim that it too stood against the corruption (or naiveté) of other news competitors in its possession of this agent of “real” news. Again, a full-page ad appearing in a July 1915 edition of *The Forum*, for which Fornaro supplied an article titled “The Great Mexican Revolution: An Analysis,” also reviewed in brief Fornaro’s book *Carranza and Mexico*. This ad entices its audience that “it is a story of vast interest to those who would learn the truth concerning the Mexican situation from a man who has supremely mastered it.”⁷ While not himself Mexican, we can see the way that various news outlets used Fornaro’s presence in Mexico as largely the basis by which these claims to having “mastered” the situation arise.

Advertising Fornaro as “supreme master” of truth regarding the Mexican Revolution allowed these publications to present themselves as in possession of a resource, a view that could not be equalled by American journalists who attempted to account for the politics of the revolution through second- or third-hand accounts, but that also could not be accessed from Mexican media itself, which had not yet “mastered” a “Metropolitan journalism.” It is perhaps too obvious to suggest the way in which this framing opens easily into an interpretation that links representations of “truth” and the “real” to imperialist figurations of metropole-periphery relations despite the political leanings of these writers. And that an American readership’s appetite for knowledge concerning distant, foreign, or “outer” spaces is presented with the assurance that “metropolitain” values are being delivered and disseminated into those very spaces whose foreignness informs the interests of the readership. The “truth” of those spaces is dependent on those spaces *becoming* more like the metropole and its attendant (if ill-defined) values.

Far from being a singular expression tucked into the pages of a small press monthly, the

⁷ *The Forum*. July 1915. Vol. 54 No. 1. 762.

hope that the Mexican Revolution would bring about social and political reforms at least partially informed by American models of “mastery” is explicit in Fornaro’s own writing. In *The Forum* article, Fornaro annotates his presentation of eight reforms the Carranza regime called for in the middle of the revolution, providing elaborating (and at times interpretive) commentary on each of the proposed social changes.⁸ In conclusion, Fornaro goes so far as to add his own proposition to the list, “To these reforms must be added a general reorganization of the school system.” Fornaro bases his prediction here on the earlier interest that Carranza had taken in the education system north of the border. Fornaro mentions, “Mr. Carranza sent a young engineer, M.C. Rolland, to investigate the school system in the United States. The trip brought forth the fact that the states of Wisconsin and Massachusetts have the best organized rural system for schools in America. The two states are the pattern which will be used for Mexico’s Minister of Education to work from.” Fornaro finishes this point by adding, “Over a hundred school teachers have been sent to Boston within a year to study educational methods in vogue there. By the time the revolution is over, most Mexican school teachers will have travelled and have had practical experience in the United States and will be able to teach the young Mexican according to the best American standards” (539). This implication of transnational tutelage suggests the ease with which even informed socialist advocates could misrecognize the imperialist tendency embedded in the hope that the U.S. ought to be a disseminator of democratic ideals. While no such governmental program existed with regard to Mexico in any systematic way, the U.S. government had in fact only recently implemented such a program with regard to their occupation of the Philippines. The *Pensionado Act of 1903* opened channels for the recruitment and training of Filipino students to study and adopt American “ideals” with which they were

⁸ Venustiano Carranza was one of several competing revolutionary leaders, who secured leadership after the ousting of Porfirio Diaz and, later, Victoriano Huerta, as head of state from 1915-17 and then president from 1917-20 until his assassination that year.

expected to return to the occupied territory and begin careers in civil service, as a mediating force of influence that would free up tensions there caused by U.S. military presence.⁹ Fornaro's hope for democratic modeling of U.S. educational systems for revolutionary Mexico reveals a problematic limit in the reporter's siding with the oppressed in the Mexican conflict.

In truth, Fornaro's political prerogatives and biases were unambiguous in his writings on Mexico both in *The Masses* and in his other publishing outlets. In his published essays written toward the beginning of the war, his emphasis on political corruption continued to offer a critical counternarrative of Diaz's rule, a rule that was often portrayed in conservative mainstream U.S. news as industriously modernizing. By the middle of the ten-year conflict, Fornaro supported the publicized reforms of the Carranza government over and against the political messaging of competing revolutionary factions, most notably those of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, who pressed most vocally for land reforms on behalf of their Indian and agrarian adherents, reforms intended to redistribute large hacienda landholdings into the possession of rural farm workers (540-41).¹⁰ One focal point in his writing of this time continued to be the corruption of earlier Mexican leaders during and following the Diaz rule leading up to Carranza, whom Fornaro revered. His support for Carranza and criticisms of Zapata and Villa reveal his attitudes toward the more revolutionary factions and ideologies. Though Fornaro is quick to point to the ways in which American business interests had earlier corrupted Mexican press and politics, he is careful to position himself as a fiscal pragmatist who seeks to square the overthrow of the Diaz regime with the demands of foreign financial interests. In "The Great Mexican Revolution," Fornaro advocates on Carranza's behalf, apparently attempting to assuage the concerns of those same

⁹ See Guevarra Jr. *Becoming Mexipino*.

¹⁰ Fornaro further believed that Villa was being used by Mexican and American interests who continued to be sympathetic to Diaz and who hoped supporting Villa's insurrection would weaken or eliminate Carranza's hold on power.

foreign interests when he claims, “Carranza has always protected the foreigners, their lives and interests... As far as the destruction of property and the great sums of indemnization to be paid, besides the foreign and international debts, there is no doubt, once Mexico settles down to peace, it will be able to pay all the indebtedness without in the least being overcome by its weight” (541). While Fornaro can cite American capitalists as a cause of corruption in the earlier Diaz regime, his vision of a post-revolutionary future for Mexico includes restitution and debt settlement to those foreign parties who had already staked claim to the development and use of its land and natural resources. Though Fornaro presents his analyses as clear denunciations of Diaz’s abuses of power, his critique is far from radical, nor does his writing present the struggles or interests of the Mexican peasant class with any clarity, citing instead vague notions of struggle for liberty.

From the very beginning of Fornaro’s involvement with *The Masses*, however, we can see one messaging strategy meant to link Mexico’s rural peasant class to other revolutionary classes internationally: the repeated comparisons of the revolution in Mexico to revolutionary action in turn-of-the-century Russia. Such a comparison was intended to provide a sense of Mexico’s advancing of “modern” political ideas and a sense of international commonality via the universality of capitalist oppression. In his first article written for *The Masses* in their March 1911 issue, Fornaro is quick to compare the repressions of the Diaz regime, particularly against the revolutionary impulses seeking to undo it, with the counter-revolutionary action of czarist Russia. He writes, “Under their rule every form of oppression and persecution known to an absolute and corrupt government has been practiced. The system of peonage, the awful conditions under which working men are forced to labor, the reduction of a large part of the working population to virtual slavery, the cruel exploitation of the country by American

capitalists—all these are the fruits of the rule of Diaz and his *cientificos*. Freedom of speech and the press is non-existent in Mexico. A systematic policy of repression is pursued, such as can be compared only to the persecution of the Russian revolutionists by the Russian government” (5). For the socialist audience of *The Masses*, at least, the 1905 Russian Revolution and its aftermath would have been familiar and widely discussed events. Fornaro’s reference to Diaz as “the Czar of Mexico” further consolidates the suggestion of the importance of Socialism in those liberatory movements.

The comparison can be understood as one way the magazine hoped to build strategic lines of subjective identity between Socialist or party-sympathetic readers and the purportedly Socialist revolutionaries fighting against Diaz across the southern border. In the April 1911 issue, a small editorial, “Socialism in Mexico,” appears in advance of Fornaro’s follow-up article, which does the double duty of painting the Mexican fighters as fellow travelers, but also of Fornaro as someone providing “surprising” truths to an American readership. It assures, “The statement made by Carlo de Fornaro in his article this month, that perhaps more than half of the revolutionists in Mexico are fighting under the banner of Socialism, will come as a surprise to the majority of our readers. The backwardness of the great bulk of the Mexican working class, who are largely recruited from the native Indians, their lack of even the rudiments of education, the virtual state of slavery in which many of them are kept, are conditions hardly favorable to the growth of a healthy Socialist movement” (3). The “surprise” registered by the editors is an interesting one here, as they simultaneously chide the revolutionary fighters in Mexico for their “backwardness” (seen as an element of those “conditions hardly favorable” for Socialist organization), just as they credit those same actors for their “fighting under the banner of Socialism.” The editorial repeats as it concludes, “Mexico, therefore, offers another example of

the fact that no matter how backward a country may be in political and social progress, no revolution can be fought nowadays unless Socialism plays an important role in it” (3).

The strained incongruence between the perceived “educational” “lack” of the “native Indians” and the eruption of revolutionary organization suggests a limit to the editor’s ability to recognize the relationship between revolutionary outbreak and Socialist educational apparatuses. The editors return to this “educational” refrain when they refer to the Mexican revolutionary leaders as “too recent graduates into the Socialist movement” unable to “understand its full significance,” and that the bulk of the fighting forces are themselves “absolutely ignorant of Socialism” and only following Socialist leaders out of “instinct.” Finally, the editors echo Fornaro’s pleasure in the power and influence of American ideological tutelage by crediting American Socialists with planting the germ of revolutionary spirit and action in pre-war Mexico, “Socialism has kept capitalism company in penetrating into feudal Mexico from without. The leaders of the Mexican revolution educated to Socialism by American comrades have in the course of but a few years succeeded in stirring up the working men to a sense of their wrongs as well as of their power. No other movement could have done this so effectually.”

Contrary to the enthusiastic praise and credit Vlag’s *The Masses* gives Socialist actors in directing the revolutionary charge against the Diaz regime, it is at best a matter of contention the degree to which Socialism and organized labor in Mexico affected the course of the revolution, including its outbreak. In an *International Socialist Review* article tracing various influencing factors for the revolution, Stuart Easterling emphasizes the role of Diaz-era dispossession and sale of rural campesino land as a primary factor: “The Mexican Revolution was, above all, driven by agrarian grievances and mass agrarian mobilization” rooted in “the question of land for campesinos and their villages.” For Easterling, the continuing value of the history of the Mexican

Revolution is its legacy of “mass popular revolt and the demands for social transformation” and how mass struggle has the capacity to effect social transformation. In his assessment, and despite mass union organization steeped in the Utopian Socialism of Charles Fourier, Mexico’s industrial workers “did not as a social class exert a preponderant influence over the course of the revolution... nor were they able to consummate an alliance with the radicalized village campesinos.” In actuality, he notes, many urban workers who would become victims of mass layoffs would join the ranks of Villa’s armies in the North (whose independence from American monied interests Fornaro continually doubts). Fornaro himself was less enthusiastic about the potential for Socialism to take hold of the political transformations that were a likely result of the war. Referring to contemporaneous political uprisings in the northwestern Mexican state of Baja California (which he calls in English “Lower California”), Fornaro claims, “At present Socialism in Mexico is entirely out of the question. Its doctrines cannot thrive among people whose illiteracy runs as high as 86 per cent... Lower California cannot stand out against a united Mexico as an independent Socialistic republic. There would be a constant fear that the great doctor, Uncle Sam, might conceive such a republic to be a menace to California and Arizona. Peaceably or by force Mexico will bring Lower California into the fold” (9). The “Socialistic republic” Fornaro refers to here was actually a sustained workers uprising led by anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon who, under the banner of the radical PLM (Liberal Party of Mexico), managed to control the border cities of Tijuana and Mexicali for the first six months of 1911 before being routed by Mexican federalist troops faithful to then Mexican president Francisco Madero.

Aside from mislabeling the political affiliation of the Magonistas in Baja California,¹¹ we

¹¹ Writing to his brother in 1908 regarding his future plans for revolutionary insurrection and the success he had discovered in recruiting like-minded participants without organizing under the label of “anarchist,”

see again the emphasis on “illiteracy” of the masses as the hurdle against “Socialistic” ideas that Fornaro and *The Masses* editors had hoped (or assumed) would direct the current of the war. The unfortunate irony of his criticisms (despite predicting correctly that the Magonista stronghold in Baja California would not hold up against the full force of Madero’s army), was that Magon himself was able to bridge two alternate traditions of radical social organization. On the one hand, Magon is known to have been fully steeped in the writings of European anarchist thinkers, adopting several of the ideas of Mikhail Bakunin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and in particular Peter Kropotkin (Saenz 101). At the same time, Magon, who was born in the southern state of Oaxaca, was himself an indigenous Mexican from a Nahua Indian family.¹² Several scholars of the anarchist uprisings in Tijuana and Mexicali have made mention of Magon’s ethnic heritage and the possibility of his adopting communal values from indigenous structures of extended family affiliation. Mexican anthropologist Benjamin Maldonado Alvarado has written more extensively on the influence of Mexican indigenous political ideals on the thinking and political practice of Magon, particularly noticing that Magon was not the sole Indian member of the PLM but rather that the PLM attracted several Indian members throughout its existence. In an article on the Magonista movement, Alvarado suggests that, more specific than a vague sense of “community” implied in “the communal,” Magon’s and other PLM member’s attachment to anarchist ideals are rooted in long-established indigenous practices and beliefs in Mexico which include a collectivist understanding of land use, a commitment to mutual aid as necessary for community membership, and a distinct anti-authoritarianism. Further, he demonstrates the

Magon writes, “No liberal party in the world has the anti-capitalist tendencies of we who are about to begin a revolution in Mexico and we would not have been able to achieve this had we merely called ourselves socialists instead of anarchists.”

¹² See Flores Magon 339. His parents both had experience as civilian fighters in the Battle of Puebla against the imperial invasion of the French Army under Napoleon III. Further, there is some scholarly disagreement as to Magon’s specific indigenous identity, though Maldonado Alvarado offers perhaps the most persuasive case, that Magon is Nahua, by identifying various assumptions earlier scholars seemed to have made about the Magon family lineage.

enduring relationship between the Magonistas and autonomous Yaqui and Mayo Indian armed insurgency, at times both carrying the Magonista flag that contained the motto, “land and liberty.” This summary of Magon is meant to indicate, by contrast, the degree to which Fornaro and *The Masses* under Vlag mischaracterize and misrepresent the heterogeneous contexts informing those fighting (and writing about) the Mexican Revolution. While Magon serves as an indication of the way a tradition of Western radical thought and indigenous anti-State politics found interplay, Fornaro’s articles presume a specific kind of miseducation that both the actors of the revolution and the readers of the magazine suffer, and for which Fornaro’s analyses, in his view, are intended to provide assistance. In future coverage of Mexico, *The Masses* would replace its primary journalist of the revolution, dropping Fornaro in favor of Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara (a co-editor with the Flores Magon brothers of the revolutionary newspaper *Regeneracion*)¹³ while also adopting alternative representational strategies in its attempt to express an international solidarity rather than an international analysis.

Max Eastman, Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, and representations of blood and land

During the summer of 1912, the head editor of *The Masses*, Piet Vlag, stepped down from his position suddenly, leaving the magazine’s future in an uncertain state. By the end of the year, however, several of the magazine’s regular contributors convinced a young socialist, Max Eastman, who had been teaching philosophy at Columbia University, to serve as editor of the magazine in Vlag’s place (Klein 48). Once persuaded, Eastman would refashion the periodical under his own vision of political commentary and aesthetics. The first issue under Eastman’s direction would appear in December 1912, and he would continue the socialist orientation of the

¹³ In addition to hiring Gutiérrez de Lara as a writer reporting on revolutionary Mexico, *The Masses* would also counter de Fornaro’s dismissive take of the Flores Magon brothers and their attempts at establishing an anarchist uprising in Baja California. See, for instance, John Reed’s article, “Persecution of Mexican Refugees” in the June 1916 issue, 22-23.

periodical that Vlag had initiated. The table of contents of each monthly edition would be accompanied by the magazine's editorial principle, written in manifesto-styled masthead. Emphasizing the magazine's "revolutionary" and not-for-profit mission, the masthead reads in part, "THE MASSES - A FREE MAGAZINE - This Magazine is Owned and Published Co-operatively by its Editors. It has no Dividends to Pay, and nobody is trying to make Money out of it. A Revolutionary and not a Reform Magazine [...] Printing what is too Naked or True for a Money-making Press." With Eastman's arrival as *The Masses* new head editor, the magazine would continue the efforts of its previous editorial staff to suggest an importance and urgency for paying particular attention to the ongoing revolution in Mexico. However, how the magazine covered the revolution in Mexico—a recurring focal point during Vlag's tenure as early as the third issue—would also shift perceptibly. At first, Eastman would continue the magazine's emphasis on covering revolutionary Mexico by utilizing once more the writing and illustrating of Fornaro, in the April 1913 issue (Fornaro's last contribution to the publication). In that article, "Intervention—What For?," we find a focus not on Mexican partisan factions but rather the legacy of American involvement in economic and military domination of the region. This change marks an emphasis less on analysis of partisan developments and more on critique of American imperialism, a continual fixation of Eastman's tenure. Like earlier issues under Vlag, we see a familiar editorial tactic at work when following the asterisk beside Fornaro's name to the footnote at the bottom of the page where the editors add, "Carlo de Fornaro formerly lived in Mexico" and then goes on to mention Fornaro's courage in exposing publicly the abuses of Diaz. Part of Eastman's reengineering of the magazine, however, would be to replace the broadly analytical writings of Fornaro with those of a Mexican journalist, Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, in order to ground an authenticity of representation rooted in his ethnic identity, while also

increasing the emphasis on critique of U.S. imperialism in Mexico, particularly where tied to issues of land, concessions, and military intervention. Removed, mostly, from Gutiérrez de Lara's writings are Fornaro's repeated emphasis of Mexico's indigenous populations. Instead, and more abstractly, blood would become a more generalizing trope to discuss the war. With that change, the editors would deploy a different tactic to ground the "authenticity" of their coverage and so to legitimate their attempt to represent the struggles of rural Mexican revolutionaries. Part of this tactical difference was to bring to the foreground issues of race and racial identity to register a more "legitimate" claim to representing revolutionary violence in Mexico.

In the April 1914 issue of *The Masses*, we can discover a series of rhetorical strategies that sought to define or defend the authenticity and veracity of the magazine's approach to covering the Mexican Revolution. First, Eastman attempts to frame the revolutionary violence in Mexico as a necessary effect of the repression and class interest of Mexican working peoples while refuting racist arguments of the time that suggested that Mexicans, as a distinct race of people, were inherently drawn to violence. In a preface to the article "The Mexican Revolution" by Gutiérrez de Lara, Eastman writes, "Americans think Mexico is a place where shoot-your-neighbor is the leading popular pastime. Mexico is a place where human beings are interested in their own interests about as they are in the United States, and willing to fight for them if they have to" (20). Not only does Eastman hope to dispel myths about "barbarous" Mexican impulses, but the attempt is made to paint both Mexicans and U.S. Americans as having a common self-interest. Two months later in the June 1914 issue, John Reed in his article "What About Mexico?" makes a similar point. There, his argument begins, "In the first place, let's settle the question of whether or not the Mexican people are fighting just because they want to fight—or because they want something they can get no other way." After dispelling the myth of the former

by asserting this importance of his having been among the revolutionary fighting forces—asking them in person for the reasons that they fight—Reed adds sarcastically, “You will make the astonishing discovery that the peons are sick of war.” In the next paragraph, Reed makes a similar gesture as the one by Eastman mentioned above, where he aims to connect events in Mexico to those already familiar to his American audience, “that argument by foreign holders of concessions is like that other which we are familiar with in this country: that the reasons employers of labor down there don’t pay better wages is that the Mexicans would not know how to spend it, because their standard of living is so low. So you’ll find often, when you ask those people why they’re fighting, that ‘It’s more fun to fight than to work in the mines or as slaves on the great haciendas.’” The cultural comparative work of Reed’s argument here intends to locate revolutionary Mexican workers as struggling within and against a class-interested representational rhetoric that readers of *the Masses* could recognize in their encounter with debates around workers and political-economy.

Another move to validate the magazine’s interest and coverage of the Mexican Revolution in the April 1914 issue is to foreground the Mexican identity of their featured journalist, Gutiérrez de Lara. Instrumental in helping John Kenneth Turner write the popular exposé of Diaz government abuses against Mexican peasants, *Barbarous Mexico*,¹⁴ Gutiérrez de Lara was an anti-Diaz socialist and attorney who, at the commencement of the war in 1910, had moved across the border first to Los Angeles and later to El Paso, Texas. In El Paso, he spent years giving public speeches in and around the city to Mexican immigrants and to Mexican-American audiences, advocating on behalf of the revolutionary factions in Mexico and promoting the equal redistribution of land to all Mexicans. Gutiérrez de Lara was arrested briefly by the El Paso police for persuading a crowd of a few thousand Mexican immigrants to march

¹⁴ Turner 527.

throughout the streets in support of the early revolutionary leader Madero (for whom Gutiérrez de Lara had fought briefly alongside fellow Maderistas before he fled to El Paso). The El Paso police feared the march would be interpreted as a breach of U.S. neutrality (Garcia 179-80). The use of arrest and incarceration by the local El Paso police department to suppress anti-Diaz political expression and agitation was part of a larger national trend, especially within the states bordering the U.S.-Mexico borderline, mostly as a consequence of American political and economic support of Diaz for decades leading up to his overthrow (Escobar 53-76). It's also possible that Gutiérrez de Lara's appearance in *The Masses* was the result of a chance acquaintance with John Reed, who traveled to El Paso at the end of 1913 before crossing the border into the state of Chihuahua to begin his reporting on the revolution for *Metropolitan Magazine*. Gutiérrez de Lara's presence in the magazine would provide crucial support to Reed's subsequent reportings, as it would act as a sign of endorsement of the magazine's characterization of the revolution from a member of the Mexican revolutionary left directly.

It was not only Gutiérrez de Lara's national identity and political track record that interested the editors of *The Masses*. In his first introduction of Gutiérrez de Lara to the readers of the magazine, Eastman is careful to assert his guest writer's ethnicity alongside his political credentials, insisting, "De Lara is a full-blood Mexican, and he is not only an agrarian revolutionist, but also a social revolutionist."¹⁵ The latter half of Eastman's sentence here might be explained by the guest writer's scant mention of the Mexican urban working class in his overview of the war, something Fornaro was quick to emphasize in his analysis of the revolution during the early years of *The Masses* under Vlag. By contrast, Gutiérrez de Lara's article, "The Mexican Revolution," presents *The Masses* readers with yet another explanation of root causes for the revolution, but this time stressing repeatedly the importance of land dispossession as the

¹⁵ Eastman, Max. Preface to "The Mexican Revolution" by L. Gutiérrez de Lara. 20.

primary instigation of violent revolution among dispossessed peons, while also detailing murderous atrocities committed by the Diaz regime in order to secure land appropriations against peasant landholders. Gutiérrez de Lara concludes his piece, “The creation of small farms in Mexico—that is the program of the present revolution as of all the past revolutions. It is the aspiration of every man in the revolutionary ranks.” This claim drives the majority of Gutiérrez de Lara’s article and, in contrast to Fornaro— whose understanding of the revolution was rooted in a careful analysis of Mexican political party factions—Gutiérrez de Lara’s emphasis is continually on the dispossessed peasant class now having taken up arms in the hopes of regaining control and possession of the farmlands that they worked. Midway through the article, Gutiérrez de Lara pinpoints specific regions in the country where land possession is central to the revolutionary uprising: “In the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, where the lands were appropriated by the father-in-law of Diaz, whole towns and villages were completely wiped out by the wholesale and bloody evictions... In the valley of Papantla in Vera Cruz, over five thousand peaceable farmers were murdered by the government soldiery for refusing to yield up their lands... In the mountains of Chihuahua in the little town of Tomachic, numbering some four thousand souls, occurred the most incredible tragedy of modern times. For refusing to evacuate their lands, every man, boy, and young woman was massacred.”¹⁶ If Fornaro’s authenticity was measured by his adeptness at tracing inter-party divisions and their claims to official government, for Gutiérrez de Lara it is rooted in his representation of land, not only as the central motivation of the revolutionary actors rising against the State, but also as the subject matter with which Gutiérrez de Lara demonstrates particularity in his tracing the specific violences among the small towns and locales that are mapped within his article. That emphasis on regional particularity is accompanied by an attendant emphasis on blood, the blood of poor farmers who refuse to

¹⁶ Gutiérrez De Lara, Lázaro. “The Mexican Revolution.” *The Masses*. Vol.5 No. 7, April, 1914. 20.

capitulate to State-sanctioned land dispossessions. The fixation on blood and violence more forcefully centers in these narratives the image of injured or murdered Mexican bodies. Both visceral and abstracted, these depictions of bodily violence attempt to solicit sympathy and outrage among readers of *The Masses* as a way to spur concern and support for the “full-blood Mexican” who is presented in this issue in terms of race and not simply citizenship.

More curious, then, is Eastman’s parallel emphasis on blood in his careful highlighting of Gutiérrez de Lara’s ethnicity. That he describes his guest writer as a “full-blood Mexican” suggests Eastman’s perception that this “full-bloodedness” imparts a claim to veracity by virtue of the writer’s “blood-authenticity.” The claim seems to one-up the previous inclusion of Fornaro under the previous editor, whose authenticity was presented as anchored in his resolve to write against the Diaz government even in the face of judicial suppression. While Gutiérrez de Lara’s own experiences were similar, his Mexican ethnicity, Eastman suggests, offers the reader a proximity to truth that Fornaro’s Italian heritage couldn’t activate despite his years in Mexico. The importance of highlighting Gutiérrez de Lara’s ethnic identity, and indeed his “blood,” can further be understood as a component of the magazine’s explicit self-portrayal as a political venue in support of cross-racial solidarity. The magazine’s incorporation of arguments in support of African American political struggles against white supremacy, for another example, are evident throughout Eastman’s editorship in both articles and illustrations (both of which often focused on lynching rituals in the U.S. Southeast).

This effort at interracial Socialist solidarity could be strained, however, by overt paternalism or, at times, ambiguous representational practices that could veer into stereotype (the frequent use of dialect writing to mark African American speech acts being one such example), complicating its continuing reception as an historic interracial periodical. Adjacent to the first

Gutiérrez de Lara essay is a full-page political cartoon that engages just such ambiguity regarding race. The illustration, by Stuart Davis, is an impressive desert scene of bold color contrasts. The bulk of the page depicts the mostly white sands of an unspecified Mexican desert, whose uniformity is interrupted by several imposing figures. In the foreground lies the sprawled out body, shirtless, belly down, and limbs outstretched in an almost “X”-shape, of a Mexican peon. Near the body rests a plow, thrusting out of the earth as though it was released mid-pull, and the fallen farmer’s sombrero. Nearby a patch of rock and cactus interrupts the smooth sea of sand. In the distance is an indistinct, shadowy assemblage of military soldiers, rifles and bayonets pointed skyward, parading away from the dead body and toward the towering edifice of a black rock cliff which dominates the background of the image. The caption beneath the image reads, “Restoring the Peon to the Land (As Huerta Does It),” with additional editorial subscript commentary in the bottom margin of the page which makes the claim, “The shooting of peons who claim their land for their own is a policy of Huerta, inherited from the Diaz regime, in which whole districts were depopulated.” The accompanying text makes clear the editors’ position against the counter-revolutionary (and unending) military dictatorship of Huerta (1913-14), as it reverses the call to “restore the land to the peon” championed by the revolutionary left.

Davis’s illustration further emphasizes the racial dimension of the peon’s struggle against debt-slavery by drawing the fallen figure in obvious color contrast to the white earth that engulfs his body. The image of the plow performs the work of signalling to *The Masses*’ Socialist readership the agricultural worker status of the peon as a gesture of workers’ solidarity, and so, combined, the two images propose an international and interracial identity between the struggle against wage slavery of the American working class, a population whose presumed interests dominate the pages of *The Masses*, and the struggle of the racialized Mexican peon against debt

slavery and land dispossession. At the same time, there is a level of abstraction that foregrounds violence and race in ambiguous ways. The pencil shading used to mark the dead farmer as a racialized body is accomplished in rough strokes, unevenly. Against the contrasting white sands in the background, the black graphite markings shade in mostly, but incompletely the figure within the boundaries of the drawn body. Without traditional use of shading, the rough fill in also exceeds the body's boundaries and marks the white sands just below the body's head and shoulders. While possible to interpret as shadow, or pooling blood, the lack of detail or shading to the color fill-in also looks as though it is just color itself drifting off the body into the sand. This abstraction of skin color, and by extension, this abstraction of race, forces attention to the pencil work as art. The position of the body, in its disfigured X-shaped, furthers the sense emphasis on figuration and composition. The limbs, in disjointed angles and at least one arm appearing incomplete or cut off at the elbow, amplify the body's presence as shape on the page. The depiction of wanton murder is as discomfoting as the aesthetic delivery itself. Like the particular but abstracting representations of blood and land in Gutiérrez de Lara's writing, Davis's drawing here offers the reader a similar visual parallel. This strategy of particularizing Mexican racial difference but abstracting revolutionary violence through figuration is, perhaps, one way the contributors involved with *The Masses* attempted to negotiate competing aesthetic values of their time: an "engaged" political art and aesthetic modernism. In the next section I will explore the magazine's general relationship to aesthetic modernism and demonstrate ways in which its contributors identified with modernist art practice but also used the space of *The Masses* to create something different that could serve as a vehicle for their political ideals.

***The Masses* and modernism**

The Masses explored a range of aesthetic strategies that would could suggest

international, interracial solidarity while also legitimizing their claim to representing experiences of those fighting a revolutionary war abroad. The evidence of this inclusive editorial approach suggests that *The Masses* considered facets of aesthetic modernism, among other aesthetic tendencies of the magazine's milieu, capable of expressing their political ideology toward that aim. At first glance, the relationship between *The Masses* and modernism might seem somewhat ambiguous and open to interpretation. It's true that *The Masses* head office was centered in Greenwich Village, an historical hotbed of cultural bohemianism and modernist aesthetic production. As a political and cultural socialite, Eastman was in close contact with many of the members of the artistic vanguard. And yet his attitudes toward modernist aesthetics, evidenced in his 1959 autobiographical *Great Companions: critical memoirs of some famous friends*, makes clear his distaste for the emerging formalism and nonnarrative abstraction of the era, reduced in one of his reflections to the "degrading, baby-talk cult of Gertrude Stein" (69-70). Another way Eastman condemned his perception of modernist formalism was to balk at its supposed self-referentiality and lack of political engagement. Looking back on his early editorship, Eastman writes, "In the Old Masses and Liberator days, I coined the word 'literarious' to describe the particular thing, or this one of the many things, against which 'the Masses crowd,' both artists and writers, were in revolt. In retrospect, when they are noticed at all, those two magazines are usually identified with Greenwich Village and the mood of Bohemian monkeyshines that is conveyed by that name. In reality 'Greenwich Villageism' was one of the things against which we were in revolt" (69-70). Here Eastman laments his work's association with Greenwich Village bohemianism and the "literarious," a faction of New York literary life who his staff confront in "revolt." We can see in his comments here the merging of a sense that not only his politics but also his editorial poetics are aligned in "revolutionary" terms. Eastman viewed the value of art in

its capacity to engage political issues of his day and to influence public opinion (*Enjoyment of Living*, 399). Using Whitman as a contrast to the new modernist aesthetic,¹⁷ Eastman writes in *Great Companions*, “I had in mind Walt Whitman whose ‘*This is no book. Who touches this touches a man*’ sums up pioneer America’s revolt, not only against feudalism and genteel tradition, but against all those mincing refinements which separate the pen-and-ink life from life in the world” (69-70). In both these comments a small fissure opens from which we can perceive a tension in the way Eastman attempts to characterize the “revolutionary” content of his aesthetic vision. We can clearly see here the modernist trope of a self-aware break with a perceived literary (“genteel”) tradition at the same moment that Eastman positions Whitman as a point of origin for his new literary trajectory. It is equally clear that Eastman understands modernism in terms of formalist autonomy, the idea that certain aesthetic forms signal to the viewer-reader a claim to art’s own autonomy, a separation from the concerns of, or embeddedness in, something apart from art defined as social life.

Eastman’s perspective suggests an attempt to forge an editorial vision that could support both radical politics and innovative art in terms different than that offered by Greenwich Village bohemianism. It’s perhaps from this perspective that Eastman might be defended from more contemporary detractors who have restrictively anchored an assessment of Eastman’s aesthetic work solely in terms of his own poems. Cary Nelson in *Repression and Recovery*, for instance, urges his readers not to read Eastman’s poetry for their lack of continuing relevance: “Despite his revolutionary politics, Eastman remained trapped in a genteel, idealized notion of the poetic” (55). While Nelson’s choice of words seems somewhat ironic given Eastman’s appraisal of

¹⁷ Whitman’s relation to either romantic or modernist traditions in U.S. verse culture continues to be explored and debated variously, but is at times placed in an historical trajectory that suggests his writing as a precursor to later modernist experimentalism. See, for example, Cary Nelson’s anthology, *Modern American Poetry*, vol. 1 (2015).

Whitman as revolting against the “genteel” noted above, it’s perhaps in Eastman’s editorial work with *The Masses* that a broader and more valuable construction of a *poetics* emerges with more complexity. For instance, Eastman’s quoting Whitman’s “This is no book” and his perception of aesthetic modernism as a partitioning of art away from “life in the world” participates in an ongoing debate about modernism (and the avant-garde). For instance, Peter Bürger’s oft-cited argument that there is a distinction between modernism and the aesthetic avant-garde, where modernism is defined by innovations in artistic practice whose work could be recognized by and circulated within art institutions (like the 1913 Armory Show) as objects of art-as-such, whereas the avant-garde sought to critique and dismantle those institutions of art that quarantine art production from other social functions, and so that avant-garde strives to undo the “autonomy of art.” Burger points to European Dadaism as the exemplar of this historical avant-garde. While the work contained in *The Masses* doesn’t approximate formally the work of European Dadaism, Eastman was conscious of supporting art that took clear aim at bourgeois cultural ideals, including the idea that art was something to be consumed by professionals in a museum.¹⁸

As evidenced by his editorial work for most of his career, Eastman had no problem advancing the careers of modernist artists whose work, in paint, political cartoon, or illustration, frustrated the art industry’s capacity to value and circulate them as representative of modern art. For example, Anna Indych-López details how early modernist art critic Anita Brenner sought to introduce Mexican modernist painters in the 1920s to an American audience in New York City. While receptions to Diego Rivera’s naturalistic representations of *indigenismo* were generally enthusiastic, Brenner found a more hostile reaction to José Clemente Orozco’s political illustrations of war violence during the Mexican Revolution (his *Horrores de la Revolución*

¹⁸ Praising the work of Ernest Hemingway in contrast to Stein, Eastman writes, “What he wants is the rough flavor of life as men live it who have something on their minds besides gossip about Art with a capital A” (*Great Companions* 72).

drawings). They were rejected as “political caricatures” and not fine art by the dealers and curators who Brenner had sought out for their promotion. Indyck-López writes, “To mainstream New York art galleries, the subject matter of the drawings was suitable for the radical magazine *New Masses* (Eastman’s later revival of *The Masses* under a new name) which editorially espoused socialist ideology, not for the gallery or the collector’s wall” (54). It’s clear that, despite modernism’s reception as a purely formalistic endeavor, its development at the time did concern distinctions of content and political messaging. The political content that Brenner’s New York clientele found unartistic is precisely where Eastman located value in the works of art his editorship was emphasizing. The unrecognizability of the modern in Orozco’s drawings were perceived as expressions of political modernity in the pages of *New Masses*.

Similarly, when we look at the roster of writers and artists who contributed content for *The Masses*, we find a long list of individuals whose work directly engages aesthetic modernism, or who clearly explored multiple aesthetic terrains and whose attitudes toward the experimental milieu of early twentieth century Greenwich Village appears much less antagonistic.¹⁹ Louis Untermeyer, who published with *The Masses* for almost the entire duration of its print run, before and after Eastman’s editorship begins, appeared with Williams and Stein in the little magazine *Broom* throughout the first half of the 1920s. Frank Walts, an African American artist and illustrator for the magazine, created several of the covers for *The Masses* during his tenure there at the same time that he provided similar cover work for W.E.B. Du Bois’s magazine, *The Crisis*, demonstrating his commitment to locating his art practice within the context of social struggle. And yet, Walts’s art was included in the 1913 Armory Show of modern art. In his book, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception 1905-1920*, Mark S.

¹⁹ Beyond the authors and illustrators with ties to modernism invited to publish in *The Masses*, Eastman also had no qualms selling advertising space to prominent modernists of the time. See for instance the backpage ad in the March 1917 issue, “An Irish Writer of Distinction - James Joyce.”

Morrisson observes the way that Walts's magazine covers are often executed "semiabstractly in strong colors reminiscent of Matisse, with a modernist formal vocabulary" (195). Stuart Davis, who illustrated for *The Masses*, was also an accomplished painter influenced by European modernists like Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec. His painting would later be defined and contextualized as "post-Cubist" and also American "proto-pop," a scion of post-war American avant-garde (Norton 184). Davis was also one of the youngest artists on display at the 1913 Armory Show, where his exposure to modernism made a sizeable impact on his aesthetic ideas and development. While once a member of Philadelphia's "Ashcan School" (a moniker he coined that would later be popularized to describe a small group of illustrators in the 1910s who focused on representations of working-class urban life), his experience with the Armory Show pushed his art more deliberately toward aesthetic modernism. Despite the fact that several *Masses* contributors directly participated in the Armory Show, the event was well known to most of the magazine's other contributors and a source of some contention. To be sure, the April 1913 edition of *The Masses* features an illustrated parody of the show. Illustrator John Sloan set images of Lego-block-looking cube figures to the English nursery rhyme "There was a crooked man" where every instance of the word "crooked" is replaced with "cubic." Running underneath the illustrated rhyme is a caption that reads, "A slight attack of third dementia [*sic*] brought on by excessive study of the much-talked of cubist pictures in the international exhibition at New York."²⁰ In fact, the artists employed by *The Masses* divided in disagreement over their reaction to the Armory Show and its representation of aesthetic modernism as a new way of conceptualizing artistic practice. This contention eventually led in part to most of the artists

²⁰ *The Masses*. Vol IV, No. VII. April 1913. 12.

quitting the periodical in 1916 shortly before the magazine's end.²¹ This split did not prevent the inclusion of a poem by notorious German feminist and dadaist Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven in the June 1916 issue,²² or the inclusion of two poems by Williams (though buried beneath the ad copy of the back page) in the January 1917 issue.²³ Despite Eastman's polemic against the aesthetic modernism that pervaded his social environment in Greenwich Village, the gulf between "The Masses crowd" and the "cult of Gertrude Stein" is not as apparent as Eastman's nostalgic self-historicizing would make it seem.

For his part, John Reed, one of *The Masses* most prominent journalists, was certainly no enemy of the Greenwich Village avant-garde either. While Reed is often mythologized as a hard-hitting Socialist reporter (buried at the Kremlin no less!), his career begins first with post-college travel to England and Spain, and then to Greenwich Village where he settles upon his return. It is here, during the time leading up to his reporting in revolutionary Mexico, that Reed became friends with and then entered into a romantic relationship with Mabel Dodge. Dodge was an upper-class arts organizer and promoter of modernist art who frequently hosted literary salons in her Fifth Avenue apartment (attended by "Wobblies and suffragettes... Vers-librists and cubists" alike),²⁴ and who was also instrumental in organizing the Armory Show in 1913, an originary source of exposure for the New York City arts scene to European avant-gardes like Cubism and the conceptual work of Marcel Duchamp. Dodge was also instrumental in promoting and

²¹ "Stuart Davis (1892 - 1964)." Menconi & Schoelkopf Gallery. Aug. 25, 2016.

<<http://www.msfineart.com/artists/stuart-davis/>>

²² Freytag-Loringhoven, Baroness Elsa von. "The Conqueror." *The Masses*. Vol. 8, No. 8. June 1916. 15. After *The Masses* was forced to end its print run because of their court-ordered restriction from using the U.S. postal service to disseminate their text, Eastman would largely revive the editorial staff and contributors in the radical publication *The Liberator* which would continue to support and publish the writing of Freytag-Loringhoven and at whose offices Freytag-Loringhoven would meet and befriend poet Claude McKay in a different instance of international, interracial literary solidarity.

²³ Williams, William Carlos. "Two Poems: Sick African & Chinese Nightingale." *The Masses*. Vol. 9, No. 3. January 1917. 42.

²⁴ See Steel 51.

publishing the modernist literature of Stein in the United States after meeting Stein in Paris in 1911. With Reed, she had travelled to Europe where the couple socialized with Stein and also cubist painter Pablo Picasso (whose work with sketch portraiture *The Masses* would print in a September 1916 issue).²⁵ Within a month of their return from Europe, Reed would be sent to Mexico on commission by *Metropolitan* magazine. Dodge accompanied Reed to the border at El Paso, Texas, before returning to New York City on her own. Dodge would be invited to publish two articles in *The Masses* in November 1914 and October 1917.

In addition to the close proximity to and engagement with Greenwich Village avant-garde art that the contributors to *The Masses* evince, critics have also contextualized the magazine within the scope of modernist art aesthetics—pointing most readily to the magazine’s highly stylized, full-color covers and to the graphic illustrations and cartoons used to convey some of the magazine’s critical perspectives, suggesting that modernist aesthetic has as much to do with formal experimentalism as it does radical political positioning. To be sure, one can observe clearly the embrace of modernist tendencies after Eastman takes editorial control of the magazine, as evidenced by the shift in cover illustrations. The covers of *The Masses* during Vlag’s editorship are entirely monochrome, many of which are purely textual (displaying featured content headlines) except for ornamental framing and bordering graphics (typically hand-held torches—an intended symbol of enlightenment—to the left and right borders of the cover designs). Those that do feature cover illustrations rely on realist representations of working class figures, predominantly close-up illustrations of worker’s faces and hands. After Eastman’s arrival at the magazine, the covers almost immediately move to full-color illustrations and adopt more recognizably modernist tendencies including a transition toward abstraction and expressionism. Sketch work and stenciling are showcased as often as more traditional drawing

²⁵ “A Portrait by Pablo Picasso.” *The Masses*. Vol. 8, No. 11. Sept 1916. 15.

and detailed work. Cover text is minimal other than the prominently displayed title of each issue. The illustrations take on, at times, satirical social commentary, and other times rely on figurative representations of working-class culture. There are several covers that also appear to embrace features of modern consumer culture, particularly images of women's fashion with an emphasis on feminine beauty. The title font loses its standardization established under Vlag and can be seen transforming across the periodical's run as cover illustrators experimented with font design as much as they did image and color composition. Across Eastman's editorship, cover illustrators were given room to experiment with various representational forms.

It's clear, then, that *The Masses* was constructed by individuals who did not, by and large, share Eastman's written objections to formalist experimentalism in visual and literary art, nor did Eastman's rejections of its rising popularity stop him from introducing elements of modernist art practice into the magazine. Rather, we might infer from the political content of *The Masses* that these contributors were drawn to the Socialist messaging established by Vlag and continued under Eastman, and that these writers and illustrators created for themselves a venue (and audience) for a more explicit, radical politics while developing an editorial aesthetic that could at times refer to both modernist and traditional styles of the period. Recognizing these tendencies, Modernist Studies scholars and those writing on early twentieth-century U.S. radical arts culture have often included *The Masses* in histories of aesthetic modernism. The Modernist Journals Project hails *The Masses* as "the flagship journal of Greenwich Village" because of its "modernist aesthetics" and because it "mixed experimental visual and literary arts."²⁶ Michael Rozendal, like Mark S. Morrison, also compares several of the more abstract cover illustrations to the paintings of Matisse (203). Melinda Knight puts *The Masses* in a group (alongside *Poetry*,

²⁶ "The Masses Collection" The Modernist Journals Project.
<http://modjourn.org/render.php?view=mjp_object&id=MassesCollection>

The Poetry Journal, and *The Smart Set*) of little magazines responsible for originating an American modernism and cultural radicalism of the 1910s (31). Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker include writing on *The Masses* (and Eastman's other editorial projects) in their anthology about modernist magazines. Granted, not all critics have defined *The Masses* primarily, or at all, in terms of American modernism, but the decision to do so or not is now clearly a central positioning play all critical receptions of the magazine are forced to recognize. More interesting, however, than questions regarding whether or not *The Masses* serves as an artifact of early U.S. modernism is whether or not its affiliations with avant-garde literary and art circles, or its referencing and adapting modernist literary and art practices, meaningfully impacted its attempts to represent an international working-class solidarity in such a way as to better negotiate some of the ideological trappings of representations of a revolutionary subaltern group. Below I will compare some of the representational forms particular to John Reed's journalistic style in his Mexico reports to some of the editorial layout decisions as an alternative form of thinking about international solidarity and modernist print matter.

John Reed and a "Poetics of Solidarity"

While Gutiérrez de Lara's explanatory articles seems to represent for *The Masses* editors a strategic but like-in-kind substitute for the earlier analyses of Fornaro, Eastman's embrace of John Reed's journalism from the front lines of the northern front of the Mexican Revolution can be read as an attempt at an entirely different representational strategy altogether, one that negotiated representations of "whiteness" as a component of highlighting how acts of representation themselves are bound up in race. Reed was originally sent to Mexico in order to cover the Mexican Revolution for *Metropolitan* magazine in the fall of 1913. The notes he made while there would turn into articles published not only in *Metropolitan* but also in *The Masses*

during Eastman's editorship. These articles would be collected and published a year later in the book *Insurgent Mexico*. A later edition of this book contains a preface by Renato Leduc—a lauded Mexican journalist and a member of Pancho Villa's army during the Revolution—which begins, "In this preface I intend to tell the story of how I discovered that the *simpático gringo* journalist, Juanito Reed—whom I had met in Chihuahua in 1914—was none other than John Reed, author of the extraordinary *Ten Days That Shook the World*" (Leduc vii).²⁷ Leduc's emphasis on the *gringo simpático* makes for an interesting contrast to Truax's *gringo culero*. The *gringo simpático* is the anglo-American who is nice, sympathetic, pleasing, and compatible—a validating term meant to confer respectability upon an outsider to Mexico from one of its insiders. In that preface to the book, Leduc recalls seeing Reed delivering his *Metropolitan* articles by telegraph at an office where Leduc worked as a boy, though he would later encounter Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World* while studying journalism at college, a book he claims had a profound effect on his own writing style. It would be decades later that Leduc would happen upon a translation of *Insurgent Mexico*, "published for the first time in Spanish in 1954... No wonder it was unknown not only to the Mexican public, but to other Spanish-speaking peoples as well" (xi-xii). Leduc sees himself offering critical praise of Reed's narrative of the revolution in stark contrast to competing narratives sanctioned by the State and business interests alike. He describes Reed's text as "a vivid portrait of the Mexican Revolution which differs greatly from the sordid, apocryphal and terrifying picture that was invented from the beginning by the mercenary publicity and information agencies of capitalist magnates" (xiii). In this way, Leduc offers up a version of Reed as fellow leftist and anti-capitalist whose relationship to truth-telling stands in relief against the "apocryphal" and "invented" "picture" crafted by the

²⁷ The preface is dated "September 1968 - Mexico City" in the middle of the Mexican student movement of '68, only weeks before the Tlatelolco Massacre that preceded the Summer Olympics there.

propagandists of capitalism.

Still, despite the lavish praise offered throughout the preface, Leduc gently submits some reservations, and, like Truax's, they have to do with Reed's capacity to see local conditions clearly as a traveler reporting back to a U.S. American audience. He begins by praising Reed's writing about Russia, where the "penetrating political sensibility of the author did not lose sight of the immense importance of the events he witnessed in those days in the streets of the tsarist capital." Leduc then quotes from Reed's own preface to *Ten Days That Shook the World*, where the American author claims, "In the struggle my sympathies were not neutral. But in telling the story of those great days I have tried to see events with the eye of a conscientious reporter, interested in setting down the truth," after which Leduc follows with, "*Insurgent Mexico* is something else" (xiv). Leduc characterizes Reed's writing in *Insurgent Mexico* as journalism tinged with "a rare poetic flair" that dispenses with chronology, Reed himself as a "troubadour," and his time in Mexico a "journalistic war adventure" which echoes some of Truax's criticisms. He praises Reed for being "a witness and a chronicler" but questions his stylistic choices as a journalist (xv). Calling attention to the visuality of Reed's descriptions, Leduc calls Reed a "muralist" and compares him to Mexican modernist muralist Diego Rivera. Finally, he mentions how "Reed fires the reader's mind with his own fascination," and points specifically to the landscape and the revolutionary "peons of the feudal haciendas of *porfirismo*" (xxiii)²⁸ as the fixations that preoccupied Reed's imagination and writing. Despite Leduc's mostly glowing and warm assessment (and nostalgic recollections) of Reed during those revolutionary years, it's evident in his couched criticisms and qualifications of Reed's writing that even to be *gringo simpático* is to suffer a romanticizing vision or something like a colonial unconscious. Reed

²⁸ The Spanish word "*porfirismo*" (or other times "*porfiriato*") is commonly used as a periodizing term in Mexican history to refer to the autocratic rule of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911).

himself seems somewhat self-conscious of the kind of partial vision he brings with him into Mexico, where in a brief dedication affixed to the copyright information page in *Insurgent Mexico*, he addresses his earlier professor at Harvard University, Charles Townsend Copeland, where he confesses, “As I wrote these impressions of Mexico I couldn’t help but think that I never would have seen what I did see had it not been for your teaching me... That to listen to you is to learn how to see the hidden beauty of the visible world.” Again, Reed seems to draw attention in this dedication to the aestheticizing operation of his own gaze, and one traced back to American ivy league pedigree.

Scholars, looking over Reed’s articles on the revolution, interpret Reed variously along much the same lines. Kimberly O’Neill argues that Reed, along with left-leaning journalists John Kenneth Turner and Katherine Anne Porter, engage in a “discourse of activism” that seeks to forge a cross-border “democratic fraternity” by triggering moral sympathies through the stories and voices of those fighting in the war. Brian Gollnick identifies in Reed’s war reportings a “poetics of solidarity.” Downplaying Reed’s poetic license in terms of historical accuracy or chronology of his actual experiences, and also the cultural capital Reed secured through the articles on his Mexican journey, Gollnick instead focuses on representations of camaraderie and generosity in Reed’s text among the peasant soldiers in Reed’s company, and their embrace of him as a foreign reporter. Even further, Gollnick lingers on the importance of Reed’s Mexico articles as more than simply sympathetic accounts of Villa and his men or valorizations of a revolutionary “spirit.” Rather, he describes them as records of actual rifts in cultural space (“an upside down world”) where peasant soldiers renegotiate status quo social life in terms of a rejection of private property, and in the way that workers are depicted in collective actions of force and determinacy. In this way, Gollnick frames Reed’s articles as convergences of self-

interest of a bohemian New York City cultural producer and “subaltern elements” of the utopian aspirations of the fighting Villa forces. Christopher P. Wilson takes a more critical approach. While wanting to save Reed’s critical reception from the critique that sees his work as “yet another episode of a totalizing, epistemic violence,” his interest stems from placing Reed’s work within “the contested area of ideological and policy struggle” of turn-of-the-century war correspondence as a discourse. What he finds in Reed’s war reporting are a “strategic pastoralism” that, while suffering various exoticisms of landscape and rural community, allowed for a representational influence from Villa himself without positioning that military leader as the central figure of *Insurgent Mexico*’s narrative, and so giving a U.S. audience a picture of Mexico that resisted narratives adopted by pro-interventionists and isolationists alike. To defend Reed’s “strategic pastoralism,” Wilson needs to circumvent the “exoticisms” he recognizes in the journalist’s work. After granting that Reed does portray Mexican peons at times as “premodern” or Villa as a leader with “the naive simplicity of a savage” (this is before a perceived “shift” in tactics according to Wilson), Wilson insists, “Reed is in fact *not* looking at ‘premodern’ peasants, but peons close to the land... a desire which provokes a combination of sporadic violence, sadness, despair, and even rebellion; it is an eternal, hieroglyphic essence beneath the ‘visible’ conflict which the revolution surfaces” (352).

Wilson’s criticism, like Leduc’s criticisms above, voices reservedly the problematic of cross-cultural representation. And Reed’s own dedication demonstrates his own attunement to a need for seeing beyond “the visible world” in order to access truth. Notions of seeing are bound up with the potentials and problems of representing in *The Masses* a U.S. imperialism exceeding national boundaries and a corresponding need for an anti-imperial international solidarity. What Reed is incapable of seeing (Mexican local conditions, his own ideological embeddedness with

American educational institutions and its ties to imperialistic monied interests) is interlinked with the way he fashions his representations of his time in Mexico as one of anti-imperialist critique. Several of Reed's articles help to exemplify this contradiction.

In one of the only articles by Reed on his tour of Mexico that would *not* appear in his later collection of such writings, *Insurgent Mexico*, was his narrative article, "MAC—AMERICAN," of the same April 1914 issue of *The Masses* as the Gutiérrez de Lara article. In fact, this article would be the first published account of Reed's time in Mexico. Reed's "MAC—AMERICAN" is a recollection of his trip to Chihuahua City, where he recounts his barroom run-in with the eponymous Mac, whom Reed describes as "an American in the raw" and later as "a brute of a man," and several of Mac's similarly situated and unnamed American travelling companions. The story allows Mac, whose first-person narration composes the bulk of the article, to voice various crass and misogynist descriptions of his host country, Mexico, and its inhabitants before recounting several of Mac's vagabond life experiences that led to his arrival in revolutionary Chihuahua. Proclamations made by Mac and his drinking buddies, like "Mexican women... are the rottenest on earth. Why they never wash more than twice a year. And as for Virtue-- it simply doesn't exist!" and "Loose! That's what they are," and "Mexican Greaser" and "dirty skunks" are accumulated in quick succession before the group goes on to make contrasting praise and defense of "The American Woman," "She is a Pure Ideal, and we've got to keep her so," Mac contends in the course of the story.

Reed is quick at this point to offer proof of his accompanying group's hypocrisy: "'Say Mac,' the second man said abruptly. 'Do you remember them two little girls you and I had in Kansas City that winter?' 'Do I?' glowed Mac." Part of Reed's purpose here, it seems, is not only the attempt to critique fantasies of racially or nationally defined moral superiority of

Americans over their southern neighbors, but is also the desire, if not the necessity, to distinguish his own presence, allegiance, and self-awareness as a sympathetic traveler in Mexico from the boorishness of his drunken compatriots in the saloon. At the moment where he and Mac meet up with Mac's drinking buddies, Reed makes a point to demarcate that line of difference explicitly, "In Chee Lee's [bar] we met up with two more Americans. They were the kind that preface all remarks by 'I've been in this country seven years, and I know the people down to the ground!'" Given the way Reed clearly establishes Mac and company as ignorant hypocrites, the act of classification is obviously meant to mock the trope of the ugly American and its corresponding claim to knowledge of another country, another culture, by virtue of being there for a duration. In this way, Reed links the dopey American tourist and the profiteering mercenary, discrediting their attempted claim to cultural knowledge of their host country. In this representation, the duration of their presence is insufficient grounds to claim cultural competence or knowledge of the Other. The uncomplicated notion of a "participant observer" is rejected in this moment, as Reed distinguishes his presence in the country from his fellow travelers. Like Reed himself, the readers too are asked to make a disidentifying gesture at this point, and recognize that neither Reed, nor they, conscious of the ugly American type, are of the same kind (or ought not to be).

Perhaps more interestingly, Reed makes an additional rhetorical gesture of importance in the article which clearly positions Mac, as Ugly American, within a broader context of colonial violence in the Americas. While Gutiérrez de Lara's writing would largely refrain from references to American Indians in his essays about the Mexican Revolution, Reed's story spotlights them in a rather terrifying anecdote. Toward the end of the narrative, the character Mac is retracing his past which includes his mentioning that his brother was injured while serving with the North-West Mounted Police, a precursor to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

(RCMP). The brother's injury is sustained while pursuing a supposed murder suspect, "You remember that Indian who murdered the fellow out in Victoria in '06?" At this moment, one of Mac's unnamed friends interrupts, "Northwestern Mounted Police! [sic] That must be a job. A good rifle and a good horse and no closed season on Indians! That's what I call a sport!" After which Reed follows up with, "'Speaking of Sport,' said Mac. 'The greatest sport in the world is hunting niggers. After I left Burlington [Vermont], you remember, I drifted down South. I was out to see the world from top to bottom... I landed up on a cotton plantation down in Georgia, near a place called Dixville; and they happened to be shy of an overseer, so I stuck.'" Mac then continues to detail a gruesome night pursuit of an African American by a posse of twelve white men led by bloodhounds, whose baying sounds Mac dwells upon with particular interest.

These moments in "MAC—AMERICAN" significantly expand the scope of Reed's critical target here. By this point in the article, Reed's bullseye no longer seems to be simply the ignorant and exploitative American adventurer in Mexico, but rather a figure, attitude, or worldview that anchors the whole of the imperialist violence in the Americas. The representational shortcomings of the Ugly American is here connected to the creation of a Canadian regional police force—distinct from the operations of the army—developed to "manage" native presence that lay in the way of that country's westward expansion, and then also to the continuing legacy of the transatlantic slave trade as it manifested in the Jim Crow U.S. South. In this moment, Reed's vision of a hemispherically defined imperialist violence connects Indian, African American, and Mexican victims of white supremacist force to issues of language and representation, land and territorial expansion, and economic exploitation rooted in racism.

While Reed likely saw himself and his presence in Mexico as wholly different and opposed to those "ugly Americans" like Mac of his article, and his depiction of Mac as an assault

on U.S. imperialistic military force more globally, the fact remains that Reed was hardly immune from the kinds of paternalistic condescension or racism that he works hard to distance Mac with. There are subtle and unsubtle traces of it in the very same article, where Reed, despite criticizing Mac as a boorish macho, represents Mexican women and Indians with equally strained descriptions. Before Reed introduces the drinking buddies who instigate Mac into his narrative recollections, Reed establishes the setting in this manner, “At the great doors of the church, through the shady paths of the Plaza, visible and vanishing again at the mouths of the dark streets, the silent, sinister figures of black-robed women gathered to wash away their sins. And from the cathedral itself, a pale red light streamed out—and strange Indian voices singing a chant that I had heard only in Spain.” It’s hard to ascertain how Reed, in an article that seeks to define the Ugly American in part as one with particularly masculinist and racist attitudes toward racialized women, indulges in similar configurations of Mexican women by associating their religious practices with an air of evil, and who seem to be consumed by the similarly dangerous streets through which the women move. Too, Reed’s depiction of the Indian prayer as “strange,” as something foreign or not belonging, is equally curious given his sympathies toward Indians victimized by American (and Canadian) imperialist violence elsewhere in the article. Reed’s attempt at defining himself in contradistinction to the Ugly American seems to buckle under his simplistic trading in damaging tropes of Mexican women and Indians that he offers his U.S.-side audiences.

It’s not only Reed’s own reliance on stereotypical representations that undercuts his claim to credibility via a distancing portrayal of the Ugly American. In *John Reed and the Writing of Revolution*, Daniel Wayne Lehman contrasts Reed’s actual field notes that he kept on his Mexican tour with the published results, later collected in Reed’s *Insurgent Mexico*. What

Lehman discovers is ample evidence of factual alteration which “raise[s] serious questions of credibility” (108). On one hand, Lehman demonstrates that this article ambiguously straddles both fiction and nonfiction genres because it was based on Reed’s actual encounters in Chihuahua but also because Floyd Dell, *The Masses* editor who likely oversaw the publication of Reed’s reports from Mexico, later categorized this piece as one of Reed’s “stories,” distinct from his “real” journalistic accounts collected in *Insurgent Mexico* which did not include “MAC—AMERICAN.” Still, Lehman points to Mac’s first-person voicing of his own history, the bulk of the article, as Reed signalling to the audience that we’re to understand the piece as one of fiction with a moral point and not to confuse the piece as an example of objective journalism. More revealing, Lehman demonstrates a consistent revision of initially recorded facts to suit the narrative purposes of Reed’s *Metropolitan* assignment. Based on an actual American gunrunner Reed met in Chihuahua named MacDonald, the eponymous “Mac” was chiefly responsible for helping introduce Reed to Villista troops in the first place. In the more “journalistic” articles published in later issues of *The Masses* and later still in *Insurgent Mexico*, Reed writes about additional accounts of his interactions with Mac, but, as Lehman shows, obscures Mac’s identity in these accounts by renaming him “Antonio Montoya” who is the one credited in these articles with bringing Reed to Villa’s troops. Other moments in Reed’s travels with MacDonald are also recorded in the journalistic pieces as Montoya, notably an incident where MacDonald physically assaults one of their Mexican guides who slept through his night watch. In *Insurgent Mexico*, it is again the quasi-fictionalized Antonio Montoya who is depicted as kicking the guide out of his sleep. Lehman speculates that this intentional misidentification allows Reed to reproduce a well-received stereotype among American audiences of the sleepy Mexican (guide) without having to include the image of an American visitor wantonly abusing the sleeping body of their host.

Other fictional revisions or omissions evidenced from the contrast between the *Insurgent Mexico* articles and Reed's field notes include Reed's multiple depictions of Mexicans as eager to accept bribes—though Lehman points to Reed's unpublished letters to his editors where Reed brags about earning favor with Villa by presenting him with expensive gifts (made possible because of the generous bankrolling of Reed's expedition by money sourced from Vanderbilt and Guggenheim sponsorship), despite depicting their relationship in his published articles as one of brotherly respect. Though Lehman credits Reed with developing a kind of stylized literary war reporting that, unlike predecessors such as Stephen Crane, managed to self-consciously expose and critique the mediating function and subjective nature of "reports from the field," Lehman affirms that Reed "had traveled to Mexico to pursue both fame and fortune and also had exploited the revolution, with Mac's assistance, to build his journalistic capital" (109). Emblematic of the way Reed himself was both promoted as talented war reporter and consumed as a mediating icon of American imperialist fantasy, *Metropolitan* magazine advertised his articles with superlative ("What Stephen Crane and Richard Harding Davis did for the Spanish American War in 1898, John Reed, 26 years old, has done for Mexico") and caricature, as "the magazine advertised the series in newspapers with a drawing of Reed outfitted in sombrero, revolver, and gunbelts" (Lehman 109). Both advertising techniques draw a line of connection between earlier popular imperialist reporting efforts and *Metropolitan's* Mexican coverage, despite the Socialist ambitions of the author. We might appreciate, then, Reed's attempt to indicate an awareness of and distancing from the trappings of the typical Ugly American and his self-centered and violent worldview, while at the same time recognizing the failure of Reed to fully dissociate himself from the "gringo culero" and its damaging effect. Reed was only one of several contributor's to attempt a critical commentary on constructions of "whiteness" as linked

to U.S. imperialism, and under Eastman's editorship, the endeavour became something of a fixation across several issues in the magazine's history.

Trading Places: Linking Ludlow to Mexico Through Racialized Work Space

The kind of self-consciousness Reed displays in his writing about race and space, about "whiteness" and imperialism, is not exclusive to his contributions alone, and where his self-awareness might prove limited in its capacity to ground representations of cross-border solidarities, the magazine's broader attempt to construct a critique of whiteness goes somewhat further. Various issues of *The Masses* promote, sometimes explicitly, a critique of whiteness and racialized constructions of exoticized distant space that suggests an aspiration by the magazine's contributors to disidentify with those constructions while linking them to those forces the magazine set out to challenge. For example, on the back cover of the May 1914 issue, artist Maurice Becker offers a full-page illustration depicting two rooftop workers in the process of pasting up the panels of a billboard advertisement. Surrounded by clouds and with his legs precariously straddling the torso-sized letter "A" along the upper edge of the billboard scaffolding, one of the two workers finishes the final panel of the ad which reads, "A TRIP TO THE ORIE"—where the word "Orient" gets clipped off by the illustration's right frame. Toward the distance in the background of the illustration, Becker contrasts emblems of New York City's urban landscape (a suspension bridge, factory chimneys bellowing out white plumes of smoke, and a densely packed collection of other rooftop surfaces) with another smaller billboard ad that asks the viewer, "Why not own A HOME in the COUNTRY?"

The illustration is saturated with a critique of different but unifying ideologies linked back to capitalism and nationalism. The fabrication of an advertisement for "the Orient" suggests the commodification and profitability of just such a fantasy, that the exoticization of distant

spaces both served the interests of a capitalist class and was presented as a fantasy that could be realized through purchasing power. The workers' forced capitulation in the ideological construction of an exoticized Other space is countered by their presumed non-presence in the marketing address itself, made more clear in the second, smaller advertisement, "Why not own a home in the country?" The two advertisements reify the romanticization of space as possession or object of ownership, an ideology that seduces all customers even as such a possession remains largely unattainable for those whose only substantial bearing in the marketplace is their ownership of their own labor power. The clipping off of the word "Orient" to the frame of the illustration suggests that the process of reifying exoticized space as commodity is continuing, or that issues of "framing" have the potential to interrupt the reception of constructed capitalist desires.

The magazine's published poems also performed work of unpacking ideologies of racialized space. In the August 1914 issue, a poem by Untermeyer titled "Decoration Day" responds to the American military occupation of Veracruz, Mexico. A two-stanza poem with two refrains, it opens by suggesting the violence unleashed by imperialistic nationalism, as it rhymes "blade" with "parade" and directs the reader in one quatrain from naval banners to the jailing of pacifists (recalling, too, that the Vera Cruz occupation began as a seemingly insignificant naval encounter, where what was in question, initially, was whether an American flag was properly saluted by nearby Mexican naval men). The second stanza, however, performs at a level much more geographically specific:

*The troops are down in Mexico,
A badly-governed land;
With warlike speech we go to teach
The things we understand.
Are not all men our brothers,
And are we not alike?*

*And yesterday we shot a man
For walking out on strike.*

The shooting of striking workers at the poem's end cannot help but point to the incident in Ludlow, Colorado (which *The Masses* had been covering extensively for months) where striking miners and their families were shot upon by a combination of local law enforcement and national guardsmen in protecting the mining interests of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. In this moment, the poem activates the idea of a cross-border workers' solidarity in linking capitalist exploitation, land dispossession, and nationalism to workers' deaths. The second half of the poem suggests the call for a universal fraternity "Are not all men our brothers?" at the same time that it might be questioning the possibility of universal identification "And are we not alike?" in that the following couplet describes a complete negation of difference. Too, the proximity of the similitude suggested in "alike" to the condemnation above of a "warlike speech" makes uneasy a fast interpretation of Untermeyer's poem as a demand for universal identification, leaving open the possibility, in the couplet's form of questioning, a recognition of difference as the point of origin for cross-border solidarity. The link between "a badly governed land" and "with a warlike speech we go to teach" further connects the interrelationship between representation as "standing in for" and representation as an ideological framing device (to re-present).

This wasn't the only poem written by Untermeyer which attempted to map connections between Ludlow and Mexico. In "A Customer," published in the June 1914 issue, Untermeyer stages a dialogue between the poem's narrator and a shopkeeper whose apathy toward current events attracts the narrator's scorn. In one section of the poem Untermeyer writes, beginning in the voice of the store owner, "So why excite ourselves about politics, or the war in Mexico, or hard times;/ Folks only hurt business by talking about labor troubles and strike... / I asked him had he read about the state of affairs in Colorado/ Where one man, stubborn with prejudice and

many million dollars, had forced a civil war.” Here the point of connection is even more direct, and in linking Ludlow to Mexico, Untermeyer elevates the strike and its spurring of reactionary violence to the stature of “civil war.” When the speaker of the poem refers to the murder of strikers in Ludlow this way, “more lives had been lost in one day than in our patriotic vengeance upon Mexico,” the owner’s reply is to turn the conversation back to issues of fashion commodities. The speaker follows this response with an aside that comments on the owner’s physical appearance, “He was a medium-sized man, with thin brown hair and pinkish cheeks/ Yet I felt this man was going to bring about the revolution.” While the owner’s response to the fact of violent class-warfare is to retreat into fantasies of fashion and commodity exchange, it is the speaker who insists on appearances, on race (the “pinkish cheeks” being emblematic of a condition of whiteness), suggesting its significance to analyzing “revolution” in this context as much as class difference.

Finally, and perhaps most emphatically, in the August 1915 issue, an illustration by Glenn O. Coleman, accompanied by an unattributed poem in place of a caption, together attempt to address “whiteness,” and white supremacy, as a social structure that takes hegemonic form. The title of the poem which sits beneath the illustration is “Race Superiority: The Portrait of a Well-Known Chinatown Character.” The illustration itself attempts to represent whiteness occupying subaltern space through aesthetic tropes intended to construct a visual exoticism of contrasts. A second-story teahouse balcony draped in paper lanterns overlooks a narrow street scene, one lined with buildings both ornate and decorative. On the balcony, a middle-class white woman sits for tea among Asian men, who themselves are marked by their hair and fashion styles. The scene is drawn mostly in shadow, with dark pencil shading encompassing most of the visual, against which the central white woman’s face, haloed by a dark, wide-brimmed hat,

contrasts greatly. There appear to be several women in the space depicted (mostly identified by the same stylized hat) though not all are unambiguously white. Down below the balcony, a police officer surveils the street scene with men and women pedestrians filling the narrow alley. The presence of the police charges this biracial scene with the looming presence of the law, suggesting a space both racialized and criminalized. The poem, in two quatrains, reads,

*Acid-pale and powder-fair,
Ultra blond of skin and hair,
To these yellow men she seems
The essence of alluring dreams.*

*But whiteness is as whiteness does
And business is -- what business was;
And talcum-and-peroxide's sold
To yellow men for yellow gold*

Against the Orientalism offered by the illustration, the poem presents an evident contradiction. On the one hand, the poem registers racial identity as a production bound to capital exchange and idealization. That “whiteness is as whiteness does” denaturalizes race as a biological category and holds to the idea that whiteness is a set of practices, in fact a profitable business. It is not reducible simply to the fallacious self-presenting elements of make-up, but that whiteness is lodged within a tradition of capital (business is what business was). The presence of the police in the illustration suggests now the interdependence of institutions (the law and commerce) that are required to reproduce whiteness and its value (economic and ideological). The title, “race superiority” is obviously intended as sardonic and so critically frames the desire of nonwhite subjects to participate in the performativity of “whiteness” as proof of the unfixedness of “white” as a racial category. On the other hand, the insistence on “yellowmen” as a corresponding identity in this exchange is offered no such “deconstruction.” Instead, the essentialized “yellowmen” are used by the poet here to produce a fantasy about the desirability of white

women among non-white subjects. Similarly, “whiteness” in the very moment of it being critiqued is in fact reinscribed as an essentializing identity that forms the object of desire for these imagined subaltern figures. Typical of almost all of the magazine’s progressive attempts to unpack ideologies of exoticized spaces, the particularities with which these artist use to forward their critique inevitably reproduce in some other way the trappings they seek to escape. A self-awareness of, and critical self-positioning within, ideologies of race and space are alone not enough to counter the reproduction of racist or exceptionalist configurations of national space.

Placing Djuna Barnes: Modernist Activism vs. Modernism Activated

I want to suggest a reading of the *The Masses*’ use of illustration and page layout as an alternative engagement with modernism that performs differently than the individually-authored articles by John Reed in regard to representations of the Mexican revolution. In the back pages of the February 1914 issue, the editors create an interplay between graphic and textual elements that create convergences of representations that escape some of the shortcomings of the Reed pieces. On a single page, the editors position four brief write-ups around a poem and illustration which center the page. In the short article called “Confiscation Large & Small,” Socialist and NAACP co-founder William English Walling exposes the media’s hypocrisy in their outcry following Pancho Villa’s reappropriation of two small estates from wealthy Mexican landholders. Noting the media’s silence on years of large-scale land dispossession of Mexican peasants under Diaz, which only continued at the beginning of the revolution under the leadership of both Madero and Huerta, Walling claims, “confiscation has suddenly become a crime. All Mexico and the United States are shocked. Villa appears nearly as vile as Zapata, who is also restoring stolen property to the people...It is barely possible that [U.S. Secretary of State

William Jennings] Bryan will take the Villa view.”²⁹ It’s an interesting attack on conservative representations of Villa that contests accepted narratives on Villa’s significance without having to voice a defense of Villa at all. Rather, the attack leaves open space for Villa’s representation in U.S. media to be contested while critiquing the conservative narrative for its ideological blind spots—namely a recognition (or representation) of land dispossession as a form of social violence. While the criticism points, rightly, to Diaz as the major actor of land dispossession and concession-granting in Mexico against land-holding peasants, implicated in this critique is also the argument for intervention or expansion on behalf of the U.S. toward Mexico—a call regularly voiced in the conservative mainstream press.

The attack on U.S. representations of Villa sits in a charged synergy with the other texts and images on the same page, and in its relation to those other texts its own significance expands. Walling’s small brief that tracks recent events regarding Villa south of the border is printed on a page that also juggles a variety of short critical pieces: a satirical comment entitled “Utopia” that critiques the criminalization of the masses, a commentary offering a skeptical interpretation of Henry Ford’s recent implementation of a minimum wage and a reduced eight-hour work day, a longer column promoting the efficacy of boycott as a radical labor tactic,³⁰ and a poem by Edmund McKenna, titled “Lost Leaders,” that denounces the use of police brutality and incarceration to destroy the lives of strike leaders. In addition to these texts, and alongside the Walling article, Eastman further included a small illustration by modernist writer, journalist, and illustrator Djuna Barnes, who had only recently moved to New York and begun a career in

²⁹ Despite *The Masses* pessimistic view of William Jennings Bryan’s stance toward Villa and his revolutionaries, historian Edward H. Worthen demonstrates a long-standing mutual admiration and correspondence between Villa and Bryan. He further argues that Bryan’s role in ordering an intervention at Veracruz, and his later criticism of the Pershing Expedition, were both influenced in part by his sympathies toward Villa.

³⁰ This article was responding to the case *Loewe v. Lawlor* (1914) which held that individual laborers could be held responsible for economic losses incurred because of secondary boycotts initiated by union leadership. See Ernst 110-11.

writing and illustrating some few months earlier at the age of eighteen. Captioned “Blowing Along,” Barnes’s sketch, in airy and soft-contoured lines, depicts a trombone player mid-slide and mid-stride, the musician reclined at a forty-five degree angle and whose loose-fitting pants and jacket appear wind-shuffled. The figure’s face is difficult to make out, and what fixes the viewer’s attention is much more so the posture of the musician, whose legs suggest forward movement but whose torso and head appear to be blown back in a gravity-defying slouch. The lines are imprecise, and the image veers away considerably from aesthetic realism and toward, arguably, more familiar modernist aesthetic tendencies.

With its inclusion of Barnes’s modernist illustration, this particular page demonstrates Eastman’s openness to a patchwork of aesthetic styles in order to create a field of associations between seemingly disparate events. The page’s visual and textual commentary reiterates contrasts between those who wield institutions of power and those whose power emerges outside those institutions. References throughout the page to The Law, The Government, Big Business, and The Media are all set against workers and peasants attempting to resist those larger collusions of power. Under this thematic framing, multiple aesthetic styles are allowed to coexist and to work in the service of a politics of the masses. In this context, Barnes’s modernist aesthetic, with her figure’s arms, legs, torso, and trombone creating a geometry of angles that looks like a Swiss Army knife in the process of opening, sits productively beneath McKenna’s more traditionally Romantic and sentimental tetrameter, “I wonder where as falls the day,/ On toilers dreaming dreams sublime/ Tom Carney rots in death’s decay? / His red heart broken in his prime. / His spirit strives in what far clime? / The cops have beaten his breath away./ Hate holds the heights his love would climb./ He led a strike of yesterday.// Slaves and their masters -- pair by pair,/ They slink or strut in chains away,/ Keepers or kept-- Oh, tell me where--/ Where are

the men of yesterday?” In fact, Eastman’s layout of this page of *The Masses* energizes both McKenna’s poem and Barnes’s illustration with contextual significance essentially impossible to instigate on their own.

The refraining question of “where?,” in reference to the poem’s “Lost Leaders,” is playfully responded to in the bottom left corner of the page with the nowhere of “Utopia,” the sarcastic blurb that contrasts in its two sentences the relative crimelessness of a rural Pennsylvania town with “the statement of a Y.M.C.A. Secretary before the Senate Committee on West Virginia, that ‘two-thirds of the human race are criminals.’” While this contextual correspondence points to the possibility of rural America as source of labor leadership, the punchline of “Utopia” is amplified throughout the page where the reader is invited to conceive of “criminality” as an instrument created for and applied upon working-class people, whereas the ethically dubious actions of Ford, Diaz, or the Press are free from its application in normative legal discourse. The poem’s images of prison and death at the hands of police bring this biopolitics to its figurative conclusion. The emphasis on the rural connects both poem and “Utopia” to continuing emphasis in *The Masses* on unionized miners and their struggles, most notably this same issue’s emphasis on the Copper Country Strike of 1913-14 in Calumet Township, Michigan, also the site of the Italian Hall Disaster of 1913 where striking miners and their children were killed in a dancehall stampede during a false fire alarm.

Another response to the poem’s “where?” points south of the border. The site of rural subaltern struggle is again linked to the Walling article on Villa and his re-appropriation of peasant land in northern Mexico. In this formation, individuals like Villa and Zapata are presented as leaders not of unionized struggle but of revolutionary agrarian insurrection. While the end of McKenna’s poem visually empties into the open white-space of the column

surrounding Barnes's illustration, the trombone slide, in addition to the character's angled back leg (a "slink or strut"?), point arrow-like toward the paragraph in the next column which announces Villa as hero to the rural Mexican workers and victim of U.S. media hypocrisy, a coincidental visual effect to be sure, but one that nevertheless directs the viewer's eye to reinforce the connection between poem, illustration, and Villa report.

The vague "sketchiness" of the illustration allows a degree of abstraction that opens a few possible interpretations of what this musician signifies. For example, the ambiguity of the illustrated musician's physical appearance, other than its posture and musical instrument of choice, allows the viewer to speculate whether or not the musician is representative of jazz music, or rather a member of a military marching band. On the one hand, the sketch's inclusion of the trombone, with its popular association with jazz and ragtime, echoes an illustration on the previous page by Stuart Davis, which represents African American men and women in Sunday clothes, gathered in what appears to be a saloon, where a figure, with his back to the viewer, sits at a piano beside a drum marked "Jacksons Band." The caption to Davis's illustration, written in dialect writing, refers to the figures' "monotonous" life in the wake of targeted church burnings in the South. On the other hand, Barnes's sketch, with its airy form and sinuous outlining, allows enough ambiguity to perceive what might be the epaulettes of a military jacket and the the clasp and strap of a military hat, if not the oversized lapels and coattails of a suit jacket. If it's a military bandsman, the illustration undercuts the connotative discipline and severity of military order in the character's sloppy, breezy looseness. While the character might be seen as parading or marching in mid-gait, it's a parade or march of one, solitary figure aimlessly leading only itself across the page. This ambiguity rooted in Barnes's modernist aesthetic, then, allows for increased interpretive linkage between the McKenna poem's emphasis on lost leaders, the Davis

illustration's depiction of black popular culture, and the Walling article's sympathetic defense of Villista revolutionaries; however, this set of correspondences is only activated by the magazine's layout decisions to allow modernist art aesthetic, a romanticized socialist aesthetic, and an acerbic editorial aesthetic to exist on the page in close proximity.

The editors would continue to play with these cross-aesthetic configurations as a way to build lines of affinity between American labor struggles and the plight of the Mexican revolutionaries below the U.S.-Mexico border. As the magazine developed this aesthetic strategy, those lines of affinity, or convergences offer an intentional interplay between differing aesthetic styles and distant geographies of radical political struggle. While the editors continued to apply strategies of conferring authenticity to its audiences in regard to the magazine's working class and interracial sympathies (indicative, for example, in the use of dialect writing to caption illustrations of African Americans, noted above) that betrayed its anti-imperialist or antiracist ambitions, its aesthetic openness would allow a different mode of anti-imperialist solidarity to emerge, a solidarity not rooted in claims to "authenticity" (of location or blood ties) but rooted instead in the ambivalent coexistence of formal difference. My idea here is that *The Masses* worked to activate modernist abstraction by locating it within other textual and artistic genres, pressing these arrangements into the service of drawing out political affinities between various global sites of class antagonism. In this way, *The Masses* could point to revolutionary Mexico outside of a single, fixed aesthetic program in order to suggest lines of shared identity and modernity with their readership without the problems inherent to speaking for those political actors as evidenced by some of their other single-authored representations of that conflict. An anti-imperialist politics can be read into the editorial practices, not just individual editorials, in the way that they concertedly resisted a total absorption of all contributors work within one

aesthetic policy. Instead, the embrace of co-constitutive difference across aesthetic borders might be understood as a parallel to their direct editorial attacks on both hard and soft U.S. imperialist tactics and their call for international, interracial working class solidarity.

Unlike those other attempts by the magazine to forge interracial, international solidarity through direct representations of subaltern populations that I looked at earlier, the page I've been interpreting just above avoids narrative representation in order to construct nonnarrative relations across segments of the page. However, this editorial poetics of relation confronts its own unique problems. The way that Barnes' illustration faces directly into the text of the article about Villa, "Confiscation Large and Small," furthers the set of relations I outline above through depictions of culture rather than blood. The drawing's possibly militaristic costume draws attention to the article's critical swipe at William Jennings Bryan, then Secretary of State under President Wilson who had advocated for military intervention into Mexico. The illustration's possible evocation of jazz music aligns black cultural producers with the article's reference to "peasants" and "the people" in terms of the magazine's self-stylized emphasis on working people and the underclass fighting against capitalist interests. The image-text dialogue insinuates a critique against both military and economic imperialism of the U.S. while hinting at yet unrealized solidarities. It also suggests that culture, in a panoply of aesthetic registers both "High" and popular, is particularly suited in its plurality to make such charges and connections. This moment in the magazine especially seems to be a desire for or anticipatory sketch of what Michael Denning deems "the cultural front" of the 1930s—a coalition of various cultural production sites unleashing leftist political messaging in the U.S. But in avoiding direct references to race, there are drawbacks to this imagined aesthetic futurity and to the magazine's vision of a global anti-imperialist solidarity. The sarcastic line, "Villa appears nearly as vile as Zapata, who also is restoring stolen

property to the people” registers the U.S. media’s particular animosity toward Zapata for his land reclamation moves (the property referred to in the line) that were in particular aimed at repossessing land owned by foreign business interests. In the *New York Times*, for instance, which *The Masses* article explicitly names as one of its intended targets, Zapata is regularly described as a bandit but also as an Indian, as are his followers. In fact, Zapata was mestizo, being of Nahuatl and Spanish ancestry, but his racialization as Indian in the U.S. was persistent.³¹ The article’s voiced solidarity with Zapata’s land confiscation and redistribution, then, presents only implicitly, if at all, the anticolonial politics underlining Zapata’s struggle against the Diaz and Madero governments while ignoring or missing an essential element motivating U.S. economic-imperial encroachment into Mexican territory. It avoids racial categorizations of the actors involved in these land contestations and instead presents it as a tension between capitalist governments (Diaz or Roosevelt) and “the people” most broadly conceived.

This is notable perhaps only because of how regularly the editors had highlighted racial identity through correlations between blood and land elsewhere in the same issue. On the facing page, in fact, another illustration intended as social satire calls out eugenicist fantasies of white superiority. The caption, “Race Suicide Alarmist: ‘Congratulations!’” rests under a cartoon of a pleased and portly employer or landlord entering into cramped living quarters of an impoverished couple and their seven children, two infants among them. In contrast to the top hat and cane sporting dandy, the family members all look underfed, cold, and defeated. The illustration ridicules the concept of “race suicide” popularized in the early twentieth-century by the white supremacist social scientist Edward A. Ross and first advanced in his article, “The

³¹ In *The Posthumous Career of Emiliano Zapata*, Samuel Brunk also mentions that supporters of Zapata during his military leadership, and later post-revolutionary Mexican governments, had various and competing investments in characterizing Zapata as Indian in order to construct historical narratives of collective national belonging.

Causes of Race Superiority.” In that text, Ross proposes “race suicide” as the condition facing the “Superior Race” of the “Anglo-Saxon” in the U.S. and worries about “the replacement of Americans by Asiatics” (88) in particular among other immigrant groups. Looking to compare the U.S. with its hemispheric neighbors, the odious Ross claims, “In Spanish America the easygoing and unfastidious Spaniard peopled the continent with half-breeds and met the natives half way... In North America, on the other hand, the white men have rarely mingled their blood with that of the Indian or toned down their civilization to meet his capacities. The Spaniard absorbed the Indians, the English exterminated them by fair means or foul” (85).

The Masses attempts to counter these or similarly fiendish constructions of white Anglo-Saxon supremacy and capitalist heteropatriarchy in a single image that encourages ire against the fat-cat-figure who uses constructions of “whiteness” in order to expand his capacities for exploitation through biological reproduction. It is not coincidental that a young girl in the illustration is the only one to return a combative gaze at the fat cat. The cartoon is further countered by this issue’s cover illustration depicting an immigrant couple and their two children in fine-looking clothing and occupying space on a boat that’s approaching the shores of the U.S. The cover color scheme is, unsubtly, red, white, and blue. The caption, “Where Ignorance is Bliss” is in reference to their transitory state of hopeful anticipation before their inevitable confrontation with nativist and white supremacist resentments that the editors are certainly challenging with their image. So the cover art and the “race suicide” cartoon work in tandem to create a consistent political message. Beneath the latter illustration and its caption are two short articles, one further lampooning “the Eugenists dream of a race of Supermen” and another parodying adherents of “The White Man’s Burden.” The page is entirely devoted to critiquing and satirizing the logics of white supremacy. Returning to the facing page, however, with the

Djuna Barnes figure, all references to race subside. Why could the contributors be so direct in challenging white supremacist logics in regard to immigrant rights, but not equally so when referring to Mexican dispossession of foreign-owned (including, mostly, U.S.-owned) land?

My thinking here is that while the magazine would sometimes racialize its subaltern subjects, or its own contributors like Gutiérrez de Lara, as Mexican, and while the contributors could variously address and unpack some white supremacist constructions of “whiteness” itself, there was a deliberate hesitancy under Eastman’s direction to address American Indians with as much attention and effort as he did working class white and black populations as correlatives to Mexican revolutionaries. Because the magazine, across several issues, had persistently attempted to draw parallels, or solidarities, between Mexican agrarians and U.S. miners (in the towns of Ludlow, Calumet, and Trinidad), the struggle over land rights needed to be framed as a workers’ struggle. Fighting against U.S.-owned haciendas could be recognized as an anti-imperial act which conformed to the editors’ vocal anti-militarism and anti-capitalism. The idea, however, that Mexican Indians were fighting not only for land use, but against national rule and Spanish occupation (something at least insinuated in Fornaro’s writings under Vlag) was not one that could cross the border. You can see this refusal in the illustration from the same Djuna Barnes issue that’s titled “The Next Deportation From Calumet.” In that starkly colored graphic, a towering, masculine hulk who’s overlaid with the personifying word “LABOR” is tossing by his trousers and collar a tuxedo’d Rich Uncle Pennybags lookalike onto a freight train labeled “to the garbage dump.” The rich, and now wedgied “Boston Variety Ultra Respectable” type is also donning the word “CAPITALISM” down the back of his coat. In the distant background and away from the train tracks, the bright lights of a small industrial city glow upward into a fully black night sky, illuminating above the rooftops these hovering words, “THE MINES FOR THE

PEOPLE!”

In contrast to the fighting in Mexico where contestations over land (and too their waterways and subsoil resources) were at least partially linked to battles over indigenous sovereignty and native agricultural traditions, the anti-imperialism configured through *The Masses* coverage of the Mexican Revolution required the reduction of Mexican population variance to simply “the people” fighting against militant capitalist ruling classes. With that reduction, their solidarity rooted in parallel or coterminous struggles could be legible to their audience who were being told that the revolution would be Socialist and that their brand of Socialism was against the imperialist ambitions of U.S. military and economic forces. The issue’s back cover art, perhaps springing from a guilty awareness of such a cordoning off of native legibility, depicts a high-value theater production with a full orchestra pit, a dancing line of smiling chorus girls in the background, and at center stage, a woman in spotlight, dressed in what looks like a flapper dress but wearing an Indian war bonnet. The crowd is a mix of dressed-up, rapt attendees, city gossipers, and drunken or sleepy revelers in the box seats. The woman at center stage stands leaning over the orchestra pit, one arm outstretched toward the audience, and her mouth open. Her dress, stockings, and headdress are all colored-in red, as is her arms and face. The caption reads, “Oh give me back my place agin— / T’row Lincoln off de cent!” In this image, a representation of an American Indian demanding the return of colonial occupied land is consumed as a cultural production, something ambiguously in between High and popular art, by a white audience. The actress also appears white but her skin is marked with deep red splotches (is it red face? stage fright blushing? the heat of the lights? shame?). The mention of Lincoln is a reference to the newly minted Lincoln penny (designed and released only five years earlier in 1909) which replaced the Indian Head cent that had been in circulation for the previous half-

century. The designer of that coin, James B. Longacre, wrote to the Mint Director at the time to explain elements of his creation, and in particular how “the feathered tiara [depicted on the bust of Lady Liberty] is... characteristic of the primitive races of our hemisphere” (Snow 25). It’s here on the back cover that *The Masses* seems able to stage some kind of confrontation between the indigenous Indian and the capitalist class that often occupied the target of the magazine’s critical scorn. But that confrontation takes only a cultural form and one whose purpose seems to be the validation of native presence through memorialization, and not the recognition of an ongoing, modern, anti-colonialist struggle with continental governments. It’s useful to remember that the Apache Wars between the Apache nation and the U.S. military had not yet reached conclusion in 1914. The reduction of that native struggle to one of representation on the U.S. one cent coin seems, ironically, to reduce the value of the American Indian to the lowest common denominator, to grant them cultural exchange value without recognizing that culture’s participation in their erasure. While the contributors in the magazine seemed capable of implicating “whiteness” as a condition of imperialism capitalism and so recognize the role that race was playing in constructions of cultural narratives of modernity and liberty, they could not open space within their pages to implicate that same culture’s involvement in shaping the legibility of native anti-colonial modernity. While Mexican revolutionaries could be figured as comrades in the fight against U.S. capitalist and military aggression, American Indians could circulate in the cultural only as cheap tokens of a distinctly unmodern time.

CHAPTER 2: LOVING NEIGHBORS: AFFECTION, ASSIMILATION, AND NATIONAL PLURALISM IN STEIN'S *GEOGRAPHY & PLAYS*

In 2016, HBO introduced its subscribers to a new fantasy sci-fi series named *Westworld*, the story of a futuristic virtual reality amusement park populated by AI automata who perform a nostalgic fantasy of a nineteenth-century Wild West show for the monied visitors of the park, whose admission fees grant them complete autonomy to (inter-)act in whatever way, meek or maniacal, they desire for the duration of their stay. The park's creator, Dr. Ford, with the help of his computer programmer assistant Bernard, design their androids with such lifelike similitude as to blur the boundaries of ethics in a pay-to-play VR simulation game. In the opening episode of the show's first season, one of the androids, cowboy rancher Peter Abernathy, displays a knack for literary quotation, versed in both Shakespeare and Donne, by design. At one point in the show the artificial humanoid quotes from Gertrude Stein's 1922 collection of writing, *Geography & Plays*, when he recites one of her most iconic lines from the poem "Sacred Emily," "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," an intentionally programmed anachronism, as Dr. Ford explains to one of his curious clients. Media and cultural critics alike have enjoyed unpacking and interpreting the show's playful literary allusions and citations, and those who have indicated an enthusiasm for the show's shout-out to literary modernism have been quick to read Stein's relation to the show in terms of parallel aesthetic technologies of dissonance, repetition, appropriation, and collage.³² The formalist leanings of these critics of the show sidestep other equally interesting questions of Stein's inclusion in the show. What does Stein's twentieth-century modernism have to do with a twenty-first-century tv show's representation of nineteenth-century colonial violence and Manifest Destiny as imagined in fictional futures? If the show is in

³² See for instance Noa P. Kaplan or Ashley Hoffman.

part attempting a critique of enduring legacies of U.S. colonial history from an imagined (dystopian) future world view (a future anterior tense?), what role is Stein serving as either a productive feature of that critique or as an attendant object of that critique? Is the show positing modernism as an aesthetics of complicity or resistance? Is there anything in the writings of Stein that offers itself up to the work of anti-imperialist protest and desire? Or is Stein's modernist aesthetic rooted in some fundamental way to the ideology of U.S. imperialist geographical domination?

Our contemporary culture's continuing interest in modernism in general invites us to consider the staying power of modernism to offer something in the way of representing a history and imagining a futurity that confronts rather than elides the legacy of U.S. colonial violence and territorial expansion. My argument in this chapter is that, in her writings collected in *Geography and Plays*, Stein positions her modernist expressions of queer desire and erotic intimacy within the context of an uneven geopolitical terrain of world war. In these writings, a mix of generically ambiguous poems and plays, Stein links emigre domestic life in Mallorca, Spain, to both the frontlines of imperial war in France and histories of colonial expansion in Western U.S. and Mexico. While valuing the affectionate interplay of local and international neighbors, she decries the total absorption and loss of difference to the expanse of undifferentiated wholeness. For Stein, borders matter, are the marker of differences to be embraced and loved. In this way, Stein's *Geography and Plays* can be read as both queer critique of European imperialism but also a strained attempt at alternative representations of transnational solidarity. While Stein metaphorizes "Mexico" as a revolutionary space of attentive desire and neighborly affection, her emphasis on national state-forms against border-threatening violence of imperial war marginalizes and erases indigenous difference from her project of solidarity.

Writing “Mexico” in Mallorca

Published in 1922 as Stein’s third full-length collection (after *Three Lives* in 1909 and *Tender Buttons* in 1914), *Geography & Plays* is a collection of texts that were predominantly written during Stein’s retreat to the Spanish island of Mallorca during intensified fighting between World War I belligerents in early 1915. It is a particularly interesting book in Stein studies since several texts in the collection have garnered ample critical attention (“Susie Asado,” “Ada,” “Sacred Emily,” “Pink Melon Joy”) while the collection as a whole has eluded much serious critical work and contextualization. Of the all the critical attention paid to *Geography & Plays* as a whole, attempts to understand why Stein is writing about Mexico in Mallorca are nearly nonexistent, despite the fact that most critics have followed Stein’s own suggestion that the plays in *Geography & Plays* are best understood as experiments in geographical representation. Not simply relying on the topical cues of the title, many critics use a statement in Stein’s lecture, “Plays,” where she writes, “a play was exactly like a landscape,” to orient their critical commentary. And yet despite the very obvious insistence that Stein’s plays are about geography in general and the geography of the Balearic Islands in specific, attempts to define and discuss what particular geographies Stein has in mind, or had occupied, continue to be sidestepped by Stein’s readers. For some Stein critics, the title “Mexico: A Play” has been read as intentionally meaningless, or as a grammatical placeholder that is intended to evoke the concept of geography only nominally. For example, Emeline Jouve writes in “‘Geography and Plays’: Spaces in Gertrude Stein’s Early Plays (1913-1919)” that the entire text is a work which develops the logic of Stein’s often cited (if not abused) line that “there is no there there,” arguing that Stein’s writing about space “conveys absence through repetition of the deictic echoing through emptiness but also negates the very existence of place” (101) and, again, that the entire

collection is best understood as a “dramatization of spaces as abstractions, as ‘there-s’ which have no concrete reality and are thus ‘not there’” (110). Jouve’s interest in Stein’s “visual spatialization” and “typographical landscape” offers no route toward any historical or cultural particulars but rather applauds the writing for methods of poetic composition that appear technically innovative at the time. The names of particular cities or countries, as “geographical locators,” are analyzed in Stein for their interchangeability and replaceability, or else for the way they “dislocate” themselves from their intended referent, “Naming a country no longer equates with affirming its existence but rather questioning it” (106). Also representative of this point of view, Jane Palatini Bowers, in *They Watch Me As They Watch This’: Gertrude Stein’s Metadrama*, comments only on the replaceability of the word “Mexico” in the “Mexico: A Play.” While she praises the formal innovations in what she calls Stein’s “conversation plays” more broadly, she also argues of “Mexico: A Play,” “The conversation might just as well be about Bolivia, Argentina, or the United States. Indeed, the substitution of another place-name for ‘Mexico’ would create hardly a ripple in the conversation. The word’s specific reference is almost irrelevant” (Bowers 16). This position might be a tempting one, if only because the text of “Mexico: A Play” seems to resist and refuse representational reference points (those that a reading audience might readily expect or be looking for, anyway) to the United States’s southern neighbor. It also eases the difficulty for the critic of having to account for why Stein might be pointing to that specific country while the text seems not to be about Mexico in any direct way or in any traditional sense. But this position misses the point that Stein herself placed significant value on the geographical particulars of her own writing, conceiving of her own work collected in *Geography & Plays* as “a volume of Spanish things” (Moad 391). This characterization helps orient a careful reader that Spain and the Spanish-speaking world are relevant contextual markers

informing the texts collected there.

Thankfully, at least one scholar has provided a roadmap to understanding Stein's Mallorcan plays in such a way that suggests the constellation of references in the text are not randomly assembled but markers of the material environment Stein occupied while visiting Mallorca. In a meticulous argument laid out in the middle section of her dissertation, *1914-16: Years of Innovation in Gertrude Stein's Writing*, Rosalind Moad retraces Toklas and Stein's year in Mallorca through various archives, interviews, and surveys of the social geography still in existence in Mallorca, while making a persuasive case for defining a multitude of references in *Geography & Plays*, including "Mexico: A Play", that reveal a material world and a social life that Stein inhabited during that time. Writing in opposition to writers like Jouve and Bowers, Moad confidently assures her readers that "Stein did not use words arbitrarily" (160). A brief survey of some of Moad's more useful observations can be helpful here to demonstrate the material presence of Mexico in Mallorca and where and in what ways Stein interfaced with that presence in her writing. Beyond the obvious temporal correspondence, that the Mexican Revolution was taking place at the same time as World War I was being fought in Europe, coinciding with Stein's move to Mallorca (her move during war time was directly impacted by the conditions of war in Northern France in Verdun which was threatening the possibility of armed conflict in Paris itself), residents in Mallorca had reason to be aware of the particular incidents of revolutionary war in Mexico. Moad shows that a local Mallorcan newspaper, *La Almudaina*, reported regularly on the Mexican Revolution during the whole of Stein's stay in Mallorca. As an example, Moad shows that the paper reported on April 17, 1915, a week after Stein's arrival, about the defeat of general Pancho Villa's forces and the loss of 400 of his troops.

The paper's attention to Pancho Villa's defeats recognizes his rapid military rise and

prominence in the war during the previous year. Moad further shows that Stein was a potentially regular reader of the paper, based on evidence that she sent copies of the daily to various friends she had in Paris (160-61), and too that the newspaper announced the arrival of her and Toklas on the island in its regular feature of naming visitors disembarking weekly transport ferries to the island from mainland Spain. Though Moad doesn't comment on this particular point, it's likely, given the other evidence she presents for Stein's reading of *La Almudaina* and the paper's sense that battles related to the forces of Villa were of significant noteworthiness, that Stein would have encountered news about Villa's raid on the U.S. border town of Columbus, New Mexico, in March of 1916. A result of this raid was that Woodrow Wilson approved U.S. military deployment into Mexico (commonly referred to then as the "Punitive Expedition") in order to arrest Villa, a response that surely would have captured international attention and Stein's interest in her native country.

Moad offers other less direct but no less significant points of connection between Mexico and Stein's time in Mallorca. For one, Moad shows evidence that Stein was thinking about the American-Mexican War of 1846-48 during her time in Mallorca. Moad points to a correspondence Stein had with friend, Mildred Aldrich (whose first name appears in "Mexico: A Play" more than once), where the two write about knowing someone from "before the Mexican war" though Moad points to other clues offered in the letters which preclude the possibility that this phrase was a reference to the Mexican Revolution—and so during her time in Mallorca Stein is thinking about both Mexico's current crisis but also reflecting on its earlier antagonism with the United States, a war which resulted in the appropriation of almost half of Mexico's North American territory and the establishment of the current U.S.-Mexico border line with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 (163). Finally, Moad suggests that bullfighting

opens up further points of connection between Stein's time in Mallorca and Mexico. She shows that in the summer of 1915, Stein attended several bullfights in Palma, Mallorca, and also Valencia, Spain (164). Moad argues that Stein's experience with and knowledge of Spanish bullfighting enters "Mexico: A Play" obliquely, through the playful personification of the name, "Donna Pilar," in the text. Moad notes that "Pilar" is the name of the last bullfighting festival that begins each year in Zaragoza, Spain (*La Feria de Toros del Pilar*), at the end of which Spanish bullfighters leave for Mexico to extend their performances into the winter season. Moad suggests that Stein's interest in bullfighting would have included an awareness of this fact, and also points to writings by Ernest Hemingway describing the bullfighters' travel from Spain to Mexico.³³

For all the detail Moad brings to a reconstruction of Stein's daily life in Mallorca, her use of these discoveries toward an interpretation of the text is somewhat limited. As shown, her argument is in part to recover a material basis for the use of the name "Mexico" in Stein's play so as to counter arguments suggesting the word's arbitrariness. Her other dominant claim is not to suggest the value or significance of Stein's engagement with revolutionary Mexico per se but rather to suggest that developments and innovations in Stein's writing style were instigated by her immediate environment in Mallorca. Her argument is still somewhat formalist. Moad pinpoints the years 1914-16 (predominantly spent by Stein in Mallorca), as the time where Stein develops in her play writing a new form of composition that differs from the style exemplified in *Tender Buttons* and for which she is most readily known. Instead, the plays offer what Moad calls "voice-montage" which is characterized less by fragmented and repetitive word play and more by the arrangement of "spoken-voice in performance" or "unassigned speech" in dialogic

³³ Moad shows that Stein's playing with the name "Pilar" occurs in another text written during her time in Mallorca, "Independent Embroidery."

form—sentences and phrases which sound like speech but which are ambiguous in terms of what characters are voicing them (153). Picking up on Stein’s own suggestion that she was primarily concerned with landscape in the writing that she accomplished in Mallorca,³⁴ Moad argues for the way "Mexico: A Play" “creates a sense of landscapes through voices” and that “voice-montage” was used to create “mobile backgrounds” as a specifically theatrical innovation (153). But these evocative suggestions aren’t fully pursued outside their importance for stage direction and producing Stein’s plays. Moad spends the great majority of her discussion about "Mexico: A Play" on how stage actors would need to confront and interpret the play’s ambiguities in terms of how to enunciate, announce, and deliver Stein’s “unassigned speech” and how Stein’s “mobile backgrounds” (Mexico being one of them) present opportunities for stage production to consider representations of space that are not bound to cliché and stereotypical cultural signifiers typically brought to stage through the use of backdrops and props.³⁵ Essentially, Moad’s ultimate interest in "Mexico: A Play" is the tension and difficulty that exists between the written text and the to-be-performed, since performance would anchor or delimit the ambiguity inherent in the text.

What Moad leaves for others to investigate is a consideration of what and how the textual presence in "Mexico: A Play" of these connections to Mexico might mean from a transnational perspective. The remainder of this chapter will take up that potential. In this chapter I want to pursue three overlapping social geographies that help to elucidate the significance of Stein’s “Mexico: A Play” in *Geography & Plays*. The first will be a consideration of what Mexico and the contemporaneous Mexican revolution meant to Stein in the context of an ongoing “world

³⁴ In a December, 1915 letter to Carl Van Vechten from Mallorca, Stein writes that “I am making plays quite a number of them. Conversations are easy but backgrounds are difficult but they come and stay.” *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten, 1913-1946*. Edward Burns, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

³⁵ Moad explicitly names the kind of “cultural iconography” of Mexico she sees Stein intentionally disrupting, “adobe huts, pueblos, cacti, sombreros. An exotic language comes with this set design, but it provides a static image, painted on cloth, and a vocabulary of cliches. Stein refused to accept this theatrical device” (159).

war” in Europe. The second will be a consideration of the Euro-colonial relationship between Spain (and also France) and Mexico and why that might be something Stein is concerning herself with. Finally, I will consider the colonial relationship between the U.S. and Mexico and also U.S. imperialism as histories informing Stein’s writing of this wartime period.

Desiring Mexico: Internal Antagonism & Attentive Imitation

That Stein titles one of her texts “Mexico” during its revolution just as Stein is fleeing and fearing war violence in France is inherently interesting. What is Mexico to a queer American expat in Europe during World War I? In what ways is Mexico configured by Stein’s text as a geography of Otherness and in what ways is it configured as a geography of Other-Worldness, the difference between representing Mexico as unidentifiable and projecting onto Mexico fantasies of utopic identification? Stein’s thinking and writing about Mexico in *Geography & Plays* stands distinctly apart both from other cultural modernists’ interest in Mexican art and later Mayan revivalism, but also from dominant representations of Mexico in the American and European newspapers which covered closely the revolution. Much of that mainstream coverage sought to construct narratives of Mexican violence and folly, while casting its people and their leaders as a racially defined population whose political instability reflected naturalized conditions of their race. Mark C. Anderson describes the period of 1913-15 as a duration particularly marked by an aggressive proliferation of “racialist reconstructions,” “racist deconstructions” and (borrowing a phrase from Edward Said) “caricatural essentializations” of Mexicans in the U.S. press.³⁶ He argues that these media representations frequently reproduced three predominant themes in signifying Mexican identity: historical backwardness or anti-modernity, racial limitation or genetic inferiority emphasizing the Spanish and Indian mestizo or

³⁶ Anderson, Mark C. “What’s to Be Done with ‘Em?’ Images of Mexican Cultural Backwardness, Racial Limitations, and Moral Decrepitude in the United States Press, 1913-1915.” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1998. 23–70.

“mongrel” body, and moral decrepitude in terms of a propensity toward deceit and excessive violence (26-27). In contrast, looking at Stein’s modernist poetic play reveals clearly that Mexico is often framed in terms of pleasure, local knowledge, mutual admiration, and community definition through neighborly discourse. Whereas the mainstream press self-circulated representations of Mexico as racialized Others, Stein attempts a configuration of Mexico as Other-space differently.

However, one of the delights but also pressures of the play “Mexico,” as one begins to read through the text, is how quickly the reader recognizes, or at least suspects, that the play has very little to say about Mexico, at least directly. While the title sets up a framework of interpretive expectation, that the writing that follows the titles will or should in some way do the work of *representing* the North American nation in some fashion, the play itself actively resists developing for the reader any clear sense of a representational collection of facts, images, statements, or informative claims about the country. Instead, the play begins in a volley of declarative statements (what I referred to as a configuration above) which appears to respond to each other as in a conversation, that emphasize geography, names, and language:

Ernestine.
 Have you mentioned tracing out California.
 I have.
 How big is it.
 As big as a boat.
 What boat.
 The city of Savannah.
 Have you succeeded in tracing the origin of the word ugly.
 I have.

The link between the title and the text could be forged through the historical origin of California as one-time state of Mexico, as Alta California, before its colonial appropriation by the United States following the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which concluded Mexico’s military

defeat during the Mexican-American War. The verb “tracing out” might further tease such a reference, alluding to the drawing of a new international border line which would come to reshape the geography of the United States. In that sense, “tracing out California” takes on spatial significance with an emphasis on borders. The reappearance of “tracing” just a few lines below, however, presents the verb in a different sense. Here “tracing the origin” points to a reverse historical development to root sources. The play begins, then, juggling an interest in time and space, in historical geography, as the occasion for dialogue and conversational address. Nevertheless, nothing immediately following this opening section continues any obvious or deliberate connection to Mexico as a geographical site. There are no further references in this first scene of the play to Mexican geography, culture, or population. Her continual evoking through naming of the country “Mexico” attempts something other than a reliance on visual and textual tropes of the authentic Other. What kind of representation is this?

To help answer this question, we might make a brief comparison with other representations of revolutionary Mexico to emerge from Europe during the same decade. And specifically we might turn to the November 16, 1913 cover of *Le Petit Journal* illustrated supplement. *Le Petit Journal* was one of the major Parisian dailies established in 1863 and printed until the middle of the second world war, and in 1913 had a print run of nearly one million copies. The November 16 cover of the illustrated supplement (a feature included with the periodical every Sunday), presents its readers with a full color illustration of a scene from the Mexican Revolution. Captioned “Les Femmes Mexicaines Dans L’Armee Révolutionnaire” [Mexican Women in the Revolutionary Army], the graphic depicts a small group of women in the fore- and midground, some standing guard, rifles in hand, alongside a sabotaged rail track which has stopped a steam-engine in the middle of mountain landscape the women occupy.

Other women attend to a fire on which they seem to be preparing food, for themselves and possible for the file of male soldiers marching away in the background toward a hillside engulfed in flame and smoke. The women who dominate the frame of the illustration are distinguished from the men in the background primarily by dress and then additionally by their roles. The clothing of the women, who all don pleated dresses and bandoliers, are illustrated in bright pink, red, blue, green, and gold colors. Four of the five women on the cover wear sombreros and headscarves. The central and most prominent woman on the cover is draped in a red serape, looking out into the distance with one hand supporting her weight against an upright rifle while the other rests on her hip above a slung satchel. The women themselves are distinguished, too, by their tasks they perform in the picture. The three women holding rifles, one on horseback, are all holding their heads upward and gazing at something out of frame—they are depicted as soldiers and lookouts in heroic pose, while the other two work above a fire with cooking utensils.

On the one hand, the image attempts to capture, in positive valuation, two roles that women played in the revolution: the soldier and the soldadera or camp-follower. Where the former were women who actively volunteered for combat roles alongside male soldiers, the latter performed care and service work to sustain the energies and morale of the predominantly male armies (this included cooking, washing, and, too, medical and sexual services). The role camp followers differed across local contexts, and Andres Resendez Fuentes demonstrates that, when not volunteers, they could be variously paid for or violently coerced into their service depending on various factors across all the partisan armies and insurgent groups. The majority of these women came from poor, rural areas of the country, and were largely from agricultural Indian or mestiza communities (Fuentes 538), whereas female soldiers, much smaller in number, “generally belonged to a higher social class” (545). In terms of their representation in both

Mexican and foreign media, however, as Fuentes has observed, female Mexican soldiers “were invariably shown in the guise of curiosities, aberrations brought about by the revolution” (525).

In needing to emphasize the Mexican-ness of its subjects, the image cannot escape several representational trappings that come with visualizing cultural Otherness. The focus of the central woman figure is clearly on her clothes and fashion. While her rifle and ammunition cartridges are buried somewhat by their dark colors in contrast to objects immediately surrounding them, the woman’s layered white dress mirrors the billowing white smoke lifting from the burning hills in the background, which has the effect of directing the viewer’s eyes to the brightly colored red-striped serape draped around the woman’s shoulders and her red-banded sombrero with its notable tall peak, which rests atop the woman’s pink scarf wrapped vertically around her ears and chin. The post the woman is striking puts the clothes and their color contrast on full display. From this central figure the eye is directed to the smaller characters in the midground who don similar fashions with small variations in color or appearance. The fashion is used to signify Mexican otherness, but so too is the landscape which engulfs and cradles the women on all sides. Rocky grass patches and boulderous mountain ranges mostly barren of plantlife place the women into a distinctly rural setting. The one woman on horseback is largely overshadowed by a stalled steam locomotive run aground at the edge of a set of sabotaged rails, a looming presence that dominates the right-side frame of the illustration. The broken-down engine is the sole signifier of technological modernity, and its state of brokenness seems to play up, intentionally or not, the stereotype of Mexico as an unmodern space. With its emphasis on fashion and landscape, and the ambiguous presence of the train as a partial framing device, the illustration seems to condescend simultaneously as it valorizes the revolutionary women subjects. Their Mexicanness overtakes the politics of the scene being imagined here. In fact, the

accompanying article inside the supplement seems to reinforce the depoliticizing of the revolutionary actors in service of a shoring up of French nationalism.

Stein's text, looking at the first scene of the play, clearly pursues other methods of engaging meaning about Mexico and its relevance to Stein's situation in Mallorca, an engagement that proposes an alternative attention to language use and social discourse. As indicated earlier, the opening of the play provides the reader with no recognizable markers or signs of Mexican culture nor Mexicanness. Familiar literary objects and devices that do the work of representation seeming oddly absent as the play gets underway. When the play does at last refer back to Mexico by name, the first several references are largely about language and pronunciation. Stein frames the word "Mexico" in its first nontitular appearance in Scene II this way, "What do we do with methods and respect./ Methods and respect serve us for imitation. We imitate pronunciation. Mexico./ Henry Irving./ Neglect me and believe me and caress me." Rather than organizing the representational development of the play's content, the word "Mexico" instead appears to punctuate a compositional discourse on social intimacies and group pleasures. The "we" insinuates a sociality of shared concern about respect and the forms of communal discourse, while the last line above pushes that concern into the service of a more intimate request. The anxiety or demand to be neglected, believed, or caressed all require an addressee, some other that can fulfill the desire to establish a relational identity which all three verbs require. The intimate is related to that which "we imitate," again establishing a sense of coupling, mirroring, or doubling. "We imitate pronunciation" suggests the close study of another's speech effects and the desire toward nearness of what one hears.

A pronunciation is not only the particular sonic register of one's speech but also a public declaration. The reference to Henry Irving, a famous nineteenth-century English stage actor,

doubles down on this emphasis to publicity or publicness, to public displays of imitation or likeness. In this reading, the passage is playfully weaving ideas of intimacy and coupling with publicity and publicness. Just after this section of the text, “Mexico” reappears in similar surroundings. For example, “Mrs. Hendry./ I have never been married./ I have./ Mexico./ Mexico is prettily pronounced in Spanish./ Pronounce it for me./ Yes I will./ Say it prettily./ Mexico./ There are many ways of winning the lottery./ Newspaper notoriety.” This last phrase might be one that gestures towards a dominant way of representing Mexico in the mainstream U.S. anglo press, as the American reading public were exposed to frequent reports and editorials on the revolutionary warring in Mexico which relied heavily on stereotypes of Mexicans as prone to violence and deceit. Debates about the need for U.S. intervention often pivoted on the idea that Uncle Sam could “tame” and “civilize” the “unmodern” Mexican through territorial occupation or annexation, or else the rejection of such border-expansive futures because of anxieties and fears about absorbing those same subjects into the U.S. American populace. But Stein’s strange configuration of Mexico, instead of reproducing anxious stereotypes of impinging foreigners, stages the issue of national proximity as one of flirtatious mutual affection and feminized desire for Otherness through intimate speech acts and games (“lottery” but also “A Play”). And the idea that success or winning might be determined through “many ways” suggests an attention to alternatives, possibilities, chance, and variability in the pursuit of futurities of pleasure (“yes I will”).

As Stein stages international relations in terms of intimate imitation and mutual respect, she also infuses this performative affection with notable tensions and contradiction. How can one be neglected but also caressed or respected? What does it mean to acknowledge that one has *and* hasn’t been married? Or do the two adjacent declaratives originate from two different voices?

Are the lines that follow “Mrs. Hendry” those belonging to one subject or two? The ambiguity in the use of names throughout Stein’s new “voice-montage” style of composition creates an eruptive instability between monologic and dialogic enunciation. But in fact this ambiguous division serves as the foundation of Stein’s incipient experiment in playwriting. In the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein writes in reference to Matisse that “There is nothing within you that fights itself and hitherto you have had the instinct to produce antagonism in others which stimulated you to attack. But now they follow” (65). The moment reveals a sense of Stein’s understanding art and its bearing on social relationships. For her, self-generated antagonism fuels artistic production. Her point about Matisse is that he lacks something that might be expected to be there—internal antagonism—and in its absence develops something like a lashing out, or according to Stein, an “instinct to produce antagonism in others” in order to drive artistic production through a sense of counter-attack. In both cases the language of violence serves the artist in producing art (“fight” and “attack”). A lot hinges on what Stein is suggesting in the last sentence, “But now they follow,” in determining what kind of value Stein is placing on the various elements of this address to a fellow artist. Given Stein’s early emphasis on mutual respect and careful methods of discourse and social exchange (in addition to her anti-militarism which I investigate later in the chapter), I assume here that Stein is marking a failure of sorts in Matisse’s relationship to “others”—that others “follow,” that they get in line behind Matisse, could be construed as a kind of imitation (artistic imitators) but the spatial logic of following limits the mutuality that Stein values here and elsewhere in the text. The others with whom Matisse engages antagonistically end without facing each other. There’s no face value, so to speak, with Matisse’s method of antagonistic provocation and the militarism suggested by his approach. It is not outward attack but internal antagonism, rather, that is Stein’s point of

orientation for artistic and social address.

There are multiple ways in "Mexico: A Play" that a sense of internal antagonism is performed. One of these internal antagonisms is the contrasting back and forth between objects and subjects of the ostensibly "domestic sphere" and the much more public economy of commodity exchange and international armed conflict. Looking at the poem "If you had three husbands" written in 1915 (and also published in *Geography & Plays*), Sara Blair fixates her attention on Stein's interplay between these two kinds of space. Blair's purpose is to offer a gentle critique of American Studies' deconstruction of gendered separate sphere theory (pointing to Lauren Berlant and Amy Kaplan) which subsequently leaves behind attempts to understand "the historically changing space of the home" especially as that evolution is represented in modernist literary texts. Pointing to Stein's work in 1915, Blair writes that "Stein's key insight is an understanding of the changing space of the home—the private world of love and ritual, the sphere of bourgeois women's self-assertion and of working women's labor—as intimately linked with other metropolitan sites of production...Stein aims to explore the tensions inherent in her *own* domestic economy, a space that also functions literally as the site of avant-garde cultural networking, production, and display" (418). In the context of the Parisian salon, Blair reveals ways in which Stein's domestic space both values but also opens her domestic environment, its permeability to objects and relations of commerce, public influence, and publicity (the many staged photos of Toklas and Stein occupying their salon for promotional purposes) expands and exposes Stein's power as a cultural influence and culture maker.

Removed from her Paris salon in her retreat to Mallorca, Stein renegotiates this domestic space differently in the context of wartime transnational displacement. Stein's move to Mallorca with Alice affords them more time to each other and, for Stein, more time for her writing. Yet, at

the same time, Stein obsesses over recording markers of her new domestic environment, objects signifying the foreign-local and her neighbor-subjects whose names and voices are lifted from their communal existence and positioned into aesthetic relations on the page. Finally, both objects and subjects that comprise her new environment are constantly pointing back to those warring nations on the Western front. In this sense, the move to Spain was both a retreat away from the armed conflicts engulfing Northern France but also a retreat in the sense of a personal vacation. Her new domestic space is one that she is fleeing into but also one that she is associating with enjoyment and pleasure. We find this recurring association in one of her Mallorcan plays, “Do Let Us Go Away.” In the opening lines of the play Stein writes, “We are dishonored. We visit one another and say good-bye./ I do not like to be teased. It is so easy to kill mosquitos but what is the use when we are discouraged by the war” (215). While the title points at the issue of capacities to travel freely, these early lines frame the issue of mobility within the incapacitating experiences (dishonor and discouragement) of war and killing. Linda Voris also notes how the plays in *Geography & Plays* frequently adopt the language of arrival and departure, which “suggests that a concern with freedom of movement is prompted by the war.” Though she further observes how the frequent movement of characters in the plays condition “much ‘making acquaintance’ with one another” (111), and in “Do Let Us Go Away” Stein makes that explicit, “In speaking of Mallorca we must remember that there is making acquaintance. They make acquaintance with each other” (*GP*, 223). In this play, making acquaintance is premised on mutual fellow-feeling. Stein’s not wanting to be teased (as provocation and as separation) stands in contrast to the social relations sustained by visitations and ritualized verbalizations of departure (good-byes). A few lines later Stein adds, “I do know the chorus. Individual cases do not bring the war home to me” (215). The group form of the

chorus is opposed in these statements to “individual cases,” an individuating or separating condition that is, again, associated with war (something like, perhaps, individual would-be soldiers who “go away” to war are not returning, do not bring the war home).

Stein’s knowledge of the chorus validates familiarity with collective expression and sociality. But the cases referred to here are unclear. In one sense, the fact that the war has not been brought home sounds like a relief, a counter to the anxiety about the war’s looming presence for Parisians reading about the front in the news. On the other hand, “letters and newspapers also serve to bring the war into domestic spaces, requiring noncombatants to confront their own relations to citizenship and participation” (Frank 156-57). “Newspaper notoriety” in terms of “bad news” may circulate regularly but does not translate for Stein into “individual cases” for or against wartime participation. But cases of what? What cases? What does “cases” mean here? Instances? Epidemic contractions? Court rulings? Perhaps also luggage (a suitcase?). Perhaps the sentence might look to the “war home” as a compound noun, as travel cases might facilitate Stein’s travel to her “war home” in Mallorca. Withdrawal because of threat of war is suggested in these early lines as well, “My principle idea is to eat my meals in peace./ They withdraw. Several people come in.” (*GP*, 215). Clearly, Stein attributes peace to withdrawal here. But withdrawal of whom? Of what? Has she withdrawn into spaces of security, or are “they” the advancing armies of empire threatening to engulf the region Stein occupies? But then, who are those “several people” who “come in” once those previously occupying space has withdrawn? In fact, Stein forges peace and domestic reproduction (meal taking) out of the traffic of coming and going and free association. If these interpretations are somewhat strained, its plausibility perhaps rests on the double register of pleasure and anxiety these opening lines associate with “going away” (escaping refugees or the threat of war) and with “coming” (a

distant threat or a visiting acquaintance).

The writing in “Mexico: A Play” similarly records this double register of the social “getaway,” producing a tension between the anxiety of refugee border-crossing and the playful interpersonal bonding that the idea of a group retreat might afford. For example, writing specifically about international movement, Stein writes, “Did you go away./ No I stayed a long time. Did you go to another country to earn your own living./ I did not I stayed here for some time./ I am going away./ I have finished everything./ I will expect a selection./ I have dreams of women./ Do dream of me./ I will come to see weather./ I understand what they mean by dirty weather” (305). The first two utterances contrast in their spatio-temporal emphases. Where the initial question is asking whether someone has moved or relocated from a point of origin, its implication is that someone who has “gone away” has left or abandoned that initial space. The response seeks to clarify and reorient the distance through an emphasis on time. Making a “stay” over a duration suggests not a move away but rather a contingent displacement. One’s relationship to the “stayed in” space for Stein is dependent on a return or on impermanence, or the independence and liberty to make choices regarding where one is or goes. The “staying” is an interruption into movement. And so the difference between answering in the negative to “Did you go away” and “I am going away” plays up this identification with movement and return. The denial of “go[ing] to another country to earn your own living” reinforces the feeling of fleeing, that her “stay” is one conditioned by external forces and not a desire to permanently occupy new space.

One of the biggest consequences of this distinction is that there is no “home” in this sense of a space in which one is “staying.” Rather, pushed into a new environment where one is not at home, the refugee is driven into an uncertain environment requiring a careful, even visceral,

attentiveness to one's surrounding, exposing one to vulnerable and intimate contact with both the social environs and the people who do call that space home. We see this attentiveness quite early in the play, where the writing first foregrounds travel and learning. After the opening lines' point to boats in the harbor at Palma, Stein writes, "We learn about rocking chairs from them./ Kites are an example./ We learn about peaches from them./ They learned them too./ Were you dreaming badly. No. Then go to sleep again little sweetheart./ Ernestine./ It is easy to see four boats. Boats are a ship. There are English and Danish and other boats. It is hard to tell the Italian flag. Hard almost impossible./ I do not mean to be discourteous./ Ernestine./ Come in" (304). If "them," which is never explicitly defined for the reader, can be understood as a reference to those native Mallorcans with whom Stein finds herself among in her arrival at Palma, then the speakers acknowledge a kind of social debt to their knowledge about the environs from those locals who are instructing them.

The objects of this learned environment share a context: interior design, arts & crafts, food—Stein's first contact with her impermanent environment is a process of understanding domestic economies. The locals are feminized in this way and stand in contrast to the masculinized conditions of war alluded to by the boats using the harbors at Palma as a haven from militarized international waters. The sense of security granted this new domestic setting is amplified in its dreaminess. Unlike the nightmarish scenes of bodily ruin being reported from the Western Front, the residents here in Mallorca are purportedly not "dreaming badly" and the command to "sleep again" is followed by a term of endearment, "little sweetheart" before the name "Ernestine" is voiced. Attentiveness, tenderness, and lesbian intimacy are textures of the foreign environment that Stein is constructing in opposition to the homosocial bodily destruction of the war. "Ernestine./ Come in." is both an invitation "in"—a solicitation into the domestic

seen as a retreat from external conditions of violence, but further, it playfully suggests sex and sexual climax. This is repeated in the earlier section quoted above, “I have dreams of women./ Do dream of me./ I will come to see weather./ I understand what they mean by dirty weather.” Dream and fantasy intermingle in this scene of desire and desiring (to be dreamt of). In this sense, the line “I will come to see the weather” is not simply a measure of curiosity about the local conditions upon arrival in a new location. The pun here, “I will come to sea weather” captures Stein’s and Toklas’ physical intimacy from their rental house with its bedroom view of the ocean. Attentiveness to another in sexual pleasure is adjoined in this scene to attentiveness to one’s newly joined environment and the social actors within it.

To learn from, to imitate, and to respect the desires and social behaviors of the foreign-local is a part of the map Stein is constructing in this scene. And, after the title, the emergence of “Mexico” in the play occurs in just such a confluence of values. In “Scene II” Stein begins in the mode of careful observation about “their” behavior, “They were willing to have table and bed linen and neglect dressing. They were willing to have excellent eating” (305), which she follows with a gesture of acknowledgement and replication of custom, “Wood is not to be neglected. I will attend to everything.” Here again we see the combination of domestic attentiveness in two senses: the careful observation of how others are behaving in one’s proximity in order to learn custom, and also the establishing of the home through consumptive practice (tables, bed linens, the food objects that might suggest “good eating”). But Stein also re-commits to linking physical intimacy with attentiveness to local custom. That “they” “neglect dressing” could be interpreted to be a reference to either the linen or food mentioned in the same line (“bed dressing” or “turkey dressing” for example). But to “neglect dressing” would also be a way of describing a state of nudity, and the placing of nude bodies in this domestic (bedroom) setting would playfully alter

the act and the place of the “excellent eating” that finishes the line. In this imagined space, imitation and intimation become indistinguishable.

It’s in this confluence that Stein places the first in-scene reference to “Mexico,” writing, “What do we do with methods and respect. Methods and respect serve us for imitation. We imitate pronunciation. Mexico.” Relating pronunciation to imitation offers two lines of reading that comment on speech and sociality. For one, the link between imitation and pronunciation is quite literal and obvious. The way that we learn to speak and make sound-sense of words is through imitating those earliest of interlocutors we interact with. Whatever one’s way (method) of pronouncing the word “Mexico” reflects a lifetime of imitative practices that informed one’s ability to produce language orally. In other words, the sound of anyone’s “Mexico,” or any other word for that matter, is the consequence of innumerable imitative repetitions of others’ speech patterns that dominate the time of early language acquisition. Then again, put into the context of Stein’s writing on ways of being in a foreign-local space, we might understand the statements to be about English-speakers imitating Spanish pronunciation of the word “Mexico” in order to demonstrate local-community deference, belonging, and esteem.

Stein is reiterating a common concern, desire, and anxiety among those entering spaces where one becomes a non-native speaker, be that through tourism or migration, to speak “like” those whom one finds oneself among. This sense of American idiom in the context of foreign encounter was one picked up on by critics who initially appraised Stein’s new writing methods. For example, Edith Sitwell described the Mallorcan plays in her review of *Geography & Plays* (and much to the delight of Stein), as “an irritating ceaseless rattle like that of American sightseers talking in a boarding-house” (qtd. in Voris 110). Though I’d like to think that Stein’s enthusiasm for this seemingly backhanded compliment, beyond simply the pleasure of any

publicity for the publication at all, might have stemmed more specifically from Sitwell's emphasis on the international and intercultural displacements suggested by Stein's writing rather than the "irritating ceaseless rattle" characterization, though perhaps that too only highlighted the play's adherence to the qualities of chit-chat and neighborly gossip in a particular sonic register, the pleasures of speaking (and, in matters of gossip and cultural mediation, the pleasures of hearing oneself speak). Dana Cairns Watson writes, "I suspect that Stein is interested in interactional conversation. The basic difference between transactional and interactional conversation is that the first is for business and the second is for pleasure... The goal of the interaction is itself to define the relationship, which means there is much more experimentation with levels of intimacy and ratios of power" (63).³⁷ In this sense, then, pleasing pronunciation is linked to group pleasure as the basis of relationship definition. Sitwell's capturing (and Stein's seeming approval) of the international "boardinghouse" quality of the text adds a point of complication, however, to Watson's interest in how Stein establishes group definition between the poles of "intimacy" and "power." Who is the power-holder, for instance, in a dialogue concerned with both pleasure and pronunciation in an international and bilingual context?

To that end, Stein bridges pronunciation as a matter of respect to one as a matter of pleasure in dialogue. Stein writes, "Mrs. Hendry./ I have never been married./ I have./ Mexico./ Mexico is prettily pronounced in Spanish./ Pronounce it for me./ Yes I will./ Say it prettily./ Mexico" (306). "Mexico" in this back-and-forth mediates between flirtatious speech acts and requests with a concern over normative modes of intimate coupling ("being married"). "Yes I will" can be seen as a consenting declarative that submits to the demand or request to "pronounce it for me" but also as a continuation of the back and forth over marriage, as something that might be actualized in the future. One might locate here as a deferred desire for

³⁷ Elsewhere in the same chapter, Watson refers to "interactional conversation" as "friendly chat" (83).

Stein's relationship to be officially sanctioned by state law and social custom. Mexico is evoked as an imagined space of possibility and futurity in this reading. But then, there is also an immediate actuality in the word appearing after the demand or request to "say it prettily." The emphasis on the "prettily" removes the issue of pronunciation from the politics of linguistic "correctness" (and the attendant problem of correction or being corrected) and instead frames speech-sound as an aesthetic-erotic characteristic, where pronunciation is understood as work that aims to produce pleasure. This pleasure is further rooted in attentiveness, "Neglect me and believe me and caress me./ Say I am careful." which leads her to declare, "Mexico./ I was so pleased." In these lines here we find Stein demonstrating an interest with internal antagonism, the voiced desire to be both, contradictorily, neglected and caressed, and to have that internal dualism be believed in. This internal antagonism is directed toward some ambiguous other, to which the speak also desires to be acknowledged and validated as a "careful" subject. This set of interrelated concepts is then projected onto the word "Mexico" conceived as a fantasy space which is both the cause of a speaker's pleasure but also potentially the personification of a desiring subject who has been pleased (this reading will depend on whether or not "Mexico." is understood as a voiced expression or word in the play or whether "Mexico" is a personified actor given lines in the play).³⁸

It's worth returning to her concepts of "methods and respect" here ("What do we do with methods and respect./ Methods and respect serve us for imitation. We imitate pronunciation. Mexico") because they seem relevant not just to her constellating scenes of intimacy with imitation, her attentive acquaintance with surrounding geography, but also of the aesthetic practice that is emerging in the Mallorcan plays more generally. The move away from the highly

³⁸ Moad also explores the ambiguity names as voiced expressions or lines in the play or else as unvoiced markers of those who are voicing line.

repetitive, noun- and conjunction-laden sentence of *Tender Buttons*, toward the more dialogue-imitative nature of the newer writing she's accomplishing in Spain. Instead of experiments in content and form, in container and character that *Tender Buttons* evinces, the Mallorcan plays appear more concerned with how conversation happens, and what is happening during conversation. Rather than a modernism built on evolutions or revolutions of "form," Stein seems to be suggesting here that the concept of "method"— as process, procedure, or "ways" of doing and being—is more central to her aesthetic thinking. It isn't that form isn't a relevant concept for reading or understanding Stein's sudden shift in writing practice (she's not exactly announcing a "form follows function" modernism announced by architect Louis Sullivan). Rather, by taking up the generic space offered by the play, she's exploring the ways that dialogue, setting, and character come to signify. Attention to method, then, as questions of how something can or ought to be done, opens easily to questions of respect in the sense of deference and polite regard or esteem, if attention to method is understood as a social and relational concept. One way method can be attended to is to consider how those ways of doing or being effect or relate to others. We see this attentiveness to ways of being in a foreign space when Stein suggests a need to learn from and model one's ways on those who originally occupy those spaces one is entering. It's possible to read from this interplay, then, an implied importance or value Stein might be placing on Mexico as an actual site of internal antagonism registered through its political revolution.

Stein's sense of pleasure derived from internal antagonism makes use of Mexico as a metaphor for modern identity making. Liberty and self-determination is staked on those internally combative forces which drive the desiring self into new forms of expression so long as the expression of others' distinct forms of self-deterministic internal antagonism are "respected" through attentive observation and imitation. The self can be like another, but not become

another. The use of Mexico in this network of values seems to suggest that, for Stein, revolutionary impulse strengthens national character so long as it does not subsume outside boundaries and differences. Revolutionary war establishes modern innovation or progress, while imperial war, with its desire for endless territorial expansion, prevents it, is retrograde.

Stein as Border Writer: Empire, War, & Borders

While Stein might be read as valuing the revolutionary character of Mexico for its metaphorical capacity to embody internal antagonism while offering itself up as an object of attentive imitation, she makes a clear distinction between revolutionary civil war and the global-imperial war befalling Europe in the middle of the 1910s, and in fact, several instances in *Geography & Plays* suggest that Stein recognizes the First World War not as the assertion of contestatory national sovereignties but one of imperial force and conquest, and her stance toward the war emerges as one defined by an anti-imperialist worldview. Other scholars have attempted to frame Stein's writing in terms of its anti-imperialist politics, though these arguments have a tendency to rely on materialist-linguistic readings of her work, moving from grammatical and syntactical forms to a social politics. For example, David Kadlec, in *Mosaic Modernism*, sees Stein's writing in the earlier *Tender Buttons* as "an anti-imperialist's assault on the distinction between expressive and functional parts of speech" and then as an "anarchistic decentralization of linguistic and visual 'syntax'" (30-31).³⁹ I'm sympathetic to these materialist accounts of modernist poetics rooted in linguistic particulars, but for me, these readings are stronger when connected to, or reinforced by, the referential capacity of the writer's content. The "decentralization of linguistic and visual syntax" must come into play with subject matter, with

³⁹ Kadlec's comment here is suggesting the influence of William James on Stein in the sense that linguistic disruptions of syntactic and epistemological "dominion" point toward pluralistic liberties rooted in relationality rather than the circumscribed equality of all-inclusiveness. In his *A Pluralistic Universe*, from which Kadlec quotes, James writes, "the pluralistic world is thus more like a federal republic than like an empire or a kingdom."

what the writer is expressing, in order to be interpretively meaningful, otherwise the writer is seen as a syntactical producer whose agency-via-content is void of meaning. The vocabulary palette matters. On this point, I think *Geography & Plays* more strongly exemplifies Stein's writing as adopting an anti-imperialist perspective because the text persistently returns to ideas and concepts we frequently associate with empire.

For example throughout "Mexico: A Play," Stein puts into tension the pleasure she takes with residing in foreign-local space with the violence and insecurity she associates with foreign-military occupation and control of national territory. Though infrequent, Stein introduces into the play several times direct references to the world war engulfing the European landscape around her. In one of "Mexico: A Play"'s concluding scenes, Stein interlaces neighborly conversation with anxiety about war and national displacement. She writes, "William King. Are you pleased with everything?/ Certainly I am the news is good./ Marcelle Helen. How do you do I have been in a bombardment./ So you have./ And were you evacuated./ We did not leave out village./ We asked the consul to tell us what he thought./ He said that there was nothing to fear./ Nothing at all./ So he said./ Very well today./ Oh yes the wind" (330). This short exchange, which Stein bookends with observations on the news and the weather (wind), is rooted in the kinds of common speech gestures which are meant to facilitate friendly discourse. It fits a running theme throughout "Mexico: A Play" of neighborliness and making or keeping acquaintance. It resonates with the familiarity of chit-chat. However, Stein's scene of familiar conversation is interrupted with references to the war. The often performative gesture of asking "how are you?" is followed by the terrifying revelation that "I have been in a bombardment." Just as something "foreign" has entered the environment (violence, via airplane bombers, occupies the airspace overhead), "villagers" are pressed with the question of fleeing as refugees in search of security. The

interlocutors discuss evacuation, and we discover that they sought advice from “the consul” which orients the speaker’s relationship to the space under bombardment, expanding the situation into one of international conflict. As a government appointee charged with the protection of foreign-nationals, “the consul” registers the “foreignness” of those speaking, and also the sense that those from “someplace else” might have access to “leaving” not necessarily possible for those native to the locale. The assurance that “there was nothing to fear” from the consul is perhaps undercut in the possible skeptical “so he said” and so the scene demonstrates another kind of vulnerability not linked to the intimacies of pleasure (“are you pleased with everything”) but to the relation of citizenship and bodily movement in the face of war violence.

Other details in the play reinforce the importance of citizenship and border as central question. Stein writes, “My mother./ You mean your mother./ I mean to say that I think the government should send her to her home./ We will see.” As opposed to the valorization of young men defending the motherland, here war and motherhood become linked through a confluence of interpretive possibilities. For one, the concern about evacuation just earlier informs this concluding moment of the play’s final scene, and reminds the reader of the violence and insecurity women are subjected to behind the frontlines of the war. But there’s also a sense of government as “nanny state,” that critical view of governmental power which criticizes the state’s capacity to make decisions on behalf of the collective citizenry or national residents. Here the speaker voices a desire for government to either facilitate or forcefully remove one’s “mother” from nationally defined boundaries. It’s unclear if the statement is a desire for assisted evacuation (a repatriation) or else the desire for a foreign national to be deported. In either case, the statement registers the sense that a state of violence or security can be equated with national borders even as the war and the fear of war violence stems from a transgression of these borders.

As Moad has demonstrated, Stein's use of the name "William King" in this section is intended as a reference to Kaiser Wilhelm II (Moad 211). As Kaiser, or German emperor, his presence in the text defines the conflict and violence experienced by the speakers in imperial terms of global territorial conquest. The anxiety of border transgression, or redefinition or dissolution, is countered in the desire for repatriation or deportation drives to reassert the validity of the border as either a demarcation of national belonging or else as the marker of "safe space" in contrast to those countries at war.

In this context of fear about European imperial expansion, the emphasis on "Mexico" as Stein writes from Mallorca presents a different kind of national resistance to the desire for imperial expansion in a global context. Mexico's relationship to Spain, of course, is marked partly through the act of anticolonial revolution as the Spanish colonies sought independence from Spanish monarchy, but also partly by a continuation of Spanish language and culture but with a difference. Stein's commentary on Mexico as an anticolonial space, as the separation of New World from Old World, is never direct. But moments in the play keep Mexico's contestatory but culturally dynamic relationship to Spain engaged. In Act VI of the play, Stein writes, "That's the way they say it./ They said I like to be separated. Do you really mean that./ Really and truly./ ... Do you never read the papers./ Not in the morning or the evening./ You mean on account of bad news./ No I like flags" (329). Then end of this scene is followed immediately by, "Alright Mexico." Again, "Mexico" is put into relation with internal self-division ("I like to be separated"), attentive imitation ("That's the way they say it") and an anxiety with the "bad news" of world war. The anti-imperial gesture follows the "bad news," as the emphasis on the pleasure derived from flags rejects the imperial impulse to conquer all, and instead registers an attraction for plurality-in-relation. While contemporaneous Mexico might not

be “all right” in light of its own civil war (one dominating front-page coverage in “the papers”), Mexico is “alright” with Stein because of its self-assertion of national self-determination.

We can find other instances in "Mexico: A Play" of Stein exploring anticolonial separation in a European context. In Act IV, Stein aligns Mexico with another European anti-colonial geography. She writes, “ Mark Baldwin. What is your name./ Australia. Did you mention Australia./ Oh yes you mentioned Australia./ We believe in Mexico.” The putting into proximity the two nonproximate nations of Australia with Mexico signals a shared colonial context in their separation from European colonial possession. Australia had federated only fifteen years prior to Stein’s Mallorcan visit, in 1901. The formation of both countries (one through revolutionary violence, the other through legislative redefinition) signal a challenge to, or breakdown of, imperial expansion. There’s a similar display of postcolonial national affinity in another of Stein’s Mallorcan plays, “For the Country Entirely.” Divided into chapters, the play’s second chapter locates conditions of “misery” and “sacrifice” (“A great many people are sacrificed. Oh dear yes.”) in the conflicting interests of empire and nation. References to the Roman emperor Caesar in this passage (“Caesar isn’t a name that is not used. I have known that a great many people have it”) also couple as references to the Kaiser (a Germanized variant of “Caesar”) Wilhelm. Following this moment, the next chapter restages the contrast between imperial ambition and national identity. Stein writes, “Here we come to act two./ Australian papers./ Canadian papers./ American papers./ Dear Miss Millicant./ Do not be insulting./ You know very well that we have not conscription./ Were you surprised./ In states./ Or in territories.” (229-30). The various papers circulating in this line signal a network of English-language newsprint carrying word of the theater of war taking place in France. Though again, Stein’s countries of emphasis here are all former colonies of the British Empire and so the country here

is being opposed to imperial territorial expansion just as Stein forwards an appraisal of the nation as a body of cultural identity. In the above few lines Stein finds insult in military conscription—the idea of cross-border antagonism, but rather turns her interest and “surprise” or fascination with internal differentiation, marked mariously in different English-speaking countries as either states (as in the U.S.) or territories (as in Canada). The violent and outward scanning militant resonates within, but is also here “domesticated” by, the respectful address to “Miss Millicant.”

Stein’s emphasis on “papers” also points to the consolidation of national identity through the passport as an expanding technology of identification and claims to citizenship. The passport especially was becoming an increasingly significant document in the context of the war. In his book *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War Through the Cold War*, Michael Robert Marrus observes that, though passports were administered in several European countries before WWI, “these documents had largely fallen into disuse internationally... Baedeker’s tourist guides at the turn of the century advised their relatively affluent readers that no one inspected passports any more [*sic*]” but points to the drastic shift in their importance following the outbreak of the world war, “Not only did wartime conditions make travel hazardous, but states themselves were eager to block the departure of persons with useful skills or of military age. From the standpoint of immigration, too, there were fears of open borders... as a result, passports came into use as a way of certifying nationality, regulating the flows of much-needed people [conscription], and providing check on suspicious persons deemed security threats” (Marrus 92).⁴⁰ Bridget Chalk connects this early twentieth-century reemergence of the passport directly to various modernist writers, including Stein, in her book *Modernism and Mobility: The Passport and Cosmopolitan Experience*. Chalk forwards an argument suggesting

⁴⁰ Marrus additionally observes how, following the end of WWI which led to the permanence and increasing reliance on the passport system, European travellers in the 1920s commonly described a “passport anxiety” when crossing international boundaries.

that, in contrast to dominant narratives of modernist cosmopolitanism and expat cultural exchange, passports served as an instrument of biopolitical control that often frustrated and arrested the free movement of people, including modernist artists, as the daily realities of citizenship bureaucracy impacted the lives of artist-migrants and the art that they produced. Comparing Stein to Claude McKay and D.H. Lawrence, Chalk concludes that Stein's relative cultural popularity and American citizenship freed her from most of the inconveniences or threat of danger that other modernist writers experienced,⁴¹ while further suggesting that Stein's supposed political support of controlling populations via restrictive immigration policy points toward a populist nativism in her writing.⁴²

However, Stein's "border writing" in the Mallorcan plays doesn't seem compatible with the conservative xenophobia of nativism. There is not the sense, in John Higham's words, of "some influence originating abroad threaten[ing] the very life of the nation within" or else the "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign... connections" (Higham 4). In Stein's Mallorcan plays, there is no evidence of an emphasis on blood, race, and family in defining national belonging. Despite her seeming promotion of cultural pluralism, it would be difficult to equate her valuation of nationalism as an example of "modernist nativism."⁴³ But when we look at how *Geography & Plays* "maps" citizenship in relation to global war or

⁴¹ Edward Burns, in his *Jacket 2* article, also suggests Stein's American citizenship must have insulated her from some of the anti-Semitic citizenship laws passed under the Vichy government.

⁴² Since the issue of nativism in Stein's writing leads perhaps too easily into ongoing and heated arguments about Stein's relationship to fascism during WWII, I make the point not to conflate the two terms and also to side, ultimately, with those who have defended Stein against the charge of Nazi collaboration. Charles Bernstein makes perhaps the most cohesive defense as he also compiles several critics who have located factual and historical errors (and politically charged disingenuousness) in those texts which paint Stein with the brush of fascism.

⁴³ Walter Benn Michaels would likely agree that Stein isn't an example of his concept, "modernist pluralism." But to be sure, Stein doesn't fit Michaels's argument about "nativist modernism" at all either (she's not mentioned in his study) despite that Stein seems clearly to promote cultural pluralism and despite Stein's place in the academic pantheon of American modernists. Michaels overgeneralizes his insights (and consequently grants undue emphasis/authority to white Anglo-American writers in defining modernism).

imperialism, more unsettling features of the text appear. Again in “For the Country Entirely,” Stein writes directly about the concept of citizen, “Now as to the word citizen. The use of it differs./ Some are inclined to ratify the use of it others prefer to ask what is a citizen. A citizen is one who employing all the uses of his nature cleans the world of adjoining relations. In this way we cannot conquer. We do conquer and I ask how, how do you do.” (233). In his essay “Radio Free Stein,” Adam Frank notices here Stein’s contrast between a fixed and stable conception of citizen and “a more uncertain, interrogative one” (157). He adds, “Like other queer expatriate writers, including Henry James, James Baldwin, and Patricia Highsmith, Stein prized her American citizenship at the same time that she chose to live outside the geographical borders of the United States, able only from a distance to support the ideals that permit a multiplicity of hyphenated identities to co-exist under the umbrella of American citizenship” (157). Much of what her plays in this time period suggest, as demonstrated above, is an inquiry into a “method” of acquaintanceship with cultural and international Others (“how do you do”), a concern with respect, imitation, learning, and attentiveness. The free crossing of well-defined international borders is precisely what activates Stein’s interest in Other-attentiveness, and so the maintenance of borders (and one’s identification, via the passport, with border-defined geographies) is an essential element in the larger social landscape she is imagining here in opposition to the territorially acquisitive drives of empire and imperial war.⁴⁴

U.S. Settler Colonialism, Assimilation, and Native Disavowal

In other moments of “Mexico: A Play,” Stein clearly orients her exploration of geography and pleasure toward the Americas. I’ve noted earlier how the play opens with a concern for

⁴⁴ In contrast, Brent Hayes Edwards’s exceptional evaluation of an early twentieth century “vagabond internationalism” as a rejection of racialized national identification and embrace of an international lumpenproletariat utopic space in the writing of Claude McKay suggests a powerful critique of the social spaces Stein is attempting to authorize.

“tracing out California” and in tracing origins, which unsettles any clear notion of Stein’s insistence of internal antagonism. The tracing of the state of California does emphasize internal division within the larger state form of the United States while indicating a constitutional division between federal and state jurisdiction. But tracing the origins of California of course places us in historical Mexico and reminds us that the tracing *out* of California was the act of annexation that followed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a treaty which redefined the national boundary line between the U.S and Mexico. The international conflict that marked U.S. intervention in Mexico subsequently redefined what counted as “inside” each nation. And so the line about “tracing out California” marks internal antagonism in two opposing senses. This is not the only moment where Stein blurs lines of demarcation (cultural and geographic) in "Mexico: A Play." In Act V, Stein writes, “Why is there a difference between South America and North America./ There is no difference he meant to go there./ After all he was very pleased./ Certainly he was and the results were good” (315). The questioning of difference between the two continents and the responding disavowal of such a difference has the potential to serve as an act that critiques the hemispheric division of the continents and the presumption of a cohesion within the markers of North and South across that division. If her emphasis has been, all along, on the strength of the nation state as the geographic form that best suits her vision of imitation, intimate attentiveness, and mutual respect, perhaps the gesture here is to undo or break the interpretive power of imagined hemispheric Americas.

In that case, the result might be the resurgence of individual state identity and, in her social fantasy rooted in method and respect, one where international actors engage each other on equal footing. However, the “he” of the subsequent lines troubles a positive reading of this moment. Who is “he”? Where is “there” to which “he meant to go”? What pleased him “after

all”? And what were these “good results”? Against the background of Spanish monarchy, the envisioning of an undifferentiated geographic hemisphere toward which one “meant to go” inescapably recalls Spain’s commission of the Columbus voyage, and so too its long and ongoing colonial history in the Americas. Though ambiguous, the “pleasure” of “good results” here shifts the value of being “pleased” from one of domestic leisure or bodily pleasure and toward the favorable outcome of some concerted effort or competition. The language of “good results” puts “pleasure” in the service of investment. The reference to the Americas, in this way, sits at odds with Stein’s earlier discourse of pleasure in freedom of movement. Here, the text is haunted by colonial dispossession and violence.

Additional details in this scene and elsewhere in the text supports that Stein is reflecting uneasily on European colonization in the Americas. For instance, Act V begins with a reference to South America in economic terms, as Stein writes, “Did you mean to be astonished./ The servant./ Did she mean to be astonished./ What is Peru./ A republic./ What is engraving./ Commercial.” (315). It’s hard not to read this moment as an example of Stein further thinking about European colonialism in the Americas. Peru, of course, once a former colonial possession of Spain, was important to the Spanish empire for its production of silver and gold through forced labor of the colonized Inca population. The tropes of astonishment and wonder that typically inform “discovery” narratives are put here in relation to colonized native servitude, at least by implication. The references to “commercial” “engraving” seem to reinforce the appropriation of wealth through European precious metal economies. Elsewhere in the scene Stein seems to be making a critical comment on possession and commerce when she adds, “When do they meet very well./ When they believe in what they have in their house./ Was it all made by them./ Not the things they bought.” (315). Is the question here one of a mutually

engaged futurity? Is she asking about a future where historical actors “meet very well” as opposed to the historical violence that defines European colonization of the Americas? Is there a subtle critique of Euro-American consumer purchase power and commodity fetishism in the contrast Stein establishes between commodity purchases and productive labor? Is the belief “in what they have in their house” the hoped-for fantasy of a recognition of colonial domination embedded within the material construct of domestic space that Stein is so invested in publicizing for its desiring capacities?

The scene ends without much help to the reader interested in Stein’s inclusion of colonial history in this modernist play. Finishing the scene, Stein writes, “I am very content where I am./ And do you mean to stay./ No I think not./ But you did like Peru./ Very much.” (315) While not exactly “pleasure,” the scene ends in “contentment” over the issue of occupying space, of overstaying without the intention of doing so. Perhaps the point here is that in “liking” Peru, Stein is registering a value for state-based, Latin American sovereignty but also that one can “do like Peru,” that Peru can be seen as a model of republican statehood that can be imitated, that the construction of political “domestic” space in nation state form makes these nations intimate imitations of each other, a geographical affinity which Mexico and the U.S. are seen as sharing. But the weak subjective evaluation of “liking” doesn’t really seem to capture any of that forcefully enough. Instead, the contentment to occupy space one finds to one’s liking reads more like the attitude of the happy tourist if not the profiteering colonizer. Stein reproduces this connection between occupation and colonial Peru in the play “For the Country Entirely,” “Why do you need a name./ I don’t know. I like the point of Inca./ Do not see it everywhere./ I will not./ Dear land.” Adam Frank points out that Inca is a city in Mallorca where Stein went to see the bullfights, but also suggests she’s playing with with pleasures of writing: the inky point of a

pen. He sees in her word play a different kind of internal antagonism, “Place names, nationalism (‘for the country’), and mastery go together on the one hand, while writing, geography (‘in the country’), and negation or uncertainty go together on the other” (Frank 156). If, through bullfighting, Inca becomes a point of connection between Spain and revolutionary Mexico, it’s also a point of connection between Spain and the Inca Empire of the western regions of South America, and the single place name conjures that colonial history of the Americas more broadly. The rapid and systematic destruction of Peru’s indigenous population created a South American geography devoid of the Inca and their culture, a space where one does “not see it everywhere” following colonial decimation. The insistence not to see it, to willfully blind oneself to their presence or legacy, leads one to mere “liking” their point, and desirous of “dear land.”

It’s not implausible that Stein is thinking explicitly about colonial violence in the Americas, particularly because there are lines in "Mexico: A Play" which point to as much. Part II, Act IV, Scene III of the play is perhaps the most direct address of colonial America, and a moment that directly links Spain, Mexico, and the United States together. The scene begins with an acknowledgement of ignorance, “I don’t quite understand what I have done” (325). This is soon followed with, “If there is a Mallorcan name if Mallorca gave the missionary who converted the California settlers if the Mallorcans have a little town of their own near New York then we will believe in Spanish influence in Mexico. The Spaniards are not liked in Mexico./ John and Maria Serra./ Foundations./ The middle of the day. Why do you not come in the day time. You mean to listen. No I don’t mean to listen.” (325). The Mallorcan “missionary who converted the California settlers” is a reference to Junipero Serra, an 18th century Mallorcan Catholic priest who established several of the first Spanish missions in Baja and Alta California, then provinces of New Spain, along most of the West Coast of what is now Baja California,

Mexico and California, U.S.A. More recently beatified by Pope John Paul II, Serra's controversial legacy is marked by violence and infantilizing attitudes toward native Indians whom he sought to convert to Christianity. While the identity of "John and Maria Serra" is not immediately clear (likely, as with many of the names in "Mexico: A Play," names of Stein's expat neighbors on Mallorca), their Anglicized names suggest a transnational continuation of Serra's familial line. That continuity is registered differently in the concession, "The Spaniards are not liked in Mexico" and so the issue of "liking" or "not liking" a population marked as foreign is rooted here in that explicit colonial violence. In this context, there is no neighborly accord, and no intimate attentiveness. In the lines, "Why do you not come in the day time. You mean to listen. No I don't mean to listen," we can find the antithesis to intimate attentiveness, where one is intent on not hearing. One's attention to the other is closed off. In contrast to all the pleasure and pleasing of coming and going elsewhere in the play (and elsewhere in the imagined European geography where most of the play seems to take place), in this moment, there is no coming.

To some degree, Stein's recognition of anti-espanola sentiment in Mexico is attentive to ongoing legacies of colonial animosity between Spain and Mexico. As Douglas W. Richmond observes, Spaniards living in Mexico during the Revolution were culturally isolationist, disdaining native Mexican culture while sponsoring literary and theatrical work by Spanish artists in Mexico City. Making up nearly half of the foreign population in Mexico in the middle of the revolutionary decade, "espanoles" from Spain owned the majority of small businesses and shops in the major cities, which often became the targets of Mexican anti-Spanish hostility and violence during the revolutionary years. Richmond notes that "these newcomers exploited the working class of their host country and Mexican resentment of the Spaniards increased when

they openly identified with the Porfirian system” and their dismissive attitude toward native Mexicans did nothing to “promote harmonious relationships with Mexico” (216). This is also during a time where, due to political upheaval and labor unrest in Spain during the 1910s, there was pressure on Spanish civilians to emigrate to Mexico or other Latin American countries (220). Between 1914 and 1916, Mexican raids on Spanish merchants and seizure of Spanish-owned goods and property increased to such a degree that the United States was prodded by Spain to intervene in their dealings with the Carranza government at that time (222). One might wonder whether these lines in “Mexico: a Play” are inspired by English-language newspaper coverage of these highly charged merchant raids: “What are they doing./ They are taking off cargo./ Are they removing it from one ship to the other./ They are.” (Stein 308). Popular Mexican sentiment supported the expulsion of all Spaniards in the country during the revolution. For their part, Spanish capitalist class engaged in hoarding and price-gouging practices when goods became scarce. Richmond writes, “Continued complaints of Spanish commercial abuses added to the crackling tension with the numerically dominant *mestizos*. A Liga Anti-Espanola circulated propaganda calling for the *deespanolizacion* of commerce within Mexico City” (Richmond 222). The revolutionary government’s anti-Spanish position was dominant until late 1916 and early 1917 when, under Carranza, it was willing to begin reconciliation talks with Spain, including the return of previously Spanish-owned land in Northern Mexico after Villa’s campaign of land dispossession and redistribution among the peon classes, though this did little to dissipate anti-Spanish hostility among the Mexican populace (224). Finally, Richmond traces various ways that these attempts at reconciliation were spurred in part by “ideological affinities” between the revolutionary Mexican government and Spanish Leftists in Europe, “Many Carrancistas had studied a variety of political ideologies in Spain and returned to Mexico

eager to apply a socialistic panacea to the ills of Mexico... Because Barcelona was the leading center of anarchosyndicalist thought in Europe, the Spanish immigrants also brought these ideas to Mexico [...] Spanish Marxists were impressed by Carranza's anti-imperialism and his public commitment to socio-economic reforms" (Richmond 225). Spain also actively supported Carranza (in private correspondence and through economic and military aid) as his rise above competitors for government leadership became clear, and the Spanish monarchy viewed Carranza as an ally (226). What's useful to recognize in this historical context is that Stein is writing about radical attentiveness and mutual respect or care at a time when Spain's relationship to Mexico is marked by economic and cultural hostility but also, at least to the Spanish Left, a degree of mutual support and affinity. Stein's anti-imperialism in the context of Spanish Left anti-imperialism emerged independently but concurrently, and for both Mexico became a space on which to project desires of influence and resemblance. Both are thinking about how to replicate behavior and affinity across borders of difference.

In light of these dynamics given light in the play, Stein's scene above appears potentially critical. Spanish influence in Mexico is perceived as an extension of European colonizing practices, where, despite that influence, "Spaniards are not liked." But the negative relation established here between Mexico and Spain because of culturally and economically isolationist Spaniards is extended into the United States as well, "if the Mallorcans have a little town of their own near New York" (325). Small emigré (Spanish) communities in New York parallel to some degree the Anglo expat community Stein finds herself among in Mallorca (indeed the great majority of names voiced in the play are Anglicized names), and so there may be a critical self-awareness here of what that displacement means, but also an asserted effort to establish emigre community in terms of possession ("a little town of their own"). We find Stein considering

influence in terms of migration of populations, but the text points towards a self-awareness more than a fear or anxiety of encroaching others. She writes, “We are coming in./ A great deal./ A great many mistakes./ Maria Serra. I understand you wish to show me what you have.” (325). Here the image of a “great deal” of people “coming in,” presented the inclusive “we are” places the speaker in the rush of bodies filling a space. The concession, “a great many mistakes” is critically evocative in how it points both to historical error (we have made a great many mistakes) but also that an overwhelming population of those “coming in” can also have the capacity to “mis-take,” to appropriate what did belong to another or no one at all (“I understand you wish to show me what you have”). But ultimately, the text’s central focus on those “incoming”— on their mistakes and capacity to understand— erases from the text the indigenous Indians of the Americas who her colonial history implies but never names or represents clearly enough in the play. Her claim that Serra “converted the California settlers” perhaps most clearly establishes this erasure, where the points seems to be about Serra’s relationship to other European colonizers occupying the west coast of the continent.

Stein’s use of Mexico to explore settler-colonial origins of Spanish missionaries and non-native Californians, and her affected pleasure in the pronunciation of “Mexico” in English and Spanish, serves to reproduce the erasure of native presence and language in the Americas even as she deliberately overlays images of bodily violence with institutions of language and literacy education. In another play from *Geography & Plays*, “The Psychology of Nations, or What Are You Looking At,” Stein includes these lines, “Readings in missions./ Who can neglect papers./ When boys make a bonfire they do not burn daily papers./ ... / A feather burns. / Indians burn have burned burns./ A boy grows dark./ He can really read better better than another./ I cannot decline a celebration./ Do you remember the Fourth of July.” (417). In one of the only two

references in the book to “Indians,” here the image of burning Indians (a burning begun in some indefinite time in the past and continuing into the present) is adjoined to the celebration of the origins of the United States in its revolutionary war for independence against colonial Britain. The scenes starts, however, in the “missions,” itself put in the context of literacy (“readings” and “daily newspapers”). A “dark” boyhood is put into comparative competition of literacy skills, a boy who can “read better better than another.” A “psychology of nations” seems to include, for Stein, a recognition, if not the celebration, of the destruction of native culture, difference, and life in the service of a cultural homogeneity propagated through institutions of literacy and learning. Both “For the Country Entirely” and “Mexico: A Play” also emphasize the role of education in consolidating national-cultural identity. In Act III, Scene III of the latter, Stein ties pronunciation—“We can pronounce everything” and “How do you pronounce my name”—not simply to pleasure but to instruction: “He teaches English./ Certainly he does./ I would like to teach Spanish./ So would I.” (323). Stein also positions teaching in relation to historical imperial regimes, “Caesar./ Caesar isn’t a name that is not used. I have known that a great many people have it./ Henry Caesar. A class is full and teaching is difficult. They do not understand” (228). “A great many people” is repeated again in a scene of teaching later in the play, “I understand why you are not liked better. A great many people expect you to teach them English. You do so and very well. You might be married and have a wife and son. With these helping you to teach you could teach many more people English” (230). “Some people believe that they will be killed. By this I mean that they delight in teaching./.../ Some teach in the north./ Do not stay away.” (231). Finally, in one of the last pieces written for *Geography & Plays*, “Accents in Alsace. A Reasonable Tragedy,” Stein ties “teaching” to “influence” in a stanza that ends, “You cannot imagine what I think about the country./ Any civilians killed.” (411).

Influence in this sense is not intimate imitation, not the doubling rooted in attentive and pleasurable observing of the Other we first observed in Stein's attempt to configure a communal domestic space. Rather, in the context of the Americas developing culturally and linguistic homogenous nation states which themselves reproduce the imperial tendencies that European settlers sought to distinguish themselves from in their own anticolonial struggles, Stein's vision of citizenship-based mutual intimation and imitation comes across more as the promotion of cultural assimilation of unaligned and unallied native populations. While Stein presents a fantasy "Mexico" on which to project desirous "methods" of mutual respect and public-private pleasures, she also dredges up in her "tracing out" the national bodies of the Americas an anxiety and disavowal of native presence that is solved in the play through the language of imitation and ideologies of literacy-based nationalism. Stein's enthusiasm for a plurality of nationalisms masks an assimilative project that seeks to elevate likeness as a condition of subject-recognition. In a short review of Stein's "Mexico: A Play" on his blog, *The Tijuana Bible of Poetics*, Mexican poet-critic Heriberto Yepez skeptically comments on Stein's vision of Mexico as a space of pleasure and repetition. He writes, "Gertrude Stein was the first Western writer to clone, not write. To clone writing," while also clarifying that "she was thinking of Spain." To look at Stein's poetics of resemblance as cloning acts might be one way of understanding its relationship to anxieties of indigeneity and assimilative impulses, as the text demonstrates pleasure both in national plurality and difference but then too with linguistic dissemination, mimicry, and correction. To see revolutionary Mexico as a generative space of self-realization through internal antagonism is to misrecognize the indigenous forces that defined the conflict, and by extension, to erase native presence from her imagined geography.

CHAPTER 3: ALIEN DOMESTICS: COLONIAL DISPOSSESSION AND GENDERED SPACE IN WILLIAMS'S *THE GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL*

The 2016 film *Paterson* by director Jim Jarmusch is a modern-day narrative homage to the twentieth-century modernism of William Carlos Williams. The film traverses a week in the life of Paterson (played by actor Adam Driver), a bus driver who writes poetry on and off the job around the city of Paterson, New Jersey. This same city, of course, would serve as the basis of Williams's epic-in-verse *Paterson*. The Williams idolized by Driver's character and presented to the audience in recitation at various times in the movie is the Imagist Williams, the Williams of his *Selected Poems*, whose most recognizable poems like "The Red Wheelbarrow" and "This Is Just To Say" offer short, observational description written in common speech, what Williams himself called "American idiom" (*I Wanted to Write*, 65). At first glance, the movie seems to domesticate Williams's radically diverse output across his large body of work by suggesting Driver's character continues the tradition of soft-spoken observational anecdote in free verse to which Williams (by the suggestion of the movie) belonged. Visually, the movie also places Williams within a literary lineage of white male writers whose assemblage into something like a "tradition" might have made sense half a century ago: the camera pans across Paterson's basement toolroom bookshelf to reveal various books of Williams sitting next to those by Poe, Whitman, Jack London, Wallace Stevens, Allen Ginsberg, Frank O'Hara, Kenneth Koch, and David Foster Wallace. If anything, the movie's nostalgia for mid-century modernism seems to be making its own soft-spoken and conservative argument, "Make American Literature Great Again." The appearance of Williams's *Spring and All* (1923) on Paterson's bookshelf is perhaps most surprising, given that the text is often characterized as Williams's most avant-garde textual work, written in a style and aesthetics that perhaps departs the most from the Williams that the

movie *Paterson* idealizes (even though “The Red Wheelbarrow” is pulled from this collection and anthologized repeatedly out of context as exemplary of Williams’s poetic brilliance). Mid-century modernism, the movie seems to be suggesting, is a lost art in need of resuscitation.

There are other details in the movie, however, that perhaps register a greater range of Williams’s aesthetic ambitions and concerns than mere imagistic austerity alone. The movie does, after all, fixate on Williams’s refrain from his own *Paterson*, “no ideas but in things.” In one of the more bizarre scenes in a movie that could otherwise be characterized as “indie-quaint,” Paterson, while out walking his dog, runs into Wu-Tang clan member Method Man at a local laundromat just as he’s composing lines or rap lyrics out loud to himself. His lyric-in-development begins with the lines, “No ideas but in things. Just call me Paul Laurence Dunbar. A paradox of stray shots and gun bars... You millionaires get killed here, I’m slum, dawg.” The two bond briefly over their interest in poetry. Driver refers to the laundromat as Method Man’s “laboratory,” connecting the “experimental” to improvisational craft and so registering the value of “discovery” and “the new” of modernism. Method Man’s own poetics, oriented toward rap or slam poetry, stands in contrast to the verse the viewer has observed Paterson composing earlier in the film, but their brief laundry room camaraderie further points to Williams’s interest in drawing from and mixing various writing genres and styles in his more collage-based writings. Method Man’s reference to turn-of-the-century African American writer Paul Laurence Dunbar offers the movie’s only registering of an alternative tradition of modernism and American literature to that exemplified in Paterson’s personal book collection. Method Man’s borrowing of Williams’s line “no idea but in things” plays up a continuing modernist legacy of appropriation and citation as an aesthetic practice of recontextualizing language in new arrangement.

The movie also goes out of its way to celebrate “newness” as a condition of aesthetic

value, but that emphasis is woven into the narrative in moments that don't always have to do with writing verse. Paterson's wife, Laura (played by Golshifteh Farahani) is similarly represented as an individual with artistic and creative ambitions who expresses her imagination through paint, music, and baking; though almost all of her screen time is contained within the suburban house in which the pair live. In contrast to Paterson, whose work as an artist is tied to his being mobile at the head of his bus as he encounters various urban and natural landscapes through the bus window and, too, pieces of speech that originate from the people occupying seats behind him, Laura's inspiration is drawn solely from her domestic setting from which, except for one scene, she never departs. Her art practice is divided between creating new visual or musical or culinary "experiments" and her recreating (through paint and redecoration) the house's interior. In the scene immediately before Paterson meets Method Man, Laura surprises Paterson as he returns home after finishing a bus driving shift, "I'll get dinner ready. We're having something new." Laura puts a plate of food in front of Paterson who sits at the table asking hesitantly, "What is it?" to which Laura replies, "Quinoa! It's like a grain, sort of like couscous, but different. I read that it came from the Ancient Incas. And it's really good for you." "Oh," Paterson replies, unenthusiased. Here, the reference to "Ancient Incas" and the transmission, or appropriation, of their cultural knowledges is not merely random or incidental. The scene attempts to capture in a few brief lines an element of Williams's writing that concerned itself explicitly with indigenous American life, European colonization, and the development of culture. The movie gets something wrong, however, regarding Williams's interest in indigeneity. In Jarmusch's tribute to modernism, indigeneity is registered as valuable ("good for you") in so far as it's received or appropriated as a distant and disembodied cultural knowledge ("ancient"), and particularly when that appropriation contributes to defining and reinforcing the complimentary

value in domestic space (the home is understood here as a metonym for the nation). Williams, however, was more complicated in his approach to colonial history. This chapter intends to investigate how Williams, in his book *The Great American Novel*, implicated constructions of bourgeois domesticity in the continuation of U.S. colonial and imperial violence. At least in this book, Williams interrogates his own nonnarrative art practice for its capacity to represent an anticolonial American cultural tradition opposed to popular media forms of national identity narration. His search for an aesthetics of “the new” insists on negotiating the past-obliterating demands of industrial capitalism with historical narratives of America that begin with colonial “first contact” in “the New World.” “Home,” understood as a class-based site of colonial national identity reproduction, becomes for Williams a space to contest competing narratives of past and future.

From its inception, the idea of modernism developed in relation not only to an idea of aesthetic ingenuity popularly expressed as a fixation on “the new” and with newness in cultural and historical terms, but also in relation to the history and legacies of colonialism. In his book *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Matei Calinescu traces the concept of aesthetic modernism back to the emergence of “modernity” in the Christian Middle Ages of Europe where the idea of the modern first emerges in the context of the “Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns.” As Calinescu notes, “the idea of modernity could be conceived only within the framework of a specific time awareness, namely that of *historical time*, linear and irreversible, flowing irresistibly onwards. Modernity as a notion would be utterly meaningless in a society that has no use for the temporal-sequential concept of history” (13). Equally important is the emphasis not simply on time but on differentiating occupants of time. Modernity in Europe at this time served as a concept that configured a perceived difference

between those living in contemporary time (“men of today”) and those having lived in antiquity (in Latin, that which was “classic” similarly evoked a distinction among people—“classic” denoted the “first class” among Roman citizens). In this way, it is perhaps less surprising that Calinescu locates the first approving and self-designating instance of “modernism” (or more properly, *el modernismo*) in the writings of Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario in the 1890s. Calinescu adds, “There is nearly unanimous consent among literary historians of the Hispanic world that the birth of *movimiento modernista* in Latin America has... the significance of a declaration of cultural independence of South America. The spirit of Dario’s modernism clearly implied a downright rejection of Spain’s cultural authority” (69). Modernism, then, rises out of, at least in part, the performance of anticolonial cultural agency. If the concept of modernity emerges in the context of a temporal break with earlier ages, modernism, then, emerges in the context of a particularly spatial historical break with the colonizing presence of European authorities, as though to say, “no longer are you tolerated, here!”

The significance of Dario’s *modernismo* in its declaring “cultural independence” from Europe, however, has been interpreted differently among critics, typically debated in terms of the “new world” modernism’s reliance on Eurocentric discourse and aesthetic form. Hispanic modernism scholar Iris Zavala registers both sides of this divide when she remarks on Dario, “[His book] *Blue (Azul, 1888)*, published in Chile—which a century later, in 1989, Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal called ‘the beginning of a revolution which is still going on’...—stands as a powerful heteroglotic cultural text of Latin American modernity... seeking to overcome the cultural domination and one-sidedness of Spanish hegemony” (77). While she argues that many of his modernist tropes are “generated in an interaction of languages and cultures experienced as indigenous,” she also concedes the writer’s “highly controversial appropriation” of

contemporaneous European aesthetic practices (77). Similar critical attention has been aimed at the modernist writing of Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade, whose 1928 “Manifesto Antropofago” (often translated as “Cannibal Manifesto”), points to ritualized cannibalism of the Tupi Indians of Brazil as a metaphor for Brazil’s larger cultural appropriation and transformation of European postcolonial culture. As in his earlier 1924 “Manifesto of da Poesia Pau-Brasil” (or “Brazilwood Poetry Manifesto”), Andrade’s objection to the importation and imitation of European aesthetic models offers in its place a gestural (gestational) incorporation of international artistic lineages, where “Brazilian cultural production becomes both native and cosmopolitan” (Bary 35). Elsewhere, Kimberle S. Lopez, in her essay “*Modernismo* and the Ambivalence of the Postcolonial Experience: Cannibalism, Primitivism, and Exoticism in Mario de Andrade’s *Macunaima*,” comments more broadly on the Brazilian Modernist movement when she suggests, “it strives to define a Brazilian identity by incorporating popular speech and indigenous myths, but also seeks to create a cosmopolitan literature for international export. Modernism, in turn, exemplifies the more general paradox of the inherent ambiguity of the colonial and postcolonial situations overall, in which expressions of cultural autonomy necessarily borrow discursive practices from the metropolis” (Lopez 25). This all suggests that borrowing, incorporating, and appropriating, while not unique to modernist cultural practice, are nevertheless foundational and defining preoccupations of modernist art, both formalist and sociological, that presented aesthetic possibilities with which to address, confront, and represent anti- and postcolonial experience. The interrelation of “transculturation” and aesthetic acts of appropriation in modernist art objects becomes, perhaps, differently complex but no less central when one moves from the Latino modernisms of South America to the Anglo-modernisms produced and circulated in the United States, as a rising cultural imperialist power in the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A discussion of appropriation as an intentional aesthetic strategy by artists read in the context of modernism must necessarily engage an important though familiar narrative regarding colonialism and primitivism. The history of European modernism's appropriative and exploitative uses of subaltern, nonmetropole, and/or second- and third-world cultural artifacts and racialized bodies has been critically documented—African masks in Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, the Tahitian body in Gauguin, dialect writing and black face in Vachel Lindsay, to cite some canonical examples. Across various modernist art practices, it bears repeating, critics continue to identify the recurring modernist/racist fantasy of locating a resuscitative cultural energy in the spaces and bodies of cultural Others set against the perceived degradation and sterility of a cosmopolitan bourgeoisie under industrial capitalism, perhaps most emblematically represented in what T.S. Eliot designates "the Waste Land." Writing on the problematic appropriation of African cultural traditions and primitivism in European modernism, especially the way in which it excludes direct engagement with African cultures and subjects in order to secure an aesthetic "purity" of modernist form, Simon Gikandi points to a "paradox that runs throughout the history of modernism, the fact that almost without exception the Other is considered to be part of the narrative of modern art yet not central enough to be considered constitutive" ("Picasso" 457). Gikandi's primary example of Picasso's work appropriating African masks and iconography—what he sees as an abstracting of Africanness removed from specific embodied African subjects—is a convincing frame with which to understand a great bulk of modernist works that incorporated as source materials objects derived from geographically dispersed sites of cultural production. We might ask, however, whether or not, or in what way, Gikandi's claim applies to those American works of early- to mid-modernism that

sought to redefine an alternative historical lineage for American art in the cultures of populations indigenous to the continent. The matter of defining an alternative historical lineage changes only slightly the modernist practitioners' appropriation of indigenous cultures as it pays lip service to an act of national inclusion in a way that, for example, Gauguin's appropriation of Tahitian bodies did not. What would be the connection, or dissonance, between a constitutive Otherness and a modernist aesthetic practice in search not of distant cultural objects of inspiration but rather "native" cultural origins, the problems of primitivism and imperialism notwithstanding?

For instance, one way the primitivist trope of cultural origins appears in American modernist texts is in the holding up of pre-contact civilizational cultures that represented (to these modernists) alternative cultural legacies to the inheritance of European art histories with which American artists felt themselves to be in direct competition or under pressure to authorize. In the United States, under the context of a twentieth-century surge in literary nationalism that sought to assert itself as superior to and autonomous from those European aesthetic legacies, the upholding of American Indian culture became a refrain with which to ground ironically nativist accounts of cultural renewal. American modernist interpretations of Aztec, Maya, Navajo, and Inca cultures and traditions, appropriated and reimagined through urban art institutions and modernist architectural projects, boasted native "revitalizations" in the U.S. and were seen as potential sites of nativist American histories and cultural nationalisms that contemporary urban artists could draw from and appropriate freely in the construction of new art forms, historical narratives, and national/continental difference from Europe (Delpar 92). This development would continue to evolve well into the 1960s, evidenced in the poetic texts of Charles Olson and his work on and in the Yucatan peninsula,⁴⁵ until the moment of aesthetic modernism's transition

⁴⁵ For an example of recent criticism that reads Olson's time in Mexico through the lens of U.S. imperialism, see Heriberto Yopez's *The Empire of Neomemory*.

into “postmodernism” when the logic of such nationalist legacies and cultural revivification were rendered redundant in late capitalism’s cultural emphasis on free play, identity consumption, and cultural relativism.⁴⁶

The modernist writings of William Carlos Williams are not exceptional in this regard, and perhaps nowhere more evident than in his account of the historical origins and development of the United States, *In the American Grain*. His first book published with a commercial publisher in 1923, *In the American Grain* has been compared to other early 20th century “radical reassessments of American literature” and history, alongside more canonical documents of the period, such as Waldo Frank’s *Our America* (1919) and D. H. Lawrence’s *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923) (Breslin 88). Williams organizes the book’s chapters around “heroic” historical individuals (Columbus, De Soto, Daniel Boone, Lincoln, etc.) and assesses their influence upon the trajectory of American culture according to Williams’s revisionary values. Typical of the book’s attitude toward an historical individualism of “great men” (*ITAG*, 121), Williams writes in the chapter on George Washington, “[he] was ninety percent of the force which made of the American Revolution a successful issue. Know of what that force consisted, that is, the intimate character of its makeup, that is, Washington himself, and you will know practically all there is to understand about the beginnings of the American Republic” (40). Grounded in an expansive archive of historical texts that he freely borrows from to write the book, Williams quotes without citation, revises or extends large textual passages, forges imaginative voicings and interior monologue where none exist in the source texts, and imaginatively fleshes out these historical documents. Another poetic liberty Williams takes in the book is to look beyond strict national boundaries in order to tell his history of the nation. In its account of the long history of the continent and its various “contacts” between native inhabitants

⁴⁶ See Jameson, *Postmodernism*.

and outsiders, Williams's narrative is notable for its inclusion of the Viking Red Eric in Greenland, Samuel de Champlain in French Quebec, and Montezuma, with his defense of Tenochtitlán against the colonizer Cortez, as significant figures in "American history"—broadening its geographical horizons to include a more hemispheric, continental depiction of national-cultural origin and development rooted in various European colonialisms. At a time when U.S. desires for territorial expansion of its borders are being debated publicly, Williams fortifies expansionary desires by broadening the historical geography that feeds into a native "culture" that Williams is attempting to define or give voice to in the book's tracing of origins.

In revisiting narratives of "first contact" and the initial inscriptions of "discovery" within "The New World," Williams represents colonial European encounter and exchange with indigenous populations as a central and recurring imaginary throughout his text. Inasmuch as Williams both critiques and celebrates various historical narratives within his configuration of national-cultural origin, fantasies of occupation, possession and dispossession, and appropriation become somewhat explicit. In his account of Daniel Boone as exceptional hero of the frontier, for example, Williams writes, "among all the colonists, like an Indian, the ecstasy of complete possession of the new country was his alone" and shortly after, "If the land were to be possessed it must be as the Indian possessed it. Boone saw the truth of the Red Man, not an aberrant type, treacherous and anti-white to be feared and exterminated, but as a natural expression of the place" (137-38). In both instances, possession is imagined as a competitive joint venture between colonizer and native, or else, possession of the land is figured as the means through which identity with the indigenous Other becomes possible. The fantasy in both instances is further strained by imagining that territorial possession for the colonizer could be "indian-like" despite the obvious discord between identity and difference that such an act of *dispossession* necessarily

forms. In other words, land dispossession can be seen in this logic as a mark of identity between colonist and native, and in that identity the antagonistic force of white supremacy is erased, and so the native can be perceived as other than “anti-white” and so something to be obliterated. I want to mark here (as something to return to later below) that Williams is engaged in thinking about the history of the European colonizing project in the Americas as an explicitly racial project, and so as a problem he is attempting to address or escape.

The significance of Williams’s representation of native populations in the early colonization of the continent, particular the chapter on Columbus in “The Discovery of the Indies,” the chapter on De Soto in “De Soto and the New World,” and the chapter on Cortez and Montezuma, entitled “The Destruction of Tenochtitlan,” has been debated. In his book *Refiguring America: A Study of William Carlos Williams’s “In the American Tree,”* Bryce Conrad praises Williams’s historicizing of a national literary aesthetic. “In [Williams’s] writing,” Conrad writes, “an evolution of American literary form begins as an involution, a descent back to origins” (66), and he finds in this “descent” Williams’s critique of “the historian’s imperative to identify one set of events as the consequences of a preceding set of occurrences” (66). This reaching backwards, coupled with Williams’s modification and alteration to source text, especially in imaginatively voicing native responses to colonial presence, leads Conrad to claim that “Williams finds the key to American language in the power of speech to disrupt the fixity of writing... by which Williams regeneratively disorders the inscriptions of the expedition’s chroniclers... a brilliant polyglossal display of voices created, simulated, appropriated, juxtaposed” (144). It is telling that Conrad does not take up the fact that these “voices” do not “belong” to the native populations being represented in the text but are instead Williams’s own constructs. Williams’s modernist prose aesthetic, in Conrad’s estimation, challenges Eurocentric

chronicles of cultural origin and as such opens textual space to reevaluate the shortcomings of a singular trajectory of literary development, one capable of “simulating” and “appropriating” contestatory native presence.

In contrast, there are many critics who have been reluctant to adopt, if not been antagonistic to, Conrad’s praise of Williams as a meaningful source of alternative historiographies of American identity. Largely, these critics have interpreted Williams’s writing on American history as extensions of colonialist and white supremacist erasure of indigenous culture and resistance. A look at a few examples can suggest a range of ways that some have emphasized race, indigeneity, and colonialism as contexts for reading the significant shortcomings of Williams’s texts. Adam Lifshey’s evaluation of *In The American Grain*, critiqued in a chapter of his book *Specters of Conquest: Indigenous Absence in Transatlantic Literatures*, delivers a typically skeptical assessment of the book. Lifshey sees that, on the surface, Williams’s modernist historical narrative appears “radically idiosyncratic” (11) compared to “traditional” sources of historical narrative. Partially echoing Conrad’s take, Lifshey claims that Williams “seeks to evoke the United States as not a nation-state so much as a narrative outcome of a polyphonous New World and the ocean crossings that lead to it” (10). Lifshey further grants that in his broadening of “American” history to include imperial projects in Central America and the Caribbean, Williams suggests an flexible historical lineage and legacy that “transcend[s] distinctions in language and national origin” (10). But this is as far as Lifshey is able to go toward crediting Williams with anything like an advance in historical representational strategy. His first, minor critique begins by pointing out that Williams fails to extend the histories of these “New World” hemispheric encounters beyond “discovery scenes.” For Lifshey, Williams’s “bypassing” Latin American counterparts to chapters on Washington

and Lincoln—making no reference to Simon Bolivar or Benito Juarez, for example—denies these spaces and their inhabitants a competing or complementary claim to modernity and transnational identity-making. More damning, for Lifshy, is the way Williams not only appropriates but revises or edits freely the source texts to suit his modernist search for literary national origins.

Lifshy's book-length project begins by defining American national identity as a colonial process of textualizing the experiences of territorial appropriation and native encounter. He defines "America" "not as a particular country or continent or hemisphere but as a reiterating foundational narrative in which a conqueror arrives at a shore determined to overwrite local versions of humanity, culture, ecology, and landscape with inscriptions of its own design," but he adds, "this imposition of foreign textualities... is never fully successful" (1). One way that overwriting foreign inscription fails, Lifshy argues, is in the way that indigenous populations manage to elude and frustrate inscription and textual representation altogether. Lifshy emphasizes historical strategies of agential self-removal, disappearance, and withdrawal from the inscribing gaze of colonizing actors, understood as a form of "spectral resistance" (8). Lifshy makes the case that this withdrawal can be registered as disembodied presence, or haunting "specters," in the Eurocentric historical archive, such as the Columbus journals. Turning to Williams, Lifshy compares indigenous absence in the historical records of Columbus's voyage to Williams's revisionary appropriations of these source texts in his chapter "The Discovery of the Indies." While noting how, in the actual source documents, native individuals "turn Columbus and his readers into helpless witnesses of indigenous absences rather than policers of aboriginal presence," he critiques Williams's erasure of these absences in his revisions, where "unresisting" natives "avail themselves as submissive to the space of the foreigners" (34). Noting

how Williams foists indigenous presence where none exists in the source documents, Lifshey charges Williams with the colonizing fantasy of sequestering indigenous embodiment “into a script of colonization,” a script whose power derives from the “incarnation” of indigenous bodies (36). For Lifshey, then, Williams’s revisionist modernist aesthetic, with its appropriations and revisions of historical archive, reiterates a colonial fantasy about controlling native opposition to Eurocentric narrative representation while fudging the historical records which had preserved an earlier failure to “incarnate” indigenous populations.

Other critics have looked at Williams’s representations of Native Americans in *In the American Grain* as an engagement with national identity construction rooted in exceptionalist expressions of aesthetic materiality. In *Our America*, Walter Benn Michaels offers Williams’s text as an example of a “nativist modernism,” a style of writing that reproduces, in self-emphasizing its own aesthetic materiality and opacity, the logics of American nativism, with its assertion of absolute identity and racial pluralism. He writes, “the modernist commitment to the materiality of the poem requires above all that the poem be itself, which is to say that it locates the poem’s value in its identity and so in its difference from anything else. Just as in nativism the goal of the American is to be American, in Williams’s modernism the goal of the American poet is to produce American poetry” (83). He further points to Williams’s criticisms of Eliot (as a self-conscious mirroring of Poe’s critique of Longfellow) as an attack against the plagiarism of European writing styles or inheritances. Michaels writes, “Their plagiarism consists in a betrayal of originality... and a betrayal of materiality... both of which are understood by Williams as betrayals of nationality.” Finally, Michaels insists that modernist originality for Williams requires a “genealogy” which positions Native American history as “abstract” material whose impenetrability justifies (white) America’s own nativist propensity. Of Williams, Michaels

concludes, “his writing is American not because it represents American subjects (‘the Indians, the forests, the great natural beauty of the New World’ [*ITAG*, 227]) but because it *is* American, it’s made ‘of original fibre.’ In order to be ‘Indianlike,’ the writer must make no likenesses of Indians, he must devote himself to ‘WRITING’” (Michaels 85).

In “William Carlos Williams and the New World,” Jeff Webb similarly takes up the issue of national identity and Native materiality in *In the American Grain*. In his opening section entitled “The Corpses of Dead Indians,” Webb suggests that Native corporeality and death serves as the foundation of Williams’s poetic configuration of a “new” American identity. He puts it this way, “The ‘New World type’ is therefore an identity defined not by ‘blood’ but by the spilling of blood, specifically in resisting assimilation by European culture” (Webb 66). Like Michaels, Webb locates in the presence of native death in Williams the grounds for a claimed “originality” in Williams’s writing, “Indian corpses neither copy the land nor have the land in their blood. Their relation to the land thus surpasses in ‘authenticity’... the relation achieved by representation... authentic because it is not really a relation at all, but an identity... Indian corpses enjoy an identity with themselves” (66-67). However, Webb adds, the emphasis not simply on human corpses but on *Indian* corpses contradicts this contained self-identity as it insists on the socio-historical relation of racial signification. This contradiction structures the entirety of *In the American Grain*, according to Webb, insisting, “The Indian corpse, then, is ultimately a figure not for identity but for the failure of identity in an America in which race is unavoidable because representation (and therefore classification) is unavoidable” (67). Webb, like Michaels, also attempts to contrast the issue of imitation and authenticity in racial terms with reference to “the language of minstrelsy,” which, according to Webb, “from William’s perspective [...] is an essential model for how to write, like Poe, from ‘deep roots’ (*ITAG* 213).

White American writers are thus able to mean nothing only when they write ‘like an Indian’ or do ‘something similar’ to the ‘Negro’s’ ‘saying *nothing*.’ The material ‘*something*’ produced by modernist self-reference is specifically American only when it derives from the author’s own racial ‘SOMETHIN’” (83).

A dominant assumption inherent to each of these accounts of race, materiality, and representations of Native Americans in Williams’s writing is that the racial identity of William Carlos Williams is white. Tellingly, Michaels compares Williams’s aesthetic pursuit of “indigenous” “American forms” to the writings of American eugenicist and klanman Lothrop Stoddard, who writes in 1927, “We are to-day evolving a whole series of distinctively American forms which truly express the national spirit... culturally, as well as racially and spiritually, alienism is being slowly mastered” (qtd. 83-84). Similarly, Webb attempts to account for the failure of Williams “identifying the Indian and Negro as examples of racial primitivism” (84) by insisting that “what makes American writing distinctively American for Williams is the writer’s attempt, on the racial model of the Indian and the Negro, to ‘annihilate’ the living corpses of past texts by consuming and transforming them according to the ‘naturalism’ of his or her own race” (84). By contrast, when constructing an account of the presence and value of Native Americans in his work, I think it’s important to complicate that assumption in light of various published accounts of how Williams experienced his own racial identity, experiences which make a quick categorizing of Williams as white overly simplistic, least of which being Williams’s Puerto Rican heritage. More precisely, I am not asserting here that Williams be read outside the category of racial whiteness, but that we do well to recognize the ways that Williams was racialized variously throughout his lifetime, to recognize that he wrote about these experiences, and to entertain the idea that the various ways Williams was racialized may have shaped his

thinking and writing about (white) European colonialism, Native American history, and national identity.

One starting point in thinking about Williams and racialization would be an often quoted exchange between Williams and Ezra Pound in a letter written by Pound in 1917. In this letter, Pound famously challenges, even if in the spirit of friendly sparring, Williams's American identity.⁴⁷ This challenge trades heavily on xenophobic, racist, and chauvinist tropes to undermine Williams's national belonging. In that letter, Pound writes, "And America? What the hell do you a bloomin foreigner know about the place? Your pere only penetrated the edge, and you've never been west... you, an effete Easterner, as a REAL American? INCONCEIVABLE!!!!" Pound's emasculating tropes in the text begin with the the letter's salutation, "My dear William: At what date did you join the ranks of the old ladies?" Later in the letter, Pound emphasized blood as Williams's key distinguishing feature, the feature which most betrays Williams's "foreignness," writing, "You have the naive credulity of a Co. Claire immigrant. But I (der grosse Ich) have the virus, the bacillus of the land in my blood, for nearly three bleating centuries... I was very glad to see your wholly incoherent unAmerican poems in the *L.R.* ... (You thank your bloomin gawd you've got enough Spanish blood to muddy up your mind, and prevent the current American ideation from going through it like a blighted colander). The thing that saves your work is *opacity*, and don't you forget it. Opacity is NOT an American quality" ("Selected Letters" 123-24).

⁴⁷ It's worth noting the "fun" Pound is having at his friend's expense in this exchange, as earlier in the letter Pound identifies with Williams directly as a fellow American, "I had no ulterior or hidden meaning in calling you or the imaginary correspondent an 'American' author. Still, what the hell else are you? I mean apart from being a good citizen, a good fellow (in your better moments), a grouch, a slightly hypersensitized animal, etc.?? Wot bloody kind of author are you save Amurkun (same as me)?" (Pound 123). To me, this doesn't change the effect of the exchange in its emphasis on race and gender as the basis of Pound's barbs against Williams and his national identity. While Pound might indeed be celebrating and reaffirming his and Williams's "Americanness," he simultaneously racializes Williams in his equating Williams's "Spanish blood" with "mud" and "opacity."

Other critics have interpreted Williams's writing through the context of his Puerto Rican heritage. Perhaps most sustainedly, in his book-length project *The Spanish American Roots of William Carlos Williams*, Julio Marzán, employing both materialist and psychoanalytic readings, argues that we can detect a lifelong identity struggle in Williams's writing between his tendency to publicly portray himself as white (a self-representation Marzán refers to as the "Bill persona"), and his tendency to repress or downplay his Latino roots (the "Carlos" counter-persona). While the book's discussion of Williams's racial self-identity is largely grounded in Williams's family history, his upbringing in a Spanish-speaking household, and his relationship to Puerto Rico (including his two trips to the island in 1941 and 1956), it also highlights several moments in Williams's *Autobiography* that demonstrate the various ways that Williams is racialized (or "read" in racial terms) by others in his company, and Williams's own self-awareness of those outside perceptions and identifications. For example, Marzán points to Williams work in Manhattan at the French Hospital following his completion of medical school. The French Hospital served almost exclusively French- and Spanish-speaking immigrants and Williams was hired, in part, for his serviceable capability in both languages. Marzán combs Williams's autobiography and personal letters to recreate an environment during that time of his life where he and his family were sharply aware of the anti-Latino sentiments that gripped New York and the country as a whole. Supporting that suggestion, Marzán looks at Williams account of a co-worker at the French Hospital who, upon *seeing* Williams for the first time and perceiving a racial identity not apparent in Williams's last name, accuses Williams of racial nepotism, that Williams got the hospital job not on the basis of merit but on "family connections." Marzán interprets this encounter to mean that in the context of a work environment predominantly run by Latino medical staff, Williams "was taken for Carlos" (28). He further constellates several of

Williams's personal letters where he describes the difficult time his Puerto Rican mother had adjusting to social life on the continent in New Jersey, that, in Williams's own words, he viewed his mother as a "foreigner" "in a new world... among an unsympathetic people who were often hostile" toward her (qtd. in Marzán 29).

While primarily figurative, Williams's use of "a new world" to characterize his mother's newly adopted home has overtones of anti-colonial sentiment triggered by the context of his work at The French Hospital. The founder and head of residence of the hospital, Dr. Julio José Henna, who was a friend of the Williams family and was, in fact, responsible for bringing Williams on board as staff, was also a Puerto Rican independence fighter who participated in organizing a an 1868 rebellion on the island. Comparing him to Cuban freedom fighter and literary figure Jose Martí, Henna's contemporary, Marzán places Henna at the center of a large network of Puerto Rican and Cuban radicals in New York City who organized anti-imperialist and anticolonial movements across the hemisphere. In 1907, Henna brought Williams as a guest to the Spanish-American club for a New Years Eve party. That same year, Henna also arranged to have Williams accompany one of the hospital's older and wealthier Mexican patients by train back to Mexico to live his remaining days because of advanced complications due to pneumonia, both to watch over his ailing body but also to provide conversational comfort. While Williams's own account of this trip into Mexico emphasizes his anxiety about being a *gringo* among suspicious Mexicans, Marzán suggests that this autobiographical account is largely a textual construction and a public ruse to fortify the "Bill persona" and that the trip points more readily toward an Hispanic, transnational solidarity among the doctors and patients of the French Hospital (Marzán points out that the patient insisted that Williams travel with him not just to the end of the line in Loredo, but to cross the border into Mexico with him, and that Williams was

invited into the home of the dying Mexican once they arrived, details that contradict Williams's characterization of the man and his family as distrusting). Paul Mariani's biography, *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked*, also suggests that this trip to Mexico was an early and formative, if not first, experience of Williams with anti-U.S. imperialism and a sense of a hemispheric ("new world") American identity that (62). The point here is that critical assessments of Williams's historical writing in *In the American Grain* which frame his work within a binary of white-colonizer and indigenous-colonized miss his proximity to anti-imperial and anticolonial organizing in New York City as well as his racialization as nonwhite in various biographical contexts. Attending to those experiences can invite a more complicated consideration of what Williams is attempting in his representations of colonial encounter and indigenous presence, absence, and resistance; something I will attempt below.

In all of those critical assessments which seek to unpack Williams's use of textual appropriation as an aesthetic strategy to re-write American historical narratives, perhaps what's striking is the nearly non-existent presence of William Carlos Williams's first book of prose writing, *The Great American Novel*, as a substantive point of reference or comparison – striking because many of the New World "discovery scenes" and historical subjects depicted in *In the American Grain* also appear in *The Great American Novel*, published two years prior and making use of many of the same source documents. Both of these prose texts deal explicitly with the nation's colonial beginnings and, in markedly different ways, position colonial contact as a significant, even if violent, precursor to American culture generally, and to the development of modernist aesthetics in particular. In the few cases where *The Great American Novel* is mentioned in relation to *In the American Grain*, it is usually to suggest that the scenes as they appear in the former book were prototypes, or draft work for the more developed and "mature"

historical work of the latter.⁴⁸ Commenting on how the subsequent text evolved more effectively from the former, Conrad writes, “*The Great American Novel* had relentlessly attacked the very nature of prose narrative to evolve stories from set beginnings, constantly doubling back upon itself in a torturous search to discover the beginning. Williams perfects that movement in ‘De Soto and the New World,’ [a chapter from *In the American Grain*] leading De Soto back to a beginning at the end [of the chapter] by deconstructing De Soto’s own attempt to impose an evolutionary narrative upon America” (66). Here, the suggestion of a technique “perfected,” especially one characterized by an assault on prose narrative, enacts a strained comparison. In looking at this, or any, of the shared texts and themes between the two novels, I find it hard to conclude that *In the American Grain* develops or “perfects” aesthetic techniques of historical representation given that the two texts read and perform differently – and that their difference is formal and rather stark.

It’s true, as Conrad points out, that there are several chapters in *In the American Grain* which use various literary devices aimed at thwarting linear or “evolutionary” narratives, and by extension that challenge a linear and causal understanding of historical development, the De Soto chapter being one of them. Another, “The Discovery of the Indies,” sets the diary entries of Columbus’s voyage in reverse, where the chapter begins with Columbus returning to Spain in old age and ends with excerpts of Columbus’s early journal entries that describe the general hopelessness and fatigue of the crew just prior to “first contact.” Williams was particularly satisfied with this narrative reversal and made that known in several of his correspondences to friends and editors (Conrad 67). And yet, the book itself follows a relatively chronological ordering of individual historical figures represented in each chapter. The literary devices

⁴⁸ There is at least one account of *The Great American Novel* that, uniquely, sees it as an aesthetic “prefiguration” of the poems collected in *Spring and All*. Still, the emphasis follows the trend of valuing the book as draft and prefiguration. See Holsapple 122.

mentioned above reassert a thematic emphasis on an origin-less encounter between the American “personality” and the fact of the “New World,” or as Williams otherwise puts it, “The New World presses on us all; there seems no end to it – and no beginning” (*ITAG* 70). But despite this thematic, the writing itself does not interrupt the reader’s sense of time within the structure of the text. The reader advances as easily through the chronology of chapters of “great” individuals as within each chapter itself. While Williams may wield a thematic of circularity and lost origins in “deconstructive” terms as Conrad interprets the text, it’s significant that the “beginning” of the book starts not on the continent but with migrating Europeans moving into an already peopled territory. The book understands beginnings, then, in colonial terms even where it attempts to re-write how that origin story is to be told.

Similarly, where source text has been used in developing a depiction of specific individuals, Williams incorporates those texts rather skillfully to avoid any jarring or notable distinctions between those texts and his own poetic renderings or elaborations. Without the source text in hand, it’s not always easy for a reader to detect where those textual borrowings begin or end in the context of Williams’s own fictional writing. If, on the one hand, the “origins” of these texts have been deliberately obscured, that the sources themselves are buried and in need of retrieving, there is, on the other hand, in those very suturing operations the erasure of new beginnings (the point at which original author’s work and appropriated source text remain distinct from each other) in the service of grammatical continuity and conjunction. This move makes the chapters read more like expressive vignettes, character sketches, than writing in traditionally academic historical writing where citational references stop and start the historian’s own discourse. In fact, it is precisely Williams’s construction of a discursive homogeneity that his act of intertextuality is difficult to perceive, and why poetic plagiarism may be the term best

suited to his method here. In this way, to clarify the point I'm making above, each chapter in *In the American Grain* depicts a scenario, a small story, where something *happens* or is narrated—in effect each chapter contains a short plot. While Williams attempts in some (and only some) of those chapters to disrupt historical commonplaces through his use of narrative devices (and here I'm drawing on the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky's distinction between narrative (“syuzhet”) and plot (“fabula”)), there is never any real difficulty for the reader in ascertaining what is happening or what's being narrated, the underlying plot in effect. What *is* difficult to perceive are the beginning and end points of Williams' textual appropriations.

By contrast, Williams wrote *The Great American Novel* using an entirely different set of literary devices and nonnarrative strategies. Its use of textual parataxis and displacement is stark in comparison to *In the American Grain*. The presence of appropriated source text is not sutured artfully into Williams's own constructed voice, but rather appears clearly as text that is alien, not belonging, from someone or somewhere else. While none have puzzled over the presentation or form of the chapters of *In the American Grain*, critics have spilled enough ink trying to describe or define just what exactly *The Great American Novel* is in terms of genre, including Williams himself, who opaquely describes his first published novel as “a travesty on what I considered conventional American writing” (*IWTW* 38). Placing it in the context of other modernist works, particularly Dada and their heralding of the concept of anti-art, Webster Schott in his introduction to the book's later New Directions edition classifies *The Great American Novel* as the first American “anti-novel” and further describes it as “plotless, hostile to the tradition of the novel, hung up on problems of language and time, indifferent to the attention span of its readers” before warning that “[it] requires functional devotion to Williams to read the book once” (155). While both books thematize and explore the historical fact of colonial dispossession in relation to

new, modernist representations of American life, *The Great American Novel* foregrounds its textual appropriations whereas *In The American Grain* makes those textual borrowings much more covert and difficult to parse.

Put otherwise, the “difficulty” of the former text relates meaningfully to how Williams has made visible the intertextual appropriations of his writing, whereas the implantation of displaced text in the latter is not offered to the reader as a troubling feature of its narratives, but rather is presented merely as history. It’s curious, especially in the criticism of Webb and Michaels, that accounts of Williams’s nationalism or nativism that fixate on the materiality of modernist text do not include, let alone center, *The Great American Novel*, which, compared to *In The American Grain*, is by far the more nonnarrative, “opaque,” and difficult of the two books. In light of Williams’s working through an understanding of modernism’s relation to colonialism in both of these books, the difference is crucial. Furthermore, the criticism of Webb and Michaels both restrict Williams’s concerns about “plagiarism” to notions of imitation and authenticity (which help their arguments about identity and race where Williams’s own racial identity is prefigured). Lost in this restrictive account is the element of theft, taking, and dispossession in the plagiarist’s act. Because both *In The American Grain* and *The Great American Novel* center explicitly around colonial acts of territorial dispossession, and that anxieties of theft and thieving repeatedly appear in those writings, it’s a curious omission in both critics’ arguments. Furthermore, unlike *In The American Grain*, Williams’s *The Great American Novel* includes in its scenes of “American” history representations of contemporaneous indigenous resistance to colonial-capitalist state formation as recorded in U.S. and British testimonials of private property loss in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution. What I want to argue below is that, as a kind of response to the Pound letter which challenges Williams national

belonging on the grounds of race and masculinity, Williams attempts to reclaim and redraw lines of American identity rooted in racialized and gendered representations of resistance to appropriation. In his anti-novel, Williams is exploring aesthetic modernism as a way to resist historical narrative and its capacity to dissolve ongoing colonial antagonisms into a series of beginnings and endings. In *The Great American Novel*, the emphasis on theft and breakage gives Williams space to consider his own relationship to the legacy of colonial white supremacy.

Instead of fixating right away on representations of historical figures of American colonialism in *The Great American Novel* (as is often the entry point into critiques of *In the American Grain*), it may be more useful to enter Williams's text through its own opening paragraphs in order to recognize the points of focus Williams gathers there and that pervade the entirety of the text from beginning to end. It is not with images of American heroism or colonial encounter that preface his *The Great American Novel*, but rather images and configurations of place, progress, and possession. In the first chapter of *The Great American Novel*, Williams establishes several of his central fixations in the book, including the ambiguity of "newness" in relation to historical progress and to already established and inherited literary forms. Williams begins the novel tying "the new" to literary genre in the opening sentence, "If there is progress then there is a novel" (158). In the first couple of pages of Williams's text, however, this affirmation of linear development is undercut in two different ways: in the occasional use of agrammatical sentence constructions which resist linear-grammatical readings, and in the recurring temporal markers found across the chapter, perhaps most apparent where Williams writes, "Heat and no wind all day long better say hot September. The year has progressed. Up one street down another. It is still September. Down one street, up another. Still September. Yesterday was the twenty-second. Today is the twenty-first" (158). The repetition and temporal

reversals evident in this passage perform against linear temporality, as Williams demonstrates the capacity of narrative sequencing to disrupt the reader's own sense of "plot development" in his temporal stallings. The prose, even in this short quotation, is *disorienting*—an experience anticipated in the passage's complimentary spatial representations of moving "up one street down another." We are wandering, if not lost, in the text's opening. In the context of the quotidian and familiar (calendar time, the weather, an autumn walk), we are made to feel estranged from the setting. In Williams's opening setting, defining progress as nonlinearity has made space strange, and so has made a strange place.

In the strange place which serves as setting for *The Great American Novel*, Williams frames disorientation in terms of possession. He writes in the opening paragraph, "I saw nameless grasses— I tapped the earth with my knuckle. It sounded hollow. It was dry as rubber" (158). The terrain in Williams's strange place is beyond the speaker's capacity to know his surroundings, as the grass escapes being known through linguistic identification. The grass is unfamiliar, and this unfamiliarity is resolved in part by the speaker's desire to "tap" the earth, but this act of physical contact is not one that leads the speaker to an increased sense of knowledge about that earth, but rather, such contact elicits from the speaker a desire for what's underneath. "It sounded hollow" first suggests the value of the earth for the speaker in terms of what lies beneath its surface. The comparison to "rubber" in the next line evokes a resource that is cultivated through processes of extraction (synthetic rubber being produced primarily from petroleum, itself a subsurface resource sustaining massive global extractive industries, while natural rubber is pulled out of trees through "taps"). The sonic tapping of ground in all its aesthetic dimension is linked here to desires rooted in possession. A strange place seems to evoke here a correlative desire to know what one can have. Williams then makes clearer still his

relation between progress and appropriation, suggesting a link between a strange place and what's necessary to understand one's environment, what it takes to "get" where one is. He writes, "Progress is to get. But how can words get... Words are words. Fog of words. The car runs through it. The words take up the smell of the car. Petrol" (159). Emphasized a second time here, Williams makes clear in the opening of *The Great American Novel* that the matter of possession, extraction, and getting are linked to an unresolved tension between the idea of progress and aesthetics. If progress necessitates narration, and narration capitulates to processes of "getting" or possession, then Williams rightly struggles over the relation between words and getting. Though a direct response to his own question is withheld, he implicates the productive and innovative capacities of modernity, registered in the appearance of the car. That "the smell of the car" (engine exhaust? new car smell?) is "taken up" by the words of progress suggests that something of modernity's productive capacity is not located only in the material relations of production but by extension can occupy the representational space of language itself. Adding to this, the appearance of the single word "petrol" in this sequence can be taken as the anchoring of appropriation (first located in language, "how can words get") back into the context of control over natural resource extraction—in the case of the automobile, a problem of modernity's increasing technological dependence on oil extraction.

Williams further complicates his opening associations between progress, extraction, and possession by expanding this association into a larger cluster of cohering ideas—first by gendering progress and possession through female bodily imagery, "To progress from word to word is to suck a nipple. Imagine saying: My dear I am thirsty, will you let me have a little milk... you cannot deny that to have a novel one must have milk" (159). The need to associate aesthetic progress with extraction is mapped onto an infantilizing image of romantic coupling

(registered in “My dear”) reduced to a relation of mother-child. The speaker imagines inspiration, both bodily and aesthetic sustenance, as possession over female biology. The novel, in this fantasy, depends on that possession of female bodily function. The novel in this equation is the production of male agency and authority to dictate conditions of aesthetic existence (“you cannot deny”).

Williams reuses the image of milk as a good desired for its ability to be extracted, “But how have milk out of white goldenrod? Why, that was what the Indians said... Words, white goldenrod, it is words you are made out of– THAT is why you want what you haven’t got” (159). Here, Williams transplants his earlier gendering of progress (as suckling) onto a scene of extracting milk from white goldenrod, where the land takes on the same properties as the female body of the previous passage, as a source of sustenance and extraction. But the passage is not conjuring an abstract pastoral setting, rather it anchors the text explicitly on the American continent and evokes a representation of the national for the first time beneath the book’s title. Goldenrod is a species of flower native to the U.S. and Mexico. While goldenrod can produce honey, and not milk, the desire to extract something vital, some use-value, from the perennial flower was, in fact, in Williams’s time, sought after by both Thomas Edison and Henry Ford who both shared an interest in the plant’s potential for industrial rubber production, since the plant contains trace amounts of natural rubber, a fact echoing the narrator’s earlier association of rubber and subsurface terrain (Wik 250).⁴⁹ The introduction of “the Indians” into this scene further invites a recognition of this pastoral as “American” space. The wording of the passage is highly ambiguous and it’s unclear what “the Indians said” in this moment. What words are being attributed to them here? If it’s “But how have milk out of white goldenrod?” then “the Indians”

⁴⁹ Ford worked closely with George Washington Carver in the early 1940s in somewhat successful experiments with goldenrod to produce rubber substitutes during wartime shortages.

are put into relation with the earlier voice seeking permission “to suck a nipple” in order “to have a little milk.” But perhaps it is the one word “why” that the narrator attributes to them, in which case they serve as a response, a critique, of the desire to “have milk out of white goldenrod,” a resistance to possessive extraction. The ambiguity establishes a tension that is further suggested by the penetration of whiteness into the scene. This gesture, through the goldenrod-breast parallel, simultaneously configures the native as an extension of nature in their handling or feeding from the female body—both naturalizing and sexualizing in a single gesture. That this conceptualization of progress refers to the extraction of use-value from natural resource is reinforced by the connection of language to desire, that because of words, one desires what one lacks.

In these important early passages, Williams appears to be opening a critique, however obliquely, of the naturalizing of theft, the taking and control over resources as designators of national progress. The source of this critique is resistance at this attempted naturalization through language. The first chapter ends similarly with an emphasis on theft as he begins to describe a scene in which two men leave a local conference held by the “Mosquito Extermination Commission” and continue on their way home, fighting to see through thick fog as they drive across the highway. The chapter ends as this scene comes to conclusion, where one of the two men returns home to the bedroom and there encounters his wife in bed, reading an issue of *Vanity Fair* “which he had bought thinking of her” (161). Williams finishes the opening chapter with this:

He looked at her and she at him. He smiled and she, from long practice, began to read to him, progressing rapidly until she said: You can’t fool me.

He became very angry but understood at once that she had penetrated his mystery, that she saw he was stealing in order to write words. She smiled again knowingly. He became furious. (161)

Where earlier in the chapter we observed Williams naturalizing and feminizing the world as resource to be extracted, in order to propel forward the fantasy of progress (via the development of industrial productive capacities or aesthetic language), here Williams seems to stage a revenge fantasy that reverses that earlier configuration. The masculine writer-as-extractor is now the one “penetrated” by the wife’s capacity to “see” that such extraction is theft, and that the writer’s “words” depends on this act of thieving. Finally, it is significant that this reversal of penetrating capacities occurs within the hetero-domestic setting of the bedroom, a scene typically normed in its cultural association with hetero-masculine mastery and feminine submission (of sexual pleasure, reproduction, and possession). The writer’s becoming “furious” registers the anxiety and violence of this reversed penetrating act taking place in a domestic space that has begun to unsettle the writer’s self-authority and masculinity. The instability of the domestic setting occurs in the fog that surrounds the house, an opacity that renders the domestic space “mysterious” but a mystery the wife in her bed is capable of seeing through. Where the writer’s purchasing of the *Vanity Fair* copy seemed to have been a gesture securing the woman’s association with mass consumption, popular culture, and normative gender roles stereotyped through high fashion and celebrity gossip, this particular bedroom scene undoes that ideological constellation, where the wife transmits through a performance of reading those lines of gender propriety back at her husband who must passively receive such a performance. Her resistance to being “fooled” coupled with her “knowing smile”—a physical expression of a claim to knowledge that contrasts with the writer’s desired shroud of “mystery” which evaporates under the woman’s smile.

Thus, the chapter ends in crisis for the would-be modernist writer intent on crafting an aesthetic “newness” while also attempting to represent a universal account of national progress rooted in taking what one wants. The ending illuminates this crisis as an unsettled relation

between theft, aesthetics, and a gendered but estranged domesticity. Or in other words, the domestic enters Williams's text precisely as a site of conflict for the ideology of modernism and its commitment to "newness" through acts of theft, extraction, and appropriation. The connection to the violent appropriative acts of colonialism and capitalism should be obvious enough at this point, and, as we shall see, it's the blurring between various registers of the domestic—between house and nation—that will trouble Williams's nonnarrative of progress most.

If the first third of *The Great American Novel* is a fixation on the demand for "the new" in envisioning a writing capable of questioning "progress" and futurity in national and national-literary terms, the book takes a decisive turn into the colonial past with Chapter 7, which begins with the declaration, "*Nuevo Mundo!* shouted the sailors. The sea was rippling like the bottom of a woven grassrope chair" (181). Williams's shift from the new of industrial capitalism to the new of European colonial contact in the Americas is a stark and notable break from the textual scenes and concerns that precede this chapter, and the colonial turn signals a deliberate consideration of the historical content of "the new" as it was being valued by modernist artists.

The direct reference to colonialism in a text, to this point, seemingly fixated on questions of twentieth century modernity and modernist literary form, should not be all that surprising to contemporary readers. As Edward Said reminds us in his "Note on Modernism" from *Culture and Imperialism*, "many of the most prominent characteristics of modernist culture, which we have tended to derive from purely internal dynamics in Western society and culture, include a response to the external pressures on culture from the *imperium*" (Said 188). And it's notable, as Said demonstrates with his own assessment of modernists (Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Conrad), that a salient feature of much modernism appears as a collection of formal characteristics that make many of these texts recognizably set against textual generic traditions that spring from a realist or

sentimentalist tradition, characteristics that can be interpreted in terms relevant to the evolution of various national imperialisms. Said sees three (formal) reactions to these imperial pressures in both British and American modernism that formally depart from an earlier body of Romantic literature: 1) a “circularity of structure, inclusive and open at the same time”—he gives as example *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, *The Cantos*—though what precisely this “circularity of structure” might entail or how it might be identified is left unexamined; 2) a predominant fixation on the the cultural fragment and its capacity to be placed alongside other fragments to create connotative contrasts, “drawn self-consciously from disparate locations, sources, cultures: the hallmark of modernist form is the strange juxtaposition of comic and tragic, high and low, commonplace and exotic, familiar and alien;” 3) and finally, and in part as a consequence of those contrasting meanings opened up by proximate and disparate fragments, Said points to “the irony of a form that draws attention to itself as substituting art and its creations for the once-possible synthesis of world-empires” (189). In Williams’s use of collage form in *The Great American Novel*, I think it isn’t hard to see the work of the fragment and of circularity (or at least an atemporal sequencing) in line with Said’s first two formal “reactions.” I’m interested in the applicability of the third feature to Williams as Said doesn’t require for his purposes a rigid definition or exposition of “a form that draws attention to itself” as a substituting performance. One can hear, perhaps, in Said’s description a kind of Poundian “reach”—a will to order, a putting-in-its-(right)-place those elements that are within the artist’s grasp. While *any and every* text that works with the fragmentary will necessarily be engaged in a kind of compositional ordering, it seems obvious that Williams’s collage aesthetic differs from that of Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, for instance.

While for Said there is no disjunct between his perceived three formal aesthetic reactions

to globalization, I wonder if he formulates a larger, more generative interpretive opening for understanding collage aesthetic and its relationship to hierarchical ordering of elements where he claims, “The formal dislocations and displacements in modernist culture, and most strikingly its pervasive irony, are influenced by precisely those two disturbing factors [British historian, J.R.] Seeley mentions as a consequence of imperialism: the contending native and the fact of other empires” (188-89). As opposed to works, like Pound’s or Eliot’s perhaps, that demonstrate an authorial desire for “total knowledge” by the very erasure of those contestations and competitors to meaning, even as those contestations are being responded to, I would be tempted to forward Williams’s *The Great American Novel* as a modernist text working within those modernist structures defined by Said, but that foregrounds and represents somewhat explicitly the contestatory nature of alternative narratives or claims to historical definition, representations that are seemingly valued for their contestatory nature, as we will see.

We might look to the *nuevo* of “*Nuevo Mundo!*” as it connects European “discovery” of a “New World” to a larger sequence of sites of newness that Williams has been tracking. For instance, Williams seeks new origins of an American authenticity grounded in the regional histories of the continent, or as Webster Schott’s introduction to *The Great American Novel* describes, “a discovery of the U.S. of [Williams’s] time. He sweats over the lack of an indigenous culture” (*GAN*, 156). By “indigenous,” Schott here naively means “Anglo-American” in contrast to British literary culture, and so erases actual indigenous culture in connecting earlier historical “discovery” with Williams’s modernist hope to discover a “new” cultural origin that can distinguish his writing in national-cultural terms. Further building on discovery as a thematic fixation, the “newness” and discovering acts of modernity’s technological progress enters the text in the second chapter where Williams plays with the word “new” in multiple contextual

registers, at one point anthropomorphizing the great generators of modern life, “Electricity has been discovered for ever. I’m new, says the great dynamo. I am progress. I make a word. Listen! UMMMMMMMMMMMM—“ (162). Later in this same chapter, Williams forges a connection between private ownership and the anxiety of being dispossessed as reciprocal components of modern progress, “He went to the window to see if his car was still there, pulled the curtain aside, green— Yes it was still there under the light... No one had stolen the spare tire” (162-63). And, again in the same chapter, Williams connects possession with modernist formal imperatives toward newness where he writes, “Clean, clean he had taken each word and made it new for himself so that at last it was new, free from the world for himself” (167). The turn to colonial “discovery” then, where the link between the “new” and taking is perhaps most obvious, is a placing of modernist formal anxiety into an explicitly colonial history of dispossession. In this light, we might look at Williams’s experimental form not so much as a pursuit for a new language freed from its debt to European cultural heritage, but, on the contrary, an inquiry into the way that imperial tendencies linger within an aesthetic invested in newness understood as clearing space for itself through the elimination of past contesting histories. More clearly, Williams seems to be toying with a materialist account of historical break or rupture. It is not just a search for new forms (his tying of discovery to Columbus should cue critics into Williams’s self-awareness of this idealistic pursuit). The text seems to question where or how, in language, colonial violence is reproduced.

Williams’s mapping of dispossession onto a cultural desire for “new words” (180) is echoed in his narrating of the landing colonizers’ linguistic encounter with a “new world” during the Columbus expeditions. He writes, “Excitedly, they went down the ladders and took their places at the words of the boatswain spoken in the Castilian tongue” (181). It’s an interesting

play on the language/taking relation Williams had earlier developed, where “taking their places” suggests not only a performed recognition of ideological hailing but also a choreographing or staging of cultural hierarchy—the sailors’ imagining of themselves as “taking their places” in history as the “discoverers” of a space-to-be-taken. The authority of “the Castilian tongue” to guarantee such a place-taking is subtly undercut in a following passage, where language and possession are again reasserted as correlative forces though not before the narrator inserts a leveling gesture against the sailors linguistic authority, “*Nuevo Mundo!* had shouted the sailors and *Nuevo Mundo* it was sure enough as they found out as soon as they had set foot on it and Columbus had kneeled and said prayers and the priest had spoken his rigmarole in the name of Christ and the land was finally declared taken over for Ferdinand and Isabella the far distant king and queen” (181). The use of the word “rigmarole” is significant here for imparting definitional possibilities such as obsolescence, excess, incoherence, and nonsense. But if the logic of possession of a “*nuevo mundo*” is here undercut because of the incoherence of past cultural practices and an obsolescent linguistic framing of knowledge and territory, Williams also frames the cycle of civilizational flourishing and ruin in terms of “changes of speech,” as a language moves with the migrations and inter-territorial interactions of its users. Williams writes:

Sanscrit, Greek, Latin growing crooked in the mouths of peasants who would rise and impose their speech on their masters, and on divisions in the state and savage colonial influences, words accurate to the country, Italian, French, and Spanish itself not to speak of Portuguese. Words! Yes this party of sailors, men of the sea, brothers of a most ancient guild, ambassadors of all the ages that had gone before them, had indeed found a new world, a world, that is, that knew nothing about them, on which the foot of a white man had never made a mark such as theirs were then making on the white sand under the palms. *Nuevo Mundo!* (182)

It seems more probable that here Williams is thinking about the development of an “American” idiomatic speech and its power over its origins in England just as English and other European languages had developed against colonial “masters” through regional interaction and conflict.

The insurrectionary image of the rising peasant, however, while certainly applicable to nationalist nostalgias of American Independence from British colonial rule, also points toward the cultural and linguistic clashing to come between the European sailors of this scene and the indigenous populations soon to be subject to colonial violence and cultural imperialism. Lastly, there is something here about the emphasis on the fact that in this moment of a construct “new world,” a part of the desire of this construction was for a space “that knew nothing about them”—a space devoid of history and also a subjective removal from the particularizing frame of “being known,” to be subject to knowledge. The fantasy of the new world, or the new, contains within it the desire to be uninterpretable, un-subject to knowledge or to history—to be universal and to possess knowledge, not to be possessed by the knowledge of an Other. It is this that Williams will try to undo or undercut in various other moments in the text which I will look at more closely below.

In Chapter XVII of *The Great American Novel*, Williams appropriates nearly the entirety of a text from a popular women’s magazine, in particular an article centered around the domestic experiences of women living in rural, impoverished communities within the Appalachian mountain range. In a letter dated September 11, 1922 to Ezra Pound, Williams referred to his recently drafted sections of this chapter, writing “The mountain part - the sugar head - I copied verbatim from *The Ladies Home Journal*” (*Pound/Williams*, 66-67). The source article, “Mountain Mothers,” by Winifred Kirkland, first published in the December 1920 edition, is an article reporting on the condition of women inhabiting the Cumberland mountain range of the U.S. Southeast. Throughout, Kirkland attempts to portray and to value the labor and folk wisdom of a rural Appalachian underclass by drawing lines of affinities between two populations of women (Kirkland’s eponymous subjects, characterized as laboring “mountain folk,” and her

middle-class reading audience) via appraisals of motherhood. Yet, while Kirkland reiterates her regard and reception of her host population as one of cultural wealth and transmission (as she notes, “I have nothing to teach the mountain woman, but that she has much to teach me”) in the service of “the Americanizing of Americans by introducing them to each other,” the text nevertheless consistently underscores the vast difference between the Otherness of the Appalachian population and the magazine’s target audience, most emphatically through the text’s constant configurations of “mountain mothers” through tropes of literacy, property ownership, and foreignness.

Demarcating her subject as “the Cumberland mountain mother,” Kirkland stresses a regional subjectivity not bound to state lines, as the Cumberland mountain range, a small part of the Appalachian Mountains, stretches over large swathes of land through Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia. Kirkland’s heightened interest in the “mountain” mother segregates her subjects from a more general Southern identity, as it goes on to establish the representation of a geographically particular underclass-culture, a geography characterized as both “treacherous and alien” and whose population have “come to be wary and secret” (*GAN*, 216). Their assumed sense of cultural isolation from the rest of the country (despite the introduction of railroads and extraction industries into the Appalachian region well before the twentieth century), adds to their characterization as being both American and foreign, an alien domestic figure constructed by Kirkland’s representational choices. Despite the insistence in defining her subjects regionally throughout the article, Kirkland estranges her subjects even further by downplaying the geography as a significant indicator of culture difference, instead claiming in the article’s conclusion, “the mountain mother today is not so much a woman belonging to a different geographical region as she is a woman belonging to a forgotten past.” While her purported aim

may have been a cross-regional, cross-cultural introduction of American women to each other, her construction of an alien domestic figure marginalizes her subjects into familiar literary tropes. The image she builds of her Appalachian subjects is one of women locked in time, primitive, lacking the modernity of the magazine's audience.

Kirkland's construction of the alien domestic in reference to Appalachian Americans was not unique. In a 1916 study of topological and social changes to the region that similarly stresses their outlier status from the rest of American "civilization," B. H. Schockel writes, "these people, who have never been able to travel freely among themselves within their mountains, have since about 1845 suffered the further handicap of being cut off from the outside world... Presently the civilization of the rest of the Americans changed, and they became 'foreigners' to the mountain folk" (Schockel 107). Similarly, again in the Schockel study of 1916, he follows an account of the Appalachian population's reliance on the "ancient" use of bow and arrows to hunt for squirrels with the following summation, "Recently, outside capital has begun to develop the coal and timber resources of the region, a fact which is bringing about many changes in the mountain country, and that rapidly. As a result, the inhabitants are facing the crisis brought about by the sudden mingling of a primitive people with the exploitative phase of modern civilization" (Schockel 108).⁵⁰ A 1924 study "Pocketed Americans" by Edward A. Ross forges a similar association. Ross writes, "Made road there is none; all that has been done since Daniel Boone came is the clearing away of logs and boulders. So the farmers live cut off from thought, literature, science, and art. The great world, the rest of mankind, are no more real to them than they are to a man dropped into a medieval oubliette [*sic*]" (qtd. in Davis 92). Kirkland's writing,

⁵⁰ Later in this article, Schockel's account of the "primitive people" of the Appalachian farmsteads contradicts its own stereotyping horizon by representing Appalachian ginseng farmers (a less popularly grown but nonetheless profitable crop) aware of their own participation in a broader economy of global trade. Schockel writes, "I came upon one old man and his wife, digging 'sang' in the woods, who stopped to talk for an hour and wanted to know why it is that the Chinese cannot live without the root, and what would happen to that people when the supply shortly would give out in America" (Schockel 111).

then, can be seen within an ironically long tradition of writing by “outsider” authors, dating back to the 1870s, who created “discovery” or “introduction” narratives about the inhabitants of the Appalachian Mountains for a mass audience (Otto 8). These narratives frequently framed the experience of encounter with Appalachian culture (its use of handicraft tools and furnishing, cabin dwellings, and antiquated farming implements) in terms of a delayed temporality, seen by popular publications and academic study alike as “a ‘retarded frontier,’ whose people belonged to ‘the last century.’ Appalachia was regarded as an isolated enclave of pioneer culture” (11).

While Kirkland’s stated purpose of her article may have been to forge a connection, however abstract, between her reading audience and her documentary subjects in the Appalachian mountains, throughout the source text, she variously demarcates her subjects as regional Others in ways that put pressure on her audience’s capacity to identify with these women. For instance, Kirkland consistently voices these subjects through her own dialect writing (“‘It’s turrible fur,’ a mother said.”) while also explicitly reminding the readership of their inherent dissimilarities, “I observe what ripe wisdom can be attained by men and women, by nature sharp and sane, who stay at home and study the moods of the mountains and of the animals; who read not books but people,” and in another example, “Illiterate though she be, she is full of ripe wisdom. Many, superior to the mountain woman in, say, sanitation might learn from sitting on cabin doorsteps that they are often inferior to her in sanity” (Williams, *GAN*, 216). While the author draws on connotations of the word “wisdom” to validate the knowledge and authority of the “mountain women,” her emphasis on illiteracy of course would resonate with the magazine-subscribing audience to whom Kirkland is appealing. Despite the intended valuation of the regional folk wisdom, Kirkland represents her subjects as naturalistic (“ripe”) and unsanitary.

The frequent use of the term “homestead” similarly anchors these women depicted in the article to conceptualizations of the land. In Kirkland’s text, the notable switch from “homesteading” to the use of “home-maker” (in reference to Mrs. Morgan, one of the few women mentioned by name in the article) is tied to Mrs. Morgan’s access to village schooling. In this way Kirkland represents the business of the homemaker as one linked to literacy, and so Mrs. Morgan is somewhat distinguished from her fellow “mountain women” and perhaps more so aligned with the reading audience of the “home journal.” Kirkland further advocates that “education alone can meet the two greatest evils in a mountain woman’s life – early marriage and snuff. No woman who has been to one of these [village] schools dips snuff” (27). Though Kirkland notes the difficulty most of the woman have in securing enough income to afford education for themselves or their children, we can see here the way that institutional education is linked to moral instruction and the correction of behaviors deemed “unladylike,” like dipping snuff. These representations strain Kirkland’s intention to “Americanize” her readers through introduction, since her introduction is necessarily one-sided, intended solely for the middle-class consumers of the periodical, and distances her subjects through their depiction as something foreign and in need of “Americanizing.”

Kirkland’s brief typology of a regional sub-population further illuminates a series of social relations made manifest by the incursion of various coal and timber industries into the region. She writes, “one must remember that there are three distinct types: the people of the little villages, almost all remote from railroads; the itinerant lumber workers, woodchoppers and mill-hands who follow the fortunes of the portable sawmill as it exhausts first one remote cover then another; and the permanent farmers who have inherited their dwindling acres for generations. Yet at bottom the mountain mother is always the same” (218). The characterization given here

by Kirkland registers a confluence of forces that include the dispossession of property from farming families in the region as well as the deforestation practices that, in addition to permanently altering the landscape which would have lasting effects on both cattle grazing and corn growing traditions in the Cumberland Mountains, also produced new kinds of laborers whose relation to the home was perceptibly altered in their needing to follow the mill as it moved from depleted zone to new sources of wood. In his study “Forest Fallowing Among the Appalachian Mountain Folk: An Ethnohistorical study,” John S. Otto points to the 1880s as the beginning of extractive industries in the region, remarking that “whole valleys were given over to railroads, coal mines, and coal towns... And after the passage of the Weeks Act of 1911, which permitted the federal government to acquire watershed lands, the U.S. Forest Service added thousands of acres of woodlands and cut-over lands to its public forests. By 1930, only 60 percent of the land of the Southern Appalachian Mountains was still owned by farm families” (6), while the U.S. Forest Service by the same time had established in the area seven national parks of over eleven million acres (6, 14). The presence of the railroad, built in the service of the mining industries and without consideration of the farming inhabitants, further isolated farming production from larger market economies. This lack of access to expanding markets elsewhere limited the farm workers’ capacities to acquire modernized, and more expensive, farming equipment, tools, and manure. They were frequently forced into debt to acquire these products as access to land needed to sustain fallow foresting became less reliable as it was appropriated by competing industrial interests. The growing of corn was one way farmers attempted to stay out of debt, since it was a crop that could grow reliably without the use of commercial fertilizers (12).⁵¹

⁵¹ While Appalachian farmers owned land individually and farms were often dispersed from each other, they also formed “communal work groups” in order to facilitate the practice of forest fallowing, a kind of crop growing particular to the Appalachian U.S. and only a few other regions globally. Forest fallowing

So what is Williams's interest in Kirkland's "Mountain Mother" text? What does he gain from the text's appropriation. I think it's useful to consider the article's links to Williams's fixation on appropriation, aesthetics, and the domestic. This section in *The Great American Novel* ties together a concern with cultural and aesthetic value in relation to natural resource extraction, labor exploitation, and the resulting constitution of a socially definable region, though it does this through a contrast between the domestic setting of the Appalachian cabins within which Kirkland is developing her characterizations of Appalachian domesticity, and the more middle-class domesticity imagined as a shared space between writer and readers. The Kirkland article too makes several references to aesthetic value, sometimes directly and at other times more obliquely. For instance, while Kirkland sympathetically explains away the dusty interior conditions of the Cumberland domestic space by emphasizing the wide array of labor performed by the woman of the region, in and outside of the house, she offers to her readers that "the mountain mother does not make herself and her husband and her children slaves to the housekeeping arts" (*GAN*, 217). The use of the phrase "housekeeping arts" suggests a configuration of the aesthetic that is particular to the middle-class (sub-)urban domestic subject, namely the magazine's target reader, as a kind of cultural practice that, because of the mountain women's necessary commitments to outdoor subsistence labor, these mountain inhabitants cannot be expected to uphold. The "unrefined" depiction of the mountain woman's home as a result of hard labor finds a reciprocal visual outlet in Kirkland's depiction of the women's physicality, where "over-work begins to tell on growing bodies" (217). The unrefined body is further associated with dirt and culinary arts simultaneously when Kirkland turns her gaze upon the children of this domestic setting, "There is usually some two-year old lying fast asleep... on

required large tracts of land to lay fallow for over a decade, and "only a fraction of a typical farmstead was tilled at any given time" (Otto 11).

the porch floor, plump and brown as a bun and studded with flies thick as currants” (217).

On the other hand, there are a variety of objects described through the piece that give indication of the kind of cultural craft work that defines or is worthy of aesthetic value and consideration from the journal’s audience, “We settle down on the doorstep probably on straight chairs with seats of cornhusks twisted into a rope and then interwoven” (217). There are other revealing details that elicit aesthetic consideration, details which seem to exceed Kirkland’s attention except where to build a sense of sympathy through her descriptions of domestic poverty and squalor, though ones that would surely have interested Williams’s sense of aesthetic appropriation. For example, “The walls are of planks with inch-wide cracks between them. There are two tiny windows with sliding wooden shutters and a door. All three must be closed when it is very cold. For better protection the walls are plastered over with newspapers, always peeling off and gnawed by woodrats” (218). The appearance of newsprint as wallpaper and insulation acknowledges an interesting form of textual appropriation and repurposing, where the textual transmission of daily information and regional event are wrenched from their intended informational circuits of consumption and forced to serve a purpose both functional and incidentally aesthetic.

Given the antagonism established earlier in Williams’s novel during the *Vanity Fair* scene, where Williams’s aesthetic of appropriation is challenged by bourgeois feminine domestic space, Williams’s appropriation of the Kirkland article stages an intriguingly different conflict. In the context of *The Great American Novel*’s exploration of modernism’s rootedness in colonial and capitalist expansion, Williams suggests a link between the reproduction of middle-class feminine identity and the construction of a cultural modernity against the backdrop of domestic Others who are trapped in a projected primitivism from which their capacity for national

belonging is denied. Placing Kirkland into his collage-based nonnarrative is meant to discredit the article's claims to the modern, on behalf of a class-defined female readership, at the expense of Ma Duncan and her peers. For Williams to imagine an expansive national identity that dissolves an idea of modernity as rooted in progress, he must quarantine, shrink, and discredit the feminine domestic that he associates with reproduction.

For the most part, it is also worth noting, Williams is a bad transcriber and appropriator. Though he generally follows the organizational development of the Kirkland article, throughout he splices earlier sentences into later paragraphs, periodically excises in-sentence material, and at times revises, reorders, adds, tinkers with, and adapts the original to his own whims. In this sense, we can see that this particular appropriation engages collage aesthetic, but unfaithfully rendering original source text in the new composition. Williams also, at times, "corrects" snippets of Kirkland's dialect text renderings, as in his changing Kirkland's "wuth" (as attributed to Mrs. Cole) to "worth" (Williams 219). In revising the dialect writing, Williams, who is otherwise in the novel highly motivated by the significance of speech as an indicator of "American" language, reverses Kirkland's othering gesture. In this way, we might read Williams's edits as a purposeful act of undercutting the authority of the source, while ironizing Kirkland's construction of Appalachian motherhood as out of time. Williams's undoing this configuration of the ancient, the pastness— reasserting their contemporaneity— allows him to frame Kirkland as a domesticating force. Williams appears to be making the case against the romanticizing of Appalachian labor embedded in Kirkland's documentary aesthetic in favor of his own collage aesthetic which works against the purposes of Kirkland's documentary, subjecting the "mountain mothers" to the extraction of knowledge content as a cultural Other. Instead, Williams's appropriation rather emphasizes Kirkland herself as an archivist of cultural

difference and national belonging which asserts the value of middle-class feminine domesticity as the measure of that belonging. Williams's appropriative re-purposing of the Kirkland text suggests a line of identity with Ma Duncan's aesthetic appropriation of mass print culture in order to decorate her own domestic interiors. Because Kirkland attributes "Indian" racial identity to some of the Appalachian women due of their dark skin and hair color, Kirkland's article provokes a consideration of colonial acts of land dispossession in the Appalachian region and the various acts of those farmers resistances to their middle-class interlocutor and the domestic culture she represents. In this way, Williams is able to link Ma Duncan and her community's cultural work of resistance to other moments in the text where native land dispossession is set against acts of appropriation as resistance to a national domestic space rooted in capitalist class values. The aesthetic of appropriation links, rather than limits, the Appalachian community to other geographies and in so doing opens paths of affinity not capable in the Kirkland source text. For example, returning to Williams's reflections on early colonial encounters between settler colonists and indigenous Indians, we can find parallels between Williams's Appalachia passage and an earlier account of the revolution in Mexico.

In the seventh chapter of *The Great American Novel*, Williams introduces explicitly into the text his concern with the U.S.'s Euro-colonial origins, that "*nuevo mundo*" that I traced above. Like many, if not all, of the chapters in the text, however, Chapter 7 refuses a single narrative thread and offers, instead, a set of juxtaposed textual sites and vignettes. The narrative voice that opens the chapter from the perspective of being within Columbus's ship, among the sailors, shifts into one describing a man reflecting back on the significance of Columbus from a more contemporary vantage point. He writes, "The Declaration of Independence. I wonder, he said, whether it could be possible that the influence of the climate—I wonder if the seed, the

sperm of that, existed in Columbus. Was it authentic? Is there a word to be found there?... Or was the declaration to be put to the credit of that German George? Was it only the result of the local conditions?" (*GAN*, 182). These lines mark Williams conjoining his continued interest in aesthetic origin to historical moments of rupture, moments where something like linear progress is disrupted first by discursive breakage (a declaration) and then too by political revolution. The quick jump from Columbus to the Declaration of Independence ties two moments of historical dispossession together. Also, Williams presents his audience with a strange binary—either the two moments of historical dispossession are the biological byproduct of race (the “seed” and “sperm” of Columbus) or else it was something more environmental, “the result of the local conditions.” It is with this proposition that Williams’s text differs sharply from his later work, *In The American Grain*, in that here he introduces Native Americans as actor-participants in the struggle over land possession, where he writes immediately after the Declaration of Independence reference, “Indians in any case, pale yellow and with lank black hair came to the edge of the bushes and stared: The Yaquis territory lay north of the river Fuertes. To the south was Carrancista territory. The valley was fertile, the Indians wanted it” (*GAN*, 183). The reference to Yaqui and Carrancista territory, along the Fuertes river, records an actual military struggle between federal and indigenous forces in Mexico. What follows this passage in the book is the documented testimony of an American commercial colonist in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution, a testimonial which registers this particular regional conflict in the northwest of the Mexican state of Sinaloa between Mexican and Indian revolutionaries and American (and British) landowners. The testimony records the actual events of a raid (in the words of an anonymous American witness) on the sugar plantation owned by American sugar baron Benjamin Johnston, who owned the United Sugar Company in Los Mochis, a town located

in the north of the Mexican state of Sinaloa, about 20 miles north of Topolobampo. The raid described in this passage was one led by Bachomo, a Mayo Indian leader.⁵² The scene dramatically counters the motif of European “discovery” and “first contact” since it depicts both a contemporary moment of political revolution and also a contemporary armed rebellion of indigenous Indians against 20th century colonial encroachment on their territory.

As a scene of “local conditions” centered around revolutionary violence, appropriation, and domesticity, the testimony connects the politics of everyday life in the American colony at Los Mochis to Williams’s earlier anxieties about “taking” and the domestic. In this sense, Chapter 7 offers several interesting parallels to the Mountain Mothers chapter. The Los Mochis scene begins by establishing the surrounding conditions leading up to the raid, “During the week of November 13th, 17th, 1916—word reached Los Mochis that Gen. Banderas and the Villistas from Chihuahua had been defeated by the Carrancistas near Fuertes and were in retreat. During this week two Indians were captured by Los Mochis police and hung on willow trees below the Jaula” (*GAN* 183). Here the testimony marks two concurrent events. First, the warring between troops faithful to Venustiano Carranza, who had only just asserted himself as president of Mexico after his successful overthrow of the revolutionary dictator before him, Victoriano Huerta, in 1914, and those troops faithful to “Pancho” Villa, the revolutionary general who headed the northern division (some 50,000) soldiers against Huerta, and then against Carranza once the latter took power. One reason for the split in revolutionary factions, represented by Villa and Carranza variously, was, in fact, a direct effect of their difference stances on the presence of foreigners in the northern regions and their increasing foreign ownership of land and natural resources encouraged as an incentive to draw foreign capital and colonists into the area.

⁵² In the source text that Williams appropriates for this section, Bachomo’s name is consistently written incorrectly as “Bacomo.” All contemporaneous accounts, from the writing of commercial colonists and fellow tribe members to local news accounts of these events, use “Bachomo” as the spelling of his name.

These localized conflicts are backdropped by a broader historical context of transnational economy and contested territorial integrity. The presence of U.S. Americans in Mexican territory would of course resonate locally within the territorial tensions sparked by the annexation of over half of Mexico's geography seventy years earlier in accordance with the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which formally ended the Mexican-American War. During the time of the conflicts represented in Williams's text, Mexicans also watched the U.S. Military—under the direction of the Wilson Administration (1913-21)—make two incursions across the Mexican border during the Mexican Revolution. The first, early in 1914, resulted in the U.S. military occupation of the Mexican port city of Veracruz as a response to revolutionary fighting that had erupted near American-owned-and-operated oil refineries along the coast, with the stated purpose of protecting American life and property, and also as a response to the arrest of 9 U.S. sailors who had been refueling their ship in the ports of Tampico (often referred to as the Tampico Affair). While the occupation lasted six months, Wilson would threaten again to retake Veracruz in 1917 (while Carranza was president) to protect their interests in the oil extraction industries there. The second military incursion would occur in 1916 after Pancho Villa, with a troop of 485 rebel followers, attacked the small town of Columbus, New Mexico, killing eighteen U.S. citizens in the end (Britton 5-6).

By the end of 1916, Carranza had called for a Constitutional Congress in order to rewrite the federal Constitution to address several of the major concerns of the Revolution (as perceived by Carranza). During the Constitutional Congress, the language of Article 27 would be written, a controversial article, long effecting later U.S.-Mexican relations over issues of land ownership and subsoil resource extraction, which stipulated that land and water ownership would be the sole right of the federal government to control for the public interest. The article gave authority

to the federal government to repossess large land estates and divide them into smaller properties for public distribution. It also made a crucial distinction between land and “subsoil” rights, the latter being a way to describe all extractable natural resources. Though land could be sold and held as private property, the latter could not, and so all extracting industries were effectively nationalized. This would allow the government, after the revolution, to confiscate both lands and resources previously held by foreign-owned private industry. Article 27 and its mandate to nationalize certain foreign-owned private property would become a sticking point at the center of U.S.-Mexico diplomatic relations for the next several decades, as the U.S. American government sought at first to protect its commercial interests below the Mexican border and, later, to secure restitution and reparation for losses due to revolutionary violence and commercial nationalization projects.

The second event that Williams’s Los Mochis passage recalls is the death of two unnamed Indians at the hands of the local police, though a motive for these executions is left a mystery. The locating of the execution “below the Jaula” is a reference to the workers’ quarters in Los Mochis which were a small distance from the plantation houses that were occupied by the landowning class of foreign-born settlers there. The workers employed by the United Sugar Company to farm and process the sugar cane were predominantly a mix of Indian and Mexican peasants. The nicknaming of these quarters “Jaula,” a Spanish word for “cage,” indicates the colonists’ perception of the plantation workers as animalistic and threatening, and their living space is conceptually denied the connotations and dignities of the domestic (home/house), rather reduced by what the cage connotes to a state of domestication. The casualness with which the lynching of two Indians is associated with (though not causally linked to) the battling factions aligned with the retreating Villistas additionally suggests how the American colonists viewed

both Indians and Mexican revolutionary soldiers as barely distinguishable sources of violence and threat.

In fact, the relationship between native populations and the revolutionary forces of the north were complex, fraught, and influenced by the particular circumstances of specific regions and local histories. Most historians of the Revolution have noted how Indian populations looked upon the revolutionary factions suspiciously as often as they did sympathetically, their alliances mostly forged in particular circumstances of contingent self-interest with regard to protecting native territory or regaining land lost to earlier State encroachments and military campaigns targeting their communities because of their resolute rejection of the legitimacy and authority of the Mexican government. The presence of the American colonies in the northern states of Mexico was, of course, a manifestation of this explicit state pacification program—starting in the early 19th century, that solicited and encouraged U.S. American and other foreign immigrants (through finance, resource allocation, and land grant) to settle the northern territory (Stacy 696). The strategy was to erode the validity of landholdings by native populations and ecclesiastical missions, though the strategy backfired when the increasing presence of Anglo-American immigrants contributed toward the land disputes that would erupt into the Mexican-American War (1846-48) which ended with Mexico losing roughly a third of its territory to the United States and the redrawing of the international boundary between the two countries (Stacy 696). Despite this loss, then-President Porfirio Diaz continued to pursue the policy of encouraging outside immigration and foreign investment into the northern territories in order to promote the construction of infrastructure—particularly railroads, telephone lines, and irrigation systems—that the federal government could not afford to undertake, while also hoping that settlers would have a colonizing effect on the northern Yaqui and Mayo Indian populations who had developed

reputations for fierce antigovernment resistance, fueled by their adoption of advanced military tactics learned from the French imperial expedition in Mexico in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The pacification of Yaqui and Mayo Indians, which was understood by the State as necessary to gain control over native land possessions and the prevention of their armed resistance, was an explicit military campaign of the Diaz government up to 1900. In the decade leading up to the Mexican Revolution, federal control over Yaqui territory tightened. Laws restricting the purchase and possession of firearms by the Yaqui were enacted. Passports became mandatory documents to be carried in public, while those discovered without them were jailed or executed. Between 1895 and 1905, two massive Yaqui deportation programs were carried out, displacing somewhere between 8,000-15,000 Yaquis to the south of Mexico in the Yucatan and Oaxaca to work in labor camps. The gradual incarceration and deportation of Yaqui Indians from their communal lands coincided with a sharp increase in American capital investment in railroad and agricultural development of the Mexican west coast, with cities along California's coast (Los Angeles and San Francisco principally) the chief benefactors and importers of this production. By 1910, over a thousand U.S. Americans had settled into the Yaqui Valley region. Profits from agricultural and mining production skyrocketed as Yaqui deportation discontinued and those who had been displaced were allowed to return, only to find their former territories transformed into U.S. American-owned farms and mines. The sudden boom in population due to returning Yaqui meant, for most, entering into an oversaturated wage-labor market rife with exploitation. It is within this larger historical context that the surrounding Yaqui and Mayo Indians confront American and English settlers in the midst of the Revolution.

This contingency between Indian and Villista troops is captured by Williams in the

appropriated Los Mochis testimony when the witness goes out of the way to note that “Banderas and his Villistas meanwhile had come down the Fuertes, effected a junction with Bacomo and his Mayo Indians, and Monday night crossed the river above Los Tastos, tore out the telephone at the pumps and started for Los Mochis. All gatekeepers encountered on the road were killed as were their families” (183). The need to note that Banderas and the Mayo Indians had formed a “junction” highlights the recognition that these two fighting forces are in fact not homogeneous or unitary. That the coalition begins their raid on Los Mochis by first targeting the telephone wires and the irrigation pumps registers the dependency of the colonies on these technologies for their survival. Both objects, wires and pumps, also work as symbolic structures of the colonists’ active reconfigurations of their geographies - as they redirect (and sell) river water used for centuries by Indian villages, and connect themselves into a communicative network with other surrounding colonies and urban centers. The targeting of the telephone poles at the irrigation pumps not only achieves the practical objective of preventing communication (for warning, or for armed reinforcement) but represents a disruption of a network of power centers whose aim is to appropriate and redefine the function and purpose of territory whose inhabitants have long resisted incorporation into that network by denouncing governmental authority and their desire to proliferate “citizenship.”

Adding to this significance, the water pumps of Los Mochis in particular register a long and nefarious history of State appropriation of native land use, as the rivers were diverted to the pumps after Diaz had sold rights to its access and use to Johnston and his United Sugar Company, though previously they were considered essential sources of water for migratory native cattle raisers. The appropriation of these waters, through the creation of legal “rights” granted the United Sugar Company, effectively destroyed generations-long collective water

access in establishing the water as privately controlled resource. The attack on the poles and pumps, then, is not merely a military strategy, but an act of negating State-sponsored “rights” which were foundational for the emergence of the commercial settlers at all. The “cutting off” of the city from outside connections in this way further enacts a symbolic victory over the town and its residents by denying the global networks of appropriation that sustained the wealth of Johnston and his United Sugar Company which had largely developed the city with the capital and raw materials from other global regions.⁵³

The interrelation between both the U.S.A.’s and Mexico’s interests in the northern territories and the version of commercial colonialism that the American and British landowners represented are further expressed in the Williams passage through emphasis on domestic life. The unnamed witness begins describing the raid as it entered Los Mochis, “the raiders swarmed into Los Mochis from three sides, shooting cursing as they galloped into town. From all over the town came the sound of smashing doors and windows, shots, yells and screams” (183). The witness indicates not only an attentiveness to, concern for, and fear of the perceived threat of physical violence marked in the sound of gunshots and screaming, but also in the destruction of property registered by the sound of doors and windows breaking. The sense of the house as secured space, which the witness imparts earlier in the passage (“It was agreed we Americans were to keep to our houses, take our animals off the roads and wait with more or less excitement until it was over. We never notified the Mexicans. Had we done so once we should not have escaped the next raid” (183-84)), is now undone as the raiding party destroys the doors and the security they represent as thresholds into spaces of private ownership and as spaces where

⁵³ Johnston’s private garden, an extension of “La Casa Grande,” his “Tuscan revival” residential mansion that was constructed with “imported materials from the United States, Spain, Germany, and Italy,” and that is referred to later in the 7th chapter of *GAN*, would later be transformed into a public park. “The trees and plants include local species and those from other parts of Mexico as well as from places where the United Sugar Company had production facilities, including India, the Phillipines, Indonesia, Java, Africa, and Australia.” See Burian 205-207.

landowner class-value is extended through the production of a particular ideal of domestic life.

As the American and British houses become occupied by Indian and Mexican forces, several representations of dispossession and exchange unfold, pointing to the constructedness and contingency of a class-based domesticity. The raiding forces are looking for usable resources to sustain their ranks. The witness derisively mentions, “In Mr. Johnson’s [sp] cellar they [the raiding party] had found all sorts of bottles from Scotch to German Scheisswasser⁵⁴ and had drunken all indiscriminately” (183). While the soldiers are quick to appropriate Johnston’s liquor as respite from the vicissitudes of war, their lack of discernment becomes as much an event as the theft of the liquor itself—noteworthy to the witness who clearly intones that the soldiers’ assumed inability to distinguish aged whiskey from moonshine marks their depravity in some meaningful way. In such a rebuke, the witness offers insight into the function of connoisseurship and taste in the construction of classed domestic subjects, a construction which the soldiers cleave apart in their rejection of its value. In another passage, the witness recalls a moment in the night when the colonists attempt to secure what little small arms they had left:

The Americans were too scattered to resist. It was decided to save the few guns by hiding them. Bacomo rode up to the house with his escort, – ordered to give up all guns and cartridges. At the last moment he turned back from the stairs, entered Mrs. Johnson’s [*sic*] room where the ladies were sitting on the beds and ordered them to get up. Under the mattress a miscellaneous collection of riot guns, rifles, shot guns, automatics, pistols and cartridges were found. When all the guns and cartridges to the last shell had been loaded on the horses behind the drunken soldiers Bacomo refused C.’s request for one of the riot guns and with a polite bow and a “*Con permiso, senores,*” he rode off. (184)

Once again, the witness’s testimony fixates primarily on the act of dispossession as the soldiers take the arms and ammunition necessary to continue their campaign against Carranza’s federal troops. But interlaced in the report of this theft of munitions, like the scene of the cellar liquor,

⁵⁴ In the same letter from Pound to Williams where Pound challenges Williams’s claim to American identity on racial terms, Pound also mentions, “I of course like your Old Man, and I have drunk his Goldwasser.”

are the class values marked in the witness's sense of domestic space. The colonists' sense of propriety and decorum are indicated by their choice of hiding space for their weapons. It isn't enough to conceal the weaponry under the mattress and out of sight from the Villistas. The colonists are inspired to have the "ladies" of the house cover the mattress with their bodies. In the construction of Mrs. Johnson's room as possessed and gendered, "feminine" space (a construction fortified in the depiction of the women in the room as "ladies... sitting on the bed"), the colonists hope to trade on the notion of "lady space" as apolitical, uninvolved, innocent, private, a space reserved from the penetrating operations of the raiding party. As Bachomo leaves the room after having gathered the hidden weapons "to the last shell," he makes a bowing gesture. The gesture appears to signify in complex and subversive ways. On one hand, it elicits from the inhabitants their sense of decorum appropriate to the classed domestic setting. In the eyes of the testifier, the bow is a "polite" one (is there such a thing as an impolite bow?). Clearly, however, the gesture takes on a sarcastic or ironic gesture in the face of the soldier's dispossession of the colonists' defenses. It mocks the colonists as it makes explicit Bachomo's knowledge of what "polite" behavior is expected of the space. The raiding party are not, thus, an ignorant and unknowing "swarm" as suggested earlier (in the cellar liquor scene for instance) but rather they choose not to reproduce classed ritual and gesture of bourgeois domestic conduct. Their rebellion is not only targeting resources. The sarcasm and irony of Bachomo's bow are sharpened in his parting farewell "con permiso, señores." While "con permiso" in Spanish is a way of formally excusing oneself as one departs company, it also more literally bears the sense of "with permission"—a playful rub of the colonists' nose in the decorum that their domestic setting serves to disseminate. Bachomo, then, critically performs, in a brief moment, the expectations of a "señor" in the house of the landowning class, though this performance is so

obviously undermined—marked as insincere—in his appropriation of the private property in the house deemed expedient for their mission.

Outside of the house, however, the extension of classed domestic value and performance continues apace. Reflecting on the observed changes in Indian raiding tactics during the time of the Americans' settler-colony, the witness recalls, "When I came here the Indians all used bows and arrows. Conscripted during the many revolutions they had deserted with their rifles until at last, after 800 of them, in a body, went over they used the rifle extensively. Wilcox lived at the pumps with his wife and daughter. A cocky Englishman, he poopooed the danger." This memory is instructive in several ways. For one, the witness perceives the adoption of the rifle as a modernizing effect on the Indians by their inclusion into Mexican warring factions during the Revolution. Secondly, it notes that the Indians have been "conscripted" into these revolutions and so imagines these native soldiers as not only involuntarily aligned with the opposing Mexican parties (an impression contradicted by the history of contingent Indian engagement in the Revolution outlined above) but also imagines the Indian fighters not as a disciplined battalion of their own self-organization but moving, undifferentiated, "in a body." The adoption of the rifle over the bow and arrow is seen not just as a practical progression in adopting the technology of modern warfare, but also that the Indians have ostensibly stolen these icons of technological superiority in their so-called "desertion" from their fighting units. The charge of "desertion" brings with it the connotation of legal duty and moral obligation, a judgment which inherently upholds the authority of the state or citizen-militia which the Indian populations, in fact, were explicitly opposed to and which they were directly fighting against. Coded in this way, the passage aligns the Indians in terms of the non-modern, the horde, and the immoral.

In contrast to this projected sense of importance associated with duty— again as much a

legal configuration as it is a value bound up with class decorum—the American observer casts a critical eye toward the British counterpart, Wilcox, who “poopooed the danger” of the surrounding revolutionary strife. Somewhat insulated, geographically, from the terrain of direct military conflict at first, Wilcox is at liberty to “poopoo” the revolutionary violence as trivial. To “poopoo” the war’s dangers for the colonists is also a way to assert that triviality through deprecating understatement. The word itself seems charged with decorum, presumption, and condescension. It would not be long, however, before the reality of that violence arrived on the doorstep of Wilcox’s living space, as the witness relates, “At a previous raid an American engineer living near Wilcox was found dead. He was supposed to have run. Looked just like a pin-cushion, with the feathered arrows that were in him. Funniest thing you ever saw in your life. There were four bullets in him also.” It turns out the American and British colonists are not immune from death by revolutionary violence that unfolds around them and into their colony directly. What’s interesting and unusual, however, about these lines is the use of simile to make sense of the American engineer’s death. The arrow-riddled body of the engineer is compared to a “pin-cushion”—that object of domestic, and feminine, domestic labor. The desire or necessity to construct “domestic subjects” here takes on a strange valence. Where in the bedroom scene we could find the colonists attempting to conceal their weapons (and so their participation in this public conflict) by burying them in the depths of feminized and private domestic space, here we find the bringing of feminized domestic space out into the public space of war. The desire to uphold a boundary between conceptualizations of domestic space and the public theater of revolution is troubled by the symbols of that boundary’s dissolution. The affect of this troubling erupts as awkward humor, the “funniest thing you ever saw in your life.” The observation that the engineer’s body is also riddled by bullets further erodes the witness’s earlier progress

narrative of the Indian's involvement in armed conflict, rooted in their adoption of the rifle. As a matter of gesture, the murder of the engineer by small arms and arrows suggests, in its excess and redundancy, the desire to impress upon the colony the insistence and maintenance of native cultural practice and discipline. In this way, the witness's fixations and complaints regarding theft and appropriation (of Johnston's possessions, of military weapons) are intertwined with anxieties of domesticity and domestic space.

The Los Mochis scene in Williams' *The Great American Novel*, then, enfolds into his larger project of representing in modernist form a new nonnarrative of national identity, a complex, transnational representation of appropriation and domestic disturbance, of revolutionary violence and anti-imperial resistance. In it we see the clash and collapse of competing or incompatible utopias: the Americans' capitalist vision of a network of continental and global commodity exchange, rooted in private property, collapses against the revolutionaries' socialist desires for a regenerative national politics rooted in land redistribution from the powerful haciendas and ecclesiastical missions to wage-laborer and peasant field workers (embodied in Carranza's Agrarian Decree of 1915). The appropriation of this witness testimony document into *The Great American Novel* allows Williams to represent the limits of endless progress for capitalist productive capacities, while also incorporating into his vision of American identity the "local conditions" of a larger transnational geography. The revolution in Mexico serves his novel as the marker of a return to questions about origin and new beginnings, to re-envision alternate historical trajectories. The documented resistance of the Mayo Bachomo gives Williams another "heroic individual" not found in *In the American Grain*, one meant to embody something particular to the continent as a component of his "American" history. For Williams, the parataxis of collage and the practice of aesthetic appropriation is the form that best

represents a way to take these competing utopias out from under a single narrative frame—where one doesn't cancel the other out but rather where each is allowed to exist simultaneously in a state of unresolved contestation. In this way, Mexico appears in Williams text as Other-space that is incorporated into Williams' vision of of a cultural "American" history.

Unfortunately, as the actual history of those "local conditions" reveal, both these utopian projects (capitalist market expansion and socialist nation-building) faced the incommensurate demands of Indian resistance fighters whose principle aim to reclaim and secure ancestral territory and communal land use negated explicitly the relationship to the state and to citizenship that both former utopias required for their legitimacy. While Williams's text attempts to use modernist aesthetic form to reconfigure a racist historical archive of national origin, his appropriation of the history of Los Mochis continues nevertheless to obscure the more piercing revolutionary content of the document his novel absorbs. As such, it is useful to observe the way that modernist collage form and an aesthetics of appropriation allowed Williams the space to critique traditional national narratives within the context of colonial appropriation of native land. Despite the representational capacities of this aesthetic, Williams's own insistence on the nation as a category of shared historical inheritance is ultimately what undermines his efforts at historical revision, even while we might recognize the value he placed on contemporary Indian resistance that opposed much of other modernists' reduction of indigeneity to cultural relics of a lost prehistory.

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ABSTRACT**BORDER ENDS: ANTI-IMPERIALISM, SETTLER COLONIALISM, AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION IN U.S. MODERNISM**

by

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From 1910-1920, the Mexican Revolution became a source of anxiety, interest, and inspiration to those who paid attention to its political turmoil as reported in the popular press. It would lead to the reinvigorating of a debate about U.S. intervention in the political affairs of Mexico, indeed, for some, the question was one of annexation. Responding to a growing imperialist culture in the U.S., William Carlos Williams, Gertrude Stein, John Reed and Max Eastman of *The Masses* were among those who looked to modernist aesthetic practice to critique military and economic expansionism in Mexico.

This dissertation explores that discursive interplay between U.S. modernism and anti-imperialism through representations of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), in writing itself conceptualized as “revolutionary.” While the writers that I take up in this study each, though in different ways, represented Mexico as a site of revolutionary modernity that points to a shared, transnational cultural affinity toward constructions of “the new” as the basis of an anti-imperialist politics, each also, confronts in their writing the disrupting presence of the American Indian within this anti-imperialist vision. Each of these writers in their own way *explicitly*

connects an interest in the aesthetics of the “new” with the colonial history of the “New World.” At the same time, they register self-consciously in their texts the contradiction of using an anti-imperialist discourse to consolidate national identity in the face of ongoing settler colonialism: the appropriation and occupation of native land, the genocide of native peoples, and the erasure of native culture. In key texts about Mexico written by Stein, Williams, Reed, and Eastman, references to a history of U.S. settler colonialism and the presence of the American Indian emerge as a limit to their anti-imperialist poetics and a challenge to their desires for the construction of a “new,” modernist national culture.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

“In the extreme brevity of the history of parity. Rage crumbles open. It felt like dense fog. What is fact is not necessarily human. Memory anticipates. Authority flows into us like a gel. We cross the border to confront the ideal. Streaky cloud at the top of the sky. Days heap upon us.” — Lisa Robertson, *The Weather*

I was born in Toronto. I’ve spent a lifetime in lines
Crossing the northern and southern U.S. borders:
Buffalo-Fort Erie, Sarnia-Port Huron, Detroit-Windsor,
Tijuana-San Ysidro. We’re all just trying to move
On with our lives.