

Writing American Space: History, Fiction and Territory
In Cather, Carpentier, Borges and Delany

by

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For Başak, who is the best one.

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Abstract

Drawing on the works of four twentieth century authors from the United States, Cuba and Argentina, this dissertation analyzes how America is encountered as an event, rather than a space, in fiction. This study examines the writers in question in a new light, searching for patterns that evince the processes of globalization that established a worldwide network of material and cultural exchange marked by an uneven development. Because of the authors under consideration the range of American circumstances includes significant national, ethnic, cultural and geographic differences as well as differences in the extent of urban development. Within these vastly different spaces of narration there are repetitions of encounters with space that attain a recognizable identity without negating the difference of their circumstance. Without assigning these spaces a totalizing identity suggests that the geographies of globalization provide one ground for interamerican literary comparison. Chapter one examines the apparent time travel in two itinerant fictions of Willa Cather and Alejo Carpentier, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) and *Los pasos perdidos* (1953). Each of these books presents itself not only as a journey into the past stages of humanity but as a return to another time, although it is clear that the encounters are all coeval. Chapter two deals with these same books to argue that, while they have a convergent image of the beginnings of history, the situation of each author in relation to globalization's centers of hegemony gives the books a different image of the future. Chapter three examines the importance of the relation between urban space and the construction of a world-system in an analysis of three works by Jorge Luis Borges and Samuel R. Delany, "El Aleph," "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand*.

Introduction:

The Idea of America and the Geography of Ideas in Literature

Spaces are NOT constructed by discourse alone, and thus are not configured solely to be read. 'Haecceities' (places as events, for example) offer endless opportunities for the emergence of new materials that irrupt from multitudinous points and ripple outward across landscapes. Mark Bonta and John Protevi
Deleuze and Geophilosophy

In this essay I examine books written by four authors written in the Americas during the 20th century. These books are primarily prose fiction but formally they remain quite varied. *Death Comes for the Archbishop* by Willa Cather is a book-length narrative but not a novel, *Los pasos perdidos* [*The Lost Steps*] by Alejo Carpentier is a novel but has the form of a personal but anonymous daily journal. "El Aleph" and "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" are two short stories by Jorge Luis Borges but they have the appearance of reports and are attributed to a fictional version of Borges himself, while *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand* comprises thirteen monologues, one prologue and one epilogue in the form of a novel. Two of the authors, Cather

and Delany, are natives of the United States of America, Borges was native of Argentina and Carpentier, though probably born in Switzerland, was a native of Cuba, and all of these national identities mark complex personal histories which do not converge easily under the comparative frame. Two of the authors, Cather and Borges, were born in the nineteenth century (1873 and 1899 respectively); Carpentier and Delany were born in the twentieth century (1904 and 1942, respectively). There is not much to be immediately observed that would justify their study in a dissertation in a department of Comparative Literature.

These are four writers of immense talent and import from undeniably different ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds, but they are all American writers. They are different writers and they are from different Americas, but they are all American writers nevertheless, and this dissertation attempts to account for certain similar occurrences in their fiction as the irruption of the American geosocial construct in its differential embodiments. If the world-system of globalization that has become the focus of attention of much sociology in the past forty years is to be trusted, we live in a global world-economy bent on the subordination of the world's social organizations to the accumulation of capital. As such it interacts on a global scale with nation-states, non-governmental organizations, civil societies, local communities and individuals. The world-system is not the identity of world, but it is a sufficiently unified system so as to be referred to as an agent. And also, if the sociologists Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein are correct, the creation of the geosocial entity "the Americas" was the constitutive act of this

world-economy.¹

The creation of “the Americas” produced the world-economy that now envelopes the globe; in the texts considered in this study I analyze the significant features of that geosocial entity as features of the landscape. The analysis is geared to the discovery of different Americas, some Americas, rather than “America”. As I have stated from the beginning, America is not a local identity and it does not negate the differences between localities. America is “the pattern” for the capitalist world-economy: “as the centuries went by, the New World became the pattern, the model of the entire world-system.”² Insofar as the places of the world have been incorporated into the capitalist world-economy they have all been incorporated under this model, this pattern.

The present comparative study of these authors as “American” is not a regional study of American authors, or a study of how an American identity persists underneath American diversity. Instead, it looks upon the writing of four authors as a counter-memory and nomadology to the Idea “America,” which it identifies as a geosocial reality, but one that overcodes local space, causing it to be perceived in certain manners, rather than being intrinsic to the land.³ As Bonta and Protevi state above, spaces are more than discursive, but America proves to be a postulate of practical reason, a supersensible totality that is assumed in the interest of (conquering, modernizing) action. One of the means of propagating this Idea in

¹ Quijano, Anibal, and Immanuel Wallerstein. "Americanity as a concept, or the Americas in the modern world." *International Social Science Journal* (1992).

² Quijano and Wallerstein, “Americanity,” 549-50.

³ A nomadology is Deleuze and Guattari’s name for “the opposite of history,” a form of writing that is not fixed to a sedentary perspective, but flows across space and time. See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 23-24 and 315-423.

literature is to depict American diversity, especially the coexistence of many time worlds in America. Often anachronistic scenes are juxtaposed as a protagonist journeys through America. Overcoded as a journey through all the stages of history, these narratives reinforce the totality of America: America contains all stages of the past as it becomes the seat of global modernization.

Against this totality I present these instances of American literature that, though they have often been interpreted according to the above formula, seem to me more to present the myriad new materials and emergent assemblages than the totality that is assumed from them. I call these texts “schizohistories” after Deleuze and Guattari, who argue that “No one has ever been as deeply involved in history as the schizo...He consumes all of universal history in one fell swoop.”⁴ Through formal and geohistorical analyses I demonstrate how, by means both aesthetic and cartographic, they resist the idea of America as totality and refigure it as a historically layered (and ongoing) event.

The idea of America as “event” might seem to fly in the face of a materialist study, as it seems to take the ground beneath our feet and watch it evaporate into air. Nevertheless I will propose that America, far from an expansive polygonal territory in two dimensions which includes some 28% of the Earth’s land area and excludes all else, is an incorporeal idea that animates certain territorializing practices among those who think it.⁵ Following Gilles Deleuze we can say that the event is best expressed by a verb in the infinitive so these practices would

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen Lane. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1985 [1972]. 158

⁵ United Nations Statistics Division, Table 3: Population by sex, rate of population increase, surface area and density. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008/Table03.pdf>. Accessed 4/27/2013

include: to discover, to colonize, to translate, to assimilate. That these verbs are all transitive demonstrates to us that the event of America, though it is an idea, is nevertheless materially grounded.

In *Ontocartography* Levi Bryant makes the claim that ideas have geography “in much the same way that diseases have a geography. They have to travel, they have their communities, they have their places in the world.”⁶ In Bryant’s materialist ontology ideas have the ambivalent status of incorporeals, beings which must always be bound to a corporeal *iteration*, but which can be reiterated in wholly discrete circumstances. Each instance of the incorporeal being is an individual corporeal entity, but maintains an identity with the other iterations. “Every copy or iteration of Shakespeare’s Hamlet in the paper of a book or in a computer program is still Hamlet, just as every execution of the operation of the Pythagorean Theorem is still the Pythagorean Theorem, and every performance of Beethoven’s Ninth is Beethoven’s Ninth.”⁷

Bryant’s insistence on the transcorporeality of ideas (ideas are transcorporeal because they are always embodied, but they also always exist across multiple embodiments) is also the cause for the particular geography of all ideas. He insists, after meme theorists, that ideas are bound to spatiotemporal fields in order to declare the limits of ideas. An idea has no capacity to affect unless it is materially deployed, and iterations of ideas must be constructed in light of the

⁶ Bryant, Levi. *Ontocartography: An Ontology of Machines and Media*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP), Originally posted at larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2013/05/07/touch-perception-communication/ Originally accessed 05/07/2013.

⁷ Bryant, *Ontocartography*. Originally posted at larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2012/10/18/the-strange-ontology-of-incorporeal-machines-writing/ Originally accessed 05/07/2013

geography where it should be deployed.⁸ For Bryant this is a pragmatic concern: critical theorists and philosophers must respond to the geography of ideas (not ideal geography) within which they function else they will find themselves serving ill-purposes.⁹

For our purposes, though, the focus will be reversed. Rather than examine one particular geography of ideas I aim to examine one geographical Idea—"America"—that is never fully realized in any iteration but is recognized in dozens if not hundreds. Treating America as an incorporeal will help us to account for the fact that America doesn't exist—at least not America in the blank, unqualified sense. America never acts, it is always micro-reducible. Instead of *America tout court*, and regardless of US-America's internal claim to that title, all that can ever be encountered are Americas. North and South Americas, Latin and Anglo Americas, African and Native Americas and a vast host of others make up the cast of entities to which the idea of America is always related, differentially.

Many textual strategies have arisen to model the experience of America's differential space, from the fantastic and supernatural to the surreal, psychological and magical realism. In a great deal of American literature we observe a paradoxical tendency of the landscape to become many different spaces while at the same time becoming unified under the idea of America and the futurity that it carries with it. A traveling or emigrating figure who notes the almost

⁸ Similarly Bruno Latour, in *We Have Never Been Modern*, writes that it is only with great effort that the universal or the global is extended by networks into local places.

⁹ Bryant argues, for instance, that a philosopher of science colleague who emphasizes the uncertainty of scientific findings rather than the probabilistic nature of scientific prediction is irresponsible to the geography of ideas in the cotemporary United States which is subject to too much science skepticism. "In this geographical locale, the important thing is to cultivate an understanding of evidence, inquiry, and the difference between data and anecdote. We already have science skepticism in spades. It's even the American way! " larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2013/05/31/philosophy-geography-and-sociology/ Originally accessed 05/31/2013.

incomparably different worlds that make up the cartographic unity is familiar in literatures identified with America from the fifteenth century into the twenty-first.¹⁰ There is, first and foremost, an oddness to the *temporal* dimension of such a landscape, in the way that it divides almost infinitely before a journeying narrator while its very diversity produces awe that one imagined geography (America) could comprise so many different places.

What comes to the fore in this analysis are the myriad territorial assemblages that act as corporeal bodies for the incorporeal America. In particular this takes the shape of a geohistory of different human ecologies in America, a sketch of how they function, manipulating one or many energy differentials and socializing humans and nonhumans alike in the process of territorialization. In some cases this abstract definition of the functioning of human ecologies is the only thing two different ecologies will share—they share neither a common energy system nor do they create similar subjects. In other instances these ecologies are complexly interrelated in both synchronic and diachronic senses. Certain complex spaces contain multiple coexisting territories, as in an urban ecology comprising both export-oriented shipping and commerce spaces, state-oriented control spaces and antiproduktive bohemian spaces.

Even more interesting are those territories which exist contemporaneously but which narratives of historical progress tell us are related one to another as “steps” in the development of history. Travel between such territories is baffling in a psychogeographical sense. What had

¹⁰ A brief list might include the writings of Columbus, both his accounts and his prophetic writings (15th. & 16th c.), Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios* [Castaways] (16th c.), Dr. Hamilton's *Itinerarium* and William Byrd's colonial travel narratives (18th c.), the genre of women's captivity narratives in both Anglo- and Latin-America (17th-19th c.), the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, the revolutionary writings of Bolívar, Bello and Martí (19th c.), John Steinbeck's fiction and travel-writing, the fiction of García Márquez, Rulfo, Faulkner, Pynchon (20th c.)

previously been considered as movement through indifferent space seems to be movement through time, into the future or into the past. As we will see, these journeys are neither time-travel (in the sense of displacement within the scheme of enumerated years) nor are they merely matters of traveling through undifferentiated space. The spatial assemblages within which these figures travel each have their own temporality, a rhythm that is produced and maintained by the processes that produce and maintain the human and nonhuman elements of the territory. Referencing the ideal geography of America, though, this multiplicity of spatial assemblages must be referred to a unified historical time. Measured this way distinct ways of life are lumped together as stages singular past.

I propose looking at these American spaces in another way: as contemporary territories which are perceived as more or less developed according to the universal history of the capitalist world-economy but, in fact, historically individual and therefore singular. If America overcodes local space, as I have stated above, then local societies and territories should subsist in American space. The universal history of the capitalist world-economy is a tool for organizing those territories *as if* they were not historically individual, but rather part of a singular world-system. It is a justification for seizing land and controlling populations in order to develop them toward a singular, desirable global modernity. By the twentieth century this subjunctive history had attained a hegemonic status that it retains today. But the authors whose works are studied below, along with others, have left us works that help us to perceive America otherwise.

Overview of chapters

In chapter one, “The Beginnings of History in America: Schizohistory in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Los pasos perdidos*,” I introduce two significant features of the writing of Willa Cather and Alejo Carpentier. Cather and Carpentier, I argue, are both intensive writers, attuned and attentive to the relationship between the text and the world. They are also both intensive readers of space, who seek to translate the polysensorial experiences they have of places into their writing. The consideration of these two features leads me to apply the geocritical methodology of Bertrand Westphal, with some alteration, to Cather’s and Carpentier’s texts.

Geocriticism maintains that the study of the places that texts reference is a legitimate one. For Westphal this method is limited to the study of actual places but others, particularly Eric Prieto and Robert T. Tally, Jr. have argued that geocriticism has a much broader applicability. I follow Prieto in using geocriticism to diagnose a type of spatial practice that is common to the writings of Cather and Carpentier: the schizohistoric journey. In the schizohistoric journey a traveler encounters different territories in space as though they were different periods in time or stages of history.

Emphasizing the spatial aspect of the schizohistoric journey in Cather’s *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and Carpentier’s *Los pasos perdidos* helps make plain the fact that the historical experience of these journeys relates to social difference and not difference in time. In the movement of the schizohistoric journey toward the beginning of history these books reveal how different Americas are perceived according to similar timeline of global development.

In chapter two, “The Divergence of America and the Ends of History in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Los pasos perdidos*,” considers these same texts, again in light of the schizohistoric journey, to analyze the ways in which the different American situations of the two authors are present in the text. The geocritical analysis of chapter one establishes that the different places encountered in these texts are contemporary or coeval, rather than existing in different times. Thus there is no movement backward in time in the journey toward the beginning of history. There is, however, very real and constant movement toward the future and the new in the Americas.

Quijano and Wallerstein’s concept of Americanness allows us to think of the Americas in differential terms and without referring all Americas back to a single totality. In effect, the definition of Americanness as a geosocial construct (rather than a geographical locus) produced according to four principles (1. Coloniality, 2. Ethnicity, 3. Racism and 4. Newness) reinserts history into the geographic image. The Americas are not an eternal entity but one that was produced and has continued to differentiate through time.

Taking this into consideration, chapter two delineates what Walter D. Mignolo calls “the colonial difference” that separates the US-American writer from the Latin American writer in the twentieth century.¹¹ Cather’s text takes on certain rhetorical and affective modes because of its author’s perspective on the future as well as the past. The same is true for Carpentier’s text.

¹¹ Mignolo, Walter D. “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101:1, (2002), 57-96.

What is distinct about the two texts in this regard is indicative of their situation in relation to the hegemon of the capitalist world-economy.

In chapter three, “Cosmopolitan America: The Limits of Spatiotemporal Perception in ‘El Aleph,’ *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand* and ‘Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,’” I consider the writing of Jorge Luis Borges and Samuel R. Delany. These writers both work in a fantastic mode: Borges is best known as the author of short stories and fictional essays that presume the reality of some great paradox and in which he comments on its effect in the world. Delany is probably best known for his science fiction novels in which he speculates on the future of culture and society of mankind on this planet and elsewhere.

I argue that these texts are in fact geocentric, although they are fantastical rather than realist narratives, because like the schizohistories of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Los pasos perdidos*, “El Aleph,” *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand* and “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” mobilize the perceived future of America. “El Aleph,” for instance, is principally concerned with the paradoxical tool of the title which contains all the space in the universe within a sphere that is small enough to be observed by a man. This impossible object should allow the person who uses it to know everything and yet it leads to a stultifying madness because making use of all of any of the information it presents requires forgetting nearly everything else. Delany’s novel *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand* produces a similar effect by evoking not small scale but enormous scale. The novel is set in a society spread across 6,000 planets. This Federation of Habitable Worlds is so vast that, in spite of the marvels of

interplanetary travel, communication and translation that are available to this highly advanced society, all that can be known about it at any one time are the remotest fragments.

Each text reflects the sense of planetary unification threatened by the hegemony of a single world-economy in the twentieth century. More important still, each text presents the role of the intellectual in confronting that planetary (or interplanetary) identity and recognizing the difference that underlies it. But the texts offer a different vision of what such work looks like: for Borges it is the isolated consideration of difference in language while for Delany it is community building work, working against the forces of hegemony even if it means being ethically compromised.

Chapter I The Beginnings of History in America: Schizohistory in
Death Comes for the Archbishop and *Los pasos perdidos*

Willa Cather wrote, in a letter to the editor of the newspaper *The Commonweal* in the autumn of 1927, that she owed the creation of Father Jean Marie Latour, protagonist of her book-length narrative *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, to the conjunction of a book, a ghost and the particular difficulties of traveling in and around New Mexico, where automobiles and trains often had to be abandoned and travel by pack animals like horses, donkeys and mules was common. She was writing to address the immense flow of readers' questions that had been coming to her by mail since the serial publication of the novel as a serial in the magazine *The Forum* in January of that year and to offer a general account of “how [she] happened to write *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.”¹

Though I will return to the conjunction of the ghost and the book, I would like to begin with an examination of Cather's encounter with the space of the Southwest. She wrote *Death* between 1925-1926, but she had first visited the Southwest in 1912. Her brother Douglass was then living in Flagstaff, AZ and Cather traveled to visit him while on a six month leave from her work as managing editor of *McClure's*. She stayed in the Southwest “a considerable length of time;”—the first thing she mentions about the place is the how much time she spent there—

1 Cather, Willa. “On *Death Comes for the Archbishop*,” reprinted in *Willa Cather on Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as an Art*. (New York: Knopf, 1949), 3-13.

but the first remark she makes about the Southwest itself is that it was quite difficult to navigate.² There were no roads for automobiles nor hotels if one traveled any distance from the main railroad lines. That meant that one went by horse or mule and carried a tent pack to set up each night and take down each morning. As a result of how slowly her travels progressed, Cather notes, she had a great deal of time “for reflection [...] about the country, or even about the roads” and that remained difficult to learn about those subjects because there were few people and fewer books that could relate the information with any certainty.³

Still, Cather came to appreciate the time that this slow movement allotted her, the reflection giving a desire to reflect on matters that she found could not be resolved by information, the joy in encountering knowledgeable locals.⁴ Eventually she began to experience the life of the landscape as a story. “I used to wish there were some written account of the old times,” she writes,

but I soon felt that no record of them could be as real as they are themselves. They are their own story, and it is a foolish convention that we must have everything interpreted for us in written language. There are other ways of telling what one feels, and the people who built and decorated those many, many little churches found their way and left their message.⁵

To put it poetically, Willa Cather wrote *Death* due to the resistance of the landscape to the speed of man technology, a resistance which inspired reflection on the whole country.

2 Cather, *Death*, 4.

3 Cather, *On Death*, 4.

4 Lewis, Edith. *Willa Cather Living: A Personal Record*, (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 2000), 39-43.

5 Cather, “*On Death*,” 5-6.

In 1927 in Cuba, Alejo Carpentier was imprisoned for political protest against the regime of Gerardo Machado. In 1928 he would flee Cuba to settle in France for more than a decade. While there he encountered and befriended surrealists like Breton, Aragon, and Tzara and contribute to the Cuban journals *Social* and *Carteles*.⁶ When he returned to Cuba in 1939 he had become critical of surrealism for what he perceived to be its apolitical practices, but the decade in Europe and the exposure to surrealism caused him to look on Latin America as something unfamiliar and to recognize “‘texturas', aspectos de la vida americana que no había advertido,” “textures” aspects of American life [he] had not noticed.⁷ Though he was slow to complete new fictional writing after he returned to Latin America—he wrote mostly journalism while living in Havana from 1939-1945, publishing only two stories, both in 1944, and starting and abandoning a novel—Shaw maintains that from the moment he returned home, or arrived in Latin America a second time, he saw it with “fresh eyes” and that a “renewal of technique” would allow him to express what he could not see.⁸

As for Cather, for Carpentier one of the bases of regional fiction was the encounter with a place that was unfamiliar, that became enchanting and made him want to write its story. And like Cather Carpentier became an adept at reading the story of a space not in words or accounts but in the buildings, ruins and geology. In the now famous prologue to his novel *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of this World*), set in Cuba, he explains how he understood there was a local reality in Latin America which deserved to be written of.

6 Shaw, Donald L. *Alejo Carpentier* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985) “Chronology” n.pag.

7 Arias, Salvador, ed., *Recopilación de textos sobre Alejo Carpentier* (Havana: La Habana, 1977) 16.

8 Shaw, *Carpentier*, 17.

Después de sentir el nada mentido sortilegio de las tierras de Haití, de haber hallado advertencias mágicas en los caminos rojos de la Meseta Central, de haber oído los tambores del Petro y del Rada, me vi llevado a acercar la maravillosa realidad vivida a la acotante pretensión de suscitar lo maravilloso que caracterizó ciertas literaturas europeas de estos últimos treinta años.

After having felt the undeniable spell of the lands of Haiti, after having found magical warnings along the red roads of the Central Meseta, after having heard the drums of the Petro and the Rada, I was moved to set this recently experienced marvelous reality beside the tiresome pretension of creating the marvelous that has characterized certain European literatures over the past thirty years.⁹

Carpentier holds contempt for the marvelous when it is created “con trucos de prestidigitación,” ‘with conjuring tricks’, because these tricks seek to record the truth of a trance or a dream and ignore the marvelous that resides in the material world, in spaces themselves.

Carpentier and Cather both hold a commitment to telling the stories of a place with which they have become familiar but upon which they still look with wonder and awe. What's more, both writer is committed to writing the stories of these places in a manner that will produce a sense of the place—five senses, in fact. Writing an account of the Southwest does not interest Cather. She herself states that “the story of the Church and the Spanish missionaries [in New Mexico and Arizona] was always what most interested [her]; but [she hadn't the most remote idea of trying to write about it.”¹⁰ Her book, when it came about, was not an account so much as the record of a “mood [... a] joyful energy.” It was written simply and quickly because it “had all been lived many times before it was written.”¹¹ It is both

9 Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo* in *Obras completas* Vol. 2 (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2002), 3.

10 Cather, “On *Death*,” 7.

11 Cather, “On *Death*,” 10.

her personal experience and, one assumes, it is a shared experience, common to Cather, the subjects of her narrative and all those who share in the experience of the Southwest landscape, to some extent or another. In quite the same way Carpentier's marvelous reality is common to all those who live in and on the lands of Haiti and, more broadly, Latin America. It is surely simple to imagine Carpentier thinking about the surrealists who conjure the marvelous with placeless words and agreeing with Cather: "Knowledge that one hasn't got first-hand is a dangerous thing for a writer, it comes too easily!"¹² The writer must be true to the structures of real situations rather than imaginative discursive dreams.

Cather and Carpentier are both American writers. Indeed they are both writers whose names and works have become emblematic of America, modernism and regional narrative. However American they both are, though, they come from markedly different American nations, ethnicities and traditions. Carpentier is Latin American, though he was born in Switzerland and spent significant amounts of time in Europe studying architecture and music. Cather is US-American, raised in Nebraska. These regions are distinguished from one another by their geography, climate, ecology, culture, language and position in the international hierarchy of the modern world-system among other things.

These distinctions are certainly real and hugely important to the understanding of both regions. But somehow, also, they are images of enormous manifolds of space-time and culture that flatten out the diversity of the two regions, identifying each with its average as it were.¹³ It

¹² Cather, "On *Death*," 11.

¹³ A good example is given in Burns and Charlip, *Latin America: A Concise, Interpretive History*, which points out that North America and South America have, in a very rough sense, very similar shapes: broadest in the

is possible that, in spite of all of their statistical differences something is common to the Americas. It would be nothing geographically, climatologically, ecologically or culturally specific because the regions have different bases in each of these categories. What is common to the Americas is a kind of experience of the history of globalization, an experience that is direct—not mediated by accounts but experienced in place. This immediate experience of space is the thread which binds the writing of Cather and Carpentier.

In this chapter I attempt to explain how certain images and figures from universal history can repeat in different realms of the territory America. I look at the key figures from the narratives of American journeys in Cather and Carpentier. These figures are indicators of historical disequilibrium, the coexistence of different times in one space. What I uncover is that the narrators of these novels, in vastly different places in America, recognize similar landscapes in the social and geographical assemblages they encounter. They identify these assemblages as stages in a universalized European history and see them as held together in a supersensible landscape called America. Furthermore, I argue for the reality of these experiences. Experiencing life in the backlands of Venezuela as medieval, for instance, is not the result of individual psychoses, nor is it a conjuring based on unembodied discourse. Such territories, paradoxically medieval and yet contemporary, are material realities.

These uncanny experiences of a European past in America give the lie to the historiography of “what really happened” and show that all historical events—including

north and tapering greatly in the south. However, Burns and Charlip explain that northern South America is in the tropical latitudes, while northern North America is in the polar latitudes. While true and certainly illustrative, it is still true that portions of North America are tropical and portions of South America are antarctic.

territories, including America—are differential, that they can have an identity only insofar as they repeat. By looking at different embodiments of the same event from universal history one can see that history is not an account of times past, but rather an abstract machine for organizing historical territories in the present.

Furthermore, this also demonstrates that history is predominantly geographical, not temporal. History does attempt to sequence events according to a linear development, but it also acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy of states.¹⁴ History is encoded upon space in the modern world-system to enforce ethnic and national hierarchies. In the Americas in particular the abundance of land that European forces seized in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was essential to the consolidation of the nation-states which performed that colonizing.¹⁵ And while the actual conditions that made the seizure of entire continents by provincial European crowns are most precisely given in biologist Jared Diamond's phrase “guns, germs and steel,” the complex difference between the social assemblages of fifteenth and sixteenth century Europeans were figures as a difference in time, a lack of historical development.¹⁶ People from outside the European ethnicity are deemed “allochronic,” 'other-timely' in the thinking of the modern world-system.¹⁷

14 Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1987), 23.

15 Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Modern World-system I Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*: (New York: The Academic Press, 1974), 17.

16 Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1999).

17 Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), introduction.

Anthropologist Johannes Fabian offers an account for this discursive figuring in *Time and the Other*, explaining that Europeans look upon other social groups as older even though they exist in the modern world as a justification for European domination of others. Fabian calls the creation of noncoeval time in the realm of discourse a “schizogenic” act, an act 'originating in splitting'.¹⁸ It follows that geography is historical, that it is storied as Cather would say, and does not merely deal with empty space.

The people who live their lives in the regions that are made allochronic by European discourse imprint their stories, the worlds they live in, in the landscape. Geography is also cultural, just as culture is geographically situated, and for that reason geography is linked to any question of global justice and, indeed, globalization *tout court*. I argue that the American landscapes in these novels are thus not related to one another as subcomponents of an extensive totality “America.” Instead I’ll show that these diverse landscapes are differential manifestations of the geographic idea of America, a configuration of bodies, ecologies and economies that relates the expanding region of Europe with the spaces into which it expands.

Many textual strategies have arisen to model the experience of America’s differential space, from the fantastic and supernatural to the surreal, psychological and magical realism. In a great deal of American literature we observe a paradoxical tendency of the landscape to become many different spaces while at the same time becoming unified under the idea of America and the futurity that it carries with it. A traveling or emigrating figure who notes the almost incomparably different worlds that make up the cartographic unity is familiar in

¹⁸ Fabian, *Time and the Other*, ix-11.

literatures identified with America from the fifteenth century into the twenty-first.¹⁹ There is, first and foremost, an oddness to the *temporal* dimension of such a landscape, in the way that it divides almost infinitely before a journeying narrator while its very diversity produces awe that one imagined geography (America) could comprise so many different places.

What comes to the fore in this analysis are the myriad territorial assemblages that act as corporeal bodies for the incorporeal America. In particular this takes the shape of a geohistory of different human ecologies in America, a sketch of how they function, manipulating one or many energy differentials and socializing humans and nonhumans alike in the process of territorialization. In some cases this abstract definition of the functioning of human ecologies is the only thing two different ecologies will share—they share neither a common energy system nor do they create similar subjects. In other instances these ecologies are complexly interrelated in both synchronic and diachronic senses. Certain complex spaces contain multiple coexisting territories, as in an urban ecology comprising both export oriented shipping and commerce spaces, state-oriented control spaces and antiproductive bohemian spaces.

Even more interesting are those territories which exist contemporaneously but which narratives of historical progress tell us are related one to another as “steps” in the development of history. Travel between such territories is baffling in a psychogeographical sense. What had previously been considered as movement through indifferent space seems to be movement

19 A brief list might include the writings of Columbus, both his accounts and his prophetic writings (15th. & 16th c.), Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios* [Castaways] (16th c.), Dr. Hamilton's *Itinerarium* and William Byrd's colonial travel narratives (18th c.), the genre of women's captivity narratives in both Anglo- and Latin-America (17th-19th c.), the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, the revolutionary writings of Bolívar, Bello and Martí (19th c.), John Steinbeck's fiction and travel-writing, and the fiction of García Márquez, Rulfo, Faulkner, Pynchon (20th c.)

through time, into the future or into the past. As we will see, these journeys are neither time-travel (in the sense of displacement within the scheme of enumerated years) nor are they merely matters of traveling through undifferentiated space. The spatial assemblages within which these figures travel each have their own temporality, a rhythm that is produced and maintained by the processes that produce and maintain the human and nonhuman elements of the territory. Referencing the ideal geography of America, though, this multiplicity of spatial assemblages must be referred to a unified historical time. Measured this way distinct ways of life are lumped together as stages of a universal past of underdevelopment.

In both Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) and Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) (*The Lost Steps*, 1956) travel through spatial assemblages within American territories is misconstrued as travel through the stages of universal history in each narrative. In *Death* spatial multiplicity is construed as the Biblical past of the Roman Catholic church, which begins with a disorganized world too unformed to support life, takes shape and passes through tribalism to nationalism and moves always toward an impending universalist future. In *Los pasos perdidos*, by contrast, spatial multiplicity is overcoded by a modernist history of art that begins with neolithic mimicry and passes from preclassical Greek art to high modern impressionism. Each book presents a journey to the beginnings of history that occurs in its contemporary moment.

As they make these journeys narrative the books are a kind of map, but what they map is an intensive journey. When I refer to these narratives as maps of intensive journeys, there are two complementary meanings of intensive which I am deploying jointly. The first sense refers

to the mode of reading that underlies an inner journey, a way of looking at books that Deleuze refers to alternately as “reading with love” and reading “the intensive way:”

in contact with what’s outside the book, as a flow meeting other flows, one machine among others, as a series of experiments for each reader in the midst of events that have nothing to do with books, as tearing the book into pieces, getting it to interact with other things, absolutely anything.²⁰

Deleuze claims that there is one question and one question only that the intensive reader answers about the book, and proceeds to ask three: “Does it work, and how does it work? How does it work for you?”²¹ We can see then that intensive reading utilize a text for different immediate situations, individual uses rather than a single textual meaning. When I argue that these books are maps of inner journey I argue that these books do something, that you can do something with them.

Reading Deeper Resonance

“A great critic is never limited by the reader’s more gullible eye. The tacit approach, the surface meaning—these were only obvious and often deceptive landmarks to Willa Cather. She heard a deeper vibration, a kind of composite echo[...].”
Stephen Tennant, “The Room Beyond”²²

In this depiction by Stephen Tennant we have Cather as an intensive reader, not a reader interested in the meanings that reside on the textual surface of writing, the immediately legible

20 Deleuze, *Negotiations*, (New York: Columbia UP, 1995), 8-9.

21 Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 9.

22 Tennant, Stephen. Foreward to Willa Cather, *On Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as Art* (New York: Knopf, 1949) v-xxiv.

content of the novel or story. Tennant alludes to a deeper echo, a movement beneath the visual image of the text which Cather hears, feels. Neither as simple as the visual image nor as shorn of its materiality, the echo is a sound and like all sounds it can only be perceived as it passes. A text, a visual perception, can be held in a truly static image; no sound can be so fixed.²³

This deeper vibration is the movement, the flow, of the real beneath the fixed form of images that can be directly perceived on the textual surface, and it is in her attention to the flow beneath the form of the text that Cather can be said to be an intensive reader and critic, someone who, in the terms of Deleuze, reads “with love,” seeking through the experience of writings underlying flows to reach out to an author, though not to identify with him or her, in order to “give back [...] a little of the joy, the energy, the love of life and politics that he (sic) knew how to give and invent.”²⁴

A formal examination of Cather’s writing can also demonstrate the intensities that her narratives cause to circulate. Tennant takes the title of his preface, “The Room Beyond,” from a statement that Cather made about the achievement of her 1925 novel *The Professor’s House*. That novel is divided into three parts, the first and third of which pertain to the domestic life of Professor Godfrey St. Peter as he enters the third age on the shores of Lake Michigan. His career as a research historian and author of the eight-volume *The Spanish Adventurers* is winding down, his two daughters have grown, married and moved out of his home and he and his wife have moved into a new and richly furnished house. The narrative chronicles St. Peter’s

23 Ong, Walter. *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1982) 31.

24 Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 9.

pained adjustment to the new house—he continues to rent his old house from his landlord so as to escape there and write—as well as his adjustment to his position as a revered father-in-law. The third part details St. Peters’ uneasy acceptance of this new life. But the intervening second section tells the story of Tom Outland, St. Peters’ pupil and protégé, in the years of his adolescence in New Mexico.

Cather states that *The Professor’s House* was structured around a two-part formal experiment. “The first is the device often used by the early French and Spanish novelists; that of inserting the *Nouvelle* into the *Roman*,” the insertion of the story of Tom Outland, New Mexico and adolescence into the novel of St. Peters’ crowded and complicated domestic scene.

But the experiment which interested me was something a little more vague [...] very much akin to the arrangement followed in sonatas in which the academic sonata form was handled somewhat freely. Just before I began the book I had seen, in Paris, an exhibition of old and modern Dutch paintings. In many of them the scene presented was a living-room warmly furnished, or a kitchen full of food and coppers. But in most of the interiors, whether drawing-room or kitchen, there was a square window, open through which one saw the masts of ships, or a stretch of grey sea. The feeling of the sea that one got through those square windows was remarkable, and gave me a sense of the fleets of Dutch ships that ply quietly on all the waters of the globe—to Java, etc.²⁵

In her narrative experiment Cather creates a square window—*Tom Outland’s Story*—which is meant to give a feeling and to impell the reader to look beyond the overly furnished house out onto the open air spaces of the Southwest.

Cather’s allusion to musical forms is telling because, just as sonic images differ from visual images because they cannot be perceived in a static state, neither can musical forms like

25 Cather, “*On Death*,” 30-31.

the sonata. The likening of her experiment to the musical format begins to demonstrate that the result will be unlike a visual image [text] and something more akin to an experience. This demonstration is completed when Cather turns to her account of the Dutch paintings. She does not describe the contents of the paintings, or does not describe them in great detail, anyhow. Instead she focuses on the perspective that the paintings give her on the world, of the visions she sees after looking at them, of the feeling of the sea and the far places of the globe. Her book is meant to be used similarly, put into contact with other flows to give an experience.

Carpentier, too, is an intensive reader of space who seeks to translate his own experience of Latin America as strange to the reader. *Los pasos perdidos* in particular is full of his readings of Latin American space and taxonomizes them by epochs drawn from art history. A city is modernist but is interlaced with the romantic spaces of the theater district with stone churches, fountains and old houses. Observing a mansion on an unlit street in the old quarter of a city the narrator stares through the window into a drawing room and it is

como si un siglo antes se hubiese dispuesto todo para un baile al que nadie hubiera asistido nunca. De pronto, en un piano al que el trópico había dado sonoridad de espineta, sonó la pomposa introducción de un vals tocado a cuatro manos. Luego, la brisa agitó las cortinas y el salón entero pareció esfumarse en un revuelo de tules y encajes. Roto el sortilegio [...]

as though preparations had been made a century before for a dance to which nobody came. Suddenly, from a piano to which the tropics had given the tone of a spinet, came the flowery prelude of a waltz for four hands. A breeze rippled the curtains and the whole drawing-room seemed to fade out in a whirl of floating tulle and lace.

The spell [was] broken [...]²⁶

26 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 170; *The Lost Steps*, 46.

Carpentier, whose fiction is noted for its attention to architecture, is known as a baroque writer in part because of this tendency to portray spaces as inseparable from and even haunted by the life that shapes and creates them. It is important to note that this tendency in his writing is drawn directly from his experience of spaces, “sentir el nada mentido sortilegio de las tierras[...]" 'feeling the undeniable spell of the lands[...].'²⁷

The second meaning of intensive comes from Manuel De Landa's reconstruction of the Deleuzian ontology in *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, where it designates the processes that produce actual, extensive forms. And while there is intensive process producing extensive form, actual extensive forms can be directly perceived while intensive processes cannot be.²⁸ Spatial assemblages are extensive and can be perceived, but the processes which produce them cannot be. This can lead to the unthinking belief in the correlation between time as absolute date and historical development as irreversible stages. In the narrative maps we consider here, by contrast, an intensive reading of the book is a transcendental exercise that, put in contact with the flows and machines outside of the book, makes possible a recognition of the intensive processes hidden within America's historical territories. In doing so they present the experience of incorporeal America through contact with its corporeal iterations.

²⁷ Carpentier, *Reino*, 3.

²⁸ Deleuze offers two different explanations why something may be imperceptible: in the instance of the very small, the very large, the very slow or the very fast, he calls "the contingently imperceptible" and explains that it is empirically imperceptible; that which can only be perceived by transcendental exercise, intensive process, is called "the essentially imperceptible." *Difference and Repetition* trans. Paul Patton. (NY: Columbia UP, 1994).

Returning to the citation from Bonta and Protevi above, we can further integrate the two meanings of intensive to our benefit as readers and actors in space. For to claim that ‘space is not constructed by discourse alone’ still admits that discourse has a role in shaping space. For Bonta and Protevi as for Deleuze and Guattari the territory is effected by indexical signs.²⁹ Thus we can make productive use of the theories from Anglo-America and Latin-America that elucidate how statist discourses on the Americas impacted the production of space in the Americas like Eric Cheyfitz’s *The Poetics of Imperialism* and Angel Rama’s *La ciudad letrada*, (*The Lettered City*).

This study takes off from these critical works in order to assert that it is not merely the discursive which signifies indexically but the whole of the sensible. The actions of domesticated grazing cattle in an undomesticated savanna are produce a space by drastically transforming flora and thereby soil. Agricultural labor in service to coffee markets intersperse rows of cultivated coffee plants with forest space, but without intensive capital input the forest space can quickly reabsorb it.³⁰ In both of these cases it is a nondiscursive physical process that is signified indexically. But most importantly this space is ‘not configured solely to be read’, it produces opportunity for different assemblages to emerge. An intensive reading—the book as a flow meeting other flows, or processes, that are signified indexically—pushes one

29 The indexical sign, in the linguistics of CS Pierce and Roman Jakobson, is the sign which signifies as a metonymic trace of the signified whole.

30 These examples along with others that are more complex are included in "Case Study: Entangled Spaces and Semiotics in Olancho" Mark Bonta and John Protevi, an appendix to *Deleuze and Geophilosophy*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002. 169-190.

beyond recognizing the referential being of the territory toward thinking the intensive becoming of territorialization.

There is no reason to oppose an interior voyage to exterior ones: Lenz's stroll, Nijinsky's stroll, the promenades of Beckett's creatures are effective realities, but where the reality of matter has abandoned all extension, just as the interior voyage has abandoned all form and quality, henceforth causing pure intensities...to radiate within and without, intensities through which a nomadic subject passes."

Deleuze and Guattari,
Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia

Schizophrenic Journey and Geocriticism

I. Interior

The nomadic subject that Deleuze and Guattari formulate above is of great importance to the linkage between intensive reading and the literary experience of the intensive production of space. It is also an analytic tool developed as part of what the philosophers call "schizoanalysis." Schizoanalysis was offered as a corrective to psychoanalysis as it was practiced in the 1950s and 1960s in France, with its exclusionary focus on the universal family structure. The aim of schizoanalysis was to demonstrate that psychoanalysis' conception of madness was wholly inaccurate, that it is not the family that makes one mad but the world.³¹

In order to assert the role of the world in the production of madness Deleuze and Guattari needed to establish three critiques of psychoanalysis: the unconscious must be seen as

³¹ Francois Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives* trans. Deborah Glassman. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. 218-220.

productive rather than representative, a factory rather than a stage; mental illness bears on the world rather than on familial egos; and desire constructs assemblages on the unconscious level rather than expressing the lack of a desired object. These three points all return to the nomadic subject, which emerges directly from the experience of libidinal intensities, unlike the Freudian ego that is a fixed entity seeking to control its libidinal drives. “It is a strange subject... with no fixed identity, wandering about over the body without organs, but always remaining peripheral to the desiring-machines, being defined by the share of the product it takes for itself...being born of the states that it consumes and being reborn with each new state.”³²

This subject is discontinuous across time, rather than self-identical. It is discontinuous in space, occupying various locales of the body without organs in its intensive journey. In other words, it is similar to the noncorporeal idea of America and an intensive analysis will show that, like that idea, the multiplicity of the subject (in space, in time) both preexists the establishment of identity and persists after that establishment. This is the reason that Deleuze and Guattari’s corrective to psychoanalysis is called *schizoanalysis*: to avoid the trappings of family drama one must foreground the discontinuity and uncover the actual events that are felt and give rise to the subject. In the narratives of Cather and Carpentier the act of journeying through spatial assemblages provide us with two subjects of the schizo process simultaneously as we attempt to map both how America is split into the discrete assemblages that are encountered while we also map how passing through these assemblages affects the nomadic subject.

32 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 16.

In the schizoanalytic sense history is felt and experienced immediately by the body in the present, in stark contrast to a history that is deduced by the mind and deals with what was in the past. But what does it mean to experience history with the body? In *Los pasos perdidos* this question is addressed most directly in the narrator's repeated experience of involuntary memory. Once he has left the Capital behind, the narrator's lived present is constantly interrupted by an unconscious irruption of his personal past that is triggered by sensation. This complex somatic infolding is narrated, but it refers primarily to a physical experience which must be given sense through recollection. Thus, though this schizophrenic journey is a flight from the life of ennui which he has settled into, the narrator never flees from this life toward another life: he never holds the belief that by leaving the United States for Latin America, or by leaving the Capital for the backlands he will travel back in time. At each moment when the narrator realizes that he is 'walking the lost steps' he is actually creating a memory to make sense of a physical affect.

Such assertions—that a twentieth century character can reenact a nineteenth century custom in such a way that he embodies a nineteenth century man, or that he can experience a world of such close vegetation that the distinction between land and water becomes muddled and he embodies the mythic account of creation in the book of Genesis—may seem insane. We might therefore be tempted to dismiss them as moments where the fiction breaks from reality. But in order to read these passages in line with Carpentier's professions about the real and actual existence of the marvelous real in Latin America, we cannot interpret this psychosis as purely mental, merely ideal. After all, Carpentier asks "What is all of American history but a

chronicle of the marvelous real?”³³ The deleuzoguattarian notion of history-memory as a punctual system provides a way of thinking the narrator’s schizophrenic journey without reducing it to a merely mental escape from the real historical world.

Cather’s archbishop lives and dies history. Still, a Christian sense of historicism often masks the intensive journey of this nomad subject. At the beginning of Latour’s narrative he crosses the expanse between his newly established vicarate and the seat of the bishop of Durango in Mexico. He is overwhelmed by the alien terrain and unable to make sense of what he sees and hears.

The difficulty was that the country in which he found himself was so featureless—or rather, that it was crowded with features, all exactly alike. As far as he could see, on every side, the landscape was heaped up into monotonous red sand-hills.... He had been riding among them since early morning, and the look of the country had no more changed and as if he stood still.³⁴

He is able to orient himself only by acts of faith when first he comes upon a “cruciform” juniper tree among the thousands of conical hills. Accepting this as a sign he makes his devotions, resuming a quotidian routine and arising from this act feeling refreshed. The narrative informs us that “that passion of Jesus became for him the only reality,” which subsumed his own corporal need, though it is only later when he stumbles upon a small farmstead that his life can proceed.³⁵

33 Alejo Carpentier, *El siglo de las luces* in *Obras Completas IV*. Buenos Aires: Editoriales del Siglo XXI, 1994. iii

34 Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, New York: Random House 1990 [1927]. 17.

35 Cather, *Death*, 20.

The archbishop demonstrates the corporal experience of history even though it is occluded by his Christian historicism and it is different from the experience of Carpentier's narrator because the itinerary of his journey is different. Carpentier's narrator travels linearly through the stages of civilization given by his history (the secular history of art) before (briefly) escaping from Western history altogether. The itinerary of the archbishop's travels is not linear because his travels are not progressively into more and more remote regions of history. Rather the archbishop is involved in the effort of modernization; his work is to align the church with the "progressive government" of the United States of America and to unite many nations.³⁶ Thus his experience of history is one of progress, rather than escape. More importantly, though, we can see that the universal history that organizes the archbishop's experience—a world of discontinuous nations to be shepherded toward pauline universalism—is fundamentally different than Carpentier's.

Deleuze and Guattari are in fact infamous for devaluing history in their philosophy. Assertions such as "History is not creative," and "history is made only by those who oppose history (not by those who insert themselves into it, or even reshape it)," are repeated throughout their jointly-authored work.³⁷ But the devaluing of history in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari is part of an assertion of the value of the transhistorical becomings that underlie all creativity. History is only a system that attempts to represent the world in a way that makes sense.

³⁶ Cather, *Death*. 7.

³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 295.

History may try to break its ties to memory; it may make the schemas of memory more elaborate, superpose and shift coordinates, emphasize connections, or deepen breaks. The dividing line, however, is not there. The dividing line passes not between history and memory but between punctual 'history-memory' systems and ... (bits) of becoming in the pure state; they are transhistorical.³⁸

But the kind of creativity called for by Carpentier's schizohistory does not make that kind of sense, it breaks from the sense of history. Cather's own sense of history recognized a progressive thrust to history but recognized it mournfully. (I need to add a note or subsection on Cather's Carlyean historicism and her growing conservatism and Christianity)

For both Carpentier's narrator and Cather's archbishop, involuntary memory conditions historical recollection. The involuntary memory always works in the manner of a somatic infolding, in which a perception affects the narrator, rather than a neutral form of information storage in the mind. Sitting in the dining room of an inn the narrator listens as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony comes over the radio. The sound evokes an associated memory and soon he is organizing his memory to include more associated elements of history:

Cada vez que la sonoridad metálica de un corno apoyaba un acorde, creía ver a mi padre, con su barbita puntiaguda, adelantando el perfil para leer la música abierta ante sus ojos, con esa peculiar actitud del cornista [...] Formado en conservatorios de la Suiza alemana, proclamaba la superioridad del corno de timbre bien metálico, hijo de la trompa de caza que había resonado en todas las Selvas Negras, opniéndolo a lo que, con tono peyorativo, llamaba en francés *le cor* [...] Lo cierto era que a una escena de caza de la *Raymunda* de Glazounoff se debía mi nacimiento de este lado del Océano. Mi padre había sido sorprendido por el atentado de Sarajevo en lo mejor de una temporada wagneriana del Teatro Real de Madrid, y, encolorizado por el inesperado arresto bélico de los socialistas alemanes y franceses, había renegado del viejo continente podrido, aceptando el atrip primera trompa en una gira que Anna Pawlova llevaba a las Antillas.

38 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. 296.

Each time the metallic sonority of a horn supported a chord, I seemed to see my father, with his pointed beard, with that peculiar attitude of the horn-player... . Trained as he had been in German Swiss conservatories, he upheld the superiority of the ...hunting horn that had echoed through the Black Forest, over what was known in French as le cor... .As a matter of fact, a hunting scene in Glazunov's *Raymonda* was responsible for my having been born on this side of the ocean. The assassination at Sarajevo [of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, which initiated the First World War] had caught my father in the middle of the Wagner cycle at the Royal Theater of Madrid, and, outraged by the unexpected bellicosity of the French and German Socialists, he had shaken the dust of the decaying Continent from his feet and accepted the position of first trumpet on a tour that brought Ann Pavlova to the Antilles.³⁹

In this sequence the narrator hears the tone of the horns, which induces a becoming-child.

Very quickly the memory expands from the impersonal tone to the personal recollection of the father. The punctual system of history-memory puts this recollection of the father in historical reference as it narrates the events leading to his emigration.

Throughout the novel history is consistently recalled through this fabulous function. This is what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they write that history and memory cannot be divided: history always takes the form of a recollection, even when the narrator is placing his personal experience within the recalled framework of the Paleolithic era or the mythic era of divine creation.

II. Exterior

Although America is thematically central to *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as well as *Los pasos perdidos* it is also impossible to locate. In either book a protagonist travels widely—

³⁹ Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 221-2; *The Lost Steps*, 85-6.

though within a prescribed territory that forms only one small portion of America—and encounters at least a dozen different social assemblages so divergent as to strike him as different worlds. The closest that these figures can approach to America *is* to travel between its disjunctively included worlds in order to grasp, as if in a vision, its simultaneous extension into the remote past and its dominance of the coming future.

Death Comes for the Archbishop, as the title announces, ends with the death of the itinerant bishop Jean Latour. Latour's death is foreordained and inevitable. It is in fact announced in the book's prologue: "And this Latour is intelligent, you say? What a fate you are drawing upon him!...He will have no easy life, your Eminence. That country will drink up his youth and strength as it does the rain."⁴⁰ The narrative unfolds in the temporality of this becoming, as the archbishop's life becomes a death and his death becomes a life that is recorded in the transformation of an unthinkable landscape into a US-American territory. More than forty years are excerpted into a discontinuous narrative of not quite 300 pages.⁴¹

The prologue, titled "At Rome" and set at a private audience of cardinals for a missionary bishop from North America, establishes that the territory in question is not known to any of the parties at hand. The terrace where they dine, with its remote view of Rome, reinforces their distanced, muddled vantage on the territories: "This new territory was vague to all of them, even to the missionary bishop. The Italian and French cardinals spoke of it as "*Le*

40 Cather, *Death*, 10-11.

41 Just under 70,000 words. Information from Project Gutenberg Australia, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200491.txt>. Accessed 07/2/2013.

Mexique,” and the Spanish host referred to it as “New Spain.”⁴² This distanced perspective is likewise figured in the name of the vicar they appoint to reform the territories, Latour, which in French is tower in the sense of both defensive battlement and rook.

The chronotope of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* is shaped by these two narrative elements, the broad temporality of becoming-death and the vantage of the surveyor.⁴³ The narrative proceeds within this space-time toward predictable ends: Latour’s death and the establishment of an Anglo-American archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico. When he witnesses the establishment of the railway in Santa Fe near the end of his death, the narrator reflects that Latour “had accomplished an historic period.”⁴⁴ But the way in which the entire narrative can only proceed by moving from vignette to vignette of concrete situations, narrated as morality tales or scenes from a hagiography, betrays it as woefully inconcrete. In contrast to the meaning of the book, which signifies the unification of America synecdochally, its use is to heighten perception of the spatial multiplicity. Reading *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, one discovers that the discrete multiplicity of spaces is primary in relation to the ideal place of the archdiocese and that multiplicity persists within the place’s unity.

Temporality in *Los pasos perdidos* is formally quite dissimilar to Cather’s long-range narrative. It is a significantly longer narrative (92,00 words) that deals, for the most part, with

42 Cather, *Death*, 4.

43 The chronotope, literally “time-space”, is a critical unit first deployed by Mikhail Bakhtin for the analysis of space and time within narratives. His primary thesis was that narratives embodied qualitatively specific space-times that were determined by the actions of the story. See “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist trans. Carlyn Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

44 Cather, *Death*, 271.

the protagonist's travel over the course of six weeks in June and July.⁴⁵ The difference in time scale can be accounted for because *Los pasos perdidos* is a novel centered on the experience of a personal becoming, the becoming untimely of the narrator. The becoming-death of Cather's narrative is the translation of a landscape into a territory and as our analysis will show it is an impersonal experience for the archbishop. The narrator of *Los pasos perdidos* does not accomplish an historic period in the manner of the archbishop but rather trespasses between a number of historic territories.

During the bulk of the narrative his life is a flight from the Modern City and the life of the "Hombre-Avispa, del Hombre-Ninguno," 'the Wasp-Man, the No-Man.'" This is the life that narrator equates with modern existence.⁴⁶ Time in the novel is measured against the narrator's transformation from office functionary to villager in the utopian "Valle del Tiempo Detenido," the 'Valley Where Time Had Stopped.'⁴⁷ "[Yo] me acerco con angustiosa opresión a ese mundo que dejé hace mes y medio, según cálculo hecho sobre los calendarios en uso, cuando en realidad he vivido la pasmosa dilatación de swis inmensas semanas que escaparon a las cronologías de este clima." '[It] was with anguished oppression that I approached that world,' he writes on returning to the Modern City, "which I had left a month and a half prior, as calculated by the calendars they use, while in reality the astonishing expansion of those six

45 The first and last chapter of the novel fall outside of these six weeks and comprise 80 of the 309 pages of the original (72 of the 278 pages of the translation).

46 The full sentence reads, "Habíamos caído en la era del Hombre-Avispa, del Hombre-Ninguno, en que las almas no se vendían al Diable, sino al Contable o al Cómitre." 'We had fallen into the age of the Wasp-man, the No-man, when souls were no longer sold to the Devil, but to the Bookkeeper or the Gally Master.' Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 131; *The Lost Steps*, 9.

47 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 413; *The Lost Steps*, 308.

weeks escapes the chronologies of that climate.”⁴⁸ When he becomes unfixed from his office life those six weeks expand to include not only immense personal transformation, which might already seem to exceed the calendar time in which it occurs, but also “todas las etapas de la civilización conocidas a la humanidad por toda historia,” ‘all of the stages of civilization known to humans throughout history,’ through which he has traveled.⁴⁹

The chronotope of *Los pasos perdidos* is determined by these distinct narrative features: time is shaped according to the epoch expansion of becoming-untimely while spaces are all presented as foreign worlds in comparison with his home world, the Modern City. The narrator journeys from his home world through many more which he is astonished to uncover have not vanished from the earth with the passage of time until finally arriving at a city founded in the Amazon plateaus that seems to have escaped time. However, the escapist narrative in which the narrator is able to flee his contemporary, horrible world for a utopia outside of history is short-lived. The narrator is not long in the “Valle del Tiempo Detenido,” before he comes to find that existence unfulfilling. He continues to be impeded from writing the music that he wants: in the Modern City he is forced to score commercial jingles in order to pay for his home and support his family; in the Valley Where Time Had Stopped there are no instruments but guitars, percussion and simple woodwinds and paper is too scarce to spare for his writing.

48 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 375; *The Lost Steps*, 276.

49 Alejo Carpentier, *Entrevistas*. Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1984. 172

In contrast to the narrator's expectation that one can evade the problems of one's time by escaping it in the hidden worlds of America the novel demonstrates that the American untimely refers to the capacity to move between times by moving through and within diverse social assemblages. The untimely is not a realm of the eternal past miraculously preserved in America but the inactuality of America: because America is not actual anywhere it exists as a multiplicity of temporalities.

Hence a chronotopic analysis of each narrative uncovers the following ground for comparison: *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Los pasos perdidos* foreground a plurality of spaces and times—in the form of spatial assemblages generated by intensive processes—that bely the identity of either a historical or territorial unity in an actual realm 'America'. Since the texts are pluralistic with regard to historical period and territory, a reading should be grounded in the locales of the text, its geography more than the world (place and period) of its production. As I propose that America is an idea, I need to find another suitable landscape—this time one that is materially real—within which the narratives can be grounded. a plurality of temporally-defined territories—any singular periodization is bound to failure. What this schizo-history requires is a geocriticism, a mode of analysis that stresses attention to where and how literature meets the world in the periods of its composition as well as its afterlife.

Geocriticism is largely consonant to my own project of intensive reading uncovering intensive processes. Bertrand Westphal, the most prominent proponent of geocriticism, defines it according to four principles. First, geocriticism is “geo-centered” and not “ego-centered.” Thus the geocritic refers to her object of study as an artifact in the world and not a

representation in someone's mind. Secondly, geocriticism is baroque: it seeks to embrace a plurality of perspectives on a place rather than to establish one correct view of it. Thirdly, geocriticism is empirical. The critic must attend to the relation between sense and perception and relate the object of criticism to the body and the physical world rather than assuming that an established meaning subsumes affective reading. Finally, geocriticism locates both spaces and times in a "spatiotemporal scheme." This means noting the temporal variety of space as well as localization of specific times.⁵⁰

A non-ego-centered criticism certainly bodes well for my aim to consider an intensive reading, as does an empirical attention to sense and perception. In addition geocriticism's attention to the intertwining of space and time sounds much like the assemblage theory picture of spaces that result from rhythmic localized processes. Geocriticism's multiperspectival approach, which seeks to study all spaces as polyvocal by only studying texts and cultural objects occurring within the same actual space, however, proves limiting for a project as far-flung as this one is. For Westphal the different multiplicities that serve as background to these two narratives cannot serve as common grounds for a geocriticism. He writes "Geocriticism is an approach whose purpose is to explore some of the interstices that until recent times were blank spaces..." and it seems central to his notion of geocriticism that geocentric attention can only be paid to actual spaces such as cities or small islands.⁵¹

50 Bertrand Westphal, Foreward, *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies* ed. Robert T Tally, Jr. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.ix-xv.

51 Westphal, *Geocritical Explorations*, xiii. See also his *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* trans. Robert T. Tally Jr. New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011. chs. 4 and 5, "Elements of Geocriticism" and "Reading Space."

What then for comparative literature in an age of globalism? I cannot ignore the feeling that the comparison of texts and cultural objects from diverse actual spaces which are nevertheless linked by their inclusion in an ideal place is both important and viable. What is more the geocritical approach to literature seems to be ideal. In pursuing a hemispheric comparative literature that is still geocritical I follow the suggestion of Eric Prieto in expanding geocriticism's practices to include the comparative study of kinds of spatial practice.⁵² The mode of spatial practice under analysis here is the schizohistoric journey, with its scrambling of the codes of interior and exterior that undermines the identity of territory AND subject.

By making a study of the schizohistoric journey I hope to contribute to the critical toolbox of the field of Inter-American studies and the discipline of Comparative Literature. An approach to literature based on the tenets of geocriticism can help to expand the field by offering a ground for comparison that would escape the national/world literature parameters on which the field was originally established. Less than a study of any one national literature, a geocriticism of the schizophrenic journey can be used to make transnational comparisons.⁵³

A Map of Schizohistory:

⁵² Eric Prieto, "Geocriticism, Geopoetics, Geophilosophy and Beyond" in *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies* ed. Robert T. Tally, Jr. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011. 28-9.

⁵³ The schizophrenic journey has a minor but important role in the national canons of many New World literatures. The schizohistory is more central to "New World literature" if we restrict that term to the definition that Lois Zamora Parkinson gives it in *The Usable Past*.

In Manuel De Landa's words, schizohistoric narratives reveal a truth about history: "we do not have to think about about primitive societies and their urban counterparts as representing successive stages of development of humanity."

Once we understand that the possibilities open to an actual assemblage [extant territory] have a certain virtual structure, (while) some forms of social organization may indeed have appeared earlier than others—hunter-gatherers certainly existed before any central state apparatus—that succession occurred only in actual time. In virtual time the latter was a possibility already prefigured in the former, [and vice versa]... ."⁵⁴

De Landa writes elsewhere that "much as water's solid, liquid, and gas phases may coexist, so each new human phase simply added itself to the other ones... without leaving them in the past".⁴ The idea of a recursive or nonlinear history is central to the materialist ontology that De Landa develops. Recursivity entails the rejection of a progressive narrative of history, it is also the central irony operating in Carpentier's title *The Lost Steps*. Those steps— "ciertas modos de vivir que el hombre había perdido para siempre," 'certain ways of life that man had lost forever'—are not lost.⁵⁵

The following pages offer an abstract geography of *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Los pasos perdidos* based on the travels of the two protagonists and the chronotopic unfolding of each text. I will analyze the books' geographies based jointly on the scheme of a universal history of Man offered by Deleuze and Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* and Manuel De Landa's abstract account of the expansion of the Europe into the Americas from *A*

⁵⁴ Manuel De Landa, "Intensive and Extensive Cartography" in *Deleuze: History and Science*. New York: Atropos Press. 135.

⁵⁵ Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 157; *The Lost Steps*, 36.

Thousand Years of Nonlinear History.⁵⁶ Overlaying these maps demonstrates a similar multiplicity of actual social assemblages or settlements in the form of apparently anachronistic territories in these two regions. These historical territories are produced by the machinic operation of social assemblages organizing their components, including man, into a world.⁵⁷

Deleuze and Guattari do not equate the social machines with actual (historical or contemporary) societies; rather these denote “abstract machines.”⁵⁸ They identify three such machines: a “territorial machine” which organizes man’s capacities directly to a communal body that is inscribed on a limitless earth; a “despotic machine” which overcodes these territorial machines, inscribing them on a state rather than the full earth, and a “capitalist machine” in which the despotic body of the state is decoded into smaller quanta of “value” and inscribed on the full body of capital such that everything, including states, become the product of capital. The territories produced by these social machines relate to one another because from the territorial to the despotic and then from the despotic to the civilized these machines envelope one another by projecting themselves as beyond the limits of the prior. Yet the enveloped machine continues functioning, though within new limits.

⁵⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand* chs. 5 and 13 and *Anti-Oedipus* ch. 3. Manuel De Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, 149-179.

⁵⁷ As should become clearer as the analysis unfolds it is important to note that these territories are continuously produced and thus still being produced in the temporality of the narratives. Cf. De Landa, "Assemblage Theory and Human History."

⁵⁸ De Landa's terms for the abstract machines, “engineering diagrams,” or “virtual structures” is clearer and simpler to grasp than its deleuzoguattarian equivalent. It is also clearer that something that is 'virtual' or a 'diagram' or can relate to so many social assemblages without denoting an essence.

In *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* De Landa provides a philosophical account of the actual⁵⁹ expansion of Europe into North and South America through a deleuzoguattarian lens. De Landa's account of the ecological, biological and linguistic processes of entanglement and domination that led to "an entire continent (being) turned into a supply region for... European life," will provide a framework for explaining why so many social assemblages which we recognize as medieval and European remain actual in Latin America.⁶⁰ The deleuzoguattarian schema above will provide a framework for thinking this contingent situation in terms of a universal without falling into the trappings of a progressive history. De Landa's account of the actual ecological and territorial expansion of Europe explains why spatial assemblages uncovered in America would fit the mold of Western European history.

Universal history gives proper names to experiential affects and manners of socio-spatial behavior that are experienced in the present but which it attributes to its own past. For Carpentier's narrator, the history of art, with its multiple disciplinary branches for music, sculpting, architecture, painting etc. provides the punctual-system for all of history, stretching from modernist painting with multiple perspectives and pronounced style, via the Revolutionary art of eighteenth century Europe, the art of the Renaissance with its perfectly crafted perspectives and surfaces, classical Greek sculpture that comes to the present denuded

59 The term "actual" is used to mark a contrast to "virtual" rather than to denote contemporary or recent. That is to say, De Landa explains the historically contingent manner in which the virtual plurality of social assemblages was actualized upon American territories. On this distinction see De Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* pp. 11-24 and Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* Trans. N. M. Paul & W. Scott Palmer, especially 102 ff. and 245 ff.

60 De Landa, Manuel. *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*. New York: Zone Books, 2000 [1997], 33.

of all its color, until finally art history merges with archaeology in Bronze Age Greece, and ends when man can no longer look upon the artifacts man has made. But in this instance, as when his personal memories are recalled to him without any conscious agency (and even at times when conscious effort to recall them fails), the narrator is experiencing the art object in the present, and it is the visual or sonic experience that produces a type of hallucinatory memory which he relates to himself and to his journal as historical thinking.

I. The Modern West

Los pasos perdidos precedes from the last stage of universal history (deleuzoguattarian regimes) to the first, from Modern City to Capital City, then onward into what the narrator names Land of the Horse, Land of the Dog, and Paleolithic. In a delirium the narrator passes through the Land of Genesis only to emerge, as he suggests, outside of history. In other words, the journey begins in the global space of capitalism, a territory more connected to the global network of capital than a nation-state. In the Capital he is in a state space, and as he journeys into the backlands the influence of both state and capital wane until he finds himself among territorial primitives.

The first chapter takes place in the Modern City, where the narrator's musical life is given over to the labor of advertising. Work demands ever more of his time and the narrator becomes alienated from his body and the daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal rhythms of his

life.⁶¹ He is unaware of the changing of the seasons except by the rotation of holiday advertisements and decoration.

Formally, chapter one is distinct from the rest of the book because it does not take the form of a daily journal, but is a unified recollection of life in the Modern City. The rest of the novel is presented in the form of daily journal entries. On one hand this feature of chapter one signals the narrator's alienation from time under the capitalist regime. If he had been less alienated from his time, one might reliably assume, he would have recorded his thoughts and impressions daily as he would upon fleeing the Modern City. Secondly, aforementioned features of journal composition mentioned above--discrete units of composition, an unforeseen trajectory and a unity which cannot be totalized in each moment--do not apply to chapter one. This warrants comment by contrast. For, while chapters two through six are meant somehow to convey a more temporally bound experience of the present, chapter one is written retrospectively, in light of the total course of the action. The ennui and frustration expressed by the narrator toward his modern metropolitan existence is an accretion of sentiment, a habitus, rather than the schizos experience of history.

The Modern West in Cather's novel is likewise formally distinct from the rest of the narrative. It is only presented in the prologue "At Rome" In this scene the imagining of the pauline universal is presented as achieved in the form of an internationally diverse but unified

⁶¹He and his wife, "Al no hallar un modo normal de hacer coincidir [sus] vidas[...]acabamos por dormir cada cual por su lado," "unable to work out any arrangement for meshing [their] lives[...] had finally wound up sleeping apart', while at work he is "Atado a mi técnica entre relojes, cronógrafos, metrónomos, dentro de salas sin ventanas revestidas de fieltros[...]," "chained to (his) technique among clocks, chronographs, and metronomes in windowless, artificially lighted rooms..." Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 130,133; *The Lost Steps*, 6, 10.

church overlooking an ordered Holy See. There is no other moment in the narrative that presents a modernity that is not provincial: not even the depiction of Santa Fé itself at the time of archbishop's death. Life is soft for these cardinals in their modern world: playing tennis, selecting wines for supper and arranging the men who come to power in the Americas. Reminding us of the difference of this life from the adopted life of our archbishop is an American bishop sent to dine with them while seeking to influence the same nomination process. Offered fine red wines and told he has eaten too quickly, without relaxing sufficiently this Canadian implant responds, "I fear I have lost my palate for vintages. Out there, a little whisky, or Hudson Company rum, does better for us."

II. The Regional Capital

The second book of *Los pasos perdidos* occurs in the Capital and its surrounding provinces, "mere prototypes" which Carpentier claims exist in every Latin American nation-state. It is thus an abstract machine: the 'despotic machine,' that establishes the State by overcoding the societies of the 'territorial machine'.⁶² The territory is quite varied. The capital city is a coastal port divided into distinct neighborhoods for entertainment, government and

⁶² As Deleuze and Guattari explain, "(the State) is a phenomenon of intra-consistency. It makes points resonate together... even diverse points of order--geographic, ethnic, linguistic, moral, economic, technological particularities. The State makes the town resonate with the countryside." *A Thousand Plateaus*, 433.

commerce. These regions are unified into one territory by nothing so much as the fact that they constitute, or are made to resonate with, the national capital. It is no coincidence that in this territory there is prolonged and deadly struggle for the control of the nation-state while only some days' journey away the struggle is unknown or unimportant. Outside of this territory the intraconsistency of the state falls below a critical threshold and the towns and villages become distinct from it, if not abandoned by it.

The narrator describes the process of making the capital city as an act of power and control exerted at a distance by foreigners, observing centuries of history in the present. The city itself is a coupling a planned layout over the aggressive terrain, flora and fauna of the tropical, coastal zone. It originated as fortifications ordered by Philip II of Spain, and ““Durante centenares de años se había luchado contra raíces... .” 'the inhabitants had been waging a war of centuries... .’⁶³ Of course, geography and life undermine this plan at every moment such that narrator always describes the production of space in the capital in two stages: first the plan of organization and then its undoing by immanent forces. First the war described above and then, "cuando un rico propietario se iba por unos meses a París...las raíces aprovechaban el descuido de canciones y siestas para arquear el lomo en todas partes, acabando en veinte días con la mejor voluntad funcional de Le Corbusier," 'when some rich property-owner went to Paris for a few months... the roots took advantage of songs and siestas to arch their backs, putting an end in twenty days to Le Corbusier's best functional designs.’⁶⁴

63 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 162; *The Lost Steps*, 38 .

64 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 162; *The Lost Steps*, 38. Similarly Carpentier writes first of the business and newspaper district “el mundo de las balanzas, caduceos, cruces, genios alados, banderas, trompetas

The great divisions between that underlie capital's neighborhoods are noted as Carpentier's narrator explains the sense of schizophrenic journey that movement in the capital brings on him. In contrast to the modern niceties of the business district and the hotel, the city also houses another, magic world of the theater. When the narrator and his lover attend the opera it is historically distinct from those more popular form of entertainment they might have sought elsewhere. Not just the architectural distinctions between the theater in New York and the opera in the capital, although the narrator does provide a description of each venue that contrasts them quite starkly—the social conventions surrounding the theater culture are decidedly not of the Modern City. Based on an entry from his grandmother's journal he read as a child, he periodizes them as falling in line with the experience of the nineteenth century. Of the theater culture he writes that “ese complejo de tradiciones, comportamientos, maneras de hacer, imposible ya de remozar en una gran capital moderna,” 'this complex of traditions, manners and attitudes... could no longer be revived in a great modern city.'⁶⁵

de la Fama, ruedas dentadas, martillos y victorias, con que se proclamaban, en bronce y piedra, la abundancia y prosperidad de la urbe,” 'Justice's scales, caducei, crosses, winged spirits, flags, trumpets of Fame, cogwheels, hammers, and victories, all proclaiming in bronze and stone the abundance and prosperity of the city,' and then “Pero cuando leegaban las lluvias de abril nunca eran suficientes los desagües, y se inundaban las plazas centricas con tal desconcierto del tránsito, que los vehículos conducidos a barrios desconocidos, derribaban estatuas, se extraviaban en callejones ciegos,” 'but with the rains of April the sewerage system proved inadequate, and the main squares became flooded, so snarling up the traffic that vehicles had to be detoured... (knocking) over statues, (getting) stuck in dead-end streets, or (running) over the sides of gullies....' (,38-9) The narrator notes that electricity was run throughout the city and industry was mechanized; production techniques caught on easily in the unregulated industrial sector, and “El progrso se reflejaba en la lisura de los céspedes, en el fausto de las embajadas, en la multiplicación de los panes y de los vinos[...], 'progress was reflected in the close-clipped lawns, the pomp of the embassies, the multiplication of loaves and wines[...],” only then to qualify this progress. “Sin embargo, había algo como un polen maligno en el aire—polen duende, carcoma impalpable, moho volante—que se ponía a actuar, de pronto, con cisteriosos designios [...] embrollar los cálculos, trastocar el peso do los objetos, malear lo garantizado.” 'Nevertheless, something like a baleful pollen in the air--...impalpable rot, enveloping decay--suddenly became active with mysterious design... upsetting calculations, contradicting specific gravity, making guarantees worthless' *Los pasos perdidos* 162; *The Lost Steps*, 39.

⁶⁵ Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* 167; *The Lost Steps* 44.

In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* the regional capital is far more central to the narrative. Rather than one point among others on the itinerary, it is the privileged seat of the archbishop himself. It, too, is in a constant state of transition: nonexistent before 1850, the vicarate established by the Council of Baltimore translated ecclesiastical territories formerly controlled by the See of Durango.⁶⁶ When, at the end of the narrative, the archbishop looks down upon the See from hills outside the city, repeating the terrace vista of the prologue, just over a half-century has passed since the town was raised to the status of See, far short of the centuries of struggle described in the Latin American capital by Carpentier's narrator, but the transformation is still noteworthy.

In the old days it had an individuality, a style of its own; a tawny adobe town with a few green trees, set in a half-circle of carnelian-coloured hills; that and no more. But the year 1880 had begun a period of incongruous american building. Now, half the plaza square was still adobe, and half was flimsy wooden buildings with double porches, scrollwork and jack-straw posts and banisters painted white. Father Latour said the wooden houses which had so distressed him in Ohio, had followed him. All this was quite wrong for the Cathedral he had been so many years in building...⁶⁷.

Father Latour's See is internally divided between the varied flows of emigrants who peopled it: first nations that had managed to remain, Chicanos who were absorbed along with the territory making pastoral livings and the commercial and military expansion of US-America in the New Mexico Territory.

On the first morning the archbishop spends in Santa Fé after his vicarate is officially recognized by the local clergy, upon returning from the dire journey between Durango and

⁶⁶ Cather, *Death* 179, 5.

⁶⁷ Cather, *Death*, 268-269

Santa Fé, he awakes to a sound that situates him impossibly in Rome. “I thought I heard the Angelus, Father Joseph, but my reason tells me that only a long sea voyage could bring me within sound of such a bell. . . . each note floated through the air . . . before the nine strokes were done Rome faded, and behind it [I] sensed something Eastern . . . Jerusalem, perhaps.”⁶⁸ Father Joseph informs him that his was not incorrect, a Spanish bell had been found and put to use to chime the third, sixth and ninth hours. This silver bell, dated to Spain in the 14th century, is just one of the many objects of the territories mixed past to be put to use in the ordering of the Regional Capital, but it serves the archbishop as a reminder of the many and more origins of the church that organizes his life. The Spanish silver was surely worked according to Moorish design—hence, the archbishop thinks, the delirium of Jerusalem—for the Spaniards learned to work silver from the Moors.⁶⁹

III. The Backlands

The settlements within the designation of the archbishop’s See that are not affiliated with the city of Santa Fé are the destinations for the archbishop’s missionary journeys. Outside the settlement of the town the human production of space amounts to an interruption of the world-shaping forces of geography and topography. By contrast, within the statist territory of the capital the human domination of geography had been a hegemonic force which was itself

⁶⁸ Cather, *Death*, 43.

⁶⁹ Cather, *Death* 45.

interrupted by the encroachment of geomorphological forces. The archbishop knows that his true mission, if he is to establish a Diocese at Santa Fé that can align itself with the US-American government and promote a *de facto* international unity among the diocesans of that See, is to translate the subjects of many nations into Americans. “The Church can do more than the Fort to make these poor Mexicans ‘good Americans.’ And it is for the people’s good; there is no other way they can better their condition.”⁷⁰

Carpentier’s narrator enters the Backlands in the third book of *Los pasos perdidos* when he departs the metropolitan suburbs by bus. It includes time spent at the city of Puerto Anunciación in the upper reaches of the Orinoco river, lodgings in a remote village visited by itinerant prostitutes as well as the final leg of the journey by boat. The narrator and his lover ascend the mountains that surround the capital by bus and then descend them, arriving eventually in the more remote savanna. From this moment the narrator is traveling in zones that are increasingly remote, with regards both to information and cultural identification with the nation. The narrator notes the growing difference from the Latin America he had known as a child.

“Hasta ahora, el tránsito de la capital a Los Altos había sido, para mí, una suerte de retroceso [...] por el reencuentro con modos de vivir, sabores, palabras, cosas, que me tenían más hondamente marcado de lo que yo mismo creyera. [...] Cuando saliéramos de la bruma opalescente que se iba verdeciendo de alba, se iniciaría, para mí, una suerte de Descubrimiento,”

'Up to that moment the change from the capital to Los Altos had been for me a kind of return, through this renewed experience of ways of life, flavors, words, things, which had left a deeper brand on me than I would have believed [...] As

70 Cather, *Death*. 36.

we emerged from the opalescent fog, which was turning green in the dawn, a phase of Discovery began for me.⁷¹

The territory of chapter three is further divided into three realms: mountain villages which are accessible by road and therefore have greater commerce with the state territory as well as two more remote territories, the Lands of the Horse and the Lands of the Dog. It is within the mountain villages that the narrator will confront memories of his experience of his Caribbean childhood and modern Europe. His personal recollections will be triggered by the sensual experience of the mountain village and we will discover the etiology of his disenchantment in urban modernity. There is a strong connection between the narrator's memories of his personal experiences and his understanding of the "manifest course of progress." As the journey becomes unfamiliar and the narrator begins to encounter Medieval societies in the twentieth century this understanding is altered.

In this territory made remote by the accidents of geography and the limited powers of the Latin American nation-state a number of social assemblages exist that are alien to the Enlightenment ideals of independence or revolution. This territory, while falling within the extensive boundaries of the nation state, the most recognizable of Enlightenment territories, does not resonate with the nation state. It is a different world in the backlands, where the so-called course of progress has never actualized:

no es el hombre renacentista quien realiza el Descubrimiento y la Conquista, sino el hombre medieval. Los enlistados en la magna empresa no salen del Viejo Mundo por puertas de columnas tomadas al Palladio, sino pasando bajo el arco románico, cuya memoriallevaron consigo al edificar sus primeros

⁷¹Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* 203, *The Lost Steps*, 77.

templos del otro lado del Mar Océano, sobre el sangrante basamento de los teocalli. La cruz románica, vestida de tenazas, clavos y lanzas, fue la elegida para pelear con los que usaban parecidos enseres de holocausto en sus sacrificios.

It was not the man of the Renaissance who carried out the Discovery and Conquest, but medieval man. The volunteers for the great enterprise did not march out of the Old World through gateways whose columns were copied from Palladio, but under Tomanesque arches, the momery of which they carried with them when they built their first churches this side of Ocean-Sea. Under the Cross, complete with pliers, nails and lance, they marched to battle against those who employed similar implements in their sacrifices.⁷²

Of course, as the presence of the narrator himself is sufficient to demonstrate, this is not a past Middle Age but a contemporary one and it interacts with both the state territory and the urban modernity.

Puede pertenecer a otro calendario un objeto, una prenda de vestir, un remedio. Pero el ritmo de vida, los modos de navegación, el candil y la olla, el alargamiento de las horas, las funciones trascendentales del Caballo y del Perro, el modo de reverenciar a los Santos, son medievales[...] Comprendo ahora que he convivido con los burgueses de buen trago [...] cuya vida jocunda me hiciera soñar tantas veces en los museos[...].

An object, a garment, a drug belonged to another calendar. But the rhythm of life, the methods of navigation, the oil lamp, the cooking-pots, the prolongation of the hours, the transcendental functions of the Horse and the Dog, the manner of worshipping the Saints, all were medieval. ... I realized that I had been living with burghers... whose jolly lives I had so often envied in museums[...].⁷³

Though anachronistic objects may be present it is the “rhythm of life” determines which historical territory: the technologies and social organization of the men, women and domestic

⁷² Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* 308, *The Lost Steps*, 177.

⁷³ Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 308. *The Lost Steps*, 178.

species, the time-keeping practice, travel subordinated to waterways and settlements subordinated to geography.⁷⁴

As the narrator's observation of the anachronism of certain objects within the medieval territory suggests, the Middle Ages are not bound by the rules of what De Landa would call 'actual time', but refer to any social and urban assemblages that self-organize in accordance with a virtual scheme. Like Carpentier whose narrator admits that the expansion of Europe into the Americas was the work of medieval man and not the man of the Renaissance or any other European social assemblage, De Landa recognizes that actual medieval social practices as perhaps the most important of all the historical emergences shaping the European domination of the contemporary world.

De Landa locates the birth of Europe in the eleventh century of our current era with the convergence of several technologies that made the cultivation of soil markedly more efficient than ever before.⁷⁵ Thus the presence of medieval man and medieval society organizing space

74 Bruno Latour makes an excellent analysis of this type of discrepancy--the relativity of the relation between history and linearized time--in his analysis of Pasteur's discovery of the microbial genesis of fermentation. He explains that time proceeds along not one but two axes, for the purpose of historical measurement. The first, linear time is one we easily recognize, but the second, sedimentary time, is much stranger because it shows the way in which "the retrograde movement of the true," to borrow a phrase from Bergson, allows the truth of any age to make it resonate with previous assemblages. "To this day, if you reproduce Pasteur's experiment in a defective manner by being, like me for instance, a poor experimenter... the phenomena making up Pouchet's claims [of a nonchemical mechanism for fermentation] will still appear. ... A (contemporary or future) society that no longer knew how to cultivate microbes and control contamination would have a hard time judging the claims of the two adversaries of 1864." Cf. *Pandora's Hope*, Boston: Harvard UP 2002, chs. four and five, esp. 168-171)

75 "(The heavy plow, new ways of harnessing the horse's muscular energy, the open-field system, and triennial field rotation) allowed for the reconstitution of the European exoskeleton, the urban framework that had for the most part collapsed with the Roman Empire. ... Interestingly, ... the 'tidal wave of medieval urbanization' laid out the most enduring features of the European urban structure. ..." De Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, 228.

in the Americas is a result of contingent history and not universal progress or *Geist*: actual historical processes transplanted a variety of European biomass and genetic material as well as what De Landa calls “organizational memory,” the embodied know-how of peasants' and craftsmen's knowledge of how to operate a social assemblage. This territory too is a form of life, a somatic memory. Isolated in regions of little contact with the contemporary state, this hybrid EuroAmerican Middle Ages persists into the narrator's contemporary moment.

The Lands of the Dog are those portions of the medieval territory that remain dominated by the local topography and geography in contrast to the Lands of the Horse.

Detras de los últimos tejados, se erguían los primeros árboles, todavía esparcidos, alejados unos de otros, sobre la vastedad fragosa del arcabuco enrevesado de maniguas, cuya rastrera feracidad borraba los senderos en una noche. Nada tenía que hacer el caballo en un mundo ya sin caminos.

(Behind) the outlying roofs, the vanguard of the still-distant jungle had posted its sentinels, magnificent trees having the air of obelisks rather than trees, still scattered, apart from one another, towering above the vast expanses of the mangroves, whose creeping feracity could wipe out a trail in one night. There was no place for the horse in a pathless world.”⁷⁶

The Lands of the Dog is a place where the precarity of the medieval socius is demonstrated: while medieval society works to control the land, organizing it into a simplified ecosystem from whose shortened food chain it can extract a surplus, it is also constantly being pushed back by the ecosystem. Especially in Amazon territories, where that ecosystem is rainforest, rather than the deciduous forests of Europe, but also in the European Middle Ages of the tenth to fourteenth centuries, this struggle meant that the Lands of Horse and Dog were likely to

⁷⁶ Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 247; *The Lost Steps* 120.

morph one into the other many times. Even once established, no historical territory is permanent.

The archbishop's charges do not fall under categorizations like Medieval or Renaissance. Each nation has its own name, though the largest, the Mexicans, is dispersed across the territory so as to be splintered between villagers and herders. The effect of the church on the lives of the people is discontinuous; the rhythm of daily lives derive from the tending of flock and field. (Insert note on agricultural specifics) Settlements are so sparse in the Backlands that when the archbishop happens by accident upon a homestead, that provides him with life saving water and shelter the homesteader declares, "A priest?... That is not possible! Yet I look at you and it is true. Such a thing has never happened to us before; it must be in answer to my father's prayers."⁷⁷ When an itinerant priest arrives at such a settlement years worth of rites must be performed. One priest must argue with a landowner who demands he should baptize children first and perform marriages afterwards so that he need not call his laborers in from the field. Inflexible about the process of correcting concubinage among the people the priest refuses, "the marriages first, the baptisms afterward; that order is but Christian. I will baptize the children to-morrow morning, and their parents will at least have been married over night."⁷⁸

77 Cather, *Death*, 24.

78 Cather *Death*, 55.

IV. The Beginning Of History

The criteria for the category “man” become more pronounced as Carpentier’s narrator begins to participate fully in the performance of history. “Me divierto con un juego pueril sacado de las maravillosas historias narradas, junto al fuego [...] somos Conquistadores que vamos en busca del Reino de Manoa,” ‘I entertained myself with a childish game suggested by the tales narrated beside the fire [...] we were conquistadors who had set out in search of the Kingdom of Manoa.’⁷⁹ The narrator gives some of his travelling companions historical names, though he gives no historical identity to his lover Rosario or to any of the Indians who work and travel with his guide. He explains the woman’s presence as auxiliary to his own: “My role was that of Juan de San Pedro... who had taken himself a woman in the sack of a town.”

The Indians, on the other hand, he fails to recognize as men on the basis of a ethno-religious convention.

Los indios son indios, y aunque parezca extraño, me he habituado a la rara distinción de condiciones hecha por el Adelantado, sin poner en ello, por cierto, la menor malicia, cuando, al narrar alguna de sus andanzas, dice muy naturalmente: «Eramos tres *hombres* y doce *indios*.» Me imagino que una cuestión de bautizo rige ese reparo, y esto da visos de realidad a la novela que, por la autenticidad del decorado, estoy fraguando.

The Indians were Indians, and though it seemed odd, I had accepted the strange distinction established by el Adelantado, who, without intending the least disdain, said with complete naturalness when recounting his adventures: ‘We were three men and twelve Indians’. I imagined a question of baptism established this differentiation, and this gave an air of reality to the setting of the novel I was forging.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* 290; *The Lost Steps*, 158.

⁸⁰ Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 290. *The Lost Steps*, 159.

While performing the role of medieval man, the narrator begins his journey through the territory of the land before man. The control of men over the production of space continues to lessen and the myth underpinning his historical schema becomes explicit. After passing through the ‘Paleolithic’ territory of the jungle, he and his travelling crew pass through “the world of Genesis”--a world of vertiginously, disorientingly closed vegetation, water and tempests. Standing before the tepuis that rise above the jungle of the Gran Sabana the narrator remarks

Son los monumentos primeros que se alzaron sobre la cortez terrestre, cuando aún no hubiera ojos que pudieran contemplarlos [...] Lo que se abre ante nuestros ojos es el mundo anterior al hombre. [...] Acaban de apartarse las aguas, apreciadas es la Seca, hecha en la yerba verde, y, por vez primera, se prueban las lumbreras que habrán de señorear en el día y en la noche. Estamos en el mundo del Génesis, al fin del Cuarto Día de la Creación.

These were the first monuments that arose upon the surface of the earth before there were eyes to see them. ...What lay before our eyes was the world that existed before man. ... The waters have just been divided, the Dry Land has appeared, the green grass has come forth, and, for the first time, the lights to rule the day and the night have been tried out. We are in the world of Genesis, at the end of the Fourth Day of Creation⁸¹

The archbishop comes to recognize the world before creation in his territory in the non-man’s land between backland settlements. When traveling on mission to the mesa settlement of the Acoma (a persistent setting in Cather’s Southwest fiction) he observes the scene but, as he had been unable to discern his vision in the valley of the conical hills, he is unable to make sense of this land.

81 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* 316-318; *The Lost Steps*, 185-187.

The mesa plain had an appearance of great antiquity, and of incompleteness; as if, with all the materials for world-making assemble, the Creator had desisted, gone away and left everything on the point of being brought together, on the eve of being arranged into mountain, plain, plateau. The country was still waiting to be made into a landscape. ...He thought that the first Creation morning might have looked like this, when the dry land was first drawn up out of the deep, and all was confusion.⁸²

It is in an episode that forms the center of the narrative, however, that the archbishop comes in contact with the most primeval space of all. Stranded during a blizzard, the archbishop's Laguna guide reluctantly shelters him in a mysterious mountainside cave kept for religious ritual. After an uneasy night's sleep and the passing of the storm, the archbishop finally has the courage to ask what the place is. Wordlessly the guide leads him to a low chamber in the rear of the cave and beckons him to listen. What the archbishop hears is the persistence of the primeval creative force working to change everything he might ever make. "He told himself he was listening to one of the oldest voices of the earth. What he heard was the sound of a great underground river, flowing through a resounding cavern. The water was far, far below, perhaps as deep as the foot of the mountain, a flood moving in utter blackness under the ribs of antediluvian rock. It was not a rushing noise, but the sound of a great flood moving with majesty and power.

"It is terrible."⁸³

Conclusion

⁸² Cather, *Death*, 94-5, 99.

⁸³ Cather, *Death*, 130.

The archbishop's encounter with the underground flood recalls to him the flux underlying the created world, antithesis to all his efforts in translating the unformed world of Santa Fé into a See of the Roman Catholic church. But for readers of the text it serves as an important emphasis of the persistence of the production of space. All of the archbishop's deeds, both his missionary work and the erection of his great cathedral at Santa Fé, "a continuation of himself and his purpose, a physical body full of his aspirations after he had passed from the scene," act as counter-memory to the collective imagined space that is America.

From the moment he begins to detail his life in the Modern City until the moment when he passes deliriously through the Land of Genesis, where he is reduced to terror and awe, the life of Carpentier's narrator undergoes constant transformation. He is transformed with each movement through the multiplicity of Latin America's temporal worlds. True to schizo form though, he never ceases to change, not even when he is stationary. His schizohistoric journey is a testament to America's diversity of historical territories, forms of life inscribed on the earth and experienced corporally. For Carpentier this meant that America, where so many forms of life persist in the present, was capable of giving birth to a great new society.

Chapter II The Divergence of the Americas and the Ends of History in

Death Comes for the Archbishop and *Los pasos perdidos*¹

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:
 “Who is this that darkens counsel
 by words without knowledge?
 Gird up your loins like a man,
 I will question you, and you shall declare to me.
Job 38:1-3

In the book of *Job*, Job confronts God about the injustice he has suffered. Though he is a righteous man, Job nevertheless suffers the loss of his land, his wealth and his family while other men who are sinners enjoy great prosperity. In response to Job’s complaint, God appears in a violent storm and delivers four speeches without once addressing Job's loss, his righteousness, or even justice. Instead, God lays out his plan for the creation of the world and mockingly asks Job what his knowledge of the primordial world is and what part he played in its creation. Job is forced to abandon his case against God because “for God questions of justice are collapsed into the issue of his power. Job can only ever confront God's power, a sphere where he will inevitably be a loser.”² Although no speeches are offered, something as forceful as a voice speaking from a storm delivers a message to the protagonists of *Death*

1 All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

2 Coogan, ed., Job footnote 42.1-6 in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001)

Comes for the Archbishop and *Los pasos perdidos* when they encounter the beginning of history. That message is that there is no hope for greater justice in a flight from the present into the past.

If the protagonists of these books would be proponents of justice—that is, if they seek a more just world—then they can only seek to construct it in the future, they cannot escape the problems of the modern West into an edenic past. There is still one question to be answered about these journeys that scramble the codes of history. Why do these two figures react the way they do when they reach the beginning of history? Why such similar reactions from two figures in such different situations? After all, these two men are at odds with regards to the modern world. Archbishop Latour is an agent of modernization, while Carpentier's narrator is fleeing from the meaningless era of the Wasp-man, the No-man. One would expect the Archbishop to find the beginning of history terrible as the antithesis of what he and the Church seek to create. But by that logic, one would expect Carpentier's narrator to find some Rousseauian paradise there. That he does not only reaffirms that there is no justice to be found in escaping the present—only another injustice. Travel to the beginning of history does not even truly provide refuge from the present because, as a geocritical analysis of schizohistoric journeys has shown, the beginning of history exists in the present, not the past. What, then, is the experience on that threshold of the far side of the past, and what explains it?

Up until this point I have considered these narratives as two instances of a writing that entails a direct experience of the landscape, an attempt to convey the experience in which

history becomes geographical. This historical geography or geohistory reveals something that is elided from the discourses of history, modernization and development. These geohistories demonstrate the persistence of disequilibrium in development and the maintenance of uneven development in the globalization of the capitalist world-economy.

It is in this sense that both books map a journey to the past—not as a journey backward in years but against the grain of history, a reversal of “the time-keeping and self-fulfilling prophecy of States.”³ Deleuze and Guattari are critical of the discourse of history throughout their joint works for precisely this reason: history is a tool of sedentary state apparatuses that imposes a hierarchy upon different territories.⁴ To use the historian Reinhart Koselleck's terms, history elides geography (geographical difference) as well as non-historic social assemblages when it unifies all the earth under a singular “horizon of expectation.”⁵ History asserts that one civilization is more modern while another is undeveloped, that a colony should serve its colonizing empire because this will bring about the development of the colony, that (in the case of Archbishop Latour) “[making] these poor Mexicans 'good Americans' [...] is for the people's good; there is no other way in which they can better their condition.”⁶

3 Bonta, Mark and John Protevi, “Deleuzoguattarian geophilosophy” *Deleuze and Geophilosophy* (Edinburgh: EdinburghUP, 2004, s.v. “history,” 95.

⁴ With relation to the modern world-system (eg the capitalist world-economy) this hierarchy is expressed as the “coloniality of power,” see Quijano and Wallerstein, “Americanity.” This role of history is also referred to as the “Eurochronology problem” because it relates all actual social assemblages to one another according to ‘stages’ of the imagined past of Western civilization. See Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 1-57; Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Preface to the 2007 Edition” *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007); and Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2013).

⁵ Koselleck, Reinhart. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2001), 187-194.

⁶ Cather, *Death*, 36-37.

Nevertheless, geographical difference—the creation of some parts of the world as peripheries and others as centers—as well as cultural difference—the maintenance of a hierarchy of social assemblages that are developed to differing extents in relation to the European present—remain crucial to the functioning of the world-economy.⁷ Because the maintenance of these underdeveloped peripheries is in fact an aim of the modern world-system it also becomes apparent that a flight into this past cannot lead to an escape from it.

Only Carpentier's narrator is attempting to flee the modern world-system. But both figures are taken aback when they encounter the beginning of history. Understanding why they react the way that they do when faced with this primeval scene, will be critical to understanding the complex relationship between geography, history and landscape in these books. It will, first of all, require examining precisely how that encounter is figured in both books.

Archbishop Latour and the narrator of *Los pasos perdidos* are both travelers in space whose itineraries lead them to temporal confusion. The Archbishop finds himself in a land where God has not finished the creation of the Earth, but where it remains the year AD 1848.

The mesa plain [at Laguna pueblo] had an appearance of great antiquity, and of incompleteness; as if, with all the materials for world-making assembled, the Creator had desisted, gone away and left everything on the point of being

⁷ Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Historical Capitalism*, (London and New York: Verso, 1983) 35-6. Wallerstein mentions “the constant geographical restructuring [...] of the capitalist world-system. Nonetheless,” he notes, “a system of hierarchically-organized commodity chains has been retained. [...] Particular geographic zones have housed ever-shifting hierarchical levels of processes. Thus, given products have had ‘product cycles’, starting off as core products and eventually becoming peripheral products [the peripheries have been industrialized]. Furthermore, given loci have moved up or down, in terms of comparative well-being of their inhabitants. But to call such reshuffles ‘development’ we would first have to demonstrate a reduction of the global polarization of the system. Empirically, this dimply does not seem to have happened;” (emphasis added).

brought together, on the eve of being arranged into mountain, plain, plateau.
*The country was still waiting to be made into a landscape.*⁸

The unfamiliar geography of the mesa plain is remarkable to the Archbishop, but not frightening or terrible. Instead the very formlessness of the land suggests to him that it should be, can be, completed. The components of a 'sensible' landscape exist in the scene: mountain, plain, plateau. They must merely be organized into the proper territories, arranged according to the plan of history.

Carpentier's narrator, like the Archbishop, is amazed to discover, as Carpentier would later remark, that “América es el único continente donde el hombre de hoy, del siglo xx, es contemporáneo de hombres situados en diferentes épocas que se remontan hasta el Neolítico,” [America is the only continent where the man of today, of the twentieth century, is contemporary with men situated in different epochs that go back to the Neolithic].⁹ Note how Carpentier's narrator pays greater attention to peoples, although like the Archbishop he begins with an observation of the landscape.

El tiempo ha retrocedo cuatro siglos. [...] No hemos entrado aún en el siglo xvi. Vivimos mucho antes. Estamos en la Edad Media. [...] retrocediendo hacia los compases del Génesis. [...] hemos caído en el habitat de un pueblo de cultura muy anterior a los hombres con los cuales convivimos ayer. Hemos salido del paleolítico —de las industrias paralelas a las magdalenenses y aurignacienses [...] que me situaba al comienzo de la noche de las edades—, para entrar en un

8 Cather, *Death*, 94-5. Emphasis added.

9 Carpentier, Alejo. “La vida es la materia misma de la escritura,” [“Life Is the Very Material of Writing,”] interview with Manuel Osorio La Quinzaine Littéraire reprinted in *Entrevistas* ed. Virgilio López Lemus, (Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1985), 484.

ámbito que hacía retroceder los confines de la vida humana a lo más tenebroso de la noche de las edades.

Time had been turned back four hundred years. [...] We have not yet come to the sixteenth century. It is much earlier. We are in the Middle Ages.[...] returning to the measures of Genesis . [...] we stumbled upon the habitat of people of a culture much earlier than that of the men with whom we had been living the day before. We had emerged from the Paleolithic—with its skills paralleling those of the Magdalenian and Aurignacian [...] with a feeling that I was at the very beginning of the night of ages—to enter a state that pushed the limits of human life back to the darkest murk of the night of ages.”¹⁰

Both Carpentier and his narrator make their observations about “going back in time” against the backdrop of a landscape (“paisaje”) that holds the multiplicity of times together.¹¹

Upon approaching the site of primordial history in their journeying, Archbishop Latour and Carpentier's narrator both react viscerally and negatively. Carpentier's narrator becomes terrified as the expedition advances upstream on a tributary of the Orinoco. From the moment the group starts up a secret path that will lead them from the 'out there' of the modern West to “el Valle del Tiempo Detenido” [“the Valley Where Time Had Stopped”] he remarks that the world slowly closes up, first on two sides with “lajas, islas de lajas, promontorios de lajas,

10 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 308, 313; *The Lost Steps* 176-177, 181-182.

11 Carpentier recited a similar account based on his own travels in the Venezuelan backlands on several occasions. His realization is more sudden than the narrator's: “De repente, comencé a mirar el paisaje del Orinoco como una especie de materialización del tiempo. Este viaje hacia las fuentes—desde luego, no llegaría hasta ellas—, en contra de la corriente era como una especie de retorno en el tiempo. A medida que avanzaba por el río, veía aldeas que se iban alejando en el tiempo de lo que podríamos llamar la historia actual y contemporánea. Aldeas maravillosas [...] donde se llevaba una vida parecida a la que se habría podido llevar en la Edad Media. Me di cuenta de que me estaba remontando en el tiempo hasta el Neolítico,” [“Suddenly, I began to see the landscape of the Orinoco as a kind of materialization of time. This journey to the sources—of course, I never reached them—, against the current was like a kind of return in time. In the manner in which we proceeded up the river, I saw towns that kept on getting more remote in time from what we could have called actual, contemporary history. Marvelous towns [...] where one lead a life like that one would have led in the Middle Ages. I realized that I was going back in time toward the Neolithic,”]. Carpentier, “La vida es la materia misma,” 484.

montes de lajas[....]” [“slabs of stone, islands of stone, promontories of stone, mountains of stone [...]”].¹² And after this the sky itself is enclosed:

una vegetación, mediana, tremendamente tupida –tiesura de gramíneas, dominada por la constante, en ondulación y danza, del macizo de bambúes— sustituye la presencia de la piedra por la inacabable monotonía de lo verde cerrado.

a dense, low-growing vegetation of interwoven grasses punctuated by the swaying, dancing presence of bamboo clumps replaced the stone with the endless monotony of impenetrable greenness.¹³

This closing off of the world reaches its zenith when the world is visually closed off by darkness and a storm mixes the waters of the atmosphere with the waters of the deep. The earth is returned to its primordial state, *tehum* [Hebrew, “deep” or “the deep”], its state on the First Day of Creation before God opened up a space for the subsequent creation of land, plants, animals and man.¹⁴

The narrator's itinerary has taken him from the global metropolis of New York to the regional capital. The capital is also connected by the ocean to the world-economy but its many districts recal a time when mercantilism ruled the Spanish American colonies and the capital was connected only to the *Casa de Contratación* [Board of Trade] at Seville. The connection

12 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 289; *The Lost Steps*, 158.

13 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 289; *The Lost Steps*, 158. It is worth noting that this is a portion of the journey which has no analog in Carpentier's personal experience on his expeditions up the Orinoco. Instead, Carpentier drew from his experiences flying over the dense green enclosures of the river. The fact that the distinction between the experience of Carpentier and his narrator is particularly acute at this moment in the book acts as further evidence of the structural reading of the scene I present—that Carpentier models the experience of the threshold of history on the seven days of creation in the book of Genesis.

14 Gen. 1:6-18. Also, Coogan, Michael D., ed. Genesis footnote6-8 in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 12. “The dome/Sky made on the second day separates an upper ocean [...] from a lower one. This creates a space in which subsequent creation can take place.

to the city's local history is also a connection to the early modern origins of the Spanish American colonial apparatuses and to the pre-global world-system it was a part of.¹⁵ When the narrator precedes to the backlands he enters a region where people live as burghers, a territory which is not even meaningfully connected to the capital and the rest of the nation-state.¹⁶ His itinerary ends in the smallest of conceivable territories, the “verde cerrado” [“impenetrable greenness” or literally “closed green”] of the Paleolithic era and the Land of Genesis. Thus there is a correlation between the perceived size and the historical identity of the territories on this itinerary.¹⁷

Death Comes for the Archbishop has a similar structure: the scale at which a territory can be perceived correlates to its perception as newer or older. Its depiction of the modern west gives the perspective of European clerics discussing the world-stage of geopolitics from Rome, the seat of the leadership of the universal Roman Catholic Church.¹⁸ The regional capital of Santa Fe, by contrast, exists within a smaller and more isolated world than the global church. It

¹⁵On the early modern/medieval origins of the Casa de Contratación see Stein, Stanley J. and Barbara Stein, *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America: Essays on Economic Dependence in Perspective*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1970), 15-17. On the pre-global “world-system” of Europe in the 16th to 19th century see Wallerstein, *The Modern World-system Vol. I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-economy in the Sixteenth Century*, (New York: Academic Press, 1976), 198ff.

¹⁶ An attempt to describe these Burghers without reference to Eurochronology would describe them as people without a nation-state. As such their lives resonate with the modern world-system compared to the inhabitants of the capital or the metropolis, because the subject of the modern world-system is subjected to a nation-state first, which disciplines her to the international world-economy. It is the Wasp-man, the No-man whose lives resonate most with the world-economy such that they do not recognize natural seasons or the passing of years, but merely the homogenous time of capitalist production.

¹⁷ This is of course the complement to the observation that there is a correlation between the speed of travel and the historical identity of the territory. See ch. 1 above, “The Repeating Landscape I: History Becoming Geography in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Los pasos perdidos*.”

¹⁸ In this sense Archbishop Latour, whose name is French both for “the tower” [as in the Tower of London or the Tower of Babel] and “the rook,” (chess-piece), is a figure for a similarly elevated and surveilling/surveying perspective.

is connected by military and civilian flows of settlers to the United States. It is connected by the Latino inhabitants of the land as well as the missionary clergy that remain there to the Mexican Republic and the Spanish Empire. Even this connection is tenuous; communication with the see of the diocese of Durango, almost 850 miles away, is difficult. Santa Fe was remote from the transatlantic trade connecting Spanish America and Europe and from the mercantilist mission of the Spanish Empire even in colonial times. In historian Colin Woodward's words, beginning in the seventeenth century

Colonial El Norte [Woodward uses 'El Norte' to denote the region of the Spanish Empire and later the Mexican Republic that was annexed by the United States during the 19th century] was the neglected, far-flung borderland of a distant, collapsing empire and would remain such for a quarter of a millennium. Isolated from regular contact with other European cultures [...] by the time the Spanish reached El Norte, the empire's religious mission had become the key element of its colonial policy. The plan was to assimilate the Native Americans into Spanish culture by converting them to Catholicism and supervising their faith, work, dress, and conduct in special settlements governed by priests.¹⁹

Santa Fe remains significantly remote from the United States in the nineteenth century. The backlands of the diocesan territory are smaller still, organized into minor nations with their own cultural systems and land grants under the hegemon of the United States.²⁰ The archbishop sets out for Las Vegas from Pecos pueblo. However, in a manner quite similar to Carpentier's

¹⁹ Woodard, Colin. *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* (New York: Penguin, 2011), 17.

²⁰ Pearce, T.M., *New Mexico Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary*, (Albuquerque, NM: New Mexico UP, 1975), 126 s.v. "Pueblo."

narrator, the archbishop's journey is beset by a sudden storm. With blizzard conditions in the Sangre de Cristo mountains navigation becomes impossible:

a burst of wind sent the snow whirling in coils about the two travellers (sic), and a great storm broke. The wind was like a hurricane at sea, and the air became blind with snow. The Bishop could scarcely see his guide—saw only parts of him, now a head, now a shoulder, now only the black rump of his mule. Pine trees by the way stood out for a moment, then disappeared absolutely in the whirlpool of snow. Trail and landmarks, the mountain itself, were obliterated.²¹

The archbishop's guide is forced to lead the archbishop to a cavern in the mountain.²² It is in this cramped and remote space that the archbishop experiences the terror of primeval waters moving deep beneath the earth.

The protagonists' encounters of the beginning of history in America describe the threshold that marks the minimum of arable land, open space, required to form a territorial assemblage and the social assemblage that develops along with it. We know that Cather and Carpentier write the experience of the landscape, that they are intensive readers of space who write without reducing the spaces they represent to mere accounts. “[Spaces] are their own story,” writes Cather.²³ The story of the beginning of time is the experience of the enclosure of the world, its contraction from the global unity of the modern world-system to no world at all.²⁴

For Carpentier's narrator the experience is “parecido al que conocen los montañeses extraviados en las nieves: se perdía la noción de la verticalidad, dentro de una suerte de

21 Cather, *Death*, 125.

22 Cather, *Death*, 126-133.

23 Cather, “On *Death*,” 4.

24 Regarding the primacy of territories to species or social assemblages, Bonta and Protevi write “Territories are fashioned as necessities to establish the maximal distribution of individuals of the same kind

desorientación, de mareo de los ojos.” [“the same thing that mountain-climbers feel, lost in the snow: the loss of the sense of verticality, a kind of disorientation, and a dizziness of the eyes.”]²⁵ The archbishop notes a “dizzy noise in [his] head [...] At first he thought it was a vertigo, a roaring in his ears brought on by cold and changes in his circulation. But as he grew warm and relaxed, he perceived an extraordinary vibration in this cavern; it hummed like a hive of bees, like a heavy roll of distant drums.”²⁶ Neither man can stand the disorienting, closed environment. Carpentier's narrator falls asleep on the breast of his lover Rosario, “buscando el calor de su cuerpo, no ya con gesto de amante, sino de niño que se cuelga del cuello de la madre,” [“seeking the warmth of her body, no longer as a lover, but like a child clinging to its mother's neck,”].²⁷ The archbishop sleeps in the cave as well, then leaves it for good when the storm has passed. He promises his guide that he will never mention it to anyone and he keeps this promise. Still, the cave “[flashes] into his mind from time to time, and always with a shudder of repugnance [...], with horror.”²⁸ Whether reduced to the state of a child

within a milieu and regulate access to spatially distributed resources. [...] Humans, like many other animals, are territorial; [...].”

25 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* 292-2; *The Lost Steps*, 161.

26 Cather, *Death*, 129.

27 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos* 301; *The Lost Steps* 170.

28 Cather, *Death*, 132-133.

clinging to its mother or to a state of horrified repugnance, each man experiences this world-enclosure as the unmaking of his reasoned existence.

The Historical Constitution of the Americas

This geocritical reading thus demonstrates that the beginning of history, the point of origin of the story of man, can be encountered in the Americas in situations that are culturally, geologically and temporally quite distinct. In fact they occur in American spaces which some people might encounter routinely: the ceremonial cave of the Pecos pueblo, a river channel leading to remote settlements. While others might encounter these spaces regularly, though, they do not evoke horror, or vertigo, or the sensation of an encounter with the remote past for any but the moderns—the white men who live in the modern West. Rosario, for instance, “parece de una sorprendente entereza,” [“displayed an amazing fortitude,”].²⁹ Jacinto, the archbishop’s guide, merely shrugs when the Latour asks him if he was scared in the cave.³⁰

The schizohistoric journey leads the books’ protagonists from the modern west through several recognizable historical territories until they reach the beginning of history, the scene of the primordial creation of the world. Their encounter with this space has a visceral affect, inducing terror, vertigo and repugnance. In these spaces the narrator and the archbishop are terrified by their own powerlessness and, by contrast, the powerful forces of weather and

²⁹ Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 301; *The Lost Steps*, 170.

³⁰ Cather, *Death*, 131.

water. But these journeys are only perceptible to those men and women who depart from a universal space, a global world. It is only after the development of the modern world-system that history is universalized in this particular way. These encounters stem from a progressive disconnection between the immediate, local setting through which these figures are moving and the modern world-system that they perceive as the whole world.

That world-system grew out of the contact with and conquest of the Americas in the long sixteenth century. In fact, the Americas were only created when they were posited as a reserve of land that could be put into the service of colonizing European crowns. The modern world-system, according to sociologists Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, was only created when the invention of America allowed those European crowns to overcome their political and productive limits.

The modern world-system was born in the long sixteenth century. The Americas as a geosocial construct were born in the long sixteenth century. The creation of this geosocial entity, the Americas, was the constitutive act of the modern world-system. The Americas were not incorporated into an already existing capitalist world-economy. There could not have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas. [...] Americanness has always been, and remains to this day, an essential element in what we mean by 'modernity'.³¹

The Americas, at least in the purview of the modern world-system, are a geosocial construct defined by four features, none of which are geographically specific. The four features that

31 Quijano and Wallerstein. "Americanness." 549-557.

define the newness of the New World are coloniality, ethnicity, racism and the concept of newness itself.

Quijano and Wallerstein also argue that the modern world-system has spread into a global world-system by imposing these four features on the rest of the globe, making the Americas “the pattern, the model of the entire world-system.”³² The feature of coloniality that remains specific to the Americas and the European world-economy—for coloniality is older and more widespread than the modern world-system—is its (practical) erasure of indigenous historicity. The wholesale destruction of historicity by conquest, population collapse and the importation of huge numbers of people was essential to producing coloniality, ethnicity, racism and newness. Quijano and Wallerstein contrast the Americas with East-Central and Southern Europe. Parts of these regions were all made peripheries in relation to the European centers of the burgeoning world-system. The fact that the indigenous social assemblages in these regions were more robust than those in the Americas meant that their histories were preserved and became the focus of resistance. In the Americas, by contrast, “the mode of cultural resistance to oppressive conditions was less in the claims of historicity than in the flight forward to ‘modernity’.”³³

Each principle creates a hierarchy: coloniality creates the hierarchy of the center and the periphery; ethnicity creates the hierarchy of European man, African man and ‘Indian’ man; racism solidifies the ethnic hierarchy and makes it a political and economic hierarchy; and

³² Quijano and Wallerstein, “Americanity,” 550.

³³ Quijano and Wallerstein, “Americanity,” 550.

newness creates the hierarchy modern/undeveloped.³⁴ Thus, a man of the modern world-system could very easily make sense of the landscapes and social assemblages he might encounter throughout the world according to these four principles but no one who was not of the modern world-system, not even a person born in the Americas, would historicize the geography in this specific manner.

The beginning of history can be found by modern man in America in spaces that are, by sake of being isolated from the modern-world system, too small for modern man. America, though, is not located at the beginning of time. America is the seat of newness itself, “the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burdens of the World’s History shall reveal itself.”³⁵ This is sure to induce cognitive dissonance—all of the past stages of history can be found in the land of the future? Understanding this paradox, which lays at the heart of both of the books under consideration here, will require a closer examination of what history means for these writers and their fictional counterparts.

I have argued that the immediate experience of space is the thread which binds the writing of Cather and Carpentier. While the writing of these two authors is bound by this common thread, and the experience within that space of an American landscape encompassing the universal history of capitalism, each writer’s perspective on the ends of history, the coming stage in the development of the modern world-system, gives a different mood to each book. The difference in Cather’s and Carpentier’s perspective on modernization can be traced to the

34 Quijano and Wallerstein, “Americanity,” 550-554.

35 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *The Philosophy of History* trans. J. Sibree, (New York: Wiley, 1944), 143.

each writer's historical and cultural situation. Cather is a US-American writing in the period between the United States' ascendance to hemispheric hegemony in the last decade of the nineteenth century and its ascendance to global hegemony in the mid-twentieth century. Carpentier wrote in the mid-twentieth century from areas in Latin America where a regional cultural identity was being formed in resistance to the US-American hegemon.

Each book presupposes a different history in which to unfold, but these different histories are structured by coloniality, ethnicity, racism and newness. In *Death* the book is drawn from the story of the Catholic Church in the Southwest, which Cather thought "the most interesting of all [the Southwest's] stories;" it is also the story of a death.³⁶ It was conceived and written in the twentieth century, but the plot of the book ends in 1888. Thus, although Cather draws on her personal experience of the Southwest in creating the book it does not extend into her future or ours. The establishment of the diocese at Santa Fe and the death of the archbishop are really one—it is the establishment of the Church which Cather loved, not its having been established, and the archbishop's life was spent on just this.³⁷ "[P]oets and novelists," writes Cather,

are told that their first concern should be to cry out against social injustice. This, of course, writers have always done. The Hebrew prophets and the Greek dramatists went deeper [...] they even cried out against the original injustice that creatures so splendidly aspiring should be inexorably doomed to fail [... .]

³⁶ Cather, "On *Death*," 5.

³⁷ A missionary bishop states as much to a Spanish Cardinal when speaking about the appointment of the archbishop. "[Latour] will eat dried buffalo meat and frijoles with chili, and he will be glad to drink water when he can get it. He will have no easy life, your Eminence. That country will drink up his youth and strength as it does the rain." Cather, *Death*, 9 (my emphasis).

This seems to be the writer's natural way of looking at the suffering of the world.³⁸

Death seems to do just this: it looks on the suffering of the world and the passing away of the greater age for a lesser one. In the end the book is melancholic because it can only long for the past while within it everything is leading to one future, a triumphant capitalist world-economy and a hegemonic United States.

Los pasos perdidos is set in a period contemporary to its composition. It is the work of a Latin American writer who has returned home from a long exile in Europe. This experience abroad had given Carpentier the estranged eyes of the foreigner and he used those eyes to look upon America as an outsider.³⁹ It was Carpentier's aim to use his writing to make sense of what was foreign to him about his native land. Later Carpentier would write that the Latin American novelist should give up on the novel as a major form in order to be writers of a different order: chroniclers.

[P]or lo mismo que la novelista se halla extraviado, desorientado, en un mundo sometido a una reciente tecnificación, no le queda más recurso, si en él algo quiere usar útilmene sus facultades innatas o adquiridas, que afianzarse en sus tareas específicas, ya que dentro del contexto de los hombres pensantes, pertenece a una especie particular: La especie de los cronistas, destinados a reportoriar los acontecimientos de su época que le sean perfectamente inteligibles.

[F]or the same reason that the novelist is lost, disoriented, in a world recently submerged in technification, he is not left any other happy choice, if he wishes to put his innate or acquired faculties to good use, in the context of thinking men, one particular type remains to him: the class of the chronicler, destined to

³⁸ Cather, Willa. "Escapism," *On Writing: Critical Studies on Writing as an Art* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 18-29.

³⁹ Shaw, *Carpentier*, 17.

make an account of the events of his age, that they might be perfectly intelligible.⁴⁰

Here is the first difference from Cather's book: *Los pasos perdidos* is a chronicle of its time. Its future is Carpentier's future rather than a yesteryear in which he seeks to evade the present. Instead, the book is politically engaged and meant to chronicle the real persistence—in bodies, not in storied spaces—of historical territories in Latin America. It is a melodramatic text meant to agitate the reader to action, rather than quiet contemplation.

There is a reason that Carpentier writes a schizohistory set in his contemporary moment while Cather sets her schizohistory in the nineteenth century (disregarding, momentarily, that Cather's personal experiences in the twentieth century inspired the book). The colonies of Latin and Anglo America began to diverge, geopolitically speaking, at the end of the eighteenth century. Certain crucial differences had distinguished these Americas from the respective dates of their foundations. The historians Stanley J. Stein and Barbara Stein, for instance, emphasize that much of what distinguishes contemporary Latin America and US-America can be traced to the Spanish and Portuguese governance of their empires. Neither the Spanish nor the Portuguese, argue Stein and Stein, invested sufficiently in infrastructure in Europe or in the colonies. As a result, the wealth that these crowns generated was largely spent outside of the empire, in effect fueling the industrialization of the Dutch and English empires. The English, by contrast, increased their population from four to nearly six million from the

⁴⁰Carpentier, Alejo. "La novela latinoamericana en vísperas de un nuevo siglo" ["The Latin American Novel on the Eve of a New Century,"] *La novela latinoamericana en vísperas de un nuevo siglo y otros ensayos*, (Mexico: Siglo XXI editores, 1981), 23.

sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, legalized the joint-stock company, created a national bank and imported artisans to transform a raw material export into a national industry.⁴¹ All of these distinctions led to a cultural and infrastructural divergence between America and América but it was in the late eighteenth century that a “transition from north-on-south to south-on-north dependency,” truly occurred.⁴²

Territorially speaking, the result of that transition was drastic. Throughout the nineteenth century the United States of America expanded by consolidation and appropriation, first of Indian lands and then of half of the Mexico. By the end of the century the US would impose a quasi-protectorate over the Caribbean and Central America. During the same period Quijano and Wallerstein note that “Latin America ‘balkanized’ itself. There were bloody frontier wars and civil wars all over. Power was organized on seigniorial-mercantile bases. [...] Everything ensured the persistence of the dependent character of the pattern of its historical development and its subordination first to European then to North American imperialism.”⁴³ For a US-American writer like Cather the nineteenth century marked the emergence of a single nation over the majority of a continent. It was a process that did not seem likely to reverse itself. But for a Latin American writer like Carpentier the crisis of power remained unresolved

⁴¹ Stein, Stanley J. and Barbara Stein, *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America: Essays on Dependency in Perspective*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1974), 6-8.

⁴² Fernandez-Armesto, Felipe, *The Americas: A Hemispheric History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2005), 57. Fernandez-Armesto clarifies: “In the colonial period these changes were foreshadowed and in some respects begun—but only, I mean to argue, slowly and imperfectly. [...] In colonial times American disparities seemed to favor areas colonized from Spain and Portugal.”

⁴³ Quijano and Wallerstein, “Americanness,” 556.

well into the twentieth century. We can see the seeds of these authors' differing narrative temperaments in this geosocial distinction.

The Places of América and America in Time

Lost was the day they should have kept,—
 Lost unheeded and lost unwept;
 Lost in a way that made search vain,
 Lost in the trackless and boundless main;

Bret Harte, "The Lost Galleon" ll. 109-112⁴⁴

I have argued above that these schizohistories are journeys into the past because they scramble the codes of history—demonstrating that differing historical phases can coexist so that the past is coeval with the modern West. It is still true, though, that these coeval territories are perceived according to a historical scheme. Territories and regions are viewed comparatively as older or more modern. This is precisely the case with Latin America and Anglo America. Beginning in the nineteenth century with the consolidation of land and power by the United States in North America this perception shifted so that Anglo America became the modern America while Latin America became the undeveloped, even backward, America.⁴⁵ An examination of the places of America and América in historical time will

44 Harte, Fr. Bret, *The Lost Galleon and Other Tales*, (San Francisco: Town and Bacon, Printers, 1867), 18-19, https://openlibrary.org/books/OL7128333M/The_lost_galleon_and_other_tales. (accessed 24 Feb. 2014).

⁴⁵ Fernández-Armesto, *The Americas*, 117-127.

demonstrate a tendency to look to for Latin America in the ‘past’ and Anglo America in the ‘future’.

Bret Harte's tale-in-verse “The Lost Galleon” shares remarkable parallels with both *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Los pasos perdidos*. All three harken back to an era of the American past which is bygone and bring it to life textually. All three operate via a fascination with the societal effects of certain modes of transportation operating during those periods that now seem archaic. In all three, a narrator views Latin American culture from the perspective of the United States.⁴⁶ Perhaps most importantly, all three posit, in different ways, that it is possible to recover lost times.

“The Lost Galleon” is the tale of the ship carrying annual delivery of importations between Manila and Acapulco by the Flota de Filipinas. The poem opens in Acapulco—the galleon (the *San Gregorio*) is overdue to deliver cargo to be distributed locally or transported overland to Veracruz and shipped to Europe. The *San Gregorio* never arrives, however, and in time it is forgotten. Harte's narrator is able to recall its voyage more than two hundred years later, however, from San Francisco, the port which fell between Acapulco and Manila on the galleon's route.

While the *San Gregorio* sails west for Manila its pilot dies of scurvy and it loses its way. The pilot stops at a port about 100 leagues east of Manila to learn where and when he is—that is, the pilot asks “the longitude, time and day.” He accepts the first two but balks when

⁴⁶ While the narrator of *Los pasos perdidos* is Latin American by birth, he seems thoroughly acculturated to the United States when he begins his journey, which would not mark such a cultural and linguistic recovery for him if he were returning to Latin America as a Latin American.

he learns the day, which his interlocutor explains is June 1st because he marks the day to be June 2nd. His interlocutor explains, “as you came this way,/ you should have lost—d'ye see—a day;/ lost a day, as plainly see,/ on the hundred and eightieth degree.”⁴⁷ The great problem for the captain of the *San Gregorio* is that the ship crossed the International on May 9th, the holy day of its patron saint, Saint Gregory. The ship's chaplain offers the captain a way to reclaim the lost day:

Said the Fray Antonio Estavan, (sic)
 The galleon's chaplain,—a learned man,—
 “Nothing is lost that you can regain;
 And the way to look for a thing is plain
 To go where you lost it, back again.
 [...]
 Wait till the rolling year goes round,
 And there will the missing day be found.
 For you'll find—if computation's true,
 That sailing *East* will give to you
 Not only one ninth of May, but *two*—⁴⁸

The comic resolution is that the *San Gregorio* will sail all year in the vicinity of the antimeridian in an attempt to cross it on May 9th, while heading East, in order to recover the precious holy day. The ship is preserved for more than 200 years—by the faith of its sailors

47 Harte, “The Lost Galleon,” ll. 99-102.

48 Harte, “The Lost Galleon,” ll. 117-121, 125-128.

and the blessing of Saint Gregory, the narrator imagines—but it never recovers this one lost day and it never returns to any port.

“The Lost Galleon” evokes the absurdity of an attempt to recover lost time that causes one to lose sight of the present. There is certainly an allegory functioning in this poem insofar as it depicts the *San Gregorio*— which is a social machine that employs men, shaping every aspect of their lives and subjecting them to a strict hierarchy, that is itself subject to much larger climatological systems and systems of exchange—as an institution that is able to survive supernaturally, but becomes blind to its own present, to its future, by searching perpetually for a moment in the past.⁴⁹ Because of course, even if the *San Gregorio* did manage to cross the International Date Line bearing east on May 10th it would never return to May 9th of the year 1640. Harte closes the poem with a “truth:”

Over the trackless past, somewhere,
Lie the lost days of our tropic youth,
Only regained by faith and prayer,
Only recalled by prayer and plaint.
Each lost day has its patron saint!⁵⁰

The poem calls our attention to the limitations of the past regained and recalled. The “tropic youth” that he writes of can never be reached, the “trackless past” cannot be traversed except “by faith and prayer.”

It is only a short leap from “Each lost day” to *los pasos perdidos* [“the lost steps”] as that phrase is deployed in the title of Carpentier's novel: the lost day, as with *los pasos*

49 On the ship as social assemblage see Margaret Cohn, “Chronotopes of the Sea” in *The Novel: Volume 2 Forms and Themes* ed. Franco Moretti, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007) 646-667.

50 Harte, “The Lost Galleon” ll. 173-178.

perdidos, refers to that which is lost to the present and to the inhabitants of the present.

Furthermore, Carpentier's narrator seeks to regain those lost days. Like the commander of the *San Gregorio* he makes his pursuit in an attempt to regain his status as a man. The modern city is the world of the No-Man, the Wasp-man. The narrator himself had returned from the second world war “un hombre sin esperanza” [“a man devoid of hope,”] and throughout his journey feels himself regaining the qualities of a manlier lost day.⁵¹

The archbishop is not like Carpentier's narrator. He is an agent of modernization who gives himself over to the flow of history. It is an effort to “better [the] condition” of the people, it is the *only* way to better the people's condition, to adjust them to the rule of the US-Americans. Father Joseph Vaillant, the archbishop's missionary companion and chief assistant in the establishment of the diocese at Santa Fe, puts it most plainly when he declares that he would prefer to lead a life of quiet contemplation, serving the Holy Mother through days of reflection. “For the time being,” he says, “it is my destiny to serve Her in action.”⁵² What the Holy Mother demands is modernization.

One could debate whether it is the Holy Mother who demands the modernization of the territory—first colonized and organized into missions for teaching the indigenous nations to speak Spanish, observe Catholic rituals and practice Spanish work habits in the seventeenth century—or whether it was the reshuffling of the world-economy by the Thirty Years' War, the industrialization of England, the Netherlands, Flanders and France. Either way it was the

⁵¹ Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 223; *The Lost Steps*, 97.

⁵² Cather, *Death*, 41.

decision of the global Catholic Church that the French were more gifted as organizers, that the Spanish had proven insufficient.

Another voice, indigenous to the Latin America, confirms the perception of Latin America as older than Anglo America. In “A Roosevelt” [“To Roosevelt”], Rubén Darío writes from Latin America to the US president in 1904 from “la América ingenua que tiene sangre indígena,/ que aún reza a Jesucristo y aún habla en español,” [“the naïve America with indigenous blood,/ that still prays to Christ and still speaks Spanish,”].⁵³ With its use of the adverb “still” the poem asserts the antecedence of Spanish America to Anglo America. However, rather than leave the matter at that assertion, Darío continues to compare both Americas according to schizohistoric allusion. Of Roosevelt and Anglo America he writes:

Eres soberbio y fuerte ejemplar de tu raza;
eres culto, eres hábil; te opones a Tolstóy.
Y domando caballos, o asesinando tigres,
eres un Alejandro-Nabucodonosor [...]
Juntáis al culto de Hércules el culto de Mammón

[You are the sovereign, strong example of your race;
you are cultured, you are able; you oppose yourself to Tolstoy.
And breaking horses, or killing tigers,
you are an Alexander-Nebuchadnezzar [...]
You [plural] join the cult of Hercules and the cult of Mammon [...]

Darío’s imagery places both America and América in the past and the modern world contemporaneously, as when he likens “[la] voz de la Biblia” [“[the] voice of the Bible”] and “[el] verso de Walt Whitman,” [[the] verse of Walt Whitman,] or when he refers to Roosevelt

⁵³ Darío, Rubén, “A Roosevelt” [“To Roosevelt”], *Antología poética*, (Buenos Aires, AR: Editorial Losada, 1966) ll. 9-12, 27, pp. 119-120.

as “Cazador!/ con un algo de Wáshington y cuatro de Nemrod!” [Hunter!/ with something of Washington and four of Nimrod!].⁵⁴

Rather than a simple distinction between the older and the more modern, then, Darío depicts two realms equally pluralist in their temporalities. América, like America, is an old realm:

la América nuestra, que tenía poetas
 desde los viejos tiempos de Netzahualcoyotl,
 que ha guardado las huellas de los pies del gran Baco,
 que el alfabeto pánico en un tiempo aprendió;
 que consult los Astros, que conoció a Atlántida,
 cuyo nombre nos llega resonando en Platón, [...]
 la América del gran Moctezuma, del Inca,
 la América fragante de Cristobal Colón [...]

our America, that has had poets
 since the old times of Netzahualcoyotl,
 that has walked in the footprints of great Bacchus,
 that learned Pan’s alphabet at once;
 that consulted the stars, that knew Atlantis,
 whose name comes to us with Platonic resonance, [...]
 the America of the great Montezuma, of the Inca,
 the fragrant America of Christopher Columbus[...]⁵⁵

Both America and América have a classical lineage. What divides them, from Darío’s vantage, is that America, in “[juntando] al culto de Hércules el culto de Mammón,” [[joining] the cult of Hercules to the cult of Mammon], “[alumbra] el camino de la fácil conquista,” [[illuminates] the path of easy conquest].⁵⁶ If America and América are different, it is not because one is old while the other is modern because both comprise a mixture of different phases of history—an

⁵⁴ Darío, “A Roosevelt,” ll. 1-4, pp. 119-120.

⁵⁵ Darío, “A Roosevelt,” ll. 30-36, 39-40, pp. 119-120.

⁵⁶ Darío, “A Roosevelt,” ll. 27-28, pp. 119-120

age or “entanglement” of time in the words of Achille Mbembe.⁵⁷ It is rather because America is a rising hegemonic power, in the hemisphere when Darío wrote but later on in the world.

This distinction between the two protagonists—that the archbishop is a modernizer whereas Carpentier's narrator is an antimodern man in fugue from the modern world-system—and the writers—Cather, the conservative US-American who sees American culture as decadent, already in a late stage, and Carpentier, a committed revolutionary convinced that the culture of América was not yet fully developed—is significant. The outlook of all of them, in conjunction with the temporal setting of each book, shapes the image of history in each book.

All people ought to live their own epoch, suffer it, enjoy it—if it offers joy—*trying to better what it is.*

La historia de América, de los Incas a acá, ha de enseñarle al dedillo, aunque no se enseñe la de los arcontes de Grecia. Nuestra Grecia es preferible a la Grecia que no es nuestra. Nos es más necesaria. Los políticos nacionales han de reemplazar a los políticos exóticos. Injértese en nuestras republicas

⁵⁷ Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony* trans. A.M. Berrett, Janet Roitman, Murray Last and Steven Rendall, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 14-16. Describing the entanglement of time, Mbembe writes: “By age is meant not a simple category of time but a number of relationships and a configuration of events—often visible and perceptible, sometimes diffuse, “hydra-headed,” but to which contemporaries could testify since very aware of them (sic). As an age, the postcolony encloses multiple *dureés* made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another: an entanglement. (Emphasis in original).

el mundo; pero el tronco ha de ser el de nuestras repúblicas.

[The history of America, from the Incas to the present, must be taught as a precise science, though it wouldn't give the history of Greek archons. Our Greece is preferable to the Greece that is not ours. It's more necessary for us. National policies have to replace foreign policies. Let the world be injected into our republics; but the trunk must be that of our republics.]

Jose Martí, "Nuestra América,"⁵⁸

Cather and Carpentier had similar conceptions of history. For each, history was not a linear development of one world but cyclical branching out of many types. Both thought that the ideal conceptions of history prominent among students of history tend to overstate temporary human tendencies as the final movement in an eschatological development. They themselves preferred to think in the *longue durée* and to imagine how contemporary might adapt in the future rather than racing to an eternal age. But Carpentier and Cather, however close their conceptions of history were, had fundamentally different conceptions about the historical ends of America. For Carpentier, América, the baroque community of all the races of the world was still coming to maturity and might define a new age of man. For Cather, though,

⁵⁸ Martí, José, "Nuestra América," *Nuestra América* ed. Pedro Henriquez Ureña, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1980), 12.

America was becoming decadent as a civilization and seemed unable to act upon its pioneering heritage.

In spite of their criticism of history they maintain that universal history is a valid means for relating the capitalist world system to societies. It is first of all important to acknowledge what Deleuze and Guattari likely intended by “universal,” a term which is somewhat of a curse word in contemporary humanities scholarship. For Deleuze explicitly the universal does not refer to a condition of eternal truth, as the word’s etymology suggests (“universal” derives from the Latin “uni-versalis” or ‘turned toward the one,’ with ‘the one’ understood as the eternal).⁵⁹ In a contemporary age, Deleuze argues (following Bergson) that the universal defines the complete range of possible permutations of an entity. This universal is defined by the thresholds at which that entity undertakes a qualitative change such that it is no longer the same entity. As an example Deleuze offers white light. White light is the universal of electromagnetic radiation perceivable by the human eye: it is defined at its lower end by the intensity of red light and at its upper end by the intensity of violet light. Outside of these limits electromagnetic radiation exists but it is not light.⁶⁰ Deleuze’s distinction between the universal-as-eternal truth and the universal as form of all possible permutations is important because it allows us to have real definitions (rather than ideal ones) of what a given entity is without relying on an Aristotelian essence. To return to the example of light: light is not light because it is essentially and eternally light. In fact, electromagnetic radiation becomes light and

⁵⁹ Smith, Daniel W. "Temporality and Truth." *Deleuze Studies* 7, no. 3 (2013): 377-389.

⁶⁰ Deleuze, Gilles. “Bergson’s Conception of Difference,” *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 32-52)

becomes other than light constantly. But we can say that the criteria for light are real and exist in immanence to the radiation-human eye system.

When applied to history this concept of the universal shows us that man (the subject of history) is not man because s/he is essentially and eternally man. Instead, man is the contingent product of a certain process (socialization) and ceases to exist as man beyond a certain threshold (schizophrenia). The emergence of the capitalist world-economy in the long sixteenth century, according to the French philosophers, was the rise of a mode of social organization premised on unmaking certain forms of socialization in order to allow for more efficient production and exchange. This puts capitalism in direct contrast to society—society is that which makes man and rigidifies his place in the world (territorialization) and capitalism is what removes man from a certain milieu to discipline him in another way (de- and reterritorialization). Thus social assemblages and capitalism mark the thresholds of universal history, the intensive quantities at which man comes into being and at which s/he becomes something other.⁶¹

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari propose five important caveats to whomever would make use of universal history. “In a word, universal history is not only retrospective, it is also contingent, singular, ironic and critical.”⁶² Universal history is retrospective because it is a projection backward that creates a past for everywhere; it is contingent because it is not the

⁶¹ This is a simplification of Deleuze and Guattari’s argument, to be sure. See below: universal history is ironic and critical.

⁶² Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, pref. Michel Foucault, (Minnesota: Minnesota UP, 1983), 140.

necessary history of all societies but rather must recognize how many accidents were necessary for history to unleash historical capitalism; it is singular because it is the history of only one place and not all places, but it organizes all places into a global everywhere; it is ironic because it operates in full knowledge of the fact that it will never achieve ‘the end of history’ but will always postpone it, ward it off; finally it is critical because, in Nietzschean terms, it always finds the past (the beginning of history) unjust. Reading with these caveats in mind we can see that both *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and *Los pasos perdidos* deploy a universal history in their American schizohistoric journeys.

If we recall that the Americas were essential to the production of the capitalist world-economy and that the major coup of colonizing powers in the Americas was the destruction of indigenous historicity (Quijano and Wallerstein) we see that the perception of universal history in America is central to the region. An examination of these books will show that Carpentier’s deployment of universal history heeds Deleuze and Guattari’s warnings better than Cather’s. It is because he is better able to project how America might change without destroying itself.

Carpentier conceived of history in a number of phases or types which repeat in different places and times as societies grow, change and interact. This historical taxonomy includes three specific phases, each of which recurs in different actual forms: the baroque, the classical and the imperial.⁶³ *Los pasos perdidos* is particularly concerned with the baroque, which for Carpentier refers to any society that is emergent and is therefore composed of undefined

⁶³ Alejo Carpentier, *Diccionario de Conceptos de Alejo Carpentier* eds. Victor Fowler and Carmen Berenguer (Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas. 2004), s.v. “América Latina,” 11-14.

elements. The baroque society of the novel is “Nuestra América;” it is emergent because it is mestizo, mixing the elements of far-flung societies to produce novelty. “The Baroque,” commonly refers to the period in European and Latin American history in which Nuestra América Mestiza was emerging. As Carpentier's abstract use of the term makes clear though, the baroque is more than an actual historical moment. What is essential to the baroque is following a line of flight from one's own time into a different future; the baroque task is to change one's own time in the name of the future rather than attempting to flee to the past.

Thus Carpentier does not believe in a strictly linear or a strictly cyclical time where events either all proceed toward the same future or occur again and again as exactly the same event. A baroque period emerges when otherwise hegemonic classical or imperial civilizations impinge upon one another's hegemony. The civilization that results is marked by a multiplicity of perspectives on reality. América is a baroque theater of contact. Rather than a place per se, it is the stage produced by the drama of inter-cultural meetings and mixings, a multiplicity of overlapping social territories. On that stage myriad classical, imperial and romantic civilizations contested, struggled and posited a civilization decidedly other than European modernity.

For Cather too, the movement of history is propelled by the mixture of civilizations, nations and territories but her emphasis is not on social assemblages. However Cather's conception of history does not have the revolutionary potential *for America* that Carpentier's has for América. Although, just as in Carpentier's scheme, Cather's vision of history is a cycle that combines cultures, then sees them develop to a classical form that can be fixed to the land

(or “territorialized”) until they turn outward to conquest and therefore become imperial, for Cather America has already become imperial. Any further development will be the tempering of the American empire by its destruction. She writes that history is in God’s hands—alternatively she writes that it is in Nature’s hands—and:

[s]ome day, perhaps, when our civilization has grown too utterly complex, when our introspection cuts off all action, when our forms have killed all ambition [...] then the savage strength of the Slav or the Bushmen will come upon us and will burn our psychologies and carry us away into captivity and make us dress the vines and plow the earth and teach us that after all nature is best. God’s scheme is so big, his resources so many.⁶⁴

Both writers understand the irony of universal history—that history does not end with the establishment of capitalism—but Cather seems unable to imagine Anglo America changing without its destruction.

Carpentier's notion of the baroque as an emergent society with the potential to enact positive change and his presentation of history as a nonlinear field in which abstract types repeat themselves in different forms implies a more complex historical development than the passing of homogeneous time and demonstrate his revolutionary understanding of the use of universal history.⁶⁵ Carpentier refers to the reality of Latin America; the baroque that he writes of is actually the New World Baroque, but within the frame of Deleuze and Guattari we can

64 Cather, Willa. “On Nature and Romance,” *The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather’s First Principles and Critical Statements 1893-1896* ed. Bernice Slotte, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska UP, 1966), 231-233.

65 Benjamin, Walter, “On the Concept of History,” *Selected Writings vol. 4* trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland et al., eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2002).

make a meaningful comparison of the baroque in Latin America and other forms of untimeliness and deterritorialization in the world.

The historical Baroque “constitutes the West's first modernity,” according to Monika Kaup, but that early modernity “conjoined the contradictory impulses of the premodern and the modern, faith and reason, the scientific and the mythic... .”⁶⁶ The Enlightenment, the modernity that was to follow after the Baroque, rejected the coexistence of these contradictory elements in the thinking of Baroque intellectuals. Voltaire's satiric depiction of Leibnitz in *Candide* is emblematic of this Enlightenment rejection of Baroque contradiction. After the crisis of the Enlightenment project was announced in the twentieth century by two world wars and the endless cycles of imperialism and neo-colonialism, however, writers and thinkers began to recognize and revindicate Baroque thought. This is especially true of 'New World Baroque' that flourished in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in Latin America's “long” seventeenth century (lasting until the expulsion of the Jesuits, roughly 1767).⁶⁷ In the colonies, the Baroque never had quite the stamp of Counter-Reformation Absolutism that the European Baroque had.

Instead, the New World Baroque as an aesthetic and ideology offered indigenous peoples a means to preserve their culture within the new monumental structures being constructed. Carpentier seizes upon this potential for creative fusion (of cultures, people, materials, social institutions) inherent in the New World Baroque to offer it as a post-Enlightenment model for cultural construction: in other words, Carpentier uses the Baroque as

⁶⁶ Kaup, “Becoming-baroque,” 108.

⁶⁷ Chiampi, *Barroco e modernidade*, 1-3.

a counter-modernity in order to emphasize at one and the same time that neither modernity, history nor civilization are singular and that whatever falls outside of the margins of “modernity,” however that territory is defined by the Enlightenment, must not be discarded as the past, but rather assimilated into the present.

In *Los pasos perdidos*, however, Carpentier is no longer dealing with the actual period of the historical Baroque in Latin America—the seventeenth, eighteenth and some of the nineteenth century. The novel is framed entirely within the twentieth century: the events narrated in the novel's present take place after the Second World War and several events from the earlier twentieth century are presented analeptically. In writing about his contemporary world using Baroque techniques Carpentier is not implying that the twentieth century is a Baroque epoch in the same way that the seventeenth century is considered to have been. We can better understand Carpentier's deployment of Baroque technique in a contemporary novel by recognizing it as a return to the Baroque, a Neobaroque. Returning to the Baroque in the twentieth century reflects the rejection of the Enlightenment ideology of linear historical development that dominated the nineteenth century in Europe and Latin America.⁶⁸

The Archbishop's work in the Southwest begins in a kind of baroque setting as the many nations of that region must be translated into “good Americans,” but the entirety of the book's plot is a movement towards the establishment of that category and towards the Archbishop's death. John N. Swift argues that the narrative contains two opposed historical pulsions, one retropulsion toward origin and one propulsion to the book's close. The

68 Kaup, Monica, “Becoming-baroque,” 110.

association of the book's closure with death contrasts significantly with the ending of *Los pasos perdidos*, in which the narrator decides that he must live in his own age. It also reinforces Cather's historical pessimism detailed above. Swift writes:

We may suspect, in fact, that the regressive impulse I've described is among other things an impulse to undo or repudiate time and its primary effect, death, and that the novel's 'plot', read through its temporal conflicts, may be the attempt to delay death by circling back to birth. [...] The novel's essential temporal doubleness may be still further illuminated by Peter Brooks's provocative psychoanalytic speculation [...] Brooks treats narrative as behaving temporally like Freud's living but death-driven organism, something 'stimulated from quiescence into a state of narratability, into a tension, a kind of irritation, which demands narration', (*Reading for the Plot*, 103). [...] ⁶⁹

Swift also cites Brooks who writes that "the desire of the text (the desire of reading) is the desire for the end [...] to die ... in its own fashion."⁷⁰ Cather, writing from hegemonic Anglo America, recognizes the fact that universal history is ironic, that history will not end, but she still foresees death for America, rather than the emergence of a new American life.

It would seem that it is the notion of the Baroque that distinguishes the universal history of Cather from that of Carpentier. For Carpentier being American and being Baroque are synonymous and both refer to a cultural novelty that results from the deracination of peoples from different worlds and their encounter in a new world. Cather follows Thomas Carlyle and Charles Kingsley in imagining the lineage of America (though not América) in terms of race, not deracination. In her depictions of the Midwest in particular America absorbs waves of European immigrants. But as Lois Parkinson Zamora notes Cather does not favor the later

⁶⁹ Swift, John N, "Cather's Archbishop and the 'Backward Path'," *Cather Studies* vol. 1 no. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska UP, 1990), 55-67.

⁷⁰ Qtd. In Swift, "Cather's Archbishop," 60.

generation settlements of America that emerge in these areas. “The towns which are subsequently created and populated by second- and third-generation immigrants are depreciated by Cather precisely because their various European heritages have been squandered, and nothing has arisen to replace them.”⁷¹ Cather finds it to be a sign of the age that nothing truly new arises in America as life is increasingly given over to the ends of capitalism.

In *Carpentier*, part of what is new in the American Baroque is also the Middle Ages. Of course, as the presence of the narrator himself is sufficient to demonstrate, this is not a remote Middle Age territory but a contemporary one and it interacts with both the state territory and the urban modernity, but remotely enough that the social assemblage itself does not resound with them.

Puede pertenecer a otro calendario un objeto, una prenda de vestir, un remedio. Pero el ritmo de vida, los modos de navegación, el candil y la olla, el alargamiento de las horas, las funciones trascendentales del Caballo y del Perro, el modo de reverenciar a los Santos, son medievales [...] Comprendo ahora que he convivido con los burgueses [...]

[An object, a garment, a drug belonged to another calendar. But the rhythm of life, the methods of navigation, the oil lamp, the cooking-pots, the prolongation of the hours, the transcendental functions of the Horse and the Dog, the manner

⁷¹ Parkinson Zamora, Lois. “The Usable Past: On the Idea of History in U.S. and Latin American Fiction,” *Do The Americas Have a Common Literature?* ed. Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1990), 20.

of worshipping the Saints, all were medieval. [...] I realized that I had been living with burghers [....]⁷²

Importantly, it is the “rhythm of life” by which the narrator recognizes the historical territory he has been passing through. It is the technologies and social organization of the men, women and domestic plant species and animals, the time-keeping practice of observing a calendar based in the Saints, the subordination of travel to the waterways of the river and the subordination of settlements to the topography of the land; it is these social practices that determine the identity of this historical territory, not the date given on a linear calendar.

As the narrator’s observation of the anachronism of certain objects within the medieval territory suggests, the Middle Ages are not bound by the rules of what De Landa would call ‘actual time’, but refer to any social and urban assemblages that self-organize in accordance with a virtual scheme. Like Carpentier whose narrator admits that the expansion of Europe into the Americas was the work of medieval man and not the man of the Renaissance or any other modern European social assemblage, De Landa recognizes medieval social practices as perhaps the most important of all the historical emergences shaping the European domination of the contemporary world.

De Landa locates the birth of Europe in the eleventh century of our current era with the convergence of several technologies that made the cultivation of soil markedly more efficient than ever before. “[The heavy plow, new ways of harnessing the horse’s muscular energy, the open-field system, and triennial field rotation] allowed for the reconstitution of the European

⁷² Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 309; *The Lost Steps* 178.

exoskeleton, the urban framework that had for the most part collapsed with the Roman Empire. ... Interestingly, ... the ‘tidal wave of medieval urbanization’ laid out the most enduring features of the European urban structure.”⁷³ Thus the presence of medieval man and medieval society organizing space in the Americas is a result of contingent history and not universal history: actual historical processes transplanted a variety of European biomass and genetic material as well as what De Landa calls “organizational memory,” the embodied know-how of peasants' and craftsmen's knowledge of how to operate a social assemblage. Isolated in regions of little contact with the contemporary state, this hybrid EuroAmerican Middle Ages persists into the narrator’s contemporary moment.

The importance of a concept of counter-modernity is its power to lay bare the fact that all extant societies and cultures are coeval rather than parts of the past that are inaccessible to 'modern' man. This flies directly in the face of Enlightenment thinkers like Hegel, who wrote in his *On The Philosophy of History* that the Americas had no history because all the historical development on those two continents through the nineteenth century were merely mimicry of the history of Europe.⁷⁴ Hegel's is a perspective on the *lack* of history in the Americas that we will see voiced at several points in *Los pasos perdidos* as well, by the narrator, his father, the hotel staff and founder of the city 'outside of history.' The text, however, makes it clear how

⁷³ De Landa, Manuel. *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 127.

⁷⁴ Parkinson Zamora, Lois, *The Usable Past*, (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1997), 4.

incomprehensible a position this is, as the narrator travels *in the present* and comes into contact with manners of living that he recognizes as the past.

Rather than the past, though, these lands which fall outside of the territory of modernity are counter-modernities (or alternative modernities) a fact which implies that modernity is not singular. Modernities are plural, and what's more, the conception of the New World Baroque allows us to think about these modernities in terms of emergence.⁷⁵ Emergence is the creation of new entities from an event which were not present in the entities that were initially involved in the event. The Baroque as counter-modernity is not a return to some premodern past, but rather a contemporary rejection of the logic that only one modernity exists or that the New World is part of the past. As Carpentier writes, “El barroquismo americano se crece con [...] la conciencia que cobre el hombre americano, sea hijo de blanco venido de Europa, sea hijo de negro africano, sea hijo de indio nacido en el continente— [...] la conciencia de serte otra cosa, de ser una cosa nueva, de ser una simbiosis, de ser un criollo.” [“the American Baroque develops along with [...] the self-awareness of the American man, be he the son of a white European, a black African or Indian born on the continent... : the awareness of being Other, of being new, of being symbiotic.”]⁷⁶ This is precisely what is lacking in America for Cather. To

75 Cf. Charles Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” *The Hastings Center Report* 25 no. 2 (1995) 24-33, and Alberto Moreiras, “Introduction: Conditions of Latin Americanist Critique” *The Exhaustion of Difference*, (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001), 1-25.

76 Carpentier, Alejo. “Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso,” [“The Baroque and the Marvelous Real”] *Ensayos* (Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2007 [1983]) 182-3. Reprinted as “The Baroque and the Marvelous Real,” trans. Tanya Huntington and Lois Parkinson Zamora in Zamora, Lois Parkinson and Faris, Wendy B. *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1995). 100.

her the cycles of the past really did return the human race to a natural balance it had previously attained.⁷⁷

At the heart of his theorization, Carpentier contrasts America with Europe. It is very important that we consider just what Europe and what America he speaks of, though; clearly Carpentier recognizes medieval Europe as a part of America so we cannot assume he distinguishes everything American from everything European. The Europe he contrasts with America is the hegemonic power behind globalization, what Dipak Chakrabarty calls “the site of the birth of modernity.”⁷⁸ That Europe is a hyperreality; it doesn’t refer to any place. Instead it refers to an geographical idea, the imagined landscape of the Enlightenment. Similarly, Carpentier refers to a very particular embodiment of America.

It is *nuestra América* (“our America”), the imagined territory that Carpentier’s compatriot Juan Martí declared a necessary reality in 1898. Stretching geographically from the Rio Grande in North America to the Straits of Magellan in South America. Still, this America is not a dense political or even continental territory. It is not merely a continent or the interstices of two continents, but the product of an enormous complex of human and geographic accidents and events. Nuestra America is contrasted to another America, Anglo-America, on two important points: it was a site onto which the European feudalism of the

⁷⁷ “Nature is pretty rough on the individual at times, but to the type she is wonderfully kind, and her mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. When she has one nation that is wholly abandoned and given over to its emotions, and another that analyzes more than it feels, she puts them together and lets them fight it out and they strike an equilibrium somewhere.” As this passage demonstrates, racial mixing leads to tempered qualities but not to the new. Cather, “On Nature and Romance,” 232.

⁷⁸Chakrabarty, Dipak. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* 2nd ed., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2009 [2000]), 29.

sixteenth century was translated and it is marked by a spirit of resistance to, rather than assimilation of, capitalism.

This resistance takes two divergent forms. For some residents of America, Martí writes, the world is no larger than the village or town in which they live, and the principles that organize life and distribute individuals and labor within that town seem to be all the law that exists in the universe. Thus, for example, the character Rosario, whom the narrator will ultimately claim “[ignora] la historia,” [“ignores history”], lives what he calls an Early Medieval moment in history without an awareness of modernity, or her own moment’s place in a linear time.⁷⁹

When the narrator sees this character reading the seventeenth century Jesuit tract *The Story of Genevieve of Brabant* (based on an even earlier French tale) and remarks to her that “Son cuentos de otros tiempos,” [“Those are tales of other days”], she rebukes him twice: “Lo que los libros dicen es verdad.” [...] ‘Lo que dicen los libros es verdad.’ [“These books tell the truth. [...] What these books tell is the truth.”]⁸⁰ From her assertion that these books are not just true but that they ‘give the truth,’ we can reverse-engineer a practical definition of truth for this figure: the truth is what these books tell. The narrator notes concretely how the past of a universal history has been exported not only by territorial conquest and the establishment of

⁷⁹Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 213 ; *The Lost Steps* 278 (translation modified).

⁸⁰Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 227 ; *The Lost Steps*, 100.

sovereignty, but by the very machinations of civilization that cultivate a European past on the soil of America:

para ella, la historia de Genoveva fuera algo actual: algo que transcurría, al ritmo de su lectura, en un país del presente. El pasado no es imaginable para quien ignora el ropero, decorado y utilería de la historia. Así, debía imaginarse los castillos del Brabante como las ricas haciendas de acá, que solían tener paredes almenadas. [...] Y en cuanto al traje, Rosario debía ver su novela como ciertos pintores del temprano Renacimiento veían el Evangelio, vistiendo a los personajes de la Pasión a la manera de los notables del día [...]

For her Genevieve's history was very probably something real, something that was happening in a real country as she read it. The past eludes the grasp of those ignorant of the trappings, the setting, the props of history. She probably saw the castles of Brabant as the great ranches she knew, which often had crenelated walls. [...] As for the style of dress, Rosario's vision was probably that of certain early Renaissance painters who presented the figures of the Passion in the attire of their own day..."⁸¹

At this point, the narrator believes that Rosario's ignorance of history—specifically, the trajectory of history which makes it impossible for a Medieval moment of history to persist in the twentieth century—leaves her unable to grasp that the historical moment of Genevieve of Brabant cannot be present because it is the past. Rosario's resistance to modernity is lived but it is not conscious.

This passive form of resistance is present in the Archbishop's diocese as well. Early in the narrative he happens upon a small agrarian settlement of Mexicans called "Agua Secreta" [Hidden Water] who have not seen a priest in years. Living in a remote region of the republic, they are not part of the imagined community of the nation. They have little or no access to news and no newspapers, which makes little difference because there is not one literate person

⁸¹Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 227 ; *The Lost Steps*, 100.

at the settlement. Like Rosario, then, they live in a time before the age of Revolutions. “Benito did not know in what year his grandfather had settled here, coming from Chihuahua with all his goods in ox-carts. ‘But it was soon after the time when the French killed their king. My grandfather had heard talk of that before he left home [...]’.”⁸²

Conclusion

A second form of resistance to modernity, which the narrator himself, even though he does not feel himself ignorant of history, is unable to conceptualize until the narrative’s end, is more cosmopolitan. Aware of its own difference from European history, it must assert American reality and therefore the multiplicity of the actual world.⁸³ In this vein the “trapping” of history is the setting of history, the irretrievable European past. Eighteen days (or seventy pages) after the narrator dismisses Rosario as ignorant for failing to realize that the world she knew was not Medieval Europe, he himself comes to realize that while it is not Europe, it is Medieval—“ [“We are in the Middle Ages. ... An object, a garment, a drug belonged to another calendar But the rhythm of life, the methods of navigation, the oil lamp, the cooking-pots, the prolongation of the hours, the transcendental functions of Horse and Dog, the manner of worshiping the Saints, all were medieval....”].⁸⁴

As Carpentier’s narrator continues his becoming-untimely, untimeliness becomes something more than simple anachronism. The rhythms of life that define the historical past

82 Cather, *Death*, 26.

83 Martí, “Nuestra América,” 15-17.

84 Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 308; *The Lost Steps*, 177-178.

persist and coexist in the spatiotemporal multiplicity of the present, and untimeliness is the recognition of the fact that these persistent pasts can actualize a different future. But it is only possible to act against universalizing history if one recognizes its artifice. Martí issues a wake-up call to Americans and Carpentier echoes it: a universalizing modernity is coming to appropriate our America from us; we must learn our own world history or we will be assimilated into this other. For the Archbishop, though, becoming-untimely only functions in the propulsion toward origins. In Cather's universal history America is the universalizing modernity and resistance to it can only lead to antimodernism, not to anything new.

Chapter III Cosmopolitan America: The Limits of Spatiotemporal Perception, From City to World in “El Aleph,” *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand* and “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”¹

Wherever there are towns, there will also be a form of power, protective and coercive, whatever the shape taken by that power or the social group identified with it. And while power may exist independently of towns, it acquires through them an extra dimension, a different field of application. Last of all, there can be no door to the rest of the world, no international trade without towns.

Fernand Braudel,
*The Structures of Everyday Life: Civilization & Capitalism 15th-18th Century vol. One*²

Introduction: From the City to the World

Fernand Braudel’s assertion that “there can be no international trade without towns” suggests something of an anachronism because it seems somehow to suggest that nation-states and national borders exist prior to the towns that instigate movement across those borders. This is of course not the case and Braudel, in other parts of his *Civilization and Capitalism* is quite clear on that point, even going so far as to write that in fact, “the town appears at least simultaneously with rural settlement, if not before it. Thus in the 6th millenium BC, Jericho and Chatal Yüyük [Çatalhöyük] in Asia Minor were already towns, creating around them

¹ All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

² Braudel, Fernand, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible, Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century* vol. I, translation revised by Siân Reynolds, (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 481.

countrysides.”³ But there is an essential feature of the town that Braudel references when he writes that the town opens the door to the world: because towns exist only where there is a division of labor, and wherever there is a division of labor, the town creates the condition in human territorial assemblages for exchange. “Even the humblest town-dweller must obtain his food-supply from the market: the town in other word *generalizes* the market into a widespread phenomenon.”⁴ The town is the extensive marker of a qualitative shift in a human society that then comes to look out upon the world with the deterritorialized desire to consume and expand.

A form of power grows from this desire, as well. This is the power to discipline the labor, but also to expand the market that the town has generalized (in keeping with the limits of production and consumption of the town itself). And so, the town not only predates the nation-state, Braudel argues that it creates the nation-state, by creating the national market, “without which the modern state would be a pure fiction.”⁵ The national capital marks the qualitative shift in a society when a large territorial regions production is all directed through a capital, unifying the capital, towns and country in one rhythm.

Thus a capital city first, and a nation second, desires surplus and its growth into the world is only limited by its capacity to transform the world into its supplier. These limits always checked the desire to spread the market; in Western Europe the most important constraints were the presence of other cities and nations mutually resisting one anothers’ territorial expansion.

³ Braudel, *Everyday Life*, 484. He also continues, “Closer to our times, we can see [this situation] in the New World, where Europeans built reproductions of their home cities and set them down literally in the middle of nowhere: their inhabitants, alone or with the aid of the local population, set about creating the countryside to supply them.”

⁴ Braudel, *Everyday Life*, 481.

⁵ Braudel, *Everyday Life*, 527.

Such was the territorial system of Europe through the fifteenth century. However, these limits could be overcome when certain European crowns extended their empires overseas into the Americas.⁶

The establishment of European cities in the New World thus opened the lands and resources of that region to the (burgeoning) European world-economy and allowed the expansion of the markets of the European world over the globe (eventually).

If the discovery of America brought Europe little return in the short run, this was because the new continent was only partly apprehended and settled by the white man. Europe had patiently to reconstruct America in her own image before it began to correspond to her own wishes.⁷

Having planted European cities “literally in the middle of nowhere,” the dynamic rhythm of the transformation of the countryside took some time and was indeed too much for the world-economy that initiated it. “It took Europe centuries to build a world in her own image across the Atlantic, and then only with immense variations and distortions.”⁸ Manuel De Landa emphasizes the distortions that entered into the American “image” of Europe as well as the effects it had on Europe. The creation of the New World proper, “the transformation of the American continent into a supply region,” he writes,

involved interactions between institutions of different eras, more specifically, a mixture of different strategies for the extraction of surpluses, some ancient, some new, in a process akin to Europe’s earlier self-colonization [the establishment of city/countryside systems throughout Western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth century. [...] European colonization transformed the New World, and the New World in turn contributed to a transformation under way in Europe.⁹

⁶ Wallerstein, Immanuel. *The Modern World-system: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* Text Edition, (NY: Academic Press, 1976).

⁷ Braudel, Fernand. *The Perspective of the World*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 388.

⁸ Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, 388.

⁹ De Landa, Manuel. *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 155-6.

Everything in this statement indicates the dynamic nature of the production of the European world-system. It actualizes institutions “from different eras” in order to make the extraction of surplus possible, indicating that the Europe in the European world-system refers to something dynamic and historically complex. It enacts complicated reciprocal effects in that European system. It results in a new world-system, dominated by European interests, to be sure, but what emerges is genuinely novel and unforeseen.

In this way a European network of cities with a common market slowly took on the guise of the entire world in the West. The result is that Urbanization, as Braudel declares, is “the sign of modern man.”¹⁰ But the attribution of the singular to modern man is misleading. There is no singular subjectivity for the modern man who lives in the urbanized world of the modern world-system. Modern man is as varied as the many realms that partake in the interchange of materials and work in the world-economy.

Expressing the unthinkable diversity of modern man draws together the writing of Samuel R. Delany and Jorge Luis Borges. Delany and Borges write in different fictional modes—Delany is still known primarily for his science fiction and sword and sorcery novels although he has written primarily literary fiction for the past two decades, Borges is best known for his erudite, complex short fiction filled with references to the history of philosophy and the occult. At the center of both writers’ projects, though, is an exposition of the decentered and dynamic nature of the human subject, its openness to change dramatically in different spatiotemporal situations. In this essay I will trace the geographic dynamisms and complications that are inherent in the process of creating a modern world—that is, an urban world—in the

¹⁰ Braudel, *Everyday Life*, 556.

writing of Borges and Delany and demonstrate how these writers deploy paradox and fuzzy knowledge to uncover that the conception of a static modern world is an inadequate representation of the unrepresentable becoming of world territoriality.

Modernity and Urban Space in Borges and Delany

“Art makes its entire effect by developing things from your landscape, denying other things in it, and replacing still others with the artists' vision: that means the same text must be read differently on each different world...”

Samuel Delany,
*The Splendor and Misery of Bodies, of Cities*¹¹

Samuel Delany was interviewed by the filmmaker Fred Barney Taylor in 2009 for Taylor's film *The Polymath*. Delany, who is a science fiction author, a filmmaker, a folk singer, a pornographer, a professor of comparative literature as well as creative writing, a playwright, a Marxist cultural critic, a theorist of generic literary protocols, a literary novelist and even, for three issues, the writer for the DC Comics title “Wonderwoman,” is the polymath.¹² When Taylor asked him why to remark on his choice to write science fiction Delany answered by broadening the question: why do I write? He asserts that he writes because he thinks of himself as an intellectual. Writing is what he believes intellectuals do. He then returns to address the topic at hand. He writes in different genres and modes because there are different genres and modes to write in.¹³

¹¹ Delany, Samuel R. “from *The Splendor and Misery of Bodies, of Cities*.” *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 16:3 (Palo Alto, CA: DALKEY Archive Press, 1996), 130.

¹² *The Polymath or, The Life and Opinions of Samuel R. Delany, Gentleman*, directed by Fred Barney Taylor (2007; New York: Maestro Media, 2009), DVD.

¹³ “Arc of Writing Career,” *The Polymath*.

We get a sense of Delany's commitment to plurality in this anecdote. Delany, the intellectual, does not write different kinds of criticism because there are different kinds of things to criticize (although he does criticize a wide variety of things, from the disappearance of Times Square porno theaters and the skewed coverage of UN proceedings during the fall of 1963 on US network television, to arguments to consider *Frankenstein* as science fiction).¹⁴ Instead Delany's writes in many forms and sees all the forms his writing takes as intellectual and critical. He does not consider any form of writing as the most intellectual, or consider any form of writing essentially intellectual. The novelist Jonathan Lethem has remarked of Delany that:

His essential and most singular facet is that he's multifaceted. He never saw the boundaries between, say, comic books and high art, literary criticism, autobiography, fiction... . He never saw the formal restrictions between narrative and radical textual innovation, typographical innovation even. He always embraced every contradiction that art offered and made it unified in his work. And his existence is equally disregarding of boundaries. He doesn't see them. And therefore he makes us see boundaries differently, he makes us question them, by his very existence.¹⁵

What Lethem highlights is that Delany's movement between and work within the restraints of different genres matches his commitment to writing about a diverse set of subjects in diverse manners. In pushing the boundaries of convention with regard both to content and to form he renders something imperceptible perceptible for the attentive reader of his work.

¹⁴ Cf. Delany, Samuel R., *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, (New York: NYU Press, 2001) on the disappearance of porno theaters; Delany, Samuel R., *The Motion of Light in Water: Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the East Village*, (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota UP, 1993) 247-250, on coverage of UN proceedings; Delany, Samuel R., "The Politics of Paraliterary Criticism," *Shorter Views: Queer Thoughts & the Politics of the Paraliterary*, (Hanover, NH: The University Press of New England), 218-270 esp. 263-268, on the question of considering *Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus* as science fiction.

¹⁵ Taylor, Fred Barney, Trailer *The Polymath: or, the Life and Opinions of Samuel Delany, Gentleman*, (NY: Maestromedia, 2009). 1:25-2:15.

I think Lethem is unquestionably right about Delany's effect on his readers. His art enacts a cognitive estrangement aimed specifically at making it difficult to perceive the boundaries we are accustomed to seeing. This is especially true of those boundaries forming the division between the binary structures that form identities like race, sex and gender. I would go even further than Lethem, though. I would do so because Lethem's statements seems to imply a blindness, a simple failure to see distinctions that have been constructed, and they might lead us to consider Delany an idiot savant. The truth of the matter, though, is that it is a consciously practiced blindness, a specifically-targeted attempt to recalibrate certain thresholds of his own perception, that leads Delany to write in this fashion.

Delany once remarked, for instance, that most Westerners have been conditioned to perceive equal gender distribution in spaces where that distribution might rather be 25:75 or 33:67. "Over two years," writes Delany,

I have managed to decondition myself to the point where twenty-five/seventy-five now *looks* to me like twenty-five/seventy-five. But thirty-three/sixty-seven still looks like fifty/fifty if I don't catch myself. One hopes this will change. [...] But I must assume that it is reinforced, if not caused, by the fact that fifty/fifty social groups are so seldom encountered on the street, in trains, on buses, or in airports.¹⁶

In this instance we see that Delany is not just naturally gifted with a blindness to certain boundaries, which we might be tempted to accept if we were to quickly gloss Lethem's statement. Instead, Delany's artistry begins from the other end of things: as an intellectual Delany questions boundaries, then takes sometimes onerous measures in order not to see them.

¹⁶ Delany, Samuel R. "To Read *The Dispossessed*," *The Jewel-hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* revised edition, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2009), 144-5.

Only then, not seeing them, can he join that which they divide in his art—which he has referred to as subjunctive fiction.

In his novel *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand*, for instance, Delany combines an insight and a moment of blindness that he developed while living in the Albert Hotel on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the early 1970s. At that time the hotel was frequented by transsexuals in the process of physical sexual transition (generally, male-to-female transsexuals). Because the hotel is serviced by only one small elevator Delany often found himself in tight quarters with many of the hotel guests, including the transsexuals. After several months living with a piqued curiosity about the biological sex of his elevator partners Delany was astonished to realize that at some point along the line he had simply stopped wondering about it.

One of the things that I used to think all the time is that one of the things that must be hard-wired into our very biology is to at least want to know the biological sex of the person you were standing next to. [...] I thought, ‘How can you not want to know?’ Until after I had been there about six months [...] I just hadn’t cared. [...] You can get used to the ‘de-genderizing’ of people just by simple exposure. [...] If you’re not going to wind up in bed with the person, who gives a flying fuck?¹⁷

Delany more passive here than in his attempt, above, to register biological sex-distribution in public spaces¹⁸ but he actively applies this plasticity of the modern subject to his novel. “That’s one of the experiences where I figured if *I* can change about something like that, then anybody can change about any of these things. But it takes time and exposure and it happens little by little.”¹⁹

¹⁷ “How could you not want to know?” *The Polymath*, DVD.

¹⁸ One could still apply his statement to this situation, in which Delany inverts convention by not noticing, rather than by noticing. “I must assume that [curiosity about biological sex] is reinforced, if not caused, by the fact that [people with ambiguous biological sex] are so seldom encountered on the street, in trains, on buses, or in airports.”

¹⁹ “How could you not want to know?” *The Polymath*, DVD.

In *Stars* the reader never does know the gender of many of the characters. One of the conceits of *Stars* is that all human and nonhuman people who have legally recognized status within the Federation are called women and use the pronoun “she.” Thus, while Marq Dyeth, the novel’s protagonist and often-narrator, is a male human, she is a male human woman by convention and will be referred to in this paper as “she,” “her,” etc. It is a feature of the novel that Delany reports bothering many readers, at least at first, though he claims that by the end of the 350 page novel they often report to him that they had lost interest in trying to discover the biological sexes of the characters.

There are many reasons why the subjunctive mode is used to distinguish a subject from the indicative. Hence Delany could refer to his science fiction as subjunctive fiction, for instance, because it expresses improbably possibilities. I would like to consider another possibility: the subjunctive is a mode which in many languages is used to express desires and to describe states of affairs that the speaking subject desires. Carl Freedman has often noted the important role of desire in Delany’s fiction. In a preface written to the twentieth anniversary reprinting of *Stars*, for instance, Freedman writes that “It should be stressed that the alternative to bigotry that the novel proposes [...] is not mere liberal toleration but rather *desire*.”²⁰ Delany’s desire is directly engaged politically. With his subjunctive project and his desire to produce emancipatory exposure, he gestures emphatically to his opinion that the ethos of the modern world-system should allow for is greater freedom for the fragmented modern subject.

²⁰ Freedman, Carl. Preface, *Stars in My Pockets like Grains of Sand* Twentieth Anniversary Edition, (Middletown, CT: The University Press of New England, 2004), viii.

For Delany this is dependent, as I have shown, upon the visibility of unpoliced diversity, upon the opportunity for modern man in his urbanized world to be exposed to social and cultural difference. He disagrees even with historicist accounts like the one given by Fredric Jameson in his essay “Postmodernism,” in which Jameson admits a preference for the modernist notion of a natural human subject alienated by capitalist culture over the “more radical poststructuralist position for which such a subject never existed in the first place.”²¹

The point is, of course,” Delany writes, “that I incline the *other* way. Moreover, I think that any time when there was such a notion of a centered subject [...] not only was it an ideological mirage, it was a mirage that necessarily grew up to mask the psychological, economic, and material oppression of an ‘other’—often (though not necessarily) a tyrannized member of the same family.”²²

Delany writes to imply the multiplicity of perspective in each work as well as across different works (that is, different forms of writing). At the same time he posits the “impossibility” that these perspectives maintain vis a vis one another. In other words, it is not possible to perceive a 33 : 67 split of women to men as both 33: 67 split and a 50 :50 split. It is possible to understand that both might be perceived, but that understanding is likely to come only after being forced out of the unthinking position, being forced to think, and perhaps to decondition as well.

The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, himself a writer comfortable in many different modes of writing (and especially, many different modes of reading), can be considered as a visionary American writer alongside Delany. The prose output of Borges, which was published as short stories, essays, fictional essays, author biographies, film and book reviews, and was

²¹ qtd. in Delany, *Stars*, 383.

²² Delany, “Afterword,” 385.

supplemented by a significant poetic output and oratory, fulfills a wide variety of functions as does that of Delany. Borges was, in fact, physically blind from the age of fifty-five and the manner in which he wrote had to be adapted accordingly. From the year 1955 Borges stopped producing the short fiction and essays which he had written to great acclaim from the 1930s and began to work by dictation.

In spite of several operations, Borges gradually lost the use of his right eye, with the vision in the left severely impaired. His ophthalmologist ordered him to stop reading and writing. The world became increasingly gray; colors disappeared, with the exception of a persistent yellow. For a man who was used to writing everything in a minute hand, there was no hope. He had to learn a new craft, that of dictation. [...] When the whole text was memorized, he would dictate it to Mother and then would have it read and reread until he was satisfied.²³

Even before he was physically blinded and the colors of the world faded to yellow, Borges often wrote about certain images—a small spot under a stair that contains all the universe seen from all angles, or a coin that, once seen, cannot be forgotten and therefore takes over one's entire perception, for example.²⁴ These images are fantastic precisely because they are impossibly overfull of information.

As with Delany, then, but with a notable difference, Borges's writing forces the reader to recognize limits of perception that are ingrained in the very manner or the perspective of perception. Rather than not seeing boundaries—and forcing his reader to see them differently—Borges sees more in objects than could possibly be perceived by one viewer. In his fictions the

²³ Rodriguez Monegal, Emir, "The Dictator" *Borges, A Reader: Selection from the Writings of Jorge Luis Borges*, edited by Emir Rodriguez Monegal and Alastair Reid, (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), 271.

²⁴ Borges, Jorge Luis, "El Aleph," and "El zahir," *Cuentos completos*, (Madrid: Debolsillo, 2011), 330-344; 295-304.

limitations that perspective places on perception are a gift that save the mind from chaos and madness.

This summary might also mislead: it might be thought that Borges, who praises forgetting as a gift, would oppose Delany's work "to make us see boundaries differently."²⁵ Would it not be natural that the writer who condemns the madness of transcending the limitations of perspective (Borges) would oppose the writer whose work counteracts the forgetfulness that allowed one perspective (on sexes, races, and more) to become naturalized (Delany)? But such is not the case. Borges, like Delany, recognizes the important irreducibility of difference to systems of order. Although he writes sardonically of the madness which his narrators often (but not always) escape by perceiving the world partially, in fragments, he does not write in order to praise partial knowledge. Instead Borges writing works to undo the anti-realist illusion of those systems of thought that would presume to transcend the empirical conditions of perception and knowledge. What Borges writes is in praise of the irreducibility of perspective.

In the 1945 story "El Aleph," ["The Aleph"], for example, the narrator Borges tells of an artifact, the Aleph, that allows whoever gazes upon it to see the infinity of all places at once and from all perspectives. Paradoxically, in gazing on the Aleph the character Carlos Argentino Daneri also renders himself incapable of writing about actual times and actual places. Although Daneri works on an enormous poem—the scale of the work, as well as its ambition and the ambition and vanity of its author can be glimpsed in its title, "La Tierra" [The Earth]—the task of writing a work that would "tratabase de una descripción del planeta" ["be about a description of the planet"] leaves Daneri forever putting off his work and expanding preliminary poems, like

²⁵ Lethem speaking in *The Polymath*.

the “Canto Augural, Canto Prologal o simplemente Canto-Prólogo,” [“Augural Canto, Prologural Canto or simply Canto-Prologue”].²⁶

The narrator Borges notes that Daneri’s poetry is not memorable or particularly good and that everything Daneri reads to him is accompanied by the author’s “comentario profuso,” [“profuse commentary”].

En su escritura habían colaborado la aplicación, la resignación y el azar; las virtudes que Daneri les atribuía eran posteriores. Comprendí que el trabajo del poeta no estaba en la poesía; estaba en la invención de razones para que la poesía fuera admirable; naturalmente, ese ulterior trabajo modificaba la obra para él, pero no para otros.

Application, resignation and chance had gone into his writing; the virtues that Daneri attributed to his poems were applied subsequently. I came to understand that the poet’s work was not in poetry; it was in the invention of reasons for which the poetry was admirable; naturally, this last effort had changed the work for him, but not for others.²⁷

Daneri’s second-order poetry cannot engage with the world, no matter what its title claims, because its primary concern is not, to use the terms of Bertrand Westphal, geocentric.²⁸ Rather than referring to the world at all it defers endlessly to poetic formality and ego-centric self-admiration.²⁹

²⁶ Borges, “The Aleph,” 332.

²⁷ Broges, “El Aleph,” 333.

²⁸ Westphal, “Foreward” *Geocritical Explorations*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011). Westphal’s principal thrust in developing the methodology he calls geocriticism is to reconsider the relation between the text and the world (or more accurately, between texts and real places). Westphal’s thesis is that, especially in the postmodern culture of late capitalism, texts have a real and observable referentiality to places and that, even more than that, texts have effects on places. “La tierra,” Daneri’s epic project, refuses to enter into reference to the world but defers endlessly to its status as text. See chapter one above for a discussion of geocentric and egocentric literary criticism.

²⁹ Evelyn Fishburne and Psiche Hughes posit that Daneri may be Borges’s satiric portrayal of Pablo Neruda. Neruda published one volume of poetry called *Residencia en la tierra* which bears resemblance to “La tierra.” Additionally, Neruda published *Canto General* in 1950, years after “El Aleph” was first published in *Sur* and after it was collected in the book *El Aleph* (1949), but he had begun working on it as early as 1938 “and Borges probably knew about it.” Borges was also critical of Neruda’s silence regarding the dictatorship of Juan Perón,

For Daneri, in fact, this is entirely in keeping with the very meaning of modernity. He imagines “La tierra” as “una vindicación del hombre moderno” [“a vindication of modern man,”]. Daneri’s modern man is the urban man who has transcended the natural world and for whom any travel into the world is worthless.

—Lo evoco —dijo con una animación algo inexplicable— en su gabinete de estudio, como si dijéramos en la torre albarrana de una ciudad, proisto de teléfonos, de telégrafos, de fonógrafos, de aparatos de radiotelefonía, de cinematógrafos, de linternas mágicas, de glosarios, de horarios, de prontuarios, de boletines...

Observó que para un hombre así facultado el acto de viajar era inútil; nuestro siglo XX había transformado la fábula de Mahoma y de la montaña; las montañas, ahora, convergían sobre el moderno Mahoma.

“I evoke him,” he said with a somewhat inexplicable excitement, “in his inner sanctum, as if he were in the tower of a castle, at his disposal are telephones, telegraphs, phonographs, two-way radios, movie projectors, magic lamps, glossaries, schedules, guidebooks, bulletins...

He observed that for a man thus equipped the act of travel was useless; our twentieth century had transformed the fable of Mohammed and the mountain; these days, the mountains come to the modern Mohammed.³⁰

It is notable that the situation of modern man seems to Daneri like the situation of a man living in a tower and looking on the world from an urban, surveying perspective. For Daneri the modern condition means being able to conjure an image of any feature of the natural world without needing to leave this castle tower. Whether by telegraphy, two-way radio or magic lamp, technology can present man with the whole world for his contemplation. The narrator Borges finds Daner’s ideas to be “ineptas” [“inept”].³¹

especially in light of Neruda’s other political denunciations. Fishburne, Evelyn and Psiche Hughes, *A Dictionary of Borges*, (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1990), s.v. “Augural Canto.”

³⁰ Borges, “El Aleph,” 332.

³¹ Borges, “El Aleph,” 332.

Bruno Latour's anthropology of the moderns can illuminate the world of the modern man that Daneri imagines.³² For Latour, different worlds exist because no single unified temporality can be said to contain all the spaces of the Earth. He calls the people who try to create such a unified world the "moderns." Their modernity is founded on an absolute rupture with the past; this rupture with the past produces a "yesteryear" that applies to everywhere outside of the one modern world and allows the moderns to transform the premoderns into moderns like themselves. For Daneri it is modern technology that creates the rupture with the yesteryear of natural world. The inversion of the fable of Mohammed and the mountain is the qualitative marker of this transition.

Yet this absolute rupture between yesteryear and the modern world is a convenient fiction that obscures the fact that the world of modernity is deeply intertwined with a multiplicity of times. Latour writes that, inevitably, modern man's "beautiful order is disturbed once the quasi-objects are seen as mixing up different periods, ontologies or genres. Then a historical period will give the impression of a great hotchpotch."³³ The moderns can only hold their beautiful order — a new time at the end of time, a new true world — until it is recognized that this world is neither singular, because it comes after other worlds, nor the temporally and materially unified Earth.

Daneri, who writes poetry only as an excuse to rationalize the merit of his poetry, is easily contrasted with both Borges and Delany. Borges describes the reader and writer trapped in

³² Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* translated by Catherine Porter, (Boston: Harvard University Belknap Press, 1993), especially 67-74.

³³ Latour, *Modern*, 71.

this inept circumstance in an article republished in the 1932 collection *Discusión* ["Discussion"] titled "La supersticiosa ética del lector" ["The Superstitious Reading Ethic"]. Borges links this problem to its age. It is a result of "la condición indigente de nuestras letras" ["the destitute condition of our writing"], by which I understand Daneri's condition, wherein "the poet's work is not in poetry," not in the production of poems, but in the second-order act of criticism.³⁴ The resulting poetry, like Daneri's, does not concern itself with its effects on the reader in the world.

Instead this writing is overly concerned with textual totality and this kind of writer becomes obsessed with the examination of the writing only in parts. Rather than offering a particular perspective to an actual reader, this writing tries to please many imagined readers. It is enough to note how Daneri comments on the first stanza that he reads to the narrator Borges:

—Estrofa a todas luces interesante —dictaminó—. El primer verso granjea el aplauso del catedrático, del académico, del helenista, cuando no de los eruditos a la violeta, sector considerable de la opinión; el segundo pasa de Homero a Hesíodo (todo un implícito homenaje, en el frontis del flamante edificio, al padre de la poesía didáctica), no sin remozar un procedimiento cuyo abolengo está en la Escritura, la enumeración, congerie o conglobación; el tercero (¿barroquismo, decadentismo, culto depurado y fanático de la forma?) consta de dos hemistiquios gemelos; el cuarto, francamente bilingüe, me asegura el apoyo incondicional de todo espíritu sensible a los desenfadados envites de la facecía.

"An interesting stanza from any angle," he judged. "The first verse wins applause from the professor, the academic, the Hellenist, not to mention the superficially erudite, a considerable sector of the public; the second moves from Homer to Hesiod (entirely an homage, from the outset, to the father of didactic poetry), but not without rejuvenating a process whose ancestry is in the Scripture, enumeration, congeries, conglomeration; the third (baroque? decadent? the cult of pure form?) consists of two identical hemistichs; the fourth, frankly bilingual, assures me the unconditional support of all minds sensitive to the pleasures of sheer fun."³⁵

³⁴ Borges, "La supersticiosa ética del lector," *Discusión*, (Buenos Aires: Gleizer Editor, 1932), 20-21.

³⁵ Borges, "El Aleph," 333. Given Daneri's choice of language we can also imagine other authors whose interest lay in the relation of writing to reality criticizing his style of writing: Carpentier, for instance,

Daneri's considerations take everything into account but the content or effect of the poem itself: as its author states, it privileges "any angle" (or all angles) over a concrete but limited perspective.

In "The Superstitious Reading Ethic" Borges makes a complaint about the readers of texts in his contemporary Argentina and not about the producers of those texts. But it is clear that his critique cuts both ways. As his description of Daneri makes clear, the writer who produces texts for identitarian readers write to offer their readers what they think they want. They do not write in order to make the reader think, to challenge the reader or to trouble the bases of his or her observations of the world: such a writer writes to please readers' expectations.³⁶ Hence the reader of whom Borges writes in the essay—who reads as s/he does because of the destitute condition of our writing—and the writer that the narrator Borges describes in "El Aleph" finally seem to be two aspects of one system that displaces writing from the real. Borges describes them as follows:

Son indiferentes a la propia convicción o propia emoción: buscan tecniquerías (la palabra es de Miguel de Unamuno) que les informarán si lo escrito tiene el derecho o no de agradarles. [...] Subordinan la emoción a la ética, a una etiqueta indiscutida más bien. Se ha generalizado tanto esa inhibición [de emoción y consideración de la eficacia de la pagina] que ya no van quedando lectores, en el sentido ingenuo de la palabra, sino que todos son críticos potenciales.

They are indifferent to conviction as such and to emotion as such: they search for techniqueries (the word is Miguel de Unamuno's) to let them know if the writing

³⁶ This is the definition of what Deleuze and Guattari call Oedipal writing. For Deleuze and Guattari, Oedipal systems function by displacing the real of desire with the symbolic representation of the oedipal scene. The real must be repressed—Deleuze and Guattari term this the primal repression and it is prepersonal—but in order for the repression to function it requires a secondary repression that creates a "displaced apparent image of the repressed," something to which it can point, like Daneri to the different components of his poem, and say "That's what you wanted!" With regard to literature Deleuze and Guattari write "It is not a question here of personal oedipalization of the author and his readers, but of the *Oedipal form* to which one attempts to enslave the world itself[...]" Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane, (Minneapolis, MS: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 121, 166, 133.

has the right to please them or not. [...] They subordinate emotion to the ethic, even better to an uncontroversial etiquette. This inhibition [of emotion and the consideration of the efficacy of the page] is so widespread that they don't even remain readers, in the straightforward meaning of the word, but rather they are all potential critics.³⁷

We can conclude that Borges values conviction over “techniques” and the affective experience of the text (emotion) over the validity of that experience (whether “the writing has the right to please” or not). If we examine further this preference for the limited perspective and attempt to give affective experience to an actual reader we will discover that they also pertain to the geocentrism of Borges writing.

Returning to “El Aleph,” for instance, recall Daneri’s evocation of modern man: static in his inner sanctum, he perceives the world from a distance with telephone, telegram, magic lantern, etc. Travel is useless for such a modern because the world comes to him or her, as the reversal of the fable of Mohammed demonstrates. Paradoxically, though, what Borges reasserts through this story is the importance of movement and changing perspective to sanity, both private and public.³⁸ When Daneri is threatened with the destruction of his home by two successful Buenos Aires businessmen who want to expand their business into that space he calls Aleph, Borges in despair tells him of the existence of the Aleph in his house. The narrator Borges, thinking Daneri mad, visits his home in order to see what it is he is talking about. Entering

³⁷ Borges, “Supersticiosa,” 20.

³⁸ As I will discuss below, Borges is acutely aware of the allure and the danger of madness that inhere in totalizing modes of thought but he always pulls back from belief in these ideologies because of how much they cannot perceive. As Kate Jenckes writes, “[Borges] suggests that he would like, like his rival Carlos Daneri in “El Aleph,” to appropriate time’s shifting movement and contain it within a totalizing representation [...] but then he admits that the most he can do is piece together a fragmented account that can only gesture to an ongoing sense of time, which contains his own mortality.” Jenckes, *Reading Borges After Benjamin: Allegory, Afterlife and the Writing of History*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), xiii.

Daneri's inner sanctum, a narrow cellar beneath the house, the narrator Borges sees the impossible Aleph.

En la parte inferior del escalón, hacía la derecha vi una pequeña esfera tornasolada, de casi intolerable fulgor. Al principio la creí giratoria, luego comprendí que ese movimiento era una ilusión producida por los vertiginosos espectáculos que encerraba. El diámetro del Aleph sería de dos o tres centímetros, pero el espacio cósmico estaba ahí, sin disminución de tamaño. Cada cosa (la luna de espejo, digamos) era infinitas cosas, porque yo claramente la veía desde todos los puntos del universo.

On the back of the step toward the right, I saw a small iridescent sphere of almost unbearable brightness. At first I thought that it was spinning, then I understood that that movement was an illusion produced by the dizzying spectacles it contained. The diameter of the Aleph was about two or three centimeters, but all of cosmic space was there, without being diminished in size. Each thing (a full size mirror, let's say) was infinite things, because I clearly saw it from all the points of the universe.³⁹

Borges the narrator wishes that the gods might grant him some image to describe the Aleph but gives up because he wouldn't want his report to be contaminated by "literatura, de falsedad" ["literature, by falseness"]. Instead he makes a list of perhaps 49 objects that he sees in the Aleph. I say perhaps 49 objects because one could read the list many times and each time count a different number of objects, because each perspective that the narrator Borges sees in the Aleph is too complex to be easily quantified. The list includes, for instance:

"las muchedumbres de América," ["the multitudes of America"];
 "todos los espejos del planeta y nunca me reflejó" ["all the mirrors on the planet, and none reflected me"];
 "una mujer que no olvidaré, vi la violenta cabellera, el altivo cuerpo, vi un cáncer en el pecho" ["a woman that I won't forget, I saw her tangled hair, her long body, I saw cancer in her breast"];
 "un ejemplar de la primera versión inglesa de Plinio [...] vi a un tiempo cada letra de cada página" ["a copy of the first English version of Pliny [...] I saw every letter on every page all at once"];
 "la noche y el día contemporáneo," ["night and day at the same time"];

³⁹ Borges, "El Aleph," 341.

“en el Aleph la tierra, y en la tierra otra vez el Aleph y en el Aleph la tierra” [“in the Aleph the Earth, and in the Earth again the Aleph, and in the Aleph the Earth”].⁴⁰

For the purpose of enumerating the objects that Borges the narrator lists I have relied on counting the number of times he uses the verb “vi” [“I saw”], but it is clear that he sees more things than 49. What is shocking about the list is the concreteness of what the narrator Borges has seen. What is impossible about the vision of the Aleph is that it shows things from the perspective of eternity rather than from any actual, or actualizable, perspective.

Borges notes as much: “Lo que vieron mis ojos fue simultáneo: lo que transcribiré, sucesivo, porque el lenguaje lo es” [“What my eyes saw was simultaneous: what I will write down, successive, because language is.”]. Borges the writer has written much about eternity over his career.⁴¹ In his 1979 lectures at La Universidad del Belgrano Borges dismisses as ideal, though he does not go so far as to call it unreal. Instead he writes that it is “una de las más hermosas invenciones del hombre. Se me ocurre que se trata de una invención humana” [“one of the loveliest inventions of man. It occurs to me that we are dealing with a human invention”]. Eternity is the illusion of a perspective from outside of history; the truth that Borges comes back to is that history is inescapable.

Only after the narrator Borges destroys the Aleph in an act of jealousy—while at the same time telling Daneri to travel outside the great city for a while, “alejarse de la perniciosa metrópoli [...] el campo y la serenidad son dos grandes medicos,” [“get out of the pernicious

⁴⁰ Borges, “El Aleph,” 341-2.

⁴¹ See, for instance, Borges, *Historia de la eternidad* [“History of Eternity”], (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1953 (1936)), “Nueva refutación del tiempo” [“A New Refutation of Time”], *Otras inquisiciones 1937-1952*, (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1952), and “El tiempo” [“Time”], *Borges, oral* reprinted in *Miscelánea*, (Madrid: Delbosillo Editorial, 2011 (1995)), 243-253.

metropolis [...] the countryside and quiet are two great healers”]—that Daneri is able to become a successful writer.⁴² “La tierra” remains too large, and the wait for its completion too long, to be published. However, just six months after the destruction of the Aleph Daneri’s poetry begins to come out in a series of fragments; he earns second honors in the Argentine National Prize for literature.⁴³

To world, not to globalize: Delany, Borges and Becoming-everybody/everything [*faire-monde*]

Le dice que en América es absurdo inventar un país y le propone la invención de un planeta.

He said that in America it is absurd to invent a country, and he proposed to invent a planet.

Hace diez años bastaba cualquier simetría con apariencia de orden —el materialismo dialéctico, el antisemitismo, el nazismo— para embelesar a los hombres. ¿Cómo no someterse a Tlön, a la minuciosa y vasta evidencia de un planeta ordenado? Inútil responder que la realidad también está ordenada. Quizá lo esté, pero de acuerdo a leyes divinas —traduzco: a leyes inhumanas [...]

Ten years ago any any symmetry with a semblance of order— dialectical materialism, anti-Semitism, Nazism—was sufficient to entrance the minds of men. How could one not submit to Tlön, to the minute and vast evidence of an ordered planet? It is useless to answer that reality also has order. Maybe so, but in accordance with divine law—I translate: inhuman laws [...]⁴⁴

⁴² Borges, “El Aleph” 342.

⁴³ Borges, “El Aleph,” 330-344.

⁴⁴ Borges, Jorge Luis. “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” *Cuentos Completos*, (Madrid: Debolsillo, 2011), 104, 106-7.

In addition to writing to present the irreducibility of perspectives among urban man in the modern world-system, the fictions of Borges and Delany intersect in another geocritically interesting fashion. The concept of creating a world—or rather, transforming or remaking a world in the image of another—is present in both *Stars* and Borges story “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius.”

The consideration of world-making is not new within the field of literary studies. In 2004 Djelal Kadir laid out two paradigms for Comparative Literature that differ according to the place they conceive of for the comparison of literature. The discipline could proceed by *globalizing* literature, Kadir points out, which would mean simply placing literature on a sphere, the simplest model of a globe. Alternatively, Kadir recommends *worlding* literature. To world literature, with the word *world* acting as a transitive verb that means “to give it [literature] a particular historical density,” also means uncovering how a new world emerges when two previously unrelated worlds are brought into contact.⁴⁵ By Kadir’s account, both globalization and worlding produce a place. Globalization produces the image of a globe where global literature can be compared; whereas, worlding produces the image of a world composed of other worlds. The difference is that the globe is ahistorical. It makes the contemporary seem as natural as the Earth itself, however tacitly. Worlding, by contrast, strives against the naturalizing discourse of globalization. In giving a text “historical density,” worlding uncovers the cultural forces that have formed the world of the text into the world of comparative literatures.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Kadir, Djelal. “To World, To Globalize: Comparative Literature’s Crossroads,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 41.1 (2004), 1-9.

⁴⁶ Kadir, “To World,” 2.

Reading speculative fiction, with its explicit reference to the transformation of worlds, encourages one to see the earth as comprising many worlds. This is the great advantage of including science fiction, speculative fiction and fantastic literature in the enterprise of geocriticism and comparative literature. As the science fiction author China Miéville has put it, “the fantastic [...] *is good to think with.*”⁴⁷ Utopian and dystopian literatures — which have long been enmeshed with science fiction, as cases like the works of H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley and Ursula K. Leguin demonstrate — attempt to give a narrative image to future worlds that might yet be formed. Often they focus on social orders almost exclusively and present geographical, ecological and industrial forces secondarily, if at all, but these texts still focus on the potential effect of contemporary social practices on the real world. Thinking with other-worldly spaces in speculative literature is always an effort to better the world, either by admonishment or encouragement of a world to come.

Similarly, reading Delany and Borges together according to a geocritical methodology has the compounded benefit of using Delany’s science fictional worlds as a means to think globalization differently in our world while also allowing us to understand Borges’ farcical archaeology of Tlön in contrast to the material richness of worlding in *Stars*. But a geocritical comparison of the two novels is not possible so long as the geocritical methodology remains limited to real geographies. Producing a geohistorical criticism to supplement existing geocritical methodology requires mapping these texts according to the interaction between worlds that is revealed in each text: the spatial practice of terraforming.

⁴⁷ Qtd. in Tally, Robert T. Jr., *Spatiality: Routledge Critical Idiom*, (London: Routledge, 2013) 195.

Given its setting in the distant future, *Stars* lacks any reference to twentieth century Latin America. However, grounds for geohistorical comparison can be found in the abstract, among the patterns in how worlding takes place, alternately in a far star system in the distant future or in Borges' false recollection of the 1940s, that "signify more" than actual geography.⁴⁸ I find that *Stars* refers explicitly to terraforming practices that involve geomorphological, ecological and technocultural processes, while "Tlön" refers satirically to processes of world-making that are purely ideological.

Delany has written that the *raison d'être* of much science fiction is to fabulate how a civilization would be if certain technologies were introduced to it that made some things which are impossible in the present possible in the world of the texts.⁴⁹ Science fiction imagines the differences that would exist and deploys them in narrative. What effects would there be for individuals, or for social, racial or gendered groups? In modern science fiction this trend is often heightened until the diversity of fictional objects establishes a "reduplicated" novel — where an ordered sarabande of wonders refract and complement each other till they have produced a completely new world."⁵⁰ At its most successful, according to Delany, science fiction seeks to present these different worlds from the perspective of their native inhabitants, to whom they would not seem strange, rather than from the perspective of the science fiction reader for whom

⁴⁸ Franco Moretti, "Graphs, Maps Trees: Abstract Models for Literary Studies 2" *New Left Review* 26 (2004), 96-7. The full citation reads "Locations as such did not seem that significant, if compared to the relations that the map had revealed among them. [...] *G*eometry 'signifies' more than geography [...] because a geometrical pattern is too orderly a shape to be the product of chance. It is a sign that something is at work here — that something has made the pattern the way it is."

I refer to Borges false recollection of the 1940s because, though the story is published with an afterword dated 1947 it was originally published in 1940, including the afterword.

⁴⁹ Delany, Samuel R. "Critical Methods/Speculative Fiction," *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Essays on the Language of Science Fiction* (Middletown, CT: University Press of New England, 2004), 24.

⁵⁰ Delany, "Critical Methods/Speculative Fiction," 26.

they represent a marvelous and strange world. In this way science fiction is able to indirectly defamiliarize the world of the reader while narrating an unfamiliar world.

One would imagine, then, that something like a technology is at the heart of *Stars*. The protagonist, Marq Dyeth, is a male woman working as an Industrial Diplomat, overseeing the transfer of technology to developing worlds.² The technology that changes life for the characters of the novel is the galactic civilization of some 6,000 planets where human societies have been established along with native societies — the Federation of Habitable Worlds.³ The Federation, with its myriad subparts, is the subject of the verb “to world” in the fictional universe of the novel. It conquers the worlds of others and transforms them. When a planet becomes part of the Federation, it is not only transformed locally; the boundary of the planet is expanded dramatically as it is brought into contact with the 6,000 other planets of the Federation.

As the Federation deploys technologies and installs settlements, it acts as what De Landa calls an “organizational memory” that can be deployed to other worlds and uses technologies (bio- and otherwise) to terraform:

in urban societies, institutions [...] reproduce themselves with variation *individually*. [...] Once the internal operations of an organization have become routinized, the routines themselves constitute a kind of ‘organizational memory.’ For example, when an economic institution (e.g., a bank) opens a branch in a foreign city, it sends a portion of its staff to recruit and train new people; in this way it transmits its internal routines to the new branch.⁵¹

The Federation of Habitable Worlds and its agents create the Federation by recreating federation patterns on new worlds through terraforming.

⁵¹ De Landa, *Nonlinear History*, 146.

In “Tlön,” by contrast, the creation of a world is a project of a team of industrialists, scientists and artists from the North Atlantic which is financed by an elusive Tennessee millionaire named Ezra Buckley. Buckley got the idea for the invention of a planet out of nothing from a previous experiment by a secret society of seventeenth century idealists, among them George Dalgarno and George Berkeley, who invented a country from nothing. “Buckley descreo de Dios, pero quiere demostrar al Dios no existente que los hombres mortales son capaces de concebir un mundo,” [“Buckley did not believe in God, but he wanted to show the nonexistent God that mortal men are capable of conceiving a world,”].⁵² The invention of Tlön begins with the creation of an Encyclopedia. Like Daneri’s writing in “The Earth,” the dictionary takes on no actual referentiality with the world, it merely imagines, as its own justification, a possible but false world. Tlön, although it has no referentiality to the Earth, is completely unified under the single perspective of the dictionary.

By contrast, it would be incorrect to think that the Federation constitutes one world even if it is a single interplanetary territory. It is not only divided among 6,000 planets and moons, it is also divided between two major civil societies — The Family and The Sygn — and interplanetary travel for the vast majority of women is prohibited. The novel oscillates from the utopic and the dystopic, as evinced by the few professionals who do travel to the different planets and moons of the Federation, in spite of the huge expense of interstellar flight. Those who are allowed to travel range from Industrial Diplomats — like the novel’s protagonist Marq Dyeth, who work for the Federation overseeing the transfer and installation of Federation technologies and institutions between planets — to representative “reproductive units” (i.e.,

⁵² Borges, “Tlön,” 104.

families) to the “psychotic killers” employed by one branch of Federation government to exercise harsh control over information transferred among the worlds.⁵³ At the same time that the Federation pursues technological development on its worlds, then, it works by sometimes vicious means to control that development and to limit interplanetary travel to a small elite.

The complexity of Federation terraforming can be seen in the novel’s first section. Dyeth visits the western equatorial band of a planet called Nepiy in the smallest “geosector” in the planets’ Quintian Grouping of geosectors.⁵⁴ She has been tasked with delivering a shipment of molecular samples to the planet that will enable the synthesis of “heteromers” (a neologism from Greek, literally, something composed of other [*heteros*] parts [*meros*]).⁵⁵ The heteromers are a Federation technology intended to curtail the growth of a genetically modified bean plant — also a Federation import — that has grown feral and noxious in the saline-rich environment of terraformed Nepiy. The reason for now working against the spread of this plant in Nepiy is that the mutation of the vine and its unregulated growth puts three of this small geosector’s urban centers, some twelve million human and nonhuman people, at risk of starvation. As Dyeth explains it:

kilometer after kilometer was acrawl with a rugged, rotting vine that decayed into polluting vapor, whipping about the strong in yellow blades — like my home world’s wrs gone wild. The vines had been intended as high-yield bean bushes that would bear seven distinct types of bean. [...] But as the genetic designs had been shipped from world to world, star to star, somewhere along the way a few triplets had fallen into the DNA specifications that, in conjunction with a high-sodium environment, upped the possibility of viable mutation: and this particular bit of Nepiy desert had been all salt marsh before its very superficial

⁵³ Delany, *Stars*, 65, 81, 115, 90.

⁵⁴ The term “geosector” seems to refer, throughout the novel, to a territorial unit akin to but different from a nation-state. Delany, *Stars*, 84.

⁵⁵ Delany, *Stars*, 65.

planoforming [...]. At about the fifth generation, the bushes had suddenly metamorphosed into this lethal and virulent sport.⁵⁶

The situation Dyeth is asked to bear witness to, the situation that threatens the lives of millions of Nepiy, is the contraction of the human settlement on Nepiy. The threat is also a direct result of the human settlement on Nepiy that brought both the genetically modified bean vines and the system of urban complexes to Nepiy in the first place. It is an instance of terraforming-gone-bad. All of this occurs as the organizational routine of the Federation is implanted on and transforms the planet.

Conclusion

The incident on Nepiy very succinctly illustrates the three distinct material fields of terraforming as practiced by the Federation: geomorphic, ecological and technocultural. Geomorphic terraforming (planoforming salt marshes) is the structural shaping of landmasses, in this case to make arable land for agriculture. Ecological terraforming (the importation of vines whose genetics react to the geological makeup of Nepiy) is the import-substitution of flora and fauna, in this case to provide sustenance for the urban settlements of the Federation. Technocultural terraforming is the establishment of technologies of production on the colonized world (heteromer synthesis). As the incident with Nepiy's feral vines demonstrates, it is a highly recursive process and by no means a linear one. Just as colonizers settling the far side of a mountain found different niches and produced different nonmodern worlds, Federation technologies and civilizations will always give rise to novel worlds.

⁵⁶ Delany, *Stars*, 67.

By contrast, Tlön cannot produce any novelty because it precedes toward an ever-greater unity, not a diversity. Tlön is the nightmare of the modern world-system, and though it is only partially exaggerated—ecologically, linguistically, and biologically the emergence of the modern world-system has meant greatly reduced diversity, even if it will not result in singularity. As before we see that Borges' fictions, rooted in the paradox, warn us of the danger of groundless knowledge to disconnect us from empirical reality by capturing our attention. What "Tlön" slyly orients us back toward, to escape our despair, is the world itself and the variety it is bound to produce.

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