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THE IMAGINARY WORLDS OF JOHN KIRTLAND WRIGHT

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this dissertation has been composed by me and is based upon my own work.

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Abstract

In 1946, American geographer John Kirtland Wright (1891–1969) proposed "the study of the world as people conceive of and imagine it"—a field of inquiry he termed geosophy (McGreevy 1987, 48). In espousing geosophy, Wright articulated a novel, humanistic perspective that formed a foundation upon which the subsequent development of perception and behavioural geography was based. From an examination of archival material, this paper traces the evolution and articulation of geosophy—examining the contexts within which it was conceived, presented, and received. Charting its expression through Wright's work, this study reveals the diverse origins of geosophy and the disparate influences that conspired to shape its development. Illuminating Wright's 'imaginary worlds'—his childhood fantasyland *Cravay* and the mountainous *terrae incognitae* of New England which he explored as an adolescent—this text exposes the complex interaction of imagination and perception that, at once, shaped and came to represent Wright's geographical perspective.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> When viewed historically, geographical concepts are seen to have come from an immense variety of sources. (Wright 1965a, xvii).

On the penultimate day of December 1946, John Kirtland Wright, geographer and historian, delivered the Presidential Address at the forty-third annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers. Entitled *Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography*, Wright's presentation examined a medley of themes—landscape perception, the allure of the unknown, the influence of imagination upon the production of geographical knowledge—before concluding by advocating a novel subfield of geographical inquiry: geosophy. Wright envisioned geosophy as "the study of geographical knowledge from any or all points of view", a project exploring the nature and expression of "the geographical ideas, both true and false, of all manner of people—not only geographers, but farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots" (Wright 1947, 12). In proposing geosophy, "the epitome of…[his] conception of geography", Wright revealed to the North American geographical community, "a multifaceted world of aesthetic feeling, imagination, and subjectivity" (Bowden 1970, 399).

Aims

This paper seeks to trace the genesis of geosophy—to illuminate the myriad contexts (social, cultural, intellectual, environmental, and academic) which conspired to mould Wright's geographical perspective. In exploring the diverse sources from which geosophy arose, this study will focus upon, and attempt to explain, Wright's

understanding of the complex relationship linking imagination and geography—revealing the influence of *Cravay*, a mythical country conjured by Wright during childhood, and of the Mahoosuc Mountain Range, Wright's personal *terra incognita*. By documenting a lifetime's varied influences, I endeavour to identify and to explain the factors that encouraged Wright to promote, at a time when it was uncommon to do so, a contextual, humanistic approach to the study of geographical knowledge. I intend, in short, to follow, and to record, the "circuitous journey" along which a humanist geographer is made (Nash 1986, 1).

To Koelsch, *Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography* represents "a kind of *summa* of Wright's geographical ideas: the first place to which one goes, and to which one frequently returns" (Koelsch forthcoming. Emphasis in original). Indeed, it is *Terrae Incognitae* which marks this text's point of departure; from this complex tapestry of ideas—the apotheosis of Wright's historical and geographical enthusiasms—I seek to unravel the diverse threads which characterized Wright's idiosyncratic engagement with geography and to trace their expression through his writings. To place Wright's life in historical context, this paper will follow with a brief biography, identifying the events that appear elemental in fashioning his geographical approach. Furthermore, from an analysis of published and unpublished material, I venture to situate Wright's work within the body of knowledge and tangle of epistemological debates from which it arose—an attempt to "locate theory in social and intellectual circumstance" (Livingstone 1992, 29). The primary focus of this dissertation remains, however, a consideration of the ways in which Wright tackled themes of subjectivity, perception, and imagination, and how these ideas informed, and help to reveal, his imaginary worlds.

Rationale

> I was a corporal in W.W.I and I had a squad for a few months, so I know that a squad consists of 8 persons. I doubt if there are that many Wrightians. (Wright 1968a, 1).

John Kirtland Wright presents an uncommon and intriguing figure for study; although having never held a permanent teaching position, his contribution to geographical thought has been described as "seminal" and his career as "one of the most fruitful and illustrious in the history of American geography" (Gold 1980, 35; Lowenthal 1969, 59). Despite such enthusiastic assessments of Wright's intellectual legacy, awareness of his work among the North American and international geographical communities is limited: "the concept of geosophy remains obscure at best, familiar to a few geographers but unknown to most. Only about half of the dictionaries of the discipline deem the term worthy of inclusion. There is little need for such an entry; the word has probably never been published without an accompanying definition" (Handley 1993, 183).[1] It is both intriguing and significant that Wright and his works have been championed by a small group of devotees, but remain beyond the ken of the majority.

An exploration of the life and work of John Kirtland Wright is not a self-contained, neatly bounded activity; it encourages, perhaps demands, an appreciation of the core themes tackled by American geography during the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, an understanding of Wright's work provides a vantage point from which to witness the birth of "the 'humanist' element in American geography", and to observe "the emergence of behavioural and perception geography as a major

[1] Geosophy did not, for example, survive the transition from the third to the fourth edition of *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Johnston et al. 2000).

research theme" (Buttimer 1990, 23; Guelke 1982, 14).

CHAPTER 2: GEOSOPHY IN CONTEXT

> When the War was over and one could relax despite the Bomb, I addressed the Association of American Geographers on 'Terrae Incognitae: the Place of the Imagination in Geography' (1946). This was Cravay once more, except that it urged geographers to look for their 'Cravays' in the unknownness that still lurks within the lands and seas about them. (Wright 1966a, 6).

Five decades before Wright addressed the Association of American Geographers on *Terrae Incognitae*, his father, John Henry Wright, delivered an evening lecture at the American Philological Association, entitled, with notable similarity, *The Function of the Imagination in Classical Philology*. Although few strands link the addresses, save for their analogous titles, John Henry Wright recounted to his audience an important philological axiom which, I suggest, can be applied to the study of his son's address: "The book was not composed for us; it was composed under certain circumstances, by a certain author, for a certain public" (Wright 1895, xx). The author of *Terrae Incognitae* we know, its audience we can surmise, but the context of its production—much less the inspiration for its proposition—remains obscure. Given this paper's principal focus, the genesis of geosophy, it is the contexts within which geosophy was conceived, presented, and received that require illumination. Rather than address these contexts chronologically, however, this chapter outlines the mid-point of geosophy's career—detailing its presentation to the Association of American Geographers. Working backwards, chapters four, five, and six explore the broad contexts within which geosophy was conceived, whilst chapter seven concludes by examining the context of its reception.

Terrae Incognitae was the forum within which Wright first explored, and expounded, the term geosophy; it marked geosophy's début and was the original

context of presentation. Wright intended geosophy—a compound of "*ge* meaning 'earth' and *sophia* meaning 'knowledge'"—to be to geography, what musicology is to music, and what ornithology is to the study of birds (Wright 1947, 11–12. Emphasis in original). Allied with a second neologism, sophogeography (the geography of knowledge), geosophy was, in part, an attempt to remark geography's academic territory—to claim, for geographers, a legitimate engagement with the study of human knowledge, "a broad domain that lies open for much more intensive geographical investigation than it has hitherto received" (Wright 1947, 11).[2] Geosophy bears the stamp of Wright's interdisciplinary passion and demonstrates his recognition of the universality, and fundamental democracy, of geographical knowledge.[3] As conceived, the purpose of geosophy was twofold: to encourage the exploration of geographical knowledge from an array of disciplinary standpoints (geographical, historical, sociological, political) and to engender an examination of the knowledge possessed both by professional geographers and by lay people (Wright 1947, 1–15). This is, however, a partial assessment of geosophy's remit.

Efforts made to summarize and represent the meaning of geosophy are frequently flawed. The third edition of *The Dictionary of Human Geography* defines geosophy, for example, as: "The study of *colloquial* knowledge from all or any points of view" (Cosgrove 1994, 230. Emphasis added). This is, arguably, incomplete—although Wright envisioned geosophy's sphere of reference extending beyond the core of academic and professional geographical knowledge into the amateur, informal, and

[2] Wright proposed the term sophogeography to describe the geography of knowledge, noting: "The *geography of knowledge* is that aspect of systematic geography which deals potentially with knowledge and beliefs of all kinds, whether religious, scientific, philosophical, aesthetic, practical, or whatever else" (Wright 1947, 11. Emphasis in original).

[3] This point is contested. Lowenthal argues, for example, "the point is not that knowledge is democratic; it's that JKW (like me) felt it essential to understand how people in general interpreted their geographical environment and indeed how they understood (or misunderstood) everything about the world around them" (Lowenthal 2001, 2).

colloquial periphery, the core was not excluded from his project. The precise definition of geosophy was, however, unclear, and subject to debate, during Wright's life. In a letter to Ronald L. Heathcote, Wright recorded, "I had quite an argument with Martyn Bowden last autumn about the meaning of the word 'geosophy.' Martyn, as you know enjoys an argument; he maintained that geosophy was the geographical knowledge in the minds of all kinds of people (Bedouins, Hottentots, geographers) as distinguished from the study of such knowledge. I think I demolished him completely" (Wright 1966c, 1). Given the fluidity of geosophy's meaning it is, perhaps, prudent to allow Wright to speak for himself:

> Geosophy…is the study of geographical knowledge from any or all points of view. To geography what historiography is to history, it deals with the nature and expression of geographical ideas both past and present—with what Whittlesey has called 'man's sense of [terrestrial] space.' Thus it extends far beyond the core area of scientific geography or of geographical knowledge as otherwise systematized by geographers. Taking into account the whole peripheral realm, it covers the geographical ideas, both true and false, of all manner of people—not only geographers, but farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots. (Wright 1947, 12).

Geosophy has an extensive genealogy; it was not, as several of Wright's correspondents noted at the time, a neologism (Dunbar 1996, 118; Wright 1949, 47). An earlier use of geosophy was, for instance, revealed by Gary S. Dunbar who, in a letter to Wright, exclaimed, "Stop the presses! I've just found some earlier geosophies. I'm going through the Patrick Geddes papers now in the National Library of Scotland. P. G. [Patrick Geddes] used the word 'geosophy' in letters dated 7 April 1898 and 12 January 1899. In the latter instance, he says: 'Philosophy wed with Geography and History, bring forth *Geosophy*…'" (Dunbar 1966, 1. Emphasis in original). For Wright, by contrast, it was *humanism* wed with history and geography,

which brought forth geosophy. Indeed, geosophy might be regarded as a *modus vivendi*—an intellectual compromise that allowed Wright to express his historical, geographical, and humanistic concerns as one. The quintessence of his entwined intellectual passions, geosophy was the culmination of several themes expressed not only in his address to the Association of American Geographers, but throughout his professional life. Geosophy must, therefore, be understood in those terms, as both a conclusion to *Terrae Incognitae* and as the product of a half-century's historical, geographical, academic, and professional influences.

Wright's Presidential Address: Imagination, Allure, and Siren Song

To Wright, addressing his audience in December 1946, no region of the earth was truly *terra incognita*; no sector of the globe was shrouded entirely by the veil of geographical ignorance. Yet, Wright argued, *terrae incognitae* unquestionably persist; not, perhaps, as literal realms of mystery, but as symbolizing the limits of personal geographical knowledge: "In the course of field work or on a summer holiday we have all climbed a mountain and gazed over uninhabited and unfamiliar country….Before us has spread, if not a land unknown to the United States Geological Survey, at least a personal *terra incognita* of our own" (Wright 1947, 2). Central to Wright's treatise was his belief that, regardless of geographical competence, all individuals have personal *terrae incognitae*—areas of the earth of which they have no first-hand experience and for which their knowledge and understanding is based upon the reports of "geographically privileged persons" complemented and augmented by their own imaginings (Wright 1947, 2; Shapin 1988, 375). Populating *terrae incognitae* with imaginary concepts—drawn, in part, from real-world experience—

was, for Wright, the *essence* of thinking geographically.[4] Writing later to Preston E. James, Wright noted, "Isn't geographical thought, like most other kinds of thought, a compound of knowledge and belief, knowledge (whether true or false) being a matter of precepts and concepts and belief being a matter of faith" (Wright 1966b, 1).

Developing this argument, Wright advanced his view that *terrae incognitae* are not merely personal concepts, but are culturally specific (Wright 1947, 2). Lands marked *terra incognita* on early European maps, for example, although unknown to Western civilizations, were the ken of their inhabitants: "China lay deep in the heart of *terra incognita* to the Romans, but the Roman Empire was equally lost in 'unknown land' to the Chinese" (Wright 1947, 2). Although tempting to view *terrae incognitae* as a measure of a particular community's geographical knowledge, or, more accurately, an index of geographical ignorance, Wright cautioned against this. Were we to speak of the world as known to Americans in 1945, he advised, we would ignore the infinite variety of geographical knowledge possessed by Americans at that time, and disguise its inherent disparities: "That which is *terrae incognitae* for all practical purposes to an isolated community of hill-billies, is more extensive than that which is *terra incognita* to the members of this Association [the Association of American Geographers]" (Wright 1947, 3). In contemplating *terrae incognitae*, Wright demonstrated the culturally and temporally specific nature of geographical ignorance and, by association, revealed the regional, personal, and complexly variegated character of geographical knowledge. As Wright concluded, "depending on our point of view, there are personal, community, and national *terrae incognitae*: there are the *terrae incognitae* to different cultural traditions and civilizations; and there are

[4] The illumination of *terrae incognitae* with a blend of *a priori* knowledge and imaginative musing is both instinctive and longstanding. As Allen reveals, "Philosophers since Strabo have used geographical lore from the familiar world to create images of unperceived and unexperienced regions" (Allen 1975, 42).

also the *terrae incognitae* to contemporary geographical science" (Wright 1947, 3).

"What distinguishes the true geographer", Wright mooted, "would seem to be the possession of an imagination peculiarly responsive to the stimulus of *terrae incognitae* both in the literal sense and more especially in the figurative sense of all that lies hidden beyond the frontiers of geographical knowledge" (Wright 1947, 4). With characteristic literary allusion, Wright compared the allure of *terrae incognitae* to the Siren song that had, in myth, enticed Ulysses and his crew (Brewer 1993, 1005). *Terrae incognitae*, Wright noted in Homeric style, appeal to and inflame the "geographical libido"—an allure at once personal and irresistible: "Some they [the Sirens] tempt with material rewards: gold, fur, ivory, petroleum, land to settle and exploit. Some they allure with the prospect of scientific discovery. Others they call to adventure or escape" (Wright 1947, 9). The Siren song of *terrae incognitae* was, for Wright, a call to the imagination and it was the imagination, more than any other faculty, which served to mediate the encounter with geographical novelty: "The imagination not only projects itself into *terrae incognitae* and suggests routes for us to follow, but also plays upon those things that we discover and out of them makes imaginative conceptions which we seek to share with others" (Wright 1947, 4). Wright's recognition of such cerebral arbitration—a watermark revealing the personal and subjective quality of geographical knowledge—was central to the geosophical project. The imagination—in Wright's view, elemental to the production of knowledge—moulds the "geographical ideas, both true and false, of all manner of people" (Wright 1947, 12). To document the complexity and peculiarities of geographical knowledge is, by default, to acknowledge the vagaries of human nature and their influence upon the perception and conception of geographical phenomena.

Summary

By exposing social, spatial, and temporal variations in conceptions of *terrae incognitae* (thereby charting a 'geography' of geographical ignorance) Wright revealed the richness and individuality of human knowledge, highlighting its potential for geographical exploration. In proposing geosophy—a framework for geography's engagement with knowledge—Wright outlined an ambitious project: the study of the geographical knowledge possessed by all manner of people—from academics at geography's core, to lay people at its periphery. This wide-ranging remit was, however, more than an argument for comprehensive survey: it reflected Wright's humanistic concern and confirmed that the geographical knowledge in the periphery—that in the minds of "farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots"—was, and is, as interesting, valuable, and illuminating as that in geography's core (Wright 1947, 12).[5] In demonstrating that geographical knowledge, however constituted, involves mental mediation, Wright described the complex interplay of imagination and perception and how, together, they conspire to shape an individual's 'sense of place.'

"Today", as Handley notes, "when human perception of place and environment are common themes in geography, it is perhaps difficult for geographers to comprehend that their discipline once ignored the role of subjectivity in the formation of human patterns" (Handley 1993, 184). Yet, it was into such a context that geosophy débuted. Presented to "a geographical establishment committed to the description and explanation of an objective reality", Wright's desire for an

[5] For Ley and Samuels, "a humanistic geography is concerned to restore and make explicit the relation between knowledge and human interests. All social constructions, be they cities or geographical knowledge, reflect the values of a society" (Ley and Samuels 1978, 21).

engagement with subjectivity, perception, human nature, and imagination was, as a consequence, a call from the periphery (Handley 1993, 185). For Bowden, in this regard, Wright's advocacy of geosophy was "yet another clarion call for research in what is now called geographical perception, and it was made with all the inner fire of one long isolated in a scholarly wilderness" (Bowden 1970, 399). Given the academic context within which geosophy was presented, Wright's aspiration—with which he concluded *Terrae Incognitae*—that "there might one day be established in some of our universities or colleges chairs of geosophy and the geography of knowledge" appears remarkably ambitious and contrary to the prevailing nature of post-war American geography (Wright 1947, 14).

CHAPTER 3: SOURCES AND METHODS

> An archive is a *terra incognita*, a mysterious island, more mysterious than a library. A printed book has (or has had) its duplicates, and you may be sure that others besides yourself must have read it, but the faded lines of an old journal or notebook or letter may well have never before been seen by human eyes other than those of their writers. (Wright 1968c, 44).

Archival Sources and Methodology

The primary sources from which this paper is informed—the John Kirtland Wright Archive, Harvard University's Houghton Library, and the Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College—constitute an "archipelago of mysterious islands" (Wright 1968c, 48). The most fructuous of these *terrae incognitae* is, arguably, the John Kirtland Wright Archive, held at the American Geographical Society in New York City. Access to the archive was secured through brief negotiation with the Society's archivist Peter Lewis, and its director Mary Lynne Bird.[6] Occupying a quartet of four-drawer filing cabinets, the archive comprises letters, diaries, sketches, lecture outlines, and typescripts spanning the period between 1920 and 1968—Wright's working life and retirement. Despite the wealth of information contained within the archive, practical constraints of time and finance limited the period spent perusing its contents. I was, to employ Wright's elegant metaphor, "unable to penetrate more than a few miles inland" (Wright 1968c, 48). The smaller collections of Wrightian material at Harvard University and at Dartmouth College were explored by proxy. Having been provided with a catalogue of the papers deposited at each location, I chose to order reproductions of material that appeared relevant to this

[6] Dunbar reveals that the American Geographical Society's archive resided, at one time, under the "jealous guardianship" of its archivist, rendering access to its contents problematic (Dunbar 2001c, 1).

paper's focus. Examination of the archival sources was complemented and guided by the informal interviewing of Wright's contemporaries, friends, and relatives.[7]

Working initially within the "fusty alcoves of the archive", Wright's papers were scanned briefly for the appearance of keywords (history, subjectivity, geosophy, imagination, and *Cravay*) thereby permitting a wealth of information to be distilled into a manageable fortune (Livingstone 2000, 286).[8] The select quantity of archival material was then subject to a detailed reading, in which key themes were noted and, where possible, correlated to Wright's published work—an attempt to situate text within context. Textual analysis is, however, an interpretative, hermeneutic, and subjective process: "the deciphering of meaning always involves the subtle interplay of what is 'objectively' there in the text with what the reader brings to the text in terms of presuppositions and expectations" (Frodeman 1995, 962). In an effort to mitigate erroneous interpretation of the archival material, I sought to confirm apparently significant themes in Wright's work through consultation with his colleagues and friends. The extent to which this approach rendered the reading of Wright's works any less subjective is, however, uncertain and questionable.

Limitations and Biases

> Historians today are quite frank in recognizing that…they cannot escape interpreting the past in terms of their own experience in the present. (Wright 1938a, 3).

Exploring Wright's life and work requires the negotiation of several intellectual and historiographic obstacles: hagiography, presentism, and internalism. That these pitfalls

[7] The views of Wright's acquaintances were canvassed by letter, telephone, and electronic mail.
[8] It is possible, indeed probable, that a number of significant documents were overlooked in the process of scanning and selection.

are awkward to avoid is manifest in "the vast bulk of writing on the history of geographical knowledge with its emphasis on cumulative progress, great-name history and the cataloguing of people and publications" (Livingstone 1995, 420–421). Hagiography—the propensity to treat the subject of a biographical investigation with undue reverence—is an impediment I aim to circumvent. Given this paper's reliance upon the views and reminiscences (predominantly uncritical and complimentary) of Wright's contemporaries, this bias might not, however, be moderated readily. Presentism, the tendency to view historical events as though through a lens fashioned by contemporary values and concepts, appears similarly ineluctable.[9] Clearly, the contexts within which this paper was written have influenced the way in which Wright's story has been described and assessed—a limitation not straightforwardly mitigated.

Given Wright's interdisciplinary enthusiasm (he considered himself to be a human honeybee, sampling the intellectual blooms of disparate disciplines) internalism—the failure to appreciate the wider contexts of which geographical knowledge is a product—would prove an unconscionable failing.[10] Yet, as Livingstone suggests, geography's histories have, typically, "been written by geographers, about geographers, for still other geographers" and overlook the 'situated messiness' of knowledge—ignoring its rich, wide-ranging, and complex origins (Livingstone 1992, 4). It is apparent, therefore, that to elude internalism, Wright's geographical passions and non-geographical interests must be scrutinized with equal intensity and similar vigour; his intellectual hinterland must be explored as thoroughly as his scholarly core.

[9] For Livingstone, "presentism of one sort or another is unavoidable" (1990, 359).
[10] Wright considered publishing an autobiography, of sorts, "under some such title as 'Reminiscences of a Geographical Honey Bee,' or possibly 'Memories of a Mis-spent Life'" (Wright 1963c, 1).

CHAPTER 4: JOHN KIRTLAND WRIGHT IN CONTEXT

> I spent Sunday reading and annotating a term paper which a graduate student…wrote about me in 1959; it is entitled "Where History and Geography Meet: The contribution of John K. Wright to American Geography"!!! It makes me feel somewhat as though I were reading my obituary in the *Geographical Review*. (Wright 1963b, 1).

A New England Childhood

Wright was born into the scholarly and literary milieux of Cambridge, Massachusetts on 30 November 1891. Wright's familial environment mirrored, in microcosm, that of Cambridge: his father John Henry Wright (1852–1908), was Professor of Greek and was Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University, and his mother Mary (née Tappan) Wright (1851–1916), was author of several novels and a collection of short stories.[11] The Wright family frequently entertained New England's intellectual elite—hosting academics, students, and literati at both their Cambridge home and New Hampshire summer retreat.[12] For Kahn, "The Wright household…was a rather academic place, with Harvard professors and their wives making dignified entrances and exits and an occasional classics student waiting nervously in the parlour to plead that an examination mark be favourably adjusted" (Kahn 1941, 22). Wright's childhood was spent, then, within a community in which academic attainment and literary accomplishment were not merely prized and encouraged, they were expected

[11] Mary Wright's novels—*Aliens*, *The Test*, *The Tower*, and *The Charioteers*—centred upon an imaginary English university town named Greater Dulwich (Wright 1968c, 52; Tahk 1999).

[12] It was at such a soirée that Wright, then aged nine, first met a geographer. He recalled the experience thus: "My first encounter with a…geographer was in the warmth of my mother's drawing room….It should have been on the tundras or steppes of the Russian Empire, for he was Prince Peter Alexeivich Kropotkin, the anarchist. All I remember is a benevolent old gentleman with a beard. My mother's diary records…that the Prince 'talked geography' with the geologist Dr. Reginald A. Daly; and that the dinner was delightful" (Wright 1963e, 2).

(Koelsch forthcoming).[13]

Wright's long-standing interest in history and geography was stimulated first, at an improbably early age, by the Spanish-American War of 1898. Rooted in Cuba's attempt to attain independence from Spain, its colonial ruler, the conflict provided a platform upon which the United States exercised its imperial ambition. American intervention enjoyed public assent. Support for action was cemented, indeed encouraged, by the *New York World* and *New York Journal* who reported the brutal treatment levied on Cubans by the Spanish military (McSherry 1998; Katz 1999). The war lasted less than four months, but changed radically the United States' position within the international community. The peace settlement established Cuba's sovereignty and ceded control of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States, who, at once, became a significant colonial power (Trask 1998). The influence of the Spanish-American War upon the United States was dramatic.[14] Its impact upon Wright was no less so: "The war enlarged the historical and geographical outlook of the American nation—and also mine" (Wright 1966a, 1). The conflict presented Wright, I suggest, with an exemplar of the complex interaction of history and geography, illustrating their ability to influence the political agenda and to inspire national sentiment.

[13] As Lowenthal confirms, "By both ancestry and environment Wright came naturally to scholarship" (Lowenthal 1969, 598).

[14] The war altered, fundamentally, the relationship between professional geography and the state; there was, in the years following 1898, a "tacit assumption—by professionals and amateurs alike—that geographical knowledge was linked to the health of the nation itself" (Schulten 2001, 50–51). During the post-war period, the National Geographic Magazine and Bulletin of the American Geographical Society (important providers of geographical information to America's lay and academic communities) increased, markedly, coverage of the United States' territorial acquisitions (Wright 1952, 120; Schulten 2001, 52). Indeed, between 1898 and 1905 the National Geographic Magazine printed fifty-two, often patriotic and partisan, articles devoted to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines—demonstrating, vividly, the claim that "geographical knowledge was a tool for nationalism" (Schulten 2001, 51).

Cravay

> April 27. Wed. Rainy, Northeast wind. A.M. School. Had a fight with Graham Carey at recess. Neither of us won for recess was over. Went up to Sparks St. for a fire. P.M. Came home. Drew a map all afternoon. (Wright 1904).

It was against a backdrop of war that Wright chose to adopt and to continue a family tradition by envisioning and populating an imaginary country.[15] Wright's *Cravay* was an island nation with a varied topography, located on a planet orbiting Sirius, the Dog Star (Wright 1966a, 2). *Cravay* provided Wright with a focus for his historical and geographical interests. He mapped the island "at varying scales according to the most advanced cartographical methods of the time; road and rail networks were developed; towns and villages grew and declined; and political boundaries were continually changing" (Bowden 1970, 395).[16] The maps of *Cravay* were complemented by a detailed historical account, written in 1903, which revealed the nation's dynamic and bloody history: "It began in medieval times…with a period of geographical discovery and exploration which lasted for about a decade and was punctuated and followed by many wars, including one of liberation from the Mother Country" (Wright 1966a, 1–2). It does not require too great a leap of faith to conclude that *Cravay's* war of independence might have been inspired by Cuba's struggle for independence.

Cravay was a canvas upon which Wright's creative instincts were expressed. Fuelled by real-world influences, Wright distilled in *Cravay* the facets of reality that piqued his imagination: exploration, landscape, and war. Wright, in essence, attempted to comprehend the real world by projecting it onto an imagined fantasy—his

[15] Wright's father, elder brother, and son all conceived imaginary countries—mythical states that were unique as fingerprints, and reflected each man's personality and interests (Wright 2001). See Chapter 5.
[16] Despite the exotic nature of *Cravay*, Wright employed the cartographic conventions used by the United States Geological Survey (Kahn 1941, 22).

perception of reality was mediated by a fantastic conceit.[17] Wright's distinctive *modus operandi* is, perhaps, best described by Lowenthal who suggests, "The lineaments of the world we live in are both seen and shaped in accordance, or by contrast, with images we hold of other worlds—better worlds, past worlds, future worlds" (Lowenthal 1975, 3).

William Morris Davis

> My first-hand knowledge of Davis was almost exclusively that gained while I was a child, and while a child's-view of a great scientist may reveal things a man's-eye doesn't, it is, after all, rather narrow. (Wright 1962, 1).

At the age of ten, Wright became acquainted with his father's friend, colleague, and Cambridge neighbour, William Morris Davis. Davis, "the greatest…stimulus in geography during the first half of the twentieth century", had recently been appointed Sturgis Hooper Professor of Geology at Harvard and was enjoying enthusiastic support—among the British and North American geographical communities—for his elaboration on the cycle of erosion (Beckinsale 1976, 466; Gregory 2000). It would be difficult to conceive, therefore, a figure more influential in shaping Wright's geographical outlook. Yet it is unwise to venture that the relationship shared by Davis and Wright was simply that of mentor-protégé. Unlike Douglas W. Johnson, an earlier Davisian disciple (who earned from his colleagues the warranted, although uncomplimentary, moniker: "Me too, Davis") Wright appears to have been less willing to accept Davis's ideas and to have been disinclined to mould himself in the

[17] Recognition of such mental mediation is longstanding: "Man is informed of the nature and content of his world", wrote Greek geographer Strabo, by "perception and experience alike" (Allen 1975, 41).

geomorphologist's image (Wright 1961, 1).[18] Wright did, however, incorporate Davis into *Cravay*—appointing him, among other esteemed positions, King of *Spineall*, Duke of *Calondit*, Marquis of *Simfrau*, Earl of *Celecticus*, Prime Minister, and Chief Geologer (Wright 1950). In his new role, Davis was presented topographic maps of *Cravay*, which, conscious of his position as friend and teacher, he both praised and criticized: "Davis…was inclined to find fault with the physiography, as unconvincing" (Wright 1950, 179). Davis's constructive criticism, which guided Wright's imaginative and geographical instinct, was continuous if intermittent, until Davis's death in February 1934. The influence of Davis upon Wright remains difficult to define, its complicated and elusive nature perhaps best captured by Wright's reminiscence, "As far as geography and I were concerned he [Davis] was like a magnet, he both repelled and attracted" (Wright 1961, 1).

Academia and War: The Geographical and Historical Fire

At the age of fourteen, Wright's interest in *Cravay* began to wane. Inspired, in part, by the destruction of one of his principal maps by a disgruntled playmate, Wright chose to shift his focus from the imaginary to the real world—a transition from the extraterrestrial to the merely terrestrial (Kahn 1941, 22–23). *Cravay's* demise was secured in 1906, when Wright was withdrawn from his preparatory school, Browne and Nichols, to accompany his parents on a fifteen-month sojourn through Europe—a

[18] Wright challenged, for example, Davis's assertion that the Cumberland Mountains form a plateau, revealing later, "This troubled me at the age of 12 (at least it makes a good story that it did)" (Wright 1967a, 1).

trip that would re-ignite his geographical fire (Koelsch forthcoming).[19]

Following graduation from Brown and Nichols, Wright, geographical fire undimmed, entered Harvard University a freshman in 1909. In the absence of a single unified course in geography, Wright was compelled to satisfy his geographical appetite by proxy, taking courses in "geology, physiography, meteorology, and climatology" (Wright 1966a, 2). Wright received instruction in physiography from Douglas W. Johnson and was, consequently, imparted Davisian geomorphology "100% proof"—a training that "inculcated a habit of thinking graphically rather than verbally" (Wright 1962, 1).[20] Johnson's influence continued throughout Wright's undergraduate studies. Indeed, Wright accompanied Johnson, as rodman on the 1911 Shaler Memorial Expedition, surveying the eastern seaboard of the United States between Florida and New Hampshire (Wright, 1966). Given these collective experiences it is, perhaps, unsurprising that Wright "nearly became a geomorphologist" (Wright 1966a, 2). As Bowden suggests, however, "close contact with the stodgy and humourless Johnson convinced Wright…of what he had felt for a year or more, that there was little of abiding interest and no lifetime challenge in physical geography as practised at Harvard"(Bowden 1970, 395). Declining politely the academic path prescribed by Johnson and Robert DeCourcy Ward—"unimaginative plodders, the lot of them"—Wright chose, when commencing his master's degree in 1912, to focus attention upon "man" rather than "nature-minus-

[19] Exposed to a variety of novel landscape formations—among them the Devon and Cornwall coast and the French Alps—Wright produced sketches, and composed descriptions, which he sent to William Morris Davis. Davis, impressed particularly by Wright's sketch and account of a double tombolo (a coastal spit), petitioned him to submit an article to the *Journal of Geography*, stating, "The example is such a beauty that it ought to become known as a standard type of that sort of thing" (Lowenthal 1969, 602; Wright 1950, 180). Wright, unmoved, declined Davis's invitation, explaining later, "I was fifteen, and there were things to do in Greece that interested me more than writing for the *Journal of Geography*" (Wright 1950, 180).

[20] Wright recalls his tutelage under Johnson thus: "I got the essence, if not the quintessence, of many of Davis' most distinctive ideas" (Wright 1963e, 3).

man" (Koelsch 2001a, 1; Wright 1966 a, 2).[21]

Having begun his master's degree an enthusiastic devotee of Ellen Churchill Semple's *Influences of Geographic Environment*, Wright experienced a Saul-like conversion. Under the tutelage of "Uncle Eph" (Ephraim Emerton, Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History) Wright became increasingly disenchanted by the dominance of environmental determinism at Harvard, and by the "intellectual dryness and lack of imagination on the part of geographers and geologists" to whom he had been exposed (Wright 1967a, 1; Holt-Jensen 1999, 44).[22] Eschewing graduate studies in physical geography, Wright chose, instead, to "go into history"—a decision which he later attributed to "mild rebellion" (Wright 1966a, 2; Wright 1967b, 1). Wright's geographical fire, although dimmed, smouldered throughout his graduate studies. Where possible, Wright chose to incorporate geographical themes in his term papers, evident in *Herodotus as a Geographer*, *Ptolemy as a Geographer*, and *Eratosthenes as a Geographer* (Wright 1963a, 1).

Gaining his master's degree in 1914, Wright enlisted in the Maine Volunteer Militia, beginning four years' military service (Wright 1918, 89). Joining the National Army's 76th Infantry Division, Wright was posted to central France in July 1918. Based initially at Saint Amand, Wright was charged with producing military maps, a "delightful" task that suited his love of cartography (Kahn 1941, 23). Shortly thereafter, Wright was transferred to the Army's Historical Section and began work at General Headquarters in Chaumont as chief archivist (Koelsch forthcoming). Having so recently studied history, Wright was now responsible for its production. His duties

[21] Ward lectured Wright in climatology (Bowden 1970, 395).
[22] Professor Emerton wrote to Wright in 1912, expressing his dissatisfaction with Semple's *Influences*: "The trouble with the book is that, when all is said and done, it gives you only a peek at the real problem of History—i.e. to understand the actions and motives of organized human life" (Wright 1966a, 195).

included the collection and collation of each battalion's war diary and the documentation of infantry operations and military engagements (Kahn 1950, 23; Koelsch forthcoming).[23] Rather than constituting a traumatic experience, the First World War provided Wright with a novel perspective on, and with practical experience of, the acquisition and dissemination of geographical knowledge, and the documentation of history.

Returning to Harvard in 1919 to begin studies towards a Doctor of Philosophy degree, Wright, "floundering around with first one and then another idea for a thesis subject", was "virtually ordered" by Charles H. Haskins, Professor of History, to focus his attention upon the geographical lore of Western Europe during the Middle Ages (Wright 1963a, 1).[24] This topic allowed Wright to reoccupy his favoured position: the intellectually stimulating borderland between geography and history. Having secured a travelling fellowship, Wright returned to Europe, spending a year researching his thesis in London, and at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (Bowden 1970, 395). Whilst in Paris, Wright attended lectures at the Sorbonne delivered by leading exponents of *la tradition vidalienne*: Jean Brunhes, Albert Demangeon, Lucien Gallois, and Emmanuel de Martonne (Wright 1966a, 4; Koelsch forthcoming).[25] The extent to which Wright's conception of geography was mediated by his encounter with the French School is unclear, and remains contested. Dunbar contends that "I don't think that he [Wright] needed any direct exposure to French geographers in order to develop his own ideas about human geography", but

[23] In his 1918 diary, Wright notes the potential for bias engendered by frequently incomplete and, on occasion, fabricated war diaries.

[24] Wright's doctoral thesis was published by the American Geographical Society as *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades* (Wright 1925; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1965. Introduction by Clarence J. Glacken).

[25] The French School, established during the 1890s in response to the work of Paul Vidal de la Blache, rejected the doctrine of environmental determinism, believing it to be futile to set "humanity's natural surroundings in opposition to its social milieu and of regarding one as dominating the other" (Buttimer 1971; Holt-Jensen 1999, 46).

Heathcote notes that "I am sure his [Wright's] exposure to the French humanists was an influence" (Dunbar 2001a, 1; Heathcote 2001, 1). Wright was, however, clearly imbued with the French School's focus upon geographical regions. As Bowden recalls, Wright "wanted to do a regional geography of his beloved New England 'à la Vidal de la Blache, Demangeon, etc.,' and proposed it to Bowman [director of the American Geographical Society], who didn't like the idea and urged him instead '…to get a lot of people to write on differing aspects and problems of New England'" (Bowden 1970, 397). The resulting volume, *New England's Prospect: 1933*, a collaboration of twenty-seven authors, was, despite Wright's chapters on *Regions and Landscapes of New England* and *The Changing Geography of New England*, economic and political rather than regional in character.

The American Geographical Society

Returning from Europe in 1920, Wright was summoned by Isaiah Bowman, director of the American Geographical Society, and was offered, and accepted, the post of Society Librarian—"the one position in the country for which my impractical preparation and tastes really fitted me" (Kahn 1941, 23).[26] Having intended during the past eight years to teach history upon graduation, Wright had instead crossed, once more, the indistinct border separating his historical and geographical interests; beginning a thirty-six year career as a professional geographer (Wright 1966a, 4; Lowenthal 1969, 598). Figure 1, a photograph taken during the early 1920s, depicts Isaiah Bowman and the newly appointed Wright.

[26] Having been spurred by Charles H. Haskins, William Morris David wrote a letter of recommendation to Isaiah Bowman, detailing Wright's qualities and potential. For Martin, Davis's letter "began Wright's career at the American Geographical Society" (Martin 2002).

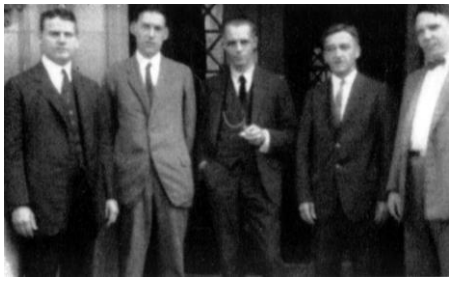


Figure 1. Staff at the American Geographical Society, c. 1923. From left to right: Isaiah Bowman, John K. Wright, Marcel Aurousseau, W. L. G. Joerg, and Raye R. Platt (Wright 1952, plate XXV).

Within the society, "a compact stone building near the opposite end of Manhattan from Wall Street—opposite in more than a topographic sense", Wright was provided considerable scope to pursue his historical interests (Wright 1938b, 898).[27] Wright recalls it thus: "for though I was titularly a librarian, my work was for the most part that of an editor and writer, and I was often called upon, and could often decide for myself, to perform tasks of a historical nature" (Wright 1966a, 4). To suggest that Wright's period at the American Geographical Society was prolific risks understatement. Before retiring in 1956, Wright had produced a wealth of books, articles, reviews, and record items (more than three hundred) for the Society's journal: the *Geographical Review* (Wright 1963c; Koelsch forthcoming).[28] Spanning a diverse spectrum, Wright's work included writings on "Arabia and Islam, past and present; geographical bibliographies; contemporary cartography; geographical distribution; contemporary exploration; 'geosophy,' the nature of geographical ideas among different peoples; human nature in geography; historical geography and geographical history; history of geographical ideas, exploration, and cartography; mountains and mountaineering; New England; place names and geographical terminology; quantities; geographical societies; and travel" (Lowenthal 1969, 600–601). It was in

[27] Ironically, the headquarters of the American Geographical Society are now on Wall Street.
[28] A comprehensive listing of Wright's publications is included in *Geographies of the Mind* (Lowenthal and Bowden 1975, 225-256).

this dizzying meld of the historical and the geographical that Wright's intellectual passions—imagination, subjectivity, and human nature—were realized. These writings were, at once, an expression of, and a precursor to, geosophy.

During his career at the American Geographical Society, Wright served as Librarian (1920–1937), Research Editor (1937–1938), Director (1938–1949), and finally Research Associate (1949–1956) (Koelsch forthcoming; Bowden 1970). Although dominated by taxing administrative and financial burdens, Wright's tenure as Society director was particularly productive. During the 1940s, Wright produced a series of papers (all but the first, initially addressed to academic associations)—*Map Makers are Human* (1942), *Where History and Geography Meet* (1943), *Human Nature in Science* (1944), and *Terrae Incognitae* (1947)—papers which explored and confirmed his conception of geography as "a field combining the literary and the imaginative" (Bowden 1970, 399). Explaining this flurry of activity, Wright declared later, "It is one of the minor laws of human nature that in educational and research institutions the less time one has to study and think owing to the administrative responsibilities, the greater the quantity of public pontification one is tempted and obliged to engage in" (Wright 1966a, 5).

Although occupying a string of influential positions within professional geography—including, ultimately, presidency of the Association of American Geographers—Wright enjoyed relatively little authority within academia.[29] As Bowden has suggested, Wright's "position at the A.G.S., if anything, protected him too well from the pressures for relevance exerted by academic geography" (Bowden 1970, 401). Wright was, I suggest, in equal measure secluded from, and keen to avoid,

[29] For Koelsch, "Wright was protected and even 'cocooned' by the AGS. Since there he had no students and hence no 'genealogy,' this also served to limit the influence of his ideas" (Koelsch 2001a, 3).

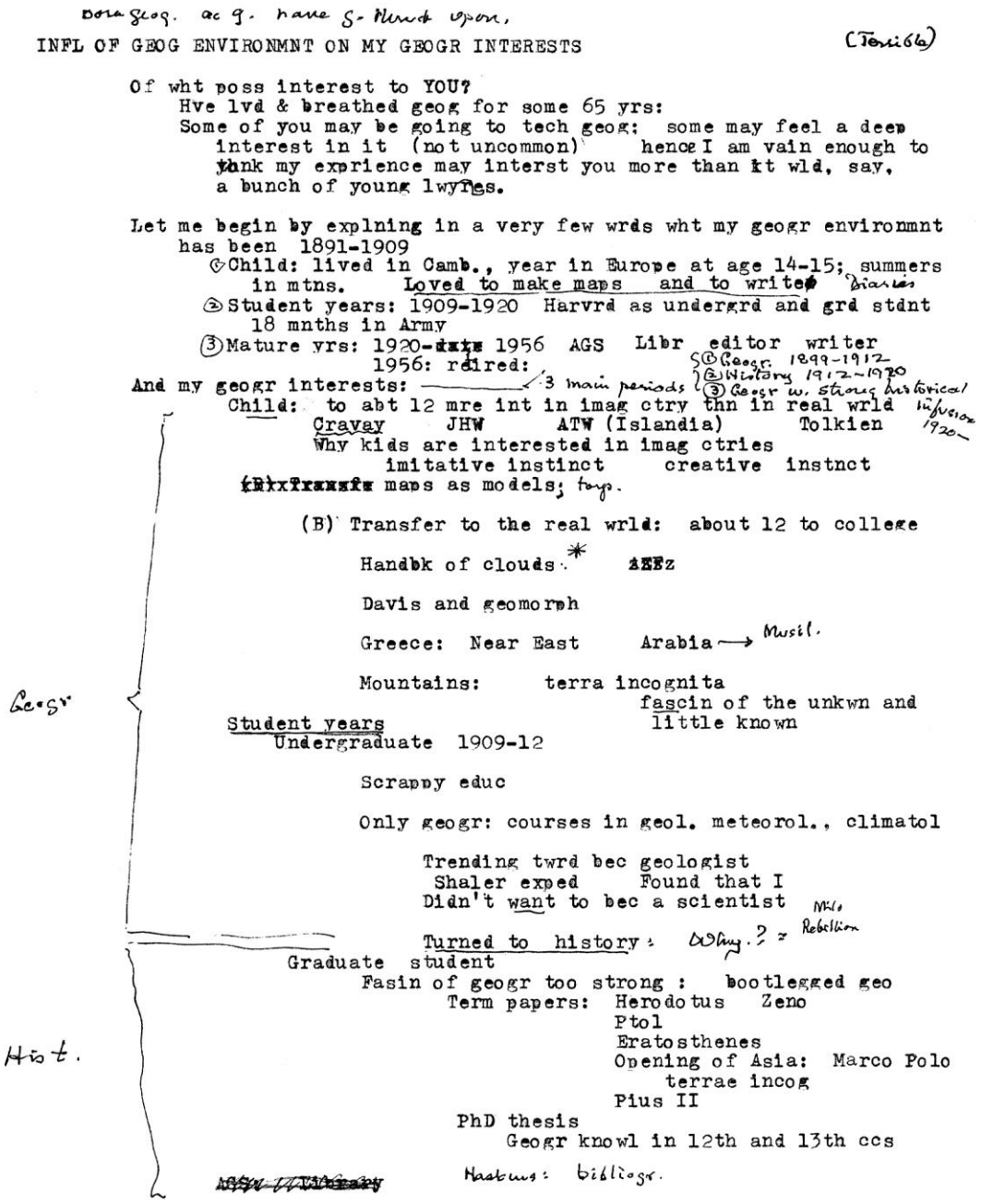
aspects of mainstream geography. His aversion to the quantitative approach proposed by Edward A. Ackerman in *Geography as a Fundamental Research Discipline* (1958) was, for example, particularly vociferous: "The words 'GEOGRAPHY AS A FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH DISCIPLINE' give me the creeps. The point…is there are two schools of thought about the nature of geography, one that it should be a…[fundamental research discipline], unified in purpose and dull as dishwater; the other, that it should roam free as the honeybees over worldwide gardens of delight…. The Fundamentals (or Disciplinarians) look upon the honeybees as subversive. They look with pedagogical horror upon any geographer who would waste his life in writing 50 articles and 345 record items and book reviews on such diverse topics as I have been guilty of writing about" (Wright 1963c, 1. Capitalization in original).

A New England Retirement

Retiring to Lyme, New Hampshire in 1956, Wright revisited his childhood passions—hillwalking and local history—and, served by the library of near-by Dartmouth College, continued to explore and to develop his geographical ideas (Sommer 2002; Koelsch forthcoming). Yet, as Bowden reveals, "the tranquillity and tender companionship of Lyme were the setting for some sad regrets that he [Wright] had not followed the Siren's call to be a novelist, artist, or a teacher" (Bowden 1970, 401).[30] Writing to a friend, Wright commented, "I envy you having been a teacher. Sometimes I think that I have missed a lot by not having adhered to my plan when I

[30] In 1959, Wright suffered a nervous breakdown—an uncharacteristic funk engendered, perhaps, by the stress incurred during his tenure as Director of the American Geographical Society (Martin 2002). Relaying the experience to a friend, Wright noted, "As you doubtless know I had a sort of nervous breakdown which kept me hospitalized from August to March, but I seem to have recovered completely and am feeling so well and cheerful, now, that I find it difficult to understand how I could have indulged in such a thing" (Wright 1960, 1).

first went to the AGS of staying there two or three years then going back into college teaching. But believe it or not, I was a shy timid soul in those days and meeting classes terrified me." (Wright 1964b, 1). Although never achieving his literary aspiration, retirement provided Wright ample time to exercise his artistic ambitions (sketching and painting the New England landscape) and to re-enter academia.


Doa Geog. ac g. have g- Hand upon,

INFL OF GEOG ENVIRONMNT ON MY GEOGR INTERESTS (Tenn 64)

Of wht poss interest to YOU?
Hve lvd & breathed geog for some 65 yrs:
Some of you may be going to tech geog: some may feel a deep interest in it (not uncommon) hence I am vain enough to think my exprience may interst you more than it wld, say, a bunch of young lwyrs.

Let me begin by explning in a very few wrds wht my geogr environmnt has been 1891-1909
① Child: lived in Camb., year in Europe at age 14-15; summers in mtns. Loved to make maps and to write diaries
② Student years: 1909-1920 Harvrd as undergrd and grd stdnt 18 mnths in Army
③ Mature yrs: 1920-1956 AGS Libr editor writer
1956: retired:

And my geogr interests: 3 main periods ① Geogr 1899-1912 ② History 1912-1920 ③ Geogr w. strong historical infusion 1920-

Child: to abt 12 mre int in imag ctry thn in real wrld
Crayay JHW ATW (Islandia) Tolkien
Why kids are interested in imag ctries
imitative instinct creative instnct
maps as models; toys.

(B) Transfer to the real wrld: about 12 to college

Handbk of clouds *

Davis and geomorph

Greece: Near East Arabia → Musil.

Mountains: terra incognita
fascin of the unkwn and little known

Geogr

Student years
Undergraduate 1909-12

Scrappy educ

Only geogr: courses in geol. meteorol., climatol

Trending twrd bec geologist
Shaler exped Found that I
Didn't want to bec a scientist

Turned to history: Dday. ? = Rebellion

Graduate student
Fasin of geogr too strong : bootlegged geo
Term papers: Herodotus Zeno
Ptol
Eratosthenes
Opening of Asia: Marco Polo
terrae incog
Pius II

PhD thesis
Geogr knowl in 12th and 13th ccs

Hist.

Hasbrus: bibliogr.

Figure 2. Outline of lecture delivered to Rhode Island College, 1967 (Wright 1967b).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Wright presented a series of talks at academic associations and community groups on a variety of geographical topics.[31] In preparing these lectures, Wright reappraised the factors that had engendered his binary interest in geography and history. Indeed, the notes for a lecture delivered at Rhode Island College, illustrated in figure 2, provide a valuable insight into Wright's intellectual genealogy.

In 1968, Wright was invited to present a semester-long seminar in the history of geography at Louisiana State University—"the only such course that Wright ever taught" (Dunbar, 2001b). Wright's enjoyment at re-entering academia was, however, tempered by his suspicion of the quantitative revolution and its influence, at that time, upon the nature and practise of both physical and human geography (Livingstone 1992, 16).[32] Wright regarded his geographical perspective as incompatible with a purely quantitative approach, stating, "The essence of my philosophy…is that geography is something like history. It is vast and amorphous, straddling both science and non-science. Much of it is not and should not be science. This, of course, is heresy among those geographers who creed it 'There is no God but Science and Quantification is his Prophet'…. If the scientists want to believe that quantification is their prophet, that's all right by me, but I ha'e me doots" (Wright 1964a, 1). Whether by fate or design Wright appears, once more, to have been out-of-step with what might be regarded to have been American geography's mainstream—an asynchrony Wright viewed as a challenge, rather than a hindrance: "the main thing I am trying to get across to my class of graduate students here [at Louisiana State University]

[31] Although generally well tailored to their audiences, Wright's address to the members of the Merryall Community Centre (Connecticut)—*Theogeography, Geotheology, and All That*—had a rather soporific effect. Wright concluded never again to present the same topic to a similar audience (Wright 1963c, 1).
[32] It is perhaps ironic that Wright, "an early advocate of the adoption of quantitative statistical techniques in geographic study", viewed with suspicion the application of similar methods to a wider array of geographical phenomena (Corbett 2002, 1).

is…[my] philosophy regarding geography. That it is needed is indicated by the argument of one of the students that the Lewis and Clark Expedition's history and its influence could best be studied by feeding it all into computers. Gawd! Maybe I misunderstood him, but I don't think so" (Wright 1968b, 1).[33] Wright maintained a lively correspondence with fellow geographers and continued to pursue his geographical and historical interests until his death in Hanover, New Hampshire on 24 March 1969.

Summary

An exploration of Wright's life reveals the continual interplay of his historical and geographical passions. Wright pursued first one enthusiasm, then the other. Preferring to inhabit the borderlands between history and geography, Wright maintained a literal and figurative distance from mainstream geography.[34] Residing neither *within* academic geography, nor *outwith* professional geography, he occupied an uncertain and contested 'third space'—a space that was for Wright, however, *terra cognita*.[35] Whilst the influence of Wright's entwined historical perspective and geographical instinct is apparent in his recognition of the spatially and temporally specific nature of

[33] Lively exchange between Wright and his students (nine men and one woman) was engendered by a suite of challenging questions—many of which Wright had pondered during his professional life: "Is geography a science? If not, should it be? What is science? Is the history of geography geography? or history? or both? Does it matter? Should geography ever be unscientific? non-scientific? Is that which is unscientific necessarily untruthful? Is that which is non-scientific necessarily untruthful? Is poetry less truthful than science? Is there geography in poetry? poetry in geography? What does 'British geography' mean? What does 'animal geography' mean? What does 'intellectual historian' mean?" (Wright 1968d, 1).

[34] Intriguingly, although unsurprisingly, an extract from Wright's *Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography* is quoted among the guiding principles of Geographing.com—an on-line journal that seeks "submissions by those interested in…ideals…which are not currently supported by the general geographic establishment" (Guiding principles 2001, 1).

[35] Wright's 'third space', although marginal, was professionally and geographically privileged. It was not, therefore, the 'third space' recognised by Soja (1996), et al.

geographical knowledge, and in his 1926 call for a history of American academic geography (a discipline then barely beyond its teenage years), the origins of Wright's humanistic concerns are less obvious. Although it is possible to identify humanistic themes in Wright's work—"landscape iconography, mental maps, environmental perception, and everyday geographies"—the genesis of these geographical inquiries cannot easily be traced (Adams et al. 2001, xv). An answer lies, I suggest, in Wright's espousal of *terrae incognitae*—realms of geographical ignorance, filled only by the imagination (Wright 1947; Adams 2001, 186). How better to comprehend such spaces—the geographies of the mind—than by exploring human nature?

CHAPTER 5: TERRAE INCOGNITAE—LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE

> The most fascinating *terrae incognitae* of all are those that lie within the minds and hearts of men. (Wright 1947, 15).

Between the age of nine and fourteen, Wright occupied two distinct worlds: the reality of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the fantasy of *Cravay*.[36] During this period, Wright's attention was focused upon, to the exclusion of much else, his imaginary world; although Wright resided in Cambridge, he inhabited *Cravay*. Despite its undoubted importance during Wright's formative years, little physical trace of *Cravay* survives—its maps and historical accounts either lost or discarded (Toynbee 2002; McPherson 2002). *Cravay*, a potentially fruitful *terra incognita*, can only, therefore, be explored partially and by proxy.

Situating *Cravay*

> The view of the island as Eden, evoking nostalgia for lost innocence, has an enduring place in the Western mind. (Tuan 1967, 14).

In his 1966 volume *Human Nature in Geography*, Wright—pondering the genesis of *Cravay*—concluded, "I think…that it was due principally to spontaneous combustion, though the flames, once ignited, were fanned by map study and history at school" (Wright 1966a, 2). It is possible, however, that Wright's imaginative fire was sparked by an external source: *Islandia*, the imaginary realm of his elder brother Austin (1883–1931). Detailing the development of *Islandia*, Austin Wright's daughter Sylvia,

[36] The precise ages at which Wright adopted and then discarded *Cravay* are not documented. It is apparent, however, that Wright's five-year interest in *Cravay* declined when he accompanied his parents to Greece in 1906 (Kahn 1941, 23).

noted, "My father originated Islandia as 'my island,' when he was a child….Occasionally he shut my uncle, who was younger, out of Islandia, and my uncle created his own world, Cravay" (Wright 1970, ix). Wright's recollection of events challenges this account: "Maybe his [Austin's] 'island,' as he called his country in his boyhood, inspired my fantasy but I doubt it, for I seem to recollect having been surprised when I first learned that he had such a country after mine had been a going concern for some time" (Wright 1963d, 693).

The genesis of *Cravay* is not, it would appear, readily traced. It is, perhaps, imprudent to seek a single point of inspiration; *Cravay* was, arguably, the product of a myriad influences: summers in the Maine mountains, conversations with William Morris Davis, meal-time family discussions, and stories heard of his paternal grandfather's missionary work in Persia (Wright 1968c). After the death of their father in 1908, John and Austin discovered that he too had, during adolescence, envisioned and mapped an imaginary country (Wright 1970, ix). John Henry's Wright's unnamed island, illustrated in figure 3, comprised five provinces: Horace, Ruskin, Milton, Bacon, and Calvin, each of which indicate, perhaps, the classical, artistic, literary, and scientific interests of the Wright family. The development of *Cravay* appears more remarkable given Wright's ignorance of the fantastical worlds inhabited by his father and brother.

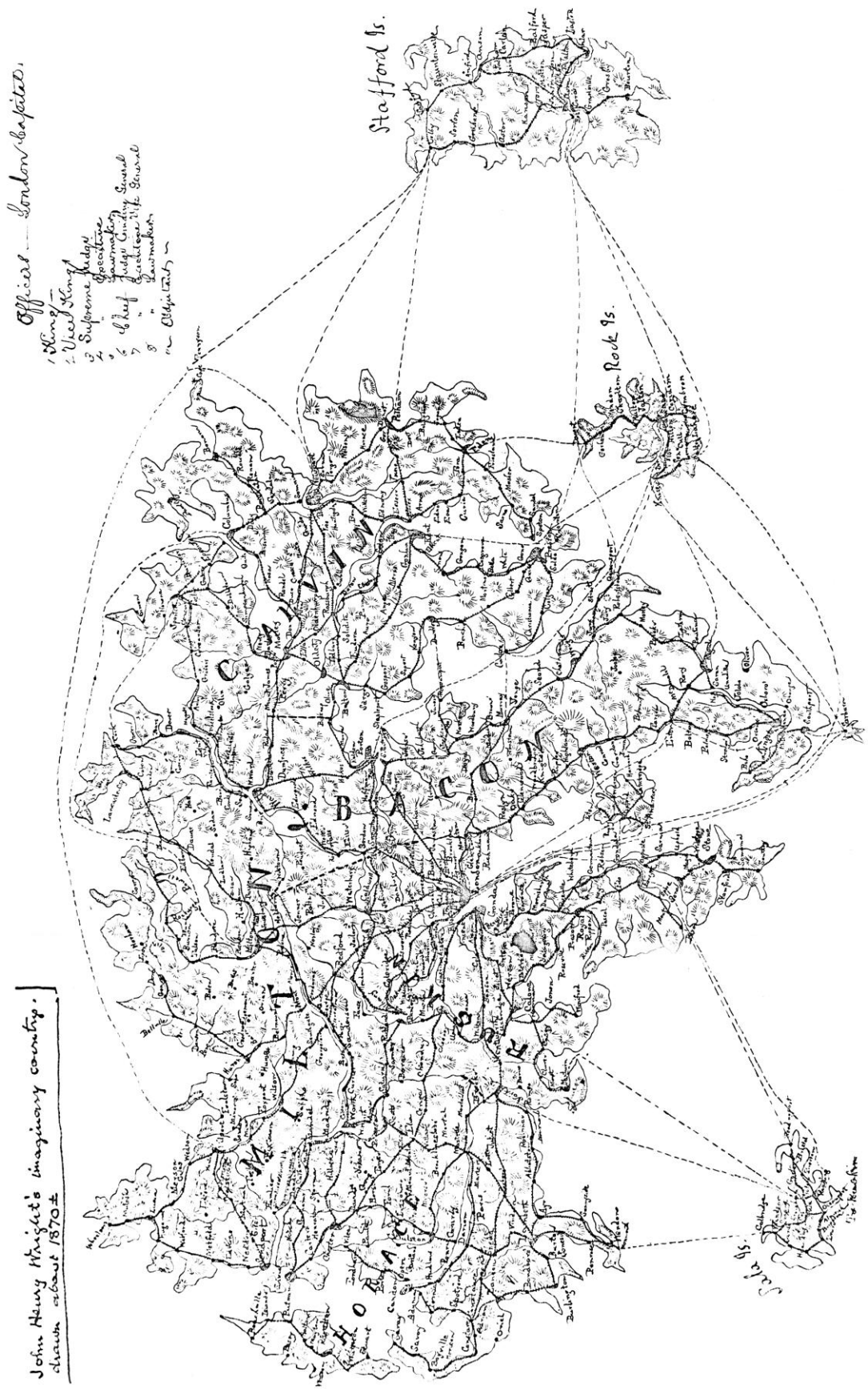


Figure 3. John Henry Wright's imaginary country, c. 1870 (Wright 1968c).

Islandia

Conceived as an island nation, *Islandia* (as had *Cravay*) underwent a degree of topographical re-imagining and was relocated to a mythical continent, *Karain*, of which it formed the "southern and temperate portion" (Wright 1970, v). Where *Cravay* had been, primarily, an exercise in mapping, *Islandia* was a literary exposition. Austin Wright began to document the history and culture of *Islandia* during 1908 (by which time John Wright had vacated *Cravay*) but did not begin his most ambitious project—the novel *Islandia*—until the 1920s (Wright 1970, ix).[37] Of the novel's composition, Austin Wright's daughter recalled, "Most of the writing of the novel…was in the decade of Stopes (Marie) and Scopes (Trial), of synthetic gin and various sorts of what is still considered sin" (Wright 1970, ix–x).[38] Where *Cravay* had developed against the Spanish-American War, *Islandia* was composed following the first industrialized war, during prohibition, and shortly before the Great Depression—it was written during a period of significant social change, a "terrified and discouraged age" (Mumford 1962, 10). The novel *Islandia* (which is set during the first decade of the twentieth century) follows Harvard freshman John Lang, who—having befriended an *Islandian* classmate—is appointed American Consul to *Islandia*, with the objective of establishing a trading relationship between two nations (Hollm 1998, 159). *Islandia*, mapped in figure 4, is an agrarian society (some 150,000 farmsteads comprise its subsistence economy) and having been "constantly threatened during its long history by European colonialists, industrialists, and merchants as well

[37] Wright's novel was complimented, *inter alia*, by "a glossary of the Islandian language; a bibliography; several tables of population…notes on the calendar and climate; and a few specimens of Islandian literature" (Wright 1970, vi).
[38] Austin Wright had quipped to his daughter, "This is synthetic gin, which makes for ginthetic sin" (Wright 1970, viii).

as by border raids from the Arabic Karains [to the north] and their Bant mercenaries" has a robustly isolationist foreign policy (Jacobs 1995, 5).

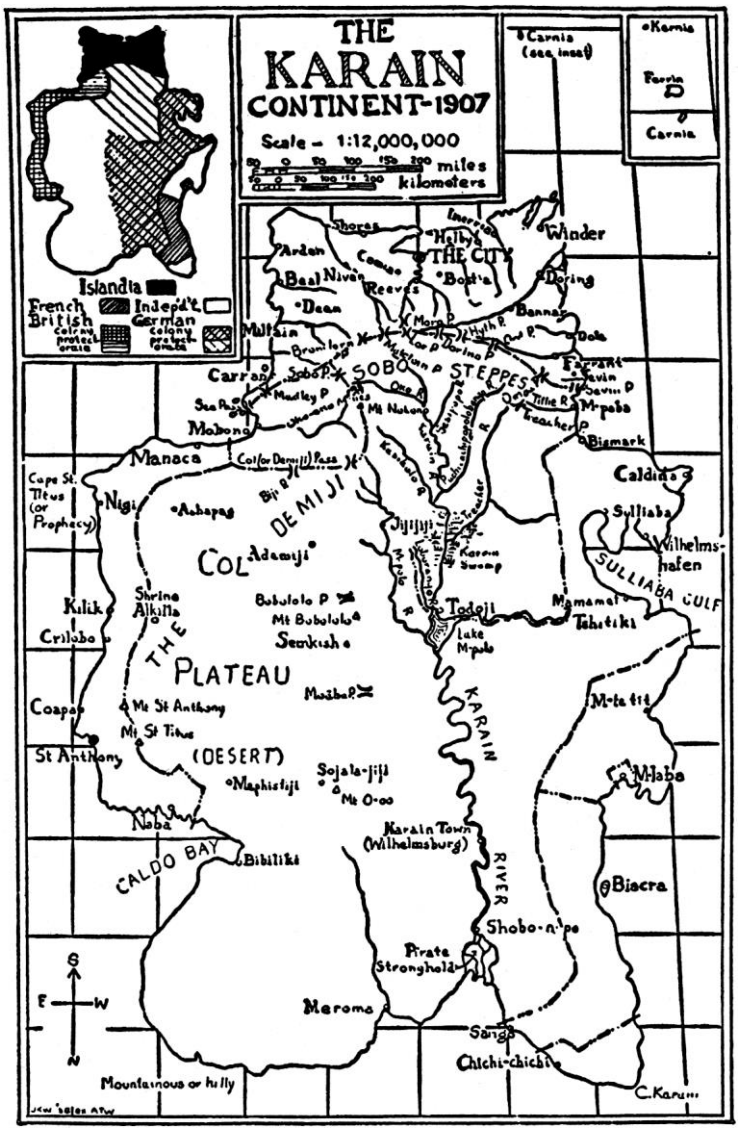


Figure 4. Map of *Islandia* drawn by John Wright for the novel's second edition (Wright 1970, 544).

The novel's central theme concerns John Lang's struggle with duty. Early in the narrative, Lang realizes that his official mission—"to promote trade and modernization, and to encourage an end to Islandia's isolationist policies"—threatens what he values most about the *Islandian* way of life: "Islandians prefer quality to quantity, beauty to profit, the intimacy and originality of hand work to the standardized products of the machine age, quietude to speed, and direct, honest

emotion to falsifying civilities" (Jacobs 1995, 5). Since Thomas More's *Utopia*, published first in 1516, utopian fiction has been regarded as both "a description of an imaginary ideal" and as a "criticism of [contemporary] political and social patterns" (Goodey 1970, 16). *Islandia* was, clearly, an 'island paradise' for its protagonist John Lang and, one might conclude, also for its author.[39] The extent to which *Islandia* offered a critique of American society during the early twentieth century is, however, uncertain: for Jacobs, Austin Wright's purpose in composing *Islandia*, "was not to transform the world of American industrial capitalism but temporarily to escape from it" (Jacobs 1995, 18). Austin Wright, in a sense, never left his imaginary world: "Islandia was an ever-present point of comparison in his mind to the places and people he encountered in life" (Jacobs 1995, 5). *Islandia* and *Cravay* provided, for the Wright brothers, a frame of reference with which to engage the real world—an imaginative conception through which reality was mediated.[40]

Geographical Imagination

> …like my father and brother and many other persons when they were children, I focused my interests upon an imaginary country (Wright 1966a, 1).[41]

In *The Story of a Sand-Pile*, G. Stanley Hall detailed the imaginary world created by two New England children during the 1880s. Sons of a Cambridge professor, the children, Harry and Jack, made manifest their world in the sandpit of their

[39] For Tuan, "One of the proper and moral uses of fantasy is to envisage the good" (Tuan 1990, 443).
[40] Such imaginative mediation is, for Lowenthal, unremarkable; "We constantly compare the reality with the fancy. Indeed, without the one we could neither visualise or conceptualise the other" (Lowenthal 1971, 3).
[41] Wright's son, Austin McGiffert, recalls: "when I was young he [Wright] encouraged me to develop my own imaginary country, but when I was a little older he advised me that I'd do better now to turn my attention to the real world instead of the imaginary one" (Wright 2001, 1).

summertime home. The children began their construction simply, with "Wells and tunnels; hills and roads like those in town; islands and capes and bays with imagined water" but, over the course of weeks, their ideas matured, and a village of Lilliputian dimensions was created (Hall 1888, 690). The settlement was populated with small figures, whittled from wood, each of which represented a member of the local community (Hall 1888, 691). The sand-pile village had an economy, laws, taxes, and an array of official and commercial buildings (with some notable exceptions).[42]

Where the sand-pile community differs from *Islandia* and *Cravay* is, it seems, in its spatial immobility. The imaginary worlds of John and Austin Wright were not, as that of Harry and Jack, centred upon a specific locale—they were entirely imagined and, therefore, portable. The geographically situated world of Harry and Jack was limited to their sand-pile; the porch of their parent's house marked the outermost boundary of their imagined realm. *Cravay*, by contrast, was fluid and expandable: "When Wright's young friends became envious of his holdings and insisted upon sharing in the government of Cravay, he made room for them by moving Cravay to a spacious, nameless planet. He invited his playmates to map out as many countries as they pleased adjacent to Cravay, and to assume the rank of viceroys, but warned them to keep their hands and crayons off his realm" (Kahn 1941, 22–23). Although difficult to trace, the influence of *Cravay* upon Wright's perspective and approach as a professional geographer is apparent, I suggest, in his focus upon the imagination, particularly his desire to reveal how this aspect of human nature was, and is, imprinted upon geographical knowledge. For Wright, *Cravay* and *Islandia* had demonstrated that "The most fascinating *terrae incognitae* of all are those that lie

[42] "'Why do you have no church?' the boys were asked. 'Because,' they replied, 'we are not allowed to play in the 'sand-pile' on Sunday, but have to go to church.' 'And why have you no school?' 'Why,' they said, exultingly, 'it is vacation, and we don't have to go to school'" (Hall 1888, 694).

within the minds and hearts of men" (Wright 1947, 15). Where literal *terrae incognitae* had captured Wright's childhood fascination, it was the Siren song of cerebral *terrae incognitae* that enticed Wright during adulthood.

The Mahoosuc Mountain Range

> Miss Hurd, editor of *Appalachia*, has asked me to do an article for them on the Mahoosuc Range, which I explored thoroughly between 1904 and 1914 in the prehistoric era before the range (except its SW part) was mapped, guidebooked, or trail-profaned….The northern Mahoosucs…are the original *terra incognita* as far as I am concerned. They are what started it. (Wright 1965b, 1).

During "long pre-World-War-1 vacations", Cambridge academics and their families would decamp to rural retreats, and beachfront properties, throughout New England (Wright 1965c, 628). The Wright family, no exception to the rule, spent their summers in Shelburne, New Hampshire, guests of Gus Philbrook—an acquaintance of John Henry Wright (Wright 1965c, 628). Philbrook's property, situated in the broad Androscoggin River Valley, provided porch-front views of the Presidential Mountain Range, and was overlooked, at its rear, by the rugged, uncharted, Mahoosuc Mountains (Wright 1965c, 628).[43] Vacationing professors and their children ventured often from Shelburne to tackle the trail-less mountains. Sojourns between 1904 and 1910 brought Wright to the summits of most of the surrounding mountains, where he "gazed with explorers' yearning on the *terra incognita* to the northeastward" (Wright 1965c, 629). To Wright, "It was *terra incognita* because it had not yet been mapped by the U. S. Geological Survey" (Wright 1965c, 629–630). Figure 5, illustrates the

[43] The Mahoosuc Range was unnamed until 1918, when the Appalachian Mountain Club Committee on Nomenclature proposed its current title—a reference to the range's notable eminences: Mahoosuc Mountain, Mahoosuc Notch, and Mahoosuc Arm (Wright 1965c, 626).

progress of survey and mapping in New England by the U. S. Geological Survey to December 1932 and, as Wright recorded, "makes clear what I well remembered from boyhood, namely that until after 1909 the White Mountain area was in a quadrangular island of relative topographical light surrounded by a sea of relative topographical darkness" (Wright 1965c, 630).

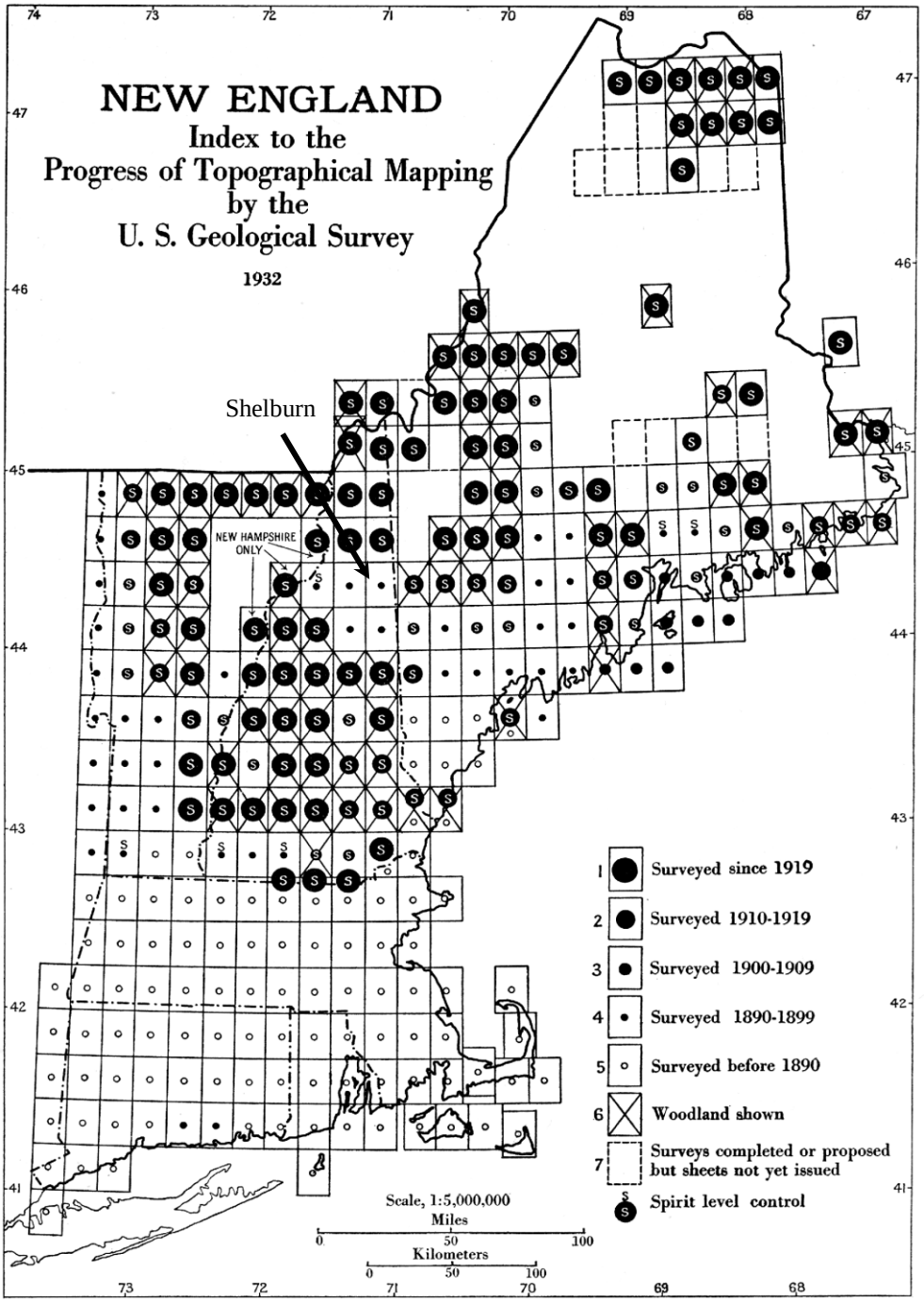


Figure 5. Map showing the extent to which much of New England was, during Wright's childhood summers, a literal *terra incognita* (Wright 1933, 15).

During the summer of 1904, a forest fire on the distant slopes of Mount Success drew Wright's "childish wonder" to that northern *terra incognita* (Wright 1965c, 629). The fire-scarred mountainside "formed a striking feature in the northern view from Shelburne for more than ten years" and was, most probably, a constant lure to Wright's exploratory desire (Wright 1965c, 629). By the summer of 1910, Wright's yearning "had become irresistibly centred upon Goose Eye"—a 3,870-foot eminence in the Maine portion of the Mahoosuc Range (Wright 1965c, 630). Having decided, with fellow Harvard Freshman Eben Fox Corey, to tackle the peak, Wright commenced a period of intensive research and preparation.[44] The pair began their ascent of Goose Eye on the morning of 15 September 1910, and concluded it successfully by afternoon. Having had his achievement recorded (see figure 6) Wright's attention was drawn northwards—enticed by a new *terra incognita* (Wright 1965c, 636).[45] As Wright noted at the time, "The trouble, or perhaps the joy, of mountain climbing is that you always want to go to the mountains just beyond the ones you have climbed" (Wright 1965c, 636–637).

[44] Despite a morning spent at the Boston Public Library leafing through atlases, gazetteers, and past editions of *Appalachia*, Wright was unable to locate an entry on Goose Eye Mountain—it appeared to be a genuine *terra incognita* (Wright 1965c, 630). A note in Moses F. Sweetser's 1879 volume *Views in the White Mountains*, provided Wright, however, with a useful insight—it recorded that in 1875, Goose Eye had been "successfully attacked" by the Portland White Mountain Club (Wright 1965c, 631). Wright and Corey journeyed to Portland where they sought and located several members of the Club including Major Gould—who "Almost before he knew our names…offered us his aneroid barometer and French pedometer [an offer that we thought it wise not to accept]"—and Mr Morse, the party's artist whose panoramic sketches, drawn from many White Mountain summits, impressed Wright greatly (Wright 1965c, 631–632). The realization that Goose Eye Mountain was, for the surviving member of the Portland White Mountain Club, *terra cognita*, did not, it appears, dull the pair's desire to scale it. Rather, as Wright recalled, one of Morse's drawings depicting a rugged, formidable, Goose Eye "added to our enthusiasm" (Wright 1965c, 632).

[45] The inevitable process by which the Mahoosuc Range became *terra cognita* dismayed Wright. In his 1916 mountain journal, he recorded: "In 1914 a party of inhabitants of Randolph [a neighbouring town] built trails from the Berlin-Success Pond road to the summits of Goose Eye and Success. Thus have we fallen. It is now possible to leave Philbrook Farm shortly after breakfast, go by automobile in short order to Success Meadows, and be on the peak of Goose Eye at one o'clock; thence descend leisurely to Ketchum, where one is met by automobile and brought home to Philbrook Farm in time for supper. Alas! alas! these are evil days, days of degeneracy. The age of heroes is gone forever. The whole district is now mapped (largely from my notes) by the A.M.C., and the new guidebook, with full description of the district, will appear about the first of July [1916]. The cold light of science will then forever have destroyed the romance of the great unknown" (Wright 1965c, 629).

In subsequent years, Wright tackled many of the unnamed peaks he had seen from Goose Eye—an activity he dubbed "micro-exploration" (Wright, 1965c, 634).[46] The history of Wright's 'micro-exploration' reveals not only a desire to seek out the unknown—to answer the Siren song of *terrae incognitae*—but demonstrates a revelry in what art critic John Ruskin described as 'Mountain Glory' (Nicolson 1959, 4; Wright 1959a, 1).[47] Wright's engagement with the Mahoosuc Mountains was, at a fundamental level, emotional and aesthetic—he craved the novel perspective provided by a mountain summit. Indeed, as he later noted, "Among the many divers [sic] interests in which mountain lovers partake—athletic, aesthetic, social, scientific, etc.—the elementary ones of what mountains look like and what the face of the earth looks like as seen form their summits are fundamental. Certainly, they have intrigued me ever since I first watched my father drawing mountain panoramas in Greece in 1906" (Wright 1965c, 632).

An individual's emotional response to the natural environment is highly personal, yet as Nicolson recognized, it is commonly accepted "that the emotions we feel—or are supposed to feel—in the presence of grand Nature are universal and have been shared by men at all times….We do not ask…to what extent they have been derived from poetry and novels we have read, landscape art we have seen, ways of thinking we have inherited" (Nicolson 1959, 1). Nicolson proposed that one's emotional reaction to a mountainous landscape could be represented by one of two

[46] With typical neological enthusiasm, Wright proposed that the "history of the micro-exploration, mapping, and acquisition of geographical knowledge of small areas could be called microgeographical history. It is (or may be) of surpassing interest to persons who know the areas in question and of surpassing dullness to those who do not" (Wright 1965c, 637).

[47] 'Mountain Glory'—a term coined by John Ruskin, in his 1856 volume *Modern Painters*, to describe the Picturesque depiction of landscape—was adopted by Marjorie Nicolson to encompass the feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction engendered by mountain landscape, as opposed to the feelings of fear, awe, and resentment, characteristic of 'Mountain Gloom' (Nicolson, 1959).

categories: 'mountain gloom' and 'mountain glory' (Nicolson 1951, 3–4).[48] Intriguingly, on two separate ascents of Goose Eye, Wright experienced widely contrasting emotions—representative each of 'gloom' and 'glory.'

Figure 6. Wright on the summit of Goose Eye, 15 September 1910 (Wright 1965c, 637).

Wright's initial assault of Goose Eye was undertaken on a sunny September day, and his mood, at that time, appears to have mirrored the climatic conditions: "The air felt warm and delightful; great flat-bottomed cumulus clouds extended to the horizon in every direction, casting their slow-moving shadows on the huge slopes of Old Speck opposite. We took off our shoes and stockings to dry them…and then settled down in unhurried bliss" (Wright 1965c, 636). Wright's revelry in 'mountain glory', apparent in his mountaintop contemplation, does not submit readily to

[48] As Wright indicated, "Glimmerings of 'Mountain Glory' are shot through the writings of the ancient Hebrews and the ancient Greeks, both of whom were mountain dwellers and not unresponsive to the grandeur of mountain scenery. The practical Romans looked upon mountains with distaste, and in the New Testament, mountains were deemed to be symbolic of the proud and the haughty" (Wright 1959a, 1).

explanation. He was, clearly, enthused and un-intimidated by the *terra incognita* spread before him, but his uncomplicated joy in "what mountains look like" owes, arguably, a debt to his reading of Moses F. Sweetser's *Views in the White Mountains* (Wright 1965c, 632). Indeed, commenting later upon his journal account of the prospect afforded by Goose Eye, Wright noted, "the description of the view, inspired by those in Sweetser goes on at tedious length" (Wright 1965c, 636). When Wright next tackled Goose Eye, a year after his initial ascent, it was in storm rather than sun. Wright and Corey, joined by their Harvard colleague John Houghton Taylor, had set off in fine mood, and in fine weather, but were rapidly overshadowed by "broad layers of steel-grey cloud…spread out threateningly" (Wright 1965c 642). Wright recalled their journey thus:

> We got off about 9 and found our way up Goose Eye Brook valley, but as we progressed farther and farther the sky constantly looked darker and more ominous; gray mists drifted before the peak of the mountain, and occasionally terrific blasts of wind came roaring down the side of the ravine, whirling showers of dry leaves. It impressed me as dramatic—even operatic. We were three lone travellers marching up into the vast and terrible mountains, where lived frightful dragons and vampires [memories of *Dracula*]. All the omens told us to turn back: birds flew by on our left and from the forest to our right came a thunderous roar, either the growling of djinns or a falling tree. We had some trepidation as to whether we should continue, but the strong voice of our consciences bade us not to fear these manifestations of the evil spirit, but to summon all our fortitude and push on to the Peak of Glory. (Wright 1965c, 642).

Although tinged with irony, Wright's account of his second outing on Goose Eye reveals traces of 'mountain gloom', and confirms that an individual's reaction to place is contingent upon many factors. Wright's emotional response to Goose Eye was, on both occasions, influenced by climatic conditions, and by books he had read, whether Sweetser's *Views in the White Mountains* or Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Emotional response to space and place is, for humanist geographers, an important

theme, since "Emotion tints all human experience" (Tuan 1998, 8).[49] Figure 7 describes how, for Tuan, an individual's experience of place (defined by the triad of sensation, perception, and conception) is mediated by emotion and thought.[50]

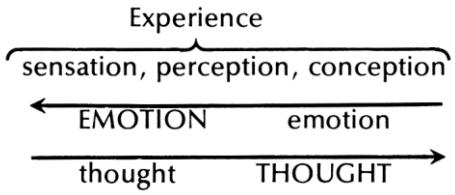


Figure 7. Diagram describing the way in which experience of place is mediated by emotion and thought (Tuan 1977, 8).

Tuan's diagram parallels one conceived by Wright in 1955 (see figure 8) that describes the way in which the formation of geographical knowledge—through observation, thought, and exposition—is influenced by non-geographical factors. Explaining this complex interaction, Wright noted:

> Each flow line in the diagram stands for a set of cause-and-effect relationships…Thus lines A, B, and C signify the influence of non-geographical conditions and forces upon the development of geographical knowledge, and lines a, b, and c signify the reverse, the influences of geographical observation, thought, and exposition, respectively, upon the outside world of non-geographical thought and enterprise.
>
> The progress of geographical observation—i.e. exploration, surveying, and other fact-gathering enterprises—influences geographical thought by placing certain data at the disposal of geographical thinkers. These are the influences signified by Line D. Naturally, they are not all-powerfully determining controls. How geographical thinkers think about the facts thus put at their disposal depends on many other circumstances—circumstances largely of a non-geographical nature suggested by line B. Let me give you an example—
>
> The boulders that adorn the landscape in the northern parts of this country [the United States] look about the same to us as they did to the

[49] In his essay, *Notes on Early American Geopiety*, Wright coined the term *geopiety* to describe "pious emotion evoked by the wonder and the terror of the earth in all its diversity"—a blend of 'mountain gloom' and 'mountain glory' engendered by the meeting of theology and geographical observation.
[50] Knowledge of the real world is, as Wright suggested, "a matter of precepts and concepts" (Wright 1966b, 1).

> Indians. I don't know what they prompted the Indians to think about them, if anything. Perhaps the Indians though that some disagreeable god had strewed them about in a temper tantrum, for this was the way Indians were likely to explain such tings. A century or so ago our forebears thought they were due to Noah's Deluge or possibly to icebergs carried by some lesser flood. Today, most of us are firmly convinced that they were scattered by a former ice sheet, for that is *our* way of explaining such things. Thus, observation of the *same* facts may elicit very different geographical knowledge, depending upon who does the thinking, and when (Wright 1955, 5–8. Emphasis in original).

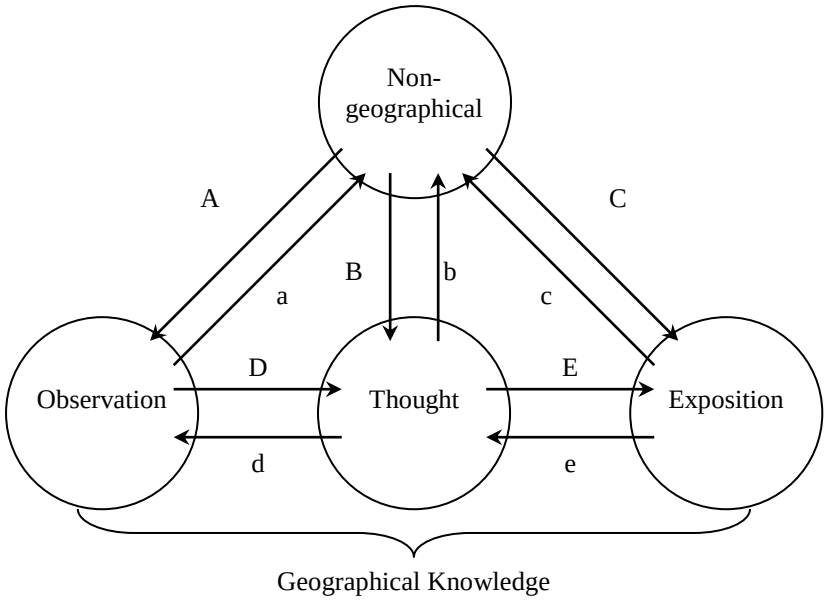


Figure 8. Diagram illustrating the ways in which observation, thought, exposition, and non-geographical factors together interact to influence the production of geographical knowledge (Wright 1955, 7).

The essence of geosophy is, I suggest, set forth in Wright's diagram. To understand the way in which geographical knowledge varies spatially, temporally, and culturally—to explore the geographical knowledge in the minds of "farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots"—it is necessary to appreciate the intricate interaction of observation, thought, and exposition and to acknowledge their contingency upon non-geographical factors (Wright 1947, 12). This was, arguably, manifest in Wright's dissimilar experiences of Goose Eye; although he perceived the same topography on each ascent, his conception of the mountain differed due to "circumstances largely of a

non-geographical nature" (Wright 1955, 8). Here, for Wright, was evidence of the influence of human nature upon the conception of geographical phenomena.

Summary

Although seemingly unrelated, Wright's experience of *Cravay* and of the Mahoosuc Range were linked by imagination. In *terrae incognitae*, both literal and cerebral, Wright witnessed, consciously or otherwise, the process by which perception and imagination conspire to shape geographical concepts—whether an emotional response to landscape or an explanation of a boulder-strewn plain. Wright recognized, however, that such mental mediation is not unidirectional—the imagination is not merely a reactive component in the production of geographical knowledge but actively "projects itself into *terrae incognitae* and suggests routes for us to follow…[playing] upon those things that we discover" (Wright 1947, 4).[51] Indeed, as Koelsch ponders, "Might Wright's early acceptance of the imaginary…have lead him to see the 'real' and 'imaginary' as parts of a continuum (or, geographically speaking, on the same scale), rather than, as, say, [Ellsworth] Huntington would see it, as two very incompatible categories?" (Koelsch 2001b, 1).

For Wright, I suggest, the manufacture of geographical knowledge occurred at, and was dependent upon, the interface between the 'real' and the 'perceived' world—dissimilar realms bound by the imagination and moulded by non-geographical factors. The individual and highly personal character of this interface rendered the knowledge produced there subjective, personal, and, ultimately, humanistic. As Wright informed

[51] For Lowenthal, Wright's imagined world mediated—and was, in turn, influenced by—his experience of the real world: "imagination and other forms of understanding proceed in tandem. Not one always before the other" (Lowenthal 2001, 2).

a colleague at the American Geographical Society, "To my way of thinking…much of it [geography and geographical knowledge] has always been and should always be conceived as non-scientific—i.e. humanistic. The non-scientific elements and possibilities in it are not just frills, as ignorant, hard-boiled science-worshipers tend to believe. If the Society fails to cultivate the non-scientific aspects of geography, its publications will never interest the 'interested laymen'" (Wright 1968b, 1). Wright's passion for the imagination, particularly its influence upon the creation of geographical knowledge was, arguably, central to the development and espousal of geosophy; for it is the imagination, above other aspect of human nature, that renders the geographical knowledge in the minds of "farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots" distinct and deserving of exploration (Wright 1947, 12).

CHAPTER 6: WRIGHT'S HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

> Having been interested in geography as a child, I went into European history for my graduate work but made the history of geography my special interest and it has remained so ever since. (Wright 1964a, 1).

For Wright, as I have intimated, geosophy was an expression of historical, geographical, and humanistic concern. His desire to explore "the nature…of geographical ideas both past and present", and to document their expression by "all manner of people" reflects, I suggest, a belief both in the spatial, temporal, and cultural contingency of geographical knowledge and in its universal and democratic distribution (Wright 1947, 12).[52] Central to the development of Wright's geosophical philosophy was, arguably, the historical perspective afforded by his doctoral thesis: *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades*. As Glacken confirms, "When John K. Wright finished *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades*, he left the Middle Ages, and has not returned to them; but as a historian of geography, he has not lost the interest in ideas which is so conspicuous in…[that] work. His…essays, 'A Plea for the History of Geography'…and 'Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography'…show how stimulated he has been, through his long and productive life, by the history of ideas" (Glacken 1965, xii–xiii).

Wright's thesis was an attempt to survey the "intellectual activity of the time of the Crusades"—to detail the practise of geography, and to define the nature of

[52] Golledge, in his Presidential Address to the Association of American Geographers, argued, "Geographical Knowledge is universal. But it can *not* be acquired only through casual observation" (Golledge 2002, 12. Emphasis in original). Wright, by contrast, believed geographical knowledge to be democratic—possessed by all those with an appreciation, however limited, of the space that surrounds them: local, regional, or global. As he noted, "Human beings possess…a geographical sense….The geographical sense is an intellectual response to the environmental *milieu*. It leads to the acquisition of geographical ideas and to their expression in a multitude of forms" (Wright 1926, 484. Emphasis in original).

geographical lore, during "an age of contrasts" (Wright 1965a, 1). Encompassing all that was "known, believed, and felt about the origins, present condition, and distribution of the geographical elements of the earth", the geographical lore of the Middle Ages comprised knowledge culled from fields alien to contemporary notions of geographical inquiry: "In the Middle Ages geology, geography, and theology were inextricably interwoven" (Wright 1965a, 2). A combination of inherited wisdom and contemporary speculation, the geographical lore available to, and possessed by, an individual during the Middle Ages was dependent upon, *inter alia*, the social, economic, and political circumstances within which he or she resided. As Wright noted, "A sharp distinction may be made between the geography of the scholar and churchman, drawn largely from antiquity, and the geography of the merchant, soldier, and pilgrim, who learned of the world by travel and exploration" (Wright 1965a, 3). Here, Wright demonstrated that within a common spatial, temporal, and cultural context, the character of individual geographical concepts was varied and personal.

To Wright, it was religion and religious belief that shaped scientific and geographical knowledge in Western Europe during the Middle Ages (Wright 1965a, 36). Christianity—specifically the varying attitudes among the Christian community towards the Bible—exerted an important influence upon the nature and practise of science; a dualism existed between those who regarded the Bible as a truthful, credible, and literal document, and those who believed its contents to be, in large measure, allegorical. This theological disparity ensured that any novel scientific or geographical knowledge (as well as knowledge inherited from the classical era) contrary to the Scriptural account did not attain widespread acceptance.[53] The

[53] As Wright asserted, "The evolution of science was profoundly modified by the conflicts between these divergent tendencies of thought and by the efforts made to reconcile one with the other. The general result spelled disaster to clear thinking in geography" (Wright 1965a, 43).

tabooing, by the Church, of Greek and Roman knowledge, and the discounting of contemporary ideas which challenged the Bible, engendered in Western Europe a period of intellectual stagnation in which "Learning in general and geography in particular suffered almost universal eclipse" (Wright 1965a, 44). Within other religious contexts, particularly Arabian Islam, theological debate was neither as divisive nor as restrictive and, consequently, the geographical knowledge of the body politic was informed by a broader range of influences: travel, commerce, and, crucially, classical texts.[54] The character of Islamic geography during the Middle Ages was fashioned not only by a willingness to accept novel (or, indeed, established) geographical concepts, but also by a need to satisfy specific, practical requirements. Islamic religious law, set forth in the *Qur'an*, requires Muslims to pray five times daily, facing Mecca. In order best to identify the *Qibla*—the direction to Mecca—Medieval Islamic geographers focused attention upon the correct determination of geographical position (Wright 1922, 76). In satisfying this religious doctrine, Islamic science cultivated sophisticated mathematical and geographical methods "centuries before…equivalent discoveries were made in Europe" (Mackenzie 2001, 217).

By exposing the vagaries of Medieval lore, Wright revealed not only regional disparities in geographical knowledge but demonstrated the influence of social and religious circumstance upon individual geographical perspectives. In exploring the spatial, cultural, and social distribution of geographical lore, Wright demonstrated, I suggest, that knowledge, geographical or otherwise, is situated spatially—not determined simply by physical circumstance, but shaped by the religious, mercantile, political, and intellectual contexts manifest at a particular geographical location, at a

[54] As Wright recorded, "Those very centuries of the Middle Ages when scientific learning was most neglected in Western Europe were the brightest ages of Moslem [sic] science and literature" (Wright 1923, 630).

specific point in time. For Withers as Wright, "Geographical knowledge…cannot be understood as something set apart from the intellectual, social and political milieux of its time" (Withers 2001, 4). As Koelsch confirms, "To write of the geographical knowledge of medieval times necessarily meant that his [Wright's] research transcended disciplinary boundaries…in search of his core themes. It also meant that the history of geographical thought was set in the larger context of the civilization that had generated such ideas" (Koelsch forthcoming). In short, Wright's contextual and interdisciplinary approach—fundamental to the geosophical project—was evident in, perhaps engendered by, his doctoral research on the geographical lore of the Middle Ages.

Where History and Geography Meet

> The *history of thought* is becoming recognized as a supremely important branch of history. If geography is to compare with history in depth and human value, should the geographer overlook the *geography of thought*? (Wright 1925b, 193. Emphasis in original).

Wright's perspective on the history of geography and of geographical knowledge was articulated most comprehensively in two papers—*The History of Geography: A Point of View* (1925) and *A Plea For the History of Geography* (1926)—texts that "constitute the earliest plea in American geography for the study of geographical perception" (Bowden 1970, 396). Wright's papers, which encompassed a suite of ideas, "laid out a general scheme for the history of geography that prefigures his later concerns" (Koelsch forthcoming). Glimmerings of geosophy are apparent in *The History of Geography: A Point of View*—a paper in which Wright advocated the "*geographical study of the history of geography*" (Wright 1925b, 193. Emphasis in

original). With precision rather than pedantry, Wright highlighted an important difference between 'historical geography' and 'history of geography'—a distinction, he claimed, "sometimes confused even by historians and geographers" (Wright 1925b, 193). For Wright, 'historical geography' was "the study of geographical facts as they have existed in the past", whilst 'history of geography', his preferred field of inquiry, was "quite different: *geography* here means geographical ideas….It might be called the history of *geographiology* or *geographiography* on the analogy of historiography; but these are frightful barbarisms" (Wright 1925b, 193. Emphasis in original). Here, not only are Wright's neological tendencies apparent, but the foundation of geosophy, as a geographical engagement with knowledge, is revealed. Wright's concern in proposing study of the history of geographical thought—"itself a geographical phenomena worthy of examination"—was, in part, to explore the influence of non-geographical factors upon the creation of geographical concepts (Wright 1925b, 194). As Wright confirmed, "The quality of geographical ideas in any age or region is determined by the human…environment….Social, political, and intellectual factors have at all times reacted upon geographical ideas" (Wright 1925b, 194).

With sentiments echoed later in his Presidential Address to the Association of American Geographers, Wright outlined his belief that perception, influenced by the vagaries of human nature, mediates the acquisition of geographical knowledge, noting, "we should never forget that it is the human mind itself and not the geographical feature [being observed] which creates the idea within the mind; nor that the mind's geographical thinking is conditioned by many non-geographical factors" (Wright 1925b, 198). To Wright, it was the way in which geographical phenomena were perceived, rather than the phenomena *per se*, which proved alluring, and it was on this basis that he advocated "studies of the relationship between the environments

experienced by man and their resultant geographical conceptions" (Bowden 1970, 396). With metaphorical enthusiasm, Wright concluded his argument thus:

> …we may compare the mind of man to a mirror which has the ability not only to reflect but to retain, record, and interpret more or less imperfectly the image that it reflects. It is not a clean, bright mirror which gives exact images, but…is warped, clouded, spotted, cracked and broken. The appearance of the image…is determined very largely by the nature of the mirror itself and by the spots, dust, and other foreign matter that may have accumulated upon it.
>
> The history of geography is the history of the images of the geographical environment that have been reflected in the minds of men though the ages. (Wright 1925b, 200–201).

Whilst the ideas set forth in *The History of Geography: A Point of View* (presented first to the History of Science Society, and published later in *Isis*) were largely theoretical, they were refined and explored with a pragmatic focus in Wright's 1925 address to the Association of American Geographers—*A Plea for the History of Geography*. In this address, Wright outlined a core-periphery model of geographical knowledge and practise, an idea he reprised in the espousal of geosophy—a field of inquiry which "extends far beyond the core area of scientific geography….Taking into account the whole peripheral realm" (Wright 1947, 12). Wright's distinction between a core of 'scientific' knowledge, and a periphery of 'non-scientific' knowledge, was, however, essentially arbitrary. For Wright, the term 'scientific' was used to define "ideas systematically worked out in conformity with the best intellectual standards of their age and that find expression in maps or formal scientific treatise" whilst the term 'non-scientific' described ideas "not…necessarily 'unscientific' or erroneous, but, rather…[those] not expressed in scientific form" (Wright 1926, 485). Wright's model, rather than a comment upon the value of the geographical knowledge acquired within the core or the periphery of geography, served merely to distinguish the contexts

within which geographical knowledge was procured and the means by which it was disseminated. Indeed, Wright's plea, with which he concluded his address, was for a history of geographical thought that encompassed both 'scientific' and 'non-scientific' knowledge.[55]

Despite the enthusiasm of its proposition, and the influential forum of its discussion (a meeting of the Association of American Geographers), Wright's plea was "largely ignored at the time" (Agnew et al. 1996, 25). His desire for a history of geography, particularly one which embraced both environmental perception and non-scientific knowledge, was presented to a geographical community "finding a new self respect by concentrating its research effort in the newly defined core of the field: regional geography. The call to…a geography of a wider scope…was simply inopportune" (Bowden 1970, 397). Wright's attempt to chart the borderlands between history and geography, to reveal their potential for fruitful geographical exploration, was received by geography's mainstream not, it appears, with alacrity but with indifference. So lacklustre was the reception of Wright's thoughts on geography and history that he neither expanded upon nor reiterated them until his Presidential Address, delivered more than twenty-five years after he had assumed, perhaps injudiciously, that his "ideas concerning the history of geography were ripe enough to warrant presentation" (Wright 1966a, 4).[56]

[55] In defending the equity of 'scientific' and 'non-scientific' geographical knowledge in his project, Wright argued, "is not the history of error, folly, and emotion often as enlightening as the history of wisdom" (Wright 1926, 484).

[56] As Bowden recalls, "The lack of any reaction to these writings…depressed Wright and he experienced flickers of self-doubt that were to affect him for the next decade" (Bowden 1970, 397).

Summary

Given its extended gestation, geosophy appears to have been neither a radical nor a revolutionary departure, but a refinement and representation "of ideas expounded [first] in 1925" (Wright 1966a, 5). In tracing the genesis of geosophy, its most obvious precedent lies in Wright's call for a *geographical* engagement with the history of geographical thought—a project that outlined not simply a history of geography, but a history of "the images of the geographical environment" (Wright 1925b, 201). Through both *The History of Geography: A Point of View* and *A Plea For the History of Geography*, Wright's concern for perception, and its influence upon the conception of geographical ideas, is apparent. Combined with his conviction that knowledge, geographical or otherwise, is a product of the specific spatial, temporal, and social context of its inception, Wright's belief that "it is the human mind…which created the [geographical] idea", laid the philosophical and epistemological foundation of geosophy a quarter of a century before its proposition to the Association of American Geographers.

CHAPTER 7: THE RECEPTION OF GEOSOPHY

> I have read with great enjoyment your 'terrae incognitae.' It seems most timely, and in a strange way both a reply to and an affirmation of John Leighly's position that there is much of geography that is art. I like very much that unlike the rest of the geographers who were intensely annoyed at being called artists, you accepted the challenge. (Carter 1947, 1).[57]

Context of Reception

Geosophy—as an attempt to redefine geography's disciplinary remit and to promote an engagement with the study of geographical knowledge—was presented to the North American geographical community at a time of significant debate (Livingstone 1992, 305). Through the 1930s and early 1940s, geographers in the United States (as elsewhere) were concerned with defining, precisely, their 'field of inquiry'—to determine, in essence, whether geography was an idiographic or a nomothetic science (if, indeed, it *was* a science) (Martin 1989, 69). Among the most significant and influential contributions to this debate was Richard Hartshorne's 1939 volume *The Nature of Geography*—written in response to John Leighly's paper, *Some Comments on Contemporary Geographic Method*, which had provoked Hartshorne's ire (Livingstone 1992, 305). The essence of Hartshorne's thesis was that "Geography is…true to its name; it studies the world, seeking to describe, and to interpret, the differences among its different parts, as seen at any one time, commonly the present time" (Hartshorne 1939, 460). Although debated, Hartshorne's definition of

[57] Leighly's call that, "Scholarly investigation must recognize…the existence of motives (perhaps unconscious) in the mind of the artist and also in the minds of others who accept or reject his artefacts", mirrors thoughts expressed by Wright in his Presidential Address (Leighly 1937, 135). For Wright, "those parts of it [geosophy] that deal with scientific geography must reckon with human desires, motives, and prejudices, for unless I am mistaken, nowhere are geographers more likely to be influenced by the subjective than in their discussions of what scientific geography is and ought to be" (Wright 1947, 11).

geographical inquiry—as a science focused upon regional differentiation—was generally accepted, and directed, therefore, the conduct of geography: as Livingstone suggests, "To have command of definition is to have control of discourse" (Agnew et al. 1996, 388; Livingstone 1992, 304). Wright's proposition of geosophy, with its focus upon spatial, temporal, and cultural variations in geographical knowledge, appeared, given the acceptance of Hartshorne's definition, titularly geography; it seemed to owe more to history and to sociology. For Handley, the reception of Wright's paper by American geographers was, consequently, predictable: "they almost totally ignored geosophy and subjective inquiry through the 1950s" (Handley 1993, 187). As Koelsch confirms, "Wright, like Harlan Barrows and J. Russell Smith, had conceptions of geography out of step with the reigning majority opinion, and was marginalized intellectually in his own time" (Koelsch 2001a, 3).

Several explanations for the unenthusiastic reception of geosophy by American geography's mainstream have been forwarded.[58] For Guelke, it was Wright's position as a professional, rather than an academic geographer, that hindered the dissemination of geosophy. As Guelke indicates, Wright "did not hold a university position and lacked an opportunity of exercising a more direct influence on students of historical geography" (Guelke 1982, 14). Although difficult to conceive of a platform more influential than the Presidential Address of the Association of American Geographers from which to launch a novel geographical concept, a paucity of 'Wrightians' (Wright's intellectual disciples) impeded geosophy's impact: Wright "had no students and hence no 'genealogy,' this…served to limit the influence of his ideas" (Koelsch 2001a, 3). Bowen, by contrast, identifies Wright's apparent inconsistency, if not hypocrisy, as central to geosophy's mixed reception. She asserts,

[58] For a survey of the post-1946 use of geosophy in the geographical literature see Handley (1993).

"Wright defended the place of aesthetic subjectivity, the intuitive, and the methods of the humanities, alongside what he evidently accepted as the 'impersonal objectivity' of scientific geography. His position…was scarcely strengthened by his rather coy references to imagination as 'hearkening to the Sirens'" (Bowen 1981, 6). Bowen's selection of the phrase 'impersonal objectivity' as apparently illustrative of Wright's belief in an error-free and objective 'scientific' geography is, I suggest, misleading, if not erroneous. Wright, in his Presidential Address, bemoaned the "mistaken belief that subjectivity is the antithesis of objectivity", and argued, moreover, that subjective conceptions might, in fact, "promote the advancement…of scientific geography" (Wright 1947, 5; Wright 1947, 7) Subjectivity and imagination were, for Wright, central to the conception of novel and elegant knowledge; as he noted, "Much of the world's accumulated wisdom has…been acquired, not from rigorous application of scientific research, but through…skilful intuitive imagining" (Wright 1947, 6).

Wrightians: An Enthusiastic Minority

> When I read 'Terrae Incognitae' before the A.A.G. in 1946 a few people spoke to me and wrote me about it immediately after the meeting and said they liked it. Since that time no one, to my knowledge has ever referred to it in the literature and, so far as I can remember, no one has ever spoken to me about it except for one or two of my close associates at the American Geographical Society. Thus I had become rather inured to the thought that the paper was a complete dud (Wright 1959b, 1).

With the exception of a letter in 1947 from George F. Carter (a cultural geographer working, at that time, at Johns Hopkins University) Wright's Presidential Address passed unremarked until 1952 when David Lowenthal, a behavioural geographer and founder *Wrightian,* contacted Wright expressing his admiration (Wright 1966c, 2). Lowenthal, intrigued by Wright's work, wrote:

> Your papers are fascinating. I have never before seen anything reasonable on the geographical study of the history of geography, which is dismissed even by such people as Hartshorne as being absurd insofar as it is not obvious. I like particularly your 'Terrae Incognitae'. Many educators, I fear, would regard their geography departments even at present as being too much in the way of geosophy, and I think the word itself would suffer from close resemblance to theosophy. (Lowenthal 1952, 1).

Similar sentiments were expressed, seven yeas later, by Ronald L. Heathcote, a student of geography at the University of Nebraska (Heathcote 2001, 1). Heathcote—whose MA dissertation, *The Historical Geosophy of Two Nebraska Counties* (1959), was "inspired by…[Wright's] work"—contacted Wright seeking an elucidation of geosophy (Heathcote 2001, 1). In his reply, Wright noted:

> My definition of 'geosophy' is such a broad one—'the study of geographical knowledge from any or all points of view' (p. 12)—that I find it difficult to give you references to studies exemplifying it….I am sending you herewith some reprints which bear in one way or another on geosophy—and I hope that if you pursue the subject and make it your speciality you will devise and use a better term, if possible. 'Geosophy' is too much like 'theosophy' and, in coining it, I had my tongue in my cheek, just a little. (Wright 1959b, 1).

In 1965, having completed his PhD (which "also owed much to his [Wright's] ideas") Heathcote and his colleague Hugh C. Prince proposed the establishment of a course in geosophy at University College London (Heathcote 2001, 1; Prince 2002, 1). The course "was to be entitled 'Geosophy: The Study of Geographical Knowledge.' There were to be 25 lectures, 10 on the nature, 6 on the acquisition, and 9 on the expression of geographical knowledge, the last to include lectures on the bucolic, the picturesque, tidiness, facadism, antiquarianism, and regionalism" (Wright 1965d, 1). Heathcote's course was, however, rejected by the University authorities. Wright, clearly disappointed, contacted Heathcote, expressing his regret:

> I am sorry that the powers-that-be turned you down. Maybe it was 'geosophy' that scared them. I am not very happy about that term, partly because it sounds so much like 'theosophy' and partly because it means 'earth-knowledge' and hence literally might embrace geography, geology, geophysics, and all the rest that have to do with the earth.
>
> It would seem to me that 'geosophy' (or whatever other term might be used to designate 'the study of geographical knowledge') should take account of
>
> 1) The acquisition of geographical knowledge
> 2) The expression ditto
> 3) The dissemination ditto
>
> as influenced by and as influencing
>
> A) An inner environment of geographical institutions and individuals
> B) The outer environment of non-geographical circumstances (intellectual, social, religious, military, etc.). (Wright 1965d, 10).

The rejection of Heathcote's course was, I suggest, significant to the subsequent history of geosophy. Without a disciplinary anchor by which to fix its definition, geosophy was subject to varied interpretation and redefinition, often engendering concepts "alien to Wright's original" (Handley 1993, 188). Indeed, geosophy's defining triad—a focus upon the spatial, temporal, and cultural variation of geographical knowledge—has, for Chambers, often been ignored by those geographers who apply novel conceptions of geosophy: "Substantive historical geosophy begins with the premise that…knowledge is *historically* distributed. Yet it is often forgotten that ideas are also *socially* and *geographically* distributed" (Chambers 1982, 197–198. Emphasis in original). It is conceivable that the failure of geosophical studies to engage with the sociology of knowledge reflects pragmatic limitations and indicates the difficulty of revealing the imaginative conceptions held by a particular group of people, at a specific time in history. As Chambers confirms, "All historical inquiries have the problem of incomplete records, but this can be particularly stifling for geosophy because the questions it asks are best answered by the subjective impressions found in letters and diaries" (Chambers 1982, 199). How might a

geosophical study reveal "the geographical ideas, both true and false, of…farmers and fishermen" if, as Chambers suggests, "farmers did not usually write" (Wright 1947, 12; Chambers 1982, 198)?

Despite geosophy's apathetic reception, aspects of Wright's philosophy—particularly his interest in the imagination's role in the construction of geographical concepts—were embraced enthusiastically, during the 1960s, by "a group of geographers [who] showed a sudden enthusiasm for exploring ideas of subjective perception" (Handley 1993, 186). This novel engagement of Wright's ideas, expressed first by David Lowenthal in his "enormously influential" 1961 paper *Geography, Experience, and Imagination*, took, as its focus, "Man's experienced world" (Ley 2000, 43; Lowenthal 1961, 248). For Lowenthal, and fellow behavioural geographers, it was the conceptual borderland separating 'objective' reality from 'subjective' fantasy that proved alluring. Believing, as had Wright, that the "The most fascinating *terrae incognitae* of all are those that lie within the minds and hearts of men", Lowenthal explored the way in perception and conception conspire to shape an individual's mental image of the 'real' world, believing that "Every image and idea about the world is compounded…of personal experience, learning, imagination, and memory….The surface of the earth is shaped for each person by refraction through cultural and personal lenses of custom and fancy" (Wright 1947, 12, Lowenthal 1961, 260).

Summary

The gradual dissemination of geosophy, and its patchy and hesitant reception, has prompted Handley to suggest that there exists "an invisible system of idea transferral

in geography, seldom footnoted or cited" (Handley 1993, 191). Indeed, those geographers for whom Wright's ideas engendered excitement, and encouraged novel geographical concepts, did not attend his December 1946 address—their introduction to geosophy came not from Wright's lecture, nor even from its appearance in written form the following year, but from the "citation of his 1947 article" in subsequent papers, and from its republication in *Human Nature in Geography* (Handley 1993, 190).[59] As Handley suggests, Wright's intellectual legacy was dispersed and inherited stochastically, owing more to personal contacts and influence than to the "formal academic media" (Handley 1993, 191).

[59] For Harm Paschen, a student at Hamburg during the 1960s, it was a reference in Lowenthal's 1961 paper that drew his attention towards Wright. Enticed, Paschen purchased a copy of *Human Nature in Geography*, and by doing so, encountered, and was fascinated by, geosophy: "Now after getting your book (it took 7 weeks to get it over here—you see there is a special travel speed for intellectual stuff and some barriers of the intellectual surface of the earth seem to be harder to cross than physical ones—I wish I could map them) and after reading it I found especially interesting your term 'geosophy'" (Paschen 1966, 1).

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

In attempting to trace the genesis of geosophy, this paper has revealed, with certainty, one fact: it is not possible to resolve a single, unique moment of conception. Rather than an intellectual response to an individual stimulus, geosophy was the product of a confusing fiesta of stimuli—varied influences that, together, constituted the embryonic *milieu* within which geosophy passed its gestation. To seek a single, definable origin is to risk obscuring the broad hinterland from which geosophy arose, and to disguise the value of geosophy as a metaphor for Wright's geographical philosophy. To document the development of geosophy is, by default, to follow Wright's "circuitous journey" as geographer, historian, and humanist (Nash 1986, 1). To understand geosophy, one must first understand Wright.

Wright engaged geography as a historian, and history as a geographer. It was this confused duality that rendered both Wright and geosophy atypical and noteworthy; each thrived within the borderland separating geography from history. Geosophy was not, however, simply the product of Wright's entwined geographical and historical passions, rather—with is focus upon subjectivity, perception, and imagination—it owed its expression to Wright's humanistic verve. Wright's concern for the "geographical knowledge in the minds of all kinds of people" was not, as I have indicated, representative solely of a desire for historical completeness (a task which his military experience had shown to be futile) but was a recognition that the ways in which "images of the geographical environment" are constituted are the same for both 'scientific' geographers and the 'non-scientific' laity (Wright 1966c, 1; Wright 1925b, 201). It is imprudent, therefore, to view geosophy as a geographical or a historical project: it was, fundamentally, humanistic. For Wright, it was not

geographical knowledge *per se* which proved alluring, but the particular and peculiar ways in which that knowledge was formed in the minds of "farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots" (Wright 1947, 12).

From the broad tapestry of influences that informed the development and espousal of geosophy, individual strands advertise their significance. Through Wright's cultivation of *Cravay* to his exploration of Maine's mountainous *terrae incognitae* a desire to resolve the influence of perception and imagination upon one's 'sense of place' is evident. Combined with the historical perspective afforded by his doctoral thesis, *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades*, Wright sought to document the way in which individual geographical conceptions were realized, and to determine the extent to which they were contingent upon the social, spatial, and temporal contexts of their inception. Wright's philosophy, embodied in his decision to pursue studies of "man" rather than "nature-minus-man", was expressed, ultimately, in geosophy—the study of 'man', albeit with geographical knowledge acting as a convenient proxy (Wright 1966a, 2). Geosophy, the essential articulation of Wright's historical, geographical, and humanistic concern, might, therefore, be regarded as a prism through which the broad spectrum of his beliefs is revealed.

This dissertation has, in focusing attention upon the development and articulation of geosophy, treated, perfunctorily, certain aspects of Wright's career and interests—it has ignored Wright's role in advancing quantitative methods (his exploration of the "borderlands between geography and statistics") and has neglected to discuss his life-long passion for maps (Lowenthal 1969, 601).[60] These important concerns are, however, beyond this paper's modest scope; in both Wright and

[60] Wright, Kahn noted, "never fells wholly at ease unless he is within sight of a map" (Kahn 1941, 20).

geosophy, there exists potential for further investigation. Geosophy was not an isolated call for research in geographical perception—it constituted part of a broader engagement with themes of subjectivity and imagination that ranged from William Kirk's perspective on the behavioural environment to David Lowenthal's musings on the psychology of environment (Livingstone 1992, 335–336). A study exploring the way in which these humanistic expressions arose, were articulated, and were received might act to expose themes common to their development and to clarify their dissimilar reception. To understand geosophy it is necessary not only to understand Wright, but also to appreciate the wider context within which his work emerged.

Geosophy, an iconoclastic effort to engage geographers with the study of geographical knowledge, was shaped and refined through fifty years of complex and disparate influences: imaginative (*Cravay*, *Islandia*, the Mahoosuc Range), geographical (William Morris Davis, Isaiah Bowman, The American Geographical Society), and historical (Charles H. Haskins, World War I, *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades*). For Wright, however, geosophy was merely a component of his Presidential Address, one thought among many. Yet, as I hope to have demonstrated, geosophy, though not an *idée fixe*, was an explicit and traceable element running throughout Wright's academic and professional life—a concern which, at once, reflected and represented his perspective on geography. Having ascended to the Presidency of the Association of American Geographers, and the Directorship of the American Geographical Society, Wright attained the most prestigious and apparently powerful positions in North American geography. Nevertheless, Wright's personal, idiosyncratic engagement with geography set him apart from the mainstream: he occupied both the core and the periphery of geography. His views, expressed as a self-confessed "renegade historian", were received with

enthusiasm by a likeminded minority but with disinterested tolerance by the majority (Koelsch 2001a, 2). Wright's distance from the mainstream, accompanied by a paucity of intellectual inheritors, limited the dissemination of his most personal work. For Wright's devotees, his contribution to American geography was "seminal", for others it remains enigmatic: "He [Wright] has written many important works; none of which I have read" (Handley 1993, 183; Kahn 1941, 24). To chart the conception, evolution, and articulation of geosophy is to reveal the intellectual passions of one man and to expose the "immense variety of sources" from which they arose (Wright 1965a, xvii).

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