



Carl Ortwin Sauer
Berkeley office, 1950s

CARL SAUER

ON CULTURE AND LANDSCAPE

Readings and Commentaries

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pactly, his reflectiveness and his realism, and perhaps his interest in pre-Columbian contacts between the Old World and the New World led Olson to urge young writers to read his works. Out of this group has come Robert Callahan, founder of the Turtle Island Foundation [in Berkeley], an independent publishing venture that has reissued *Northern Mists* [1968a, 1973] and *Man in Nature* [1939, 1975] and has announced a program of additional Sauer publications. Several papers on Sauer and his influence on modern writers have recently appeared in the literary "little magazines," especially in New England and in the Bay Area, and more may be anticipated.

Parsons (1996) later published a full article on "Mr. Sauer' and the Writers." Also see Meinig (1983:319–320).

Poet Bob Callahan not only wrote a poem about Sauer (Parsons, 1996:24), but even turned Sauer's words and images into poetry or "song" in "Carl Sauer (The Migrations)" (1977:107–108):

The route of dispersal south
along the eastern base of the Rockies, southeast
into the forest in pursuit of old world mammals,
musk ox, giant elk, mammoths, bison, burning ahead
wooded areas turning into grasslands . . . (see Sauer, 1944a).

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Carl Sauer and His Critics

Kent Mathewson

INTRODUCTION

Carl O. Sauer, and the Berkeley school he inspired, should be granted a central place in any formal history or informal accounting of American geography. On this, there should be little disagreement. Yet, if one consults the standard extended histories, Sauer, his students, and confreres in the shared Berkeley enterprise are treated more in refractory than integral ways.¹ Taking a step beyond, one might make the controversial claim that the work of Sauer, his associates, and his adherents constitutes American geography's premier accomplishment over the past century. While this would be a minority position, his stature as a major figure persists, and if anything, appears to be growing (see chapter 4, table 1). Of course, this claim would invite vigorous debate, involving revisiting many earlier debates within the development of American geography. This inquest and appraisal would necessarily put the concepts of "culture" and "landscape" in sharp relief. Here, I will not attempt this. Rather, I will sink some test pits to identify and clear some of the grounds that must be prepared in order to build the case for placing the importance of Sauer and his school within twentieth-century American geography. Here, I only discuss some of his main critics, and the contexts out of which they mount their criticisms. A fuller treatment would necessarily engage the history of the development and deployment of a number of concepts in American geography, especially culture and landscape.

Not surprisingly, many of Sauer's chief critics also turn out to be repre-

sentative figures of American geography's main paradigmatic moments over the past century. For simplicity's sake, this time frame can be divided into five temporal spans, each with its recognized orthodoxies or epistemic expressions, some of which are at odds with one another, as one may note. The phases with representative critics are: (1) 1900–1925, environmentalism and Davisian landform studies, few if any critics; (2) 1925–1955, static-synchronic chorology, Davis himself, some environmentalists, though muted, and famously Richard Hartshorne; (3) 1955–1970, spatial analytic and systems science, Peter Gould and various lesser positivist critics; (4) 1970–1980, structuralist and humanist approaches, seemingly few critics; and (5) 1980–present, post-structuralist perspectives and neo-positivist regroupings (especially around GIS), James Duncan and most New Cultural geographers almost as a rite of passage. This highly simplified scheme obviously requires caveats—for example: the rigid dating is obviously debatable, physical geography gets short shrift, and unpublished sources may contain more material than published critiques. It is useful, however, in putting his critics in changing disciplinary contexts. (For a substantial bibliography of commentaries on Sauer over the course of these phases, see chapter 4 herein.)

BACKGROUND: "THE MORPHOLOGY OF LANDSCAPE"

Throughout much of his professional life, Carl Sauer was at odds with mainstream American geography. While still in graduate school (1909–1915) he began to develop critiques of major currents within the mainstream. These departures or dissents were well informed and grounded in the philosophy and history of geography. Initially these came from close readings of the German and French geographical literature. Save for his advisor Rollin Salisbury, he was not impressed with the geography faculty at the University of Chicago, and even less taken by the cause-and-effect geographical determinism then enjoying paradigmatic dominance. He later remarked that by 1912 he had begun to distance himself from the Chicago program and spent his evenings reading the continental literature (Sauer, 1999b). It was not until after 1923, when he moved from the University of Michigan to Berkeley, that he began to publish critiques of mainstream currents and propose alternative approaches (Hooson, 1981). His major statement during this period, "The Morphology of Landscape," was published in 1925.²

Penn and Lukermann (2003) and other commentators on "The Morphology" agree that its immediate import was to offer American geographers

a window on developments in European, especially German, geographic thought regarding the concept of not only "landscape," but also "culture" and "chorology." It also attacked environmental determinism head-on. It can be credited with discrediting and perhaps even derailing the environmentalist project within American geography. Of course, the environmentalist conceit did not disappear, but after 1925 it was moved to the margins, and within another two decades largely outside the bounds of respectable disciplinary discourse.³

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO "THE MORPHOLOGY"

Curiously, upon publication, "The Morphology" was met with little comment, at least in print. The only comment of note was by Charles R. Dryer in the 1926 *Geographical Review* (Lukermann, 1989:53–54). This review appeared under the subheading "The Nature of Geography."⁴ Beyond Dryer's patronizing tone and his not so subtle ethnic slur on prolix German scholarship and by extension Sauer's own creation, Dryer does not find Sauer's attack on prevailing currents in American geography objectionable. He doubts that Sauer's landscape morphological method will yield much, but does commend the "young, competent, and ambitious" geographer for his seriousness.

Beyond the journals, "The Morphology" made for considerable commentary, or at least that is what Sauer's younger contemporaries, especially in the Midwest, have said in retrospect. Preston James (1929:85) and others put some of Sauer's ideas and methodology to work during the late 1920s and into the 1930s. The main adherents, however, were Sauer's own Berkeley students and the visiting German geographers that he favored for his early hires in the reconstructed Berkeley geography department (Speth, 1981).

RICHARD HARTSHORNE

The main critic of Sauer's concept of landscape, or his advocacy of putting landscape at geography's core, was Richard Hartshorne. In 1939 Hartshorne published his *The Nature of Geography*. It was subtitled "A Critical Survey of Current Thought in the Light of the Past." One of the principle targets was Sauer and his emerging Berkeley school. Two years earlier, John Leighly (1937), Sauer's close colleague at Berkeley, published an article modestly entitled "Some Comments on Contemporary Geographic Methods." He fol-

lowed with "Methodologic Controversy in Nineteenth Century German Geography" (1938). Leighly's interpretation of German geographers provoked Hartshorne to respond—first in an article-length paper, and then an extended paper that eventually was published as two entire numbers of the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (and later in various book editions and translations). Hartshorne found much of Sauer's concept of landscape objectionable—especially the emphasis on material culture and its tolerance for humanistic perspectives—and not within the proper bounds of geography. He also felt that both Leighly's and Sauer's advocacy of a genetic or historical method would be taking geography down misguided if not errant paths. Furthermore, for Hartshorne, a product of the Chicago department that Sauer had spurned, physical geography was best marginalized if not demobilized altogether. Finally, like many of Sauer's subsequent critics, Hartshorne saw little value in culture historical themes, such as plant and animal domestications, prehistoric human-environment interactions, material culture diffusions, and the dispossession and demise of indigenous and local peoples in the wake of European colonial global expansion.

Sauer's interdisciplinary foraging in the domains of history, anthropology, and the natural sciences, together with his disdain for positivistic social science focused on narrow political and economic concerns in the here-and-now, branded him as a maverick and possibly a subversive (at least in a disciplinary sense). For self-appointed paradigm policemen such as Richard Hartshorne, Sauer and his followers were beyond the pale and needed to be given disciplinary citations or censures, and were not widely cited in the geographic literature.

Sauer's response followed the next year. The Association of American Geographers held its annual meeting at Louisiana State University in 1940, and Sauer was the association's president. His presidential address, "Foreword to Historical Geography" (1941b), was directed squarely at Hartshorne and mainstream American geography that found landscape-as-concept confusing and landscape studies as geography's central focus deviant (Livingstone, 1992:260). Sauer (1941b:4–5) prescribed three remedies for the "pernicious anemia" that he took to be geography's current condition. He offered a "three-point underpinning" for geography: (1) that the history of geography not only be a foundational element in graduate education, but also a touchstone through a geographer's career; (2) that "American geography cannot dissociate itself from the great fields of physical geography"; and (3) that "the human geographer should be well based on the sister discipline of anthro-

pology." Not surprisingly, his former colleague Richard Russell and former student Fred Kniffen (both had arrived at LSU from Berkeley in the late 1920s to found the ideal Sauerian department) were the hosts of his presidential meeting. Moreover, they were well on their way to building a program based on his three-point design, along with many other Sauerian features. Within the address, and within the LSU program, the study and reconstruction of cultural landscapes were at the core of what Sauer prescribed for a healthy discipline of geography.

After this exchange, Sauer did not expend much further effort in debating the eastern and midwestern custodians of geographic orthodoxy. Removed as he was beyond the western mountains in Berkeley, he and his students thrived in semi-isolation from the rest of American geography. His scholarly exchanges were more likely to be with anthropologists, historians, botanists, agronomists, and field-oriented natural scientists of all descriptions than with geographers who found increasingly less value in historical approaches to questions of culture and landscape. Thus, by the late 1950s, when Hartshorne and the unreconstructed regionalists came under fire from the spatial science "insurgents," Sauer and his associates were mostly ignored and largely unaffected.

PETER GOULD AND ALLAN PRED

During the 1960s, however, when the spatial positivists achieved what they assumed was an hegemony within American geography, Sauer and similar landscape enthusiasts were dismissed as irrelevant relics, or derided as retrograde and even reactionary. Peter Gould best expressed this sentiment in his retrospective essay "Geography 1957–1977: The Augean Period" (1979). Gould quotes Sauer as saying, "We may leave enumeration to census takers . . . to my mind we are concerned with processes that are largely non-recurrent and involve time spans beyond the short runs available to enumeration." He finds Sauer's debunking of increasing quantification in the social sciences as "shabby, parochial, and unintelligent," and accuses Sauer (and by implication many of his contemporaries) of "bumbling amateurism and anti-quarianism" (140).

Similarly, Allan Pred in a 1983 retrospective essay on the "quantitative revolution" remembered Sauer at Berkeley in the early 1960s as being anti-urban and racist in his views of rural black migration to cities. Pred was understandably disturbed by what he imagined Sauer's views on the black

civil rights movement to be. Pred paraphrased Sauer's position as "Negroes are simple, happy folk whose natural place is close to the soil. If only they hadn't been driven from the countryside into the cities we would have none of these problems" (1983:92–93). Rhetorical simplification aside, this may be a reasonably accurate rendering of Sauer's sentiments. Sauer's position on the plight of rural peoples in general, and indigenous and tribal populations in particular, is well documented. He was an outspoken advocate on rights of rural folk to defend and extend their traditional ties to the land, especially in the face of "development" and modernization. Pred's mid-century modernist outlook clashed with Sauer's earlier antimodernist convictions (Mathewson, 1986).

Later, a postmodernist Pred read Sauerian-inspired landscape studies the riot act in a review of James Duncan's 1990 work *The City as Text* (1991:115–116). Pred proclaimed that with Duncan's intervention: "The heavy ballast of Sauer-influenced landscape study is to be cast overboard. Fully. No more avowedly atheoretical undertakings. No more innocent reading of the superficial and the artefactual. No more satisfied, naïve claims that what you see is what you have. No more shunning of the human agency associated with landscape production. No more denial of the social processes and power relations with which built landscapes are inescapably interwoven. No further reliance on a notion of culture that is superorganic, unproblematic, divorced from the experiences of everyday life, devoid of the actively constructed and contested" (116).

Though both appraisals were honestly held by these critics, they say as much about their own epistemological perspectives (spatial positivist for Gould, and post-positivist for Pred) as about Sauer's own outlook and practice. Pred's latter comments may accurately describe the practices and perspectives of aspects of traditional cultural geography, but they cannot be applied in blanket fashion to Sauer's work.

JAMES BLAUT

During the decade of the 1970s, the phase I have associated with both structuralist and humanist currents in human geography, Sauer and the Sauerians once again did not elicit much critique. During this decade, cultural geography in general and landscape studies in particular generated little innovation, but still attracted enthusiasts. In various ways, traditional landscape studies offered some geographers a refuge or quiet backwater removed from the

theoretical ferment and methodological challenges that both the spatial analysts and their structuralist or radical opponents represented. This condition was not to last for long, however. In 1980 (perhaps significantly coinciding with the onset of the Reagan-Thatcher era), two quite different critiques of cultural geography were published. James Blaut's "Radical Critique of Cultural Geography" appeared in *Antipode*, and James Duncan's "The Superorganic in American Cultural Geography" appeared in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Among other things, Blaut took aim at cultural geography's tentative moves toward the soft positivism implicit in much of the behavioral geography of the time. He praised traditional cultural geography for its unwavering embrace of its historical and materialist groundings. But he challenged it to also take up a radical ethno-class perspective in looking at the world, whether past, present, or future. Not inconsequently, Blaut's doctoral work was with Fred Kniffen, a founder of the LSU program, and one of Sauer's early students (Mathewson and Stea, 2003).⁵

JAMES DUNCAN

Duncan had studied with one of Sauer's students—David Sopher, a specialist on South Asian landscapes and religions. But unlike Blaut, Duncan faulted the Sauerians specifically for their alleged embrace of the superorganic concept. The term superorganic was coined by Herbert Spencer, and adapted by Sauer's Berkeley anthropologist colleague Alfred Kroeber for a general cultural theory. Kroeber (1917) posited four separate levels of reality: the inorganic, the organic, the psychological, and finally, at the top, the social or cultural level (Duncan, 1980:184–185). According to Kroeber, each level is autonomous, and the cultural or "superorganic" level has separate ontological status and causative power. As such, culture is an entity above humans, not reducible to actions by individuals, and following its own laws. Duncan argues that Sauer and his students uniformly adopted Kroeber's superorganic concept, and hence American cultural geography reified culture, assumed internal homogeneity within cultures, and accepted a form of cultural determinism in their landscape studies.

Other than a few scattered quotes and Sauer's famous epigram from "The Morphology" that stated: "The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result" (1925:46), there is little actual evidence that Sauer, or most of his students for that matter, did accept Kroe-

ber's superorganic concept (Mathewson, 1998). The main exception is Wilbur Zelinsky, an extremely eclectic and prolific cultural geographer and one of Sauer's students from the 1950s. Zelinsky (1973:40–41) did explicitly accept and employ the superorganic cultural concept in his writings. Beyond identifying Zelinsky's affinities for the superorganic, and Sauer's supposed close association with Kroeber, Duncan himself reifies Sauer and Berkeley school geography in attributing a quasi-superorganic control or direction over the Sauerians' perspectives and practice. Even though Duncan missed the mark in some of his critiques of Berkeley school geographers, there is no question that his article helped catalyze an emerging dissatisfaction with cultural geography in the traditional mode. It also generated both immediate response (Duncan, 1981; Richardson, 1981; Symanski, 1981) and protracted comment and debate that continue (Duncan, 1993; Mathewson, 1998).

THE "NEW CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY"

By the end of the 1980s the "New Cultural Geography" was rapidly emerging, especially in Britain (Cosgrove and Jackson, 1987). Cultural Marxists such as Denis Cosgrove (1983, 1984, 1985) and Stephen Daniels (1993) put historical eyes on elite culture and past rural landscapes. Others, such as Peter Jackson (1989), with comparable cultural materialist views, surveyed contemporary urban popular culture scenes and situations. Starting from this initial base, during the 1990s the New Cultural Geography exploded into multiple directions and modes, but most proponents were united in indicting traditional cultural geography, past and present, as irrelevant at best, and reactionary at worst. Duncan, Cosgrove, Jackson, and others, such as Derek Gregory (1989) and David Ley (1981, 1982), produced a cannon of criticism that caricatured the traditional cultural geographers as single-mindedly focused on mapping the distribution of material artifacts such as houses, barns, fences, and gasoline stations. Rarely does this kind of criticism admit, or even apparently see, that the core focus of Sauer's work, and that of most of his followers, was on ecological analysis and historical interpretation of cultural landscapes.

This oversight or, more accurately, ignorance on the part of many of the instigators of the New Cultural Geography has not gone without challenge. Perhaps the best rebuttal to date is Marie Price and Martin Lewis's article "The Reinvention of Cultural Geography" (1993). Beyond stressing the Sauerians' past and continuing emphasis on cultural landscape construction in its environmental and historical dimensions, they point to Sauer's own radical

environmentalist stance, his defense of indigenous peoples and local folk in the face of capitalist development, and his profound skepticism toward positivist social science in refuting the notion that Sauer and his style of landscape studies are necessarily both irrelevant and reactionary.⁶

MICHAEL SOLOT

Along with generally uninformed critiques by the new cultural geographers during the past two decades, several well-informed geographers and anthropologists have offered critical opinions on Sauer's scholarship. In 1986, Michael Solot, then a geography graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, examined Sauer's rejection of cultural evolutionism and his championing of culture history as an alternative course for cultural geography. The crux of Solot's argument is that Sauer rejected cultural evolutionism, as Franz Boas had earlier, chiefly because of its associations with environmental determinism, and its "rationalistic" commitment to explaining culture change and transformation in unilinear and often providential terms. Solot suggests that Sauer offered as an alternative culture historical excavation of patterns of past landscape change with an emphasis on the visible, material elements of landscapes. Both of these appraisals are basically correct. Solot goes on to argue that in doing so, Sauer eschewed examination or explication of the processes involved. Again, this may be accurate for the first decade or so of Sauer's program and perspectives. This position is harder to support or demonstrate if one considers Sauer's last two or three decades of work (ca. 1950–1975). Sauer becomes increasingly concerned about the destructive nature not only of earlier colonial patterns *and* processes, but of modern life and civilization itself.

DICKSON, HARRIS, AND GADE ON AGRICULTURAL ORIGINS AND DISPERSALS

One of the main texts from which Solot draws his conclusions is Sauer's *Agricultural Origins and Dispersals* (1952a). Several scholars sympathetic to Sauer's overall oeuvre have put critical eyes to aspects of his theory of agricultural origins, and his championing of non-reoccurrent histories of agriculture's diffusions. Anthropologist D. Bruce Dickson (2003) considered Sauer's domestication theories in light of subsequent theories. First he rehearsed Sauer's basic arguments, aspects of which were original and ran

counter to conventional wisdom. Sauer hypothesized that agriculture was spawned in conditions of leisure and abundance, not undue toil and scarcity. He posited key cultural and environmental preconditions, and deemed the optimum locations to be riverine settings with diverse relief features in the humid tropics. His prime candidate was Southeast Asia. He also argued that root crops rather than seed crops were the first cultigens. Finally, he proposed that epidemic-style diffusion out of single hearths through cultural contact was the mode of dispersal. While Sauer's ideas were generally well received in geography, outside they met with muted response, or in some cases were rejected outright. Dickson traces this reception, and then turns to recent appraisals that have been more congenial. He shows that post-structural-functionalist approaches can accommodate Sauer's insights and conjectures. Specifically, both non-equilibrium development (or historical growth models) and evolutionary interpretations of domestication as naturally selected cases of mutualism between plants and/or animals and humans are not incompatible with Sauer's ideas.

Two geographers with ties to the Berkeley school have also reevaluated Sauer's speculations and prospectings involving the domestication process. David Harris (2002), archaeologist and Berkeley geography Ph.D., drawing on his own and others' grounded work (Near East and Southeast Asia/Australasia) corrects and counters much of Sauer's empirics (or lack of them) regarding Old World plant and animal domestication. Though Sauer comes up short in the test of time on these origins, Harris nevertheless gives him high marks on his deeper speculations. Sauer's prescient projections of early human migrations and dispersals and the importance of fire as perhaps humankind's primordial domestication continue to be corroborated by accumulating evidence. Daniel Gade, a cultural geographer in the Sauer mold, revisited Sauer's writings on New World crop diversity (1999:184–213). Much of Sauer's fieldwork on crop diversity was done as part of his Rockefeller Foundation-funded travel in 1942 to South America (1982). His principle publication on the topic is "Cultivated Plants of South and Central America" (1950a). Gade surveys Sauer's conjectures and conclusions regarding crop origins, chronologies, diffusions, and distributions. Much of what Sauer proposed has been shown to be accurate. In other cases, however, he was far from correct, and in one case—that of the coconut being an Old World rather than a New World domesticate, he declined to be corrected during his lifetime despite accumulating evidence to the contrary. Despite Sauer's streak of Missouri-style stubbornness, Gade credits Sauer's sharp insights and skill-

ful syntheses with helping to put the question of crop diversity and agricultural origins before a broad spectrum of subsequent specialists. Perhaps even more important, Gade sees Sauer's moral defense of biodiversity as being a legacy that lives on in a dissenting academic tradition and resonates with the struggles of ordinary farmers to defend their agro-cultural patrimony in the face of a destructive modernization.

DAVID STODDART

Sauer's earliest graduate training at Northwestern University was in geology, and his dissertation advisor was Chicago's foremost physiographer, Rollin D Salisbury. Sauer continued to keep a foot (if not a particularly active hand) in physical geography for the first half of his career. However, he is little remembered for his efforts in this side of the field. David Stoddart, former Berkeley chair of geography and distinguished coastal geomorphologist and historian of science, exhumed and evaluated portions of Sauer's record as a geomorphologist (Stoddart, 1997). What he found was that Sauer was quite engaged at certain times in the 1920s and 1930s in planning and promoting research in geomorphology, climatology, and soil studies. Soon after arriving in Berkeley in 1923, Sauer launched a study of California's Peninsular Range (1929a). Stoddart sees this venture more as establishing a beachhead to advance geography's claim to geomorphic study turf within the university than as sustaining a commitment to geomorphic studies per se. At the same time, Sauer saw potential in applying the new German approach to land form studies pioneered by Walther Penck (1924). Sauer and his close colleagues John Leighly and John Kesseli saw great utility in Penck's analytical method as a means to challenge and deflate Harvard's William Morris Davis's reigning "cycle of erosion" concept and method. Although Sauer showed great élan and ingenuity in his analyses, few of his novel interpretations were born out in subsequent work. Stoddart's own appraisal suggests that some of Sauer's explanations were simply an inversion of the Davisian explanations.

A few years later Sauer found himself in southeast Arizona, deflected from his intended Mexican fieldwork by political troubles south of the border. There he decided to re-examine "some commonly accepted concepts concerning basin-range features" (Sauer, 1930a). The founding work had been carried out by Davis, and by Sauer's Berkeley geology colleagues Andrew Lawson and George Louderback (upon whose territory he had trespassed in his Peninsular Range studies). Kirk Bryan, a Harvard geologist and geogra-

pher, had carried out the most recent studies. Sauer advanced a provocative Penckian explanation for the processes at work. Little came of this venture, save for engendering the career-long enmity of Bryan.

Sauer's final foray into the physical geography arena was more successful. During the Depression, Isaiah Bowman (a member of Roosevelt's Science Advisory Board) named Sauer to the S.A.B.'s Committee on Land-Use. Sauer played a key role in fostering research on soil erosion. He drew effectively from the ranks of his growing cadre of Berkeley-trained geographers. The principal sites chosen were in New Mexico and the piedmont of the Southeast looking at arroyo and gully formation. Although Sauer by this time was not directly involved in the fieldwork, it did spark interest among geographers (primarily Berkeley-associated) in these questions for several decades subsequently. Among the main things that Sauer took away from this experience was the destructive potential of human agency to alter landscapes under colonial or subsequent exploitative conditions, and his own lack of enthusiasm for further involvement with bureaucratic agencies and organizations. This mid-Depression service also helped set the stage for Sauer's resolute turn from the 1940s on toward historical geography.

RICHARD SYMANSKI

Over time, Sauer's persona, his position as the key figure in a scholarly school, and his approach to geography have all generated critical comments, but to date the most sustained attempt at critique has been by Richard Symanski. Symanski, a geographer teaching in the ecology program at the University of California, Irvine, has in recent years turned to Web-based and self-published broadsides aimed at selected geographers and tendencies within the discipline. He has singled out Sauer for extended criticism. A short essay titled "Coconuts on a Lava Flow in the Chiricahua Mountains" appears in a 2002 collection of Symanski's essays. He revisits the case of the coconut, and Sauer's relations with Henry Bruman, his former doctoral student who championed an Old World origin for its domestication. Symanski also unearths a field episode from the 1920s in which Sauer overrode a student's interpretation of local geology, thus putatively demonstrating disregard for the evidence as well as pulling rank with a subordinate. Among the conclusions Symanski draws from these episodes, along with several other recounted lapses and errors in the field, is that Sauer was neither much of a scholar nor a field-worker nor at times a gentleman. Given the temptations

toward hagiography that some of the literature on Sauer exhibits (Mikesell, 1987), Symanski's observations are a useful corrective. But also given Symanski's well-known, and well-honed, penchant for invective and ridicule, his motives must be questioned.⁷

DON MITCHELL

In contrast to Symanski's *ad hominem*, *ad infinitum* attacks on an expanding gallery of geographers, Don Mitchell has set his sights on de- and reconstructing landscape studies. In important ways, Mitchell (2000) picks up the Marxist critique of traditional cultural geography that Cosgrove, Daniels, and Jackson initiated but have not sustained. In addition, Mitchell's approach to landscape is more direct and his adherence to historical materialism more orthodox. For Mitchell, landscape is the product of human labor, and must be understood as such. Questions of representation, "reading the landscape as text," and similar approaches deployed by the first wave of new cultural geographers are deemed useful, but they are not at the core of his concerns. Unmasking the social relations at work in landscape construction and destruction are his concern. Unlike most critics of the Sauer and the Berkeley school, Mitchell has never singled out Sauer as the source of cultural geography's perceived problems and retrograde agendas. For the most part, Mitchell (2000) sees Sauer's cultural landscape concept quite accurately, especially Sauer's materialist and historical orientation, and his "Herderian" ethno-pluralism in the face of Eurocentrism. In Mitchell's estimation, Sauer's main failing was in not adequately theorizing the place of labor in culture and landscape, leaving an ill-defined "culture" to do this work.

In a *Progress in Human Geography* report on current cultural landscapes studies, Mitchell (2003:787) asks the question: "Just landscapes or landscapes of justice?" He singles out Kenneth Olwig's excavations of the landscape concept for favorable comment, especially the connections Olwig (2002) makes between the construction of modern Atlantic imperial polities and the construction, or the production, of both cultural and political landscapes. Following on this, Mitchell argues for putting empire and imperial polities center stage in landscape studies. As he suggests: "It is doubly important now, as . . . the landscape of empire is every bit as much a landscape of destruction as it is a landscape of production" (2003:788). He goes on to comment on landscape destruction as a defining characteristic of our current times (lower Manhattan on 9/11, Afghanistan in its wake, Palestinian towns before, during, and

after, and then Iraq) and to propose that landscape studies become laboratories, or at least incubators, of theory and practice directed at the propagation of landscapes of justice.

LANDSCAPES OF DESTRUCTION

If this refocusing of critical landscape studies on landscapes of destruction is to be taken seriously, then it must also take seriously its precursors. In nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century geography, the work of George Perkins Marsh (1864), Elisée Reclus (1905–1908), Jean Bruhnes (1910), and a number of other chroniclers of imperial and colonial “destructive exploitation” (to use the apt term of the times) provides the foundations for any contemporary study of landscapes of destruction. If the focal point is to be grounded in cultural landscape study, then Carl Sauer and his work indisputably need to be the starting point. Surveying his career, starting with his dissertation in 1915 and continuing until his death in 1975 (some sixty years of fieldwork, research, and publication), one will find that, for Sauer, landscape construction and destruction were central organizing concepts and were often conjoined to produce powerful and sometimes polemical critiques of European colonial expansion from the late Middle Ages onward.⁸

CONCLUSION

An adequate account has not yet been written of Sauer’s contributions to American geography as realized and expressed through the collective production and directions taken by his associates, students, and those inspired by the Berkeley school approach. If and when it is, it will encompass the work of several generations of scholars, whose numbers now total several hundred at a minimum. Sauer’s direct progeny within the Latin American branch of his “academic genealogical” tree (his advisees and their advisees, et cetera, that wrote dissertations on Latin American topics) numbered over 150 by 2000 (Brown and Mathewson, 1999). Sauer’s works and those of some of his students have been or are currently being translated into Spanish and Portuguese and a whole new generation of Latin American geographers and students are being introduced to the Berkeley school, many for the first time.⁹ Nor has anyone yet attempted to tabulate the published contributions of Sauer, along with his associates and several generations of his legates, to the

multiple questions that have engaged this large group of like-minded scholars. I think it is safe to say, however, that this literature comprises some hundreds of books and monographs, and several thousand articles and lesser publications. Viewed collectively, this corpus amounts to one of the larger bodies of published work in North American geography. It has not previously been implicitly recognized or acknowledged in these terms.

I think it is also safe to say, despite retorts to the contrary, that Sauer’s legacy is alive and well and is likely to persist as long as geographers and kindred scholars continue to take an interest in questions of culture and landscape and the history of humans’ agency on earth.¹⁰ The quality and quantity of the Sauerian oeuvre taken as a whole—or even in parts—is large and complex enough to ensure both continuing criticism and enduring admiration (see chapter 4, tables 1 and 2). For example, Don Mitchell’s 2003 call for landscape scholars to put questions of landscape destruction front and center provides not only a fulcrum to redirect cultural geography, but also an appropriate lens to reassess Sauer’s and his adherents’ contributions. Mitchell’s call could be the grounds for a critical survey of past thought, in light of the future. And, this is not likely to be the last opportunity either.

NOTES

1. In the standard text on the history of geography by Martin (2005), *All Possible Worlds*, Sauer appears as a leader of the younger field-oriented midwestern geographers after World War I, as the introducer and practitioner of the landscape approach in American geography, as an early advocate of historical geography, and later as an organizer of the monumental International Symposium on Man’s Role in Changing the Face of Earth in 1955 (Thomas, 1956). Martin makes only fleeting references to the Berkeley school itself. Johnston and Sidaway (2004), *Geography and Geographers*, index the Berkeley school, but the references are to critical and reifying comments made by new cultural geographers. Johnston and Sidaway do accord Sauer significant roles in pre-1960s cultural and historical geography, and the debates over Hartshorne’s (1939) *The Nature of Geography*. Lesser histories by Unwin (1992) and Holt-Jensen (1999) devote a few lines to Sauer mainly in relation to his debate with Hartshorne, but also as a possibilist and advocate of landscape studies. By far the most sympathetic and sophisticated treatment of Sauer in these histories is Livingstone’s (1992). He devotes a major section to Sauer, especially his relations to Boasian anthropology. Here one is allowed to glimpse the larger significance of Sauer and his school for not only geography, but in the context of cognate fields. Yet, not even a synoptic accounting of the school is offered by any of these histories.

2. While much has been written on Sauer’s “Morphology of Landscape” (1925), there has been little close reading. Penn and Lukermann’s (2003) “Chorology and Landscape” is the ex-

ception. See them for a fuller understanding of the issues, implications, and legacy of Sauer's treatise.

3. This is not to say that the residua of environmental determinism has not been reconstituted and resurrected even in our times, but these revivals come almost entirely from beyond geography's borders. Examples range from Jared Diamond's (1999) well-intentioned but seriously flawed *Guns, Germs, and Steel* to the global development designs advanced by various economists and planners who have recently "discovered" geography in its most banal forms (see Sluyter, 2003).

4. Perhaps significantly, Hartshorne does not mention this, or cite Dryer (other than his 1919 presidential address to the AAG) in his own 1939 magnum opus entitled *The Nature of Geography*.

5. Blaut (1993), until his death in 2000, was proud of this lineage, and even more pleased to self-identify as a "Kniffenite/Sauerian-Marxist"—a seeming contradiction in terms for many geographers (Mathewson, 2005).

6. Also, see the commentaries on "The Reinvention of Cultural Geography" by Cosgrove, Duncan, and Jackson, with a response by Price and Lewis, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83 (1993): 515–522.

7. To date, Gade (2004) has provided the most penetrating (psycho)analysis of Symanski's crusade to unmask the foibles, follies, and falsities of American geographers, ordinary and otherwise.

8. Much of Sauer's writing can be subsumed in this category, from his 1920s reports on the "cut-over" lands of northern Michigan, to his 1930s broadsides on colonialism and destructive exploitation, to his organizing the 1955 Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth symposium, and on to his cultural and historical studies of the European conquest of the Americas throughout his career.

9. Environmental historian Guillermo Castro H. based at the City of Knowledge Foundation, Panama, is currently translating Sauer's methodological papers for Web distribution. James Parsons's and Robert West's Colombian studies have been translated and published in Colombia under several auspices. Mexican geographer Narciso Barrera-Bassols is overseeing the translation and publication of geographical classics on Michoacán, Mexico, including studies by Sauer students Donald Brand, Dan Stanislawski, and Robert West. William Denevan, a student of Parsons, has published or republished three of his own monographs in Spanish plus several articles in Spanish or Portuguese. Brazilian geographers Roberto Lobato and Zeny Rosenthal are publishing some of Sauer's methodological writings in Portuguese. It will be interesting to see to what extent this foreign exposure generates new work along old lines, or if hybrid forms develop.

10. In what attempts to pass for a jocular marker of the extinction of Sauerian-inspired cultural geography, the lead illustration of the *Handbook of Cultural Geography* (Anderson et al., 2003) depicts an above-ground tomb in New Orleans with the inscription in Gothic script "Here Lies Cultural Geography, Born 1925, Died 2002. In Loving Memory." At least memory is indicated here, but Sauer and the Berkeley school are largely elided from this 580-page reference work. The only place they make a serious appearance is in Jane Jacobs's "Introduction: After Empire" (2003:348–350). And this is because Andrew Sluyter (1997, 2002) has made a cogent case for the potential of Sauerian-style geography for postcolonial analysis. Sympathetically, Bret

Wallach (1999) asked whether Sauer would make it "across that Great Bridge" to the next millennium? He forecast a decline "in the near term," but held out for his later "resurrection."

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