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LEARNING TO READ THE PIONEER LANDSCAPE: BRAUDEL, ELIADE, TURNER, AND BENTON

JOHN OPIE

Looking at different viewpoints about the landscape of middle America is like seeing the Japanese movie *Rashomon*: it all depends on who is telling the story. We tend to forget, for example, that American origins are intertwined with an agricultural world view. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the United States was predominantly a nation of farmers, and to all appearances it would continue so indefinitely. (It was not until the early twentieth century that more Americans lived in cities than on farms.) The future successful course of America seemed to depend upon vast and open tracts of good farmland that was virtually free; otherwise the republic was in peril. This was Thomas Jefferson's rationale, in part, for the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

But the first exploratory experiences with middle America were negative. When the United States acquired the Louisiana Purchase,

James Monroe complained to Jefferson that he had bought a perpetual wasteland. As late as 1821 an Illinois settler complained that "books are written in the east to prove the wretchedness of the prairies."¹ This judgment was based in part on a widely accepted belief that harked back to the clearing of land in early medieval Europe: good agricultural land comes from forested land; where there was only grass and no woods, the land could not support farming. It would take another generation to dispel this hardy myth.

But no farmer could long stay away from the rich, black, six-foot-deep soil of Illinois and Iowa. Settlers welcomed the fact that the prairie land did not have to be laboriously cleared of trees and stumps before planting. Soon descriptions of the prairie sod were dominated by positive rather than negative statements; it was "fertile," "benign," "salubrious," "verdant," and "lush."² The extraordinary success of prairie farmers emerged as a major symbol of American self-identity that still persists today.³ Despite contemporary urbanization, the agricultural heartland is taken to be a powerful and permanent feature of the American character and American nationhood. My purpose here is to explore the reasons for the

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power of this fundamental symbol in the American experience. My essay draws on approaches from several disciplines and includes non-American viewpoints as well as representative American interpretations.

The virgin prairie of middle America was soon praised for its productivity and recognized as familiar landscape. Europeans had over the years invented a model landscape: the idyllic natural garden-park that could be transformed into a classic agrarian setting. Dutch landscape paintings of the seventeenth century, for example, idealized the familiar scene of the small self-sufficient farm: a cluster of houses framed by fields, a stream or lake, and woodlots. This vision, centered on the successful agrarian traditions of plowing, sowing, harvesting, and husbandry, became an important ideal of western civilization. The Dutch view was followed by the romanticized portrayals by Gainsborough and Turner, and more recently the French Impressionists.⁴

Many nineteenth-century American artists, including the Hudson River School and western wilderness painters like Thomas Moran and the transplanted Albert Bierstadt, were unabashed nature-romantics.⁵ An American booster of the West, William Gilpin, later described a garden-park as a grasslike lawn with scattered trees and a winding stream or small lake. The similarity between this idealized landscape and western places like the floor of Yosemite Valley, Hayden Valley in Yellowstone, and the meanders and meadows of Rocky Mountain National Park, is not coincidental.

This pastoral and agrarian vision of paradise was also derived from commonly held biblical and classical traditions.⁶ In America, Crèvecoeur, Bartram, and Jefferson heaped praises upon the yeoman settled on his small self-sufficient farm; he was the typical and ideal inhabitant of the new land.⁷ Out of the virgin garden-park the yeoman farmer established a rural landscape and gave order to the land. Early travelers like Timothy Dwight and Peter Kalm praised the virtues of this domestic landscape.⁸ These idylls were fulfilled, it seemed, in the rich lands first of southeastern Pennsylvania

and then the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The wild open spaces originally called the "Kentucky Barrens" emerged as the coveted bluegrass country.⁹ The stage was set for successful conquest of a previously forbidding prairie country to the west. So important did the landscape of an emerging middle America become that much later the pioneer planner Frederick Law Olmstead recreated the garden-park in New York's Central Park and in the Chicago suburb of Riverside.¹⁰ The Garden City movement of the late nineteenth century reflected the strength of the rural imagery, which is still visible today in suburban landscapes.¹¹

BRAUDEL AND AMERICAN PERMANENCE

The profound impact of a landscape has been explored by the French *Annales* historian Fernand Braudel. Whether the American Midwest was called a garden, parklike, a middle landscape, or simply prairie, Braudel sees it as an elemental geographical "structure."¹² Convinced of the binding relationship between man and his physical surroundings, Braudel searches for long-term definitive forces in history: the *longue durée*, "a history in slow motion from which permanent values can be detected."

According to Braudel, what stands out in New World settlement are vast spaces, intimidating in distance and in time.¹³ Human influences seem like insignificant islands set up in the middle of incomprehensibly large oceans, buffeted by superhuman natural forces. Braudel plays down the standard textbook sequence of political, military, and social events almost into insignificance compared to his extended geographical cycles of imperceptible, slow, recurrent movement crossing uncounted generations.

The power of Braudel's geographical structures is nowhere more evident than in agricultural life. Farming is the most representative form of "material life": elemental, repetitious, traditional, necessary. The agricultural process is a "conjuncture," or the process of coming to terms with one's geography over the long run.¹⁴ (Modern industrialization is also such a

response.) But everywhere structures set boundaries for human possibility: climate, terrain, food resources, and populations are all involved in this "ground floor of history." Perhaps American history is still too brief to demonstrate Braudel's monumental notions, but it can also be argued that our history now has a degree of duration, and that possibly the American experience involves an unusual "compression" of history. Perhaps history moves at a variable pace.

AMERICAN HISTORY AS "SACRED HISTORY"

Another approach shifts our attention from physical geographical reality to the life of the mind. Mircea Eliade, a Roumanian anthropologist and philosopher of religion, sees the same issues in terms of myth. Eliade treats myth not as invented fable but rather as a narrative that establishes the ultimate truths of a national identity.¹⁵ A living myth supplies models for human behavior and gives meaning and value to life. It is supposed to narrate a superior history, so powerful as to be sacred in quality, by telling how a reality came into being through a description of superpowerful places, extraordinary persons, and a fateful sequence of events. This is neither mere history nor nostalgia; either would degrade the understanding of the human condition implied in the myth. This particular history is sacred and superior because it makes absolute statements about the ultimate forces and features of a national identity. It is a fundamental binding memory that supplies all-important continuity between past, present, and future. It is a "useful past" because it explains how a people came into existence, what their primary characteristics are, and what significance they have in the course of human events. Ideally, it is also future-oriented in that it tells what a people should become, through past example. It is worth noting that mythic tales of creation and renewal given a narrative linear form, are particularly explicit among peoples where history began; Babylonians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Iranians—all

were frontier societies. Their old sagas had universal significance and "explained" the nature and destiny of man.¹⁶ The American movement into new country came much later, but the themes of the mythic creation of a civilization are extraordinarily strong.

TURNER'S SEARCH FOR A "USABLE PAST"

The themes of myth and history, space and time, environmental permanence and human response converged in the writings of Frederick Jackson Turner. Seen as history alone, Turner's work may be, as Richard Hofstadter suggested in 1949, "a positive hindrance to sound inquiry into America's past," because it promoted an inadequate interpretive stance.¹⁷ But to interpret Turner's frontier as myth or "sacred history" places his views in another dimension. In turn, this symbolic dimension has points of convergence with the geographical or environmental stance already described.

Turner's key statement, endlessly repeated in various forms in his essays, turned up first in his landmark 1893 paper: "Up to our own day, American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development."¹⁸ Turner concluded that westward movement into new territory had controlled the evolution of American society. Another conclusion was that this development had come to an end; it was history. For him the pieces of a massive, complex, and critically important puzzle—American identity—fell into place.

According to Turner, westward movement forged the American personality: "to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy;

that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that bouyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier, portraits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.”¹⁹

Turner had been troubled by powerful new forces that were changing the nation in the late nineteenth century—rampant industrialization, uncontrolled urban growth, mass immigration, and the new internationalism. None of these were direct products of the frontier experience, he felt, and seemed to stand in direct contradiction to it. According to Turner, by 1890 the nation had taken a strange and un-American turn. Without attachment to the frontier and its traditions, Americans lived outside known guidelines or purposeful direction.

In a 1903 essay he wrote apprehensively, “The question is imperative, then. What ideals persist from this democratic experience of the West; and have they acquired sufficient momentum to sustain themselves under conditions so radically unlike those in the days of their origin?”²⁰ He lamented, “The free lands are gone, the material forces that gave vitality to Western democracy are passing away. . . . Never again can such an opportunity come to the sons of men.”²¹ At the peak of his career, in his presidential address before the American Historical Association in Indianapolis in 1910, he opened with the words, “The transformations through which the United States is passing in our own day are so profound, so far reaching, that it is hardly an exaggeration to say that we are witnessing the birth of a new nation in America.”²² In the next paragraph he restated his anxiety: “It is with a shock that the people of the United States are coming to realize that the fundamental forces which have shaped their society up to the present are disappearing.”²³

Turner’s objective was to notify Americans that their useful history—thereby their sacred history in contrast to the useless and profane present—was their westward expansion into empty land. The frontier thesis made sense of the American past and gave Americans a national myth at the same time that they acquired

a national history.²⁴ In light of the disappearance of the frontier and the un-American transformations taking place by the late nineteenth century, the duty of the historian was to revive and conserve the great American tradition. Turner’s 1910 Indiana University commencement address was his strongest statement of the frontier as America’s sacred history: “The first ideal of the pioneer was that of conquest. It was his task to fight with nature for the chance to exist. Not as in older countries did this contest take place in a mythical past, told in folk lore and epic. It has been continuous to our own day. . . . He was building a new society as well as breaking new soil.”²⁵ In the 1893 essay Turner wrote, “Behind institutions, behind constitutional forms and modifications, lie the vital forces that call these organs into life and shape them to meeting changing conditions.”²⁶ The forces Turner points to suggest Braudel’s structures and conjunctures.

AMERICAN ARCHETYPE:

THE FARMER IN THE MIDDLE LANDSCAPE

In most frontier epics, heroic stature belongs to the mountain man, explorer, fur trader, hunter, or cattle rancher. It is not usually acknowledged that Turner’s “frontier thesis” depends on, in his own words, “the advance of the more steady farmer.”²⁷ The immigrant agriculturalist, attracted by good soil on free land, is Turner’s representative frontiersman. Settlement by the farmer marks the high point of frontier advance. In his historic 1893 essay the longest quote, covering two printed pages, is a statement from 1837 about waves of agrarian advance into the wilderness.²⁸ The sequence is constant and repetitious: first backwoods settlement, then permanent clearings that open the forested land, and finally the extensive fields of a recognizable rural American landscape.²⁹ Turner’s attention to the farmer combines mythic and geographical elements. The primitive agricultural experience anywhere is intimately affected by natural cycles of seasons and the biological rhythms of the natural world. Farmers are also

notoriously indifferent to the historical events that fill textbooks.

Turner eliminated both the effete East and the untamed West from his formulation of an American myth. The Atlantic Coast frontier had too many ties with Europe to allow for new development, and the American character remained stifled.³⁰ The need to break with Europe was one of Turner's major themes. But another statement about the wilderness is often ignored. Turner repudiated the "lawless" frontier. The gambler, the desperado, the "Carolina Regulator," and the "California Vigilante" represented "that line of scum that the waves of advancing civilization bore before them."³¹ Primitive frontier society, even for Turner, could be too primitive.

To Turner, the midwestern prairie was not undifferentiated wilderness but familiar garden-park. The pioneer farmer was there to plow land, build his farmhouse, barn, and outbuildings, and settle in. Statements about the "Middle Landscape" and "Middle America" are commonplace and important in our history. The middle region would not lead to an urban industrial society that Turner feared for its rootlessness. It did not sustain the defeatist baronian tradition of the southern tidewater. Nor was it inhabited by primitive barbarians. "The men of the frontier had closer resemblances to the Middle region than to either of the other sections. . . . The Middle region . . . was democratic and nonsectional, if not national; 'easy, tolerant, and contented'; rooted strongly in material prosperity . . . the Middle region mediated between East and West as well as between North and South. Thus it became the typically American region."³² In the nineteenth century, the people who formed the "Middle region" poured into the newly opened territory that came to be called the Middle West.

BENTON: PAINTER OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

Thomas Hart Benton was successfully established as an artist when he first read Frederick

Jackson Turner in 1927. Benton had already committed himself to the formulation of an American art derived exclusively from American historical myths and dreams, and which would be accessible to a wide public.³³

Between 1919 and 1926 Benton produced his first major work in this American context: two series of five murals titled the *American Historical Epic*. The paintings are typical, as they emphasize the energy and force Benton saw in American life. Contours and figures are active, large areas are brightly colored, and the lines have a dynamic flow. Benton consciously worked to capture in his art the epic proportions of the settlement of the vast American landscape. Like Turner, Benton believed that no distinction could be made between American geography and the American character. The myths and dreams of the American frontier past, so closely associated with its geography, were the means for self-discovery. Out of this past came the values that were worth maintaining in an era of rapid change.

With Turner, Benton believed that a new and vital civilization was emerging out of the pioneer experience on the agricultural prairie. The American Midwest was not the dull and barren field that critics made of it, but a region full of kinetic energy where the powerful forces of land and farming had transformed its inhabitants. With Turner, Benton believed that a native set of ideals, aspirations, and realities were being created and lived by the hardworking, pragmatic yeoman farmers of the Midwest.

Benton searched for a usable past just as Turner did. He consciously combined environmentalism and Americanism because he believed they were joined together in the midwestern experience. In this middle landscape existed archetypes of the everyday but fundamental life of Americans. America's genius was to invest the ordinary, the commonplace, or the average with mythic properties. "Our basic cultural ideas, our beliefs as to what constitutes the 'American character', our mythologies, had their origins in the earlier conditions."³⁴ Benton concentrated on types, even mythic stereotypes, rather than individuals or specific

historic events. "I believe I have wanted, more than anything else, to make pictures, the imagery of which would carry unmistakably American meanings for Americans and for as many of them as possible."³⁵

But also with Turner, Benton feared for the future of this definitive way of life, centered as it was on an agricultural region that had been settled in a specific era; his concern was that the nation would move in un-American ways. "Traditions and the old ways fight still the entrance of the modern world in this country, but in a little while they will break down and the very last of our father's America will be gone."³⁶ For Benton, the dangers lay not only with industrialization, immigration, and urbanization, but also with fascism and Marxism, which he tended to equate as the same kind of totalitarianism. For Turner,

the enemy had been modernization and socialism.

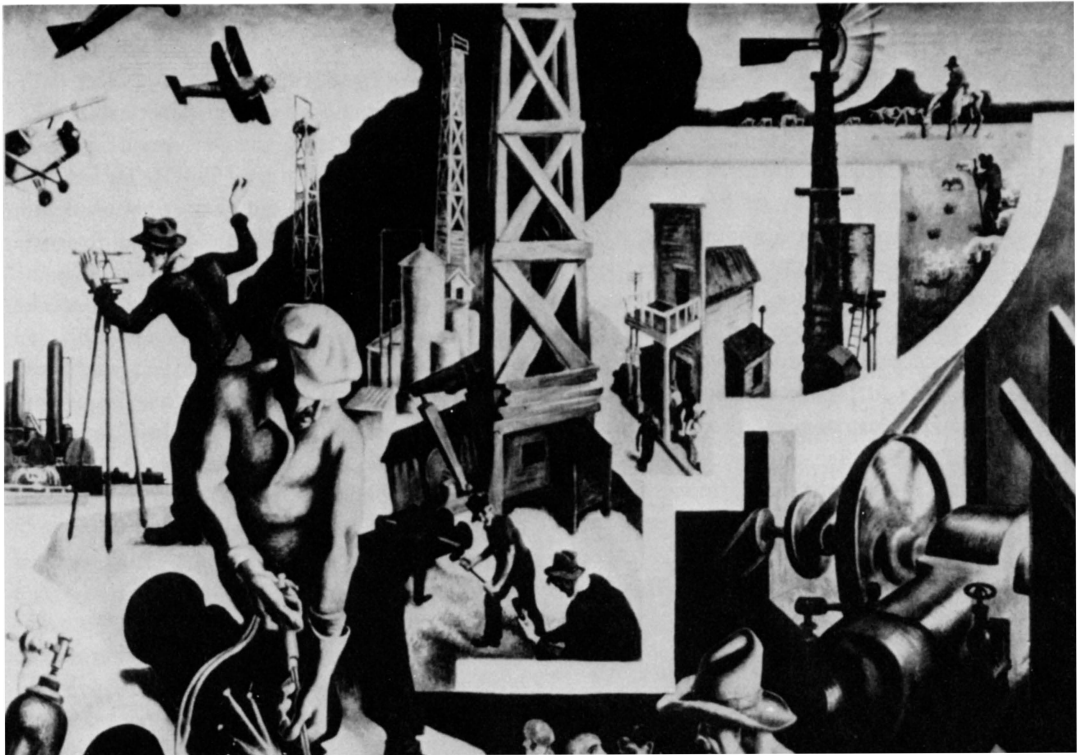
Beginning with the mural called *The Pathfinder*, Benton more intently Americanized his work by exaggerating the features of his subjects, almost to caricature (Fig. 1). He believed that sharp contours, simplification of detail, and strong tones gave him an idealized imagery. He also began to expunge devices such as the abstract cubistic rock in the foreground of *The Pathfinder* when they carried no American meaning at all.³⁷ Never before had an American artist worked so intently in a series of connected art works to find a uniquely American art form. When critics came to say that Benton made art subservient to Americanism, he was delighted; this was not failure but victory.³⁸ Benton had become the most Turnerian of American artists.

While Benton was no great artist, he never succumbed to mere illustration, whether on the level of Currier and Ives or Norman Rockwell. He became the preeminent mural painter of the 1930s. Benton chose *America Today* as his theme for a commission from the New School for Social Research in New York City (Fig. 2). With this commission he went a step further than Turner and pointed to another direction for the frontier thesis. Looking now at urban as well as agricultural life, Benton continued to emphasize America's superabundant energies, focusing on the dynamics of American industry and on the exciting variety and creative confusion of everyday life in the modern world. He fused the frontier personality to a freshly technological world. Where many found only creeping standardization and sameness, Benton found diversity, robustness, and animation. His exaggeration took hold of this explosive power: "muscles bulge, hands clench, shoulders lean."³⁹ The murals jostle, block, rush, gyrate, and celebrate.

Benton invites us to a non-Turnerian extension of the frontier myth—the dynamism and exuberance generated by the early farmers of middle America provided the drive toward energetic industrialization in the late nineteenth century in the same Midwest, and we enter the



FIG. 1. *The Pathfinder* (American Historical Epic). 1926. Collection of the artist. All paintings reproduced by permission.



world of Carl Sandburg. We also enter, less optimistically, the world of Woody Guthrie. Turner's view was backward-looking and helplessly passive toward modernity. The ordinary people in Benton's murals were his own mythic giants: "the working people who in a few generations had made America the strongest country in the world. . . . The murals celebrate the life of those people whose actions upon the land created the character of the nation."⁴⁰

After completing the New School murals, Benton said he did not know whether they qualified as art, but he didn't care. It was enough to show the "energy and rush and confusion" of American life.⁴¹ Art disappeared into myth just as Turner had lost history in myth. What were called Benton's "overmuscle and extra-jointed" bodies were not only rich but overripe, not only colorful but gaudy, paradigms of physical kinetic energy: Benton's symbolic figures created a mythic space equivalent to real space. These themes were repeated in murals commissioned by the state of Indiana for the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago.

Benton had lived in New York City since 1912 but was drawn back to his home state of Missouri in 1935 to live in Kansas City until his death in 1975. He returned to Missouri to paint murals commissioned at the state capitol building in Jefferson City. Titled *A Social History of the State of Missouri*, they were perhaps his most satisfying paintings.⁴² They combine an internal autobiography of Benton's earlier midwestern rural world with the external history based on a later modernity. Daily life is set alongside abstractions like law and politics and juxtaposed indiscriminately with mythic tales of Jesse James and Huck Finn—it was all woven from one cloth. These murals are less dense and cluttered than many earlier works. Space is deeper, scenes are calmer, and the murals take on even more epic proportions.

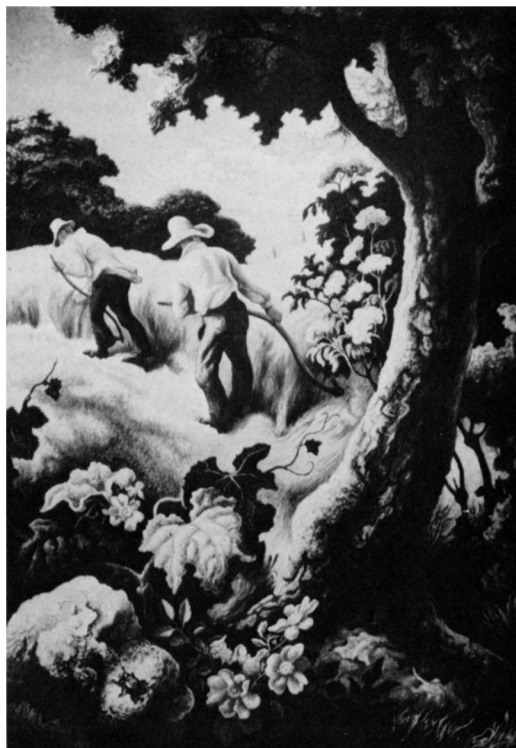
Benton was at home with midwestern themes. *Cradling Wheat*, done in 1938, marks the beginning of a series of more specific paintings (Fig. 3). Natives tell us that it depicts a plain, simple, and distinctive Missouri landscape, complete with the region's rolling hills and



FIG. 2 (left). *The Changing West*. 1930-31. New School for Social Research, New York. FIG. 3 (above). *Cradling Wheat*. 1938. The St. Louis Art Museum. FIG. 4 (right). *July Hay*. 1942. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

recognizable cloud formations. Yet it is also a generalized representation of a major agrarian theme. Compare *July Hay* of 1942 with pedestrian European wheat-harvest pictures.⁴³ Benton converts an ordinary scene into an archetype of the agrarian myth through exaggeration, enlargement, telescoping, and selective magnification (Fig. 4). The result is eerie, almost hallucinatory.⁴⁴

Old Kansas City (Trading at Westport Landing) of 1956 is almost Benton's archetypal mural (Fig. 5). The scene portrays no specific historical moment but represents all the key elements of the westward movement: scout, Indian, pioneer, squaw, pioneer woman, wagons, cattle, riverboat, and infinite open landscape. It could be a direct pictorial representation of Turner's writings. The same is true of the panel at the Harry S. Truman Library at Independence, Missouri, called *Independence and the Opening of the West*, done between 1959 and 1962 (Fig. 6). Here the sequence of events is also present—the Turnerian rhythm and cycle including the French explorer, the mountain man, the hunter, Indians offering peace and war, traders, rivers and overland trails, and at the peak of the hill, just as in Turner's mythology, the settler and his family.⁴⁵ Benton's leading interpreter, Matthew



Baigell, concludes that Benton's landscapes describe the ultimate result of the frontier myth, "in the streams, hills, and mountains of the country, populated by people unsuspectingly living out their time, quietly enjoying themselves, living easily on the land, celebrating nothing more than their existence."⁴⁶

If we are to fathom the interests and objectives of Turner and Benton, it is not adequate to see them as historian and painter alone. Both ambitiously attempted to fathom the American spirit and the American dream. Both came up with the same specific myths, identifiable heroes, and archetypal landscapes: the space of the American Midwest, inhabited by the myths and heroes.

The American prairie country is not only a geographical region; it is perceived space. The myths began early, with descriptions ranging from desert to paradise. My purpose here has not been to debate the myths, but to examine their purpose and function. Our habitual debunking, denial, or repudiation of the myths

as mere nostalgia or wrongheaded sentimentality eliminates a particularly rich treasury. What Ralph H. Gabriel called the "American Democratic Faith" can be directly linked to the middle landscape shared by Turner and Benton.⁴⁷ Our perceptions are enriched by the values given to geography by Braudel and to myth by Eliade. In the 1980s we often speak of the search for America. What Braudel and Eliade separately consider—imperishable geographical structures and deeply felt, long-standing mythic structures—have been linked together by Turner and Benton.



NOTES

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2. John L. Allen, "Geographical Knowledge and American Images of the Louisiana Territory," *Geographic Perspectives*, ed. by Ward, p. 35.

3. See Richard Rhodes, *The Inland Ground: An Evocation of the American Middle West* (New York: Atheneum, 1970).

4. Paul Shepard, *Man in the Landscape* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1967), especially chaps. 3 and 4; see also Kynaston McShine, *The Natural Paradise: Painting in America, 1800-1950* (New York: Museum of Modern

FIG. 5 (left). *Old Kansas City (also known as Trading at Westport Landing)*. 1956. *The River Club, Kansas City*. FIG. 6 (below). *Independence and the Opening of the West*. 1959-62. Museum of the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.



Art, 1976); Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); and John Opie, "Seeing Desert as Wilderness and as Landscape," *Proceedings of Our National Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California, 1980), pp. 101-8.

5. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

6. Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

7. See the excellent anthology edited by John Conron, *The American Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 130-62.

8. Frank N. Egerton, "Ecological Studies and Observations before 1900," *Issues and Ideas in America*, ed. by Benjamin J. Taylor and Thurman J. White (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), pp. 311-43.

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12. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 17, 20, 101-2.

13. Braudel, *Mediterranean World*, p. 32.

14. Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. ix-xiii.

15. Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); also see W. C. Beane and W. G. Doty, eds., *Myths, Rites, Symbols: A Mircea Eliade Reader*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

16. Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954).

17. Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 146-49, 152.

18. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1920), p. 1.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

20. "Contributions of the West to American Democracy," *Frontier in American History*, pp. 260-61.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

22. "Social Forces in American History," *Frontier in American History*, p. 311.

23. *Ibid.*

24. "Significance of the Frontier," p. 11; see also Ray A. Billington, *The Genesis of the Frontier Thesis* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1971), pp. 134-42.

25. "Pioneer Ideals and the State University," *Frontier in American History*, p. 271; see also pp. 269-70.

26. "Significance of the Frontier," p. 2.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

29. Billington, *Genesis of the Frontier Thesis*, pp. 76-87.

30. "The Old West," *Frontier in American History*, p. 68.

31. "Significance of the Frontier," pp. 32-33.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

33. Matthew Baigell, *Thomas Hart Benton* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1975), pp. 41-42, 84-87.

34. Quoted in Baigell, *Benton*, p. 50; see also N. Heller and J. Williams, *The Regionalists: Painters of the American Scene* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1976).

35. See Baigell, *Benton*, p. 50.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-55.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 55; see also R. F. Chirico, "Thomas Hart Benton and Pieter Breughel," *Arts Magazine* 54 (September 1979): 148-49, for a discussion of the depth of "folk art" in the western artistic tradition.

38. Baigell, *Benton*, p. 58.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74; see also M. O. Cruz, "The Regionalist Triumvirate and the 'American Program'" (Ph.D. diss., St. Louis University, 1975). Cruz proposes that Benton, Wood, and Curry discovered a common American "creed" that cut across cultural barriers and across American pluralism.

42. M. Baigell and A. Kaufman, "The Missouri Murals: Another Look at Benton," *Art Journal* 36 (Summer 1977): 314-21.

43. See also *Wyoming Hay* (1963-64), *New Fence* (1941), *Threshing Wheat* (1938-39), and *Butterfly Chaser* (1932).

44. Baigell, *Benton*, pp. 102-3, 131.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

47. Ralph H. Gabriel, *The Course of American Democratic Thought*, 2d ed. (New York: Ronald Press, 1956).