Spring 2024

Technological Discourse and Poetic Complications: American Writings on Panama, 1900-1915

Hannah Rosa Herschend
Bard College

Technological Discourse and Poetic Complications
American Writings on Panama, 1900-1915

Senior Project Submitted to

The Division of Social Studies

of Bard College

by

Hannah Rosa Herschend

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2024

Acknowledgements

I have many to thank for incredible support throughout this writing and research process.

To Karen Barkey, thank you for everything. You've inspired me tremendously academically. This project would not have been possible without your support.

Thank you to Dominik Bartmanski, whose work and teaching deeply affected the way I think about sociological theory and profoundly influenced the direction of this project.

Thank you to Michael Donoghue, whose scholarly work on Panama sparked my interest in pursuing this project and whose advice in finding the archival material was indispensable.

To my Board members, Miles Rodriguez and Peter Klein, thank you for providing clarity and direction at the midway point of this project.

Thank you to Alexa Murphy and Melanie Mambo for your invaluable help with research at the library.

Thank you to all of the excellent sociology professors I have had over the years, both at Bard and Humboldt University of Berlin.

Thank you to my family for your love and support, and a special thanks to my dad for proofreading this thesis.

To my dear friends, thank you for endless inspiration and advice, encouragement, conversations and proofreadings in the final days of April.

Table of Contents

Introduction……..1

History/Literature on Panama……..5

Methodology……..…19

Literature Review ……..……24

Chapter 1...…….37

Chapter 2...…….54

Conclusion...…….…….66

Bibliography……...69

Appendix...…….76

INTRODUCTION

Bird's Eye View of the Canal, National Geographic, 1913[1]

The construction of the Panama Canal in the early 20th century marked a massive achievement for the United States. The canal itself was a brilliant feat of engineering, and it was built on the suddenly independent, friendly country of Panama, which had offered a generous portion of its land for this massive construction without a fight. It was indeed an impressive feat in foreign relations for the United States.

Panama's secession from Columbia is widely understood to be the direct result of American interest, leaving the status of Panama's nationhood unclear. In 1902, the United States bought the rights to build the canal from France but could not reach a favorable agreement with

[1] National Geographic Society (U.S.), *Bird's-Eye View of the Panama Canal*, n.d., n.d., Map and Imagery Library, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida., https://ufdc.ufl.edu/aa00038444/00001.

Columbia.[2] The U.S. then began covert negotiations with the Colombian province of Panama, which had fostered separatist desires for some time. Essentially, the U.S. backed the Panamanian secession from Columbia in exchange for the rights to build and control the canal. Notably, the treaty was written in English with no Panamanians present and was translated for Panamanians to read after the fact.[3] The bizarre conditions of Panamanian independence prompted, on the Panamanian end, the rapid development of a Panamanian nationalist movement and discourse. This discourse responded directly to the political indignities suffered and the sudden, dramatic influx of Americans and foreign laborers who flooded into the urban centers of Colón and Panama City to construct the canal.[4, 5] Part of this discourse involved romanticizing the rural interior and general ideological opposition to what was understood as 'American.'

This thesis examines the American discourse that arose at the same time as the building up and blasting out of the canal in Panama. It takes the shape of a discourse analysis of texts–primarily analyzing travel guides and souvenirs written in the early 20th century. Most important to this project is the argument that experiences are hard to understand and require management. Such arguments have been made in the scholarly study of colonialism not only as a process of exploitation but also as one of meaning-making by all the participants. Although I take these American texts to be honest, though obviously subjective reports and not devious

---

[2] Office of the Historian, "Building the Panama Canal, 1903-1914" (U.S. Department of State, n.d.), https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/panama-canal.

[3] Katherine A. Zein, "Introduction: Setting the Scene of Sovereignty," in *Sovereign Acts*, Performing Race, Space, and Belonging in Panama and the Canal Zone (Rutgers University Press, 2017), 3–22, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1tm7jm0.7.

[4] Michael E. Donoghue, "ROBERTO DURÁN, OMAR TORRIJOS, AND THE RISE OF ISTHMIAN MACHISMO," in *Sports Culture in Latin American History*, ed. DAVID M. K. SHEININ (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 17–38, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt14tqd0x.5.

[5] Melissa Gonzalez, "'Cien Por Ciento Nacional!' Panamanian Música Típica and the Quest for National and Territorial Sovereignty" (Columbia University, 2015).

fabrications, they can be read as products of the meaning-making process instead of documented reality.

Indeed, there is never a completely coherent colonial ideology. Although all the documents I am using are written by Americans (except for one British fellow who was quite an American enthusiast) there is a tension between the official, high modernist discourse and the poetry and memoirs. The official texts align with a high-modernist ideology. Machines are valorized, and human complexity is downplayed or eliminated. Nature is conquered or organized to fulfill the needs of technology. Technological advancement is evidence of superiority. In the texts, the passive voice is used, suggesting the inevitability and superiority of technology and eliminating the messiness and disorganization of human experience.

The 'unofficial' or more poetic texts offer an alternative, almost contradictory view to the official narrative. To be sure, these 'alternative' texts are neither completely anti-colonial nor completely anti-racist. However, they offer a contradictory view because they provide an emotional account and grapple with a complexity that the high modernist narrative is scrubbed clean of. They discuss how the jungle relentlessly penetrates their psyches, the bodily experiences of being wet and sticky and covered in bugs, tender love for Panamanian women, awe at the jungle and its sublimity, and intense fear of pain and death.

Interestingly, the division between the high modernist and literary texts cannot be split neatly along any line of class or nationality. Why, then, is there this split? This project emphasizes, above all, the relationship between discourse and power. By looking back at the historical formation that led to the ideology of high modernism and its relationship to power, and conversely, the relationship of art to power, this essay suggests that the form carries weight. This

may not be causal, but it is correlated. In the case of the American writings on Panama during the construction of the Canal, from which we have over a century of historical difference and robust historical scholarship to aid in understanding the power dynamics of the time, it is possible to situate these primary source texts within a well-researched socio-political scene. From this distance, what the project lacks in specificity and risks in precision is balanced out through generalizability. It seeks to understand, using the historical case of the United States intervention in Panama as a case, how artistic discourse and high modernist discourse relate to power.

HISTORY/LITERATURE ON PANAMA

1. Gold Rush, American Expansion & Panama Railroad

In the nineteenth century, the United States was experiencing a period of excitement fueled by expansion. The swelling borders of the country and subsequent settlement were vital politically and economically in rounding out the edges of the United States proper. The exploration these new territories demanded was also incredibly important, as Immerwahr notes, in developing a cowboyish sensibility that would color the ideological context for this expansion period.[6] Teddy Roosevelt, famously involved in this frontier-man act, advocated intensely for the character-building (and, by extension, nation-building) aspect of settlement and expansion. However, toward the end of the nineteenth century, westward expansion hit the Pacific Ocean on the West Coast, and there was conceivably no more land to take. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner theorized, with regret, that the end of the frontier period carried the danger of ending all of the momentum in matters of national character and democratic sensibility that the period had brought with it. Roosevelt agreed.[7]

Immerwahr argues, however, that the frontiers of the United States then dipped into the ocean. The Pacific became the next frontier of the United States. Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan published *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* in 1890, which Roosevelt had read. Immerwahr notes that Mahan's work was much less focused on the personal and national growth aspect of the land frontier, and instead made the case that maritime trade was the key to

---

[6] Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, First Picador paperback edition (New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020).
[7] Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire,* 62.

economic success.[8] Indeed, the next American years were marked by numerous interventions in the Pacific Ocean: Hawaii in 1898, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam in 1899, American Samoa in 1900, and the Panama Canal Zone in 1904.

Thus it comes as no surprise that the history of Panama as a nation is inextricably tied to United States interest. The California Gold Rush in 1848 had set off the first major spark of American interest in the isthmus when the region was still a province of Columbia. The gold rush drew crowds of U.S. American travelers who funneled through the isthmus on their way from the East Coast of the United States to the West.[9] In 1850, the construction of the Panamanian transnational railroad became the largest investment by the U.S. government outside of the United States territory. $8 million was invested, which Maurer and Wu adjusted to 28.5 billion relative to the U.S. economy in 2009.[10] The Panamanian isthmus was politically and economically important: for some time, it was the key to connecting the East and West coasts of the United States.[11] The railroad project was also the precursor to the canal project.[12]

In 1869, the U.S. completed its own transcontinental railroad, which rendered the Panamanian railroad more or less obsolete. However, intense U.S. activities on the isthmus of Panama had lasting implications. The railroad project had drawn a diverse crowd of laborers to the Panamanian Isthmus, where Colombian workers worked alongside Irish, West Indian, and Chinese workers.[13] Regional exports—especially coffee—took off as more ships trafficked the

---

[8] Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire,* 63.
[9] Noel Maurer and Carlos Yu, "BEFORE THE DITCH," in *The Big Ditch*, How America Took, Built, Ran, and Ultimately Gave Away the Panama Canal (Princeton University Press, 2011), 13–54, http://www.jstor.org.ezprox.bard.edu/stable/j.ctt7sh42.7, 36.
[10] Maurer and Yu, *BEFORE THE DITCH*, 46.
[11] Jason M. Colby, "Enterprise and Expansion, 1848-1855," in The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion in Central America (Cornell University Press, 2011), 19.
[12] Phil Weinert, "The Panama Canal: A Retrospective," *The Military Engineer* 91, no. 602 (1999): 37–40, 38.
[13] Colby, *Enterprise and Expansion*, 26.

region, and demand grew with the West Coast population boom.[14] This period also saw Panama beginning to take shape in the American imagination. On their journey through the Panamanian isthmus, American gold rush prospectors and other travelers and adventurers earned horrible reputations in the Caribbean[15] and wrote letters back home. These letters contributed to a body of literature Mattox calls 'Isthmiana'.[16] They characterized Panama as beautiful and dreadful, as attractive and revolting, and as a space of danger that was integral to both personal and national improvement. Mattox describes how a traveler's slow, tedious, unpredictable passage through the isthmus, with its moments of terror and its moments of excitement, and its seemingly massive disconnect from the modern United States, created the genre that would characterize Panama as a whole in the American imagination. These individual experiences bled into the cognitive understanding of the Panamanian tropics. These accounts would have been widely read, as letters sent home were often published by local newspapers or periodicals[17]—thus sparking interest in Panama and exporting these sensual, emotional accounts as fact. In this way, Panama's location in the tropics and the construction of tropical imagery became key aspects of the American understanding of the Isthmus. Indeed, these accounts did not exist outside of the context of American territorial expansion in the continental United States, which was publishing its own body of literature sensationalizing the West.[18]

During this time, the Panamanian province of Columbia was also starting to develop its own discourse, which pushed back ideologically against rising American and foreign influence.

---

[14] Colby, *Enterprise and Expansion*, 23.
[15] Colby, *Enterprise and Expansion*, 23.
[16] Jake Mattox, "Claiming Panama: Genre and Gender in Antebellum U.S. Isthmiana," *American Studies* 53, no. 1 (2014): 117–47, 119.
[17] Mattox, *Claiming Panama*, 125.
[18] Michael Adas, "Machines and Manifest Destiny," in *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge, Mass. London: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2006), 68-79.

Specifically, this Panamanian discourse found its center in the countryside. In 1882, Belsario Porras, a journalist and politician who later became the president of Panama for three terms, published the influential essay, 'El Orejano'.[19] He sought to rewrite the negative associations that Panamanians had against the *campesino*, or rural peasant, and that instead of being a backward, simple people, the campesino exemplified an ideal—a tough, self-sufficient (man) who lived in harmony with nature, exerting harmonious dominance over his land. He described the campesino in physical/racial terms as well—highlighting their European features—and claims his description was representative physically of the true Panamanian. He romanticized the Panamanian interior as being the root of true Panamanian culture.[20] As the metropolises of Colón and Panama City grew rapidly, Porras asserted that the real Panamanian way of life was located in the countryside. As American, West Indian, Chinese, and Irish laborers and contractors flooded in, Porras asserted that real Panamanians had European, Mediterranean features, which likely referred to the ideal of mestizaje. As laborers cleared brush and held the jungle at bay, Porras wrote that real Panamanians lived in harmony with the natural landscape. Although this discourse had many similarities to the American discourse at the time, such as dominance over the land as a cornerstone element of national character and white racial supremacy, the notable difference was that respect for nature was an extremely important element and a direct counter to the American project of development through the rail project and, later, the canal.

So even before Panama's secession from Columbia and the construction of the Panama Canal, U.S. presence on the isthmus was felt strongly. Although there had been interest in the Caribbean and the Isthmus before the Gold Rush, particularly as it related to Pacific trade routes,

[19] Gonzalez, *Música Típica*, 49.
[20] Gonzalez, *Música Típica*, 50.

[21] the Gold Rush provided both an economic boom and sparked intense excitement in the Caribbean. Finding a trans-isthmian passage would be a major political and economic victory for the United States. Panama was understood to be an essential link between the West and East coasts of the U.S., allowing U.S. Americans to access the riches of the West Coast and sparking interest in the new possibilities of trade and commerce. Beyond being politically and economically indispensable, Americans viewed the Isthmus as a dangerous but alluring place. Their understanding of Panama was heavily wrapped up in an understanding of the 'tropics,' and the fears and excitements that came with it—heightened by the excitement, danger, and possibility of 'striking it rich' of the Gold Rush era and the momentous period of American territorial expansion. At the same time, Panamanian understanding of Panama began to center on the interior, harmony with nature, the 'traditional way of life', and developed the ideal of the 'ethnic Panamanian', which would eventually develop into the Panamanian nationalist discourse.

2. Canal Project, Panamanian Independence

The search for a trans-Isthmian passage was sensationally framed as a centuries-long, slow-going project. Military engineer Lieutenant K. Rockwell traces the idea back to Pope Innocent the Fourth in 1245.[22] More often, the idea was traced back to the Spanish Empire.[23] It was not until the American period of serious interest in the Pacific Ocean, however, that the United States began to plot the canal project seriously. In 1895, a commission was appointed to

[21] K. Rockwell, "A Brief History of the Panama Canal," Professional Memoirs, Corps of Engineers, United States Army, and Engineer Department at Large 1, no. 2 (1909): 164-7.
[22] Rockwell, *Panama Canal*, 164.
[23] International Harvester Companies, *Panama Canal: Panama-Pacific International and Panama-California Expositions* (Chicago, USA: International Harvester Companies, 1915).

investigate constructing a canal. In 1902, the U.S. bought the rights to build the canal from the French.[24]

However, when Washington encountered negotiating difficulty with Colombia, it began covert negotiations with a separatist group on the Isthmus. In 1903, with the U.S. military standing by, Panama seceded from Colombia and declared independence.[25] Immediately, the Hay-Bunau-Varilla treaty was ratified, which granted the U.S. sole permission to build the canal and complete sovereignty (or technically, the 'equivalent of sovereignty'[26]) in the 500 square mile strip that would become the canal zone.[27] Although the country was recognized as its own state, any matter could be essentially vetoed by the United States at any time. The Canal Zone was governed by the War Department of the United States, which had the power to intervene whenever and for whatever reason they saw fit, including beyond the borders of the zone.[28]

Notably, no Panamanian was involved in the signing of the treaty—it was negotiated between U.S. Secretary of State John Hay and Phillipe Buneau-Varilla, a Frenchman leftover from the French canal project, who had appointed himself "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary" of Panama directly after its succession.[29] According to Zein, Panamanians learned about their independence in the papers the next day, which came "like a bolt from a clear sky."[30] Although the treaty recognizes Panama as independent from Columbia, the words of the treaty itself never acknowledge Panama as a sovereign nation. Instead, the treaty proposes that

---

[24] Rockwell, *Panama Canal*, 168-9.
[25] Gonzalez, *Música Típica*, 47.
[26] Zein, *Introduction*, 6.
[27] Gonzalez, *Música Típica,* 47.
[28] Richard W. van Alstyne, "The Panama Canal: A Classical Case of an Imperial Hangover," *Journal of Contemporary History* 15, no. 2 (1980): 299–316, 307.
[29] Zein, *Introduction,* 3-4.
[30] Zein, *Introduction,* 3.

Panama shall operate 'as if sovereign,'. The treaty was also written in English and needed to be translated for Panamanians to read after the fact.[31]

The conditions under which Panama became a country were not the culmination of a nationalist will. There had been separatist sentiment on the Isthmus when it had been a province of Columbia, but the act of its independence was very clearly the result of American interest and American power. The secession had been a bloodless coup with American warships just off the coast of Colón.[32] Moreover, the terms of Panama's independence were unclear. The words of the document and Panama's 'as-if' sovereignty would provide no solace to those looking for certainty to the question —Is this real? The sudden event, the cryptic language, and the blatant American involvement made it too confusing to be taken as fact. More than anything, the U.S. association with Panama's independence completely undermined its legitimacy. Zein argues that all of these diplomatic uncertainties made performing sovereignty necessary for national legitimacy as an effective way of settling the 'as if' contingency.[33]

Canal construction began immediately after independence, completely transforming the Isthmus. American workers, troops, and tourists flooded in, along with foreign workers and their families—totaling nearly a third of Panama's population by 1912.[34] Tens of thousands of Panamanians found work because of the canal project,[35] although hardly any Panamanians were employed by the Isthmian Canal Commission. Only 357 Panamanians worked on the canal as

---

[31] Zein, *Introduction*, 3-4.
[32] Van Alstyne, *Imperial Hangover,* 303-304.
[33] Zein, *Introduction,* 4-5.
[34] Michael E. Donoghue, "Borderland on the Isthmus: The Changing Boundaries and Frontiers of the Panama Canal Zone," in *Borderland on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2014), 13.
[35] Donoghue, *Borderland,* 10.

contract laborers.[36] The canal provided 'between one-fifth and one-half of Panama's GDP from 1904 through 1979.' Schools and universities were built (although many Panamanian children could not access these). U.S. health officials virtually eliminated Yellow fever and malaria from the canal zone (although this was done to facilitate the canal construction, not as a charity to Panamanians). And, U.S. engineers made water and electricity much more accessible to hundreds of thousands of Panamanians.[37]

The work of the canal itself was grueling and slow going. It was a ten-year project from 1904 to 1914 to build over 50 miles of canal. The Americans took over the construction which had already been started by the French, who had been forced to abandon the project due to rampant disease.[38] As many as 22,000 people had died during French construction, mostly from yellow fever.[39] With this staggering death toll in mind, Americans realized that sanitation and fighting against disease would be major priorities in the construction project. And indeed, the American sanitation project was considered a success. In 1905, yellow fever had been virtually eliminated. The campaign against malaria proved to be more complex but also found great success: by 1909, the rate per thousand had dropped from 11.6 (in 1906) to 1.2. However, even with all of these major sanitation strides, still more than double the number of workers died from disease as from accidents. The death rate per thousand in 1912 was 3.08 from accidents and 7.08 disease.[40]

---

[36] Noel Maurer and Carlos Yu, "DIGGING THE DITCH," in *The Big Ditch*, How America Took, Built, Ran, and Ultimately Gave Away the Panama Canal (Princeton University Press, 2011), 97–138, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7sh42.9, 108.
[37] Donoghue, *Borderland,* 10.
[38] H. F. Hodges, "Building the Panama Canal," *The Military Engineer* 100, no. 654 (2008): 75–76.
[39] Maurer and Yu, *DIGGING THE DITCH,* 98.
[40] William M. Baxter, *The Panama Canal: A Brief and Simple Description of the Essential Features* (The Official Guide of the Isthmian Canal Commission, 1913).

In addition to disease and dangers associated with the physical building and blasting, the construction project was plagued by management problems. Maurer and Yu employ a telling quote from John Stevens[41]: "There are three diseases in Panama…yellow fever, malaria, and cold feet."[42] The project went two times over budget, from $144 million to $326 million.[43] The first two years of construction had been incredibly costly, but with little to show. The first canal commission was ultimately fired, and the next supervisor of construction resigned amid rumors of conflict. It was not until 1907 that Goethals, who would see the canal to completion, took charge.[44]

The terrain itself was extremely difficult to work in. It was a mountainous and dense junglescape, with rainfall of over 100 inches per year.[45] The Chagres River was wild and prone to extreme flooding. It needed to be dammed to form the artificial lake Gatún, a major part of the canal.[46] Reoccurring landslides slowed production (1 cubic yard slid for every cubic yard excavated).[47] At its peak of construction in 1914, the Isthmian Canal Commission employed 44,000 workers, almost all of whom were foreign to Panama. This was a massive population shift, as it was equivalent to more than a quarter of Panama's economically active population at the time.[48]

The influx of Americans drastically changed the sexual landscape as well. The image in the imagination of U.S. Americans of Panama as a site of beauty and danger, disease and

---

[41] John Stevens was the commissioner of construction before Goethals
[42] Maurer and Yu, *DIGGING THE DITCH,* 99.
[43] Maurer and Yu, *DIGGING THE DITCH,* 97.
[44] Maurer and Yu, *DIGGING THE DITCH*, 100.
[45] Weinert, *Retrospective,* 37–40.
[46] Maurer and Yu, *DIGGING THE DITCH,*108.
[47] Maurer and Yu, *DIGGING THE DITCH,* 103.
[48] Maurer and Yu, *DIGGING THE DITCH,* 108.

adventure, folded into a new image of Panama and its people as "emotional and duplicitous, given to carnality and seduction."[49] The tropical discourse born out of the excitement and fear in the gold rush era was quickly mapped onto Panamanian women, who were seen as exotic, exciting, and possibly diseased.[50] The sex industry took off, as was typical of port cities.[51] But alongside prostitution, there were thousands of Panamanian women looking for relationships and marriage with American men, which could lift them and their families out of poverty and possibly grant them American citizenship.[52]Although Panamanian women were fetishized as a whole by Americans as a whole, there are plenty of examples of American men who fell deeply in love with Panamanian women.[53]

The tourism industry took off in Panama in the early 20th century. American canal-building activities had created a transportation network that made short vacations to the Caribbean possible, and canal health officials had virtually eliminated Yellow Fever and Malaria. [54] Beyond this, tourism allowed Americans to see 'their canal' and experience this technological triumph firsthand.[55] Scholars such as Van Alstyne and Sutter make the case that the literature that came with the canal build was quite significant, as it made the canal ideologically available to the greater American population. Van Alstyne notes that the literature about Panama published in the United States gave Americans feelings of ownership over the canal.[56] Sutter goes so far as to

---

[49] Michael E. Donoghue, "Desire, Sexuality, and Gender in the Zone-Panama Borderland," in *Borderland on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2014), 137.
[50] Donoghue, *Desire, Sexuality, and Gender*, 137.
[51] Donoghue, *Desire, Sexuality, and Gender*, 151-2.
[52] Donoghue, *Borderland,*10.
[53] Donoghue, *Desire, Sexuality, and Gender*, 151-2.
[54] Blake Scott, "From Disease to Desire: The Rise of Tourism at the Panama Canal," Environmental History 21, no. 2 (2016): 271.
[55] Van Alstyne, *Imperial Hangover,* 305-6.
[56] Van Alstyne, *Imperial Hangover,* 305-6.

call the literature one of the most important features of the build.[57] In any case, the literature gave Americans the idea to travel to Panama to see what was happening firsthand.

As Western forces worked to tame and conquer the wilderness and produced literature reinforcing these ideas, Latin American intellectuals engaged in a cultural/literary movement that enshrined nature as a source of literary inspiration. Thus, in the 1910s/20s, the genre "*Novela de la Selva*" (Novel of the Jungle) emerged.[58] As U.S. influence rose in the canal zone in the 1920s, so did the ideology that the 'true' Panama was hidden in the interior.[59] The canal zone was marked as a place of domination and loss of sovereignty: the U.S. controlled this land, and the population consisted of occupying Americans, soldiers, and other migrant workers, who were considered not Panamanian and excluded from the culture. The 'interior,' sometimes confined to the Azuero peninsula, sometimes including everything outside of Panama City and Colón (the two cities at either end of the canal), was romanticized into the 'real' Panama. The Azuero peninsula, in particular, and its relative geographic isolation resulted in far less immigration than the canal zone, and the population was mostly mestizo (white and indigenous).[60] The isolation also meant they would be less ideologically influenced by U.S. presence in the canal zone—their culture was seen as more 'purely Panamanian'. The peninsula and its inhabitants came to serve as a symbolic representation of the ideal Panama, the one that existed before the canal, a romanticized site of nostalgia.

---

[57] Paul S. Sutter, "Triumphalism and Unruliness during the Construction of the Panama Canal," *RCC Perspectives*, no. 3 (2015): 19–24, 21.
[58] Lesley Wylie, "Introduction," in *Colonial Tropes and Postcolonial Tricks*, Rewriting the Tropics in the Novela de La Selva (Liverpool University Press, 2009), 14–39, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt5vjhfr.5, 7.
[59] Gonzalez, *Música Típica*, 21.
[60] Gonzalez, *Música Típica,*18.

Rodríguez discusses in depth the relationship between the romantic (through the romance novel) and national sentiment in Panamanian literature. She writes that much of this literature "establishes a relationship between erotic love (the heterosexual love of men for women) and patriotic love (the homosocial love of men for men and of men for their country)."[61] Ideas of femininity and (ironically) the fatherland are linked, as land is considered "something to possess, to conquer, to penetrate, to control, to govern."[62] She also finds a conflation between love, eroticism, patriotism, and sovereignty that manifests itself both in the possession of both land and women. The Canal Zone itself in Panama was where this indignity was felt sharply: the land belonged politically and legally to America, and the landscape suffered intense manipulation through the physical building of the canal and the scientific manipulations that aimed to tame the jungle.

The Azuero peninsula, the rural jungle, became known from the Panamanian perspective as authentic Panama, where a man could control both the land and his women. Donoghue characterized the idea of the Azuero peninsula as a place where the "purity of national identity waxed powerful in music, dance, patriarchy, and populist patriotism. Here, male campesinos dominated within their households and communities and periodically used their fists or machetes against recalcitrant or "unfaithful" women, local enemies, and imperious landlords."[63] The idealism of the Azuero peninsula is tied directly to the ownership of the land, ownership of

---

[61] Ileana Rodríguez, "Vanishing Bodies, Woman/Nation: Deconstructing the Panamanian State," in *Women, Guerrillas, and Love: Understanding War in Central America*, trans. Robert Carr and Ileana Rodríguez, NED-New edition (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 19–29, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttttq4s.7. 19.
[62] Rodríguez, *Vanishing Bodies,* 28.
[63] Donoghue, *The Rise of Isthmian Machismo*, 21.

Panamanian women, and the idea of the 'campesino'—which no doubt gains much of its appeal from its association to harmonious patriarchy and ideological land ownership.

Indeed, B. Scott argues that military intervention and scientific manipulation of the landscape have gone hand in hand, with examples not only in Panama but also in Cuba. Shortly after the military interventions in both countries, the U.S. set to work spraying for mosquitos and filling stagnant water with petroleum to lower rates of disease.[64] However, it is important to note that some of the sanitation issues that the U.S. 'solved' were issues created by intense manipulations of the landscape in the first place, and other major public health concerns were ignored if they did not affect white Americans.[65] Indeed, looking at the statistics for the staggering American victories against disease, it is important to note that the rural death rates stayed relatively constant, at around 16 per thousand (see chart).[66] The landscape was essentially 'sanitized' in a way that would make it less dangerous to white Americans. Sutter argues that pneumonia and tuberculosis, which American officials saw as 'not tropical' and did not affect white U.S. workers, were not addressed.[67]

Indeed, after military intervention and sanitation projects in the Caribbean, B. Scott argues that these places suddenly became attractive to tourists. Although Panama is no longer a hot tropical destination, B. Scott argues that in the early days, it helped shape the concept of tropical vacation because it gave Americans a chance to see 'their' canal and enjoy the domesticated version of the once deadly tropical region. Specifically, the sanitation and environmental manipulations made the landscape safe for white Americans. Panama also became

---

[64] Scott, *From Disease to Desire,* 272.
[65] Sutter, *Triumphalism and Unruliness*, 22.
[66] Chart is from Mauer and Yu, *DIGGING THE DITCH,* 125.
[67] Sutter, *Triumphalism and Unruliness*, 23.

a hot spot for biologists and scientific study of the jungle, and remained one of the most overstudied countries for its size because the Canal Zone offered the opportunity for Western scientists to study in sanitary conditions.[68] Indeed, compared to the Panamanian conception, the American relationship to the tropical landscape was one marked by classification and domination of nature.

Table 4.5
Death Rates from Infectious Disease in Panama, per Thousand

	National	*Panama City*	*Colón*	*Rural*	*Canal Zone*
1903	21.0	50.0	56.0	16.0	
1904	20.7	50.0	50.2	15.8	
1905	20.4	65.8	49.5	13.4	
1906	20.0	44.8	51.4	15.4	39.3
1907	19.7	34.5	39.2	16.8	24.1
1908	19.6	34.8	26.3	17.3	8.7
1909	19.4	25.4	22.6	18.5	7.5
1910	19.3	31.7	26.3	17.3	7.5
1911	19.1	31.3	26.4	17.2	7.7
1912	19.0	29.3	24.4	17.4	6.4
1913	18.7	31.9	24.2	16.4	5.2
1914	18.3	34.5	25.2	15.3	7.0
1915	18.0	29.9	21.8	15.6	4.1
1916	17.6	29.0	28.2	14.8	4.6
1917	17.3	28.1	26.3	14.5	5.7
1918	17.3	21.4	23.6	16.0	7.1
1919	17.3	19.7	21.9	16.5	6.2
1920	17.3	21.4	21.2	16.3	7.4
1921	17.3	22.1	17.3	16.5	5.7

Source: James Simmons, *Malaria in Panama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1939), 92; and Omar Jaén Suárez, *La población del Istmo de Panamá* (Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1998), 505–6.

[68]Megan Raby, "'The Jungle at Our Door': Panama and American Ecological Imagination in the Twentieth Century," *Environmental History* 21, no. 2 (2016): 260–69.

METHODOLOGY

The process of this research was not straightforward. Because I was working with historical texts, as opposed to live subjects, I was not able to formulate a specific question to ask before consulting my primary source materials, or at least not one that I was sure could be answerable. I knew I was interested in researching something related to nation building and emotion in Panama in the early days of the canal build, and the next task was to find archival material which I could access. Michael Donoghue kindly pointed me toward a few online databases with primary source materials relating to Panama, and from there University of Florida's *Panama and the Canal*[69] archival collection proved most useful.

The selection of the materials I used for this project was contingent on a few things. First, due to the time constraints for this project, I had to choose something feasible. For example, this took newspapers off the table as the scans were not always legible or in PDF format. Going forward, I limited my search to materials available for free, in English, and in high quality PDF format. Once I settled on the idea of looking at books published about Panama between 1900 and 1915, I opened my search to the Library of Congress website.

This method limited the amount of material I had access to and, importantly, limited the perspective of the texts. All the books I read are written from the American perspective, except one book written by a British travel writer who makes it clear that he is an America enthusiast. To remedy this, while keeping the project methodologically clear, I supplement this material with secondary historical material, which offers a more holistic perspective. This literature is reviewed in the 'history' section.

[69] Accessible here: https://ufdc.ufl.edu/collections/pcm

The books used are as follows. More details on the books and publications are available in the appendix.

Panama Souvenir 1915 is a souvenir the International Harvester company issued in honor of the Panama-Pacific exposition. It explains the canal while also advertising the products it makes.

Panama Canal 1913 is the official guide of the Isthmian Canal Commission, written by Willian Baxter.

Panama and What It Means is a book by a professional British travel writer who has also written books explaining various faraway territories.

Panama Roughneck Ballads is self-described as written in memoriam of the American builders of the canal.

Panama Patchwork was an important book of poetry at the time, written by the poet J.S. Gilbert; Aguirre calls him the 'Kipling of the Isthmus.'[70]

As I read these texts, I looked specifically for the way they dealt with the body, technology, emotion, jungle, and chaos. I kept note of where these themes came up and favored the most overt examples. Instead of sampling at random, I read each book in its entirety, looking for these themes.

[70] Robert D. Aguirre, "The Dissonant Lyre:," in *Mobility and Modernity: Panama in the Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Imagination* (Ohio State University Press, 2017), 120–47, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1503gz2.9.

This project takes the shape of a discourse analysis. Methodologically, I rely on Foucault's assertion that in using discourse analysis to analyze the historical past, one must recognize that there is a necessary difference between what is written down and how people behave. Rules and codes, for example, are written documents that describe ideal behavior but do not reflect actual behavior.[71] Scott provides a succinct example of this in explaining the 'rule to work' action, where employees can effectively grind work to a halt by following every rule meticulously.[72] To remedy this split, Foucault suggests taking discourse as a 'monument' instead of a 'document.' In doing this, one can consider both its existence and the conditions for existence. Foucault's concept of 'games of truth' points to his understanding of reality as something that is not fixed, but instead constantly negotiated. In this light, 'versions' of the truth are not read as devious or ignorant fabrications. Making sense of reality is not a straightforward task–it requires intervention.[73]

Stoler applies this in her dealings with colonial documentation in colonial archives. She theorizes that the colonial obsession with explanation and documentation is an effective expression of power, but she also finds that it can be read as an expression of anxiety about the retention of power. Colonial powers have to create a discursive reality in which they are in control, and they do this through documentation.[74] Excessive energy devoted to producing colonial documents repeatedly asserted that everything was in order. Note the irony here–Stoler

---

[71] Michel Foucault, "Lecture Ten: 18 March 1981," in *Subjectivity and Truth: Lectures at the Collége de France, 1980-1981*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2017) 235-45.
[72] James C. Scott, "Compulsory Villagization in Tanzania: Aesthetics and Miniaturization," in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 1998), 265.
[73] Michel Foucault, "The Art of Arts," in *Confessions of the Flesh: Volume 4 of The History of Sexuality*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 2021), 108.
[74] Ann Laura Stoler, "Prologue in Two Parts," in *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1-15.

does not mean that everything was, instead, 'out of order,' but that order needs *to be constructed*, it is not simply kept track of. She writes that colonial writings, which she calls 'commitments to paper' are both political and personal. Although colonial archives are full of what seems to be rational and reasonable documents, such as documentation of rank, rules, family documents, etc, Stoler suggests that the choice of what to document and what not to document reveals the way the attention of the writer was selectively cast. Essentially, she writes that what one discovers in a colonial archive is a wealth of information dealing with what she characterizes as colonial common sense: what they felt needed to be explained, and what they felt needed to be committed to paper.[75]

In short, Foucault and Stoler suggest that when working with historical materials, one should not fall into the trap of perceived objectivity. Instead, discourses are ways of making sense of reality and are political and personal. They are a game of truth, not reality. Historical documents don't just keep a record of what is, overall, 'most important,' they keep a record of what the entity responsible and the person who wrote them found to be most important. They are personal and political.

Diana Taylor's conception of the '*scenario*' helps thicken my reading of these texts. Taylor writes that the *scenario* can be used as a paradigm to understand social reality which draws from the archive as well as the repertoire. Taylor characterizes the 'repertoire' as the site of body knowledge, what Scott may characterize as *Metis* (this concept is more thoroughly fleshed out in the next section). Similar to Foucault's and Stoler's assertion that documented

[75] Stoler, *Prologue in Two Parts*, 1-15.

reality is not the same as lived reality, Taylor's idea of the *scenario* invites us to consider the physical conditions present–the scene under which the discourse was developed.[76]

Of course, I only have the texts to draw from, and all the events I look at happened over a century ago. However, using this methodological approach means not only looking at what *was* written, but also considering what is missing, and *why* these documents exist. Because I have both the poetic and official texts side by side, which describe roughly the same scenarios in strikingly different ways, I use what is described in one version of the story to speculate about what might be missing from the other.

[76] Diana Taylor, "Acts of Transfer," in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003). 28-30.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretically, this project is interested in the relationship between discourse and the pre-discursive experience and how this relationship relates to power. This theoretical section patches together three distinct yet theoretically relevant pillars: a theory on the feeling of nation and the role of text, a discussion on modernity and its historical foundation, and ends with a discussion on relevant art theory.

1. Texts, Feeling, Nation

Weber writes that the nation, far from being just an organizational or economic institution, relies on cognitive legitimacy for institutional legitimacy.[77] Its existence must be felt by its people. Although there are many 'raw materials' of the nation, such as a common language or a notion of common descent or homogeneity, it is ultimately the values of each culture that determine the most vital elements of a nation. This is to say—raw materials alone do not create a nation. According to Jenkins & Sofos, it must 'be called into being by nationalist ideologies and movements.[78]But this is not a one-time event. Jenkins & Sofos point out that collective identity—both its construction and maintenance—involves ongoing, complex social negotiation.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson points out the paradox between the political power in the nation and its philosophical incoherence.[79] To understand the nation, one

---

[77] Max Weber "The Nation," in *Structures of Power,* 171-179.
[78] Spyros A. Sofos and Brian Jenkins, "Nation and Nationalism in Contemporary Europe: A Theoretical Perspective." in *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Spyros A. Sofos and Brian Jenkins (Routledge, 1996), 9.
[79] Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities," in *Nations and Nationalism: A Reader*, ed. Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman (Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 49.

must look beyond sovereignty on paper. Again—the power of a nation does not come from its technical existence, but instead from the way it is imagined. He writes that the nation is imagined, in that the connection of one countryman to the other men of the country exists in his mind—as he cannot possibly have a personal connection with all of those he feels connected to. Anderson points out that this 'imaginative' aspect, though, is not a testament to its foolishness, but instead helps to explain the way the nation lives in the conscience. He writes that the nation is a community in that 'the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'—regardless of the realities of hierarchy or exploitation.[80] It is the strength of the ideas of horizontal connection and immortality (that is, a nation exists before, between, and after the lives of each countryman) that makes it so powerful that men will die for it. The concept of nation is deeply tied to emotion.

Salvatore also helps provide context for the texts written by Americans dealing with South America during this time. He argues that the U.S. informal empire in South America can be read as a 'soft machine,' who, along with producing concrete technology, can be seen as "a machine that produced, processed, and disseminated texts and images." Salvatore argues that this production of texts and images, which manifested as word fairs, films, photographic exhibits, and travel narratives, was an indispensable element in the American imperial activities in Latin America. Therefore, the texts I am looking at are wrapped up in an American expression of national power.[81]

---

[80] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 50.
[81] Ricardo D. Salvatore, "Imperial Mechanics: South America's Hemispheric Integration in the Machine Age," *American Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2006): 662–91, http://www.jstor.org.ezprox.bard.edu/stable/40068388.

Discussion on Modernity and its Historical Foundation

This section examines James Scott's concept of high modernism. Then it places the development of this line of thinking in historical context to better understand its relationship to power. I then trace the historical emergence of positivist thinking and consider the reasons for the increasing (and heavily theorized, heavily enforced) banishment of the body as modernity forges on through history. Foucault describes the Greco-Roman and early Christian thinkers as thinkers who dreaded yielding, who found it to be both humiliating and incompatible with the truth, and strived for complete mastery not only over their bodies but over reality itself. This interplay between the body and positivist thinking highlights aspects that are important to the analysis of this project: the relationship between objectivity and socio-political power and the relationship between yielding, political domination, emotion, and the body.

In Scott's language, high modernism is "…best conceived as a strong, one might even say muscle-bound, version of the self confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature), and, above all, the rational design of social order commensurate with the scientific understanding of natural laws."[82] He places the historical peak of high modernism around the time of the First World War, especially in Western Europe. Scott explains that the high modernist ideology is often wrapped up in the idea or hope of improving the human condition through top-down organization. However, these schemes tend to fail because the top-down nature of high modernist organization fails to incorporate local, situated knowledge and practice, which, as he argues, have also emerged – often with great success – as remedies for

[82] James C. Scott, "Introduction," in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Veritas Paperback (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 4.

improving the human condition. Importantly, he also attends to the frustration and feeling of powerlessness from local experts when the state comes in with an organizational agenda, which is not trivial in the grand scheme.

Scott characterizes high modernism as a 'thin simplification' of complex issues, often chasing the absolute objectivity of mathematics and applying these where they cannot truly be applied. Thin simplifications attempt to lessen the number of variables for a more pleasing equation, even though these countless variables do indeed exist in the real world. High modernism is often, although not always, mixed up with lust for power and control as it is completely hierarchical in nature. Most importantly, Scott shows that thin and radical simplifications are often not effective or can be dangerous. Taking the example of monocropping and radical plant simplification of industrial farming, he shows that although these methods may temporarily result in a high yield, they also make the plants extremely vulnerable to disease.[83]

Visual aesthetics, Scott argues, also play a large role in high modernism. He shows how planners tend to favor the look of productivity or organization over any empirical evidence of it. He takes villagization in Tanzania as an example, showing that organizers favored outward aesthetic markers of technological advancement–houses in straight lines, large farms, monocropping, and tractor plowed fields–over local methods which were empirically tested over time to be the most effective way of farming their particular lands.[84] Abstraction in general was massively important to the project of high modernism. Scott shows how abstract and visual notions of the look of 'technological advancement' led to the development of methods that were

---

[83] James C. Scott, "Taming Nature: An Agriculture of Legibility and Simplicity," in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) 264-270.
[84] Scott, *Villagization in Tanzania*, 253.

not necessarily better than local practices across a wide array of situations, ranging from agriculture to city planning.

Although Scott coined the term 'high modernism,' he is not its only critic. Adorno and Horkheimer critique the confidence in technology (a key facet of high modernism). They argue that the rationale of technology is the rationale of domination. Implicit in the valorization of technology –including satisfaction at the visual 'look of progress'-- is a consent to be dominated by those few who control the industries which produce steel, petroleum, electricity and chemicals.[85] This is to say, it is almost a celebration of the hierarchical status quo. Ghaziani & Brim discuss political scientists Clarke & Primo's (2012) term 'physics envy,' in their piece on queer methods in the social sciences. The term physics envy acts as a sort of tongue in cheek critique of the desire to sanitize the field of mess and chaos, although these exist without fail in the social world, and indeed have played a part in foundational mathematical and physics discoveries.[86] Halberstam, also writing on queer methodological potential, criticizes the concept of mastery, especially in academia, as it dampens the ability to think outside of the box. Narrow expertise, they argue, is losing its ability to solve the more pressing issues of today's world.[87] Susan Stewart writes, "If authority is invested in domains such as the marketplace, the university, or the state, it is necessary that exaggeration, fantasy, and fictiveness in general be socially placed within the domains of anti- and non-authority: the feminine, the childish, the mad, and the

[85] Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception (1944)," in *The Consumer Society Reader* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 5.
[86] Amin Ghaziani and Matt Brim, "Queer Methods: Four Provocations for an Emerging Field," in *Imagining Queer Methods*, ed. Amin Ghaziani and Matt Brim (New York University Press, 2020), 3–27, https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479808557.003.0003, 5.
[87] Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 7.

senile, for example."[88] The fact that many of these contemporary criticisms of high modernism come from queer and feminist theory is, I argue, not a coincidence. Indeed, in Scott's critique of the high modernist city he relies on Jane Jacob's writings, where he explains that her position as a woman, outside the structure of power, is likely the reason she was seeing the city through a different light.[89] In the next section, a history of the development of modernism helps to unpack the relationship between modernist ideology, power, and sexuality.

ROAD TO MODERNITY AS ROAD THAT LEADS AWAY FROM THE BODY

A look back through history helps provide context for what is usually posed as a self-evident truth: the supreme truthfulness of positivism. However, this truthfulness is often at odds with the realities of the physical body. This section examines Foucault's work on positivism in conjunction with Classen's work on the social history of the sense of touch to better understand the dynamic that splits mind and body.

Foucault starts this investigation in ancient Greece as this was the cradle of the intellectual tradition that laid the philosophical framework for Christianity and modernity. He traces the rise of positivism to its specific socio-political context and examines the way this discourse was intertwined with political power, gender, and sexuality: this discourse was developed exclusively by the wealthy and powerful men of Greece. This is to say, positivism cannot be called a universal practice or universal idea of truth. Here, the Foucauldian concept of 'games of truth' becomes useful, as Foucault claims there is not 'one' universal truth that can

---

[88] Susan Stewart, "On Description and The Book," in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 6.
[89] James C. Scott, "The High Modernist City: An Experiment and a Critique," in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 138-139.

simply be discovered and related, but that instead, there are plural ways to interpret what is going on. These discursive interpretations then exert an influence on the world.[90] Therefore Foucault can argue that knowledge production is not only linked to a particular culture, class, and gender but also intimately linked with the reproduction of power structures.

Strikingly, Foucault clarifies that the development of philosophical discourse is inextricable from discourse about sex. The Greco-Roman & early Christian thinkers spent massive amounts of time theorizing about sex and committing these theorizations to paper. They found sex to be basically incompatible with the truth.[91] Although this project is not very concerned with sexuality or sexual practice, the reasons behind sex's incompatibility with 'the truth' are extremely important. Foucault writes:

> "Sexual pleasure is a violent pleasure that seizes hold of the entire body, shakes it up, and drags the will beyond what it would have wished. Second, sexual pleasure is a fleeting, precarious pleasure that is intense in one moment and then converted after into tiredness, exhaustion, sorrow, regret and so on. In short, sexual pleasure is a pleasure that we would describe in terms of 'paroxysmal,' and, to that extent, is opposed to a philosophical life, to a *bios theoretikos* is characterized by a grasp of the truth that the paroxysmal violence and blinding of the pleasures of love can only prevent." [92]

The big issue with sex was that it involved *giving in* to pleasure. Sexual pleasure, pleasure in eating, and losing oneself to anger were all problematic for those seeking positivist truth. There were all forms of yielding, or giving in. These thinkers write that yielding is antithetical to the truth, but we can also observe that yielding is antithetical to holding power. We begin to see that

---

[90] Foucault, *Lecture Ten*, 243-245.
[91] Michel Foucault, "Lecture Seven: 25 February 1981," in *Subjectivity and Truth: Lectures at the Collége de France, 1980-1981* (New York: Picador, 2017) 153.
[92] Foucault, *Lecture Seven*, 152.

positivist notions of truth are bound up quite tightly to notions of power, both sexually and politically.

Notably, Foucault discusses the active/passive dynamic in sex in Ancient Greece, especially between men and boys. He writes: "For a man, excess and passivity were the two main forms of immorality in the practice of aphrodisia"[93] Both of these unacceptable attitudes also involve yield— either giving into the lure of physical pleasure, or being physically penetrated. Both of these also involve giving up control, and according to the Greeks, this puts the truth out of reach. Another key aspect and problem of sex was that where the intellect could be conceived as floating in a literally higher realm, sex was firmly anchored in the physical body. Ideas of the body and ideas of sex become tangled here. Basil of Ancyra noted that the sense of touch was the most dangerous of all of the senses because it had the highest possibility of corrupting the mind. The sense of touch, he argued, represented the senses of the body generalized. This was a massive problem because with each sensory input comes a possible thought which is out of the control of the mind.[94]

Importantly, the concept of sex was intimately linked to the concept of death for the Greeks. Bartmanski writes:

> "[Foucault] also ties sex to truth and living-in-truth, revisiting ancient conceptions of certain incompatibility of ***aphrodisia*** (which is a violent, intense, orgasmic and paroxysmal pleasure, similar in some respects to death) and ***truth*** that means a form of authentic knowledge, a transcendence and connection to gods, and thus requires tranquility and being purified from orgasmic carnal intensities. Orgasmic carnal intensities that are reminiscent of death state, are seen by Greeks as distracting, i.e. not

[93] Michel Foucault, "Aphrodisia," in *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990) 47.
[94] Michel Foucault, "Virginity and Self Knowledge," in *Confessions of the Flesh: Volume 4 of The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2021) 161.

> congenial to a philosophical life, the calm life of wisdom, contemplative theoretical life (bios theoretikos) that requires a kind of Stoic tranquility."[95]

Therefore, death and sex are both functions of the physical body and involve a giving up of control that is antithetical to a life that seeks positivist truth. Although this project is not interested in sex per say, the history of sexuality offers much clarity on the pressing matters of body and death which will come up in the primary source material.

The Christian concept of confession was the discursive solution to these pressing problems of the power of the body. Confession aimed to provide some *control* over these elusive yet powerful feelings. The act of confession hurdles over the barrier of shame, and externalizes and abstracts the pre-discursive experience which once gripped the body and therefore the mind. The act of confession, then, puts the feelings which are most powerful as desires and sensations into the world of discourse which the philosopher has control over.[96] This type of discourse is reminiscent of Scott's idea of a thin simplification, where what was once big and chaotic is simplified in order to be more manageable, and more similar to something like mathematics or physics. In this vein, Scott described Plato's attempt to transform the realm of love into the realm of logic or *techne*. Plato regarded love, a zone of contingency, desire, impulse, and often—the physical body— as appealing to the lower appetites. He believed that in order to be raised to the realm of the philosophical truth, love needed to be sanitized of these basic instincts.[97]

Constance Classen's book, *The Deepest Sense, a Cultural History of Touch*, offers a more concise history of the sense of touch and the physical body along the path from middle ages to

---

[95] Dominik Bartmanski, "The Opening Talk," The Late Michel Foucault, 1980-1984 (Notes from Seminar On The Late Michel Foucault, Humboldt University Berlin, Berlin, DE, Summer 2023).
[96] Foucault, *The Art of Arts*, 79-110
[97] James C. Scott, "Thin Simplifications and Practical Knowledge: Metis," in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) 320.

modernity. She shows that the move toward modernity has been a move away from the physical body, which became increasingly perceived as a more 'crude and uncivilized mode of perception.' She argues that understanding history sensually helps us to understand historical figures as once warm and alive, perceptive, and sensuous beings instead of lifeless puppets. Erasing sensory history also obscures the emotional and sensual ways people understood the world and made decisions.[98] This may falsely put historical actors in the realm of *techne* or positivism, when lived realities were as richly influenced by desires and bodily sensations as they are now. Indeed, Foucault's discussion on the anxieties of the Greek scholars in relation to the body and desire show how strong an influence this was. The body, the sense of touch, and emotion are intimately linked, and all three are banished from the world of positivist thinking.

Discussion on relevant Art Theory

Because the unofficial texts I analyze fall into the literary and artistic domain, a glance into the tradition of art theorists is necessary. At risk of falling back onto cliches that posit art as the decorative and nebulous sibling to 'real' pursuits of knowledge, Winterson, Shahn, and Stewart are useful in asserting the specificity in artistic discourse. Dewey and De la Fuente help us understand the kind of knowledge that art produces. Finally, James Baldwin, walking the line between theorist and artist, offers searing insight into why it is the artist that sees what others may not see, helping to give context to the pressing question at the heart of this thesis–why is there a disconnect between the literary texts and the official texts?

[98] Constance Classen, "The Inside Story," in *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012) xii.

Here I argue that art constitutes another specific kind of discourse used to make sense of the disorientation of the present moment. De la Fuente's definition of art is useful here. He writes that social scientists should see "art as visual, acoustic, and other media that lead to heightened sensory perception and the coordination of feelings though symbols."[99] Using Gell's (1999) notion of 'art-like events,' De la Fuente characterizes the event of art (this can be understood similarly to Fish's conception of the 'event' of reading) as being one where a material index (the art) permits a particular cognitive operation. This is a *specific* event, a *specific* cognitive operation. Rather than art being nebulous and without borders, Winterson argues that the job of the poet is precision in language to transmit a *specific* point.[100] Working with paint, Shahn argues that a work's content comes from its shape. The meaning of a painting cannot come from anywhere besides the shape of the paint.[101] This is to say, the meaning in artistic discourse is not limitless. The type of discourse created by art is as specific and limited as other types of discourse– the main difference I am concerned with in this regard is that it has different goals than that of the high modernist, positivist, or techne-type discourse.

Then what are the goals of art, as opposed to the goals of a high modernist discourse? To a certain extent, art deals in the margins. Scott shows how *techne* is related to state power, and Foucault shows how the tradition of positivism and logic is related to political and sexual power. De la Fuente quotes Molotch, who writes that "Making and appreciating art goes to those who take up the unessential tasks, such as women or effete or neurotic men."[102] Susan Stewart,

---

[99] Eduardo De La Fuente, "Why Aesthetic Patterns Matter: Art and a 'Qualitative' Social Theory," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 44, no. 2 (2013): 168–85, https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12036.
[100] Jeanette Winterson, "A Work of My Own," in *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 166-167.
[101] Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content*, 6th printing, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1956-1957 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978) 53.
[102] De La Fuente, *Why Aesthetic Patterns Matter*, 170.

writing on the subject of longing, reminds us, "If authority is invested in domains such as the marketplace, the university, or the state, it is necessary that exaggeration, fantasy, and fictiveness in general be socially placed within the domains of anti- and nonauthority: the feminine, the childish, the mad, and the senile, for example."[103] If high modernism aims to tidy things up, to put things in order, to make things efficient, art does absolutely not do this. It is seen as standing outside of productive society, at least when it is being produced. Indeed, art has a pedestal in high society, but this dynamic is not what this paper is concerned with.

Instead, this paper is concerned with the reason why the production of art stands in opposition to a high modernist ideology. Dewey characterizes art as something that has always had a significant social function–one need not look far to see that it has enjoyed a place in every conceivable society. He points to the function of art as something that keeps the human experience alive and available to the senses.[104] Instead of being a cold spectator, the artist needs heightened alertness to the world.[105] This is indeed opposite to the positivist ideology–early Christian thinkers devised techniques to close the mind and body to outside forces that may affect the stream of consciousness.

Lastly, James Baldwin helps us understand art's relationship to extremity. He writes, "The state of birth, suffering, love, and death are extreme states—extreme, universal, and inescapable. We all know this, but we would rather not know it. The artist is present to correct the delusions to which we fall prey in our attempts to avoid this knowledge."[106] You'll remember that the early Christian thinkers found sex and love to be so antithetical to the truth because of

---

[103] Stewart, *On Description,* 6.
[104] John Dewey, "The Live Creature," in *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1934), 7.
[105] Dewey, *The Live Creature,* 5.
[106] James Baldwin, "The Creative Process (1962)," in *Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 669–72.

the power they had over the senses. Baldwin reminds us that it is these extreme experiences that constitute artistic truth.

CHAPTER 1

The canal project in Panama was a feat of technology's triumph over nature, and much of the official literature that accompanied the build celebrated this. In fact, some of this literature celebrated the technological aspect to the point of downplaying or completely erasing any complications that came by way of human or jungle complexity. This chapter looks at three books which err on the more 'official' side of the literature to examine the kind of discourse they construct. The first part of the chapter looks at two booklets: The booklet, *Panama Canal 1913* provides an excellent example of this clean-scrubbed, high modernist narrative. It is the official guide written by the Isthmian Canal Commission, so, unsurprisingly, its account feels factual, cold, and objective. It favors the passive tense, taking human actors as far out of the picture as possible. The booklet tells the story of the canal's construction as if the canal rose from the ground and ran itself. *The Panama Canal Souvenir*, issued by Harvester International, pushes a similar attitude towards technology and humans and presents the canal as an icon of technological progress. *The Souvenir* is published by a grain harvesting technology company and serves the double purpose of celebrating the technological feat of the Canal's construction and selling its own grain harvest technology products. The second part of this chapter analyzes *Panama and What it Means*, written by the prolific travel writer John Foster-Fraser. This book is part personal narrative and part technical explanation and reflects the popular prejudices and opinions of the time.[107] Fraser's book infuses the high modernist narrative with emotion and

[107] Elizabeth H. Bemis, "Panama Canal Bibliography - American Period 1904-1999" (University of Florida Panama Canal Museum Collection, March 2019), https://www.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/pcm/PCBibliography2019.pdf 50.

national pride. Taken as a whole, these texts come together to paint a picture of national pride and technological progress during the Panama Canal construction period.

The *Panama Canal Souvenir* was issued at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition and the Panama-California Exposition, both of which took place in 1915 to celebrate the completion of the Panama Canal. The souvenir itself was issued by International Harvester Companies (IHC), connecting the technological wonder of the canal to their products. The pamphlet invokes a splendid beginning: "The completion of the Panama Canal, an event of world importance and the greatest physical accomplishment in history, is the realization of a world-dream that has existed since the days of the Spanish Main."[108] It explains Spain and France's failure to realize this dream and its heroic completion by the United States, hence the occasion for this celebration. "Undoubtedly the Panama Canal will stand as the greatest engineering feat of the Twentieth Century. Its completion has dwarfed all previous triumphs of engineering skill, not only in magnitude but in efficiency maintained through the years of persevering endeavor."[109] Next, the document explains the Exposition in San Francisco, detailing the exhibits and concluding with an in-depth explanation of the IHC exhibit. It then explains the San Diego exposition, again taking the reader on an in-depth tour of the IHC exhibition on display there.

The IHC exhibition in San Diego tells the story of progress, starting with the old, backbreaking farming technologies of the Middle Ages through the invention of the machine. This history then culminates in the invention of IHC machines. The pamphlet is heavily

[108] International Harvester Companies, *Panama Canal: Panama-Pacific International and Panama-California Expositions* (Chicago, USA: International Harvester Companies, 1915), 4.
[109] IHC, *Panama Canal Souvenir*, 9.

illustrated with photographs, and throughout these images, the reader sees people and animals gradually replaced by shiny machines—the literal picture of progress. The pamphlet reads:

> "Numerous inventions of all kinds for making the farm home and country life more desirable are constantly coming into use. Nearly every operation on the farm has been made less burdensome, and many methods of agriculture have been completely transformed. All these farm machines invented to benefit the farmer directly have also benefited the nation indirectly and have placed our entire social and economic life upon a higher plane."[110]

The message here is clear: technology improves life. Although the pamphlet moved on from the excitement of the Panama Canal and into shameless advertising rather quickly, what is important here is that the *idea* of the Panama Canal worked to this end. The Panama Canal and grain harvesting technologies have very little in common, but this is not quite the point. Instead, the Panama Canal can be read here as an icon of progress. Taking Bartmanski's conception of iconicity as a condensation of meaning in which the material dimensions matter,[111] the Panama Canal exemplifies U.S. technological superiority on the international stage. Salvatore shows how this idea of U.S. technological rule was exported enthusiastically not only through text, but also through images and even world fairs.[112] This is to say, it is not just the idea of the Canal that was exported but also its exact likeness in the form of photographs or to-scale representations. The grain harvesting technologies, although they do differ from the Canal radially in terms of technology, do share the same metallic surface and ability to manipulate the landscape radically, both are features exemplified in the pamphlet.

---

[110] IHC, *Panama Canal Souvenir*, 45.
[111] Dominik Bartmanski, "Iconicity," in *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Sociology* (Los Angeles: SAGE Reference, 2016).
[112] Salvatore, *Imperial Mechanics*, 665.

An interesting feature of technological advancement is hinted at in the souvenir: the more advanced the technology, the fewer human hands will be needed. In explaining the mining of iron to produce the machines, the pamphlet reads: "All of this material is unloaded and discharged into the furnaces mechanically. The iron ore is not touched by human hands from the time it is taken from the mines by steam shovels until it is handled by the workmen in building modern farm machines."[113] To a certain, obvious extent, this is a good thing because mining and handling iron ore seems like incredibly dangerous work, and keeping human hands away from the fire keeps them safe. However, Scott provides context for how the aesthetic understanding of progress is easily mutated and transferred from one thing to another. Like the effectiveness of monocropping for wheat in certain plots of soil created a monocropping craze as the image of neat lines became equated with productivity, we see that this may become an aesthetic or ideological formula: that lack of human touch indicates greater progress.[114]

Indeed, *Panama Canal 1913* tells the story of the canal's construction mysteriously near-devoid of human actors. The language is telling, as the entire thing is written in the passive tense. Here are a few examples which illustrate my point:

> "The spillway, which is located about midway of the dam, is built right into a natural hill, which stood at an elevation of 110 feet above sea level."[115]
> "In the year 1911, 16,600,000 cubic yards were excavated…"[116]
> "Thirty-eight steam shovels are at work excavating this material."[117]
> "As a matter of fact, the number of hours that a steam shovel is generally employed in loading cars amounts to only about six."[118]

---

[113] IHC, *Panama Canal Souvenir*, 51.
[114] Scott, *Villagization in Tanzania*, 253-255.
[115] Baxter, *The Panama Canal,* 24.
[116] Baxter, *The Panama Canal,* 29.
[117] Baxter, *The Panama Canal,* 30.
[118] Baxter, *The Panama Canal,* 30.

The workers are glaringly absent in this language. The spillway is built, the material excavated, the steam shovel employed. To be sure, it is quite common for scientific or 'objective' documents to be written in the passive tense; this is not a unique or unusual feature of this text. However, this grammatical choice reveals a power structure that privileges the object (the Canal) over the subject (the builders) and creates a grammatical world in which the build is inevitable. This grammatical choice also erases complexity and culpability from the project, raising it to the domain of mathematical precision and inevitability instead of leaving it on the messy floor of humanity. Again, this fits directly into the concept of high modernism, which privileges the abstracted idea over situated reality.

This is not to say that workers are completely absent from the text. In the section on building and blasting, we find: "All of the material which is excavated by the shovels is first drilled and then blasted before it can be handled, and in the length of the Cut a great number of drills are constantly working."[119] In this section the only ghostly remnant of the lives of the workers is the word 'handled.' The word is only an echo of the hands and, by extension, the lives of those who did it. It may surprise the reader to see that it is the 'drills' who are working and the 'steam shovels' who are employed. Indeed, later on this page, the worker is mentioned, but only in the context of his death: "This charge is exploded by means of the regular electric light current, the ordinary magneto battery having been found too unreliable and its use resulted in too many misfired shots, which had to be subsequently excavated, thereby greatly endangering the lives of the workmen."[120] Although workmen are finally mentioned here, it seems only because

[119] Baxter, *The Panama Canal,* 31.
[120] Baxter, *The Panama Canal,* 31.

the narrative has been so convincingly built as one of machines and drills that a reader may not understand why 'misfired shots' are so great a problem.

The booklet is interspersed with pictures—mostly of the canal construction, with a few scenes of Panama. Notably, most of the photos are completely free of people. A few people are visible in the photograph of the old flat arch in a church, and there are workmen lined up in a photo showing the abandoned French project, and one figure in each of the two photos of the steam shovels at work, but the rest of the photos present a ghostly view of the canal being constructed completely absent of people.

The booklet ends with a section on 'facts and figures.' Baxter presents 138 facts, including features such as the length of the canal, the depth of the rivers, the grade of the railroad, construction materials, and costs.[121] Only three of these figures relate to people: the population of Colon (17,740), Panama City (37,505)[122] and the death rate per thousand of 1912: 3.08 from accidents, 7.08 from disease, and 10.16 from all causes.[123] The human death toll was big, and the fear of death of Americans in Panama loomed large in the psyche of the workers–this will be explored in Chapter 2. Having this context makes the fractional, mathematical account of death curious. This seems like a way to downplay death and mechanize the human: death becomes a function that may be compared with the equipment or any of the other figures presented in Baxter's list. Indeed, Baxter lists the number of cars, trucks, dredges, boats, locomotives, drills, and their precise functions, but he does not list the number of workers. In doing so, he paints the picture of technological advancement, as if the canal had been

[121] Baxter, *The Panama Canal,* 53-9.
[122] Baxter, *The Panama Canal,* 54.
[123] Baxter, *The Panama Canal,* 56.

constructed purely mechanically without human hands (only human deaths, as a decimal amount).

These first two texts tell the story of the Panama Canal as a story of technological progress, emphasizing the unemotional 'facts of the matter' and, in this way, naturalizing them as the inevitable progress of man. Both texts favor the machine over the man, which is in line with Classen's claim that the road to modernity involved a rejection of the body, as the body became a marker of an uncivilized state. Because high modernist ideology goes hand in hand with a civilizing mission, the physical body (not to mention personhood) of the builder is obscured while technology and machines enjoy conspicuous stardom in this version of the story of the Canal construction.

John Foster Fraser's guide to Panama, *Panama and What It Means* tells the story of Panama and the Canal narratively but with an attitude of matter-of-factness. Although it differs from the pamphlet and the guide because Fraser inserts himself squarely into the story and unquestionably evokes emotion, his attitude leans strongly in the high-modernist direction. It is important to note that the book is long and filled with numerous violent prejudices and especially well-saturated with racist discourse. The scope of this project does not allow a deep unpacking of racist nature of the text, although it is important to note that it is not my intention to erase or gloss over Fraser's blatant racism. Instead, this analysis will focus on one aspect of Fraser's picture of Panama: the excitement about technological progress and advocating for the taming of nature. Both are two big aspects of the high modernist ideology. Finally, it is important to note that although he takes a high modernist angle, the goal of Fraser's book seems to be, above all, an emotional goal.

Fraser opens the book with a discussion on the importance and brilliance of the Panama Canal. "It is a dramatic as well as a colossal undertaking,"[124] he writes. However, Fraser then turns to the issue of Americans perhaps not knowing enough to revel in this excitement. He writes:

> "...at the first glance there is nothing which excites the ordinary man. Indeed, the ordinary man, if dumped down on the Isthmus and not informed he was looking upon the excavations for the Panama Canal, would probably be no more impressed than if he were looking at some big railway cutting through a hilly country. It is only when he hears of the difficulties encountered and overcome, and sees the armies of men at work in the cuts—sweating and grimy the whole day through—hears the drills eating into the rocks, is startled when the earth reverberates with violent explosions, sees giant engines delve the hillside, piling cars with debris, and the railway line is shifted nearer to the work by great arms in front of an engine, done in a sixth of the time it would take men to do, that he begins to realise the immensity of the undertaking."[125]

Therefore, the goal of this book, it would seem, is to 'excite the ordinary man.' To do so, Fraser has his task relatively cut out for him: he must show how impressive this feat is. But why does he need to excite the ordinary man? To answer this question, it is important to go back to the context under which this book was written and the necessity of emotion in state projects.

Scott's concept of high modernism is inextricably tied to the state. And, the state, beyond being an organizing entity, is also an emotional entity.[126] In this period of U.S. empire expansion, it would have been necessary to excite the empire-passions of Americans back home. Indeed, Salvatore shows that there was a genre of literature being published at this exact time with this goal, and this book finds its place among them.[127]

---

[124] John Foster Fraser, *Panama and What It Means* (London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, LTD, 1913), 1.
[125] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means,* 2.
[126] Weber, *The Nation,*171-173.
[127] Salvatore, *Imperial Mechanics*, 665-666.

Fraser addresses this curious relationship between Panama and the U.S., hinting at the imperial subtext. He writes:

> "Exactly how the Americans got from the Republic of Panama complete control of a stretch of country ten miles wide, and reaching forty miles from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the agency whereby the Republic of Panama came into being at all—declaring independence from the Republic of Colombia, which was a necessary preliminary to the deal between the Americans and the Panamanians—is a complicated story with different versions. Anyway, after spoking the wheels of other enterprises for a good many years, the United States did the right thing and determined to build the Canal as a national enterprise. Taking it that the end justifies the means, the American people are now putting their shoulders back and breathing proudly."[128]

Fraser makes it clear that American *pride* is a significant element in this equation. If it is the ends which justify the means, as Fraser suggests, then the American feeling of pride acts as a proof of this justification. However, as he suggests in the first part of the introduction, there is more American pride possible, and this book will help Americans realize how big an accomplishment this is and, as a result, feel more proud. Again, emotion is an incredibly important element in the concept of the nation,[129] so this need for national pride and national pride as proof of justice is no big surprise.

Fraser spends a significant amount of time explaining the mechanics of the canal to the reader, which I argue is a way of granting the reader some degree of imaginary ownership over the project. "It seems rather a simple affair in engineering;" he writes, "yet the more one sees the more one wonders and admires."[130] He explains to the reader the way the ships are raised up by a series of locks, navigate through the artificial lake, and are placed down into the next sea. He inserts a diagram which explains the elevations of the locks and gives a sense of the geography.

---

[128] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 3.
[129] Weber, *The Nation,*171-173.
[130] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 6.

Many of the chapters are devoted specifically to helping the reader to understand the technology and understand the landscape. In the chapter on the Gatun Dam, he writes:

> "Once a vessel approaches a lock it will cease to use its own steam. It will be towed through by electric locomotives running on cog rails at the top of the lock walls. Four engines will take charge of each ship. It is reckoned it will take about fifteen minutes to fill a lock and about three hours will be occupied to pass through the six locks—the three at Gatun I am describing and the three locks on the Pacific side. To go from ocean to ocean will probably take from ten to twelve hours."[131]

The book is saturated with factual information like this. The reader will understand, after reading this book, the nuts and bolts of the canal's construction; he may even feel like a bit of an expert on the matter. This is an important juxtaposition to the way Fraser characterizes Panamanians in the book, as aimless people who have no interest in any sort of development and live a life of willful ignorance.

Fraser claims that the American management of people is just as important a feat as the engineering required to make the canal, and that Panamanians had to be organized by an outside force (America). This is indeed reminiscent of Scott's conception of high modernism as an ideology that both pushes technological progress and the organization of people. In his introduction, Fraser writes: "Remember, the region is unhealthy jungle. The population, a breed of Spanish-Indian, is sparse, and with none of the strenuousness necessary to remove mountains. The Panamanians of the capital city are lazy and conceited."[132] With a high modernist sensibility that frames technological progress as a self-evident good, the fact that Panamanians have not organized to build a canal immediately becomes a moral issue. Most of Fraser's language to describe Panama and Panamanian involves laziness and decay. He even describes the

[131] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 35.
[132] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 11.

Panamanian-controlled zones as a place to temporarily escape from the buzz of American progress:

> "The ramshackle sea wall, falling to decay, and the turrets askew, and soldiers hanging round with rifles to prevent the escape of prisoners, is a spot to idle a quiet hour when you want to get away from being stuffed with information as to how many cubic yards of earth were removed from the Culebra Cut last month, how the water of the imprisoned River Chagres is rising against the Gatun spillway [...]"[133]

He writes that on his walks through these areas, he always sees "plenty of drowsy loungers."[134] In Fraser's conception, Panamanians are lazy and sleepy and happy to lounge around, not doing anything at all. Moreover, Fraser also paints a picture of Panamanians as delusional:

> "It is the happy belief of the Panama people that they are the centre of all things. Indeed, I rather gathered that the chief credit of the Canal is due to themselves. Some of them unfolded to me the ambition to make Panama the great educational metropolis of the world. With the Canal open Panama will be admirably situated to receive students from North and South America, and it will be about equidistant between the crowded populations of Asia and Europe. So what better spot could you discover for the establishment of a University for the world ? This is the kind of drowsy dream the Panamanian indulges in as he sits beneath the orange trees in the warm of the evening and sips his beverage. He is podgy and eats spiced foods, which are not good for a tropical climate, and he is disposed to malaria."[135]

Fraser is employing a paternalistic irony here–he has first explained that Panamanians are incredibly lazy, then delusional, and now they want to establish a university. The juxtaposition for this lazy, delusional Panamanian is, in an overt way, the worldly and knowledgeable John Foster-Fraser who is delivering this information. He is subtle about the suggestion but, at the same time, does little to conceal his contempt for Panamanian ignorance or his own expertise on every subject he deals in. However, because Fraser starts the book with an invocation of the

---

[133] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 93.
[134] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 93.
[135] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 94-5.

"American enthusiast,"[136] and the suggestion that a goal of this book is to invoke pride, this can also be read as a juxtaposition of the reader of the book against the Panamanian. Where the Panamanian is lazy and delusional, the reader is, by opposition, industrious and knowledgeable. And, indeed, this is not merely metaphorical: the Canal project in Panama was a project of the American government; it was necessary to involve the American public emotionally.

Fraser spends significant time discussing his contempt for the jungle, again as evidence of the Panamanian failure to properly manage the country. He writes: "Before the Americans came the isthmus was one of the earth's pestiferous spots: swampy, miasmic, with mosquitoes carrying yellow fever and malaria. Colon was 'the white man's grave'. Panama reeked with uncleanliness and disease. The interlying jungle country bred continuous sickness."[137] He describes the atmosphere: "Everything seems confusion. The air is hot and clammy, and sickly odors come from the jungle"[138] He characterizes the jungle as a site of disorganization, danger, and disease. He does not hide his contempt about the horrors of the jungle–this writing is indeed emotionally charged. The reader feels his disgust. To him, the jungle represents something *to be* sanitized, organized, and made safe. It also stands as evidence of the failure of the Panamanians to have addressed this 'problem'.

Compare this to the excitement Fraser feels when he surveys the construction site. After spending considerable time where "the climate is humid and you are in a constant state of perspiring enervation,"[139] he finally came to a scene which brought "real appreciation to [his] heart."[140] He writes:

---

[136] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 1.
[137] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 3.
[138] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 9.
[139] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 56.
[140] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 69.

> I understood how the face of the earth had been altered; I saw the never-ending dirt trains jogging over the crazy temporary lines; I saw the white walls of the locks, heard the cry of machinery; I saw the flaming fires at night, and the dark figures of the workers. There was the twinkle of lights in the camps; there was the run alongside a deep cut which made eyes to close tight in sudden dread that a lurch would send us over the side ; there was the long run through the black jungle with millions of glow-flies scintillating."[141]

This scene of technological progress delights Fraser, it even warms his heart. We see a completely different treatment of the scene of the build compared to the scenes of the jungle. Where he finds the jungle horrible, he finds the construction scene, where the land has been cleared, delightful. This is an emotional response to the ideal of high modernism. Scott's concept of high modernism is related to the knowledge system of *techne*, which is a system which is decidedly unemotional and strives for a math-like precision. However, this does not mean that its *effect* is unemotional. Indeed, because high modernism is inextricably tied to large scale, state projects, and because the state is an emotional entity, this reveals an intense emotional response to the ideology of technical progress.

Another example of this is the way in which Fraser characterizes the facts of the build. More than anything else, he argues that the facts are exciting. Take this passage, for example:

> "Some of these shovels can lift 5 cubic yards, and that means over eight tons of rock or over six tons of earth. A seventy-ton shovel has shifted 4,823 cubic yards in a day. The shifting in a full working hour is 289 cubic yards. Much more could be shifted; the difficulty is getting the stuff away. Even the thousands of dump cars and the seventy-five miles of railway track are hedged by limitations. As it is, 175 trains haul out of the Cut every day, or a train every two and a half minutes.
> Statistics like these indicate the ferociousness with which the excavating goes on. In the veins of the workers is a throbbing joy over big results. Go day by day, and you see little change. Let a month elapse, and then you mark the difference. And there is the Cut—a long black passage through the hills which tells of work done. Why, the record clearance in one day is 127,742 tons, removed on 333 trains."[142]

---

[141] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 69-70.
[142] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 45.

The sentence, "In the veins of the workers is a throbbing joy over big results," is particularly telling—there is no question about emotion being a big part of this progress. Fraser delivers the same information in this section which brings throbbing joy to the builders to the reader, to spark the reader's joy as well. At the beginning of the book, Fraser suggests that this book is to spark American excitement at the Canal build. Therefore we can also interpret these facts and figures as being there to dazzle and excite the reader.

Fraser finishes his book with an explanation of what, in his opinion, could be done to develop Panama. In this way, he finishes his book by invoking the reader again, characterized as someone who might possibly be persuaded to come and make a difference in this 'undeveloped' country. The reader, reading up until this point, already understands the geology, people, and canal mechanics. The reader is saturated in factual information, aimed to make him confident in the American involvement, as he himself is intellectually involved. The reader is assured that the inhabitants of Panama are nowhere near as educated or ambitious as he (the reader) is. Fraser writes: "The talk about the Canal has naturally directed the eyes of the world to the possibilities of Panama, and questions are being asked what the country has to offer to the speculator, investor, and the colonist."[143] He then suggests: "A settler could get a quick return with sugar-cane and tobacco, and the possibilities of orange growing have impressed everyone who has made a study of the land."[144] Fraser turns to the forests: "Now it is calculated that quite two-thirds of the area of Panama is forested with trees of valuable wood." But he laments, "enormous capital would be required to clear the land."[145] Fraser makes it clear: the land is rich

[143] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 239.
[144] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 241.
[145] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 242.

with possibility! In his eyes, one only needs to clear the horrible jungle, plant crops in tidy lines, and restructure it all according to a high modernist sensibility. Note how enthusiastically and unempirically Fraser employs the high modernist perspective, especially when it comes to farming: "One feels regret," he writes, "at the haphazard way in which the existing population, instead of properly cultivating the land, neither plough or prune it; the soil is simply scratched with the machete, the seed dropped, and the crop allowed to take care of itself."[146] He continues: "Probably it is the very luxuriance of Panama, giving crops with little work, which has ministered to the sloth of the natives and prevented them from turning their little farms to more profitable use."[147] Scott argues that the high modernist sensibility values monocropping and planting in straight lines as superior to any other method of farming, although in practice farming is tied intimately to the land which is farmed and cannot be abstracted.[148] Fraser, here, notes that traditional farming practices are indeed quite successful, but because he sees them as primitive and uncivilized, he assumes that adopting the European monocropping model can only possibly yield better results. This project does not claim an understanding of which farming method would be *more* successful, but what is important here is the confidence and morality which is attached to Fraser's imaginary farm project. For Fraser, it is inconceivable that any existing farming method would be of any value at all.

These suggestions are oriented toward the reader. "Altogether," writes Fraser, "the Isthmus is well worth the consideration of those men who, with large capital, are always on the look out for some part of the world which remains to be harvested."[149] Fraser conceptualizes

[146] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 242.
[147] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 243.
[148] Scott, *Villagization in Tanzania*, 253-255.
[149] Fraser, *Panama and What It Means*, 249.

Panama as a vacuum, undiscovered, undeveloped, waiting to be made use of. He makes an overt suggestion that someone come and make use of this (perhaps, the reader!) Lying slyly under this overt suggestion is the fact that the United States has already intervened. Fraser opened his book gesturing vaguely towards the United States intervention, seemingly claiming, 'no one can say exactly *if* the U.S. did intervene, but if it had intervened, then it would have been justified.'. The justification he provides is based on the emotional magnitude of the canal build and the immorality with which he characterizes the lack of 'development' by Panamanians. Both are entirely emotional arguments based on the morality he has attached to facts. In this section, toward the close of the book, by suggesting that anyone with enough money *should* come and develop the region, the United States intervention finds itself as just one among many other imagined future improvement schemes.

Both the existence of these texts and the way they deal with information helps us understand what kind of discursive environment they were operating under, and what kind of discourse they were creating. First, these texts were being written and published in the time period which was marked by U.S. political expansion into the Pacific. Notably, as Immerwahr argues, this expansion was taking place without the self-label, 'empire'[150] This period of expansion, especially in South America, was dependent upon representations,[151] making the texts analyzed here inherently political whether or not they claim it outright. Because the Panama Canal was celebrated as an icon of American technological progress, emotion is implicit even in those texts which deal solely with facts. These texts all express confidence in technological progress, confidence in factual information, and, to some extent, emotion as justification for state

[150] Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire,* 19.
[151] Salvatore, *Imperial Mechanics*, 665,.

power. These texts do not deal with –or in the case of Fraser's book, contemptuously deal with– human emotion, the chaos of the jungle, or mess. Things should be in order, is the argument of these texts. Note the moral implications.

The first part of this chapter analyzed two texts which dealt with factual information and seemed scrubbed clean of emotion, the messiness of human lives, and the disorder of the jungle. However, by scrubbing this factual narrative clean of emotion and putting everything neatly in order, they leave a clear and shiny story that seems to be a perfect base to foster an uncomplicated feeling of pride. In short, the neatness and unemotionality of these first two texts does not mean they will not be received unemotionally. Indeed, Fraser's text gives us a first-hand account of how someone may interpret the 'facts of the matter,'--with glowing delight! Fraser's account showed how the counting of steam-shovels, the measuring of track, and the weighing of dirt produces an excitement and pride that is easily transferred to the nation, the United States. Fraser's text also demonstrates that the facts, beyond being exciting, invite authority. When Fraser presents the facts to the reader, he does not suggest that one needs to really be there, or know the history, or talk to people who live there in order to understand Panama. In fact, his account treats local people with considerable racist contempt. He stresses the ignorance of Panamanians over the knowledge of himself and his readers.

CHAPTER 2

The poems and literary writings on Panama supplement the official texts and their high modernist narrative with human emotion, mess, and what Scott characterizes as Métis. This chapter looks primarily at the collection of songs and poems written by the canal builders and the book of poems by J.S. Gilbert. Interestingly, these texts center on bodily experiences. Where the high modernist discourse deals in facts that squash complexity and mess, these texts err more on the side of marvel and submission to both the disorder of the natural world and the mess of human nature. But of course, to say that these texts are one thing is to be misleading. Contained in these collections of poetry are indeed celebrations of the domination over nature, perpetuations of racist stereotypes, and celebrations of men who 'keep their wits about them'. And of course, there are plenty of examples of the accepted narrative that the jungle is a breeding ground for disease and foul character. However, when taken as a whole, these poems offer a startlingly different view of the goings-on among Americans in Panama.

It is not true that high modernist texts force experience into a rigid mold while poetry and art allow experience its full force and depth. To an extent, both discourses, simply because they *are* discursive and not pre-discursive, give form to experience. I must turn to art theorists for guidance in analyzing this section. Working on poetry, Winterson writes: "The formal beauty of art is a threat and relief to the formless neutrality of unrealized life."[152] Indeed, her concept of 'unrealized life' can be interpreted as the pre-discursive experience–she clarifies that art and the pre-discursive experience are not the same thing. Winterson argues that the job of the poet is

[152] Jeanette Winterson, "The Semiotics of Sex," in *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 114.

exactness in words– this is the way to catch the idea most accurately. The more exact the language, the more precise the transmission of idea and meaning.[153] It is the precision in choice of words which is responsible for creating what Fish may characterize as the event of reading.[154] Shahn, writing on painting, similarly claims that the meaning and content of art can only come from its form and shape, the 'look' of the painting. Without form, there is no content, and the content depends entirely on the form for its transmission. Shahn's book is tellingly titled, *The Shape of Content*.[155] My aim here is not to fall into the trap of poetic romance, confusing the poems with a higher and truer form of knowledge. Poetic texts also have a specific angle, a specific idea, and constitute a specific discourse. What does separate the poetic texts from the modernist texts are the goals of their respective discourses.

Classen, theorizing the social history of the sense of touch, describes the path from the Middle Ages to modernity as a path that led man outside his body. Where the medieval man lived a painful life, dealing with famines, plagues, animals and bugs who bit him, and backbreaking work,[156] the way to modern life involved ridding the body of pain. Classen provides the example of the Christian preacher's threats centering less on the bodily tortures that might be sustained in Hell (boiling, biting, burning, etc–she provides numerous and graphic examples)[157] and instead began to center the woes of emotional suffering. Dialogue about the body became out of fashion and obscene to the newer generations of 'sensible people,' even in the context of Hell. Indeed, in his famous work *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains this

---

[153] Winterson, *A Work of My Own*,166–67.
[154] Edward Regis, "Literature by the Reader: The 'Affective' Theory of Stanley Fish," *College English* 38, no. 3 (1976): 263–80, https://doi.org/10.2307/375884.
[155] Shahn, *The Shape of Content*, 53.
[156] Constance Classen, "Painful Times," in *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 47–49.
[157] Classen, *Painful Times,* 64-48.

move away from corporeal punishment to usher in modern, sensible times.[158] Classen proves that the sense of touch has always fit snugly into the bottom of the hierarchy of the senses in the Western tradition. The 'lower senses,' including touch, taste, and smell, were linked triply to women, animals, and the 'uncivilized.'[159]

Many of the poems examined in this chapter deal with the ineffability of experience and the imperfect project of transferring this feeling to text. *In the Roar of the Ocean,* Gilbert describes the various meanings one can understand by listening to the froth of the waves. "Come closer, stranger, closer to the shore, / And listen, listen, *listen* to that roar ! /Do you know what that means to us, my man ? / Ah, no ! not you–not anybody can, / Unless he's lived for years upon this beach, / And learned the lessons that old sea doth teach."[160] Although the poem attempts to explain the meanings and the secrets of the ocean on the shore, Gilbert also reminds us that some things cannot be passed on through text. Where a high modernist text pins down experience, this poetic discourse hints at the experience which cannot be pinned down. Taking Winterson's concept of precision in poetry, this can be read not as a failed attempt to explain exactly the meanings contained in the ocean but instead as a work that transmits to the reader only as much as can be transmitted, perhaps taking the words to the edge of their usefulness.

Throughout the poem, Gilbert clarifies that only the "keen-trained ear" can hear the modulations in pitch and detect things such as a "far, faint plash so like a falling tear." Only those who listen very carefully will hear what the sea has to say; its stories are complicated. If there is one thing this poem does not deal with, it is factual data like the high modernist

---

[158]Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Second Vintage Books edition (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995), 3-31.
[159] Constance Classen, "A Woman's Touch," in *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 72-73.
[160]J. S. Gilbert, *Panama Patchwork* (New York: The Burr Printing House, 1901), 3.

interpretations of the ocean have provided, such as temperature, depth, or height of the tides. The poem ends like this: “It means all this ! Aye, infinitely more ! / So closer, stranger, closer to the shore, / And listen, listen, *listen* to that roar!”[161] Gilbert does not give the reader the full experience of listening to the ocean, although he does suggest what his experience in listening has revealed to him and what the ocean might reveal to someone else. He does make clear that the experience cannot be revealed through text, no matter how precise his language is. Where high modernism involves condensation and clarification of meaning, such as Scott’s example of abstracting a forest to the value of its wood, this kind of discourse opens up the possibility of meaning, even suggesting meaning not yet known, only knowable through respectful, careful listening. Where the modernist report may survey thoroughly yet quickly, Gilbert’s poem points to knowledge only available through repeated intimate encounters with the ocean. Winterson describes the venture of poetry—reading and writing—quite like a love affair, requiring sensitivity and some degree of symmetry and respect between the writing and the person. This is the opposite of the hierarchical mastery over knowledge figured into the arrangement of a high modernist discourse.

Gilbert’s poem, ‘Sunrise,’ describes the author looking out at the beautiful sunset while tormented by a thousand tropical nuisances. “I sit on my lofty piazza, / O’er looking the restless sea; / (and a spider glides over my forehead, / a cockroach runs over my knee!)[162] The use of parentheses here is particularly illuminating, almost suggesting that this is the subtext not often said out loud. It suggests that in surveying and looking out on the horizon, the surveyor's body is bound to be bitten, crawled on, sunburnt, damp, and generally subject to some humiliation.

---

[161] Gilbert, *Panama Patchwork*, 4.
[162] Gilbert, *Panama Patchwork*, 5.

Indeed, with this context, it is curious that the first we hear viscerally of this presumably imminent and exceedingly intense body experience from a poem. However, Classen and Foucault demonstrate that this denial of the body was an essential facet of the path to the development of the modern ideal sensory world.[163,164] Since poetry exists within the domain of art and art is allowed to be emotional and illogical, it makes sense that poetic discourse is allowed to make sense of bodily reality, where modernist discourse is (generally) not.

The Song of the Prickly Heat presents a similar view of the intensity of the bodily experience of being on the Isthmus: "Itch, itch, itch / Til night drives the day away! / Itch, itch, itch, / Til day drives the night away! / Arms and stomach and legs, / Neck and ankles and back, / Digging them all til they scorch and bleed, / From one to the other with lightning speed, / Like a demented jumping-jack!"[165] This gives us a glimpse of the heat's real power over the Americans on the Isthmus. It seems that mastery over the body would have been impossible in a situation like this. Instead, the itchiness makes the subject succumb to bodily desire (the illogical itch) instead of being a master over his body. The image of the 'demented jumping jack' gives us a clue to how wild this succumbence is and how massively different it is to polite modern life.

In the poem, *The Mosquito*, Gilbert writes (in the voice of the mosquito): "And I make the meekest Christian / Hate God, and wish to die!"[166] This is strong language, and not without reason. Not only were mosquitos pesky, with their relentless buzzing and infliction of itchy bites, but they often carried deadly diseases, not least malaria. The threat and fear of death are not trivial matters, and the poetic discourse reminds us of how large this loomed in the psyche of

[163] Classen, *The Inside Story*, xii.
[164] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 3-31.
[165] Gilbert, *Panama Patchwork*, 48.
[166] Gilbert, *Panama Patchwork*, 45.

those Americans in Panama. Indeed, many of the poems in this volume deal with the fear of death and bodily harm.

Cut it Out from *The Panama Roughneck Ballads* follows the story of a canal builder on the operating table with an abscess of the liver. He is likely terrified and screaming the entire time. "When they laid him on the table / He soon began to shout. / His roars were awe-inspiring. "Cut it out! Cut it out! Cut it out!" / They patched him back to labor; And now he goes about / Roaring at all boozers," / "Cut it out! Cut it out! Cut it out!"[167]. Although many of the poems in this volume commend the bravery of the canal builders, this poem also offers a glimpse of the real and intense fear of death that would have been experienced. In this poem, this element of fear and terror conveyed through the cries and roars of the canal builder is an element of gripping emotion that the high modernist narrative is clear of. In the high modernist texts, death is acknowledged, as many people did die, and much needed to be organized to prevent further death. But this intermediary between death and life–the real fear of death– does not fit into the narrative. However, this fear of death is indeed impactful–the near-death experience of this builder was traumatic for him and compelled him to try and change the lives of those around him actively. Although this is a poem and likely fiction, the emotions it deals with are likely very real.

King Fever by Gilbert is another poem that deals with this fear of death: "Then hail! All hail, to the Great Socialist ! / King Fever is his name ! / Whose leveling power none can resist, / King Fever is his name ! / Whose might can demolish the whole Chinese Wall, / And round our poor craniums rebuild it all— / Whose flames burn alike the great and the small— / King Fever

[167] John Hall, *Panama Roughneck Ballads* (Panama and Canal Zone: Albert Lindo, Panama Railroad News Agency, 1912), 41-42.

is his name!"[168] In the colonial context, where the Americans were meant to imagine themselves on the top of the hierarchy, the leveling power of tropical disease likely constituted not only a fear of death and bodily harm but also acted as a threat to their perceived power. This colonial complex was not unique to Americans in Panama. Adas showed how English colonists worked to downplay their struggles for survival in America;[169] Scott discusses how colonists in Burma, Dutch Batavia, and Algeria, for example, consistently stressed about presenting an *image* of control to maintain real political control.[170] With this context, the 'leveling power' of disease, which did not operate along the intended hierarchy and instead could make Americans incredibly sick and weak and often kill them, may not have only been a personal threat but also a political threat.

Beyond bodily experiences, the nature of the Canal man's body was extensively discussed in the *Roughneck Ballads*. The text, '*The Old Canal Man,'* for example, connects the arts of life of the canal builder to his outward appearance. "The Old Canal Man—What is he? He is a wanderer over the face of the earth, and the knocks he has received have endowed him with a goodly stock of worldly wisdom….He is a man whose experience has taught him many things, principal of which is a fair knowledge of his kind—man."[171] The author goes on to clarify that his knowledge is situated: "The hard life he leads has seasoned his shrewdness with philosophy—the philosophy of real life—not of books."[172] You can see this on his body: "the

[168] Gilbert, *Panama Patchwork*, 44.
[169] Michael Adas, "'Engins' in the Wilderness," in *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge, Mass. London: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2006), 34.
[170]James C. Scott, "The Public Transcript as a Respectable Performance," in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 45-52.
[171] Hall, *Panama Roughneck Ballads*, 12.
[172] Hall, *Panama Roughneck Ballads*, 13.

mark of toil is upon him, and he is not ashamed of it. On the contrary, in his gruffly hearty way he takes pride in his gnarled fists and sun-tanned, seamy visage." [173]

Not only is the body privileged here over the abstracted and bodiless ideal of high modernism, but the look of the "Canal Man's' body is decidedly in opposition to the neat look of the high modernist body. Classen argues that the invention of the military drill was a cornerstone aspect of modernism in that it not only made the human body more like that of a machine but also prepared people to work with machines. She argues that a tidy physical appearance, neat uniforms, strict haircuts, and polished shoes, for example, were important elements of the control of the drill, and a hair out of place might be strictly punished. Like a machine, the military drill prepared the body for repetitive work.[174] Scott also makes the case that visual aesthetics, especially straight lines and right angles, is a cornerstone aspect of high modernism.[175] The Canal man stands quite in opposition to this ideal. The canal digger is described in the poem, The Rough-Neck: "Rough the mould, rough the "Roughneck," / Though soft of heart and kind of eye. / Hardened by the blows of tempests; Nature's wrath their skin hath flayed…" The poem ends with, "For they're built on Nature's plan."[176] Another poem describes the 'Roughneck' as "sweat soaked and musky."[177] This kind of description shows that one of the most admirable traits of the Canal man is his robust life experience, which makes itself visually known through the marks it leaves on his body.

---

[173] Hall, *Panama Roughneck Ballads*, 14.
[174] Constance Classen, "Sensations of a New Age," in *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 167–70.
[175] Scott, *Introduction*, 4.
[176] Hall, *Panama Roughneck Ballads*, 19.
[177] Hall, *Panama Roughneck Ballads*, 23.

Robust life experience leads to situated knowledge, or Scott's conception of *Métis*. In his concise language, *Métis* "represents a wide array of practical skills and acquired intelligence in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment."[178] Scott makes the compelling case that *Métis* works in direct opposition to the knowledge system that characterizes high modernism— or *Techne*— which is the impersonal, quantitative, precise knowledge that comes from books rather than experience. In these poems, it is the marks that are left upon the body—the sweat and grime, the 'seamy visage' and the 'gnarled fists'— which are visual indicators of the repeated, situated experiences that left them. They suggest that along with these physical marks, there is an intelligence that can only come by way of experience.

The poem, "*We're Diggin' Th' 'Ditch' Together"* from the *Roughneck Ballads* offers a tongue-in-cheek response to the modernist narrative that seems to sanitize the builders from the story of the build. The clerk begins the poem by asking, who is digging the ditch? He then announces that he is building it because without him, the work would grind to a halt. The poem responds: "Mr. Clerk you're O.K. in your place; / You die of th' fever like me. / In th' hospital ward you're a 'case,' / Like a fish is a fish in th' sea. / Now tell me, old pal, straight an' plain; / I'd like to have it made clear. / By th' power of your clever, brain, / How many yards did you dig last year?"[179] This poem touches on some themes that oppose both the high modernist and colonial narrative. First, the poet suggests that although the clerk has a high rank, he is not above the threat of fever, which can strike anyone, regardless of status. This is to say, the clerk is involved with Techne's knowledge system, and the poet pokes at his confidence in book knowledge as something that may shield him from disease or death. While *Techne* ignores the

[178]Scott, *Practical Knowledge,* 313.
[179] Hall, *Panama Roughneck Ballads*, 47.

body and its illogical knowledge and desires, the poet suggests that just because one ignores his body does not mean the body does not exist. The clerk's body does exist, and it is a body just like any other (except, of course, the subtext is that his body does not carry the marks that point to an intelligent body). His intelligence cannot protect him from disease: in the hospital bed, when he lies among the other bodies gripped by disease, his mind, no matter how intelligent, will not help him fight the fever, and the fever will not consult his status before taking him as a victim. The line, 'like a fish is a fish in th' sea' makes this clear: he may hide his body behind his intelligence, but at the end of the day he does not exist on a higher plane, he exists as a body on the earth.

Second, the poet pokes at the idea of the clerk's intelligent mind being the thing that is building, blasting, and moving dirt. Although it is more than clear that the planners have a decisive effect on the build— it seems inconceivable that the Canal be built without top-down organization and planning—the poet reminds us that the canal *also* could not have been built without the physical moving of dirt done by the builders. Scott makes it clear that one of the key aspects of high modernist thinking is the disproportionate valuing of abstraction. Among his examples, he includes the case of the scientists who designed a farm from a hotel in Chicago. This farm was not designed for a real location or real people; they conceived that it could be put anywhere and worked by anyone. Scott makes the case that the abstract idea is valued over situated knowledge in high modernism. Even when the farms did not work out exactly according to their plan and proved to be less productive than traditional farming because they had to be implemented in the real, messy, unpredictable physical world, their perfection in the abstract was

so exciting that their political success outweighed their real life failures.[180] In this way, Scott suggests that abstract ideas tend to be more attractive than physical realities regarding state organization and development. The poet pokes at this idea, drawing attention to the asymmetry in value: the canal could not exist without the planners *or* the builders. However, the builders are instead characterized as an afterthought, an inevitability, a mechanical function, instead of as indispensable agents in the construction of the canal.

"*To Blame*" from Panama Patchwork is another poem that valorizes this concept of *Métis*. It describes the trial of a sea captain on the bench for neglect. " "Neglect?" Oh, yes, 'tis easy / For lubbers just like you / To spin out yarns in fathoms, / And for fools to think 'em true! / Who taught *you* navigation? / How long have *you* been to sea? / You don't know port from starboard, / Or weather side from lee !"[181] While the critic theorizes on the shore, the poet suggests that the judge cannot possibly understand the situated knowledge it takes to manage a ship in the abstract. Regardless of 'who is to blame' in this poem, the poet does push the point that the knowledge of the ship captain is hard-earned through practical experience and cannot possibly be understood by the judge who can think through the situation but only from the abstract perspective. This poem suggests a frustration with the confidence in abstraction as the gold standard for knowledge.

The poetic discourse offers an alternative understanding of the experience of Americans in the Canal build. The poems deal with themes that would have no place in the modernist discourse: marvel at the landscape, intense emotions and intense bodily experiences, and a valorization of situated knowledge as opposed to the simplifications and abstractions that the

---

[180] James C. Scott, "Soviet Collectivization, Capitalist Dreams," in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 201.
[181] Gilbert, *Panama Patchwork*, 55.

'official' high modernist narrative provides. Not coincidentally, these poems seem also critical of power. James Scott writes in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* that with every form of domination there is resistance, and more often than not this resistance is covert-ish. It takes place, he argues, in plain sight but often under some sort of disguise. Rumors, folktales, songs, and jokes serve as examples.[182] Diana Taylor writes that body-knowledge, similar to Scott's conception of *Metis*, is a powerful tool of resistance precisely because it cannot be pinned down textually. Although these poems do work textually (of course–they are texts!), they also consistently invoke the body as a locus of meaning outside of the realm of *techne*. Indeed Foucault and Classen demonstrated the denial of the body corresponded with the rise of both techne and modern times (not least, high modernism), so this invocation of the body can be read as a form of resistance.

[182] James C. Scott, "Domination, Acting, and Fantasy," in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 19.

CONCLUSION

This paper has worked to illuminate the differences between the high modernist discourse and the poetic discourse published at the time of the building of the Panama Canal, situate them historically, and contextualize these discourses theoretically. The question remains–why this difference?

The high modernist texts enjoy a special seat at the table of national power. Sutter characterizes these texts, the genre of which he calls 'Tropical Triumphalism' as one of the most important features of the Panama canal build.[183] Salvatore claimed that the dissemination of texts, images, and world fairs was a crucial feature of U.S. expansion into South America.[184] On a broader scale, Scott shows how high modernism is tied to state organizing power and how it operates aesthetically as well as organizationally. It abstracts and thins concepts in order to organize–and hopefully improve–life on a massive scale.[185] Foucault's historical analysis shows how positivist thinking has always been linked intimately to power, and distanced from the physical body. This is all to say: positivism and power go hand in hand–both on a broad, global scale as suggested by many scholars, and as discernible here in this historically specific case.

The techniques of power employed in the modernist texts analyzed (discussing only the 'facts of the matter,' erasing the messiness of human lives, and assuming a seemingly neutral stance) work to naturalize the colonial enterprise by making it seem like inevitable progress. At the same time that they assume an unemotional, factual position, they serve the purpose of fostering excitement and American national pride. By making it all seem untinged by emotion or

[183] Sutter, *Triumphalism and Unruliness*, 21.
[184] Salvatore, *Imperial Mechanics*, 665.
[185] Scott, *Villagization in Tanzania*, 253.

complexity, the resulting feeling is predictable (pride, excitement) and works *with* rather than against the system of power.

On the other hand, the poetic texts, by dealing with complexity, emotion, and mess, do not fall neatly in line with these techniques of power. This is not to say that they might not, on occasion, follow the dominant narrative, but instead to point out that they are disposed to being antithetical. One can see the physical body as the first victim of the high modernist abstraction program, as Classen shows that the physical body (and its sensing power; the body's intelligence) has become further and further banished as the road of modernity forges ahead.[186] This is because of the body's unpredictability in the face of organizational power: it is, or at least was understood to be, the site of impulse, desire, and irrational behavior. The discursive world of art operaties similarly: it is oftentimes the antithesis of the modernist archive.

Although this paper looks only at the example of these poetic texts, by connecting these to the larger world of scholarly and artistic research in the arts, it takes the theoretical leap to suggest a pattern. Baldwin suggests that what distinguishes the artist's work is its dealing with the extreme human states: birth and death, suffering and love.[187] The anxieties of the early Christian theorists (who were laying the groundwork for positivism and modernity) about sex and about the body are deep concerns: they are seeking a way to deal with birth, death, suffering and love – through techniques of domination.

Domination always comes with resistance, and as Scott has shown in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, these are often not overt.[188] In the case of Panama, we find in the poetry–written by American men, members of the colonial power– that the artistic form nurtured

[186] Classen, *The Inside Story*, xii.
[187] Baldwin, *The Creative Process*, 669-72.
[188] Scott, *Domination, Acting, and Fantasy*, 19.

an attitude toward both power itself and the discursive logic of power that was critical. This is not to say it is causal, or to recommend poetry-writing as a remedy to colonial occupation. However, the relentless denial of birth, death, suffering and love (to borrow Baldwin's langage) in the high modernist texts in the case of the American high modernist writings on Panama suggest that this was an essential component in the enterprise. A look at the poetry reveals a relationship to power and a relationship with the contingencies of life that are important for understanding the historical past.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adas, Michael. "'Engins' in the Wilderness." In *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission*. Cambridge, Mass. London: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2006.

———. "Machines and Manifest Destiny." In *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission*. Cambridge, Mass. London: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2006.

Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception (1944)." In *The Consumer Society Reader*. New York: The New Press, 2000.

Aguirre, Robert D. "The Dissonant Lyre:" In *Mobility and Modernity: Panama in the Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Imagination*, 120–47. Ohio State University Press, 2017. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1503gz2.9.

Alstyne, Richard W. van. "The Panama Canal: A Classical Case of an Imperial Hangover." *Journal of Contemporary History* 15, no. 2 (1980): 299–316.

Anderson, Benedict. "IMAGINED COMMUNITIES." In *Nations and Nationalism*, edited by Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman, 48–60. A Reader. Edinburgh University Press, 2005. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrmwf.8.

Ann Laura Stoler. "Prologue in Two Parts." In *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Baldwin, James. "The Creative Process (1962)." In *Collected Essays*, 669–72. New York: Library of America, 1998.

Bartmanski, Dominik. "Iconicity." In *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Sociology*. Los Angeles: SAGE Reference, 2016.

———. "The Opening Talk." The Late Michel Foucault, 1980-1984. Notes from Seminar on The Late Michel Foucault, Berlin, DE, Summer 2023.

Baxter, William M. *The Panama Canal: A Brief and Simple Description of the Essential Features*. The Official Guide of the Isthmian Canal Commission, 1913.

Bemis, Elizabeth H. "Panama Canal Bibliography - American Period 1904-1999." University of Florida Panama Canal Museum Collection, March 2019. https://www.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/pcm/PCBibliography2019.pdf.

Classen, Constance. "A Woman's Touch." In *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*, 71–92. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

———. "Painful Times." In *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*, 47–70. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

———. "Sensations of a New Age." In *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*, 167–97. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

———. "The Inside Story." In *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

Colby, Jason M. "Enterprise and Expansion, 1848–1885." In *The Business of Empire*, 19–46. United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion in Central America. Cornell University Press, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt7v86t.5.

De La Fuente, Eduardo. "Why Aesthetic Patterns Matter: Art and a 'Qualitative' Social Theory." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 44, no. 2 (2013): 168–85. https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12036.

Donoghue, Michael E. "Borderland on the Isthmus: The Changing Boundaries and Frontiers of the Panama Canal Zone." In *Borderland on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone*. Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2014.

———. "Desire, Sexuality, and Gender in the Zone-Panama Borderland." In *Borderland on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone*. Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2014.

———. "Rape and Murder in the Canal Zone:" In *Decentering America*, edited by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, 1st ed., 277–312. Berghahn Books, 2007. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130h8m9.14.

———. “ROBERTO DURÁN, OMAR TORRIJOS, AND THE RISE OF ISTHMIAN MACHISMO.” In *Sports Culture in Latin American History*, edited by DAVID M. K. SHEININ, 17–38. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt14tqd0x.5.

Foucault, Michel. “Aphrodisia.” In *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of The History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

———. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Second Vintage Books edition. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995.

———. “Lecture Seven: 25 February 1981.” In *Subjectivity and Truth: Lectures at the Collége de France, 1980-1981*. New York: Picador, 2017.

———. “Lecture Ten: 18 March 1981.” In *Subjectivity and Truth: Lectures at the Collége de France, 1980-1981*, edited by Frédéric Gros, translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Picador, 2017.

———. “The Art of Arts.” In *Confessions of the Flesh: Volume 4 of The History of Sexuality*, edited by Frédéric Gros, translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 2021.

———. “Virginity and Self Knowledge.” In *Confessions of the Flesh: Volume 4 of The History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage Books, 2021.

Ghaziani, Amin, and Matt Brim. “Queer Methods: Four Provocations for an Emerging Field.” In *Imagining Queer Methods*, edited by Amin Ghaziani and Matt Brim, 3–27. New York University Press, 2020. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479808557.003.0003.

Gonzalez, Melissa. “‘Cien Por Ciento National!’ Panamanian Música Típica and the Quest for National and Territorial Sovereignty.” Columbia University, 2015.

Halberstam, Jack. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Hodges, H. F. “Building the Panama Canal.” *The Military Engineer* 100, no. 654 (2008): 75–76.

Immerwahr, Daniel. *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*. First Picador paperback edition. New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.

International Harvester Companies. *Panama Canal: Panama-Pacific International and Panama-California Expositions*. Chicago, USA: International Harvester Companies, 1915.

Jenkins, Brian, and Spyros A. Sofos, eds. *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe*. 1. publ. London: Routledge, 1996.

Mattox, Jake. "Claiming Panama: Genre and Gender in Antebellum U.S. Isthmiana." *American Studies* 53, no. 1 (2014): 117–47.

Maurer, Noel, and Carlos Yu. "BEFORE THE DITCH." In *The Big Ditch*, 13–54. How America Took, Built, Ran, and Ultimately Gave Away the Panama Canal. Princeton University Press, 2011. http://www.jstor.org.ezprox.bard.edu/stable/j.ctt7sh42.7.

———. "DIGGING THE DITCH." In *The Big Ditch*, 97–138. How America Took, Built, Ran, and Ultimately Gave Away the Panama Canal. Princeton University Press, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7sh42.9.

Office of the Historian. "Building the Panama Canal, 1903-1914." U.S. Department of State, n.d. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/panama-canal.

Regis, Edward. "Literature by the Reader: The 'Affective' Theory of Stanley Fish." *College English* 38, no. 3 (1976): 263–80. https://doi.org/10.2307/375884.

Rockwell, K. "A Brief History of the Panama Canal." *Professional Memoirs, Corps of Engineers, United States Army, and Engineer Department at Large* 1, no. 2 (1909): 164–74.

Rodríguez, Ileana. "Vanishing Bodies, Woman/Nation: Deconstructing the Panamanian State." In *Women, Guerrillas, and Love: Understanding War in Central America*, translated by Robert Carr and Ileana Rodríguez, NED-New edition., 19–29. University of Minnesota Press, 1996. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttttq4s.7.

Salvatore, Ricardo D. "Imperial Mechanics: South America's Hemispheric Integration in the Machine Age." *American Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2006): 662–91.

Scott, Blake. “From Disease to Desire: The Rise of Tourism at the Panama Canal.” *Environmental History* 21, no. 2 (2016): 270–77.

Scott, James C. “Compulsory Villagization in Tanzania: Aesthetics and Miniaturization.” In *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1998.

———. “Domination, Acting, and Fantasy.” In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, 17–44. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990.

———. “Introduction.” In *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Veritas Paperback. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

———. “Soviet Collectivization, Capitalist Dreams.” In *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, 193–222. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

———. “Taming Nature: An Agriculture of Legibility and Simplicity.” In *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

———. “The High Modernist City: An Experiment and a Critique.” In *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

———. “The Public Transcript as a Respectable Performance.” In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, 45–69. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990.

———. “Thin Simplifications and Practical Knowledge: Metis.” In *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

Shahn, Ben. *The Shape of Content*. 6th printing. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1956-1957. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978.

Stewart, Susan. “On Description and The Book.” In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993.

Sutter, Paul S. “Triumphalism and Unruliness during the Construction of the Panama Canal.” *RCC Perspectives*, no. 3 (2015): 19–24.

Taylor, Diana. “Acts of Transfer.” In *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.

Weber, Max. “The Nation,” n.d.

Weinert, Phil. “The Panama Canal: A Retrospective.” *The Military Engineer* 91, no. 602 (1999): 37–40.

Winterson, Jeanette. “A Work of My Own.” In *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*, 165–92. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

———. “The Semiotics of Sex.” In *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*, 103–18. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Wylie, Lesley. “Introduction.” In *Colonial Tropes and Postcolonial Tricks*, 14–39. Rewriting the Tropics in the Novela de La Selva. Liverpool University Press, 2009. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt5vjhfr.5.

Zein, Katherine A. “Introduction: Setting the Scene of Sovereignty.” In *Sovereign Acts*, 3–22. Performing Race, Space, and Belonging in Panama and the Canal Zone. Rutgers University Press, 2017. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1tm7jm0.7.

PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL: BOOKS

Baxter, William M. *The Panama Canal: A Brief and Simple Description of the Essential Features*. Boston: Rand Avery Supply Co, 1913.

Fraser, John Foster. *Panama and What It Means*. London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, LTD, 1913.

Gilbert, J. S. *Panama Patchwork*. New York: The Burr Printing House, 1901.

Hall, John. *Panama Roughneck Ballads*. Panama and Canal Zone: Albert Lindo, Panama Railroad News Agency, 1912.

International Harvester Companies. *Panama Canal: Panama-Pacific International and Panama-California Expositions*. Chicago, USA: International Harvester Companies, 1915.

IMAGES

National Geographic Society (U.S.). “Bird’s-Eye View of the Panama Canal.” 1913. Map and Imagery Library, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida. https://ufdc.ufl.edu/aa00038444/00001.

APPENDIX: PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS

This short section gives a more detailed overview of the sources used, followed by scans of the first pages of each book

1. **Baxter, William M. *The Panama Canal: A Brief and Simple Description of the Essential Features*. The Official Guide of the Isthmian Canal Commission, 1913.**

Although I could not find information on the author, Rand Avery publishers also published maps, travel brochures, and railroad information.[189]

2. **Fraser, John Foster. *Panama and What It Means*. London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, LTD, 1913.**

John Foster Fraser was a Scottish journalist and travel writer who enjoyed some fame and success during his lifetime. He authored at least 16 books, for example: "The Real Siberia," "Canada As it Is," and "Pictures from the Balkans"[190]

Elisabeth Harris, librarian at the University of Florida Panama Canal Archives, writes this about the book:
"This work is the first-hand account of the experience, observations, and opinions of the author, a Scottish travel writer, during a trip to the Panama Canal Zone. It contains the same stereotypes and broad characterizations as many other accounts from this time. He touches on the governing and social structure, the details of everyday life, the functionality of leisure time, and homesickness. His account of people and cultures in the Zone could be of interest to a scholar looking for additional primary source material. He sees the canal enterprise as fitting of the American temperament and is impressed by what the U.S. has accomplished. He discusses Great Britain's involvement and the future impact of the canal on British trade, fearing that Britain could lose some of its colonial holdings in the Caribbean to America if they do not better manage the populations. In his view, white governance in the Canal Zone and the British West Indies was

[189] See examples here: https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search?search_field=all_fields&q=rand+avery+co
And here: https://openlibrary.org/search?q=Rand+%26+Avery+co&mode=everything
[190] "SIR JOHN F. FRASER, JOURNALIST, DEAD," *New York Times (1923-)*, June 8, 1936, 101830044, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

necessary, and the British subjects on the islands should be seen as an asset to manage, much like the governance position in the Zone. The style is descriptive and the text calls upon multiple senses. It includes a table of contents, map, 48 plates of photographs, a list of illustrations, and an index." [191]

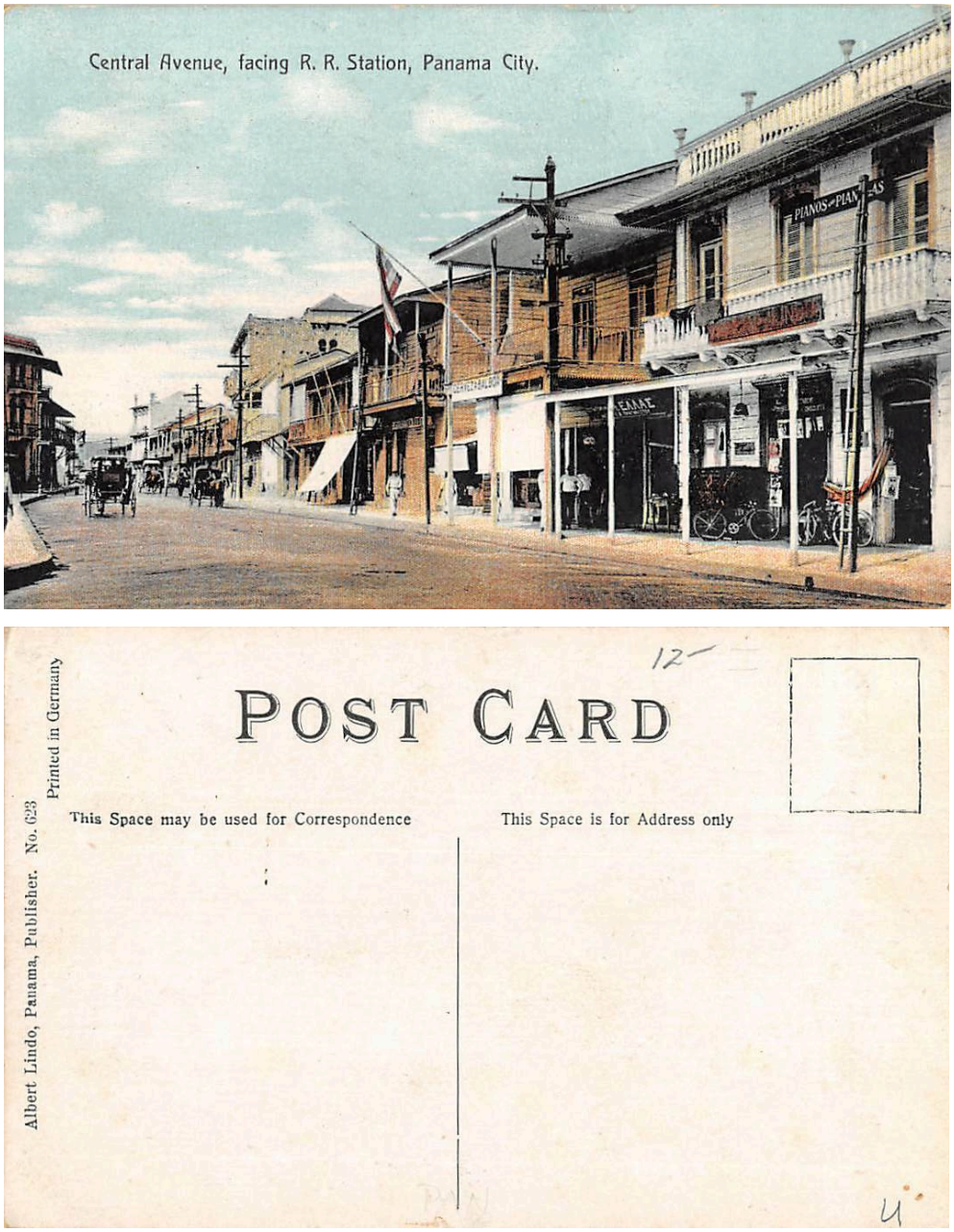
3. **Gilbert, J. S. *Panama Patchwork*. New York: The Burr Printing House, 1901.**

Aguirre writes on J.S. Gilbert:
"The biographical Gilbert remains obscure. He was born July 20, 1855, at Middletown, Connecticut, and educated at Skinner School, Chicago. He went to Panama in 1886 to work for the Panama Railroad Company and was later employed by one of the many steamship companies. He died August 15, 1906, from complications related to malaria and was buried at Mt. Hope cemetery in Colón."[192] Aguirre also calls Gilbert, 'the Kipling of the Isthmus'.

4. **Hall, John. *Panama Roughneck Ballads*. Panama and Canal Zone: Albert Lindo, Panama Railroad News Agency, 1912.**

The New York Times wrote on this book, saying "it seems to be the real thing", that it is easy to believe that these were really the songs and poems sung by the Canal builders..[193] The publisher, Albert Lindo, was a merchant born in Panama City, and was educated at Cornell University and then Columbia University for civil engineering. He went on to operate retail shops in Panama.[194] An Ebay search revealed that Albert Lindo published lots of postcards, in addition to some illustrated books.[195]

[191] Bemis, *Bibliography,* 50.
[192] Aguirre, *Dissonant Lyre*, 121.
[193] "PANAMA BALLADS," *New York Times (1857-1922)*, February 23, 1913, 97400454, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.
[194] "Albert Lindo, Merchant, Dies; Operated Stores in Panama," *New York Times (1923-)*, May 31, 1968, 118310762, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.
[195] Ebay search using term, 'Albert Lindo.' April 2024.



Example of a Postcard published by Albert Lindo[196]

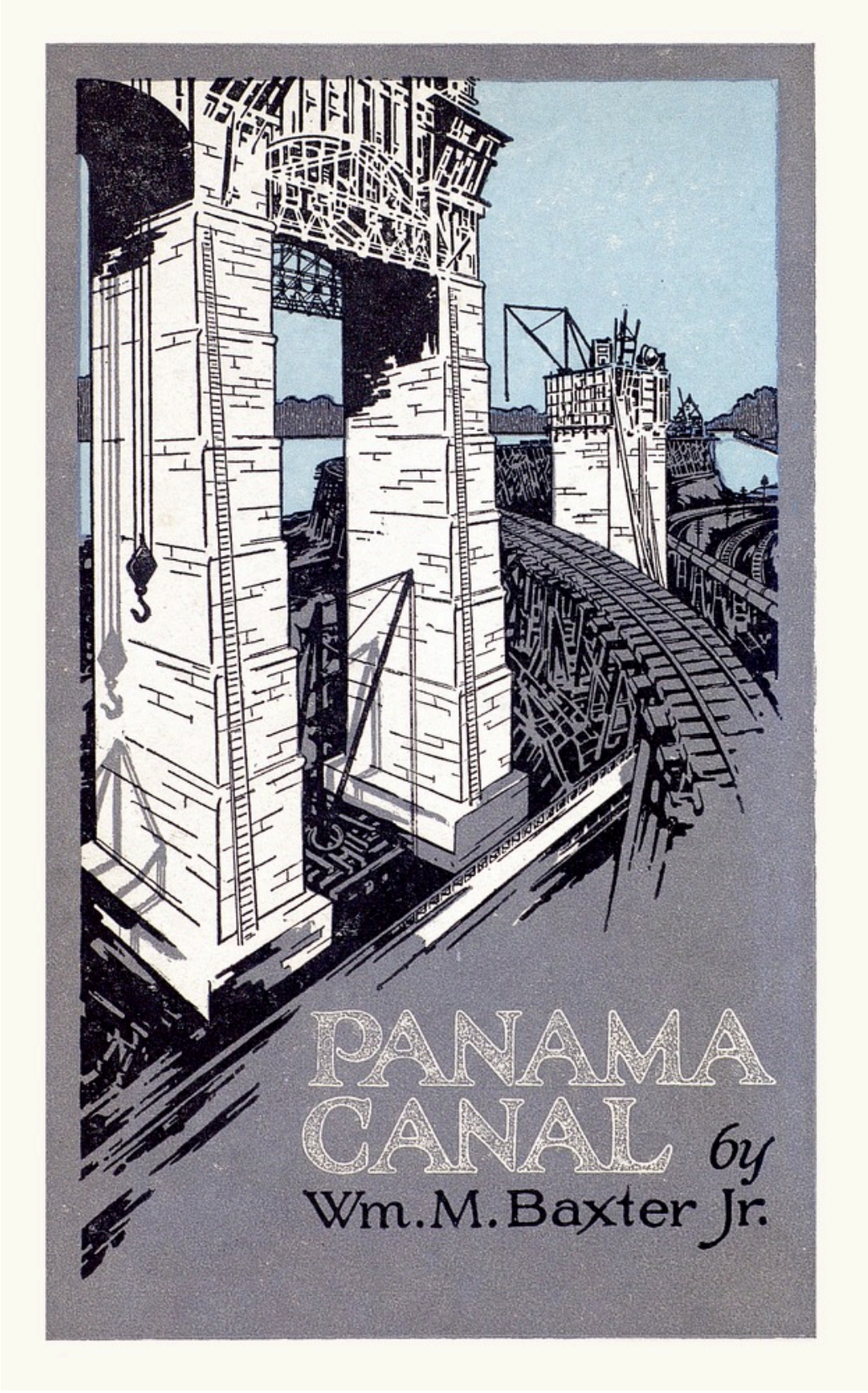
[196] THE CARTOPHILIANS, *PANAMA CITY, PANAMA ~ CENTRAL AVENUE, STORES, ALBERT LINDO PUB ~ 1904-20* 09/09/2023. Ebay Listing, # 304456727086. https://www.ebay.com/itm/304456727086?itmmeta=01HWPCZG8BZ1WQV494ZEETMR2S&hash=item46e308fa2e:g:yt8AAOSw4kRiF8AX&itmprp=enc%3AAQAJAAAAwDBpSFdT0GzGhHa1wYfjr%2FotNPQGD%2FE5VtW5PohQnsdszHC78qwoXdc2RZiqiWbAn3c84e5zk2SD1UpF%2BrP8GKh1A0hRbBf4OHRNrQwJdQr5yKjwwmPe%2BVD3QwqNFtRCkiKstxhBHfyS1yIOzZXZJ8spHpA8G%2BBt5CpfT53LnDWgSjcpacI4oFihF%2F5YUgu0NZDztHDkxeAsNtZBHKRvmGKbRr3ND6BNxiUL%2F4Ua2baJACkLKHO3gFfkeiEnYVlNmg%3D%3D%7Ctkp%3ABk9SR6CE_szlYw

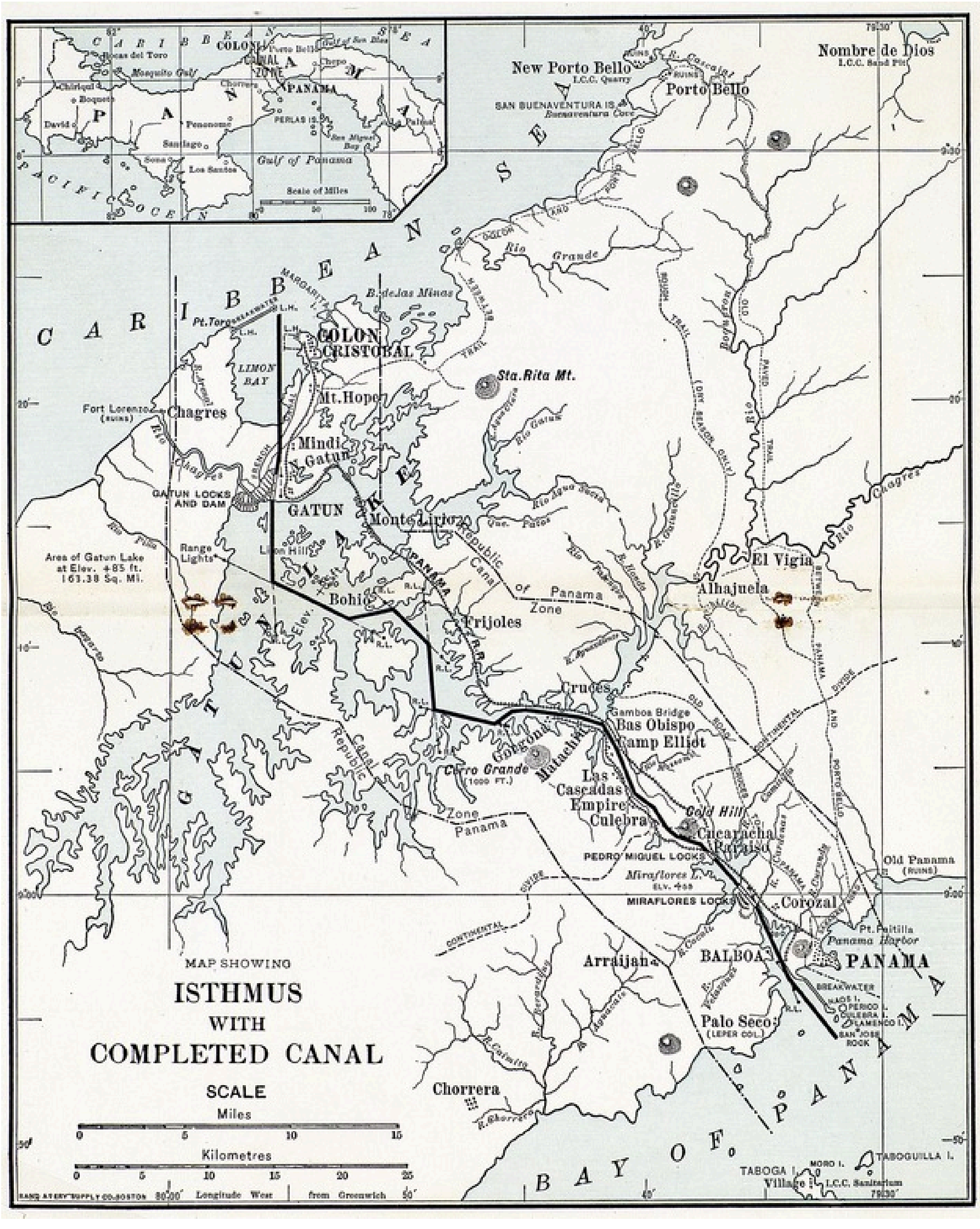
5. International Harvester Companies. *Panama Canal: Panama-Pacific International and Panama-California Expositions*. Chicago, USA: International Harvester Companies, 1915.

International Harvester Co was a leading and hugely successful farm machinery manufacturer.[197]

[197] Mark R. Wilson, Stephen R. Porter, and Janice L. Reiff, "International Harvester Co.," in *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, Dictionary of Leading Chicago Businesses (1820-2000), n.d.

FIRST PAGES: PANAMA CANAL 1913




MAP SHOWING
ISTHMUS
WITH
COMPLETED CANAL
SCALE
Miles
Kilometres
CARIBBEAN SEA
GATUN LAKE
BAY OF PANAMA
COLON
CRISTOBAL
LIMON BAY
Chagres
Fort Lorenzo (RUINS)
Mt. Hope
Mindi
N. Gatun
GATUN LOCKS AND DAM
Monte Lirio
Bohio
Frijoles
Cruces
Gamboa Bridge
Bas Obispo
Camp Elliot
Gorgona
Matachin
Cerro Grande (1000 FT.)
Las Cascadas
Empire
Culebra
Gold Hill
Cucaracha
Paraiso
PEDRO MIGUEL LOCKS
Miraflores L.
MIRAFLORES LOCKS
Corozal
BALBOA
PANAMA
Old Panama (RUINS)
Panama Harbor
Arraijan
Palo Seco (LEPER COL.)
Chorrera
TABOGA I.
TABOGUILLA I.
El Vigia
Alhajuela
Sta. Rita Mt.
New Porto Bello
Porto Bello
Nombre de Dios
SAN BUENAVENTURA IS.
Area of Gatun Lake at Elev. +85 ft. 163.38 Sq. Mi.
Range Lights
Republic of Panama
Canal Zone
Longitude West from Greenwich

THE PANAMA CANAL

A BRIEF AND SIMPLE DESCRIPTION

OF THE

ESSENTIAL FEATURES

BY

WILLIAM M. BAXTER, JR.

The Official Guide of the Isthmian Canal Commission

ENLARGED AND ILLUSTRATED

1913

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	Page
Culebra Cut, looking north from the Continental Divide	8
Flat Arch in the Church of San Domingo, Panama	14
Old French Locomotives, near Empire, Canal Zone	16
Abandoned French Ladder Dredges	18
Old French Excavation in Cut, near Empire	22
Steam Shovel Loading Rock for the Toro Point Breakwater	28
Steam Shovel in Culebra Cut, buried under small rock slide, May 31, 1912	32
Slide of 300,000 cubic yards in the East Bank of Culebra Cut, August 21, 1912	34
Gatun Locks in Course of Construction	36
Cross-section of Lock Chamber and Walls, Gatun Locks	40
Entrance to Upper Gatun Lock from the Lake	42
General View of the Pedro Miguel Lock	44
Sanitary Drip Barrel	48

A General Map of the Canal Zone and the Panama Canal, printed in three colors and bound in board covers, has just been issued.

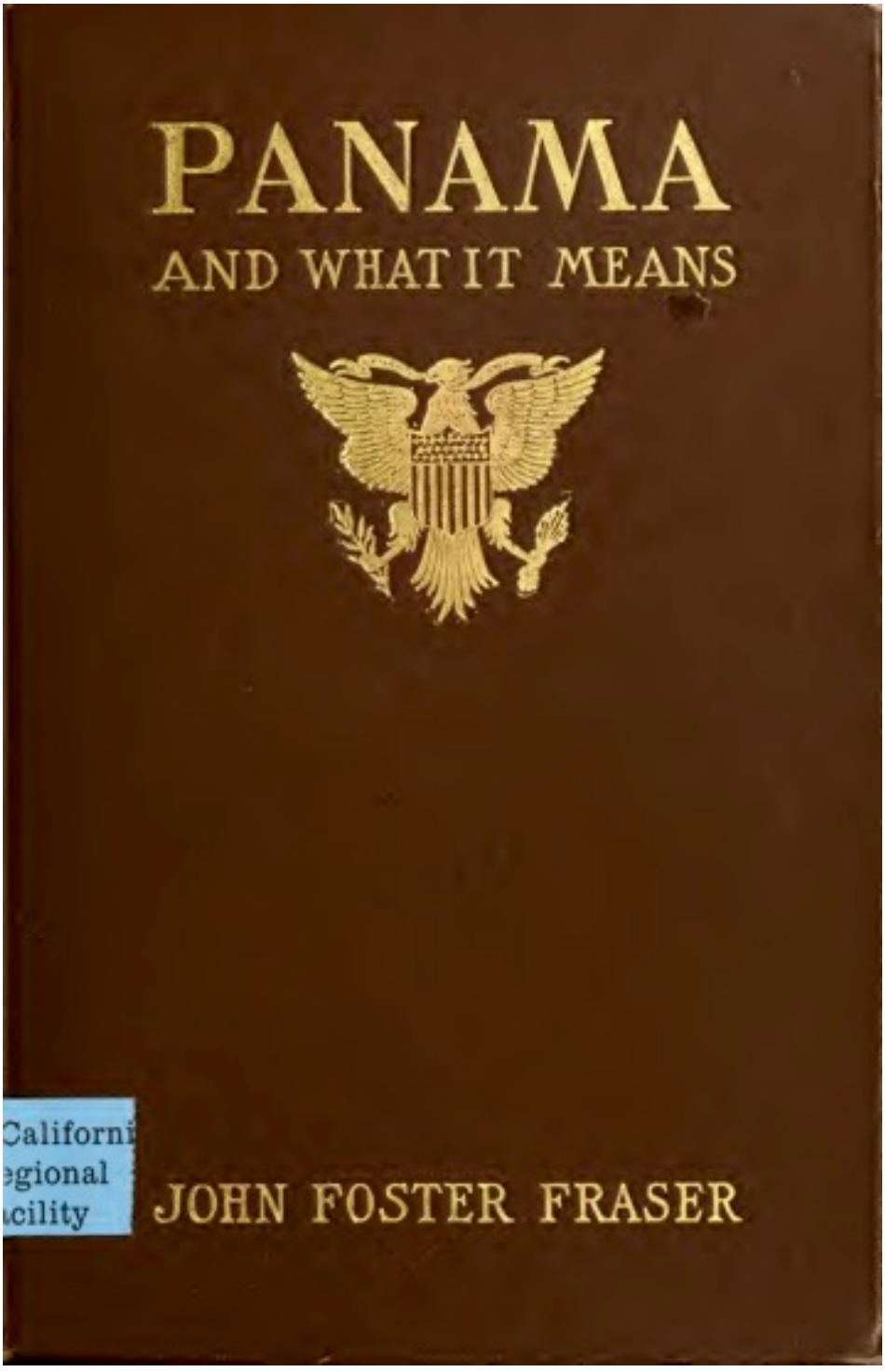
Size 4½ x 13 inches, folded.

Published by Wm. M. Baxter, Jr., Official Guide of the Isthmian Canal Commission.

■ ■ ■

RAND AVERY SUPPLY CO., BOSTON.

FIRST PAGES: PANAMA AND WHAT IT MEANS



COLONEL GOETHALS,
THE CZAR OF THE CANAL ZONE.
Photograph by Underwood & Underwood, High Holborn, W.C.

PANAMA

AND WHAT IT MEANS

BY

JOHN FOSTER FRASER

WITH A MAP AND FORTY-EIGHT PLATES
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

TWELFTH THOUSAND

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LTD
London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne
1913

First Edition *February* 1913.
Reprinted April 1913.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
1.	A Bird's-eye View	1
2.	Management and Men	11
3.	The Raw Material	21
4.	The Gatun Dam	29
5.	The Culebra Cut	39
6.	Wages and Living	48
7.	Colon-cum-Cristobel	56
8.	Scenes along the Route	69
9.	Panama of To-day	92
10.	The Battle against Disease	110
11.	The Realisation of a Dream	126
12.	French Muddle and American Delay	147
13.	The Strange Story of the Panama Republic	162
14.	The Baby Republic and Its Fate	173
15.	For God and Gold	188
16.	The Sack of Panama	202

CHAPTER PAGE
17. The West Indies and the Canal . 223
18. Resources and Trade of the Isthmus 239
19. The Future in the Pacific . . . 250
20. What Is the Use of It All? . . 272
Index 283

LIST OF PLATES

	FACING PAGE
Colonel Goethals	*Frontispiece*
Map of the Panama Canal	1
Diagram of Elevations when the Canal is Finished	4
A Steam Shovel at Work	6
A Track-shifting Machine	8
A " Spreader " at Work	10
Steam Shovels at Work, September 9, 1912 . .	16
Building the Breakwater to protect the Atlantic Entrance to the Canal, July 21, 1911 . .	24
The Gatun Dam, with the Water of the Lake beginning to Rise, June 7, 1912	30
Gatun Spillway: General View looking West, August 4, 1912	32
The Spillway at Gatun, showing the Rising Surface of Gatun Lake in the Distance, September 7, 1912	34
Gatun Upper Lock, showing Guard Gates, Operating Gates, Intermediate Gates, and Safety Gates in Process of Construction, June, 1912 . .	36
A Bend in the Culebra Cut, June, 1912 . .	40
The Notorious Cucaracha " Slide," October 23, 1911	42
Hand Drill Gang boring Holes for Dynamite to blast Moving Face of a " Slide " in the Culebra Cut, February, 1912	44
Culebra Cut, looking North from Contractors' Hill, and showing Terraces left after removing Superimposed Weight to avoid " Slides " . .	46

LIST OF PLATES

FACING PAGE

A Landslide of 300,000 Cubic Yards in the Culebra Cut, near Empire, August 21, 1912 . . 48

Meal Time amongst the Coloured Workers . . 50

Sleeping Quarters for the Labourers . . . 54

The Front Street in Colon 58

The Statue to Columbus at Cristobel . . . 64

In the Jungle 74

Heated Volcanic Rock in the Culebra Cut, February 16, 1912 78

Building a Lighthouse on the Edge of the Jungle . 80

Where the Canal will enter the Pacific, June, 1912 88

From the Old Spanish Fort at Panama; Islands guarding Entrance to the Canal in the Distance 94

The Tivoli Hotel at Panama 100

The Cathedral in Panama City 106

Spraying Trenches with Kerosene to kill the Malaria Mosquito 112

A Section of the Great Culebra Cut, June, 1912 . 118

Culebra Cut at Culebra: View looking South: Blasting Rock on Contractors' Hill, January, 1912 . 128

Culebra Cut, looking North from a Point just South of the Empire Suspension Bridge . . . 132

Gatun Lower Locks—Middle and Upper Locks in the Distance, January, 1912 138

Gatun Middle Locks, looking South, June 7, 1912 144

An Old French Locomotive, near Empire . . 148

Two Old French Dredgers; Shovel beginning to Work in the Background, June 20, 1910 . 152

Where the American Canal intersects the Old French Canal on the Atlantic Side, June 11, 1912 . 160

General View of the Pedro Miguel Locks, looking South, May 4, 1911 166

LIST OF PLATES

FACING PAGE

Gatun Lower Lock, looking towards the Atlantic, June 7, 1912 176

The Pedro Miguel Locks: the West Chamber, View looking North from the Lower Main Gates, March 29, 1912 182

Miraflores Locks, looking North, June 14, 1912 . 192

The Lower Main Gates in the Pedro Miguel Lock, showing Outlet in the Wall, March 28, 1912 . 200

Miraflores Lower Locks, August 16, 1912 . . 224

Wreck Cranes freeing a Steam Shovel buried by a "Slide" in the Culebra Cut, August 25, 1912 232

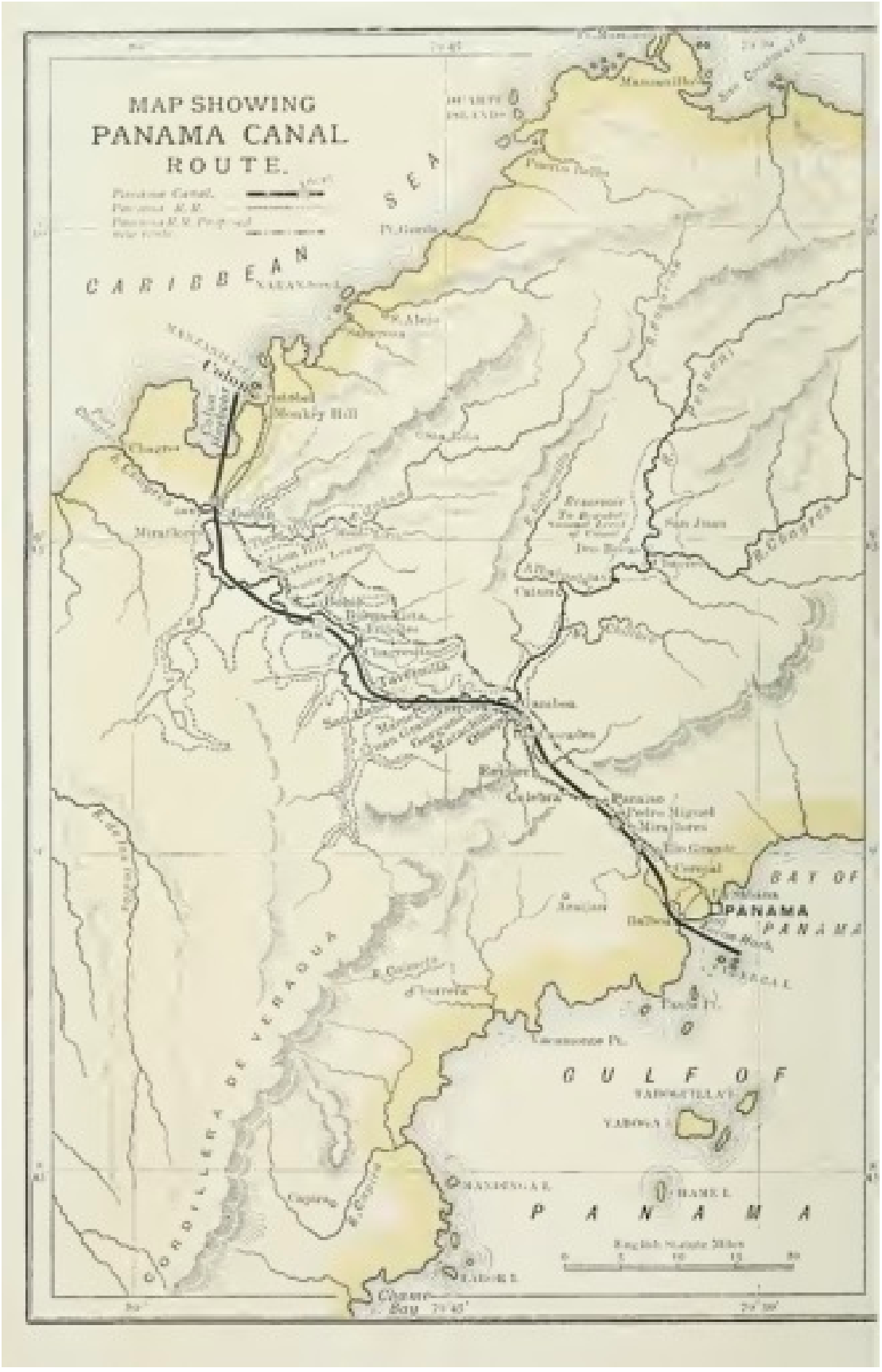
Dumping Concrete for the Walls of the Pedro Miguel Locks, November, 1910 240

Concrete Mixing Plant 244

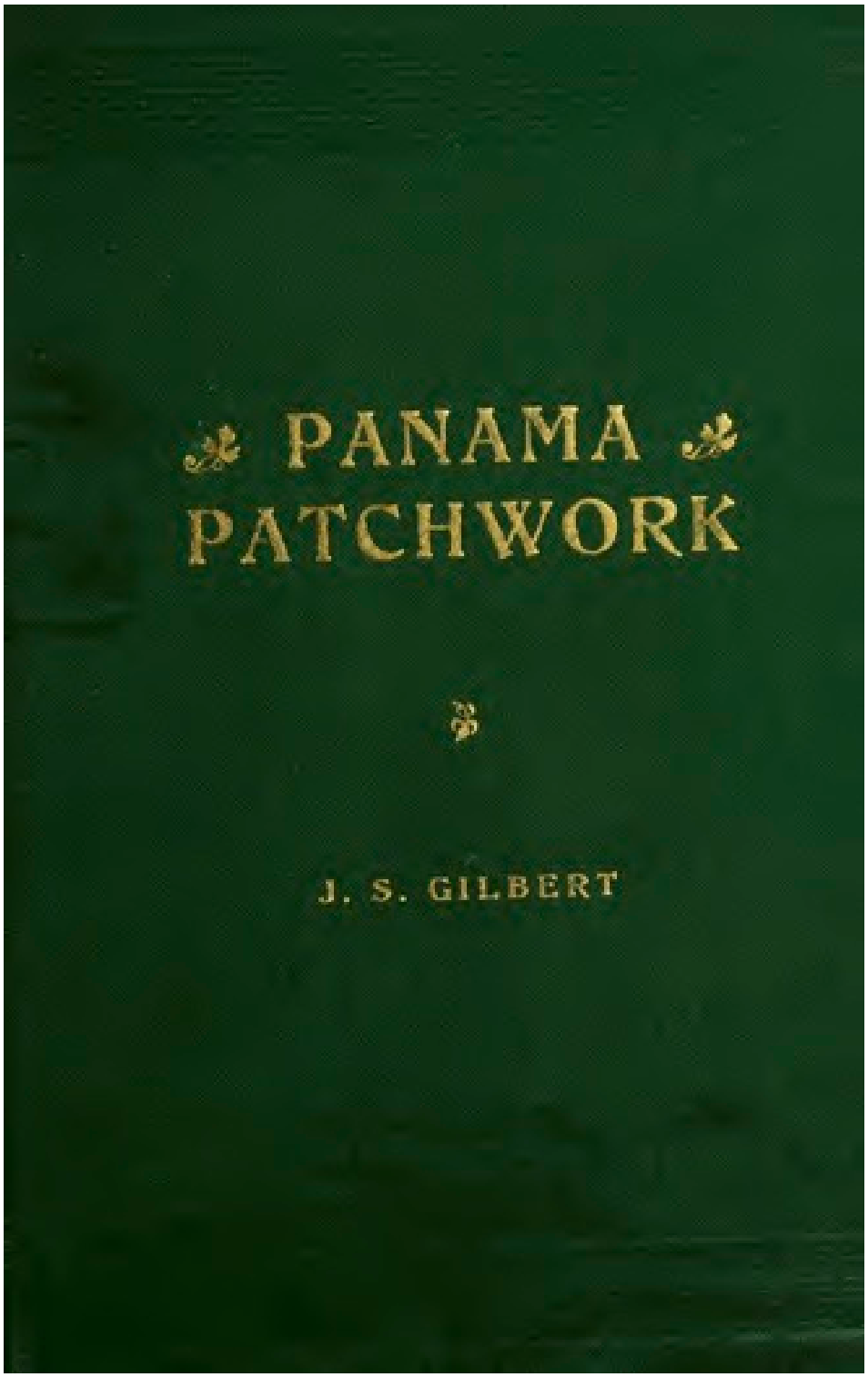
Gang of 150 Men shifting Track by Hand, January, 1912 256

Constructing the Approaching Wall of Concrete at the Pedro Miguel Locks, June, 1912 . . 264

Dumping "Dirt" from Canal Excavations; the Steel Wedge hauled by a Chain rapidly pushes all the Debris on one Side 272


MAP SHOWING
PANAMA CANAL
ROUTE.
CARIBBEAN SEA
Colon
Monkey Hill
Panama
BAY OF PANAMA
PANAMA
GULF OF PANAMA
Chame Bay

FIRST PAGES: PANAMA PATCHWORK



PANAMA PATCHWORK

PROEM.

THERE's no excuse to offer for this book
  Save that, perhaps, of one man's vanity;
And that's a thing at which you ought to look
  With calm and undisturbed urbanity.

A favor, though, the bard would ask of you:
  When his conclusions you're disposed to doubt,
Believe that as he wrote he thought 'twas true—
  He thought he knew the things he wrote about.

He does not, dares not ask for charity,
  For that would be requesting overmuch;
He knows the Grace's worth—and rarity:
  His work's a freak; just write him down as such!

Panama Patchwork

By

J. S. Gilbert

PATCHWORK:

Something irregularly or clumsily composed

—WEBSTER

NEW YORK:

The Burr Printing House

1901

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1900, by
J. S. GILBERT, in the Office of the Librarian of
Congress, Washington, D. C.

J. M. H.

To him who strives to find in every man
Some kindly impulse or some noble trait;
Who knows his own, and hence doth mildly scan
His brothers' faults, this book I dedicate.

EXPLANATORY.

To those who have resided on the Isthmus of Panama for any length of time, and especially to those whose associations with the country extend over a period of fifteen or twenty years, no word of explanation as to the occasional seeming disparagement of it as a place of residence in these pages is considered necessary. It is only to those whose stay has not been sufficiently long, or who have lacked the insight to discover the "true inwardness" of the place and people, that it is thought best to say here that no one more freely and gratefully acknowledges the charm of the former and the unvarying courtesy of the latter than the author of the following rhymes.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Proem,	ii
The Land of the Cocoanut-Tree,	1
In the Roar of the Ocean,	3
Sunset,	5
Beyond the Chagres,	6
The Isthmian Way,	7
The Funeral Train,	9
A Frijoles Washer-Girl,	10
John Aspinwall,	12
"Cinco Centavos?"	14
To the Southern Cross,	16
The Sea-Grape Tree,	17
Woodbine Sally,	19
Isthmian Hymn,	21
The Trade-Wind,	22
A Song of Dry Weather,	23
Yellow Eyes,	24
He Has Gone,	25
The Paradise of Fools,	27
The Busiest Man,	28
While We're Still Living On,	31
The Naked Brown Babies of Bolivar Street,	33
That Excellent Heart,	34

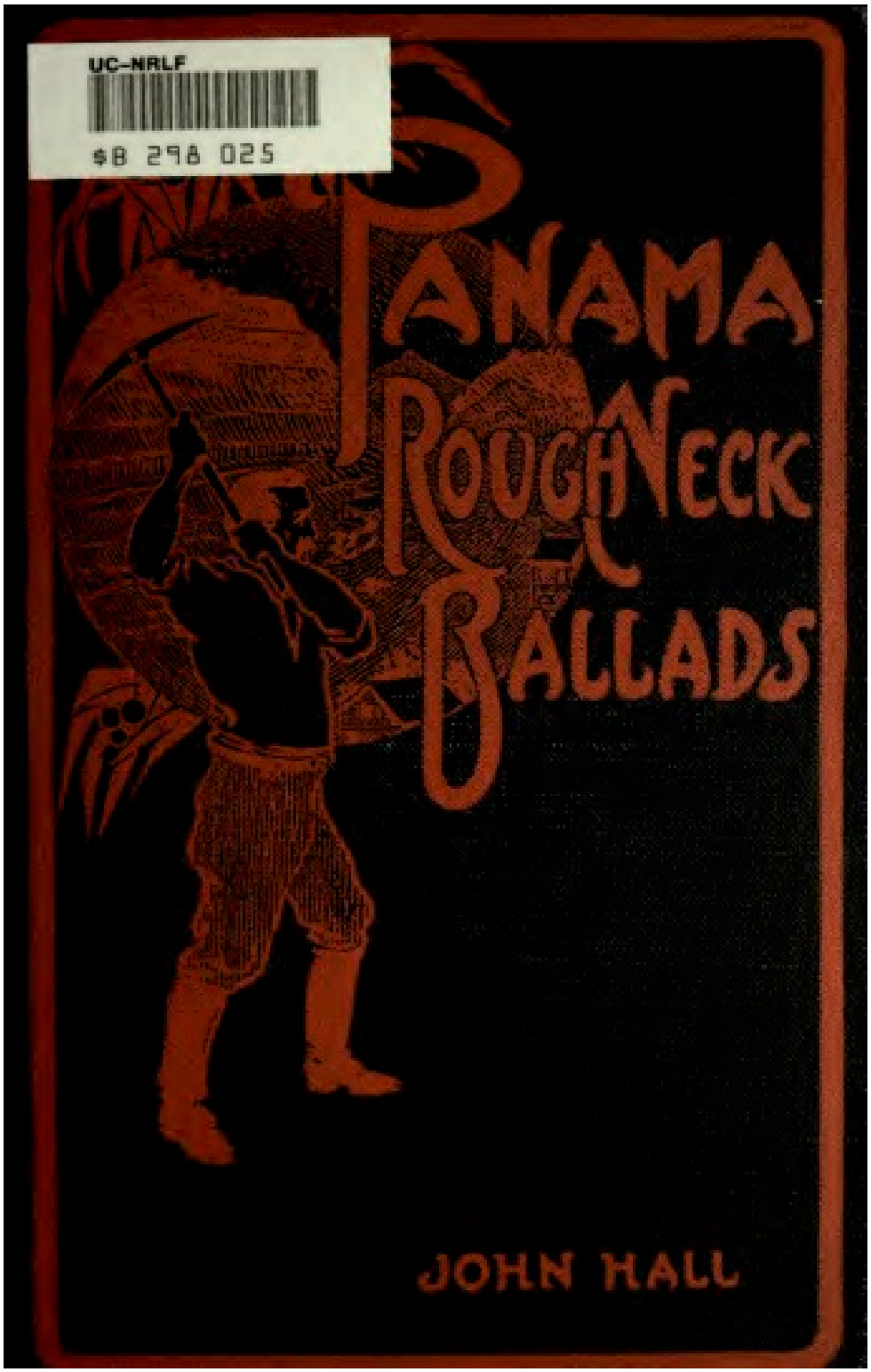
	PAGE
The Man Who Is Always Right,	35
A Panama Lullaby,	37
A Tropic Nocturne,	38
San Lorenzo,	39
Our Little Landscape,	40
The Waning Moon,	41
The Never-Failing Friend,	42
King Fever,	43
The Song of the Mosquito,	44
"No Ice,"	46
The Sand-Fly,	47
The Song of the Prickly Heat,	48
The Song of the Misanthrope,	50
A Marvel,	51
Geographical,	52
He'll Never Die,	53
When the Trade-Wind Blows Again,	53
"To Blame?"	55
On Roncador,	57
The Visit,	58
A New Year's Rainbow,	59
The Comrades of the Pleasant Past,	60
Chiarini and His Elephant,	61
In Memoriam,	63
The Epitaph,	64
Saints' Rest,	65
Two Words,	68
Then and Now,	70
Fidus Achates,	72

PAGE

Warned, ... 73
Transmigration, ... 75
A Toast, ... 77
Saint Patrick, ... 78
Malachi, ... 79
Me Too, ... 81
Little Jamaica Man, ... 83
Beneath the Rose, ... 84
Only a Weed, ... 85
Simple Ave, ... 87
The Old Familiar Faces, . . . 88
Prayer of a Timid Man, ... 90
If Ye Weep, ... 91
Memory, ... 92
The Wave, ... 94
Job and Another, ... 95
Let Me Alone, ... 96
Au Revoir, ... 97
Victoria the Woman, ... 99
A Sprig of Sage-Brush, ... 101
Maranatha, ... 103
The Minority, ... 104
Charity, ... 105
The Portal and the Door, . . . 106
To John Payne, ... 107
A Ship of Mist, ... 108
We Linger Still, ... 109
When I Am Dead, ... 110
To Him Who Waits, ... 111

	PAGE
My Wicker Jug,	112
The Sweet Old Story,	113
The Fall of Old Panama,	114
The Land of the Cacique,	122
On the Brow of the Hill,	128
"Old Comrade,"	132
Curtain,	134

FIRST PAGES: PANAMA ROUGHNECK BALLADS



Panama Roughneck Ballads

BY

JOHN HALL

PUBLISHED BY

ALBERT LINDO

PANAMA RAILROAD NEWS AGENCY

PANAMA AND CANAL ZONE

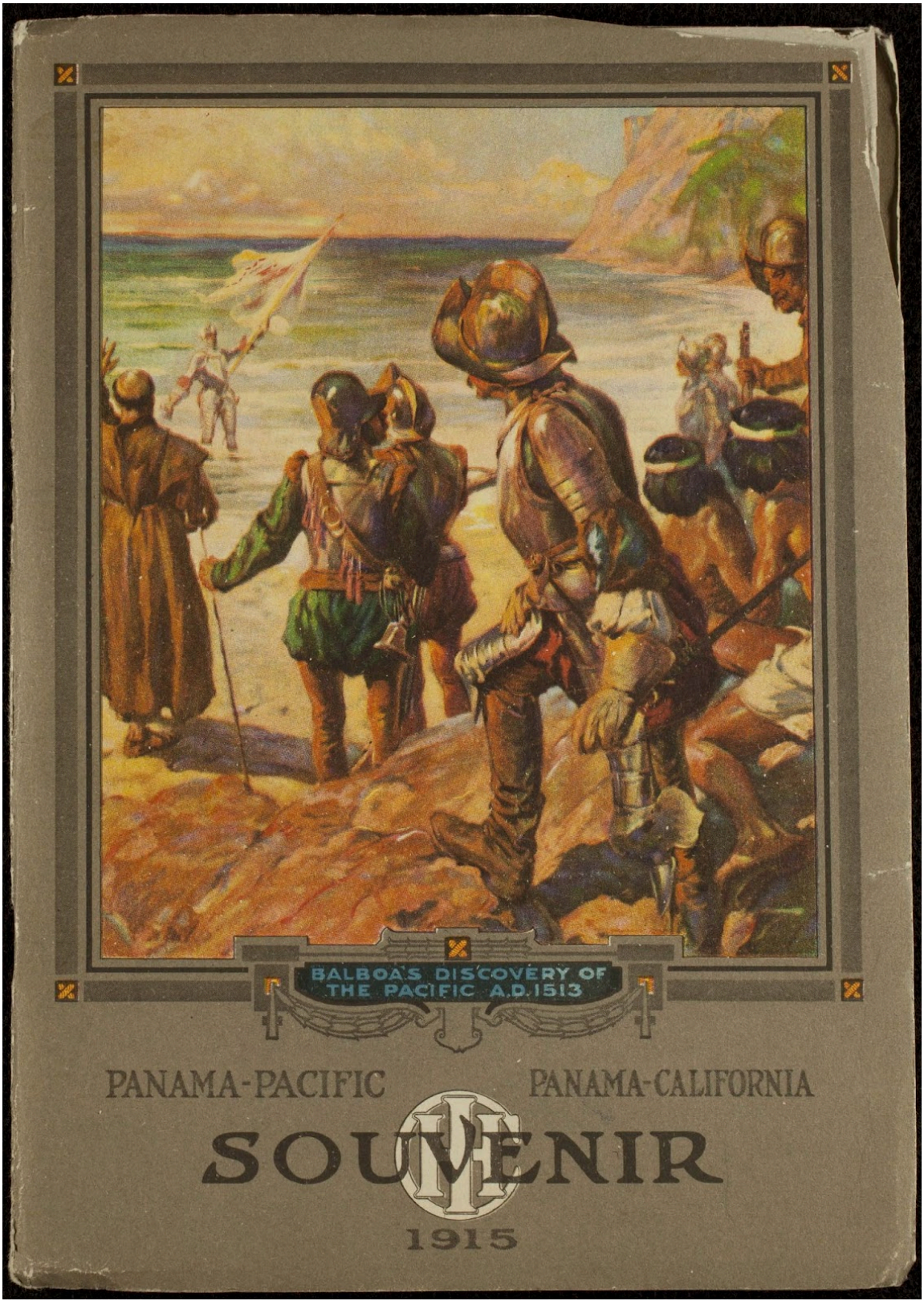
CONTENTS

1—Introduction	5
2—Roughneck's Love Lay	7
3—The Lure of The Tropics	9
4—The Old Canal Man	12
5—The Craven. (With Apologies to Poe)	17
6—As It was	18
7—The Roughneck	19
8—The Lay of The Roughneck	20
9—In The Land of The Mango	22
10—The Roughneck Breed	23
11—Forward, March!	24
12—The Steam Shovel	26
13—"Spickety Bill"	27
14—"Mrs. Mac-Dasher"	30
15—Jack in Panama	32
16—The Canal Builders	34
17—The Liar	39
18—"Cut It Out"	41
19—"Where's th' Damage?"	43

Contents

20—The Battle 45
21—"We're Diggin' th' Ditch Together" 47
22—Sergeant Snookers of the "Z. P'leece" 49
23—Old Chagres 52
24—Saxon Dan 54
25—The Girl He Left Behind . . . 57
26—"Tell the Colonel" 59
27—To the "Big Ditch" 62
28—"When th' Ditch is Dug" . . . 64
29—The Price of Empire 65
30—"An' th' Love I'll Give Will Be True" 67
31—The Sad Fate of Anopheles Liz . 69
32—Bill's Relapse 71
33—"On Velvet" 73

FIRST PAGES: PANAMA CANAL SOUVENIR



PANAMA CANAL

PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL AND PANAMA-CALIFORNIA EXPOSITIONS

SOUVENIR ISSUED BY
INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER COMPANIES
CHICAGO U.S.A.

G. KRATZNER