

**Reading the reception of Ellen Churchill Semple's  
*Influences of geographic environment* (1911)**

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## Abstract

This is a thesis in the historical geography of textual reception and meaning. Its focus is *Influences of geographic environment* (1911), by American geographer Ellen Churchill Semple (1861–1932). Semple’s book, a treatise on environmentalism, coincided with the emergence of geography in North America and Britain as an independent academic discipline, and it exerted an important but varied influence on generations of geographers. For those who considered it a monument to Semple’s scholarship and erudition, it was a timely manifesto for a scientific approach to geographical research. For others, *Influences* was conceptually flawed—a text which might damage geography’s emergent academic legitimacy and disciplinary credibility. Accepted by some, repudiated by others, *Influences* was lauded and criticized in almost equal measure.

By attention to archival records, personal correspondence, published reviews, provenance, and marginalia—the material traces of its reading—the thesis examines the different reactions to *Influences*, and shows that it is possible to trace a geography of the book’s reception: to identify why it was encountered differently by different people, at different times and in different places. Informed by work in literary theory, book history, and the history of science, this thesis outlines the contribution that geography, or a geographical sensibility, can make to understanding the way knowledge and ideas in the guise of the printed text are conceived, transmitted, and received. By exploring the particular characteristics of *Influences*’ diffusion, the thesis offers a broader perspective on the different means by which scientific knowledge circulates; how its credibility is assessed; and how judgements as to its acceptance or rejection are made. In reading thus the different receptions of Semple’s text, the thesis proposes ways in which geographers

might usefully engage with the cultural study of print in historical and geographical context.

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To Liana, for everything, I am grateful.

## Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis has been composed by me, that the work is my own, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Parts of this thesis have been published as “Bringing geography to the book: charting the reception of *Influences of geographic environment*” in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31, no. 4 (2006): 525–540. This paper is reproduced, with the permission of Blackwell Publishing, as Appendix D.

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## Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Declaration</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Figures</i>	<i>ix</i>
<b>Chapter 1 Bringing geography to the book</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction: reading the reception of <i>Influences</i>	1
Towards a geography of reading and reception of knowledge	6
<b>Chapter 2 Historical geographies of print</b>	<b>8</b>
Introduction: geography and the book	8
From script to print	11
Theories of authorship and reading	19
Textual reception and the history of science	36
Conclusion: reading the reception of <i>Influences</i>	50
<b>Chapter 3 Origins and propagation of anthropogeography</b>	<b>54</b>
Introduction: biographical and historiographical concerns	54
A biographical sketch	57
Ratzel and the development of anthropogeography	64
Bringing anthropogeography to the United States	75
From “unassuming little woman” to professional geographer	87
The genesis of <i>Influences</i>	96
Conclusion: the development and promotion of anthropogeography	102
<b>Chapter 4 “A German dose sweetened”: popular reviews of <i>Influences</i></b>	<b>105</b>
Introduction: questions of scale and the reception of knowledge	105

Communicating anthropogeography to the Anglophone world	109
Reading the popular reception of <i>Influences</i>	113
Trans-Atlantic flows: the international circulation of <i>Influences</i>	130
Semple's literary style	137
<b>Chapter 5 "A new vantage ground for the study of man": academic reviews of <i>Influences</i></b>	<b>151</b>
Introduction: recalling scholarly reviewing communities	151
Beyond the Anglo-American world	178
Conclusion: scale, interpretative communities, and the problem of analysis	183
<b>Chapter 6 From the field to the lecture theatre: proving and disseminating anthropogeography</b>	<b>190</b>
Introduction: seeking proof in the field	190
Semple's public lectures and scholarly seminars in the United States	218
Conclusion: performance and representation	230
<b>Chapter 7 <i>Influences'</i> textbook career: professional receptions of anthropogeography</b>	<b>232</b>
Introduction: situating the readings of <i>Influences</i>	232
Environmentalism and the formation of the Chicago School of geography	234
Geography "at breakneck speed": from the classroom to the war room	259
Semple's apotheosis and the decline of environmentalism	269
<i>Influences</i> in the United Kingdom	295
Conclusion: the rise and fall of "the greatest woman geographer"	311

<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Concluding thoughts: geography, the book, and the reception of knowledge</b>	<b>317</b>
	Introduction: reading the reception of anthropogeography	317
	Thinking geographically about anthropogeography	319
	Geography and the book	330
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Census of <i>Influences</i></b>	<b>335</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Summer courses in environmentalism, 1902–1928</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>John Kirtland Wright’s questionnaire</b>	<b>426</b>
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>Published material</b>	<b>428</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>444</b>



## Figures

Figure 1. Ellen Churchill Semple, 1914.	2
Figure 2. Library of the Working Men's College (circa 1913).	45
Figure 3. Friedrich Ratzel.	62
Figure 4. Frederick Jackson Turner (circa 1915).	78
Figure 5. Kentucky mountaineers.	85
Figure 6. Advertisement announcing the publication of <i>Influences</i> .	114
Figure 7. Theodore Roosevelt at <i>The Outlook</i> office (circa 1914).	122
Figure 8. Charles Atwood Kofoid's personalized bookplate.	144
Figure 9. Ray Hughes Whitbeck.	157
Figure 10. George Goudie Chisholm (circa 1912).	164
Figure 11. Herbert John Fleure.	170
Figure 12. Fleure's notes on <i>Influences</i> .	172
Figure 13. A peasant's farm at 2,200 feet.	202
Figure 14. Terraced valley and rice fields at 2,000 feet.	213
Figure 15. The Music Hall, Edinburgh (circa 1880).	216
Figure 16. Elizabeth Fisher before a geography class at Wellesley College.	223
Figure 17. Mary J. Lanier with (left to right) J. Paul Goode, Wallace W. Atwood, Walter S. Tower, Rollin D. Salisbury, and Harlan H. Barrows. University of Chicago, 1910.	225
Figure 18. Miss Ellen Churchill Semple in her tent.	228
Figure 19. Relative independence of humanity in relation to physical constraints.	236
Figure 20. Harlan Harland Barrows.	238
Figure 21. George Babcock Cressey.	245

Figure 22. Kirtley Fletcher Mather (circa 1929).	248
Figure 23. Derwent S. Whittlesey and Robert S. Platt at the Harvard University graduation of Platt's son, 1954.	260
Figure 24. Joseph Russell Smith.	267
Figure 25. Semple (seated at right) with Clark students on fieldwork, 1928.	272
Figure 26. Cloud Cuckoo Land.	299
Figure 27. Pejorative marginalia.	300
Figure 28. Alfred Cort Haddon.	301
Figure 29. Semple's grave, Cave Hill Cemetery, Louisville, Kentucky.	313
Figure 30. Geographers at Muir Woods, California.	318
Figure 31. Associative marginalia.	375
Figure 32. Issue card (recto and verso) with due dates.	398
Figure 33. Issue card (recto and verso) with due dates.	399
Figure 34. Marginal swastikas.	400
Figure 35. Semple's <i>ex libris</i> and donation label.	403
Figure 36. Issue card (recto and verso) with due dates.	410
Figure 37. Semple's postscript.	414

# Chapter 1

## Bringing geography to the book

Books are not unlike people, and some books, like some people, deserve biographies. A “Life and Times of *Influences of Geographic Environment*,” if well written, appreciative but not uncritical, and racy but not unfair, would interest American and British readers who enjoy thinking about the nature of geography.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction: reading the reception of *Influences*

“There can be little hesitation in pronouncing this the most notable work that has yet appeared in English on the subject to which it is devoted”.<sup>2</sup> It was with this expression of admiration that George Goudie Chisholm (1850–1930), lecturer in geography at the University of Edinburgh, introduced his review in 1912 of a newly published environmentalist text. The book which inspired Chisholm’s approbation was *Influences of geographic environment* (1911), written by Ellen Churchill Semple (1863–1932, Figure 1), “one of the ablest geographers of the day” as she was elsewhere described.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to Chisholm’s enthusiastic comments, Semple’s book was encountered disdainfully by an anonymous reader at the University of Oxford’s School of Geography. In a series of undated marginal annotations, the unsigned respondent pencilled critical counterpoints to Semple’s text: “This is laughable”; “Come off it!”; “Bunkum!”<sup>4</sup> In a yet different geographical and institutional context, a Mormon reader at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah sought in the pages of Semple’s text confirmation of his or her religious

<sup>1</sup> Wright, “Notes towards a bibliobiography”, 346.

<sup>2</sup> Chisholm, “Miss Semple”, 31.

<sup>3</sup> *The Scotsman*, 26 November 1912.

<sup>4</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Oxford, Geography and the Environment Library, M 59a, 245, 299, 620.

faith.<sup>5</sup> *Influences* was, for that Utah reader, more than an instructional textbook: it was a potential means by which to validate the scriptural authority of the *Book of Mormon*. For these three readers, Semple's book meant different, sometimes contrary, things. Quite why this was—why *Influences* provoked such dissimilar responses—and what these differences in reception reveal about the circulation and consumption of environmentalist thought in geography, is the central concern of this thesis.



Figure 1. Ellen Churchill Semple, 1914.  
University of Kentucky (Special Collections and Digital Programs), 46M139.

*Influences* marked an important and singular moment in the proto-disciplinary history of Anglo-American geography. Semple's book, together with a series of her earlier papers, communicated the anthropogeographical work of German geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) to an English-speaking intellectual community whose engagement with his scholarship had been hitherto limited, and whose disciplinary remit

<sup>5</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library, GF 31 .S5 1911.

had yet to be outlined systematically. Semple's work, like that of Ratzel before her, was a contribution to a two-millennia-old intellectual tradition—environmentalism, or, in its pejorative modern characterization, environmental determinism—which sought to understand human society and its corollaries as a product of the geographical environment. Religion, politics, economics, and settlement patterns, as well as the physical and mental characteristics of a population, could in Semple's view be understood by reference to the persistent influence of topography and climate. Seeming to offer a “scientific foundation” upon which the discipline might build, Semple's work shaped the practice of geography in the United States during the first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> So great was its impact, *Influences* is said variously to have “shaped the whole trend and content of geographic thought in America” and “determined the methodological thought of at least a generation”.<sup>7</sup>

In Britain, Semple's intellectual influence was less obvious until a disciplinary schism in 1911—prompted by a paper critical of the discipline's then-current scope and intellectual purpose, delivered by Sir Charles Frederick Arden-Close (1865–1952), president of the Geographical Section (Section E) of the British Association for the Advancement of Science—stimulated a period of methodological reappraisal. *Influences* was important in countering Close's concerns, and in defining what, precisely, geography as an intellectual enterprise in Britain in the second decade of the twentieth century ought to be. Despite the book's singular importance in directing the initial course of Anglo-American geography (or, perhaps, because of it) Semple's ideas, of which *Influences* was the foremost representation, were subsequently subject to disputation, qualification, and, ultimately, rejection. Like the initial reception of Semple's

<sup>6</sup> Frenkel, “Geography, empire, and environmental determinism”, 144.

<sup>7</sup> Atwood, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 267; Hartshorne, *Nature of geography*, 122.

anthropogeography, the rejection of it was varied spatially and temporally: there was a complex chronology and spatiality to the acceptance and repudiation of her ideas. Anthropogeography, as expressed in *Influences*, had both a history and a geography.

This thesis is an attempt to recover and to explain the history and geography of Semple's *Influences*—to reveal how the ideas it contained were understood, staged, and disputed differently, at different times, in different places. Personal reading experiences are “small stories” within the larger narrative describing the reception of Semple's ideas.<sup>8</sup> By attending to these individual apprehensions of, and engagements with, *Influences*, this thesis aims to understand the different responses to anthropogeography and to explain how (and whether) collective interpretations of Semple's text were manifested. My focus is on the different audiences for *Influences*, and how private and shared hermeneutic practices informed their acceptance and rejection of Semple's text. My concern is to understand why *Influences* was read differently in, among other places, Edinburgh, Oxford, and Provo—to trace what one scholar has termed “the comparative history of variations within a larger pattern of unity”.<sup>9</sup>

By exploring the qualities of *Influences*' diffusion, my broader intentions are to understand the processes by which scientific and geographical knowledge circulates (or not) in the guise of the book, and to make certain general claims about the nature of academic and popular audiences and of textual reception. Informed both by recent work in the history of science on the reception of scientific texts and by emergent scholarship on the geography of reading, this thesis considers the locational particularities of *Influences*' reception. I do not intend to suggest that location determined straightforwardly the reading of Semple's book. Rather, I wish to question

<sup>8</sup> Lorimer, “Telling small stories”, 197.

<sup>9</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the book*, 17.

the notion of a taken-for-granted ‘British’ or ‘American’ response to *Influences*, by showing that when considered at different scales—personal, metropolitan, regional, national, or international—different stories of the book’s reception are told. My purpose is, in part, to evaluate the validity of Sher’s claim that “the relationship of ‘print and knowledge’ always requires more than a local, metropolitan approach”.<sup>10</sup>

The attention to scale in this thesis necessarily unsettles the presumed cohesion of national traditions in geography, challenging internalist histories which attribute to individual nations (or, in some cases, institutions) a common approach to geographical work. To interrogate solely the national scale risks obscuring local difference. The reverse, however, is equally true. To address this problem of the appropriate scale at which to reconstruct the reception of knowledge is also to attend to the *appropriateness* of scale as an analytical framework, and to consider alternative means by which the dissemination of knowledge can be imagined. In this respect it is not the reception of anthropogeography *per se* with which this thesis deals, but rather the processes which facilitated its reception. From an examination of the different and particular readings of Semple’s text, and the “specific contexts of [the] experiences and expectations” of her readers, I seek to understand not only individual hermeneutic practices, but also, more broadly, the means by which Semple’s environmentalism moved (in geographical and epistemic terms) between places.<sup>11</sup> This thesis has to do, then, with what Secord has called “knowledge in transit”.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Sher, *Enlightenment and the book*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Secord, *Victorian sensation*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Secord, “Knowledge in transit”, 664.

## **Towards a geography of reading and reception of knowledge**

Chapter 2 positions this thesis in relation to the intellectual traditions from which it draws. I trace the spatial turn in book history, the history of science, and reception study, and show how work in these fields has informed my understanding of the production, circulation, and consumption of knowledge. The correspondence between these literatures and the methodological basis of this thesis—the reconstruction of individual and collective interpretative practices through an attention to the material traces of historical readings—is also explained in Chapter 2. In order properly to contextualize the ideas presented in Semple's book, and to provide a basis upon which to interpret its reception, I outline in Chapter 3 a partial history of environmentalist thought. From environmentalism's origins in the Classical tradition, I trace its different expressions in nineteenth-century Europe and North America. With reference to Semple's biography, I describe her encounter with Ratzel's work in the 1890s, and examine her efforts to bring his anthropogeography to the attention of the Anglo-American geographical community and to promote it as a modern field science.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 consider, respectively, the popular and academic reception of *Influences* revealed by published reviews of Semple's book. In both instances, I examine the relative influence of "reviewing cultures"—whether defined in terms of national responses to Semple's work, or by assessments which were conditioned by the city, genre, or discipline in which they were composed.<sup>13</sup> Whilst the principal aim here is to discuss and to assess the geography of these reviews (and what they reveal about the initial response to Semple's text in different contexts), questions of authorship, intended audience, and editorial mediation will be shown to be significant in

<sup>13</sup> Rupke, "Geography of enlightenment", 333.



shaping the content of these published critiques. The reception of *Influences* was not simply a matter, however, of its reading. It depended to an important extent upon Semple's communication of her ideas in public lectures, scholarly seminars, summer schools, and university lecture rooms. Chapter 6 considers, therefore, the influence of this public oration upon the acceptance (or not) of Semple's anthropogeography, particularly in the five years immediately following the publication of *Influences*.

Chapter 7 examines the various ways in which Semple's book was employed pedagogically in the United States and United Kingdom. Drawing upon individual reading experiences, these engagements are situated within the educational contexts in which they occurred, and related to then-contemporary geographical debates. My focus is, at turns, biographical and prosopographical: I am interested in both the individual uses of Semple's text, and in its incorporation into the teaching of geography at different academic institutions. In this respect, this chapter follows not only the trajectory of *Influences'* textbook career, but also describes the locational, institutional, and individual particularities in the discipline's engagement with questions of environmental influence.

By this geographical attention to the circulation of Semple's text—by reading its reception, as it were—this thesis advances some thoughts on the different means by which anthropogeography was disseminated, how its credibility was assessed, and how judgements as to its acceptance or rejection were made differently, by different people, in different interpretative contexts. In short, what follows is concerned to show why Semple's book meant the things it did to an economic geographer in Edinburgh, a disgruntled student in Oxford, and a Mormon in Utah, and, from that, to illuminate questions to do with the historical geographies of textual reception.

## Chapter 2

### Historical geographies of print

#### Introduction: geography and the book

The historiographical analysis of the book as a material artefact imbued with meaning and authority has changed significantly during the past half-century, reflecting broader transformations within cultural studies and the history of science.<sup>1</sup> Where book history began with study of the mechanical elements of print—the number and location of printing presses, the manufacture of paper, the distribution and sale of texts—it has, since the 1970s, sought to explain the social bases of book production and circulation, authorship and reading, textual reception and the exchange of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Whilst the influence of the ‘cultural turn’ in the humanities is evident in this engagement with the quotidian and social aspects of print, the effect of the ‘spatial turn’ in the sociology of science is more difficult to discern. I suggest, however, that a spatial sensibility has underpinned book history, and that attempts to describe and to elucidate the social processes which govern authorship, publishing, and reading have been informed by an appreciation of space, place, site, and situation. I contend that geography—whether manifest in discussions of the location of printing presses, or in analyses of the circulation and consumption of texts—occupies a significant position within the historical study of print. To speak of the geography of the book, as I shall do in relation to the reception of *Influences*, is to make explicit a sub-disciplinary trend hitherto implicit.

<sup>1</sup> Eisenstein, *Printing press*, I.

<sup>2</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*.

Whilst geography has formed an important yet often unacknowledged component of the description and analysis of print culture, its specific and potential contribution to understanding the making, distribution, and reading of books needs to be outlined. For one author, “If the history of the book is now an established discipline, the geography of the book is still making up its rules”.<sup>3</sup> A corollary of this disciplinary immaturity is that the epistemic foundations and methodological principles of book geography are somewhat ill-defined. The relative novelty of book geography is made clear by Robert Mayhew’s 1998 claim that geographers “have yet to show any interest in the sociology of the book”.<sup>4</sup> Recent geographical studies concerned with authorship, publishing, and reading have begun, however, to address this gap.<sup>5</sup> Bertrum MacDonald and Fiona Black have pioneered, for example, spatial analytical techniques in the study of print, employing Geographical Information Science technologies to describe the history of the book in Canada.<sup>6</sup> James Secord and David Livingstone, meanwhile, have set out an intellectual framework for the geography of reading.<sup>7</sup> Livingstone has proposed a four-fold typology: spaces of textual circulation, sites of hybridity, cartographies of reception, and cultural geographies of reading. Although not intended strictly as a set of rules by which the geography of the book might be defined, Livingstone’s formulation nevertheless demonstrates the utility of a spatial awareness in

<sup>3</sup> Price, “Review of *In another country*”, 334.

<sup>4</sup> Mayhew, “Character of English geography”, 388.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Craggs, “Situating the imperial archive”; Gingerich, *Book nobody read*; Keighren, “Bringing geography to the book”; Livingstone, “Science, text and space”; Mayhew, “Materialist hermeneutics”; Ogborn, “Writing travels”; Ogborn, “*Geographia’s* pen”; Ogborn and Withers, “Travel, trade, and empire”; Rupke, “Geography of enlightenment”; Rupke, “Translation studies”; Ryan, “History and philosophy of geography”; Secord, *Victorian sensation*.

<sup>6</sup> MacDonald and Black, “Using GIS”.

<sup>7</sup> Livingstone, “Science, religion and the geography of reading”; Livingstone, “Science, text and space”; Secord, *Victorian sensation*.

explaining the “engagements between publications and audiences, writers and readers, producers and consumers”.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst the prospective scope of the geography of the book in terms of its intellectual focus is evident in the work of Secord, Livingstone, and others, a certain methodological uncertainty is apparent. By attending to the spaces in which texts are composed, printed, distributed, sold, read, and reviewed, the geography of the book seeks to situate ideas, practices, and practitioners within geographical context, and to understand how knowledge and ideas are made mobile and circulate between these spaces. Although the epistemic imperative of this project is clear—emerging from a constructivist understanding of scientific culture and a sociological appreciation of knowledge—what book geography is, as a question of method, is less obvious.<sup>9</sup> To propose a geography of printed texts is to suggest that location matters to the ways in which books are written and read.<sup>10</sup> It is to acknowledge a plurality of textual meaning, and to expose cultural relativism in reception of books. Conversely, it is also to acknowledge that, despite being altered physically or contextually as a consequence of local social circumstance, the printed text is a remarkably successful medium for the communication of knowledge.

In attempting to describe the geography of *Influences*—from authorship, through publication, to reviewing and reading—I draw upon work in book history, reception study, and the history of science. In what follows, I summarise these literatures, and describe how they have influenced my selection of sources and methods. I begin by considering the development of modern book history—tracing its origins from the

<sup>8</sup> Livingstone, “Science, text and space”, 391.

<sup>9</sup> Aspects of the sociology of knowledge and the spatial turn in science studies are outlined in Bloor, *Knowledge and social imagery*; Demeritt, “Social theory”; Golinski, *Making natural knowledge*; Livingstone, “Spaces of knowledge”; Powell, “Geographies of science”; Shapin, “Placing the view from nowhere”.

<sup>10</sup> Livingstone, “Science, text and space”.

French *Annales* School of socioeconomic history—before turning to more recent theoretical conceptions of reading which have sought to explain how practices of reading develop, are inscribed in place, person, and community, and change through time. From work in reader response criticism and the aesthetics of reception, I examine the role of hermeneutics in the making of textual meaning. I then introduce literature relating to the reception of books, and consider how the theoretical concept of interpretative communities has informed practical work on the reception of scientific texts. This chapter concludes by examining how marginal annotations and details of province might contribute to the reconstruction of historical geographies of reception.

### **From script to print**

The study of print as an economically- and socially-contingent project has, since at least the 1950s, been informed by the French discipline of *histoire du livre*.<sup>11</sup> This field of bibliographical enquiry emerged, in part, from the novel historical approaches advocated by, among others, Lucien Febvre (1878–1956) and Marc Bloch (1886–1944).<sup>12</sup> Febvre and Bloch’s ideas, expounded in their journal *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale*, sought to counter traditional, positivist political and military histories—what Febvre described as *l’histoire événementielle* (event-driven history)—by engaging with the social, economic, geographical, and personal aspects of history.<sup>13</sup> This approach, embodied in what became known as the *Annales* School, was applied to the history of the book in *L’apparition du livre* (1958), Febvre’s posthumous final work, but written almost entirely by fellow historian Henri-Jean Martin.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 28.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, “Recent work on French rural history”.

<sup>13</sup> Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the book*, jacket.

<sup>14</sup> Johns, “Science and the book”.

Febvre and Martin's project—"to examine the influence and the practical significance of the printed book during the first 300 years of its existence"—was driven by a desire to understand print history as a process at once socially enabled and technologically facilitated.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, the mechanical developments which permitted the transition from script to print were considered in relation to the social factors which precipitated that change. Febvre and Martin demonstrated that the printed book represented "something more than a triumph of technical ingenuity".<sup>16</sup> The book was "one element in a larger 'ensemble' of [social and technological] transformations".<sup>17</sup> This sociological engagement with print history considered the material aspects of book production (paper, movable type, binding, and finance) in relation to print's human corollaries: author, printer, bookseller, and reader. In so doing, Febvre and Martin illuminated the cultural, intellectual, and economic implications of the printed book in medieval and early-modern Europe.

Geography formed an important interpretative component of Febvre and Martin's analysis, which drew upon the French school of regional geography.<sup>18</sup> Whilst a student at the *École normale supérieure* in Paris (1899–1902), Febvre was influenced by Paul Vidal de la Blache (1845–1918) and introduced to his regional perspective on human geography—what came to be known as *la géographie humaine*.<sup>19</sup> Febvre became an enthusiastic proponent of Vidal's regional paradigm, and aspects of it are apparent in his and Martin's discussion. Geography, for Febvre and Martin, referred to the spatial diffusion and locational spread of the technologies and practitioners of printing. They sought to describe how and why "the printer's art" moved from Gutenberg's workshop

<sup>15</sup> Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the book*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the book*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Eisenstein, *Printing press*, I, 33.

<sup>18</sup> Andrews, "Early life of Paul Vidal de la Blache".

<sup>19</sup> Buttimer, *Society and milieu*; Martin, *All possible worlds*.

in Mainz to numerous European cities within a brief period.<sup>20</sup> More than a locational analysis, however, Febvre and Martin's geographical assessment of the printed book exposed the social and economic factors that encouraged the establishment of print industries in particular locations at specific times.

### **Print culture**

It was to these print industries that Elizabeth Eisenstein turned in her influential volume *The printing press as an agent of change* (1979). In countering what she perceived as a lack of attention by historians to the varied impacts of printing, Eisenstein identified the “consequences that ensued once printers had begun to ply their new trades throughout Europe”.<sup>21</sup> In so doing, Eisenstein related the emergence of the printed book in Europe to important social, cultural, and scientific realignments during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Copernican Revolution. Eisenstein's exploration of the links between the printed book and these cultural movements was contingent upon the notion of ‘print culture’. Eisenstein's print culture referred not only to the social networks in which printed books were produced, circulated, and read, but also to the particular ways in which the printed book was understood—how its authority and utility was assessed, and how it was read.<sup>22</sup>

As Johns summarizes, Eisenstein's print culture imposes certain conditions upon books produced within it: “*standardization, dissemination, and fixity*”.<sup>23</sup> Subject to this conditional triumvirate, printed books display certain characteristics: fidelity between copies, in terms both of content and style; a literal and epistemic mobility; and an

<sup>20</sup> Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the book*, 167.

<sup>21</sup> Eisenstein, *Printing press*, I, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 10. Italicization in original.

immutability or incorruptibility of textual meaning.<sup>24</sup> For Eisenstein, the printing press allowed for the multiple and faithful reproduction of texts. This “typographical fixity”, in contrast to the vicissitudes of script, permitted a democratization of knowledge.<sup>25</sup> With each reproduced book being a mimesis of its partner, the meaning of the text it contained could be preserved, and could thus transcend the impermanent fabric of the book. This fixity, Eisenstein argued, exerted an important influence on scholarly practice. Spared the “drifting texts, migrating manuscripts, [and] localized chronologies” which characterized the scriptural culture, the scholar working in the age of the printed book could amass, refer to, and build upon, a library of accumulated wisdom.<sup>26</sup> The ability to bring together disparate texts, and to consider them in juxtaposition, created “conditions that favoured new combinations of old ideas at first and then, later on, the creation of entirely new systems of thought”.<sup>27</sup> Combining textual fixity and physical mobility, the printed book was essential to the development of science as a communicative process. Circulated in the guise of the printed book, knowledge from geographically or intellectually distinct sources could be brought together and compared—either in personal collections or through public libraries—thus facilitating the production of new ideas.<sup>28</sup>

Eisenstein’s print culture limits the role of geography in accounting for the social history of the book. The essentialist implication of print culture denies a spatial variability in the ways in which books are understood (what they mean to, and how they are used by, different people in different places). A more nuanced attention to textual “variations over space and time” is outlined in Robert Darnton’s model of “the

<sup>24</sup> Lessing, “Understanding changed readings”.

<sup>25</sup> Eisenstein, *Printing press*, I, 116.

<sup>26</sup> Eisenstein, *Printing press*, I, 124.

<sup>27</sup> Eisenstein, *Printing press*, I, 75.

<sup>28</sup> Garberson, “Libraries”.



communications circuit”.<sup>29</sup> Here, Darnton traces the “life cycle” of the printed book—describing a series of flows and transmissions linking author, publisher, shipper, bookseller, and reader.<sup>30</sup> Each node in this circuit is considered in relation to “other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environment”.<sup>31</sup> In this respect, the social as well as the technological components of print are situated within a broader, geographically-informed context. Despite Darnton’s intervention, the apparent passivity of geography in the process of textual production and consumption is reflected in a significant corollary of print culture: Bruno Latour’s concept of “immutable and combinable mobiles”.<sup>32</sup> Latour illustrates this with reference to the Copernican Revolution, and the work of astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546–1601). For Latour, as for Eisenstein, the Copernican Revolution—meaning the gradual acceptance of a heliocentric conception of the solar system, rather than the immediate reaction to the publication of *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543)—was dependent upon print culture.<sup>33</sup>

With reference to Eisenstein’s discussion of the Copernican Revolution, Latour points to the processes employed by Brahe in attempting to resolve certain discrepancies which became apparent when he juxtaposed the Copernican and Ptolemaic astronomical models.<sup>34</sup> According to Latour, Brahe, seeking to reconcile or explain these inconsistencies, instigated a collaborative programme of systematic astronomical observations across Europe—an operation which was facilitated by the

<sup>29</sup> Darnton, “What is the history of books?”, 67.

<sup>30</sup> Darnton, “What is the history of books?”, 67.

<sup>31</sup> Darnton, “What is the history of books?”, 67.

<sup>32</sup> Latour, *Science in action*, 227.

<sup>33</sup> Eisenstein, *Printing press*, II, 575–635; Latour, *Science in action*, 126.

<sup>34</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 11.

circulation of “the same preprinted forms” to various correspondents.<sup>35</sup> In Latour’s scheme, these forms, produced on Brahe’s own press in his observatory at Uraniborg, allowed him to capture distant observations and, in effect, to “turn every observatory in Europe into an extension of Uraniborg”.<sup>36</sup> Brahe’s observatory became, therefore, a centre of calculation, where data from geographically distant locals (brought back using immutable printed forms) were combined. For Latour, the printing press enabled Brahe “to gather in the same place not only fresh observations made by him and his colleagues, but all the older books of astronomy”.<sup>37</sup> In so doing, Brahe was the first “to consider at a glance the summer sky, plus his observations, plus those of his collaborators, plus Copernicus’ book ... the first to sit at the beginning and at the end of a long network that generates what I will call immutable and combinable mobiles”.<sup>38</sup>

Implicit in Latour’s conception of immutable and combinable mobiles, as in Eisenstein’s print culture, is the elimination, even the transcendence, of geographical difference. Where immutable mobiles “calibrate and discipline” the data they contain (which might well have been “written differently according to different times and places”), print culture, so understood, imposes similar spatial harmonization.<sup>39</sup> The fixity which Eisenstein identifies would seem to deny the printed book locally-specific, or even heterogeneous, meaning. The book is important to the conduct of science (so it is thought) precisely because it is independent of local circumstance: it is a “usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity”.<sup>40</sup> The knowledge it contains can move anywhere, because it is understood to be from nowhere (or, at least, above and beyond

<sup>35</sup> Latour, *Science in action*, 226.

<sup>36</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> Latour, *Science in action*, 226.

<sup>38</sup> Latour, *Science in action*, 227.

<sup>39</sup> Latour, *Science in action*, 224.

<sup>40</sup> Said, *World*, 226.

the social circumstances of the site of its production). Johns has questioned the validity both of Eisenstein's print culture, and of Latour's immutable mobile.<sup>41</sup> For Johns, Brahe is an unsuitable model for Latour's scheme of accumulative and collaborative science, not least because, as he notes, "I have found no trace of these preprinted forms in Tycho's *Opera Omnia*, nor in any relevant secondary authority. I am unable to find Latour's source for this central claim; it may well derive from an imaginative reading of certain passages in Eisenstein's *Printing Press*".<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Johns asserts that, rather than the standardization, dissemination, and fixity which Eisenstein's print culture requires, Brahe's printed work displayed variability of style and content, was unevenly distributed, and was likely to have been "read in different ways, by different people, in different places and for different reasons".<sup>43</sup>

Michael Gorman has sought to rescue the immutable mobile from Johns' attack. Gorman has suggested that Latour, rather than inventing the method of collaborative astronomy in his reading of Eisenstein's account of Brahe, simply misattributed its origin.<sup>44</sup> As Eisenstein reveals, it was the astronomer Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655) rather than Brahe, who, in publishing "an open letter to the astronomers of Europe asking them to observe the transit of Mercury", demonstrated the "collaborative effort in simultaneous observation that was made possible by print".<sup>45</sup> Yet, for Gorman, Eisenstein is similarly mistaken in her attribution—he posits that the letter seeking astronomical collaboration came, in fact, from Johannes Kepler (1571–1630). Whilst Gorman's archival detective work answers Johns' factual criticism of Latour's model, it

<sup>41</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 10–40.

<sup>42</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 17 n. 26.

<sup>43</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 18.

<sup>44</sup> Gorman, Michael F. The elusive origins of the immutable mobile. Stanford University, 2001. Available from <http://www.stanford.edu/group/STS/immutablemobile.htm> (accessed 30 September 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Eisenstein, *Printing press*, II, 631.

does not satisfy his broader epistemic objection to Eisenstein's print culture, nor, by implication, to Latour's immutable mobile.

For Johns, print culture as posited by Eisenstein is an inadequate schema by which to account for the societal influence of the printed book, since it fails to explain its heterogeneity. His principal concern is that the concept of print culture denies (or, at least, fails to acknowledge) the role of the author *and* the reader in the mutual construction of a text's meaning. Eisenstein's fixity posits that a printed book is invested with power and authority through the printing process, and that these imprinted qualities remain with the book as it transcends space. By contrast, Johns argues that if we "consider fixity not as an *inherent* quality, but as a *transitive* one", it is possible to see print culture as the "*result* of manifold representations, practices and conflicts, rather than just the monolithic *cause*".<sup>46</sup> In so doing, we can observe and recover multiple and situated print cultures.

Johns calls for a more explicitly social engagement with the history of the printed book, drawing upon work in the history and sociology of science to help explain how the book came to be understood differently by different people, at different times, and in different places. This is a geographical project, and one which, in some senses, provides the intellectual framework in which I conceptualize the reception of *Influences*. Whilst Eisenstein and Latour provide a convincing indication of the ways in which knowledge moves between places, as supposedly immutable textual representations, there is a sense in which the communication and reception of *Influences* depended upon its mutability and the different readings and interpretations to which it was subject. That *Influences* functioned in relation to the particular social and intellectual

<sup>46</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 19–20. Italicization in original.

concerns of its different audiences—that it was understood to speak to certain temporally and spatially specific issues—meant that Semple’s ideas were differently realised in different sites of encounter. In this sense, *Influences*’ localized pattern of diffusion—its situatedness—reflects Edward Said’s concept of cultural and intellectual communication.<sup>47</sup> For Said, an idea, in the process of its relocation, “is to some extent transformed by its new uses, [by] its new position in a new time and place”.<sup>48</sup>

### Theories of authorship and reading

Perhaps the most visible and well documented limitation of Eisenstein’s print culture is that it fails to acknowledge properly the role of the reader in the reception and application of printed texts. Muting the voice of the reader means that Eisenstein’s scheme cannot account for the “divergent cultural consequences” which occur when a book is read differently in different places.<sup>49</sup> An appreciation of such locally and socially particular actualizations of a text’s meaning is predicated on understanding the ways in which readers engage with a text, and the “intellectual ‘labour’” they employ in their “use or appropriation” of it.<sup>50</sup> Attention to such labour is, in part, a consequence of certain conceptual realignments that have taken place in the *Annales* School of cultural history during the past quarter-century.<sup>51</sup> Informed by the work of Michel Foucault, the so-called fourth-generation *Annales* historians sought to reject ontological distinctions between the social and the material—arguing that they are, broadly speaking, the product of common discursive practices.<sup>52</sup> These historiographical revisions have found

<sup>47</sup> Haraway, “Situated knowledges”.

<sup>48</sup> Said, *World*, 227.

<sup>49</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 29.

<sup>50</sup> Chartier, *Cultural history*, 34.

<sup>51</sup> Hunt, “Introduction”, 6–7.

<sup>52</sup> Chartier, *Cultural history*, 46.

expression in studies of the history of reading which seek to “understand how we construe meaning from little figures printed on a page”.<sup>53</sup>

Work in the history and psychology of reading has contributed to three broad perspectives on the emergence of textual meaning: objectivist, constructivist, and subjectivist. The objectivist or formalist canon holds that the meaning of a text exists independently of its audience; it resides in the text and is consumed passively by the reader. The constructivist position, by contrast, implies an active interplay between text and reader. Rather than emerging *in vacuo*, a text’s meaning is formed “in a dynamic relationship with the reader’s expectations, projections, conclusions, judgements, and assumptions”.<sup>54</sup> This is not to propose, however, an ‘alchemical’ process whereby inert, meaningless print is transformed into active, meaningful text. It is to acknowledge rather that the act of reading is, to a significant extent, constitutive of a text’s meaning.

The philosophical terrain between the objectivist and constructivist has been mapped by Roland Barthes.<sup>55</sup> Analyzing Honoré de Balzac’s novella, *Sarrasine* (1830), Barthes employed a metaphorical distinction between ‘writerly’ (*scriptible*) and ‘readerly’ (*lisible*) texts to explain the varied interaction of author, text, and reader.<sup>56</sup> For Barthes, the ‘readerly’ are those works in which the author, through a series of linguistic signs and hermeneutic directions, encourages the reader to infer from the text a specific meaning. In short, the author facilitates and conditions the readers’ engagement with the text. Offering the reader “no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text”, the ‘readerly’ work denies the possibility of interpretation, and ensures “reading is

<sup>53</sup> Darnton, *Great cat massacre*, 215.

<sup>54</sup> Fish, *Is there a text*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*.

<sup>56</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*.

nothing more than a *referendum*".<sup>57</sup> The 'writerly' text is, by contrast, "*ourselves* [the reader] *writing*".<sup>58</sup> What Barthes means by this is that the 'writerly' text affords the reader interpretative authority—an ability to "appreciate what *plural* constitutes it [the text]", and to tease out a variety of meanings.<sup>59</sup> The 'writerly' text is characterized, then, by the transmission of authorial power to the reader.

Barthes' perspective on the 'writerly' found its most powerful formulation in his discussion of "The death of the author".<sup>60</sup> Here, Barthes sought to problematize established understandings of authorship—to discount the notion of the author as creator, and to propose, instead, the author as "mediator, shaman, or reciter" of language and meaning.<sup>61</sup> Barthes intended to question the taken-for-granted notion of authorship associated with 'print culture', and to disrupt its corollaries of warrant, credibility and authorial intent. For Barthes, "a text consists not of a line of words, releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God), but of a multi-dimensional space in which are married and contested several meanings, none of which is original".<sup>62</sup> Such an intertextual melange acts, in Barthes' formulation, to undermine the potential function of the author in the production of 'readerly' texts. It is the reader, rather than the writer, who is responsible for making meaning; it is the reader who, somewhat perversely, possesses 'authorial' control. Barthes concludes: "Here we discern the total being of writing: a text consists of multiple writings, proceeding from several cultures and entering into dialogue, into parody, into contestation; but there is a site where this multiplicity is collected, and the site is not the

<sup>57</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, 4. Italicization in original.

<sup>58</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, 5. Italicization in original.

<sup>59</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, 5. Italicization in original.

<sup>60</sup> Barthes, *Rustle of language*, 49–55.

<sup>61</sup> Barthes, *Rustle of language*, 49.

<sup>62</sup> Barthes, *Rustle of language*, 53.

author, as has hitherto been claimed, but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any of them being lost, all the citations out of which a writing is made; the unity of a text is not in its origin but in its destination".<sup>63</sup> The implication here is that the meanings attributed to texts "depend upon the areas of competence or the expectations of the various publics that take hold of them".<sup>64</sup>

Something of Barthes' attention to the 'writerly' is apparent also in Umberto Eco's earlier discussion of what he terms the 'open work'—a measure of the extent to which the meaning of a text, musical composition, or piece of art can be negotiated in the process of reading, playing, or viewing.<sup>65</sup> The degree to which a text is open to interpretation is, for Eco, a product of the social and intellectual circumstance of its reader. An example of this phenomenon is the medieval theory of allegory—the theological schema which encouraged the reading of the Scriptures in three distinct modes: moral, allegorical, and anagogical (referring to the hidden spiritual meaning). As Eco notes, this interpretative method was limited; once a reader had engaged the Scriptures in these three modes "all available possibilities of interpretation" were exhausted.<sup>66</sup> The interpretative potential was circumscribed, then, by the "imperial and theocratic society" within which the Scriptures were read.<sup>67</sup> Hermeneutic freedom was thus constrained socially.

In contrast to such readings of the Scriptures stands James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). For Eco, these complex texts represent the epitome of the open work—their ambiguous style, structure, and content affording the reader almost limitless interpretative opportunity. Whilst Eco's formulation seems at first merely to

<sup>63</sup> Barthes, *Rustle of language*, 54.

<sup>64</sup> Chartier, *Order of books*, x.

<sup>65</sup> Eco, *Open work*.

<sup>66</sup> Eco, *Open work*, 6.

<sup>67</sup> Eco, *Open work*, 6.



prefigure Barthes' distinction between the 'readerly' and the 'writerly', it is unique in that it allows for a shared reading of a text—the consequence of an interpretative framework imposed by, for example, a common theological context. Whilst Eco acknowledges the role of the reader in the production of meaning, he shows this to be limited in certain circumstances by the readers' social and intellectual situation. Where Eco and Barthes differ is in their attention to, and understanding of, the reader. Barthes' relatively passive reader contrasts with Eco's authoritative and involved reader. What both perspectives encourage, however, is an engagement with textual plurality and an appreciation of intertextuality—what Livingstone has termed textual hybridity—in the construction of meaning.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the constructivist understandings advanced by Eco and Barthes, aspects of their work on the production of textual meaning have formed a basis for subjectivist perspectives in the history of reading. Where objectivism implies the passive consumption of meaning, and constructivism its active negotiation, subjectivism argues that meaning is the product of the reader alone. Subjectivism is informed by a dual presupposition: "that reading is not already inscribed in the text with no conceivable gap between the meaning assigned to it (by its author, by custom, by criticism, and so forth) and the interpretation that its readers might make of it; and, as a corollary, that a text exists only because there is a reader to give it meaning".<sup>69</sup> The implication of this philosophy is, as Michel de Certeau notes: "Whether it is a question of newspapers or Proust, the text has a meaning only through its readers; it changes along with them; it is ordered by codes of perception that it does not control".<sup>70</sup> Given this apparent

<sup>68</sup> Livingstone, "Science, text and space".

<sup>69</sup> Chartier, *Order of books*, 2.

<sup>70</sup> De Certeau, *Practice of everyday life*, 174.

subjectivity, whilst the author, publisher, and printer can control a book's literal content, they cannot successfully determine how it is read, engaged with, and understood.

### ***Understanding authorship***

In response to Barthes' obituary for the author, Foucault sought to identify the structural bases by which "the writing subject" is transformed into an author, and how normative notions of authorship are produced and sustained.<sup>71</sup> Foucault examined the means by which writers come to be designated as authors, and how these authors' textual inscriptions come to be regarded as their 'work'. Foucault made clear the cultural and intellectual cachet of authorship, and explained that what he called the "author function" was a discursive product (in a mode similar to Eisenstein's print culture).<sup>72</sup> Foucault's author function, as a social and literary construction, has important implications for assessing the means by which texts are consumed. The 'author' in Foucault's model is more than simply the persona of the writer. The author function serves, in a legal sense, to codify, commodify, and classify the writer's inscriptions as intellectual property, and, in more abstract terms, to embody claims to truth and validity within certain discursive arenas.

In relation to scientific and geographical texts, the role of authorship has served a number of different and contrasting functions.<sup>73</sup> During the Middle Ages, for example, the authority of scientific writing was contingent upon it having an identifiable author.<sup>74</sup> In the seventeenth century, by contrast, Robert Boyle (1627–1691) and fellow independent gentleman fellows of the Royal Society approached the position of author

<sup>71</sup> Foucault, "What is an author?", 102.

<sup>72</sup> Foucault, "What is an author?", 108.

<sup>73</sup> Shapin, *Social history of truth*.

<sup>74</sup> Blair, "An early modernist's perspective".

rather regretfully, lest it be seen as an immodesty and thereby a “handicap to credibility”.<sup>75</sup> The utility of authorship as a “self-conscious social function”, which served to warrant knowledge claims as credible, was replaced in eighteenth-century European science by an impulse towards literal or metaphorical anonymity.<sup>76</sup> The writer (as epistemically distinct from the author) served to communicate the “anonymity of an established or always redemonstrable truth”, rather than a personal perspective on it.<sup>77</sup>

This “drive to authorial anonymity” was not apparent in English geography in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>78</sup> In part, this was because those engaged in geographical writing—particularly those producing introductory geographical grammars and educational texts—were “either historians or Grub Street journalists”, and less inclined to modesty as a result.<sup>79</sup> The production of reliable geographical information depended upon being able to identify and to assess those making claims to knowledge. In the context of exploration, the ability to warrant knowledge as credible relied upon placing trust in the testimony of “geographically privileged persons”.<sup>80</sup> That much geographical writing was done by “armchair geographers” in Europe meant that a chain of approved claims to knowledge linked work in the field to work on the page.<sup>81</sup> Authority was attributed to these geographically remote informants by “virtue of their social and scientific connections”—it did not rest simply with the producer of the text.<sup>82</sup> The role of author was, in a conceptual sense, shared between the “remote authority” and the local composer of the text.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Shapin, *Social history of truth*, 179.

<sup>76</sup> Mayhew, “Character of English geography”, 405.

<sup>77</sup> Foucault, “What is an author?”, 109.

<sup>78</sup> Mayhew, “Character of English geography”, 405.

<sup>79</sup> Mayhew, “Character of English geography”, 402.

<sup>80</sup> Shapin, “House of experiment”, 375.

<sup>81</sup> Withers, “Mapping the Niger”, 171.

<sup>82</sup> Heffernan, “In-credible geographies of Timbuctoo”, 205.

<sup>83</sup> Withers, “Reporting, mapping, trusting”, 504.

These different comprehensions of authorship influence how one might understand the role of Semple as producer of geographical knowledge. Her authorship of *Influences* might be viewed as obvious, made self-evident by the seven years she spent in the production of her manuscript. It is apparent, however, that the authority of her work—like that of eighteenth-century exploration texts—was, in some senses, devolved. The subtitle of her book—*on the basis of Ratzel's system of anthropogeography*—makes this clear, as does her extensive reference to Classical authorities in her approximately 1,400 citations. Rather than representing the claims of a single “Author-God”, her book might be conceived of as a marshalling of different geographical voices.<sup>84</sup> In certain readings of *Influences*, detailed here in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, the breadth of this scholarship was seen to convey authority upon Semple and her geographical claims. Who her audience took Semple to be depended, in this respect, not only upon their familiarity with her previous work, but also upon an understanding of the wider conceptual framework within which her ideas were situated. Semple’s ‘author persona’ can be seen to be different for her different readers. That she was a woman, a former student of Friedrich Ratzel, an American, and a Classical scholar, each mattered (if in various ways) to the different readers of her work.

As Foucault has suggested, the author as distinct from the writer is “the result of a complex operation which constructs a certain rational being we call ‘author’”—it is a social category made manifest by the reader.<sup>85</sup> In Foucault’s subjectivist construction, the notion of authorial intentionality as an assumed independent function is subverted by the proposition that the author is, in fact, a production of the reader. To assume otherwise is, for Deleuze and Guattari, “to fabricate a beneficent God to explain

<sup>84</sup> Barthes, *Rustle of language*, 53.

<sup>85</sup> Foucault, “What is an author?”, 110.

geological movements”.<sup>86</sup> The extent to which texts can be regarded as ‘readerly’ or ‘writerly’, to borrow Barthes’ distinction, is not, therefore, immediately apparent. What remains obvious in Foucault’s analysis is an attention to the discursive formulation of textual meaning. Given the disparate interpretations to which *Influences* was subjected by its readers, it seems sensible initially to conceive of it as a ‘writerly’ text. Yet, to suggest that the authorial control—the power to make meaning—rested solely with the individual readers of Semple’s book would seem to deny, or make unlikely, the possibility of common engagements and shared interpretations. This would make it difficult to speak, then, of a geographically or culturally particular response to Semple’s book. Any commonality above the level of the individual would seem coincidental.

### **Shared readings**

It has been noted that a text’s meaning is formed “in a dynamic relationship with the reader’s expectations, projections, conclusions, judgements, and assumptions”.<sup>87</sup> As one constructivist author frames it, the reader’s response is “not *to* the meaning; it *is* the meaning”.<sup>88</sup> From this perspective, Semple’s book might be seen to contain a potential plurality of meaning. This apparent interpretative efflorescence might be qualified, however, by Stanley Fish’s notion of ‘interpretative communities’—a concept intended to explain why “different readers execute the same interpretive strategy when faced with the ‘same’ text”.<sup>89</sup> For Fish, readers within a common language group—or, more narrowly, a mutual academic or national context—share fundamental linguistic

<sup>86</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand plateaus*, 4.

<sup>87</sup> Fish, *Is there a text?*, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Fish, *Is there a text?*, 3. Italicization in original.

<sup>89</sup> Fish, *Is there a text?*, 170.

understandings and a syntactic experience.<sup>90</sup> Individual readings are mediated, then, through a “publicly available system of intelligibility”.<sup>91</sup> In this sense, it becomes possible to speak of the interpretation of *Influences* as “a collective and institutional phenomenon, not just a random set of individual responses”.<sup>92</sup>

The conceptual relativism with which Fish’s description of interpretative communities is underpinned has been subject to criticism. For Dasenbrock, Fish’s scheme is flawed because “members of the one world we all live in and share do not neatly divide into those with whom we share a conceptual scheme ... and those with whom we don’t”.<sup>93</sup> It is not possible to distinguish, Dasenbrock argues, between interpretative communities. Dasenbrock suggests, moreover, that if distinct communities *do* exist, the fundamental incommensurability of their analytical strategies would mean that it would not be possible to compare usefully one community’s reading of a text with that of another’s. One could not tell whether they represented genuinely different readings, or simply different ways of *talking about* readings. As an alternative schema for explaining distinct textual engagements, Dasenbrock suggests Donald Davidson’s notion of “interpretive charity”—the idea that, when faced with a text, the reader will attempt to credit the author with a scheme of beliefs as similar to his or her own as possible, “so as to maximise agreement”.<sup>94</sup> Whilst the charitable reader, in Davidson’s formulation, engages a text from a particular intellectual position, with a prior theory in mind, there is a process of negotiation in which that theoretical position is modified, forming a “passing theory” which allows the incorporation of the novel

<sup>90</sup> Fish, *Is there a text?*, 4–5.

<sup>91</sup> Fish, *Is there a text?*, 332.

<sup>92</sup> Graff, “Is there a text?”, 38.

<sup>93</sup> Dasenbrock, “Do we write the text?”, 11.

<sup>94</sup> Dasenbrock, “Do we write the text?”, 13.

information.<sup>95</sup> This contrasts with Fish's interpretative communities, in which "interpretations are [by default] always self-confirming".<sup>96</sup>

Rather than limiting the readers of *Influences* to one interpretative community, I suggest that they were most likely to have been members of multiple communities—whether defined by, for example, nationality, academic interest, language group, or religion. The interpretative apparatus brought to bear upon these communities' reading of Semple's book may represent the unique combination of these analytical positions. Whilst the extreme relativism of Fish's conception is likely unhelpful—suggesting, as it does, that "there is no text prior to interpretation"—the notion of shared or common interpretative strategies, even when these are ephemeral and vary both with space and time, might usefully be applied to the study of the historical geographies of textual reception.<sup>97</sup> My wish is to proceed in the spirit of Fish's interpretative communities, if not precisely within its rigorous confines. I acknowledge the "inescapably collective character of interpretation", yet hope to make clear differences within and between these communal understandings.<sup>98</sup> As has been noted, "reading is not only a personal experience but also one that is shaped by cultural norms".<sup>99</sup>

Attempts to understand the plurality of readers' interpretations in more than an idiographic sense have been limited, until relatively recently, to work in literary criticism. Two epistemologically distinct approaches inform these interpretations: that of attempting to deduce readers' responses from the structure of the text itself—its semiotic matrix—and that of phenomenological and aesthetic explorations, which "attempt to locate individual or shared determinations which govern modes of

<sup>95</sup> Dasenbrock, "Do we write the text?", 13.

<sup>96</sup> Dasenbrock, "Do we write the text?", 15.

<sup>97</sup> Travis, *Reading cultures*, 4.

<sup>98</sup> Livingstone, "Science, text and space", 395.

<sup>99</sup> Blair, "An early modernist's perspective", 421.

interpretation from outside of the text”.<sup>100</sup> Each approach, both the semiotic and the contextual, has been frustrated by the non-inscriptive nature of reading—the fact that the act of reading does not tend to leave a material trace.<sup>101</sup> Attention has focused, therefore, on defining and describing cultures of shared reading practice (often socially, nationally, or temporally specific), and has attempted to show how different approaches to reading (be they private or public; silent or vocal; studious or escapist; reverent or critical) influence the actualization of texts’ meanings.<sup>102</sup> These are, I argue, geographical concerns, since they require attention to the local and particular nature of reading. For Chartier, “reading is always a practice embodied in acts, *spaces*, and habits”.<sup>103</sup> Whilst the primary focus of such work has been upon the “European practice of reading literature for pleasure”, the contours of reading practice and the interpretation it identifies might sensibly be applied also to scientific texts.<sup>104</sup>

Robert Darnton has attempted to reconstruct the socially-inscribed practices by which a reading culture is defined.<sup>105</sup> Analyzing the reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Darnton presented an intriguing example of a shared cultural experience—a common reading event. In two prefaces to his novel, Rousseau outlined the ways in which he wished his book to be read—and by whom—thereby providing his readers with an explicit strategy and interpretative framework with which to engage his text.<sup>106</sup> As Darnton records, “this new way of reading worked so well that *La nouvelle Héloïse* became the greatest best-seller of the century, the most important single source

<sup>100</sup> Chartier, “Texts, printing, reading”, 156–157.

<sup>101</sup> Darnton, “History of reading”.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Cavallo and Chartier, *History of reading*; Chartier, “Texts, printing, reading”.

<sup>103</sup> Chartier, *Order of books*, 3. My italicization.

<sup>104</sup> Boyarin, “Placing reading”, 10.

<sup>105</sup> Darnton, *Great cat massacre*.

<sup>106</sup> Darnton, *Great cat massacre*.



of romantic sensibility”.<sup>107</sup> Rousseau, having “instructed his readers how to read him”, united a series of individual readers to form a common reading community.<sup>108</sup> What is clear, here, is that although each reader’s engagement with *La nouvelle Héloïse* was personal, it was informed by shared cultural precepts—it was, at once, fundamentally individual and irrevocably collective. Darnton cautions against taking the reading of Rousseau as an uncomplicated, temporally-transcendent example of reading practice, noting: “nothing could be more misleading in an attempt to recapture the experience of reading in the past than the assumption that people have always read the way we do today [and vice versa]. A history of reading, if it can ever be written, would chart the alien element in the way man has made sense of the world”.<sup>109</sup> As Chartier makes clear, despite Rousseau’s comparative success in “installing an order”, reading is never a prescribed activity: “Readers use infinite numbers of subterfuges to ... read between the lines, and to subvert the lessons imposed on them”.<sup>110</sup>

### ***How readers respond***

In moving from questions of *what* people read in the past to *how* they read it, a number of conceptual challenges become apparent. Pursuing what Chartier has termed the “archaeology of reading practices” requires a careful excavation of an archival sediment (readers’ letters, diaries, marginalia, *inter alia*), and a sifting of the hermeneutic matrix to reveal the fragile and fleeting traces which mark the interaction of reader and book.<sup>111</sup> Work in this field has followed the reappraisal of readership provoked by Barthes and Foucault. Theories of reader response and reception have emerged within the context

<sup>107</sup> Darnton, “History of reading”, 142.

<sup>108</sup> Darnton, “History of reading”, 142.

<sup>109</sup> Darnton, *Great cat massacre*, 216.

<sup>110</sup> Chartier, *Order of books*, viii.

<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Sherman, *John Dee*, 53.

of literary criticism, and have “sought to reassert the indispensable contributions readers make to the textual encounter”.<sup>112</sup> Work on reader response and aesthetic reception by, among others, Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss, Umberto Eco, and Stanley Fish, surfaced in opposition to the textual emphasis of formalism and the New Criticism which dominated literary criticism in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>113</sup> Formalism held that a text was to be considered “without reference to its cultural and historical context and without regard to the intention of its author or the response of its reader”.<sup>114</sup> Reader-response criticism took readers’ social context, biographies, physicality, and psychological makeup as important elements in reconstructing their hermeneutic strategies.

Wolfgang Iser’s formulation of a theory of aesthetic response (as distinct from a theory of the aesthetics of reception) was intended, for example, to examine the “poles of text and reader, together with the interaction that occurs between them”.<sup>115</sup> For Iser, these poles could be seen usefully to represent the artistic (the text) and the aesthetic (the “realization accomplished by the reader”).<sup>116</sup> The theory of aesthetic response speaks, then, to the interaction of these poles—to the structures within and beyond the text which allow the reader a “spectrum of actualizations” in his or her engagement with the text.<sup>117</sup> Rather than simply an arbitrary, subjective response—or a determined, subjective reception—the reader’s construal of meaning is, for Iser, an intersubjective phenomena. For Iser, reading, although not *determined* by the text, is *conditioned* by its structure (to which the reader has an aesthetic response), in combination with the

<sup>112</sup> Sherman, *John Dee*, 55.

<sup>113</sup> Davies, *Dissenting reader*.

<sup>114</sup> Davies, *Dissenting reader*, 37.

<sup>115</sup> Iser, *Act of reading*, ix.

<sup>116</sup> Iser, *Act of reading*, 21.

<sup>117</sup> Iser, *Act of reading*, 24.

reader's existing experiences.<sup>118</sup> The reader makes meaning, then, as a result not only of his or her own social and intellectual experiences, but also as a consequence of "the various perspectives offered by the text".<sup>119</sup>

The applicability of Iser's formulation depends, however, upon the acceptance of the notion of the "implied reader".<sup>120</sup> This category represents a pragmatic construction: an attempt to circumvent the potential intellectual challenges of dealing with 'real', 'ideal', or 'hypothetical' readers. For Iser, the implied reader "embodies all those predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept had his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader".<sup>121</sup> In this respect, the value of a theory of aesthetic response in relation to the reception of *Influences*, where only the "real reader" is to be invoked, seems limited.<sup>122</sup> I suggest that the metaphor of reading as an intersubjective process is valuable, however, and that certain of the readings I detail in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 7 illustrate not only this negotiated ideation, but also what might be thought of as readers' aesthetic response to Semple's text.

Whilst the individual specificity of reading practice might seem to necessitate a psychoanalytic interrogation of readers (in order that the social and contextual factors they bring to their interpretation of a text might be properly apprehended), Hans Robert Jauss has suggested that such "threatening pitfalls of psychology" can be circumvented by attending to the "objectifiable system of expectations" which a reader

<sup>118</sup> Riquelme, "Wolfgang Iser's aesthetic politics".

<sup>119</sup> Iser, *Prospecting*, 7.

<sup>120</sup> Iser, *Act of reading*, 34.

<sup>121</sup> Iser, *Act of reading*, 34.

<sup>122</sup> Iser, *Act of reading*, 28.

brings to a particular text.<sup>123</sup> Borrowing from Hans-Georg Gadamer’s notion of ‘horizon’—“the range of vision [or interpretation] that includes everything that can be seen [or understood] from a particular vantage point [or context]”—Jauss describes texts as existing within, and helping to describe, readers’ horizons of expectations.<sup>124</sup> For Jauss, the horizon of expectation serves to define the “rules of the game”—the interpretative framework which might conceivably be applied to the reading and reception of a text.<sup>125</sup> Whilst the horizon is seen to elicit from the reader all that is “familiar to him from earlier texts” in similar genres, it is not straightforwardly a prescribed engagement with the text.<sup>126</sup> Where Jauss’s formulation transcends individual subjectivism is by arguing that the horizon of expectation—which can be seen to be shared among members of an intellectual, cultural, or other social community—necessarily precedes individual interpretation. As Jauss frames it, “The interpretative reception of a text always presupposed the context of experience of aesthetic perception: the question of the subjectivity of the interpretation and of the taste of different readers or levels of readers can be asked meaningfully only when one has first clarified which transsubjective horizon of understanding conditions the influence of the text”.<sup>127</sup> Simply, for Jauss, it is sensible to interrogate individual subjectivity only when the factors that condition that subjectivity have been explored.

Whilst Jauss’s perspective on (literary) reception is somewhat conceptual, and its applicability to historical study has been questioned, something like a horizon of expectation is apparent in the initial response of certain readers to *Influences*.<sup>128</sup> Since

<sup>123</sup> Iser, *Prospecting*, 22.

<sup>124</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and method*, 301.

<sup>125</sup> Jauss, *Towards an aesthetic of reception*, 88.

<sup>126</sup> Jauss, *Towards an aesthetic of reception*, 88.

<sup>127</sup> Jauss, *Towards an aesthetic of reception*, 23.

<sup>128</sup> De Man, “Introduction”.

Semple's text was a representation of Friedrich Ratzel's geographical work, and its various chapters had appeared as articles in learned journals, it might be assumed that geographers approaching her book, at least in the Anglophone world, would have had some expectation as to its content, and an idea as to whether or not they agreed with its general orientation. What is unclear, however, is whether this prejudicial frame of interpretation can be seen to represent the "transsubjective horizon of understanding conditions" which Jauss describes, or whether this horizon might be taken more properly to represent the social, intellectual, and academic contexts within which Semple's readers were situated.<sup>129</sup> It is apparent, however, that Jauss's horizon "allows a more critical and creative role to both texts and readers" than does Fish's notion of interpretative communities.<sup>130</sup> I should like to proceed, then, with something of Jauss's perspective—particularly in respect to the interests and concerns which Semple's readership brought to the text—but also to acknowledge a conceptual weakness: that the attention of Jauss and Iser is to archetypal readers rather than to actual ones. As Sherman makes clear, "The pages of Reader-Response works are populated with every kind of reader except the real and the historical".<sup>131</sup>

In this process of abstraction and generalization, reader-response criticism has been unable fully to attend to the 'alien element' which Darnton identifies as critical. It is in work on the history of the book, rather than in literary criticism, that the individuality and local particularity of reading practices has been most enthusiastically charted. As Johns reveals, the history of reading, in its appreciation of the "different practices by which readers in various times and places attribute meanings to the objects

<sup>129</sup> Jauss, *Towards an aesthetic of reception*, 23.

<sup>130</sup> Morris, *Realism*, 126.

<sup>131</sup> Sherman, *John Dee*, 55.

of their reading”, seeks to explain “the global by rigorous attention to the local”.<sup>132</sup> The work of Roger Chartier and Robert Darnton is important in this context. Research in what Chartier terms “object study” has brought a sociological perspective to the book; viewing the printed text not only as a physical object, but also as a historically- and culturally-situated phenomenon.<sup>133</sup> Attending to the “different appropriations accorded a single book as it traverses a number of distinct social spaces”, object studies have revealed social and spatial variations in the interaction between reader and book (physically, emotionally, and intellectually), and have begun to account for the resultant interpretative plurality.<sup>134</sup> Locating these reading practices, charting their geography, has been an important concern. As Chartier notes, “Reading is not a solely abstract intellectual operation; it involves the body, is inscribed within a space” as “reading habits vary with time, place and milieu”.<sup>135</sup> *Where, when, and by whom* books were read have been shown to matter to *how* they were read.

### **Textual reception and the history of science**

Recent work in the history of science, concerned to locate science in social and spatial context, has turned to the book to better understand the processes by which scientific knowledge and ideas are communicated and received.<sup>136</sup> Bibliographical studies—attending variously to Darwinian evolution, Einsteinian relativity, and Newtonian physics—have been united by a desire to expose national and cultural differences in the

<sup>132</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 385.

<sup>133</sup> Quoted in Johns, “Natural history as print culture”, 107.

<sup>134</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 385.

<sup>135</sup> Cavallo and Chartier, *History of reading*, 4–5.

<sup>136</sup> See, for example, Blair, “Reading strategies”; Blair, “An early modernist’s perspective”; Daston, “Taking note(s)”; Frasca-Spada and Jardine, *Books and the sciences in history*; Topham, “Scientific publishing”; Topham, “View from the industrial age”.

reception of scientific ideas.<sup>137</sup> Work by Nicolaas Rupke on the critical reception of Alexander von Humboldt's *Essai politique sur le royaume de la Nouvelle-Espagne* (1808–1811) in Britain, France, and Germany has, for example, revealed the influence of national reviewing cultures upon the popular conception of Humboldt and his writings.<sup>138</sup> In France and Germany, Humboldt's work was viewed primarily as an important contribution to the scientific and geographical understanding of Mexico. In Britain, by contrast, its economic and mercantile implications were emphasized. This British-Continental disparity reflected not only different national understandings of Humboldt and his work, but also exposed dissimilarities in the styles and practices of reviewing—what Rupke calls “reviewing cultures”.<sup>139</sup> Differences in the apprehension of Humboldt's work were seen to exist both between nations and also between periodicals, reflecting the particular concerns of journals, their authors, and audiences. Much the same was also true of the reception of his five-volume *Cosmos* (1845–1859).<sup>140</sup>

In such work, the national has typically served as the *de facto* scale—the “natural unit of assessment”—at which the acceptance and repudiation of scientific work is judged.<sup>141</sup> There exists at this scale, however, “a temptation to homogenize ... heterogeneous reading practices”, by assuming a national commonality in the response to books.<sup>142</sup> The opposite tendency—to emphasize differences *within* a nation at the expense of explaining differences *between* nations—is also evident.<sup>143</sup> Recent work on the reception of scientific and theological texts has attempted to ameliorate this tendency by

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, Glick, *Comparative reception of Darwinism*; Paty, “Scientific reception of relativity”; Russell, “Reception of Newtonianism”.

<sup>138</sup> Rupke, “Geography of enlightenment”.

<sup>139</sup> Rupke, “Geography of enlightenment”, 333.

<sup>140</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt current*.

<sup>141</sup> Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*, 40.

<sup>142</sup> Friedman, *Mappings*, 119.

<sup>143</sup> Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*.

attending to more overtly local and individual responses.<sup>144</sup> Important in this reappraisal is James Secord's *Victorian sensation* (2000), which deals with the authorship, publication, and reading of Robert Chambers's anonymously-issued *Vestiges of the natural history of creation* (1844). Secord shows that *Vestiges* was read and interpreted differently by its disparate audiences—its interpretative communities. At disparate scales, *Vestiges* was engaged with and understood differently—its meaning varied “within regions and between them, within cities and between them, within neighbourhoods and between them”.<sup>145</sup> For phrenologists in Edinburgh, philanthropists in Liverpool, and middle-class women in London, *Vestiges* meant different things; its significance depended upon the particular social, religious, political, and economic contexts within which it was encountered. These distinct engagements with Chambers's book reflect “geographies of reading”, and demonstrate the embodied and situated nature of reading practice.<sup>146</sup>

The meanings attributed to the ideas outlined in *Vestiges* were a consequence of the ways in which it was read in particular places, and also of how it was translated. In his examination of Dutch and German translations of *Vestiges*, Rupke shows how, by means of additional prefaces, footnote commentary, illustrations, and omissions, translators conveyed “a different message from the one the author had in mind”.<sup>147</sup> Whether in the seemingly straightforward process of textual consumption, or in the more complex practices of rendition, mediation, and representation, a hermeneutic topography is thus revealed: space is important, location matters to the apprehension of meaning. Secord and Rupke demonstrate that “meaning is mobile”—that textual

<sup>144</sup> See, for example, Fyfe, “Reception of William Paley”; Fyfe, *Science and salvation*; Livingstone, “Science, religion and the geography of reading”.

<sup>145</sup> Livingstone, *Putting science in its place*, 115.

<sup>146</sup> Secord, *Victorian sensation*, 153.

<sup>147</sup> Rupke, “Translation studies”, 210.



significance is not necessarily fixed and spatially transcendent, but is formed in the moment and at the site of encounter.<sup>148</sup>

Owen Gingerich's work on the reception of Nicolas Copernicus's *De revolutionibus* has been similarly attentive to the sites of book production, transmission, and reading.<sup>149</sup> In a wide-ranging census of the approximately six hundred extant copies of the first and second editions of *De revolutionibus*, Gingerich interrogates provenance and marginal annotations to describe the invisible college—the intellectual network of students, tutors, and corresponding colleagues—within which Copernicus's ideas circulated.<sup>150</sup> Gingerich shows that the reception of *De revolutionibus* depended not only upon its original printed content, but also upon the ways in which individual copies were variously altered and supplemented by their readers. It is evident, therefore, that to speak of the reception of *a* book is problematic; it is necessary to attend, as far as is possible, to the reading of *individual* copies of a book—to marginal annotations, and to matters of provenance. In this way, it is possible to observe how the printed text is “changed physically and contextually over time”—to acknowledge its material as well as epistemic malleability.<sup>151</sup>

To attend to the individual copies of a book in the way that Gingerich has outlined is to problematize Latour's conception of the immutable mobile. In Latour's scheme, a text is taken to be a fixed and unalterable representation of a claim to knowledge. I should like to suggest, however, that books are rather more pliable—both in terms of their physical arrangement and in the interpretations to which their content is subject. A fundamental tenet of Latour's conception is that texts are mobile precisely

<sup>148</sup> Livingstone, “Text, talk and testimony”, 95.

<sup>149</sup> Gingerich, *Book nobody read*.

<sup>150</sup> Gingerich, *An annotated census*.

<sup>151</sup> McKitterick, *Print*, 224.

because “they allow new translations and articulations while keeping some types of relations intact”.<sup>152</sup> I should like to qualify this by suggesting that what textual mobility is taken here to mean—the transcendence of physical and epistemic distance—is facilitated by the mutability of texts. Texts are protean—they are brought into being in different ways and to fulfil different purposes in different places. Their movement depends, in part, upon translations and iterations that are profoundly and importantly situated. A text is not, however, necessarily transformed beyond all recognition by its audience in order to satisfy their particular intellectual orientation. This would make the rejection of certain texts, or indifference towards them, an unlikely consequence. My point is that it might be useful to see the circulation of books as being facilitated not just by their physical transportability and intellectual commensurability. The fact that they are not above and immune to local circumstance would seem to be significant not only in relation to the ways in which they are read, but also to the ways in which the knowledge and ideas they contain move between places. Gingerich’s attention to the margins of the book would seem one way in which this might be interrogated.

### ***Marginal traces and matters of provenance***

A corollary of the attention to the inscribed and embodied aspects of reading has been an attendance to individual reading practice. The retrieval and reconstruction of historical readers’ experiences has, in part, been predicated on an exploration of their own writings about (often literally in) the books they read. Analysis of these commentaries—the material and marginal traces left by the immaterial act of reading—represent “The most impressive claims for the history of reading in Anglophonic

<sup>152</sup> Latour, *Pandora’s hope*, 307.

historiography”.<sup>153</sup> Marginalia—a product of the humanist scholarly tradition—are the articulation of an often private experience: they “respond to an antecedent text; they express the separate (usually contrary) views of the marginalist; and thereby assert a separate personality”.<sup>154</sup> They speak, then, to the fleeting moment of encounter between reader and book. What they cannot do, however, is to “provide direct access to the mental processes of readers as they appropriated texts”.<sup>155</sup> Yet, as Jackson makes clear, “If we accept marginalia as mediated forms of expression, governed by convention and conditioned by historical circumstance as the written word always is, we may yet be able to salvage something”.<sup>156</sup>

Much of the existing work in historical bibliography to draw upon marginalia has attended to the annotations of prominent literary and scientific figures. The reading practices of the French Hellenist Guillaume Budé, the English Renaissance polymath John Dee, and the nineteenth-century poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (who coined the term ‘marginalia’), have been recovered in this way.<sup>157</sup> Comparatively little attention has been paid—beyond the work of Secord and Gingerich, and the study of Isaac Newton’s library—to the marginal annotations of scientists and of scientific texts.<sup>158</sup> As noted, however, reading is “the principal mode for the reception of scientific work” and it might usefully be traced “through records of book ownership” and “in manuscript annotations”.<sup>159</sup> In part, this lack of attention reflects a broader cultural ambivalence towards marginalia: readers’ marks in books have been viewed variously as graffiti and

<sup>153</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 385.

<sup>154</sup> Jackson, “Writing in books”, 219.

<sup>155</sup> Jackson, “Readers’ notes as evidence”, 145.

<sup>156</sup> Jackson, “Readers’ notes as evidence”, 145–146.

<sup>157</sup> Grafton, “Is the history of reading a marginal enterprise?”; Jackson, “Writing in books”; Sherman, *John Dee*.

<sup>158</sup> Harrison, *Library of Isaac Newton*.

<sup>159</sup> Blair, “An early modernist’s perspective”, 421.

vandalism, “unless, of course, they can be attributed to a Great Man”.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, what Jackson terms “the *professional* marking of books”—the systematic underlining, highlighting, and notation of key words and topics, which is seen to characterize an engagement with scientific texts, particularly textbooks—has been considered somewhat less instructive and significant than the extensive annotations of important literary figures.<sup>161</sup>

This perspective has changed somewhat in recent decades, reflecting a renewed interest not only in marginalia in all its forms, but also in matters of provenance. As one commentator on bibliography notes, “now every little detail, the binding, a circulating library label, advertisements ... besides every last mark made by later pen, pencil or stamp, has become the subject of anxious study”.<sup>162</sup> Concomitant with this attention to the traces of ownership and use has been an increased awareness of their potentially ephemeral nature. As Stoddard makes clear, “Old covers and endpapers [the, typically, blank sheets of paper at the beginning and end of books] are jettisoned along with library marks, ownership marks, book sellers’ marks, index notes, annotations, documents or verses”.<sup>163</sup> Such losses can occur rapidly, and often without deliberate malice. The copy of *Influences* housed at Cambridge University Library, for example, had its sheet of due dates excised when transferred from the general collection to the Rare Books Department, thereby eliminating all evidence of its issuing between July 1987 and June 2001 (the first and last dates previously recorded).<sup>164</sup> Marks of provenance and of reading practice can be taken only as a partial and indicative record.

<sup>160</sup> Scott-Warren, “Words in edgeways”, 369; Sherman, ““Rather soiled by use””.

<sup>161</sup> Jackson, “Writing in books”, 219. Italicization in original.

<sup>162</sup> Anonymous, “Annotated book”, 169.

<sup>163</sup> Stoddard, “Looking at marks in books”, 32.

<sup>164</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Rare Books Department, MH.63.21.

Whilst the practice of marginal annotation appears to be an essentially private and individual practice, it might be understood also to be a collective and, occasionally, public endeavour. Readers' notes in books tend to conform to certain modes of response. In addition to underlining and "marginal flagging", as a method of highlighting key passages, there is a tendency to include in the margin a topic or key word, which serves to summarize the content of a page or paragraph.<sup>165</sup> These topic words are occasionally listed in the flyleaves or endpapers of the book, along with their relevant page numbers, serving as a "personal index to the volume".<sup>166</sup> Such indexes survive in several copies of Semple's book.<sup>167</sup> Perhaps most revealing of individual engagements with the text is what Jackson calls "normal marginalia"—the comments, criticisms, objections, observations, and praise conferred by the reader.<sup>168</sup> In broad terms, these paratextual additions take the form either of evaluative or associative comments. The former are typically judgements on style or content, whilst the latter are a form of intertextual cross-reference by which links are drawn between the work in question and that of other related writers. In one sense, this marginal exchange between reader and author might be dismissed as a one-sided conversation—Jackson compares it to "talking back to the TV set"—but the margin can be seen to represent the site at which the distinction between author and reader is blurred and contested.<sup>169</sup> The margin reveals and represents "the struggle for control of position" between author and reader.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Blair, "An early modernist's perspective", 423.

<sup>166</sup> Blair, "An early modernist's perspective", 423.

<sup>167</sup> See, for example, *Influences of geographic environment*, Brock University, James A. Gibson Library, GF 31 S5, unpaginated; *Influences of geographic environment*, Wellcome Library, XWA, unpaginated.

<sup>168</sup> Jackson, "Writing in books", 218.

<sup>169</sup> Jackson, *Marginalia*, 85.

<sup>170</sup> Tribble, *Margins and marginality*, 10.

Whilst the motivation for certain types of marginal marking is clear, particularly where it can be seen to aid the reader in the summary or highlighting of important themes and passages, critical or barbed comments represent a rather more complex impetus. The description of Semple's book as "Bunkum!"—with which quote this thesis began—can be seen as the visceral response of one reader, and an act of subversion.<sup>171</sup> The margin of a library copy of *Influences* is, at once, a space for private reflection and a site of public display. It is also an illicit space: a forum in which a library's policies governing the defacement of books can be challenged and a future audience addressed; it is "bound up with a variety of taboos and transgressions".<sup>172</sup> To write 'Bunkum!' is not only to challenge Semple, but to perform a subversive and culturally marginal activity. As Jackson confirms, such a response "has to be understood not as the expression of an irresistible, spontaneous response—or not entirely that—but as a gesture towards a later reader".<sup>173</sup>

The value of attending to individual copies of a book rests not only in potentially enlightening annotations, but also in the various indications of purchase, ownership, and exchange they contain.<sup>174</sup> In relation to the reading and reception of Semple's book, details of who owned copies, and when, can provide a potentially significant indication of *Influences*' historical circulation and audience. The information can be often surprising. The copy of *Influences* deposited at the American Philosophical Society Library was not, for example, acquired until 1993, when a grant for the Carlier Fund facilitated its purchase.<sup>175</sup> A surviving bookplate on the book's flyleaf shows it to

<sup>171</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Oxford, Geography and the Environment Library, M 59a, 620.

<sup>172</sup> Sherman, "Rather soiled by use", 473.

<sup>173</sup> Jackson, "Readers' notes as evidence", 145.

<sup>174</sup> Pearson, *Provenance research*.

<sup>175</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, American Philosophical Society Library, 572 Se5i.

have been acquired originally in 1913 by the library of the Working Men's College in London (Figure 2)—“the oldest adult education institution in the country”.<sup>176</sup> This simple piece of ownership evidence demonstrates the existence of a historical audience for Semple's book (namely students at the College) that would have remained otherwise unrecorded. Moreover, it shows that a commercial market existed for Semple's book eighty years after its initial acquisition, and that the College no longer wished to own it.



Figure 2. Library of the Working Men's College (circa 1913).  
From *A history of the Working Men's College, 1854–1954* (1954): unpaginated.

Given the varied nature of marginal annotations and details of provenance (and the predominantly pejorative associations of the former), few library catalogues have recorded their existence systematically.<sup>177</sup> In part, this has reflected a technical limitation, where the standard MARC (MACHINE-Readable Cataloging) format has been unsuitable

<sup>176</sup> Harrison, *History of the Working Men's College*, vii.

<sup>177</sup> See, for example, Baker, “Discards”; Baker, *Double fold*; Baker, “Catalogue and the card”; Pearson, “Provenance and rare book cataloging”.

for the standardized documentation of marginalia and provenance.<sup>178</sup> More generally, however, it represents a previously prevailing attitude in library science (in contrast to work in archives and special collections) which viewed the book in terms of its textual content rather than its status as a material object. An attention to the copy-specific features of books is apparent, however, in a number of specialized cataloguing projects, such as that detailing the fifteenth-century printed books in the Bodleian Library, and a similar but shorter volume detailing books with manuscript additions in the British Library.<sup>179</sup> Given the prohibitive expense and labour required in cataloguing retrospectively large library collections to take account of provenance and marginalia (the Bodleian Library Incunable Cataloguing Project took fourteen years), most remain unexamined. As Gingerich and Secord have shown, it is thus necessary to inspect individual copies of books physically in order that their unique contents might be recovered.

In attempting to undertake such a survey for the surviving copies of *Influences*, it was necessary first to identify their number and location. The union catalogue Copac (which provides access to the library catalogues of the twenty-seven member Consortium of Research Libraries) was used to identify copies of Semple's book in British and Irish academic institutions. In addition to the forty-five copies listed by Copac, a further nine were identified using the University of Cambridge's Newton Catalogue (the catalogues of individual colleges being unavailable via Copac), and several more using the catalogues of institutions not affiliated with the Consortium of Research Libraries, including the Royal Geographical Society, Queen's University Belfast, and Trinity College Dublin. The OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) union

<sup>178</sup> Baker, "Discards".

<sup>179</sup> Alston, *Books with manuscript*; Coates et al., *Catalogue of books*.



catalogue WorldCat was used to identify the location of copies outside the United Kingdom. The database lists 785 institutions at which at least one copy of Semple's book is deposited. Given that a number of these institutions hold multiple copies (the University of Chicago, for example, has sixteen) the surviving number of Semple's book in academic institutions worldwide might be assumed to exceed 1,000.

Since each copy of Semple's book could not reasonably be examined in person, a questionnaire was prepared and distributed to the reference or subject librarian at the British academic institutions where *Influences* was deposited. The questionnaire sought copy-specific details of the book, including information on binding, provenance, and marginalia. Where potentially significant marginalia were identified, the book was either ordered via Interlibrary Loan (ILL), or examined in situ. A difficulty presented itself, however, in relation to the ILL system. Since a copy of *Influences* is on deposit at Edinburgh University Library, a number of loan requests were cancelled automatically. Standard policy prevents a book being ordered if it is available locally. Although the specific reasons for the request had been detailed in the on-line ILL form, it was necessary to negotiate with ILL staff at Edinburgh on each occasion a book was requested—a time-consuming process. Difficulties were apparent too at the lending institutions. A request made to the Oxford University Library Services for a copy of *Influences* housed at the Geography and Environment Library resulted in one from the Radcliffe Science Library being sent in its place (it seems that the British Library code for the Geography and Environment Library OX/U10 was confused with that of the Bodleian Library OX/U-1, which, since it does not hold a copy of *Influences*, would have passed on the request to the Radcliffe Science Library). In general, however, the

combination of proxy examination and personal inspection permitted a useful census of British copies to be compiled (see Appendix A).

A similar procedure was adopted in relation to copies of Semple's book held outside the United Kingdom. From the 785 institutions listed by WorldCat, approximately 100 in the United States and Canada were chosen for examination. These included institutions with which Semple had been associated, along with those at which geography had been taught in the first half of the twentieth century. A number of additional institutions, of various types, were selected in order that the census was not limited exclusively to larger and longer-established academic centres. The paper questionnaire was replaced by an identical electronic version, accessible via the World Wide Web.<sup>180</sup> Of the approximately 100 institutions surveyed, three quarters completed an on-line questionnaire. The majority of contributions were detailed, and indicated a careful reading for the presence of, typically sparse, marginalia. Given the book's length (683 pages) there are, however, omissions. One questionnaire completed by the Business, Science, and Technology Center of the San Francisco Public Library stated: "usually we are very happy when people don't write in our books. In this case, I'm sorry to inform you that our library users were very well behaved and did not write notes of any kind in this book".<sup>181</sup> Later personal examination of the copy revealed, however, a number of annotations that were missed during the original inspection.<sup>182</sup> It is apparent, therefore, that the census upon which this thesis is, in part, based can be understood only as a partial record, and one that necessarily is secondary in importance to the individual reading experiences revealed in published reviews and the diaries and correspondence of contemporary geographers. The principal value of the census

<sup>180</sup> <http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/s9631102/bookcensus.html>.

<sup>181</sup> Anonymous (San Francisco Public Library), census return, 1 March 2006.

<sup>182</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, San Francisco Public Library, 573.4 Se54.

comes, however, from revealing the instinctive and unguarded reaction of certain readers to Semple's text, and from knowing, with comparative certainty, where Semple's book was at particular times in its history. Whilst the detail and comprehensiveness of Gingerich and Secord cannot here be matched, something of their methodological approach can usefully be applied to the reception of *Influences*.

In attempting to describe the historical reception of Semple's *Influences*, it is necessary to attend to its individual readers and to their particular engagement with the text. Of particular importance in this regard is a survey on the influence of Semple's book conducted in 1961 by John Kirtland Wright (1891–1969), erstwhile Director of the American Geographical Society. Wright's project—a contribution to a plenary session on Semple at the Association of American Geographers' Annual Meeting—took as its focus the effect of Semple's book on the practice and perspective of geographers in the fifty years following its publication.<sup>183</sup> Wright drafted a questionnaire which he sent to fifty-two geographers—friends and correspondents of various ages, and of various nationalities—soliciting recollections of their reading of *Influences* and the use of the text in their professional experience (see Appendix C).<sup>184</sup> Replies to Wright's questionnaire provide an important record of the reading, application, and rejection of Semple's ideas—a valuable starting point from which to discuss the use and disuse of *Influences*.<sup>185</sup>

Unlike the largely anonymous marginalia previously described, Wright's fifty-two respondents represent known readers of Semple's book. Others exist too: the identifiable newspaper and periodical reviewers of *Influences*, and the eighteen scholars to

<sup>183</sup> American Geographical Society Archives (hereafter AGSA), John Kirtland Wright Papers, Carton B, Folder 36. Preston E. James to Wright, 24 May 1961.

<sup>184</sup> AGSA. John Kirtland Wright Papers, Box 16. Questionnaire, 1961.

<sup>185</sup> American Geographical Society Library (hereafter AGSL), Replies to a questionnaire relating to Ellen Churchill Semple's "Influences of Geographic Environment", 1961.

whom Semple's publisher, Henry Holt, sent complimentary copies upon its publication (assuming, in fact, that they did read it).<sup>186</sup> This list was supplemented by reference to Semple's personal correspondence in which a number of presumed readers were identified, and to those scholars who recorded an encounter with Semple's text in autobiographical reminiscences and other writing.<sup>187</sup> Where personal archives of these known and presumed readers exist, an attempt has been made to locate evidence of their reading experience—whether in letters, diaries, notes, or in the marginal annotation of their personal copies of the book. In this way, it has been possible to describe, using this scattered and fragmentary evidence, something of what it meant to read *Influences*—both at the time of its publication and in subsequent years. Given the varied candour and fidelity with which these reading encounters are described, they must necessarily be understood as partial in terms both of their subjectivity and their comprehensiveness. Just as each reader's engagement with Semple's book was distinct, so too are the traces of their reading.

### **Conclusion: reading the reception of *Influences***

As noted, “Much of the success of the history of reading will depend on finding inventive ways of coordinating different kinds of evidence to devise a convincing, if nonetheless partly speculative, reconstruction of the reading experience both of individuals and groups of individuals in particular contexts”.<sup>188</sup> To recover the reception of *Influences* depends on bringing together in combination the disparate but complementary sources in which its historical reading is inscribed. The “uncorroborated

<sup>186</sup> Princeton University (Department of Rare Books and Special Collections) (hereafter PU), C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Joseph Vogelius, 26 May 1911; Madison, *Owl among colophons*.

<sup>187</sup> University of Kentucky (Special Collections and Digital Programs) (hereafter UK), 46M139; Swenson, *Why on earth did it happen*; Wise, “Becoming a geographer”.

<sup>188</sup> Blair, “An early modernist's perspective”, 422.

witness of individual readers”—revealed in correspondence, diaries, and notes—forms the most significant source.<sup>189</sup> This is supported by academic and popular reviews, publishers’ records, marginal annotations, accession stamps, and library issue slips. There is no single source or method by which the contours of the reading of Semple’s book can be described, but by attending to these subjective and partial fragments, and appreciating the social and spatial contexts of which they were part, the reception of Semple’s geographical philosophy might be usefully envisaged.

There is an important distinction to be made, however, between the reading of Semple’s book, and the reception of her anthropogeographical ideas. Whilst the latter cannot be understood without attention to the former, the response of contemporary geographers (and others) to Semple’s work did not depend solely upon their engagement with her 1911 text. Each reader brought to Semple’s book a unique set of expectations and assumptions. These preconceptions were conditioned, in part, by the wider intellectual concerns of the social or academic communities to which they belonged. The reading of Semple’s book can be understood, then, both as an individual and subjective event and as a communal social concern. How the ideas in *Influences* were received depended upon the individual orientation of the reader *and* his or her broader intellectual context. The process of reception was informed by the social, intellectual, and geographical setting of the readers of Semple’s book—not determined by them. My contention is that, whilst Jauss’s horizon of expectations and Fish’s interpretative communities provide a valuable indication of how reading and interpretation function at various scales, the reception of Semple’s book was messier than either scheme might allow.

<sup>189</sup> Jackson, “Readers’ notes as evidence”.

This messiness is a consequence, in part, of the fragmentary and partial historical record. How might one reasonably reconstruct a historical reader's horizon of expectation if all that remains to indicate this reader's engagement with Semple's book is anonymous marginalia? Similarly, how might one place George Chisholm (with whose review this thesis began) in an interpretative community? Should this be based on language, nationality, or academic concern? Or all three? Or none? Reconstructing the concerns, motivations, and interpretations of a historical reader must always and necessarily be "partly speculative".<sup>190</sup> By bringing together disparate indicators of reading practice, and by treating these individual engagements with Semple's book as part of a wider reception of her ideas, I should like to show that it is possible to make claims about the significance of *Influences* for particular individuals, for certain academic and intellectual communities, and for specific historical moments. I should like to conceive of reading (and, by implication, reception) not as the attempt to decipher an authorial message but to produce it. It is precisely because a reader has a history, biography, and psychology that he or she is able to affect the individual act of combination that produces the meaning of a text, or generates the understanding of an idea. To explain this process requires attention to these individual and subjective qualities. To ask what Semple meant to British geography, for example, is to ask first what she meant to individual geographers; it is to explain "the global by rigorous attention to the local".<sup>191</sup>

Before turning to the reading of Semple's book, it is necessary to explore the intellectual concerns of which her work was a component: environmentalism and anthropogeography. Chapter 3 introduces Semple's biography, describing her

<sup>190</sup> Blair, "An early modernist's perspective", 422.

<sup>191</sup> Johns, *Nature of the book*, 385.

educational background and the development of her academic interests. Particular attention is paid to her work with Friedrich Ratzel and to her engagement with environmentalist traditions.<sup>192</sup> In an effort to contextualize her work, and my reading of its reception, I consider the history of environmentalist thought, and the role of nature-culture theory in shaping the development of geography in Europe and North America. Dealing specifically with Semple's attempt to represent Ratzel's anthropogeography to the American geographical community, I trace the parallel emergence of disciplinary geography in the United States and United Kingdom, and the development of environmentalist research agenda in each.

<sup>192</sup> Genthe and Semple, "Tributes to Friedrich Ratzel".

## Chapter 3

### Origins and propagation of anthropogeography

#### Introduction: biographical and historiographical concerns

Ellen Churchill Semple was born during the American Civil War, in Louisville, Kentucky on 8 January 1863—seven days after Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.<sup>1</sup> Lincoln’s Proclamation declared free all slaves in territories in rebellion against the federal government, but did not apply to slaves in border states supporting the Union, or to slaves in southern states under Union control. Kentucky was something of a political pivot in this movement: it represented the physical and ideological boundary between the Confederate South and Unionist North. Just as territorial control of Kentucky passed between Unionist and Confederate forces at various times during the War, so too did the majority political opinion of its population.<sup>2</sup> The particular geographical position of Kentucky served to condition its role in, and response to, the Civil War. This apparent interrelatedness of geography and political events would become later for Semple an important research focus—evident in her discussion of ‘The geography of the Civil War’ in *American history and its geographic conditions* (1903).<sup>3</sup>

The causal connections that seem evident between Semple’s life experiences and her geographical interests—such as that of the Civil War—exist, in part, only in retrospect. They are evidence of a presentist impulse in historiography whereby past events are deemed significant only where they are seen to have had some bearing of an

<sup>1</sup> James, Bladen, and Karan, “Ellen Churchill Semple”.

<sup>2</sup> Harrison, *Civil War in Kentucky*.

<sup>3</sup> Semple, *American history*, 280–309.



important later development.<sup>4</sup> This tendency is apparent in histories of geography which have tended to “personalize and institutionalize”—to see the development of geographical thought as a retrospective question of “leadership and schools”.<sup>5</sup> An essentialist and potentially problematic implication of such an approach is that intellectual influence is seen to be something which can be attributed straightforwardly to an individual or institution.<sup>6</sup> Whilst the history of anthropogeography cannot be understood as synonymous with the personal histories of either Semple or her intellectual mentor, Friedrich Ratzel, I should like to suggest that its development, articulation, and communication depended, to an important extent, upon Semple’s and Ratzel’s intellectual experiences and the outward expression of their individual personalities.

In what follows, I use Semple’s biography as the starting point from which to trace the emergence of her geographical interests, to describe their intersection with those of Ratzel, and to illustrate their relation to environmentalist traditions. My intention is not to replicate traditional histories of the discipline which have emphasized “cumulative progress, great name history, and the cataloguing of people and publications” but, in presenting a more-or-less chronological narrative in which personality and scholarly contribution occupy significant roles, the historiographical limitations associated with biographical work and textbook chronicles remain apparent.<sup>7</sup> Biographical excursions into the discipline’s history are followed often by doubt as to their scholarly value.<sup>8</sup> As a historical method, biography is seen to be “too restrictive and

<sup>4</sup> Seidman, “Beyond presentism and historicism”.

<sup>5</sup> Mikesell, “Continuity and change”, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Livingstone, “History of science and the history of geography”.

<sup>7</sup> Aay, “Textbook chronicles”; Agnew, Livingstone, and Rogers, *Human geography*, 22.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Keighren, “Breakfasting with William Morris Davis”.

redolent of the outmoded emphasis on great men”.<sup>9</sup> Attending to the lives of past geographers risks, it is feared, “feeding back into the progressivist grand narratives of old”—subverting the contextually nuanced, socially and spatially attuned assessments which replaced them.<sup>10</sup> In a historiographical climate which tends to be “nonindividualistic and a-biographical”, a scholarly focus on the work of individual geographers—as a proxy for broader trends within the development of the discipline—can seem anachronistic by comparison.<sup>11</sup> As has been noted, “Recounting distinguished lives ... is not the same thing at all as discerning the historical and present contours of geography as a discipline”.<sup>12</sup> Underlying these general concerns as to the validity of biography is a tension between attending to a subject’s geographical work and his or her personal life—what has been described as “the dual challenge of telling history and telling lives”.<sup>13</sup>

In bringing together Semple’s personal and professional biographies, I describe the ways in which her geographical interests were initiated, informed, and communicated. This is not an essentialist account, however, of Semple’s work, nor of geography’s engagement with environmentalism. Just as the development of anthropogeography cannot be reduced to “a sequence of events like the beads of a rosary”, Semple’s geography cannot be seen to depend solely upon the accumulation of her personal and professional experiences.<sup>14</sup> In presenting a biographically-informed assessment of anthropogeography, I suggest, however, that individuals mattered to its development and articulation, and that there is, as a consequence, value beyond the

<sup>9</sup> Terrall, “Biography as cultural history”, 307.

<sup>10</sup> Terrall, “Biography as cultural history”, 307.

<sup>11</sup> Söderqvist, “Neurobiographies”, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Withers, “Biographies, practices, sites”, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ambrosius, *Writing biography*, jacket.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Benjamin, “Benjamin’s modernity”, 109.

enumerative in engaging with the “annoyingly complex and uncertain” facets of past geographers’ lives.<sup>15</sup>

### **A biographical sketch**

Semple, the youngest child of Alexander Bonner Semple (1805–1875) and Emerin Price Semple (1822–1904), was spared first-hand experience of the Civil War since Kentucky was, from 1862, controlled exclusively by Unionist forces.<sup>16</sup> Her father, an entrepreneur, operated a business specializing in “hardware, cutlery, and guns”.<sup>17</sup> Louisville’s specific geographical location—bordering Illinois on the Ohio River, a major tributary of the Mississippi—facilitated trade with both northern and southern states.<sup>18</sup> As a consequence, Alexander Semple’s firm enjoyed considerable commercial success. At Ellen’s birth, his family was financially secure: they enjoyed “good schooling, an abundance of books, and a healthy, well-ordered life”.<sup>19</sup> Although Semple’s parents separated during her girlhood, this seems not to have affected the family’s financial status—her mother was part of a “famous Kentucky family”, and seems to have drawn upon the support of her extended lineage.<sup>20</sup> Following her parents’ separation, Semple passed her childhood within a predominantly female milieu.<sup>21</sup> Within this matriarchy, Semple’s mother, “an exceptionally gifted woman of rare charm”, exerted an important and enduring influence.<sup>22</sup> Under her guidance, Semple came to “delight in reading books, especially books on history and travel”.<sup>23</sup> She also mastered tennis and horseback

<sup>15</sup> Hankins, “In defence of biography”, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Harrison and Klotter, *New history of Kentucky*.

<sup>17</sup> Bushong, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 87.

<sup>18</sup> Semple, “Louisville”; Wheeler and Brunn, “An urban geographer”.

<sup>19</sup> Colby, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 229.

<sup>20</sup> Bingham, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, unpaginated.

<sup>21</sup> Bushong, “Ellen Churchill Semple”.

<sup>22</sup> Colby, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 229.

<sup>23</sup> James, Bladen, and Karan, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 29.

riding, and was, to her apparent reluctance, introduced to Louisville's postbellum social scene.

The relative wealth and privilege of her family afforded Semple excellent educational opportunities, and facilitated her later independent research. She attended a number of girls' schools in Louisville, and, in order to prepare herself for future study, received private tuition "and engaged in a great amount of systematic reading in economics, social science, and history".<sup>24</sup> In autumn 1878, aged fifteen, Semple followed her sister's lead and entered Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York.<sup>25</sup> Although underage, Semple passed the entrance examination—which included questions on geography, grammar, English literature, American history, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and Latin—"without conditions" and enrolled as the youngest of three hundred incoming students.<sup>26</sup> Although the college did not offer tuition in geography, something of the intellectual contours of Semple's later concerns were outlined in courses on history and economics, as well as in her training in classic and modern languages.<sup>27</sup> Recalling college days at Vassar, a near contemporary of Semple's, Mary Augusta Jordan (1855–1941), noted that the "typical graduate of the seventies increased instead of deplete[d] her central energy during the four college years".<sup>28</sup> This much was true of Semple. Vassar instilled in her an ability to organize data, to draw conclusions, and to communicate her ideas.<sup>29</sup> Vassar served also to extend Semple's social circle. Her

<sup>24</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, *Biography of a neglected classic*.

<sup>26</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>27</sup> James, Bladen, and Karan, "Ellen Churchill Semple".

<sup>28</sup> Jordan, "Spacious days at Vassar", 56.

<sup>29</sup> Bingham, "Ellen Churchill Semple".

academic colleagues, many of whom became firm friends, comprised students from a variety of backgrounds, both from the United States and abroad.<sup>30</sup>

Semple graduated from Vassar in 1883 “with an outstanding record”, and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree.<sup>31</sup> Her success earned her election to the Phi Beta Kappa honour society, and the position of valedictorian.<sup>32</sup> She delivered a commencement address on ‘The conscience of science’ at her graduation ceremony.<sup>33</sup> Semple returned to Louisville shortly thereafter and began “the most frustrating” decade of her life, mired in “a whirl of frequent and elaborate social activities”.<sup>34</sup> Semple found this life pleasurable but intellectually unfulfilling. After a period of travel in Europe, she offered tuition at her sister’s private school in Louisville—the Semple Collegiate School.<sup>35</sup> Despite her rather intimidating persona—“slim and straight, with masses of dark hair, the crispest white collar and jabot” and “an air of almost fierce authority”—she was regarded fondly by her students, who knew her as Miss Nelly.<sup>36</sup> Semple taught Latin, ancient history, and physical geography, and seemed to revel in the task. As one student recalled: “She really enjoyed teaching. She loved to see her class catch fire. The pains that she used to take with the stupid as well as the brilliant paid off for she held her group of girls enthralled, at times even frightened by her zeal for imparting knowledge. And what knowledge!”.<sup>37</sup> Semple’s pedagogic ability, honed in preparing Louisville’s privileged for college entrance examinations, would later be crucial to the propagation of her geographical philosophy (see Chapter 6 and Chapter 7).

<sup>30</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*.

<sup>31</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 2. Baugh, “Ellen Churchill Semple, the great lady of American geography”, 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Bulletin of Vassar College: alumnae biographical register issue*.

<sup>33</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 2. Baugh, “Ellen Churchill Semple, the great lady of American geography”.

<sup>34</sup> Bushong, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 88.

<sup>35</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*.

<sup>36</sup> Brandeis, “Ellen Semple”, unpaginated.

<sup>37</sup> Brandeis, “Ellen Semple”.

Whilst the experience of tutoring proved valuable to Semple's later work, it was not "the motivating germ of her career".<sup>38</sup> Inspiration in this regard came from discussions with two "widely read and cultivated lawyers and a brilliant Jewish Rabbi".<sup>39</sup> Conversations with these men, supplemented by access to their libraries, had an important influence on Semple's intellectual development.<sup>40</sup> She became interested in questions of environmental influence, but found little beyond "the purely pseudo-scientific writings of Henry Buckle" with which to engage.<sup>41</sup> Buckle's work, expounded in his unfinished *History of civilization in England* (1857–1861), posited the view that man, in Buckle's terminology, progressed from "a stage in which he was completely dominated by the environment to one in which he had obtained freedom from it and even controlled it".<sup>42</sup> The ultimate stage in this progression was represented, for Buckle, by mid-nineteenth-century Western Europe. Whilst Buckle's work appealed to Semple in terms of the answers it seemed to provide on the subject of environmental influence, she "was shrewd enough to see ... that he was not authoritative. He was valuable only as being suggestive".<sup>43</sup> Although she would later consider him to be a forerunner of Ratzel—in terms of his intellectual focus, rather than his methodological approach—his work was not, for Semple then, sufficiently scientifically rigorous.<sup>44</sup> As she later put it, "I began to scent the importance of geographic influences, tho' at that time ... I struck no trail of a previous investigator that was reliable enough to follow".<sup>45</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Harvard University Archives (hereafter HUA), HUG 4877.410. Charles C. Colby to Whittlesey, 18 June 1932.

<sup>39</sup> Colby, "Ellen Churchill Semple", 231.

<sup>40</sup> HUA, HUG 4877.410. Charles C. Colby to Whittlesey, 18 June 1932.

<sup>41</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912

<sup>42</sup> University of California at Berkeley (The Bancroft Library) (hereafter UCB), CU-468, Box 1, Folder 2. Glacken to Thomas R. Smith, 19 April 1963.

<sup>43</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>44</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*.

<sup>45</sup> Royal Geographical Society (hereafter RGS), Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 30 October 1912.

In 1887 Semple again visited Europe—travelling to London in the company of her mother. There she was introduced to Durren J. H. Ward, a recent Ph.D. graduate from the University of Leipzig.<sup>46</sup> Ward relayed news of a charismatic professor of anthropogeography, Friedrich Ratzel (Figure 3), whose lectures “made history come alive”.<sup>47</sup> In what was later termed the “turning point in her career”, Semple borrowed from Ward a copy of the first volume of Ratzel’s *Anthropogeographie* (1882).<sup>48</sup> She kept the book for six months and, supplemented by a bibliography from Ward, systematically absorbed Ratzel’s oeuvre. Semple found in Ratzel a compelling approach to geography and history. She resolved to go “immediately to Leipzig to study under him”.<sup>49</sup> In order to prepare more properly for research under Ratzel, Semple began external studies towards a Master of Arts degree in Economics and Social Science from Vassar. Throughout this period of supplementary education she maintained a correspondence with Ward, discussing “many of the then on-going problems of evolution and the influence of various types of environment”.<sup>50</sup> In 1891, having completed a thesis on slavery, Semple travelled to Leipzig to undertake work with Ratzel.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Clark University (Archives and Special Collections) (hereafter CU), B4-18-11. Durren J. H. Ward to Atwood, 2 July 1932.

<sup>47</sup> James, Bladen, and Karan, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 30.

<sup>48</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 2. Baugh, “Ellen Churchill Semple, the great lady of American geography”, 3.

<sup>49</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1912. Semple to John S. Keltie, 30 October 1912.

<sup>50</sup> CU, B4-18-11. Durren J. H. Ward to Atwood, 2 July 1932.

<sup>51</sup> Bushong, “Ellen Churchill Semple”.



Figure 3. Friedrich Ratzel.

From *Bulletin of the Association of American Geographers* 36, no. 9 (1904): 550.

In order to improve her spoken German, Semple spent her first three months in the city in lodgings with a local family. This linguistic and conversational preparation was important since her admission to study at Leipzig would depend upon her skills of negotiation and persuasion. In the late nineteenth century, the University of Leipzig did not permit female students to matriculate, nor, officially, to sit examinations. Female students were permitted to attend lectures and seminar series, however, if they petitioned the organizing faculty directly. A testimonial as to their abilities would be provided upon completion of the course.<sup>52</sup> Following a personal application to Ratzel, Semple was afforded *ordentliches Mitglied* (regular member) status, and was admitted to his geographical seminary.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, she undertook economic studies with Wilhelm Roscher (1817–1894), from whom she learned “his wonderful method in inductive

<sup>52</sup> Luxenberg, “Women at Leipzig”.

<sup>53</sup> Colby, “Ellen Churchill Semple”.



research”.<sup>54</sup> She later credited Roscher for ensuring the rigour of her work: “Roscher taught me to take off any hat to every obstructive fact that threatened to block my theory; and that is a great debt to owe any man”.<sup>55</sup> It was from Ratzel, “my inspiration, my dear master and friend”, that she drew personal and professional motivation.<sup>56</sup>

The typical Leipzig professor seems to have been dour and efficient. One lecturer was described thus: “The professor comes in & drones out his lecture .... He doesn’t come till the audience is there, & he is always the first to leave”.<sup>57</sup> Ratzel, by contrast, was an enthusiastic and effective orator. For one student, he was “as full of energy as a steam engine. He bounces along like a boy .... He seems so entirely full of kindness that you can feel it as far as you can see the man”.<sup>58</sup> Ratzel was seen, also, to embody Ralph Waldo Emerson’s statement that “What you are stands over you the while & thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary”.<sup>59</sup> Something of the influence of Ratzel’s lectures came, then, from his convincing and charismatic presentation, rather than from the straightforward communication of his geographical principles. His oratorical skill was apparent when, in 1902, William II visited the University of Leipzig, and chose to attend one of Ratzel’s lectures. For one member of the audience, Ratzel was “by far the most imposing figure in the party, he was not only the most handsome, but he was the most learned and altogether the most kingly”.<sup>60</sup>

Whilst Ratzel’s enthusiasm and apparent regal confidence—the Emersonian ‘thunder’—doubtless enthralled Semple as much as it did his other students, she was

<sup>54</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1912. Semple to John S. Keltie, 30 October 1912.

<sup>55</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1912. Semple to John S. Keltie, 30 October 1912.

<sup>56</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1912. Semple to John S. Keltie, 30 October 1912.

<sup>57</sup> American Philosophical Society Library (hereafter APS), B Sm59. “Journal of European trips, 1901–1903”, 9 November 1901.

<sup>58</sup> APS, B Sm59. “Journal of European trips, 1901–1903”, 27 November 1901.

<sup>59</sup> APS, B Sm59. “Journal of European trips, 1901–1903”, 27 November 1901; Gilman, *Selected writings*, 73. Italicization in original.

<sup>60</sup> APS, B Sm59. “Journal of European trips, 1901–1903”, 9 February 1902.

attracted, more particularly, to his geographical approach. Although a number of biographical treatments assert that as a consequence of her sex Semple was required to sit “in an adjoining room, with the communicating door ajar” when attending Ratzel’s lectures, this was not the case.<sup>61</sup> The pair enjoyed a constructive and collegiate relationship—discussing, among much else, “the philosophy of style, and style in geographical writing”.<sup>62</sup> Such discussions were critical to Semple’s later articulation of anthropogeography. As she recalled:

Ratzel, in his frequent talks with me, urged the value of a literary style for books on Anthro-geography. He argued that since the science had to do with man, it was entitled to the same literary treatment as History. I took his admonitions to heart, not only because I agreed with him in theory, but also because I anticipated that anthropogeography would make its way slowly in this country [the United States], and that outward charm might help to secure for it more open doors.<sup>63</sup>

In contemplating Semple’s response to Ratzel’s geographical position, and her desire to communicate it to an Anglophone audience, it is important to consider the development of his geographical work, and what he took anthropogeography to be.

### **Ratzel and the development of anthropogeography**

The contours of German geographical investigation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were described, in large part, by the work of Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) and Carl Ritter (1779–1859).<sup>64</sup> Humboldt’s exploration of the Americas at the end of the eighteenth century served not only to outline a systematic and instrumental approach to natural science, but also to “further systematize the theory of the control of land-forms and climate over the distribution and habits of plants, animals, and

<sup>61</sup> Bingham, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, unpaginated.

<sup>62</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1912. Semple to John S. Keltie, 30 October 1912.

<sup>63</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, American Geographical Society Library, GF31 .S5.

<sup>64</sup> Keltie and Howarth, *History of geography*.

man”.<sup>65</sup> Humboldt’s contribution was, then, to questions of environmentalism—the doctrine which holds that biological activity (particularly in terms of human social and cultural organization) is both fashioned and inhibited by the natural environment.<sup>66</sup> The question of “how far the physical features of the earth affect man” is part of a long debate within Western intellectual traditions, traceable to Hippocrates and Aristotle.<sup>67</sup> The precise genealogy of environmentalism need not be detailed here—it is sufficient to note that from the beginning of the nineteenth century, principally as a consequence of Humboldt’s explorations, it became a question *of* geography and a question *for* geography.<sup>68</sup>

In contrast to the peripatetic Humboldt, Carl Ritter spent the majority of his professional career at the University of Berlin, where in 1820 he was appointed to the first chair of geography.<sup>69</sup> Ritter’s principal influence upon the development of geography as an academic discipline was in his criticism of the descriptive nature of geographical investigation. He espoused, instead, a scientific and inductive approach to geography which he termed *Erdkunde* (earth science).<sup>70</sup> Ritter’s ideas were most fully expressed in his unfinished nineteen-volume *Die Erdkunde im Verhältniss zur Natur und zur Geschichte des Menschen* (The science of the earth in relation to nature and the history of mankind), written between 1817 and 1859.<sup>71</sup> Infused with a teleological vision, Ritter’s work was an attempt to apply a physiological approach to the study of the earth, in order that the laws which govern it might be discerned.<sup>72</sup> The metaphor of

<sup>65</sup> Keltie and Howarth, *History of geography*, 144.

<sup>66</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt current*.

<sup>67</sup> Tatham, “Environmentalism and possibilism”, 128.

<sup>68</sup> Elements of the history of environmentalist thought are provided by Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian shore*; Tatham, “Environmentalism and possibilism”; Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*.

<sup>69</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*.

<sup>70</sup> Tatham, “Geography in the nineteenth century”.

<sup>71</sup> Livingstone, *Geographical tradition*; Tatham, “Geography in the nineteenth century”.

<sup>72</sup> Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian shore*; Tatham, “Geography in the nineteenth century”.

comparative anatomy was apparent in his analysis and classification of regional difference. For Ritter, it was in the comparison of similar regions in different parts of the world—a form of areal differentiation—that causal relationships describing the “reciprocal and evolutionary relation of environment and society” could be apprehended.<sup>73</sup> Ritter’s geography conceived of the earth’s surface as a series of “discrete and objective natural regions” which were “uniquely linked to a particular national ethos”.<sup>74</sup> Ritter’s contribution to geography was principally two-fold: he outlined a systematic and inductive methodology and, in “conjoining Land and Volk”, facilitated a geographical understanding which took land and its inhabitants to be intimately correlated.<sup>75</sup>

Ritter and Humboldt both died in Berlin in 1859, the year of Charles Darwin’s *On the origin of species*.<sup>76</sup> Their deaths are understood to have marked the end of a period of significant development in German geography, and heralded “the beginning of a crisis in scientific and philosophic thought”.<sup>77</sup> Ritter’s chair of geography at Berlin remained vacant until 1874, and geography became “a side issue in the curricula”.<sup>78</sup> Something of a disciplinary focus was recovered in 1871 when a chair in geography was created at the University of Leipzig—its first occupant was Oscar Peschel (1826–1875). In contrast to the Kantian idealism which permeated the work of Humboldt and Ritter (the notion that our knowledge of objects is inherently subjective), Peschel was influenced by the philosophical doctrine of materialism, which holds that what is observed in nature can be explained only by reference natural causes, not by assuming

<sup>73</sup> Sauer, “Recent developments”, 166.

<sup>74</sup> Bassin, “Studying ourselves”, 482.

<sup>75</sup> Koelsch, “Franz Boas”, 3.

<sup>76</sup> Broek, *Compass of geography*.

<sup>77</sup> Tatham, “Geography in the nineteenth century”, 58.

<sup>78</sup> Schelhaas and Hönsch, “History of German geography”, 16.

the existence of an external, supernatural power. Peschel was critical, therefore, of the apparent teleological basis to Ritter's work, and sought to offer a materialist revision to his *vergleichende Erdkunde* (comparative geography).<sup>79</sup> Peschel's principal contribution was to revise, and to define more narrowly, the basic units of comparative analysis. Where Ritter sought comparisons between "whole continents or major parts of continents", Peschel attended to particular types of landforms—valleys, mountains, glaciers, lakes, fjords, and so on.<sup>80</sup> In this respect, Peschel's morphological focus was an important prompt to the development of systematic physical geography.

Aspects of Peschel's research focus were developed by a former student of Ritter—Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833–1905).<sup>81</sup> A geologist by training, Richthofen undertook the majority of his field research in China, the details of which occupied his five-volume *China* published between 1877 and 1912.<sup>82</sup> Richthofen made a special study of loess (fine-grained, wind-blown soil) as both a geological phenomenon and as evidence of "the reciprocal action of man and his environment".<sup>83</sup> Following his research in China, Richthofen pursued an academic career. He was appointed Professor of Geology at Bonn in 1875, before succeeding Peschel at Leipzig in 1883. Richthofen used the opportunity of his inaugural lecture at Leipzig to communicate his manifesto for the scope and method of geography.<sup>84</sup> His geography was based upon the intensive observation and description of the earth's surface features, and an attempt to relate these to their physical underpinnings—that is, for example, to describe the development of soil by reference to the base geology. In this way, Richthofen's scheme allowed for

<sup>79</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*.

<sup>80</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 165.

<sup>81</sup> Ravenstein, "Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen".

<sup>82</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*.

<sup>83</sup> Crone, *Modern geographers*, 35.

<sup>84</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*.

both descriptive geography (special geography or chorography) and explanatory geography (general geography or chorology).<sup>85</sup> He saw geography as both idiographic (concerned with the description of unique features) and nomothetic (concerned with generalities and the laws governing them).

The systematic study of the earth's physical features pioneered by Peschel and Richthofen informed Ratzel's approach to human geography.<sup>86</sup> In much the same way that Peschel and Richthofen advocated the comparative study of representative landforms, so too was Ratzel concerned to understand the "biotic and cultural features" of different social groups in relation to their environment.<sup>87</sup> Ratzel's intention was, in short, to do for human geography what Peschel and Richthofen had done for physical geography—that is, to make it a science.<sup>88</sup> His approach to human geography was informed, to a significant extent, by his student training in natural history and zoology.<sup>89</sup>

Ratzel began his academic training in the mid 1860s, approximately five years after Darwin's *On the origin of species* had "newly invigorated" the natural sciences.<sup>90</sup> His enthusiasm for the Darwinian method—particularly as interpreted by Ernst Heinrich Haeckel (1834–1919), his graduate professor of biology at the University of Jena—was expressed in his first book *Sein und Werden der organischen Welt* (The nature and development of the organic world) published in 1869.<sup>91</sup> Haeckel's interpretation of Darwin facilitated a *Weltanschauung* (world view) in which all organic life could be explained and understood by reference to the "natural laws and processes that had been

<sup>85</sup> Ravenstein, "Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen".

<sup>86</sup> Crone, *Modern geographers*; Martin, *All possible worlds*.

<sup>87</sup> Martin, *All possible worlds*, 167.

<sup>88</sup> Dickinson, *Makers of modern geography*.

<sup>89</sup> Livingstone, *Geographical tradition*.

<sup>90</sup> Sauer, "Formative years of Ratzel", 245.

<sup>91</sup> Wanklyn, *Friedrich Ratzel*.

proclaimed by Darwin”.<sup>92</sup> In this respect, human beings could be subject to study in much the same way as other animal or vegetable life—the fundamental controls on their development being the same. Darwin’s work, as interpreted by Haeckel, provided a basis, therefore, by which human adaptation to the environment might be described and explained scientifically as a question of biology.<sup>93</sup>

Ratzel’s enthusiasm for the Darwinian approach was further reinforced during a short period of study at the University of Munich, where he was introduced to the naturalist and ethnographer Moritz Wagner (1813–1887). Based upon fieldwork in Central America during the late 1850s, Wagner had formulated a theory to describe the function of the migration of species in development of organic diversity.<sup>94</sup> Wagner was somewhat critical of the principles of natural selection and proposed, instead, a *Migrationstheorie* which stated that it was the dispersal of organisms across space, and into new environments, that facilitated adaptation, and that these adaptations were subsequently preserved by means of geographical isolation.<sup>95</sup> As has been noted, Wagner’s perspective gave Ratzel “his first direct awareness of the interest of geographical work”.<sup>96</sup> In the years immediately following his exposure to Wagner’s theory, Ratzel undertook a number of important expeditions as travel correspondent for the *Kölnische Zeitung* (Cologne Journal). The most significant of these was his 1874–1875 sojourn in North America—the “turning point in his career”.<sup>97</sup> Of principal interest to the readers of Ratzel’s dispatches in the *Kölnische Zeitung* was the contribution of German migrants to the United States, particularly their role in the nation’s westward

<sup>92</sup> Bassin, “Friedrich Ratzel”.

<sup>93</sup> Broek, *Compass of geography*.

<sup>94</sup> Sauer, “Formative years of Ratzel”.

<sup>95</sup> Campbell and Livingstone, “Neo-Lamarckism”.

<sup>96</sup> Wanklyn, *Friedrich Ratzel*, 11.

<sup>97</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 169; Natter, “Friedrich Ratzel’s spatial turn”.

expansion.<sup>98</sup> Ratzel made a special study of other minority groups, including the settlement of the Pacific coast states by East Asians. This period of field observation was critical for the later development of his anthropogeographical principles; it helped to clarify his “thinking on the relationship between the political state and its environmental milieu”.<sup>99</sup>

### **The publication of Anthropogeographie**

Following his appointment to a lectureship in geography at the Institute of Technology in Munich in 1875, Ratzel began systematically to formulate his perspective on human geography. His principal aim was to refute Buckle’s claim that “as civilization advances it becomes more & more divorced from the physical environment”.<sup>100</sup> Ratzel saw modern civilization as “a product of the close interrelationship between culture & environment”—not as a separate and independent phenomenon.<sup>101</sup> Ratzel was influenced in his thinking by the social evolutionary writings of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Spencer’s perspective on human societal development—expounded most fully in his 1862 volume *First principles*—was based upon biological evolutionary principles.<sup>102</sup> For Spencer, the development of human society (and, by implication, the state) was analogous to organic evolution, in that competition for survival and predominance facilitated and prompted adaptation. Aspects of this organic conception were apparent in his numerous publications on the United States, but expressed most systematically in the first volume of his *Anthropogeographie oder Grundzüge der Anwendung der Erdkunde auf die Geschichte* (1882).

<sup>98</sup> Bassin, “Friedrich Ratzel”.

<sup>99</sup> Bassin, “History and philosophy of geography”, 568.

<sup>100</sup> UBC, CU-468, Box 7, Folder 34. Mss. on ideas, 1974.

<sup>101</sup> UBC, CU-468, Box 7, Folder 34. Mss. on ideas, 1974.

<sup>102</sup> Livingstone, *Geographical tradition*; Shapin, “Man with a plan”.



In the first volume of *Anthropogeographie*, Ratzel sought to describe how the distribution and comparative success of human populations could be seen as “more or less” a function of environmental conditions.<sup>103</sup> In this respect, Ratzel’s text was a reworking of Ritter’s *Erdkunde*, and an attempt to elevate the study of human-environment relations above the pseudoscience of Buckle.<sup>104</sup> Ratzel was keen to show that as societies developed they “became more and more enmeshed in their lands”.<sup>105</sup> By eliminating the teleological framework associated with Ritter’s geography, Ratzel presented a model of human development that was, in effect, directionless and without “ultimate purpose”.<sup>106</sup> Since there was no divine direction, the evolution of human societies was seen to depend upon a Spencerian struggle for survival, with those most adept at responding to the challenges and opportunities afforded by particular environmental circumstances being ultimately successful. In this respect, a “deterministic tint” coloured Ratzel’s scheme.<sup>107</sup>

Combining Wagner’s *Migrationsgesetz* (law of migration) with the biological evolutionary ideas of Spencer and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829)—or, more properly, their application to the understanding of the social organism—Ratzel’s volume was a synthesis of the theoretical positions underpinning his perspective, and an attempt to set out systematically what he took the study of *Anthropogeographie* to be.<sup>108</sup> His intended foci were threefold: the distribution of human societies on the earth’s surface; the function of migration and the environment in relation to these distributions; and the developmental influence of the physical environment upon individuals and social

<sup>103</sup> Tatham, “Geography in the nineteenth century”, 63.

<sup>104</sup> Stoddart, “Darwin’s impact on geography”.

<sup>105</sup> UBC, CU-468, Box 1, Folder 2. Glacken to Thomas R. Smith, 19 April 1963.

<sup>106</sup> Tatham, “Geography in the nineteenth century”, 64.

<sup>107</sup> Tatham, “Geography in the nineteenth century”, 64.

<sup>108</sup> Weikart, “Origins of Social Darwinism”.

groups.<sup>109</sup> Aware that “the geographer cannot formulate laws expressed with mathematical precision”, Ratzel’s work was an attempt to describe how the study of human geography might proceed, rather than a proof of his concept.<sup>110</sup> As a methodological statement, Ratzel’s text was received as a timely conformation “of the view then held by scientists, that environment determined the characteristics and the line of development of a people”.<sup>111</sup> Yet, the validity and value of Ratzel’s geography when applied to research in the field was, for some readers, uncertain. This much was true of German anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942).

Despite receiving a doctorate in physics from the University of Kiel in 1881, Boas “self-identified as a geographer”.<sup>112</sup> His education was richly infused with geographical themes, and as a doctoral student he produced work on “the northern limit of Greenland, and geography as the necessary foundation of history”.<sup>113</sup> At Kiel, and previously at the University of Bonn, Boas had come under the influence of Theobald Fischer (1846–1910), a disciple of Ritter who lectured on geographical exploration and polar research. Fischer’s influence—combined with his interest in questions of environmental influence—led Boas to undertake an expedition to Baffin Land (now Baffin Island) with the purpose of confirming the environmentalist position then current in German geography. Ratzel’s *Anthropogeographie* provided Boas with a “systematic representation of the ideas which I had then in mind, and which I desired to study in one particular field”.<sup>114</sup> His investigation of the social organization of Baffin Land’s Inuit (or Eskimo as they were then called) showed “that in the same physical

<sup>109</sup> Bassin, “Friedrich Ratzel”; Dickinson, *Makers of modern geography*.

<sup>110</sup> Crone, *Modern geographers*, 37.

<sup>111</sup> APS, B B61ru, Series IV. “Franz Boas: his work as described by some of his contemporaries”.

<sup>112</sup> Koelsch, “Franz Boas”, 1.

<sup>113</sup> Koelsch, “Franz Boas”, 5.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in Koelsch, “Franz Boas”, 6.

environment different cultural forms occur”.<sup>115</sup> He concluded that “the environment can only act upon a specific culture, not determine it”.<sup>116</sup> Something of this perspective was rehearsed in his 1887 methodological treatise ‘The study of geography’, published in *Science*, in which Boas discussed the segregation of geography between descriptive and nomothetic research.<sup>117</sup>

Ratzel succeeded Richthofen at Leipzig in 1886, and in lectures to small seminar groups perfected his pedagogic style.<sup>118</sup> At Leipzig, Ratzel also composed the second volume of his *Anthropogeographie*, subtitled *Die geographische Verbreitung des Menschen* (the geographical distribution of mankind), which was published in 1891. Ratzel’s previous proclamations on anthropogeography had been subject to criticism by Hermann Wagner (1840–1929), professor of geography at the University of Göttingen, principally because “the basis in data and the citation of authorities was too slender”.<sup>119</sup> Wagner, who corresponded with Ratzel, worked closely also with Franz Boas on the *Geographisches Jahrbuch*—an annual geographical bibliography.<sup>120</sup> It seems probable, therefore, that Ratzel was aware of the concerns expressed as to the empirical validity of his work. Ratzel had, however, “the mind of a seer”, and communicated his geographical principles with enthusiasm but perhaps also without care to provide a “foundation in fact”.<sup>121</sup> The second volume of *Anthropogeographie* was, by contrast, situated more firmly in data—indeed Ratzel devoted an entire section of the book to a discussion of population statistics.<sup>122</sup> It dispended with, moreover, the deterministic

<sup>115</sup> APS, B B61ru, Series IV. “Franz Boas: his work as described by some of his contemporaries”.

<sup>116</sup> APS, B B61ru, Series IV. “Franz Boas: his work as described by some of his contemporaries”.

<sup>117</sup> Boas, “Study of geography”; Koelsch, *Clark University*.

<sup>118</sup> Wanklyn, *Friedrich Ratzel*.

<sup>119</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1921–1930. Semple to Hugh R. Mill, 19 December 1924.

<sup>120</sup> Harris and Fellmann, “Geographical serials”; Koelsch, “Franz Boas”.

<sup>121</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1921–1930, Annual Awards 1922, Paper proposing Ellen Churchill Semple, A.M., LL.D.

<sup>122</sup> Cahnman, “Methods of geopolitics”.

environmentalism which characterized the preceding volume, and was rather more constrained in terms of its theoretical pronouncements. Where the first volume dealt principally with the effect of the physical environment upon human history, the second attended more particularly to the social organisation of human societies in relation to their environment. This subtle distinction was important, since it later facilitated both deterministic and possibilistic interpretations of Ratzel's ideas.<sup>123</sup> Ratzel later issued a second edition of the first volume of *Anthropogeographie*, which brought it into closer alignment with the second volume.<sup>124</sup>

Semple's period of study at Leipzig between 1891 and 1892 coincided, then, with the ultimate expression of Ratzel's anthropogeography. His four thematic principles—that human societies develop “within a frame (*Rahmen*), exploiting a place (*Stelle*), needing space (*Raum*) and finding limits (*Grenzen*)”—became the fundamental tenets of Semple's later discussions on anthropogeography. Whilst in Ratzel's lectures, Semple “avidly absorbed whatever the master propounded and truly became his disciple”.<sup>125</sup> The communication of influence was not, however, purely one-sided; through unspecified family connections Semple was able to procure for Ratzel a “veritable carload” of United States census material—necessary for his increasingly statistical research.<sup>126</sup> Semple was aware, however, that although Ratzel “fairly devoured material”, “he seems to have taken few notes”, and “sometimes he did not give his facts quite straight”.<sup>127</sup> As her appreciation for Ratzel's anthropogeography developed, Semple became concerned to communicate it, in part, to “an American public to whom

<sup>123</sup> Buttner, *Society and milieu*; Keighren, “Bringing geography to the book”.

<sup>124</sup> Semple, “Review of *Anthropogeographie* by Friedrich Ratzel”.

<sup>125</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 2. Baugh, “Ellen Churchill Semple, the great lady of American geography”, 5.

<sup>126</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 2. Baugh, “Ellen Churchill Semple, the great lady of American geography”, 5.

<sup>127</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1921–1930. Semple to Hugh R. Mill, 19 December 1924.

the subject was quite new”.<sup>128</sup> Semple was conscious that since there was “no previous Ritter and Peschel on this side of the water [the United States]”, she would be required first to communicate the basic principles of a systematic human geography. Moreover, given that Ratzel’s work was “so closely adapted to conditions obtaining in Teutonic and Slavonic Europe”, it was “to most American and English students ... a closed book”.<sup>129</sup> Semple’s project was, then, one of translation, clarification, and adaptation—of bringing Ratzel’s work to the attention of a different interpretative community. It is to quite how Semple repositioned Ratzel’s ideas for an audience whose ‘horizon of expectation’ was distinct from that of contemporary German geographers that I now turn.

### **Bringing anthropogeography to the United States**

In the eight years since Semple had been introduced to Ratzel’s work by Durren Ward, she had evolved from pupil to preceptor: “Previously she had followed; now she would lead the anthropo-geographic movement in the United States”.<sup>130</sup> Semple’s central project upon returning to Louisville in the mid 1890s was to communicate Ratzel’s ideas to the English-speaking world, “but clarified and reorganized”.<sup>131</sup> To that end, she devoted her time to library study and field research, honing “the craft of authorship”.<sup>132</sup> To further her authorial skills, Semple joined the Authors’ Club of Louisville—a recently-formed cabal of aspiring female writers who composed fiction inspired by Louisville and its environs.<sup>133</sup> In this way, Semple was able to refine the literary style

<sup>128</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1921–1930. Semple to Hugh R. Mill, 19 December 1924.

<sup>129</sup> *Review of Reviews*, July 1911.

<sup>130</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*, 90.

<sup>131</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 304–305.

<sup>132</sup> James, James, and Boyer, *Notable American women*, 260.

<sup>133</sup> *The Courier-Journal*, 13 June 1903; Thompson, “Alice Caldwell Hegan Rice”.

which both she and Ratzel believed necessary to communicate the anthropogeographical position.

Semple's initial academic writing was confined to the direct translation of German scholars—principally the economist Karl Diehl (1864–1943) and the sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909), both of whom published a number of reviews in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Semple also translated short works by Ratzel.<sup>134</sup> It was in the lecture theatre, however, that Semple was able first to synthesise and to represent aspects of Ratzel's geographical philosophy. In common with her desire to reframe Ratzel's arguments in a locally-tailored form, Semple presented a lecture entitled 'Civilization is at bottom an economic fact' at the Third Biennial General Federation of Women's Clubs in Louisville on 29 May 1896. Her talk—"one of the most valuable papers of the convention"—was delivered under the auspices of the Philanthropy and Home section of the Federation, and was intended to address, in part, questions of economic disparity that were then apparent in Louisville.<sup>135</sup>

Semple's first opportunity to address a more obviously geographical audience came in 1897 with a paper she contributed to the first volume of the *Journal of School Geography*. The *Journal* had been established that year by Richard Elwood Dodge (1868–1952), a former student of William Morris Davis. Dodge was then professor of geography at Teachers College, Columbia University, and, along with Davis, was part of "that general movement ... which created modern geography in the United States".<sup>136</sup> Semple's paper, 'The influence of the Appalachian barrier upon colonial history', was an attempt to apply something of Ratzel's method to the historical study of the North

<sup>134</sup> Ratzel, "Studies in political areas".

<sup>135</sup> Croly, *History of the Woman's Club*, 173.

<sup>136</sup> Dryer, "Century of geographic education", 148; Visher, "Richard Elwood Dodge".

America.<sup>137</sup> The Appalachian barrier—running from Vermont to Alabama—represented, for Semple, an impediment to the historical settlement of the continent, and an environment within which early colonial settlers were “protected from without by bulwarks of nature’s own making”.<sup>138</sup> In Semple’s formulation, the geographical arrangement of the continent was seen to confer upon British settlers in the Thirteen Colonies a “certain solidarity which they would not have otherwise possessed”—a factor vital, she believed, in their ultimate success in the American Revolutionary War.

### ***The environmentalism of Turner and Shaler***

Semple’s use of environmentalist principles to explain the historical development of the United States was not, however, unprecedented. At a meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago in 1893—organized in conjunction with the World’s Columbian Exposition, celebrating the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s voyage—Frederick Jackson Turner (1861–1932) had presented a “penetrating essay” on “The significance of the frontier in American history”.<sup>139</sup> Turner’s paper, it is claimed, “became the most famous scholarly paper ever delivered by an American historian”.<sup>140</sup> More prosaically, it motivated an intellectual reassessment of the nation’s frontier experience. Turner’s thesis saw the American West as a metaphor and an explanation for the distinctive historical development of the United States. For Turner (Figure 4), the “ever retreating frontier of free land” to the West of the Appalachians was fundamental to the nation’s historical experience and social development.<sup>141</sup> The physical and cultural distance which separated the frontier from the eastern seats of power promoted an

<sup>137</sup> Semple, “Influence of the Appalachian barrier”.

<sup>138</sup> Semple, *American history*, 36.

<sup>139</sup> Gelfand, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 30.

<sup>140</sup> Bogue, “Not by bread alone”, 13.

<sup>141</sup> Quoted in Benson, *Turner and Beard*, 23.

individualism and ad hoc democracy among the frontier's pioneers.<sup>142</sup> Reliance was placed upon individual wit and strength, and centralized political control was regarded with suspicion. In this respect, the frontier was seen to be responsible, in part, for facilitating a national character—and consequently national institutions—in which individual liberty was emphasized.<sup>143</sup> In Turner's scheme, "bio-social inheritance was envisaged as subservient to the influence of the physical environment in shaping the American nation".<sup>144</sup>



Figure 4. Frederick Jackson Turner (circa 1915).  
From *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70, no. 1 (1980): 33.

Turner's personal background was not dissimilar to that of Semple. He passed his boyhood during the Civil War in Portage, Wisconsin. Like Louisville, Portage

<sup>142</sup> For a counterpoint to Turner's conception of individualism, see Boatright, "Myth of frontier individualism".

<sup>143</sup> Campbell and Livingstone, "Neo-Lamarckism"; Kearns, "Closed space and political practice".

<sup>144</sup> Livingstone, "Environment and inheritance", 125.



represented a “semifrontier milieu” and was an important centre of commerce.<sup>145</sup> Turner’s hometown provided, then, “a typical example of the theory of American history to which he devoted his life”.<sup>146</sup> Turner was educated in “zoology, botany, physics, and chemistry” at the University of Wisconsin, and received his doctorate from Johns Hopkins University.<sup>147</sup> His principal intellectual influences were evolutionary and environmentalist: he drew variously upon Darwin, Spencer, and Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895).<sup>148</sup> A particular spur to the development of his frontier thesis was, however, the deterministic political economy of Achille Loria (1857–1943). Loria, also influenced by a Spencerian perspective, saw economic development as a function of the relative scarcity or abundance of land. In this respect, Turner’s formulation was similar to the anthropogeographical principles outlined by Ratzel. In applying to the historical study of the United States the Lamarckian metaphor of the social organism, Turner’s perspective corresponded with the “new science of evolutionary human geography”.<sup>149</sup> As such, Turner has been credited as the “cofounder, along with Ellen Churchill Semple and Albert Perry Brigham” of the subfield of American geography concerned with environmental influence.<sup>150</sup> This is, though, a historiographical conceit: although Brigham, Turner, and Semple understood their work to be complementary, they did not consider the establishment of an environmentalist geography to be their common aim.

Whilst Turner’s and Semple’s contributions to the post-Darwinian project can be seen to have exerted a novel influence upon the disciplinary focus of American geography, aspects of their intellectual interests were apparent in the earlier “creative

<sup>145</sup> Block, “Frederick Jackson Turner”, 32.

<sup>146</sup> Brewer, “Historiography of Frederick Jackson Turner”, 240.

<sup>147</sup> Coleman, “Science and symbol”, 28.

<sup>148</sup> Block, “Frederick Jackson Turner”.

<sup>149</sup> Coleman, “Science and symbol”, 24.

<sup>150</sup> Block, “Frederick Jackson Turner”, 31.

outlooks” of George Perkins Marsh (1801–1882) and Nathaniel Southgate Shaler (1841–1906).<sup>151</sup> Turner’s work can be seen to have built, most particularly, upon that of Shaler, a Kentucky geologist-geographer who studied under the Swiss naturalist Louis Agassiz (1807–1873) at Harvard and who later taught William Morris Davis.<sup>152</sup> Among Shaler’s most notable contributions to the environmentalist canon was *Nature and man in America*.<sup>153</sup> Shaler’s book, situated firmly within the context of contemporary anthropological science, considered the relationship between human society and the physical environment in North America (particularly the United States). As he noted in introduction, “In the light of modern science, we regard our species as the product of terrestrial conditions”.<sup>154</sup> Shaler regarded the influence of the environment upon organic life as a function of its developmental stage—the more advanced the organism, the greater its dependence upon the environment: “When the human state is attained ... the relations of life to the geography and other conditions of environment increase in a wonderfully rapid way”.<sup>155</sup> Formulated in this way, Shaler’s perspective on environmental influence was “fully consonant” with that of Ratzel—societal development was seen to be paralleled by increasing dependence upon the physical environment.<sup>156</sup> The thrust of Shaler’s book contrasted the “unsuitability of the North American continent as a cradle for civilization” with its suitability as an arena in which incoming races could prosper.<sup>157</sup> In this way, and echoing Ratzel’s earlier work on German immigrants in the United

<sup>151</sup> AGSL. Clarence J. Glacken to Wright, 11 May 1961.

<sup>152</sup> Bladen, “Nathaniel Southgate Shaler”.

<sup>153</sup> Shaler, *Nature and man*.

<sup>154</sup> Shaler, *Nature and man*, 360.

<sup>155</sup> Shaler, *Nature and man*, 360.

<sup>156</sup> Livingstone, *Nathaniel Southgate Shaler*, 135.

<sup>157</sup> Livingstone, “Environment and inheritance”, 130.

States, Shaler argued that “in its transplantation from Europe to America the Aryan race had not deteriorated, but had probably benefited”.<sup>158</sup>

Shaler’s engagement with neo-Lamarckian conceptions of social development extended into the analysis of “mental, moral, and social realms”.<sup>159</sup> This was apparent, most particularly, in his discussion of race and racial superiority. Shaler’s views were predicated upon the notion that different racial groups did not share a common origin (or that a common origin was so temporally distant that sufficient modification had taken place in the interim to render races morally and intellectually distinct). This polygenist perspective was underpinned by a number of anthropogeographical principles, particularly those related to climatic influence and geographical isolation. As he made clear, for example, the emergence of civilization in Europe depended upon “the stress of the high latitudes, [and] the moral and physical tonic effect of cold”.<sup>160</sup> It is apparent, then, that Semple’s work on the Appalachian barrier, and Turner’s frontier thesis, were representative of a broader intellectual trend within American scholarship which encompassed geography, geology, history, culture, race, politics, and economics.

### ***Anthropogeography in the field: investigating “moonshine whiskey and wretchedly cooked food”***

Between 1897 and 1900, Semple contributed five further papers to the *Journal of School Geography*, and one to the *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* on various aspects of environmentalism and anthropogeography.<sup>161</sup> These papers were

<sup>158</sup> Livingstone, “Environment and inheritance”, 130.

<sup>159</sup> Livingstone, “Environment and inheritance”, 132.

<sup>160</sup> Shaler, *Nature and man*.

<sup>161</sup> Semple, “Causes determining the location of cities”; Semple, “Indians of southeastern Alaska”; Semple, “Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Part I”; Semple, “Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Part II”; Semple, “Development of Hanse towns”; Semple, “Louisville”.

based largely upon secondary sources, and were restatements of ideas she had absorbed during her time in Leipzig, rather than genuinely original pronouncements. Semple's contributions to the *Journal of School Geography* were considered by its editor, Richard Dodge, to be important in communicating to "the common school teachers" the principles of anthropogeography.<sup>162</sup> For the journal, geography was conceived of as "the science of man's relation to his earth environment", and its object of inquiry "the mutual dependence of man and nature upon one another".<sup>163</sup> Given this formulation, Semple's anthropogeography could be seen not only to parallel the initial contours of academic geography in the United States, but also to represent a model for the teaching of school geography. Whilst Semple received the support and encouragement of Dodge and Davis in her promotion of Ratzel's geography, she retained a desire to demonstrate the utility of anthropogeography in the field. Semple's perspective on geographical research, "based on bold and keen creative insights" seemed to offer a model for a systematic engagement with human geography—one which might most convincingly be demonstrated in the field.<sup>164</sup>

In the summer of 1898, Semple participated in a philanthropic project of the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs to establish a "social settlement" in Hazard, "a squalid, wretched little town in the heart of the Kentucky mountains", for the intended benefit of the nearby populace.<sup>165</sup> Whilst the project was motivated largely by a religious imperative, Semple saw the difficulties of life in the mountains as a problem of geography rather than theology. In the scattered and isolated population, Semple saw clearly the deleterious influence of the physical environment on what was,

<sup>162</sup> Dodge, "Social function of geography", 335.

<sup>163</sup> Merrill, "Suggestive course in geography", 321.

<sup>164</sup> HUA, HUG 4877.417. Whittlesey to Charles C. Colby, 26 January 1954.

<sup>165</sup> Semple, "New departure in social settlements", 158.

fundamentally, an Anglo-Saxon population: “isolated by mountain ranges from the outside world and *from each other*, their naturally fine stock deteriorating constantly from the effect of too close intermarriage, moonshine whiskey and wretchedly cooked food, these people have degenerated in many respects”.<sup>166</sup> Yet, for Semple, the perceived superior lineage of the population ensured that “in talking to them, one is deeply impressed with the fact that the material is sound and good”.<sup>167</sup> The social settlement took the form of a tent—“decorated with flags, Japanese lanterns, and photographs of the best pictures”—where books, newspapers, and periodicals were made available, and the basic principles of hygiene and domestic economy communicated.<sup>168</sup>

Over the course of its six-week operation, the social settlement was judged to have been successful in bringing to the mountains certain aspects of lowland social and religious culture. A fundamental tenet to which the volunteers in this philanthropic project subscribed was that the Kentucky mountaineers were “our brothers in blood”.<sup>169</sup> This perspective, inspired by Scripture, depended also upon their shared Anglo-Saxon ancestry. In a sense, the task of the Federation of Women’s Clubs was not to introduce an entirely novel social framework, but to reinvigorate one which had been lost as a consequence of a century’s isolation. This is not to suggest, however, that this was considered a question of racial superiority. The dominant theological model in the Commonwealth during this period was that “God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth”.<sup>170</sup> For Semple, the notion of an immutable and geographically independent racial superiority (at least in the face of the challenges of the physical environment) made little sense. Her interest in the Kentucky mountaineers was due not so much to

<sup>166</sup> Semple, “New departure in social settlements”, 158. Italicization in original.

<sup>167</sup> Semple, “New departure in social settlements”, 158.

<sup>168</sup> Semple, “New departure in social settlements”, 158.

<sup>169</sup> Daingerfield, “Educational work in the Kentucky mountains”, 178.

<sup>170</sup> Wilson, *Berea College*, 16.

the fact that their origin was broadly Anglo-Saxon, but rather that in little more than a century the “naturally fine stock” from which they were descended had been so significantly modified as a consequence of geographical isolation that their social, economic, and agricultural systems were largely novel.<sup>171</sup>

Semple’s work in the Kentucky Mountains continued in 1899, when she completed a 350-mile horseback journey through its more isolated stretches. Her observations formed the basis of her most personal contribution to the anthropogeographical literature: ‘The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains: a study in anthropogeography’.<sup>172</sup> This paper, published in the Royal Geographical Society’s *The Geographical Journal*, was said to take “high rank among the geographical articles in the English language”.<sup>173</sup> Semple described a region where the population was “still living the frontier life of the backwoods”, where Elizabethan English was spoken, and where “the large majority of inhabitants have never seen a steamboat or a railroad” (Figure 5).<sup>174</sup> The principal characteristic of life in the mountains was a geographical isolation that left the population “almost as rooted as trees”.<sup>175</sup> The consequence of this comparative immobility was close intermarriage and the preservation of “the purest Anglo-Saxon stock in the United States”.<sup>176</sup> The same isolation that facilitated this conservation of racial qualities was seen also to have facilitated a “retarded civilization” where the “degenerate symptoms of an arrested development” were apparent.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Semple, “New departure in social settlements”, 158.

<sup>172</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”.

<sup>173</sup> Colby, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 232.

<sup>174</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”, 588.

<sup>175</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”, 591.

<sup>176</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”, 592.

<sup>177</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”, 593.



Figure 5. Kentucky mountaineers.  
From *The Geographical Journal* 17, no. 6 (1901): 609.

The physiological effects of the mountain environment were, to Semple, particularly apparent. The population was seen to have lost the “ruddy, vigorous appearance” of their forebears, becoming “tall and lanky ... with thin bony faces, sallow skins, and dull hair”.<sup>178</sup> Despite these outward adaptations to the rigorous mountain life, Semple confidently detected “the inextinguishable excellence of the Anglo-Saxon race”.<sup>179</sup> In this respect, whilst the mountain environment was a limiting factor in the physical and societal development of its population, it did not circumvent entirely the civilizing potential of their genetic inheritance (wrought over millennia amid more favourable conditions). Whilst the physiological effects of the environment were pronounced, Semple saw the influence of the mountain topography most particularly in the vernacular architecture. The most remote and isolated communities typically

<sup>178</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”, 594.

<sup>179</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”, 594.

displayed cabins that were “primitive in the extreme” and redolent of “pioneer architecture”.<sup>180</sup> The barns which accompanied these were redolent of the “Alpine dwellings of Switzerland and Bavaria”.<sup>181</sup> In broader valleys, where access to the centres of sawmilling was easier, the buildings were akin to “village dwellings in Norway”.<sup>182</sup> For Semple, then, there was an apparent parallel between environmental conditions and architectural style in terms both of what could be constructed and what was most suited to local circumstances. The existence of similar dwellings in the Alpine and Kentucky Mountains did not necessarily indicate a shared culture, therefore, but a set of common geographical circumstances.

In physical appearance, architecture, and social organization, Semple saw the influence of the mountain environment written upon the Kentucky highlanders. Geographical isolation and topographical obstacles were presented, with implicit reference to the tenets of anthropogeography, as an explanatory framework: the environment being the basis by which the peculiarities of the mountaineers’ society might be understood. Semple’s demonstration that anthropogeography could be studied in the field, and that environmental influence was an apparently legitimate and demonstrable causal explanation, was significant for those geographers—particularly Davis and Dodge—who believed that the promotion of the discipline depended upon an ability to adhere to a scientific and nomothetic approach.<sup>183</sup> For Davis, her paper ought to “serve as the type of many more”.<sup>184</sup> In appearing thus to satisfy Davis’s desire for rational and deductive geographical research, Semple’s paper drew positive attention: it “fired more American students to interest in geography than any other article ever

<sup>180</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”, 598.

<sup>181</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”, 597.

<sup>182</sup> Semple, “Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains”, 597.

<sup>183</sup> Beckinsale, “W. M. Davis”.

<sup>184</sup> Davis, “Current notes of physiography”.



written”.<sup>185</sup> It served, moreover, to secure for Semple a more prominent position within the professional geographical community. The fact that her work had been published by the Royal Geographical Society brought her to the attention of an international constituency.

### **From “unassuming little woman” to professional geographer**

Concurrent with her fieldwork in the Kentucky Mountains, Semple was encouraged by Richard Dodge to collate her earlier articles on North America in a single volume.<sup>186</sup> Semple was contracted—“at the request” of the Boston publisher Houghton, Mifflin and Company—to produce a book setting out her perspective on the influence of the physical environment upon the course of American history.<sup>187</sup> In preparation of the volume, Semple undertook extensive secondary research, visiting “Washington and ... the magnificent Mercantile Library of St. Louis”.<sup>188</sup> For Semple, however, the most valuable and instructive material for her study was found in Louisville, at the private library of Reuben Thomas Durrett (1824–1913). A cofounder of Louisville’s Filson Historical Society, Durrett amassed an unparalleled collection of primary material relating to the historical settlement of Kentucky and the Ohio River Valley, and an impressive anthology of secondary literature dealing with travel and historical accounts.<sup>189</sup> Semple sought, by reference to these authorities, to present a convincing demonstration of the application of anthropogeographical principles to the study of the United States. Semple’s book attended to the environmental factors which she understood to have conditioned war, migration, commercial development, the location

<sup>185</sup> Colby, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 232.

<sup>186</sup> *The Courier-Journal*, 11 January 1903.

<sup>187</sup> *The Courier-Journal*, 11 January 1903.

<sup>188</sup> *The Courier-Journal*, 13 June 1903.

<sup>189</sup> See University of Chicago (Special Collections Research Center) (hereafter UC), DurrettCdx 1–208.

of cities, the provision of transportation, and international trade. In tandem with her examination of the Kentucky mountaineers, Semple had demonstrated that an anthropogeographical approach might be applied with equal success to the study of historical and contemporary society.

Semple's original plan had been to entitle her book *Geographic influences in American history*, but shortly before its publication, it was discovered that her near contemporary Albert Perry Brigham (1855–1932) was working on, and had copyrighted, a book of the same name.<sup>190</sup> Retitled *American history and its geographic conditions*, Semple's book was published in 1903—the same year as Brigham's. Despite their similar subject matter, Semple and Brigham proceeded “as if the other one did not exist”, and, as a consequence, drew fairly distinct conclusions.<sup>191</sup> Brigham had studied as a graduate student under Shaler and Davis at Harvard, and was familiar with Ratzel's work.<sup>192</sup> Where Semple's book took as its basis the influence of individual environmental factors upon the historical settlement of the United States (rivers, mountains, climate), Brigham took a rather more regional approach by considering the particular combination of geographical factors apparent at specific “physiographic provinces”, and their subsequent influence upon national development.<sup>193</sup> As a consequence of the somewhat different emphasis placed upon geographical influences by Semple and Brigham, their work could be read as complementary rather than contradictory.<sup>194</sup>

In the critical response to the work of Semple and Brigham, it is possible to detect the influence of readers' distinct disciplinary and interpretative circumstances. The complex contours of this reception have been traced by Judith Bronson, and show

<sup>190</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*.

<sup>191</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Box 12. Preston E. James to Sauer, 25 January 1972.

<sup>192</sup> James, “Albert Perry Brigham”.

<sup>193</sup> Hart, “Review of *Geographic influences*”, 571.

<sup>194</sup> Keasby, “Review of *American history*”; Turner, “Geographical interpretations”, 36.

a distinction between generally positive reviews by geographers and more critical interpretations by historians (the exception being Frederick Jackson Turner's review in *The Journal of Geography*).<sup>195</sup> In demonstrating the validity and applicability of the anthropogeographical method to geographical work in the United States, Semple's text was welcomed both by American geographers—including Ralph Stockman Tarr (1864–1912), a former student of Davis—and international scholars, among them Ratzel and the Oxford geographer Andrew John Herbertson (1865–1915).<sup>196</sup> Semple's work, coming as part of the “drama of professionalizing geography”, was read by geographers as a contribution to debates then current regarding the infant discipline's epistemic and methodological foundation.<sup>197</sup> In this respect, Semple, despite holding no professional position within the academy, became “part of the movement to establish a professional field of geography in America”.<sup>198</sup>

Something of the cultural and scholarly impact of Semple's volume is indicated by its relatively rapid adoption as a standard textbook on historical geography and anthropogeography. In a number of states, the book was adopted by Teachers' Reading Circles, where it was read by elementary and secondary school teachers of geography, and was placed on the formal reading lists for history and geography at several universities.<sup>199</sup> In addition, Semple's book was adopted by every ship's library in the United States Navy, and “included in the list of required reading for students entering the government military at West Point”.<sup>200</sup> As a consequence of the comparative success

<sup>195</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*.

<sup>196</sup> Herbertson, “Historical geography of the United States”; Tarr, “Review of *American history*”.

<sup>197</sup> Herbertson, “Geography in the university”.

<sup>198</sup> James, “Geographical ideas in America”.

<sup>199</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912; RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1912. Semple to John S. Keltie, 30 October 1912.

<sup>200</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1921–1930, Annual Awards 1922, Paper proposing Ellen Churchill Semple, A.M., LL.D.

of her volume, Semple became “a person of importance who was in great demand”.<sup>201</sup> *American history* was, for Semple, an important watershed—it marked the conclusion of her first period of geographical authorship, and, as a warrant of credibility, provided an entrée to the professional geographical community.<sup>202</sup> As one Kentucky newspaper reported, “on a quiet street of a Kentucky city an unassuming little woman ... [has produced] an authority for the centuries to come”.<sup>203</sup>

### ***Semple’s professional apprenticeship***

In 1904 Semple lost the two most significant influences in her life: her mother and Friedrich Ratzel.<sup>204</sup> Shortly before Ratzel’s death, he expressed a desire that Semple should realise her long-held ambition of communicating his anthropogeographical principles, *in toto*, to the English-speaking world. Driven, perhaps, by the loss of her intellectual mentor, Semple enthusiastically pursued the task of translating Ratzel’s ideas—beginning a seven-year project that became *Influences of geographic environment* (1911). Despite the personal losses experienced by Semple in 1904, her professional standing advanced considerably. In September of that year, she was invited to present, along with Martha Krug Genthe (1871–1945), a tribute to Ratzel before the Eighth International Geographical Congress in Washington, D.C.<sup>205</sup> The Congress was an important opportunity to communicate to an international audience the geographical work then being conducted in the United States, and the Chairman of the Congress’s

<sup>201</sup> Barton and Karan, *Leaders in American geography*, I, 81.

<sup>202</sup> Lewis, *Biography of a neglected classic*.

<sup>203</sup> *The Courier-Journal*, 13 June 1903.

<sup>204</sup> James, Bladen, and Karan, “Ellen Churchill Semple”.

<sup>205</sup> Genthe and Semple, “Tributes to Friedrich Ratzel”.

Scientific Committee, William Morris Davis, was keen to make “the best possible showing”.<sup>206</sup>

Concomitant with Davis’s international aspirations was the “larger problem of mobilizing geographers in the United States”.<sup>207</sup> For Davis, the tasks of disciplining and professionalizing geography were related and imperative. Whilst physical geography had begun to coalesce under recognised courses, degree programmes, and (in some instances) departments at north-eastern universities in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the same was not true of work in human geography—the very issue to which Semple’s work was seen to speak. Although two independent societies existed for the promotion of geographical knowledge—the American Geographical Society and the National Geographic Society—neither was tailored specifically to the requirements of newly-emergent academic geographers.<sup>208</sup> Davis was keen, therefore, to establish “a society of mature geographical experts” that might more properly represent their interests.<sup>209</sup>

Davis’s plan for an Association of American Geographers was given impetus by the International Congress in 1904.<sup>210</sup> Before the close of the year, a seventy-strong list of potential members was compiled, based upon an evaluation of their published work. Of the forty-eight short-listed candidates who went on to become charter members of the Association, only two were female: Semple and Genthe. Unlike their male counterparts, neither Semple nor Genthe “were employed in research oriented Universities”.<sup>211</sup> This gender discrepancy was typical of the period and belied the fact

<sup>206</sup> James and Martin, *Association of American Geographers*, 31.

<sup>207</sup> James and Martin, *Association of American Geographers*, 31.

<sup>208</sup> Dunbar, “Credentialism and careerism”; Wright, *Geography in the making*.

<sup>209</sup> Lowenthal, “AAG and AGS”, 468.

<sup>210</sup> James and Ehrenberg, “Original members of the Association of American Geographers”.

<sup>211</sup> Monk, “Histories of American geography”, 2.

that Genthe was the only founding member of the Association to hold a Ph.D. in geography (from the University of Heidelberg). Davis was convinced of Semple's and Genthe's "scholarly qualifications", and, in this respect at least, their gender was not an impediment to membership.<sup>212</sup> The wider organization of academic geography in the United States was such, however, that gender inequalities were significant and obvious.<sup>213</sup>

From its foundation, the Association comprised many of the leading American geographers, and afforded Semple a warrant of professional credibility that complemented the positive reception of her scholarship. The Association's subsequent annual meetings provided her also with an important platform from which to communicate her ideas. Semple devoted much of 1905 (her first year as a professional geographer) to work on *Influences*, but took time away for a further visit to Europe. Whilst abroad, Semple was invited by John Scott Keltie (1840–1927), Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, to lecture before the Society on either mountain dwellers or convict islands—subjects "semi-popular and sufficiently narrow to be adequately treated in one evening's lecture".<sup>214</sup> Semple was concerned, however, that she be permitted to extemporise during her talk, rather than be compelled to read from a prepared paper—this despite what she described as "an old-time feminine objection to hearing myself speak in public".<sup>215</sup> Although Keltie appeared keen for Semple to lecture before the Society (and, indeed, invited her to contribute a paper to *The Geographical Journal*) it appears that her plans changed, and Semple returned to the United States without addressing the Society.

<sup>212</sup> James and Martin, *Association of American Geographers*, 31.

<sup>213</sup> See, for example, Berman, "Sex discrimination and geography"; Bronson, "Further note on sex discrimination"; Monk, "Women's worlds"; Monk, "Histories of American geography".

<sup>214</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 12 August 1905.

<sup>215</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 2 September 1905.

Upon her return to the United States, Semple was approached by Rollin Daniel Salisbury (1858–1922), a fellow member of the Association of American Geographers, and founder of the newly-created department of graduate studies in geography at the University of Chicago, who offered her a visiting lectureship.<sup>216</sup> Established in 1903 by Salisbury (Figure 17), then dean of the graduate school, the department was the first in the United States to offer graduate studies and exerted, arguably, an unequalled influence upon the development of the discipline during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>217</sup> Salisbury—regarded as a “skilful organizer, an inspiring leader, [and] a teacher beyond praise”—assembled a faculty drawn from among the leading geographers of the period, including John Paul Goode (1862–1932) and Harlan Harland Barrows (1877–1960) (see Figure 17 and Figure 20).<sup>218</sup>

Salisbury had studied geology at Beloit College under Thomas Chrowder Chamberlin (1843–1928).<sup>219</sup> Like Davis, his near contemporary, Salisbury pursued work in physiography (physical geography).<sup>220</sup> He conceived of geography as a geminated discipline, combining the related fields of “geographic geology” and “life-significance studies”.<sup>221</sup> The latter was understood to take as its focus the “relevance of physical conditions to human affairs”.<sup>222</sup> This reflected a longstanding interest in environmentalist themes—cultivated during a rural boyhood in which Salisbury “noticed interesting things on the farm”, such as the influence of agricultural practice upon local topography.<sup>223</sup> In this respect, he was “much more concerned with man’s

<sup>216</sup> Pattison, “Geography at the University of Chicago”.

<sup>217</sup> Pattison, “Geography at the University of Chicago”.

<sup>218</sup> Barrows, “Department of geography”, 198.

<sup>219</sup> Schneider, “Chamberlin, Salisbury, and Collie”.

<sup>220</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 311.

<sup>221</sup> Pattison, “Rollin D. Salisbury”, 107.

<sup>222</sup> Pattison, “Rollin D. Salisbury”, 107.

<sup>223</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

influence on nature than with nature's influence on man".<sup>224</sup> Salisbury was, as a consequence, "hopeful, but sceptical, that workers in anthropogeography might develop that part of geography on a scientific basis".<sup>225</sup>

Something of Salisbury's interest in the promotion of anthropogeographical work was evident in his appointment to the department of Barrows who, in the summer of 1905, offered a course on the 'Influences of Geography on American History'—the first of a series of special Summer Quarter seminars intended for teachers of geography.<sup>226</sup> In common with Salisbury's vision, Barrows' brand of environmentalism was concerned with influence rather than with "extreme determinism" (although, as described in Chapter 7, their perspectives were not identical).<sup>227</sup> In this context it might seem peculiar that Semple—later understood as an advocate of environmental determinism—should have been invited by Salisbury to join the faculty on a part-time basis. Her perspective on anthropogeography was not, however, logically incompatible with the department, even though it would later stand "definitely for revision of the environmental doctrine".<sup>228</sup> Barrows' concern (and, by implication, that of Salisbury) was to make clear the mutual relationship between society and environment.<sup>229</sup> He drew, in this respect, on the work of Turner (under whom he later studied at the University of Wisconsin), and, most particularly, on Semple's *American history*.<sup>230</sup> Whilst Barrows' perspective on anthropogeography would later change (see Chapter 7) it was, at the time of Semple's hiring, broadly compatible with her own.<sup>231</sup>

<sup>224</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

<sup>225</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 311.

<sup>226</sup> Foster, "New department in its setting".

<sup>227</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

<sup>228</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

<sup>229</sup> Grossman, "Man-environment relationships", 128.

<sup>230</sup> Barrows, *Historical geography of the United States*; Block, "Frederick Jackson Turner".

<sup>231</sup> Barrows, "Geography as human ecology".



Semple's appointment to Chicago reflected not only the topicality of her geographical interests, but also the perceived authority of her scholarship. Her election to the Association of American Geographers undoubtedly facilitated this transition from private scholar to academic geographer, but her intellectual merits seem to have been recognized before then—in 1902 she was considered for the position of department head by the University's president, William Rainey Harper (1856–1926).<sup>232</sup> Her eventual appointment to the department was on a part-time basis only (she lectured typically during the Spring Quarter). Quite why she was not offered, or did not accept, a fulltime position is uncertain. For one biographer, this was a conscious choice on Semple's part, and reflected “her priorities in keeping research and writing as her primary activities”.<sup>233</sup> For Robert Swanton Platt (1891–1964), who studied under Semple at Chicago, Salisbury's decision to appoint Semple on a part time basis was “not so much because [he was a] nonbeliever [in] environmentalism as because [Semple was a] woman”.<sup>234</sup>

The course Semple developed—“Some Principles of Anthro-geography”—was intended as a general introduction to her geographical perspective, drawing upon her existing body of work.<sup>235</sup> Semple's lectures were considered the “most stimulating & inspiring” of those offered by the department, and her ideas were, as a consequence, received with considerable approbation.<sup>236</sup> The opportunity for Semple to present her work to an audience of enthusiastic students, the first in the United States to receive an explicitly geographical education at graduate level, proved valuable in shaping not only the subsequent content of her work, but also aspects of the discipline's later research

<sup>232</sup> Rossiter, *Women scientists in America*.

<sup>233</sup> Bushong, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 89.

<sup>234</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 10, Folder 16. “Changes in geographic thought”, 19 March 1950.

<sup>235</sup> *Circular of information for the year 1906–1907*, 122.

<sup>236</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 10, Folder 16. “Changes in geographic thought”, 19 March 1950.

focus.<sup>237</sup> Semple's students included "many who went on to play important roles in the development of professional geography".<sup>238</sup> The influence of Semple and of Chicago were such that four fifths of geography Ph.D. graduates during or before 1946 could trace an academic lineage back to one of five geographers, three of whom taught at Chicago: Salisbury, Barrows, Semple, Wallace Walter Atwood (1872–1949), and Vernor Clifford Finch (1883–1959).<sup>239</sup>

### **The genesis of *Influences***

Semple's relatively light teaching schedule ensured that she was able to devote extended periods to her work on *Influences*. When not teaching in Chicago, she divided her time between Louisville and the Catskill Mountains in New York State, where she lived in a tent (Figure 18) and worked on her book without interruption. As one newspaper reported, "she would work six hours a day, with only the chipmunks and the birds as her companions".<sup>240</sup> Rather than present a literal translation of Ratzel's *Anthropogeographie*, Semple sought to re-examine the fundamental principles of his work, to clarify them, to subject them to proof and, where necessary, to reject them. She intended to relocate Ratzel's book linguistically, and to reframe its contents, revise its arguments, and supplement its sources. She sought to "make the research and induction as broad as possible, to draw conclusions that should be elastic and not rigid or dogmatic ... to be Hellenic in form but Darwinian in method".<sup>241</sup> Semple hoped to distinguish her text from Ratzel's in several ways. The first was to eliminate the organic theory of society

<sup>237</sup> Bushong, "Ellen Churchill Semple".

<sup>238</sup> James, Bladen, and Karan, "Ellen Churchill Semple", 33.

<sup>239</sup> Bushong, "Geographers and their mentors".

<sup>240</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>241</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 2 April 1911.

and state, which had formed an important interpretative component of Ratzel's work.<sup>242</sup> Additionally, Semple was disinclined to use race as an explanatory category, believing that if people of different ethnic stock, but similar environments, manifested similar or related social, economic, or historical development, it was reasonable to infer that such similarities were due to environment and not to race.<sup>243</sup> Perhaps most significantly, however, Semple's explicit aim was to deny any straightforward relationship between the natural environment and human social and physiological organization. Her prefatory remarks made this clear: "the writer speaks of geographic factors and influences, shuns the word geographic determinant, and speaks with extreme caution of geographic control".<sup>244</sup>

By mid-1907, Semple had made substantial progress on *Influences*, and was keen to communicate her findings. In addition to two papers dealing with geographical boundaries, published in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, Semple was invited by Turner to contribute a paper to the meeting of the American Historical Association in Madison, Wisconsin.<sup>245</sup> Turner's session—to which he contributed a paper on 'The relation of geography and history'—was intended to bring together work on geography, history, and environmental influence. In addition to Semple's paper, 'Geographical location as a factor in history', the session included a contribution on 'Physiography as a factor in community life' by the chair of History at the University of North Dakota, Orin Grant Libby (1864–1952). Whilst this was not, as has been claimed, "the first occasion on which Semple delivered a formal paper before an assembled body

<sup>242</sup> Keighren, "Bringing geography to the book".

<sup>243</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vii.

<sup>244</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vii.

<sup>245</sup> Semple, "Geographical boundaries. Part I"; Semple, "Geographical boundaries. Part II".

of scholars”, it was nevertheless an important opportunity to communicate her ideas to an interdisciplinary audience.<sup>246</sup>

Semple’s work was not received, however, with unequivocal enthusiasm. One member of the audience—George Lincoln Burr (1857–1938), then professor of medieval history at Cornell University—took exception to aspects of Semple’s thesis, and engaged her in extended debate. His principal contention was that Semple placed too much emphasis on geographical control. For Burr, “geography, though a factor in history, is only a factor, and that no more in history than in mathematics can the outcome be inferred from a single factor alone”.<sup>247</sup> Attempting to strike a conciliatory note, Barrows, who was also in the audience, “defended a position intermediate between that of Miss Semple and Professor Burr”.<sup>248</sup> Semple for her part was inclined to attribute Burr’s dubiety to the fact that, as she perceived it, “historians as a rule do not know geography”.<sup>249</sup> She was supported in this opinion, to some extent, by Ralph Tarr (who had earlier praised her *American history*) and George Burton Adams (1851–1925), President of the American Historical Association, who believed “the disagreement was caused partly by lack of definition of terms”.<sup>250</sup> The argument resurfaced some days later, however, at the Association of American Geographers meeting in Chicago, where Semple and Burr discoursed at length during the formal dinner.<sup>251</sup>

Throughout the research and writing of *Influences*, Semple maintained a correspondence with John Scott Keltie. On 21 April 1907, she dispatched a paper dealing with coastal peoples (which later formed the eighth chapter of *Influences*), along

<sup>246</sup> Block, “Frederick Jackson Turner”, 38.

<sup>247</sup> Anonymous, “Meeting of the American Historical Association”, 436.

<sup>248</sup> Anonymous, “Meeting of the American Historical Association”, 437.

<sup>249</sup> Quoted in Block, “Frederick Jackson Turner”, 38.

<sup>250</sup> Anonymous, “Meeting of the American Historical Association”, 437.

<sup>251</sup> AGSL. Charles C. Colby to Wright, 23 May 1961.

with a letter outlining her approach to, and hopes for, the book. This letter indicates Semple's eagerness to ensure that her work was seen as "something more than a mere restatement of Ratzel's principles".<sup>252</sup> To that end, Semple had "made wide inductive research, just as if I were writing a wholly original work", enabling her, she believed, to see "more clearly than he [Ratzel] did ... the immense importance of the interplay of geographic forces".<sup>253</sup> Impressed by Semple's chapter, Keltie again invited her to lecture before the Society. She agreed enthusiastically, hoping that she would "finish the manuscript and maps a year from this date" and then talk "volubly on the subject of Anthreopo-geography" at the Society.<sup>254</sup>

Between 1908 and 1910, Semple maintained an almost unwavering pattern of research, writing, and presentation as *Influences* took shape. Her 1907 talks at the American Historical Association and Association of American Geographers were published the following year in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, and on 27 November 1908 she presented 'The operation of geographic factors in history' at the annual meeting of the Ohio Valley Historical Association in Marietta, Ohio.<sup>255</sup> Semple's paper formed the basis of the first chapter of *Influences*—indeed the opening sentence of both was identical: "Man is a product of the earth's surface".<sup>256</sup> In 1910, perhaps in anticipation of the imminent publication of *Influences*, Semple's then famous paper on the Kentucky Mountains was republished in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*.<sup>257</sup> Semple had been "constantly getting requests" for offprints, and the copy on deposit at the library of the University of Chicago had been used so heavily that the

<sup>252</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 21 April 1907.

<sup>253</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 21 April 1907. Underlining in original.

<sup>254</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 8 March 1908.

<sup>255</sup> Semple, "Geographical location as a factor in history"; Semple, "Oceans and enclosed seas"; Semple, "Operation of geographic factors in history".

<sup>256</sup> Semple, "Operation of geographic factors in history", 65.

<sup>257</sup> Semple, "Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky mountains".

“article has the printer’s ink almost now off”.<sup>258</sup> By the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, then, Semple’s work on *Influences* neared completion and its potential audience had been alerted to its publication through papers and conference contributions.<sup>259</sup>

In March 1910, Semple wrote to Keltie from the University of Chicago, announcing that her manuscript was nearing conclusion. It is evident from her letter that she intended *Influences* to meet the requirement of student geographers: “I have had the advantage of lecturing out the material three times here at the University of Chicago; and this has enabled me to adapt it to students’ needs”.<sup>260</sup> Semple’s principal reason for writing was to gauge Keltie’s view on the suitability of issuing a British edition of *Influences*. She wrote: “Do you think it would perhaps be advisable to arrange for an English edition of it [*Influences*], in view of the growing demand for geography in your universities? I should greatly appreciate a word of advice from you ... for no one understands the English field so well as you”.<sup>261</sup> In reply, Keltie enthused:

I shall be very interested indeed to see your book on the Influences of Geographical [sic] Environment, when it is published. We want a book which discusses the whole problem thoroughly, widely and fully. We talk a great deal about the influence of geographical environment, but I do not think that anyone has actually and fairly faced the position, stating what the terms of the problem are on both sides, first from the side of the environment—what exactly do we include in that term; and then from the side of the human subject, and what precisely as far as we can make out, are the inter-actions between them. I should very much like indeed if an English publisher would take the book up.<sup>262</sup>

<sup>258</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 6 March 1910.

<sup>259</sup> See, for example, Semple, “Coast peoples. Part I”; Semple, “Coast peoples. Part II”.

<sup>260</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 6 March 1910.

<sup>261</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 6 March 1910.

<sup>262</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. John S. Keltie to Semple, 16 March 1910.

Although Keltie advised Semple to discuss this matter with her publisher, Henry Holt and Company, he suggested a number of suitable London firms, including Macmillan, Heinemann, and John Murray.

When Semple next wrote to Keltie, on the eve of the publication of *Influences*, it was in a mood both buoyant and reflective. Contemplating her recently-completed work, Semple explained: “I hoped to make the research and induction as broad as possible, to draw conclusions that should be elastic and not rigid or dogmatic, and finally to give the whole book a certain literary quality .... That was my ideal: of course I did not get within shouting distance of it in the accomplished book, as you will clearly see; but perhaps you will occasionally catch a gleam from the star to which I tried to hitch my lumbering little cart”.<sup>263</sup> This apparent lassitude was countered by the enthusiasm she expressed for a planned round-the-world journey: “now I’m to have my play time; early in June I start on a year’s trip around the world viâ San Francisco and Japan .... Some time in the summer or autumn of 1912, I shall loom up on the horizon of Burlington Gardens; there I shall drop into the house of the Society and say,—how do you do, Dr Keltie, do you remember me?”.<sup>264</sup> Keltie’s reply, congratulating Semple on the publication of *Influences*, reached her shortly before she departed on her global sojourn. In it, Keltie’s expectancy is evident: “I am delighted to hear from you once again, especially with such good news about your new book. We have not received it yet, but I dare say we shall soon, and you may be sure that I shall read it with real delight, and hope we shall be able to have a stunning review of it in the Journal by some competent hand”.<sup>265</sup>

<sup>263</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 2 April 1911.

<sup>264</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 2 April 1911.

<sup>265</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. John S. Keltie to Semple, 22 April 1911.

## **Conclusion: the development and promotion of anthropogeography**

Semple's *American history* included on its title page the Ritterian epigram "So much is certain: history lies not near but in nature".<sup>266</sup> In some respects, this quotation was a model for, and an indicator of, Semple's approach to geography—one which saw the natural environment as "the central determinant" of history.<sup>267</sup> Anthropogeography was, for Semple, a field which combined her dual intellectual interests: history and geography. It was also an approach which, for a period of almost four decades, paralleled and reflected the scholarly concerns of disciplinary geography—first in Germany, then later in the United States and Britain. Although part of a broader contemporary debate concerning evolution, nature, society, race, and cultural development, anthropogeography represented a nineteenth-century revision of Classical environmentalist themes.

Ratzel's formulation of anthropogeography can be seen—in having drawn upon the earlier work of, among others, Ritter, Peschel, and von Richthofen—to be part of a tradition within German geography concerned with describing the relationship between people and land. Yet it might equally be seen to depend upon the emergent themes in nineteenth-century biology and ethnography, particularly that of Darwinian evolution and its subsequent social revisions. The genesis of Ratzel's anthropogeography can be seen most properly to represent the unique combination of these scholarly themes. His intellectual interests were informed not only by his academic mentors, including Haeckel and Wagner, but also by his periods of journalistic field observation as correspondent for the *Kölnische Zeitung*. Ratzel's personal biography mattered, then, to the development of his academic concerns.

<sup>266</sup> Semple, *American history*, title page.

<sup>267</sup> Fitzpatrick, *History's memory*, 77.



Personal experiences mattered also to the formation of Semple's geographical concerns. Although it is not possible to attribute a definite causal connection, it seems probable that Semple's firsthand experience of the Civil War in Kentucky, of class segregation in Louisville, and of extreme poverty in the Appalachians were motivating factors in the development of her environmentalist concerns. Semple's relatively privileged upbringing also facilitated the educational and research opportunities which engendered her dual interest in history and geography. When considered in light of her subsequent research focus, her period under the tutelage of Ratzel would seem the most crucial pedagogic experience. In Ratzel's work, particularly as communicated in the first volume of his *Anthropogeographie*, Semple found an expression of geography which corresponded with her own emerging perspective. An enthusiastic and faithful student of Ratzel, Semple was not, however, an uncritical disciple. In communicating Ratzel's geography to the Anglo-American academic community, Semple saw an opportunity to correct its perceived failings by putting it on a more rigorously scientific foundation, based principally upon field observation.

Semple's promotion of a scientific approach to geographical research coincided with the institutionalization of the discipline in the United States. Her interpretation of Ratzel's ideas was seen to correspond not only with a desire among geography's proponents to place the discipline on a scientific footing, but also with the neo-Lamarckian environmentalist project outlined by, among others, Turner, Marsh, and Shaler.<sup>268</sup> It was the topicality and applicability of Semple's early work on anthropogeography that ensured its generally positive reception. Yet it was not until Semple entered the academy in her early 40s that she felt sufficiently able to begin the

<sup>268</sup> Marsh, *Man and nature*.

major part of her geographical work: the writing of *Influences*. Semple's appointment to the University of Chicago afforded her the opportunity to communicate her ideas to an enthusiastic graduate cohort (refreshing the pedagogic skills she had developed in her earlier career) and to work through the key components of her book in the lecture theatre. This space, a forum for debate and discussion, was one in which Semple's oratorical skills were honed.

The publication of *Influences* in 1911 was, in certain respects, the apotheosis of Semple's anthropogeographical project. Rather than marking the terminus to this particular element of her research, however, the book was a prompt to a new and important phase of geography's disciplinary development. In the following two related chapters, I examine the initial reaction to Semple's book. My substantive focus in this regard is upon the book's contemporary reviews—in the popular press (Chapter 4), and in the academic literature (Chapter 5). I consider the influence of reviewing cultures, in terms both of national responses to Semple's work, and in relation to thematic or disciplinary reviews. The aim, here, is to examine how the critical reception of Semple's book varied spatially and socially as a function of its interpretative communities. It is also to determine the utility of published reviews as a proxy for the reception of knowledge.

## Chapter 4

### “A German dose sweetened”: popular reviews of *Influences*

#### Introduction: questions of scale and the reception of knowledge

*Influences of geographic environment on the basis of Ratzel's system of anthropo-geography* was published in May 1911, issued simultaneously in the United States and Britain. Despite the effort the book's production had cost, Semple chose not to await critics' reaction and embarked almost immediately on an eighteen-month journey around the world with two female friends.<sup>1</sup> She understood the significance of newspaper and periodical reviews, however, and had the former collated by a press clipping bureau and dispatched to her at intervals during her sojourn. She was keen to learn whether these reviews foresaw “the career for the book which I had hoped for”.<sup>2</sup>

Semple's concern over the critical fate of her book was prescient. Her earlier experience in relation to her *American history* made her aware that reviews of *Influences* would act not only to shape its reading, but also to help frame contemporaneous debate about its contents. Ranging from the highly complimentary to the mildly derogatory, the printed critiques of Semple's book reflected the spectrum of opinion associated with its reception, but were not a straightforward proxy of it. As Rupke notes, “reviews are by no means the only standard by which reception and relative success of books can be measured”.<sup>3</sup> To speak of the reception of Semple's work, it is necessary to consider what reception means, and at which spatial, temporal, and social scales such meanings can usefully be explored.

<sup>1</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*.

<sup>2</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Edward N. Bristol, 4 January 1912.

<sup>3</sup> Rupke, “Geography of enlightenment”, 324.

A common element linking work in the history of science and literary criticism is the idea that reception is what we might call the ‘afterlife’ of an initial encounter with a text or idea. Rather than being simply a temporally fixed event—the moment when the reader scans a line of text and begins to consume or construct its meaning—reception is also what happens next. The reception of Semple’s work should not be understood to refer only to the initial reading and reviewing of *Influences*, but also to the role of anthropogeography in informing then-current discussions, to its incorporation into teaching curricula, and to its subsequent rejection. In thinking about the ‘trajectory’ of Semple’s anthropogeography, or the ‘career’ of *Influences*, it is necessary to assess what her book meant to its various audiences in 1911 (and why), and also what it meant to readers at various times and in different places in the years following its publication. The study of reception is, in this way, “concerned with investigating the routes by which a text has moved and the cultural focus which shaped or filtered the ways in which the text was regarded”.<sup>4</sup>

Efforts to reconstruct the reception of scientific knowledge have tended to employ in their analyses a hierarchical conception of scale which privileges the national (as described in Chapter 2).<sup>5</sup> An unintended but significant limitation of this approach is a propensity to deemphasize interpretative differences *within* nations, whilst accentuating dissimilarities *between* them. The assumption of homogenous analytical practices which underpin the examination of national responses to science has been challenged, however, by recent work which has attended to local and individual responses to

<sup>4</sup> Hardwick, *Reception studies*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Brush, “Periodic law in America and Britain”; Conlin, “Reception of the Foucault Pendulum”; Russell, “Reception of Newtonianism”.

scientific and theological texts.<sup>6</sup> As might be expected, however, a corollary of an attention to reading and reception practices at the level of region, city, street, or individual (in a nested hierarchy of scale) is an apparently unbounded heterogeneity of interpretation. The more local the scale of analysis, the more diverse and particular might the hermeneutic practices appear. If the intention of work in the reception of texts and of knowledge is to make claims about the nature of circulation and consumption which are nomothetic and look beyond individual experience, then it is necessary to consider in what ways commonalities and shared interpretations might be identified. As has been suggested, “Precisely what the correct scale of analysis is at which to conduct any particular enquiry into the historical geography of science—site, region, nation, globe—has to be faced”.<sup>7</sup>

The utility of scale as a spatial framework upon which to reconstruct the reception of knowledge is uncertain since, at different scales, different patterns of reception can be identified. Recent debates in human geography have sought to problematize, moreover, the vertical hierarchy upon which scale depends.<sup>8</sup> Various attempts to reconceptualise scale have attended to its social construction, and have led in some quarters to the “rejection of scale as an ontologically given category”.<sup>9</sup> In thinking beyond the vertical, local-to-global hierarchy, efforts have been made to describe how scale might be conceived of as a series of horizontal relations and social networks which span or transcend concrete space. A number of theorists have proposed the elimination of scale as a conceptual category altogether—advancing a

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Fyfe, “Reception of William Paley”; Fyfe, *Science and salvation*; Livingstone, “Science, religion and the geography of reading”.

<sup>7</sup> Livingstone, “Text, talk and testimony”, 99.

<sup>8</sup> Brenner, “Limits to scale?”.

<sup>9</sup> Marston, “Social construction of scale”, 220.

“flat ontology” as an alternative.<sup>10</sup> Whilst the precise contours of this debate need not be detailed here, it is important to note that the scales invoked by reception study are not independent and taken-for-granted categories, but are enacted by social processes.<sup>11</sup>

Although my intention is not to challenge the ontological or epistemic validity of scale in relation to the reception of Semple’s anthropogeography, it seems apparent that to better understand the commonalities and disunities in the response to *Influences*, it is necessary to think beyond scale as nominally fixed, spatially defined categories, and to consider the function of social networks and hermeneutic communities. In this respect, Jauss’s concept of the horizon of expectation and Fish’s notion of interpretative communities are useful, but, as discussed in Chapter 2, the rigorous application of these principles to the reception of Semple’s work is limited in both conceptual and practical terms.<sup>12</sup> Given the generally anonymous nature of the newspapers upon which this chapter draws, it is not possible always to determine the identity of individual readers, or, when their identity is apparent, to contextualize their reading experience and to position them within an interpretative community other than that of the newspaper-buying public. The professional reviews of Semple’s book—those commissioned and printed in learned journals and academic periodicals—present other, related analytical difficulties. Although the identity of the reviewers in these cases is almost always apparent, quite how their interpretation of *Influences* was conditioned by their disciplinary concerns, and those of the periodical for which they were writing, is not always clear (see Chapter 5).

<sup>10</sup> Marston, Jones III, and Woodward, “Human geography without scale”, 422.

<sup>11</sup> Elements of the pro- and anti-scale debate are described in Collinge, “Flat ontology”; Escobar, “‘Ontological turn’ in social theory”; Hoefle, “Eliminating scale”; Jonas, “Pro scale”; Jones III, Woodward, and Marston, “Situating flatness”; Leitner and Miller, “Limitations of ontological debate”.

<sup>12</sup> Fish, *Is there a text?*; Jauss, *Towards an aesthetic of reception*.

Rather than framing my analysis of the popular and professional reviews of *Influences* in relation to their thematic content or geographical origin, I here proceed more-or-less chronologically. My purpose in so doing is not to present an uncomplicated narrative of reception, but rather to acknowledge the thematic complexity of newspaper and periodical reviews, and concede the difficulty inherent in their categorization. Given that the majority of British newspaper reviews were published after those in the United States, and that periodical reviews were issued later still, a coincidental grouping of location and medium is, however, evident. Whilst these ‘accidental’ categories provide more opportunity to make general claims about the role of location and publication type in the reviewing of Semple’s book, they are not intended to provide definitive conceptions of the British, or American, or newspaper, or academic response to *Influences*. Reception is messy and various and personal—reviewing no less so. Whilst this complexity precludes a definitive narrative of the critical response to Semple’s work, it invites useful speculation about the nature of interpretation, the sociology and geography of reading, and the communication and reception of knowledge.

### **Communicating anthropogeography to the Anglophone world**

Unlike Semple’s *American history*—a handsome, claret-red volume with debossed cover lettering—*Influences* was presented more soberly: a muted brown binding offset by a gilt top edge and spine lettering. Despite being larger than its predecessor, *Influences* was printed densely, using smaller type, on noticeably coarser paper. The margins of the text were somewhat larger, however, and contained short topic sentences which served to summarize the main text. These marginal glosses, a form of paratextual index,

undoubtedly served as useful navigational markers, allowing readers to negotiate the book's 683 pages. The textual density of the volume was relieved by twenty-one maps. The book's initial retail price was set at \$4 in the United States, and 18s in Britain.

In a brief preface to *Influences*, Semple outlined the intellectual genesis of this project and detailed her perspective on the book's function and purpose. Her intention was to show that, although planned originally as a "restatement of the principles embodied in Friedrich Ratzel's *Anthropo-Geography*", her book had developed to become something rather more sophisticated and intellectually relevant, reflecting the geographical concerns of its author and mirroring contemporaneous concerns.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence of her earlier discussions with John Scott Keltie, Semple was keen to make clear to her readers that, in bringing *Anthropogeography* to the United States, her project was not one merely of "literal translation", but rather an exercise in interpretation and cultural relocation.<sup>14</sup>

For Semple, it was important that *Influences* should be "adapted to the Anglo-Celtic and especially to the Anglo-American mind".<sup>15</sup> The purpose of this cultural reframing was to place Ratzel's work more obviously on a scientific foundation and, by so doing, to "throw it into the concrete form of expression demanded by the Anglo-Saxon mind".<sup>16</sup> Semple's concern was, as it had been in her earlier work, to reform Ratzel's conclusions, which she regarded as "not always exhaustive or final", and to present them in a manner more clearly supported by real-world examples.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, Semple drew upon "about a thousand different works"—bringing together data from travel and exploration texts, and from "works of comprehensive or

<sup>13</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, v.

<sup>14</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, v.

<sup>15</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, v.

<sup>16</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vi.

<sup>17</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, v.



even encyclopedic scope in the fields of history, geography, and anthropology”.<sup>18</sup> Her desire to situate her work within this literature represents both a wish to position anthropogeography in relation to a wider intellectual genealogy and also a pragmatic attempt to avoid the “just criticism of inadequate citation of authorities” to which Ratzel had been subject.<sup>19</sup> *Influences* combined and juxtaposed, therefore, contemporary sources with Classical authorities. Semple’s intention in uniting such disparate work was to “compare typical peoples of all races and all stages of cultural development, living under similar geographic conditions”.<sup>20</sup> If, by so doing, she was able to show that “peoples of different ethnic stocks but similar environments manifested similar or related social, economic or historical development”, she might reasonably infer that such similarities were a function of environment rather than of race.<sup>21</sup> Semple was aware, however, of the potential speciousness of this argument, and felt compelled to state that she had “purposely avoided definitions, formulas, and the enunciation of hard-and-fast rules”.<sup>22</sup>

The preface makes clear that the purpose of *Influences* was not to “delimit the field” or to advance “precipitate or rigid conclusions”, but was to serve as an indicative manifesto for what anthropogeographical research was and might become.<sup>23</sup> Whilst these prefatory comments do not resemble straightforwardly the prescriptive framework for reading which Robert Darnton identified in Rousseau’s *La nouvelle Héloïse*, they can be seen as an attempt to inform the reader of the intended purpose of *Influences*, and to make clear Semple’s particular engagement with Ratzel’s work. The reader of Semple’s

<sup>18</sup> Wright, “Notes towards a bibliobiography”, 347.

<sup>19</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vi.

<sup>20</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vii.

<sup>21</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vii.

<sup>22</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vii.

<sup>23</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vii.

book had been prepared, then, for a work grounded not only in the science method, but also positioned within an Anglo-American intellectual and cultural context.

The first chapter of *Influences*—"The operation of geographic factors in history"—opens with a proclamation of seemingly Scriptural authority: "Man is a product of the earth's surface".<sup>24</sup> This statement underpins Semple's proposition that 'man' cannot be studied scientifically, or understood correctly, without consideration being given to "the ground which he tills, or the lands over which he travels, or the seas over which he trades".<sup>25</sup> Semple devotes the body of the first chapter, therefore, to a wide-ranging summary of human/environment interactions in historical context. In a series of case examples, she outlines her perspective on various components of geographic influence (topographical, climatological, geological, hydrological, among others), describing the different ways in which these factors have affected human society, psychology, and physiology. Despite her noted desire to speak of geographic influence rather than of geographic determinant, the section dealing with climate attributes to it controlling influence on aspects of human life: "Climatic influences are persistent, often obdurate in their control".<sup>26</sup> In consequence to this assertion, she describes the tropics as encouraging a "dead level of economic inefficiency", and the polar latitudes as excluding "the white woman".<sup>27</sup>

In its second chapter, *Influences* details at greater length the classes of geographic influence previously identified. Here, again, Semple's tone appears to be rather more deterministic than might be expected given her protestations against this line of argument. The text is peppered with language incompatible with her desire to avoid "the

<sup>24</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 1.

<sup>25</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 10.

word geographic determinant”.<sup>28</sup> Semple speaks in terms of the “*pressure* of the environment”, and about the ways in which the “environment modifies the physique of a people ... by *imposing* upon them certain dominant activities”.<sup>29</sup> Humanity is described as “a *passive* subject”, exposed to environmental factors that “*determine* the direction” of its development, and “*determine* the size of the social group”.<sup>30</sup> The reason for Semple’s use of such seemingly inconsistent language is not immediately apparent, but, as Wright makes clear, “such adverbs as ‘inevitably,’ ‘always,’ and ‘everywhere’ are favoured” in a way that is at odds with “the avowals to the contrary in the preface”.<sup>31</sup> A similar tone pervades the following fifteen chapters, and is apparent in her discussion of various aspects of human/environment interaction: society, state, and economy in relation to land; migration and colonization; geographical location and area; natural boundaries and frontiers; coasts, oceans, and enclosed seas; rivers, islands, peninsulas; and steppes, deserts and mountains.

### Reading the popular reception of *Influences*

On 11 March 1911, under its ‘Book news and book views’ column, the Syracuse, New York newspaper *The Post-Standard* reported the imminent publication of Semple’s book. *Influences* had been selected for special mention from among Henry Holt’s March output, but the anonymous *Post-Standard* copywriter seems to have been unfamiliar with its author; Semple is introduced incorrectly as “Ellen Church Temple”.<sup>32</sup> Beyond *The Post-Standard*’s erroneous two-sentence advanced notice, *Influences* seems not to have attracted further press attention until June. For reasons that remain unrecorded, the book’s

<sup>28</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 35. Italicization in original.

<sup>30</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 41–43. Italicization in original.

<sup>31</sup> Wright, *Human nature*, 191.

<sup>32</sup> *The Post-Standard*, 11 March 1911.

publication was delayed until 29 May.<sup>33</sup> After this apparent false start, a comparative flurry of publicity accompanied the book's summer launch—*The Nation*, for example, carried seven advertisements between June and September (Figure 6).



Henry Holt & Co. 34 W 33d St  
NEW YORK

*Have Just Published*

**David Starr Jordan's**  
**The Stability of Truth**  
A Discussion of Reality as Related  
to Thought and Action.  
AMERICAN NATURE SERIES, Group VI.  
The Philosophy of Nature. 12mo.  
\$1.25 net; by mail \$1.32.  
Prof Vernon L. Kellogg in his editor's  
preface calls this: "A robust treatment of  
science in life by a robust exponent of the  
life scientific."

**Ellen Churchill Semple's**  
**Influences of  
Geographic Environment**  
On the Basis of Ratzel's System of An-  
thropo-Geography. By the author of  
"American History and Its Geographic  
Conditions." With 21 maps and an in-  
dex, 683 pp, 8vo, \$4 net; by mail \$4.24  
The book covers: Geographic Factors in  
History, Society, and State in Relation to  
the Land, Movements of Peoples, Geogra-  
phical Location, Area, Boundaries, Coast  
Peoples, Coasts and Enclosed Seas, Man's  
Relation to the Water, Anthro-geogra-  
phy of Rivers, Continents and Their Pen-  
insulas, Island Peoples, Plains, Steppes  
and Deserts, Mountain Barriers and Their  
Passes, Influences of a Mountain En-  
vironment, Influence of Climate, etc.

**Thomas Leaming's**  
**A Philadelphia Lawyer  
in the London Courts**  
*Illustrated by the author*  
8vo, gilt top, \$2 net; by mail, \$2 14.  
A book for laymen as well as law-  
yers, full of interesting comparisons of  
American and English customs and pro-  
cedure and not devoid of dramatic epi-  
sodes. Descriptive circular on applica-  
tion.

**Letters That Live**  
Compiled by LAURA E. LOCKWOOD and  
AMY R. KELLY Cloth, \$1.50 net; leather,  
\$2.50 net Postage, 7 cents. With full  
gilt flexible cover and illustrated cover  
linings, uniform with "The Open Road."  
Over 150 letters from some 70 writers  
including Walter Pater, James Howell,  
Lady Montagu, Robert Burns, Sidney  
Smith, Jane Welsh Carlyle, Dickens, Fitz-  
gerald, Thackeray, Mrs Browning, George  
Eliot, Holmes, Stevenson, Aldrich, and  
Lewis Carroll

Figure 6. Advertisement announcing the publication of *Influences*.  
From *The Nation*, 1 June 1911.

A brief and matter-of-fact summary appeared on 17 June in *The Publishers Weekly*, a New York City trade news magazine serving the publishing industry, booksellers, and librarians.<sup>34</sup> The brevity of the announcement (noticeably shorter than other similar notices) would seem to indicate that its author assumed among his or her

<sup>33</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 10. Scrapbook, 1895–1932.

<sup>34</sup> *The Publishers Weekly*, 17 June 1911.

audience a certain familiarity with Semple's previous work, or, more generally, with the broad contours of anthropogeography. Semple was described simply as "The author of 'American history and its geographic conditions'", and her book as "a modified, simplified, and clearer ... restatement of Ratzel's 'Anthropo-Geographie'".<sup>35</sup> Beyond this, no mention was made of the book's theme or contents, or explanation proffered as to who Ratzel was or with what his book dealt.

Rather more contextual exposition accompanied an announcement of *Influences*' publication in the following day's *Daily Picayune*, a New Orleans newspaper. The *Picayune* had been formerly a powerful organ of pro-slavery politics, and was still in 1911 largely "white, conservative and racist".<sup>36</sup> The political stance of the paper was in flux, however, and was becoming more closely aligned with the Democratic position of its rival, the *Times-Democrat*, with whom it merged in 1913.<sup>37</sup> Given the important role of race and geography in the historical development and contemporary politics of New Orleans, it seems probable that Semple's exploration of the topic would have been of some interest to the *Picayune*'s 28,600 readers.<sup>38</sup> As with the notice in *Publishers Weekly*, it was assumed by the *Picayune* that Semple was "already well known" to its audience as the author of *American history*. *Influences* was described as an extension of the themes outlined in that book, namely "How geography goes hand in hand with history and sociology".<sup>39</sup> For readers unfamiliar with the scope of anthropogeography, its purpose was defined as being to show how "social and historical development has been affected by such factors as climate, soil, rivers, seas and mountains".<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *The Publishers Weekly*, 17 June 1911.

<sup>36</sup> Nelson, "New Orleans Times-Picayune", 212.

<sup>37</sup> Dabney, *One hundred great years*.

<sup>38</sup> Dabney, *One hundred great years*, 378.

<sup>39</sup> *Daily-Picayune*, 18 June 1911.

<sup>40</sup> *Daily-Picayune*, 18 June 1911.

In contrast to the rather perfunctory announcements of *The Publishers Weekly* and the *Daily Picayune*, a more thoughtful and considered response to Semple's book was featured in *The Sun* (New York City) on 24 June.<sup>41</sup> The anonymous reviewer seems to have taken as the basis of his or her response Semple's hope that her book would fulfil a pedagogical role. Under the headline 'Geographical light on history', the reviewer lamented the current state of school geography, noting that whilst children "are taught about climate and physical configuration, about the place of the earth in the universe, about nature and strange peoples ... they do not know that Springfield is in Massachusetts or the Ozarks in Missouri".<sup>42</sup> Although disapproving of the general trend towards specialization in geography, the reviewer was keen to make clear the value of Semple's work: "none [of geography's specialisms] is so fascinating as the 'anthropogeography' of Katzel [sic] and Peschel which Ellen Semple Churchill [sic] introduces".<sup>43</sup> The reviewer saw much in Semple's book that engaged with "the study of plain geography", something which was understood to have been among "the greatest sufferers in the evolution of the modern school system".<sup>44</sup> In her attention to geographical context and to environmental circumstance, Semple's work was seen by this reviewer to incorporate fundamental components of a correct geographical education.

Beyond the empirical content of *Influences*, the review found Semple's causal scheme linking human history to its geographical situation largely valid. So convincing were the examples Semple advanced, that the reviewer expressed the ironic concern that they risked eliminating "pride of individual achievement or national characteristics" by

<sup>41</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911.

<sup>42</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911.

<sup>43</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911.

<sup>44</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911.

showing geographical location, rather than a population's inherent merit or ability, to be the controlling factor in its social development. Despite the reviewer's support for Semple's specific claims, he or she expresses some dubiety about their wider applicability. As the reviewer framed it, "The danger with the science [anthropogeography] is that, while the theories may be true and may be applicable in general cases, in specific instances other elements also come into consideration".<sup>45</sup> The reviewer's concern was that although Semple's principles were confirmed by the specific examples she provided, their general applicability was unproven—particularly when they were formulated and proposed as scientific rules. The reviewer recommended treating Semple's work not "as an exact science, but as a tentative explanation of many things that have happened on earth".<sup>46</sup>

*The Sun's* review concluded by stating that Semple "has rendered education a service" by expounding upon a component of geographical research "which the modern pedagogues are inclined to neglect".<sup>47</sup> Her repeated reference to German and French authorities was singled out for particular praise, as was her "interesting and readable manner".<sup>48</sup> By situating her work in relation to its perceived intellectual genealogy, and by applying to her writing the literary style which she and Ratzel believed necessary for the communication of anthropogeography, Semple secured the approbation of *The Sun's* reviewer. A doubt remained, however, about the scientific validity of her work, particularly in terms of its ability to furnish nomothetic

<sup>45</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911.

<sup>46</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911.

<sup>47</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911.

<sup>48</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911.

conclusions. As a consequence, the reviewer concluded that *Influences* “is an admirable piece of work, provided it is not used as a text book”.<sup>49</sup>

*The Sun*’s generally laudatory assessment of *Influences* was echoed in a review of the book published in the *Boston Evening Transcript* on 5 July.<sup>50</sup> The *Transcript* had something of a tradition of printing items relating to current debates in geography, having regularly included letters and notes from William Morris Davis.<sup>51</sup> As with previous reviews of *Influences*, and perhaps as a consequence of its earlier geographical output, the *Transcript* assumed in its readers a knowledge of Ratzel and his work. The precise details of Semple’s thesis were not made immediately obvious: her book was described only as being “on the basis of Ratzel’s monumental system of anthropogeography”.<sup>52</sup> The reader of the *Transcript* was to understand that it was as an addition to, and correction of, Ratzel’s work that Semple’s book was most valuable: “The ideas of Ratzel have been tested and verified and the author in her work has had constantly in mind the English-reading peoples for whom her work has been prepared”.<sup>53</sup>

In common with *The Sun*, the *Transcript*’s reviewer considered Semple’s “extended reference to books and personal authorities” important in extending the value and credibility of her conclusions.<sup>54</sup> Unlike *The Sun*, however, the *Transcript* understood Semple’s book to have more than simply a pedagogical value; it was seen to have a national importance and to be a “distinct credit to American scholarship”.<sup>55</sup> For this reason, and as a consequence of Semple’s accessible prose, the reviewer felt that

<sup>49</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911.

<sup>50</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, 5 July 1911.

<sup>51</sup> Chorley, Dunn, and Beckinsale, *History of the study of landforms*, II.

<sup>52</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, 5 July 1911.

<sup>53</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, 5 July 1911.

<sup>54</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, 5 July 1911.

<sup>55</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, 5 July 1911.



Semple's book was likely to appeal both to "the special student and to the general reader".<sup>56</sup>

Quite who the general reader of the *Boston Evening Transcript* was in 1911 is an interesting question. The *Transcript* was Boston's foremost newspaper and attended particularly to the city's art and literature.<sup>57</sup> The paper's literary editor, William Stanley Braithwaite (1878–1962), encouraged the work of emerging poets, one of whom, T. S. Eliot, immortalised the paper in his 1915 poem "The *Boston Evening Transcript*".<sup>58</sup> In Eliot's poem, the *Transcript's* readership was set apart from the city's lascivious street life: "When evening quickens faintly in the street, / Wakening the appetites of life in some / And to others bringing the *Boston Evening Transcript*".<sup>59</sup> One might assume, then, a certain literary or intellectual sensibility among the paper's audience that, combined with its relative familiarity with certain geographical debates (a consequence of Davis's contributions), might facilitate a useful engagement with Semple's text.

The ways in which the historical development of Boston—or its contemporaneous political life, characterised by the transition of political power from Yankee to Irish ethnic groups—might have conditioned the response of the *Transcript's* readers to Semple's text is, however, unclear.<sup>60</sup> Does it make sense to envisage a typical *Transcript* reader, or, more broadly, to contemplate a typical Bostonian reader? Do they represent a common interpretative community, defined by a shared metropolitan scale, or two distinct hermeneutic modes? Although Boston figured largely in Semple's *American history*, she mentioned it only once in *Influences* whilst discussing the geographical particularity of religion. She noted: "Christianity is one thing in St.

<sup>56</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, 5 July 1911.

<sup>57</sup> Chamberlin, *Boston Transcript*.

<sup>58</sup> Butcher, *William Stanley Braithwaite*; Szefel, "Encouraging verse".

<sup>59</sup> Negri, *Great short poems*, 51.

<sup>60</sup> Eisinger, "Ethnic political transition in Boston".

Petersburg, another among the Copts of Cairo ... and yet another in Boston”.<sup>61</sup> If religiosity can be seen to be a question of location, so too, perhaps, can the characteristics and interpretative framework of a newspaper’s audience—those to whom book reviews are directed. In this respect, the audience of the *Daily Picayune*, influenced by the local politics of race, and the readers of the *Transcript*, concerned with questions of art, literature, and education, might be conceived of as distinct and dissimilar.

It is unwise to assume, however, that the ‘general reader’ as imagined in retrospect is the same general reader to whom the *Picayune* or *Transcript* addressed their reviews of Semple’s book. Whilst it is possible to infer something of the interpretative stance of a newspaper’s audience from its social characteristics—“intelligence, socio-economic status, occupation, educational level, and so forth”—its inherent heterogeneity means that neither the *Picayune* nor the *Transcript* can stand, unproblematically, as a proxy for their various audiences.<sup>62</sup> The “active plurality” of a newspaper’s readership is such, moreover, that it would be unjustified to make broader inferences about the intellectual and hermeneutic characteristics of their readers’ metropolitan setting based solely upon single reviews.<sup>63</sup> The *Transcript* alone cannot be seen to represent Boston’s reading public.

### **Modes of reviewing and the problem of anonymity**

In addition to newspaper reviews, Semple’s book attracted short summaries in the *Cumulative Book Index*, a monthly bibliography, and in the *Review of Reviews*, a monthly index of periodical literature founded by the British journalist William Thomas Stead

<sup>61</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 175.

<sup>62</sup> Kroll, “Writing for readers”, 173.

<sup>63</sup> Vandenberg, “Coming to terms”, 79.

(1849–1912) and American academic Albert Shaw (1857–1947).<sup>64</sup> Although Stead's and Shaw's publication purported only to "digest the contents of the high-end press into a 'review of reviews'", it had also a campaigning role in contemporary social and political debates.<sup>65</sup> Initially published simultaneously in New York and London, the two editions became, by the early years of the twentieth century, increasingly distinct.<sup>66</sup> It seems that it was only the American edition that featured a summary of *Influences*. For the *Review*, the principal value of Semple's book lay in bringing to the Anglo-American audience the "monumental work of Friedrich Ratzel", for whom it had been previously "a closed book".<sup>67</sup> By subjecting Ratzel's conclusions to verification, and by seeking to apply them beyond "Teutonic and Slavonic Europe", Semple was seen to have "worked them out to a better proportioned system".<sup>68</sup>

*The Outlook*, a weekly New York City periodical, whose contributors included former United States President Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) (Figure 7), published a chiefly complimentary review of *Influences* in its 15 July issue. Although the review was unsigned, it is possible that Roosevelt was its author. Roosevelt had a long-standing interest in Social Darwinism, and his account of the United States' westward expansion during the eighteenth century—*The winning of the West* (1889–1896)—formed an important basis not only to Frederick Turner's frontier thesis, but was also cited in Semple's *American history* and *Influences*.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *Cumulative Book Index*, July 1911; *Review of Reviews*, July 1911.

<sup>65</sup> Hamlin, "Games editors played", 640.

<sup>66</sup> Dawson, "Review of Reviews".

<sup>67</sup> *Review of Reviews*, July 1911.

<sup>68</sup> *Review of Reviews*, July 1911.

<sup>69</sup> Burton, "Theodore Roosevelt's Social Darwinism"; Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*.



Figure 7. Theodore Roosevelt at *The Outlook* office (circa 1914).  
Library of Congress, FAB 0897.

For *The Outlook*, Semple's text represented a "valuable and scholarly" contribution to geography—one likely to prove "of genuine interest to a considerable class of intelligent general readers".<sup>70</sup> In common with *The Sun*, however, *The Outlook's* reviewer believed that the general applicability of Semple's anthropogeographical principles had been overstated: "The reviewer believes that in this book very naturally sometimes too much is claimed for the effect of geographic conditions upon man's development".<sup>71</sup> Despite, or perhaps because of, this qualification, the reviewer saw Semple's book as a valuable corrective to Houston Stewart Chamberlain's (1855–1927) *The foundations of the nineteenth century* (1911), a text in which Chamberlain demonstrated

<sup>70</sup> *The Outlook*, 15 July 1911.

<sup>71</sup> *The Outlook*, 15 July 1911.

the controlling influence of race upon social development and civilization, and advocated the desirability of preserving the Aryan race.<sup>72</sup>

Roosevelt offered a withering review of Chamberlain's book in his 1913 volume *History as literature*. For Roosevelt, Chamberlain's doctrine was "based upon foolish hatred", and situated in "a matrix of fairly bedlamite passion and non-sanity".<sup>73</sup> For *The Outlook* and, one might suppose for Roosevelt also, Semple's expressed desire to eliminate "the race factor" enhanced the value and relevance of her book.<sup>74</sup> If we are to assume that Roosevelt might have read *Influences*, if not necessarily reviewed it, it seems probable that Semple's literary style would have appealed to him. In his 1912 presidential address to the American Historical Association, for example, Roosevelt "reminded historians of the 'literary power' of narrative and warned against the lure of science and abstractions".<sup>75</sup> Given the universal anonymity of the newspaper and literary periodical reviews of Semple's book, it is difficult, beyond such inferences, to determine who engaged with her work in the months immediately following its publication. In a brief summary of *Influences*, published on 3 August, the New York City newspaper *The Independent* provided, however, a useful indication: "*Prominent geographers* have already welcomed the work and much of it is exceedingly interesting to *biologists* who care for problems of distribution and ecology of organisms".<sup>76</sup> Quite who these geographers and biologists were became apparent only gradually as academic journals in Britain, the United States, Germany, and Italy published responses to Semple's book (see Chapter 5).

<sup>72</sup> Chamberlain, *Foundations of the nineteenth century*.

<sup>73</sup> Roosevelt, *History as literature*, 235–236.

<sup>74</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vii.

<sup>75</sup> Kloppenberg, "Review of *History's memory*", 199.

<sup>76</sup> *The Independent*, 3 August 1911. My italicization.

Although different in remit and readership from *The Transcript*, its metropolitan stablemate, Boston's weekly *Christian Register* issued a review of *Influences* similar in spirit to that of its forerunner.<sup>77</sup> Established in 1821 as "one of the oracles of the Unitarians" in Boston, the *Register* was not, however, religiously conservative, and had, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, been supportive of Alfred Russell Wallace's (1823–1913) work on natural selection.<sup>78</sup> Despite the periodical's theistic position, the *Register's* reviewer chose not to comment directly upon Semple's perspective on the geography of religion. The *Register* sought to describe rather how Semple's work corrected and expanded that of Henry Buckle and represented, as a consequence, "the most complete exhibition of facts and theories to be found in the English language".<sup>79</sup> In common with *The Sun* and *The Outlook*, the *Register's* reviewer expressed some doubt as to the wholesale validity of Semple's environmentalist claims, but concluded that such questions need not limit the book's value: "It is not necessary to accept all of them [Semple's theories] to recognize the fact that the book is rich in material for study, full of suggestion, and stimulating to the imagination".<sup>80</sup>

The *Christian Register's* sentiments were echoed by the *Providence Daily Journal*, whose congratulatory assessment of Semple's book featured under the headline 'A German dose sweetened'.<sup>81</sup> In common with previous newspaper reviews, the *Journal* considered Semple's principal achievement to have been shaping Ratzel's *Anthropogeography*—"a German work said to be difficult reading even for Germans"—into a form accessible by the "English and American students" to whom its contents

<sup>77</sup> *Christian Register*, 3 August 1911.

<sup>78</sup> Dexter, "Louis Agassiz's lectures on zoogeography"; Hudson, *Journalism in the United States*, I, 297.

<sup>79</sup> *Christian Register*, 3 August 1911.

<sup>80</sup> *Christian Register*, 3 August 1911.

<sup>81</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 20 August 1911.

had been largely unavailable.<sup>82</sup> Like the *Christian Register* before it, the *Journal* expressed some concern as to the limitations of Semple's conclusions, but was satisfied by her admission that "some of the principles may have to be modified or their emphasis altered after wider research".<sup>83</sup> This minor caveat did not, however, "detract from the interest of the elaborate work, which shows the science as it is to-day, and which contains much that appeals to the intelligence and judgement of the thoughtful reader".<sup>84</sup>

The *Journal's* review, taken together with those published in other newspapers during the summer of 1911, demonstrates the general approbation with which Semple's ideas were greeted in the United States. A common source of praise was Semple's academic rigour and literary flourish. For the *American Library Association Booklist*, for example, *Influences* was distinguished by "Sound scholarship and a readable style".<sup>85</sup> More particularly, however, Semple's achievement was seen to lie in "liberating anthropogeography from the drag-weight of the 'social organism' theory of society", and in placing it more properly in the context of current social theory.<sup>86</sup> For the *Boston Herald*, so impressive was Semple's reformulation of Ratzel's work—characterised by a "gain in clearness of statement and concreteness of expression"—that *Influences* could, conceivably, "be advantageously re-translated for the use of Germans themselves".<sup>87</sup> It seems apparent that for the *Herald*, then, the fundamental correctness of anthropogeography was not in doubt, and that the value of Semple's book depended upon her proper framing and contextualisation of its principles. By presenting her

<sup>82</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 20 August 1911.

<sup>83</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 20 August 1911.

<sup>84</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 20 August 1911.

<sup>85</sup> *Booklist*, September 1911.

<sup>86</sup> *Boston Herald*, 2 September 1911.

<sup>87</sup> *Boston Herald*, 2 September 1911.

conclusions with “modesty and reserve”, and by making clear their “merely tentative character”, the *Herald’s* opinion was that Semple “increases rather than diminishes the value of her book”.<sup>88</sup>

The relatively uncritical acceptance by the *Boston Herald* of Semple’s anthropogeographical principles contrasted, to some extent, with the thoughtful and measured assessment of their applicability by the *Springfield Daily Republican*. Established in 1824 as a weekly Whig newspaper, the *Republican’s* political stance changed during the mid-nineteenth century as it became an important opponent of slavery.<sup>89</sup> In its Liberal Republican stance, the *Republican* was the political antithesis of the New Orleans *Daily Picayune*. Whilst both newspapers welcomed Semple’s book, it seems probable that they did so for different reasons. Given the brevity of the *Picayune’s* summary of *Influences* it is, perhaps, unwise to infer from it alone a particular, local reading of the book. In the case of the *Republican’s* review, however, it is apparent that location mattered. Unlike previous assessments of Semple’s work—which dealt only with the broad tenets of her environmentalist position—the *Republican* attended particularly to her pronouncements on the geographical regions with which its readership would be most familiar: the continental United States, and, most especially, its eastern seaboard. By addressing, specifically, the application of anthropogeographical principles to the United States, rather than treating them in abstract, the *Republican’s* reviewer was able to present a more nuanced assessment of their validity.

For the *Republican*, the function of “mountain barriers and waterways” in relation to social development was understood to be “universally recognized” and an

<sup>88</sup> *Boston Herald*, 2 September 1911.

<sup>89</sup> Hooker, *Story of an independent newspaper*.



uncontroversial component, therefore, of Semple's thesis.<sup>90</sup> Where the paper expressed some concern, however, was in relation to her discussion of climate and its effect on different social groups. As the *Republican's* reviewer made clear, "The eastern coast of the United States gives a specially good opportunity for the study of climate and its influence upon man" since, in a relatively narrow latitudinal range, the climatic variations are pronounced. According to Semple's scheme, the "contrasts in temperament, manner of life, point of view, etc." resulting from this climatic gradient should be particularly marked.<sup>91</sup> She cites, by way of explanation, "the famous contrast between New England Puritan and Virginian Cavalier", and concludes that the divergent population characteristics of the Northern and Southern states have "become still more different owing to the fact that the large negro labouring class in the South, itself primarily a result of climate, has served to exclude foreign immigration".<sup>92</sup> For the *Republican* this conclusion represented "too strong a statement", in part because Semple had failed properly to acknowledge the "French Huguenot and Scotch-Irish settlement" in Southern states.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the tentative nature of Semple's claims as to the significance of climatic influence, the *Republican's* reviewer believed it desirable that she distinguish more overtly "between the direct and indirect effects of climate".<sup>94</sup> Semple was aware, however, of the importance of so doing. She thought it vital to "distinguish between direct and indirect results of climate, temporary and permanent, physiological and psychological ones, because the confusion of the various effects breeds far-reaching conclusions".<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> *Springfield Daily Republican*, 7 September 1911.

<sup>91</sup> *Springfield Daily Republican*, 7 September 1911.

<sup>92</sup> *Springfield Daily Republican*, 7 September 1911.

<sup>93</sup> *Springfield Daily Republican*, 7 September 1911.

<sup>94</sup> *Springfield Daily Republican*, 7 September 1911.

<sup>95</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 608.

Semple was conscious, moreover, that the “direct modification of man by climate is partly an *a priori* assumption” and that “incontestable evidences of such modifications are not very numerous”.<sup>96</sup> Despite this circumspection, Semple was explicit in her view that whilst the direct physical effect of climate was not always obvious, it “undoubtedly modifies many physiological processes” and informs a population’s temperament and intellectual energy.<sup>97</sup> The *Republican’s* reviewer concurred, broadly, with this position, and, in what was certain to appeal to the newspaper’s local readership, noted: “The northerner is more domestic, and works harder; the southerner is less thrifty and feels less compulsion to work. Hence class lines are sharper in the South because in the North the labourer, under the whip of climate, is constantly recruited into the rank of capitalist”.<sup>98</sup> Semple’s representation here of Jedidiah Morse’s (1761–1826) moral topography cast the *Republican’s* readership in a positive light—an accidental compliment which flattered the reviewer.<sup>99</sup>

Despite the largely positive response to *Influences* evident in its early newspaper reviews, efforts to assess the function of Semple’s book—beyond its pedagogical role in informing the “thoughtful reader” or “student of anthropology”—were somewhat limited.<sup>100</sup> In almost all cases the reviewers assumed, or implied, that their readers “had favourable [prior] knowledge” of Ratzel’s *Anthropogeography* and Semple’s *American history*.<sup>101</sup> Framed in this way as part of an already-established body of knowledge, and as an “index to Ratzel’s thought”, *Influences* required a somewhat lower burden of proof

<sup>96</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 608.

<sup>97</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 608.

<sup>98</sup> *Springfield Daily Republican*, 7 September 1911.

<sup>99</sup> For a discussion of Morse’s contribution see, for example, Livingstone, “Moral geographies of the American Republic”.

<sup>100</sup> *Providence Daily Journal*, 20 August 1911; *The Continent*, 24 August 1911.

<sup>101</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, 23 September 1911.

than might otherwise have been expected.<sup>102</sup> I mean simply that whilst the scholarly authority of Semple's book depended upon, to some extent, her attempts to place anthropogeography on a scientific basis, its popular authority was a function of her "direct transmission of Ratzelian principles into American cultural and geographical understanding".<sup>103</sup> The fundamental validity of Semple's thesis seems not to have been at question.

It is possible, conversely, that the caution of newspapers' reviewers to assess the content of *Influences* in an analytical manner was a consequence of their unfamiliarity with its principles. As Bronson suggests, anthropogeography was "new to the United States, and few critics felt competent to deal with such a theoretical work".<sup>104</sup> The authority and credit which they sought to confer upon Semple's book as a proxy of Ratzel's anthropogeography might represent, then, an effort not to appear ignorant. The popularity of Semple's *American history* (the WorldCat union catalogue lists more than 1,500 extant copies) would suggest that a significant proportion of *Influences*' reviewers were likely to have read it, or have had access to it. Ratzel's *Anthropogeographie* was, by contrast, a "closed book": its language and relative unavailability in the Anglophone world being limiting factors.<sup>105</sup> The familiarity with which Ratzel's work was treated in these reviews is, perhaps, erroneous, and illustrative of a particular rhetorical stance and style of reviewing which privileged idealised "intelligent general readers".<sup>106</sup> Given the anonymity of these reviews, it is difficult, moreover, to make inferences about their authors' horizon of expectation, and the interpretative presuppositions which they brought to their reading of *Influences*.

<sup>102</sup> Buttimer, *Society and milieu*, 29.

<sup>103</sup> Berman, *Modernist fiction*, 164.

<sup>104</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*, 98.

<sup>105</sup> *Review of Reviews*, July 1911.

<sup>106</sup> *The Outlook*, 15 July 1911.

### **Trans-Atlantic flows: the international circulation of *Influences***

During the summer of 1910, in correspondence with John Scott Keltie, Semple discussed the desirability of arranging a British edition of her forthcoming book. Her intention was that *Influences* be published simultaneously in the United States and Britain, not that it be adapted in any particular way to the British market. Following Keltie's advice, Semple "left the disposition of the English rights" to her publisher Henry Holt, who arranged for the London firm Constable and Company to act as the book's European distributor.<sup>107</sup> Upon the book's publication in the United States, Holt shipped "150 and 10 free copies in sheets" to Constable in London, which were then bound and sold at 18s.<sup>108</sup> In "the early part of 1912", Constable ordered a further 100 copies from Holt—an indication of the book's comparative success.<sup>109</sup> Holt's stock of unbound copies had, however, been exhausted, and they shipped the outstanding order with their own binding.<sup>110</sup> Although it is unclear when Constable offered *Influences* for sale, the book was reviewed first by *The Bookseller*, an organ of the British book trade, on 29 September 1911.

Unlike the early summaries that accompanied the publication of *Influences* in the United States, *The Bookseller* offered an extended description of the book's content, method, and intended audience. In a highly complimentary assessment of Semple's work, *The Bookseller* noted that "the skill with which she marshals her facts and makes her inductions at once arrests and retains the interested attention of the reader".<sup>111</sup> In common with the *Springfield Daily Republican*, *The Bookseller* drew its readers' attention to

<sup>107</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1912. Semple to John S. Keltie, 2 April 1911.

<sup>108</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Treasurer to Semple, 16 November 1912.

<sup>109</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Treasurer to Semple, 16 November 1912.

<sup>110</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Treasurer to Semple, 16 November 1912.

<sup>111</sup> *The Bookseller*, 29 September 1911.

the sections of the book most likely to correspond with their personal environmental experiences: “English people will naturally turn to the chapter describing the main characteristics of island peoples”.<sup>112</sup> In this way, *Influences* was seen to have for its British readers, a local geographical significance. *The Bookseller* noted also that, as a consequence of the “mass of facts instanced and her comprehensive knowledge of her wide and important subject”, Semple’s conclusions were of potential interest “to all races”.<sup>113</sup> *Influences* was important, then, both locally and globally.

The attempt to make explicit to the book’s potential readers its unique significance or local interest was also apparent in *The Scotsman*. As the paper’s reviewer noted, anthropogeography was “a rich and in this country imperfectly explored field of science”.<sup>114</sup> British readers owed Semple, therefore, a “debt of gratitude” for bringing to their attention a “timely work” whose conclusions spoke to “present problems of politics and commerce”, particularly in relation to “the lines, tendencies, and limitations of trade conquest”.<sup>115</sup> The potential significance of *Influences* was a function, then, not only of its “abundant references to authorities”, but also of its topicality and timeliness.<sup>116</sup>

The perceived relevance of Semple’s book mattered somewhat less, however, to *The Morning Post*, a conservative London daily. Under the headline “The brotherhood of man”, the *Post*’s reviewer—identified only by the initials F. G. A.—explained how *Influences* supported and confirmed a monogenist understanding of human development (the notion which holds that all human races share a single biological origin).<sup>117</sup>

<sup>112</sup> *The Bookseller*, 29 September 1911.

<sup>113</sup> *The Bookseller*, 29 September 1911.

<sup>114</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 October 1911.

<sup>115</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 October 1911.

<sup>116</sup> *The Scotsman*, 2 October 1911.

<sup>117</sup> *The Morning Post*, 5 October 1911.

Questions of human origin underpinned much biological, anthropological, philosophical, and religious discussion throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century.<sup>118</sup> Although such debates were influenced importantly by theological principles, novel theories of transmutation, evolution, and speciation were significant spurs. These discussions had an important bearing upon understandings of racial inferiority and superiority. Although the debate was settled, to some degree, during the 1870s—when, along with other works, Darwin’s *Descent of man* (1871) effectively refuted the premise that race was akin to species—the promotion and discussion of monogenist and polygenist perspectives remained live.<sup>119</sup> The persistence of polygenist understandings of human development reflected, in part, an unwillingness to concede the troubling moral implications of monogenism: that there existed a “common ancestry for black and white, Christian and Pagan, cultured and barbarous”.<sup>120</sup> As the *Post*’s reviewer conceded, this was “a view of humanity not wholly pleasing”.<sup>121</sup>

Readers of the *Post* who had travelled “off the beaten track”—perhaps “camping with the lonely Indian on his native lake shores, musing amid the scented turmoil of Eastern bazaars, watching sleek Kanakas fishing in some Queensland lagoon, or swarthy Levantines quarrelling on the quays of Scutari”—could not have failed, its reviewer noted, to “resist the curious conviction that, after all, there was something in the old Biblical version of a human race dispersed from a common centre and gradually moulded in different patterns by the tyranny of environment”.<sup>122</sup> What Semple’s text had done, for the *Post*’s reviewer at least, was by dint of its scholarship to put these

<sup>118</sup> Haller, “Species problem”; Livingstone, “Geographical inquiry”.

<sup>119</sup> Haller, “Species problem”.

<sup>120</sup> *The Morning Post*, 5 October 1911.

<sup>121</sup> *The Morning Post*, 5 October 1911.

<sup>122</sup> *The Morning Post*, 5 October 1911.

suspicious on a scientific footing: “it is in working out a thousand interesting results that Miss Semple overwhelmingly convinces us”.<sup>123</sup>

It is unclear whether the reviewer’s opinion as to the persuasiveness of Semple’s argument would have been shared by the *Post*’s editor, Howell Arthur Gwynne (1865–1950).<sup>124</sup> Gwynne held strongly anti-Semitic views, and the *Post* was an occasional organ for these; particularly following the publication in English of the fraudulent *The protocols of the elders of Zion* (1920), a text which alleged a Jewish plot to achieve world domination.<sup>125</sup> Part of Gwynne’s prejudice depended upon the notion of Jewishness as a racial/species category, and the political perspective of his newspaper reflected this to some extent.<sup>126</sup> Semple’s implicit effort to undermine such categorizations would seem, then, to contradict the paper’s editorial stance. This discrepancy seems not to have detracted in any overt way from the reviewer’s commendatory assessment of *Influences*.

The *Post*’s reviewer was, however, somewhat ambivalent about the effectiveness of Semple’s prose. Despite detecting occasional glimpses of “an attractive style”, the text was deemed “occasionally arid, with a brevity that only just escapes being brusque”.<sup>127</sup> Where Semple had “lost a great chance”, the reviewer believed, was in failing to emulate the picturesque style of Buckle.<sup>128</sup> Given that one of Semple’s explicit intentions had been to offset Buckle’s non-scientific perspective on environmentalism, her disinclination to imitate his stylistic arrangement is, perhaps, unsurprising. Regardless of these concerns, the *Post*’s reviewer recommended Semple’s book “to serious students of the subject” and “to the wider public” on account of “the

<sup>123</sup> *The Morning Post*, 5 October 1911.

<sup>124</sup> Hindle, *The Morning Post*.

<sup>125</sup> Ben-Itto, *Lie that wouldn’t die*.

<sup>126</sup> Wilson, “‘Protocols of Zion’ and the ‘Morning Post’”; Wilson, *Politics of the Morning Post*.

<sup>127</sup> *The Morning Post*, 5 October 1911.

<sup>128</sup> *The Morning Post*, 5 October 1911.

soundness of her conclusions and the absence of dogma”.<sup>129</sup> As the reviewer concluded, “for all the occasional dryness of style, the author has assembled a wonderful profusion of material for the proper study of mankind”.<sup>130</sup>

The themes of scholarship, local relevance, and scientific authority were apparent, also, in a review published in the *Irish Times*, Ireland’s “leading unionist newspaper”.<sup>131</sup> For the *Times*, Semple’s book represented “one of the most important books ever published upon generalised geography”.<sup>132</sup> The veracity of this claim was demonstrated by reference to Semple’s impressive scholarship: by supporting her arguments with “an infinite variety of instances”, she was seen to have produced an “encyclopædia of geographical facts”.<sup>133</sup> In the scope, ambition, and industry of her work, the *Times* saw fit comparison only with Darwin, but conceded that Semple’s text was not “illustrating anything so wonderful and new” as a theory of evolution by means of natural selection.<sup>134</sup> Like the *Morning Post*, however, the *Times* was troubled by Semple’s prose, finding it verbose and “a little exhausting”.<sup>135</sup>

In an effort to persuade its readers of the book’s local relevance, the *Times* attended particularly to the aspects of *Influences* which dealt with island environments and with Celtic ethnicity. As the reviewer made clear, “To us who live in the British Islands the chapter on Island Peoples is of deep interest”.<sup>136</sup> Part of this interest lay in the fact that Semple’s book seemed to offer an explanation for Celtic religiosity—which was described as the necessary consequence of life in “remote, isolated, or mountainous

<sup>129</sup> *The Morning Post*, 5 October 1911.

<sup>130</sup> *The Morning Post*, 5 October 1911.

<sup>131</sup> Wheatley, *Nationalism and the Irish Party*, 5.

<sup>132</sup> *Irish Times*, 20 October 1911.

<sup>133</sup> *Irish Times*, 20 October 1911.

<sup>134</sup> *Irish Times*, 20 October 1911.

<sup>135</sup> *Irish Times*, 20 October 1911.

<sup>136</sup> *Irish Times*, 20 October 1911.



regions”.<sup>137</sup> Perhaps more significantly, however, the review quoted at length from Semple’s discussion of Irish history, and her identification of the apparent reasons for the nation’s comparative domination by England. In Semple’s view, although the Irish “started abreast of the other Northern Celts in nautical efficiency”, they experienced an “arrested development in navigation” from which they did not recover fully.<sup>138</sup> According to Semple’s thesis, moreover, Great Britain acted as a barrier to the stimulating effect of commercial and cultural exchange with continental Europe and, as a consequence, Ireland “tarried in the tribal stage till after the English conquest”.<sup>139</sup> Semple’s conclusion was that, as a result of excessive isolation, Ireland “failed to learn the salutary lesson of political co-operation and centralisation for defence, such as Scotland learned from England’s aggressions, and England from her close Continental neighbour”.<sup>140</sup>

Despite the unflattering nature of Semple’s account, it was, for the *Times*’s reviewer, proof that “Ireland suffered from ... failure, long before English influence could reach her”.<sup>141</sup> Semple’s position satisfied, in some ways, the paper’s unionist politics. Indeed, the reviewer expressed ironic surprise that, given the negative influence of isolation on the nation’s historical development, “At this moment, in the twentieth century, Ireland is begging for more complete isolation!”<sup>142</sup> Semple’s thesis was, in this way, co-opted to fulfil a particular political agenda. Although the review of *Influences* did not straightforwardly misrepresent the book’s content, it did present it in a manner intended to appeal to the political bias of the paper’s readership. This particular staging

<sup>137</sup> *Irish Times*, 20 October 1911.

<sup>138</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 298.

<sup>139</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 435.

<sup>140</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 435.

<sup>141</sup> *Irish Times*, 20 October 1911.

<sup>142</sup> *Irish Times*, 20 October 1911.

of *Influences* demonstrated not only its scholarly worth, but also its local political significance.

Local relevance was less significant, however, to the *Glasgow Herald*; perhaps because Glasgow is mentioned in *Influences* only twice, briefly. The *Herald's* reviewer—identified by the initials W. P.—seems to have been more eager to explain the global scope of anthropogeography, devoting most of the 1,300-word review to a description of the subject's principles.<sup>143</sup> Where the reviewer offered direct comment on Semple's book was, however, in relation to its prose and intellectual authority. For the *Herald*, *Influences* was “a monument of erudition and arrangement”, but was not free from “the defects of its qualities”.<sup>144</sup> Semple's rigorous support of her environmentalist argument was seen to detract from the wider consideration of geographical factors. As the reviewer noted, “Miss Semple's super-Germanic subservience to facts, and her determination to give concrete proof of every opinion she advances, have precluded any attempt to deal at length with the more subtle and also more profound influences—artistic, literary, and religious—of geographical environment”.<sup>145</sup>

The very breadth of Semple's scholarship, which had been previously understood as a warrant of the book's credibility, was potentially also a failing (although it was not seen to detract from the validity of her argument). Whilst Ratzel had been subject to criticism for insufficient reference to authorities, Semple was admonished for the opposite fault. Where the *Herald* saw particular scope for the improvement of *Influences* was, however, in relation to its prose. In a topical reference to the recent award of the Nobel Prize in Literature to the Belgian author Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949), the *Herald's* reviewer noted that Semple's book could be “an absolutely ideal volume” if

<sup>143</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 21 October 1911.

<sup>144</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 21 October 1911.

<sup>145</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 21 October 1911.

only Maeterlinck “were to go conscientiously through her book and then write an imaginative supplement to it”.<sup>146</sup>

Although linked by questions of authority, scholarship, and relevance, the various British newspapers which commented upon the publication of *Influences* did so in unique ways. Whilst it is possible to say, in broad terms, that the British (and Irish) press treatment of Semple was approbative, it does not stand as a straightforward surrogate by which the popular British reception of anthropogeography can be described. Here, again, the question is one of scale: what is lost when considering the national response to *Influences* is precisely what the book meant, and why it was welcomed, in London, Dublin, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Yet, if we are to think of scale as a social, rather than geographical category, the metropolitan reception of Semple’s work can be seen to be inescapably part of its national reception. Semple’s book was read and reviewed in simultaneously overlapping and complex circumstances—defined both by local urban conditions and by more remote national concerns. It is not possible to speak of the Dublin reading of *Influences*, for example, as a discrete and spatially-bounded phenomenon without consideration being given to contemporaneous national political and religious issues.

### **Semple’s literary style**

In 1922 John Wright, Librarian of the American Geographical Society, invited Semple to inscribe the Society’s copy of *Influence* with a short postscript, setting out the conditions of the book’s production, and amplifying her thoughts as to its purpose (see Figure 37).<sup>147</sup> In her brief correspondence with Wright, Semple conveyed an apparently

<sup>146</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 21 October 1911.

<sup>147</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, American Geographical Society Library, GF31 .S5.

relaxed attitude towards the book's critical reception: "When the book was finally out, I started around the world and did not hear anything about it for eight months. I was content not to".<sup>148</sup> This nonchalant air was, perhaps, a little disingenuous: Semple's press clipping bureau had kept her up-to-date with newspaper reviews through her journey, and she received "Several very appreciative letters from both geographers and historians (*mirabile dictum*)" en route.<sup>149</sup> It seems, moreover, that Semple was in touch with one newspaper's literary editor during her journey: the *Chicago Evening Post's* Floyd Dell (1887–1969).

Dell joined the *Chicago Evening Post* as editor of its "Friday Literary Review" supplement in 1911, having previously written for the socialist monthly the *Tri-City Workers' Magazine*.<sup>150</sup> Semple seems first to have contacted Dell in early 1911, whilst living in Chicago, to ask which of the *Post's* contributors had reviewed "Mrs. [Alice] Maynell's last volume of essays".<sup>151</sup> It is not apparent whether Semple thought the review worthy of praise or criticism. Given Dell's socialist and working class background, and the fact that he had an "unconventional, 'feminist' marriage", he seems, for Semple at least, an unlikely choice of correspondent.<sup>152</sup> When next Semple wrote to Dell, on 18 November 1911, it was by postcard from Singapore where she had paused in her journey from Hong Kong to Sumatra.<sup>153</sup> In her brief note, Semple sent congratulations to Dell's wife, Margery Currey, for an unspecified achievement (most probably in relation to Currey's suffragist work). What Semple did not mention, however, was the *Post's* review of *Influences*, which had been published the previous week.

<sup>148</sup> AGSA. Isaiah Bowman Papers, Folder "Semple, Ellen Churchill 1920–32". Semple to Wright, 1 February [1922].

<sup>149</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Edward N. Bristol, 4 January 1912.

<sup>150</sup> Millett, *Contemporary American authors*.

<sup>151</sup> The Newberry Library (hereafter NL), Midwest MS Dell, 1908–1969, Box 11, Folder 426. Semple to Dell, [1911].

<sup>152</sup> Dumenil, "Love, literature, and politics", 700.

<sup>153</sup> NL, Midwest MS Dell, 1908–1969, Box 11, Folder 426. Semple to Dell, 18 November 1911.

Despite Dell's personal connection with Semple, the *Post's* anonymous review was notably even-handed in its assessment: praising and criticizing in near equal measure. Unlike several earlier reviews, however, the *Post* assumed of its readers no pre-existing knowledge of Ratzel's work; it detailed carefully the development of his perspective on anthropogeography and described the ways in which Semple had modified them for "the English reading public".<sup>154</sup> Semple, on the other hand, was seen to require no introduction: she was "known to the public for a long time as a contributor to geographical magazines and as author of 'American History and Its Geographic Conditions'".<sup>155</sup> For the *Post's* reviewer, Semple's project of adapting and restating Ratzel's basic principles had been achieved most elegantly by substituting "facts taken from the American continent for the illustrations given by Ratzel".<sup>156</sup> In this respect, Semple's incorporation of contemporary scholarship was praised: "Material furnished by the publications of the Smithsonian Institution has been used to great advantage".<sup>157</sup>

The work upon which Semple drew in this respect was that of the Smithsonian's curator Otis Tufton Mason (1838–1908). Mason's 1896 volume *Primitive travel and transportation*, which Semple cited at length, was an attempt to understand the historical development of different indigenous populations by reference to their material culture. The influence of environmental circumstances upon this development was, for Mason, a significant explanatory factor.<sup>158</sup> His ethnographic examination of the material artefacts of these different populations seemed to lend tacit support to Semple's interpretation of environmental causation. As he noted, "like [environmental] causes

<sup>154</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>155</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>156</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>157</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>158</sup> Kohlstedt, "North American museums"; Kohlstedt, "Concepts of place".

produce like [social] effects”.<sup>159</sup> Although Mason’s interpretative stance later changed following criticism by Franz Boas, Semple elected to refer only to those aspects of his earlier work which clearly supported her position.<sup>160</sup> For the *Post’s* reviewer, perhaps unaware of Mason’s change of heart, Semple’s selective referencing was convincing.

Quite who the *Post’s* reviewer was is not clear. It is apparent, however, that he or she possessed a formidable historical knowledge which permitted the identification of “a few errors” in Semple’s thesis.<sup>161</sup> Semple’s claim that the typical Polish head type is essentially Germanic was, for example, refuted: “That territory [Poland], evacuated by Germanic tribes during the *Völkerwanderung*, was settled by Slavs and reconquered by Germans after the tenth century. The mixture of the two races appears in the form of their heads”.<sup>162</sup> Similarly, Semple’s assertion that the French region Pays de Gex separates Switzerland from the canton of Geneva was challenged: “As a fact, this small part of the Jura has no other outlet than on the Lemman, and for this reason enjoys free trade with Switzerland”.<sup>163</sup>

Beyond these factual inaccuracies, the *Post* was disappointed by the quality of the book’s illustrations, which were rather more naive than those which had accompanied Semple’s *American history*. As the reviewer noted, “A work of such tremendous importance ought to be provided with splendid maps and charts, which, unfortunately, are lacking. In almost every instance the scale of the maps is such that it is impossible for the reader to get an adequate idea of the points they serve to illustrate”.<sup>164</sup> While Semple’s literary style was not subject to criticism—“it is not dry reading”—her

<sup>159</sup> Mason, “Resemblances in arts”, 248.

<sup>160</sup> Buettner-Janusch, “Boas and Mason”.

<sup>161</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>162</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>163</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>164</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

accessibility was.<sup>165</sup> For the *Post*, it would have been preferable if “technical terms used in the book had been translated or explained, for even Webster’s Dictionary fails in many instances to give their meaning”.<sup>166</sup> Such limitations did not, however, detract from the book’s intrinsic value, and the *Post*’s reviewer concluded that “Sociologists, anthropologists, economists and geographers will be equally interested in the book, which is an extremely valuable addition to all four of these sciences”.<sup>167</sup>

Quite how significant the book’s cross-disciplinary appeal might be was made clear the following week when *The Dial*—a Chicago literary magazine—published a review of the book by a marine biologist, Charles Atwood Kofoid (1865–1947). *The Dial*, which carried the subtitle *A semi-monthly journal of literary criticism, discussion, and information*, was not a specialist academic publication, but addressed “the interested, informed general reader”.<sup>168</sup> Although Kofoid’s research interests were principally in relation to oceanic plankton, his intellectual hinterland was broad. He was a “collector of books” and “an industrious investigator and reader”.<sup>169</sup> As a consequence of his wide reading, Kofoid contributed “several thousand reviews” to professional and popular periodicals on various topics relating broadly to biology.<sup>170</sup> It was, then, from a biological vantage point that Kofoid approached Semple’s book.

For Kofoid, the logic of Semple’s argument was not in doubt, but its contemporary applicability was. The industrial and technological developments of the nineteenth, and early-twentieth centuries were, for Kofoid, evidence of the “elimination

<sup>165</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>166</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>167</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 10 November 1911.

<sup>168</sup> Golding, “Dialogics of modernism”, 44.

<sup>169</sup> Kirby, “Charles Atwood Kofoid”, 462.

<sup>170</sup> Kirby, “Charles Atwood Kofoid”, 462.

of geographic environment as a predominant factor in man's evolution".<sup>171</sup> As he framed it, the discoveries of modern science were "fundamentally changing his [man's] relations to the physical configurations of the earth ... and modifying, indeed often minimizing, their effects upon his social and national evolution".<sup>172</sup> The technologies of mass communication were seen to have circumvented the controlling limitations of geography by facilitated the "intermingling of the peoples of the earth".<sup>173</sup> Semple's failure to address this fact was, Kofoid believed, a notable weakness.

Kofoid's review praised Semple for presenting Ratzel's work in a "less dogmatic" fashion, and for providing a thorough analysis of the topographic and climatic factors which related to human development.<sup>174</sup> Where Semple's analysis was lacking, Kofoid felt, was in relation to heredity. For Kofoid, heredity was "a counterfoil ... to the effect of environmental factors".<sup>175</sup> He saw that in the "higher levels and later stages of human evolution" the inheritance of genetic material from "great leaders" was a more powerful influence in shaping the future development of a society than were environmental conditions.<sup>176</sup> Semple had made a conscious choice, however, to concentrate her analysis upon geographic conditions, rather than the "internal forces of race", in part because she saw the former to have been "operating strongly and operating persistently" throughout human history.<sup>177</sup> Given that the environment was, in Semple's view, "a stable force", and one which "never sleeps", it could be considered "for all intents and purposes immutable in comparison with the other factor [heredity]"

<sup>171</sup> Kofoid, "Environment as a force in human action", 399.

<sup>172</sup> Kofoid, "Environment as a force in human action", 399.

<sup>173</sup> Kofoid, "Environment as a force in human action", 398.

<sup>174</sup> Kofoid, "Environment as a force in human action", 399.

<sup>175</sup> Kofoid, "Environment as a force in human action", 399.

<sup>176</sup> Kofoid, "Environment as a force in human action", 399.

<sup>177</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 2.



in explaining the historical development of human society.<sup>178</sup> Whilst Semple's book had failed to Kofoid's satisfaction to adequately engage with this important biological principle, he saw value in her work: to "the biologist and historian", *Influences* was "of unusual interest".<sup>179</sup>

Kofoid's review of *Influences* was written a year after he had joined the Department of Zoology at the University of California at Berkeley. He remained there until his retirement in 1936 and, shortly before his death in 1947, donated his substantial collection of books—numbering more than 44,000 volumes—to the University Library.<sup>180</sup> Among Kofoid's bequest was his review copy of *Influences*, distinguished by his *ex libris* bookplate (Figure 8).<sup>181</sup> Such indicators of provenance have, as outlined in Chapter 2, an important significance when it comes to understanding the material history of individual copies of *Influences*. Since the circulation of Semple's ideas depended in part upon the circulation of her book, it is helpful to be able to relate the physical trajectory of *Influences* to its intellectual impact. Knowing when Kofoid's book was deposited also provides a *terminus post quem*—a date after which certain reading encounters in the University Library must have occurred (see Appendix A).

<sup>178</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, 2.

<sup>179</sup> Kofoid, "Environment as a force in human action", 399.

<sup>180</sup> Kirby, "Charles Atwood Kofoid"; Peterson, *University of California Library*.

<sup>181</sup> Eales, "Provenance of some early medical and biological books".



Figure 8. Charles Atwood Kofoid's personalized bookplate. University of California at Berkeley, Doe Memorial Library, Gardner Main Stacks, GF31.S5.

Kofoid's analysis of Semple's book demonstrates, to some extent, the relative freedom he had to bring his own biological concerns to the reviewing process. In this respect, whilst his perspective would undoubtedly have been of interest to the "informed general reader" to which *The Dial* was addressed, his engagement with the text was clearly that of a biologist.<sup>182</sup> In some senses, then, it is not possible to isolate a single factor responsible for shaping the tone and content of a published review: author, editor, remit, and audience can all be seen to matter. That the extent to which these various components are expressed in a review can vary, is evident in a short notice published in *The Survey*, a New York philanthropic journal. The development of the journal, which had been originally a charitable publication, paralleled the

<sup>182</sup> Golding, "Dialogics of modernism", 44.

professionalization of social work in the United States, and addressed topics relating to welfare and social justice.<sup>183</sup>

The review's author, Lillian Brandt (1873–1951), a social welfare researcher, shared certain of Semple's intellectual positions, particularly in relation to Social Darwinism.<sup>184</sup> Her interest in social deprivation led Brant to take "exception to a social Darwin approach that assigned the cause of poverty to intemperance, idleness, dishonesty, shiftlessness, and other moral defects".<sup>185</sup> For Brant, these were the results of poverty, rather than the cause of it. In her assessment of *Influences*, Brandt praised Semple's efforts to "eliminate the influence of repudiated theories" (Social Darwinism being one) from her interpretation of Ratzel's anthropogeography.<sup>186</sup> Satisfying this requirement did not in Brandt's opinion necessarily widen the audience for, or potential relevance of, Semple's book. As she concluded, "The resulting volume is in no sense a popular one".<sup>187</sup> Yet, for Brandt, Semple's scholarship was such that her book was one "which no student of the influence of the earth upon man can afford to overlook".<sup>188</sup>

Perhaps the most effusive review of *Influences* published in a popular periodical was that which appeared on 21 December 1911 in *The Nation*—a weekly New York City magazine, and the advertising venue of choice for Semple's publisher, Henry Holt.<sup>189</sup> The anonymous review, dripping with superlatives, was similar in tone to that published earlier by the *Boston Evening Transcript*—that is, Semple's book was seen to be not only a significant scholarly accomplishment, but also, and more importantly, a national triumph. For *The Nation*, *Influences* was "a remarkable book, one of the few products of

<sup>183</sup> Chambers, *Paul U. Kellog*.

<sup>184</sup> Brandt, "Cause of poverty".

<sup>185</sup> Coleman and Rebach, "Poverty", 355.

<sup>186</sup> Brandt, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 1346.

<sup>187</sup> Brandt, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 1346.

<sup>188</sup> Brandt, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 1346.

<sup>189</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

American contemporary science which may safely challenge the best that has been put forth in this field by any foreign scientist whatsoever”.<sup>190</sup> Semple’s book was not seen to have a parochial significance only to the geographical community, but a truly national importance: Semple had demonstrated that, in terms of intellectual achievement and scholarly rigour, the United States could equal or exceed any other nation. By so doing, Semple had also subverted the erroneous conflation of femininity and unreason.<sup>191</sup> As *The Nation* made clear, “Let us add, without any condescension, that it [*Influences*] places Miss Semple among the handful of women in the world over who are the peers of the foremost men of science”.<sup>192</sup>

For *The Nation*’s reviewer, Semple’s book was “a model of logical arrangement and clear statement”, and in this respect was a significant improvement upon Ratzel’s original scheme.<sup>193</sup> The particular value of her approach lay, *The Nation* concluded, in bringing together “geography, anthropology, history, and economics” and making clear “the causal relationships between one and another of these”.<sup>194</sup> By drawing upon these disparate sources, Semple rendered her conclusions into a valid and scientific form that could not “be gainsaid”.<sup>195</sup> Put simply, she had produced the text that “[Henry] Buckle dreamed of”, but had failed to realise.<sup>196</sup> Rather than the monocausal determinism Buckle had advanced, Semple’s work was seen to represent a more restrained and considered multicausalism.

Making clear the “two, three, or more causes that contribute to any given effect”, demonstrated the complexity of the relationships with which Semple was

<sup>190</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

<sup>191</sup> Lloyd, *Man of reason*.

<sup>192</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

<sup>193</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

<sup>194</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

<sup>195</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

<sup>196</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

dealing, and explained quite why “she refrains from summing up her immense investigations in the form of a general law”.<sup>197</sup> This was not to suggest, however, that Semple’s book was unscientific or inadequately researched. The reviewer was unable to recall “a scientific book which contains more facts on a page than hers”.<sup>198</sup> It was as a scholarly and logical indication of how the subject of anthropogeography might in the future be approached, rather than as a collection of definitive statements about the relationship between humanity and the physical environment, that Semple’s book was seen to have most value. By combining unimpeachable scholarship and a style “enriched by memorable phrases”, *Influences* could not, *The Nation* concluded, “fail to sink deep in many minds”.<sup>199</sup>

News of *The Nation*’s highly laudatory assessment of her book did not take long to reach Semple. She wrote to her editor from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), clearly enthused by the review: “Did you see the glorified review on my book in the ‘Nation’ of Dec. 21? It makes me eager to get to work again”.<sup>200</sup> Her editor’s reply indicates that, as far as Henry Holt was concerned, *Influences* was both a critical and commercial success: “Yes, the *Nation* review was of quite the right sort, and is of a piece with comments our travellers [sales representatives] are hearing from college people. I think you will be pleased with the report of sales I sent you some weeks ago. The book has done enormously well for the short time it has been before the public, and promises to do better”.<sup>201</sup>

In the popular periodical and newspaper press, *Influences* was subject to varied and distinct interpretations. Opinion differed, for example, as to the book’s specific strengths, particular failings, and intended audience. For certain reviewers Semple’s book

<sup>197</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

<sup>198</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

<sup>199</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

<sup>200</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Edward N. Bristol, 12 February 1912.

<sup>201</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Edward N. Bristol to Semple, 11 March 1912.

spoke to very particular and specialized audiences; for others, it had relevance for the general reader (however defined). *The Sun* found *Influences* to be, for example, “an admirable piece of work, provided it is not used as a text book”.<sup>202</sup> *The Newark News* concluded the opposite: that Semple’s book was of singular importance as a “guide and aid to present-day students”.<sup>203</sup> Opinion varied also as to the scientific character of Semple’s geography. For *The Nation*, her text represented the work of a “true scientist”.<sup>204</sup> For *The Saturday Review*, by contrast, there was doubt as to whether Semple’s conclusions were “properly to be considered scientific” at all.<sup>205</sup> Where agreement was near uniform, however, was in relation to Semple’s scholarship—to her original observations and her presentation of supporting facts.

The last extended newspaper assessment of Semple’s book was published by *The Manchester Guardian* on 29 January 1912, almost eight months after *Influences*’ initial appearance. The *Guardian* was then under the editorship of Charles Prestwich Scott (1846–1932), a pacifist and advocate of women’s suffrage. The political and journalistic remit of the *Guardian* was summarised by Scott’s dictum that “Comment is free, but facts are sacred”.<sup>206</sup> In this latter respect, Semple’s text seems to have satisfied the *Guardian*’s reviewer: “To show the thoroughness of Miss Semple’s work ... it is only necessary to state that for this chapter [on island people] of less than 60 pages there are seven pages of references to 223 authorities”.<sup>207</sup>

In much the same way that *The Bookseller* had done, the *Guardian* made clear the relevance of Semple’s text to British readers by choosing “as of special interest to us the

<sup>202</sup> *The Sun*, 24 June 1911

<sup>203</sup> *Newark News*, 23 December 1911.

<sup>204</sup> *The Nation*, 21 December 1911.

<sup>205</sup> *The Saturday Review*, 30 December 1911.

<sup>206</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 May 1921.

<sup>207</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1912.

chapter on island peoples”.<sup>208</sup> For the *Guardian*, a representative of Liberal politics, a particularly intriguing notion in Semple’s argument was that the contours of political life in Britain were, to some extent, a consequence of geography: that alternating periods of relative seclusion or intercourse were responsible for engendering conservative and radical political tendencies respectively. Semple’s assertion that Britain and Japan were exceptions to the general rule that the “pre-eminence [of islands] is usually short-lived” elicited some dubiety on the part of the *Guardian*’s anonymous reviewer, who noted “Britain and Japan are cited as exceptions, but are they?”<sup>209</sup> Given that Manchester was then an important hub of the British Empire, and the site of the exchange of people and commodities, it seems peculiar that the *Guardian* would have imagined a time when its influence particularly, and that of the nation more generally, would be reduced.

Whilst certain earlier assessments of *Influences* had expressed doubt as to the validity of Semple’s inferences, the *Guardian*’s reviewer was convinced of their rigour. Semple’s approach—which had been to compare “peoples of different racial stocks”, occupying the same or similar environment, in order to isolate the influence of the environment in their social and physical development—was, in the *Guardian*’s opinion, quite correct: “That this is the right method none can deny”.<sup>210</sup> The reviewer was keen to acknowledge, however, that Semple’s task was not straightforward: “it is not difficult to point out the pitfalls in the way of those who pursue it [Semple’s method]. For it is no broad and easy road to rush along, and to follow it involves a minute knowledge of the details of a very complicated country which is not well explored”.<sup>211</sup> In common with *The Nation*, the *Guardian* understood Semple’s wish to bring together the

<sup>208</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1912.

<sup>209</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1912.

<sup>210</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1912.

<sup>211</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1912.

perspectives of “anthropologists, ethnologists, sociologists, and historians”—in order to address the factual and interpretative limitations of each in isolation—to be a particular strength.<sup>212</sup> It was not simply that Semple’s command of these disparate subjects was impressive, but that, in their combined presentation, these different disciplinary positions demonstrated that the “geographical element has been acting steadily and persistently” in relation to human development.<sup>213</sup> Quite what the professional representatives of these different disciplinary positions made of Semple’s engagement with them, became apparent only towards the close of 1911 as her book came under the scrutiny of professional and scholarly journals. It is to this question—to what might be termed the professional reception of *Influences*—that I turn in Chapter 5.

<sup>212</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1912.

<sup>213</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 January 1912.



## Chapter 5

### “A new vantage ground for the study of man”:

#### academic reviews of *Influences*

##### Introduction: recalling scholarly reviewing communities

The analytical difficulties associated with newspaper reviews of Semple’s book—authorial anonymity and an uncertain audience among them—are somewhat less obvious in relation to the professional and scholarly analyses of *Influences*. In nearly all instances, for example, the identity of the scholarly reviewer is apparent, and the intended audiences for their commentaries are more narrowly defined—principally by disciplinary affiliation and intellectual interest. The extent to which these reviews can be seen to represent discrete disciplinary reactions to Semple’s book is, though, limited by the same vagaries of individual authorship, editorial remit, and reviewing culture evident in relation to the popular assessments of *Influences*. In general terms, however, it might be assumed that the authors of these professional reviews were addressing audiences who shared certain academic concerns, were familiar with particular canonical texts and debates, and wished to know the value of Semple’s book in relation to their own disciplinary context. I suggest that whilst the scholarly analyses of Semple’s book were conditioned by some of the same factors that shaped its popular assessments, it is still possible to infer something of what *Influences* meant in different disciplinary contexts, and in different places, in the period immediately following its publication.

The first explicitly geographical examination of *Influences* was published anonymously in *The Journal of Geography* in September 1911.<sup>1</sup> Until 1902, the *Journal* had appeared as the *Journal of School Geography*, under the editorship of Richard Dodge, and with the intellectual backing of William Morris Davis.<sup>2</sup> In addition to being the venue of Semple's first geographical publications, the *Journal* also (in both its incarnations) carried numerous articles relating to geography and environmentalism.<sup>3</sup> As a supporter of Semple's work specifically, and as a proponent of anthropogeography more generally, the *Journal's* review of *Influences* was highly complimentary, but also notably even-handed.

The reviewer, in an echo of earlier praise for Semple's scholarship and national intellectual contribution, stated "This volume [*Influences*] is unquestionably the most scholarly contribution to the literature of geography that has yet been produced in America".<sup>4</sup> The fact that Semple had contributed to the intellectual life of the nation mattered almost as much as did her geographical achievement. As the review's author noted, "The writer of this review is not qualified to say whether or not the deliberate judgement of years is likely to place *Influences of Geographic Environment* among the really great books on anthro-geography, but, that a volume of such evident and unquestionable merit has been produced by an American geographer, is a matter of just pride to us".<sup>5</sup>

For the *Journal's* reviewer, Semple's scholarship was beyond reproach: by making "nearly one thousand five hundred separate citations of authorities" she had ensured

<sup>1</sup> Anonymous, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*".

<sup>2</sup> Davis and Dodge, "*Journal of School Geography*".

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Carney, "Geographic influences in the development of Ohio"; Chamberlain, "Geographic influences in the development of California"; Dodge, "Man and his geographic environment"; Dryer, "Geographic influences in the development of India"; Goode, "Human response to the physical environment"; Whitbeck, "Response to surroundings"; Whitbeck, "Mountains in their influence"; Whitbeck, "Geographic influences in the development of New York State".

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 33.

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 33.

that her text was “not open to criticism”; at least not on this front.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the *Journal* considered Semple’s research to be “simply prodigious” and concluded that “for her heroic work the author will receive the unstinting appreciation of geographers and students of geography throughout the English-speaking world”.<sup>7</sup> Where the *Journal* identified potential for censure was, however, in relation to Semple’s pronouncements on the geographical background to history. As the reviewer made clear,

Every thoughtful reader will find here and there that the author [Semple] has drawn conclusions and made interpretations in accordance with preconceived ideas. Being a geographer, and believing in the profound influence of geographic environment, it is not strange if she gives greater weight to the geographical element in history than the ordinary historian would give.<sup>8</sup>

Given the tendency of historians to “tear to pieces many of the conclusions drawn by other historians”, the *Journal* thought it highly likely that “historians will find some things in the book that they do not accept”.<sup>9</sup>

Whilst Semple’s literary style had been identified in popular reviews as an important strength, necessary to the communication of her principles, the *Journal*’s reviewer considered it to be an impediment to her credibility. Semple’s tendency to employ personification was seen to be “somewhat unfortunate in a scientific treatise”.<sup>10</sup> Whilst the reviewer recognized that geographers would be able to determine which of Semple’s figures of speech were to be taken at face value, it was conceivable that her assertions were “capable of being taken with many varying degrees of literalness by different readers, and hence leaving different impressions with different readers”.<sup>11</sup> The recognition that as a result simply of her style, Semple had exposed herself to

<sup>6</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 33.

<sup>8</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 33.

<sup>9</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 33.

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 33.

misinterpretation was significant. There seemed to be an important tension between Semple's desire to communicate her anthropogeography using the literary flair which she and Ratzel considered appropriate, and the necessity in the mind of the *Journal's* reviewer of formulating her ideas in a robust and scientific form.

The fact that Semple was unwilling to advance "hard-and-fast rules" in relation to her environmentalist principles was, to an extent, reflected in the construction of her prose.<sup>12</sup> Despite the concerns expressed by the *Journal* in relation to Semple's overuse of personification, it considered her writing more generally to have "attained a Macaulay's excellence in the construction of paragraphs".<sup>13</sup> The comparison being made here was to the English poet and historian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), who was noted for his unambiguous narrative style. Regardless of quite how Semple had chosen to present her conclusions, the *Journal* was certain that "Much that she has set down will stand" and that, as a consequence, *Influences* was a text for which "present geographers cannot but feel a deep sense of gratitude".<sup>14</sup>

The service which *Influences* had rendered the "organic side of geography"—a contribution which the *Journal* deemed cause for particular gratitude—was highlighted in an anonymous review published in the 23 November 1911 number of *Nature*.<sup>15</sup> As the review's author was keen to point out, geology and mathematics had lent a "definitiveness and precision to the inorganic side" of geography which was then notably absent in the subject's attention to human social organization.<sup>16</sup> Whilst Ratzel's work had "furnished a basis for the scientific development of this part of the subject", the absence of an adequate expansion of his perspective, particularly one in English,

<sup>12</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vii.

<sup>13</sup> Anonymous, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 34.

<sup>14</sup> Anonymous, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 34.

<sup>15</sup> Anonymous, "Human geography".

<sup>16</sup> Anonymous, "Human geography", 101.

was seen to have acted as an impediment to the furtherance of human geography.<sup>17</sup> Semple's *Influences* had, for *Nature's* reviewer, a "particularly valuable" role in closing this gap.<sup>18</sup> As was noted, "Precise description and quantitative treatment by recognised scientific method is much needed in this branch of geography, and Miss Semple had placed English-speaking geographers under a deep obligation by her scholarly treatment".<sup>19</sup>

*Nature's* reviewer was aware, however, that although Semple's method was scholarly and scientific, it was not strictly nomothetic. Given that Semple's anthropogeography was "being but gradually evolved", she had intentionally avoided "Definitions and systematic classification".<sup>20</sup> Whilst the reviewer regretted that Semple had not been more firm in her convictions and made "some provisional efforts in this [nomothetic] direction", he or she recognised that the principal value of *Influences* lay in its indicative and suggestive qualities: that it provided a spur to new research and that it was the responsibility of future geographers to "carry forward the investigation into specific instances in order to determine the value of the different factors involved in each case".<sup>21</sup> The fact that Semple's *Influences* was not a definite explanation of her anthropogeography did not, for *Nature* at least, diminish its intrinsic value. In the reviewer's opinion, Semple's real achievement was in having formulated a rigorous and well-supported methodological framework around which future conclusions could be built, not in providing a set of definitive principles. *Nature* was not, however, entirely uncritical of the presentation of Semple's work. Like the *Chicago Evening Post* (see Chapter 4), it found *Influences'* maps inadequate: "we must regret that most of those

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, "Human geography", 101.

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, "Human geography", 101.

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, "Human geography", 101.

<sup>20</sup> Anonymous, "Human geography", 101.

<sup>21</sup> Anonymous, "Human geography", 101.

[maps] in the present work are not satisfactory; the drawing is coarse and the scale is indicated by the lines of latitude and longitude only”.<sup>22</sup>

Science, geographical methodology, and national pride were themes evident in the laudatory assessment of Semple’s book by Ray Hughes Whitbeck (1871–1939), published in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*.<sup>23</sup> Whitbeck (Figure 9), then a lecturer at the department of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was “an environmental purist to the end”.<sup>24</sup> Educated at Cornell University, where he obtained an A.B. in 1901, Whitbeck had come under the influence there of Ralph Tarr, an important supporter of Semple’s early work.<sup>25</sup> Whitbeck developed research interests in various aspects of environmentalism, but was particularly concerned with the “effects of glaciation on man’s activities”.<sup>26</sup> A number of his papers on environmentalist topics appeared in *The Journal of Geography*, of which he was editor between 1910 and 1919. It was under his guidance, then, that the *Journal’s* even-handed review of *Influences* had been published.

<sup>22</sup> Anonymous, “Human geography”, 101.

<sup>23</sup> Whitbeck, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”.

<sup>24</sup> Trewartha, “Geography at Wisconsin”, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Brigham, “Memoir of Ralph Stockman Tarr”; Engeln, “Ralph Stockman Tarr”; Tarr, “Review of *American history*”.

<sup>26</sup> Williams, “Ray Hughes Whitbeck”, 212.



Figure 9. Ray Hughes Whitbeck.  
From *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 30, no. 3 (1940):  
unpaginated.

Whitbeck's editorial balance was apparent also in his review for the *Bulletin*. For him, Semple was seen to embody "four factors not often within the reach of one person", namely "deep interest in a great subject, ability to handle it, training, and leisure".<sup>27</sup> Whitbeck did not intend the last of these qualities to appear pejorative, and was eager to make clear that the ambitious scope and scholarship of *Influences* could not have been achieved without "a prodigious amount of labour"—something which depended upon Semple's part-time teaching responsibilities.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, there could be few other geographers, in Whitbeck's opinion, able and capable of completing the task of adequately reformulating Ratzel's ideas and in so doing of putting geography in the United States more firmly on a scientific footing.

<sup>27</sup> Whitbeck, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 937.

<sup>28</sup> Whitbeck, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 937.

As with *The Journal of Geography* and *Nature*, the *Bulletin* was conscious of the fact that, despite the rigour of Semple's approach, it was not possible for her conclusions to be formulated in a definitive manner. As Whitbeck noted, "Miss Semple, or anyone else, who attempts to estimate the actual weight of geographic influences in history or development of a people, attempts the impossible".<sup>29</sup> Whilst Semple's statements were praised for being generally "conservative and guarded", there were occasions, Whitbeck believed, where Semple's enthusiasm for her thesis was communicated too immoderately: "there are frequent statements ... which, if taken literally, seem extravagant".<sup>30</sup> Whitbeck's concern was the same as that of the *Journal*: that Semple's literary style and tendency to use figures of speech could lead to the misinterpretation of her work. As was noted, "a careful and friendly reader can not escape the conviction that the author has aimed to be conservative. An unsympathetic reader may not grant that she had always been successful in this endeavour".<sup>31</sup>

A further parallel between the *Journal's* review and that by Whitbeck was in the literal quantification of Semple's scholarship: both reviews noted that her book contained "nearly 1,500 citations of authorities", and that the chapter on island people alone was "followed by 233 references".<sup>32</sup> This similarity was, I suggest, more than simply coincident—it depended upon the fact that Whitbeck had edited, and perhaps also written, the review which appeared in the *Journal*. In any event, Semple's citatory tendencies were seen to have a two-fold significance: they acted at once to strengthen her environmentalist claims by situating them within an established and respected literature, and, more pragmatically, to provide "geographers of the English-speaking

<sup>29</sup> Whitbeck, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 938.

<sup>30</sup> Whitbeck, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 938.

<sup>31</sup> Whitbeck, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 938.

<sup>32</sup> Whitbeck, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 938.



world” with an accurate and current bibliography.<sup>33</sup> The authorities upon which Semple drew spoke, then, not only to her own intellectual concerns, but also to those of her intended audience. As Mayhew has suggested, “the scholarly authorities whom an author chose to cite must tell us something of their scientific self-fashioning, of their intellectual tastes and imagination, of the sense they had of whom they were in dialogue with as they composed their books”.<sup>34</sup>

The fact that Whitbeck was predisposed towards Semple’s environmentalist thesis can be seen to have conditioned his engagement with *Influences* and his subsequent assessment of it. What is apparent also, however, is that Semple’s book was seen by Whitbeck to represent a particular disciplinary and national achievement. By making a contribution both to geography and to the United States, Semple had secured Whitbeck’s approbation:

If the reviewer were disposed to look for faults in the book they doubtless might be found. But the great service which Miss Semple has done for Geography, the years of work which the book has cost, the pardonable pride which we feel in knowing that an American Geographer did the work, all impel this reviewer, at least, to dwell upon the excellencies of the book rather than to seek minor points of weakness.<sup>35</sup>

In this respect, it did not matter that Semple’s conclusions were not definitive or that her prose was bombastic: these small failings were counterbalanced by her more significant contribution to the disciplinary reputation of geography and the intellectual standing of the United States. These themes were rehearsed by Whitbeck in a paper—‘An estimate of Miss Semple’s *Influences of geographic environment*’—presented to the 1911 meeting of the Association of American Geographers.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Whitbeck, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 938.

<sup>34</sup> Mayhew, “Mapping science’s imagined community”, 77.

<sup>35</sup> Whitbeck, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 939.

<sup>36</sup> Anonymous, “Titles and abstracts of papers”.

Despite the fear expressed by *The Journal of Geography* that Semple's position was likely to be attacked by academic historians, her book was subject to a positive assessment in *The American Historical Review* by Orin Libby, then chair of History at the University of North Dakota.<sup>37</sup> Libby was an enthusiastic disciple of Frederick Turner's frontier thesis, and contributed a number of original papers on the role of the frontier in the historical development of the United States.<sup>38</sup> Semple and Libby had, as discussed in Chapter 3, both contributed papers to a session of the American Historical Association chaired by Turner in 1907.<sup>39</sup> The session was intended to bring together geographical, historical, and environmentalist perspectives: the intellectual triumvirate which *Influences* was designed to represent. In this respect, Libby and Semple were part of a broader intellectual project, loosely defined by the attempt to integrate geographical and historical perspectives to more satisfactorily explain the historical settlement, current development, and future potential of the United States.

For Libby, Semple's project—"carried out with scholarly precision and comprehensive grasp of details"—was not an attempt to prove a direct correlation between environmental circumstances and historical development, but rather was intended to explore "the complexity of the subject under consideration".<sup>40</sup> Semple's hope in so doing was, in Libby's opinion, to show that "Man is no longer merely the conqueror of natural environment, nor ... the passive creature of physiographic influences".<sup>41</sup> By making clear the multifarious and variable relationships between the physical environment and social development, Semple's book was seen to be "a

<sup>37</sup> Libby, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*".

<sup>38</sup> Jacobs, "Colonial origins of the United States".

<sup>39</sup> Anonymous, "Meeting of the American Historical Association".

<sup>40</sup> Libby, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 355.

<sup>41</sup> Libby, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 355.

thoroughly scientific demonstration of the vital relation existing between these two great areas of study [geography and history]”.<sup>42</sup>

In common with Charles Kofoid writing in *The Dial* (see Chapter 4), Libby considered Semple’s environmentalist principles to be most applicable to the early stages of human social development. As Libby noted, “With the fuller development of the social and industrial life, physiography no longer acts as directly or openly; its influence becomes more subtle and hidden”.<sup>43</sup> Whilst Semple was seen to have been generally aware of this limitation, there were occasions when the “temptation to claim for physiography what clearly belongs to any of a half-dozen forces in society” was clearly too strong for her to resist.<sup>44</sup> Libby went on to detail a number of instances where Semple’s interpretation of historical events was, in his professional opinion, dubious. He recognised, however, that Semple’s tendency to advance the physiographic component of her thesis was, in part, a consequence of her disciplinary orientation: “The economist has quite another theory to account for the same phenomena, so has the sociologist”.<sup>45</sup>

Libby’s criticisms were somewhat minor, and he recognized that given the ambitious scope of Semple’s project it was “impossible to avoid many seeming misconceptions and errors of fact”.<sup>46</sup> As for Whitbeck, so it was for Libby: these failings were relatively minor and did not detract from the overall correctitude of Semple’s conclusions and the consequent value of her work. As Libby made clear, “a mere enumeration of these [errors] does not invalidate the genuine claim which the subject of

<sup>42</sup> Libby, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 355.

<sup>43</sup> Libby, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 356.

<sup>44</sup> Libby, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 356.

<sup>45</sup> Libby, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 356.

<sup>46</sup> Libby, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 357.

anthropo-geography had upon the progressive student”.<sup>47</sup> Semple’s book offered, in the *Review*’s opinion, a “new vantage ground for the study of man”, and served to describe “an aspect of history more and more to be reckoned with”.<sup>48</sup> Rather than “tear to pieces” Semple’s work in the way *The Journal of Geography* feared, Libby’s review had shown that, for him at least, there was value for historians and geographer in the mutual exchange of interpretative positions.<sup>49</sup> *Influences* was shown to matter, in this way, almost as much to historians as it did to geographers.

Shortly before she embarked upon her eighteen-month sojourn in 1911, Semple received a note of congratulations from John Scott Keltie. Keltie expressed excitement at the imminent publication of *Influences*, and assured Semple of his hope that “we shall be able to have a stunning review of it in the Journal by some competent hand”.<sup>50</sup> The competent hand selected for the task was George Chisholm, a pioneer of commercial geography in the United Kingdom, and a longstanding correspondent of Semple.<sup>51</sup> Quite by chance, Chisholm’s reading of Semple’s text was influenced by a moment of disciplinary crisis.

### **Colonel Close and the challenge of scientific geography**

On 31 August 1911, Sir Charles Frederick Arden-Close, president of the Geographical Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, presented a “perfectly astounding” paper at the Association’s annual meeting in Portsmouth.<sup>52</sup> With vociferousness apparently contrary to his position, Close advanced a damaging critique

<sup>47</sup> Libby, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 357.

<sup>48</sup> Libby, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 357.

<sup>49</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 33.

<sup>50</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. John S. Keltie to Semple, 22 April 1911.

<sup>51</sup> Barnes, “Performing economic geography”; Withers, *Geography, science and national identity: Scotland since 1520*.

<sup>52</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1911. Clements Markham to John S. Keltie, 10 September 1911.

of disciplinary geography, arguing that it was inconsistent in scope, method, and epistemology.<sup>53</sup> His central claim, based upon an analysis of papers published in *The Geographical Journal* between 1906 and 1910, was that geography was inadequately scientific. He concluded: “geography ... must prove its independence and value by original, definitive, and, if possible, quantitative research”.<sup>54</sup> As recent work has shown, Close’s criticism of geography was part of a longer-standing doubt as to the discipline’s position within the Association.<sup>55</sup> In part, these uncertainties reflected a tension between those aspects of the discipline which were largely descriptive—of which travel and exploration narratives formed a part—and those components (too few, in Close’s opinion) which were scientific and explanatory.

Close’s address drew an immediate response from a number of British and North American geographers.<sup>56</sup> Through a network of private correspondence, they debated the implications of Close’s assertion and discussed potential responses. A public reaction to his criticisms was slow, however, to emerge. This was due to the fact that Close’s argument could not “be gainsaid”, and that certain members of the geographical establishment were keen to avoid overt displays of division.<sup>57</sup> Hugh Robert Mill (1861–1950), librarian of the Royal Geographical Society, was eager, for example, to mitigate press reporting of Close’s remarks, and succeeded in persuading a reporter from *The Times* “to suppress the controversial part”.<sup>58</sup>

For Chisholm (Figure 10), Close’s address afforded an opportunity to articulate and defend geography’s intellectual position. Chisholm had been recently appointed

<sup>53</sup> Close, “Position of geography”.

<sup>54</sup> Close, “Position of geography”, 409.

<sup>55</sup> Withers, Finnegan, and Higgitt, “Geography’s other histories?”.

<sup>56</sup> Genthe, “Comment on Colonel Close’s address”.

<sup>57</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1911. George G. Chisholm to John S. Keltie, 18 September 1911

<sup>58</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1911. Hugh Robert Mill to John S. Keltie, 23 September 1911.

lecturer in geography at the newly-established department of geography at the University of Edinburgh, and it was there that he formulated and expressed his initial thoughts on Semple's text.<sup>59</sup> In his opening lecture to the geography class on 11 October 1911, Chisholm, speaking to the title 'Some recent contributions to geography', introduced his students to two newly-published works: Jean Brunhes *La géographie humaine* (1910), and Semple's *Influences*.<sup>60</sup> For Chisholm, these texts were particularly noteworthy since they could be seen to satisfy Close's opinion that geography should display "original, definite, and, if possible, quantitative research".<sup>61</sup>

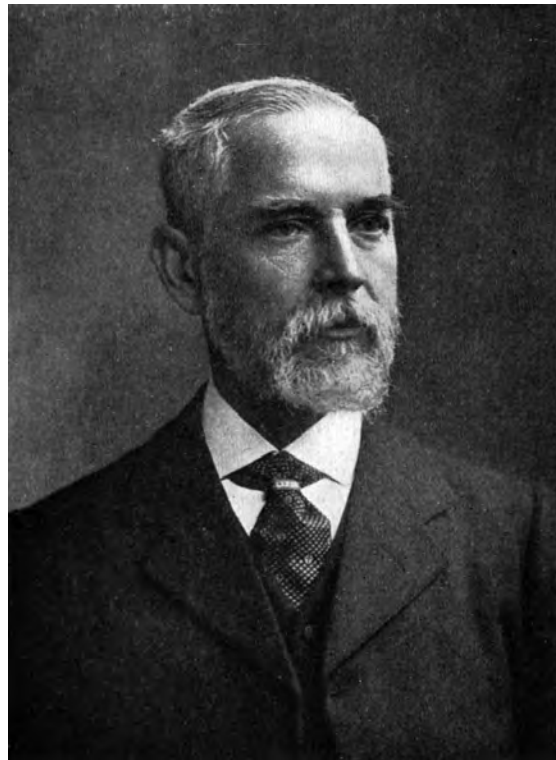


Figure 10. George Goudie Chisholm (circa 1912).  
From *Memorial volume of the Transcontinental Excursion of 1912 of the American Geographical Society of New York* (1912): unpaginated.

In addition to its value in countering Close's criticism, *Influences* also complemented Chisholm's belief—expressed in his 1908 inaugural lecture—that "it is

<sup>59</sup> MacLean, "George Goudie Chisholm"; Wise, "University teacher of geography".

<sup>60</sup> Chisholm, "Some recent contributions to geography".

<sup>61</sup> Close, "Position of geography", 409.

of the highest consequence to have a class of investigators whose constant and single aim is to see that the known causes that affect the value for man of place are never overlooked".<sup>62</sup> Chisholm's enthusiastic response to *Influences* can be seen, therefore, both as reaction to its content (which mirrored, to some extent, his own geographical interests), and to the fact that it spoke usefully to a then-current disciplinary debate.

The tone of Chisholm's review, published in the January number of *The Geographical Journal*, was defined by its introductory sentence: "There can be little hesitation in pronouncing this the most notable work that has yet appeared in English on the subject to which it is devoted".<sup>63</sup> In common with certain earlier reviewers, Chisholm found that "the only English work that can be fairly compared with it [*Influences*]" was Buckle's *History of civilization in England* (1857–1861).<sup>64</sup> This was not intended to be a backhanded compliment on Chisholm's part—since Semple had pointedly dismissed Buckle's pseudoscience—but rather was recognition of the ambitious scope of her volume. For Chisholm, Semple's book was a valuable corrective to Buckle's erroneous reasoning: by "making geography rather than history the foundation of the investigation", Semple had avoided the interpretative limitations evident in Buckle's treatise.<sup>65</sup> It is clear that Chisholm had a certain familiarity with the work of Ratzel, and that he assumed the same familiarity in his audience. He recognized, for example, that it was "to the first of Ratzel's two volumes that Miss Semple's book most closely corresponds".<sup>66</sup> Whilst he considered Semple's treatment of Ratzel's work to be in most respects superior to the original, he felt that her decision not

<sup>62</sup> Chisholm, "Meaning and scope of geography", 575.

<sup>63</sup> Chisholm, "Miss Semple", 31.

<sup>64</sup> Chisholm, "Miss Semple", 31.

<sup>65</sup> Chisholm, "Miss Semple", 31.

<sup>66</sup> Chisholm, "Miss Semple", 31.

to include “the chapter on the vegetable and animal worlds” was an “important omission”.<sup>67</sup>

Chisholm’s review reassured its readers that “most of the important ideas” contained in the second volume of Ratzel’s *Anthropogeographie* had been retained by Semple (where her scheme permitted). Certain other components of that volume were not, at the time of their formulation by Ratzel, “ready for scientific treatment”, and Semple’s decision to exclude them was understood by Chisholm as justified.<sup>68</sup> One aspect of Ratzel’s second volume which *Influences*, to its disadvantage, did not address was that on “the structural works of men”.<sup>69</sup> Chisholm felt that an attempt by Semple to attend to this aspect of Ratzel’s project and to place it on the same scientific footing as the rest of her volume “would have been welcome”.<sup>70</sup> Whilst other reviewers of *Influences* merely hinted at their familiarity with Ratzel’s principles, Chisholm made his explicit. It was apparent that he had returned to Ratzel’s work on several occasions in the preparation of his review, and, as a result, was able to present a highly detailed comparison of the two volumes: noting correspondence and divergence.

Whilst, in some respects, Chisholm’s engagement with Semple’s book was esoteric, it did form the basis of a rigorous and lengthy assessment in which he attended to each of Semple’s chapters in turn. In presenting this detailed evaluation, Chisholm was addressing “the student of geography” and the “Readers of this *Journal* [who] are already acquainted with Miss Semple”—in short, the professional audience for her book.<sup>71</sup> In large part, then, the *Journal’s* review was descriptive rather than evaluative, but Chisholm felt justified in suggesting “one cannot be too emphatic in expressing the

<sup>67</sup> Chisholm, “Miss Semple”, 32.

<sup>68</sup> Chisholm, “Miss Semple”, 32.

<sup>69</sup> Chisholm, “Miss Semple”, 32.

<sup>70</sup> Chisholm, “Miss Semple”, 32.

<sup>71</sup> Chisholm, “Miss Semple”, 34.



value of this work”.<sup>72</sup> The significance of *Influences* was, for Chisholm, defined by more than its didactic qualities. By acknowledging the complexity of the topic and by presenting the potential scope of future research, Semple had “left [it] to the student to find out what those [environmental] causes are, and in what manner they have the local attachment indicated”.<sup>73</sup> In this respect, *Influences* was suggestive of how the problems of local environmental influence might be approached. The onus was, then, on geographers working in their own familiar locales to address the detailed and complex interrelations between place and environment. Semple’s book provided the methodological framework and intellectual principles, but it was up to the reader, in Chisholm’s view, to apply them to their local geographical research. Perhaps because of his own “sometimes circuitous writing style”, Chisholm chose not to comment on Semple’s prose.<sup>74</sup>

The value of *Influences* as a refutation of Close’s claim that disciplinary geography was unscientific was highlighted in an anonymous review published in the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*. For the *Magazine*’s reviewer, *Influences* was “a satisfactory answer—if an answer were required by one of unbiased mind—to the charge lately made that geography is not a science, but a hanger-on of other sciences, a picker-up of crumbs falling from their table, with a suspicion of larceny when unobserved”.<sup>75</sup> The vehement quality of this statement would seem to indicate that its author was responding not only to Close’s criticism of geography, but also to those expressed more generally by ‘biased’ commentators in the academy. It is highly likely that this position

<sup>72</sup> Chisholm, “Miss Semple”, 32.

<sup>73</sup> Chisholm, “Miss Semple”, 33.

<sup>74</sup> Barnes, “Science studies approach to disciplinary history”, 532.

<sup>75</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 160.

also reflected the opinion of the *Magazine's* editor, Marion Newbiggin (1869–1934).<sup>76</sup> Semple's book was, in some senses then, being co-opted to perform a role for which it had not been designed: that is, defining *and* defending the scope of disciplinary geography.

Despite identifying its topical and political significance, the *Magazine* was not entirely uncritical in its assessment of *Influences*, objecting particularly to Semple's imprecise distinction between geography and anthropogeography. By appearing to claim "that Anthro-Geography is Geography", Semple's text could be seen to allow "the enemy [Close] to say that the title should not be Anthro-Geography but Geographic Anthropology".<sup>77</sup> The *Magazine's* reviewer seems to have been keen to anticipate what Close, and those who shared his opinion, might offer by way of response to Semple's book. Beyond this explicit objection to Semple's nomenclature, the reviewer could offer "nothing but favourable criticism for the remainder ... if one excepts the American spelling".<sup>78</sup> In particular, the *Magazine* praised "the wealth of apt illustrations, and the abundance of picturesque metaphors" in Semple's book—both factors which had been subject to criticism in other published reviews.<sup>79</sup> As the reviewer made clear, however, "We are not quite certain if this [Semple's literary style] is conducive to easy comprehension, but it undoubtedly lends great charm to the style".<sup>80</sup>

Although the *Magazine* chose not to attend to the parts of *Influences* which dealt, in various ways with the role of geographical environment in the historical development of Scotland—a topic which might conceivably have been of interest to its audience—it

<sup>76</sup> Bell, "Reshaping boundaries"; Freeman, "Manchester and Royal Scottish Geographical Societies"; Maddrell, "Geographical work of Marion Newbiggin".

<sup>77</sup> Anonymous, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 160.

<sup>78</sup> Anonymous, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 161–162.

<sup>79</sup> Anonymous, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 161.

<sup>80</sup> Anonymous, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 161.

did point to the fact that the Scottish poet and novelist Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) was among Semple’s “singularly complete” reference to authorities.<sup>81</sup> Whilst this might be dismissed simply as parochialism, I would like to suggest that it was a subtle indication of the fact that *Influences* could be seen to speak not only to a professional geographical audience, but also to the geographical-literate membership of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (as I go on to discuss in Chapter 6).

Whilst the *Scottish Geographical Magazine* and *The Geographical Journal* together saw Semple’s book as a timely and welcome contribution to the development of the discipline (particularly in view of the concerns expressed recently by Close), this did not represent, I suggest, a common ‘British’ response to *Influences*. That Semple’s book was understood in other ways—that is, not simply as a response to Close’s attack—is apparent in a review by Herbert John Fleure (1877–1969) for *The Geographical Teacher*. Perhaps because Fleure’s review was written some time after Close’s criticism of university geography, or perhaps because he was addressing an audience of school teachers of geography (for whom debates about the place of geography in the university were of less immediate concern), Fleure (Figure 11) chose not to situate his assessment of *Influences* in the way Chisholm and the *Magazine* together had done.

<sup>81</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 162.



Figure 11. Herbert John Fleure.

From *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society* 16, (1970): unpaginated.

Fleure was Professor of Zoology at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, where he specialized in the study of natural regions and human evolution.<sup>82</sup> His geographical interests were closely allied with the regional human geography of Paul Vidal de la Blache and Andrew Herbertson, and his perspective on human biological and societal organization drew from Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, and Patrick Geddes (1854–1932).<sup>83</sup> An enthusiastic physical anthropologist and archaeologist, Fleure undertook extensive fieldwork in Wales, describing and classifying racial types. Charting regional variations in language and physical characteristics—the consequence of an interplay between heredity and environment—Fleure demonstrated

<sup>82</sup> Bowen, Carter, and Taylor, *Geography at Aberystwyth*; Freeman, “Herbert John Fleure”; Garnett, “Herbert John Fleure”.

<sup>83</sup> National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW), A1982/3 1977152, item 7; Campbell and Livingstone, “Neo-Lamarckism”.

his possibilist inclination; he showed that “the modern environment was an end product deriving its character from the activities of settlers over thousands of years”.<sup>84</sup>

As a consequence of his intellectual orientation, Fleure’s reaction to *Influences* (Figure 12) was “rather hostile”; he objected to its apparently deterministic environmentalism.<sup>85</sup> As he noted later, “I have thought of men and environment as knit together—neither dominating the other—and I feel that we lose a lot when we say that such & such a fact is due to environmental influence”.<sup>86</sup> Fleure’s review considered the practical application of Semple’s anthropogeography, and found her causal description of human–environment relations wanting in several respects.<sup>87</sup> With a nod towards Semple’s deterministic rendition of anthropogeography, Fleure found it notable that she did not advocate Henri Bergson’s (1859–1941) notion of ‘*élan vital*’ as an explanatory cause. Bergson’s idea formed part of a wider doctrine of vitalism, and sought to attribute to evolution a spiritual, non-mechanical guidance—a vital spark that directed the course of evolutionary development. Despite his sardonic aside, Fleure’s criticisms of Semple’s approach were utilitarian. He questioned the extent to which her generalizations might usefully be applied to the study of local regions, concluding, “The reader, who tries to apply Miss Semple’s theses to the ... study of his own locality ... will find the need of modification in many points”.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Freeman, “Herbert John Fleure”, 38.

<sup>85</sup> AGSL. Herbert J. Fleure to Wright, 31 May 1961.

<sup>86</sup> AGSL. Herbert J. Fleure to Wright, 31 May 1961.

<sup>87</sup> Fleure, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”.

<sup>88</sup> Fleure, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 68.

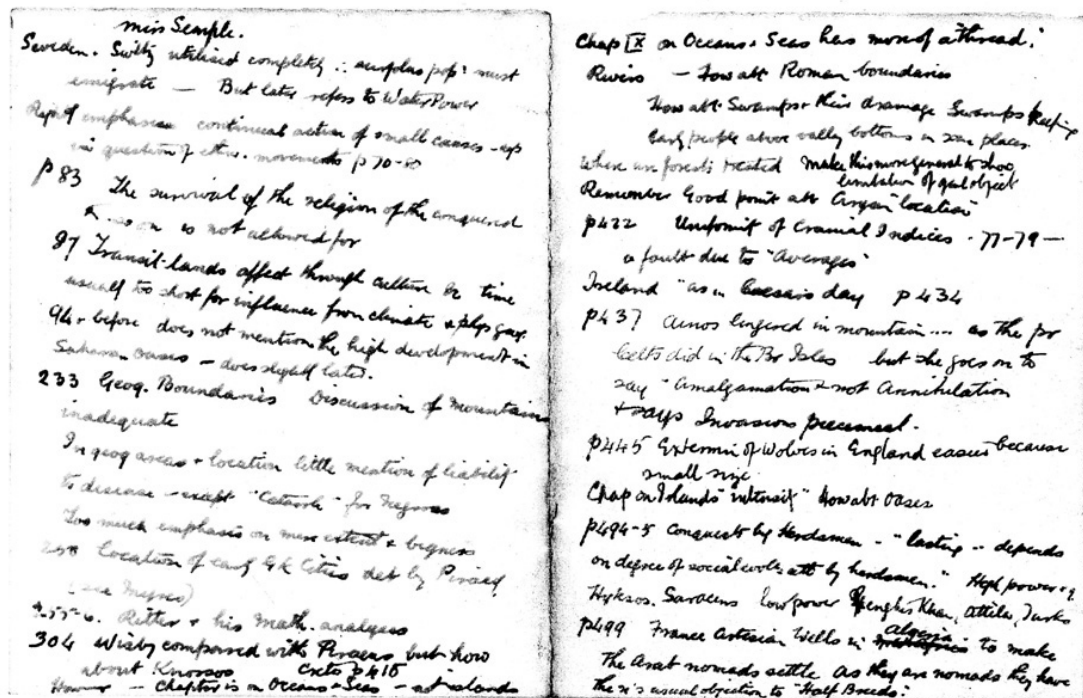


Figure 12. Fleure's notes on *Influences*.  
National Library of Wales, A1982/3 1977152, item 31.

Fleure did not read *Influences* as the nomothetic manifesto Chisholm and the *Scottish Geographical Magazine* had identified. Distanced sufficiently from Close's climacteric address, and influenced by his own perspective on regional geography, his reading was rather more critical and considered. As I show in Chapter 7, Fleure did not reject Semple's claims entirely; he employed *Influences* in a pedagogic capacity at Aberystwyth, just as it was at other British academic institutions. These scholarly engagements provide an important means by which to recover the different ways in which Semple's ideas were conveyed to students. They demonstrate that the reception of *Influences* was not a temporally-fixed event, but was a continual process of negotiation. Before moving on to consider these scholarly engagements in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, I should like to consider further what *Influences* meant to its non-geographic reviewers (social scientists, economists, and political scientists), and to geographers working outside the Anglophone context.

That Semple's book was potentially of interest to more than its geographical audience was made evident in a review by the economist George Byron Roorbach (1879–1934) published in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.<sup>89</sup> Roorbach's opinion, which mirrored closely that of Chisholm, was that Semple's book "must be regarded as the most valuable contribution to the subject of anthropo-geography that has yet been published".<sup>90</sup> Beyond *Influences*' obvious appeal in this respect to geographers, Roorbach considered it to be "of great value ... [to] the student of the social and political sciences, and of absorbing interest to the intelligent general reader".<sup>91</sup> Roorbach, who shared Chisholm's research interests in commercial and economic geography, seems to have been aware also that, in addition to being a useful restatement of Ratzel's principles, Semple's book had a wider political significance for contemporary geography.<sup>92</sup> *Influences* was "a good illustration of the meaning and value of scientific geography".<sup>93</sup>

Like Whitbeck, Roorbach recognized that Semple had placed "occasional over-emphasis" (at the expense of other contributory factors) on the influence of geographical conditions in relation to social development.<sup>94</sup> This was for Roorbach, however, a pardonable error. The logical quality of Semple's argument was seen to be such that "criticism [of this type] is reduced to a minimum".<sup>95</sup> Roorbach's praise for Semple's work extended beyond its intellectual context and addressed the text's physical makeup. The value of *Influences* as a reference had been enhanced, Roorbach felt, by the inclusion of "a full table of contents and complete index", as well as "marginal

<sup>89</sup> Roorbach, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*".

<sup>90</sup> Roorbach, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 350.

<sup>91</sup> Roorbach, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 350.

<sup>92</sup> Anonymous, "George Byron Roorbach".

<sup>93</sup> Roorbach, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 350.

<sup>94</sup> Roorbach, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 350.

<sup>95</sup> Roorbach, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 351.

paragraph headings ... [and] a full list of references to authorities”.<sup>96</sup> These paratextual elements—generally now standard components of an academic or scholarly text—were clearly noteworthy, if not necessarily novel, additions to Semple’s book.

On 15 December 1911, Davis Rich Dewey (1858–1942), editor of the *American Economic Review*, wrote to the University of Minnesota economist Edward Van Dyke Robinson (1867–1915), inviting him to review Semple’s *Influences*. Dewey’s only stipulation by way of editorial guidance was that “The review should not run over 700 words” and that “copy is desired by March 5th”.<sup>97</sup> Beyond these simple constraints, Robinson seems to have been relatively free to determine the review’s content, scope, and purpose. Although Dewey had offered to send Robinson a copy of *Influences*, this was not necessary. Robinson was among those scholars to whom Henry Holt sent a copy of *Influences* upon its publication. The list of those who received a copy was compiled by Semple, and included “those who have been using my previous book, for several years past, as text or reference”.<sup>98</sup> It is unclear quite how Semple and Robinson became acquainted, but it seems likely that as a frequent contributor to *The Journal of Geography*, Semple would have been aware of his work.<sup>99</sup> Robinson had also undertaken a Ph.D. at the University of Leipzig at a time which coincided with Semple’s period of study there. Whether or not they knew one another then is uncertain, but it seems likely that their shared experience of Leipzig would have been an important basis to conversation and reminiscence.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Roorbach, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment?*”, 351.

<sup>97</sup> Columbia University (Rare Book and Manuscript Library) (hereafter CoU), Ms Coll Robinson, E. V., Box 3, Binder 5, Section 10. Davis R. Dewey to Robinson 15 December 1911.

<sup>98</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Joseph Vogelius, 26 May 1911.

<sup>99</sup> Fellmann, “Origin of American economic geography”, 327.

<sup>100</sup> Dodge, “Edward Van Dyke Robinson”.



Despite Robinson's likely predisposition towards Semple's work, his assessment of *Influences* was, excepting its superlative overtones, fairly even-handed. As Whitbeck had done in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, Robinson emphasized the important service which Semple's book had rendered contemporary American science. *Influences* was, in his view, "on a par with the best in either German or French".<sup>101</sup> By combining "geography, anthropology, history and *economics*", Semple had produced "a truly monumental work which no serious student of any of the social sciences can afford to ignore".<sup>102</sup> Robinson considered Semple's method to be "thoroughly scientific" and was unable to detect any instance "of forcing the facts to fit any prearranged scheme".<sup>103</sup> Robinson, unlike the anonymous reviewer in *The Journal of Geography*, found Semple's prose style well tailored to her subject: "the style is always clear, lively and sometimes poetic. As a result, there is hardly a dull page in the book".<sup>104</sup>

Conscious perhaps of the audience to whom he was addressing his review, Robinson paid particular attention to Semple's discussion of economic matters. Despite the "immense literature" from which Semple had drawn, Robinson felt that "disproportionate use has been made of geography and anthropology, compared to history and economics".<sup>105</sup> Despite his concern that "it may seem ungracious to ask for more", he believed that Semple's reliance on Thomas Malthus and Wilhelm Roscher for economic principles, and George Grote and Quintus Curtius, "both long since out of date", for Greek history, was rather inadequate.<sup>106</sup> Robinson went on to list fourteen scholars—geographers, economists, and historians—from whose perspective he felt

<sup>101</sup> Robinson, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*".

<sup>102</sup> Robinson, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 338. My italicization.

<sup>103</sup> Robinson, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 339.

<sup>104</sup> Robinson, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 339.

<sup>105</sup> Robinson, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 339.

<sup>106</sup> Robinson, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 339.

*Influences* might have benefited. Although he recognized that attention to these works might not have changed Semple's conclusions materially, it "would have immensely strengthened the authority of the work".<sup>107</sup> In concluding his review, Robinson expressed the hope that these defects would be remedied in a second edition.

In contrast to the generally mild criticisms which Semple's text had attracted from geographers and economists, it was subject to some fairly robust censure by the Columbia University sociologist Alvan Alonzo Tenney (1876–1937) in a review published in *Political Science Quarterly*.<sup>108</sup> Tenney was a social theorist, with research interests in "population, public opinion, and international peace".<sup>109</sup> In his 1908 volume *Social democracy and population*, Tenney "attacked 'anthropo-sociologist' and other biological determinists", arguing that "intelligent knowledge of biology allowed increased 'social democracy'".<sup>110</sup> In short, Tenney's belief was that knowledge, whether scientific or not, had a greater role in shaping society than did biological or environmental factors. In this respect, his position was not far removed from those critics who considered modern scientific developments to have circumvented the roles of environmental influence. The intellectual basis for his argument was, however, distinct.

In discussing Semple's method—that of comparing "typical peoples of all races ... living under similar geographic conditions" in order to show that "similar or related social, economic or historical development" was a consequence of environment rather than race—Tenney identified a "serious theoretical and practical fallacy".<sup>111</sup> As he made clear, "Unless undue extension is given the terms race and geographic environment,

<sup>107</sup> Robinson, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 340.

<sup>108</sup> Taft, "Alvan A. Tenney: a tribute".

<sup>109</sup> Bannister, *Sociology and scientism*, 77.

<sup>110</sup> Bannister, *Sociology and scientism*, 78.

<sup>111</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, vii; Tenney, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 346.

Miss Semple ... has taken no account of a very important third factor, namely, knowledge".<sup>112</sup> In Tenney's view, social, economic, and historical similarities were more likely to be the result of "cultural contacts and the spread of institutions by imitation" than of geographical factors in isolation.<sup>113</sup> Tenney was concerned, then, that "the unwary reader may often fail to appreciate the importance of non-geographic factors not mentioned in the text".<sup>114</sup>

In addition to the potential speciousness of Semple's conclusions, Tenney also considered *Influences* to be beset by inconsistency. This was seen to relate, particularly, to Semple's notion that geographic conditions were immutable in their influence. Tenney identified a number of occasions where Semple contradicted her position by acknowledging the variability of one or other geographic factor. At the same time, however, Semple was also seen to have failed to address long-term variations in climate and topography that would have influence the development of "primitive man".<sup>115</sup> Semple's failing was, essentially, a lack of adequate temporal appreciation: she was guilty of not thinking "in tens of centuries".<sup>116</sup>

As a consequence of these apparent failings, Tenney considered the nomothetic value of Semple's book to be limited: "The reader who expects to find in the volume a succinct and coördinated statement of principles and a well-constructed theory in which there is adequate presentation of the importance of the various geographic influences on man in relation to each other, together with their importance as a whole in relation to other influences, will be disappointed".<sup>117</sup> Despite this fairly damning indictment,

<sup>112</sup> Tenney, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 346.

<sup>113</sup> Tenney, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 346.

<sup>114</sup> Tenney, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 346.

<sup>115</sup> Tenney, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 347.

<sup>116</sup> Tenney, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 347.

<sup>117</sup> Tenney, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 348.

Tenney did consider *Influences* to be “remarkably well written”.<sup>118</sup> Although he was, in some respects, intellectually opposed to Semple’s project, he understood it to be “a work which no student in any branch of political science can afford to overlook”.<sup>119</sup>

The extent to which Tenney’s interpretation contrasted with reviews written by, and for, geographers was made clear by an anonymous review published in the *Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Philadelphia*. For the *Bulletin*, Semple’s book was peerless: “No book published in recent years has made so large a contribution to scientific geography as this”.<sup>120</sup> That Semple’s method, reasoning, and presentation were accurate and sufficient was not in doubt. *Influences* was, for the *Bulletin*’s reviewer, “at once a classified survey of the great field of geographic influence on human activities and a mine of information of great value to the student especially of political and social sciences”.<sup>121</sup> In the years following the publication of *Influences*, the *Bulletin* featured several scholarly articles on aspects of geographic influence—illustrating something of the dominance of environmentalism, not least as a consequence of Semple’s writing, in the United States.<sup>122</sup>

### **Beyond the Anglo-American world**

Although Semple’s intention had been to adapt Ratzel’s work to the “Anglo-Celtic and especially to the Anglo-American mind”, it is apparent that its impact and readership were rather more international.<sup>123</sup> Two foreign-language reviews of *Influences*—one Italian, one German—provide an interesting indication of how Semple’s work was

<sup>118</sup> Tenney, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment?*”, 348.

<sup>119</sup> Tenney, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment?*”, 348.

<sup>120</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment?*”, 70.

<sup>121</sup> Anonymous, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment?*”, 71.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, Hess, “Influence of glaciation in Ohio”; James, “Development of Trans-Andean communication”; Keir, “Some influences of environment in Massachusetts”; Ristow, “Influence of geography upon the history of Bohemia”; Trewartha, “Dairy industry as a geographic adjustment”.

<sup>123</sup> Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*, v.

engaged with in these distinct cultural and intellectual contexts. Whilst, as has already been elaborated, these reviews cannot be seen to represent straightforwardly the ‘Italian’ or ‘German’ reading of Semple’s book, they do serve as an important counterpoint to its predominantly Anglo-American interpretation, and afford an indication of the commonalities and differences in styles of reviewing practice.

It was to the newly-appointed lecturer in geography at the University of Padua, Roberto Almagià (1884–1962), that the *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana* turned in 1912 for its review of *Influences*. Almagià, who later went on to become one of Italy’s most distinguished geographical scholars, had studied under the discipline’s modern founder in that country, Giuseppe Dalla Vedova (1834–1919).<sup>124</sup> Vedova had been an enthusiastic proponent of “the modern methods of geographical study which had already borne fruit in Germany”, and Almagià’s exposure to, and familiarity with, these works, particularly in relation to Ratzel’s geography, is apparent in his review of Semple’s book.<sup>125</sup> Like Chisholm in *The Geographical Journal*, Almagià sought to provide a detailed comparison of Semple’s book with Ratzel’s original text. Almagià was generally satisfied with Semple’s choices in relation to the inclusion or exclusion of Ratzel’s themes, but regretted, as had Chisholm, the fact that *Influences* lacked “a systematic exposition of the influences of the biological environment on man, which is found in chapter 16 of the work of Ratzel”.<sup>126</sup> Despite this empirical omission, Almagià felt that Semple’s project had succeeded in placing Ratzel’s principles “in clear light” by supporting them “with frequent references and numerous examples”.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*; Kish, “Roberto Almagià”.

<sup>125</sup> Anonymous, “Giuseppe Dalla Vedova”, 158; Luzzana Caraci, “Modern geography in Italy”.

<sup>126</sup> Almagià, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 551. Translated from original.

<sup>127</sup> Almagià, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 551. Translated from original.

What set Semple's work apart from that of Ratzel was, in Almagià's view, her "determined exclusions of bare definitions and theoretical formulae", and the "abundance of examples ... historical proofs ... [and] factual information" with which she supported her assertions.<sup>128</sup> By making clear the complexity of the anthropogeographical principles with which she was dealing, and by placing them on a scientific and well-supported basis, Semple had rendered "a book very apt to introduce into schools"—a fact enhanced by "the lucidity of the exposition and the easiness of reading".<sup>129</sup> It seems, then, that Semple's adaptation of Ratzel appealed to the Italian mind as much as it did to the Anglo-American.

Echoing Chisholm's review, Almagià presented a detailed chapter-by-chapter analysis of *Influences*, in which he found Semple's book to be characterized by "lucidity and orderliness of exposition" and "accurateness in the research and in the choice ... of [illustrative] examples".<sup>130</sup> Like Robinson, however, Almagià expressed regret that Semple's selection of authoritative literature had failed to extend beyond the Anglophone. Whilst he acknowledged that Semple had given some consideration to works in German and French, it was clear to him that Semple was "evidently ignorant of our language".<sup>131</sup> Semple's inadequate attention to Italian sources was, however, only part of her failing. As Almagià made clear "we Italians might also complain that not all the observations ... [made about Italy] appear equally exact".<sup>132</sup> For Almagià, it was inconceivable that

one might wholeheartedly welcome all that the author says about the consequences of the position of Italy in the Mediterranean ... or about the contrasts between continental and peninsular Italy ... nor

<sup>128</sup> Almagià, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 551. Translated from original.

<sup>129</sup> Almagià, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 551. Translated from original.

<sup>130</sup> Almagià, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 552. Translated from original.

<sup>131</sup> Almagià, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 553. Translated from original.

<sup>132</sup> Almagià, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 553. Translated from original.

might we subscribe to the judgement that the Italian state has renounced every territorial expansion and accepted its present borders as definitive due to a lack of energy and national purpose!<sup>133</sup>

Despite Almagià's mild apoplexy at these national slights, he did not feel that they diminished "the general value of the work".<sup>134</sup> In the absence of a similarly comprehensive and comprehensible text in Italian on the principles of anthropogeography, Almagià felt that Semple's book would "be greeted favourably by [Italian] scholars".<sup>135</sup>

As has been noted of one popular review, it was intimated, perhaps ironically, that Semple's book could "be advantageously re-translated for the use of Germans themselves".<sup>136</sup> The validity of this suggestion was confirmed, however, by the German geographer Otto Schlüter (1872–1959), in a review published in *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen*.<sup>137</sup> Schlüter had been educated under Ferdinand von Richthofen, and had inherited from him (and, by implication, from Carl Ritter also) a desire to focus on the comparative analysis of landscapes.<sup>138</sup> For Schlüter, the physical landscape was a "cultural product" as much as it was the consequence of a series of natural conditions.<sup>139</sup> In this respect, his outlook differed from the predominately environmentalist perspective which had underpinned much earlier work in German geography. His examination of settlement patterns in a relatively homogeneous geographical setting—the Unstrut Valley—showed how populations from distinct cultural backgrounds used and altered the landscape in notably different ways. To

<sup>133</sup> Almagià, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 553–554. Translated from original.

<sup>134</sup> Almagià, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 554. Translated from original.

<sup>135</sup> Almagià, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*", 554. Translated from original.

<sup>136</sup> *Boston Herald*, 2 September 1911.

<sup>137</sup> Schlüter, "Review of *Influences of geographic environment*".

<sup>138</sup> Ritter, *Comparative geography*.

<sup>139</sup> Dickinson, *Makers of modern geography*; Livingstone, *Geographical tradition*, 264.

understand these societies, Schlüter suggested, it was necessary to understand their cultural landscape, not simply their physical setting.<sup>140</sup>

Despite having shown through work in the field that a uniform physical environment could support multiple social and cultural expressions—a situation at odds with Semple’s environmentalist principles—Schlüter seems not to have considered this an impediment to recommending her book to the readers of *Petermanns*. Schlüter commended Semple for having adapted Ratzel’s work “tactfully and with scientific aplomb”.<sup>141</sup> By remaining faithful to the spirit of the original text, but providing a more robust scientific formulation, Semple was seen to have produced a “whole new masterpiece”.<sup>142</sup> For Schlüter, Semple’s main achievement had been to provide a counterpoint to “Ratzel’s erratic thought process” by clarifying the central tenets of anthropogeography and by supporting them with systematic reference to examples from fieldwork and contemporary geographical literature.<sup>143</sup> Semple’s text would, in Schlüter’s opinion, be “very much welcomed by German geographers”.<sup>144</sup>

Schlüter’s disenchantment with the environmentalist tenet came, as it had done for Franz Boas, in the field: at the moment when his observations of societal organization and cultural expression appeared to contradict assumed principles of environmental control. It is unclear, then, why Schlüter was so unequivocal in his praise for Semple’s *Influences*; perhaps his stance embodied Donald Davidson’s notion of “interpretive charity”.<sup>145</sup> In part, it is probable that he appreciated Semple’s desire for scientific rigour and her reluctance to make definitive claims based on the principles to

<sup>140</sup> Livingstone, *Geographical tradition*.

<sup>141</sup> Schlüter, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 166. Translated from original.

<sup>142</sup> Schlüter, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 166. Translated from original.

<sup>143</sup> Schlüter, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 166. Translated from original.

<sup>144</sup> Schlüter, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 166. Translated from original.

<sup>145</sup> Dasenbrock, “Do we write the text?”, 13.



which she subscribed. The fact that Semple's approach was largely comparative would perhaps also have satisfied Schlüter's wish to replicate the methods set forth by Ritter and Richthofen. What is clear, however, is that there was no straightforward connection between Schlüter's research concerns and geographical principles, and his analysis of Semple's book. Whether his review of *Influences* was in some way disingenuous, or was tailored to fit an unknown editorial position at *Petermanns*, cannot necessarily be resolved. If we are to take Schlüter's review as a genuine reflection of his opinion, however, it would seem to indicate that Semple's book had value beyond its attempt to prove the anthropogeographical principles to which it subscribed. That Semple's project mirrored Schlüter's wish to place geographical research on a scientific basis was reason enough it seems to recommend it to the readers of *Petermanns*.

### **Conclusion: scale, interpretative communities, and the problem of analysis**

In the two years following its publication in May 1911, *Influences* was reviewed in more than forty periodicals, including local and national newspapers; geographical and non-geographical journals; and popular and literary magazines. The diverse character of these publications was matched in variety by the tone of their reviews. Given such diversity, any attempt to identify representative and common themes—to describe particular styles and cultures of reviewing—can only ever be partial. Nevertheless, I suggest that it is possible to make certain claims about the reviewing of Semple's book which help define and explain the initial character of its reception. Further, the complicated and multifaceted character of the published reviews of *Influences* prompt

important consideration of the appropriateness of scale (whether social or geographical) as an analytical mode.

Were cultures of reading and reviewing to follow neat geographical scales, then we should be able to describe clear differences between the reading of *Influences* in, say, Boston and New York City, and between Britain and the United States. The fact that, as these reviews demonstrate, there was not straightforwardly a ‘Boston’ or ‘New York City’ or ‘British’ or ‘United States’ reading of Semple’s book, makes clear that the contours of reviewing style do not necessarily follow those of taken-for-granted geographical scales—the city, the region, the nation, and so on. It is apparent that in different places, however, different types of reading were possible. Whilst location did not always *determine* how Semple’s book was read, it did *facilitate* certain types of engagement. I do not dismiss scale as an analytical category, rather suggest that alone it is insufficient. I believe it is worth considering how we might incorporate notions of interpretative community and of reviewing culture to more fully chart the hermeneutic topographies of *Influences*’ reception.

In the same way that it is problematic to point to particular metropolitan, regional, or national readings of *Influences*, so too it is unwise to speak in terms of disciplinary-specific readings of Semple, or of styles of reviewing that were unique to, or characteristic of, particular media. The danger of making generalizations about the types of reading and styles of reviewing is, in part, that the role of individual authorship, editorial policy, and intended audience is diminished. There are, however, some important commonalities worth emphasizing.

The most striking of these is that the published reviews, in almost all cases, devoted little effort to explaining what anthropogeography was, or where its intellectual

origins lay. It was assumed almost universally by the book's reviewers—whether genuinely, or as the consequence of disingenuous intellectual affectation—that their readers were aware of Ratzel, Semple, and their work, and that little additional explanation was required as to its nature and purpose. Whilst this might have been valid in relation to the readers of geographical publications, it seems improbable that the less-specialized audience of metropolitan newspapers would have been cognisant of Ratzel's anthropogeography. As I suggested previously, however, the tendency of reviewers to attribute to their readers this level of intellectual sophistication served a dual function: it spared the reviewer the task of explaining the complex intellectual underpinnings of Ratzel's work, whilst serving also to define the periodical's audience as intelligent general readers.

Stylistic differences between periodicals were somewhat more apparent when it came to describing the content of Semple's book. In general terms, professional periodicals, particularly geographical journals, outlined systematically the content of *Influences*—typically offering a chapter-by-chapter summary. Non-professional reviews, by contrast, frequently presented generalized overviews, occasionally highlighting a specific aspect of Semple's book which would correspond to the local geographical knowledge of their audience. Highlighting the local relevance of Semple's book in this way did not, though, necessarily equate to a 'local' reading of *Influences*. The identification of the text's local relevance was a discursive or rhetorical element common to several reviews—it was not uniquely 'local'. Whilst it is true that what precisely was deemed local and relevant varied between periodicals, the very act of highlighting the local importance of *Influences* was commonplace.

Where I think it *is* possible to see a local reading of *Influences*, however, is in the *Irish Times*'s review. By making the link between Semple's anthropogeographical analysis of Irish history and the then-current local (and national) concern of Irish independence, the *Times* offered a reading that was situated geographically and politically as well as temporally. The particular political climate of Dublin at the time of the review's publication facilitated a specific engagement with Semple's text—one which, arguably, would not have occurred in quite the same way at a different time or in a different location. I should like to make a distinction, then, between local readings (the *Irish Times* review being one example) and 'localized' readings, which I take to be those which drew attention to the relevance of Semple's book to local contexts, but were not necessarily shaped by these contexts.

Similarly, I think it useful to distinguish between discipline-specific readings of Semple's work, and more general 'disciplinary' engagements. I take the former to be those reviews which were overtly shaped by the disciplinary context of their author. In this respect, the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*'s review and that written by George Chisholm are important examples; the context and focus of each review was directed in some way by Close's negative assessment of disciplinary geography. Again, my intention is not to suggest that these were necessarily 'geographical' readings of Semple, but to argue that they reflected a particular disciplinary moment (which, in this case, also happened to be a national concern).

In contrast to these readings, where topical disciplinary debates played an obvious role in shaping the assessment of Semple's text, a number of professional reviews considered her text only in abstract relation to their disciplinary concerns. This is particularly evident in relation to those periodicals and authors who listed texts and

sources (most related to their own discipline) which Semple had failed to mention. By expressing the wish that Semple had attended more particular to economic texts, as Edward Robinson had done, or that she might have benefited from an engagement with Italian geographical literature, as Roberto Almagià suggested, such reviews showed what it was to read Semple's book in *relation* to a disciplinary context, rather than *through* that context. This is a subtle but important distinction. Robinson and Almagià each assessed *Influences* as it spoke to their professional and scholarly position, but their reviews were not necessarily uniquely shaped by that position.

That reviews of *Influences* cannot be separated neatly between popular and professional assessments is evident too in the response to Semple's literary style. Opinion was divided along aesthetic lines—rather than on a straightforwardly popular/professional basis—as to whether or not Semple's prose represented an impediment to the effective communication of her ideas. The factors which underpinned these assessments did tend, however, to reflect the position of the periodical in which they appeared. The professional journals which objected to Semple's prose did so typically on the basis that it was incompatible with correct scientific exposition. For popular periodicals critical of Semple's prose, by contrast, it was readability and comprehension which tended to factor in their assessments.

The reaction to Semple's scholarship—to her extensive citation of authorities—was almost unanimously commended (even in those cases where reviewers identified sources from which Semple had failed to draw). In nearly every case, Semple's effort to situate her work within an established literature, and to support her claims by reference to contemporary research, was seen as a warrant of credibility. Securing authority in this way mattered particularly to geographical reviewers of *Influences*—it was seen to relate to

the then-current project of defining geography as an independent and scientific discipline. That geography could be considered a science was a “strange assertion”, particularly for those non-geographers for whom the subject inevitably recalled “certain grammar-school exercises in locating rivers, mountains, political boundaries, etc., and in memorizing lists of exports and imports”.<sup>146</sup> Semple’s book was seen, then, to have a unique and particular importance in helping to place geography on a nomothetic footing, by showing that it was more than simply “descriptive and mnemonic”.<sup>147</sup>

Beyond the book’s immediate relevance to the promotion of disciplinary geography, it was also, for a number of American reviewers, an important national triumph. In some respects, this reading of *Influences* as a distinct contribution to American intellectual life was nationally-specific—the reading was uniquely ‘American’. This is not to suggest, however, that it was a position shared by all (or, indeed, most) of the book’s reviews in the United States. Rather, we can think of a national reading of Semple’s book that was not shared and universal. Whilst the patriotic assessments of *The Nation*, *The Journal of Geography*, and *The American Economic Review* were uniquely American, they cannot necessarily stand as proxies for the national response to *Influences*.

I would like to distinguish, then, between the national as a geographic scale and the national as a common social category. The reviews of *Influences* published in the United States varied considerably in terms of style, content, purpose, and assessment. As a result, attempting to identify a common response to Semple’s book is difficult and potentially specious. It is possible, however, to identify certain themes which were unique to the United States (principally the book’s national contribution). In this sense, whilst these reviews were not representative of a nationwide response (geographically

<sup>146</sup> Keller, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 333.

<sup>147</sup> Keller, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 333.

speaking), they were a uniquely ‘American’ interpretation. We can perhaps speak of a national response to Semple’s book only if we are willing to see the nation as a social entity, not as a fixed spatial category. In this way, it is not necessary to choose the ‘correct’ scale of analysis in studying reception, but to explore and justify what we take scale to be and to see how our categories can better make sense of these interpretations.

Whilst the discussion in this and the previous chapter of the published reviews of *Influences* has addressed the book’s initial engagement, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 consider its ‘career’ more broadly. By examining how Semple’s book was used in different disciplinary settings, and describing how this use varied with time, I show that the reception of Semple’s book was never a single moment, fixed in time and space. Rather, it was something continually in flux. In building upon matters of scale, I go on to consider the influence of Semple’s public oration upon the acceptance of her anthropogeography. My attention is to the different “spaces of speech” in which Semple’s ideas were promulgated, discussed, and disputed.<sup>148</sup> The reception of *Influences* will be shown to depend not simply upon its textual content, but also upon Semple’s representation of it.

<sup>148</sup> Livingstone, “Science, site and speech”, 71.

## Chapter 6

### From the field to the lecture theatre: proving and disseminating anthropogeography

#### Introduction: seeking proof in the field

Before embarking on her eighteen-month sojourn in 1911, Semple had been invited to present her anthropogeographical work to the University of Oxford by Andrew Herbertson, director of the School of Geography. Keen to follow the progress of her book, Herbertson had been in regular contact with Semple since at least 1907.<sup>1</sup> Semple's other principal British correspondents—George Chisholm and John Scott Keltie—were similarly eager to persuade Semple to lecture to the societies they represented (the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and the Royal Geographical Society respectively).<sup>2</sup> This enthusiasm reflected, in part, the relevance and timeliness of Semple's anthropogeographical contributions, but it also had something to do with the potential popular appeal of her travel narrative. As Keltie noted, “What an indefatigable traveller as well as worker you are!”<sup>3</sup>

Part of the purpose of Semple's journey was to gather additional proofs of her anthropogeographical concepts—to show that in different environments her ideas remained valid. Whilst Semple saw her journey as an important opportunity to relax after the long effort *Influences* had required, its scholarly purpose was evident: “I long to see and live anthro-geographically after theorizing about it for the past seven years”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Edward N. Bristol, 13 March 1911.

<sup>2</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 11 November 1911.

<sup>3</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. John S. Keltie to Semple, 6 September 1911.

<sup>4</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 2 April 1911.



This chapter considers the connections between Semple's field research and the communication of her anthropogeography. It is concerned with the various venues, public and professional, in which Semple sought to disseminate her work, and attends to the different ways in which she employed the knowledge and experience gained during her 1911–1912 excursion.

I begin by examining her contribution to the geographical summer school at the University of Oxford, before going on to describe the importance of her lecture tour of Scotland under the auspices of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. Semple's address to the Royal Geographical Society in 1912 will be shown to be significant in conferring upon her a warrant of academic credibility, and in providing a prompt to the admission of women fellows to the Society. I conclude by considering how Semple promoted *Influences* (and the ideas it contained) at various universities and teacher training colleges in the United States. I am interested not only in Semple's pedagogical approach, but also in the ways in which ideas of environmentalism conditioned the development of Anglo-American geography curricula and, thus, the meaning of *Influences* in sites of geographical instruction.

Semple's visit to Japan was facilitated by two former Vassar classmates—Stematz Yamakawa (the first Japanese woman to receive a college degree, and wife of Field-Marshal Prince Oyama who was commander-in-chief in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905), and Baroness Uriu (whose husband, Rear Admiral Uriu, served in the Imperial Japanese Navy during the war).<sup>5</sup> As a consequence of these personal connections, Semple was able to travel freely and was provided with skilled government interpreters. She spent three months “studying the geographic factors in

<sup>5</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*.

the utilization of material resources” in Hondo (now Honshū).<sup>6</sup> During a 175-mile journey by foot through the island’s central mountain range (which recalled earlier work in the Kentucky Mountains), Semple examined the influence of altitude upon agricultural patterns. She saw the latter as “the result of climate relief”.<sup>7</sup>

Although Semple’s exploration of Japan was atypical for a Western female of the period, it was not unprecedented. More than twenty years previously, the English traveller Isabella Bird (1831–1904) had completed an extended exploration of Yezo (Hokkaidō), Japan’s northernmost island, before travelling widely in Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> Bird’s experiences formed the basis of her 1880 volume *Unbeaten tracks in Japan*.<sup>9</sup> Whilst it was not Semple’s intention to replicate Bird’s journey, it is apparent that she was familiar with Bird’s writings and that these would have served as useful preparation for her own explorations.<sup>10</sup> Although Bird’s observations were not necessarily framed as scientific—at least as the term was understood at the time—her systematic approach was arguably something which Semple sought to replicate.<sup>11</sup> Semple’s eagerness to ensure the rigour of her work was clear. She made a specific point after completing her principal fieldwork of visiting the Agricultural College of Tokyo Imperial University to “check off my own observations against the statistical [accounts]”.<sup>12</sup>

Semple’s exploration of Hondo’s mountain region had an emotional as well as scholarly significance. Perhaps as a consequence of her early fieldwork in the Kentucky Mountains, and her long period of writing in the Catskills, Semple had a particular fondness for and intellectual interest in mountain environments. Semple, like Bird,

<sup>6</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 30 October 1912.

<sup>7</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>8</sup> Bell and McEwan, “Admission of women fellows”; Domosh, “Feminist historiography of geography”.

<sup>9</sup> Bird, *Unbeaten tracks in Japan*.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Semple, “Geographical boundaries. Part II”; Semple, *Influences of geographic environment*; Semple, “Japanese colonial methods”.

<sup>11</sup> Domosh, “Beyond the frontiers of geographical knowledge”.

<sup>12</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 19 August 1911.

“revelled in the ‘glorious upper world’” which the mountains represented, and seemed to relish the physical extremes which she encountered.<sup>13</sup> In a letter to Keltie she recalled, “I have been alternately blistered by the sun, and stormbound by the typhoon in some mountain village; but it has all been one prolonged delight”.<sup>14</sup> At various stages during her world travels Semple sought out similarly mountainous regions, allowing her to perform a comparative analysis of different elevated environments. In subsequent months, Semple undertook “walking trips for like purposes through the Hartz Mountains, the Thuringian Forest, the mountains of Norway and Sweden, and through the Alps of Austria and Switzerland and in eastern France”.<sup>15</sup> Whilst these mountain environments held an undeniable frisson of danger and sublimity, Semple’s attraction to them seems to have been somewhat more pragmatic: they represented an “anthropogeographical laboratory” in which her principles could be tested and refined.<sup>16</sup>

Following her period of exploration in Japan, Semple passed through Korea and Manchuria, where she was given “special privileges and passes over all the principal roads, and the best Government guides and interpreters”.<sup>17</sup> A guest of the South Manchurian Railway Company, Semple toured the industrial complexes at Port Arthur (Lüshun), and then travelled to Peking (Beijing) where she explored the Forbidden City. Semple’s visit to China coincided with the Xinhai Revolution (1911–1912), during which the ruling Qing Dynasty was overthrown, but this seems not to have affected her itinerary beyond some minor rerouting.<sup>18</sup> From Peking, Semple travelled by the newly-

<sup>13</sup> Birkett, *Spinsters abroad*, 57.

<sup>14</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 19 August 1911.

<sup>15</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>16</sup> *Springfield Daily Republican*, 7 September 1911.

<sup>17</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>18</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

completed railroad to the city of Kalgan (Zhangjiakou).<sup>19</sup> Bordering the Gobi Desert, Kalgan was the “most important trading point” northwest of Peking, and had since “Marco Polo’s day” been recognised as “very fruitful and prosperous”.<sup>20</sup> Semple was hosted there by Anglo-American tobacco industrialists (a number of whom were from Kentucky), who were successfully increasing the market for cigarettes in an area where opium had been recently outlawed. There, Semple undertook a study of desert trade patterns, particularly the camel caravans which ran into Tibet and Gansu.<sup>21</sup>

Semple concluded the Asian portion of her journey with visits to Java, the Malay Peninsula, Burma (Myanmar), India, and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). She devoted considerable attention to Java and Ceylon as island environments (touring the latter by motorcar), and completed detailed studies of their geographical and social organization.<sup>22</sup> From Bombay, Semple sailed to Europe—a journey which seems to have inspired her to write a short story, ‘My little hairy brother’, for the child of her niece.<sup>23</sup> The story concerned a man travelling “by sea from hot India to cold Europe”, who encountered a monkey (a fellow passenger) “on his way to the London ‘Zoo’”.<sup>24</sup> The monkey, unaccustomed to the “very cold wind [which] blew from the north”, sought refuge under the man’s overcoat, “next to his flannel shirt near his heart”.<sup>25</sup> In a simple way, Semple’s story was about the influence of geographic conditions; here climate. Whilst her composition seems not to have reflected any overt attempt to communicate the anthropogeographical principles to which she subscribed, it does indicate that these matters were an ever present concern. In a more subtle way, too, it suggests that

<sup>19</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Edward N. Bristol, 4 January 1912.

<sup>20</sup> Anonymous, “Peking-Kalgan R.R.”, 122.

<sup>21</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>22</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 23 January 1912.

<sup>23</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 9. “My little Hairy Brother. A story for J. C. Chute”.

<sup>24</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 9. “My little Hairy Brother. A story for J. C. Chute”.

<sup>25</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 9. “My little Hairy Brother. A story for J. C. Chute”.

Semple's time as a member of the Authors' Club of Louisville might have left her with an unrealized desire to pursue children's fiction.

Throughout her journey, Semple was in regular correspondence with Keltie who was eager to ensure that she would "come to us before ... any other Society in our country".<sup>26</sup> Keltie's concern that Semple might decide to lecture first to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society was unfounded. Semple was keen to reassure Keltie that "I should wish to give your Society the preference as to the date for my lecture, as the invitation came first from you".<sup>27</sup> Moreover, she left it to Keltie and Chisholm to "arrange the dates between you".<sup>28</sup> One thing that Semple did wish to make clear, however, was her desire to *present* her paper, rather than simply *read* it. As she noted "I would rather talk off this lecture than read it from notes. When I get up a good head of steam, so to speak, I can then make the subject more alive".<sup>29</sup> In the same way that she considered literary prose necessary for the textual communication of her anthropogeographical position, so Semple also saw the correct performance of her ideas as crucial to their effective transmission. Semple was keen to employ the oratorical techniques she had perfected at Chicago, and feared that having to read from a written text would diminish the impact of her work. Keltie was happy to assure Semple that "we much prefer that anyone lecturing to us should speak and not read".<sup>30</sup>

Semple's voyage to Europe took her first to the Mediterranean, where she spent some weeks visiting important centres of ancient Greece and Rome. Whilst in Greece, Semple journeyed by motorcar from Sparta to the Vale of Tempe, which transects

<sup>26</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. John S. Keltie to Semple, 6 September 1911.

<sup>27</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 11 November 1911.

<sup>28</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 11 November 1911.

<sup>29</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 11 November 1911.

<sup>30</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. John S. Keltie to Semple, 11 December 1911.

Mount Olympus and Mount Ossa.<sup>31</sup> On her return to Athens, Semple's motorcade followed the route taken by Xerxes' invading army in 480 B.C., passing through the hot mineral springs at Thermopylae (to the evident concern of her chauffeur, who feared for the vehicle's tires).<sup>32</sup> Semple devoted an extended period to the study of Mediterranean agricultural practices, stock-raising, and, perhaps as a consequence of her recent examination of contemporary trade patterns in the Gobi Desert, ancient trading routes.<sup>33</sup> Again, Semple's wish was to test and to refine her anthropogeographical ideas by applying them in the field. Her investigations marked the beginning of a third distinct phase of academic research, and were the foundation upon which her final book *The geography of the Mediterranean region* (1931) was based. Semple completed her global odyssey with a northward sweep, taking in Switzerland, Germany (where she explored the Thuringian Forest and the Hartz Mountains), France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, and Norway, before arriving in the United Kingdom in July 1912.<sup>34</sup>

### ***"Listening to her quiet voice": Oxford's geographical summer school***

Semple's initial destination upon arrival in England was the Lyceum Club in Piccadilly, of which she was a corresponding member.<sup>35</sup> Organized in 1904 as a public meeting venue for women engaged in literary, artistic, and scientific pursuits, the Lyceum was the first women's club in central London.<sup>36</sup> Using the Club as a social and academic base, Semple undertook research at the library of the Royal Geographical Society and made

<sup>31</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>32</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*.

<sup>33</sup> Bladen and Karan, *Evolution of geographic thought*.

<sup>34</sup> Bladen and Karan, *Evolution of geographic thought*.

<sup>35</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>36</sup> Rappaport, *Shopping for pleasure*.

final preparations for her planned lectures at the University of Oxford.<sup>37</sup> In developing a five-lecture course on ‘Island People’, Semple drew upon her recent research in Japan and South Asia. Her seminar was intended to include a detailed anthropogeographical analysis of Sicily, Ceylon, Java, Japan, and Great Britain “as types of island environment”.<sup>38</sup> Semple’s plan was, then, to prepare a course which would convey her anthropogeographical ideas through the discussion of contemporary geographical research. Having demonstrated her ideas in the field, she sought to prove them in the classroom.

The Oxford biennial summer schools in geography had been initiated in 1902 by Halford Mackinder (1861–1947) as a forum in which school teachers of geography could extend their knowledge and practical experience of the subject.<sup>39</sup> Although the initial meeting attracted thirty participants, the summer schools went on to exert a significant influence upon the nature and practice of geography education in Britain during the first quarter of the twentieth century. In addition to benefiting from the teaching services of important British scholars, the schools also attracted “many of the leading contemporary American geographers”.<sup>40</sup> In addition to Semple, significant contributions were made by William Morris Davis and Albert Brigham.<sup>41</sup>

During the summer schools’ initial years, much of the teaching load was assumed by Andrew Herbertson, and overall organizational responsibility passed to him when Mackinder left the School in 1905. The five summer meetings organized by Herbertson between 1908 and 1914 were attended by more than 850 teachers of school

<sup>37</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 5 July 1912.

<sup>38</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 5 July 1912.

<sup>39</sup> Carter and McGregor, “Long vacation course”; Freeman, *Modern British geography*; Kearns, “Halford John Mackinder”.

<sup>40</sup> Campbell and Livingstone, “Neo-Lamarckism”, 283.

<sup>41</sup> Dickinson, *Regional concept*; Williams, “Geographer-envoy from America to Europe”.

geography.<sup>42</sup> Although the meetings' form did not alter radically from that developed by Mackinder, Herbertson tailored them more closely to those summer schools pioneered by Patrick Geddes in Edinburgh during the 1880s.<sup>43</sup> Herbertson's vision was for a course that ranged from the classroom to the field, and embraced geography's entire disciplinary scope. Given the schools' popularity and impact (in that they had an important influence on how geography was taught in schools), Semple's lectures were an significant platform from which to communicate her anthropogeographical philosophy to audiences beyond the academy.

Herbertson's research interests were, to an extent, allied with those of Semple. His 1905 paper 'The major natural regions' was an important manifesto for a systematic approach to geography which, in considering the classification of regional environments based upon climate, vegetation, and topography, might usefully expose the relationship between human society and the geographical milieu.<sup>44</sup> Unlike Semple, however, Herbertson advanced a more nuanced proto-possibilist perspective: rather than proposing a straightforward causal link between environment and society, Herbertson was satisfied to claim only that the influence of the natural region would "make itself apparent in human affairs".<sup>45</sup> Despite Herbertson's "cautious and balanced" position on environmentalism, he shared with Semple a methodological vision of geography which placed systematic research at its core.<sup>46</sup>

For a payment of £30, Semple contributed a number of lectures on 'Environmental Influences' and the 'Geographical Environment of Man' at the Sixth

<sup>42</sup> Baigent, "Herbertson".

<sup>43</sup> Baigent, "Herbertson"; Meller, "Geddes".

<sup>44</sup> Herbertson, "Major natural regions".

<sup>45</sup> Watson, "Sociological aspect of geography", 467.

<sup>46</sup> Bell, "Reshaping boundaries"; Crone, "British geography", 202.



Biennial Vacation Course.<sup>47</sup> Her associate lecturers included Patrick Geddes, who spoke on the geography of cities, and Herbert Fleure, “an effective lecturer” who talked on the geography of Wales.<sup>48</sup> Although Fleure had close intellectual links with Geddes—having invited him to contribute to Aberystwyth’s own vacation course several years previously—it is unclear to what extent the three geographers used the opportunity of the Oxford summer school to exchange views on the purpose and direction of the discipline.<sup>49</sup> In some senses, Fleure, Geddes, Herbertson, and Semple represented a broadly similar Neo-Lamarckian approach to geography.<sup>50</sup> They were also united by a common desire always to consider society in relation to environment; to do otherwise was, in Herbertson’s view, “scientific murder”.<sup>51</sup> Where they differed, however, was in their conceptions of region and in the roles they attributed to biological heredity in relation to societal development.<sup>52</sup>

Although Fleure later “explicitly rejected Semple’s ideas”, I suggest that this rejection was not simply a consequence of his opposition to her environmentalist position.<sup>53</sup> Semple considered Fleure to be a “modest, gentle, curious soul”, and recognized him as a source of “valuable information and suggestions”.<sup>54</sup> Fleure, for his part, appreciated Semple’s scholarship, but found a number of her assertions impossible to credit. As a consequence of his close intellectual connection to Vidal de la Blache, Fleure saw Semple’s geographical interpretation of history as “not always very

<sup>47</sup> Oxford University Archives (hereafter OUA), GE 4/1; GE 5.

<sup>48</sup> CU, B4-18-11. Semple to Atwood, 29 August 1922; NLW, A1982/3 1977152, item 7.

<sup>49</sup> Freeman, *Modern British geography*.

<sup>50</sup> Graham, “Estyn Evans’s Ireland”, 187.

<sup>51</sup> Fleure, “Developments in Herbertson’s thought”, 99.

<sup>52</sup> Fleure, “Developments in Herbertson’s thought”; Fleure, “Recollections of A. J. Herbertson”; Freeman, “Herbert John Fleure”; Garnett, “Herbert John Fleure”.

<sup>53</sup> Graham, “Estyn Evans’s Ireland”, 187.

<sup>54</sup> HUA, HUG 4877.412. Semple to Whittlesey, 4 April 1929.

judicious”, but did not wish to dismiss her work in its entirety.<sup>55</sup> As has been noted, Fleure “had little time for those who attempted to devise ‘laws’ in human geography”.<sup>56</sup> Although it had been Semple’s explicit aim to avoid generalizations, Fleure considered Semple’s text to be “sometimes dogmatic rather than scientifically tentative”.<sup>57</sup> This fact, combined with the book’s seeming inattention to biological heredity, was the basis of his antipathy towards *Influences* and the reason why it was used as a set text at Aberystwyth in a very particular way (see Chapter 7). For Fleure, the underlying problem in Semple’s work was that she lacked correct “anthropological experience”, and that as a result her beliefs, although genuinely held, lacked credibility.<sup>58</sup>

In her lectures at Oxford, Semple was in effect seeking to promote a new approach to geographical research and explanation. She saw the summer school as a way to “help me further to formulate my ideas”, since her experience at Chicago had shown the value of classroom discussion in revising and refining her anthropogeographical perspective.<sup>59</sup> As part of the task of communicating her ideas, Semple had arranged with her British publisher, Constable and Company, to have a supply of *Influences* for sale in Oxford and for the book to be included on the course’s recommended reading list.<sup>60</sup> Demand for her text proved strong, and upon her arrival in Oxford in August Semple discovered that “all of my seminar students (21) and many of my 200 lecture students had provided themselves with the book”.<sup>61</sup>

As a consequence of her charismatic lecturing style, rather than the compelling qualities of her book *per se*, Semple made a highly favourable impression on her students

<sup>55</sup> AGSL, Herbert J. Fleure to Wright, 31 May 1961.

<sup>56</sup> Bowen, “Geography in the University of Wales”, 30.

<sup>57</sup> AGSL, Herbert J. Fleure to Wright, 3 June 1961.

<sup>58</sup> Fleure and James, “Anthropological types in Wales”, 36.

<sup>59</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 5 July 1912.

<sup>60</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Treasurer, 8 November 1912; OUA, GE 4/1.

<sup>61</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Treasurer, 8 November 1912.

and on the members of the public and University community who attended her presentations. A contemporary newspaper report spoke of her “stimulating personality”, “eloquent delivery”, and “quiet humour”.<sup>62</sup> Semple’s “quiet voice, with which she can do wonderful things” would seem, then, to have been an important factor in the approbative reception of her ideas in Oxford.<sup>63</sup> The plausible acceptance of Semple’s anthropogeography depended not only upon its textual representation, but also upon her embodiment of it. Here, the geography of the reception of *Influences* no longer concerned simply its textual form, but also the ways in which it transcended its tangible guise.

Combined with impressive lantern slides (Figure 13), which Semple had commissioned whilst in Japan, and a convincing oratory, Semple led her audience, as one witness recalled, “gently face to face with the Truth [of environmental influence]”.<sup>64</sup> As was noted, “If we had to learn the relative unimportance of our personality it was nothing less than genius which persuaded Miss Semple to give a course of lectures on ‘Environmental Influences’”.<sup>65</sup> The extent to which the credibility of Semple’s pronouncements depended upon her convincing and enthusiastic mode of presentation was clear: “Even if one had read her book, it is always far more inspiring to listen to the spoken word than to read the written one, and Miss Semple has a wonderfully stimulating personality”.<sup>66</sup> Semple’s effectiveness in communicating her ideas was seen, not only as a peculiar skill but as a model, more generally, for the dissemination of knowledge. As was noted, “She can keep her audience keenly alert for a whole lecture without a single note. The Americans seem to make a special study of the art of

<sup>62</sup> *The Oxford Times*, 17 August 1912.

<sup>63</sup> *The Evening Post*, 9 November 1912.

<sup>64</sup> *The Oxford Times*, 17 August 1912.

<sup>65</sup> *The Oxford Times*, 17 August 1912.

<sup>66</sup> *The Oxford Times*, 17 August 1912.

imparting their information, which would be a great help to many of our learned men”.<sup>67</sup>



Figure 13. A peasant's farm at 2,200 feet.  
From *The Geographical Journal* 40, no. 6 (1912): unpaginated.

As a consequence of her enthusiastic methodological and epistemological evangelism, Semple succeeded in communicating the basic principles of her anthropogeographical philosophy to a number of British school teachers of geography, as well as to students at the School of Geography and to parts of Oxford's academic and lay communities. The initial positive response to Semple's work became formalized by the incorporation of her anthropogeography into the department's curriculum and examinations.<sup>68</sup> Although Semple's output became part, in this sense, of the framework of geography at Oxford, reaction to it, and to anthropogeography more generally, was not constant and always approbatory (see Chapter 7).

<sup>67</sup> *The Oxford Times*, 17 August 1912.

<sup>68</sup> Keltie, *Position of geography in British universities*.

### **Women's Geographical Circle and the Royal Geographical Society**

Following her spell in Oxford, Semple returned to London, to library work, and to writing up the results of her Japanese research for presentation to the Royal Geographical Society. Semple was, again, based at the Lyceum Club, and her visit coincided with the establishment of a Geographical Circle at the Club. Through its Circle—admission to which depended upon “participation in original geographical work”—the Club sought to “promote geographical knowledge”.<sup>69</sup> The Circle was presided over by Bessie Pullen-Burry (1858–1937), an imperialist explorer and anthropologist who had travelled widely in “Europe, the Holy Land, Africa, India, Australasia, the West Indies, the United States and Canada”.<sup>70</sup> In addition to being an important supporter of the suffragist cause, Pullen-Burry was also later a member of ‘The Britons’: an anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant political group, which had important links to *The Morning Post* (see Chapter 4).<sup>71</sup> Along with the Circle’s Vice-Presidents—explorer/traveller Charlotte Cameron, and Violet Roy-Batty, a close friend of the African explorer Mary Kingsley—Pullen-Burry arranged for a luncheon to be given in Semple’s honour at the Lyceum on 13 November 1912.<sup>72</sup>

The luncheon, which was “very well attended”, was an opportunity for Pullen-Burry to set out the aims and scope of the Circle—one of which was to promote practical training for those women engaged in geographical research.<sup>73</sup> In support of the Circle’s principles, Semple “illustrated in humorous fashion the fact that the days are gone when the mere possession of a text-book on the subject was considered sufficient

<sup>69</sup> Bell and McEwan, “Admission of women fellows”, 303.

<sup>70</sup> Dagg, *Feminine gaze*, 248.

<sup>71</sup> Linehan, *British fascism*.

<sup>72</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 10. Scrapbook, 1895–1932. Geographical Circle programme, undated.

<sup>73</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 10. Scrapbook, 1895–1932. Geographical Circle programme, undated.

equipment for a teacher”.<sup>74</sup> Semple and Pullen-Burry were united in their desire to encourage geographical work in the field. They wished to claim part of the otherwise manly rhetoric of science which had, since at least the eighteenth century, emphasised physical exertion and ocular testimony as central to the “pursuit of scientific truth”.<sup>75</sup> Something of the foundations for this project were laid with the establishment in 1907 of the Lyceum’s Alpine Club (which, in 1909, went on to become an independent organization).<sup>76</sup> The Club’s president was Elizabeth Le Blond (1861–1934), a “Victorian woman of both spunk and discretion who ascended the Matterhorn in long and abundant skirts”.<sup>77</sup> Le Blond had shown how the trappings of gender could change from being markers of a woman’s inability to be in the field, to evidence of what she was able to overcome.

The guiding influence of women such as Le Blond and Pullen-Burry created an environment at the Lyceum which promoted travel and exploration as the bases of physical health and intellectual betterment. This was, in part, a component of the wider suffragist movement of which Pullen-Burry and Semple were enthusiastic proponents. Semple’s various contributions to the Woman’s Club of Louisville, the Kentucky Federation of Women’s Clubs, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy had instilled in her an implicit desire for gender equality, and her geographical work became an extension of that wish. Semple’s work in the field served a dual purpose: it satisfied the belief that a direct sensory engagement with an object of study was necessary to secure correct and reliable knowledge of it; and it demonstrated that a women was able to work successfully and systematically in remote or foreign environments in spite of

<sup>74</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 10. Scrapbook, 1895–1932. Geographical Circle programme, undated.

<sup>75</sup> Hevly, “Heroic science of glacier motion”, 66; Kearns, “Imperial subject”; Withers, “Mapping the Niger”.

<sup>76</sup> Anonymous, “An alpine section”.

<sup>77</sup> Lukacs, *Destinations past*, 212.

the perceived limitations of her gender. It was Semple's success in these objectives that led, in part, to her invitation to lecture before the Royal Geographical Society on 4 November 1912.

At the time of Semple's presentation of the 'Influence of geographical conditions upon Japanese agriculture' to the Geographical Club of the Royal Geographical Society, it was relatively uncommon for a woman to enter the Society; more so to address it. For a brief period between 1892 and 1893, the Society had admitted twenty-two women, including the explorer/traveller Isabella Bird to its Fellowship.<sup>78</sup> The issue of the admission of women to the Society—"The Lady Question" as it became known—had been the subject of prolonged debate among the Fellowship.<sup>79</sup> One of the "most strenuous opponents" to the admission of women at that time had been the explorer George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925).<sup>80</sup> By 1912 Curzon's position had, however, changed significantly. As newly-instated president of the Society, Curzon oversaw the purchase of more suitable, more expensive premises near Hyde Park. Faced with this expense, Curzon turned "an eye to new subscriptions" and came increasingly to the view that the election of women to the Fellowship was justified in both meritocratic and financial terms.

The perceived remuneratory benefits of extending membership to women were not, though, advertised explicitly. Curzon chose instead to emphasize the scholarly and exploratory achievements of women. As he noted, "We feel that in the last twenty years women, have, with increasing ability and thoroughness, vindicated their right to be

<sup>78</sup> RGS, Additional Papers, Box 93/2. *The Guardian*, 10 July 1982; Bell and McEwan, "Admission of women fellows".

<sup>79</sup> RGS, Additional Papers, Box 93/2. Freshfield, "Memorandum on the conduct of affairs by the Council of the Royal Geographical Society".

<sup>80</sup> *The Scotsman*, 26 November 1912; Domosh, "Feminist historiography of geography".

regarded as serious contributors to geographical science”.<sup>81</sup> In the time which had elapsed since the initial admission of women in 1892–1893, Curzon reported that “women [including Semple] have read some of the ablest papers before our society” and had “conducted explorations not inferior in adventurous courage or in scientific results to those achieved by men”.<sup>82</sup> In a sentence which seemed to speak almost directly to Semple’s experience, Curzon concluded:

they [women] have made valuable additions to the literature of travel, and have been invited to lecture in our great Universities; above all, as research students and as teachers, they enjoy opportunities for which they are at least as well equipped as men, and which render them a factor of great and growing importance in the diffusion of geographical knowledge.<sup>83</sup>

Curzon believed that women satisfied not only “the ‘emerging standards’ of scientific exploration or fieldwork, but also the ‘standards’ of race, class and gender” associated with membership of the Society.<sup>84</sup> Whilst his position on this matter seems to have been resolved during the middle part of 1912, I suggest that his exposure to Semple and her work helped to cement—or, at least, to render less disingenuous—his thoughts as to the scientific and geographical contribution of women. Given that Curzon had, twenty years previously, been of the opinion that women’s “sex and training” made them “unfitted for exploration”, his revised position represented a radical change.<sup>85</sup>

Curzon had encountered Semple’s work first in a gentlemen’s club, where he “took up a book which was entitled “The Influence of Geographic Environment””.<sup>86</sup> He recalled his impressions thus: “This book was written by an author who was evidently a

<sup>81</sup> *The Morning Post*, 26 November 1912.

<sup>82</sup> *The Morning Post*, 26 November 1912.

<sup>83</sup> *The Morning Post*, 26 November 1912.

<sup>84</sup> Domosh, “Beyond the frontiers of geographical knowledge”, 488.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Anderson, *Women and the politics of travel*, 23.

<sup>86</sup> Curzon et al., “Discussion”, 603.



master of the subject with which he or she dealt. It was written with a great knowledge of the subject, no inconsiderable powers of reasoning, and a most agreeable style”.<sup>87</sup> Whether Curzon registered surprise when he discovered the gender of the book’s author is uncertain. What is apparent, however, is that he greeted Semple’s appearance before the Society with alacrity.

The qualities which Curzon had identified in Semple’s text were echoed in her presentation to “the most fashionable [audience] in London”, which took place in the lecture theatre of Burlington House in Piccadilly on 4 November.<sup>88</sup> Dressed in “a light-blue evening gown with a string of fine pearls”—her attire a marker of difference in otherwise male surroundings—Semple seemed to project a certain calm authority.<sup>89</sup> With only occasional reference to her notes, and with the aid of hand-tinted lantern slides, Semple spoke confidently and engagingly on the relationship between climate and agriculture in Japan—using this example to illustrate her broader perspective on environmentalism. The *Daily Express* spoke of the “remarkable spectacle of a woman lecturer holding an audience of some of the greatest living scientists spellbound for more than an hour”.<sup>90</sup> That Semple was in command of her subject was evident following her talk when Lionel William Lyde (1863–1927), an economic geographer at the University College, London interjected with a criticism of her interpretation of Japanese agriculture. Lyde had a certain reputation for “making startling and provocative assertions” of this type, and Semple responded in like spirit.<sup>91</sup> Quoting from a statistical account, she retorted “You have taken a sentence from page three and applied it to page

<sup>87</sup> Curzon et al., “Discussion”, 603.

<sup>88</sup> *Louisville Herald*, 5 January 1913.

<sup>89</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 November 1912.

<sup>90</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 November 1912.

<sup>91</sup> Fawcett, “Recent losses to British geography”, 506.

sixteen”, at which point “the professor [Lyde] rose in almost trembling apology ... and the audience applauded”.<sup>92</sup>

Semple did not take Lyde’s criticisms personally, she considered him to possess a “bright mind”, albeit “a bit erratic in its conclusions”.<sup>93</sup> Despite his “reputation of being bumptious”, Semple perceived a “charming personality with [a] keen sense of humor”.<sup>94</sup> Shortly before Lyde’s comments (and Semple’s response to them) were to be published in *The Geographical Journal*, Keltie offered Semple the opportunity to alter or supplement her statement. She was, it seems, satisfied with her impromptu response, and asked Keltie to “let my ... reply stand as it is” since it answered the “most important criticisms advanced by Prof. Lyde”.<sup>95</sup> Semple’s evident clarity and composure in response to Lyde’s bumptiousness impressed Curzon. He concluded the evening’s session with an effusive expression, which spoke not only to his opinion of Semple’s work but also to the debates then current within the Society about the admission of women to the Fellowship:

We have had an unusual experience to-night for in the place of the somewhat cautious compliments that are usually addressed to the reader of the paper, we have listened to a series of searching questions put by an intrepid professor [Lyde], and responded to by Miss Semple with a spirit and ability that has given us all the greatest delight. Three things struck me chiefly about the paper: first, the extremely keen and observant eye which Miss Semple must have directed to the objects of her inquiry; secondly, the wonderful beauty of the slides she showed us, many of them from photographs taken by herself; and, thirdly, her unusual power ... of deducing from the phenomena of material existence large generalizations and scientific laws.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> *Daily Express*, 5 November 1912.

<sup>93</sup> CU, B4-18-11. “Miss Semple’s list. European geographers”.

<sup>94</sup> CU, B4-18-11. “Miss Semple’s list. European geographers”.

<sup>95</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, undated [November 1912].

<sup>96</sup> Curzon et al., “Discussion”, 607.

A few hours before this successful address, Semple had dined with the Council of the Society at Oddenino's Imperial Restaurant on Regent Street. As one newspaper reported, Semple was only "the second woman in the world to whom has been shown the honor of being a guest at a council dinner".<sup>97</sup> Her predecessor in this regard had been Isabella Bird. Semple was the only woman among a dinner party of thirty men, and this resulted in an "amusing incident" when a "portly butler came to the door and announced to the assembled guests: 'Lady, gentlemen, dinner is served'".<sup>98</sup> At dinner, Semple sat at Curzon's right hand next to Major Leonard Darwin (1850–1943), son of Charles Darwin. Darwin was then chairman of the Eugenics Education Society, and was an enthusiastic promoter of social progress by means of the improvement and selection of hereditary traits.<sup>99</sup> Whether Darwin had read Semple's book is unclear, but a copy of *Influences* was held (either then, or later) by the library of the Eugenics Society.<sup>100</sup> Although Semple was inclined to attribute greater influence to environment than to heredity in the development of physical and mental traits, her position on mediated or directed heredity is less certain. Asked later what she talked about with Darwin and Curzon, Semple replied "I didn't, they did, about themselves".<sup>101</sup>

Darwin was one of a "prominent group" of Society Fellows who were then active in advocating the admission of women, and it seems likely that Semple's presentation and dinner conversation would have confirmed Darwin in his supportive opinion.<sup>102</sup> Darwin had preceded Curzon as Society president, and his quiet persistence on the matter of female membership—combined with Curzon's own reappraisal of the

<sup>97</sup> *Louisville Herald*, 5 January 1913.

<sup>98</sup> *Louisville Herald*, 5 January 1913.

<sup>99</sup> Searle, *Eugenics and politics in Britain*.

<sup>100</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, Wellcome Library, XWA.

<sup>101</sup> *The Courier-Journal*, 8 January 1963.

<sup>102</sup> Bell and McEwan, "Admission of women fellows", 302.

scholarly and geographical contribution of women—was responsible for Curzon’s decision in November 1912, only days after Semple’s address, to issue a circular to Society members “promoting the election of ladies as Fellows”.<sup>103</sup> The fact that this motion came from Curzon, formerly a passionate opponent of female membership, did not go unnoticed in the press. For *The Scotsman*, Curzon’s conversion was “symptomatic” of wider changes at the Society, where “only a few weeks ago the ... new lecture session was opened with a paper on the economic geography of Japan, by one of the ablest geographers of the day, Miss Ellen Churchill Semple”.<sup>104</sup> With the newspaper press, and the majority of the Fellowship in support of the resolution, it was passed successfully, and women permitted to become members from January 1913. Of the 163 women elected that year, at least three were members of the Lyceum Club’s Geographical Circle with whom Semple had dined in November 1912: Bessie Pullen-Burry, Charlotte Cameron, and Violet Roy-Batty.<sup>105</sup>

By chance, rather than by design, Semple was at the focal point of an important change in the institutional structure of geography in the United Kingdom. Although it is not my intention to suggest that she precipitated this change, it is apparent that her approach to geography (in terms, particularly, of scholarship and work in the field) illustrated that gendered assumptions of what it meant to do geographical work were changing. For much of the first half of Semple’s professional career women were, to varying degrees, excluded from the discipline’s mainstream. In part, this exclusion reflected established notions of what counted as suitable scholarly and scientific pursuits for women.<sup>106</sup> The conduct of science in the field—particularly where it

<sup>103</sup> *The Times*, 2 December 1912.

<sup>104</sup> *The Scotsman*, 26 November 1912.

<sup>105</sup> Bell and McEwan, “Admission of women fellows”.

<sup>106</sup> McEwan, “Gender, science and physical geography”.

necessitated physical exertion, risk, or, simply, remoteness—was understood as a “heroic, manly endeavour”.<sup>107</sup> Combined with the exploratory achievements of various women travellers, Semple’s scientific work in the field was evidence that such undertakings were not exclusively a male preserve.

In some senses, then, Semple’s work had to succeed not only in terms of its scientific value and rigour, but also in its ability to transcend the gendering of knowledge. In achieving the former—in part by being co-opted in the defence of the discipline—Semple’s work secured the latter. As one contemporary newspaper recorded, “It is satisfactory to know that a woman [Semple], by her writings, which occupy the highest rank in recent geographical literature, and by her research work, should be so successful a pioneer in a new and most important branch of geographical science”.<sup>108</sup> As I hope to have established, however, the relative enthusiasm with which Semple’s anthropogeography was greeted in Oxford and London was a function both of text and of speech: Semple’s literary style and impressive locution were fundamental elements in the successful communication of her work. Whilst the written text was, in most cases, sufficient to satisfy questions about Semple’s method, reasoning, and deduction, the fact that she was able to give voice to her anthropogeographical ideas on the floor of the Burlington House lecture theatre, and to defend them successfully in the face of criticism and pejorative opinions as to her gender, lent additional authority to them and to her.

The visual representation of Semple’s material (see, for example, Figure 14) similarly mattered in the communication of her ideas. The relationship between author, reader, and text was, to an extent, replicated in the context of Semple’s slide lectures,

<sup>107</sup> McEwan, “Gender, science and physical geography”, 219.

<sup>108</sup> *The Evening Post*, 8 March 1913.

where a “performative triangle ... of speaker, audience, and image” facilitated the communication of her environmentalist ideas.<sup>109</sup> The particular role of the visual image in this situation was to ‘collapse’ the geographical distance between the lecture theatre and the field. In so doing, Semple’s photographs “transported viewers across space” and made, for a brief time, the distinct spaces of field and lecture theatre virtually collocational.<sup>110</sup> As a consequence of the perceived authority of photography as a virtual witness, Semple had the ability to link her anthropogeographical claims to what could be construed of as their visual proofs.<sup>111</sup> Images were, then, one important component of the “rhetorical triangle” through which Semple’s anthropogeographical knowledge moved.<sup>112</sup> Although underpinned by a common triumvirate of producer, object, and receiver, Semple’s written texts, her spoken addresses, and her visual representations each communicated something different (or, at least, spoke in different ways) about her anthropogeographical work.

<sup>109</sup> Nelson, “Slide lecture”, 415.

<sup>110</sup> Schwartz, “Photographs and the construction of imaginative geographies”, 20.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Krauss, “Photography’s discursive spaces”; Ryan, *Picturing empire*; Tucker, “Photography as witness”.

<sup>112</sup> Nelson, “Slide lecture”, 422.



Figure 14. Terraced valley and rice fields at 2,000 feet.  
From *The Geographical Journal* 40, no. 6 (1912): unpaginated.

Whilst it is possible to dismiss the relative importance of these last two modes—the oratorical and the visual—in the dissemination of Semple’s ideas, I suggest they had a significance that was disproportionate when compared to the relatively small number of people who were witness to her lectures. In part, this was a consequence of the press reporting which accompanied Semple’s visit to Britain. In much the same way that her literary style appealed to certain outlets of the popular press that had reviewed her book, so too did her confident and effective oratorical abilities. This is not to suggest, straightforwardly, that style was more important than substance, but that the manner in which Semple’s knowledge was communicated mattered to the ways in which, and by whom, it was received. For parts of geography’s professional mainstream, Semple’s lecture to the Royal Geographical Society remained a topic of conversation for several weeks; it seemed to speak not only to the question of gender in geographical

work but also to the position of anthropogeography and regional description in the discipline. As one member of Semple's audience, the surveyor-geographer Henry George Lyons (1864–1944), later recalled, Semple's method of taking "the general view of a whole district" was one from which "there is a great deal to be learned".<sup>113</sup>

Whilst the Oxford summer school and the Royal Geographical Society were largely professional spaces, Semple was also presented with the opportunity to address more diverse audiences, including a popular lecture tour of Scotland under the auspices of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. At George Chisholm's invitation, Semple travelled north from London to address the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, and Aberdeen. As a guest of Chisholm, Semple was honoured with a "handsome reception ... to which were invited all the University [of Edinburgh] students [of geography]".<sup>114</sup> Her tour of the Society's regional branches began in Aberdeen on 19 November, where a "large audience" gathered to hear "Miss Semple, who had come all the way from Kentucky to lecture to them—(applause)".<sup>115</sup> What was particularly significant for this audience was that Semple was "by extraction Scotch, as her name showed, having come from Renfrewshire—(applause)".<sup>116</sup> The following evening, Semple addressed a "very large audience" in Dundee.<sup>117</sup> A reporter described, in some detail, the format of Semple's presentation, and her effective use of visual material:

A number of excellent coloured slides were then shown. The audience were treated to some remarkable mountain pictures, showing graphically the hilly nature of the land. The pictures led the audience from the flat seashore to the wooded mountains, showing on the way the cultivation of rice at different stages of growth; the

<sup>113</sup> Darwin and Lyons, "Discussion", 238.

<sup>114</sup> *Louisville Herald*, 5 January 1913.

<sup>115</sup> *The Aberdeen Free Press*, 20 November 1912.

<sup>116</sup> *The Aberdeen Free Press*, 20 November 1912.

<sup>117</sup> *Dundee Advertiser*, 21 November 1912.



interculture of beans or millet with barley, the case of the mulberry tree and the lumbering industry. In addition to this some splendid pictures of Japanese villages and houses were shown, and an accurate conception of the Jap farmer's existence obtained. Altogether, Miss Semple's lecture was of a most informative character, and we learned many things of the land of the Rising Sun. Indeed, her hour's lecture taught us more than the perusal of many books might have done.<sup>118</sup>

Semple concluded her Scottish lecture tour on 28 November, with the presentation of 'Japan as a type of island environment' at the Music Hall on Edinburgh's George Street (Figure 15)—a meeting attended by an audience of 1,200.<sup>119</sup> The Society's speaker the previous week in Edinburgh had been the Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen (1872–1928), whose topical address—'How we reached the South Pole'—attracted a similarly large audience.<sup>120</sup> The fact that Semple was able to secure an audience similar in size to that of Amundsen signals to the particular significance of the public science lecture during this period (rather than any notion of celebrity on Semple's part).<sup>121</sup> Given that the total membership of the Society in 1912 was 1,898, it is clear that a significant proportion of the audience for such lectures was made up of an interested local public.<sup>122</sup> By addressing the Society, then, Semple was able to communicate her ideas beyond the immediate community of geographical scholars and students to whom they were originally targeted.

<sup>118</sup> *Dundee Advertiser*, 21 November 1912.

<sup>119</sup> *The Scotsman*, 29 November 1912; *Louisville Herald*, 5 January 1913.

<sup>120</sup> *The Scotsman*, 23 November 1912.

<sup>121</sup> For a discussion of the importance of the provincial lecture theatre, see, for example, Finnegan, "Scientific speech and intellectual culture".

<sup>122</sup> *The Scotsman*, 13 November 1912.

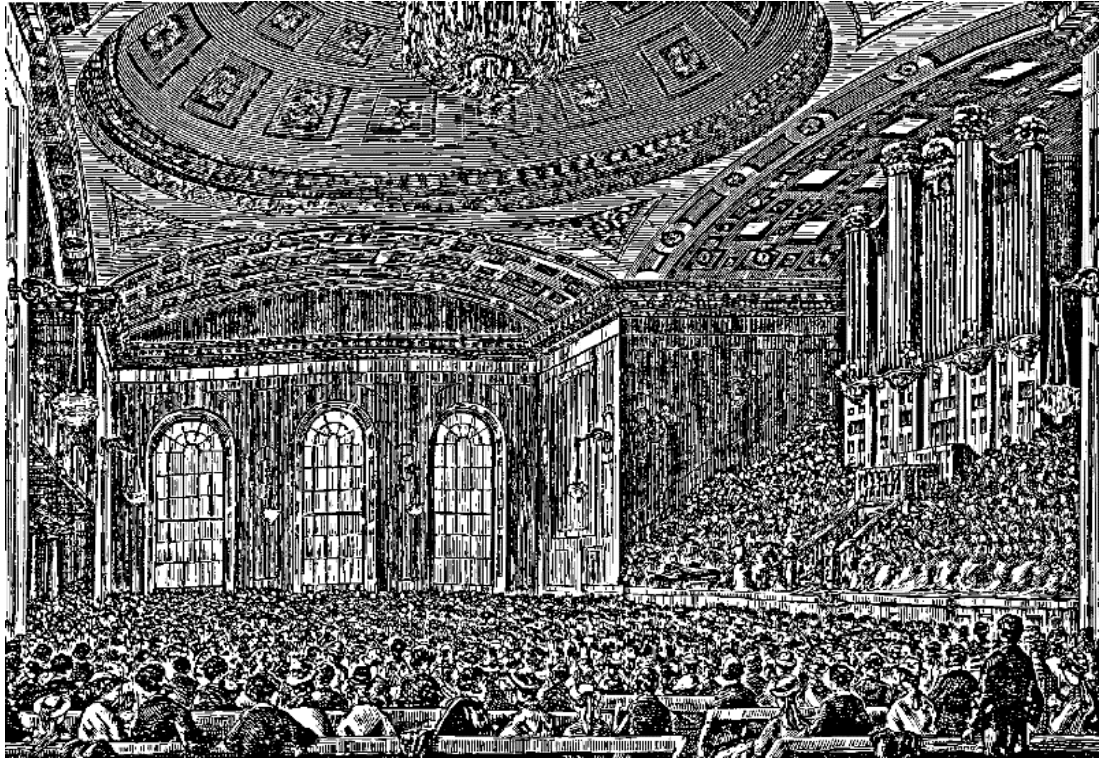


Figure 15. The Music Hall, Edinburgh (circa 1880).  
From *Old and New Edinburgh* III, 152.

The final sentence of the *Dundee Advertiser's* report points to the peculiar ability of the spoken word—especially when juxtaposed with compelling visual material—to engage an audience's imagination and to convey in a comparatively limited time certain important components of an argument. The particular site of the provincial lecture theatre—and the fact that the audiences comprised both lay and professional people—served in some senses to condition Semple's approach to the communication of her knowledge.<sup>123</sup> Whilst her rhetorical style (characterised by extemporaneous delivery, enthusiasm, and subtle humour) seems not to have varied with venue, the content and purpose of her presentations depended upon the audience and society to whom she was addressing her work.<sup>124</sup> In this respect, what Semple chose to say about her anthropogeography was different for student teachers in Oxford; for the elite members

<sup>123</sup> Livingstone, "Science, site and speech".

<sup>124</sup> Naylor, "Field, the museum and the lecture hall"; Scott, "Popular lecture".

of the Royal Geographical Society; and for the interested lay audience of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. These different conversational spaces demanded subtly different approaches to the communication of her geographical knowledge. More significantly, however, these venues were also important sites through which the reception of Semple's *Influences* was mediated.

Although listening to Semple talk on the subject of environmental influence was not the same material experience as reading her textual account, both were part of a process through which the transmission and reception of her anthropogeography was enacted. The epistemic implications of listening to and reading about Semple's work were different, however, in certain important ways. Perhaps the most significant dissimilarity in this respect was that Semple was present, in her capacity as author, in the 'public' spaces of her lectures, but was materially absent in the 'private' spaces in which her book was read. For her readers, as distinct from her listeners, Semple (as author of *Influences*) existed as an imagined construction. As a consequence of what Donald Davidson has called "interpretive charity"—that is, the tendency of readers to seek points of correspondence between their own intellectual position and that of the text with which they are engaged—Semple's readers had a somewhat greater flexibility in determining the meaning of her anthropogeography than did those listening.<sup>125</sup> I am not claiming, however, that the positive reception of Semple's ideas was facilitated more particularly by one mode of engagement or the other. My point is, simply, that the reception of *Influences*, and the ideas it contained, was not solely a matter of its reading but was also a question of engagements with its other representational forms (the scholarly seminar; the academic discussion; the public lecture). In much the same way

<sup>125</sup> Dasenbrock, "Do we write the text?", 13.

that the press had an important mediating influence on the circulation and reception of *Influences*, so too did Semple's own efforts to address her work both to professional and lay communities. Although the difference that Semple's lectures and seminar presentations made to the way in which *Influences* was regarded by its British readers in the second half of 1912 was varied, it is apparent—to the extent these anecdotal accounts allow—that they did exert an important influence on the ways in which the geographical community came to regard both Semple and her ideas.

### **Semple's public lectures and scholarly seminars in the United States**

By the time of her return to the United States in December 1912, Semple had secured the international scholarly reputation she had for so long cultivated. Her relative celebrity was such that her homecoming was marked by a number of often patriotic newspaper reports celebrating her achievements in relation to travel and exploration, and highlighting her positive reception by large parts of the British geographical community. Responding to the Royal Geographical Society's recent decision to admit women to its Fellowship, the *Chicago Evening Post* declared: "We formally propose—let who will second it—the name of Miss Ellen Churchill Semple ... one of three or four students who are developing the comparatively new science which deals with the influence of geographic conditions upon the developments of human society .... We may be wrong, but we know no English woman with superior claims".<sup>126</sup>

For *The Louisville Times*, "Miss Semple's claims to such distinction [membership of the Royal Geographical Society]" seemed equally obvious.<sup>127</sup> It was important, the *Times* believed, however, that Semple's achievements were recognised locally as well as

<sup>126</sup> *Chicago Evening Post*, 1 February 1913.

<sup>127</sup> *The Louisville Times*, 4 January 1913.

internationally: the paper was keen that Louisville especially should stand as an exception to “that old Scriptural rule that ‘a prophet is not without honour save in this country and in his own house’”.<sup>128</sup> To the evident approval of the *Times*, “a sort of intellectual ovation” was arranged by the Woman’s Club of Louisville in Semple’s honour.<sup>129</sup> Having been seen formerly only as “an ornament to the more or less frivolous section of Louisville ‘Society’”, Semple had, in the opinion of the *Times*, been elevated to the status of “savant”.<sup>130</sup> Her apotheosis as “Ratzel’s recognized successor” reflected particular credit on her hometown.<sup>131</sup> As the *Louisville Herald* confirmed, the city was “justly proud to claim for her own a woman of such distinction and learning and charm as Miss Semple”.<sup>132</sup> In some senses this local support was not new: ten years earlier, for example, *The Courier-Journal* had described Semple’s *American history* as “truly another feather in the cap of the Commonwealth”.<sup>133</sup> What had changed in the intervening decade, however, was the fact that knowledge of Semple’s work was no longer restricted to “the more studious” sectors of Kentucky society.<sup>134</sup> As a consequence of its discussion in newspapers and popular periodicals, as well as Semple’s teaching and public lectures, her anthropogeography had come to the attention of wider metropolitan and national publics.

Semple devoted much of 1913 and 1914 to the communication of her recent anthropogeographical work in Asia and Europe. The diverse and hectic nature of her programme of dissemination evidenced by the variety of institutions to which she spoke. On 7 March 1913, for example, she addressed the Appalachian Mountain Club at

<sup>128</sup> *The Louisville Times*, 4 January 1913.

<sup>129</sup> *The Louisville Times*, 4 January 1913.

<sup>130</sup> *The Louisville Times*, 4 January 1913.

<sup>131</sup> *The Louisville Times*, 4 January 1913.

<sup>132</sup> *Louisville Herald*, 5 January 1913.

<sup>133</sup> *The Courier-Journal*, 13 June 1903.

<sup>134</sup> *The Louisville Times*, 4 January 1913.

the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston on ‘Geographic influences in Japan’, before going on to deliver the same lecture four days later before a large audience of “laymen in geography” at the American Geographical Society in New York City.<sup>135</sup> In both venues, Semple’s use of “Superior stereopticon views” to illustrate her lecture was praised.<sup>136</sup>

A little more than a year later, Semple was awarded the American Geographical Society’s prestigious Cullum Geographical Medal in recognition of her “distinguished contributions to the science of anthropogeography”.<sup>137</sup> In accepting this honour, Semple was not only “the first woman medallist”, but was also “the first person to receive an AGS medal who was not in any way associated with the exploration tradition”.<sup>138</sup> At the award ceremony, attended by “an audience that filled the large auditorium”, the Society’s vice-president John Greenough (1846–1934) praised Semple’s contributions to both anthropogeography and the disciplinary standing of geography:

To this branch of science [anthropogeography] the medallist has devoted herself for many years and in many lands with a result truly monumental. Her writings and teachings on the subject are recognized both here and in Europe as authoritative and exhaustive and the charm of style and manner in her books creates a sustained interest such as might not always be expected in scientific material. The catalogue of her works is extensive and our Society honors itself in honoring her.<sup>139</sup>

In response, Semple thanked the Society for its “rare and signal honour”, and for restoring her “childhood faith in miracles”.<sup>140</sup>

On 26 March, newly-decorated, Semple addressed the Washington, D.C. branch of the Associate Alumnae of Vassar College. She took the opportunity there to discuss

<sup>135</sup> *Boston Herald*, 6 March 1913; Wright, *Geography in the making*, 154.

<sup>136</sup> Anonymous, “Meeting of the Society”, 285.

<sup>137</sup> Anonymous, “Cullum Geographical Medal presented to Miss Ellen Churchill Semple”, 364.

<sup>138</sup> McManis, “Leading ladies at the AGS”, 271.

<sup>139</sup> Anonymous, “Cullum Geographical Medal presented to Miss Ellen Churchill Semple”, 364.

<sup>140</sup> Anonymous, “Cullum Geographical Medal presented to Miss Ellen Churchill Semple”, 364.

her recent travels, and, for reasons that are not immediately apparent, to lend support to James Monroe Taylor (1848–1916)—recently-resigned president of the College—in his stance against the promotion of women’s suffrage on campus.<sup>141</sup> The following day, maintaining a hectic pace of dissemination, she lectured to the National Geographic Society on ‘Problems of the Japanese farmers’.<sup>142</sup> In each venue, Semple’s “Southern grace and charm” were instrumental in the communication of her anthropogeographical principles—her correct deportment a necessary requirement for the effective dissemination of her ideas.<sup>143</sup> Yet her ability to undertake this peripatetic programme of dissemination depended not only upon her rhetorical abilities, but also upon her relative financial independence. Semple’s familial inheritance and royalties from the sale of *American history* and *Influences* (which amounted to several hundred dollars annually) were sufficient to allow her to choose when, and under what circumstances, she undertook paid employment.<sup>144</sup> For a majority of geographers at this time, most particularly female geographers, this was an uncommon luxury.<sup>145</sup> Semple was not, however, immune to financial concerns, and, as noted in Chapter 7, she was disadvantaged remuneratively as a consequence of her gender.<sup>146</sup>

Although the dissemination of Semple’s anthropogeographical work was often facilitated by institutional lectures—at venues such as the Geographic Society of Chicago, the League for Political Education, the Japan Society, and the Geographical Society of Philadelphia—she also made a number of important contributions to the

<sup>141</sup> *The Washington Post*, 27 March 1914.

<sup>142</sup> *The Washington Post*, 28 March 1914.

<sup>143</sup> Anonymous, “Presentation of the Cullum Geographical Medal to Hugh Robert Mill”, 669.

<sup>144</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Treasurer to United States Trust Company, 10 April 1933.

<sup>145</sup> Monk, “Histories of American geography”.

<sup>146</sup> Berman, “Sex discrimination and geography”; Bronson, “Further note on sex discrimination”.

teaching of environmentalism at various colleges and universities.<sup>147</sup> Between 1914 and 1916, for example, Semple undertook additional lecturing at Wellesley College, Massachusetts; the University of Colorado; and the Western Kentucky State Normal School, in addition to her regular teaching commitment at the University of Chicago.<sup>148</sup> Her work in these different institutional settings provides a useful insight into her pedagogical approach, and to the ways in which her research focus had begun to shift to questions of Mediterranean geography.

At the time of Semple's visit in the autumn semester of 1914–1915, Wellesley College was something of a “female Harvard”—a progressive women's college whose “stellar cast” of administrators and faculty was exclusively female.<sup>149</sup> The College was one of the few academic institutions in the United States at which female scholars were able to attain academic positions commensurate with their intellectual abilities. At Wellesley, Semple collaborated with Elizabeth Florette Fisher (1873–1941), Professor of Geology and Geography (Figure 16) on courses related to environmental influence.<sup>150</sup> Under the auspices of ‘Economic and Industrial Geography II’, Semple offered lectures on anthropogeography which dealt with “the influence of the geographic factors of physical environment on man, his industry and his needs; the production of various commodities which supply the needs of man, and the transportation of these commodities”.<sup>151</sup> The course was structured around “Lectures and recitations”, as well

<sup>147</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1911–1920. Semple to John S. Keltie, 14 March 1913.

<sup>148</sup> Wellesley College Archives (hereafter WC). *Wellesley College News*, 3 December 1914; University of Colorado at Boulder (Archives) (hereafter UCoB). *University of Colorado Bulletin*, 1915; Western Kentucky University (Museum and Library) (hereafter WKU), *Normal Heights*, April 1917.

<sup>149</sup> Palmieri, “Academic women at Wellesley College”, 195.

<sup>150</sup> Elder, “Women in early geology”; Shrock, *Geology at M.I.T.*

<sup>151</sup> WC. *Wellesley College course catalog*, 1914–1915.



as “Laboratory and fieldwork equivalent to two hours a week”.<sup>152</sup> It seems likely that, in this latter respect, Semple made use of the College’s “300 acres of fields and lake”.<sup>153</sup>



Figure 16. Elizabeth Fisher before a geography class at Wellesley College. From *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (2004): 6.

Semple also contributed to ‘Geography of Europe III’, detailing the “historical geography of the Mediterranean Basin” and the “Regional geography of Europe in its physical, economic, historical and commercial aspects”.<sup>154</sup> In addition to lectures, “library work” and “critical discussions” were both important pedagogic apparatus in Semple’s course.<sup>155</sup> Her enthusiasm and oratorical ease seem, again, to have impressed her students. The College newspaper was similarly impressed; it described Semple as “a remarkably endowed woman”, whose “splendid talks” touched upon “every phase of

<sup>152</sup> WC. *Wellesley College course catalog, 1914–1915*.

<sup>153</sup> Palmieri, “Academic women at Wellesley College”, 201.

<sup>154</sup> WC. *Wellesley College course catalog, 1914–1915*.

<sup>155</sup> WC. *Wellesley College course catalog, 1914–1915*.

human interest”.<sup>156</sup> Her students were also reported to have expressed “their deepest appreciation of her brilliant work with them”.<sup>157</sup>

The students’ enthusiasm for their work with Semple seems to have prompted the organization of two additional public lectures: one on ‘Japanese Agriculture’, the other on ‘Militant Germany’.<sup>158</sup> Combined with her “unusual power of correlation between geography and history”, and her “versatility and exquisite English”, the topicality of this second talk provided “a remarkable insight” into the scope of Semple’s anthropogeographical interests.<sup>159</sup> Whether or not the impact of Semple’s ideas persisted at Wellesley after 1915 is not, however, immediately obvious. Given that Fisher—who had invited Semple to contribute to the autumn semester’s courses—remained at the college until her retirement in 1926, it seems probable that some element of Semple’s environmentalism was retained on the curriculum.

An appreciation for environmental influence was, however, central to the work of Mary Jean Lanier (1872–1961), who joined the College’s department of geography in 1917, becoming its head between 1927 and 1939.<sup>160</sup> Lanier (Figure 17) had completed her undergraduate and doctoral degrees at the University of Chicago, and through contact there with Semple developed an interest in environmentalist themes. Lanier’s environmentalism was expressed most particularly in her 1924 doctoral thesis, ‘The earlier development of Boston as a commercial centre’, and it seems probable that this perspective directed, or at least informed, her teaching at Wellesley.<sup>161</sup> Lanier had worked closely with Harlan Barrows, and had on a number of occasions taught with him at

<sup>156</sup> WC. *Wellesley College News*, 3 December 1914.

<sup>157</sup> WC. *Wellesley College News*, 3 December 1914.

<sup>158</sup> WC, 1DB/1899–1966. Report of the Department of Geology and Geography, 1914–1915.

<sup>159</sup> WC, 1DB/1899–1966. Report of the Department of Geology and Geography, 1914–1915.

<sup>160</sup> Visher, “Rollin D. Salisbury and geography”.

<sup>161</sup> Anonymous, “Dissertations in geography”.

Chicago's summer school a course entitled 'Influence of Geography on American History, For Teachers of Geography and History' (see Appendix B).<sup>162</sup> Despite Lanier's distinctly environmentalist outlook, geography at Wellesley had by the 1940s assumed "a regional emphasis", and environmentalism was no longer considered an appropriate explanatory approach.<sup>163</sup>



Figure 17. Mary J. Lanier with (left to right) J. Paul Goode, Wallace W. Atwood, Walter S. Tower, Rollin D. Salisbury, and Harlan H. Barrows. University of Chicago, 1910. From *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69, no. 1 (1979): unpaginated.

In the summer of 1916, Semple was "secured for two courses of lectures" by the University of Colorado at Boulder as part of its inaugural summer school in geology and geography.<sup>164</sup> Although a department of geography was not established there until 1927, a number of geographical courses had been offered at Colorado since 1910, and the summer school was an opportunity to place the University's geographical offering

<sup>162</sup> Anonymous, "Geography in the summer schools", 370.

<sup>163</sup> de Souza, "Elizabeth Eiselen", 267.

<sup>164</sup> Anonymous, "Geography in the summer schools", 370.

on a more substantial base.<sup>165</sup> Semple's six-week courses included 'General Principles of Anthropo-Geography', and 'Geography of the Mediterranean Basin'.<sup>166</sup> Like those offered at Wellesley, Semple's courses were designed to provide an introduction to the "various classes of geographic influences and their mode of operation", before grounding them in relation to specific examples (in this case, the history of the Mediterranean region).<sup>167</sup> As ever, Semple was keen to demonstrate the validity of her work in the field, and arranged for a "field study of life under semi-arid conditions" to be undertaken in south-western Colorado immediately following the summer school.<sup>168</sup>

Unlike at Wellesley, it is clear that environmentalism remained an important component of the geographical offering at Colorado. Virtually every year between 1917 and 1925, the geologist-geographer Walter Edward McCourt (1884–1943) (then head of the geography programme at Washington University in St Louis) contributed a course on 'Geographic Influences' to Colorado's geographical summer school (see Appendix B). In 1926, responsibility for these courses passed to Ralph Hall Brown (1898–1948), who had been recently appointed to the faculty. It is probable, however, that although the course retained the same name, its content and purpose was altered subtly. Brown had studied under Ray Whitbeck at the University of Wisconsin, and had inherited from him aspects of the environmentalist tenet.<sup>169</sup> Later, however, Brown's perspective altered as he became convinced by Harlan Barrows' 1922 call that geography should seek to define itself as the scientific study of human ecology.<sup>170</sup> For Brown, Barrows' belief that the objective of geographical inquiry "should be the study of how man adjusts to the

<sup>165</sup> Blouet and Stitche, "Survey of early geography teaching"; Winsted, "Geography in American universities".

<sup>166</sup> UCoB. *University of Colorado Bulletin*, 1915.

<sup>167</sup> UCoB. *University of Colorado Bulletin*, 1915.

<sup>168</sup> Anonymous, "Geography in the summer schools", 370.

<sup>169</sup> Dodge, "Ralph Hall Brown"; Karan and Mather, *Leaders in American geography*, II.

<sup>170</sup> Barrows, "Geography as human ecology"; McManis, "Prism to the past".

environment ... rather than how he is influenced by the environment” became the basis to his later research.<sup>171</sup> It seems unlikely, then, that Brown—in his position as Instructor in Geography at Colorado between 1925 and 1929—would have employed Semple’s text in an instructional capacity. It is certain that he did not when he later taught at the University of Minnesota.<sup>172</sup>

Of Semple’s three short-term teaching appointments between 1914 and 1917, her influence seems to have been felt most strongly and persistently at the Western Kentucky State Normal School in Bowling Green, where she lectured in June 1917. Western Kentucky was a teacher-training institution, and Semple’s lecture series was tailored to the specific requirements of school teachers of geography. In addition to general discussion of anthropogeographical principles, Semple offered a number of practical and topical additions. Her lectures included ‘Reading the Map of Russia, or France, or Africa, or the Balkan Peninsula, or India’ and a discussion of mountain barriers “with a special view to their effect in the present war”.<sup>173</sup>

Two months earlier, Semple had participated in a meeting of the Council of Geography Teachers of Kentucky, which had been organized with the intention of making geography “more vital and of more abiding interest to the children and teachers of Kentucky”.<sup>174</sup> Semple’s presentation attracted a “large attendance of enthusiastic teachers” as well as Robert Powell Green, who led geographical instruction at Western Kentucky, and who arranged for Semple to present her work there in June.<sup>175</sup> Semple’s summer lectures, dealing with various aspects of environmental influence, were advertised in the School’s official newsletter *Normal Heights* beneath a photograph

<sup>171</sup> Karan and Mather, *Leaders in American geography*, II, 49.

<sup>172</sup> AGSL. Fred E. Lukermann to Wright, 19 May 1961.

<sup>173</sup> WKU. *Normal Heights*, April 1917, 19.

<sup>174</sup> Anonymous, “Meeting in Kentucky”, 336.

<sup>175</sup> Anonymous, “Meeting in Kentucky”, 336.

entitled, prosaically, “Miss Ellen Churchill Semple in Her Tent”.<sup>176</sup> The image (Figure 18) showed Semple at her campsite in the Catskill Mountains, where she summered whilst writing *Influences*. Being a “Noted author, lecturer and traveller”, Semple doubtless was a source of particular pride for students and teachers of geography in her home state. Above all her scholarly achievements, the conviction remained that Semple was “a Kentucky woman”.<sup>177</sup>



Figure 18. Miss Ellen Churchill Semple in her tent.  
Western Kentucky University (Museum and Library), *Normal Heights*, April 1917, 19.

Semple’s provincial associations with geographical education in the state, and at Western Kentucky particularly, were later honoured on several occasions. In 1929, for example, the Pennyroyal Council of Geography teachers hosted a dinner in her honour, at which Semple’s contribution to geography was celebrated and “various members of the group told Geography jokes”.<sup>178</sup> Among the Council members then present was Ella Jeffries, who was head of the Department of Geography at Western Kentucky between

<sup>176</sup> WKU. *Normal Heights*, April 1917, 19.

<sup>177</sup> WKU. *College Heights Herald*, June 1929, 1.

<sup>178</sup> WKU. *College Heights Herald*, June 1929, 1.

1920 and 1942.<sup>179</sup> Jeffries was later one of the associate members of the Ellen Churchill Semple Geographical Society, which was established by the “majors and minors in geography” at the Western Kentucky State Teachers College (as the Normal School was then known) in March 1931.<sup>180</sup> The ‘Semplia’—the members of the Society—intended in their work to promote geography and to celebrate the contribution of Semple, “Kentucky’s most distinguished geographer”.<sup>181</sup> Alongside the Society’s social functions and field trips, a programme of lectures and discussions was arranged to mark “Semple’s career and her contributions to geographic thought and literature”.<sup>182</sup>

Although Semple’s scholarly contribution was celebrated at Western Kentucky in this distinctive and enthusiastic manner, her geographical principles were not accepted in their entirety. Jeffries believed that Semple had attributed “too much to geographic environment”, and that Jean Brunhes was correct in his assertion that “all history can not be explained by geography”.<sup>183</sup> Jeffries did hold to the view, however, that “it is not possible for us to separate man from his environment”, and that the physical environment serves to impose certain restrictions upon societal development.<sup>184</sup> For this reason, she continued to engage with environmentalist themes, and offered a course on ‘Geographic Influence in American History’ to the 1921 summer school (see Appendix B). Jeffries neither rejected Semple’s ideas nor accepted them in their entirety. It seems likely that this somewhat considered approach to Semple’s work was replicated in Jeffries’s geographical instruction at Western Kentucky. This is not to suggest, however, that use of Semple’s text was restricted to the Department of Geography. One of the

<sup>179</sup> Harrison, *Western Kentucky University*.

<sup>180</sup> WKU. “The Ellen Churchill Semple Geographical Society”, 1931.

<sup>181</sup> WKU. *The Talisman*, 1931, 132.

<sup>182</sup> WKU. *The Talisman*, 1931, 132.

<sup>183</sup> Jeffries, “Dependence of the social sciences”, 229.

<sup>184</sup> Jeffries, “Dependence of the social sciences”, 229.

copies currently held at the Kentucky Library of the Western Kentucky University was, for example, deposited in honour of Ella Jeffries by Gabrielle Robertson, who taught history at the institution from 1914 until 1960.<sup>185</sup> Another copy contains marginalia which list the dates of a number of historical events—evidence, perhaps, of the book being encountered by a student of history rather than of geography.

### **Conclusion: performance and representation**

As I hope to have made clear, the reception of *Influences* was not a matter simply of how Semple's book was read. It was also a question of the other representational guises which her anthropogeography assumed (the lecture, the photograph, the seminar). In much the same way that Semple's earlier papers laid a foundation for the reading of *Influences* (and promoted certain expectations of it among the book's likely readers), her public and scholarly lectures formed a context for the reception of her environmentalism. Whilst the *reading* of *Influences* necessitated the interaction of reader and text, the *reception* of it was not so constrained. It is useful, I think, to distinguish between the reading of Semple's book (as a material act) and the reception of it as a process which transcended and transformed the text. Whilst the reading of Semple's book mattered to its reception, it was not the only thing that mattered. The reception of Semple's work was facilitated both by the reading of *Influences*, and by the communication of her anthropogeography through a "network of supratextual discourses".<sup>186</sup>

Quite what the relative importance of these different communicative modes was in relation to the reception of Semple's ideas cannot straightforwardly be quantified. It

<sup>185</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, Western Kentucky University, Kentucky Library, GF31 .S5; Harrison, *Western Kentucky University*.

<sup>186</sup> Ríos-Font, *Configuring literature in modern Spain*, 128.



is evident, however, that the textual, visual, and aural transmission of *Influences'* content demanded of Semple different performative skills, and required of her audience different receptive repertoires. Anthropogeography existed differently (in both a material and an epistemic sense) in its various representational forms: the printed book, the public lecture, the scholarly seminar, and so on. Whilst the 'performance' of anthropogeography in the classroom and lecture theatre was undoubtedly important in its circulation, the reading of its textual representation was pre-eminent. It is to *Influences'* reading in its different institutional settings that I turn, then, in Chapter 7.

## Chapter 7

### *Influences*' textbook career:

#### professional receptions of anthropogeography

##### Introduction: situating the readings of *Influences*

*Influences* came to secure an audience that transcended disciplinary divisions and encompass scholarly and lay communities, yet Semple's intended readers were university students of geography.<sup>1</sup> Through her lectures at the University of Chicago, she attempted to adapt *Influences* "to students' needs", and envisioned a clear pedagogical role for her book—the principal function of which was as an aid to education in anthropogeography.<sup>2</sup> The extent to which her book was actually used in this capacity is not, however, a barometer of its 'success'. The reception of *Influences* is not a matter simply of the 'right' or 'wrong' application of the book (as it relates to Semple's vision for its use) but is, rather, a question of why it was used (or not) in particular ways.

This chapter considers the different ways in which Semple's book was employed pedagogically. Drawing upon evidence of individual reading experiences—specifically, John Wright's 1961 census, course reading lists, examination scripts, autobiographical reflections, and the marginal annotation of institutional copies of Semple's book—the chapter attempts to situate these uses and readings within the context of then-contemporary geographical debates. In so doing I hope to explain something of the motivating factors which underpinned the teaching of geography at these different institutions, and the use made of Semple's work in that teaching.

<sup>1</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 6 March 1910.

<sup>2</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 6 March 1910.

Given that the history of the engagement with Semple's book was not straightforwardly linear—that is, it did not follow an unproblematic and chronological progression from acceptance, through doubt, to rejection—what follows is neither strictly chronological nor unwaveringly locational. Rather it is part biographical and part prosopographical. In attending to the individual as well as to the institutional response to Semple's work, the significance of subjectivity, personal experience, and social networks upon the circulation, acceptance, and repudiation of her knowledge is, I contend, revealed. My aim is three-fold: to highlight the multiplicity of reading experiences within and between institutions; to make clear that the reaction to Semple's book changed through time (and that it did so at different rates, and for different reasons, in different institutional settings); and to record that *Influences* functioned, as Deleuze and Guattari have it, like “a little machine” which, in order to function, had to be “plugged into” the particular social and intellectual concerns of the different institutional contexts in which it was read.<sup>3</sup>

One way in which to conceive of the printed book is as an “assemblage”—that is, the bringing together of author, text, and reader (and the unique contexts and associations of each).<sup>4</sup> The concept of assemblage—described particularly through the work of Deleuze and Guattari—addresses “the modernist problem of the heterogeneous ... while preserving some concept of the structural so embedded in the enterprise of social science research”.<sup>5</sup> It offers, in short, a way of accounting for the multiple meanings which arise within a seemingly finite number of social circumstances. In this scheme, the book can be understood to represent an assemblage of assemblages: it is the epistemic location at which different contexts commingle, and a multiplicity of

<sup>3</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand plateaus*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand plateaus*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Marcus and Saka, “Assemblage”, 102.

meaning is made. The notion of assemblage also helps to explain why—given the potential plurality of meaning associated with the reading of *Influences*—there were shared and common responses to it. For Deleuze and Guattari, “the assemblage is fundamentally territorial”, and—whether that territory is conceived of as social or spatial—it is “the first thing to constitute an assemblage”.<sup>6</sup> Put simply, the geographical or intellectual context of the assemblage matters to the way meaning is made. To understand the process through which meaning arises, it is important to understand the “internal organization” of the territory in which the assemblage emerges.<sup>7</sup> In what follows, I consider something of the internal organization of the different institutional spaces in which Semple was read, and attempt to draw links between these spaces and the different interpretations to which *Influences* was subject.

### **Environmentalism and the formation of the Chicago School of geography**

In the years before the First World War, the principal function of Chicago’s department of geography was “to train men and women for posts in other universities and colleges”.<sup>8</sup> Historical geography formed an important component of this education, and Semple’s paper on the Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains and her *American history* were required reading—notably for Harlan Barrows’ course on ‘Influences of Geography on American History’, which ran from 1904.<sup>9</sup> A concern for the environmentalist theme at Chicago predated both Barrows’ course and that offered by Semple after 1906. During the 1890s, a variety of courses was offered “in botany and

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand plateaus*, 356.

<sup>7</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand plateaus*, 356.

<sup>8</sup> AGSL. Charles C. Colby to Wright, 23 May 1961.

<sup>9</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Carton 4, Folder 3. Notebook of class notes, Chicago, 1909.

zoology” which addressed aspects of environmental influence.<sup>10</sup> Part of the *raison d'être* for the establishment of the department of geography—first proposed in 1902—was to provide a professional focus to the study of these environmental factors.

The new department's potential scope was set out, in part, by the geologist-geographer John Paul Goode, who proposed three courses on anthropogeographical themes: ‘Geographic Ethnology’, ‘Geographic Factors in Social Development’, and ‘Racial Problems in America’.<sup>11</sup> Goode's environmentalist position—expressed first in his “rambling thesis” on ‘The influence of physiographic factors upon the occupations and the economic development of the United States’ (1901)—was broadly compatible with that of Semple.<sup>12</sup> Although Goode's approach to human-environment relations was largely deterministic, he understood that whilst environmental influences were generally persistent, the response of societies to them was not. As he noted, “though at first our evolution has been unconscious, and wholly the result of a chance geographic environment, sooner or later evolution becomes conscious and self-directed”.<sup>13</sup> Goode's graphical representation of his scheme (Figure 19) shows how, through time, certain important social developments—(a) the beginning of social organization; (b) the discovery of fire; (c) agriculture; (d) domestication; and (e) mechanical invention—changed the relationship between the physical and social environments.

<sup>10</sup> Pattison, “Geography at the University of Chicago”, 155.

<sup>11</sup> Pattison, “Goode's proposal of 1902”.

<sup>12</sup> Martin, “John Paul Goode”, 51.

<sup>13</sup> Goode, “Human response to the physical environment”, 335.

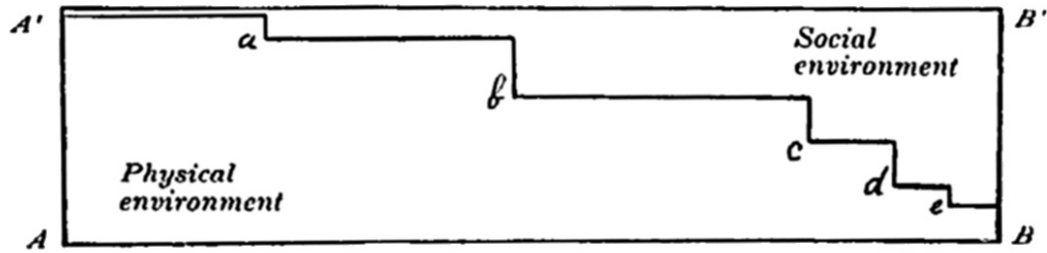


Figure 19. Relative independence of humanity in relation to physical constraints. From *The Journal of Geography* 3, no. 7 (1904): 343.

As a consequence most probably of Rollin Salisbury's moderating influence, Goode's proposed classes did not materialize. Even so, an environmentalist rhetoric—apparent in the “discourse signaling” vocabulary of “‘geographical influence,’ ‘geographic factor,’ and ‘geographic condition’”—was evident in the department's early courses.<sup>14</sup> This was particularly true of Barrows' course, which “introduced historical geography to the curriculum of the American university” and articulated a position for environmentalist themes in geographical study.<sup>15</sup>

For Koelsch, the “intellectual stimulus” for Barrows' course came from two principal sources: Frederick Jackson Turner and Semple.<sup>16</sup> Although Barrows briefly studied under Turner at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1907, his interest in Turner's work, and also that of Semple, was a consequence of an earlier reading of their works.<sup>17</sup> Barrows' copy of Semple's *American history* is “interleaved and annotated in a way which shows his careful and systematic absorption of her work”.<sup>18</sup> Barrows completed his undergraduate education at the Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti under Charles McFarlane (1871–1949).<sup>19</sup> McFarlane's perspective on

<sup>14</sup> Pattison, “Geography at the University of Chicago”, 157.

<sup>15</sup> Merrens, “Historical geography”, 531.

<sup>16</sup> Barrows, *Historical geography of the United States*, v; Chappell, “Harlan Barrows and environmentalism”.

<sup>17</sup> Block, “Frederick Jackson Turner”.

<sup>18</sup> Barrows, *Historical geography of the United States*, vi.

<sup>19</sup> Whitbeck, “Thirty years of geography in the United States”, 122.

environmental causation—expressed particularly in his later collaboration with Albert Brigham on geographical textbooks—emphasized environmental causation, whilst also making clear the impact of society upon the environment. In some respects, McFarlane's attention to both social and environmental causation was reflected in Barrows' own teaching.

Barrows' course on the historical geography of the United States sought to examine “the geographic conditions which have influenced the course of American history”.<sup>20</sup> Barrows intended the course to assess the importance of geographic conditions “as compared with one another, and their importance as compared with non-geographic factors”.<sup>21</sup> Barrows' approach was distinct from that of Semple in that he attributed rather more significance to human causation than she allowed. This is not to suggest, however, that Barrows (Figure 20) lacked Semple's environmentalist beliefs, but that he did not belong “in the same [anthropogeographical] camp as Huntington or Semple”.<sup>22</sup> Semple and Barrows were united, however, in terms of their oratorical skills. As one of Barrows' former students recalled, “Barrows delivered masterful lectures, beautifully organized. He did not use notes but committed to memory in advance the structure of each lecture and all the figures and illustrations”.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> UC. *Circular of information*, 1906.

<sup>21</sup> UC. *Circular of information*, 1906.

<sup>22</sup> Chappell, “Harlan Barrows and environmentalism”, 198.

<sup>23</sup> Harris, “Geography at Chicago”, 23.



Figure 20. Harlan Harland Barrows.  
University of Chicago, Special Collections Research Center, asas-00760.

Barrows' course, despite initially being offered "against Professor Salisbury's advice", went on to become "one of the [most] famous courses of the Department and the University", and attracted large numbers of students.<sup>24</sup> Of those students who graduated with a Ph.D. in geography in the United States during or before 1946, more than a third were Barrows' "academic descendents".<sup>25</sup> Although the content of the course changed substantially with time, Semple's *American history* formed a core component of it. One of Barrows' early students—Carl Ortwin Sauer (1889–1975)—completed the course in the autumn quarter of 1909.<sup>26</sup> A relative newcomer to geography, Sauer had trained previously in geology—first at the Central Wesleyan

<sup>24</sup> Colby and White, "Harlan H. Barrows".

<sup>25</sup> Bushong, "Geographers and their mentors", 197.

<sup>26</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Carton 4, Folder 3. Notebook of class notes, Chicago, 1909.



College (Warrenton, Missouri), then at Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois).<sup>27</sup> Sauer's undergraduate training exerted a significant influence upon his later intellectual outlook, but it also had the immediate consequence of making him an "informed dissenter" at Chicago.<sup>28</sup> In some respects Sauer's critical outlook complemented Barrows' engagement with Semple's work (which was to treat it as indicative, rather than authoritative). Although Sauer came later to oppose the environmentalism of Goode, Barrows, and Semple, this perspective emerged only by degrees.<sup>29</sup>

For most graduate students at Chicago between 1906 and 1923, Sauer included, exposure to Semple's work came principally through her own lectures and seminars. Semple considered Sauer in particular "one of the finest minds that had ever come into my classes".<sup>30</sup> Whilst these lectures were important in refining the content of *Influences*, they also exerted a significant impact upon the educational experience of a generation of American geographers. This was particularly true in the case of Stephen Sargent Visher (1877–1967), who took Semple's course in the spring quarter of 1914.<sup>31</sup> Visher had been raised in a remote agricultural community in South Dakota, his boyhood shaped by "direct contact with the rigorous regime of the upper mid-latitude continental climate".<sup>32</sup> As Visher's obituarist noted, his exposure to the "day to day vicissitudes of the South Dakota natural environment" provided an important background to his later environmentalist concerns.<sup>33</sup>

Visher's interest in the role of climate was cemented by study at Chicago in the first decade of the twentieth century under the "brilliant" geographer-botanist Henry

<sup>27</sup> Kenzer, "Carl O. Sauer's undergraduate heritage"; Leighly, "Carl Ortwin Sauer, 1889–1975".

<sup>28</sup> Sauer, "Education of a geographer", 288.

<sup>29</sup> Sauer, "Fourth dimension of geography".

<sup>30</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Box 18. Semple to Sauer, 16 July 1918.

<sup>31</sup> AGSL. Stephen S. Visher to Wright, 25 March 1961.

<sup>32</sup> Rose, "Stephen Sargent Visher", 394.

<sup>33</sup> Rose, "Stephen Sargent Visher", 395.

Chandler Cowles (1869–1939).<sup>34</sup> Cowles, a pioneer of plant ecology, conducted research which drew upon environmentalist precepts and sought to define “a causal relation between plant and environment”.<sup>35</sup> As Visher later noted, “My studies of various aspects of the environment (climate, slope, soil, changes in the environment) are all outgrowths of the interest that Professor Cowles aroused”.<sup>36</sup> Before returning to Chicago to continue his doctoral studies in 1913, Visher undertook research on the biogeography and regional ecology of South Dakota, paying particular attention to the ways in which “settlers, cowboys, and trappers” had historically adapted to life on the steppe.<sup>37</sup> This research formed the basis to “The Geography of South Dakota”—a course he offered twice at the University of South Dakota between 1911 and 1913.<sup>38</sup> The course was intended to examine the “industrial development of South Dakota as dependent upon the geographic conditions, especially location, topography, climate and resources”.<sup>39</sup> Visher’s research in the field, and his teaching experience, was useful preparation for Semple’s course. Her anthropogeographical ideas seem, also, to have corresponded with his own environmentalist perspective.

Visher, who read *Influences* first as a requirement of Semple’s course, considered her text beneficial, and later used it “with graduate training of several students” at Indiana University between 1921 and 1957.<sup>40</sup> Visher’s research interests later focused primarily upon the role of climate, which he deemed “the most potent” of the “geographical influences to which man is subjected”.<sup>41</sup> During the early 1920s, Visher

<sup>34</sup> Colby, “Geographic thought in America”, 20.

<sup>35</sup> Raup, “Development of geographic botany”, 331.

<sup>36</sup> Rose, “Stephen Sargent Visher”, 395.

<sup>37</sup> Rose, “Stephen Sargent Visher”, 395.

<sup>38</sup> University of South Dakota (Archives and Special Collections) (hereafter USD). *Thirty-first annual catalogue of the University of South Dakota 1912–1913*.

<sup>39</sup> USD. *Thirtieth annual catalogue of the University of South Dakota 1911–1912*.

<sup>40</sup> AGSL. Stephen S. Visher to Wright, 25 March 1961.

<sup>41</sup> Visher, “Climatic influences”, 196.

worked closely with Ellsworth Huntington (1876–1947) at Yale University on the research and writing of *Climatic changes, their nature and causes* (1922). Huntington, a former student of William Morris Davis, was interested in the historical relations between climate and society—particularly in regard to migration and the progress of civilization.<sup>42</sup> Huntington's position on environmental influence was, in this way, rather similar to Semple's. This was evident in his call for “a more precise statement as to the nature and amount, the quantity and quality” of an “environmental influence compared with various other elements”<sup>43</sup> Huntington was eager—perhaps more so than Semple—to advance definitive statements in relation to the role of geographical factors. He was, however, critical of Semple's *Influences*, believing that it drew too heavily upon “book knowledge and not enough from actual observations”.<sup>44</sup> Semple, for her part, believed that Huntington was “too obsessed with his climate theory”.<sup>45</sup> In later years, Huntington revised his opinion of Semple's scholarship, and wrote to her expressing his admiration: “I feel that you must have in the back of your head a complete card catalogue of everything written by several hundred different people. How do you manage it?”<sup>46</sup>

At the time Visser took Semple's course in 1914, environmental influence was the predominant geographical concern in the United States and United Kingdom.<sup>47</sup> A survey conducted that year by the economic geographer George Roorbach (who had reviewed Semple's book in positive terms two years previously in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*) found that three quarters of those geographers questioned, identified the determination of the influence of geographical

<sup>42</sup> Martin, *Ellsworth Huntington*.

<sup>43</sup> Keltie, “Thirty years' progress”, 224.

<sup>44</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Edward N. Bristol to Semple, 20 February 1912.

<sup>45</sup> Yale University (Manuscripts and Archives) (hereafter YU), MS 496D, Box 10, Folder 156. Semple to Millicent Todd, 19 December 1915.

<sup>46</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 10. Ellsworth Huntington to Semple, 15 December 1931.

<sup>47</sup> Roorbach, “Trend of modern geography”.

environment as “one of the chief problems facing the modern geographer”.<sup>48</sup> The geographers who responded in these terms were, in some senses, the ‘usual suspects’—Ellsworth Huntington, Ray Whitbeck, Mark Jefferson (1863–1949), and Albert Brigham—but their number also included Lionel Lyde, the economic geographer who had voiced concerns during Semple’s lecture to the Royal Geographical Society two years previously.<sup>49</sup> What is noteworthy, however, is that each of Roorbach’s respondents viewed the prospective contribution of a detailed understanding of geographical influence in different ways. For Lyde, it had possible significance for questions of race. As he noted, “If we knew the original causes of ... [racial] differentiation ... we should have the key to climatic naturalization”.<sup>50</sup> For Brigham by contrast, the study of environmental influence was an important basis to “a more rational definition of the science” of geography.<sup>51</sup> These different interpretations show that, whilst environmental influence was a common concern for geographers in 1914, their conception of it—in terms of its cognitive content and of the ‘work’ it could do—varied considerably. Semple’s anthropogeography was, then, only one of several distinct approaches to environmentalism.

Although the underlying motivation for engagements with issues of environmental influence varied between geographers, Semple’s text served a common purpose in that it was frequently co-opted in support of these different perspectives. Simply, whilst the exact purpose of environmentalist work was conceived of in different ways, *Influences* could be, and was, read in such a way as to lend credence to these distinct perspectives. This is particularly true in relation to the book’s pedagogical role in

<sup>48</sup> Roorbach, “Trend of modern geography”, 803.

<sup>49</sup> Abrahams, “Academic geography in America”.

<sup>50</sup> Roorbach, “Trend of modern geography”, 803–804.

<sup>51</sup> Roorbach, “Trend of modern geography”, 803.

universities and colleges in the North America and Britain, where it was employed in a number of (often subtly) different ways according to the personal concerns and research interests of faculty members. I should like briefly to depart from the book's use at Chicago, then, to consider its reading in a different context.

### ***From the classroom to the courtroom: the circulation of environmentalism***

In 1915, the year after Visser's reading of *Influences*, the book was encountered by George Babcock Cressey (1896–1963), a freshman student at Denison University (Granville, Ohio).<sup>52</sup> Visser and Cressey shared not only this early exposure to Semple's work, but also a number of personality traits—notably “hard work, perseverance, and personal abstemiousness”—which were expressed in their later professional activities.<sup>53</sup> Cressey's course was under the direction of Frank Carney (1868–1934), a geologist by training, who incorporated aspects of Semple's thesis into his first-year course.<sup>54</sup> Carney had been educated at Cornell University, where, in addition to completing his doctorate on the ‘Pleistocene geology of the Moravia Quadrangle, New York’ (1909), he served as an instructor in the geography summer school between 1901 and 1904.<sup>55</sup> As Carney's obituarist noted, “This was probably the beginning of his interest in geography as a college subject”.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> AGSL. George B. Cressey to Wright, 6 April 1961; James, “George Babcock Cressey”; James and Perejda, “George Babcock Cressey”.

<sup>53</sup> Harris, “Stephen Sargent Visser”, 379.

<sup>54</sup> Hubbard, “Life and work of Dr. Frank Carney”; Mahard, “History of the department of geology and geography”.

<sup>55</sup> Anonymous, “Doctorates conferred by American universities”; Brigham, “Summer session of Cornell University”; Foscue, “Life and works of Doctor Frank Carney”.

<sup>56</sup> Foscue, “Life and works of Doctor Frank Carney”, 51.

Like Ray Whitbeck, Carney had come under the influence of Ralph Tarr, professor of physical geography at Cornell, and an important supporter of Semple.<sup>57</sup> In his work at the geography department's summer school, Carney came into contact with other environmentalist geographers: most notably Albert Brigham and Ray Whitbeck.<sup>58</sup> Carney's exposure to environmentalist debate at Cornell seems to have influenced his later work and, as professor of geography and geology at Denison University between 1904 and 1917, he published several articles on environmentalist themes.<sup>59</sup> Carney also developed a lecture course on 'Geographic Influences', designed to examine

several types of geographic influences, as observed in the habitats of primitive peoples, in the development of ethnic groups, in the growth of ideas concerning the size and shape of the earth, and in map-making; in the social, industrial and political activities of advanced peoples, and the influence of topographic and climatic environment on mental and moral qualities.<sup>60</sup>

Carney's course—which was “innovative and difficult, yet popular”—ran for several years at Denison, and was also offered as part of the summer session of geography at the University of Virginia in 1911 and at the University of Michigan in 1912–1913 (see Appendix B).<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Brigham, “Memoir of Ralph Stockman Tarr”; Engeln, “Ralph Stockman Tarr”.

<sup>58</sup> Anonymous, “Cornell summer school of geology and geography”; Brigham, “Summer session of Cornell University”.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Carney, “Springs as a geographic influence”; Carney, “Geographic influences in the development of Ohio”; Carney, “Geographic conditions in the early history of the Ohio country”.

<sup>60</sup> Denison University (Archives and Special Collection) (hereafter DU). *Denison University Annual Catalogue 1915–1916*.

<sup>61</sup> Bork, “Kirtley Fletcher Mather's life”, 77.



Figure 21. George Babcock Cressey.  
From *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 55, no. 2 (1965): 360.

Although Semple's *Influences* was recommended reading for Carney's course, it is unclear quite how many of his students actually read it. As George Cressey (Figure 21) later recalled, "I doubt that we read much of the book, but the ideas were built into ... [the] course".<sup>62</sup> Carney was an enthusiastic and effective lecturer, and, like Semple, used "his own extensive collection of lantern slides to illustrate his lectures".<sup>63</sup> Carney employed Semple's book principally as a supplement to his own teaching. It thus seems likely that those students who subsequently read *Influences* did so in a way that was conditioned by their exposure to Carney's representation of its content. Carney saw the study of environmental influence as an important component of the "treatment of human ecology"—that is, the study of different social groups in relation to one another,

<sup>62</sup> AGSL. George B. Cressey to Wright, 6 April 1961.

<sup>63</sup> Bork, "Kirtley Fletcher Mather's life", 77.

and in relation to their environment.<sup>64</sup> To some degree, Carney's ecological perspective influenced Cressey's later research in Asia which focused upon "the problems of man's use of the land and his habitat".<sup>65</sup>

In the early 1920s, Cressey completed graduate work in geology under Rollin Salisbury at Chicago, and there met Semple. Although he did not work with her at that stage, he later recalled the "thrill in lending Miss Semple my fountain pen".<sup>66</sup> After an extended period of research and teaching in China, Cressey returned to the United States to complete a doctoral degree in geography—first at Yale under Huntington, then at Clark University under Walter Elmer Ekblaw (1882–1949). At Clark in 1930, Cressey attended "what was probably Miss Semple's last class" in anthropogeography.<sup>67</sup> There, fifteen years after his initial encounter with Semple's work, Cressey reread *Influences*. As he noted later, "What impressed me then, and what stands out in the book, was her very extensive documentation. She drew on a vast literature for her references".<sup>68</sup>

Cressey was not, however, uncritical of Semple's approach, and commented in class "that she seemed to be more interested in evidence to support her theories, rather than in searching for true relations".<sup>69</sup> This dubiety as to the value of Semple's work was reflected in Cressey's response to Wright's questionnaire, which asked respondents to characterize the influence of Semple's book upon the development of modern geography using one of four adjectives: beneficial, neutral, negligible, and detrimental (see Appendix C). Cressey wrote: "As to the significance of *INFLUENCES*, I would certainly say 'stimulating'. Few of us today would subscribe to her determinism, but she

<sup>64</sup> Bork, "Kirtley Fletcher Mather's life", 77.

<sup>65</sup> Karan and Mather, *Leaders in American geography*, II, 74.

<sup>66</sup> AGSL. George B. Cressey to Wright, 6 April 1961.

<sup>67</sup> AGSL. George B. Cressey to Wright, 6 April 1961.

<sup>68</sup> AGSL. George B. Cressey to Wright, 6 April 1961.

<sup>69</sup> AGSL. George B. Cressey to Wright, 6 April 1961.



unquestionably opened up many ideas. Judged in terms of the early twentieth century, the values were positive; measured today the ideas are negative”.<sup>70</sup> Although it is unclear whether Cressey used *Influences* subsequently in his own teaching career at Syracuse University, I shall show later that the book was read there in particular ways.<sup>71</sup>

In his thirteen years at Denison University, Carney ‘produced’ “seventeen professional geologists and geographers”.<sup>72</sup> Although he instilled in many of them an interest in an ecological approach to geography, their opinion as to the value of Semple’s environmentalism varied considerably. Cressey’s slight suspicion of Semple’s position was, for example, in notable contrast to the opinion of his near contemporary, Kirtley Fletcher Mather (1888–1978), who graduated from Denison in 1909.<sup>73</sup> Mather (Figure 22) had begun his undergraduate education at Chicago under Salisbury and Atwood, but transferred to Denison in 1907, where he worked closely with Carney and absorbed his environmentalist perspective. His return to Chicago for graduate work between 1909 and 1915 again brought him under the direction of Salisbury and Atwood and undoubtedly exposed him to Semple’s influence. Mather eventually returned to Denison in 1918, and took over Carney’s teaching load, including the class on ‘Geographic Influences’.<sup>74</sup> The course—which remained “semi-popular”, and had “a large enrolment”—continued to employ Semple’s *Influences* as a required text.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>70</sup> AGSL. George B. Cressey to Wright, 6 April 1961. Capitalization in original.

<sup>71</sup> Herman, “George Babcock Cressey”.

<sup>72</sup> Hubbard, “Life and work of Dr. Frank Carney”, 274.

<sup>73</sup> Bork, “Kirtley Fletcher Mather’s life”; Bork, *Cracking rocks and defending democracy*.

<sup>74</sup> Bork, “Kirtley Fletcher Mather’s life”.

<sup>75</sup> UC, Rollin D. Salisbury Papers, Box 5, Folder 14. James H. Hance to Salisbury, 9 January 1920.



Figure 22. Kirtley Fletcher Mather (circa 1929).  
From *The Ohio Journal of Science* 82, no. 3 (1982): 75.

From Denison, Mather transferred in 1924 to the department of geology at Harvard.<sup>76</sup> The following year, he was invited to contribute expert testimony to the trial of John Thomas Scopes (1900–1970), a Tennessee high school teacher who had been arrested for teaching evolution theory (in contravention of a recently-passed prohibitory law).<sup>77</sup> Mather, despite being a committed Baptist, did not consider the theory of evolution antithetical to his religious beliefs. In written testimony to the court in defence of Scopes, he expressed his view that the palaeontological record confirmed “that life has progressed through time”.<sup>78</sup> In addition, Mather’s environmentalist education under Cressey at Denison, and his geological work in the field with Salisbury and Atwood, had made clear to him certain of the natural pressures by which biological

<sup>76</sup> Bork, “Kirtley Fletcher Mather’s life”.

<sup>77</sup> Numbers and Stephens, “Darwinism in the American south”.

<sup>78</sup> Bork, “Kirtley Fletcher Mather’s life”, 82.

adaptation was encouraged. Whilst the precise details of Mather's perspective need not be detailed here, it is sufficient to note that he, like Semple, did not consider his scientific work incompatible with religion.<sup>79</sup>

The career of Frank Carney makes clear the importance of personal networks and of scholarly centres in the communication and circulation of environmentalist perspectives in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The relatively peripatetic nature of academic lecturing at that time, and the prevalence of summer schools, means that it is unwise to view any academic institution as homogeneous and unchanging in its engagement with environmentalist themes. For this reason, it is difficult to make general claims about what environmentalism meant, for example, at Yale or Cornell or Chicago or Denison. What is clear, however, is that the foundations for Carney's environmentalist concerns were laid at Cornell—the result of the influence of Ralph Tarr, and of the visiting geographers Albert Brigham (Colgate University) and Ray Whitbeck (State Model School of New Jersey). All of this transpired, of course, before the publication of *Influences*, and it was not until Carney was at Denison that he was able to incorporate Semple's text into his teaching of environmentalism (although it is likely that he previously had employed her scholarly articles).

In addition to the direct influence of Carney's teachings upon Mather and Cressey at Denison, his contribution to summer schools at Michigan and Virginia brought his representation of environmentalism to a geographically-broader audience. In this way, his lecture courses facilitated the transmission of Semple's ideas, but, as the recollections of Cressey make clear, the extent to which Carney's teaching corresponded to the exact content of Semple's book was quite varied. In some respects, Carney's

<sup>79</sup> Mather, "Evolution and religion".

prorogation of environmentalism and use of *Influences* was representative of the different ways in which Semple's ideas moved between places—that is, not simply in the material representation of the printed text, but also in various modified and embodied forms. The reception of *Influences* did not, as was made clear in Chapter 6, depend solely upon its reading, but also upon the communication and representation of its content in other forms. That Cressey did not read Semple's book in its entirety in 1915 whilst taking Carney's class does not mean, for example, that he was not receiving it. He was, albeit in a modified way.

The significance of Cornell and of Ralph Tarr in the promotion and circulation of environmentalism in the United States in the first two decades of the twentieth century is evident not only in relation to the work of Carney and Whitbeck, but also that of John Lyon Rich (1884–1956). Rich studied geology at Cornell under Tarr and inherited from him the interest in environmental influence that Whitbeck and Carney had previously acquired.<sup>80</sup> In 1911, Rich joined the faculty of the newly-established department of geography at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where, over the next seven years, he developed courses dealing with regional geography, research methodology, and environmental influence.<sup>81</sup> From 1913, Rich offered a course on 'Influences of Geographic Environment', which dealt with "The influence of geographic factors ... on his [man's] mode of life, his industries ... modes of communication; the bearing of these factors on historical movements and on the development and policies of nations".<sup>82</sup> The environmentalist content of this course was mirrored in his 1917–18 course 'Human Geography'—itself concerned with the "Influence of topography, climate, and other physiographic factors on human life and

<sup>80</sup> Barbour, "John Lyon Rich".

<sup>81</sup> Fellmann, "Development of geography at the University of Illinois".

<sup>82</sup> Fellmann, *Geography at Illinois*, 38.

history”.<sup>83</sup> This course was based upon Rich’s attempts to quantitatively analyze the extent to which “the location and distribution of cultural features, such as towns and clearings in the forests, [are] controlled by topography”.<sup>84</sup> Rich’s study identified a strong correlation between topography—meaning relief, slope, and exposure—and the location of settlements and agricultural practices. He saw this as “the beginning of the quantitative study” of environmental influence, but recognised that it was the work of psychology to “determine its effect in moulding character”.<sup>85</sup>

When Rich left Illinois in 1918 to pursue a career as a petroleum geologist, the nature of the geography curriculum changed significantly. As Fellmann makes clear, “the program did not survive intact”, and Rich’s replacement in the post “taught only 3 or 4 of his formidable array of courses”.<sup>86</sup> It seems, then, that in Rich’s absence environmentalism no longer figured to the same extent in the geography curricula. It is evident that the individual interests of scholars, and their personal research concerns, were important in shaping the ways in which geography was taught at the institutions to which they contributed. For this reason, one cannot separate the engagement of environmental themes at Denison or Illinois from the personal influence of Carney or Rich. The ways in which environmentalism was staged at different institutions did not necessarily reflect some intrinsic character of those institutions, but rather the interests and concerns of their students and faculty. We might conceive of the geography of environmentalism, then, not as a function of the institutions in which it was proposed or opposed, but as an expression of situated and personal engagements which characterized individuals’ responses to questions of environmental influence. The

<sup>83</sup> Fellmann, *Geography at Illinois*, 38.

<sup>84</sup> Rich, “Cultural features and the physiographic cycle”, 297.

<sup>85</sup> Rich, “Cultural features and the physiographic cycle”, 306, 308.

<sup>86</sup> Fellmann, “Development of geography at the University of Illinois”, unpaginated.

influence of personal conviction in response to Semple's work, and to environmentalism more generally, was, as I hope now to show, particularly apparent at the University of Chicago.

### **Chicago and "the rebellion against determinism"**

Although the circulation of Semple's anthropogeography importantly depended upon the use of *Influences* in geographical instruction and upon the teaching of environmentalism at different educational institutions, the contribution of her own teaching and lecturing, particularly in the United States, cannot be underestimated. As Bushong has noted, for example, "most of the second generation of American-trained geographers were her students".<sup>87</sup> Although the important role of Semple's oratory in the convincing presentation of her ideas has been noted, not all of her students were straightforwardly intellectual disciples of her anthropogeographical cause. This is particularly true in relation to the department of geography at Chicago, which—despite being an important centre of environmentalist geography and the forum in which much of the content of *Influences* was presented and revised—was also the site where "the rebellion against environmentalism had begun ... among groups of geographers, both young and old".<sup>88</sup> In order to consider quite why Chicago produced both Semple's most enthusiastic proponents and her most impassioned opponents, let me return to consider Carl Sauer's education in the period following his introduction to the environmentalism of Goode, Barrows, and Semple.

Whilst Sauer's entrée to geographical research had been shaped by the environmentalist perspectives of Semple and Barrows, he came later to be considered

<sup>87</sup> Bushong, "Ellen Churchill Semple", 92.

<sup>88</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

synonymous with “criticism of environmental determinism”.<sup>89</sup> Environmentalism was, for Sauer, an unduly dominant component of American geography, and during the 1920s particularly he advanced a “detailed and devastating refutation of the thesis of environmentalism” which “singled out for critical consideration” Semple and likeminded contemporaries.<sup>90</sup> Sauer’s dissatisfaction with geography as taught at Chicago reflected, in part, the fact that his initial training had been in geology and ecology.<sup>91</sup> His exposure to “a rather simple mechanical theory of behaviour” as a graduate student at Chicago, whilst not troubling him unduly at the time, was something against which he later rebelled. Sauer’s disillusion with the doctrine of environmentalism can be traced, I suggest, to his “years as apprentice and journeyman geographer in Illinois, Missouri, Michigan, and Kentucky”.<sup>92</sup>

In 1910, the year after he had completed Barrows’ course on ‘Influences of Geography on American History’, Sauer was sent under the titular supervision of Rollin Salisbury to complete a geological/geographical examination of the upper valley of the Illinois River.<sup>93</sup> With little direction from Salisbury as to his research focus, Sauer chose to examine the physical origin of the grassland environment (a likely consequence of his course with Henry Cowles) and the historical influence of the plains upon pioneer settlers. As Sauer subsequently noted, in this later respect, his study was “an attempt to apply the orientation then prevailing of human adaptation to physical environment”.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Beck, *Environmental determinism*, 17.

<sup>90</sup> Speth, *How it came to be*, 182.

<sup>91</sup> Kenzer, “Carl O. Sauer’s undergraduate heritage”.

<sup>92</sup> Anonymous, “Annual general meeting”, 521.

<sup>93</sup> Sauer, *Seventeenth century North America*, 9.

<sup>94</sup> Sauer, *Seventeenth century North America*, 9.

Even at this stage, however, Sauer harboured “some early doubts that this direction [environmental influence] was adequate or proper”.<sup>95</sup>

Sauer's conviction that the apparently deterministic basis of environmentalist theory was flawed, echoed to some degree Barrows' attempts to present a modified version of environmentalism—one which would “distinguish between geographic and non-geographic factors”.<sup>96</sup> As has been noted, “Barrows stood definitely for revision of the environmental doctrine and against extreme determinism. For him, ‘adjustment’ and maladjustment to environment were undetermined except by human choice”.<sup>97</sup> Despite Barrows' modified position, Sauer became increasingly doubtful as to the value of “the environmentalism tenet”, particularly as his experience of work in the field increased.<sup>98</sup>

Whilst conducting fieldwork for his doctoral thesis, ‘The geography of the Ozark Highland of Missouri’ (1920), Sauer became increasingly aware of the difficulty of making straightforward connections between topography and its physical and social corollaries:

not all the soils were derived from the weathering of the underlying rock; vegetation paralleled only in part the stratigraphy; kinds of people and their habits did not sort out by physical environment. It was important to know the different terrains, but it was apparent that these only helped to understand the different ways of life.<sup>99</sup>

Sauer's fieldwork brought him in contact with various cultural groups—“German immigrants ... anti-slavery New Englanders ... hill folk from Tennessee and Kentucky”—each of whom “carried on the usages of their own very distinct and

<sup>95</sup> Sauer, *Seventeenth century North America*, 9.

<sup>96</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Box 18. Sauer to William W. Speth, 3 March 1972.

<sup>97</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

<sup>98</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Box 18. Sauer to William W. Speth, 3 March 1972.

<sup>99</sup> Sauer, *Seventeenth century North America*, 9.



different traditions".<sup>100</sup> It gradually became clear to Sauer that "Cultural geography ... was more than 'response to natural environment!'"<sup>101</sup>

The extent to which the environmentalist principles of Barrows, Semple, and Goode continued to influence Sauer's work at this stage is evident from his field notebooks, which demonstrate an underlying concern for environmental factors. His notebook for 1914 is scattered with comments which reflect this student training in geographical influence: "The people are the typical Missouri hillfolk"; "typical backwoods—log cabins—log everything"; "Fertile population still largely of French descent & decided Frenchtypes. They speak a very broken lingo & are said not to be able to read the printed French.—Good example of influence of isolation"; "Geog. infl."<sup>102</sup>

Despite Sauer's nascent doubts as to the explanatory validity of the anthropogeographical principles to which he had been exposed at Chicago, it is apparent that he undertook his fieldwork with certain environmentalist presuppositions in place. Yet, Sauer came to realize that each observation which appeared to confirm the role of environment in shaping social organization was offset by another which seemed contradictory. The most significant of these observations was that the architectural, agricultural, and social traditions of different immigrant groups to the Ozarks persisted, despite the fact that they were in (culturally speaking) a 'new' environment. If geographical conditions were truly the predominant mechanism for determining these cultural expressions, then it might be assumed that descendents of Germans, French, New Englanders, and Kentuckians would work the land in similar ways, and adapt their architectural practices to reflect the requirements of the environment, rather than

<sup>100</sup> Sauer, *Seventeenth century North America*, 9–10. Exclamation in original.

<sup>101</sup> Sauer, *Seventeenth century North America*, 10.

<sup>102</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Carton 4, Folder 24. Field notes, 1914.

maintaining the traditions of their cultural heritage. The fact that the Ozarks were geographically relatively homogeneous, yet culturally were heterogeneous, gave Sauer pause. As previously suggested, however, Sauer's concerns emerged only gradually; it took extended methodological debate and revision before he rejected environmentalism in its entirety. As Sauer later noted, "Most of the things I was taught ... as a geographer I had either to forget or unlearn at the cost of considerable effort and time".<sup>103</sup>

Part of the process of unlearning occurred at Chicago in the years between Sauer's field seasons in the Illinois River valley and the Ozarks, when "a vigorous group of graduate students" began to discuss alternatives to the environmental perspectives of their teachers and lecturers.<sup>104</sup> These nonconformist students—"young in years and strong in hope"—included Wellington Downing Jones (1886–1957), who began graduate studies at Chicago in 1908.<sup>105</sup> Like Sauer, Jones worked primarily under the guidance of Salisbury, and was, as a consequence, afforded "exceptional opportunities for field study"—most notably a two-year spell in Patagonia.<sup>106</sup> In the course of his fieldwork, Jones sought to focus upon "objective data and inherent qualities rather than on imagined causes [e.g., environmentalism]".<sup>107</sup> In collaboration with Sauer, he made "juvenile attempts to select categories for observation" which formed the basis to a methodological paper published in the *Bulletin of the Association of American Geographers* in 1915.<sup>108</sup> One of the "Hints on observation" that Jones and Sauer offered stated: "Because of the complexity of conditions in most cases, generalizations must be made with extreme care and only after much accurate observation. The geographer needs to

<sup>103</sup> Quoted in Leighly, "Carl Ortwin Sauer", 100.

<sup>104</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

<sup>105</sup> Colby, "Narrative of five decades", 11.

<sup>106</sup> Colby, "Wellington Downing Jones", 51.

<sup>107</sup> Platt, "Wellington Downing Jones", 286.

<sup>108</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Box 11. Sauer to Richard Hartshorne, 22 June 1946.

guard against emphasizing geographic influences at the expense of non-geographic ones".<sup>109</sup> The implications of Sauer's field experience were apparent in the advice which he and Jones provided on examining the characteristics of social groups; they recommend that geographers attend to the

influence of environment, with special reference to different development of different stocks in the same environment, and to survival of traits and institutions acquired in a previous environment (a fundamental geographic problem of great complexity, the interpretation of which requires great care and in many cases cannot be undertaken).<sup>110</sup>

Although Jones and Sauer were somewhat tentative in their suggestions, their paper was a tangible manifestation of "the rebellion against environmentalism" then emerging among parts of the graduate community at Chicago.<sup>111</sup> It was, however, several years before Sauer "rejected definitely the hypothesis of mechanical causation in human affairs".<sup>112</sup> When he attained his first university appointment—at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1915—the general introductory course he developed was still "built about Ellen Semple's ideas as expressed in her *Influences of Geographic Environment*".<sup>113</sup> Sauer also offered a course on 'Geographic Influences' at Michigan's summer school from 1916—three years after Frank Carney had addressed the same topic there (see Appendix B).

The rebellious mood which Sauer and Jones promoted was not, I would like to suggest, necessarily shared by all geography graduate students at Chicago. Bernard H. Schockel, Mary Lanier, Almon Ernest Parkins, and Mary Dopp—whose periods as graduate students coincided with those of Jones and Sauer—were important in

<sup>109</sup> Jones and Sauer, "Outline for field work in geography", 521.

<sup>110</sup> Jones and Sauer, "Outline for field work in geography", 524.

<sup>111</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

<sup>112</sup> Leighly, "What has happened to physical geography?", 315.

<sup>113</sup> Leighly, "Carl Ortwin Sauer, 1889–1975", 338.

promoting environmentalism in their later teaching careers: Schockel at the Indiana State Normal School (Terre Haute); Lanier at Wellesley College; Parkins at the George Peabody College for Teachers (Nashville, Tennessee); and Dopp at various high schools in Chicago (including Parker High School and Harper High School). Parkins (1879–1940) had previously studied under Mark Jefferson at the Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti (where Barrows completed his undergraduate work) and inherited from Jefferson an interest in environmental factors.<sup>114</sup> At Chicago, Parkins came under the influence of Barrows and Salisbury more so than Semple, and this was reflected both in the content of his thesis—“The historical geography of Detroit” (1914)—and in his lecturing at the George Peabody College, particularly in his course ‘Influence of Geography on American History, with Special Emphasis on the South’.<sup>115</sup> Parkins remained at the College until his retirement in 1940 and at intervals invited contributions to the College’s summer session from former Chicago colleagues. Mary Dopp, for example, offered ‘Influence of Geography on American history’ on a number of occasions (see Appendix B).

The fact that the principles of anthropogeography were tested at Chicago so vigorously was a consequence, I suggest, of Semple’s approach to its teaching. As one student recalled, “she often said she hoped her work would prove or disprove the values of anthropogeography” and “that if better theory came along she hoped she would have strength of mind to embrace it”.<sup>116</sup> In this respect, she facilitated an environment at Chicago which was more productive of critical and independent thought than any similar geographical institution of the period.

<sup>114</sup> Whitaker, “Almon Ernest Parkins”.

<sup>115</sup> Anonymous, “Summer session courses”.

<sup>116</sup> HUA, HUG 4877.417. Charles C. Colby to Whittlesey, 4 February 1954.

## Geography “at breakneck speed”: from the classroom to the war room

When Robert Platt began graduate study in geography at Chicago in 1915, the emergent schism in regard to geographical causation within the department was obvious.<sup>117</sup> Platt—who later came to head the department—had trained in philosophy at Yale, and discovered geography by accident.<sup>118</sup> Onboard ship between China and the United States, he fell into conversation with the brother-in-law of Wellington Jones, whose description of geography as then practiced at Chicago had interested Platt.<sup>119</sup> What appealed to Platt (Figure 23) particularly was the notion that “geography had the advantage of going more to the field for direct observation instead of going to the library to read about things no longer visible”.<sup>120</sup>

At Chicago, Platt studied under Barrows, Walter S. Tower (1881–1969) (Figure 17), Goode, and Salisbury. At this early stage, Platt seems to have developed a suspicion of the environmentalist imperative in geography, particularly as it was promoted by William Morris Davis.<sup>121</sup> Platt seems, like Sauer, to have identified most closely with Salisbury—sharing his “prejudice against what Davis suggested [about geography’s methodological focus]”.<sup>122</sup> Given the interests of the faculty which Salisbury assembled at Chicago, it is apparent that he felt there was some value in environmental study. As Platt later pointed out, Salisbury encouraged his students “to look into the subject to see what was in it, apparently hoping that somebody would investigate a field that might

<sup>117</sup> Thoman, “Robert Swanton Platt”.

<sup>118</sup> Harris, “Geography at Chicago”.

<sup>119</sup> Hartshorne, “Robert S. Platt”.

<sup>120</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 7, Folder 6. *St. George’s Alumni Bulletin*, 1947, unpaginated.

<sup>121</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

<sup>122</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

have potential significance”.<sup>123</sup> Chicago under Salisbury considered its approach to the environmental question to be distinct and balanced. Set against the extremes of “Geography without influences” and “Geography all influences”, Chicago saw the physical environment as “one factor”, and thought in terms of “geographic influences, not controls”.<sup>124</sup> Quite how successful the department was in pursuing this moderate position was—given the reaction of Sauer and Jones—questionable.

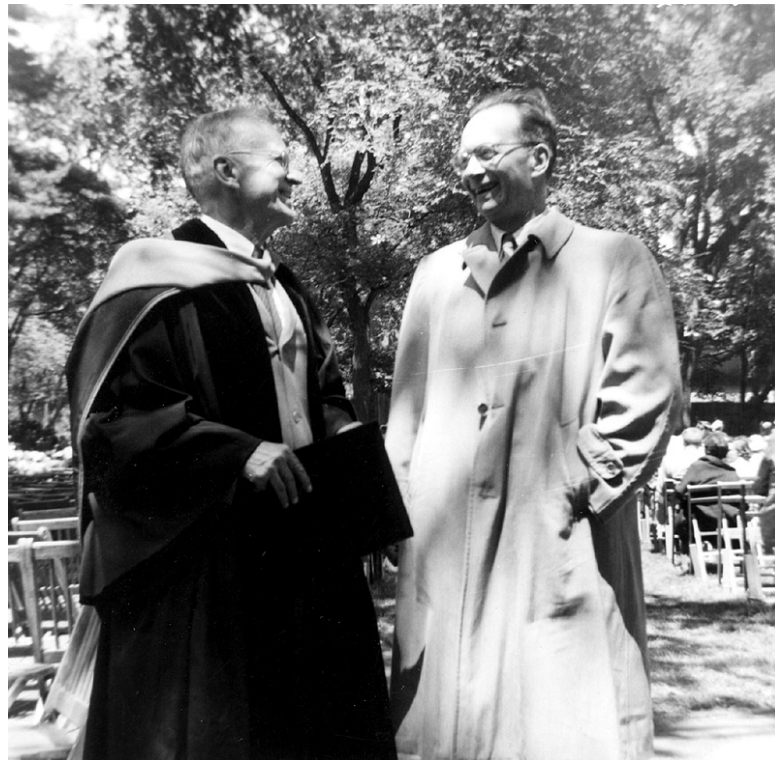


Figure 23. Derwent S. Whittlesey and Robert S. Platt at the Harvard University graduation of Platt's son, 1954. University of Chicago, Special Collections Research Center, asas-00762.

Platt took Semple's course in anthropogeography in the spring quarter of 1916, receiving an A minus in his final assessment.<sup>125</sup> During the course, for which he was required to read *Influences*, Platt developed a personal admiration for Semple, believing

<sup>123</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 3, Folder 6. Platt to Walter M. Kollmorgen, 12 May 1956.

<sup>124</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 1, Folder 18. Notes from Barrows' 'Influences of Geography on American History', undated.

<sup>125</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 1, Folder 17. Unofficial transcript.

her to be “one of the most stimulating & inspiring” of the university’s lecturers.<sup>126</sup> He felt, moreover, that her environmental ideas “served [a] useful purpose”.<sup>127</sup> Despite his personal affection for Semple, Platt went on to become “one of the most eloquent adversaries” of environmentalism—describing it as “a pseudo-scientific sanction of vulgar belief”.<sup>128</sup> The revision of Platt’s perspective on Semple’s work, which he considered “stimulating and irritating”, was a consequence in part of work in the field.<sup>129</sup>

In 1919, a year before gaining his doctorate, Platt was appointed to the department’s faculty, and, in addition to regular lecturing commitments, offered for more than three decades an annual summer fieldtrip for graduate students.<sup>130</sup> Whilst the initial purpose of these fieldtrips was to “gain direct insight into reciprocal associations involving people, space, and the social and physical settings”, this objective “changed somewhat as Platt’s own views changed”.<sup>131</sup> As Thoman makes clear, Platt became “increasingly sensitive to human organization of space” as he found the generalizing principles of environmental theory inadequate to explain the “micro-conditions and events” he encountered in the field.<sup>132</sup> Platt’s intellectual collaborator in this revision was Derwent Stainthorpe Whittlesey (1890–1956), who had joined the faculty in 1919 (the year Barrows assumed the role of chairman from Salisbury), having earlier completed a master’s and doctoral degree at Chicago.

Although Whittlesey (Figure 23) had undertaken his graduate work under the auspices of the department of history, he came to Semple’s attention in 1914 when he

<sup>126</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 10, Folder 16. “Changes in geographic thought”, 19 March 1950.

<sup>127</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 10, Folder 16. “Changes in geographic thought”, 19 March 1950.

<sup>128</sup> UC, Robert S. Platt Papers, Box 10, Folder 14. “Can we avoid determinism?”.

<sup>129</sup> AGSL. Robert S. Platt to Wright, 3 April 1961.

<sup>130</sup> Hartshorne, “Robert S. Platt”.

<sup>131</sup> Thoman, “Robert Swanton Platt”, 109.

<sup>132</sup> Thoman, “Robert Swanton Platt”, 110.

took her course on anthropogeography.<sup>133</sup> As a consequence of the material Whittlesey encountered in Semple's lectures, he was "inspired to a lifetime of geography".<sup>134</sup> Semple and Whittlesey enjoyed a close personal friendship—he called her "Nennie" or "Ole Miss"—but he did not share her perspective on questions of environmental influence.<sup>135</sup> In terms of his intellectual concerns (notably the development of quantitative field methods in geography), Whittlesey was more closely aligned with Jones, Sauer, and Platt, and later came to be "heavily influenced by the social perspective of the French school".<sup>136</sup> Although Whittlesey regarded Semple as "the outstanding representative of the creative imagination" in geography, he, like Sauer and Platt before him, found the environmental ideas Semple advanced did not correspond with his observations in the field.<sup>137</sup> As I go on to show, the work of Whittlesey and others came to represent "the antithesis of environmental determinism".<sup>138</sup>

Semple's anthropogeography was beginning to be tested at Chicago by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, even as her professional standing within the United States geographical community was in the ascendant. In addition to her peripatetic lecturing, Semple had begun to formulate ideas on the historical geography of the Mediterranean region. In 1915 she published 'The barrier boundary of the Mediterranean basin and its northern beaches as factors in history', and, in 1916, 'Pirate coasts of the Mediterranean Sea'.<sup>139</sup> Semple's special Mediterranean experience found a practical outlet during 1917 when the United States entered the First World War. Before committing to military action, President Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) emphasized the

<sup>133</sup> Koelsch, "Derwent Stainthorpe Whittlesey".

<sup>134</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 10. Derwent S. Whittlesey to Semple, 9 December 1931.

<sup>135</sup> HUA, HUG 4877.412. Whittlesey to Semple, 2 February 1931.

<sup>136</sup> Ackerman, "Derwent Stainthorpe Whittlesey"; Smith, "Elimination of geography at Harvard", 162.

<sup>137</sup> HUA, HUG 4877.417. Whittlesey to Charles C. Colby, 26 January 1954.

<sup>138</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 327.

<sup>139</sup> Semple, "Barrier boundary of the Mediterranean basin"; Semple, "Pirate coasts of the Mediterranean".



importance of planning for post-war peace. To that end, in September 1917, Wilson commissioned his advisor Colonel Edward House (1858–1938) to institute a committee of experts—the Bureau of Inquiry for the Peace Terms Commission, or ‘The Inquiry’ as it became known—to analyse and advise on the requirements and implications of peace.<sup>140</sup>

House drew together a team of academic experts under the command of his brother-in-law Sydney Edward Mezes (1863–1931), president of the City College of New York. Keenly aware of the important role geography might play in any peace negotiations, Mezes invited Isaiah Bowman (1878–1950), director of the American Geographical Society, to join the Inquiry as Chief Territorial Specialist, and to organize a contingent of geographical advisors.<sup>141</sup> Among the geographers who were invited to join the Inquiry in its headquarters at the American Geographical Society were Mark Jefferson, under whom Bowman had studied at the Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti, Douglas Wilson Johnson (1878–1944), then lecturer at Columbia University, and Lawrence Martin (1880–1955), who had previously worked closely with William Morris Davis, Tarr, and Whitbeck.<sup>142</sup>

Much of Bowman’s geographical education was undertaken in milieux in which environmentalism was emphasized—at Michigan with Jefferson, at Harvard with Davis, and at Yale with Tarr.<sup>143</sup> When Bowman joined the faculty at Yale in 1905, for example, environmental influence was already an established component of the curriculum: Herbert Ernest Gregory (1869–1952), a former student of Davis, offered a popular

<sup>140</sup> Smith, *American empire*.

<sup>141</sup> Smith, *American empire*; Wright, *Geography in the making*; Wright, “American Geographical Society”.

<sup>142</sup> Anonymous, “War services”; James and Martin, *All possible worlds*; Smith, *American empire*; Wright, *Geography in the making*.

<sup>143</sup> Martin, *Isaiah Bowman*.

course on 'Environmental Influences on Man' in the geology department.<sup>144</sup> At Yale, Bowman pursued research in population distribution and regional geography which reflected his environmentalist training.<sup>145</sup> In 1908, Bowman contributed to the summer session at the University of Chicago and there met Semple.<sup>146</sup> The two thereafter maintained an occasional correspondence, and in 1911 Bowman was among those scholars to whom Henry Holt sent a copy of *Influences* upon its publication.<sup>147</sup> Given Bowman's environmentalist disposition at this point, it is perhaps unsurprising that he urged Semple to "break any engagement and drop all other work" to contribute to the business of the Inquiry.<sup>148</sup>

Semple joined the Inquiry in New York City in December 1917, and was commissioned to complete a study of the Mediterranean and Mesopotamian regions, setting forth "principles for partitioning these areas to achieve maximum self-determination, based upon sound consideration of physical and cultural factors".<sup>149</sup> She worked first as an assistant to Douglas Johnson, before going on to work with Mark Jefferson.<sup>150</sup> Semple's resultant briefings—which included "The Austro-Italian frontier" and the "Turkish Empire, past & future"—were both read by President Wilson at the Versailles conference.<sup>151</sup> Despite the necessarily fast-paced environment of the Inquiry, which required Semple to work "at breakneck speed", she found the work stimulating and appreciated the opportunity to apply her research skills for immediate practical benefit.<sup>152</sup> When, at the close of 1918, the Inquiry members, "their assistants (together

<sup>144</sup> Martin, "Geographic thought in New England".

<sup>145</sup> Martin, "On Whittlesey, Bowman and Harvard".

<sup>146</sup> Martin, *Isaiab Bowman*.

<sup>147</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Joseph Vogelius, 26 May 1911.

<sup>148</sup> RGS, Correspondence Block 1881–1910. Semple to John S. Keltie, 18 May 1918.

<sup>149</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*, 110.

<sup>150</sup> Crampton, "Cartographic calculation of space"; Gelfand, *Inquiry*.

<sup>151</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 2. Semple to Mrs Francis McVey, 24 May 1931.

<sup>152</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 2. Semple to Mrs Francis McVey, 24 May 1931.

with the materials they had gathered) and numerous officials, including President Woodrow Wilson” departed for the Paris Peace Conference, Semple was forced to remain in the United States.<sup>153</sup> Despite her extensive previous experience of travel in Europe, Semple, and other women on the Inquiry staff, were forbidden from travelling, simply “because they were women”.<sup>154</sup>

Whilst in New York City, Semple was invited (probably by Johnson) to lecture to the 1918 summer session of Columbia University. Environmentalism had been taught there for more than two decades under the “super determinist” direction of Richard Dodge, an important early supporter of Semple’s work.<sup>155</sup> Dodge retired from his post at the Teachers College of Columbia University in 1916, but his environmental perspective persisted under the auspices of a number of new geographers, at both the College and at the University proper.<sup>156</sup> Dodge’s successor at the College was Charles McFarlane, who had taught Bowman at Ypsilanti, and who maintained Dodge’s focus on environmental factors.<sup>157</sup> Environmentalist matters were not, however, restricted to geographical teaching at Columbia. At this time Franz Boas, whose early concerns about the validity of anthropogeography I detailed in Chapter 3, was professor of anthropology. Among the courses he offered was ‘Anthropology 1’—an introductory lecture series which dealt, among other topics, with “the types of man as determined by race and environment”.<sup>158</sup>

Aspects of environmentalism remained a component of Boas’s work, but were refined and underpinned by a possibilist philosophy, which saw the environment as

<sup>153</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 346.

<sup>154</sup> Bushong, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 89.

<sup>155</sup> De Bres, “Geography in Teachers College”, 394.

<sup>156</sup> Visher, “Richard Elwood Dodge”.

<sup>157</sup> De Bres, “Geography in Teachers College”.

<sup>158</sup> APS, B B61ru, Series II. Courses of instruction in anthropology, 1915..

important only “insofar as it limits or favors activities”.<sup>159</sup> As has been noted, Boas “did not dismiss the environmental factor altogether”, but considered it, much like Barrows, as one influence among many.<sup>160</sup> What Boas was opposed to was strict environmental determinism rather than the consideration of environmental factors *per se*.<sup>161</sup> The year after his death, Boas’s library—which included work by, among others, Semple, Ratzel, and Spencer—was purchased by Northwestern University. Boas’s copy of *Influences* contains, revealingly, uncut pages—an indication that he did not, in his own edition at least, read Semple’s work from cover to cover.<sup>162</sup>

In 1919, the year after Semple contributed to Columbia’s summer school, the geographical curriculum again gained an environmentalist imperative under the guidance of the economic geographer Joseph Russell Smith (1874–1966), a recent appointment to the faculty.<sup>163</sup> Born into a Quaker agricultural community, Smith trained initially as an economist before turning to geography.<sup>164</sup> In 1901, he travelled to Leipzig where he spent a year “ostensibly studying” anthropogeography under Ratzel.<sup>165</sup> Like Semple, Smith was enraptured by Ratzel, and described him as “the finest man in the institution”.<sup>166</sup> Despite his enthusiasm for Ratzel’s work, Smith’s German was “scarcely adequate for his needs”, and, as a consequence, he “derived much of his deterministic outlook from the works of Ellen Churchill Semple”.<sup>167</sup> Smith developed his perspective on economic and commercial geography at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where he assumed the post of instructor of commerce vacated by John

<sup>159</sup> Mikesell, “Geographic perspectives in anthropology”, 627.

<sup>160</sup> Trindell, “Franz Boas”, 329.

<sup>161</sup> Livingstone, *Geographical tradition*.

<sup>162</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, Northwestern University, Main Library, 551.4 S47 copy 2.

<sup>163</sup> Rowley, *J. Russell Smith*.

<sup>164</sup> Martin, “J. Russell Smith”.

<sup>165</sup> Barnes, “Science studies approach to disciplinary history”, 537.

<sup>166</sup> APS, B Sm59. “Journal of European trips, 1901–1903”, 27 November 1901.

<sup>167</sup> Freeman, “Review of *J. Russell Smith*”, 114.

Paul Goode in 1903.<sup>168</sup> Smith's work at Wharton focused principally upon economic geography and industrial management, but retained an environmental component. Smith—in collaboration with Walter Tower (under whom Robert Platt later studied at Chicago)—encouraged an attention in his lectures to “the mutual interrelationship between earth and man”.<sup>169</sup> Smith's perspective was, then, one of influence rather than determinant.



Figure 24. Joseph Russell Smith.  
From *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 57, no. 1 (1967): 198.

One of Smith's students during his time at Wharton, and his assistant between 1911 and 1919, was George Roorbach.<sup>170</sup> Both Roorbach and Smith had an important connection with *Influences*—Roorbach reviewed the book in positive terms for the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, and Smith, like Bowman, received a

<sup>168</sup> Fellmann, “Origin of American economic geography”; Martin, “J. Russell Smith”.

<sup>169</sup> Rowley, *J. Russell Smith*, 79.

<sup>170</sup> Rowley, *J. Russell Smith*.

complimentary copy of the book from Semple upon its publication.<sup>171</sup> In 1919, Smith accepted the chair in economic geography at Columbia, where he continued to organize courses in which the “environmental factors that influence man’s economic and social development” were an important component.<sup>172</sup> The content of these courses reflected and directed the “man-environment orientation” of geographical work at Columbia during the 1920s.<sup>173</sup> Semple’s book played an important role in Smith’s teaching—particularly in his ‘Geography 2: Economic Geography’. The text was used not only to extend the ideas communicated in Smith’s lectures, but also as the basis to various assignments, one of which required students to identify on a map the location of various physical features (rivers, passes, mountain ranges) mentioned in Semple’s text.<sup>174</sup>

Smith’s enthusiasm for Semple’s work, and his promotion of it at Wharton and Columbia, was undoubtedly a consequence of his positive experience under Ratzel at Leipzig. I suggest that it was also to do with his interest in economic and commercial geography. Along with Edward Robinson, George Chisholm, and George Roorbach, Smith’s principal research concerned economic and commercial geography. It was in this aspect of human social organization that the influence of geographical factors—location, access to resources, barriers to trade, *inter alia*—was most apparent. As Smith made clear in a methodological pronouncement on economic geography, the subject attended fundamentally to “those geographic influences that affect the economic status of man”.<sup>175</sup> Smith’s position was not that the environment necessarily determined the economic development of a society, but that it imposed certain opportunities and

<sup>171</sup> PU, C0100, Box 115, Folder 12. Semple to Joseph Vogelius, 26 May 1911.

<sup>172</sup> De Bres, “Geography in Teachers College”, 397.

<sup>173</sup> De Bres, “Geography in Teachers College”, 397.

<sup>174</sup> APS, B Sm59, Columbia University: geography course outlines. “Geography 2—Economic Geography, Columbia College”, 1922.

<sup>175</sup> Smith, “Economic geography”, 473.

limitations which might be differently negotiated. As he framed it, “Economic geography is the description and interpretation of lands in terms of their usefulness to humanity”.<sup>176</sup> In this way, although Smith, Robinson, Chisholm, and Roorbach were associated with different institutional as well as national traditions of geography, they represented (as a consequence of their particular research interests) a common interpretative community—they engaged with Semple’s book in broadly positive terms because it was compatible with their economic concerns.

### **Semple’s apotheosis and the decline of environmentalism**

The establishment of what was termed “a great geographical institute” at Clark University in 1920 was, to some degree, an expression of confidence in disciplinary geography in the United States.<sup>177</sup> In need of a suitable geographer to administer the proposed graduate school, the university authorities approached Wallace Atwood, who had trained as a geologist under Rollin Salisbury, lectured in geography alongside Semple at Chicago, and taken over from William Morris Davis at Harvard upon the latter’s retirement.<sup>178</sup> During negotiations over the conditions of his appointment, Atwood was persuaded also to assume the presidency of the university—an enviable position from which to organize the new graduate school.<sup>179</sup> Atwood had the opportunity, then, to choose from the leading geographers in the United States in fulfilling his vision for geography at Clark. The first geographer he approached was Semple. Given that Semple’s work was then subject to criticism by certain of her students and colleagues at Chicago it might appear an unusual choice. Semple was, however, at the peak of her

<sup>176</sup> Smith, “Economic geography”, 475.

<sup>177</sup> Koelsch, “Wallace Atwood’s ‘Great Geographical Institute’”, 573.

<sup>178</sup> Karan and Mather, *Leaders in American geography*, II.

<sup>179</sup> Atwood, *Clark Graduate School of Geography*; Koelsch, *Clark University*.

professional standing, having recently been elected president of the Association of American Geographers. As was later noted, "Atwood's hiring of Ms. Semple was a coup analogous to the acquisition of a used Rolls Royce in good running condition".<sup>180</sup>

At Clark, Semple "came into her full powers as a teacher and director of research".<sup>181</sup> Clark provided a congenial environment in which Semple could benefit not only from the personal and intellectual support of her colleagues, but also from "the challenge of training serious graduate students in geography".<sup>182</sup> Under an agreement with Atwood, Semple taught only during the first semester of each year, and devoted the second to research. Because she was unmarried, and had no children, Semple was paid \$500 less per year than her male colleagues—a remuneratory discrimination she did not uncover until later in life, and one which prompted her to disinherit the university.<sup>183</sup> The Clark authorities justified this financial inequity on the basis that Semple was "without dependents".<sup>184</sup> She considered this a "mid-Victorian argument from a group of modern capitalists".<sup>185</sup> It was also a potent reminder to Semple that, "though I worked longer hours and made a larger scientific literary output every year than the men professors in my department ... [and had a] national and international reputation [which] equalled or surpassed theirs", the academy, like the society it reflected, was not a meritocracy.<sup>186</sup> Semple's experience proved two things: that "only exceptional women could find a place on a university faculty", and that the work of a female scholar was not

<sup>180</sup> Berman, "Ellen Churchill Semple at Clark University", unpaginated.

<sup>181</sup> Colby, "Ellen Churchill Semple", 236.

<sup>182</sup> Bronson, "Further note on sex discrimination", 111.

<sup>183</sup> Berman, "Sex discrimination and geography".

<sup>184</sup> CU, Vertical file: "Semple, Ellen Churchill". Codicil III of the will of Ellen C. Semple, 1932.

<sup>185</sup> CU, Vertical file: "Semple, Ellen Churchill". Codicil III of the will of Ellen C. Semple, 1932.

<sup>186</sup> CU, Vertical file: "Semple, Ellen Churchill". Codicil III of the will of Ellen C. Semple, 1932.



judged or remunerated on its merits alone.<sup>187</sup> As Berman made clear, “real equality did not come in her lifetime”.<sup>188</sup>

In her decade-long career at Clark, Semple offered courses dealing, in various ways, with environmentalism: ‘Influences of Geographic Environment’; a seminar in ‘Principles of Anthropogeography’, which she continued to offer at Chicago; the ‘Geography of the Mediterranean’; the ‘Geography of Europe’; and ‘Geographic Factors in the Location and Development of Cities’.<sup>189</sup> As at Chicago, Semple taught a number of students (Figure 25) who would later achieve professional and disciplinary prominence. Her students included Esther Sanfreida Anderson (born 1891), the University of Nebraska’s delegate at the International Geographical Congress in Warsaw in 1934, and staff member on the United States Government’s War Production Board; Ruth Emily Baugh (1889–1973), first female professor of geography at the University of California; Meredith Frederic Burrill (1902–1997), Executive Secretary of the United States Board on Geographic Names, and later president of the Association of American Geographers; Walter Ekblaw, editor of *Economic Geography*; Edwin Jay Foscue (1900–1972), lecturer in geography at the Southern Methodist University in Texas; and Preston Everett James (1899–1986), lecturer in geography at the University of Michigan and at Syracuse University.<sup>190</sup> Semple sought to instil in these students those qualities of thorough research, reasoned argument, and elegant communication for which she herself strove. As one later noted, “To think clearly and to express oneself directly and forcibly were her cardinal requirements”.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Monk, “Women were always welcome at Clark”, 19.

<sup>188</sup> Berman, “Sex discrimination and geography”, 11.

<sup>189</sup> Berman, “Ellen Churchill Semple at Clark University”.

<sup>190</sup> Harris, “Geographers in the U.S. government”; James and Martin, *All possible worlds*; Monk, “Histories of American geography”.

<sup>191</sup> Baugh, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 3.



Figure 25. Semple (seated at right) with Clark students on fieldwork, 1928. From *Economic Geography* 74 (1998): 16.

If Semple's appointment to the faculty at Clark was the high-water mark in her lecturing career, then her selection as first woman president of the Association of American Geographers in 1921 represented her professional apotheosis. Semple had been preceded in the role of president by a number of environmentalist geographers, including Ralph Tarr (1911), Albert Brigham (1914), Richard Dodge (1915), Mark Jefferson (1916), Charles Dryer (1919), and Herbert Gregory (1920).<sup>192</sup> Semple's address—"The influence of geographic conditions upon current Mediterranean stock raising"—combined her emerging Mediterranean concerns with her longstanding environmentalist work.<sup>193</sup> Although Semple's presidential contribution was not the last in the Association's history to deal with environmental influence, it did—ten years after the publication of *Influences*—mark the beginning of the end of the dominance of environmentalism in American geography. As is clear from the different historical

<sup>192</sup> James and Martin, *Association of American Geographers*.

<sup>193</sup> Semple, "Influence of geographic conditions".

engagements with questions of environmental influence in the United States, the move away from Semple's anthropogeography and its allied perspectives represented a "gradual weakening of the hold of physical determinism" rather than a revolutionary transition.<sup>194</sup>

One of the most significant modifications to the environmentalist position was proposed by the Association's president in 1922, Harlan Barrows. Barrows' methodological proclamation—"Geography as human ecology"—was the material expression of the concerns he had raised at Chicago in relation to "extreme physical causation".<sup>195</sup> In Barrows' scheme, geography was defined as "dealing solely with the mutual relations between man and his natural environment".<sup>196</sup> For Barrows, the adjustment of human societies to their physical environments "was not caused by the physical environment but was a matter of human choice".<sup>197</sup> Whilst Barrows' conception of geography was later dismissed as "a backward step" since he was seen merely to have replaced an inflexible physical determinism with a rigid cultural determinism, his was the first in a series of important challenges to the environmentalist position in the United States.<sup>198</sup> The next, and perhaps the most significant, came from Carl Sauer.

### **Sauer and the "detailed and devastating refutation of the thesis of environmentalism"**

Sauer's time at the University of Michigan between 1915 and 1923 provided the opportunity to pursue new research concerns and to develop his pedagogic skills.

<sup>194</sup> Rowley, *J. Russell Smith*, 30.

<sup>195</sup> Rowley, *J. Russell Smith*, 35.

<sup>196</sup> Barrows, "Geography as human ecology", 3.

<sup>197</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 319.

<sup>198</sup> Rowley, *J. Russell Smith*, 35.

Fieldwork in Michigan, Kentucky, and New England in the early 1920s—mapping “‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ landscapes”—was important in reinforcing his non-deterministic perspective on human-environment relations.<sup>199</sup> In 1923, Sauer was commissioned to write a regional monograph by the Kentucky Geological Survey on the Pennyroyal Plateau—an area of central and western Kentucky with a characteristic limestone-based karst topography.<sup>200</sup> Sauer was assisted in the project by a Michigan student, John Barger Leighly (1895–1986), with whom he later worked at the University of California at Berkeley.<sup>201</sup> Sauer’s investigation of the Pennyroyal, like the Ozarks before it, described a region of near-homogeneous topography, climate, and soil which supported heterogeneous cultural traditions. Sauer witnessed a region which was populated by the descendents of different settler groups who, despite the particular environmental conditions of the region, “maintained old ways and attitudes”.<sup>202</sup> This fact served to “reinforced a growing realization that human activity was the single greatest agent of landscape change and that land use varies according to cultural preferences”.<sup>203</sup>

Sauer’s experiences in Kentucky led to the publication in 1924 of ‘The survey method in geography and its objectives’—a methodological statement on the scope and purpose of the discipline. In what was, in effect, an expansion of his 1915 paper with Wellington Jones, Sauer set out in explicit terms his concerns relating to environmental influence in geographical research. For Sauer, it was “difficult to do scientifically sound work” in the environmentalist mode; studies which operated under the assumptions of environmental influence could only “throw a half-light on the human scene”.<sup>204</sup> Sauer’s

<sup>199</sup> Leighly, “Carl Ortwin Sauer, 1889–1975”, 338.

<sup>200</sup> Leighly, “Drifting into geography in the Twenties”.

<sup>201</sup> Leighly, “Drifting into geography in the Twenties”.

<sup>202</sup> Sauer, “Status and change”, 116.

<sup>203</sup> Kenzer, “Carl O. Sauer’s undergraduate heritage”, 267.

<sup>204</sup> Sauer, “Survey method in geography”, 18.

model for research in geography emphasized systematic regional description—a form of chorology—from which relationships between a population and its environment were to be inferred using “classified and properly correlated observations”, but never assumed *a priori*.<sup>205</sup> He sought, in essence, to avoid the “premature generalizations” he associated with the environmentalist method.<sup>206</sup>

In 1923, Sauer accepted the positions of professor of geography and chairman of the department at the University of California at Berkeley—a move which eventually brought him into contact with the anthropologists Alfred Louis Kroeber (1876–1960) and Robert Henry Lowie (1883–1957), both former students of Boas at Columbia.<sup>207</sup> Lowie in particular encouraged Sauer to reappraise the work of Ratzel—specifically the second volume of his *Anthropogeographie*. As Sauer recalled, “Lowie got me to understand Ratzel against whom I had been prejudiced by Miss Semple’s enthusiasm for her great master environmentalist”.<sup>208</sup> From Ratzel, Sauer inherited an epistemic concern which took culture (rather than environment) as an organizing factor.<sup>209</sup> Prior to his refamiliarization with Ratzel’s work, Sauer completed a “sort of habilitation”—a methodological paper which he saw as part of a process of “emancipating myself from the dictum then ruling at Chicago”.<sup>210</sup> Sauer’s methodological reappraisal—“The morphology of landscape”—outlined an approach to geography that placed empirical focus upon cultural landscapes.<sup>211</sup> As he noted, “My object of study is not this fearfully inclusive thing, man, but material culture in areal massiveness”.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>205</sup> Sauer, “Survey method in geography”, 18.

<sup>206</sup> Sauer, “Survey method in geography”, 18.

<sup>207</sup> Solot, “Carl Sauer and cultural evolution”; Steward, Gibson, and Rowe, “Alfred Louis Kroeber”; Trindell, “Franz Boas”.

<sup>208</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Box 18. Sauer to William W. Speth, 3 March 1972.

<sup>209</sup> Leighly, “Carl Ortwin Sauer, 1889–1975”.

<sup>210</sup> UCB, BANC MSS 77/170 c, Box 11. Sauer to Richard Hartshorne, 22 June 1946.

<sup>211</sup> Sauer, “Morphology of landscape”.

<sup>212</sup> HUA, HUG 4877.412. Carl O. Sauer to Whittlesey, 25 September 1929.

Sauer's paper—described later as “the famous piece that blasted determinism”—sought to disrupt what he saw as the mechanistic and deterministic bases of environmentalism and anthropogeography.<sup>213</sup> In this respect, his work represented an overt criticism of Semple, but seems not to have affected their “friendship of long standing”.<sup>214</sup> Whilst Sauer admitted to Semple that his work was in “quite a different direction from that in which you have worked”, he believed that she would be “sympathetic toward what we are trying to do in the study of the succession of natural and cultural landscapes”.<sup>215</sup> Whilst Semple had been subject to similar critical appraisal in France—notably in Lucien Febvre's *La terre et l'évolution humaine* (1922)—Sauer's paper was the most explicit condemnation of her work in the North American literature.

Whilst Sauer's accession to the chairmanship of the Berkeley geography department effectively eliminated the teaching of environmentalism at the institution, it had occupied an important place in the curriculum between 1910 and 1923. The principal exponent of environmental influence at Berkeley was Sauer's predecessor, Ruliff Stephen Holway (1857–1927).<sup>216</sup> Holway had trained as a geologist at Stanford University before joining the geography faculty at Berkeley in 1904.<sup>217</sup> There, Holway offered a number of courses which “mirrored the prevailing geographic opinion of the time”—dealing, in various ways, with human-environment relations.<sup>218</sup> His course on ‘General Physical Geography’ attended, for example, to “Land forms, climatology, oceanography, and planetary relations, and their effect upon human affairs”, whilst his course on ‘Geographical Influences in the Western United States’ dealt with “The

<sup>213</sup> Beck, *Environmental determinism*, 123.

<sup>214</sup> CU, B4-18-11. Carl O. Sauer to Semple, 20 June 1926.

<sup>215</sup> CU, B4-18-11. Carl O. Sauer to Semple, 20 June 1926.

<sup>216</sup> Sauer, “Ruliff S. Holway”.

<sup>217</sup> Dunbar, *Geography in the University of California*; Stadtman, *Centennial record of the University of California*.

<sup>218</sup> Speth, “Berkeley geography”, 224.

geographic conditions which have influenced the exploration and early settlement of the west and the present effect of physical factors on the life of the people".<sup>219</sup> These themes were expanded, both geographically and epistemically, in a 1918 course on 'Geographic Influences in the Development of the United States', which sought to describe "the influence of topography and climate of the United States upon location of cities and trade routes and upon man and his activities".<sup>220</sup> Quite where Holway's environmentalist concerns originated is not immediately clear. Holway had been converted to geography after attending a summer course at Harvard under William Morris Davis in the first decade of the twentieth century, and it seems probable that Davis's then-strong interest in environmentalism, and Semple's anthropogeography particularly, were transmitted to Holway.<sup>221</sup>

Although under the auspices of the newly-emergent Berkeley school of cultural geography there was an implicit move away from the environmentalist imperative in geographical research, this did not equate to a straightforward rejection of the work of Semple and her likeminded contemporaries. Semple's book was used by John Leighly for "many years" in 'Geography 151, American Geographic Thought', although he did not read the book first until "about 1940 or 1941".<sup>222</sup> *Influences* was employed as an illustration of a particular moment in the historical development of geographical thought in the United States, rather than as a textbook from which to learn. That Semple's book remained in use is evident in the recollections of Richard Joel Russell (1895–1971), who joined the faculty on a teaching fellowship in 1920, having previously

<sup>219</sup> UCB. *Annual announcement of courses of instruction for the academic year 1910–11*, 113–115

<sup>220</sup> UCB. *Annual announcement of courses of instruction for the academic year 1918–19*, 114.

<sup>221</sup> Dunbar, *Geography in the University of California*.

<sup>222</sup> AGSL. Clarence J. Glacken to Wright, 11 May 1961; John Leighly to Wright, 29 March 1961.

completed undergraduate study at Berkeley in forestry and geology.<sup>223</sup> Russell recalled reading *Influences* “Many times, 1919–1925, as a student and junior faculty member”—this despite his “close and continuing friendship with Carl O. Sauer”.<sup>224</sup> Russell was by training a Davisian geomorphologist, but began to “doubt the Davisian doctrine” after accompanying Davis on fieldwork in California, and attending a seminar given by him at Berkeley.<sup>225</sup> Russell found particular difficulty in applying Davis’s deductive methodology to his own work in the field.<sup>226</sup> Although Russell was not entirely happy that *Influences* “crowded out Davis’ physiographic influences in favour of environmental determinism”, he considered Semple’s book an important counterpoint to Davisian geomorphology.<sup>227</sup> As he noted, in response to Wright’s questionnaire, “As a competitive ‘fad’ it kept us from being completely submerged by physiography and ‘economic geography’”.<sup>228</sup>

Russell’s contemporary, Fred Bowerman Kniffen (1900–1993), read *Influences* at about the same time, but responded to it in a different way—a consequence, I suggest, of his longer-standing working relationship with Sauer. Kniffen had completed undergraduate work in geology at the University of Michigan, but had become dissatisfied by geology’s lack of attention to human life. In his final year at Michigan, Kniffen came under the influence of Sauer, and accompanied him and Leighly on a summer field trip to Kentucky and Tennessee. There, Kniffen became acquainted with Sauer’s emergent dissatisfaction with the environmentalist method.<sup>229</sup> In 1925, he began graduate studies at Berkeley, working closely with Sauer in geography and Kroeber in

<sup>223</sup> Kniffen, “Richard Joel Russell”; McIntire, “Richard Joel Russell”; Walker, “Richard Joel Russell”.

<sup>224</sup> AGSL. Richard J. Russell to Wright, 5 April 1961; Walker, “Richard Joel Russell”, 128.

<sup>225</sup> McIntire, “Richard Joel Russell”, 277.

<sup>226</sup> Walker, “Richard Joel Russell”.

<sup>227</sup> AGSL. Richard J. Russell to Wright, 5 April 1961.

<sup>228</sup> AGSL. Richard J. Russell to Wright, 5 April 1961.

<sup>229</sup> Walker and Richardson, “Fred Bowerman Kniffen”.



anthropology.<sup>230</sup> Much like his earlier dissatisfaction with geology, Kniffen felt that “anthropology neglected the earth”, and he became increasingly convinced that Sauer’s cultural geography, which drew ever more from the work of Ratzel, represented the correct route to explanation in geographical research.<sup>231</sup> Like Sauer, Kniffen described himself as an ‘anthropogeographer’—in the tradition of Ratzel, rather than in the tradition of Semple.<sup>232</sup>

In 1928, Russell joined the faculty of the School of Geology (later the Department of Geography and Anthropology) at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.<sup>233</sup> Kniffen, along with a number of Berkeley graduates, followed soon after.<sup>234</sup> Together, they formed a department which resembled a “Little Berkeley”, and at which Sauer’s cultural geography was emphasized.<sup>235</sup> Although it unclear whether Russell employed Semple’s text in his teaching there, it is apparent that Kniffen used *Influences*, as late as the 1950s, in his graduate seminar ‘Elements of Cultural Geography’.<sup>236</sup> Kniffen recommended Semple’s text only—as one of his students, Gary Seamans Dunbar, recalled—as “the extreme example of environmental determinism”.<sup>237</sup> Used in this way, Semple’s book was presented as part of the historical development of the discipline, rather than as a text from which to learn directly. It was seen, then, to be an outmoded “period piece”, whose “literary quality was always higher than its scientific quality”.<sup>238</sup>

<sup>230</sup> McKee, “Interview with Fred B. Kniffen”; Walker and Richardson, “Fred Bowerman Kniffen”.

<sup>231</sup> Walker and Richardson, “Fred Bowerman Kniffen”, 734.

<sup>232</sup> Entrikin, “Carl O. Sauer”.

<sup>233</sup> Kniffen, “Richard Joel Russell”; Walker, “Richard Joel Russell”.

<sup>234</sup> Mathewson and Shoemaker, “Louisiana State University’s Department of Geography and Anthropology”.

<sup>235</sup> McIntire, “Richard Joel Russell”, 277.

<sup>236</sup> AGSL. Gary S. Dunbar to Wright, 24 May 1961.

<sup>237</sup> AGSL. Gary S. Dunbar to Wright, 24 May 1961.

<sup>238</sup> AGSL. Gary S. Dunbar to Wright, 24 May 1961.

Although by the late 1920s Semple's *Influences* (and the determinism it was seen to represent) had been effectively dismissed by the geographical community at Berkeley, it continued to be used in other parts of the institution, notably in the Department of Social Instructions. It was there that Clarence James Glacken (1909–1989), then an undergraduate, was introduced to the book by Frederick John Teggart (1870–1946).<sup>239</sup> Glacken undertook Teggart's year-long course 'The Idea of Progress' in 1928, and as preparation for that class read Semple's book.<sup>240</sup> Teggart recommended *Influences* as "a significant book in the general field of the history of ideas", and Glacken read it alongside "the Kleine Schriften of Ratzel, and the writings of the French possibilist school".<sup>241</sup> Glacken's encounter with Semple's book—juxtaposed as it was with the work of Ratzel and of the French school—was distinct from those earlier students for whom *Influences* was presented principally as a textbook. Glacken's approach to the book was, then, somewhat more critical and considered than that of certain of his predecessors. Teggart presented Semple's work "as an example of environmental explanation of cultural differences ... not as a necessarily valid exposition of the problem".<sup>242</sup> For this reason, Glacken did not feel a particular need at this point to express an opinion as to the validity of Semple's conclusions. He was inclined, rather, to view *Influences* in its intellectual context as "an important landmark in the history of ideas".<sup>243</sup>

After almost two decades in non-academic employment, Glacken completed a Ph.D. at the Isaiah Bowman School of Geography at Johns Hopkins University.<sup>244</sup> He returned to Berkeley in 1952, and was appointed to the geography faculty where he

<sup>239</sup> Dangberg, *Life and works of Frederick J. Teggart*; Macpherson, "Clarence James Glacken".

<sup>240</sup> AGSL. Clarence J. Glacken to Wright, 11 May 1961.

<sup>241</sup> AGSL. Clarence J. Glacken to Wright, 11 May 1961. Underlining in original.

<sup>242</sup> AGSL. Clarence J. Glacken to Wright, 11 May 1961.

<sup>243</sup> AGSL. Clarence J. Glacken to Wright, 11 May 1961.

<sup>244</sup> Macpherson, "Clarence James Glacken".

inherited Leighly's 'Geography 151, American Geographic Thought'. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Glacken continued Leighly's practice of devoting "at least an hour, often more, to a discussion of selected chapters [of *Influences*]"<sup>245</sup> Glacken also made use of Semple's book in his course on 'Relations Between Nature and Culture'. As he recalled, "Students are always interested in some of Miss Semple's more detailed analyses and of course are critical".<sup>246</sup> This period was marked by the increasing dominance of quantitative methods in geography, and the cultural geography that Sauer had developed in response to environmentalism was itself being challenged. The geography faculty at Berkeley was "divided into factions either defending the 'Berkeley School' ... or trying to turn geography's course into a more 'modern' direction".<sup>247</sup> In much the same way that concerns had emerged in the 1920s as to the validity of Semple's method, so too was the authority and value of Sauer's geography questioned in the 1960s.

Concomitant with his teaching at Berkeley, Glacken undertook the research and writing of *Traces on the Rhodian shore* (1967)—a volume which tracked the development of human conceptions of nature from antiquity to the end of the eighteenth century. An important element of Glacken's volume was a detailed history of environmentalist thought—following its origin from the Classical work of Hippocrates and Aristotle, through Jean Bodin (1530–1596), to Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755) during the Enlightenment.<sup>248</sup> It is evident from Glacken's unfinished sequel to *Traces*, which dealt with the same themes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that he saw the environmentalist work of Semple and Ratzel as part of a

<sup>245</sup> AGSL. Clarence J. Glacken to Wright, 11 May 1961.

<sup>246</sup> AGSL. Clarence J. Glacken to Wright, 11 May 1961.

<sup>247</sup> Macpherson, "Clarence James Glacken", 33.

<sup>248</sup> Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian shore*.

venerable intellectual tradition.<sup>249</sup> Glacken's approach to *Influences* was, then, one of juxtaposition and contextualization. Having read Semple's book in tandem with its possibilist alternatives, and charted its intellectual ancestry, Glacken understood *Influences* in terms of its contribution to the historical development of environmentalist thought. In his classroom teaching, then, he used *Influences* as illustrative rather than as instructive—it was a text which his students learned *about*, not *from*.

In different ways, and for different reasons, Semple's book had an important role in the teaching of environmentalist thought at Berkeley. Although the principles upon which the book depended had been effectively refuted by Sauer in the 1920s, *Influences* continued to fulfil a particular function. Having gone from being an instructional tool for Holway during the second decade of the twentieth century to an illustrative example of environmentalist thought for Teggart and Glacken from the 1930s, Semple's book fulfilled two distinct roles. In this way it continued to function, albeit in an altered capacity, after its thesis had been gainsaid by Sauer and others at Berkeley. The rejection of *Influences* at Berkeley, and one might suppose also at other intuitions, cannot be regarded straightforwardly, then, as coterminous with the end of its 'career'. Semple's book had an afterlife—its usefulness transcended its ability to shape and to direct the course of geographical research.

### ***Semple's students and the promotion and repudiation of anthropogeography***

The different uses to which Semple's text was put at Berkeley between the 1910s and the 1960s make apparent the difficulty in identifying a common institutional response to her

<sup>249</sup> UCB, CU-468, Box 7, Folder 32. Twentieth century.

ideas, or defining one that was uniquely, or notably, Californian. Distinct perspectives on *Influences* within the department at Berkeley were mirrored, moreover, by differences between components of the University of California system. This was particularly true in Los Angeles. The Southern Branch of the University of California, as UCLA was then known, was established in 1919—an outgrowth of the Los Angeles State Normal School.<sup>250</sup> Geography had been taught at the Normal School since its inception in the 1880s, but it did not attain a dedicated department of geography until 1911.<sup>251</sup> In 1912, Ruth Baugh was appointed to the geography faculty, a position she retained for more than four decades.<sup>252</sup> In 1913 and 1919, Semple visited the Normal School and offered a series of lectures on anthropogeography. She came into contact with Baugh during this period, and the two established a strong friendship. After completing an undergraduate degree in geography at Berkeley in the early 1920s (prior to the arrival of Sauer), Baugh transferred to Clark University in 1925 where Semple had secured for her a scholarship to complete graduate study.<sup>253</sup> For Semple, Baugh was “probably the strongest woman candidate for a degree that we have had”.<sup>254</sup>

A near contemporary of Baugh at Clark was Preston James, who had completed his doctoral studies there in 1923.<sup>255</sup> Despite their almost simultaneous encounter with Semple’s work, they responded to her teaching in notably different ways. These distinct experiences suggest that the force of Semple’s personality alone did not guarantee the effective communication of her anthropogeography. Before arriving at Clark, James has completed a master’s degree in meteorology and climatology under Robert DeCourcy

<sup>250</sup> Dunbar, *Geography in the University of California*.

<sup>251</sup> Dunbar, *Geography in the University of California*.

<sup>252</sup> Bruman, Fetty, and Spencer, “Ruth Emily Baugh”.

<sup>253</sup> CU, B4-18-11. Wallace W. Atwood to Semple, 8 June 1925.

<sup>254</sup> CU, B4-18-11. Semple to Wallace W. Atwood, 1 July 1925.

<sup>255</sup> Martin, “Preston E. James”.

Ward (1867–1931) at Harvard University.<sup>256</sup> Ward was an enthusiastic proponent of climatic causation, and the influence of his perspective—along with that of Semple—is apparent in the field diary which James kept whilst visiting Latin America in 1921:

last night ... we had a fine example of hot house climate. You could wring the moisture out of your clothes and with no wind to evaporate the water, it soon became impossible to indulge in the least exertion .... Even after disease has been eliminated from the tropics, the physiological effect remains to deny for all time any perfect acclimatization of the white races without the loss of the energetic qualities of leadership of that race.<sup>257</sup>

Although James was, as a consequence of his earlier education, inclined towards an environmentalist perspective, he found Semple's teaching of the subject at Clark rather unsatisfactory. As he noted later:

Ellen used the book the wrong way. Students had to memorise and repeat what it says, and any attempt to discuss the questions inherent in her philosophy was squashed. I remember how delighted she was one time when I added an example of 'robbers in pass routes'. I told about going through the Mohawk Valley in an automobile as a child, and having the sheriff stop us for going over 8 miles an hour and collecting a fine. This was the only route west in 1911—and this was truly a robber in a pass route. She loved it. But when I suggested that the Bolivian Plateau might be considered more peripheral than the Atacama (in relation to markets in Europe) she almost threw me out of class.<sup>258</sup>

Despite these misgivings as to Semple's pedagogic approach, aspects of her work influenced James's doctoral thesis entitled 'Geographic factors in the development of transportation in South America' (1923). At some point in the 1920s, however, James's faith in the significance of environmental influence appears to have moderated. In 1923, he was appointed to the faculty of the University of Michigan (in part on the strength of a letter of recommendation from Semple), where he replaced the recently-departed Sauer. Although *Influences* appeared on undergraduate reading lists there, the text was not

<sup>256</sup> Martin, "Preston Everett James"; Martin, "Preston E. James".

<sup>257</sup> Quoted in Martin, "Preston E. James", 165.

<sup>258</sup> AGSL. Preston E. James to Wright, 11 April 1961.

incorporated directly into the curriculum.<sup>259</sup> As James later noted, “This was an intellectually exciting period, because we were coming out from Semple and joining Sauer”.<sup>260</sup>

The principal spurs to James’s reassessment of the environmentalist position were periods of chorographic fieldwork in Trinidad and New England.<sup>261</sup> These regional studies, similar to those undertaken by Robert Platt, showed how “several cultures have left their own peculiar impressions in the landscape”—the reverse, in short, of Semple’s approach.<sup>262</sup> Like Sauer and Platt, it was work in the field—particularly that which revealed cultural heterogeneity in geographically similar environments—which caused James to question the value of an environmentalist approach. In 1929, the same year as James’s research, Whittlesey completed a similar study in New England and coined the term ‘sequent occupance’ to describe “studies of the processes of change in the occupance of an area”.<sup>263</sup> As was later noted, “Studies in sequent occupance [like those of James, Whittlesey, Platt, and Sauer] represent the antithesis of environmental determinism”.<sup>264</sup>

James’s focus upon regional description and the influence of society upon the environment was not a straightforward rejection of Semple’s perspective, but, rather, a more considered basis from which to advance conclusions about the relationship between society and the environment. James did not believe that Semple’s approach was wrongheaded, just overstated: “When Ellen wrote about how nature whispered to man the answers of how to get along in an environment, she was letting the poetry of nature

<sup>259</sup> AGSL. Preston E. James to Wright, 11 April 1961.

<sup>260</sup> Quoted in Martin, “Preston E. James”, 166.

<sup>261</sup> James, “Geographic reconnaissance of Trinidad”; James, “Blackstone Valley”.

<sup>262</sup> James, “Blackstone Valley”, 117.

<sup>263</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 327.

<sup>264</sup> James and Martin, *All possible worlds*, 327.

get the upper hand".<sup>265</sup> James's intention, in examining the interrelation of landscape and human life, was to redress the balance somewhat. Commenting later on the influence of Semple's book, James noted "There are many parts that are just as valid today as Ellen thought they were .... But because parts were so extremely deterministic, the whole book has been set aside".<sup>266</sup> There was for James, however, enough in Semple's book of value for it to remain on the reading list at Michigan throughout his tenure and later at Syracuse University despite the "violence of the anti-environmentalism prevalent there".<sup>267</sup>

In the three years which separated James's and Baugh's encounters with *Influences* at Clark, Semple's classroom manner seems to have mellowed, and the prescriptive experience which James recalled was replaced by a somewhat more dialogic approach. As Baugh noted, "The book was used ... as a basis for the discussion which Miss Semple directed. Students recited, asked questions, drew out the author on subjects not generally understood, or on points where there were differences of opinion".<sup>268</sup> After completing her Ph.D. in 1929 at Clark, Baugh returned to the University of California at Los Angeles, where she resumed her teaching career. There, Baugh made considerable use of *Influences* "in undergraduate courses in which historical subjects and material in human geography were being considered", and the book was placed on reading lists in both the history and geography departments.<sup>269</sup> Semple's ideas were also discussed in a graduate course entitled 'Development of Geographic Thought', taught from 1925 by Clifford Maynard Zierer (1898–1976), who had studied under Steven Visher, a former student of Semple, at Indiana University and who completed an environmentalist

<sup>265</sup> AGSL. Preston E. James to Wright, 11 April 1961.

<sup>266</sup> AGSL. Preston E. James to Wright, 11 April 1961.

<sup>267</sup> AGSL. Philip W. Porter to Wright, 30 March 1961.

<sup>268</sup> AGSL. Ruth E. Baugh to Wright, 24 May 1961.

<sup>269</sup> AGSL. Ruth E. Baugh to Wright, 24 May 1961.



doctoral thesis at the University of Chicago, in part under the influence of Barrows.<sup>270</sup> Under Zierer's direction the "departmental philosophy" at UCLA "emanated largely from Ellen C. Semple, Ellsworth Huntington, and others of similar bent".<sup>271</sup> As a result of the frequent reference to *Influences* in Baugh's and Zierer's courses, "the copies placed on reserve at U.C.L.A. were well worn".<sup>272</sup>

The environmentalist orientation of the geography curriculum at UCLA was challenged, however, on a number of occasions, most notably by Joseph Earle Spencer (1907–1984), an undergraduate between 1925 and 1929.<sup>273</sup> For Spencer, the "simplistic and one-sided views" embodied in the environmentalist position "caused me considerable difficulty, and I was summarily ejected from class on several occasions for arguing with instructors".<sup>274</sup> Spencer was supported in his dubiety by Jonathan Garst (1893–1973), an Iowa-born, Edinburgh-educated geographer, who joined the faculty in 1927.<sup>275</sup> As Spencer recalled, Garst's "views were very different from those of the American-trained faculty", and he introduced Spencer to the work of European geographers, particularly those of the French school.<sup>276</sup> Garst gave a focus to Spencer's concerns as to the value of the environmentalist position and provided him with an alternative methodological approach to geographical research. As Spencer's obituarist noted, "Garst set Joe's orientation in a nondeterminist direction", and it was at Garst's suggestion that Spencer later undertook graduate work at Berkeley under Sauer.<sup>277</sup> When Spencer returned to UCLA in 1940 as an instructor in geography, he brought with him

<sup>270</sup> Wheeler and Brunn, "An urban geographer".

<sup>271</sup> Spencer, "Geographer west of the Sierra Nevada", 46.

<sup>272</sup> AGSL. Ruth E. Baugh to Wright, 24 May 1961.

<sup>273</sup> Nelson, "J. E. Spencer".

<sup>274</sup> Spencer, "Geographer west of the Sierra Nevada", 47.

<sup>275</sup> Leighly, "Carl Ortwin Sauer, 1889–1975"; Spencer, "Geographer west of the Sierra Nevada".

<sup>276</sup> Spencer, "Geographer west of the Sierra Nevada", 47.

<sup>277</sup> Nelson, "J. E. Spencer", 596.

the cultural geography of Sauer which came gradually to replace the environmentalist physical geography which had dominated previously at the Los Angeles department.

Baugh remained at UCLA until 1956, achieving full professorship in 1953.<sup>278</sup> Although not entirely uncritical of Semple's work, most of the courses Baugh offered at UCLA were "on regions and topics that had been of interest to Miss Semple—Europe, Historical Geography of the Mediterranean Region, the Geographic Basis of Human Society".<sup>279</sup> Whether directly by reference to *Influences*, or indirectly through her own teaching, Baugh facilitated the communication and dissemination of Semple's geographical work during much of the first half of the twentieth century. In addition to her promotion of *Influences* at UCLA, Baugh's most significant contribution to Semple's intellectual legacy was the assistance she afforded Semple in the completion of her final work, *The geography of the Mediterranean region* (1931).<sup>280</sup> Semple's ill health (she had suffered a heart attack in 1929) meant that much of the editorial responsibility for the book was assumed by Baugh, who, facilitated by a grant from the National Research Council, undertook "rewriting and reorganizing for which she should have received greater credit".<sup>281</sup>

In a career which spanned five decades at UCLA and its predecessor institution, Baugh, like Semple before her, influenced the undergraduate experience of a number of future geographers, including Robert Cooper West (1913–2001), Evelyn Lord Pruitt (1918–2000), and Peter Hugh Nash (b. 1921).<sup>282</sup> Although, as Nash recalled, "Baugh almost worshipped Semple, and much of this admiration rubbed off on me", Semple's

<sup>278</sup> Monk, "Histories of American geography".

<sup>279</sup> Bruman, Fetty, and Spencer, "Ruth Emily Baugh", 11.

<sup>280</sup> Anonymous, "Semple completes work on the Mediterranean region"; Bushong, "Ruth Emily Baugh".

<sup>281</sup> Bruman, Fetty, and Spencer, "Ruth Emily Baugh", 11.

<sup>282</sup> Nash, Guelke, and Preston, *Essays in honour of Peter Nash*; Walker, "Evelyn Lord Pruitt".

anthropogeography was not necessarily inherited by Baugh's students.<sup>283</sup> Baugh's personal affection for Semple did not translate to an evangelical espousal of anthropogeography, but it was manifest in her inclination to direct her students to Semple's work (either through her own teaching, or by direct reference to *Influences*, *American history*, and *Mediterranean region*). In some respects, Baugh's use of Semple's text contrasted markedly with her Clark contemporary Ekblaw, who "transferred his admiration and respect for her to her book".<sup>284</sup> Whilst Baugh had inherited something of Semple's research interests and passion for geography, Ekblaw might more properly be understood as her intellectual primogeniture—her most enthusiastic recipient and proselytizer.

In 1913 Ekblaw had been selected as botanist and geologist for the MacMillan Crocker Land Expedition to the Arctic. Beset by problems, the Expedition was forced to remain in the high Arctic for four years, rather the one year originally intended.<sup>285</sup> In this time Ekblaw began an investigation of the Inuit population of northern Greenland, a subject which became the basis of his doctoral dissertation—"The Polar Eskimo" (1926)—which was supervised by Semple.<sup>286</sup> As Beck notes, Ekblaw's interpretation of the Inuit culture was "something close to the stereotypical deterministic viewpoint", and offered "a nightmare version of environmental determinism"—a notable contrast to Franz Boas's investigation of the Baffin Island Inuit.<sup>287</sup> Ekblaw's adherence to the environmentalist perspective was regarded as an "example of over enthusiasm".<sup>288</sup>

<sup>283</sup> Nash, Guelke, and Preston, *Essays in honour of Peter Nash*, 280.

<sup>284</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

<sup>285</sup> Barnes, "W. Elmer Ekblaw".

<sup>286</sup> Ekblaw, "Material response of the polar Eskimo"; Ekblaw, "Material response of the polar Eskimo (continued)".

<sup>287</sup> Beck, *Environmental determinism*, 82.

<sup>288</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

Ekblaw was rigid in his reference to Semple's work, which he used as the sole basis for his 'Human and Cultural Geography' course at Clark, offered until 1948–49.<sup>289</sup> As one student later recalled, "Criticism of anything was resented", and when an attempt was made to discuss possibilist theories in geography, "Ekblaw lost his temper and said my remarks were absurd because 'You can't grow bananas at the Pole'".<sup>290</sup> Ekblaw's admiration of Semple's book—which he regarded as "the final word on the subject [anthropogeography] in the English language"—went beyond a straightforward adherence to her ideas; the rigidity of his outlook serving in some ways to misrepresent her ideas, or, at least, to exaggerate them by association.<sup>291</sup> As a consequence of Ekblaw's persistent adherence to environmentalist ideas, a "latter-day form of environmental determinism predominated" at Clark throughout the 1930s and 1940s—well beyond the endurance of this perspective at other institutions, including UCLA.<sup>292</sup> As one student of that period recalled, "we were expected to be familiar with Ellen Churchill Semple", but "Vidal de la Blache we viewed only in passing".<sup>293</sup>

Between 1922 and 1946, almost one third of geography doctorates completed at Clark, among them George Cressey's, were directed by Ekblaw, and the influence of his environmentalism was often apparent in their content: for example, 'The influence of location on the evolution of Duluth, Minnesota' (1933), George Henry Primmer (b. 1889); 'Geographic backgrounds of Babylonian culture' (1934), Sidney Everette Ekblaw (b. 1903); and 'Geographic factors in American tung culture (Southeastern United

<sup>289</sup> AGSL. Albert S. Carlson to Wright, undated; Van H. English to Wright, undated; Wilma B. Fairchild to Wright, 26 March 1961; Stephen B. Jones to Wright, 27 March 1961; Walter W. Ristow to Wright, 18 April 1961.

<sup>290</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

<sup>291</sup> Ekblaw, "Review of *The geography of the Mediterranean region*", 104.

<sup>292</sup> Prunty, "Clark in the early 1940s", 45.

<sup>293</sup> Prunty, "Clark in the early 1940s", 45.

States)' (1943), Ruben L. Parson.<sup>294</sup> An unintended consequence of Ekblaw's teaching was that a number of his students inherited an exaggerated opinion of Semple's determinism.<sup>295</sup> For one student, George Tatham (1907–1987), it was not until he re-read *Influences* in preparation for a contribution to Griffith Taylor's 1957 volume *Geography in the twentieth century* that he appreciated the extent to which his view of it had been shaped by Ekblaw's perspective.<sup>296</sup> Here, again, geographical location and social context mattered to the reading of Semple's book: under Ekblaw's tutelage, students received the "strong impression that Semple was extremely deterministic and Ratzel equally, if not more, so".<sup>297</sup>

In addition to the cohort of graduate students Ekblaw supervised between the 1920s and 1940s, a larger number of undergraduate students attended his lecture courses and summer seminars. Several—including Albert Sigfrid Carlson (b. 1907) and Stephen Barr Jones (1903–1984)—went on to occupy important positions within the geographical academy in the United States. Carlson, who enrolled on Ekblaw's course in 1928, and who later headed the geography department at Dartmouth College, recalled not only the circumstances in which he read *Influences*, but also the practicalities of his reading: "I ... underlined it, took sentence outline notes on it and, at that time, was able to locate most of the place names in the chapters and explain their geographic significance".<sup>298</sup> Ekblaw's enthusiasm for *Influences* permeated Carlson's own reading of it. He later described Semple's book as having exerted a positive and beneficial influence on the development of geography in North America: "I believe the book as important

<sup>294</sup> Bushong, "Geographers and their mentors"; Koelsch, "East and Midwest in American academic geography".

<sup>295</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

<sup>296</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

<sup>297</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

<sup>298</sup> AGSL. Albert S. Carlson to Wright, undated.

as Mackinder, Brunhes, La Blache and Huntington's works".<sup>299</sup> Unlike a number of his contemporaries at different institutions, however, Carlson maintained an enthusiasm for *Influences* and continued to recommend it to undergraduate geographers at Dartmouth as late as the 1960s.

Carlson's compatriot, Stephen Jones, who attended the Clark summer school in 1928 (Appendix B), was similarly enthused by his initial encounter with *Influences*, finding it "extremely interesting and stimulating", and reading it "kiver to kiver [sic]".<sup>300</sup> Jones's enthusiasm was, however, short lived. When he returned to graduate studies at Harvard University in autumn 1928, he was forced to defend his newly-acquired environmental perspective to the recently-appointed Derwent Whittlesey. As Jones recalls, "Whittlesey de-environmentalized me".<sup>301</sup> After completing a Ph.D. on the 'Human occupancy of the Bow-Kicking Horse region, Canadian Rocky Mountains' (1933), and a period of teaching at the University of Hawaii, Jones went on to found the committee (later department) of geography at Yale University.<sup>302</sup> It was at Yale that Jones became aware of the ways in which *Influences* was regarded by non-geographers. He recalled having *Influences* "pushed at me (figuratively) ... by several social scientists, mostly rather elderly and retired" who disagreed passionately with Semple's thesis.<sup>303</sup> In this respect, Jones saw Semple's book as having exerted a damaging influence on professional geography, since it was seen by those in other branches of the social sciences to be "the geographers' bible"—embodying the discipline, its scope, and methods.<sup>304</sup> Having been

<sup>299</sup> AGSL. Albert S. Carlson to Wright, undated.

<sup>300</sup> AGSL. Stephen B. Jones to Wright, 27 March 1961.

<sup>301</sup> AGSL. Stephen B. Jones to Wright, 27 March 1961.

<sup>302</sup> Harris, "Stephen Barr Jones".

<sup>303</sup> AGSL. Stephen B. Jones to Wright, 27 March 1961.

<sup>304</sup> AGSL. Stephen B. Jones to Wright, 27 March 1961.

an adherent of Whittlesey's brand of cultural geography for more than two decades, this interpretation (or misinterpretation) of geography's discipline irked Jones.<sup>305</sup>

As the examples of Baugh and Ekblaw make clear, the persistence of Semple's book as a pedagogic tool at particular institutions in the United States was, in part, a function of Semple's diaspora in both its first and second generations—that is, the students whom Semple taught, and those her students went on in turn to teach. There was not, then, a simple and uncomplicated transmission of Semple's anthropogeography. As Edward Said has suggested, any idea in the process of its relocation is “to some extent transformed by its new uses, [by] its new position in a new time and place”.<sup>306</sup> This was true of Semple's anthropogeography. In the different representational guises which her book assumed in the classrooms of Baugh and Ekblaw, it was transformed epistemically and its meaning and implications were mediated. Those students who used *Influences* in subsequent teaching careers might, then, more properly be thought of having used Baugh's *Influences* or Ekblaw's *Influences*, both distinct from the text they would have received from Semple.

As previously mentioned, however, whether Semple's book was used in the 'right' or 'wrong' way is not what should motivate us. The question of the geography of the reception of *Influences* is, rather, a matter of why the book meant particular and different things to particular and different people, and of how these understandings changed across space and through time. *Influences* did not contain a fixed and canonical meaning which was either accurately or erroneously interpreted by its different readers—its meaning was always, in some senses, in flux as it was remade and

<sup>305</sup> AGSL. Stephen B. Jones to Wright, 27 March 1961.

<sup>306</sup> Said, *World*, 227.

negotiated. The career of Semple's book was not determined simply by the acceptance or repudiation of its principal thesis (however defined) but by its very malleability.

In 1939, at the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers, John Leighly in conversation with Ekblaw "learned ... with astonishment" that *Influences* was still used as a textbook at Clark.<sup>307</sup> His incredulity did not mean, however, that Leighly considered Semple's book moribund or inconsequential, for, although *Influences* functioned in notably different ways for Leighly at Berkeley and Ekblaw at Clark (and, indeed, also for their students), it *did* function. Even in its repudiated form, the book served a particular role for Leighly—its career redefined, but enduring. This seeming contrast between the book's material permanence and its epistemic malleability has been summarized thus:

The 'career' of a book begins, ordinarily, immediately upon its birth, and the most vigorous and vital years are the years of infancy, as was true of *Influences*. A book responds to its environment by multiplying in number of copies more or less proportionately to its ability to make friends and interest people. Qualitatively, however, it remains the same (unless, of course, there are sudden mutations when new editions are published) with a constancy that may be embarrassing to the author and refreshing or disappointing to the reader .... Although untouched for years, as long as a copy exists anywhere a book, like a bear in winter, continues to 'live' dormant.<sup>308</sup>

The transition of *Influences* from its "vigorous and vital" debut, to a period of doubt and repudiation, occurred at different rates in different places, and at different rates for different people.<sup>309</sup> This was not a linear process of maturation, however, but was geographically variable and was particular to individuals or groups. As I shall describe in relation to the career of *Influences* in the United Kingdom, a common context for the reading and reception of Semple's text did not mean, necessarily, that the book's

<sup>307</sup> AGLS. John Leighly to Wright, 29 March 1961.

<sup>308</sup> Wright, "Notes towards a bibliobiography", 349–350.

<sup>309</sup> Wright, "Notes towards a bibliobiography", 349.



career trajectory was uniform spatially. Despite the shared disciplinary concerns which informed the initial reading of Semple's book, the uses to which it was put, and how it was viewed with time, were multiple. The career trajectory of *Influences* in the United Kingdom, although conditioned by the initial context of its reception, was, then, manifest differently in different places and for different people.

### ***Influences* in the United Kingdom**

In 1918, Herbert John Fleure was appointed to the newly-created Gregynog Chair of Geography and Anthropology at the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth, where he outlined a syllabus influenced strongly by the intellectual triumvirate to which he subscribed: anthropology, geography, and history.<sup>310</sup> Rooted in what would later be described as a possibilist perspective, his syllabus at Aberystwyth echoed the French school of regional geography, and was distinct from the environmentalist focus of that of contemporary geographical institutions in the United States. Fleure's intellectual orientation was described in his *Human geography in Western Europe* (1918)—a text which sought to promote a geography which attended to regions as defined by “areas on which different men have set their characteristic stamp” rather than by, simply, their topography, climate, or ecology.<sup>311</sup> It was Fleure's view that it was “impossible to treat man [simply] as a creature of circumstance”.<sup>312</sup>

Despite Fleure's intellectual orientation, and the doubts he had expressed earlier as to the validity of Semple's method, he frequently recommended *Influences* to his students. One of these, Emyr Estyn Evans (1905–1989), read it in 1923. As Evans later recalled, Semple's book was presented as a tool by which “to exercise our critical

<sup>310</sup> Bowen, “Geography in the University of Wales”; Bowen, Carter, and Taylor, *Geography at Aberystwyth*.

<sup>311</sup> Watson, “Sociological aspect of geography”, 472.

<sup>312</sup> Watson, “Sociological aspect of geography”, 471.

faculties”, rather than a book from which to learn directly.<sup>313</sup> Evans had originally entered Aberystwyth to study Latin, but “soon fell under the spell” of Fleure, an “inspiring teacher”.<sup>314</sup> His pre-university education had not been explicitly geographical, and, as Evans later noted, “the title [of Semple’s book] appealed to a beginner”.<sup>315</sup> The context for Evans’ reading was, however, shaped by Fleure, and he seems to have engaged with the work critically, having been warned of its potential limitations.

Evans came increasingly under Fleure’s influence during his undergraduate study and—with Fleure, Emrys George Bowen (1900–1983), and Harold John Edward Peake (1867–1946)—formed what was later termed “the ‘Aberystwyth School’ of historically-oriented human geography”.<sup>316</sup> Much of the focus of the school was on “the racial characteristics, both physical and social, of various peoples, and on their powers of adjustment to particular climatic circumstances”.<sup>317</sup> Whilst the human ecological orientation of this work was superficially similar to that proposed by Harlan Barrows at Chicago and the cultural geography of Sauer at Berkeley, it was distinct in that sought specifically to identify the characteristics of particular racial types as the basis to understanding their cultural expression in space: settlement, agriculture, trade, and so on. For Barrows and Sauer (and so, too, for Semple), race mattered less.

Although the work of the School “aroused considerable interest”, it had “little impact on regional geography ... in Britain”, at least compared to the influence of Sauer in the United States.<sup>318</sup> More significantly, however, the geography of Fleure and his disciples was not intended as a corrective to Semple’s anthropogeography as was Sauer’s,

<sup>313</sup> AGSL. Emry E. Evans to Wright, 14 April 1961.

<sup>314</sup> Buchanan, “Emyr Estyn Evans”, 14.

<sup>315</sup> AGSL. Emry E. Evans to Wright, 14 April 1961.

<sup>316</sup> Carter, “Emrys G. Bowen”; Fleure, “Harold John Edward Peake”; Williams, “Creation of humanised landscapes”, 172.

<sup>317</sup> Freeman, *Hundred years of geography*, 180.

<sup>318</sup> Freeman, *Modern British geography*, 110.

and, as a consequence, existed in parallel with it for much of the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>319</sup> Evans, who went on to teach at Queen's University, Belfast between 1928 and 1970, employed *Influences* there in much the way Fleure had done at Aberystwyth: "I still recommend students to read the work, warning them, as I was warned, of its weaknesses. At a certain stage I think it is immensely stimulating and I have not known students to suffer in the long run. It is much more dangerous for students who are not geographers".<sup>320</sup>

Unlike at Aberystwyth, aspects of environmentalism were favourably incorporated into the teaching of geography at the University of Oxford during the tenure of both Halford Mackinder and Andrew Herbertson.<sup>321</sup> When the Honours degree syllabus was put before University authorities for approval in the early 1920s, environmental influence featured prominently in both its physical and human components. The proposed course in 'Principles of Physical Geography' promised "a study of the influence of geographical conditions ... upon man", whilst the 'Geography of Man' considered the "influence of geographical environment upon physical type and culture".<sup>322</sup>

Around this time, Semple's book—then one of the recommended texts included in the unofficial book list issued to students—was read by John Norman Leonard Baker (1893–1971) in preparation for the Diploma in geography.<sup>323</sup> Baker, who had recently completed undergraduate work in modern history, was "quite naturally ... critical of it", but appreciated the fact that *Influences* conveyed to Anglophone readers, albeit in a

<sup>319</sup> Buchanan, Jones, and McCourt, *Man and his habitat*.

<sup>320</sup> AGSL. Emry E. Evans to Wright, 14 April 1961.

<sup>321</sup> Keltie, *Position of geography in British universities*; Scargill, "Foundations of geography at Oxford".

<sup>322</sup> Keltie, *Position of geography in British universities*, 9–10.

<sup>323</sup> AGSL. John N. L. Baker to Wright, 30 April 1961.

mediated form, “something of what Ratzel had been writing about”.<sup>324</sup> The value of *Influences* to Baker came from its representation of Ratzel’s anthropogeography, rather than from its communication of Semple’s own perspective. Despite doubts as to the book’s validity, Baker selected a copy as a reward when he was granted the Herbertson Memorial Prize in 1921.<sup>325</sup> Whilst the titular focus of geography at Oxford seems not to have changed radically in the period between Semple’s lectures at its summer school and Baker’s encounter with her text, the Neo-Lamarckian perspective associated with both Mackinder and Herbertson appears to have been in vogue no longer.<sup>326</sup>

In 1923, Baker joined the faculty at Oxford as an assistant to Henry Oliver Beckit (1875–1931)—“a conservative Balliol man, bent upon turning out a few well-trained men” according to Semple’s assessment of him—and spent the remainder of his career there.<sup>327</sup> As has been noted, “for many years, and particularly ... during the 1930s, ‘Baker’ and ‘Oxford geography’ were almost synonymous terms”.<sup>328</sup> During this period, the “criticism of [Lucien] Febvre and the rise of the ‘possibilists’ had an adverse effect on Semple’s book”, but, as Baker was keen to point out, this was “all the more reason for reading it to see exactly what she said!”.<sup>329</sup> *Influences* remained, then, “one of the ‘recommended’ books in our unofficial book list given to undergraduates” until at least the 1960s.<sup>330</sup>

From the pejorative annotation of the surviving copies at Oxford, it is evident that those students who chose to read Semple’s text during the 1950s and later ‘to see exactly what she said’ encountered it in very different terms than those who had read

<sup>324</sup> AGSL. John N. L. Baker to Wright, 30 April 1961.

<sup>325</sup> AGSL. John N. L. Baker to Wright, 30 April 1961.

<sup>326</sup> Baker, “History of geography in Oxford”; Kearns, “Halford John Mackinder”.

<sup>327</sup> CU, B4-18-11. “Miss Semple’s list. European geographers”.

<sup>328</sup> Steel, “John Norman Leonard Baker”, 5.

<sup>329</sup> AGSL. John N. L. Baker to Wright, 30 April 1961.

<sup>330</sup> AGSL. John N. L. Baker to Wright, 30 April 1961.

the book at the time of its publication. Although, as Baker pointed out, “It would be a mistake to judge the value of the book by present-day standards”, it is evident that student readers during the second half of the twentieth century considered certain of Semple’s arguments to be barely credible.<sup>331</sup> That *Influences* was subject not simply to doubt but to ridicule is evident in a marginal sketch depicting ‘Cloud Cuckoo Land’ (Figure 26)—the implication being that the ideas contained within the book reflect derangement or naivety on Semple’s part. Although it appears that it was Semple’s somewhat florid prose that attracted most negative comment—“What an imagination”; “This is laughable”; “Come off it!”—the perceived racism of her text was subject to particular censure.<sup>332</sup> Semple’s claim, for example, that despite the vicissitudes of the tropics, the British colonist is able “to do a white man’s stint of work” is qualified by the acerbic suggestion “i.e. kicking nigs, supping gin” (Figure 27).<sup>333</sup>

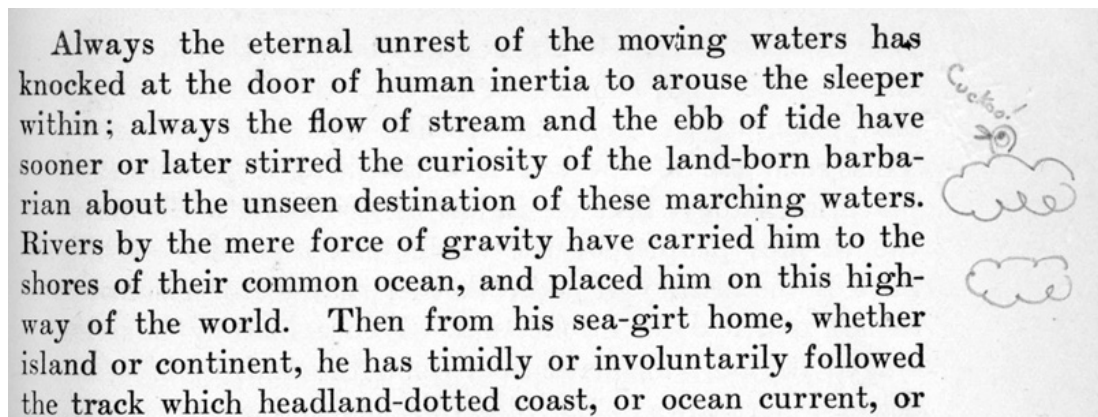


Figure 26. Cloud Cuckoo Land.

*Influences of geographic environment*, University of Oxford, Geography and the Environment Library, M 59a, 293.

<sup>331</sup> AGSL. John N. L. Baker to Wright, 30 April 1961.

<sup>332</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Oxford, Geography and the Environment Library, M 59a, 245, 299.

<sup>333</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Oxford, Geography and the Environment Library, M 59a, 413.

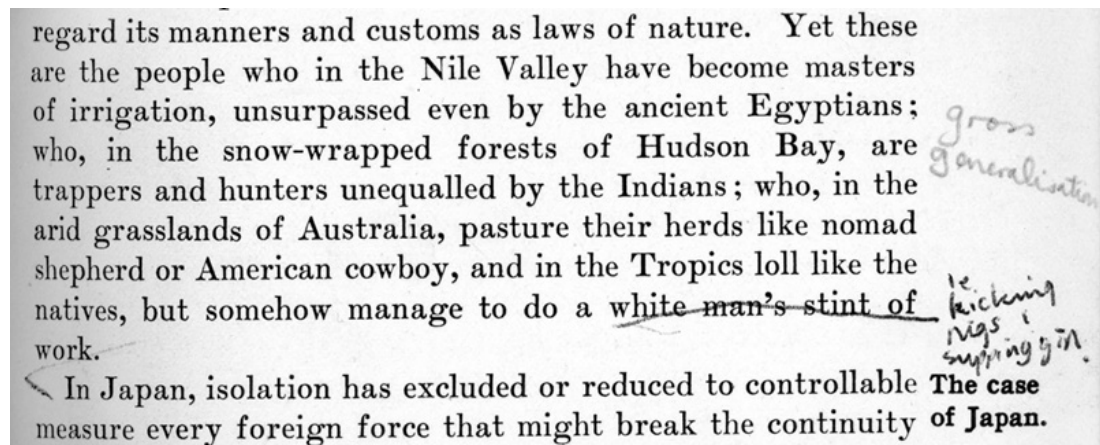


Figure 27. Pejorative marginalia.

*Influences of geographic environment*, University of Oxford, Geography and the Environment Library, M 59a, 413.

A similar transition from an initially eager acceptance to a later enthusiastic repudiation was apparent also at the University of Cambridge, where anthropogeography had formed a core component of the geographical curriculum since the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>334</sup> From 1903, Alfred Cort Haddon (1855–1940)—whom Semple described as “the great anthropologist of Cambridge University”—offered a twice-weekly lecture course in anthropogeography.<sup>335</sup> Haddon, a zoologist and anthropologist by training, had undertaken a number of ethnographic expeditions during the 1880s and 1890s which had convinced him of the important connection between culture and physical environment.<sup>336</sup> His syllabus for the anthropogeography course covered “The geographical distribution of races according to continents. The influence of geographical environment on the life, arts, social organisation, and migrations of the more important peoples”.<sup>337</sup> This reflected his interests and, from 1907, his course formed one of six subjects in the examination for

<sup>334</sup> Keltie, *Position of geography in British universities*.

<sup>335</sup> CU, B4-18-11. “Miss Semple’s list. European geographers”.

<sup>336</sup> Dritsas, “Expeditionary science”; Fleure, “Alfred Cort Haddon”.

<sup>337</sup> Cambridge University Library (hereafter CUL), Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, CUR 28.18. *Cambridge University Register*, 14 June 1909, unpaginated; Stoddart, “Foundations of Geography at Cambridge”.

the diploma in geography. When the Tripos, or Honours, programme in geography was prepared in 1919, anthropogeography was, again, one of six examinable components.<sup>338</sup>

The anthropogeography course was, on occasions, taught by Haddon's assistants: Miss L. Whitehouse and Mrs Guiggin.<sup>339</sup>

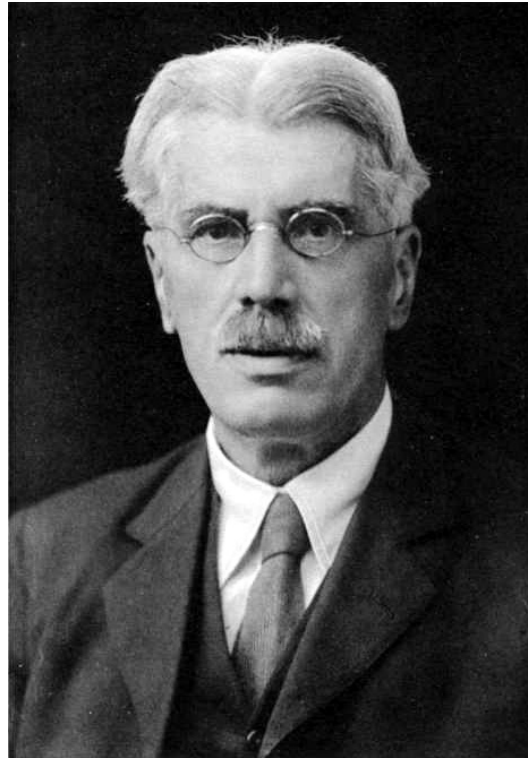


Figure 28. Alfred Cort Haddon.  
From *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society* 3, no. 9 (1941): unpaginated.

Semple's book was included on the undergraduate reading list as preparatory material for Haddon's course, and was the first book which Henry Clifford Darby (1909–1992) purchased upon arrival in Cambridge as a sixteen-year-old undergraduate in 1925.<sup>340</sup> He later recalled the experience: "Without realising that my geographical soul might be imperilled ... I bought ... E. C. Semple's *Influences of geographic environment*

<sup>338</sup> Davis, "Geography at Cambridge University".

<sup>339</sup> CUL, Min.V.31., Minute Book, Board of Geographical Studies. 19 November 1915 and 23 May 1918.

<sup>340</sup> Baker, "Henry Clifford Darby"; Darby, "Academic geography in Britain".

(1911), and read it with interest".<sup>341</sup> In his second year at Cambridge, Darby purchased an English-language translation of Lucien Febvre's *A geographical introduction to history* (1925)—“the antidote to the ‘Influences’”.<sup>342</sup> Febvre's book was a monograph on the inadequacies of anthropogeography and environmental influence, and “The major butt of this attack was borne by the luckless Ellen Semple”.<sup>343</sup> In his text, Febvre set out a “very vigorous statement” of the principles of Possibilism to which he subscribed.<sup>344</sup> Whilst the precise tenets of Febvre's philosophy need not be described here, it is sufficient to note that he understood the physical environment to impose constraints upon societies which, rather than determining a particular course of cultural development, afforded a series of possibilities which could be differently exploited.<sup>345</sup> Possibilism did not, however, eliminate deterministic thinking—it merely changed the causal focus from environment to society.

Following the publication of Febvre's “outstanding work”, *Influences* was, as Darby recalled, “subject to some pretty severe criticism by my fellow students and myself, to say nothing of our teachers”.<sup>346</sup> At Cambridge, as at Oxford, Semple's *Influences* was no longer encountered favourably. Febvre's critique of the anthropogeographical and environmental perspective and the emergence of possibilist alternatives had undermined its credibility. Yet, contemplating the book's overall influence on geographical thought in the five decades since its publication, Darby considered its effect to be largely beneficial. In response to Wright's questionnaire, he noted “One might, of course, say that the ‘Influences’ is a shocking book that misled

<sup>341</sup> Darby, “Academic geography in Britain”, 16.

<sup>342</sup> AGSL. Henry C. Darby to Wright, 17 April 1961.

<sup>343</sup> Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, 37.

<sup>344</sup> Tatham, “Environmentalism and possibilism”, 151.

<sup>345</sup> Aspect of Possibilism are described in Livingstone, *Geographical tradition*, 68–69; Tatham, “Environmentalism and possibilism”.

<sup>346</sup> AGSL. Henry C. Darby to Wright, 17 April 1961; Dickinson, *Makers of modern geography*, 193.



people and put them on the wrong train. Yet it did provoke us to think and, after all, one enjoyed even its absurdities". For Darby, "The book, so to speak, filled a gap, and filled a need" and "on balance, I would be inclined to give it the sort of affection one gives to some out-dated and out-moded classics".<sup>347</sup>

In contrast to Darby's somewhat critical reading of *Influences*, Semple's book was encountered rather more positively at the University of Liverpool. There, racial geography and anthropology—"dealt with as of the first importance"—formed part of the course in human geography offered by Percy Maude Roxby (1880–1947), who had studied under Herbertson at Oxford.<sup>348</sup> George Tatham, a second-year undergraduate in 1925, read Semple's book in preparation for this course and found it stimulating. He felt, however, that it did not equal her *American history*, which he had read the previous year.<sup>349</sup> Institutional context was important, then, to Tatham's reading of *Influences*. As he noted later, "Whenever I have encountered people whose opinion of Geography seems to have been adversely affected by 'Influences' it has usually turned out to be a result not so much of the book itself but of the way they were introduced".<sup>350</sup>

Roxby's interests lay principally in regional geography, and he inherited from Herbertson a "cautious and balanced" approach to environmentalism.<sup>351</sup> Although he was "deeply aware of the influence of the physical environment" he was equally conscious of the "long human moulding of the landscape".<sup>352</sup> In this respect, although Roxby "appeared as a 'possibilist', following Lucien Febvre and Vidal de la Blache", he did not reject the value of Semple's work outright—indeed, he felt there was value in

<sup>347</sup> AGSL. Henry C. Darby to Wright, 17 April 1961.

<sup>348</sup> Darby, *Theory and practice of geography*; Freeman, "Percy Maude Roxby"; Keltie, *Position of geography in British universities*, 19.

<sup>349</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

<sup>350</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

<sup>351</sup> Clout, "Place description"; Crone, "British geography", 202.

<sup>352</sup> Freeman, "Percy Maude Roxby", 113, 110.

it.<sup>353</sup> For this reason, “Semple’s work was always recommended by P.M. Roxby as background reading for his Human Geography course”.<sup>354</sup> As noted earlier, Tatham subsequently read *Influences* under Ekblaw at Clark University, and had his perspective of the text altered as a result.<sup>355</sup> Since Roxby and Ekblaw understood Semple’s text in different ways, and sought to draw different conclusions from it for the benefit of their students, *Influences* functioned differently at Liverpool and at Clark. The fact that Tatham’s impression of the book was different in these different contexts (and changed again when he reread the book in the 1950s), makes clear the significance both of time and of location (particularly of institutional circumstance) to the act of reading and to the interpretation of Semple’s text.

In considering the reception of *Influences*, it is necessary to acknowledge the fact, then, that its readers often changed their mind—and changed it repeatedly in Tatham’s case—as to its content and value. It is apparent that the interpretative repertoire with which readers engaged Semple’s book was rarely fixed and invariable, but was fluid and mutable. Exposure to new social and intellectual experiences, to new texts and to new contexts, often meant that readers’ horizons of expectation were altered. As they changed, so did their reading of Semple’s book. The motivations for reading *Influences* varied too. For some, it was read to gain Semple’s perspective; for others, it was an entrée to Ratzel. For still others, Semple’s book was read to gain insight into the historical development of the discipline, or simply to fulfil a course requirement. These different motivations facilitated different readings.

Despite Febvre’s efforts to “settle the score with geographic determinism”, Semple’s book remained an important text in undergraduate education in the United

<sup>353</sup> Freeman, “Percy Maude Roxby”, 114.

<sup>354</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

<sup>355</sup> Warkentin, “George Tatham”.

Kingdom throughout the 1930s.<sup>356</sup> It seems probable that it was precisely because Semple's book had been subject to criticism that it received continued attention. Its notoriety served as motivation for Oskar Hermann Khristian Spate (1911–2000), who read *Influences* in 1931 whilst an undergraduate student at the University of Cambridge.<sup>357</sup> The book appealed to him “because it was ... a standard, full-dress discussion of a problem—environmentalism—which ... has always bulked large in geographical thinking”.<sup>358</sup> Although the popularity of *Influences* had, in large measure, given way at Cambridge to a focus on Possibilism and the work of Febvre, Semple's book continued to be read “by serious students”.<sup>359</sup>

Spate saw *Influences* (and, by implication, the work of Ratzel), as having made an important challenge to the “empiricist and anti- (or at best a-) theoretical tradition in social science”.<sup>360</sup> Although Spate, who later advanced work in probabilism—an intermediate position between environmental determinism and Possibilism—recognized the important contribution that Possibilism had made in countering “a lot of pseudo-scientific junk” associated with environmental determinism, he also considered it to have “put nothing very positive in its place”.<sup>361</sup> Given this, Spate thought that Semple had been “too totally cast out” by the geographical community, and that there was much in Semple's oeuvre that was worthy of consideration.<sup>362</sup> As he noted, “there is a great deal in Semple's book to think over, to verify, to discuss, to dispute .... It is like Marxism: invaluable stiffening of one's philosophical bony structure”.<sup>363</sup>

<sup>356</sup> Dosse, *New history in France*.

<sup>357</sup> Ward, “Oskar Hermann Khristian Spate”.

<sup>358</sup> AGSL. Oskar H. K. Spate to Wright, 4 April 1961.

<sup>359</sup> AGSL. Oskar H. K. Spate to Wright, 4 April 1961.

<sup>360</sup> AGSL. Oskar H. K. Spate to Wright, 4 April 1961.

<sup>361</sup> AGSL. Oskar H. K. Spate to Wright, 4 April 1961; for a description of probabilism, see Martin, “Necessity for determinism”, 11.

<sup>362</sup> AGSL. Oskar H. K. Spate to Wright, 4 April 1961.

<sup>363</sup> AGSL. Oskar H. K. Spate to Wright, 4 April 1961.

Whether read as an exercise in philosophical ossification, or as a representation of what human geography once was, might once have been, or could have become, *Influences* was, by the mid 1930s in the United Kingdom, understood no longer to be part of geography's contemporary canon. That *Influences* continued to be read is apparent, however, from copies of the book which survive in numerous British university libraries (see Appendix A). Tangible manifestations of private reading practice (date stamps, marginal annotations, worn pages, and rebinding) describe an irregular but sustained engagement with Semple's book—a material record of intangible intellectual interaction.<sup>364</sup> Of these, marginal annotations are particularly revealing. At once a personal commentary and an open proclamation, they attest to the interplay between reader, text, and author. The motivations for these exchanges are not always clear, but their somewhat illicit nature allows their commentary to be more critical than might otherwise be possible. They are, of course, occasionally a form of vandalism—a site where frustrations, either with the text, or more generally, can be expressed. In one Cambridge copy, for example, the word Oxford has been altered to read Poxford.<sup>365</sup>

The accusation 'RACISM!' is proclaimed, for example, on several pages of a copy of *Influences* held by the University of Birmingham.<sup>366</sup> Whilst this undated comment cannot be taken as a proxy for the initial reception of *Influences*, it is apparent that Semple's ideas had been subject to debate in Birmingham's department of geography since the early 1920s, where Febvre's possibilism exerted a significant influence. Michael Wise, a student during the second half of the 1930s, was, for example, issued a "firm warning" in relation to Semple's apparent determinism by the

<sup>364</sup> Withers, "Working with old maps".

<sup>365</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Oxford, Geography and the Environment Library, M 59a, 413.

<sup>366</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Birmingham, Main Library, GB 95/S copy 1, 620.

department's head, Robert Henry Kinvig (1893–1969), who chanced upon him reading *Influences*.<sup>367</sup>

Kinvig had trained initially as a historian, but was invited by Roxby to join him as an assistant lecturer in geography at Liverpool in 1919.<sup>368</sup> The pair shared a similar intellectual outlook, and Kinvig in particular “referred frequently” to Roxby’s teaching in his later career at Birmingham.<sup>369</sup> Kinvig, like Roxby, believed that “Human geography was much more than the study of the influence of the natural environment upon human groups”, but he was, arguably, even more passionate in this belief.<sup>370</sup> As Wise recalls, it was as a consequence of Kinvig’s recommendation to his students “that Febvre’s *A geographical introduction to history* (1925) became a much-read book” at Birmingham.<sup>371</sup> In this context, it is unsurprising that Semple’s book was subject there to criticism: one anonymous reader described it as “foolish rot”.<sup>372</sup>

Whilst Semple’s expressed concern had been to eliminate race as an explanatory category, it is clear that, for several readers at other institutions likely encountering the book several decades after its publication, *Influences* conveyed quite the opposite message. Annotations in a number of library copies show that, in both the United Kingdom and the United States, Semple’s text was considered racist and representative of Nazi geopolitics. An ironic “Heil Hitler!” appears, for example, in one copy of the book at the University of California at Berkeley alongside Semple’s prediction that “It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the vigorous, reorganized German Empire will one day try to incorporate the Germanic areas found in Austria, Switzerland and

<sup>367</sup> Wise, “Becoming a geographer”, 113.

<sup>368</sup> Anonymous, “Robert Henry Kinvig”.

<sup>369</sup> Wise, “Becoming a geographer”, 113.

<sup>370</sup> Wise, “Becoming a geographer”, 113.

<sup>371</sup> Wise, “Becoming a geographer”, 113.

<sup>372</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Birmingham, Main Library, GB 95/S copy 2, 19.

Holland".<sup>373</sup> Swastikas are, moreover, present in the margins of copies held at the University of Chicago and Queen's University Belfast.<sup>374</sup> For one reader at the University of Sheffield, using a copy printed in 1947, Semple's discussion was "racialist", whilst for another at the University of Oxford, *Influences* was methodologically unsound: it "doesn't embrace falsification principle", it "relies more + more on examples", and thus was "unscientific".<sup>375</sup> In another Oxford copy, Semple's suggestion that "The method of anthropo-geography is essentially analytical" is accompanied by the pejorative suggestion "I wouldn't have guessed from reading this book".<sup>376</sup> Of these comments, the last two are particularly significant, since the positive reception of *Influences* in the years immediately following its publication depended upon its perceived scientific qualities.

That Semple's thesis was seen to afford a nomothetic approach to geographical research ensured its approbation. Yet, its reception was neither spatially nor temporally uniform—its *raison d'être* was undermined by an increased attention to the Vidalian tradition of regional geography, introduced through the work of Febvre and Brunhes. The British geographical engagement with Semple's notions of environmental influence might be dismissed, then, as transitory, but I would suggest that it was more significant. Although Semple's ideas did not dominate in Britain to the extent that they did in the United States, they provided an important framework around which disciplinary geography was constructed. Rather than serve merely as a methodological guide,

<sup>373</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of California at Berkeley, Doe Memorial Library, Gardner Main Stacks, GF31.S5 copy 3, 186.

<sup>374</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, GF31.S4 copy 4, ix; *Influences of geographic environment*, Queen's University Belfast, Main Library, GF51/SEMP copy 1, 33.

<sup>375</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Sheffield, Main Library, B 910.01 (S), 189;

<sup>376</sup> *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Oxford, Geography and the Environment Library, M 59a, 474.

Semple's book had, particularly for early readers, a totemic significance—its epistemic proclamations were an important indicator of geography's disciplinary remit.

Attention to the ways in which *Influences* was reviewed upon its publication in Britain, and how it was subsequently used, shows its reception to be in large measure a question of its perceived usefulness in outlining a scientific methodology for geography. For Chisholm, and for the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, *Influences* spoke to a particular moment when discipline was concerned not only with its academic institutionalization, but also with its epistemic and methodological bases. It would be inaccurate to suggest, however, that the reception of Semple's ideas depended simply upon a pragmatic assessment of their applicability. Affirmation of her perspective was, as was discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, a function of the Neo-Lamarckian approach evident in the work of Mackinder and Geddes, among others. The fact that Semple's ideas could be seen to build upon Spencerian Social Darwinism by advancing a more nuanced multi-causalism meant that her work represented an important contribution towards the Neo-Lamarckian scheme.

Perhaps the most significant challenge to *Influences* in Britain came with the publication of Lucien Febvre's *A geographical introduction to history*. At base, Febvre's criticisms related to the generalizing principles with which Semple's ideas were seen to be underpinned. For Febvre, the "older technique of generalization and comparison" was logically flawed—he advocated, instead, the study of specific geographical regions, and their particular qualities.<sup>377</sup> The tension between Semple and Febvre appears to reflect that between a nomothetic and idiographic conception of geography. This is not so. The regional geography which, to some extent, came to replace environmentalism

<sup>377</sup> Barnes, *History and social intelligence*, 64.

was promoted using the very arguments that had ensured the earlier enthusiastic reception of Semple's book—namely that it would provide for geography “a method of research ... appropriate and peculiar to it” and one sufficiently rigorous that “geography may find its logical position among the sciences”.<sup>378</sup> Put simply, the acceptance of Febvre's anti-environmentalism depended not only upon the rejection of Semple's principles, but also upon the scientific imperative, the desire to legitimize geography, which seemed to characterize disciplinary self assessment in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The repositioning of British geography during the 1920s and 1930s from its initial adherence to environmentalist ideas, to a closer alignment with possibilist alternatives (principally associated with the French school) was not an immediate paradigmatic shift, but was gradual, uneven (spatially and temporally), and motivated by a number of different factors. Semple's work was not replaced in the affections of British geographers by that of Febvre because it was seen to be self evidently 'better'. It had to do, rather, with the types of questions geographers wished to ask, and with the ways in which they conceived of the relationship between nature and society. As the examples of Fleure and of Kinvig make clear, personality and educational experience mattered to the ways geographers engaged with the work of Semple and Fleure. The reception and subsequent rejection of *Influences* and the ideas it contained was a process that was inherently subjective: it depended upon the judgement and opinion of individual geographers and their students.

Despite the important role of subjective assessment in the relative dominance of environmentalism and possibilism in Britain during the 1920s and 1930s, there is an

<sup>378</sup> RGS, Charles F. A. Close Papers, LBR.MSS.2d (Vol. 3). Unstead, “Regional geography and its future development”, unpaginated.



extent to which the book's institutional setting mattered too. At the University of Edinburgh, for example, the use of Semple's book post-dated the retirement of its most enthusiastic proponent, George Chisholm. The fact that *Influences* was subsequently used at Edinburgh by Alan Grant Ogilvie (1887–1954) and James Wreford Watson (1915–1990) in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching did not mean, however, that they understood it in the same way as Chisholm, or used it for the same purpose.<sup>379</sup> As has been previously described, *Influences* fulfilled a pedagogic role even after its content had, in large part, been repudiated. It is for this reason, then, that *Influences* remained on lists of recommended reading in the United Kingdom decades after its methodological influence and disciplinary topicality had faded.

### **Conclusion: the rise and fall of “the greatest woman geographer”**

In the autumn of 1929, with her *Mediterranean region* two-thirds complete, Semple suffered a severe heart attack, complicated by cardiac asthma, and was incapacitated for several months.<sup>380</sup> Her teaching career at Clark was effectively ended. By the summer of 1930, despite being confined to bed, she was able to resume a limited programme of work—her head “clear and vigorous”.<sup>381</sup> That autumn, Semple relocated to a boarding house overlooking the campus of Clark University, and, with the assistance of Ruth Baugh, began to draw *The geography of the Mediterranean region* to its conclusion.<sup>382</sup> That winter, the Association of American Geographers held its annual meeting in

<sup>379</sup> Edinburgh University Library (Special Collections) (hereafter EUL). *The Edinburgh University Calendar 1925–1926*, unpaginated; AGSL. J. Wreford Watson to Wright, 2 June 1961.

<sup>380</sup> RGS, Hugh Robert Mill Collection, Folder 7. Semple to Mill, 18 January 1931.

<sup>381</sup> AGSL. J. Wreford Watson to Wright, 2 June 1961.

<sup>382</sup> Bladen and Karan, *Evolution of geographic thought*.

Worcester—home to Clark University. Semple, having summoned sufficient strength, attended the meeting, and presented her final paper.<sup>383</sup>

In the summer of 1931, on medical advice, Semple left Worcester; moving first to Petersham, Massachusetts (where she completed her Mediterranean book); then to Asheville, North Carolina; before finally settling in West Palm Beach, Florida. Shortly after her arrival, Semple received news that she had been awarded, on the recommendation of her former colleague John Paul Goode, the Helen Culver Gold Medal by the Geographic Society of Chicago in recognition of her “distinguished leadership and eminent achievement in the advancing of the science of geography”.<sup>384</sup> The Society’s minute book described her as “the greatest woman geographer”, and noted that the medal was conferred “by unanimous vote”.<sup>385</sup> Since Semple was unable to collect the award in person, the Society arranged for her erstwhile Chicago colleague, Charles Carlyle Colby (1884–1965), to present it to her during his 1932 spring vacation in Florida.<sup>386</sup> Recognition of another kind came in the reviews which followed the publication of *Mediterranean region*. In addition to uniformly complimentary periodical reviews, Semple also received personal congratulations from a number of European geographers, including Albert Demangeon (1872–1940) and Emmanuel de Martonne (1873–1955), to whom she had sent autographed copies of her book.<sup>387</sup>

Shortly before her death, Semple wrote to the President of the University of Kentucky, from where she had received an honorary doctorate in 1922, noting her rapid deterioration: “I am nearing the Great Divide, whence the final journey will be swift and short. But I was able to play the game to the end—even after the grave figure of Death

<sup>383</sup> Semple, “Waterworks in ancient Mediterranean lands”.

<sup>384</sup> Bladen and Karan, *Evolution of geographic thought*, 46.

<sup>385</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 10. J. Paul Goode to Semple, 5 February 1932.

<sup>386</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 10. Fay-Cooper Cole to Semple, 24 March 1932.

<sup>387</sup> Bronson, *Ellen Semple*.

had established its ultimate claim to me—and to complete my big book on the Mediterranean”.<sup>388</sup> She also used the opportunity to dispatch books and personal artefacts to the Memorial Library at the University, apparently keen that these should be placed in her home state rather than at one or other of the universities at which she had taught. She died on 8 May 1932.



Figure 29. Semple's grave, Cave Hill Cemetery, Louisville, Kentucky. Author photograph.

In the four decades which preceded her death, the nature and position of Anglo-American disciplinary geography had changed significantly. Semple's career as a geographer paralleled the discipline's institutionalization and professionalization in the United States, and her own contribution to its methodological focus was significant and, for a time, dominant.<sup>389</sup> Semple was not, of course, the only proponent of

<sup>388</sup> UK, 46M139, Box 2. Semple to Frank L. McVey, 28 March 1932.

<sup>389</sup> Dunbar, "Credentialism and careerism"; Koelsch, "Academic geography, American style"; Lowenthal, "AAG and AGS".

environmentalism during this period. Yet her *Influences* proved unusually important in communicating the principles of anthropogeography (in part because there was “practically nothing in English” on the topic).<sup>390</sup> Given that Semple’s book “was published when few English geographers read German”, her text served also as an important means of presenting to students and scholars of geography a selected part of Ratzel’s work.<sup>391</sup>

Semple’s presentation of anthropogeography coincided with, and helped to define, a period of methodological realignment in disciplinary geography in the United States and United Kingdom. Her book succeeded in fulfilling a pedagogical role associated with this realignment—that of providing “a firm interpretation of the influence of the environment”, written “in such a way that the [student] reader understands Semple’s meaning”.<sup>392</sup> *Influences* built upon a number of earlier anthropogeographical pronouncements on Semple’s part, and its contents were not, strictly speaking, novel. The book’s intended function was to provide a complete and coherent statement of Semple’s perspective on environmental influence—not a definitive statement on the remit and methods of anthropogeography, but an indication of potential scope and possible approaches. It was, then, in its educational role that Semple’s text had its most direct influence upon the teaching of geography during the second decade of the twentieth century, and upon the discipline’s subsequent research focus.

As has been shown, however, Semple’s book was not a straightforward proxy of her beliefs. In different places, and for different people, *Influences* meant different things, and was put to different uses—evidence of what Livingstone has elsewhere termed a

<sup>390</sup> AGSL. John N. L. Baker to Wright, 30 April 1961.

<sup>391</sup> AGSL. George Tatham to Wright, undated.

<sup>392</sup> AGSL. Albert S. Carlson to Wright, undated.

“reputational geography”.<sup>393</sup> The reading, reception, repudiation, and reappraisal of *Influences* varied with time and across space, and varied between people in (sometimes different) institutional, cultural, and national contexts. As with the reviewing of Semple’s book, it is not possible to describe pedagogical uses of the text which were characteristic of particular nations. It is possible in certain respects, however, to speak of its use as “a collective and institutional phenomenon”.<sup>394</sup> That *Influences* was differently staged in different institutional contexts was, in large part, a consequence of the individuals who comprised the departments of geography, geology, sociology, anthropology, and history at which Semple’s book factored in engaging with environmentalism. The institutional uses of *Influences*, and their engagement with environmentalism more generally, cannot be separated, then, from the individuals of whom they comprised. As the examples of Sauer, Ekblaw, Tarr, and Carney make clear, the interests and passions of a leading faculty member—particularly at a time when individual departments of geography (where they existed at all) were relatively small—could dominate the ways in which geography was conceived of, and the uses to which Semple’s book was put.

The individual readings of *Influences*, together with the different and particular uses to which it was put in educational settings, again confirm that the reception of Semple’s text was not a fixed and singular event—an either/or judgement of acceptance or repudiation—but was an ongoing process, changing either in terms of location or time as a consequence of shifting attitudes, novel experiences in the field, or the vagaries of scholarly topicality. Understanding reception as something which, in some ways, both preceded and proceeded the moment in which the encounter between reader

<sup>393</sup> Livingstone, “Mobilising science”, unpaginated.

<sup>394</sup> Graff, “Is there a text”, 38.

and text (or audience member and lecturer) took place has implications for what it means to think about the dissemination of knowledge. Chapter 8 considers the broader implications of this varied attention to Semple's text by exploring to the ways in which it can help us conceive of the nature of the reception of texts and of knowledge, and illuminate the ways in which geography matters to the processes of knowledge creation and dissemination as well as to its criticism and rejection.

## Chapter 8

### Concluding thoughts:

#### geography, the book, and the reception of knowledge

##### Introduction: reading the reception of anthropogeography

On 20 September 1912—as Semple prepared in London for her presentation to the Royal Geographical Society—some sixty geographers, representatives of more than a dozen nations, gathered in Muir Woods, a stand of giant redwood trees north of San Francisco.<sup>1</sup> These geographers were part of the Transcontinental Excursion—a 13,000-mile, eight-week geographical expedition organized by William Morris Davis to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the American Geographical Society.<sup>2</sup> The lofty redwoods, beneath which the party assembled for a commemorative photograph (Figure 30), were “a living commentary on the effect of climate, modified by altitude and exposure”.<sup>3</sup> Muir Woods comprised in miniature, as it were, an example of a significant trope in contemporary geographical research: environmentalism.

The question of environmental influence was a common concern for the members of the Excursion and its organizing committee. One of the Excursion’s purposes was to “observe ... the direction which human activity has been forced to follow by the nature of its geographical environment”.<sup>4</sup> For one of the Excursion’s participants, the “systematic elucidation” of environmental influence was a “great and

<sup>1</sup> Brigham, “Transcontinental Excursion”; Wright, “British geography and the American Geographical Society”.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous, *Transcontinental Excursion of 1912*.

<sup>3</sup> Becket, “United States National Parks”, 336.

<sup>4</sup> Ogilvie, “Vegetation in the United States”, 343.

worthy task”.<sup>5</sup> Whether Semple’s anthropogeography might provide a model for work in this regard was undoubtedly a conversational spur for those geographers gathered at Muir Woods—many of whom (Harlan Barrows, Henry Becket, Albert Brigham, George Chisholm, William Morris Davis, Richard Dodge, Ruliff Holway, Robert Ward, and Frank Williams) had either recently read *Influences* or would later incorporate it into their teaching.



Figure 30. Geographers at Muir Woods, California.  
American Geographical Society.

For all the common concerns which conspired to bring this international party of geographers together in a Californian redwood grove, the ways in which they addressed the central question of environmental influence and how they engaged with Semple’s book as a consequence differed enormously. This thesis set out to describe and to explain these different perspectives on environmentalism, and to account for the different receptions of *Influences* these perspectives engendered. My aim has been not

<sup>5</sup> Becket, “United States National Parks”, 337.



simply to understand the production and reception of Semple's anthropogeography, but to attend, as Secord has put it, to "knowledge in transit".<sup>6</sup>

### **Thinking geographically about anthropogeography**

In the seventy-five years since Semple's death, something akin to historiographical conflation has been evident as Semple, Ratzel, anthropogeography, and environmental determinism are rendered synonymous. The result is a convenient shorthand which speaks of "the Ratzel-Semple environmental-determinism method".<sup>7</sup> Cast as the "American disciple" of Ratzel, Semple's position within the disciplinary record becomes, therefore, that of "the prophet of geographical determinism", or, less charitably, "the bogey-lady of a slightly silly concept that has now happily been abandoned and forgotten".<sup>8</sup> The tendency thus to associate Semple with "environmentalist dogma", and to view her work only in relation to that of Ratzel, elides the contemporary significance of her geographical contribution, and abridges the venerable tradition of environmentalist scholarship in North America.<sup>9</sup>

Semple's anthropogeography was neither a straightforward restatement of Ratzel's principles, nor was it introduced to a scholarly community ignorant of questions of environmental influence. Whilst Semple, Brigham, and Barrows undoubtedly "established themselves as its [environmentalism's] most eloquent exponents" during the first decade of the twentieth century, their work should be understood as part of a long-standing project which (in its contemporary expressions in the United States) was

<sup>6</sup> Secord, "Knowledge in transit", 664.

<sup>7</sup> Gelfand, "Ellen Churchill Semple", 39.

<sup>8</sup> These quotations are taken, in reverse order, from: AGSL. John F. Hart to Wright, 11 May 1961; Anonymous, "Review of *The geographic background of Greek and Roman history*", 83; Crone, "British geography", 202.

<sup>9</sup> Leighly, "Review of *The geographic factor*", 766.

evident in the contributions of Frederick Turner, George Marsh, Nathaniel Shaler, and others.<sup>10</sup> For all the later pedagogical and disciplinary significance of *Influences*, the ideas it contained were not wholly novel, and it is important, therefore, to understand the response of geographers to Semple's book as part of an ongoing debate within the discipline as to the suitability of environmental causation as an explanatory approach.

Semple's professional career, and the propagation of her anthropogeography, coincided at the turn of the twentieth century with the institutionalization of geography in the United States and United Kingdom. Claiming for geography the status of a legitimate discipline was contingent, in part, upon the demonstration of a unique, rigorous, and scientific method. The principles of environmentalism, particularly as expressed in Semple's formulation, were co-opted to provide a methodological basis upon which the discipline defined its *raison d'être*. It is important to note, however, that although environmental causation—drawing upon a neo-Lamarckian understanding of social development—was a predominant concern for Anglo-American geographers during the first two decades of the twentieth century, it was not pre-eminent. Geography in this period should not be considered synonymous, then, with environmentalism, nor should environmentalism be understood, straightforwardly, as tantamount to Semple's anthropogeography.

The commendatory initial reception of Semple's written work was contingent upon a number of factors: her scholarship, her intellectual genealogy, her investigative rigour, her literary flourish, and her demonstration of anthropogeography as a field science. These criteria mattered to varying extents to Semple's different audiences, but the principal spur to the acceptance of anthropogeography as a suitable focus for

<sup>10</sup> Merrens, "Historical geography", 530.

geographical inquiry was its apparently “sound scientific” quality.<sup>11</sup> Although Semple’s intention was not to promote anthropogeography as a nomothetic method, its logic (evidenced by the two millennia of scholarship from which it drew) and deductive reasoning were, for a number of geographers, “a good illustration of the meaning and value of scientific geography”.<sup>12</sup> That anthropogeography could be studied in the field mattered, also, at a time when defining the discipline’s field of inquiry was more than simply a metaphorical process.<sup>13</sup>

The discipline’s approbative stance in relation to environmentalism facilitated the generally positive response to the publication of *Influences* in 1911. It is clear, however, that whilst a number of readers and critics considered Semple’s book to be the quintessence of anthropogeography (and, therefore, a welcome contribution), the reception of it was heterogeneous: it varied, for example, within nations and between them, within institutions and between them. The particular disciplinary schism in British geography prompted by the controversial comments of Charles Close in 1912 meant, for example, that the context in which Semple’s book was read in Britain differed importantly from that in the United States. Attention to the ways in which *Influences* was reviewed upon its publication in Britain shows its reception to be, in part, a question of its perceived usefulness in outlining for geography a scientific methodology; it was seen to speak to a particular moment when the discipline was concerned not only with its academic institutionalization but also with its epistemic and methodological foundation. Whilst the potential contribution of Semple’s book in this respect mattered also in the United States, her work was viewed there by a number of readers in relation, more generally, to the project of American scholarship. *Influences* was thus rendered as

<sup>11</sup> Colby, “Ellen Churchill Semple”, 232.

<sup>12</sup> Roorbach, “Review of *Influences of geographic environment*”, 350.

<sup>13</sup> Driver, “Field-work in geography”.

something akin to a national triumph. As this thesis has shown, however, as many interpretative differences existed within Britain and the United States as existed between them.

### ***Scales, networks, and the reception of knowledge***

The reception of *Influences* cannot be reduced simply to a single moment or type of encounter. The sundry responses to Semple's book, both at the time of its publication and in subsequent decades, show that whilst it is possible to make certain general statements about the different national or disciplinary readings of *Influences*, to take one of these in isolation is inadequate to the task of understanding the various and disparate readings which constituted its reception. Whilst the limitations associated with the use of the national as an analytical scale against which the acceptance and repudiation of knowledge is judged have been documented, the question of "what the correct scale of analysis is at which to conduct any particular enquiry into the historical geography of science—site, region, nation, globe", is something which remains unresolved.<sup>14</sup> The reluctance of historians and geographers of science to advance definitive statements in this regard reflects their appreciation of the limitations associated with privileging the explanatory potential of one spatial scale over another, and, more generally, their awareness of the uncertain epistemic basis of scale as a spatial hierarchy.

In attending to individual engagements with Semple's work—whether in the context of private, scholarly readings; public and academic lectures; or the critical reviewing and discussion of anthropogeography—this thesis has been concerned to show that the social networks upon which the circulation, dissemination, and reception

<sup>14</sup> Livingstone, "Text, talk and testimony", 99; Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment*.

of *Influences* depended, were not inscribed or constrained by particular spatial scales. Whilst certain scales—the national, for example—facilitated particular types of engagement (as the example of the Close furore in Britain makes clear), the interpretative networks and hermeneutic communities within which Semple's ideas circulated existed often 'above' the scale of the city, region, and nation. These networks depended, however, upon a series of nodes—people, lecture theatres, field sites, periodicals—whose physical location meant that they were not 'beyond' the influence of their spatial situation. Whilst certain of these networks can be seen, broadly, to correspond to a particular scale (the metropolitan in the case of the writers and readers of Bostonian newspapers reviews, for example), a number (members of a disciplinary community, for instance) cannot be rendered so neatly as cartographical abstractions. For this reason, it is my contention that the reception of *Influences*, and of scientific knowledge more generally, cannot be the subject of a 'correct' scale of analysis. It is necessary to consider the connections between scales, not to treat them as discrete entities.

This thesis has drawn upon work in reception study and literary theory in order better to understand the movement of Semple's book as a material object, and to explain the vagaries of interpretation to which it was subject. Part of this project has been to identify what Jauss has called the "objectifiable system of expectation" which readers brought to their engagement of *Influences*.<sup>15</sup> Based upon a constructivist understanding of reading—as described by, among others, Barthes and Eco—it has been assumed that the reader executes an active part in the construction of meaning: they are not simply the passive recipient of an authorial message. Whilst Stanley Fish's

<sup>15</sup> Iser, *Prospecting*, 22.

notion of the 'interpretative community' has been useful in considering how the opinions of individual readers were conditioned by the common concerns and hermeneutic strategies of the social group to which they belonged—defined, perhaps, by language, disciplinary interest, political allegiance, religious affiliation, and so on—it is apparent that readers were never part of just one community. In the same way that the social networks through which Semple's ideas moved were not defined solely by geographical scale, the act of reading was a function of multiple interpretative influences and the unique combination of analytical positions.

Acknowledging this interpretative multiplicity addresses the hermeneutic complexity of reading and of the reception of knowledge. It raises, however, two important questions. First, given the many and varied interpretative concerns—disciplinary, political, religious, among others—with which readers engaged Semple's book, to what extent is it possible to identify one of these concerns as dominant, or to describe the influence of one concern in isolation? Second, if the act of reading is dependent upon a unique and individual combination of these hermeneutic stances, to what extent is it possible to make general statements about the ways in which different interpretative communities approached Semple's work?

In respect of the first question, it seems that the component of readers' interpretative repertoires most significant in shaping their engagement with *Influences* was their disciplinary context. In some ways this is not surprising. Given the fact that the reading experiences upon which this thesis is based were drawn largely from geographers (or from scholars more generally), it is almost a self-selecting consequence that issues of scholarly relevance or disciplinary topicality figure prominently. The task is, perhaps then, not so much to do with identifying *the* dominant interpretative

influence, but, rather, with describing how that influence is modified, altered, or supplemented by the reader's other concerns: as Travis has made clear, "Theories that assign readers to fixed subject positions elide questions of interpretive variation".<sup>16</sup> My attention to the biographies of individual readers has gone some way to explain the different interpretative apparatus with which they engaged Semple's text. I have shown how their predominantly 'disciplinary' reading of *Influences* was conditioned by, among other things, their opinion as to the significance of heredity versus environment; the precise nature of their scholarly training; their personal histories and quotidian experiences of different environment conditions.

Whilst the influence of these distinct perspectives is more or less explicit in the reading experiences which this thesis has documented, there are certain factors whose significance seems probable but whose impress is difficult to detect. Amongst the most complex in this regard is the importance (or not) of Semple's gender in the reading and reception of her ideas. Recent work in feminist historiography has pointed to the importance of gender—of inequalities and of presumed gender roles—in the historical practice of geography, in both discursive and disciplinary terms.<sup>17</sup> Given the fact that for much of her professional career Semple was distinguished by being the sole female in an otherwise male environment, and that, in various ways, she was a victim of gender discrimination, it seems inconceivable that her sex—and the largely pejorative presumptions that went with it—was not an important factor in the reading of *Influences*. A tension exists, however, between the belief that this must have been so, that gender

<sup>16</sup> Travis, *Reading cultures*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Domosh, "Feminist historiography of geography"; Kearns, "Imperial subject"; Maddrell, "Geographical work of Marion Newbiggin"; Maddrell, "Discourses of race and gender"; McEwan, "Gender, science and physical geography"; Monk, "Women were always welcome at Clark"; Monk, "Women's worlds"; Monk, "Histories of American geography"; Tamboukou, "Writing feminist genealogies".

must have mattered, and what the historical record is able to reveal. Absence of evidence is not, of course, evidence of absence, and the fact that gender does not seem explicitly to have conditioned the reading of *Influences* does not mean that its influence was not implicit.

The potential significance of Semple's gender in the reading and reception of her work was a concern which emerged only by degrees during the research upon which this thesis is based. It figured initially as a question of method: how might one identify gender's role in the reception of knowledge? How might readers' opinions or prejudices as to Semple's gender be recovered from the material traces of their reading? Later, this concern became more general: a matter of my own gendered reading of geography's history. My position, and the fact that the majority of secondary sources which inform me were written by men, potentially rendered the shades of influence that Semple's gender had on the reception of her work less distinct. My inability to apprehend the significance of gender might be dismissed simply as confirmation of the fact that the contours of a reader's encounter cannot be mapped in their entirety—that whilst it is possible to point towards certain dominant concerns, the richness and complexity of personal readings means that not all of their constitutive influences can necessarily be isolated. This is, arguably, true, but it is also important to acknowledge that my own reading of Semple's reception is—like that of *Influences*' readers—partial and gendered.

The complex interpretive stance of individual readers of Semple's book does not preclude, however, the possibility of examining collective responses to it. It is necessary to recognize, however, that readings were rarely the product of a single interpretative community. The requirement is thus to pluralize—to think in terms of shared responses to *Influence* which allow for the fact that a reader's position in relation



to such a hermeneutic collective is always multiple. Just as it is useful to compare the response of newspaper and scholarly critics to *Influences* as examples of reviewing communities, it is important to consider the ways in which interpretation varied as much within these groups. These readers were influenced not only by their position as reviewers, but also by the audience for which they were writing; the editorial position of the periodical for which they wrote; the issues that were peculiar to the city, region, and nation in which they worked; as well as their own particular orientation on environmentalism. The point here is to acknowledge the significant role of institutional setting, disciplinary context, religious affiliation, and so on, in defining shared responses to Semple's book, but also to make clear the fact that since the readers of *Influences* were not confined to only one of these social affiliations, it is unwise to attribute determinative significance to them in isolation.

### ***Circulation of texts and of ideas***

That *Influences* was read differently by different people, at different times and in different places, unsettles the notion of typographical fixity—the belief that the printed text allows for the uncomplicated reproduction and circulation of the ideas it is intended to represent. The vision of the text as a physically unchanging medium, and as an epistemically-stable platform for the circulation of knowledge, has informed work in the history and sociology of science—most notably in Bruno Latour's formulation of “immutable and combinable mobiles”.<sup>18</sup> In Latour's conception, the apparent physical immutability of the printed text is central to understanding how knowledge made in one place moves—in its physical guise and in its conceptual form—to another. As this thesis

<sup>18</sup> Latour, *Science in action*, 227.

has shown, however, the individual copies of *Influences* were neither physically nor epistemically immutable. Rather than an impediment to the communication of anthropogeography, the fact that Semple's book would "often mutate, creating an enhanced or different understanding" of her message was, however, a necessary and vital part of the communicative process.<sup>19</sup> As Livingstone has made clear, "circulation and translation are reciprocally constitutive operations".<sup>20</sup>

Acknowledging the fact that the printed book cannot replicate with precise fidelity the ideas which its author seeks to impart has implications for what we take the reception of scientific knowledge to mean. If the process of reception is no less subjective than was the creation of the scientific knowledge with which it is concerned, what is it, precisely, that is being received? It is helpful first to challenge the notion of reception as a passive act of receiving (or, of rejecting). I suggest that it is necessary to consider reception as an active process of engagement, in which an idea or concept is remade, repositioned, and refashioned by its recipient. The reception of knowledge is not a question so much of its reproduction, but of its reconstitution. The movement of knowledge and ideas, whether understood spatially or epistemically, depends upon (and results in) modification of that knowledge.

The plural and disparate readings of *Influences* show that the notion of an uncomplicated transmission of anthropogeographical knowledge from Semple to her readers is unsustainable. The reception of her ideas was not a binary defined by acceptance or rejection *in toto*, but was a complicated process in which Semple's anthropogeography was remade (and remade differently) by individual readers' encounters with it. What was being received, then, was always new and was always the

<sup>19</sup> Nersessian, "Opening the black box", 208.

<sup>20</sup> Livingstone, "Science, religion and the geography of reading", 28.

result of negotiation between the text and the reader. This interpretative complexity was not a function of the veridicality of *Influences* as a representative of Semple's ideas, but reflected the fact that anthropogeography did not have a singular and fixed meaning. It existed as an effectively infinite number of potential meanings. In this respect, what Semple's book held was not *the* canonical meaning of anthropogeography, but its *immanence*. Although the book's intended purpose was to convey Semple's ideas, it might more properly be understood to have acted as the prompt to the creation of new knowledge.

The meanings attributed to Semple's anthropogeography by the readers of *Influences* were constrained and fashioned by the various interpretative influences to which they were subject. Although each reading of Semple's text was undoubtedly individual, the spectrum of interpretation was limited by, among other things, shared disciplinary, national, and epistemic circumstances. Although the readings of *Influences*—and the understandings of anthropogeography they engendered—were distinct, they were typically not so disparate as to be incommensurable. Anthropogeography was clearly recast in different ways by its individual recipients, but it is possible to identify a common conception of it (whereby it assumed a causal relationship between environmental influences and human development) and, therefore, to make general claims about its transmission and impact.

Although *Influences* was central to the dissemination and circulation of anthropogeography, Semple's ideas existed in a number of different representational guises. The reception of her environmentalism was not a matter simply of the reading of her book. Anthropogeography was propagated and debated in other media and venues: the scholarly and popular lecture; the newspaper and periodical review; the

conference and classroom. Each of these communicative nodes facilitated the mediation of Semple's anthropogeography in different ways. Her personal performance of her work—typified by impassioned oratory and captivating lantern slides—communicated something qualitatively different about anthropogeography, for example, than did the classroom discussions of those teachers for whom *Influences* was a pedagogic guide to their engagement with environmentalism. In these different discursive venues, different understandings of anthropogeography were mobilized. These encounters, although superficially distinct from the reading of *Influences*, were part of a common interpretative process. The reception of Semple's environmentalism cannot be illumined fully, then, by reference solely to the reading of her text. The book, it is clear, mattered to the communication and reception of anthropogeography, but it was not the only thing that mattered.

### **Geography and the book**

Whilst Leah Price's provocative and accurate assessment that "the geography of the book is still making up its rules" was an important prompt to this thesis, it has not been my intention to codify precisely how geography and geographers might contribute to the understanding of print culture.<sup>21</sup> Geography in, and the geography of, the book has been the subject of recent scholarly attention, and it is now generally accepted that any "history of the book is also a geography of the book".<sup>22</sup> Comparatively little attention has been paid, however, to the geography of the book as it relates to the reception of scientific knowledge. I would like to conclude, then, by offering some observations on

<sup>21</sup> Price, "Review of *In another country*", 334.

<sup>22</sup> Price, "Reading", 308.

the methodological and conceptual implications of such work, and where it might be taken in the future.

Any attempt to reconstruct the reception of a scientific text is also an attempt to reconstruct its various audiences. The book as a source of knowledge depends upon the actualizing influence of its readers. What geography brings to the processes by which historical audiences are recovered is a belief that their social and spatial location mattered to their composition and interpretive inclinations. By attending to the circulation of knowledge as a function of its distribution as a printed text (and in other representational guises), the geography of the book can chart the material and epistemic spread of knowledge. In this way, it is possible to identify where, as well as when, different audiences were exposed to that knowledge, and how the connections between them constituted the networks upon which the dissemination of knowledge depended.

The ethnographic tools which facilitate the analysis of contemporary audiences have no exact equivalents in the reconstruction and examination of historical audiences.<sup>23</sup> More fundamentally, it is difficult to identify who these historical readers or recipients actually were. As this thesis has shown, class lists and examination records, published reviews and reports of scholarly discussions, library issue cards and records of provenance, diaries and personal correspondence, can all indicate who read, owned, or had access to Semple's text. These audiences remain silent without these material traces of their interpretative engagements. Whilst it is clear that anonymous marginalia in a library copy of *Influences* is qualitatively different from a seemingly considered periodical review, both are tangible manifestations of the largely ephemeral interaction

<sup>23</sup> Brooker and Jermy, *audience studies reader*; Jensen, "Potentials of historical reception studies".

of reader and book. These material traces are the informants upon which the historical ethnography of hermeneutic communities depends.

The reception of *Influences* was not a matter simply of its reading: the circulation of Semple's anthropogeography depended upon its representation and reproduction in a number of distinct forms. The lecture theatre and classroom were, for example, often as important as the text itself in the communication of Semple's ideas. With time, different interpretations of Semple's text became codified, *inter alia*, in lecture courses and examinations. These mediated representations mattered often as much in informing the opinion of audiences as to the particular qualities of anthropogeography than did their actual reading of *Influences*. It is evident, then, that in thinking about the communication of Semple's knowledge, it is important to acknowledge that its reading and its reception were not quite the same thing. Where work in the geography of the book might make a particularly valuable contribution to conceptualizing Secord's 'knowledge in transit' is, perhaps counterintuitively, to its supertextual as well as textual representations.

The book is something which transcends its physical manifestation—it is more than simply a collection of printed pages. In much the same way that Elizabeth Eisenstein described print culture as being about more than the material and technological components of print, we might think of the book as existing in more than just its textual form. *Influences* was simultaneously a printed book, and a series of representations and apprehensions. It occupied not only a textual space, but a social space too. The periodical review, examination script, scholarly lecture, academic discussion, and private diary were the hinterland of Semple's book—the spaces it occupied beyond its textual core; the sites where its meanings were variously created,

replicated, circulated, altered, and forgotten. By attending to print's social and spatial components, the geography of the book contributes to mapping the complex social processes by which books exist both as material objects and as cultural artefacts. In so doing, it suggests new ways in which the circulation and consumption of texts and thus of knowledge are understood.

**Reading the reception of Ellen Churchill Semple's**  
***Influences of geographic environment* (1911)**

Innes M. Keighren

Appendices



# Appendix A

## Census of Influences

### Abbreviations and standard references

BP = book plate

C<sub>1</sub> = inside front cover

C<sub>2</sub> = inside back cover

cp = copyright page

dp = dedication page

fl = flyleaf

s = spine

tp = title page

u = unrecorded page number

/ = new line

*Italic type* indicates marginalia.<sup>1</sup>

### A note on classification

In a majority of instances *Influences* is identified by the Library of Congress Call Number GF31 .S5 (or variants thereon). Where Dewey Decimal Classification is (or was) used, the variety is somewhat greater and reflects the influence of different cataloguing strategies. One 1947 study showed, for example, that “Semple’s well-known work *Influences of Geographic Environment* ... is classified in at least ten different categories. Forty-one libraries catalog it in Somatology (573); sixteen libraries put it with

<sup>1</sup> Based on Gingerich, *An annotated census*, xi.

Geography, distributed among 910, 910.7, 911, and 917; two libraries assign it to U.S. History (973); two to Ethnology (572), and one each to Sociology (302), Commerce (380), and Physical and Dynamical Geology (551)".<sup>2</sup> Shelfmarks, classmarks, and call numbers in the following list are reproduced verbatim from the online catalogue of the institution in question.

## **Australia**

### **Western Australia**

#### **University of Western Australia**

##### **Humanities and Social Sciences Library**

Call number: 301.3 SEM

Printed November 1947.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Ownership inscription: [indecipherable] *B. Riddell 15.5.26.*
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) Label: R. W. Preece & Sons, booksellers, 34 King William St. Adelaide.
3. (fl) Stamp: University of Western Australia.
4. (tp) 1927.
5. (fl) Date stamp sheet.
6. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet and card. Recording due dates between 1972 and 1980.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

*Marshall & Bathurst Islands (Timi)* beside Semple's map showing the density of population in the eastern hemisphere (8).

<sup>2</sup> Meyer, "Geographic classification of geography material", 214.

## Chapter II

*encourage wandering* following Semple's claim that "The political organization of the native Australians, low as they were in the social scale, seems to have been based chiefly on the claim of each wretched wandering tribe to a definite territory" (55).

**Canada****Alberta****University of Alberta****Book and Record Depository**

Call number: GF 31 S47

Printed November 1947. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Alberta.

Marginalia:

Index

*Nature never did betray the heart that loved her* (fl). *Trusting what's around you in nature, if you never [indecipherable] it won't betray you* (fl).

**Rutherford Library**

Call number: GF 31 S47

Printed October 1930. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Alberta.

No significant annotations.

## Manitoba

### University of Manitoba

#### Elizabeth Dafoe Library

Call number: GF 31 S5 1911

Printed February 1947. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (tp) Stamp: University Library Manitoba.
2. (cp) *Act. 95 200.*
3. (632) Stamp: 7408.

Marginalia:

Preface

*READ* beside the listing for Chapter XVII in the list of contents (xv).

Chapter I

*Speculative* beside “So a habitat leaves upon man no ephemeral impress; it affects him on one way at a low stage of his development, and differently at a later or higher stage, because the man himself and his relation to this environment have been modified in the earlier period” (24).

Chapter III

*political theory, economics?* beside the marginal gloss “Land basis of society” (53). *P.Q.? Israel? \** in response to “He [the anthropogeographer] sees in land occupied by a primitive tribe or a highly organized state the underlying material bond holding society together, the ultimate basis of their fundamental social activities, which are therefore derivatives from the land” (53). *possibilistic* beside the marginal gloss “Man’s increasing dependence upon nature” (69).

## Chapter XVII

*Refuted by present evidence* in response to Semple's claim that "Economic and social retardation have kept the hot belt relatively underpopulated" (626). *effect of trop climate* following Semple's discussion of the effects of the Mexican climate upon incoming Spanish populations (627).

**Nova Scotia****Dalhousie University****Killam Memorial Library**

Call number: GF 31 S5

Original Holt binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Date stamp sheet from Newark Junior College.
2. (fl) BP Dalhousie College Library.
3. (fl) Presented by Professor S. H. Prince / Proceeds of Extension lectures in Sociology.
4. (tp) *GF 31 S5*.
5. (cp) *21062-Oct.19/31*.
6. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 1980 and 2000.

No significant annotations.

## Ontario

### Brock University

#### James A. Gibson Library

Call number: GF 31 S5

Printed February 1947.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Label: Blackwell's (bookseller), Oxford, England.
2. (fl) Indecipherable ownership inscription: perhaps *F. G. Lamin*.
3. (fl) Issue slip wallet.
4. (fl) 327356.
5. (fl) 84652.

Marginalia:

Preface

Personal index to books' contents: 400 / 404 – *peninsulas as isolating & cohesive zones* / 412 / xx 421 / xxx 434–8 *Thalassic islands* / 628 – *climatic adaptability of Chinese* / 104 *Chinese – acclimatisation* / 427 *Cyprus & Sicily* / 431 [indecipherable] *in W. Indies* / 358–9 [indecipherable] *valleys* / 261-6 *land repels, sea attracts;* [indecipherable] / 272 / 277 *Coast peoples as middlemen* / 298 (fl).

Chapter V

*location in relation to the rest of the world / tried to distinguish location independent of all the other effects / is this possible?* in relation to Semple's suggestion that "The location of a country or people is always the supreme geographical fact in its history. It outweighs every other single fact in its history" (129).

**University of Guelph****McLaughlin Library**

Call number: GF 31.S5

Printed 1911. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Guelph.
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

An apparent conversation between two readers beside Semple's map of "Density of Population in Western Hemisphere" *I don't give a fuck / I'm sorry / [in different hand] you better had be (9).*

**University of Toronto****John P. Robarts Research Library**

Call number: GF 31 S5

Printed August 1923. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Label: Handbound at the University of Toronto Press.
2. (tp) *13 November 1924.*
3. (C<sub>2</sub>) Stamp: BINDING SECT. SEP 4 1968.
4. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet.

Marginalia:

Chapter II

An ironic *Then there are no negroes in Newark, Cleveland, New York?* Following Semple's claim that "The catarrhal zone north of the fortieth parallel in America soon exterminates the negroes" (37).

Chapter IV

*east instead of south* beside Semple's discussion of "Movement to like geographic conditions" (107).

Call number: GF 31 .S5 1968 c.1

Printed 1968. Rebound.

Provenance:

Chapter I

*Not right way to look at it* beside Semple's claim that "Buckle attributes a highly wrought imagination and gross superstition to all people ... living in the presence of great mountains and vast plains" (18).

**University of Waterloo**

***Dana Porter Library***

Call number: GF31.S5

Printed February 1947.

Marginalia:

Preface

In response to Semple's claim that "He [Ratzel] enunciates one brilliant generalization after another" the ironic comment *The key to Environmental determinism* \* *Read no further or be cursed with eternal boredom* [in different hand] &



*generalizations* (v). Beside Semple's claim that her method of research "has been to compare typical peoples of all races and all stages of cultural development, living under similar geographic conditions" the comment *simple XC/E. Semples* [sic] *self proclaimed step away from simple C-E* following her claim that "For this reason the writer speaks of geographic factors and influences, shuns the word geographic determinant, and speaks with extreme caution of geographic control" (vii).

## Chapter I

*convincingly poetic* in response to Semple's claim that "the earth has mothered him [man], fed him, set him tasks, directed his thoughts, confronted him with difficulties ... and at the same time whispered hints for their solution" (1). *rel's are complex / how complex* following Semple's suggestion that "Man's relations to his environment are infinitely more numerous and complex than those of the most highly organized plant or animal" (2). *numerous ex's over time / true then* bracketing Semple's discussion of natural routes of movement (6). Following Semple's examination of the allure of harbours and outlying islands to early seafarers the comment *Not today generalized* (15). *Ex of Invalid Generalizē*, in response to Semple's view that Heinrich von Treitschke's *Politik* (1897) "imitates the direct inference of Buckle" that the absence of artistic and poetic development in Alpine areas is a consequence of "majestic sublimity which paralyzes the mind" (19). *? prove it* following the claim that "The Scotch immigrants in American who fought in the Civil War were nearly two inches taller than the average in the home country" (21). *Bull!* following Semple's claim that "Activity is youth and sluggishness or paralysis is old age" (22).

## Chapter II

*Psychological Adaptation / Physical Adaptation* following Semple's discussion of same (34). *result of economic pursuits caused by plural env.* bracketing Semple's examination of the influences of dominant activities (36). *such terminology!* following Semple's use of the term "dusky squaws" (47).

## Chapter III

*pleasurable excitement ???* following Semple's suggestion that "For while fuel was a necessity to the Indian only for warmth and cooking, and incidentally for the pleasurable excitement of burning an enemy at the stake, it enters into the manufacture of almost every article that the Pennsylvanian uses in his daily life" (70).

## Chapter IV

*Go-Moose-Go!* apparently unrelated to the content of the chapter (74).

## Chapter XIII

*proof?* bracketing Semple's claim that "island life is distinguished by a greater proportion of peculiar or endemic forms" (411). *why?* following Semple's discussion of the fall of Easter Island (417). *how do they get this / why is there a difference* in response to "The knowledge of iron, stock-raising, and many branches of agriculture were continental achievements, which belonged to the great eastern land-masses and spread from Egypt over Africa" (434). An ironic *share the wealth* bracketing Semple's discussion of polyandry (462).

## Quebec

### McGill University

#### **Humanities and Social Sciences Library**

Call number: GF31 S5

Printed 1947.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>) BP McGill University Library.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>, fl) Stamp: Undergraduate Library.
3. (fl) Date stamp sheet.

No significant annotations.

Call number: GF31 S5 1968 copy 1

Printed 1968.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP McGill University Library.
2. (fl, C<sub>2</sub>) Date stamp sheet.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

*Great quote* bracketing introductory paragraph (1). *why history repeats itself* following Semple's discussion of the "Stability of geographic factors in history" (2). *same as that of location* beside Semple's examination of the "Persistent effect of natural barriers" (4). *to survive an area one must copy the native cultures* beside "Arctic explorers have succeeded only by imitating the life of the Eskimos" (10). *marriage of history & geography* beside Semple's use of Johann Gottfried von Herder's phrase that 'history is geography set into motion' (11).

## Chapter II

*Darwin + Spencer* following Semple's quotation of Darwin (33).

Call number: GF31 S5 1968 copy 2

Printed 1968.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP McGill University Library.
2. (fl) 15<sup>00</sup> each.
3. (C<sub>2</sub>) Date stamp sheet.

Marginalia:

## Chapter I

*racism* in response to Semple's claim that "the energy, initiative, adaptability, and receptivity to new ideas ... which characterize the Anglo-Saxon American as well as the English Africander, can be traced back to the stimulating influences ... of the abundant opportunities offered by a great, rich, unexploited country" (22). *an explanation* beside the marginal gloss "Partial response to environment" (27).

## Chapter XVI

*stereotypes* following Semple's discussion of the "conservatism of the mountaineer" (601).

## **Ireland**

### **University of Dublin**

#### ***Trinity College Library***

Call number: HL- 75-908

Original Constable binding.

Provenance:

1. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 1973 and 1975.
2. (tp) *18/- net.*
3. (tp) Embossed stamp: PRESENTATION COPY.

No significant annotations.

## **United Kingdom**

### ***England***

#### **British Library**

Shelfmark: 10006.p.4.

Printed 1911. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (tp) *10006/p/4.*
2. (tp verso) Stamp: British Museum.
3. (dp verso, viii, 638, 683) Stamp: BRITISH MUSEUM / 26 SEP 11.
4. (viii) Stamp: BRITISH MUSEUM / 26 SEP 11.
5. (C<sub>2</sub>) Stamp: POUND [binder] 1934.

Marginalia:

Chapter II

*nomadic labor* beside a discussion of agriculture on the Andean slopes (37).

Chapter III

The typographic error “vise” changed to *vice* (62).

Chapter IV

“Saracen” changed to *Arab* (75).

Chapter VIII

“Todcaster” changed to *Tadcaster* (245).

Chapter XIV

*Rubbish!* in response to Semple’s claim that Islam “belongs to an arrested economic and social development” (515).

Index

*P 671-2 missing 5/1/34* (670). This is most likely connected with the book’s rebinding in 1934.

### **Durham University**

#### **Main Library**

Shelfmark: S43798

Rebound. Heavily worn.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Durham University Library.
2. (tp) Stamp (accession): 25 October 1928.
3. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 1964 and 4 February 1998.

## Marginalia:

Many, throughout (u).

Shelfmark: S43799

Rebound. Heavily worn. Pages ix–x missing.

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Durham University Library.
2. (u) Stamp (accession): 14 June 1946.
3. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 1965 and 19 January 1999.
4. (C<sub>1</sub>) Issue slip wallet [this copy was “once in our Reserve (heavy use collection)”].<sup>3</sup>

No significant annotations.

Shelfmark: BAF496

Original Constable binding. Heavily worn.

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Presented by Mr D. McMurtrie.
2. (tp) Stamp (accession): 22 April 1999.
3. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 26 February 2002 and 17 December 2003.

Scattered marginalia (u).

### University College London

#### Store

Shelfmark: STORE 04-0720

Provenance:

1. (fl) Ownership inscription: *Grace Mills Jordan / 1935*.
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording one due date—6 December 2001.
3. (C<sub>2</sub>) Stamp: UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON.

<sup>3</sup> John Lumsden (Durham University), census return to author, 10 January 2005.

## Marginalia:

## Preface

*ethnic* bracketing Semple's discussion of her method—that is, to attribute causation “to environment and not to race” (vii). *masterpiece* in relation to the section of the book dealing with plains, steppes, and deserts (xiv).

## Chapter II

*only classifications Miss Semple makes* in relation to her discussion of classes of geographical influence (33). *survival of fittest(?)* beside Semple's discussion of stature and environment (34). *characteristics not hereditary* following Semple's examination of the physical effects of dominant activities (36). Marginal flagging of themes: *Eskimo animal age / same with family / clothes / Danes* (41). Marginal flagging of themes: *Russian / Lincoln / Leningrad to Moscow* (42). *kind of units around which society is built up / perish* in relation to Semple's discussion of the size of the social group (43). *Kipling's Forelopers [pioneers] (?)* bracketing the section dealing with the Boers of South Africa (48).

## Flyleaf

*Novel, Jörn Uhl— Gustav Frenssen (fl). Foundation of Purgatory – what has been published on it (fl). North by East / Geog. env. in Hist (C<sub>2</sub>).*

**University of Birmingham****Main Library**

Shelfmark: GB 95/S copy 1

Rebound with original spine retained.

## Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Stamp: Birmingham University Main Library.



2. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 1979 and 1996.

Marginalia:

Chapter II

*Early geog see adaptation to environment* → *environ determine* in relation to Semple's discussion of the classes of geographic influences (36).

Chapter IV

[Indecipherable] *in geog at that time, geog studies*; and *racism* in response to Semple's suggestion that "Strong peoples, like the English, French, Russians and Chinese, occupy ever larger areas" (119). *Evidence* in response to Semple's claim that "The negroes in North America ... have not been seriously modified physically by several generations of residence in a temperate land" (120). In relation to the claim that "The long-headed Teutonic race of northern Europe is ... an offshoot of the long-headed brunette Mediterranean race of African origins which became bleached out under the pale suns of Scandinavian skies", the critical comment *rational scientific thought? No mention of evolution (Darwin) reason for skull changes and time* (121).

Chapter XIV

*why???* in relation to Semple's suggestion that pastoral nomads are "powerless" to "originate or develop" civilization (509).

Chapter XVII

*RACISM!* next Semple's discussion of climate and race temperament (620). *Acclimat* and *Racism* following Semple's discussion of the effects of tropical climate (626). *no vigour* beside the claim that "The presence of an inferior, more or less service native population, relaxes both conscience and physical energy

just when both need a tonic” (627). *Slavish* in relation to Semple’s discussion of the problem of acclimatization (628).

Shelfmark: GB 95/S copy 2

Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (fl) Stamp: Birmingham University Main Library.
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Showing that the text was issued seven times between 1971 and 1979, twice during the 1980s, six times in the 1990s, and once in 2005.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

*foolish rot lack of creativity in highland regions* in response to Semple’s view that Heinrich von Treitschke’s *Politik* (1897) “imitates the direct inference of Buckle” that the absence of artistic and poetic development in Alpine areas is a consequence of “majestic sublimity which paralyzes the mind” (19). Semple’s use of the phrase “toil-dulled brains” is accompanied by the locally-specific retort *a rare class! – not B[irmingham] U[niversity]* (20).

### **University of Cambridge**

#### **Cambridge University Library, Rare Books Department**

Classmark: MH.63.21

Printed 1911. Original Constable binding.

Provenance:

1. (fl) Cambridge University Library issue slip. Recording due dates between July 1987 and June 2001. Removed between October 2004 and October 2006.
2. (tp, 1, and 17) Stamp (accession): University Library Cambridge, 12 October 1912.

## Marginalia:

## Chapter I

Typographical error amended (11). Grammatical error amended (12). *1911!* beside Semple's claim that "Russia will come into its own, heir to a long-withheld inheritance", perhaps a consequence of its perceived prescience (12). *???* beside Semple's claim that "the English turned to the sea—to fish, to trade, to colonize" (15). Associative note *c.f. what is said of mountain dwellers* beside a discussion of environmental influences in New England (26).

## Chapter II

*But Darwin does not say acquired characteristics can be inherited* in response to Semple's suggestion that "man as an organism, by the preservation of beneficent variations and the elimination of deleterious ones, is gradually adapted to his environment" (34). *Nurture not nature in every individual?* following Semple's discussion of the lung capacity of indigenous Andean populations. *Belgian customs union since war* beside mention of the *Zollverein* (German Customs Union) (34). This indicates a post World-War Two reading on Semple's book, since the Benelux Customs Union—which promoted trade between Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—came into effect on 1 January 1948.<sup>4</sup>

## Chapter IX

*It never gets there?*—an ironic comment in response to Semple's discussion of "far-famed Dalmatian sailors, who for centuries have faced the storms sweeping down from the Dinaric Alps over the turbulent surface of the Adriatic" (300).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Milward, *The reconstruction of Western Europe*, 232–253.

## Chapter XI

?*Egypt* beside the section on fluvial settlements and peoples (363).

## Chapter XIII

Following a discussion of Panama: *sold to U.S.A.* (426). *1945!* in response to Semple's claim that the armada sent by Kublai Khan in 1281 was "the only attempt to invade Japan that recorded history shows" (437). Clearly this reading dates from post 1945.

## Chapter XIV

*923* following discussion of South Africa (488). This date might relate to the Native Urban Areas Act.<sup>5</sup> *Define 'savage'!* in response to Semple's claim that "imperious pastor superimposed upon peaceful tiller, has made the only stable governments among savage and semi-civilized races" (494).

**Emmanuel College Library**

Classmark: 420.SEM(1)

Original Constable binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Emmanuel College.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) W.Heffer & sons Ltd / Booksellers (new and second-hand) / Cambridge, England.

Marginalia:

## Chapter I

*1911* beside Semple's prescient statement that "Many of its [Russia's] previous geographic disadvantages will vanish ... while its massive size will dwarf many

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Barber, *South Africa in the twentieth century*, 83.

previous advantages of its European neighbours” (12–13). *No* beside the marginal gloss “Indirect mental effects” (19). *Or can it be traced to the* [indecipherable] *who settled in New England* in response to Semple’s suggestion that “In the mountains, as also in New England, a law of diminishing financial returns had for its corollary a law of increasing moral insight” (23–24). *What about the heartland of Europe* next to Semple’s claim that it is not possible to “understand the location of modern Athens, Rome or Berlin from present day relations of urban populations to their environment” (25).

## Chapter II

*Surely this is no different* associated with Semple’s discussion of stature and environment (35).

## Chapter III

In response to Semple’s suggestion that “an expanding state which incorporated a new piece of territory inevitably incorporates its inhabitants, unless it exterminated or expels them” [indecipherable] *nonsense!* (52).

## Chapter VI

*Geopolitik?* bracketing Semple’s discussion of the “Relation of ethnic to political expansion” (190).

## Chapter XVII

In response to Semple’s suggestion that “In all these instances the white race has been successfully transplanted” the ironic *Is it? / You’re slipping* (628). *White man’s burden, imperialism, segregation???* beside the claim that “Here [in the temperate zone] man found his birthright, the privilege of the struggle” (635).

**Jesus College Library**

Classmark: DUK AP Sem

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Jesus College.
2. (fl) Ownership inscription (unrecorded).

Marginalia:

Chapter XV

*Ridge settlement of chalk?* in response to “Historical movement, when forces into the upheaval areas of the earth, avoids the ridges and peaks, seeks the valleys and passes, where communication with the lowland is easiest” (521).

**Newnham College Library**

Classmark: 855.SEM

Rebound. Endpapers and flyleaves missing.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Newnham College.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Rebound 1960*.
3. (fl) 854.3 / 855:12.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

The typographical error “because” changed to *became* (11). An associative *see de la Blache* following Semple’s discussion of geographical factors in history (21).

Chapter II

The typographical error “adaption” changed to *adaptation* (33).

## Chapter IV

ROT beside Semple's use of the phrase "Westward the star of empire takes its course"—taken from the title of a painting, *Westward the Star of Empire Takes Its Way* (1867), by the Scottish-American artist Andrew Melrose (1836–1901) (109).<sup>6</sup>

## Chapter X

*What about China?* in response to Semple's claim that "the earliest civilizations have originated in the sub-tropical rainless districts of the world" (328).

## Chapter XI

*Egypt?* beside the suggestion that "Owing to the strong pull exerted by a river's mouth upon all its basin, current, commerce and people alike tend to reach the ocean" (350).

**University of Manchester****John Rylands Library**

Shelfmark: 910.11/S13

Printed 1911. Heavily worn. Pages missing (u).

Marginalia:

## Chapter I

*typical of E.C.S.* in response to her suggestion that "Geography's claim to make scientific investigation of the physical conditions of historical events is then vindicated" (10).

## Chapter II

*melanin* following the claim that "black pigment renders the negro skin insensitive to the luminous or actinic effects of solar radiation" (39).

<sup>6</sup> Truettner, "Art of history".

## Chapter XII

*NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT* bracketing the suggestion that “Only after the Atlantic gulf was finally crossed did influences from the American side of the ocean begin to impinge upon the West African coast” (386).

## Chapter XIV

Semple’s suggestion that homogenous regions display “a history corresponding to that of its counterpart in some distant part of the world” challenged by *NO! c/f. Scot H’land & Andes* (475). *c/f diversity in G. B. & W. Eur. with monotony Russia & Poland / ethnically / geographically* following Semple’s discussion of the link between topographic monotony and lack of social diversity (478).

**University of Oxford****Corpus Christi College Library**

Call number: 304.2 Se (STACK)

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>) Stamp: CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE OXFORD JUNIOR LIBRARY.

No significant annotations.

**Geography and the Environment Library**

Call number: M 59a

Printed 1911. Rebound. Pages trimmed extensively. Original title and copyright pages missing. Replaced with photocopies from M 59c.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Library of the School of Geography, October 1920.
2. (fl) Stamp indicating that the copy was rebound by Morley, Oxford.



3. (dp) Stamp (accession): School of Geography, 27 October 1911. (The later date of the BP might indicate that this copy was rebound in 1920).
4. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates (approximately fifty-three) between 8 October 1960 and 25 July 2005.
5. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet. “Book List” stamp overlaid with “School of Geography / CANCELLED” stamp.

#### Marginalia:

#### Preface

An ironic *yuk!* following Semple’s suggestion that it is “unwise to put tight clothes on a growing child”—meaning that she is reluctant to define, too narrowly, the scope of anthropogeography (vii).

#### Chapter I

*Quote* directly above the opening sentence of the first chapter—“Man is a product of the earth’s surface”—indicating perhaps that the reader intended either to employ this sentence in some form, or to investigate its origins (since it is a paraphrase of scripture) (1). Topic words *islands, steppes, grasslands, and climate* following Semple’s discussion of geographic factors in history (6). Typographical error amended (11). In response to the section on the multiplicity of geographic factors, the note *as opposed to single factors* (11). A further ironic *Yuk again!* following Semple’s metaphorical description of “warm nurseries where Nature could cuddle her children” (12). *attribute of phys. environ.?* in response to Semple’s view that Heinrich von Treitschke’s *Politik* (1897) “imitates the direct inference of Buckle” that the absence of artistic and poetic development in Alpine areas is a consequence of “majestic sublimity which paralyzes the mind”

(19). *Sequential relationship* next to the claim that “The roots of geographic influence often run far underground before coming to the surface” (24). *KEY SITE of City best hill* beside “the original choice of these sites [Athens, Rome, and Berlin] was dictated by far different consideration from those ruling to-day” (25).

### Chapter III

Marginal index containing entries under the heading *LAND DEMANDS—Hunters / Pastoral nomads / Agriculture* (65).

### Chapter IV

Corrective marginalia *Scottish Welsh* beside Semple’s use of “Scotch” (92).

### Chapter V

*need outlet or inlet for commercial or polit. expansion* in relation to Semple’s discussion of the character of interior and periphery in relation to state expansion (143). *Yuk once more!* following the phrase “The estuaries of the Mersey and Clyde were marshy solitudes, echoing to the cry of the bittern” (149).

### Chapter VI

An ironic *Ja Grossdeutschland über alles* following Semple’s prescient assessment that “It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the vigorous, reorganized German Empire will one day try to incorporate the Germanic areas found in Austria, Switzerland and Holland” (186).

### Chapter VII

*serve them right* [indecipherable] *Sitting Bull* beside “American colonists met with difficulties in their purchase of land from Indians, often paying twice for the same strip” (219).

## Chapter IX

A sketch of a cuckoo sitting atop a cloud in response to Semple's discussion of oceans and closed seas: "Always the eternal unrest of the moving waters has knocked at the door of human inertia to arouse the sleeper within; always the flow of the stream and the ebb of the tide have sooner or later stirred the curiosity of the land-born barbarians about the unseen destination of these marching waters" (293). This sketch is a response perhaps to Semple's slightly florid prose, and an indication of where the reader thought her ideas belonged (or originated). Semple's prose is subject to further comment: *What an imagination* following her suggestion that a "floating log or bloated body of a dead animal" was a prompt to early humans taking to the water (295). *Why didn't he fly there?* beside the description of the riparian transportation of a statue of a winged bull (295). *This is laughable* in response to Semple's phrase "gymnasium of the sea", and *Come off it!* following Semple's claim that Pacific islanders are equally at home at sea and on land (299).

## Chapter X

*Really the right word? are we winning?* in response to Semple's suggestion that "The water which is a necessity to man may become his enemy unless it is controlled" (323). *Here we go again Oob!* beside Semple's discussion of the "incessant struggle between man and nature" (323). *Physical' equivalent of the 'Human' Hadrian's Wall?* beside mention of sea walls in the Netherlands (324). *What a drag* following a discussion of "the power to co-operate that is developed in a people by a prolonged war against overwhelming sea or river" (327). *Makes you weep* in relation to Semple's claim that civilization encourages a transition from "barren

individualism” to a realisation of “the superiority of common interests” (327). *careful I may take you literally / suggests aimlessness* next to Semple’s suggestion that “On every side [of a landmass], the breaking of the waves and the swell of the tides block his wanderings, unless he had learned to make the water carry him to his distant goal” (333).

#### Chapter XI

*Yum Yum* beside “The temptation to giant powers to gobble up these exquisite morsels of territory is irresistible” (351). *are they human?* in response to mention of mountain rivers’ “impetuosity” (373). *Hurrah!* associated the book’s examination of lakes as nuclei of states (374).

#### Chapter XII

*That phrase again* beside Semple’s use of “rise as islands” (380). *Only one!* in relation to Semple’s use of Australia as an example of “Insular continents” (381). *Don’t think she likes Australia* following Semple’s suggestion that “prevailing aridity has cast a mantle of monotony over most of the continent” (382). *She likes her own continent* beside the statement that “The twin continents of the Americas developed a race singularly uniform in its physical traits” (382). Semple’s prose subject to further criticism: *Trying to animate nature again* in response to “Only where North America and Eurasia stretch out arms to one another around the polar sea do Eastern and Western Hemisphere show a community of mammalian forms” (384). *Keep to the facts* beside the suggestion that the “Old World ... was searching for some outlet across the shoreless distances of the Atlantic, waiting for some call from its voiceless beyond (390). *Embroidery!* following the use of “neatly trimmed outline” (393). Semple’s style

questioned: *Worse than 'rising islands'* in relation to the phrase “on the surface of the ocean”; *animation again* following the description of Africa as “a huge torso of a continent, headless, memberless, inert”; *must have lost its memo* in reply to Semple’s claim that “Humanity has forgotten to grow in its [Africa’s] stationary soil” (393). *Poor Ending* accompanying the concluding paragraph of the chapter (406).

### Chapter XIII

*4? 5? 5½?* and *Hearsay I expect* beside “Ascension possessed originally less than six flowering plants” (411). *Not the right word* following the use of “curse”; *good word* following the use of “indubitable”; *a matter of opinion* following the claim that, at the time of its discover, human life in Australia was “restricted to one retarded negroid race” (411). In response to the description of the “pronounced insular mind of the globetrotting Englishman” *I hope I’m not like that!* (413). A local reading, and institutional rivalry, evident in the response *But not to Cambridge it seems* following Semple’s claim that “The [snail-] trail of the [P]Oxford education can be followed over the Empire” (413). The objection *gross generalisation* is made in response to the claim that the British surpassed the ancient Egyptians in terms of irrigation and native Canadians in terms of hunting and trapping (413). Furthermore, Semple’s claim that despite the vicissitudes of the tropics, the British colonist is able “to do a white man’s stint of work” is qualified by the suggestion *i.e. kicking nigs, supping gin* (413). This ironic comment would indicate, perhaps, that the reader thought Semple’s text racist. *americanisation now adopted wholesale* following “The introduction of foreign culture into the Empire has been a process of selection and profound

modification” (414). “England has inoculated” changed to “England has in[*fect*ed]” (415). *but GB is now decaying* in response to the claim that Great Britain and Japan are exceptions to the rule that limitations of space arrest the development of island nations (416). *covering up again for exceptions* beside Semple’s suggestion that “A comparatively narrow strait may effectively isolate, if the opposite shore is inhabited by a nautically inefficient race” (422). *What no soldiers? all born in blue uniforms* in response to Semple’s mention of the “bare but seaman-breeding coasts of Germany, Denmark and Norway” (422). Semple’s use of “vulgar” to describe the Sicilian language criticised: *popular as opposed to classical? vulgar has emotional overtones* (428). *Hey you, grizzly take your foot and get out of here!* following the claim that “in 1857 the Russian bear tried to plant a foot on this island [Tsushima]” (428). Semple’s mention of Australia as “the larges of all the Pacific island group” countered with *Haven’t you decided whether it’s a continent or not yet?* The claim that Great Britain is “too small either to oppress them [its colonies] or to get along without them” greeted with *Too true!* (445). *Man removed wood!(!?)* following “At the time of Cook’s visit it [Easter Island] was woodless” (455). *Come off it* in response to the suggestion that “cultivation of the ground [in Melanesia] has advanced to the aesthetic stage” (455). *Let’s go on a trip man!*—a marginal addition likely postdating Normal Mailer’s *Advertisements for myself* (1959), which the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies as the earliest use of the term ‘trip’ to indicate a hallucinatory experience induced by a drug—beside Semple’s description of Fiji natives as “dark, frizzly [sic] haired savages, addicted to cannibalism” (456). *Not convinced more details please* following Semple’s claim that it was the unemployment of “the great mass of agricultural

laborers” in England following the Black Death that “furnished the raw material for her colonies” (458). The apparent racist tone of Semple’s phrase “The ambitious tillers [of various Pacific Islands] look like savages” countered with *To you dearie* (459). *courting couples smoking ‘Players’* [cigarettes] following the use of the phrase “wild things of the woods” (460). *from head or feet?* beside the phrase “work naked to the waist” (460).

#### Chapter XIV

Semple’s suggestion that “The method of anthropo-geography is essentially analytical” is accompanied with the pejorative suggestion “I wouldn’t have guessed from reading this book” (474). *do they live that long or is it heredity again?* in relation to Semple’s suggestion that “Constant practice in riding, scouting and the use of arms, physical endurance tested by centuries of exertion and hardship, make every nomad a soldier” (493).

#### Chapter XV

*Boy what a varied history!* in response to “Nowhere does history repeat itself so monotonously ... as in these mountain gates” (545). *What a concept / Not So e.g. Shap v Cumberland Coast Route* in relation to the claim that “The historical importance of passes tends to increase with the depth of the depression” (546). *Romanticism*, and, in a different hand, *Nothing wrong with that!* following Semple’s description of a European mountain valley as “a place of inns, hostelries, of blacksmith shops” (550).

#### Chapter XVI

Various criticisms of Semple’s discussion of politico-economic value of varied relief: *not logical / pure opinion / Time has told* (557). *e.g. subjection of Highlands*

following “The conquest of mountain peoples means always expensive and protracted campaigns” (589). *Bonnie Prince* [Charlie] beside “The independent spirit of the mountaineer ... give always a touch of heroism to highland warfare” (590).

## Chapter XVII

In response to Semple’s suggestion that “climate ... affects their [individuals and groups] immunity from certain classes of disease and their susceptibility to others” the claim *No / The Disease itself propagates immunity / Disease not climate entirely* (608). *Bunkum!* in response to the section explaining the links between climate and race temperament (620). *Do they or is it just our lack of knowledge about detail?* following the suggestion that “Frigid zones and the Tropics alike suffer from a [climatic] monotony” (623). *Yuk! again* following the phrase “His nursery has kept him a child”; *poor things* following “their growth is painful”; *Bad use of words* following “gave to the people [of the tropics] their first baptism of redemption from savagery to barbarism” (635).

Call number: M 59b

Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (21) Stamp (accession): School of Geography 18 November 1950.
2. (fl) *Sch of Geog / 21322*.
3. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates (approximately fifteen) between 27 October 2000 and 21 August 2005.
4. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet. “Book List” stamp overlaid with “School of Geography / CANCELLED” stamp.



5. (C2) Issue slip list borrower J. B. Fyson, due date 10 October 1964.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

*doesn't embrace falsification principle / Relies on more + more supporting examples → unscientific / may have an influence – the causal [indecipherable] determinism, but not sole determinant* beside the introductory paragraph of the chapter (1). This criticism most likely postdates Karl Popper's (1902–1994) theory of potential falsifiability—advanced in *Logik der forschung* (1934)—as the criterion by which science is distinguished from non-science. *Man must be studied with his env / he is a product of the earth's surface*—marginalia summarizing Semple's claim that “Man can no more be scientifically studied apart from the ground which he tills” (2). *vs. Darwin* following Semple's discussion of Darwin's view of climatic influence (20 and 22). Corrective marginalia: “Scotch” changed to *Scottish* (21). *TRUE* beside Semple's claim that “Europe is part of the Atlantic coast [of North America]” (30).

Chapter III

*with increased civilization* following Semple's suggestion that with increasing civilization, humanity “multiplies his dependencies upon nature” (70).

Chapter IV

In response to Semple's indication that “the slight impedimenta carried by primitive folk minimize the natural physical obstacles which they meet”, *but is not impedimenta a result of maturity instead of vice versa as here suggests?* (81). A corrective *Now closed* next to the suggestion that the “markets of western Tibet” had been “recently opened to Indian merchants” (100). In relation to the alternate

expansion and contraction of Germany, *Contracted after the Great War* (140). A corrective *Now lost* in relation to the description of the Adriatic harbour of Fiume [Rijeka] as “the pride of the nation [Hungary]” (143).

#### Chapter XVII

A marginal highlighting—*EXCEPTION*—of the claim “The influence of climate upon race temperament ... can not be doubted, despite an occasional exception, like the cheery, genial Eskimos” (620).

#### **Nuffield College Library**

Call number: GF

Original Constable binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *CAS 125*.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP NUFFIELD COLLEGE LIBRARY / University of Oxford / COLE COLLECTION [indicating that this copy was bought second-hand by George Douglas Howard Cole (1889–1959), Fellow of Nuffield, and later sold to library].<sup>7</sup>
3. (C<sub>1</sub>) *GF*.
4. (fl) Ownership inscription: [Reverend] *R. H. Murray / Pershore Abbey* [Pershore, Worcestershire].

No significant annotations.

#### **The Queen's College Library**

Call number: WW.n.80

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Ex libris* Arthur E. Bestor Jr.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Martin (Nuffield College), census return to author, 6 January 2005.

2. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Presented to the Library of The Queen's College, Oxford by Arthur Bestor. Professor of History, University of Illinois; Harold Vyvyan Harmsworth Professor of History, University of Illinois; Harold Vyvyan Harmsworth Professor of American History, Oxford, and Fellow of Queen's College, 1956–7.
3. (fl) BP The Queen's College.
4. (fl) Ownership inscription: *Theodore H[arding] Boggs* [1882–1969].
5. (fl) Ownership inscription: *Arthur E. Bestor Jr. 24th January 1946*.
6. (fl) Stamp (accession): 15 April 1964.
7. (fl) WW.n.80.

No significant annotations.

### **Radcliffe Science Library**

Call number: 1901 e.11

Original Constable binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *C. / Anthr. A. 26. / I. Nat. Sci. 225 m. / 1901.e.11*. "The first [call number] indicates that this book was placed on an open shelf which assumes it will be well read. It was then moved to another open shelf area and then placed in our bookstack (closed area)".<sup>8</sup>
2. (fl) Promotional pamphlet or bookmark, reading INFLUENCES OF GEOGRAPHIC ENVIRONMENT / SEMPLE / 18/-NET. / CONSTABLE / LONDON.
3. (v) Stamp: RADCLIFFE.
4. (1) Stamp: BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA / RADCLIFFE.

<sup>8</sup> John Hillsdon (University of Oxford), census return to author, undated [January 2005].

Marginalia:

Chapter I

The American English “meager” changed to *meagre* (15).

**Social and Cultural Anthropology Library**

Call number: L 5:4 STACK

Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) L-5, 4.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Department of Social Anthropology.
3. (C<sub>1</sub>) Label: THORNTON & SON. / Booksellers, II The Broad, Oxford.
4. (tp) PRESENTATION COPY.
5. (tp) DEPT. SOC. ANTHROP. OXFORD.
6. (tp) Stamp: THE TYLOR LIBRARY OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

*became?* suggested as a replacement for the typographical error “because” in the line “before it because” (11). The marginal gloss “Evolution of world relations” changed to read Evolution of world *cultural* religions (12). ? *Polynesian physical type* following Semple’s discussion of the physical homogeneity of island peoples (13).

Chapter IV

*after 2000 yrs of development!?* in relation to Semple’s discussion of native peoples in the United States (95). *Navajo, from Deúe?* beside Semple’s examination of the

migration of Athapascan peoples (102). *only 2 specimens* in response to Semple's claim that "A dolichocephalic substratum of population ... had in fact been traced by archaeologists all over Europe" (121).

#### Chapter VI

*1918 f. !* in response to Semple's suggestion that "Finland's history since 1900 shows that the day for the national existence of small peoples is passing" (177).

#### **University of Sheffield**

##### **Main Library**

Shelfmark: B 910.01 (S)

Printed February 1947.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Sheffield.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) Accession number 16141.
3. (C<sub>1</sub>) Address of Blackwell's (bookseller).
4. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates 15 November 1974 and 28 October 1992.

Marginalia:

#### Chapter VI

*racialist* in response to the claim that "A wide, unobstructed territory ... affords the most favourable conditions to an intruding superior race" (189).

**University of Southampton****Hartley Library**

Shelfmark: GF 31 SEM copy 1

Printed August 1923. Rebound. Heavily worn. No endpapers.

Provenance:

1. (u) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 1955 and 2004.

No significant annotations.

Shelfmark: GF 31 SEM copy 2

Printed February 1947. Rebound.

1. (u) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 17 October 2002 and 4 June 2004.

No significant annotations.

**Wellcome Library**

Shelfmark: XWA

Printed 1911. Original Constable binding.

Provenance:

1. (fl) Eugenics Society Library Book L1763.
2. (fl) *F4 . 66*.
3. (fl) *A.1.83*.
4. (tp) *277711269*.
5. (tp) Wellcome Institute Library /Coll. welMOMec / Call No. WA.
6. (683) Wellcome Institute Library.

Marginalia:

Index

Personal index to books' contents: *1 history geog* [indecipherable] / *4 barriers* / *12 Russia* / *15 England & Holland* / *18 India* / *20* [indecipherable] / *26 Turks* / *27 religion* / *35 stature* *36* / *38 Colour* / *114 Two type popul* / *340 Atlantic & Pacific* / *393 effect of land masses* *399* / *415 island* / *486 nomads* (fl).

## Scotland

### National Library of Scotland

Shelfmark: S.86.f

Printed 1911. Original Constable binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) S. ~~88.d~~ / 86.f.
2. (fl) Stamp: ADVOCATES' LIBRARY.
3. (tp) Stamp (accession): ADVOCATES' LIBRARY, 12 October 1911.

No significant annotations. Uncut pages (337–340).

### University of Aberdeen

#### Queen Mother Library

Shelfmark: 910 Sem

Rebound. First thirty pages "heavily damaged".<sup>9</sup>

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Aberdeen.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>, fl) Acquisition date: 11 November 1912.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Sommer (University of Aberdeen), census return to author, 14 January 2005.

3. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 1971 and 23 October 1998.

No significant annotations.

### **University of Edinburgh**

#### **Main Library**

Shelfmark: .91:.572 Sem.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Ex libris* Edinburgh University Library.
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet.
3. (tp) *D.10824/578 / .91 : 572.*
4. (tp) Stamp EX BIBL. UNIV. EDINBURGEN.
5. (683 verso) *20.4.54.*

Marginalia:

#### Chapter II

Associative *See also Brunhes Géog. Hum. p. 667* (Figure 31) beside Semple's suggestion that "geographic conditions which give this or that bent to a nation's purposes and determine its aggregate activities have a similar effect upon the individual" (42).



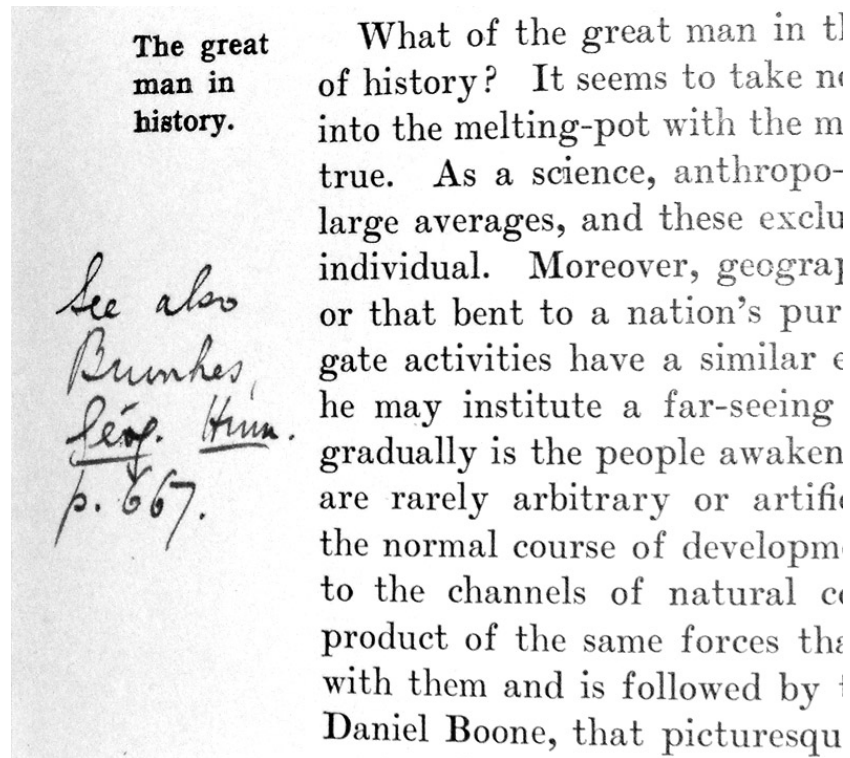


Figure 31. Associative marginalia.

From *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Edinburgh, Main Library, .91:.572 Sem.: 42.

#### Chapter X

Associative See p. 369, *numerous examples* beside Semple's discussion of the protection afforded by water frontiers (319).

#### Chapter XI

Typographical error "Motve for inanalns" changed to *Motive for canals* (352).

#### Index

Extra item—*Puttoo cloth*, 578—added to index under Pygmy tribes of Africa (671).

## **Northern Ireland**

### **Queen's University Belfast**

#### **Main Library**

Shelfmark: GF51/SEMP copy 1

Printed 1911. Original Constable binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates from 1973 to present.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Queen's University Belfast Main Library.
3. (u) Stamp: Education Library, Queen's University.

No significant annotations.

Shelfmark: GF51/SEMP copy 2

Printed 1913.

Provenance:

1. (s) A135. This is an earlier shelfmark indicating that this copy was previously on deposit at the Department of Geography Library (closed 2005).<sup>10</sup>
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet.
3. (fl) BP Department of Geography Library.
4. (fl) *1913 repr.*
5. (u) Stamp: Geographical Association Belfast Northern Ireland Branch.

<sup>10</sup> Diarmid Finnegan (Queen's University Belfast), census return, 1 September 2006.

## Marginalia:

## Chapter II

Two swastikas sketched in response to Semple's suggestion that "Certain geographic conditions ... apply certain stimuli to which man, like the lower animas, responds by an adaptation of his organism to his environment" (33).

## Chapter III

*Simple—complex* beside Semple's discussion of the "advance in civilization involving more complex relations to the land" (53).

## Chapter VII

*Moving boundaries / man made boundary* following Semple's examination of boundaries, both natural and anthropogenic, as limits to movement or expansion (209). *every day mingling* following Semple's discussion of "Boundary zones of mingled race elements" (221). *Lingo borders 2 / lingos v. similar* bracketing a section dealing with "Ethnic border zones in the Alps" (222). *Defection natural product of the remoteness and independ. of frontier life* beside Semple's discussion of the policing of frontiers in China (234).

## Chapter VIII

*Difficult to compare coasts diff. of coastal zones etc.* following Semple's discussion of the necessity of conceiving of the coast as a zone, rather than "as a mere line" (256). *Coast cut off fr. hinterland tends to detach itself politically* beside Semple's argument to that effect (257). *Venice import because of Brenner pass Albanian & Dalmatian coasts cut off fr. Interior* following Semple's examination of mountain barriers as they relate to access to coast and hinterland (258). *Disadvants of elevated coast* following Semple's examination of problems associated with

inaccessibility from the sea (260). *Submerged coast with poor hinter land or rocky barrier Brittany* following a description of “Maritime activity on steep embayed coasts” (261). *Delagoa Bay* beside Semple’s claim that it is the only “considerable indentation” on the otherwise “uniform coast of East Africa” (263). *Seaport devel. marked by increase of size & decrease of nos. / Importance of neighbouring islands in marine expansion* following Semple’s discussion of the evolution of ports (264).

### Chapter XIII

*Madagascar Formosa sep. more pronounced [indecipherable] less ethnic similarly with mainland* beside Semple’s examination of “Ethnic divergence with increased isolation” (418). *Islands tend to force the amalgamation of race, culture & speech* echoing Semple’s claim to this effect (421).

## United States of America

### Alabama

#### Air University

#### Muir S. Fairchild Research Information Center

Call number: 910 Se5i.

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Stamp: Reference Library.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Library Air Corps Tactical School.
3. (C<sub>2</sub>) Date stamp sheet and issue slip wallet.

No significant annotations.

## **Arkansas**

### **Hendrix College**

#### **Olin C. Bailey Library**

Call number: 573.4 R1

Printed October 1930.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Date stamp sheet. Recording issue dates (eighteen) between 26 August 1944 and 28 April 1966.
2. (dp) *Carnegie (Baker & Taylor) §3.42 Hist. 5-19-32.*

No marginalia.

## **Arizona**

### **University of Arizona**

#### **Arizona State Museum Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5 1911

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona. Presented by Frederick R. Wulsin [anthropologist, 1891–1961].
2. (fl) Ownership inscription: *F.R. Wulsin.*
3. (fl) *rx:/g/e6.*
4. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 24 January 1967 and 5 May 1978.
5. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet.

Marginalia:

Preface

*This amounts to saying: / 1) any trait is due to race or environment / 2) environment = geographic conditions / 3) any trait not due to race is due to geographic conditions / All three propositions are false* in response to Semple's claim that "If peoples of different ethnic stocks but similar environments manifested similar or related social, economic or historical development, it was reasonable to infer that such similarities were due to environment and not to race" (vii).

Chapter I

*It sounds well but it isn't always so* following Semple's discussion of "Man as a product of the earth's surface" (1).

## **California**

**California State University at Fresno**

**Henry Madden Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5

Printed November 1947.

Marginalia:

Chapter IV

*have / have not* following Semple's discussion of "Two-type populations" (114).  
*Nordic vs Alpine, Tungus, Manchu Korean...* following Semple's examination of "Differentiation and isolation" (119).

## Chapter VI

*large area facilitates defence small area easily conquered* / *Russia* following Semple's discussion of the "Weakness of small states" (176). *large areas produce more powerful people* beside Semple's claim to this effect (179). *literatures of small areas compare unsuccessfully with those of larger ones* beside Semple's claim to this effect (180).

**San Diego State University****Main Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5 c.4

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Issue card pocket. San Diego State College Library.
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates from 1975.

Marginalia:

## Chapter II

*11:25* beside Semple's discussion of the "Indirect effect [of geography] upon language" (41). Possibly a reference to a biblical passage.

## Chapter VI

*8:30* beside Semple's discussion of "The size of the earth" (168). Possibly a reference to a biblical passage.

## Chapter VIII

*7:00* beside Semple's discussion of the "Evolution of ports" (263). Possibly a reference to a biblical passage.

**San Francisco Public Library**

Call number: 573.4 Se54

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Issue card pocket, with San Francisco Public Library crest. Accession number 60445.
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 9 March 1982 and 13 May 1998.

Marginalia:

Preface

[Indecipherable] *Ratzel* beside Semple's discussion of his work (v). *Precaucion* [sic] [indecipherable] *determinism* in response to Semple's claim that she speaks "of geographic factors and influences, shuns the word geographic determinant, and speaks with extreme caution of geographic control" (vii).

Chapter I

Indecipherable marginalia beside section on the effect of a previous habitat (25).

Chapter II

*Don't take this* [indecipherable] beside Semple's discussion of river routes (44).

Chapter VII

*Put next page in same paragraph* written beside the section on border refugees and ethnic mingling (237). This might indicate a scholarly reading.

Chapter X

Indecipherable marginalia beside Semple's discussion of river dwellers in populous islands (322).



**Scripps College*****Ella Strong Denison Library***

Call number: GF31 Se54 c.2

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Ex libris* Janet Jacks Balch.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Scripps College.
3. (fl) *JJB Book Plate / India Trip—1929 / GF31 Se54 / Scripps dup GF31 Se54 c.2 / Mrs. Balch- #201- President Wilson.*
4. (fl) Stamp: AUG 10 '45.
5. (tp) Stamp: Scripps College.
6. (dp) *GF31 Se54 c.2.*
7. (dp) Stamp: 31056.
8. (fl) Date stamp sheet. No dates recorded.
9. (C<sub>2</sub>) BP From the Books of J.W. Robinsion Co., Seventh and Grand, Los Angeles.
10. (C<sub>2</sub>) E109/5681 \$4.00.
11. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet.

No significant annotations.

**University of California at Berkeley*****Doe Memorial Library, Gardner Main Stacks***

Call number: GF31.S5

Printed 1911. Original Holt binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Ex libris* Charles Atwood Kofoid.

2. (fl) BP The Library of the University of California. Presented by Prof. Charles A.

Kofoid and Mrs. Prudence Kofoid.

3. (cp) *Kofoid. Replacing No. 322503.*

Marginalia:

Chapter I

*What about* [indecipherable] beside Semple's discussion of the relative importance of geographic factors and heredity (2). It is possible, given the concerns expressed by Kofoid, that he was the author of this particular annotation. *Might see as improbable* in response to Semple's discussion of Buckle's claim that "the absence of artistic and poetic development in Switzerland" was a consequence of the "overwhelming aspect of nature there" (19). *How about Lake Dist[ri]ct of Eng[land]* beside Semple's claim that "French men of letters, by distribution of their birthplaces, are essentially products of fluvial valleys and plains, rarely of upland and mountain" (19).

Chapter XIV

Indecipherable marginalia beside Semple's analysis of the intellectual activity of the desert dweller (512).

Chapter XVII

*Not at all, they were there before economic use of the mines* in response to Semple's assertion that "Mineral wealth explains ... high [altitude] Bolivian settlements" (610). *How about Java, Nigeria, W.I.?* beside the assertion that "The hottest regions, also, are far from being so densely populated as many temperate countries" (611).

Call number: GF31.S5 copy 3

Printed 1938. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (cp) *Replacing 224438.*
2. (fl) University of California at Berkeley Main Library issue slip. Recording due dates between October 1975 and June 2004.

Marginalia:

Preface

*Jan 1911* beside Semple's prediction that "The eventual scope of the science [anthropogeography], the definition and organization of its material must evolve gradually, after long years and many efforts of many workers in the field" (vii).

Chapter I

*Yes* in response to the suggestion that "Man can no more be scientifically studied apart from the ground which he tills ... than the polar bear or desert cactus can be understood apart from its habitat" (2). *Wrong!* in relation to Semple's claim that the "early Trans-Allegheny commonwealths" were characterized by "headstrong self reliance" and impatience with governmental authority (3). Semple's assertion that the Russian plain is populated by "homogenous folk" is countered by the corrective claim: *no, rather heterogeneous* (12). A further corrective statement—*contradicts rather*—in response to Semple's view that Heinrich von Treitschke's *Politik* (1897) "imitates the direct inference of Buckle" that the absence of artistic and poetic development in Alpine areas is a consequence of "majestic sublimity which paralyzes the mind" (19). This marginal criticism echoes that in Kofoid's copy. *More courage to stay at home & fight* [indecipherable] ?

following Semple's claim that "the ocean barrier culled superior qualities of mind and character also—independence of political and religious conviction, and the courage of those convictions" (21). Following Semple's discussion of the "rapid decay" of Spain's sea power in the seventeenth century, *then the 'golden age' of Spanish literature* (29).

## Chapter II

In response to the claim that the dwarfed horses apparent in Iceland and the Shetlands, among other places, are "due either to scanty and unvaried food or to excessive inbreeding, or probably to both", *fallacy of the excluded* [indecipherable] *term* (35). Semple's argument that the short stature of the Samoyeds is a consequence of "an immemorial struggle against cold and hunger" challenged with the claim *Samoyeded* [sic] *migrated north from Altai ca. 1200* (35). Moreover, Semple's claim that there is a relationship between the "physical vigour and strength" of various native American groups is challenged: *The well-fed NW Coast Indian Shortest of all* (35). Marginalia beside Semple's discussion of the physiological effects of the dominant activities of certain cultural groups is unreadable as a consequence of heavy trimming of the margins (36). *This is, of course, not naïve* in relation to the claim that "when the Aryans descended to the enervating lowlands of tropical India, and in that debilitating climate lost the qualities which first gave them supremacy, the change which they underwent was primarily a physiological one" (37). *No No* beside Semple's claim that "The intense heat and humidity of most tropical lands prevent any permanent occupation by a native-born population of pure whites" (37). *PFUI!* in relation to the discussion of the effect of altitude on skin colour (39). *Are natural resources*

*“natural”* beside “Geographic conditions influence the economic and social development of a people by the abundance, paucity, or general character of the natural resources” (43).

#### Chapter IV

*Quote!!* bracketing a paragraph illustrative of Semple’s literary style: “The earth’s surface is at once factor and basis in these movements. In an active way it directs them; but they in turn clothe the passive earth with a mantle of humanity. This mantle is of varied weave and thickness, showing here the simple pattern of a primitive society, there the intricate design of advanced civilization; here a closely woven or a gauzy texture, there disclosing a great rent where a rocky peak or the ice-wrapped poles protrude through the warm human covering” (79).

#### Chapter VI

For one reader (most likely post-1939), Semple’s prediction that “It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the vigorous, reorganized German Empire will one day try to incorporate the Germanic areas found in Austria, Switzerland and Holland” elicited *Heil Hitler!* (186).

#### Chapter VII

In similar vein (although in a different hand) Semple’s map showing the Slav-German boundary in Europe is annotated with *Obviously from German sources*, with an arrow pointing to the portion of the map shaded as “Germans” (223).

## Chapter VIII

*San Francisco?* in the response to Semple's claim that "the evolution of the coast zone with the development of civilization shows the persistent importance of this inner edge", meaning estuaries, bays, and similar inland waterways (247).

**University of California at Irving*****Langson Library***

Call number: GF31 .S5 1911

Printed 1911. Original Holt binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Stamp: LIBRARY University of California Irvine.
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording issue dates between 15 July 1968 and 1 March 2007.

No significant annotations.

**University of California at Santa Barbara*****Davidson Library***

Call number: GF31 .S4

Printed October 1930.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Norman E. Gabel.
2. (fl) BP University of California at Santa Barbara / Presented by BEQUEST OF NORMAN E. GABEL PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY.

Marginalia:

Chapter II

*effecting* [sic] *cultural characteristics* beside Semple's discussion of the ways in which climate can influence social development (37). *cultural heritage* beside Semple's discussion of "The great man in history" (42). *Africa is product of isolations* beside Semple's examination of "Segregation and accessibility" (45).

**University of La Verne**

***Elvin and Betty Wilson Library***

Call number: GF31 .S5

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Ownership inscription: *Elizabeth A. Young / Christmas 1911 / from Mrs. A. E.*  
[indecipherable].
2. (fl) Stamp: APR 23 '59.
3. (fl) *Return to E A Young.*
4. (fl) Stamp: 32458.

Chapter IV

*Names* following "Two centuries later the names of these non-Lombard tribes still survived in certain villages of Italy which had formed their centers" (85).

Chapter X

*1917-8* beside "The flood [of the Yellow River] of 1887 covered an area estimated at 50,000 square miles, wiped out of existence a million people" (327). *Isabella Bird Bishop* following a citation of her *The Yangtze Valley and beyond* (1900) (327).

## **Colorado**

### **Colorado College**

#### **Tuft College**

Call number: GF31.S5 1911

Printed October 1930.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Colorado College Library.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) 104612.
3. (C<sub>1</sub>) From Carnegie Corporation / Received March 1936.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

*Isn't it proximity to other social orders* bracketing Semple's discussion of the "Persistence effect of natural barriers" (4).

### **University of Denver**

#### **Penrose Library**

Call number: GF31.S5

Marginalia:

Preface

*dealing with MAN* beside Semple's mention of "this new science of anthropo-geography" (vii).

Chapter II

*good* in response to "Any feature of geographic environment tending to affect directly the physical vigor and strength of a people cannot fail to prove a potent



factor in their history” (35). *Eskimo heavy fat-cold* following Semple’s discussion of the effects of cold climates (36). [Indecipherable] *to much generalization* following Semple’s statements on the “Difficulty of generalization” (40).

### **University of Northern Colorado**

#### **James A. Michener Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5

Printed 1911. Rebound in 1933 “by a student as part of a book-binding class”.<sup>11</sup>

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>, fl) Stamp: The Library / Colorado State Teachers College / Greeley, Colorado.
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) Issue slip wallet.
3. (fl) BP This volume bound by [indecipherable] / in C.T.C. Bindery / qr. Winter  
1933.

No significant annotations.

### **Connecticut**

#### **Yale University**

#### **Kline Science Library**

Call number: GF31 S45

Printed 1923.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Yale University Library Anthropology Library.
2. (fl) Emboss: Peabody Museum Library New Haven, Conn.
3. (fl) *AS 2.00*.

<sup>11</sup> Lisa Blankenship (University of Northern Colorado), census return to author, 2 March 2006.

4. (fl) Date stamp sheet.
5. (fl) Stamp: Kline Science Library.
6. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet.
7. (C<sub>2</sub>) Yale University Museum Anthropological Section.

No significant annotations.

## **Florida**

### **University of Florida**

#### **Store**

Call number: 573.4 S473

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Florida Library.
2. (fl) Stamp: 5931.
3. (fl) 26 / 7 / 16.
4. (fl) Date stamp sheet.
5. (C<sub>2</sub>) Stamp: sci-hssl.
6. (C<sub>2</sub>) 573.4 .S473 c.1. / 5874.
7. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet.

Marginalia:

Chapter II

*physical* beside Semple's discussion of "Physical effects" (33).

## Chapter VI

*the natural man* following Semple's statement that "The earth's superficial area is the primal and immutable condition of earth-born, earth-bound man; it is the common soil whence is sprung our common humanity" (168).

## Chapter VII

*zones rather than lines* following Semple's examination of "The boundary zone in nature" (204).

**University of South Florida****Tampa Library**

Call number: GF31 .S4

Printed 1911.

Marginalia:

## Chapter XVII

*cold* in response to "The cold pole of the earth, so far as recorded temperatures show, is the town of Verkhoyansk in northeastern Siberia" (611).

Call number: GF31 .S5 1968

Printed 1968.

Marginalia:

## Chapter I

*important* bracketing Semple's discussion of the direct and indirect effects of the environment (19). *theme indirect effects / use indirect effects and geographic influences* flagging the content of the paragraphs beside which they appear (22). *fertile plantation slavery* [indecipherable] follows Semple's discussion of the United States Civil War. *slower and very import* following Semple's claim that "Slowly and

deliberately does geography engrave the sub-titles to a people's history" (24). *influence of [indecipherable] / why Christians and Jews [indecipherable] / influences [indecipherable]* beside Semple's discussion of the effects of environment upon religion (27).

## Chapter II

*correspondence between internal condition and external circumstances* following Semple's explanation of Spencer's description of "internal conditions and external circumstances" (34). *environment determines why [indecipherable] shall become stable enough to [indecipherable] by heredity* bracketing Semple's discussion of the comparative importance of environment and heredity (35).

## Chapter XVII

*reindeer little [indecipherable]* following mention of "the domesticated reindeer on the tundra" (625).

## **Georgia**

### **Agnes Scott College**

#### **McCain Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Agnes Scott College Library.
2. (cp) GF31 .S5 / ~~910-5e5i~~.
3. (dp, 49) 9267.

4. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet and card. Recording due dates between 18 September 1953 and 3 June 1964.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

*USA?* beside “The slow historical development of the Russian folk has been due to many geographical causes—to excess cold and deficiency of rain, and outskirts location on the Asiatic border of Europe exposed to the attacks of nomadic hordes, a meagre and, for the most part, ice-bound coast which was slowly acquired ... and a vast area of unfenced plains wherein the national energies spread out thin and dissipated themselves” (14).

Chapter IV

*Wrong* in response to “The Poles, who once boasted a large and distinguished nationality, are being Germanized and Russified to their final national extinction” (119).

**Armstrong Atlantic State University**

**Lane Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5

Printed February 1947.

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Gift of The Library of the University of Georgia Savannah Division.
2. (fl) LC 11-12727 / 9/22/47.

No significant annotations.

**Georgia Institute of Technology****Georgia Tech Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5

Printed October 1930. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Georgia School of Technology Library.

Marginalia:

Chapter XIV

*because no nat. boundaries* beside “The level or undulating surface of extensive lowlands is not favourable to the early development of civilization. Not only do their wide extent and absence of barriers postpone the transition from nomadism to sedentary life, but their lack of contrasting environments and contrasted developments ... put chains upon progress” (477).

**Shorter College****Livingston Library**

Call number: 910.03 Se5i

Printed 1911. Front endpapers missing.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Livingston Library.

Marginalia:

Chapter VII

*slave and servant* beside the marginal gloss “Peoples as barriers” (209).

**Illinois****University of Chicago****Joseph Regenstein Library**

Call number: GF31.S4 copy 1

Printed 1911. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Chicago.
2. (tp verso) *Coll. of Ed. Pur.*
3. (dp) Stamp: 350643 /26961.
4. (ix) Stamp: 123874.
5. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet and card. Recording due dates between 9 March 1923 and 20 October 1947.

Marginalia:

## Chapter I

The typographical error “because” changed to *became* (11). *France* following Semple’s discussion of “Land and sea opposed” (16).

## Chapter IX

*China—Japan* and *neighbouring* bracketing Semple’s discussion of “Assimilation facilitated by ethnic kinship” (306).

## Chapter X

*February* below Semple’s discussion of the rainy season in the Foota Jallon and Kong mountains (325).

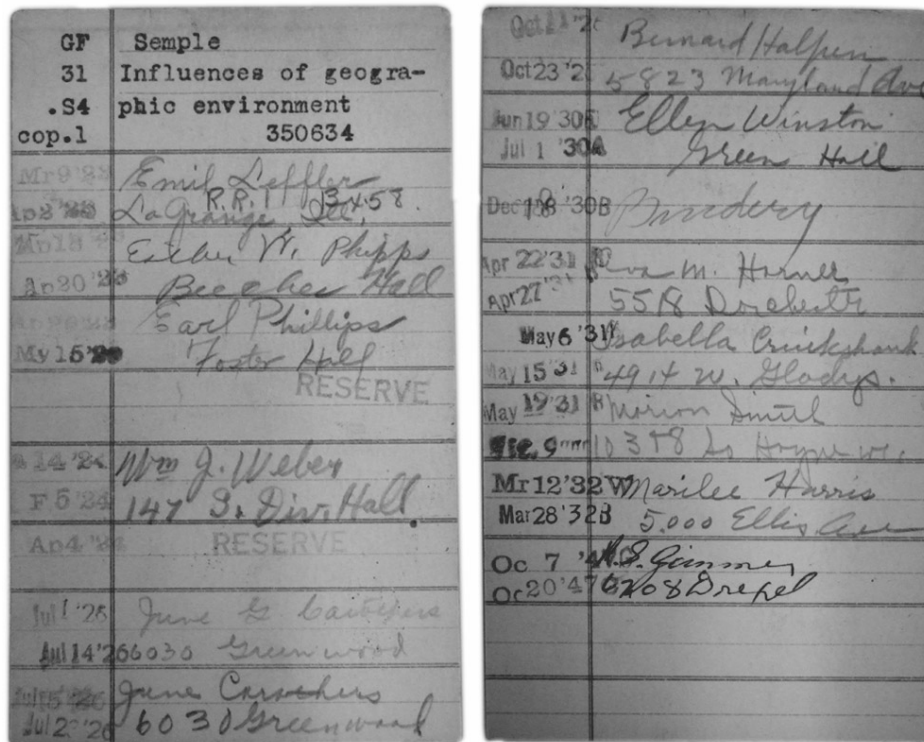


Figure 32. Issue card (recto and verso) with due dates.

From *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, GF31.S4 copy 1: unpaginated.

Call number: GF31.S4 copy 2

Printed 1911. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Chicago.
2. (tp verso) *Geog. pur.*
3. (dp) Stamp: 342759 / 119293.
4. (11) Stamp: 64326.
5. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet and card (Figure 33).
6. (C<sub>2</sub>) Stamp: Rosenwald Library.

Marginalia:

Chapter I

The typographical error “because” changed to *became* (11).



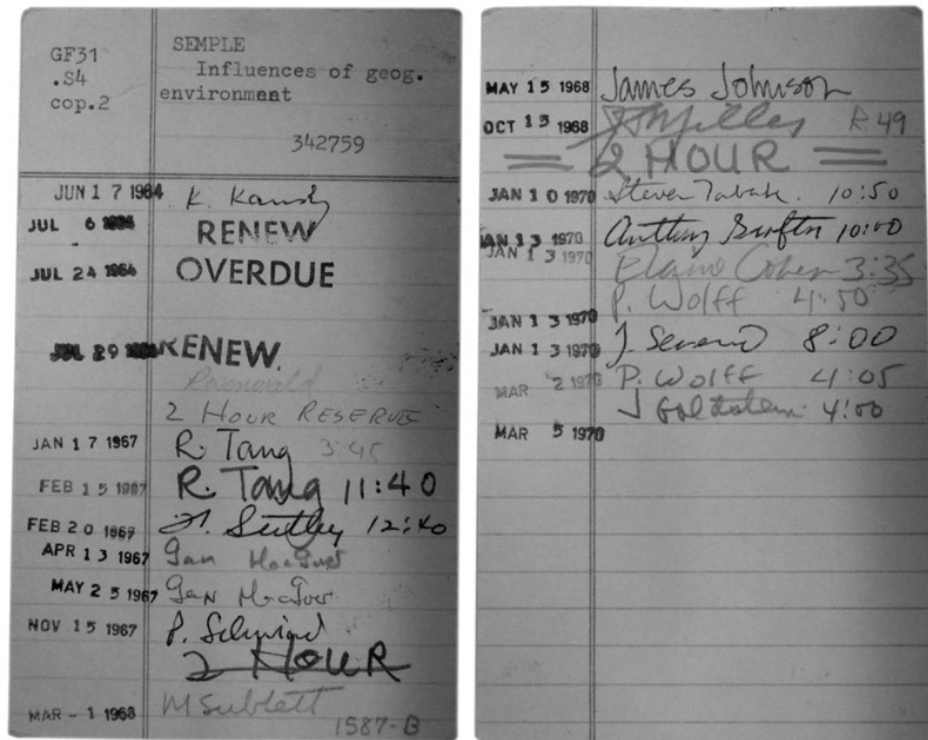


Figure 33. Issue card (recto and verso) with due dates.  
From *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Chicago, Joseph  
Regenstein Library, GF31.S4 copy 2: unpaginated.

Call number: GF31.S4 copy 3

Printed 1911. Rebind (with marble boards and false raised bands).

Provenance.

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Chicago.
2. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet and card.

No significant annotations.

Call number: GF31.S4 copy 4

Printed 1911. Rebound.

Provenance.

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Chicago.
2. (tp) gift of William I Thomas.
3. (dp) Stamp: 363537 / 142582 / 98546 / 130324.

4. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet and card.

Marginalia:

Preface

A number of items in contents page flagged with what appear to be swastikas. These correspond to the underlining of terms that might be associated with Nazi geopolitics.

CONTENTS	
.....	▼
CHAPTER I.	
GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS IN HISTORY	
Earth's surface—Persistent effect of ge-	
current influences of nature-made high-	
historical similarity—Persistence of	
<u>relation of geography to history</u> —Mul-	卐
tic factors—Evolution of geographic	
of geographic factors—Direct and	
environment—Indirect effects in differ-	✓
peoples—General importance of in-	
element—Previous habitat—Trans-	
artial response to environment—The	
environment—Unity of the earth and	
.....	1
CHAPTER II.	
GEOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES	
<u>Physical effects of environment</u> —Stat-	
istics—Effects of dominant activities—	
climate—Pigmentation in relation to	
mentation and altitude—Difficulty of	
geographic distribution— <u>Psychical ef-</u>	卐
fects—In mind and character—In language	
history— <u>Economic and social effects</u> —	
group— <u>Effects on movements of peoples</u>	
accessibility—Change of habitat.....	32

Figure 34. Marginal swastikas.

From *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, GF31.S4 copy 4: ix.

Call number: GF31.S4 copy 7

Printed 1911. Original Holt binding. Title page missing.

Provenance.

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP University of Chicago / Gift of Kenneth Goode.
2. (fl) Ownership inscription: [John] *Paul Goode / University of Chicago / Chicago IL / USA.*

3. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet and card.

Marginalia:

Preface

“Louisville” prefixed by *Derby* (viii).

Chapter I

The typographical error “because” changed to *became* (11).

### **Northwestern University Library**

#### **Main Library**

Call number: 551.4 S47 copy 2

Provenance:

1. (u) *Ex libris* Frans Boaz.

No significant annotations. Uncut pages (u).

### **Iowa**

#### **Cornell College**

##### **Russell D. Cole Library**

Call number: 910.03 Se54i

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (fl) *Withdrawn 3-20-47*.

Marginalia:

No significant annotations.

**Clarke College****Nicholas J. Schrup Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Mount St. Joseph College, Dubuque, Iowa.
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between July 1931 and May 1958.
3. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet.

No significant annotations.

**Kentucky****University of Kentucky****Special Collections Library**

Call number: 46M139

Printed November 1927. Original Holt binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Ex libris* (see Figure 35).
2. (tp) *from Ellen Churchill Semple, to the University of her beloved native State—June 1930.*
3. (tp) 78030.
4. (cp) \*910.1 *Se 534.*
5. (dp) *E.V.B. 10/14/31.*
6. (dp) *Semple gift 1931.*
7. (51) 78030.

8. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 31 March 1941 and 14 March 1945.
9. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet. \*910.1 Se534 / 78030.

Ellen Churchill Semple  
Geographical Collection  
University of Kentucky  
Library



Figure 35. Semple's *ex libris* and donation label. From *Influences of geographic environment*, University of Kentucky, Special Collections Library, 46M139: unpaginated.

No annotations beyond Semple's dedication.

### **Western Kentucky University**

#### **Kentucky Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5

Provenance:

1. (u) Previous call number *910 Se 54 2*.

Marginalia:

Chapter IV

1500 *Catherine de' Medici* 1572 *Coligny* 1598 *Henry IV* beside Semple's seeming unconnected discussion of natural regions of retreat (95). 1572 corresponds to the death of Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral of France, and 1598 to the end of the French Wars of Religion. These marginalia indicate, perhaps, that their author was a historian, or student of history, rather than a geographer. *Emigration to Canada (tobacco carpenter)* next to Semple's exploration of commerce as a guide to various movements (97).

Call number: GF31 .S5

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP In memory of Miss Ella Jeffries, Presented by Miss Gabrielle Robertson.
2. (u) Previous call number 573.4 S47 3i.

No significant annotations.

## **Maryland**

**Johns Hopkins University**

**William H. Welch Medical Library**

Call number: RA792 .S47

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Library of the School of Hygiene and Public Health, The Johns Hopkins University.
2. (fl) Stamp: Dec 14 '51.

3. (C<sub>2</sub>) Label: The Norman, Remington Co. [bookseller] Baltimore.

No significant annotations.

## **Massachusetts**

### **Clark University**

#### **Rare Books and Special Collections**

Call number: GF 31 .S5

Printed 1911. Original Holt binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Univ. C. S473i.*
2. (C<sub>1</sub>) *97473.*
3. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Nov. 1921.*
4. (fl) *Univ. C. S473i.*
5. (dp) *97473.*

No significant annotations.

### **Goddard Library**

Call number: GF 31 .S5 copy 2

Printed 1911. Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP The Libby Geographical Library.
2. (cp) *GF 31 S5 c. 2. / 95855 / Apr. 1921.*

## Marginalia:

## Chapter I

*Possibly due to harder life - less time for arts* in response to Semple's view that Heinrich von Treitschke's *Politik* (1897) "imitates the direct inference of Buckle" that the absence of artistic and poetic development in Alpine areas is a consequence of "majestic sublimity which paralyzes the mind" (19). *Excellent* [a different hand from the proceeding annotation] bracketing Semple's discussion of the indirect mental effects of mountain environments (20). *Cumulative knowledge* beside Semple's claim that "if we assert that a people is the product of the country which it inhabits at a given time, we forget that many different countries which its forbears occupied have left their mark on the present race" (25).

## Chapter II

In response to Semple's use of the word "ethnic", the suggestion *use the word racial* (37).

## Chapter IV

The suggestion that "Castes or social classes, often distinguished by shades of colour as in Brahman India" is qualified by *false* (115).

## Chapter V

*Economic reason* in relation to a discussion of trade in the Kalahari Desert (137).

## Chapter VI

*I doubt it* in response to Semple's suggestion that "Finland's history since 1900 shows that the day for the national existence of small peoples is passing" (177).



## Chapter VII

*Wonderful!* beside Semple's use of a 1775 description of the Volga basin as "an asylum for malcontents and vagabonds of all kinds, ruined nobles, disfrocked monks, military deserters, fugitive serfs, highwaymen, and Volga pirates" (236).

**Harvard University****Tozzer Library**

Call number: ETHL. Se 54 i

Rebound.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) Label: Harvard University / Library of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology / Bought Fuller Fund / May 29 , 1922.
2. (tp) *Ethl. Se 54 i / Bought from money received / From sale of R. G. Fuller duplicates. / Rec May 29, 1922.*
3. (tp) *3690 / 89.*
4. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 10 May 1993 and 10 February 2002.
5. (C<sub>2</sub>) ETHL. Se 54 I / Influence of geographic environ / Tozzer Library AEP4812 / 32044042797563.

Marginalia:

## Chapter I

NO beside Semple's suggestion that "The gradual desiccation of western Asia which took a fresh start about 2,000 years ago causes that great exodus and displacement of peoples known as the *Völkerverwanderung*" (17). *yet it was relatively independent of these other ones in its hey day* beside a discussion of Greece as an

“intellectual clearing-house for the eastern Mediterranean” (19). Semple’s suggestion that “French men of letters ... are essentially products of fluvial valleys and plains, rarely of upland and mountain” challenged by *Proves nothing. What about economic opportunity & aims etc.* (19).

### Chapter III

*At present considered bad* beside the phrase “militantism of Germany” (52). This suggests a reading, perhaps, during the 1930s or 1940s.

### Chapter IV

Associative *cf. p. 45* beside a discussion of the historical population of England (75). *No* in response to Semple’s suggestion that “Hunter and pastoral peoples need far more land than they can occupy at any one time” (80). *all he needed* in relation to the suggestion “in Central Africa the negro invaded only their [forests] edges for his yam fields” (81).

## **New York**

### **Vassar College**

#### **Archives and Special Collections Library (Alumnae Collection)**

Call number: 1882 Semple

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Thompson Memorial Library / Alumnae Library.
2. (C<sub>2</sub>) BP Not to be circulated.

No significant annotations.

**Main Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5

Printed 1911.

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Thompson Memorial Library.
2. (C<sub>2</sub>) Issue slip wallet and card.

No significant annotations.

**Pennsylvania****American Philosophical Society Library**

Call number: 572 Se5i

Printed 1911. Original Holt binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Ex libris* Working Men's College, 1913. Presented by H. Levinsohn.
2. (fl) BP listing the regulations of the library of the Working Men's College.
3. (dp) *P. M. Pollak cat. 60 no 258 Aug 27, 1993.*
4. (C<sub>2</sub>) *Ex libris* American Philosophical Society. Presented by the Carlier Fund.

No significant annotations.

**Bryn Mawr College****Canaday Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP Bryn Mawr College Library.
2. (fl) 1.2.17.
3. (fl) *jvc 4.00 B/10.*



2. (tp) *GF / 31 / .S5 / 1911*.
3. (tp) 278.
4. (tp) 169267.
5. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 13 June 1982 and 22 June 2006.

Marginalia:

#### Chapter V

In relation to a discussion of Russia's partial inaccessibility, *sea* [sic] *p. 175* (129). *Greece* in relation to Semple's discussion of the country's geographical location (131). *Read* bracketing part of a discussion of the comparative benefits and disbenefits of large geographical areas (134). *Read* bracketing Semple's discussion of centre and periphery (144).

#### Chapter IX

*horse elephant* bracketing Semple's discussion of the lure of the ocean and its role in the migration of peoples (293). In response to Semple's suggestion that "with higher nautical development, the sea loses its barrier nature" the note *how distance between Am[erica] & Europe has diminished by means travel* (293). Semple's marginal gloss "Primitive forms" supplemented with *of boats* (295). *ocean curr[ent] determines distribution* beside Semple's discussion of regions of advanced navigation (299). *Read* bracketing the discussion of geographic conditions in Polynesia (299). These marginalia seems to indicate that the reader in question was a "believer in the *Book of Mormon* ... seeking confirmation of [his or her] beliefs in Semple's book".<sup>12</sup> As the Curator of Rare Books at Brigham Young University notes, "It is not surprising that one would find such annotations in

<sup>12</sup> Derek Jensen (Brigham Young University), census return to author, 7 April 2006.

the text since BYU is a Church-supported school. Reasons why I see connections to the *Book of Mormon* are as follows. First of all, the *Book of Mormon* is an account of an Israelite family that escapes Jerusalem before its destruction around 600 B.C.. The family makes its way across what is now the Arabian peninsula, they build a boat and then sail to what is now the Americas. The highlight of the book (for L[atter] D[ay] S[a]ints) comes about 3/4 of the way through the book when Jesus Christ visits believers in the Americas after his death and resurrection. In the *Book of Mormon* there are accounts of horses and elephants in the Americas, the distribution of peoples and of course travel from what is now the Middle East to what is now the Americas. One can understand why the reader wrote ‘horses elephants’ on p. 293 and why the reader was so interested in population distribution in the Americas as well as travel<sup>13</sup>.

Call number: GF 31 .S5 1914

Printed 1914.

Provenance:

1. (cp) Stamp: The Library / Brigham Young University / Provo, Utah.
2. (v) Stamp: Royal Philosophical Society, Glasgow.
3. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 16 May 1990 and 31 May 2006.
4. (C<sub>2</sub>) *AE 10/88*.

Marginalia:

Preface

A corrective *or deductions* beside “Ratzel has based his inductions” (vi).

<sup>13</sup> Derek Jensen (Brigham Young University), census return to author, 7 April 2006.

## **Wisconsin**

### **University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**

#### ***American Geographical Society Library***

Call number: GF31 .S5

Printed 1911. Original Holt binding.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) *Ex libris* American Geographical Society, acquired January 1922 by purchase.
2. (fl) Handwritten author's postscript (see Figure 37). Written in response to a request by the librarian of the American Geographical Society, John Kirtland Wright.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> AGSA. Isaiah Bowman Papers, Folder "Semple, Ellen Churchill 1920-32". Semple to Wright, 1 February [1922].

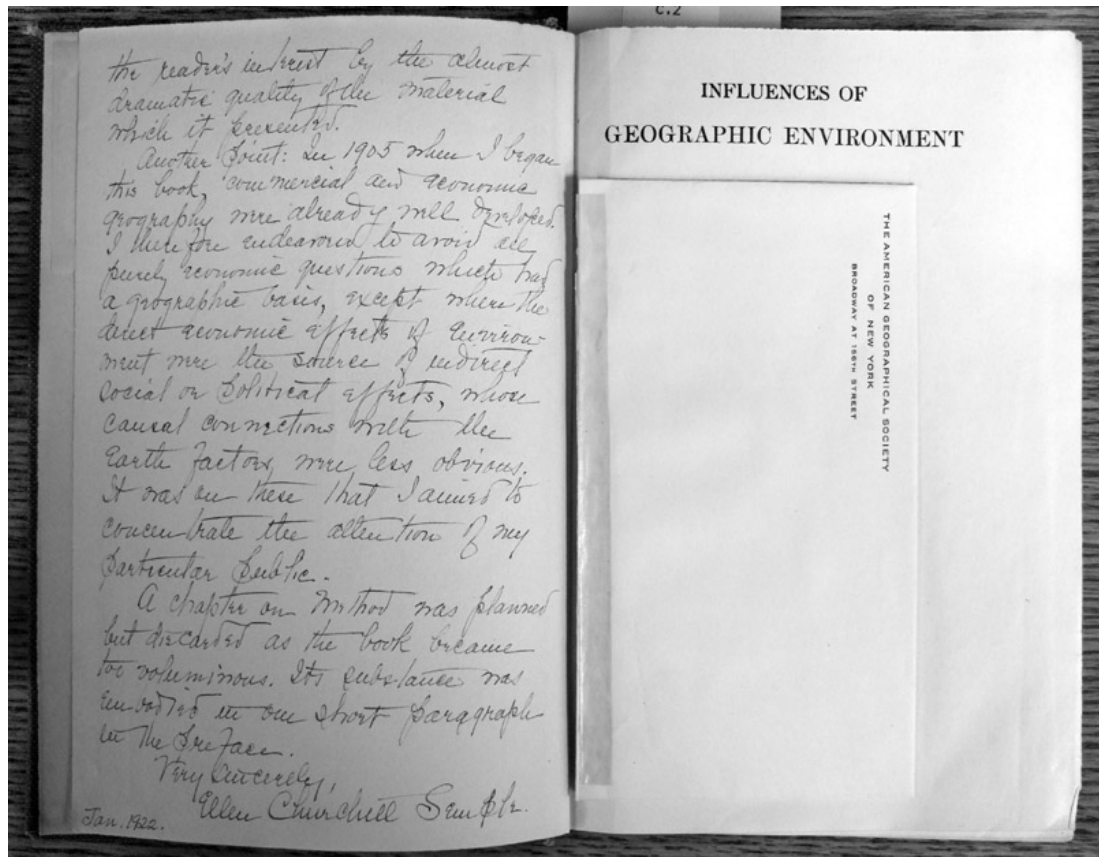


Figure 37. Semple's postscript.  
From *Influences of geographic environment*, American Geographical Society  
Library, GF31 .S5: unpaginated.

#### Marginalia:

The author's postscript reads: *To the preface of this book, which takes the public into the author's confidence, little can be added.*

*Ratzel, in his frequent talks with me, urged the value of a literary style for books on Anthro-geography. He argued that since the science had to do with man, it was entitled to the same literary treatment as History. I took his admonitions to heart, not only because I agreed with him in theory, but also because I anticipated that anthro-geography would make its way slowly in this country, and that outward charm might help to secure for it more open doors. Especially was I concerned to make the first chapter engage the reader's interest by the almost dramatic quality of the material which it presented.*



*Another point: in 1905 when I began this book, commercial and economic geography were already well developed. I therefore endeavoured to avoid all purely economic questions which had a geographical basis, except where the direct economic effects, whose causal connections with the earth factors were less obvious. It was on these that I aimed to concentrate the attention of my particular public.*

*A chapter on Method was planned but discarded as the book became too voluminous. Its substance was embodied in one short paragraph in the preface.*

*Very sincerely, Ellen Churchill Semple. Jan. 1922 (fl).*

**Golda Meir Library**

Call number: GF31 S5

Printed October 1930.

Provenance:

1. (C<sub>1</sub>) BP State Teachers College Milwaukee Wisconsin.
2. (fl) Date stamp sheet. Recording due dates between 18 March 1969 and 5 January 1996.

No significant annotations.

**Marquette University**

**Raynor Memorial Library**

Call number: GF31 .S5 1911

Printed 1911.

Provenance:

1. (fl) Ownership inscription: *E. L. Cooley / Dec 31 1923.*
2. (tp verso) *51694.*
3. (99) *51694.*

4. (99) Stamp: Marquette University Library.
5. (C<sub>2</sub>) ~~4.00~~ / 2.00.

No significant annotations.

## Appendix B

### Summer courses in environmentalism, 1902–1928

These data, taken from *The Journal of Geography* between 1902 and 1928, detail the summer courses in environmental influence or anthropogeography offered at various colleges and universities in the United States during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Although not entirely comprehensive, these course titles are a crude barometer indicating where environmentalist themes were taught, and by whom. The courses are organized alphabetically by state and institution, and are listed chronologically.

Year	Course title	Instructor
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#### California

##### *University of California (Berkeley)*

1919	'Influence of Geographic Environment on Man and his Work'	Ruliff S. Holway
------	---	------------------

##### *University of Southern California (Los Angeles)*

1920	'Relation of Geography to History'	Allan Kline
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#### Colorado

##### *University of Colorado (Boulder)*

1914	'Geographic Influences'	Walter E. McCourt
------	-------------------------	-------------------

1915	'General Principles of Anthro-Geography'	Ellen C. Semple
------	--	-----------------

1915	'Geography of the Mediterranean Basin'	Ellen C. Semple
------	--	-----------------

1916 'Geographic Influences'	Walter E. McCourt
1917 'Geographic Influences'	Walter E. McCourt
1918 'Geographic Influences'	unrecorded
1921 'Geographic Influences'	Walter E. McCourt
1922 'Geographic Influences'	Walter E. McCourt
1923 'Geographic Influences'	Walter E. McCourt
1924 'Geographic Influences'	Walter E. McCourt
1925 'Geographic Influences'	Walter E. McCourt
1926 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Ralph H. Brown
1927 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Ralph H. Brown
1928 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Ralph H. Brown

## **Indiana**

### ***Indiana State Normal School (Terre Haute)***

1915 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Bernard H. Schockel
1916 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Bernard H. Schockel
1923 'Geographic Influences in American History'	A. H. Sutton

### ***Indiana University (Bloomington)***

1916 'Relation of Geography to American History'	Frank E. Williams
--	-------------------

**Illinois*****Illinois State Normal School (Normal)***

1920 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Mr Case
1921 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Miss Strong
1922 'Geographic Controls'	C. E. Cooper
1923 'Geographic Controls'	Robert G. Buzzard
1923 'Influences of Geography on American History'	Robert G. Buzzard
1924 'Geographic Influences in United States History'	Robert G. Buzzard
1926 'Influences of Geography on American History'	Robert G. Buzzard
1928 'Influences of Geography on United States History'	Robert G. Buzzard

***Northwestern University (Evanston)***

1926 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Albert LaFleur
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***Northern Illinois State Teachers College (DeKalb)***

1922 'Influences of Geography on American History'	Robert G. Buzzard
1924 'Geographical Influences on American History'	William C. Gould
1928 'Geographic Influences on History'	William C. Gould

***University of Chicago***

1905 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows
1906 'Some Principles of Anthro-po-geography'	Ellen C. Semple
1906 'American History and Its Geographic Condition'	Ellen C. Semple

1911 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows
1912 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows/Mary J. Lanier
1912 'Geographic Influences in the History of the Interior'	Harlan H. Barrows
1913 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows
1914 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Mary J. Lanier
1914 'Geographic Influences in the History of the Interior'	Harlan H. Barrows
1915 'Influences of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows/Mary J. Lanier
1915 'Geographic Influences in the History of the Western States'	Harlan H. Barrows
1916 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Mary J. Lanier
1917 'Geographic Influences in the History of the Interior'	Harlan H. Barrows
1918 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows
1919 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows
1920 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows
1920 'Geographic Influences in the History of the Interior'	Harlan H. Barrows
1921 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows
1921 'The Geographical Factor in History'	James Fairgrieve
1922 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Harlan H. Barrows

## **Kansas**

### ***State Teachers College (Pittsburgh)***

1923 'Geography of American History'	Miss Roseberry
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## **Kentucky**

### ***Western Kentucky State Normal School (Bowling Green)***

1917 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Ellen C. Semple
1921 'Geographic Influence in American History'	Ella Jeffries
1926 'Geographic Factors in European History'	unrecorded

## **Massachusetts**

### ***Clark University (Worcester)***

1922 'The Influence of Climatic Environment'	Charles F. Brooks
1924 'Geographic Influences in the History of the United States'	Mr Case
1927 'Influences of Geographic Environment'	W. Elmer Ekblaw
1928 'Influences of Geographic Environment'	W. Elmer Ekblaw

## **Michigan**

### ***Michigan State Normal College (Ypsilanti)***

1906 'Geography of American History'	Mark Jefferson
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### ***University of Michigan (Ann Arbor)***

1913 'Geographic Influences'	Frank Carney
1916 'Geographic Influences'	Carl O. Sauer
1918 'Geographic Influences'	Carl O. Sauer
1919 'Geographic Influences'	F. W. Frostic

1920 'Geographic Influences'	F. W. Frostic
1921 'Geographic Influences'	unrecorded

## **Missouri**

### ***Southeast Missouri State Teachers College (Cape Girardeau)***

1921 'Geographic Influences'	unrecorded
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### ***University of Missouri (Columbia)***

1916 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Almon E. Parkins
1917 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Mendel E. Branom
1923 'Geographic Influences in American History'	James R. Cowan
1924 'Geographical Influences in American History'	P. E. Andrews

## **New York**

### ***Columbia University (New York City)***

1917 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Albert P. Brigham
1918 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Ellen C. Semple
1918 'Influences of Geographic Environment'	Ellen C. Semple

### ***Cornell University (Ithaca)***

1904 'Geographic Influences and Relations'	Ray H. Whitbeck
1905 'Geographic Influences and Relations'	Ray H. Whitbeck
1906 'Geographic Influences and Relations'	Ray H. Whitbeck



1923 'Geographic Influences in American History'

S. T. Bratton

## **Ohio**

### ***Cleveland School of Education/Western Reserve University (Cleveland)***

1924 'Geographical Influences in American History'

W. M. Gregory

### ***Kent State Normal School (Kent)***

1924 'Geographic Influences in History'

Professor Olson

### ***Ohio University (Athens)***

1917 'Influences of Geography on American History'

Carl O. Sauer

1924 'Geographical Influences in American History'

Albert LaFleur

1925 'Geographic Influences in American History'

Albert LaFleur

1928 'Geographic Influences in American History'

Jane K. Atwood

## **Pennsylvania**

### ***State Normal School (Edinboro)***

1925 'Geographic Influences in American History'

Hazel M. Ketcham

### ***University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia)***

1916 'Climate and its Economic Influences'

George B. Roorbach

## Tennessee

### **George Peabody College for Teachers (Nashville)**

1915 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Mary Dopp
1916 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Mary Dopp
1917 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Almon E. Parkins
1918 'Influences of Geography on American History'	Almon E. Parkins
1919 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Almon E. Parkins
1920 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Almon E. Parkins/ Julia McClarty
1921 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Almon E. Parkins/Miss Walker
1922 'Influence of Geography on American History'	Almon E. Parkins
1924 'Influences of Geography on American History'	Miss Cowling
1925 'Influence of Geography on American History'	John B. Appleton
1926 'Geographic Influences in American History'	Lucile Foust

## Texas

### **East Texas State Teachers College (Commerce)**

1924 'Influence of Geography on American History'	T. Taylor Broun
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### **University of Texas (Austin)**

1917 'Geographic Influences in History'	W. L. Fleming
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**Virginia**

***University of Virginia (Charlottesville)***

1911 'Geographic Influences'

Frank Carney

**Wisconsin**

***University of Wisconsin (Madison)***

1915 'Influence of Geography on American History'

Frank E. Williams

## Appendix C

### John Kirtland Wright's questionnaire

Transcribed, verbatim, from a copy of Wright's questionnaire sent to Wilma B. Fairchild (1915–1983), editor of the *Geographical Review*.<sup>1</sup>

Box 44--Lyme, N.H.

March 24, 1961

Dear

I have been asked to prepare a paper for the next annual meeting of the A. A. G. to be read at a session commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Ellen C. Semple's "Influences of Geographic Environment." In order that this may be something more than a record solely of my own recollections and ideas, I am asking some two dozen geographers of varying ages, both in this country and in Britain, to answer the following questions as briefly or extensively as they may wish.

(A) (Factual) 1) If you have read "Influences," when, where, and why did you do so?  
2) What are the essential facts known to you concerning the use that has been made of "Influences" in educational institutions? Dates or approximate dates would be helpful.

(B) (Opinion) Which of the following adjectives do you feel best characterizes the over-all effect of "Influences" upon the development of modern geography:

1) Beneficial;

<sup>1</sup> AGSA. Editorial Correspondence, *Geographical Review*, John K. Wright, 1928–1962. Wright to Wilma Fairchild, 24 March 1961.

- 2) Neutral, because beneficial and detrimental effects are balanced;
- 3) Negligible;
- 4) Detrimental.
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

Please comment on your answer:

(C) Do I have your permission to quote or paraphrase those parts of your replies that are not enclosed in brackets?

I shall be grateful, indeed, for anything you may send, and I am sure you will understand that it will not be possible to incorporate all the material elicited by this inquiry in my finished paper.

With all best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

(signed) John K. Wright

## Appendix D

### Published material

#### Bringing geography to the book: charting the reception of *Influences of geographic environment*

Innes M Keighren

Whilst geography has formed an important yet often unacknowledged component in the description and analysis of print culture, its specific and potential contribution to understanding the making, distribution and reading of books has yet to be outlined fully. This paper seeks to describe the different ways in which Ellen Churchill Semple's 1911 volume *Influences of geographic environment* was received and understood – to explain why it was read both as a timely manifesto for a scientific approach to geographical research, and as a text which might damage the discipline's legitimacy. In exploring *Influences'* trajectory of diffusion, I argue that it is possible to outline a geography of its reception – to reveal a locational particularity in its reading and reviewing. In so doing, I address questions relating to the epistemic and methodological bases of book geography, and describe the contribution that geography can make to explaining how knowledge and ideas, in textual form, are communicated and received.

**key words** United Kingdom textual reception geographies of the book geographies of reading geographies of reviewing environmental determinism

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revised manuscript received 28 July 2006

#### Introduction: Miss Semple's *Influences* and the geography of the book

There can be little hesitation in pronouncing this the most notable work that has yet appeared in English on the subject to which it is devoted' (Chisholm 1912, 31). It was with this expression of admiration that George Goudie Chisholm, lecturer in geography at the University of Edinburgh, introduced his review in 1912 of a recently-published environmentalist thesis. The text which inspired Chisholm's approbation was *Influences of geographic environment* (1911), written by Ellen Churchill Semple, 'one of the ablest geographers of the day' (*The Scotsman* 1912). In contrast to Chisholm's enthusiasm, Semple's book was encountered disdainfully by an anonymous reader at the University of Oxford's School of Geography. In a series of undated marginal annotations, the

unsigned respondent pencilled a critical counterpoint to Semple's text: 'This is laughable'; 'Come off it!'; 'Bunkum!'<sup>1</sup> Although this unfavourable response was a voice from the margins, it provides an important means by which to recover the ephemeral interaction of reader and book. Together with more considered commentary, such as Chisholm's review, marginalia form 'small stories' within a larger narrative describing the reception of Semple's ideas (Lorimer 2003). This paper is concerned with such stories of reception, and with the role of geography in exploring the circulation and consumption of printed texts.

*Influences of geographic environment* marked an important and singular moment in the proto-disciplinary history of Anglo-American geography. Semple's book, together with a series of her earlier papers, communicated the work of Friedrich Ratzel to an English-speaking intellectual community whose

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engagement with his geography had been hitherto limited, and whose disciplinary remit had not yet been outlined systematically. Seeming to offer a 'scientific foundation' upon which the discipline might build, Semple's work shaped the practice of geography in the United States during the first decade of the twentieth century (Cook 1906; Frenkel 1992, 144). So great was its impact, *Influences* is said to have 'largely determined the methodological thought of at least a generation' of geographers (Hartshorne 1939, 122). In Britain, by contrast, Semple's influence was largely absent until a disciplinary schism in 1911 – prompted by a critical paper delivered by Charles Close, president of the Geographical Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science – stimulated a period of methodological reappraisal (Freeman 1985).

The intention of this paper is two-fold: first to explain why *Influences* came to serve as an important pivot in the debate which followed Close's address, and, second, to describe the different ways in which Semple's book was received and understood by its British audience. In exploring *Influences'* trajectory of diffusion, I argue that it is possible to describe a geography of its reception – to reveal a locational particularity in its reading and reviewing, and to show that this was framed, in part, by the disciplinary reflection prompted by Close's comments. My intention is not to suggest that location determined straightforwardly the reading of Semple's book. It is, rather, to question the notion of a taken-for-granted 'British' (or 'English', or 'Scottish' or 'Welsh') response to *Influences*, by showing that when considered at different scales – personal, metropolitan, regional, national or international – different patterns of reception become apparent.

This attention to scale necessarily unsettles the presumed cohesion of national traditions in geography, challenging internalist histories which attribute to individual nations a common approach to geographical work. To interrogate solely the national scale risks obscuring local difference. In addressing this problem of scale, I draw upon recent work in book history and the history of science, which has considered geographies of reading and reception (see, for example, Rupke 1999; Secord 2000; Ryan 2003; Livingstone 2003a, 2005a, 2006). This paper also addresses more general questions relating to the epistemic and methodological bases of book geography, and points towards the contribution that geography can make to explaining

how knowledge and ideas, in their textual form, are communicated and received.

### Tracing geographies of reading and reception

The historiographical treatment of the printed book, as a material artefact imbued with meaning and authority through a print culture, is a comparatively recent concern (Finkelstein and McCleery 2002). The field of book history, marked by an attention to 'the social and cultural history of communication by print', attends to the social bases of book production and circulation, authorship and reading, textual reception and the exchange of knowledge (Darnton 1982, 65). The study of print, as an economically and socially contingent project, emerged in part as a response to the intellectual realignments associated with the French *Annales* School of socioeconomic history, and found expression in Lucien Febvre's posthumous work *L'apparition du livre* (1958), completed by fellow historian Henri-Jean Martin (Johns 1998).

Febvre's project – 'to examine the influence and the practical significance of the printed book during the first 300 years of its existence' – was driven by a desire to understand print history as a series of socially and technologically facilitated events (Febvre and Martin 1976, 11). As a student at the *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris (1899–1902), Febvre came under the influence of Paul Vidal de la Blache, becoming an enthusiastic proponent of his principles of regional human geography (Baker 1999). Aspects of this research focus are apparent in Febvre and Martin's discussion of the geography of the book. Geography, for them, referred to the spatial diffusion and locational spread of the technologies and practitioners of printing (Febvre and Martin 1976). Febvre and Martin's geographical assessment exposed the social and economic factors that encouraged the establishment of print industries in particular locations at specific times. They demonstrated that the printed book was, as Eisenstein summarized, 'one element in a larger "ensemble" of [social and technological] transformations' which were both spatially and culturally enacted (Eisenstein 1979, 33).

Although such an explicit attention to print's geographical dimension has been largely absent from subsequent analyses of print culture, an implicit consideration of space – most notable in an engagement with particular sites of book production

*Bringing geography to the book*

527

and consumption: the printing house, book shop, library and reading room, among others – is evident in much work on book history (see, for example, McKenzie 1965; Chartier 1994; Jacobs 2003). Elizabeth Eisenstein's influential *The printing press as an agent of change* (1979) addressed the social implications of print technology, and considered these in relation to sites of textual creation and reception. Eisenstein's principal thesis related the emergence of the printed book in Europe to important social, cultural and scientific realignments, including the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Copernican Revolution. For Eisenstein, links between the printed book and these sociocultural movements were contingent upon the notion of print culture, which referred not only to the social networks in which printed books were produced, circulated and read (and the sites of these exchanges), but also to the particular ways in which the printed book attained authority (Johns 1998).

A rather more nuanced attention to textual 'variations over space and time' is outlined in Robert Darnton's model of 'the communications circuit' (Darnton 1982, 67). Here, Darnton traces the 'life cycle' of the printed book – describing a series of flows and transmissions linking author, publisher, shipper, bookseller and reader (Darnton 1982, 67). Each node in this circuit is considered in relation to 'other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environment' (Darnton 1982, 67). In this respect, the social as well as the technological components of print are situated within a broader, geographically-informed context – a spatial vocabulary apparent also in studies of reading practice.

The geography of reading – an appreciation of the local and social construction of textual meaning – assumes an active interplay between text and reader. A text's meaning is formed 'in a dynamic relationship with the reader's expectations, projections, conclusions, judgements, and assumptions' (Fish 1980, 2). The printed book can contain, then, a plurality of meaning. This interpretative efflorescence is qualified by Stanley Fish's notion of 'interpretative communities' – a concept that explains why 'different readers execute the same interpretive strategy when faced with the "same" text' (Fish 1980, 170). For Fish, it is possible to speak of a collective response to, or reception of, a particular text.

In moving from questions of *what* people read in the past to *how* and *where* they read it, a number of conceptual challenges become apparent (Fischer

2003). Pursuing what Chartier terms the 'archaeology of reading practices' requires the careful excavation of archival sediment (readers' letters, diaries, marginalia, *inter alia*), and sifting of the hermeneutic matrix, to reveal traces of the interaction between reader and book (quoted in Sherman 1995, 53). Contributions to this interpretative recovery are associated with work on reader response and the aesthetics of reception (see, for example, Iser 1978 1989; Eco 1989; Jauss 1982). It is in such work – particularly that of Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser – that the individuality and geographical particularity of reading practice is most enthusiastically detailed.

The history of reading, in its appreciation of the 'different practices by which readers in various times and places attribute meanings to the objects of their reading', seeks to explain 'the global by rigorous attention to the local' (Johns 1998, 385). Research in what Chartier terms 'object studies' brings a sociological perspective to the book, viewing the printed text not only as a physical object, but also as a historically and culturally situated phenomenon (Sherman 1995). Object studies reveal social and spatial variations in the interaction of reader and book and account for the resultant interpretative plurality. Locating these reading practices is important. As Chartier reveals, 'Reading is not a solely abstract intellectual operation; it involves the body, is inscribed within a space ... reading habits vary with time, place and milieu' (Cavallo and Chartier 1999, 4–5). *Where, when* and *by whom* books are read, then, matters to *how* they are read (Livingstone 2005a).

Recent work in the history of science, concerned to locate science in social and spatial context, has turned to the book to better understand the processes by which scientific knowledge and ideas are communicated and received (see, for example, Frasca-Spada and Jardine 2000; Blair 2004; Daston 2004; Topham 2004). These bibliographical studies – attending variously to Darwinian evolution, Einsteinian relativity and Newtonian physics – have been united by a desire to expose national and cultural differences in the reception of scientific ideas (see, for example, Glick 1974; Paty 1987; Russell 1991). The geography of reception has been exposed most clearly in these national responses to science. Work by Nicolaas Rupke on the critical reception of Alexander von Humboldt's *Essai politique sur le royaume de la Nouvelle-Espagne* (1808–1811) in Britain, France and Germany has, for example, revealed the influence



of national reviewing cultures upon the popular conception of Humboldt and his writings (Rupke 1999).

The national has served as the *de facto* scale at which the acceptance and repudiation of scientific work is judged. At this scale there exists, however, 'a temptation to homogenize ... heterogeneous reading practices', by assuming a national commonality in the response to books (Friedman 1998, 119). Recent work on the reception of scientific and theological texts attempts to ameliorate this tendency by attending to more overtly local and individual responses (see, for example, Fyfe 1997; Livingstone 2003a). An important and spatially attentive contribution to this reappraisal is James Secord's *Victorian sensation* (2000), which deals with the authorship, publication and reading of Robert Chambers' anonymously-issued *Vestiges of the natural history of creation* (1844). Secord shows that *Vestiges* was read and interpreted differently by its disparate audiences – its interpretative communities. At disparate scales, *Vestiges* was engaged with and understood differently – its meaning varied 'within regions and between them, within cities and between them, within neighbourhoods and between them' (Livingstone 2003b, 115). These distinct engagements with Chambers' book reflect 'geographies of reading', and demonstrate the embodied and situated nature of reading practice (Secord 2000, 153).

In his examination of translations of *Vestiges*, Nicolaas Rupke shows how, by means of additional prefaces, footnote commentary, illustrations and omissions, translators conveyed 'a different message from the one the author had in mind' (Rupke 2000, 210). Whether in the seemingly straightforward process of textual consumption, or in the more complex practices of rendition, mediation and representation, a hermeneutic topography is revealed: space is important; location matters to the apprehension of meaning. Secord and Rupke thus demonstrate that 'meaning is mobile' – that textual significance is not necessarily fixed and spatially transcendent, but is formed in the moment and at the site of encounter (Livingstone 2005b, 95).

Owen Gingerich's work on the reception of Nicolas Copernicus's *De revolutionibus* (1543) is similarly attentive to the sites of book production, transmission and reading (Gingerich 2004). In a census of the extant copies of *De revolutionibus*, Gingerich uses an analysis of provenance and marginal annotations to describe the 'invisible college' – the intellectual network of students, tutors and corresponding colleagues – within which Copernicus's

ideas circulated (Gingerich 2004, 170). Gingerich shows that the reception of *De revolutionibus* depended not only upon its original textual content, but also upon the ways in which individual copies were variously altered and supplemented by their readers. It is evident, therefore, that to speak of the reception of a book is problematic; it is necessary to attend, as far as is possible, to the reading of individual copies of a book – to marginal annotations, and to matters of provenance. In this way, it is possible to observe how the printed text is 'changed physically and contextually over time' – to acknowledge its material as well as epistemic malleability (McKitterick 2003, 224).

It has been noted recently that 'if the history of the book is now an established discipline, the geography of the book is still making up its rules' (Price 2003, 334). Whilst geography has formed an important yet often unacknowledged component in the description and analysis of print culture, its specific and potential contribution to understanding the making, distribution and reading of books has yet fully to be outlined. Recent geographical studies concerned with authorship, publishing and reading have begun, however, to address the geography of the book. From the politics of reading in relation to printed and cultural texts, to the politics of writing in the gendered and commercial project of empire, these works illustrate the potential scope of geography's engagement with print culture (see, for example, Blunt 1994; Philips 2000; Ogborn 2002).

Bertrum MacDonald and Fiona Black have pioneered spatial analytical techniques in the study of print, employing GIS technologies to describe the history of the book in Canada (MacDonald and Black 2000). David Livingstone has proposed an epistemological and methodological framework for the geography of reading (Livingstone 2005a). His four-fold typology describes spaces of textual circulation, sites of hybridity, cartographies of reception and cultural geographies of reading (Livingstone 2005a). Intended not simply as a set of rules by which the geography of the book might be defined, Livingstone's formulation nevertheless demonstrates the utility of a spatial sensibility in describing the production and exchange of texts. Attending to the spaces in which texts are composed, printed, distributed, sold, read and reviewed, the geography of the book attempts to situate ideas, practices and practitioners within geographical context, and to understand how knowledge and ideas are made mobile and circulate between these spaces.

*Bringing geography to the book*

529

In turning to the geographies of Semple's book, I seek to reveal, through an attention to the dissemination, reading and reviewing of *Influences*, aspects of the disciplinary concerns of British geography in the first half of the twentieth century, and to describe how discourses of environmentalism were differently negotiated and understood. More particularly, I hope to explain why *Influences* meant different things to its different readers, and to assess what these distinct interpretative moments reveal. Of particular importance in this regard is a survey on the influence of Semple's book conducted in 1961 by John Kirtland Wright, erstwhile Director of the American Geographical Society. Wright's project – a contribution to a plenary session on Semple at the Association of American Geographers' Annual Meeting – took as its focus the effect of Semple's book on the practice and perspective of geographers in the fifty years following its publication. Wright drafted a questionnaire which he sent to 52 geographers – friends and correspondents of various ages, and of various nationalities – soliciting their recollections of their reading of *Influences*, and the use of the text in their professional experience (AGSA 1961).

Replies to Wright's questionnaire provide an important record of the reading, application and rejection of Semple's ideas – a valuable starting point from which to discuss the use and disuse of *Influences*. Drawing upon the methodological approaches outlined by Rupke, Secord and Gingerich, I complement Wright's census by attending to the published reviews of Semple's book, to its discussion in personal correspondence, and to the marginal annotation of individual copies. In this way, I describe a geographical engagement with print culture and identify certain epistemic and methodological concerns.

**Semple, Ratzel and *Influences of geographic environment***

Ellen Churchill Semple was born in Louisville, Kentucky on 8 January 1863 (James *et al.* 1983). At 15 she entered Vassar College, where she completed an A.B. in History. Following graduation, Semple travelled widely, and in 1887 visited London where she was introduced to Durren J. H. Ward, a recent PhD graduate from the University of Leipzig. In what was later termed the 'turning point in her career', Semple borrowed from Ward a copy of the first volume of Ratzel's *Anthropogeographie* (1882)

(Baugh 1961). She kept the book for six months and, supplemented by a bibliography from Ward, systematically consumed Ratzel's oeuvre (CUA 1932). In Ratzel, Semple found a compelling approach to both geography and history. She resolved to go 'immediately to Leipzig to study under him' (RGSA 1912).

Friedrich Ratzel gave new impetus to the geographical study of human societal and cultural organization (Dickinson 1969). His approach to human geography was informed, in part, by the systematic study of the Earth's physical features pioneered by his near-contemporaries Oscar Peschel and Ferdinand von Richtofen (Crone 1951; Martin 2005). Like Peschel and Richtofen, who advocated the comparative study of representative landforms, Ratzel considered the 'biotic and cultural features' of different social groups in relation to their environment (Martin 2005, 167). Drawing upon his student training in zoology, and upon the work of Herbert Spencer, Ratzel applied Neo-Lamarckian principles to the study of human society (Campbell and Livingstone 1983). Uniting biological, historical and ethnographic concerns, Ratzel's perspective – influenced by Moritz Wagner's 'Migrations-theorie' – was most fully described in his two-volume *Anthropogeographie* (1882, 1891). The first volume dealt principally with the effect of the physical environment upon human history; the second attended more particularly to the social organization of human societies in relation to their environment (Martin 2005). This subtle distinction was important, since it later facilitated both deterministic and possibilistic interpretations of his ideas.

Semple studied under Ratzel at Leipzig in 1891–1892, and again in 1895. When she returned to the United States in 1895, she had evolved from pupil to preceptor, and sought to relay Ratzel's anthropogeographical principles to the English-speaking world, 'but clarified and reorganized' (Martin 2005, 364). Her desire found expression in the *Journal of School Geography*, and it was at the invitation of William Morris Davis, one of the journal's sponsors, that she contributed her first paper (Semple 1897). At the time of its publication, 'geographers were making broad formulations of hypotheses about geography', and, for Davis in particular, Semple's perspective on geographical research, 'based on bold and keen creative insights' seemed to offer a model for a systematic engagement with human geography (HUA 1954).

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In a series of papers between 1897 and 1901, Semple synthesized and represented aspects of Ratzel's geographical philosophy. This work culminated in 1901 with the publication of her most personal work, 'The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky mountains: a study in anthropogeography' (Semple 1901). Semple's demonstration that anthropogeography could be studied in the field, and that environmental influence was a legitimate causal explanation, was significant for those geographers who believed that the promotion of the discipline depended upon an ability to adhere to a scientific and nomothetic approach (Beckinsale 1981). Appearing to satisfy Davis's desire for rational and deductive geographical research, Semple's paper drew positive attention: it 'fired more American students to interest in geography than any other article ever written' (Colby 1933, 232).

Semple's ambition to communicate Ratzel's anthropogeographical principles *in toto* – a seven-year project that became *Influences of geographic environment* – was given impetus by his death in 1904 (Bronson 1973). Rather than present a literal translation of Ratzel's *Anthropogeographie*, Semple sought to re-examine the fundamental principles of his work, to clarify them, to subject them to proof and, where necessary, to reject them. She did not merely relocate Ratzel's book linguistically, but reframed its contents, revised its arguments and supplemented its sources. She sought to

make the research and induction as broad as possible, to draw conclusions that should be elastic and not rigid or dogmatic ... to be Hellenic in form but Darwinian in method. (RGSA 1911a)

Semple hoped to distinguish her text from Ratzel's in several ways. The first was to eliminate the organic theory of society and state, which had formed an important interpretative component of Ratzel's work. In addition, Semple was disinclined to use race as an explanatory category, believing that if people of different ethnic stock, but similar environments,

manifested similar or related social, economic or historical development, it was reasonable to infer that such similarities were due to environment and not to race. (Semple 1911, vii)

Perhaps most significantly, however, Semple's explicit aim was to deny any straightforward relationship between the natural environment and human social and physiological organization. Her

prefatory remarks made this clear: 'the writer speaks of geographic factors and influences, shuns the word geographic determinant, and speaks with extreme caution of geographic control' (Semple 1911, vii).

It is ironic, then, that *Influences* was read precisely as environmental determinism in a number of contexts. In appearing to continue the intellectual tradition of environmentalism – evident in the work of Hippocrates and Aristotle, Montesquieu and Bodin – Semple was labelled 'the modern apostle of determinism' (Freeman 1961, 78; Clacken 1967). Moreover, Semple's disinclination to advance 'definitions, formulas, and ... hard-and-fast rules' exposed something of an idiographic aspect to her anthropogeography which contrasted with the nomothetic interpretation it previously received (Semple 1911, vii).

Despite Semple's intention to speak of geographical influences, rather than of determinants, the text of *Influences* is peppered with language apparently incompatible with her wish. She speaks in terms of the 'pressure of the environment', and about the ways in which the 'environment modifies the physique of a people ... by imposing upon them certain dominant activities' (Semple 1911, 35; emphasis added). For Semple, 'man is as a passive subject', exposed to environmental factors that 'determine the direction' of his development, and 'determine the size of the social group' (Semple 1911, 41–43; emphasis added). The reason for Semple's use of such seemingly inconsistent language is not immediately apparent, and as Wright notes, 'such adverbs as "inevitably," "always," and "everywhere" are favoured' in a way that is at odds with 'the avowals to the contrary in the preface' (Wright 1966, 191).

### The reception of *Influences* in the United Kingdom

On 31 August 1911, Sir Charles Frederick Arden-Close, president of the Geographical Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, presented a 'perfectly astounding' paper at the Association's annual meeting in Portsmouth (RGSA 1911b). Contrary to his position, Close advanced a damaging critique of disciplinary geography, arguing that it was inconsistent in scope, method and epistemology (Close 1911). His central claim, based upon an analysis of papers published in *The Geographical Journal* between 1906 and 1910, was that geography was inadequately

*Bringing geography to the book*

531

scientific. He concluded: 'geography ... must prove its independence and value by original, definitive, and, if possible, quantitative research' (Close 1911, 409).

Close's address drew an immediate response from a number of British and North American geographers. Through a network of private correspondence, they debated the implications of Close's assertion, and discussed potential responses. A public reaction to his criticisms was slow, however, to emerge. This was due to the fact that Close's argument could not be falsified, and that certain members of the geographical establishment were keen to avoid overt displays of division.<sup>27</sup> As one geographer noted, 'Close's address, however unfortunate ... is closely reasoned. Many of the positions he takes up cannot be gainsaid' (RGSA 1911e).

For George Goudie Chisholm, recently-appointed lecturer in geography at the University of Edinburgh, Close's address afforded an opportunity to articulate and defend geography's intellectual position. Chisholm used Close's paper as the basis of his opening lecture to students of geography in Edinburgh in October 1911. Rebutting Close, Chisholm showed his students 'how the function of geography is illustrated in such books as Miss Semple's *Influences of Geographic Environment* and Brunhes' *Géographie Humaine*' (RGSA 1911d). The works of Jean Brunhes and Semple were advanced as models for research in human geography which would 'amply meet the demand of Colonel Close for original definitive research' (Chisholm 1911, 573).

That Chisholm drew upon the works of Brunhes and Semple in this way reflected more than their value in countering Close's damaging assertion. Although Chisholm's research concerns were principally in commercial and economic geography, he maintained a strong interest in environmental influence, and addressed that theme in his inaugural lecture in Edinburgh in 1908 (Chisholm 1908; MacLean 1988). Chisholm's reading of *Influences* and *La géographie humaine* (1910) can be seen to depend both on the disciplinary context within which he encountered the texts, and on his own concern for research in human-environment relations. It is significant, moreover, that Chisholm presented *Influences* and *La géographie humaine* as complementary. Brunhes' perspective on human geography, articulated in *La géographie humaine*, served to 'systematize the French geographical

manifesto for human possibilism' (Lorimer 2003, 207). Semple's volume, by contrast, and despite prefatory claims to the contrary, was predicated upon an environmental determinist perspective. As such, Semple and Brunhes might well have been read in counterpoint, but for Chisholm, at least, their shared research focus was more significant than their antipodal explanatory approaches. Both *Influences* and *La géographie humaine* were recommended texts for Chisholm's honours course in economic geography until 1926.<sup>28</sup>

Chisholm's perspective on *Influences* was rehearsed and expanded in his review of the book, published in *The Geographical Journal* (Chisholm 1912). In earlier correspondence, John Scott Keltie had assured Semple of a 'stunning review ... in the *Journal* by some competent hand', and, whilst Chisholm's review was highly complementary, it was not uncritical (RGSA 1911e). His enthusiasm for Semple's work was such, however, that he believed 'the only English work that can be fairly compared with it' was Henry Thomas Buckle's unfinished *History of civilization in England (1857-1861)*. The degree to which Semple might have appreciated this comparison is uncertain, since Buckle was seen to represent a 'pseudo-scientific' approach to the study of human history in relation to the natural environment (*The Evening Post* 1912). As such, Semple dismissed Buckle – and 'a dozen others as "single factor" determinists' – arguing that his conclusions, based principally upon an analysis of climatic influence, were not supported sufficiently by data (AGSL 1961a).

Chisholm found fault in Semple's adaptation of Ratzel, especially her over-reliance on the first volume of his *Anthropogeographie*. Aspects of Ratzel's second volume, particularly its discussion of 'the structural works of men', Chisholm argued, might have been incorporated usefully into Semple's analysis (Chisholm 1912, 32). This criticism was slight, and Chisholm concluded that 'one cannot be too emphatic in expressing the value of this work' (1912, 32). His enthusiasm was echoed in subsequent reviews. The *Scottish Geographical Magazine* found Semple's book to be not only 'a remarkably complete presentation of geography', but, perhaps more importantly, 'a satisfactory answer – if an answer be required by one of unbiased mind – to the charge lately made that geography is not a science, but a hanger-on of other sciences, a picker-up of crumbs falling from their table' (Anon 1912, 160). Used to rebuff Close's assertion, *Influences* had an

importance beyond its methodological contribution to geography.

The degree to which these reviews were tailored to satisfy the perceived interests of their audience is unclear; as such they cannot be taken as a straightforward indication of the Scottish academic reception of *Influences*. That both Chisholm and the *Scottish Geographical Magazine* chose to juxtapose Semple's book with Close's address might indicate, however, a common reading of her work – the product of the shared practices of an interpretative community. Despite this commonality, it is notable that several newspaper reviews of Semple's book made no mention of Close's address, nor the nomothetic implications of her methodology. The academic and popular critiques of *Influences* seem to represent different reviewing cultures. Whilst the former were concerned with the epistemological implications and potential applications of Semple's book, the latter engaged her text as a work of literature and as a source of intellectual instruction.

For *The Glasgow Herald* (1911), Semple's book, a 'monument of erudition and arrangement', would have been 'an absolutely ideal volume' if only Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian poet and recipient of the 1911 Nobel Prize in Literature, were to have written 'an imaginative supplement to it'. *The Morning Post* (1912a) found fault in Semple's 'occasionally arid' prose, composed with 'brevity that only just escapes being brusque'. The newspaper reviews were united, however, in praising Semple's scholarship, logic and comprehensive reference to authorities. That Semple's formulation of anthropogeography exhibited consistency and utility was carefully highlighted.

Reception of Semple's anthropogeography was facilitated not only by the reading and reviewing of her book, but also by a number of public lectures and demonstrations. Immediately following the publication of *Influences*, Semple embarked on an 18-month world tour. She concluded her journey in Britain, where she received numerous invitations to lecture. Her first such engagement was a two-week summer school at the University of Oxford, organized by Andrew John Herbertson. His biennial summer schools, modelled on those pioneered by Patrick Geddes in the 1880s, exerted a significant influence upon the nature and practice of geography education in Britain during the early twentieth century (Jay 1979). The five summer meetings organized by Herbertson between 1908 and 1914 were attended by more than 850 teachers

of school geography (Baigent 2004). Semple's lectures were an important platform, therefore, from which to communicate her anthropogeographical philosophy. As one newspaper recorded, 'Even if one has read her book, it is always far more inspiring to listen to the spoken word' (*The Evening Post* 1912).

Her associate lecturers included Patrick Geddes, who spoke on the geography of cities, and Herbert John Fleure, who talked on the geography of Wales. Seeking to promote a new approach to geographical research and explanation, Semple arranged with the British publisher of *Influences*, Constable and Company, to have a supply of her book on sale in Oxford. Demand proved strong. Arriving in the city, Semple discovered that 'many of my 200 lecture students had provided themselves with the book' (HHA 1912). She made a favourable impression on her audience – a contemporary newspaper report spoke of her 'stimulating personality', 'eloquent delivery' and 'quiet humour' (*The Oxford Times* 1912). The plausive acceptance of Semple's anthropogeography would seem to depend, then, not only upon its textual representation, but also upon her convincing and enthusiastic oration.

Following her time in Oxford, Semple travelled to London where she was invited to address the Royal Geographical Society (*The Times* 1912). Although women had been permitted to the fellowship of the Society for a brief period in the 1890s, at the time of Semple's visit they were excluded (Bell and McEwan 1996). Infrequent lectures by female explorers – notably Olive MacLeod – were a feature of the Society's programme, but Semple's appearance was sufficiently novel for the *Daily Express* (1912) to report the 'remarkable spectacle of a woman lecturer holding an audience of some of the greatest living scientists spellbound'. Semple's clarity and composure impressed the Society's president, George Nathaniel Curzon. He admired her 'unusual power ... of deducing from the phenomena of material existence large generalizations and scientific laws' (Curzon *et al.* 1912, 607).

Curzon previously had opposed the admission of women to the Society, but moderated his position in response to representations from John Scott Keltie and other Society fellows (Bell and McEwan 1996). His enthusiasm for Semple's work coincided, then, with a reappraisal of the position of women within the institution. It is conceivable that Semple's impressive performance further motivated his reassessment. On 21 November 1912, less than a month after Semple's address, Curzon wrote to the Society's

*Bringing geography to the book*

533

fellowship proposing the admission of women – a resolution that was approved in a subsequent ballot (*The Morning Post* 1912b).

Whilst Semple's gender seems not to have hampered her geographical work in Britain, nor, overtly, to have conditioned the reception of her anthropogeography, gender discrimination was apparent throughout her professional life. Unlike the majority of her female contemporaries, Semple enjoyed the 'fulsome recognition of her [male] peers' and was the profession's 'only female "superstar"' (Berman 1974, 8). This acceptance is attributed to Semple's 'superior means, intelligence, and social position' (Bronson 1975, 112). Her experience was not typical. She was, for example, one of only two women among the 50 founding members of the Association of American Geographers, and, when elected to the Association's presidency in 1922, was its *only* female member – a situation she found vexing: 'I hate this only-woman business' (RCGA 1924). Despite her elevated position within the academy, Semple was not immune from 'mid-Victorian' attitudes which prevailed among male colleagues (Semple 1932). When teaching at Clark University in the 1920s, she was paid significantly less than her male peers despite a 'national and international reputation [that] equalled or surpassed theirs' (Semple 1932; Berman 1974; Bronson 1975).

Recent historiographical work has attempted to recuperate the role of women in geography's history. Female geographers are shown to have made important contributions in school and college teaching, exploration, research and editorial work (see, for example, Zelinsky 1973a 1973b; Rubin 1979; Domosh 1991; Maddrell 1997; Monk 1998 2004a 2004b). Whilst such women have typically been 'written out of histories of geography', Semple seems to occupy an enduring place in the discipline's canon – her work being intimately connected with an important phase of its methodological development (McEwan 1998, 11). Whilst considerations of gender cannot be uncoupled from the contemporary response to her work, the role of gender in the reception of her anthropogeography is notable for its apparent atypicality, at least when compared to the experience of her female compeers.

Despite being praised for the logic and rationality of her scholarship – thereby subverting the conflation of femininity and unreason – Semple's deductive principles were subject to criticism (Lloyd 1984). A subtle condemnation accompanied Herbert John Fleure's review of *Influences* in *The Geographical*

*Teacher* (Fleure 1913). Fleure, whom Semple had met in Oxford, was Professor of Zoology at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, specializing in the study of natural regions and human evolution (Bowen *et al.* 1968). His geographical interests were closely allied with the regional human geography of Paul Vidal de la Blache and Andrew Herbertson, and his perspective on human biological and societal organization drawn from Spencer, Darwin and Geddes (Campbell and Livingstone 1983; Freeman 1987). An enthusiastic physical anthropologist and archaeologist, Fleure undertook extensive fieldwork in Wales, describing and classifying racial types. Charting regional variations in language and physical characteristics – the consequence of an interplay between heredity and environment – Fleure demonstrated his possibilist inclination; he showed that 'the modern environment was an end product deriving its character from the activities of settlers over thousands of years' (Freeman 1987, 38).

As a consequence of his intellectual orientation, Fleure's reaction to *Influences* was 'rather hostile'; he objected to its apparently deterministic environmentalism (AGSL 1961b). As he noted, 'I have thought of men and environment as knit together – neither dominating the other – and I feel that we lose a lot when we say that such & such a fact is due to environmental influence' (AGSL 1961b). Fleure's review considered the practical application of Semple's anthropogeography, and found her causal description of human-environment relations wanting in several respects (Fleure 1913).

With a nod towards Semple's deterministic rendition of anthropogeography, Fleure found it notable that she did not advocate Henri Bergson's notion of 'élan vital' as an explanatory cause (Fleure 1913). Bergson's idea, which Semple *did* discuss at her lectures at Oxford, formed part of a wider doctrine of vitalism, and sought to attribute to evolution a spiritual, non-mechanical guidance – a vital spark that directed the course of evolutionary development (*The Oxford Times* 1912). Despite his sardonic aside, Fleure's criticisms of Semple's approach were utilitarian. He questioned the extent to which her generalizations might usefully be applied to the study of local regions, concluding, 'The reader, who tries to apply Miss Semple's theses to the . . . study of his own locality . . . will find the need of modification in many points' (Fleure 1913, 68).

Fleure, then, did not read *Influences* as the nomothetic manifesto Chisholm, Curzon and the *Scottish*

*Geographical Magazine* had identified. His reading – distanced sufficiently from Close's climactic address, and influenced by his own perspective on regional geography – instead was rather more critical and considered. Fleure did not reject Semple's claims entirely; he employed *Influences* in a pedagogic capacity at Aberystwyth, just as it was at other British academic institutions. These scholarly engagements provide an important means by which to recover the different ways in which Semple's ideas were conveyed to students. They demonstrate that the reception of *Influences* was not a temporally-fixed event, but was a continual process of negotiation.

#### *Influences' textbook career*

Appointed to the newly-created Gregynog Chair of Geography and Anthropology in 1918, Fleure outlined a syllabus influenced strongly by the intellectual triumvirate to which he subscribed: anthropology, geography and history (Bowen *et al.* 1968; Bowen 1987). Rooted in what would later be described as a possibilist perspective, his syllabus at Aberystwyth echoed the French school of regional geography. Despite this orientation, Fleure recommended Semple's book to his students – one of whom, Emyr Estyn Evans, read it in 1923. As Evans recalled, it was presented as a tool by which 'to exercise our critical faculties', rather than a book from which to learn directly (AGSL 1961c). Evans employed *Influences* in the same way when he later taught at Queen's University, Belfast: 'I still recommend students to read the work, warning them, as I was warned, of its weaknesses. At a certain stage I think it is immensely stimulating and I have not known students to suffer in the long run' (AGSL 1961c; Buchanan 2006).

Unlike at Aberystwyth, aspects of environmentalism were favourably incorporated into the teaching of geography at the University of Oxford during the tenure of both Halford Mackinder and Andrew Herbertson (Keltie 1921). When the Honours degree syllabus was put before University authorities for approval in the early 1920s, environmental influence featured prominently in both its physical and human components. The proposed course in 'Principles of Physical Geography' promised 'a study of the influence of geographical conditions ... upon man', whilst the 'Geography of Man' considered the 'influence of geographical environment upon physical type and culture' (Keltie 1921, 9–10).

Around this time, Semple's book – then one of the recommended texts included in the unofficial

booklists issued to students – was read by John N. L. Baker in preparation for the Diploma in geography (AGSL 1961d). Baker, who had recently completed undergraduate work in modern history, was 'quite naturally ... critical of it', but appreciated the fact that *Influences* conveyed to Anglophone readers 'something of what Ratzel had been writing about' (AGSL 1961d; Steel 1995). The value of *Influences* to Baker came from its representation of Ratzel's anthropogeography, rather than from its communication of Semple's own perspective. Despite doubts as to the book's validity, Baker selected a copy as a reward when he was granted the Herbertson Memorial Prize in 1921 (AGSL 1961d). Whilst the titular focus of geography at Oxford seems not to have changed radically in the period between Semple's lectures at its summer school, and Baker's encounter with her text, the Neo-Lamarckian perspective, associated with both Mackinder and Herbertson, appears to have been vogue no longer (Kearns 1985). Despite this change, *Influences* continued to appear on published booklists until the 1960s (AGSL 1961d).

At the University of Cambridge, anthropogeography had formed a core component of the geographical curriculum since the turn of the twentieth century (Keltie 1921, 12). When the Tripos, or Honours, programme in geography was prepared in 1919, anthropogeography was one of six examinable components (Davis 1920, 207). Semple's book was included on the undergraduate reading list as preparatory material for the course in anthropogeography, and was the first book which Henry Clifford Darby purchased upon arrival in Cambridge in 1925. He later recalled the experience: 'Without realising that my geographical soul might be imperilled ... I bought ... E. C. Semple's *Influences of geographic environment* (1911), and read it with interest' (Darby 1983, 16). In his second year at Cambridge, Darby purchased an English-language translation of Lucien Febvre's *A geographical introduction to history* (1925) – 'the antidote to the "Influences"' (AGSL 1961e). Febvre's book was a monograph on the inadequacies of anthropogeography and environmental influence, and 'The major butt of this attack was borne by the luckless Ellen Semple' (Meller 1993, 37). Following Darby's reading of Febvre, *Influences* was 'subject to some pretty severe criticism by my fellow students and myself, to say nothing of our teachers' (AGSL 1961e). At Cambridge, as at Oxford, Semple's *Influences* was no longer encountered favourably. Febvre's critique of

*Bringing geography to the book*

535

the anthropogeographical and environmental perspective, and the emergence of possibilist alternatives, had undermined its credibility.

In contrast to Darby's critical reading of *Influences*, Semple's book was encountered more positively at the University of Liverpool. There, racial geography and anthropology – 'dealt with as of the first importance' – formed part of the course in human geography offered by Percy M. Roxby, who had studied under Herbertson at Oxford (Keltie 1921, 19; Wise 2001). George Tatham, a second-year undergraduate in 1925, read Semple's book in preparation for this course, and found it stimulating. He felt, however, that it did not equal her 1903 book, *American history and its geographic conditions*, which he had read the previous year (AGSL 1961f). Institutional context, then, was important to Tatham's reading of *Influences*. As he noted later, 'Whenever I have encountered people whose opinion of Geography seems to have been adversely affected by "Influences" it has usually turned out to be a result not so much of the book itself but of the way they were introduced' (AGSL 1961f).

Despite Febvre's efforts to 'settle the score with geographic determinism', Semple's book remained an important text in undergraduate education throughout the 1930s (Dosse 1994, 59). It seems probable that it was precisely because Semple's book had been subject to criticism that it received continued attention. Its notoriety served as motivation for Oskar H. K. Spate, who read *Influences* in 1931 whilst an undergraduate student at the University of Cambridge (Ward 2001). The book appealed to him 'because it was ... a standard, full-dress discussion of a problem – environmentalism – which ... has always bulked large in geographical thinking' (AGSL 1961g). Although the popularity of *Influences* had given way at Cambridge to a focus on possibilism and the work of Febvre, Semple's book continued to be read 'by serious students' (AGSL 1961g).

Unlike earlier readers, Spate saw *Influences* (and, by implication, the work of Ratzel), as having made an important challenge to the 'empiricist and anti- (or at best a-) theoretical tradition in social science' (AGSL 1961g). Although Spate, who later advanced work in probabilism, recognized the important contribution that possibilism had made in countering 'a lot of pseudo-scientific junk' associated with environmental determinism, he also considered it to have 'put nothing very positive in its place' (AGSL 1961g). Given this, Spate thought that Semple had been 'too totally cast out' by the geographical

community, and that there was much in Semple's oeuvre that was worthy of consideration (AGSL 1961g). As he noted,

there is a great deal in Semple's book to think over, to verify, to discuss, to dispute ... It is like Marxism, invaluable stiffening of one's philosophical bony structure. (AGSL 1961g)

Whether read as an exercise in philosophical ossification, or as a representation of what human geography once was, might once have been or could have become, *Influences* was, by the mid 1930s, understood no longer to be part of geography's contemporary canon. That *Influences* continued to be read is apparent, however, from copies of the book which survive in 18 British university libraries. Tangible manifestations of private reading practice (date stamps, marginal annotations, worn pages and re-binding) describe an irregular but sustained engagement with Semple's book – a material record of intangible intellectual interaction (Withers 2005). Of these, marginal annotations are particularly revealing. At once a personal commentary and an open proclamation, they attest to the interplay between reader, text and author (Jackson 2001). The motivations for these exchanges are not always clear, but their somewhat illicit nature allows their commentary to be more critical than might otherwise be possible.

The accusation 'RACISM' is proclaimed, for example, on several pages of a copy of *Influences* held by the University of Birmingham.<sup>4</sup> Whilst this undated comment cannot be taken as a proxy for the initial reception of *Influences*, it is apparent that Semple's ideas had been subject to debate in Birmingham's department of geography since the early 1920s, where Febvre's possibilism exerted a significant influence. One student, Michael Wise, was issued a 'firm warning' in relation to Semple's apparent determinism by the department's head, Robert Kinvig, who chanced upon him reading *Influences* (Wise 2001, 113). Whilst Semple's expressed concern had been to eliminate race as an explanatory category, it is clear that, for several readers likely encountering the book several decades after its publication, *Influences* conveyed quite the opposite message. For one at the University of Sheffield, Semple's discussion was 'racialist',<sup>5</sup> whilst for another at the University of Oxford, *Influences* was methodologically unsound: it 'doesn't embrace falsification principle ... unscientific'.<sup>6</sup>

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Of these comments, the last is particularly significant. The positive reception of *Influences* in the years immediately following its publication depended upon its perceived scientific qualities. That Semple's thesis was seen to afford a nomothetic approach to geographical research ensured its approbation. Yet, its reception was neither spatially nor temporally uniform – its *raison d'être* was undermined by an increased attention to the Vidalian tradition of regional geography, introduced through the work of Febvre and Brunhes. The British geographical engagement with Semple's notions of environmental influence might be dismissed, then, as transitory, but I would suggest that it was more significant. Although Semple's ideas did not dominate in Britain to the extent that they did in the United States, they provided an important framework around which disciplinary geography was constructed. Rather than serve merely as a methodological guide, Semple's book had, particularly for early readers, a totemic significance – its epistemic proclamations were an important indicator of geography's disciplinary remit.

### Conclusion: the geography of *Influences*

The historical geography of *Influences* is concerned both with the 'bibliobiography' of 'one of the greatest formative works in the geography of the English-speaking world', and the description of a set of ideas later dismissed as 'bunkum' (Tatham 1951, 147). That *Influences* meant different things to different people, at different times and in different places is clear, and a full discussion of these disparate interpretations would, as Wright has noted, 'call for an even longer book than *Influences* itself' (Wright 1966, 192). What is significant in these apparent contradictions is what they reveal about the academic readers of Semple's book, the disciplinary contexts within which they engaged *Influences*, and the role of the text in communicating ideas of environmental influence.

Attention to the ways in which *Influences* was reviewed upon its publication in Britain shows its reception to be in large measure a question of its perceived usefulness in outlining a scientific methodology for geography. For Chisholm, and for the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, *Influences* spoke to a particular moment when discipline was concerned not only with its academic institutionalization, but also with its epistemic and methodological bases. It would be inaccurate to suggest, however, that the

reception of Semple's ideas depended simply upon a pragmatic assessment of their applicability. Affirmation of her perspective was a function of the Neo-Lamarckian approach evident in the work of Mackinder and Geddes, among others (Kearns 1985). The fact that Semple's ideas could be seen to build upon Spencerian Social Darwinism by advancing a more nuanced multi-causalism, meant that her work represented an important contribution towards the Neo-Lamarckian scheme.

The reception of *Influences* cannot be reduced simply to a single moment or type of encounter. Whilst the response to it was 'most vigorous and vital' in the years immediately following its publication, it continued to be read widely during the first half of the twentieth century, and has been variously engaged with by subsequent generations of geographers (Wright 1966, 191). Perhaps the most significant challenge to *Influences* came with the publication of Lucien Febvre's *A geographical introduction to history*. At base, Febvre's criticisms related to the generalizing principles with which Semple's ideas were seen to be underpinned. For Febvre, the 'older technique of generalization and comparison' was logically flawed – he advocated, instead, the study of specific geographical regions, and their particular qualities (Barnes 1926, 64).

Although the tension between Semple and Febvre appears to reflect that between a nomothetic and idiographic conception of geography, this is not so. Regional geography was promoted using the very arguments that had ensured the earlier enthusiastic reception of Semple's book – namely that it would provide for geography 'a method of research ... appropriate and peculiar to it' and one sufficiently rigorous that 'geography may find its logical position among the sciences' (Unsted 1930). Put simply, the acceptance of Febvre's anti-environmentalism depended not only upon the rejection of Semple's 'hollow dogma', but also upon the scientific imperative, the desire to legitimize geography, which seemed to characterize disciplinary self-assessment in the first decades of the twentieth century (Livingstone 1992, 290).

It is possible to chart the geography of *Influences*. The different ways in which it was read – engagements which varied across space and through time – constitute nodes in an intellectual topography through which Semple's ideas moved. The reception of *Influences* reflected more than its material circulation; it was a question of individual engagements with the text, of disciplinary contexts, and of the

*Bringing geography to the book*

537

ways in which ideas of environmental influence were differently staged in their discursive venues, both public and private. In this way, geography matters both in understanding the circulation of books, and in accounting for the circulation of knowledge.

Although the geography of the book is still defining its remit, it is apparent that a spatial sensibility has influenced much recent work in the history of the book, and the history of science more generally. In tracing the reception of scientific ideas, attention to the different local readings of scientific texts makes it possible to see not only how ideas move between places, but also how they are modified, challenged or accepted as a consequence of local circumstances. The geography of the book is not limited, however, solely to the reception of texts; its concern ranges from the macro-geographies of book production and distribution, to the micro-geographies of bookshops, libraries and the printed page itself. In attending to the cultural geography of books in these spaces, and across a variety of scales, print culture can be understood to be profoundly, and importantly, a matter of geography, and a matter for geography. By attending to print's spatial component, the geography of the book might contribute to mapping the complex social processes by which books exist both as material objects and as cultural artefacts. In so doing, it suggests new ways in which the circulation and consumption of texts and thus of knowledge might be understood.

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**Notes**

1. Oxford University School of Geography and the Environment Library, call number M.59a, pages 299 and 620.

2. Hugh Robert Mill, librarian of the Royal Geographical Society, was keen to mitigate press reporting of Close's remarks. As he later noted, 'I induced the Times man to suppress the controversial part'. Royal Geographical Society Archives, CB8/24, Mill to Keltie, 23 September 1911.
3. The Edinburgh University Calendar 1925–1926 (James Thin, Edinburgh).
4. University of Birmingham Main Library, shelfmark GB 95/S, barcode 01374205, pages 119, 620, and 626.
5. University of Sheffield Library, shelfmark B 910.01 (S), page 189.
6. Oxford University School of Geography and the Environment Library, call number M.59b, page 1.

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- AGSL 1961c Replies. Evans to Wright, 14 April 1961
- AGSL 1961d Replies. Baker to Wright, 30 April 1961
- AGSL 1961e Replies. Darby to Wright, 17 April 1961
- AGSL 1961f Replies. Tatham to Wright, undated
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539

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540

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#### Abbreviations

AGSA: American Geographical Society Archives

AGSL: American Geographical Society Library

APS: American Philosophical Society Library

CoU: Columbia University (Rare Book and Manuscript Library)

CU: Clark University (Archives and Special Collections)

CUL: Cambridge University Library (Department of Manuscripts and University Archives)

DU: Denison University (Archives and Special Collections)

EUL: Edinburgh University Library (Special Collection)

HUA: Harvard University Archives

NL: The Newberry Library

NLW: National Library of Wales

OUA: Oxford University Archives (Bodleian Library)

PU: Princeton University (Department of Rare Books and Special Collections)

RGS: Royal Geographical Society

UC: University of Chicago (Special Collections Research Center)

UCB: University of California at Berkeley (The Bancroft Library)

UCoB: University of Colorado at Boulder (Archives)

UK: University of Kentucky (Special Collections and Digital Programs)

USD: University of South Dakota (Archives and Special Collections)

WC: Wellesley College Archives

WKU: Western Kentucky University (Museum and Library)

YU: Yale University (Manuscripts and Archives)

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Wilma B. Fairchild to Wright, 26 March 1961.

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Preston E. James to Wright, 11 April 1961.

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John Leighly to Wright, 29 March 1961.

Robert S. Platt to Wright, 3 April 1961.

Philip W. Porter to Wright, 30 March 1961.

Walter W. Ristow to Wright, 18 April 1961.

Richard J. Russell to Wright, 5 April 1961.

Oskar H. K. Spate to Wright, 4 April 1961.

George Tatham to Wright, undated.

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