José Clemente Orozco

in the United States, 1927–1934

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The Epic of American Civilization: The Mural at Dartmouth College (1932–34)

Jacquelynn Baas

The Picture speaks to me of truths impossible for me to put into words and of which I did not ever know before.

— MAX BECKMANN

Interpreting Orozco's Epic[1]

The Reverend Eleazar Wheelock founded Dartmouth College in 1769 in Hanover, in what was then the royal province of New Hampshire. Dartmouth was chartered by the king for "the education and instruction of Youth of the Indian Tribes in this Land ...and also of English Youth and any others." Its predecessor was Moor's Charity School, which Wheelock had established in Lebanon, Connecticut, in 1754, ostensibly for the purpose of educating the local Indians, an idea more popular among both schools' English supporters than among the purported recipients. The nation's ninth-oldest college, Dartmouth was named in honor of its benefactor, the second earl of Dartmouth, to whom, in 1768, Wheelock sent "a small specimen of the produce and manufacture of the American wilderness": a pipe, tobacco pouch, knife case, and several other articles.[2]

Dartmouth's remote location in the New England wilderness fostered an active commitment on the part of its faculty and administration to providing students with examples of the "natural and moral world," as museum and library collections were thought of in the eighteenth century. This commitment to providing accessible cultural resources continued into the twentieth century. One of its most notable manifestations is *The Epic of American Civilization,* the mural that José Clemente Orozco was commissioned to paint in the large basement-level reserve reading room of Baker Library in the spring of 1932. Built in 1928 and lovingly maintained and expanded since then, Baker Library is both the physical center of the campus and the intellectual center of college life. The reserve reading room still retains its original function and is thus not only a public space but a place where more than three generations of Dartmouth students have spent a great deal of time (figs. 158, 159, and 160).

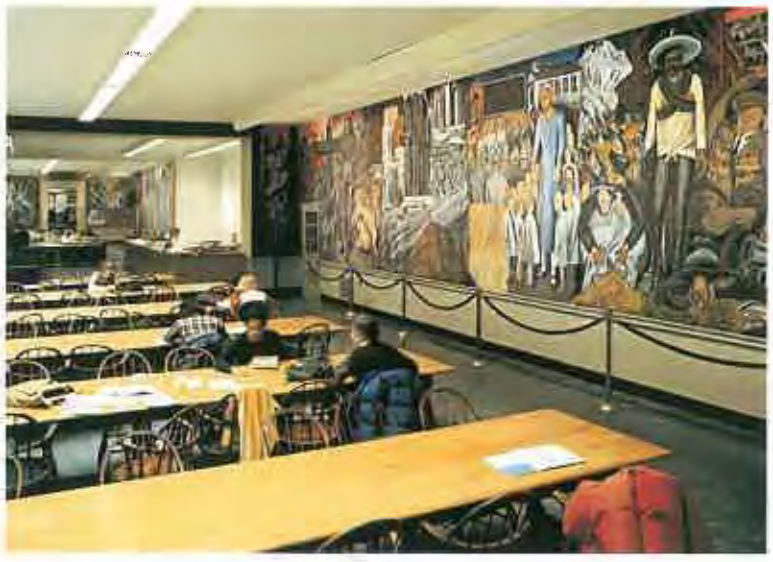
Figs. 156 and 157 · Views of west wing (top) and east wing (bottom), reserve reading room, Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, 1930s, photographs courtesy Dartmouth College Library.

The Epic of American Civilization is a pivotal work in the career of one of the most significant

artists of the twentieth century. José Clemente Orozco was fifty years old when he left Dartmouth in the winter of 1934. Although even greater artistic achievements lay ahead, *The Epic of American Civilization* remains one of the most developed summaries of Orozco's philosophy. It is also, in the opinion of many critics, the greatest mural cycle in the United States. Yet, outside Dartmouth, published studies of the mural have been few, and none, with the exception of Lewis Mumford's perceptive 1934 article in the *New Republic,* has focused exclusively on this masterpiece.[3] In this first section and in those that follow, I shall attempt to provide an account of its development and bring a number of issues to bear upon its interpretation.

A key to understanding Orozco's work in general and *The Epic of American Civilization* in particular is an awareness of the relation between the artist's passionate idealism and his pessimism. Spain's greatest filmmaker, the late Luis Buñuel, declared that "man is never free, yet he fights for what he can never be, and that is tragic."[4] Orozco's sense of the human condition was based on a similar conviction of tragic impasse. Two years before embarking on the Dartmouth mural, Orozco painted a mural at Pomona College titled *Prometheus,* a theme that was strongly influenced by Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound,* which Eva Sikelianos had produced in 1927.[5] When the chorus of that play asks the tormented Titan the nature of his transgressions against the tyrant-god Zeus, Prometheus gives two. Conveying fire to mortals, by which they shall "master many arts," is not the first he cites. First place is given to the planting of "blind hope" in the heart of man, taking from him the "expectancy of death." Prometheus, unlike man, unlike even Zeus, has the gift of foresight. But all his news is bad news. If his defiance of tyranny brought the wrath of Zeus upon him, his certain knowledge of impending disaster is the only weapon he has; it is his key to freedom.[6]

Orozco knew death. As Michael Brenson has pointed out, "Death…is the ultimate wall, and death is perhaps the ultimate subject of Orozco's art."[7] It is more omnipresent even than the violence, corpses, and cadavers that litter his works—the same, after all, could be said of many artists of his generation (and others). With Orozco, death is always there, no matter what the subject. Its presence can be as mild as the anxious expressions worn by the ostensibly happy family at the New School (fig. 139) or as threatening as the beckoning black rectangles that are the leitmotif of his art, from his 1926 fresco *The Gravedigger* at the Preparatory School (fig. 161),



Figs. 158–160 · View of west wing (left), general view (center), and view of east wing (right), reserve reading room, Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, about 1980, photographs by Jochen Littkemann.

Fig. 161 · **The Gravedigger,** 1926, fresco, National Preparatory School, Mexico City, photograph by Bob Schalkwijk.

Fig. 162 · **War,** 1926–28, ink on cardboard, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City/INBA 16983.

to the omnipresent gaping black doorways in his drawings and prints, such as *War* (fig. 162), to the great *Metaphysical Landscape* (fig. 278), painted one year before his own death.

Orozco's knowledge was shaped by the experience of ten years of civil war that gripped Mexico during the second decade of the twentieth century, at the outset of his career. He tells us what the revolution meant to him in his autobiography, the tone of which shifts into ironic gear whenever the subject threatens to engage his emotions: "To me the Revolution was the gayest and most diverting of carnivals, that is, of what I take carnivals to be, for I have never seen one."[8] His drawings tell another story, as does his friend Jean Charlot: "Not until 1926 did Orozco put down in a black-and-white set of drawings the cruel images that had festered in his heart for over a decade. Even so, the artist shied away from the fact that what once had been flesh, bone, and blood—mostly blood—now was art. When I suggested Goya's war etchings as a prototype for the series, Orozco reproved me, in the soft subdued voice he used when in anger: 'I am not Goya. Goya is only a painter.'"[9] This indirect, ironic response was typical of the artist's verbal, in contrast with visual, communication. For Orozco, art was not just painting; it was how he communicated the things he knew. Through his art, he shared his trauma and his anger, which he insisted over and over, in many forms, are our trauma and should be our anger. We may or may not want to know, much less believe, but he will say it anyway. This was his role.

Orozco was twenty-seven when the revolution began and thirty-four when he left Mexico for San Francisco in 1917. Some measure of the brutality he witnessed during those years is conveyed in the fifth chapter of his autobiography:

> The world was torn apart around us. Troop convoys passed on their way to slaughter. Trains were blown up. In the portals of churches wretched Zapatist peasants, who had fallen prisoners to the Carrancistas, were summarily shot down. People grew used to killing, to the most pitiless egotism, to the glutting of the sensibilities, to naked bestiality.... In the world of politics it was the same, war without quarter, struggle for power and wealth...underneath it all, subterranean intrigues went on among the friends of today and the enemies of tomorrow, resolved, when the time came, upon mutual extermination.[10]

Because he was haunted by the savage treachery of this period, Orozco's humanist idealism took a resolutely apolitical form. He saw the dogmas of political and religious salvation, like concepts of race and nationality, as idols corrupting understanding, preventing the emancipation of the human spirit. Only by throwing off the shackles of the

Fig. 163 · **Christ Destroying His Cross,** 1923, fresco, National Preparatory School, Mexico City, Archivo Fotográfico IIE-UNAM.

Fig. 164 · General view of frescoes, 1937–39, Hospicio Cabañas, Guadalajara, photograph by Bob Schalkwijk.

Fig. 165 · **Man of Fire**, 1937–39, fresco, Hospicio Cabañas, Guadalajara, photograph by Bob Schalkwijk.

creeds and prejudices that have enslaved humankind to authoritarian purposes can a "New World," a genuine harmony of individual expression and social purpose, come into being.[11]

The American continent, where migrating peoples have mingled for centuries, figured in Orozco's imagination as the symbolic stage for his ultimate triumph of the human spirit. The walls of the reserve reading room in Baker Library at Dartmouth College, a school whose own history encompassed "Indian Tribes…English Youth and any others," struck him as a perfect location for his vision, the key elements of which he had distilled well before coming to Dartmouth. In 1929 he had been given the opportunity to express his views in the January issue of *Creative Art*: "The Art of the New World cannot take root in the old traditions of the Old World nor in the aboriginal traditions represented by the remains of our ancient Indian peoples. Although the art of all races and of all times has a common value—human, universal—each new cycle must work for itself, must create, must yield its own production—its individual share to the common good."[12]

Orozco's title for his Dartmouth mural, *The Epic of American Civilization*, may have been influenced by his New York colleague Thomas Hart Benton's ambitious painting series of 1923–30, *The American Historical Epic*. (Orozco's patron Alma Reed showed Benton's work at her Delphic Studios gallery, and in 1931 Benton had recommended Orozco to the Dartmouth art faculty.[13] Inspired by Spencer's *History of the United States*, Benton's series eventually comprised eighteen paintings, although he had planned to do seventy-five.[14] He included racial and economic conflict in his

visual history, which he organized into "chapters." But his perspective was different from Orozco's: Benton's series was, in the end, an anti-epic. He wished "to present a people's history in contrast to the conventional histories which generally spotlighted great men, political and military events, and successions of ideas."[15]

Traditionally an epic is a long narrative poem on a heroic theme. Early epics, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* are written versions of national oral legends. The conventions of the modern literary epic include a hero who founds a new civilization (a "city of destiny," like Virgil's Rome) in a mythic time that is continuous with known history. This hero performs notable deeds, often including a descent into the underworld. The style of the epic is appropriate to its exalted theme and is characterized by extended similes in which apparently different subjects are extensively compared. This format, which would have been familiar to Orozco through his affiliation with Eva Sikelianos's and Alma Reed's Delphic Circle, was well suited to his mural aesthetic, which found its inspiration in heroic, dualistic themes of conflict, self-sacrifice, and regeneration.

The Dartmouth hero, Quetzalcoatl, is allied thematically with other tragic heroes adopted by the artist during this middle period of his career: the Christ destroying his cross, who made a first, brief appearance at the Preparatory School in 1923 (fig. 163) and reappears in the Dartmouth cycle; Pomona College's *Prometheus* of 1930[16] (fig. 110); and the magnificent *Man of Fire* from 1939 in the dome of the Hospicio Cabañas in Guadalajara (figs. 164 and 165). The fate of the Man of Fire, who rises to heaven in flames, is an alternative to that of Dartmouth's Quetzalcoatl, who departs on a raft of serpents. In another version of the myth,[17] Quetzalcoatl immolates himself, ascending in flames to heaven, where he becomes the Morning Star. Whatever their nominal identities, Orozco's mythic heroes were united by a common mission of self-sacrifice for the sake of the enlightenment and liberation of humankind. For Orozco, whose aesthetic was imprinted by the experience of the Mexican Revolution, this liberation is a painful and tragic process whose outcome is far from secure.

Orozco took advantage of the division of Baker Library's reserve reading room into east and west wings to portray America's "two cultural currents," the indigenous and the European. A sequential listing of the twenty-six panels of *The Epic of American*

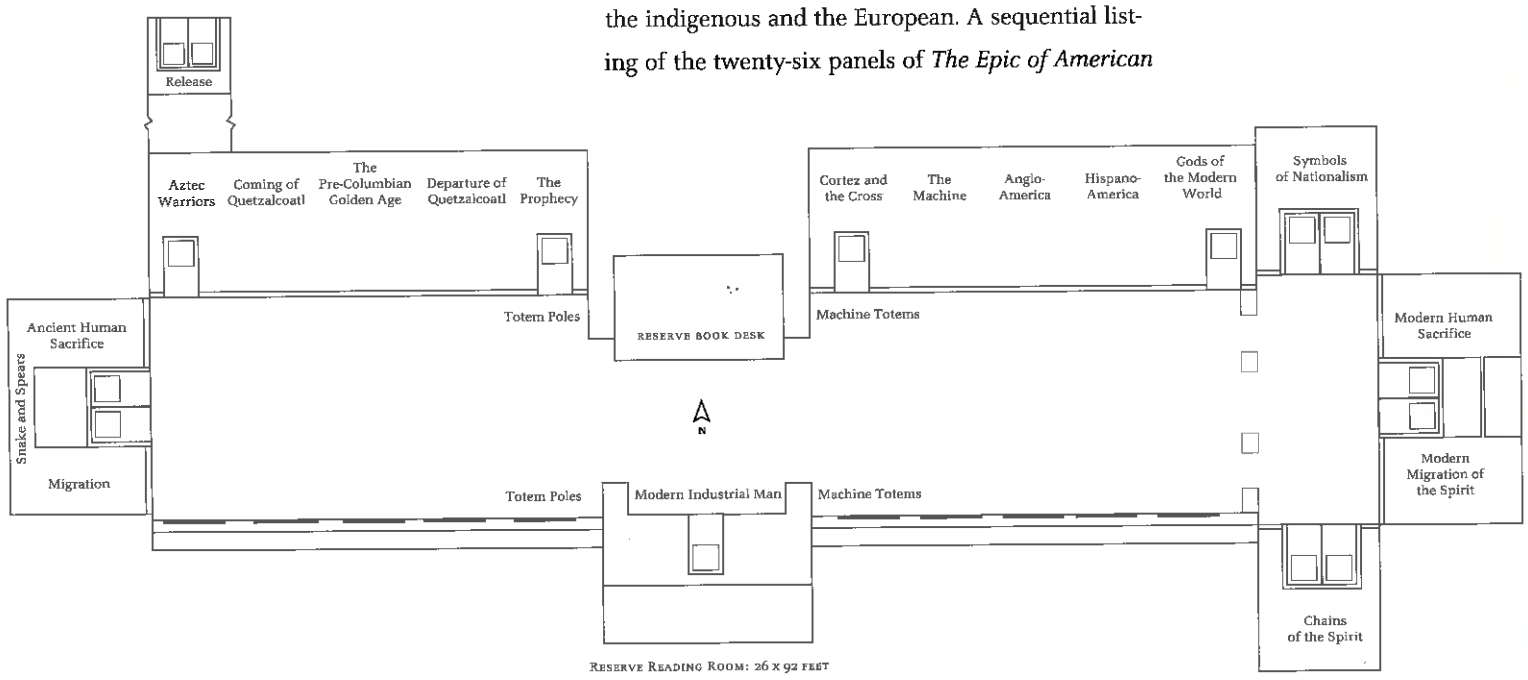
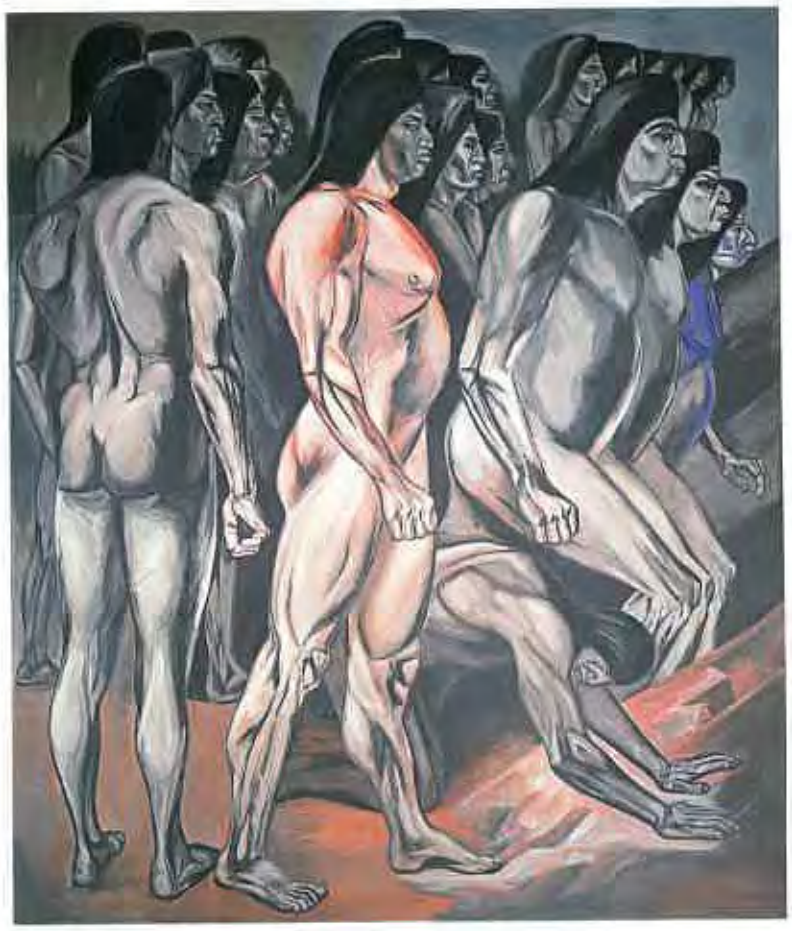


Fig. 166 · Diagram of **The Epic of American Civilization,** 1932–34, fresco, reserve reading room, Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, created by Barbara Krieger.

Civilization (fig. 166) from left to right is useful for the discussion that follows, but it should be kept in mind that their arrangement is not strictly chronological, either internally (in keeping with a historical order of events) or externally (the order in which they were painted). On the left-hand panel of the western end wall of the reserve reading room is *Migration* (fig. 167). To its right, over the doorway in the center of the western end wall, is a small panel, *Snake and Spears* (fig. 168). Balancing *Migration,* on the right side of the western wall, is *Ancient Human Sacrifice* (fig. 169). Turning the corner to the long north wall of the west wing, *Aztec Warriors* (fig. 170) decorates the small panel over the door that leads to the hallway connecting Baker Library with the art history building, Carpenter Hall. (Orozco painted *Release* [fig. 193] over a door in this hallway.) The north wall features three large compositions: *The Coming of Quetzalcoatl* (fig. 171), *The Pre-Columbian Golden Age* (fig. 172), and *The Departure of Quetzalcoatl* (fig. 173). The departing Quetzalcoatl points to another small overdoor panel at the end of the wall: *The Prophecy* (fig. 174), which was in fact the first panel Orozco painted in the reserve room.

The last two compositions of the west wing, together called *Totem Poles* (figs. 175 and 176), were painted on the tall, narrow wing walls that flank the entrance to the central reserve desk portion of the room. Their opposites are the *Machine Totems* (figs. 177 and 178), painted on the wing walls at the west end of the east wing. The long north wall of the east wing features five compositions: *Cortez and the Cross* (fig. 179), *The Machine* (fig. 180), *Anglo-America* (figs. 181 and 27), *Hispano-America* (figs. 182 and 28), and *Gods of the Modern World* (fig. 183).



The eastern end of the east wing is contained within an alcovelike space. On the north wall of this alcove is another small overdoor panel, *Symbols of Nationalism* (fig. 184). Two large compositions flank the doorway of the east wing, corresponding to those of the west wall at the far end of the room: *Modern Human Sacrifice* (fig. 185), showing a victim of modern warfare, and *Modern Migration of the Spirit* (figs. 186 and 66), with its battered but triumphant Christ. Another small overdoor panel, *Chains of the Spirit* (fig. 187), completes this section. Finally, across from the reserve desk, on the south wall at the center of the room, is a depiction of contemporary American life in five compositions on three panels collectively titled *Modern Industrial Man* (figs. 188, 189, 190, 191, and 192).

Fig. 167 · **Migration** from **The Epic of American Civilization,** 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 105 in (305 x 267 cm).

Fig. 168 · **Snake and Spears** from **The Epic of American Civilization,** 1932–34, fresco, 24 x 93 in (61 x 236 cm).

Orozco thus presents the mythic history of the Americas up to the arrival of Cortez in the west wing of Baker Library's reserve reading room, while the European-influenced, "modern" phase is presented in the east wing, along with a mythic vision of the future in the form of *Modern Migration of the Spirit.* Both parts of the mural cycle contain a prophetic figure—Quetzalcoatl in the west wing, Christ in the east wing—linked by Cortez, the historical antihero.

Commission and Response

The idea of bringing José Clemente Orozco to Dartmouth to execute a mural seems to have occurred to members of the art faculty at Dartmouth around the time their new building, Carpenter Hall, was completed in 1929. The following year the department's chairman, Artemas Packard, supported by a young member of the art faculty, Churchill P. Lathrop (who had brought Orozco's work to Packard's attention), began a campaign to realize their vision of obtaining for the college the services of one of the two important Mexican muralists then working in the United States, Diego Rivera and Orozco. According to Lathrop, Orozco was the preferred choice from the beginning.[18] They organized several exhibitions of Orozco's prints and drawings in the galleries of Carpenter Hall in order to make his work better known in northern New England. The persistence of Orozco's New York dealer, Alma Reed, was an important factor in Orozco's favor and may have helped to offset a tendency among potential supporters of a mural for Carpenter Hall to

Fig. 169 · **Ancient Human Sacrifice** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 105 in (305 x 267 cm).

Fig. 170 · **Aztec Warriors** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 74 x 56 in (188 x 142 cm).

Fig. 171 · **Coming of Quetzalcoatl** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 205 in (305 x 521 cm).

favor the better-known Rivera. Chief among these supporters was the Rockefeller family; Nelson Rockefeller, Dartmouth class of 1930, had been a student of Lathrop's.

On February 20, 1931, Reed wrote to Packard that Orozco wanted to "go on with the type of work that he did in Pomona College and which he calls the New World epic painting—taking great traditional themes, such as the Prometheus, and giving them a meaning for today." On May 22, Packard responded, stating that members of the art department had been thinking of this project and how it might be accomplished, and that "some of us are predisposed in favor of Señor Orozco." Moreover, he wrote, the exhibition of Orozco's lithographs that Reed had sent to be shown at the Carpenter Hall galleries the previous year had done "a good deal to prepare the way for him. We have been thinking for a long time of the advantage of having some good murals in our Art Building and have been slowly encouraging the idea among those who might be interested in helping the project. These questions present themselves repeatedly: 1. How much would it cost? 2. What choice would we have as to subject and design—i.e., how would we know we were getting what we wanted? & 3. How would we choose the right man to do them?" Three days later Reed answered that the cost "would depend entirely upon the surface to be covered and the condition of that surface." As for subject matter, "Orozco feels that a subject may be selected in either of two ways. First, there is the entirely personal, original conception of the artist, influenced by the functional aspects—the use and geometry of the wall to be decorated. The second source, which he feels, strongly, offers appropriate subjects for the decoration of a college or university, is the great, eternal and universal material of Greek mythology, given a modern and original application to the problems and psychology of our own age."

Reed went on to argue why Orozco should be Dartmouth's choice, proposing the mythological

Fig. 172 · **The Pre-Columbian Golden Age** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 175 in (305 x 445 cm).

Fig. 173 · **The Departure of Quetzalcoatl** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 205 in (305 x 521 cm).

Fig. 174 · **The Prophecy** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 74 x 56 in (188 x 142 cm).

subject of Daedalus. Reed's description of Orozco's themes provides a valuable perspective, not only on his earlier *Prometheus* mural at Pomona College but on ideas he was to develop at Dartmouth:

> At Pomona College, California...he has depicted in a panel, 26 feet high by 35 feet in breadth, Prometheus, as the symbol of the creative artist, whose face and hands are burned for every new gift brought to humanity—mankind, perhaps, remaining indifferent. The emphasis of this interpretation of Aeschylus is on personal heroism—the struggle—the pursuit of highest values regardless of reward or gratitude. For the decoration of an art building, a great theme suggests itself—the myth of Daidalos in its original Greek connotation—"Daidala," in the most ancient usage, meaning "works of art." Orozco has a splendid interpretation and modern application of this myth based upon man's striving to escape from the mechanistic—the urge towards pure creation—the release of the creative faculties. He also has several other subjects which he would be pleased to submit as soon as he knows the available wall space and the number of panels desired.

These two motifs—selfless rebellion against tyranny for the sake of human values and the freedom to create—were linked. For Orozco, the highest human ideal was "the release of the creative faculties." Prometheus's gift of fire was the dual gift of creation and liberation from dependence on a tyrannical god. Although the final mural would, to say the least, encompass "several other subjects," this would remain its theme.

Fig. 175 and 176 · **Totem Poles** from **The Epic of American Civilization,** 1932–34, fresco, each 120 x 30 in (305 x 76 cm).

Fig. 177 and 178 · **Machine Images** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, each 120 x 30 in (305 x 76 cm).

Chairman Packard did not make much headway with raising funds for an art department mural.[19] By November 1931 Reed was again pressing him about Orozco's interest in the Dartmouth mural project: "I am wondering if there is any development on the matter of the murals for Dartmouth. Do you not think it would be advisable for Sr. Orozco to submit his drawings for the project, based, of course, on the architectural setting for the murals? He would be pleased to come to Dartmouth at any time, on his own responsibility, in order to take measurements."

Orozco's offer to come at his own expense to assess the scope of the project was a turning point. Members of the art department responded with a creative idea for funding a mural by José Clemente

North wall overview, pre-Cortesian section, continuous scan by Hany Farid.

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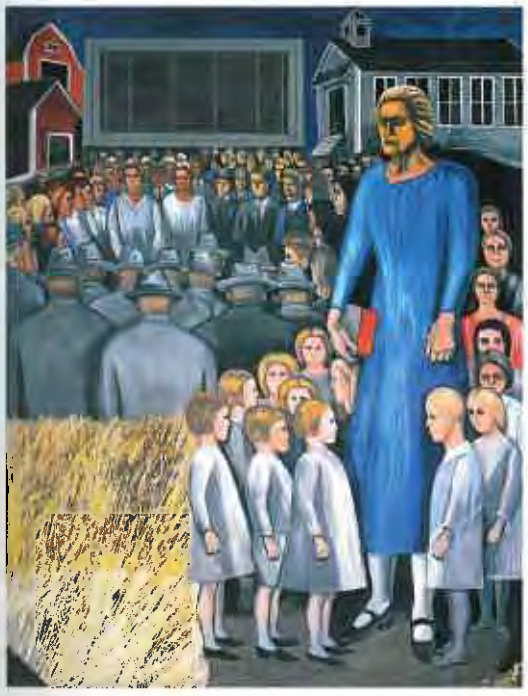

Fig. 179 · **Cortez and the Cross** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 182 in (305 x 462 cm).

Fig. 180 · **The Machine** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 118 in (305 x 300 cm).

Fig. 181 · **Anglo-America** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 103 in (305 x 262 cm).

Fig. 182 · **Hispano-America** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 119 in (305 x 302 cm).

North wall overview, post-Cortesian section, continuous scan by Hany Farid.

Orozco for Dartmouth. Churchill Lathrop recalled: "Early in 1932, we had a brilliant revelation, an idea that might move the stalled project off dead center. The department had a small lecture budget;[20] so, why not invite Orozco to give a lecture-demonstration on fresco painting? Such an unusual lecture, by a scholarly artist, would attract considerable student and community attention, and it would produce a few square feet of fresco: a small sample mural. Work-in-progress on even a small mural would have educational value. Also, the presence of Orozco would give the community the chance to observe his skill and judge his character."[21]

Finally, on the weekend of March 18–20, 1932, Orozco visited Dartmouth. During discussions of the project, he and members of the art department became excited at the possibility of his executing a mural in a much more favorable location than

Fig. 183 · **Gods of the Modern World** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 119 in (305 x 302 cm).

Fig. 184 · **Symbols of Nationalism** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, over door area: 55 x 96 in (140 x 244 cm).

Fig. 185 · **Modern Human Sacrifice** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 130 in (305 x 330 cm).

Fig. 186 · **Modern Migration of the Spirit** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 120 x 126 in (305 x 320 cm).

Fig. 187 · **Chains of the Spirit** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, over door area: 55 x 96 in (140 x 244 cm).

Carpenter Hall. They set their sights on the large reserve reading room on the ground floor of Baker Library, with which Carpenter is linked by a pedestrian passageway. On April 6, Packard wrote President Ernest M. Hopkins:

> I have completed arrangements with José Clemente Orozco to come to Dartmouth under the auspices of the Department of Art during the first week of May "to give instruction in the technique of fresco painting." For purposes of demonstration he will use the brick walls of the passageway connecting Carpenter Hall and Baker Library. It is specifically understood that the total cost of this undertaking is not to exceed $500. Aside from its immediate value to students in Art courses, Mr. Orozco has graciously consented to do this as a means of helping us arouse interest in our larger scheme of obtaining a series of mural paintings for Carpenter Hall. In order to spare him any professional embarrassment I have agreed not to announce publicly the fact that the painting he does at this time will be in the nature of a free will offering and is not to be paid for at the rates expected of a man of his standing.

Whether or not Hopkins was aware of it, Packard was being disingenuous on the point of just where he hoped the "larger scheme" for a series of mural paintings would emerge. The library reading room was already in his mind. This is evident from a much-edited draft of a letter Packard intended for President Hopkins, written three weeks later but apparently never sent; at least, no copy of a final letter exists in the Dartmouth archives. Dated April 26, 1932, the draft reads:

> Mr. Goodrich [Nathaniel L. Goodrich, then librarian of the college] has become very much interested in the possibility of getting Orozco to do something on the walls of the nearby basement corridor of the library. I have told him the Department of Art would be perfectly willing to relinquish any prior claim for Carpenter Hall if the way seemed clear to keep Orozco on working after he finishes the small piece which

Fig. 188 · Left-hand panel, **Modern Industrial Man** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 114 x 59 in (290 x 150 cm).

Fig. 189 · Left-hand panel, **Modern Industrial Man** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 114 x 60 in (290 x 152 cm).

Fig. 190 · Central panel, **Modern Industrial Man** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 40 x 214 in (102 x 544 cm).

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he has agreed to do for us—since the library walls in question (which Orozco has not seen) are infinitely preferable from every point of view to the walls in the passageway between Carpenter and Baker for his particular type of painting.

Knowing that Mr. Orozco has been saving what he conceives to be the most important idea of his career (what he calls an "Epic of America") until just the right wall for it was offered him, I have begged him to bring a set of sketches with him when he comes next week showing how he might develop this theme for the spaces in the library, if those walls were made available. Since such large spaces are not easily to be found, I am pretty sure that he will become so eager to do his masterpiece there that the question of immediate remuneration will bother him as little as in the case of the comparatively small job in the passageway.... In short, we stand a good chance of getting a great deal more than we originally bargained for and I am extremely anxious to make no mistake at this crucial point in the proceedings.

The message was received, for on April 28 President Hopkins wrote a memorandum to the college treasurer, Halsey Edgerton: "You doubtless have heard that we are bringing the latest sensation in mural painters, or at least one of the two latest sensations, to Hanover in the person of Orozco. I have offered to utilize $500 of the Rockefeller tutorial money to pay for his presence here, partly because he may be that useful to the Department of Art and partly because of Mrs. Rockefeller's enthusiasm about these two Mexicans."

An argument for commissioning wall decorations for the college would not have been easy to make during the Depression, when members of the faculty were sustaining reductions in their salaries. President Hopkins's diplomatic skills (as well as his wit) are evident in his justification of this expenditure to the conservative college treasurer:

> Fortunately, Orozco, who is a flaming red communist, is favorably disposed toward us as an institution, which he considers eleemosynary. He makes the distinction that the faculty are not eleemosynary and ought to be annihilated because they profiteer on the students' need for education. This is a particularly interesting point of view at the present moment. He likewise is said to have told Mrs. Bliss, while he was doing a mural in her house, that he hoped she would be assassinated.[22]

All of this detail is written because of the fact that I have agreed with Mr. Goodrich that I should be glad to have the walls of the reserve desk room downstairs in the Library covered with some kind of color, be it good, bad, or indifferent. Presumably Orozco's is good, even though I can't make anything out of it.

Fig. 191 · Right-hand panel, **Modern Industrial Man** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 114 x 59 in (290 x 150 cm).

Fig 192 · Right-hand panel, **Modern Industrial Man** from **The Epic of American Civilization**, 1932–34, fresco, 114 x 60 in (290 x 152 cm).

> Likewise, if we were reckoned as capitalists, I suppose we would have to pay $25,000 to $50,000 for having it done.[23] If he is willing to do it for $500, why well and good.
>
> This is really a letter of warning. Please do not oppose him at any point. I'd hate to lose a good treasurer and you represent all that he abhors.

The next day Packard cabled Reed that chances looked extremely good for the "larger project if we can turn interest in that direction the moment Orozco arrives." Indeed, Packard organized a barrage of campus publicity for the artist's second visit to the college on May 2, 1932. The college newspaper, the *Dartmouth,* carried a series of articles. Under a headline J. C. Orozco to Exhibit Art of Painting Fresco, the *Dartmouth* of Monday, May 2, cited the initial Daedalus plan, noting that "the location where Orozco will work has not yet been definitely decided.... Announcement of the location and scope of his work will be made later in the week, at which time his sketches will be available for publication."

The fresco that Orozco painted upon that occasion (figs. 193, 194, 195, and 196) has been titled variously *Release, Man Released from the Mechanistic,* and, more descriptively, *Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life.* It was originally proposed as a focal point of a mural cycle in the corridor connecting Carpenter Hall and the library[24] on the theme of the Greek mechanical genius Daedalus. According to Orozco, the subject of this small panel was intended to be "post-war" in theme. In a press release dated May 25, 1932, he was quoted as stating that *Man Released from the Mechanistic* "represents man emerging from a heap of destructive machinery symbolizing slavery, automatism, and the converting of a human being into a robot, without brain, heart, or free will, under the control of another machine. Man is now shown in command of his own hands and he is at last free to shape his own destiny." That Orozco seriously

Fig. 193 · **Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life,** 1932, fresco, 89 x 89 ½ in (226 x 227 cm), Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.

Fig. 194 · Orozco on scaffold with **Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life,** May 1932, photograph courtesy Dartmouth College Library.

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Fig. 195 · Study for **Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life**, 1932, graphite on paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.262.

Fig. 196 · Study of a hand (back) for **Man Released from the Mechanistic to the Creative Life**, 1932, graphite and red chalk on tracing paper mounted to laid paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.992.20.1.

Fig. 197 · **Daedalus: Project for Fresco mural,** 1932, reproduction of a drawing from Alma Reed, **José Clemente Orozco** (New York: Delphic Studios, 1932), n.p.

considered a larger mural cycle built around the theme of Daedalus is indicated by a drawing in one of his notebooks that gives the plan of this corridor with extensive notations regarding the painting space available along both walls[25] and by a drawing with the caption "Daedalus: Project for Fresco Mural, 1932," which was reproduced on the last page of Alma Reed's 1932 picture book *José Clemente Orozco* (fig. 197).[26] The flaming head of the sun in this drawing resembles Orozco's own visage, suggesting an identification on the part of the artist with his self-sacrificing Man of Fire god-heroes.[27] The myth of Daedalus, on which Alma Reed was so keen, would have taken him down another path. He had been content to please her when the theme suited him, as at Pomona College, and when she was the de facto patron, as at the New School. But in considering the larger space in the Dartmouth library reserve room, Orozco abandoned the Greek mythological subject that Reed had been promoting. In a letter of May 22, 1932, she confessed to Packard:

> I felt very foolish on the train when I glanced over Orozco's note-book and realized how completely he had organized the Quetzalcoatl project. He had written me nothing about this and I had no chance to talk it over with him while at Dartmouth, so it all came as a surprise …now I realize how silly my suggestion of placing Daedalus on the other large panel must have seemed to you. As Orozco pointed out, there is enough material in the Quetzalcoatl

> myth, as he already conceives of it, to fill every wall in the college.... Orozco is very insistent upon the present and future aspects of the theme which lifts it entirely out of the historic and archaeological class.

In his own prospectus for the Dartmouth mural (handwritten on Hanover Inn letterhead), Orozco outlined his theme:

> The American continental races are now becoming aware of their own personality, as it emerges from two cultural currents—the indigenous and the European. The great American myth of Quetzalcoatl is a living one embracing both elements and pointing clearly, by its prophetic nature, to the responsibility shared equally by the two Americas of creating here an authentic New World civilization. I feel that this subject has a special significance for an institution such as Dartmouth College which has its origin in a continental rather than in a local outlook—the foundation of Dartmouth, I understand, predating the foundation of the United States.[28]

A more schematic version of Orozco's intentions at this early moment in the project is preserved in Packard's handwritten notes from his May 1932 discussions with Orozco:

> The Epic of Civilization on the American Continent developed in terms of the American myth of Quezacoatl [sic] (the symbol of the Power of Good in the Universe).
>
> (It is to be understood that there is no literary or other record of the exact implications of this ancient myth of Quezacoatl and that this interpretation grows out of the inspired idealism and creative imagination of Orozco. There is no paralele [*sic*] to it in existence. It is in every sense an *original* work not a work derived or imitated from any other man.)

There follow two more pages of notes in which Packard recorded his preliminary discussions with Orozco about the development of the cycle. These reveal that the two long north walls of the reserve room were originally planned to "represent the constructive, affirmative, *positive* aspects of the myth." Specifically, the north wall in the west wing was to depict "the Plumed Serpent (Quezacoatl) representing *Heaven & Earth*." Here Quetzalcoatl "comes among the Toltecs and teaches them the arts. This brings about a long period of Prosperity, Peace, Fraternity and great accomplishments: Architecture, creation of American agriculture—maize, squash, fruits etc.—various handicrafts." The north wall of the east wing would have depicted the "New Culture of the American continent according to the prophecy of Q.: New Culture / New Religion / New Art / New Architecture (Spanish-Ren.-N.Y.) / The Machine as a factor human happiness. The Dream of an Ideal Culture of the Future growing out of all this."

In contrast, the four panels of the west and east walls were intended to represent "the barbaric aspects of human nature (both European and American) operating against the constructive civilizing forces of human nature." On the two west panels would have been shown the "destruction of the Toltec Empire & Coming of the Aztecs: *Xochitl* discovers alcohol (pulque from the maguey plant) and presents it to the King Tecpaucoltziu. (This represents the destructive vices and superstitions—opposite of the influence of Quezacoatl) and brings about the resumption of human sacrifices." The two east panels were to have depicted the "destruction of the Indian civilizations (from Alaska to Patagonia) by the White Man. *Conquest* (Cortez) Destruction of all the indigenous civilizations—introduction of modern weapons of destruction."

With her letter of May 22, Alma Reed enclosed an outline that was more developed. It indicates that the two long, north, "positive" walls would each have been divided into three sections. In the west

wing (which was executed essentially as planned), Orozco intended to present Quetzalcoatl appearing among the Toltecs, "The Golden Age," and "The Prophecy." Two small overdoor panels on this wall were to show "The Migrations from the North" and the "European Invasion." The east wing would have continued with "The Return of Quetzalcoatl," "The Future Golden Age," and "Our Time," while two overdoor panels here would have represented "Agriculture" and "Science and Industry."

This second outline contained minor alterations in Orozco's original scheme for the four panels of the west and east "barbaric" walls. The theme of drunkenness had disappeared and, in addition to "The Aztec Invasions," the west walls were to show "Huitzilopichtli, God of War." The east walls would have depicted "Spaniards—Cortez, and War between Europeans and Indians." General information was also provided about the content of four narrow vertical panels opposite the west and east walls, subjects that seemed to be less resolved: "Decorative panels; Natural products of Continent. Figures." Finally, subjects were proposed for the section at the center of the south wall, opposite the reserve reading desk: "'The Mayflower' / The Norseman / Immigrants, to America."

Packard made several weekend visits to New York to discuss details of the commission, and on June 9, 1932, a contract was signed by J.C. Orozco, Artemas Packard, and Dartmouth's treasurer, Halsey Edgerton. Here it is agreed that Orozco would complete a mural project comprising 2,090 square feet (this figure apparently did not include the section across from the reserve desk) and give "such instruction in the technique of fresco painting as he cares to at his convenience." The project was to be completed within eighteen months, and the artist was to be paid a total of $5,200: $4,000 in compensation and $1,200 for travel, room, and board.[29] Upon the execution of the agreement $250 was paid, while $1,250 was to be paid on the completion of the "panel on which Orozco is now working." (Orozco had begun the right-hand west wing overdoor panel [fig. 174] in early June; the $1,250 paid on its completion later that month financed a three-month trip to Europe.) Beginning in the fall, increments of $200 were to be paid on the first of each month, with the balance payable upon completion of the project.

Ultimately, Orozco was paid considerably more. By November 1933 it was clear that he would not complete the project by January 1. President Hopkins's respect and concern for the artist are revealed in a memorandum he sent to the college bursar on November 23:

> In the development of [Orozco's] murals...he has taken on much added space over anything that was originally contemplated.... With the additional work to be done, however, and with the decreasing span of time, it has seemed to me perfectly apparent that the last panels would have to be a slap-dash effort, largely without the merit of the careful work done on others.... On the other hand, I should be very unwilling to have him quixotically continuing his work and meanwhile being in financial distress because of added contribution.
>
> Consequently, I took up with the Trustees at their last meeting the general principles involved and received their favorable assent to going on with Orozco up to July first...payments to cease, however, at such point before July first as his work may be completed. There was also a $500 appropriation for materials. In short, at the expiration of the present arrangement, will you please continue payments to Orozco so long as he may be here at the rate of $2500 for six months, and will you make available to him $500 for expenses in connection with materials, etc. for his painting.

Orozco finished the mural on February 13, 1934. Three days later President Hopkins instructed the bursar: "May I ask for such slight irregularity as may be necessary in your practices to make Mr. Orozco's final payment at the present time and to have it figured on the basis to April 9. He is completing his work almost immediately and technically we are not obligated beyond the present month, but I should like to include the extra month's allowance for the sake of covering every possible question and making it the more comfortable for him to get his family back to Mexico."

In total, then, Dartmouth College paid José Clemente Orozco approximately $7,000 for painting *The Epic of American Civilization,* in addition to $500 for *Man Released from the Mechanistic.* Accounting records further show that the college incurred $2,177.05 in expenses in connection with the project, for a total cost of approximately $10,000.[30] This was the figure used by Hopkins in subsequent correspondence, although at the artist's request, the cost of the mural was treated in a confidential manner.[31]

On June 18 and 19, 1932, a little more than a week after the contract had been signed, the commission was heralded in a two-part article in the *Dartmouth* by Leo Katz, who, Alma Reed tells us in her biography of Orozco, was an "internationally known artist, author, and lecturer" chosen by her to assist the muralist in the early phases of the project (fig. 198).[32] Despite its positive tenor, Katz's article hints at potential problems with the public perception of the Dartmouth commission.

> I have been at many institutions where the desire to be progressive has been quite obviously on the program. Almost invariably, alas, I found a stubborn and paradoxical attempt to deal with new problems along conventional lines.... Of all this I haven't found a trace in Dartmouth. I don't hesitate to admit that I am utterly amazed at the courage and broadmindedness with which this institution has acted in this particular case. One has to come from a hot-house center like New York, where lately an unhealthy ballyhoo about "national art," "American art for America," and similar battle cries have saturated the atmosphere of the art world, ...in order to appreciate the fact that there exists a place far removed from the centers of "Art" where silently out of a sincere desire to fight in the front trenches of life and to catch up with the...changes that are so essentially characteristic of our time a plan was conceived and made possible which is so much nearer to the truly creative nature of the very heart of our burning problems of art and culture.[33]

That Dartmouth was not quite such an ivory tower as Katz implied is indicated by a letter of June 29, 1932, from Hopkins to Packard. Hopkins instructs Packard to cease his independent fundraising for the project, citing the problematic public perception that the college was raising money for "extravagant"

Fig. 198 · Orozco and Leo Katz on scaffold with **The Departure of Quetzalcoatl**, June 1932, photograph courtesy Dartmouth College Library.

purposes. "Likewise," Hopkins wrote, "the always present reservations in a small group of our local people has been present so that I am trying to give due attention to the policy of an ounce of prevention ...in anticipating troubles which may arise."[34]

Katz's article was intended to ease acceptance of a project that, by its very nature, was bound to be controversial.[35] In her biography of the artist, Alma Reed relays an account by Katz of his time at Dartmouth as Orozco's assistant that provides a more personal point of view:

> On Sundays Orozco used the day mostly to concentrate on the work of the coming week, while I usually dictated to a secretary some article in defense of the painter for the College bulletins and magazines. Already during the first months appeared numerous protests from alumni and other interested people against having this "beautiful New England College" ruined by what they called "brutal Mexican stuff." They had to be reminded that Dartmouth was founded for the Indians. I really admired the College president because he refused to listen to all that unfriendly, sometimes even threatening outpouring of narrow-minded prejudice. Professor Packard, the head of the Art Department, was a steady, enthusiastic admirer and never seemed to doubt the importance of the undertaking.[36]

Critics of the project tended to fall into three camps. First there were those, alluded to in the letter of June 29, 1932, to Packard from President Hopkins, who regarded the project as an extravagance, not appropriate for a sober New England college like Dartmouth, particularly during hard times. Second, the fact that the college had hired a Mexican artist was the focus of a chauvinistic brand of protest that was particularly ironic in light of Orozco's criticism in the mural itself of just such destructive nationalistic impulses. These critics had been mentioned in the spring of 1932 by Katz in the *Dartmouth,* with his reference to the "unhealthy ballyhoo" in New York about "'American Art for America.'" The situation did not improve. One year later, in June 1933, a group of American artists organized themselves into a National Commission to Advance American Art and drew up a "regret list," with Dartmouth at its head. The national press picked up the story, and Dartmouth gained notoriety in the *New York Times* and other eastern papers for "employing a Mexican painter to depict 'The Epic of Culture in the New World.'"[32] When artists like John Sloan and Rockwell Kent rose to Dartmouth's defense, however, the ultimate result was, within the art world at least, more positive than negative.[38]

The third source of criticism was a predictable defensive reaction to Orozco's strong imagery and unflinching social commentary. These took the form of letters to the president and comments in the media. An unusually polite protest was sent to Hopkins from a group signing its letter simply "Boston Mothers": "When our sons go to college a great many temptations come into their lives to drag down rather than build up character.... Therefore, why not do as much as possible to uplift.... Hanover has such beautiful scenery, that pictures of her hills in winter and summer, her campus, her winding rivers, etc., would have made an ideal subject for mural paintings. something beautiful to remember rather than hideous subjects. We would be everlastingly grateful to you if the pictures could be destroyed."[39]

Other comments were less decorous: "The walls of Dartmouth now contain as savage an attack on American civilization as ever issued from the councils of red revolution. Orozco has shouted forth in paint the Communist Manifesto. He has laid on the indictment without mercy, subtlety or humor. What he says seems bitter and surprisingly naive. We will do well to accept his challenge...clear out such corruption."[40]

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President Hopkins's responses to such suggestions were unfailingly kind but firm in support of the principles of a liberal education:

> There are those who do not like to change their pre-conceived ideas in regard to what music or poetry or paintings should be, and to them, of course, all modern work of this sort is anathema. There are 100% Americans who have objected to the fact that we employed a Mexican to do this work, but I have never believed that art could be made either racial or national. There are those who object to the fundamental ideas suggested, but my conception of a college is a place where such ideas should be considered. There are those who object to some of the panels…who do not consider them quite "nice," but certainly if that be a criterion of judgment many of the great works of the medieval masters would have to be removed from the Louvre and other galleries restricted to the greatest in art.[41]

The numerous suggestions from alumni and others that the frescoes be destroyed were undoubtedly influenced by the commissioning and destruction of Diego Rivera's mural at Rockefeller Center in 1933–34. Against the wishes of his patron Nelson Rockefeller, Dartmouth Class of 1930, Rivera painted the head of Lenin in a fresco commissioned as the centerpiece of the new RCA Building. When Rivera was dismissed on May 9, 1933, and the unfinished panel finally destroyed on February 9, 1934, the resulting publicity had inevitable repercussions at Dartmouth.[42]

It should be kept in mind that the protests that greeted Orozco's public murals in the United States were no stronger, and in fact were considerably

Fig. 199 · Work in progress on the west and north walls of **The Epic of American Civilization** (Orozco on scaffold with **Ancient Human Sacrifice** and two observers), fall 1932, photograph courtesy Dartmouth College Library.

Fig. 200 · Orozco with **The Departure of Quetzalcoatl**, June 1932, photograph courtesy Dartmouth College Library.

less violent, than the reactions that had greeted his work in Mexico less than a decade earlier.[43] Also, in comparison with the financial problems associated with the commissions for Pomona College in Claremont, California, and the New School in New York City,[44] the Dartmouth situation must have seemed close to ideal. In his autobiography, Orozco had this to say about Dartmouth: "The Administration and the 2500 students of the College were enthusiastic in their support of the Fine Arts project, so I set to work. I had complete freedom to express my ideas; no suggestion or criticism of any sort was ever made."[45]

The marked shift in focus from plan to finished project that characterized the Dartmouth mural had already surfaced in Orozco's previous major mural commission, the Preparatory School murals in Mexico City. Jean Charlot, his colleague there, pointed out that only one of the many themes proposed in Orozco's first program ever corresponded with a completed panel.[46] Moreover, of the panels he painted in the first campaign in 1923–24, most were destroyed or altered and repainted by the artist in 1926. There too the mood went darker. Charlot described the shift as "from a constructive to a destructive assertion, from optimism to pessimism."[47] Orozco was quite capable of developing a program to please a client, but the final result was another matter. Where he stuck with the program, as at the New School, the result was wooden and unconvincing. Where he left the path for parts unknown, as at Dartmouth, the results were astonishing.[48]

Orozco signed and dated his last Dartmouth panel (fig. 177) on February 13, 1934. Three days later there was a dinner for him, his wife, Margarita, and others involved with the project. The student leader for this celebration, Carl B. Hess, read the following statement from President Hopkins, who could not be present: "I want to bespeak the satisfaction that I have had officially and personally in the presence among us of Mr. Orozco as a guest; I want to testify in regard to the sweetness of character and the loftiness of motive which have inspired his work; and I wish to make a record of the high value I attach to the personal influence he has exerted while among us and the abiding worth of the pictorial art which he leaves with us."[49]

After another three days, Orozco, Margarita, and their three children returned first to New York and then to Mexico. The artist's final statement about his accomplishment was published in the *Dartmouth* on February 17: "Each panel has been a new experience, it has presented new problems. I have experimented with color, and organization of material. I am just beginning to realize what I have done and what all this has done to me." It is an unusually candid and vulnerable statement, this admission that, for Orozco, mural art was a process, not a program.

The West Wing: The Coming and Departure of Quetzalcoatl

The murals in the west wing of the reserve reading room in Dartmouth's Baker Library form a coherent cycle around a mythic moment in the ancient history of the Americas, a vision of cultural fulfillment that was extinguished by jealousy, superstition, and aggression (fig. 199). Associations with the name Quetzalcoatl range from that of a religious icon—the plumed serpent whose earliest-known images date to the second or third century and

whose dualistic symbolism encompassed heaven and earth—to that of legendary leader Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, whom the Aztecs, who saw themselves as the cultural heirs of the Toltecs, promoted as a Toltec culture hero who thus would have lived sometime in the ninth to twelfth century. Written versions of oral accounts of the Toltec priest-ruler Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl are preserved in about a dozen variants in Spanish, French, Italian, and Nahuatl (the language of the Aztecs). Of the last, only five fragments survive, all dating to the mid-sixteenth century and recorded by Friar Bernardino de Sahagún in codices now in Madrid and Florence. Perhaps not surprisingly, given his own religious calling, Sahagún's interpretations, along with those of the other influential historian of the Aztecs, Fray Diego Durán, emphasized the Christ-like attributes of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, particularly his self-sacrifice for the sake of his people.[50]

Whatever Orozco's intermediate sources,[51] he seems to have based his visual account of Quetzalcoatl primarily on Fragments C and D of the Sahagún codices. The first portrays Quetzalcoatl as savior and bringer of light, while the second describes the fall of the Toltec empire along with an account of Quetzalcoatl's departure on a raft of serpents. As he himself emphasized,[52] however, Orozco did not simply turn this material into a narrative. Rather, he adapted its archetypal features—the bringer of civilization who is cast out by his own people and prophesies his return after a period of destruction—to his own sense of the frustrated hopes of human history. Our interpretation, then, must be guided by the artist's visual cues rather than by any particular version of Quetzalcoatl's protean identity, either as a legendary figure or as a pre-Cortesian god.

Orozco began his work in the reserve room with one of the smaller panels, *The Prophecy* (called *Europe* at an early stage), over the door at the east end of the long west wing wall, nearest the central

Fig. 201 · Study for the **Pre-Columbian Golden Age**, 1932–34, gouache on paper, Orozco Farias Family Collection.

delivery desk (fig. 174). This would seem an odd place for the artist to begin, but at this point the contract had not yet been signed and the commission was apparently not fully secure. In an unpublished account written by Carlos Sánchez, an artist from Guatemala who had graduated from Dartmouth in 1923 and became Orozco's assistant, we learn why the color appears to have been applied in smaller, more delicate strokes in this panel than elsewhere:

> Still being on trial, he had to paint another tentative panel in the Baker Library basement next to the space in the middle of the hall, where they dispensed books and received returned books from the students.... If I remember correctly, it represented riding medieval knights in armor. These were painted not in Orozco's fast strokes, but in what he himself of others would derogatorily call "estilo lamidito." Mexicans use a lot of diminutives. *Lamido* is what a dog does when he licks his wounds. "Lamidito," applied to painting, means that the artist goes over the same area over and over again, like an artisan, not like an artist painting with "bravura," because his demon impels him to express himself.... Lamidito is something like a school exercise. The work suffers because of this.[53]

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The delicate fresco technique of *The Prophecy* does resemble that of the earlier *Release* (fig. 193) more than that of its neighboring *Departure of Quetzalcoatl* (fig. 173), the panel to the immediate left of the little overdoor panel he had just finished. With the contract presumably in hand, Orozco painted the top portion of *Departure* in a markedly freer style. He left for Europe before completing this composition (fig. 200).[54]

After his return, Orozco painted at the opposite end of the long north wall the complementary overdoor panel to *The Prophecy,* the panel showing *Aztec Warriors* (fig. 170), where stonelike faces emerge from eagle and jaguar costumes emblematic of the warrior class. Aztec warriors engaged in a continuous "sacred war." The primary purpose of this systematized aggression was to supply sacrificial victims whose hearts and blood would feed the sun and thus ensure the wellbeing of the universe. In the foreground of this composition is a monumental sculptured head of a feathered snake: Quetzalcoatl as the plumed serpent, icon of Aztec power. Similarly, the complementary panel depicting the European invasion shows armor-masked soldiers bearing the Christian cross in the form of a huge piked weapon (fig. 174). This image declares the militant nature of the god into which European culture transformed Christ and his teachings. Thus, on either side of the scenes that depict the appearance of the legendary Quetzalcoatl, his golden age, and his departure, we are offered complementary glimpses of the organized brutality of a humanity alienated from what Orozco called the "Power of Good in the Universe."

Between these two bracketing images, we are addressed by *The Coming of Quetzalcoatl* (fig. 171).[55] According to various accounts, this Toltec priest-ruler created fire, fostered the cultivation of corn and the art of carving stone, developed the science of astronomy, and discouraged the practice of human sacrifice. Quetzalcoatl's appearance in the Dartmouth mural accords with descriptions of him as clear-eyed, white-bearded, white-robed, and powerful.[56] In Orozco's painting, the humanity of Quetzalcoatl's piercing eyes and powerful hands breaks the spell of the earlier gods arrayed behind him. According to Artemas Packard's artist-approved description, they represent "the figures of the older gods who symbolize the forces which influence the destinies of men. From left to right they are specifically the God of Greed [Xipe Totec], dressed in the skins of his victims; the God of Magic [Tezcatlipoca], with feet of smoking mirrors; the God of Rain and Storm [Tlaloc]; the God of Death [Mictlantecuhtli]; the God of War [Huitzilopochtli], with feet of feathers; and the God of Fire [Huehueteotl], whose home was in the cone of the volcano Orizaba."[57] In contrast, Quetzalcoatl "is represented as arousing

Fig. 202 · Composition study for left half of **The Departure of Quetzalcoatl**, 1932–34, gouache on paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; w.988.52.81.

men from their intellectual and spiritual torpor to learn the arts of civilization. To the right of the sleeping figures is a group of people conversing together on the porch of a Toltec house, a symbol of the beginnings of co-operation and understanding without which no society can exist."[58] To the right, in a panel called *Agriculturist, Sculptor, and Astronomer,* are depicted personifications of "the outstanding accomplishments" of the Toltecs (figs. 172 and 201).

This legendary golden age of Quetzalcoatl, which takes up over half of the long west wing wall, is depicted as a peaceful time of cooperation, creativity, and understanding. Orozco's expressive emphasis across the length of this wall is on the classically balanced powers of eyes and hands, signifying knowing and doing, the true sources of human culture. Bringing the light of knowledge and peace, Quetzalcoatl awakens the human race from isolation and ignorance to cooperation and creativity.

But the complementary human tendency toward superstition, greed for power, and aggression compels the beneficent hero-god to depart on a raft of serpents. In *The Departure of Quetzalcoatl*

(figs. 173 and 202), the enemies of Quetzalcoatl are depicted as "evil priests and magicians who sought by a series of treacheries and enchantments to counteract his beneficent influence and to regain control for the powers of darkness over the minds and hearts of men. Witchcraft and human sacrifice were re-established and in their wake followed war, disease, and the destruction of Tollan, the great Toltec city."[59]

This last major panel of the west wing shows a "disappointed messiah, who, renounced by his people, departs into the East...on a boat made of serpents, prophesying that he would return in five hundred years with other white gods who would destroy the civilization of those who failed to follow his precepts and set up a new civilization in its stead" (figs. 203 and 204).[60]

Historically, this prophecy was fulfilled by the coming of Cortez, the Spanish conquistador who was identified by the Aztecs with the returning Quetzalcoatl. Because of the magnificence of Teotihuacán, the ancient site north of Mexico City that was excavated by Manuel Gamio during the Mexican Revolution, this city was believed during Orozco's time to be the legendary Toltec capital Tollan. The result of Gamio's extensive work, *La población del valle de Teotihuacán,* was published

Fig. 203 · Study of Quetzalcoatl for **The Departure of Quetzalcoatl**, 1932–34, crayon on tracing paper, 32 ¼ x 24 ⅛ in (81.7 x 61.1 cm), Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Clemente Orozco Valladares, photograph ©2001 Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Fig. 204 · **Self-Portrait**, 1932–34, gouache on paper, Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection of Twentieth-Century Art, The Vergel Foundation, New York.

by José Vasconcelos's Secretaría de Educación Pública in three massive volumes in 1922. Gamio's volumes were in the collection of Baker Library when Orozco was working there (they had entered the collection on October 21, 1930), and the artist no doubt consulted them in the course of planning his compositions. (In his autobiography Orozco relates that Baker Library had "a collection of books in Spanish which by itself is greater than many very important libraries in Spanish America."[61])

The two pyramids above which Quetzalcoatl rises in the Dartmouth mural are the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon at Teotihuacán (fig. 205). Despite his scorn for "Mexicanist" painters who imitated the style of pre-Cortesian frescoes in their own work, Orozco had a great deal of respect for the artistic accomplishments of the ancients in the realm of both art and architecture. For example, in a letter dated April 25, 1928, he wrote to George Biddle: "[B]y [no] means fail to see the ruins of San Juan Teotihuacán, better than Egypt, one hour by railroad from the City of Mexico or by automobile. You will never forget the piramids [*sic*], frescoes, subways, museum and small towns nearby."[62] The sculptor carving at the center of Orozco's *Agriculturist, Sculptor, and Astronomer* (fig. 172) is creating decorative architectural motifs similar to those found at Teotihuacán, illustrated in Gamio as "Fragments of frescoes in the 'Temple of Agriculture'" (fig. 206). Appropriately, Orozco's sculptor is working directly next to a grower of corn.

These motifs also show some resemblance to the carved stone architectural elements excavated in the mid-1920s at the Toltec-Mayan site of Chichén Itzá, Yucatán. Moreover, the temple-topped pyramid that serves as a backdrop for the treacherous priests in *The Departure* (fig. 173) resembles the edifice at this site known as El Castillo (fig. 207). Orozco's friend and correspondent Jean Charlot worked every January through May from 1926 through 1929 at Chichén Itzá, serving as staff artist for excavations sponsored by the Carnegie Institution. The two-volume publication of this excavation, *The Temple of the Warriors at Chichén Itzá, Yucatán,* appeared in May 1931 and entered the collection of Dartmouth's Baker Library the following month.[63]

Alma Reed too had close personal links with Chichén Itzá, and in her biography of Orozco she asserts her role in the planning of these panels: "I supplied assorted data on the culture of the ancient Maya—much of which Orozco used. I was familiar with the subject as a result of my archaeological studies in Yucatan where I reported the Carnegie excavations at Chichen-Itzá for the *New York Times.* It is possible that I communicated some of my own ardent admiration for the mother race of the American continent, especially for its great culture hero, Kukulcan, the Maya embodiment of Quetzalcoatl, to whom many admirers likened Felipe Carrillo Puerto."[64]

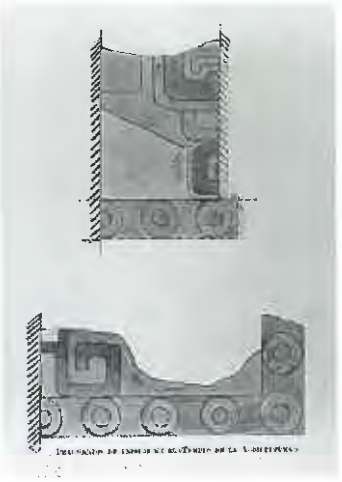

Fig. 205 · "Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán," from Manuel Gamio, **La población del valle de Teotihuacán** (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos, Secretaria de Educación Pública, 1922), vol. 1, opposite p. 130.

Fig. 206 · Watercolor renditions of "Fragments of frescoes in the 'Temple of Agriculture,'" from Manuel Gamio, **La población del valle de Teotihuacán** (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos, Secretaria de Educación Pública, 1922), vol. 1, opposite p. 138.

Fig. 207 · "View of Chichén Itzá," with "El Castillo" at top center, from Earl H. Morris et al., **The Temple of the Warriors at Chichén Itzá, Yucatán** (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1931), vol. 2, plate 25, used with permission of the Carnegie Institution.

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In *An Autobiography,* Orozco provides a more specific account of Alma Reed's associations with the Yucatán and its governor, the assassinated Felipe Carrillo Puerto: "Alma Reed had been in Mexico to write some articles for the *New York Times.* In Yucatán she had met the Governor, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, and falling in love they planned to marry. While she was on her way home to prepare for the wedding, Carrillo Puerto was assassinated in the outbreak of the de la Huerta revolt."[65] Orozco had paid overt homage to Carrillo Puerto in a panel he painted at the New School for Social Research in 1931, before coming to Dartmouth. Behind the New School depiction of Carrillo Puerto (fig. 141) looms a clear representation of El Castillo. Chichén Itzá was developed by the Toltecs as they moved eastward into the Yucatán Peninsula, and some versions of the Quetzalcoatl myth have the Toltec priest-ruler moving through the Yucatán before departing by sea. Although, in her biography, Reed tended to overemphasize her own importance in the development of Orozco's projects, the site from which Quetzalcoatl angrily departs on his raft of serpents in the Dartmouth mural may well have been meant to evoke Chichén Itzá. The association of the Yucatán with the assassination of Carrillo Puerto thus lends an added edge of betrayal to this scene of treachery.

These three narrative panels of the west wing—*The Coming of Quetzalcoatl, The Pre-Columbian Golden Age,* and *The Departure of Quetzalcoatl*—show a clear influence of the art of William Blake, which Orozco would have been quite aware of at this time through the research and writing of his fellow Delphic Circle member Emily Hamblen.[66] Like Orozco, Blake endorsed a revolutionary response to the need for change, and he was similarly obsessed with concepts of struggle between forces of good and evil, light and darkness. Blake's *America: A Prophecy* and *Europe: A Prophecy,* in which he integrated the American War of Independence and the French Revolution into his grand mythology, no doubt influenced Orozco's own conception of his epic of the Americas. Even clearer is the visual evidence of Blake's stylistic influence on the rhetorical poses and gestures of Orozco's figures[67] and on the poetically graphic delineation of musculature in the central figure of *The Golden Age* (figs. 172 and 208).

Fig. 208 · Study for **The Pre-Columbian Golden Age,** 1932–34, ink on paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.64.

According to Orozco's first plan for the mural, the long walls of each of the wings of the reserve

Fig. 209 · Orozco on scaffold with **Ancient Human Sacrifice,** fall 1932, photograph courtesy Dartmouth College Library.

reading room were to represent "the constructive, affirmative, *positive* aspects of the myth," while the far end walls of each wing would have presented "the barbaric aspects of human nature operating against the constructive civilizing forces of human nature." In the west wing, this thematic organization resulted in the presentation of Aztec culture, which succeeded that of the Toltecs, to the left of the Toltec period shown on the long north wall. Thus, reading from left to right, in the "first" panel of the room we see the migration of the Aztecs into central Mexico (fig. 167); in the right panel we see the resumption of the ancient practice of human sacrifice that, according to some versions of the legend, had been eliminated under Quetzalcoatl (fig. 169); and, above the doorway, we observe a symbolic statement of the ferocity of Aztec society in the form of a rattlesnake flanked by spears (fig. 168). Although awkward chronologically, this organization has the advantage of permitting an easy narrative transition from Quetzalcoatl's departure and prophecy to the *Cortez* of the east wing.

In *Migration,* the Aztecs[68] are shown marching in lock step phalanxes toward their destiny: the conquest and absorption of indigenous cultures into a single, totalitarian society. We are alerted to the significance of the migration panel by the contrast drawn between its grimly militaristic figures (the fallen marcher dramatizes the price extracted) and the harmoniously varied culture suggested in the panels devoted to Quetzalcoatl's epiphany. (It is also interesting to compare these figures with the marching Zapatistas in Orozco's painting from the previous year [fig. 37].)

Ancient Human Sacrifice takes up the right-hand side of the west wall (figs. 209, 210, and 211). Orozco's emphasis is not on the Aztecs' sun worship (Quetzalcoatl is the only light bringer here), but on their dark, chthonic obsession with war and human sacrifice. The image that presides over this ritual was described by Orozco as Huitzilopochtli, god of

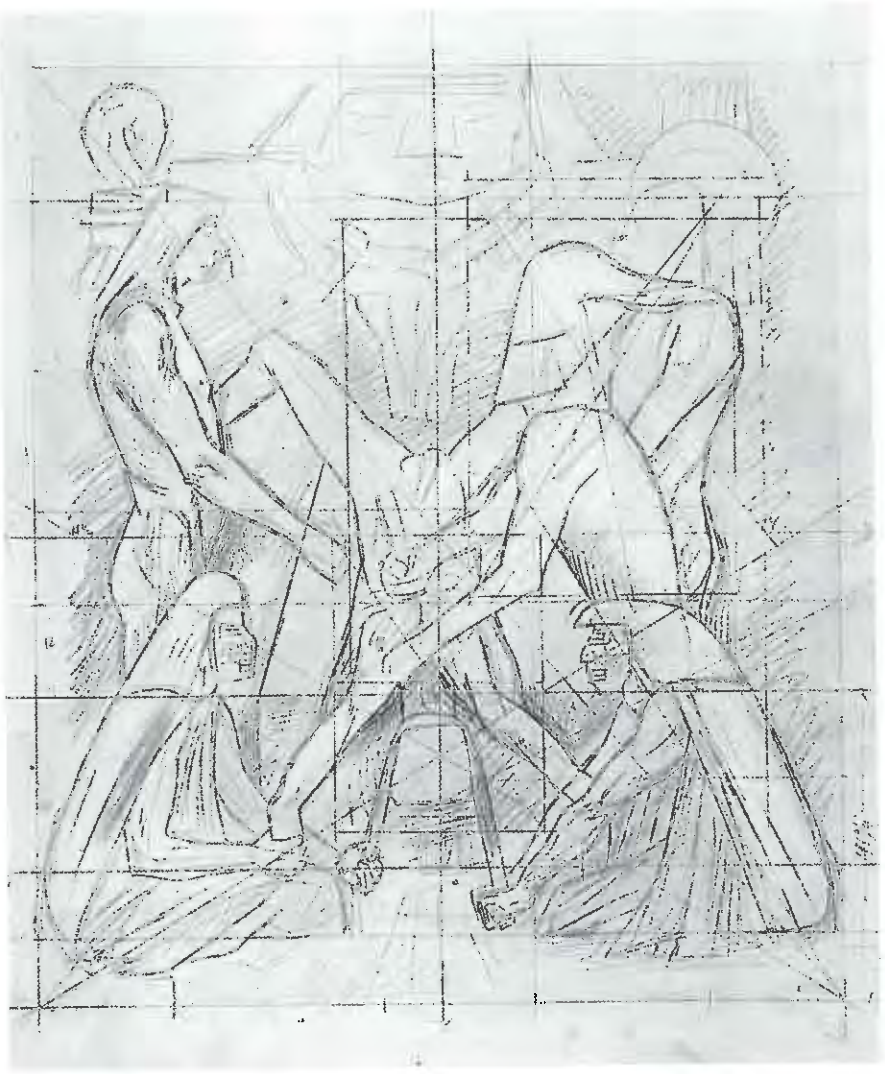

Fig. 210 · Composition study for **Ancient Human Sacrifice**, 1932–34, graphite on cream paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.33.

Fig. 211 · Study of victim for **Ancient Human Sacrifice**, 1932–34, charcoal on paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.31.

war and patron god of the Aztecs. Visually, however, this image is more closely identified with the head of the goddess Coyolxauhqui, who was decapitated by Huitzilopochtli.[69] The priest who carries out the ritual is masked, as are the victim and other participants, emphasizing the blind impersonality of this sacrifice of human life to a dead god.

These two panels introduce the theme of bondage to an abstract, mechanistic destructiveness, a theme that the panels of the east wing restate in even more monstrous terms. The two narrow vertical panels on either side of the east doorway of the west wing serve as parenthetical statements of this theme. Here totem poles representing caricatures of Northwest Coast bird images symbolize the fetishism of native religion in North America (figs. 175 and 176). These two panels, along with the little *Snake and Spears* over the west doorway (fig. 168), were painted at the end of the project, just before the last two panels, the *Machine Totems* (figs. 177 and 178), in the east wing.[70] They introduce into the cycle a reference to the native inhabitants of North America and may have been meant to accord with a frequently used justification for the appropriateness of this particular mural cycle for Dartmouth, the earliest years of which were linked with the goal of educating Indians.[71] Whatever the rationale, no part of the mural better clarifies the artist's uncompromising humanism, which condemns primitive religion as absurd fetishism. Far from idealizing tribal societies, Orozco here implies that they too contribute to the authoritarian legacy of humankind.

As the mural developed, the horrors of the modern world loomed larger than the artist's original vision of an "authentic new world civilization," which Orozco in the end relegated to the section of the south wall facing the reserve desk.[72] This shift to a darker vision may have been influenced by the artist's only visit to Europe during the summer of 1932, when he had barely begun the frescoes of the west wing.[73] In Europe, he encountered the despair left by World War I and the rising dictatorship that augured another world war. In his autobiography, Orozco recalls accounts published in European newspapers of war scandals, "documented beyond dispute, of the shameful politicians and the dealers in cannon fodder. Exposures of how Germany and the Allies had exchanged critical materials during the progress of the First World War and so prolonged that war in the interests of big speculators."[74] He returned to Dartmouth with a darker view of the likelihood of an imminent answer to the problems of humankind and with a sharpened sense of a perennial pattern of dehumanization. This experience influenced the final form of Orozco's *Epic,* wrenching its poetic conventions into an antithesis. His epic hero, Quetzalcoatl, is finally, tragically confined to the realm of mythic promise, while the founding of the historic city would simply begin another cycle of human misery, with Cortez as its militarized antihero.

Fig. 212 · Composition study for **Cortez and the Cross**, 1932–34, tempera on paper, Instituto Cultural Cabañas, Guadalajara/INBA 14560, photograph by Rubén Orozco.

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/INBA 14560,
Orozco.

The East Wing: Cortez and the Modern Era

The scenes of the east wing of the reserve reading room shift our attention from indigenous American history and myth to their counterparts after the European conquest. The subject originally proposed by Orozco for the long, "positive" north wall was "The New Culture of the American Continent." Soon after starting the mural, perhaps as soon as the completion of the top part of his *Departure* panel in June 1932, certainly not long after his return from Europe that fall, Orozco conceived the visual logic of beginning his east wing walls with the fulfillment of Quetzalcoatl's prophecy in the form of the coming of Cortez. The first panel of the east wing depicts "Cortez's Ships Destroyed by Himself," followed by "Hernan Cortez, symbolizing the conquest of the continent under the aegis of the Cross and the end of the old civilization" (figs. 179 and 212).[75] His godlike status reinforced by the large cross behind him, Cortez is portrayed with a curiously self-absorbed tenderness amid the carnage. This stylistic dissonance parodies the conventions of Spanish Renaissance portraiture contemporary with Cortez, whose El Greco-like serenity conveys an unwavering faith in the righteousness of his cause.[76] The face of Cortez is so eerily out of key with the expressionist context of human suffering that it becomes another kind of mask, while the prominent cross that gives Cortez his authority provides a visual link between this panel and the final panel of the east wing, in which Christ destroys his cross.

The Cortez panel presents a complicated image that benefits from comparison with earlier and later versions by Orozco of the same subject. The extensive frescoes that he executed in 1923–24 and 1926 in the main courtyard of the National Preparatory School in Mexico City contain a number of compositions that found later expression in the mural at Dartmouth.[77] The depiction of a nude Cortez with his Indian consort, Malinche, over the stairway leading

Fig. 213 · **Conqueror-Builder and Indian Worker,** 1926, fresco, National Preparatory School, Mexico City.

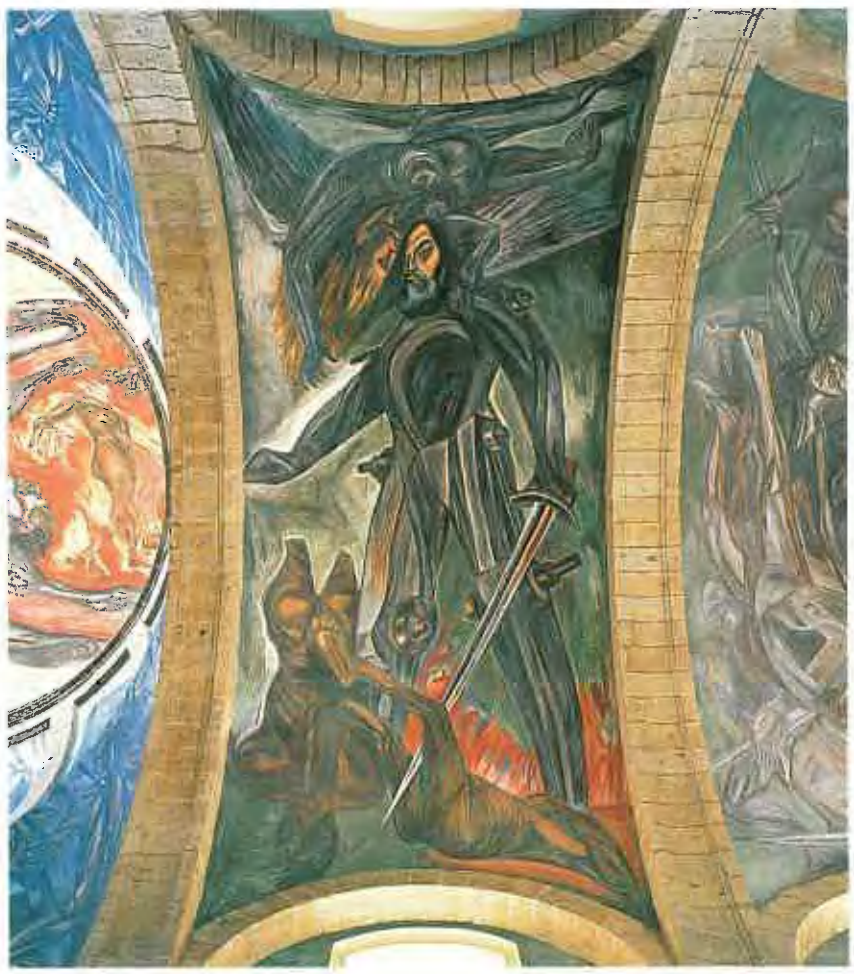


Fig. 214 · **Cortez and Victory,** 1937–39, fresco, Hospicio Cabañas, Guadalajara, photograph by Bob Schalkwijk.

from the courtyard to the first floor (fig. 17), presents a paternalistic figure who holds down the prone body of a young native man with his right foot while reaching with his left hand to restrain Malinche from offering assistance. At the same time, however, their right hands are grasped in a gesture of equality. Nearby depictions of primitive, almost stupefied "Ancient Races," a "Conqueror-Builder" who plans grand projects for an Indian worker (fig. 213), and a Franciscan who wraps an emaciated Indian in a smothering embrace further confirm Orozco's ambiguous view of a conquest that brought both good and evil.

Orozco's great 1936–39 fresco cycle at the Hospicio Cabañas in Guadalajara has as its overarching theme Mexico before and after the Spanish Conquest. In this sense, it is a further development of the Dartmouth cycle. The *Man of Fire* in the dome has already been mentioned. In vaults on either side of the dome are flanking portrayals of a Franciscan holding a cross like a sword over the bent back of an Indian and a Cortez whose armor has become a machine with a gaping hole where his heart should be (fig. 214), a pointed parallel with the sacrificial victim of an Aztec goddess shown nearby. As at Dartmouth, the Guadalajara Cortez holds a sword in his right hand, while dismembered Indians are piled at his feet and flames rise in the background.

In these three cycles, which span a little more than a dozen years, we see Orozco moving by degrees, not from a brighter to a darker depiction of Cortez and the changes that the coming of European civilization brought to the American continent, but rather to a more forceful expression of the savagery that characterized both indigenous and European cultures at the time of the conquest. Cortez is finally neither hero nor villain. He is a mindless, heartless expression of the mechanistic society that spawned him, no more or less admirable than the brutal society that he destroyed.

In the second panel of the east wing, the gray steel of Cortez's armor becomes a monstrous, chaotic presence: Toward the center of this wall, we are confronted with Orozco's expressionistic representation of *The Machine* (fig. 180). Its gray and jagged mass appears to feed on the piled human bodies at Cortez's feet like some demonic incarnation of antihuman materialism. The message, surely, is that the impersonal chaos of the modern era permits no more concern for human life than did the murderous rituals of the Aztecs. *The Machine,* which symbolizes the mass regimentation of modern society for inhuman goals, is the controlling theme of this wing. Its presence is starkly emphasized in the two vertical panels on either side of the doorway (figs. 177 and 178). Here we see fantasies of machines possessed by their own life, modern equivalents of the totem idols depicted in the west wing (figs. 175 and 176).

The 1920s and early 1930s in America were characterized by an increasing consciousness of the drawbacks as well as the potential advantages of the machine age. World War I had contributed to a growing awareness that modern life was bringing unforeseen horrors as well as increasing productivity. Machine guns, tanks, long-distance artillery,

Fig. 215 · Diego Rivera, **Detroit Industry,** north wall, 1932–33, fresco, Detroit Institute of Arts, gift of Edsel B. Ford, photograph © 1991 Detroit Institute of Arts.

and aerial bombardments not only killed but maimed in unthought-of ways, while modern medicine produced living corpses. In *An Autobiography,* Orozco wrote of an exhibition of photographs he had seen in Europe during the first summer of his Dartmouth project: "photographs showing soldiers who lived on with their faces partly or completely shot away.... Philanthropists could boast of having supplied them with masks which gave them a human appearance. Others had lost not only their faces but arms and legs, and miraculously went on living, transformed into beings which beggared the most lurid artistic imagination."[78]

But the machine appealed to the artistic imagination in positive ways as well. In May 1927, the year that Orozco arrived in New York from Mexico, Jane Heap of the *Little Review* organized a Machine-Age Exposition designed to convince artists that they should "affiliate with the creative artist in the other arts and with the constructive men of [our] epoch: engineers, scientists, etc."[79] In the spring of 1930 Orozco's friend Lewis Mumford lectured at the New School for Social Research on "Creative Expression and the Machine," and in 1930–31 he wrote *Technics and Civilization,* published in 1934 with, as its frontispiece, Orozco's "Cortez and the Machine" from the Dartmouth mural. It is likely that the artist shared with the critic an attitude toward the machine described in *Technics and Civilization*: "No matter how completely technics relies upon the objective procedures of the sciences, it does not form an independent system, like the universe: it exists as an element in human culture and it promises well or ill as the social groups that exploit it promise well or ill. The machine itself makes no demands and holds out no promises: it is the human spirit that makes demands and keeps promises."[80]

It seems apparent that Orozco was inspired, or at least energized, by Diego Rivera's contemporary depiction of the machine in his *Detroit Industry* fresco cycle, painted between July 1932 and March 1933 (fig. 215).[81] Rivera devoted considerable time to the study of machinery at the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge plant, which was his subject. Orozco, working in rural New England, relied on other sources. In the Dartmouth archives, there is a copy of a letter of July 7, 1933, from Dartmouth's reference librarian to the director of the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, requesting photographs that the artist could use as models:

> The specific items requested are:
> Electrical—motors, Dynamos, Turbines, etc.
> Steam Shovel
> Locomotives
> Lathes
> Linotype
> Rotary Press
>
> ...we feel in considering the permanence of the frescoes, that we should make available to the artist pictures of the machine as it has been perfected at the time when his work is being executed.[82]

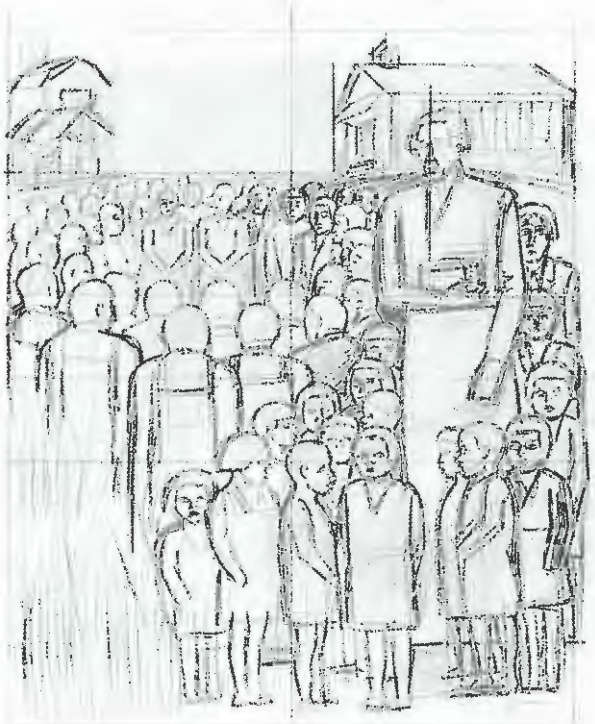
Orozco made at least one study for this panel that appears to have been done from photographs (fig. 216). But the final panel resembles Rivera's work more than any of the "specific items" called

Fig. 216 · Study of gears and girders for **The Machine**, 1932–34, graphite on tracing paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.119.

Fig. 217 · Composition study for **Anglo-America**, 1932–34, graphite on paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.174

Fig. 218 · Composition study for **Anglo-America** , 1932–34, graphite on paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.131.

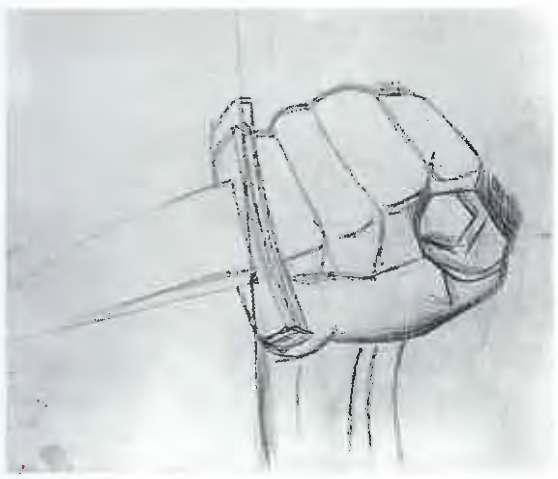
Fig. 219 · **Destruction of the Old Order**, 1926, fresco, National Preparatory School, Mexico City, photograph by Bob Schalkwijk.



for by the librarian on Orozco's behalf. The theme seems to have elicited from both artists visual and cultural associations between machines and primitive gods.

One cultural manifestation of machine civilization is the cold, repressive world of the schoolhouse and town meeting depicted in the panel entitled *Anglo-America* (fig. 181).[83] Alma Reed tells us that Orozco "regarded the growing tendency toward standardization as the most dangerous ailment of modern society. He ...lost no opportunity to deride our national mania for over-organization. Many of his devastating caricatures pilloried the 'committee,' which he viewed as a symbol of futility and one of the most harmful of American institutions."[84] Here Orozco fuses critiques of American Puritanism and of organization-man anonymity, blending them into the life-denying gray that extends across the entire wall.

This vision of repression is complemented by the violent scenario of *Hispano-America,* exploding in revolution and all but destroyed by imperialistic exploitation (fig. 182). *Anglo-* and *Hispano-America* are among the few finished compositions upon which Orozco has been quoted at length. After the completion of his project, the artist was interviewed by the *Dartmouth,* and these two panels provided the pretext for an analysis of the cultures of the two Americas:



It is the rebel spirit that the United States needs, the spirit of the Latin American, who will try to preserve his individuality and honor and self-respected at any cost.... The picture of the town meeting illustrates part of the American political idealism which supposes that talking about public problems will keep order and peace and save the world. That is only half of the question, however, for discussion only ends in compromise. But the Latin American mind cannot be understood by the North Americans.... They have the capacity to put up with a situation just so long. Then they get mad. So, you see, the unrest and instability of the southern republics, which Americans cannot comprehend, is perhaps the good thing. The weakness may be a sort of strength.[85]

According to Orozco's autobiography, he found New Englanders to be "country folk, hostile and formal in their dealings with outlanders and new arrivals, but most cordial on closer acquaintance, and

Fig. 220 · Study of head for **Hispano-America**, 1932–34, graphite on cream paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.154.

Fig. 221 · Study for **Hispano-America**, 1932–34, graphite on paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.174.

anxious to be neighborly, to understand one, and to help out with the greatest good will, disinterest, and courtesy."[86] In other words, cold and unappealing, exactly how he depicted his grim schoolmarm, her robotlike charges, and the zombielike participants in a New England town meeting (figs. 217 and 218). On the other hand, he lavished much love on the gorgeous painting of wheat at the bottom left of this composition, which corresponds to the equally beautifully painted corn in the *Golden Age* panel of the west wing (fig. 172). It is likely that in *Anglo-America,* Orozco was attempting to evoke a thematic parallel with the *Golden Age* of Quetzalcoatl: The earlier panel's themes of agriculture, cooperation, and education all have counterparts here, and the dominant blue and gold coloration of *Anglo-America* reinforces the visual connection.

The more vivid comparison is with its neighboring *Hispano-America,* a more fully developed version of Orozco's 1926 composition *Destruction of the Old Order,* on the ground floor of the Preparatory School in Mexico City (fig. 219). There Orozco enjoyed the leeway allowed him by his subject to experiment with the cubist compositional device of multiple points of view. He continued experimenting with cubism in his depiction of *The Machine* at Dartmouth. In *Hispano-America,* he extended cubism's multiple viewpoint to the human figure of the foreign general about to stab the rebel in the back. For Orozco, however, cubism was an expressive, not an analytical, style; its purpose was to foreground emotional content (figs. 220 and 221).

In 1940, when Orozco was asked if a preliminary sketch for the fresco *Dive Bomber and Tank* (fig. 233) was the head of an aviator, he replied, "'Yes perhaps,'—he turned the sketch upside down—'or, it might be a bomb. A picture must be capable of being looked at from any direction.... I plan to paint this fresco so that the individual panels can be turned upside down or rearranged in any order, changing but not disturbing the basic composition.'" The interviewer then asked whether Orozco's choice of a dive bomber as his subject had any political motivation. The artist answered: "'Of course not. I simply paint the life that is going on at present—what we are and what the world is at this moment. That is what modern art is, the actual feeling of life around us or the mood of whatever is just happening. As for political significance, that can be found in any painting if the observer wishes to see it there.'"[87]

In *Hispano-America,* Orozco's political commentary is anything but passive. It is not difficult to see caricatures of Woodrow Wilson and Winston Churchill in the figures to the left and General Pershing in the figure to the right of the rebel, who

Fig. 222 · **Pancho Villa,** 1931, oil on canvas, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City/INBA 17271.

resembles Pancho Villa, the Mexican "bandit" who in 1916 extended his rebellion across the border into the United States.[88] The real bandits in *Hispano-America* are the top-hatted, mask-wearing capitalists behind the general, whose crotch is in suggestive proximity to the prominent buttocks of the foreground figure with his nose buried in Mexican gold. U.S. investment in Mexico at the time of the revolution was extensive, three times that of other foreigners, twice that of Mexicans. Americans controlled 75 percent of Mexican mines and almost 60 percent of Mexican oil.[89] In his painting *Pancho Villa* of 1931 (fig. 222), Orozco depicts the rebel leader as a Cortez-like figure: heroic in his stance and attire, destructive in his impact. In the Dartmouth fresco, there is greater emphasis on the rebel's heroic integrity, which contrasts sharply with the murderous, greedy figures surrounding him.

The *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* of November 1933 gave the title of this panel as "Hispano-America—The Rebel and His International Enemies."[90] Orozco's rebel is a hero standing alone against foreign capitalistic greed and imperialism. The artist summarized his message when he proposed the subject to Artemas Packard:

> The best representation of Hispanic-American idealism, not as an abstract idea but as an accomplished fact, would be, I think, the figure of a rebel. Hispanic-America, in its century of independent life, has been the victim of the most cruel and unjust aggressions. It has been invaded, enslaved, dispossessed, exploited, deceived by enemies posing as friends. But the foreign aggressor or the local exploiter or dictator always meets with the resistance of the people and their leaders, who rise in armed protest to oppose the brutal force. In every case there is the rebel—sometimes a most humble and illiterate man, sometimes a student in the university, sometimes a real bandit, sometimes a saint. He may be poor or rich, but he is always an idealist who sacrifices everything in life to struggle for a fundamental human or social cause.... If there is any need for expressing in just one sentence the highest ideal of the Hispanic-American rebel, it would be as follows: "Justice whatever the cost."[91]

"Justice whatever the cost" is the quintessential motivation of the Orozco hero.

The wrecked buildings in the background of *Hispano-America* encompass modern as well as colonial architecture, belying Orozco's assurance to Packard that "after the destruction of an armed revolution remains a triumphant ideal with a chance of realization."[92] John Hutton was closer to the mark when he asserted: "For Orozco, revolutions occur as the negation of an unacceptable present, not the harbingers of a better future."[93] Leonard Folgarait points out that the word "revolution" "means coming back to the same point in a circular pattern, over and over again."[94] This was certainly Orozco's sense of its meaning: the event and its cause, inextricably linked.

Fig. 223 · Composition study for **Gods of the Modern World,** 1932–34, graphite on tracing paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.155.

At the end of this long north wall is the unforgettable *Gods of the Modern World* (figs. 183 and 223), perhaps the best known of all the images of the Dartmouth mural. In it, academicians, supposedly the guardians of the accumulated knowledge of humankind, are depicted as living corpses presiding over the stillbirth of useless knowledge while behind them the world goes up in flames. Several of Orozco's "gods" wear European academic garb. In retrospect, he seems to have been remarkably penetrating in his perception of the failure of the European academic establishment to question the rising fascism that led to World War II.

Orozco had not yet reached this point in the execution of his program when he wrote his manuscript for the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* of November 1933. There this subject is described as "The End of Superstition—Triumph of Freedom."[95] A shift from historical to mythic time on the north wall of the east wing—from *Hispano-America* to "The Triumph of Freedom"—may have seemed too abrupt a transition. Or perhaps the last panel of this wall may have appeared too unimportant a position for such a culminating theme. Whatever the reason, he shifted his "Triumph of Freedom" to the right-hand side of the east wall, where, in the form of *The Modern Migration of the Spirit,* it parallels *Migration* on the corresponding west wall (figs. 186 and 167). For the end of the north wall, he devised the brilliant and startling vision of the gods of the modern world, who, according to Orozco's visual argument, fulfill the same deterministic function as the ancient gods arrayed behind Quetzalcoatl at the opposite end of the room (fig. 171). The north wall of the east wing is itself balanced by the world in conflagration behind these dead gods of academia and the flames emerging from Cortez's burning ships.

The strength of this criticism of higher education's abdication of social responsibility derives in large measure from Orozco's powerful conjugation of birth and death imagery. The use of skeletons as symbols to effect pointed social satire is of course characteristically Mexican. One thinks first of Posada, who, Orozco tells us in his autobiography, was an early hero.[96] Orozco himself first used skeleton imagery in his 1925 caricatures for the Mexican journal *L'ABC.* The ineffectuality of academics was an even earlier theme. The August 10, 1912, issue of the opposition journal *El ahuizote,* for which Orozco produced caricatures during the early years of the revolution, contains a satiric depiction entitled *Doctors of Learning* (fig. 224), in which the "doctors" are depicted as blind buffoons. Although President Hopkins's account of Orozco's opinion of the Dartmouth faculty—that they "ought to be annihilated because they profiteer on the students' need for education"—may have been exaggerated for effect, Orozco expressed a similar view on another occasion. Alma Reed tells us that *Gods of the Modern World* "is a plastic variation on the theme of an informal talk the artist had given a short time before at the Art Department of Yale University when, to the amazement of the instructors, he told some two hundred students that they were all painting with the 'dead hand of the Academy.'"[97] Such overt criticism in the arms of academia may seem unusual, but this prickly stance was typical of Orozco, who eight years later offered a similarly scathing indictment of corrupt justice on the walls of the Supreme Court of Mexico.

A valuable eyewitness account of the creation of *Gods of the Modern World* is provided by Gobin Stair, a member of the Dartmouth class of 1933,

Fig. 224 · **Doctors of Learning,** from **El ahuizote,** August 10, 1912.

who served as Orozco's helper during the final phases of the mural. Stair recalled the creation of this particular panel as a "difficult time," adding: "I guess there was some reluctance or perhaps lack of enthusiasm around for what this section might 'say.' I was not involved in that higher-level concern but I was involved in the material, and he conveyed to me that I was to do some research. So I got him medical books with illustrations of skeletons, but also he wanted some baby skeletons and that was difficult. Luckily I found a bell jar with the skeleton of a fetus, and that, as you can see, is just what he wanted."[98] In fact, the message of *Gods of the Modern World* could not be clearer: What the modern world needs is not another generation of "educated" academics, dead to the burning issues of contemporary life, but more independent thinkers and doers. Fortunately, Orozco's perspective accorded well with the educational philosophy of President Hopkins, who defended this panel to a disgruntled Dartmouth widow and grandmother of a potential student: "I was exceedingly glad to have this panel interpolated among the others, because I felt that if, on the walls of an educational institution, we were to indict modern society in its other important phases the College ought certainly to recognize its own limitations and be willing to have indictment made of these."[99]

The panels of the east end of the east wing are in a kind of alcove where, at the time they were painted, the light must have been dimmer than in the rest of the reserve reading room. Perhaps partly for this reason, Orozco here markedly brightened his colors and reverted to a caricatural style, the swift impact of which he was a past master. To the right of *Gods of the Modern World* is his outraged portrayal of *Modern Human Sacrifice* (figs. 185 and 225), corresponding to *Ancient Human Sacrifice* on the far west wall opposite (fig. 169). The body of an unknown soldier, his skeletal hands still testifying to his final agony, is buried beneath the trappings

Fig. 225 · Composition study for **Modern Human Sacrifice**, 1932–34, graphite on tracing paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.177.

of patriotism: colorful flags, wreaths, monuments, speeches, brass bands, and the "eternal flame" that marks the grave of the decorously anonymous victim of modern nationalism. The overdoor panel to the left, showing a junk pile of totemistic animal symbols of warfare and empire from three historical eras, suggests the continuity between primitive and modern chauvinism (fig. 184).

The repeated cycles of brutality that take us from ancient through modern times finally come to an end in *Modern Migration of the Spirit* (figs. 186; 90–95). In this climax to the mural, the human spirit is dramatized as a Christ figure that rejects his sacrificial destiny by chopping down his cross and destroying the causes of his agony: militarism (represented by tanks and armaments), religion (the cross, a Buddha image, a minaret), and the authoritarian perversion of culture (a fallen Ionic column and the fragment of an Aphrodite). He appears to be flayed, like the sacrificial victims of the god of greed depicted in the west wing. This

Learning,
ust 10, 1912.

theme of malevolent greed connects him as well with the rebel, whose enemies are motivated by lust for gold. Bearing the wounds of his oppression, his spiritual purification symbolized by the flamelike colors of his body and his torn flesh, this reincarnation of Quetzalcoatl has returned to cast off the chains that are symbolically associated with death in the overdoor panel to the right (fig. 187).

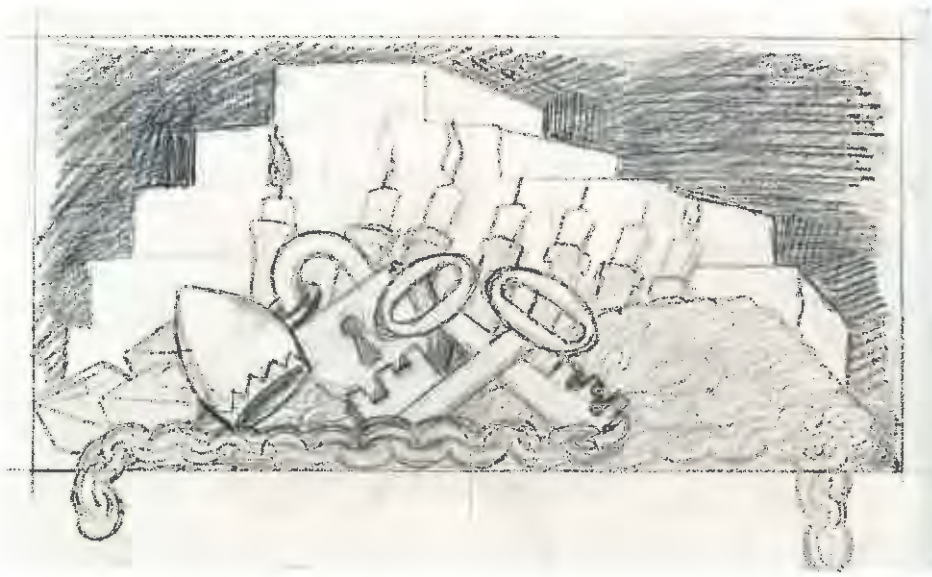
Modern Migration of the Spirit may seem an unduly anarchistic vision. But as with the death imagery of *Gods of the Modern World,* Orozco's vision is here characteristically Mexican, as Anita Brenner explained in *Idols behind Altars:* "In Mexican mood the messiah is always accompanied by disaster: an earthquake, a conquest, a revolution, the sacrifice of a ruler; death and pain. Therefore all the prophecies which promise restoration are complemented by announcements of catastrophe. New life, the fires rekindled by the ancient Mexicans after the end of each fifty-two-year cycle, was made after the darkening of these fires, destruction of possessions, with the sense of impending obliteration."[100] According to ancient Mesoamerican traditions, our age, the age of the "Fifth Sun," the age of Quetzalcoatl, will come to an end with earthquakes and fire. *Modern Migration of the Spirit* is the ultimate fulfillment of Quetzalcoatl's prophecy of return.

Orozco draws here on Eastern tradition as well, for iconographically his triumphant Christ is based on the Byzantine image of the Christ Anastasis, the crucified Christ who rises up, breaks down the doors of hell, and raises humankind to join him in his resurrection.[101] In a typical image of Christ Anastasis, the defeat of death is symbolized by the broken gates of his kingdom and the scattered keys, bolts, and nails that imprisoned the inhabitants of the underworld. In these images, Christ assumes the active stance that we see in the Christ of *Migration of the Spirit.* In several versions (e.g., fig. 226), the broken doors form a cross under Christ's feet, much like the cross in the Dartmouth panel. Orozco surely

Fig. 226 · **The Anastasis,** Skevophylakion Lectionary, eleventh century, fol. 1 (verso), from Anna Kartsonis, **Anastasis: The Making of an Image**, fig. 80, copyright © 1986 by Princeton University Press, reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

Fig. 227 · Composition study for **Chains of the Spirit,** 1932–34, graphite on tracing paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.188.

would have known images such as these. In *An Autobiography,* he writes of being rebaptized by his Delphic Circle friends, "with the name of Panselenos [*sic*]...a famous Greek painter of Byzantine times whose murals are to be found in Mistra.... As I returned to Manhattan on the ferry boat, across the enchanted bay of New York, my imagination was full of the elongated, rigid, austere images of the Apostles and the Virgin at the feet of the gigantic Pantocrat."[102] As always with Orozco, it is impossible



to draw simple conclusions from such comparisons. At most, we might consider the genesis of this image together with the overdoor panel to its right (fig. 187) and observe that Orozco utilizes religious symbolism to multiply associations, not to specify meaning. In a preliminary drawing for the overdoor panel (fig. 227), for example, a bishop's miter appears with the keys to these chains of the spirit. Orozco apparently rejected this symbol as too specifically anticlerical. (Nevertheless, if we examine the final composition closely, we notice that the vultures are wearing clerical collars.)

In these final two panels of the east wing, Orozco portrays the human spirit in the form of a triumphant resurrected Christ. But while the Christian tradition was an important source of imagery for the artist, he transformed its assumption of cosmic order into a blazing dreamworld of torment, outrage, and prophetic exclamation. For Orozco, order can be generated only from within, as a moral statement, not from without, as a confirmation of traditional dogma.

Coda: Modern Industrial Man

The panels across from the reserve desk, at the center of the south wall of the reading room (figs. 188–192), have traditionally been titled *Modern Industrial Man.* However, their rich, subdued coloration and utopian import are perhaps better conveyed by an earlier title, *The Dream of an Ideal Culture of the Future.* These last five panels serve as a coda, balancing the lost utopia of Quetzalcoatl with a Depression-era vision of human possibility. The machine has been diverted from the exercise of power for its own sake to the service of humankind, while industrial man himself is shown planning and working cooperatively. This vision of the future recalls Quetzalcoatl's mythical golden age, projected (somewhat unconvincingly to our twenty-first-century eyes) from an age of stone to an age of steel. Its focal point—the central panel, which is over bookshelves—depicts the worker in a humanistic industrial society at last free to put down his tools and nourish his spirit. Appropriate to the location, he is reading a book.

In Orozco's original plan, the subjects for these panels had been described as "The Mayflower, The Norseman, Immigrants to America." By 1933 a revised plan for the mural ambitiously listed the subjects for the panels across from the reserve desk as:

EXPLORERS: Norsemen, Spanish, French, Dutch, English

SETTLERS: The Mayflower, the Pilgrims, the Indians

ELEAZAR WHEELOCK AND SAMSON OCCOM: symbol of the origin of Dartmouth College, of "Quetzalcoatl" in New England

WINNING OF THE WEST: Covered wagons, dead Indians

MODERN MIGRATIONS: Symbol of 19th & 20th century Immigration to America[103]

Fig. 228 · Study of Eleazar Wheelock with Indians, 1932–34, graphite on cream paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.265.

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It is hard to believe that Orozco was ever serious about executing this ill-conceived plan. But there does exist a drawing for the central panel that shows Eleazar Wheelock teaching the Indians (fig. 228). The Indians, barrel, and book recall lines from Orozco's *An Autobiography* that convey his cynical view of Wheelock's "missionary" project:

> Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, is one of the oldest of educational institutions in the American Union. Several years before the War of Independence it was founded by a missionary who wished to educate the Indians of the neighborhood. Eleazar Wheelock came along with a grammar, a Bible, a drum, and more than five thousand quarts of whiskey ["five thousand gallons of rum" in the traditional Dartmouth drinking song to which Orozco here alludes]. To the sound of his drum, the Indians assembled, drank his whiskey, and learned the idiom of the New Testament. Today there are no more Indians left to be educated after this admirable plan.[104]

As Orozco worked out the iconography of the east wing, these walls at the center of the room must have emerged as the only logical place for the "Future Golden Age," which had been displaced from the north wall by the expanding theme of "Our Time." The concept at this time of a golden age of the future was not unique to Orozco; it was a characteristic post–World War I, machine age metaphorical device for visualizing a bearable future. According to Orozco's fellow Delphic Circle member Claude Bragdon, "The Machine Age represents a period of power—if only for destruction. When power attains a certain maximum, it not infrequently changes to beauty—after the stalk, the flower; after the Iron Age, the Golden. But this Golden Age can come only as the result of some fresh outpouring of spiritual life, some change in the universal consciousness."[105] Orozco's *Modern Migration of the Spirit* proposes just such a "change in the universal consciousness."

Seeking both conceptual and stylistic inspiration for his vision of an ideal modern culture, Orozco turned to the work of a colleague, the American muralist Thomas Hart Benton, with whom Orozco had worked at the New School and who had recommended Orozco to the Dartmouth faculty.[106] The deep diagonals into space, vertically stacked workers, cranes, motifs of transportation and industry, and general theme of construction in *Modern Industrial Man* echo the similarly dramatic elements of Benton's *City Building* (fig. 229) from his *America Today* mural, executed at the New School in 1930, at the same time Orozco was creating his own mural two floors above.[107]

On the other hand, the steel I beams that hang threateningly above the conferring workers in the left-hand section, and that have been transformed into dynamic structures in two other panels, were a favorite motif of Orozco's. He distorted them

Fig. 229 · Thomas Hart Benton, **City Building** from **America Today,** 1930, distemper and egg tempera on gessoed linen with oil glaze, 92 x 117 in (233.6 x 297 cm), Collection, AXA Financial, Inc. through its subsidiary The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the U.S. © AXA Financial, Inc.

Fig. 230 · **Winter**, 1932, oil on canvas, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City/INBA 17275.

expressively in his 1926 Preparatory School composition *The Conqueror-Builder and the Indian-Worker* (fig. 213), and they appear as well in a number of his New York paintings from the late 1920s and early 1930s, where, with typical Orozcian dualism, they convey both the energy and the oppressiveness of American life (fig. 230).

The international style architecture depicted in these panels is intended to signify a harmony of function and beauty that is no longer dependent on cultural ornament. Orozco studied architecture and worked as an architectural draftsman early in his career. The international style in architecture was first celebrated as such at the Museum of Modern Art in a 1932 exhibition that he may well have attended. In the American skyscraper, Orozco saw a totally new cultural expression that could serve as a model for the art of the future: "Already, the architecture of Manhattan is a new value, something that has nothing to do with Egyptian pyramids, with the Paris Opera, with the Giralda of Seville, or with Saint Sofia, any more than it has to do with the Maya palaces of Chichen-Itzá or with the 'pueblos' of Arizona.... The architecture of Manhattan is the first step. Painting and sculpture must certainly follow as inevitable second steps."[108]

The model for the central, reading figure in Orozco's *Modern Industrial Man* was no doubt a Dartmouth student (fig. 231). The final version (fig. 232), however, not only is obviously a worker but also appears to be of mixed race, a mestizo of both European and Indian ancestry. Orozco offers here a similar ideal to that of the dark-eyed young man of the *Release* panel that he had painted in an adjacent corridor eighteen months earlier (fig. 193). The young man in *Release* rises from the confusion of postwar machinery to reach for the light. The worker in *Modern Industrial Man* rests from his labor of creating the future to nourish his spirit. Alma Reed relayed Orozco's sense of the future of his own country, the future of the rebel, who was his model of change: "We have had enough of revolution. We want time now to work and to rest. The people are learning to think."[109]

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Conclusion

In *An Autobiography,* Orozco describes *The Epic of American Civilization*: "The murals consist of fourteen pictures of approximately ten by thirteen feet in dimension, and ten smaller ones. In the first of them the theme is that of 'Quetzalcoatl' but the final paintings bear no very clear relation to this."[110] His countryman Octavio Paz put it another way: "[T]he work of art is always unfaithful to its creator."[111] The Neoplatonist dualism of Orozco's conception of painting—the marked separation and energizing relationship between "idea" and "plastic construction"—was reflected in his preference for meanings that are themselves generated through the opposition of such dualistic contrasts as "the barbaric aspects of human nature" and the "power of good in

the universe." Moreover, despite the fact that *The Epic of American Civilization* by definition takes a chronological approach to its subject, no particular progress is implied. Both these factors contribute to the difficulties that Orozco had in creating, and viewers have in interpreting, this work.

In search of a conceptual framework that will allow us to bring the content of Orozco's *Epic* into focus, it is useful to compare his own description of his first Dartmouth panel, *Release* (fig. 193)—"man is now shown in command of his own hands and he is at last free to shape his own destiny"—with "state three" of Mexican Minister of Culture José Vasconcelos's analysis of the progress of civilization. The statement was published in 1923, the year Vasconcelos gave Orozco the Preparatory School commission, and Orozco surely knew it:

> A quick synthetic survey shows men organized at first into tribes whose collective law is strength.... From the first emerges the martial type dominated by material interests and unfit for a superior life.... A second period follows...in which internal organization and international relations are based on convenience and planning.... In this second period ...intelligence affirms its superiority over the irreflectiveness of brute strength...yet this state is still not supreme. Higher than the fatalities of logic and all material and moral interest, there lingers in our consciousness the desire to act freely, at one with our sympathies. When this urge will become reality...the third state of society will have been reached, to wit the aesthetic period.[112]

An argument could be made that Orozco, consciously or unconsciously, organized his fresco cycle in the reserve reading room around a similar tripartite vision of human progress toward the ideal of an aesthetic society. The first, martial stage of civilization is represented both by the Aztecs, who are shown on the west wall marching into the Valley of Mexico and engaging in human sacrifice, and by the conquistador Cortez and the imperialistic comic opera of *Modern Human Sacrifice* on the east wall. The second, intelligent, cooperative stage appears in the west wing, with *The Coming of Quetzalcoatl,* and in the east wing, where the arrival of European civilization produces the orderly regimentation of *Anglo-America.*

Orozco and Vasconcelos shared with the European post–World War I avant-garde a utopian vision of a final stage of "aesthetic" freedom that would allow humankind to "act freely, at one with our sympathies." In Orozco's *Epic,* this vision is represented by two mythic moments that "linger in our consciousness": the legendary golden age of Quetzalcoatl, at the center of the north wall of the east wing, and the potential golden age of the future, depicted across from the reserve desk. For Orozco, as for his counterparts in Europe, such as El Lissitsky and László Moholy-Nagy, the advent of this era of creative freedom would require nothing less than a "destruction of the old order" (to quote the title of his composition at the Preparatory School). This is the role of the revolutionary Christ

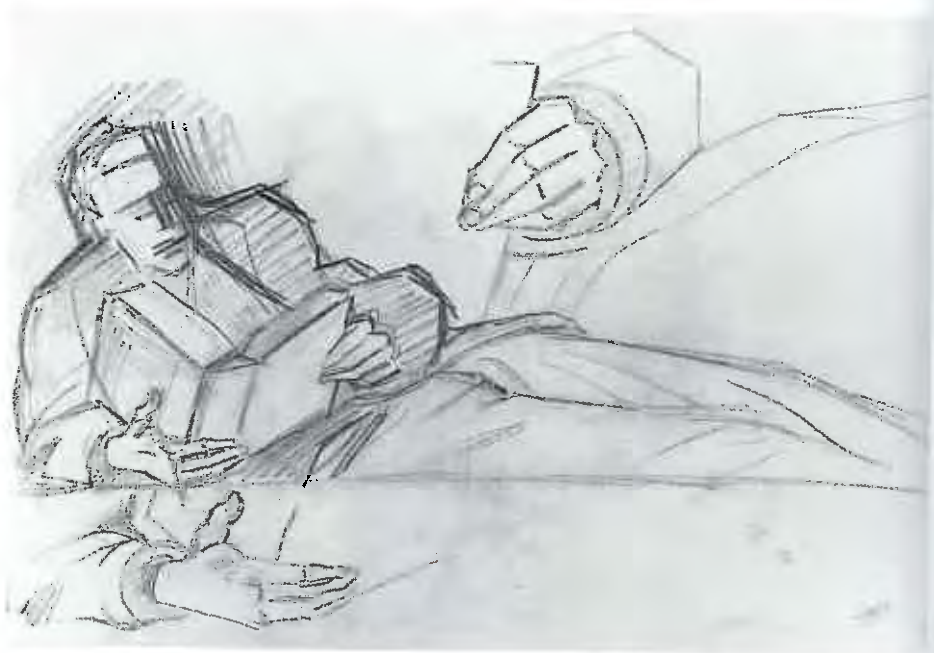
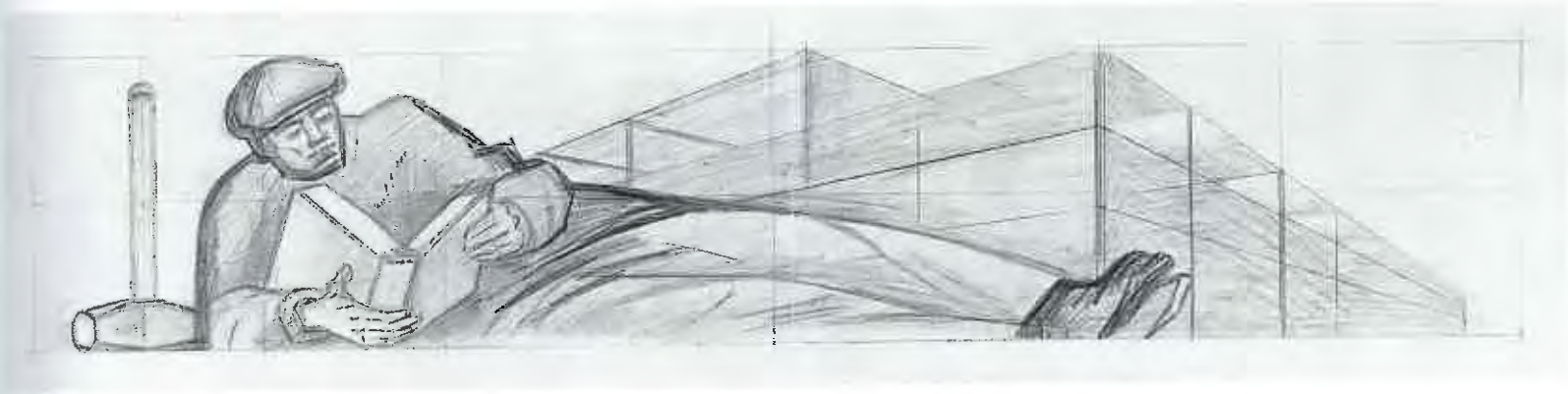


Fig. 231 · Figure study for **Modern Industrial Man**, central panel, 1932–34, graphite on tracing paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.228.



gure study for **Modern**
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8.

who breaks free of the bonds of history in the final panel of the east wing, a subject that in an early plan for the mural carried the title *The End of Superstition — Triumph of Freedom.*

Analogies such as these are fragmentary at best, and it is essential to stress once again that no matter how one chooses to analyze Orozco's work, his symbolism is always dynamic and multivalent. Rarely can his images be reduced to the kind of direct equations that are so available in the work of the other muralists or indeed in Alma Reed's point in support of the theme of Daedalus: that "'Daidala,' in the most ancient usage, mean[s] 'works of art.'" Orozco would have had little interest in such literary niceties. For him, art was not a language. It was "knowledge at the service of emotion." "Painting," he emphasized, "assails the mind. It persuades the heart."[113] *The Epic of American Civilization* "assails" us with a vision of history that is fiercely humanistic, individualistic, and, above all, unrelentingly critical.

From the perspective granted us by time, what is most striking about *The Epic of American Civilization* is Orozco's refusal to settle for easy solutions. He does not idealize any moment of the historical past or the historical process itself, nor does he pit the indigenous American civilizations against those of Europe. Moreover, despite the anarchist overtones of his vision of triumph, Orozco shows no trust in any specific political solution. His visual epic of the Americas is fueled by sheer indignation at the continuing degradation of the human spirit, in patterns that are hauntingly similar in ancient and modern societies. "Only because of the hopeless," wrote Walter Benjamin, "is hope given to us." Orozco's work at Dartmouth embodies this paradox of an idealism inspired by pessimism. We may not want to see his message, or believe it, but to paint it was his Promethean role.

Fig. 232 · Study for **Modern Industrial Man**, central panel, 1932–34, graphite on paper, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; D.988.52.237.

incorporate just these elements into his work.

78. See González Mello's biographical essay in this catalog.

79. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 144.

80. Besides Hambidge's publications, see Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists,* 51–52, 157–59; and Elizabeth Mitchell Walter, "Jay Hambidge and the Development of the Theory of Dynamic Symmetry, 1902–1920," University of Georgia, Ph.D. thesis, 1978, esp. 4–8.

81. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 149.

82. The only hint of other drawings is what appears to be a crayon or ink study of the *Slaves* panel illustrating a review of the murals by Orozco patron Suzanne La Follette: "America in Murals," *New Freeman* (February 18, 1931), 540–44.

83. Reed, *Orozco,* 208; Hurlburt, *Notes,* 127, based on an interview with Goodrich. Margaret Hedrich, reference librarian at the New School's Fogelman Library, confirms that according to Johnson family members, Orozco offered to include Johnson's portrait in the mural, but he declined for fear of political fallout and out of concern for his place in history (personal communication, December 1997).

84. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 150. Orozco's extensive explanation of the theory here suggests its continued importance to him.

85. "Orozco Has Begun New York Murals," press release.

86. Barnitz, "Los Años," 117, also notes this.

87. First published in *Creative Art,* vol. 4, no. 1 (January 1929).

88. Reed, *Orozco,* 210–11.

89. There does not appear to be any similarity between how Orozco seems to have envisioned the room to function and the conceptual experiments with "painted environments" and spectator's viewpoint that Siqueiros was making from 1933 onward. I find no evidence in Orozco's notebooks of the period of "plastic exercises" of the sort in which Siqueiros engaged. José Clemente Orozco, *Cuadernos,* ed. Rachel Tibol (Mexico: Cultura SEP, 1983); Hurlburt, *Mexican Muralists,* 217–20.

90. Renato González Mello, "La máquina de pintar: Rivera, Orozco y la invención de un lenguaje," doctoral thesis in art history, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1998, 187–88.

91. Reed, *Orozco,* 206; Barnitz, "Los Años," 119.

92. Roberta Smith, "New School Unveils Its Restored Orozco Murals," *New York Times* (October 11, 1988).

93. *The New School for Social Research* (1930). In *Pioneer's Progress* (273–74), Johnson makes a clear distinction between the kind of advanced adult education training he envisioned at the New School and the training of militants for such activities as trade union organizing, something that he thought the school could not successfully undertake.

The Epic of American Civilization: *The Mural at Dartmouth College*

(Jacquelynn Baas)

Quotations without citations are from correspondence and documents preserved in Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library.

1. I should like to thank the National Endowment for the Arts for a 1987–88 fellowship that enabled me to travel to Mexico and conduct much of the research for this essay, a first version of which was written in 1989. (An even earlier version was published in the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* [January–February 1984], 45–49.) Clemente, Alfredo, and Lucrecia Orozco, along with Renato González Mello, each deserve special thanks for their helpfulness and generosity. Thanks are due too to the staff of the Dartmouth College Library, particularly Special Collections, as well as the good staff of the Hood Museum of Art, particularly Diane Miliotes.

2. David McClure and Elijah Parish, *Memoirs of the Rev. Eleazar Wheelock* (Newburyport, Mass.: Edward Little and Co., 1811), 97.

3. "Orozco in New England," *New Republic* (October 10, 1934), 231–35. See the bibliography for other citations. The most extensive recent scholarship on the Dartmouth mural in English has been published by Dartmouth alumnus Laurance P. Hurlburt in *The Mexican Muralists in the United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

4. Quoted by Peter B. Flint in Buñuel's *New York Times* obituary, July 31, 1983.

5. See González Mello, "Orozco in the United States: An Essay on the History of Ideas," in this catalog. In his autobiography, Orozco gives this date as 1929 (José Clemente Orozco, *An Autobiography* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962], 127).

6. The dominant theme of *Prometheus Bound* is resistance to tyranny. Zeus knew that like his father, Kronos, and his grandfather Uranos, he was in danger from his own offspring. What he didn't know was who the mother would be. For a god with Zeus's amorous ambitions, this was a problem. Prometheus knew: Thetis was the problem paramour. But certain that this information would eventually win him his freedom, Prometheus wouldn't tell.

7. "Orozco: Mexican Conscience," *Art in America* (September 1979), 78.

8. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 40.

9. From the Foreword to José Clemente Orozco, *The Artist in New York: Letters to Jean Charlot and Unpublished Writings, 1925–1929* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), 10–11.

10. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 54.

11. See, on this subject, Joséfina Zoriada Vázquez, "An Historian Views Orozco's Works," in Montgomery Endowment Symposium, *The Orozco Murals at Dartmouth College,* Dartmouth College, 1980, esp. 25–26.

12. "New World, New Races and New Art," *Creative Art* (January 1929), xiv. See Alma Reed, *Orozco* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 84–85, for an account of the writing of this article.

13. The late Professor Churchill Lathrop told me that Orozco was highly recommended by Thomas Hart Benton, who visited the college on February 10, 1931, to "conduct groups in drawing practice," according to an article in the *Dartmouth* of that date (4).

14. See Henry Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original* (New York: Alfred Knopf 1989), 127–30 (but not for Adams's inaccurate account of Alma Reed and the New School commission, 156–57).

15. Ibid., 129.

16. In the introduction by John Hubert Cornyn, *The Song of Quetzalcoatl,* 2d ed., transl. and ed.

John Hubert Cornyn (Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch Press, 1931) which Orozco probably consulted (see note 51), there is a description of Quetzalcoatl as "the Nahua Prometheus who descends into the Subterrestrial Regions in search of the Fire" (41).

17. Bernardino de Sahagún, *Fragment C.* See Enrique Florescano, *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl,* transl. Lysa Hochroth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 248, note 8, in which Florescano cites what he considers the most reliable sources of facts and analysis regarding Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl.

18. Churchill Lathrop, "How the Murals Were Commissioned," in Montgomery Endowment Symposium, *Orozco Murals,* 2. Here Lathrop cites Orozco's dedication to "universal values" and his craft. In personal conversation with me, Lathrop stressed the high regard in which Orozco was held as an artist by Packard and him. That the president and trustees finally agreed with the art department in the choice of Orozco over Rivera is implied in a letter of June 29, 1933, from President Hopkins to Roy F. Bergengren:

> I have gone pretty carefully into the comparative merits of Orozco and Rivera. Mr. Thayer, of our Board of Trustees, got interested enough to go down to Mexico and go back to the original sources. The Mexicans can't understand, according to Mr. Thayer, where the vogue of Rivera came in this country, or why he is considered in the same class with Orozco.... [M]y belief is that Rivera is one of the kings of the racketeers. He hates humanity in general and most of its representatives in particular.... He is a sensationalist, and actually makes big money by the controversies which he arouses. Orozco, on the other hand, is sweet, gentle, and unacquisitive; convinced that the world needs betterment, but entirely unwilling to ascribe individual responsibility or collective responsibility to any group for the fact that we do not improve faster than we have done.

In the letter of March 8, 1934, to a Mrs. F.C. Lewis, President Hopkins wrote: "[T]hough we know the skill of Rivera's technique we considered Orozco as his superior even here, and a much more normal-minded citizen in addition."

19. In a letter to Mrs. Rockefeller of August 8, 1931, Packard uses her suggestion of Rivera as a pretext for proposing an even more ambitious plan:

> I am more than a little excited by your suggestion of Rivera, who, without any doubt, is a greater all-round painter than Orozco.... I am writing directly to him to find out whether he could consider doing a mural for us if we should find it possible to have him. I am now wondering whether, if this sort of thing is as well worth working for as we think, it is not worth undertaking as part of a more ambitious program. Would it not be eminently worth while to think of a continuous series of mural paintings being executed at Dartmouth at intervals of three to five years during the next fifty or a hundred years by the most competent artists available so that in the course of time we should have in this one place a sequence of original works such as no institution of our day possesses? ...I am of the opinion that it would not require a very large endowment to guarantee such a program.... But I am not as competent to judge of this or of the wisest method of raising the funds necessary to make a start as you and President Hopkins are.

No response has been preserved.

20. The source for this "small lecture budget" was Rockefeller tutorial money, a fund for special educational initiatives.

21. Lathrop, "How the Murals Were Commissioned," 8.

22. In this memorandum, Hopkins conflates Orozco's politics with those of the communist Diego Rivera. It is difficult to believe that Hopkins did not understand this distinction, for according to Churchill Lathrop, both Packard and Lathrop spoke with him frequently on this topic, and in other letters, he wrote of the research that he and the trustees had carried out on Orozco versus Rivera (see note 18, above). Lathrop recalls that Hopkins and his politically conservative treasurer enjoyed teasing each other. The last sentence of the memorandum suggests that this was Hopkins's intent here.

23. Diego Rivera was paid about $21,000 to paint the 4,030-square-foot walls of the central court of the Detroit Institute of Arts that same spring, a project that may have removed him from consideration for the Dartmouth mural. The following year Rivera was paid $21,000 to paint the mural at Rockefeller Center, a project that was considerably smaller than the Dartmouth mural, about 1,000 square feet [illegible] about 3,000 square feet at Dartmouth.

24. A stack wing was later added to Baker Library, lowering the ceiling in this passageway and blocking a window that was a key factor in Orozco's composition. *Release* shows a young man reaching toward the light, which at one time streamed into the space from the directly adjacent window (fig. 2[illegible]).

25. Raquel Tibol, *José Clemente Orozco: Cuadernos* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, Subsecretaría de Cultura, 1983), [illegible].

26. Reed published this book (it bears the Delphic Studios imprint) in order to publicize Orozco's work. It is possible that the drawing was dashed off to satisfy the promise made in the *Dartmouth* of May 2 that Orozco's sketches for the Daedalus mural would be "available for publication."

27. Leo Katz claimed that he was the model for the head of Quetzalcoatl in *Departure,* "but [not] the hand that points to the Spaniards, he did not use the sketch he had made of my hand but wanted it to be his own" (quoted in Reed, *Orozco,* 246).

28. The charter for Dartmouth College was signed by the royal governor of New Hampshire in 1769. The quoted statement was written during Orozco's second visit to Dartmouth in early May 1932, presumably for publication in a press release issued on May 25, 1932.

29. In a letter to his wife of May 15, 1932, Orozco says he has been given a budget of $6,200 for the Dartmouth frescoes, including preparation of the walls, travel, and his fee. The extra $1,000 was prob[illegible]

[illegible]bly what the college [illegible]
[illegible]for the preparation of [illegible]
[illegible]José Clemente Orozco [illegible]
[illegible]*Margarita* [Mexico City: [illegible]
[illegible]a, 1987], 248.)

30. Hopkins had [illegible]
[illegible]Packard prepare for [illegible]
[illegible]figures for other mural [illegible]
[illegible]According to Packard, [illegible]
[illegible]Chavannes was paid [illegible]
[illegible]Boston Public Library [illegible]
[illegible]("less than half the size [illegible]
[illegible]the library paid John [illegible]
[illegible]$20,000 for the mural [illegible]
[illegible]top floor. Edwin Howe [illegible]
[illegible]Blashfield's "regular" [illegible]
[illegible]per square foot, José [illegible]
[illegible]being paid $60,000 to [illegible]
[illegible]the Waldorf-Astoria [illegible]
[illegible]("according to early [illegible]
[illegible]ments to the press") [illegible]
[illegible]being paid $21,000 [illegible]
[illegible]Center contract ("pre[illegible]
[illegible]especially low figure [illegible]
[illegible]"under ordinary circ[illegible]
[illegible]would be $50,000 for [illegible]
[illegible]project. Packard figu[illegible]
[illegible]college was actually [illegible]
[illegible]$2 per square foot [illegible]
[illegible]contract, $3 per squ[illegible]
[illegible]six-month extension [illegible]

31. In a letter [illegible]
[illegible]1934, to Edward Bru[illegible]
[illegible]wrote: "I have not g[illegible]
[illegible]the exact details of [illegible]
[illegible]in general because [illegible]
[illegible]professional jealous[illegible]
[illegible]between Orozco and [illegible]
[illegible]inclination which R[illegible]
[illegible]has to boast of the [illegible]
[illegible]which he secures [illegible]
[illegible]compared with any [illegible]
[illegible]Orozco gets. Orozco [illegible]
[illegible]toward us has been [illegible]
[illegible]consideration, and [illegible]
[illegible]give support to his [illegible]
[illegible]rival by the publica[illegible]

ably what the college had budgeted for the preparation of the walls. (José Clemente Orozco, *Cartas a Margarita* [Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1987], 248.)

30. Hopkins had Artemas Packard prepare for him comparative figures for other mural projects. According to Packard, Puvis de Chavannes was paid $60,000 for the Boston Public Library stairway mural ("less than half the size of ours"), and the library paid John Singer Sargent $20,000 for the murals he did on the top floor. Edwin Howland Blashfield's "regular price" was $450 per square foot, José María Sert was being paid $60,000 to $300,000 for the Waldorf-Astoria mural ("according to early and late statements to the press"), and Rivera was being paid $21,000 on the Rockefeller Center contract ("presumably an especially low figure"). Orozco's fee "under ordinary circumstances" would be $50,000 for the Dartmouth project. Packard figured that the college was actually paying him $2 per square foot on his original contract, $3 per square foot on the six-month extension.

31. In a letter of August 28, 1934, to Edward Bruce, Hopkins wrote: "I have not given publicity to the exact details of the arrangement in general because of the deep professional jealousy that prevails between Orozco and Rivera, and the inclination which Rivera apparently has to boast of the larger income which he secures for his work as compared with anything which Orozco gets. Orozco's whole attitude toward us has been one of generous consideration, and I do not want to give support to his greatest living rival by the publication of data which might be misunderstood by the public.... I should prefer that the exact figure of approximately $10,000 should not be quoted."

32. Reed, *Orozco,* asserted that Orozco did not allow assistants such as Katz, Carlos Sánchez, and Gobin Stair to work on the mural itself, and this is reinforced by a statement in a letter from President Hopkins to Matt B. Jones on June 8, 1932: "Leo Katz, the Austrian painter, has suspended all operations on his own and is up here seeking the privilege simply of holding Orozco's brushes and sitting beside him on the staging to see how he works."

33. *Dartmouth* (June 18, 1932), 4–5.

34. In fact, problems had already begun to arise, even before the contract was signed. On May 26, Matt B. Jones, president of the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, had written Hopkins with "a plea that no further progress be attempted in connection with the murals for the Baker Library that were advertised in the article in last evening's *Transcript*.... It may be that it will be the 'largest' mural, but I do not believe that is a word that connotes appropriateness or quality in art." There followed a lengthy exchange of correspondence, in the course of which Hopkins argued on pragmatic grounds, "I know nothing whatever about art...my original interest in Orozco arose from the suggestion of one of the wealthy patrons of the College [he is probably referring to Mrs. Rockefeller] that in our teaching of the various eras of art...it seemed that the College ought to give something in the way of instruction about Mexican art and about mural painting, both of which could be combined in the person of Orozco" (letter of May 31, 1932). He also reveals, "[W]e are having a more violent division of opinion in regard to the Orozco venture than in regard to anything that has happened for a long time, and there is no neutral ground. We are receiving encomiums as the most enlightened and the most culturally inclined institution operating on the face of the earth, and at the same time we are receiving comments which make your kindly inquiry seem like an approving benison" (letter of June 8, 1932).

35. Other positive articles appeared in the library *Bulletin* (March 1933), 6–8, the *Alumni Magazine* (November 1933), 7–12; (January 1934), 17–18; (February 1934), 21; (April 1934), 11–12, numerous issues of the *Dartmouth,* and a 1933 issue of the occasional publication *Arts Chapbooks* (No. 4, *Orozco at Dartmouth: A Symposium,* ed. Kimball Flaccus [Hanover: Arts Press, 1933], with articles by Churchill Lathrop, Stacy May, Artemas Packard, Kimball Flaccus, William Gaston Raoul, and Gobin Stair).

36. Reed, *Orozco,* 247.

37. The *New York Times,* June 10, 1933. Articles also appeared on this date in the *New York American, New York Herald Tribune,* and *Bridgeport* [Connecticut] *Telegram.* The *New York Times* story pointed out that "the newly organized national Commission to Advance American Art is composed of a group of conservative artists. The membership of its governing board is recruited heavily from the National Academy of Design.... The commission was organized several weeks ago when Diego Rivera was dismissed from Rockefeller Center. At the National Arts Club yesterday, ...it was said that few of the members had seen either Señor Orozco's work in Mexico or his half-finished fresco at Dartmouth, on which he has been engaged for a year."

38. In a letter of June 29, 1932, to Roy F. Bergengren, President Hopkins wrote: "The last regret list published by our 'Sell American' artists has apparently proved a boomerang, for we are now getting more proffers of support and substantiation than at any other time during the whole discussion." For more on this topic, see Churchill Lathrop in the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (January–February 1983).

39. Quoted by Lathrop, *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (November 1983).

40. Quoted in the *Dartmouth* (March 14, 1951), 2.

41. From a letter of March 8, 1934, to Mrs. Franklin C. Lewis, 2.

42. Ironically, Nelson Rockefeller was one of the Dartmouth mural's supporters. In a letter of March 4, 1934, from President Hopkins to Fred A. Howland of Montpelier, Vermont, Hopkins wrote: "I was talking with Nelson Rockefeller...a week ago when he was expressing his conviction that in the Orozco murals we had the greatest murals in the United States." Regarding the Rockefeller Center mural, see the article by Lucienne Bloch in *Art in America:* "On Location with Diego Rivera," vol. 74, no. 2 (February 1986), 102–23; and Irene Herner de Larrea et al., *Diego Rivera: Paradise Lost at Rockefeller Center* (Mexico City: Edicupes, 1987).

43. See Jean Charlot, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance 1920–*

1925 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), ch. 9.

44. Orozco was not paid for the New School project, and at Pomona he barely recouped his expenses.

45. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 158. Those tempted to believe that Orozco is here simply being flattering should compare the statements in *An Autobiography* about Pomona College (139). President Hopkins did ask Artemas Packard to suggest to Orozco that he "review" his racial stereotyping in the *Anglo-America* panel (note 83). Whether Packard did so or not is unknown. Leo Katz recounted that "it was amusing to see how the different members of the faculty tried to impress their own ideas or pet theories on Orozco.... He would listen politely, never argue, never contradict, just let them talk. Once in a while he would say, 'Yes?' and then he would go ahead and paint exactly what he had in mind in the first place" (Reed, *Orozco,* 246).

46. Charlot, *Mexican Mural Renaissance,* 229.

47. Ibid., 235.

48. Important for understanding *The Epic of American Civilization* are a pair of articles by Orozco and Packard published in the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* of November 1933, 7–12. The interpretations of the various panels provided here are valuable for two reasons. First, their source seems to have been Orozco himself; an original document in Orozco's hand with a few minor editorial changes by Packard is preserved in the Dartmouth College archives. These comments thus can be used as evidence of the artist's own intentions. Second, a comparison between the descriptions and the finished panels indicates that the artist had completed only about half the east wing panels at the time of the article and none of the central panels across from the reserve desk. The marked discrepancies between Orozco's plan, even at this late date, and the final solutions testify to the artist's faith in his own creative logic.

49. "The Bulletin," Hanover, N.H., no. 11 (February 20, 1934), 1–2 (Dartmouth College archives).

50. Florescano, *Myth of Quetzalcoatl,* 172–73.

51. One source was almost certainly *The Song of Quetzalcoatl,* sent to Dartmouth by Cornyn on May 25, 1932, after Cornyn had read in the papers that "the library of your college is to make the myth of Quetzalcoatl the motive for the mural decorations that are soon to be placed in it and that the Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco has been entrusted with the work" (letter to President Hopkins of May 25, 1932). In his letter of thanks (June 13, 1932), Hopkins stated that "at the present moment Orozco has this [book], having expressed his great interest in reading it." The book did not enter the collection of the Dartmouth College library until October 9, 1933, after the west wing had been completed. In Cornyn's book, Quetzalcoatl is referred to as "the prophet" (see Orozco's title, *The Prophecy,* for the scene showing the departure of Quetzalcoatl), and many aspects of Quetzalcoatl mythology are related in detail.

52. "...there is no literary or other record of the exact implications of this ancient myth of Quetzalcoatl ...this interpretation grows out of the inspired idealism and creative imagination of Orozco." From Artemas Packard's handwritten notes made during his May 1932 discussion with Orozco (Dartmouth College archives).

53. From an unpublished manuscript written in 1983 (5–6) and submitted to the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine,* now in the Dartmouth College archives. One of the "others" whose fresco technique Orozco derided was almost certainly Diego Rivera.

54. In a letter of October 15, 1932, the college information officer Albert Dickerson wrote to Albert Franz Cochrane, art editor of the *Boston Evening Transcript:* "Orozco returned to Hanover a little over a week ago after spending the summer abroad. He had begun work on the first panel of this large library project last June and half finished a figure of Quetzalcoatl. He is now working on his drawings for the complete series and will probably not resume painting on the walls until sometime in November."

55. Described by Orozco in his 1933 manuscript for the *Alumni Magazine* as "Teotihuacán—The Gods" (see note 48).

56. One such account was given by Orozco's erstwhile friend Anita Brenner in her book *Idols behind Altars* (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1929), 49.

57. *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (November 1933), 11 (see note 48).

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 158.

62. From a letter in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, available on microfilm through the Archives of American Art, P17 680–87.

63. Earl H. Morris, Jean Charlot, and Ann Axtell Morris, *The Temple of the Warriors at Chichén Itzá, Yucatán* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1931).

64. Reed, *Orozco,* 241.

65. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 127.

66. Hamblen published three books on Blake: *Interpretation of William Blake's Job (Its Ancient Wisdom and Mystic Ways)* (New York: Occult Research Press, n.d.); *On the Minor Prophecies of William Blake* (New York: Dutton, 1930); and *The Book of Job Interpreted* (New York: Delphic Studios [Alma Reed's imprint], 1939).

67. My thanks to Renato González Mello for pointing this out to me.

68. The identification of the migrating men in this panel specifically with the Aztecs is based on early proposals. A diagram that probably dates to early 1933 (see note 10) describes the subject of this panel as "Migration of the Aztecs from the North: symbol of the origin of American civilization." Anecdotal accounts have it that members of the Dartmouth football team were models for this composition.

69. This panel was described by Orozco in his fall 1933 manuscript for the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* as "Human Sacrifice to Huitzilopochtli." Orozco portrayed Huitzilopochtli in his blue-and-yellow-striped guise in the panel showing *The Coming of Quetzalcoatl.* The model for the disembodied head that presides over *Ancient Human Sacrifice* can be identified, on the basis of its closed eyes, strongly defined brow, flat nose, and slack downturned mouth, with the head

the goddess Coyolxau
Associated with darkn
sorcery, Coyolxauhqu
lated and dismember
brother Huitzilopocht
an attack on their mo
fertility goddess Coat
heads or masks of Co
preserved in a numbe
including a famous o
Mexico City in 1830.
Peabody Museum in
a example that is stril
Orozco's representati
Nicholson with Eloise
Keber, *Art of Aztec M*
of Tenochtitlán [Wash
National Gallery of A

70. Verbal comm
Churchill Lathrop.

71. In a letter of
to Matt B. Jones, for
President Hopkins m
ment that the subject
is appropriate to Dart
of the college's early
the American Indians
he misattributes to O
ment actually written
Hubert Cornyn: "The
your college is in line
tions which connect i
Indian races of Amer
the president of May
assertion was questio
who, in a letter of Jur
replied to Hopkins: ".
far cry from the Azte
Mexico to the rude s
Algonquin strain wit
[*sic*] Wheelock worke
which, as I understan
ologists have been ur
show a common anc

72. The artist's
for this section, publi
November 1933 in th

the goddess Coyolxauhqui. Associated with darkness and with sorcery, Coyolxauhqui was decapitated and dismembered by her half brother Huitzilopochtli when she led an attack on their mother, the earth fertility goddess Coatlicue. Stone heads or masks of Coyolxauhqui are preserved in a number of collections, including a famous one discovered in Mexico City in 1830. In 1928 the Peabody Museum in Boston acquired a example that is strikingly similar to Orozco's representation. (See H.B. Nicholson with Eloise Quiñones Keber, *Art of Aztec Mexico: Treasures of Tenochtitlán* [Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1983], 51.)

70. Verbal communication from Churchill Lathrop.

71. In a letter of May 31, 1932, to Matt B. Jones, for example, President Hopkins makes the argument that the subject of the murals is appropriate to Dartmouth because of the college's early connection with the American Indians. In the process he misattributes to Orozco a statement actually written by John Hubert Cornyn: "The resolution of your college is in line with its traditions which connect it with the Indian races of America" (letter to the president of May 25, 1932). This assertion was questioned by Jones, who, in a letter of June 3, 1932, replied to Hopkins: "...it is rather a far cry from the Aztec civilization of Mexico to the rude savages of the Algonquin strain with which Eleazer [*sic*] Wheelock worked, between which, as I understand it, the archaeologists have been unable as yet to show a common ancestry."

72. The artist's original scheme for this section, published as late as November 1933 in the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (see note 50), laid out the following subjects: "The Missionaries—Dartmouth College; Missionaries and Explorers; Settlers (the Puritans in New England); 19th Century Immigrants."

73. Alma Reed recounts that "my file of carbon duplicates reveals that on 17 June 1933, Orozco dictated to me a letter to Professor Packard in which he presented the ideas he wished to incorporate into his future painting at Dartmouth" (*Orozco*, 260–61). The revised subjects for the east wing that she cites—for example, "next to the Cortez panel there will be one dealing with our legendary wealth, which from the earliest days was the lure of the settler..."—have a slightly more negative cast than the original concept but are still far from the caustic critique of modern society that we see in the final version. It is unfortunate that Orozco's correspondence with Packard, which apparently included some drawings, has disappeared. The last trace of it is contained in a copy of a note in the archives of the Museum of Modern Art from Packard's son to Alfred H. Barr, Jr., written after the elder Packard's death: "[W]e've uncovered a wealth of original sketches, correspondence, etc. concerning the Orozco murals, and are a bit at loose ends as to what to do with them...." In his reply, Barr suggested that the family get in touch with Dartmouth. In 1989 I visited the younger son and his wife and was in touch with the older son, who was unable to locate this material.

74. Orozco, *An Autobiography*, 156.

75. *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (November 1933), 12.

76. Orozco's enthusiasm for El Greco and Velázquez is conveyed in a 1928 letter to Jean Charlot (Orozco, *The Artist in New York*, 38; see also Reed, *Orozco*, 250).

77. *Christ Destroying His Cross* of 1923, painted over in 1926, has already been mentioned (fig. 35). In addition, compare *The Destruction of the Old Order* at the Preparatory School with *Hispano-America* at Dartmouth; *Ancient Races* with corresponding panels in the east wing of the reserve room; *Social and Political Junkheap* with *Symbols of Nationalism;* and the very beautiful sleeping man derived from Giotto in *The Grave Digger* with the sleeping figure in *The Coming of Quetzalcoatl.*

78. Orozco, *An Autobiography*, 156.

79. The *Little Review*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Winter 1927), 63. On January 4, 1928, Orozco wrote Jean Charlot: "The real American artists are the ones who make the machines: you have to take off your hat to them" (Orozco, *The Artist in New York*, 32).

80. Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934), 6.

81. See Linda Bank Downs, *Diego Rivera: The Detroit Industry Murals* (New York and London: Detroit Institute of Arts in association with W.W. Norton, 1999). Downs convincingly argues that on the north wall of this cycle Rivera emphasized visual resemblances between modern machines and pre-Cortesian sculpture: "Just as the Aztecs were human fodder for the sun, Rivera drew the analogy to the factory workers who sacrifice their energy for the technological universe" (166).

82. The letter is from Paul Allen, reference librarian, the College Library. A reply was sent on July 10 from H.H. Brinker, Department of Promotion, A Century of Progress International Exposition: "...we are sending you under separate cover two or three photographs which may be of some assistance to Mr. José Clemente [*sic*], in connection with the fresco he is painting in the Dartmouth College Library. We would suggest, however, that you write to some of the manufacturers of machinery who, we are sure, would be glad to send you photographs." The photographs to which Brinker refers are not in the Dartmouth files.

83. This is the only panel to which President Hopkins seems to have recorded his objections. In a letter of November 23, 1933, to Artemas Packard, Hopkins informs Packard of his instructions to the bursar to continue Orozco's payments past January 1, adding:

> In regard to the murals in general, I should like to have Mr. Orozco feel that he has the enthusiastic support of the College in the principles for which he stands and the ideas which he wishes to represent. ...I wish, however, that he would, before he gets done, review the panel "Anglo-America, Town Meeting and School Teacher." ... Perhaps racial characteristics do not mean so very much in an artist's life, but there never was a group of children in New England, either in Puritan times or since, that looked anything like this group of Scandinavian square-heads.... That is the only panel so far that I have taken any exception

to, and I genuinely believe that the criticism is justified that whatever inspiration there may have been in the idea, the panel as a whole and the representation of the figures given are completely out of keeping with the library building or the locale.... I do feel very strongly...that in the one spot where he touches upon the school children, provision for whose education was first made in New England and where the public school first developed, he ought to give us New England characters and the sense of New England atmosphere.

84. Reed, *Orozco,* 49.

85. *Dartmouth* (February 17, 1934), 3.

86. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 158.

87. From a press release in the files of the Museum of Modern Art. I should like to thank Eloise Ricciardelli for kindly making these files available to me.

88. This figure is usually identified with Zapata, but he more closely resembles Villa. According to Friedrich Katz ("Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico," *American Historical Review,* vol. 83, no. 1 [February 1978], 101–30), Villa's "primary motivation was his firm belief that Woodrow Wilson had concluded an agreement with Carranza that would virtually convert Mexico into a U.S. protectorate. Although such an agreement never existed, Villa had reasonable grounds for supposing that it did" (102). Wilson sent a punitive expedition led by General John Pershing into Mexico to subdue Villa. The expedition failed, and Villa "is still celebrated [in Mexico] as the man who attacked the United States—and got away with it" (130). Villa was assassinated in 1923 by political enemies in Mexico.

89. See Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, *The Great Rebellion: Mexico, 1905–1924* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980), 103.

90. *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (November 1933), 12.

91. Reed, *Orozco,* 245.

92. Ibid.

93. From an unpublished paper given at the Dartmouth College symposium "In Celebration of José Clemente Orozco," October 12–13, 1984 (11).

94. Leonard Folgarait, *Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico, 1920–1940: Art of the New Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 203.

95. *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (November 1933), 12.

96. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 8. Renato González Mello believes that Orozco was convinced of Posada's worth by Jean Charlot; the fact that skeleton imagery does not appear in Orozco's caricatures before 1925 would appear to support his position.

97. Reed, *Orozco,* 262.

98. Gobin Stair, "The Making of a Mural: A Handyman's Memoir of José Clemente Orozco," *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (February 1973), 23.

99. Letter to Mrs. Franklin C. Lewis, March 8, 1934, 2.

100. Brenner, *Idols behind Altars,* 17–18.

101. See Anna D. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

102. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 134–35. In addition, as David Scott has pointed out, "just before he left for California [in 1930], Alma Reed had held an exhibit showing the paintings of Mistra at her Delphic Studios" (Scott, "Orozco's Prometheus," *College Art Journal,* vol. 17, no. 1 [Fall 1957], 16).

103. From a plan for the mural probably produced around March 1933 in connection with the article "Orozco," published in the Dartmouth *Library Bulletin* of this month, 6–8, Dartmouth College archives.

104. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 158.

105. Claude Bragdon, *The Arch Lectures* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1942), 102.

106. See note 13.

107. For more information on Benton's mural projects, which must have been of tremendous interest to Orozco, see Adam, cited above, and Emily Braun and Thomas Branchick, *Thomas Hart Benton: The America Today Murals* (New York: Equitable Life Assurance Society, 1985).

108. "New World, New Races and New Art," *Creative Art* (January 1929), xlvi.

109. Reed, *Orozco,* 185.

110. Orozco, *An Autobiography,* 159.

111. "Social Realism in Mexico: The Murals of Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros," *artscanada* (December–January 1979–80), 60.

112. *Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación Pública,* 2, 1923, 17, cited and quoted in Charlot, *Mexican Mural Renaissance,* 92–93.

113. Reed, *Orozco,* 59, 95.

Orozco at War: Context and Fragment in Dive Bomber and Tank *(1940)*

(James Oles)

1. "Mexico's Art through Twenty Centuries Installed in Modern Museum," *Art Digest,* vol. 14, no. 17 (June 1, 1940), 15.

2. "Interchangeable Dive Bomber," *New Yorker,* vol. 16, no. 21 (July 6, 1940), 13; Clemente Orozco, *Orozco, Verdad Cronológica* (Guadalajara: EDUG/Universidad de Guadalajara, 1983), 390.

3. With the $7,500 fee, he planned to bring his wife, Margarita, up to visit the New York World's Fair and Niagara Falls. See José Clemente Orozco, *Cartas a Margarita* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1987), 300–310. For further details on the commission, including information based on unpublished letters, see Alejandro Anreus, *Orozco in Gringoland* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 118–22.

4. The panels were constructed of galvanized wire lath attached to a welded steel frame. Three coats of plaster (scratch, brown, and equalizing) were applied to the lath; the fourth, or intonaco coat, was applied just before he began painting. (See Clemente Orozco, *Dive Bomber and Tank* collection file (notes on the preparation of panels and the fresco technique used in painting *Dive Bomber and Tank*), Museum of Modern Art, Department of Painting and Sculpture.

5. MacKinley Helm, *Man of Fire: J.C. Orozco: An Interpretive Account* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishers, 1953), 87.

6. Author's i
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