PRE-COLUMBIAN SCULPTURE AND MODERN SCULPTORS

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF M. A.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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1970

ABSTRACT

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This paper measures the depth of influence of pre-Columbian, primarily Mexican, stone sculpture upon the following modern artists: Moore, Flannagan, Zorach, Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska, Picasso, Dérain, Duchamp-Villon, Zadkine, and Gauguin. By examination of the forementioned artists' works, examination of pre-Columbian sculpture, analysis of the artists' and of other authors' written commentaries on the artists' works, it is shown that Moore and Flannagan were the sculptors who were most profoundly influenced by pre-Columbian sculpture. The paper then analyzes the conceptions of nature and art held by the ancient Mexicans and these two modern sculptors. It is shown that the reason why Moore's and Flannagan's works show the greatest percentage of ancient Mexican influence is that these two artists held philosophical views which were similar to the ancient Mexican's. These similar concepts enabled Moore and Flannagan to be better able to appreciate and absorb the essence of pre-Columbian sculpture and to evolve similar but individualistic plastic expressions.

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Art

1970

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to express his appreciation to Professor Webster Smith for his assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In comparing specific sculptures of the following modern artists, Moore, Flannagan, Zorach, Epstein, Hepworth, Gaudier-Brzeska, Picasso, Laurens, Dérain, Duchamp-Villon, Zadkine, and Gauguin, with specific examples of pre-Columbian sculpture we are struck by their similarities. Except for Gauguin, whose ceramic-sculpture was influenced by Peruvian, and to a lesser extent ancient Mexican ceramic-sculptures, the other sculptors were influenced by the stone sculpture of ancient Mexico. To measure the depth of the influence of ancient Mexican stone sculpture on each of the forementioned artists it is necessary to measure the percent of their total work that bears similarity to pre-Columbian Mexican sculpture and to study and compare these pieces with their Mexican counterparts to see how many and how strong these similarities are. By making such quantitative and qualitative comparative analyses we find the following:

1. Moore and Flannagan have been most persistently and profoundly influenced.
2. most of Zorach's animal sculptures have been influenced by Aztec animal sculpture, but not so strongly as Flannagan's animal sculpture. In some of Zorach's animal sculptures Egyptian influence predominated. In others we find the artist's romantic and sentimental attitude toward animals manifested. This sentimental quality is absent in both

Flannagan's and the Aztec's plastic interpretation of nature.

3. although Epstein produced some carvings, his more realistic bronze portrait studies formed the main body of his work. In most of his carvings we find an intermingling of Egyptian and ancient Mesopotamian influences along with ancient Mexican influence. However, his sculpture, "Woman Possessed," is predominantly influenced by Mexican sculpture.
4. Hepworth, after a few initial abstract plastic experiments based on the human head and figure which were influenced by pre-Columbian art (1925-35), turned to a non-representational art based on pure form.
5. Gaudier-Brzeska was influenced by so many other non-European arts, i.e., that of China, Mesopotamia, Negro Africa, Egypt, and Polynesia, besides that of ancient Mexico, that it is exceedingly difficult to isolate or judge the extent of the influence of any one of them.
6. Picasso, Laurens, Duchamp-Villon, Dérain, and Zadkine are only represented by single works.

Hence, by direct comparison, we conclude that Moore and Flannagan were the sculptors most influenced by the sculpture of ancient Mexico.

In order to confirm the contention that the modern sculptors mentioned in the first paragraph were influenced by pre-Columbian art, aside from making direct comparisons, I shall,

when it is pertinent, draw from both or from either of the following sources: (1) the sculptor's statements, and (2) the statements of others.

If we study Moore's and Flannagan's sculptural aims and concepts regarding nature as revealed in their writings and compare them with the pre-Columbian Mexican's concepts regarding nature as revealed in the translations of their writings and in the writings of scholars in the field of pre-Columbian culture we again find similarities. Because of these analogies Moore and Flannagan were motivated to find solutions similar to those of the ancient Mexicans. They could, moreover, better comprehend and thus absorb the ancient Mexican's modes of plastic expression while maintaining individual plastic expressions of their own. I will, therefore, analyze most deeply the relationships that exist between Moore's and Flannagan's sculpture and pre-Columbian Mexican sculpture. Whereas all the sculptors mentioned in the first paragraph were influenced by pre-Columbian sculpture because they found in it the same qualities of simplicity of form, directness of approach, and vitality of expression which they sought to infuse into their own work, the influence upon them was not as lasting or deep as that exerted upon Moore and Flannagan.

In order to understand why pre-Columbian art did not exert any influence upon artists until the first decade of the twentieth century, with the exception of Gauguin in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, I will devote

section II of my paper to a short history of the discovery of pre-Columbian art as art. I will include all the sculptors who were influenced by pre-Columbian art in the latter part of this second section. In section III, I will give a brief summary of the qualities found in the stone sculpture of ancient Mexico and the related metaphysical concepts that motivated this type of plastic expression. In section IV, I will present a detailed comparison between pre-Columbian Mexican sculpture and the sculpture of Moore and Flannagan. I will then show that similar conceptions of art and nature were held by these two modern sculptors and the ancient Mexicans.

II. THE DISCOVERY OF PRE-COLUMBIAN ART

> If the works of that artistic world do not confirm, or even if they offend, our concept of beauty, which is that of Western civilization, it is not because of any inadequacy in pre-Cortesian art, but inadequacy on the part of the spectator who, misled by prejudice, applied invalid standards to it.[1]

The Sixteenth Century

Except for small pockets of resistance, the Spaniards had conquered the Aztecs, the Mayas, and the Incas by the end of the sixteenth century. They wiped out much of the pre-Columbian civilization by destroying their religious sculpture and temples, by killing the people who resisted them, and by converting forcibly those remaining to Catholicism. Once the military and religious leaders were killed, and the plastic manifestations of their religion were destroyed, their civilization crumbled. The Spanish were not interested in the pre-Columbian's accomplishments in art. They were interested in treasure. In reference to the literature written by the Spanish during the sixteenth century on the pre-Columbian civilization, George Kubler writes, "All these sources may be described as a literature of economic and political purpose. When monuments are mentioned, it is not for the sake of their form or expression, but to indicate that important centers of population were present, or that

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[1]Paul Westheim, The Art of Ancient Mexico, (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1965), p. 49.

treasure might be latent. The notion of any artistic value beyond magnitude of expertise, strangeness of form, and rarity of material was absent from sixteenth century commentaries upon pre-conquest manufactures."[1] However, there was one important commentary written in this period. Bernardino de Sahagún, a Franciscan monk, with the help of some Aztecs, compiled an encyclopedia work on the native peoples of Mexico. This work, which was written in the native Aztec language, contained Aztec literature on their arts which gives us direct information on what the Aztecs thought about their art. Phillip II (1527-98) stopped Sahagún's research for the reason that it was "not conductive to the glory of God nor to mine that things be written about the superstitions of these Indians."[2] He had him send all his volumes to Spain where all but four volumes decayed in the royal library. These were finally published in the nineteenth century in the original Nahuatl, and later in the twentieth century in Spanish and English. The typical attitude exhibited by the Spanish conquistador towards pre-Columbian sculpture was one of revulsion. In the process of destroying some pre-Columbian sculpture, Bernal Diáz recalls, "The idols looked like fiercesome dragons, as big as calves, and there

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[1]George Kubler, The Art and Architecture of Ancient America, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1962), p. 8.

[2]I. A. Langnas, "The Discovery of Aztec Art," Arts, Hilton Kramer, XXXV, no. 8-9, (May-June, 1961) p. 28.

were figures half men and half great dogs of hideous appearance."[1]

The only person in the sixteenth century who appreciated pre-Columbian art was Albert Dürer. Upon seeing some of the pre-Columbian's gold and silver work, weapons and other artifacts sent to Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, which were exhibited in Brussels in 1520, he wrote the following in his diary: "I have never seen in all my days what rejoiced my heart as these things. For I saw among them amazing artistic objects and I marvelled over the subtle ingenuity of men in these distant lands. Indeed I cannot say enough about the things which were there before me."[2]

The Seventeenth Century

The Spanish missionaries paid the highest tribute to pre-Columbian sculpture's expressive power by their destruction of it. It was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the expressive vitality of pre-Columbian sculpture was rediscovered in a more positive way by modern sculptors. The only literature which the Spanish allowed to be written on pre-Columbian art was in the form of commentaries describing the objects to be destroyed and

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[1]Bernard Diáz del Castillo, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, trans. by A. P. Maudslay, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1956), p. 129.

[2]Victor W. von Hagan, The Aztec: Man and Tribe, (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1958), p. 154.

the date of their destruction. Any other writings were discouraged. When "...the nun Juna Ines of the Cross, who was the greatest woman poet of the Americas, started to write in defense of the Indians and to compose verses in Nahuatl, the Aztec language, she was mercilessly silenced."[1]

The Eighteenth Century

The Jesuit historian, Francisco Clavigero, wrote the most important of eighteenth century commentaries on Aztec art. He defended the Indian culture against the writers of his time, such as Dr. William Robertson, who said in his history of the Americas that the pre-Columbian nations were not to "rank with the nations which merit the name civilized."[2] Clavigero considered pre-Columbian art a naive art based on the heart rather than the mind. However, he did not think that pre-Columbian art should rank with the artistic achievements of Europe.

The Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century the official Mexican attitude was to elevate anything Spanish and debase anything pre-Columbian. José Bernardo Couto, a noted appreciator of

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[1] Langnas, Arts, XXXV, no. 8-9, p. 28.

[2] Langnas, Arts, XXXV, no. 8-9, p. 28.

colonial art, in his "Dialogue of the History of Aztec Paintings in Mexico" (1860) said this about Aztec paintings, "'One should not look in them for a knowledge of chiaroscuro or of perspective, or for a taste of beauty or grace.... They failed to express moral qualities and moods of the soul ...and showed a certain propensity to observe and copy the less genteel aspects of Nature, such as animals of disagreeable aspect.'"[1]

Some nineteenth century European and American archaeologists were less biased in their attitude towards pre-Columbian art. John L. Stevens, who explored the Yucatan peninsula (1840) and was the first to amass evidence for the independent origin of the ancient Mexican civilizations, showed some appreciation for Mayan art. "His first view of Copan convinced him that American antiquities were important 'not only as the remains of an unknown people but as works of art.'"[2]

William H. Prescott, another American writer on pre-Columbian art, showed some appreciation for Aztec sculptures but was unable to fully appreciate them as he was blinded by the artistic prejudices of his day. We can see this from the following statements taken from his book, History of the Conquest of Mexico: "The allegorical phantisms of his

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[1]Jean Charlot, "Who Discovered America," Art News, Alfred Frankfurter, LII, no. 7, (November 1953) p. 31.

[2]Holger Cahill, Aztec, Incan and Mayan Art, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1933), p. 6.

religion, no doubt, gave a direction to the Aztec artist, in his delineation of the human figure; supplying him with an imaginary beauty in the personification of divinity itself. As these superstitions lost hold on his mind, it opened to the influences of a purer taste; and, after the conquest, the Mexicans furnished many examples of correct and some of beautiful portraiture."[1]

Franz Kugler, the German art historian, wrote the first explicit statements about pre-Columbian art. He was one of the first to believe in the independent origins of the pre-Columbian culture. He arrived at his decision by comparing available photographs of pre-Columbian art with the art of other cultures.[2] More important in relation to this paper is the following: "In 1842 Kugler correctly noted the Aztec sculptor's search for the 'inner meaning of organically animated form' and his command of the 'expressions of the life of the soul.' But Kugler was ill at ease with the 'deformed proportions,' the 'excessive symbolic ornament,' the 'archetectonic inventions.' Like Waldeck, who claimed to be Jacques-Louis David's pupil, Kugler preferred the 'lively sense for nature, excellent musculature, slender forms, and soft motions of Maya sculpture at Palenque."[3] "In

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[1]William H. Prescott, History of the Conquest of Mexico, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippicott and Co., 1864), p. 141.

[2]Kubler, p. 13.

[3]Ibid., pp. 13, 14.

other respects Kugler was less adventurous. His taste for Neo-Classic correctness and severity, then already old-fashioned but characteristic of his generation, kept him from enjoying the expressive power of Mexican sculpture."[1]

Most of the scholars of the nineteenth century considered only those pieces of pre-Columbian sculpture which approached realism, and hence which could be judged by the western standards of beauty, to be art. The painter-sculptor Paul Gauguin was an exception. His early exposure to Peruvian and Huaztec ceramic-sculpture, his love for the primitive, and his hatred for the effete, over-sophisticated academic art of his time gave him the right frame of mind to appreciate pre-Columbian sculpture. Unbiased by a western ideal of beauty based either on the Classical, Renaissance, or Realist tradition, he could observe and analyze the formal strength of these sculptures and penetrate the secret behind their powerful vitality. "Pre-Columbian art had been familiar to Gauguin since his youth, thanks especially to his guardian Gustave Arosa's collections and publications and we find him using motifs from this distant civilization in early drawings (1878) and wood carvings (1881)....And when he began to make ceramics in 1886 it was to the forms of this art in particular that he turned in order to break away from the European tradition of pottery."[2] Gauguin's trip to

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[1]Kubler, p. 13.

[2]Merete Bodelson, Gauguin's Ceramics, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1964), p. 98.

Central America in 1887 reinforced his love for pre-Columbian ceramics. He was proud of his Indian heritage and it was on his return from Martinique "that he wrote the famous words to Mette Gauguin about the two natures within him: 'L'Indien et la sensitive: la sensitive a disparu ce qui permet a l'Indien de marcher tout droit et fortement.'"[1] The extent of "the Indian" in Gauguin is very nicely illustrated in the book, Sculpture and Ceramics of Paul Gauguin. Here one can see photographic comparisons made between Gauguin's ceramics and pre-Columbian ceramics, each photographic comparison being supplemented with a commentary by the author.[2]

As very little of pre-Columbian art was shipped to Europe, Gauguin was fortunate in that he was able to come into direct contact with it. The Romantic literary movement in the nineteenth century stimulated the archaeologists and the painters (Delacroix, Lautrec, van Gogh, Degas) to turn to exotic places and remote civilizations. However, the pre-Columbian civilizations of Latin America were by-passed. It was easier to travel to and to procure art objects from the European colonies in Asia, Africa, and Oceanea. Before the twentieth century the ethnographical collections which contained an appreciable amount of art from primitive and ancient civilizations possessed no art from the ancient Americas. "The Latin American peoples, who attained

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[1]Bodelson, p. 98.

[2]Christopher Gray, The Sculpture and Ceramics of Paul Gauguin, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1963).

independence from Spain before the formation of the European colonial empires, never contributed from their rich resources to these ethnographical collections."[1]

There were other good reasons why pre-Columbian sculpture did not influence any western artists except Gauguin until the twentieth century. The archaeologists and art historians who traveled to Latin America and saw pre-Columbian sculpture were blinded by European aesthetic dogma and, therefore, could not see the artistic value in this art form. The artists who were capable of breaking with European tradition never went to Latin America.

The Twentieth Century

The prejudices against pre-Columbian art extended into the early part of the twentieth century. Many western scholars were still applying western aesthetic standards to an art which was not made with these standards in mind.

In the early twentieth century, Manuel Gamio, a Mexican archaeologist and anthropologist who had been a student of Franz Boas, conducted an experiment. "He gathered at his house a number of civilized people well acquainted with Western art but unfamiliar with that of ancient Mexico. He presented them with two sets of works of art. The first included the well known head of the "Eagle Knight," monumental though only life size; the head of a dead Aztec that might

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[1]Kubler, p. 13.

have been based on a death mask; and a charming chapulín in red carnilite. The second group consisted of a colossal and terrifying head of the god Coyalyauhqui; a weird figure with the body of a baby and the head of a bird peeping out of a baroque canopy; and a coiled feathered snake about to strike. The concensus of opinion was that the first set represented genuine works of art and the second did not."[1] Nor were Gamio's friends isolated examples. Roger Fry's and Eliefaure's reactions toward the fierce and terrible aspects of Aztec sculpture deprived them of a total appreciation of this art.[2]

Even though the prejudices against non-Western art in general and pre-Columbian art in particular continued to be prevalent in the first quarter of the twentieth century there were events taking place at this time which began to weaken the bases for these prejudices. The aesthetic bias that presupposed art to be a successful imitation of nature was attacked by Wilhelm Worringer, Alois Riegl, André Focillion, and others.[3] These scholars stressed the importance of abstraction. During the same period, artists were plastically actualizing the principles of abstraction. The works of these scholars and artists made it possible to comprehend the abstract formal properties of non-Western art.

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[1]Langnas, Arts, XXXV, no. 8-9, p. 28.

[2]Cahill, p. 13.

[3]Dore Ashton, Abstract Art Before Columbus, (New York: André Emmerick Gallery, 1957), p. 34.

Non-Western art ceased to be curios in museums and began to exert influence on the art of twentieth century western man.

In the early part of the twentieth century, there was an upsurge of archaeological investigation in Latin America. Many art objects were sent to America and Europe where they found their way into museums and ethnographical collections. The Trocadéro Museum in Paris was founded by Dérain and Vlaminck in the first decade of the twentieth century.[1] This museum contained examples of pre-Columbian art which were viewed by many of the important artists of the twentieth century, including Picasso. During the early part of the twentieth century Lipchitz began to collect pre-Columbian as well as other non-Western art forms. His now world famous collection contains many examples of pre-Columbian sculpture.[2] While it is possible that Lipchitz was influenced by pre-Columbian sculpture as Selz states,[3] this influence is inconsequential. This is apparent to anyone who studies his work in its entirety.

There exist a few isolated works by Laurens, Dérain, Zadkine, Duchamp-Villon, and Picasso that resemble pre-Columbian sculpture in their formal properties and/or general overall appearance. Laurens abstracted the features of the

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[1]Ashton, p. 34.

[2]The Lipchitz Collection, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1960).

[3]Jean Selz, Modern Sculpture Origins and Evolution, (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1963), p. 238.

head in his "Portrait of Marthe Giriead" (1912, stone)[1] in much the same way the Aztec artist did in his stone statue of "Xochiquetzal."[2] In his stone sculpture, "Crouching Man" (1907),[3] Dérain, like his pre-Columbian predecessors, abstracts the human figure into large geo-organic volumes. Zadkine's "Head of a Man" (1914, stone)[4] resembles Aztec stone masks with its division into a few basic planes. Duchamp-Villon's "Maggy" (1912, bronze)[5] resembles a terra-cotta skull[6] of the Mixteca-puebla civilization. Picasso's "Skull" (1943, bronze),[7] bears a striking resemblance to Aztec skull sculpture.

William Zorach, the American sculptor, made frequent visits to the pre-Columbian exhibit in the Museum of Natural History during the 1910's.[8] The fact that Zorach was

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[1]Selz, p. 227.

[2]Raoul d'Harcourt, Primitive Art of the Americas, (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1950), p. 74.

[3]Carola Giedion-Welcker, Contemporary Sculpture an Evolution in Volume and Space, (New York: George Wittenborn Inc., 1960), p. 44.

[4]Selz, p. 233.

[5]Ibid., p. 229.

[6]Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art Mexicain, (Paris: Ministere d'Etat Affaires Culturelles, 1962), p. 169.

[7]Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, Sculpture of the Twentieth Century, (New York: Museum of Modern Art), p. 178.

[8]Cahill, p. 7.

influenced by Aztec sculpture is easily seen by direct comparison. Zorach's "Frog" (1954, granite)[1] is similar in appearance to and has the same formal properties as Flannagan's "Frog" (1938, sandstone)[2] and the Aztec "Frog" (stone).[3] (See IV for a detailed comparison between the "Frog" sculpture of Flannagan and the Aztec.) In 1933 the Museum of Modern Art in New York gave a joint exhibition of pre-Columbian and modern art. Zorach was represented with the following three stone sculptures: "Rabbit" (1930), "Cat" (1930), and "Seated Child" (1939).[4] Other animal stone sculptures by Zorach influenced by Aztec stone animal sculptures are: "The Grey Rabbit" (1947),[5] "Reclining Cat" (1935),[6] and "Pigeon" (1930).[7]

During the 1920's Mexican painters and sculptors issued a manifesto calling for a return to the native heritage of Mexico. The Mexican craftsmen and folk artists did not need

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[1]John I. H. Bauer, William Zorach, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1959), Fig. 78.

[2]Carl Zigrosser, "Introduction," John B. Flannagan, "Statement by the Artist," The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, ed. by Dorothy C. Miller, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1942), p. 32.

[3]Westheim, The Art of Ancient Mexico, Plate III.

[4]Cahill.

[5]Bauer, Figure 65.

[6]Ibid., Figure 43.

[7]Ibid., Figure 31.

a manifesto. They had been preserving the pre-Columbian tradition since colonial times.[1] In Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art Mexicain there is a skull done by a twentieth century folk artist that is strongly reminescent of the Aztec's treatment of the skull in their sculpture.[2] Mexico's great contribution to twentieth century art has been in the field of mural painting. However, Mexico did produce three major sculptors, all of whom were influenced by pre-Columbian art. They are Luis Ortiz Monasterio, Francisco Zuniga, and Carlos Bracho. "Woman's Head"[3] by Monasterio shows Aztec influence in its simplification of planes, stylization of the eyes and the flat nose, and its massive cubic overall shape. However, it lacks the Aztec sculpture's great expressive vitality. The same critique can be applied to "Head of an Indian" (stone)[4] by Zuniga, adding the fact that it is more realistic than both Monasterio's "Woman's Head" and Aztec sculpture. Of the three modern Mexican sculptures, Bracho's "Head of an Indian Woman"[5] comes closest to the Aztec sculpture's feeling of simplicity, directness, and vitality.

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[1] Cahill, p. 8.

[2] Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art Mexicain, p. 409.

[3] Art News, Alfred Frankfurter, XLVLLI, (May 1949), p. 18.

[4] Contemporary Artists in Latin America, (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1945).

[5] Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art Mexicain, p. 369.

In 1913 Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska helped to found the London Group, a group of avant-garde sculptors and painters. Gaudier-Brzeska stated the beliefs of the group in a manifesto which appeared in the first edition of the group's periodical, Blast. In Blast he wrote of the group's contempt for the art traditions of Greece, Rome, and the Renaissance; and their admiration for the art of the ancient civilizations of China, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and America.[1] His study of the art of these ancient civilizations helped him to form concepts of sculpture which were to become the creed of the many modern sculptors who followed him. "Sculptural energy is the mountain. Sculptural feeling is the appreciation of masses in relation. Sculptural ability is the defining of these masses by planes."[2] Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska admired sculpture that was clear, hard, durable, and geometric.[3] These qualities are found in pre-Columbian art as well as in their work. Gaudier-Brzeska absorbed many non-Western influences. He did not create a single work in which the pre-Columbian influence is clearly dominant. The most one can say is that this was one of the influences found in his sculpture. Valentiner states in regard to

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[1]Richard Buckle, Jacob Epstein Sculptor, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1963), pp. 65, 66.

[2]Ezra Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska, (New York: John Lane Co., 1916), p. 91.

[3]Buckle, p. 78.

Gaudier-Brzeska's "Seated Figure" (1915),[1] "The expression of the face, as well as the preponderance of the upper part of the body over the lower, reflect the influence of primitive African and primitive American sculptures by which this sculptor was greatly impressed."[2]

In some of Epstein's carvings of the 1930's, the pre-Columbian influence is more apparent than in Gaudier-Brzeska's sculptures. "Woman Possessed" (Hoptonwood stone, 1932)[3] possesses plastic qualities which are similar to two pre-Columbian sculptures. The overall position of Epstein's figure is similar to the first of these, "Pregnant Woman" (Occidental Coastal Civilization of Mexico, terracotta, 300-1250 A.D.).[4] Both sculptures are geo-organic abstract representations of the female figure in the same unusual reclining pose. In both figures the back is greatly arched, the legs bent at the knee, and the head is touching the ground. Both are fertility images; the Mexican figure is already pregnant, while Epstein's figure is tensely awaiting her union with the male. Both sculptures are simple, direct, plastic expressions. The "stoniness" of Epstein's figure is accentuated by the use of simplified, large, smoothly

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[1]Valentiner, Origins of Modern Sculpture, (New York: Wittenborn and Co., 1946), Figure 55.

[2]Ibid., p. 73.

[3]Buckle, pp. 192, 193.

[4]Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art Mexicain, p. 89.

joined volumes, and by the tensely static distribution of mass. The Mexican figure is looser, less rigid, softer, and appears to grow from within outward. It seems to contain something like a filled pot. Here the Mexican artist makes use of the properties of terracotta to emphasize the idea of fecundity. However, the head of Epstein's figure is much more akin to a second pre-Columbian sculpture, the Mayan "Chacmool."[1] In both these sculptures the head is treated as a flattened ovoid growing out of the neck. Both have the same facial stylizations: flat elongated nose, almond-shaped eyes and open mouth.

The heads of "Elemental" (alabaster, 1932),[2] "Chimera" (alabaster, 1932),[3] "Adam" (alabaster, 1938),[4] and one of the male figures from the relief "Primitive Gods" (Hoptonwood, 1933)[5] all show Mayan influence.

Epstein, along with Gaudier-Brzeska, were founding members of the London Group. Gaudier-Brzeska wrote a manifesto for this group in which he praised pre-Columbian art. Gaudier-Brzeska mentions Epstein's name as one of the artists supporting this manifesto.

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[1]Herbert Read, The Art of Sculpture, (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1961), Figure 204.

[2]Buckle, pp. 191, 192.

[3]Read, Figure 205.

[4]Ibid., p. 202.

[5]Barbara Hepworth, text, Herbert Read, "Introduction," Barbara Hepworth Carvings and Drawings, (London: Lund Humphries and Co., Ltd., 1952), p. ix.

In his book on Epstein, Richard Buckle writes of Epstein's respect for Mexican sculpture and its influence on him. In reference to Moore and Epstein, Buckle writes, "In the future they would go very different ways,...because of their mutual respect, perhaps because of their admiration for Mexican sculpture [which] they had in common...."[1] Epstein's "Woman Possessed" and Moore's "Reclining Figure" (brown Horton stone, 1929)[2] shared similar qualities of form and feeling with the Mayan "Chacmool." With respect to Epstein's "Primitive Gods," Buckle writes, "It represented a male deity nearly three-quarter length, with squarish flat-topped head and incised Mexican-style features [like "Woman Possessed"]...."[3]

Moore and Hepworth came under the pre-Columbian influence in the 1920's. Herbert Read, in his introduction to Barbara Hepworth Carvings and Drawings, states that Hepworth was influenced by the sculpture of ancient Mexico.[4] Hepworth in her "Head" (stone, 1930), and especially in her stone "Mask" (1929), abstracts the facial features in much

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[1]Buckle, pp. 191, 192.

[2]Read, The Art of Sculpture, Figure 205.

[3]Ibid., p. 202.

[4]Barbara Hepworth, text, Herbert Read, "Introduction," Barbara Hepworth Carvings and Drawings, (London: Lund Humphries and Co., Ltd., 1952), p. ix.

the same way as a Teotihuacan artist did in a mask shown in Westheim's Sculpture of Ancient Mexico.[1]

Flannagan's sculpture began to show pre-Columbian influence in the 1930's. He was represented in the Museum of Modern Art's show of 1933 with "Serpent" (stone, 1930) and "Nude" (stone, 1930).[2]

Sahagún's manuscripts were finally translated into Spanish from the original Nahuatl by Francisco del paso y Trancuso in 1958 and then into various other modern languages.[3] The Aztec's conception of their art finally became available to the modern world.

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[1]Barbara Hepworth, Barbara Hepworth Carvings and Drawings, Figure 14.

[2]Hepworth, Figure 12.

[3]Langnas, Arts, XXXV, no. 8-9, pp. 29, 101.

III. PRE-COLUMBIAN ART (MEXICAN)

Aztec poems recorded by Bernardino de Sahagún:

Toltecatl: The Artist

The artist: disciplined, abundant, multiple, restless.
The true artist; is capable, well prepared, skillful;
He dialogues with his heart, finds things with his reason.
The true artist takes everything from his heart;
He works with delight; makes things calmly, with a steady hand;
He works like a Toltec, puts things together, works well, creates;
He arranges things, makes them trim, adjusts them.

The bad artist: takes chances with his work, laughs at people,
Makes things dim, passes over the face[1] of things,
Works without care, defrauds people, is a thief.[2]

Zuquichiuhqui: The Potter

He who gives clay a being,
With a sharp eye molds it.
Kneads it.

The good potter;
He puts care into things,
Teaches the clay to lie;
He dialogues with his heart,
Makes things live, creates them;
He knows everything like a Toltec,
Makes his hands skillful.

The bad potter:
Clumsy, laughs in his art,
Deathly pale.[3]

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[1] "face" also used by the Aztecs to mean "mind." Langnas, Arts, XXXV, no. 8-9, p. 101.

[2] Langnas, Arts, p. 29.

[3] Ibid., p. 29.

The Painter

The good painter;
Toltec-artist of the black and red ink,
Creator of things with the black water....

The good painter; understanding
God in his heart,
Defies things with his heart,
Dialogues with his own heart....[1]

Art and religion were inseparable for pre-Columbian man. The purpose of their art was to give plastic expression to their magico-religious conceptions of the universe. Pre-Columbian art is not a realistic art, but an abstract art based on natural forms. Their reality was not based on perception, but on metaphysical concepts and myths. "The purpose of pre-Cortesian art is not and cannot be the representation and embodiment of the optic phenomenon. In that artistic world, the authentic and genuine reality that must be represented is what acts as the vital element within things, the hidden mythico-magic forces. To give them plastic expression and to convert into form the spirits that animate things, to shape the significance rather than the visual aspect--this is the aim of that artistic creating and this is where all esthetic appreciation must start. It is thought expressed in symbolic images, in contrast to realistic-objective thought."[2]

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[1]Von Hagan, p. 198.

[2]Westheim, The Art of Ancient Mexico, p. 26.

A short summary of the pre-Columbian Mexican's concepts of nature will help us to better understand their art. The following statements are true for all the major ancient Mexican civilizations: Toltec, Aztec and Mayan. They believed in animism. "Every object, man, animal, plant and stone is possessed and ruled by hidden forces and by spirits, demons and gods. What characterizes phenomena and gives them their existence is not matter, but the spirits inherent in matter."[1] They believed the universe to be in a condition of ceaseless change brought about through the struggles of two great godly adversaries, Quetzalcóatl and Tezcatlipoca. Both gods possessed the dual aspects of the creative and the destructive. Tezcatlipoca made the first world which Quetzalcóatl destroyed, Quetzalcóatl then created a second world which Tezcatlipoca destroyed, etc. The concept of dualism was central to the pre-Columbian Mexican's way of thinking. The creative and the destructive forces in continuous struggle, first one force in ascendency then the other, give rise to the cyclical recurrence of the natural phenomena: life and death, day and night, summer and winter, rain and drought, etc. There is a principle of unity underlying the ancient Mexican's concept of dualism. The dual aspects of nature are interdependent. They are not final states, they continuously change into one another obeying some metaphysical unifying principle. This concept

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[1]Westheim, The Art of Ancient Mexico, p. 21.

is manifested in their art. "The Borgia Codex, describing the five regions of the world, shows, after the destructive forces, the creative forces symbolized by the pair of gods, shown in the act of copulation, who dominate each region. In the South, the place of death, the god and goddess of death are seen thus (Plate 52 of the Borgia Codex)."[1] A destructive process is the necessary condition for the birth of the creative process.

The most important gods of ancient Mexico possessed both the creative and destructive aspects of nature. Besides Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcóatl, the most important gods were: the sun god, who was also a god of war; the maize gods who were also war gods; and the earth goddess who was both the creator and destroyer of all earthly beings. The metaphysical conception of the interrelationship of the creative and destructive aspects of nature is manifested in the sculpture of ancient Mexico. In a ceramic mask from the Mexican Valley civilization at Tlataco (700 B.C.),[2] we find a plastic representation of the human head divided into two halves, half face and half skull. Both halves are combined into one unified plastic symbol.

The pre-Columbian Mexican considered the process of birth to be the result of a struggle between the creative and

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[1]Westheim, p. 25.

[2]G. H. S. Bushwell, Ancient Arts of the Americas, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), p. 34.

destructive forces taking place either in the womb of the human mother or in the womb of mother earth. "A part of her being dies there so that new life can begin, just as a grain of maize dies in the earth so that a new plant can spring up."[1] In Westheim's book, The Sculpture of Ancient Mexico, the earth's struggle to give birth to maize and woman's struggle in childbirth are combined in one plastic symbol.[2] The Aztec sculpture represents the goddess of fertility, Tlazolteótl, giving birth to the maize god. The agonized features of the goddess testify to the birth struggle. The "Great Coatlicue"[3] is the strongest plastic expression of the ancient Mexican's concept of creation-destruction. I will consider the "Great Coatlicue" in more detail later when I compare it to Moore's "Reclining Figure" of 1951.

The ancient Mexican's deepest worry was that the creative energies, the gods governing the sun, rain, etc., would exhaust themselves. They believed the gods created man so that man would nourish them. The individual man had to be sacrificed to the gods in order that the gods would have enough energy to do their respective functions and hence to ensure the survival of the human community as a whole. In order that the right god be nourished and the right ritual performed at the right time, an elaborate

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[1]Westheim, The Art of Ancient Mexico, p. 6.

[2]Westheim, The Sculpture of Ancient Mexico, Figure 71.

[3]Ibid., Figure 75.

systematic study of the heavenly bodies, the positions of which coincided with earthly crises, i.e., the time of the planting of maize, was developed. Because of this religious motivation, the Mayans developed the most accurate calendar then in existence, and could accurately predict the eclipses of the sun and the moon, and other celestial events hundreds of years in the future. They were the first people to discover and use the zero.

In studying pre-Columbian stone sculpture we find the following qualities:

1. not beautiful,[1] but vital expression, imbued with "ch'i";[2]
2. not optical reproduction, but geo-organic abstraction based on natural form;
3. respect for the stone in the treatment of form which preserves the stone's (a) static massiveness, (b) compactness, and (c) hard tenseness;
4. monumentality regardless of size;
5. appeal to the tactile sense;
6. direct statement, avoidance of unnecessary ornamentation;

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[1] Beauty in the Greco-Roman-Renaissance sense.

[2] ch'i--"[This]...signifies the life and breath of everything, be it man, beast, mountain, or tree. It may be rendered by the word spirit or spiritual, but also by the word vitality, which is the result of the activity of the spirit." Oswald Sirén, The Chinese on the Art of Painting, (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 21.

7. rhythmatic placement of volumes;
8. three-dimensional presence;
9. archetypical form;
10. symbolism.

All the above qualities found in pre-Columbian sculpture are reflections of the pre-Columbian's metaphysical concepts.

Their sculptures are not beautiful; they are not meant to be. They are a vital, plastic, representation of the forces of nature both in its creative and destructive aspects. They fulfilled deep religious needs of the people. The makers of the sculpture believed the statue to be the god himself. "The statue of the deity is the deity itself. Magic thinking identifies the image with the thing. The image seems more real than the thing itself because the image has been given form and shape, and the form is a manifestation of psychic energies."[1]

"It is the artist's task to create the image of the deity, not merely as an adornment of the temple or as a luxury, for this art is an applied, subordinate art at the service of an extra-artistic purpose: survival of the community."[2]

The sculptors respected the "stoniness of the stone" because: (1) they believed that a spirit resided in the

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[1]Westheim, The Art of Ancient Mexico, p. 39.

[2]Ibid., p. 40.

stone, the finished object was to become a living god; (2) they had a great respect for craftsmanship; and (3) the plastic properties of stone best expressed their metaphysical concepts.

I have already mentioned why pre-Columbian sculpture is abstract. On the more specific use of geo-organic form, Westheim, in his book The Sculpture of Ancient Mexico, writes, "Organic form is transposed into cubico-geometric form in order to raise the work above individuality and convert it into an expression of metaphysical conceptions. The figure assumes the posture of a statue: immobile, hieratic, it represents a timeless existence rather than an action subject to time which explains why this art resists description."[1]

The sculpture was monumental, independent of size, because it represented a concept which was to be separated from the world of everyday appearances.

The sculpture has three-dimensional presence because the sculpture plastically represents a spirit or god that is to exert its force in a three-dimensional world.

There is no extraneous matter in pre-Columbian sculpture. Only those plastic formal qualities that clearly manifested the pre-Columbian's metaphysical concepts were used.

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[1]Westheim, The Sculpture of Ancient Mexico, p. 14.

Any embellishment on the basic plastic symbol was superfluous and was not even considered. "All the means of expression are used functionally; their function is to form a determined plastic structure, and all that does not serve this is rigorously eliminated."[1]

Rhythmatic repetitions were plastically used to strengthen and emphasize the magico-religious symbols. The pre-Columbian's conception of nature as a system of recurrent cyclical processes was reflected in their plastic use of rhythm.

Pre-Columbian sculpture is tactile because the sculptor used smooth, round, organic forms and thought with his hands as well as with his intellect.

Pre-Columbian man could capture in his sculptures the creative-destructive archetypes, i.e., "Coatlicue," and the archetype of animals, i.e., "the froginess of a frog," because pre-Columbian man combined close observation of nature with an intense probing into the inner reality of things.

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[1]Westheim, The Sculpture of Ancient Mexico, p. 15.

IV. MOORE, FLANNAGAN, AND ANCIENT MEXICAN STONE SCULPTURE

> ...[The]...works by Flannagan are undoubtedly influenced by sculptures of very early periods of...such...types...[as that of Mexico and Central America].[1]

> ...Flannagan's animals recall certain Aztec stone carvings.[2]

> Although he reveals his grounding in European tradition in his sense of free will, and in his feeling for compassion, Flannagan was much influenced by Aztec sculpture of the pre-Columbian period.[3]

> Its "stoniness", by which I mean its truth to material, its tremendous power without loss of sensitiveness, its astonishing variety and fertility of form-invention and its approach to a full three-dimensional conception of form, make it unsurpassed in my opinion by any other period of stone sculpture.[4]

The Direct Comparisons

Moore. "Snake." 1924. Marble. 6 in.[5]
Flannagan. "Snake." 1938. Limestone. 25 in.[6]
Aztec. "Coiled Serpent" (representing the earth). 1324-1521. Polished black granite.[7]

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[1] Valentiner, Origins of Modern Sculpture, p. 73.

[2] Selz, p. 238.

[3] Charles Seymour, Jr., Tradition and Experiment in Modern Sculpture, (Washington, D.C.: The American University Press, 1949), p. 68.

[4] Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xliv.

[5] Ibid., Plate 4B.

[6] John B. Flannagan, "Statement," Carl Zigrosser, "Introduction," The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, ed. by Dorothy C. Miller, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1942), p. 34.

[7] Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art Mexicain, Figure 819, p. 297.

All three sculptures are simple, directly carved, compact geo-organic forms. They are assymmetrical organic forms which can be contained in basic geometric volumes. Moore's and the Aztec's snake fit into an ovoid, while Flannagan's snake can be contained in a cone. The three sculptures are extremely similar in appearance and are not optical reproductions of a snake. They do capture the essential character of the snake. The snakes' twisting movements, coiled energy, and earth-nature are reflected in the tense, circular, rhythmic arrangement of volumes and the massive heaviness of stone. The three sculptures are massive and monumental in appearance while being small in actual physical dimensions. Their roundness adds to their full three-dimensional presence. All three pieces appeal to the sense of touch. Moore's and the Aztec's sculpture evoke the tactile sense by their round, organic smooth forms and Flannagan's sculpture by its round, organic slightly textured form. All three possess vitality and monumentality.

I will make one more detailed comparison between two animal sculptures, one by Flannagan and one by an Aztec.

Flannagan. "Little Creature." 1941. Bluestone. 13 in.[1]
Aztec. "Grasshopper." Stone.[2]

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[1]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 34.

[2]Antonio Castro Leal, "Los Animales en la Escultura Mexicana," Mexico en el Arte, II, (August 1948), Figure 6.

In comparing these two sculptures we find the same similarities occurring. Both sculptures are simple, directly carved, compact geo-organic forms. The two sculptures are extremely similar in appearance. They are not optical reproductions of the grasshopper. They are symbols of the earth. The Aztec grasshopper is static, heavy and massive, and at rest in a horizontal position. Flannagan's is vertical, not balanced on, but merging with a blade of grass which it is eating. Although Flannagan's grasshopper appears heavy, and its axis is tilted slightly from the vertical, it is still static. Both sculptors' respect for the material, stone, is felt in the closed, compact treatment of the forms. The sculptures are massive and monumental in appearance, though small in actual dimensions. The monumentality and static vitality of the figures are enhanced by their compact, closed mass and simplified convexo-planar constituents, which unobtrusively overlap one another giving rise to a living, unified whole. The total shape of both figures approaches that of an elongated ellipsoid. The organic gives them a living vitality while the geometric freezes them in time. The tactile and three-dimensional qualities are emphasized through smoothness and roundness of form. Although Flannagan attempts to achieve texture through his use of the bushing hammer, the overall effect of his sculpture is one of smoothness. The Aztec makes greater use of rhythm. This is seen in the rhythmic positioning of the grasshopper's legs and segmenting of the grasshopper's

abdomen. Both sculptures pulsate with ch'i.

To avoid repetition, I will only state that when comparing the following we are struck by the same forementioned similarities:

Flannagan. "Frog." 1938. Sandstone. 7 in.[1]
Aztec. "Frog." Stone.[2]

Flannagan. "Pelican." 1928. Sandstone.[3]
Totonac. "Seated Pelican." Stone. 15 in.[4]

Whereas Flannagan expressed himself mainly through his animal sculpture, Moore preferred the human figure.

Moore. "Reclining Figure." 1929. Brown hornton stone. L. 32 in.[5]
Mayan-Toltec. "Chac Mool, the Rain Spirit." Chicken Itza. 948-1697 A.D. Limestone L. 58-1/2 in.[6]

Both sculptures are closed forms consisting of large, simple, geo-organic volumes which remain contained within the rectangular block; this rectangular block-like treatment is further accentuated by the roughly hewn rectangular base. Both sculptures are static, massive, and monumental. All these aspects of the sculptures help the observer to feel the ponderous weight of stone. Moore and the pre-Columbian man

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[1]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 32.

[2]Westheim, The Art of Ancient Mexico, Plate III.

[3]Flannagan, p. 32.

[4]Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1940), Figure 40.

[5]Herbert Read, The Art of Sculpture, (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1961), Figure 205.

[6]Ibid., Figure 204.

were not interested in giving an optical reproduction or a narcissistic idealization of the human figure. They were interested in imbuing their work with spiritual vitality. They achieved their aim. Both sculptors used the medium of the human figure as a basis which they abstractly modified to express man's primordial feelings and concepts toward nature. These sculptures are plastic manifestations of the earth archetype. Through the formal arrangements of volumes, and through the concentrated mass, or energy, of stone, they are direct expressions of natural forces. Both sculptures are supra-personal in aspect and possess vitality.

Following are some more specific qualities common to both; both are reclining figures with the upper part of the body raised, both are frontal with the head twisted at a ninety degree angle from the body, both are still partially contained within the stone, the position is similar, the legs, arms, and neck are cylindrical, the shape of the head and the facial features, especially the open mouth, are similar.

Although Flannagan consistently throughout his sculptural career keeps to the simple, closed form, Moore in 1929 starts to open up his forms with the introduction of the hole. Moore's sculpture becomes more complex than Flannagan's, but the more complex shapes always merge into a uniform organic whole, and he never violates the "stoniness of the stone." We can see why Moore admired the "fertility of form

invention"[1] found in pre-Columbian sculpture. The closed treatment manifested in Aztec animal sculpture could inspire Flannagan's animal sculpture while the Totanac's and the Toltec's successful use of the hole could serve as a guide for Moore's experimentation with negative space.

Moore. "Square Form." Hornton stone. 1936.[2]
Toltec. "Ara Head." Basalt. Zochicalco, Mexico. 23 in.[3]

In both sculptures we find a hole introduced without losing the quality of the "stoniness of the stone." "A piece of stone can have a hole through it and not be weakened--if the hole is of a studied size, shape, and direction."[4] Both pieces preserve these qualities of stone mentioned. The hole adds to their three-dimensional reality. "The hole connects one side to the other making it immediately more three-dimensional."[5] The hole adds to its metaphysical quality--"...the mystery of the hole--the mysterious fascination of caves in hillsides and cliffs."[6] Both sculptures, although they are more non-representational than the previous ones, lie within the realm of geo-organic forms. They both possess a living vitality and feeling of monumentality.

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[1]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xliv.

[2]Giedion-Welcker, p. 147.

[3]Ibid., p. 146.

[4]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xli.

[5]Ibid., p. xli.

[6]Ibid.

Without analysis here are some more examples where pre-Columbian sculpture and Moore's sculpture are similar:

Civilization of Teotihuacan III. "Funeral Mask." Green stone. Approx. 300-650 A.D., Teotihuacan, Mexico.[1]
Moore. "Mask." Green stone. 1930.[2]

Pre-Classic. Terracotta female figure. 1500-600 B.C.[3]
Moore. "Mask." Concrete. 1927.[4]

Olmec figurine. "Serpentine."[5]
Moore. "Reclining Figure." Iron stone. 1930.[6]

As a result of these comparisons we have seen that Moore's and Flannagan's sculpture possess the same qualities which we found in pre-Columbian sculpture. If the similarities between Moore, Flannagan and pre-Columbian sculpture were just restricted to the same formal devices, i.e., the open mouth in Moore's masks and pre-Columbian masks, I would conclude that they borrowed directly from the pre-Columbian pieces they saw. However, there are too many correlations that transcend these formal devices. These similarities could only be the result of similar views of nature and art.

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[1] Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art Mexicain, Figure 399, p. 129.

[2] Read, Plate 23B.

[3] Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art Mexicain, Figure 100-101, p. 41.

[4] Read, Plate 61B.

[5] Erwin Christensen, Primitive Art, (New York: Crown Pub., Inc., 1955), Figure 166.

[6] Read, Plate 23A.

Moore's and Flannagan's Concepts About Their Art and About Nature

> Henry Moore, in common with artists of his type throughout the ages, believes that behind the appearance of things there is some kind of spiritual essence, a force or imminent being which is only partially revealed in actual living forms.[1]

Flannagan and the pre-Columbian artist were artists of Moore's type. The pre-Columbians had an animistic religion in which art and religion were inseparable. In their sculpture they took natural forms and transformed them into metaphysical symbols. Flannagan and Moore shared with pre-Columbian man an animistic reaction to natural forms. Flannagan often sees "...an occult attraction in the very shape of a rock as sheer abstract form."[2] Moore finds "...principles of form and rhythm from the study of natural objects such as pebbles, bones, plants, etc."[3] "There are universal shapes to which everybody is subconsciously conditioned and to which they can respond if their conscious control does not shut them off."[4]

The modern sculptors, Moore and Flannagan, explain the creation of their work as follows: Moore--"Each particular

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[1]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xxiv. In reference to Read's term "actual living forms," I would prefer to include all forms upon which man can project the quality of life.

[2]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 7.

[3]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xl.

[4]Ibid., p. xli.

carving I make takes on in my mind a human, or occasionally animal, character and personality, and this personality controls its designated formal qualities and makes me satisfied with my work."[1]; Flannagan--"To that instrument of the subconscious, the hand of a sculptor, there exists an image within every rock. The creative act of realization merely frees it."[2] "As design, the eventual carving involuntarily evolves from the eternal nature of the stone itself, an abstract linear and cubical fantasy out of the fluctuating sequence of consciousness, expressing a vague general memory of many creatures of human and animal life in various forms."[3] The Aztec explored the creation of his art in terms of religion, "...understanding god in his heart, defines things with his heart, dialogues with his heart...."[4]

The pre-Columbian artist did not strive for fame and glory among his contemporaries. He was a necessary agent of the community. His job was to manifest the "magico-religious" feeling of the community in plastic form. Hence, he must communicate not to an esoteric few, but to the whole society. "We do not know the name of a single master from the three millenniums that pre-Cortesian art approximately

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[1]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xl.

[2]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 7.

[3]Ibid., p. 7.

[4]From the translation of the Aztec poem on "The Painter," von Hagan, p. 199.

encompasses."[1] In these days of the cult of the individual, the artist rarely feels that it is necessary to express himself to many, but only to himself or a few. Flannagan was an exception. Of course it was easier for pre-Columbian man to communicate to many because he was an integral member of his society. In his introduction to the book, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, Carl Zigrosser tells of Flannagan's passion for anonymity which the artist had related to him.[2] Flannagan put his belief in anonymity into practice by signing very few of his works. Flannagan, like the pre-Columbian, felt it necessary to communicate to many. He spoke of "...disciplining myself to think and see and feel so naturally as to escape the precious or the esoteric. My aim is the achievement of a sculpture that should fulfill a definite function in the social consciousness of many instead of a limited few."[3]

Moore, Flannagan, and pre-Columbian man had a high regard for technical proficiency. It is only when technique is perfected to such a degree as to be almost effortless, that the more profound aspects of art can manifest themselves. Throughout the Aztec poem "Toltecatl," the Aztec

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[1]Westheim, The Sculpture of Ancient Mexico, p. 9.

[2]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 9.

[3]Ibid., pp. 11, 12.

makes references to his respect for superior workmanship by describing the Toltec as disciplined, skilled and equipped with a steady hand.[1] Flannagan wrote, "It takes an artist to be a really good craftsman...."[2]

The pre-Columbian was not concerned with an art of perceptual appearances. He probed into natural phenomena in order to arrive at the spiritual essence of things. "The artist of pre-Hispanic Mexico does not reproduce realities: he creates symbols. In contrast to an artistic attitude whose ideal is the analysis of the perceptible, the creation of symbols attempts to find an explanation for the phenomena of reality, an orientation in the universe that enables man to understand the incomprehensible reality.[3] Flannagan and Moore had similar attitudes. In his interpretation of the artist, Flannagan writes, "The stone cutter, worker of metal, painter, those who think and feel by hand, are timeless, haunted by all the old dreams. The artist remembers, or else is fated by cosmic destiny to serve as the instrument for realizing in visible form the profound subterranean urges of the human spirit in the whole dynamic life process--birth, growth, decay, death."[4] Moore writes, "Because a work does not aim at reproducing natural appearances, it is

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[1]Langnas, Arts, XXXV, no. 8-9, p. 29.

[2]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 12.

[3]Westheim, The Sculpture of Ancient Mexico, p. 10.

[4]Flannagan, p. 8.

not, therefore, an escape from life--but may be a penetration into reality, not a sedative or drug, not just the exercise of good taste, the provision of pleasant shapes and colors in a pleasing combination, not a decoration to life, but an expression of the significance of life, a stimulation to greater effort in living."[1]

Moore and Flannagan like their pre-Columbian predecessors thought of nature in terms of the living and organic, not in terms of the mathematic-physical and mechanical. Natural forms for them were charged with vital rhythms and energies. These forms evolve out of nature by a continual process of organic growth and are molded by the creative-destructive natural forces within and at the same time outside of them. Moore, Flannagan, and the pre-Columbians were concerned with the processes which give rise to and are reflected in the external phenomena of form. "Pebbles share nature's way of working stone. Some of the pebbles I pick up have holes right through them."[2] The geometric is not, however, foreign to the organic. Organic form evolves according to geometric laws but, "Organic forms, though they may be symmetrical in their main disposition, in their reaction to environment, growth and gravity, lose their perfect symmetry."[3]

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[1]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xl.

[2]Read, p. xli.

[3]Ibid., p. xxxix.

By creating as nature creates, "understanding god in his heart,"[1] the artist can create living, organic plastic forms which follow geometric laws that result from the dialogue between the artist's metaphysical concepts and the medium by which these concepts are to be realized. The formal principles, "truth to material," geo-organic abstraction, etc., are but a reflection of the artist's deeper concepts regarding the workings of nature.

Pre-Columbian man tried to explain nature in terms of gods, and their art in terms of communion with these gods. Moore and Flannagan tried to explain nature and their creative work in modern psychological jargon, i.e., the communication with the creative unconscious. Nevertheless, the sculpture of Flannagan, Moore, and the pre-Columbian, which does not depend on linguistic terminology relative to a particular culture, is a direct plastic expression of the artist's deep feeling and concepts regarding nature. Therein lie the similarities.

With these thoughts in mind, I will quote more of Moore's and Flannagan's statements on art. I will try to group them according to the specific principles about which they are writing, e.g., "truth to materials." However, since these specific concepts are interrelated, and since the artists often intermingle their ideas, this will not always be possible.

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[1]Von Hagan, p. 191.

Truth to Materials

> Every material has its own individual qualities. It is only when the sculptor works direct, when there is an active relationship to his material, that the material can take its part in the shaping of the idea. Moore.[1]

> Each material being used logically according to its own nature is after all a great part of being an artist with sculpture. Flannagan.[2]

Monumentality

> A carving may be several times over life size and yet be petty and small in feeling and a small carving only a few inches in height can give the feeling of huge size and monumental grandeur, because the vision behind it is big. Moore.[3]

> The size is deliberately small physically, partly to make possible their use in even a small docile (social purpose), and partly as a reaction to the so-called heroic--too often mock-heroic. There are monumental miniatures and miniature monuments. Flannagan.[4]

Simplicity and Directness

> ...It makes a straightforward statement, its primary concern is with the elemental, and its simplicity comes from direct and strong feeling, which is a very different thing from that fashionable simplicity-for-its-own-sake which is emptiness. Like beauty, true simplicity is an unselfconscious virtue; it comes by the way and can never be an end in itself. Moore.[5]

> The simplicity of the work is a wholly austere concern with purely essential sculptural values. The

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[1]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xxxix.

[2]Flannagan, The Letters of John B. Flannagan, p. 73

[3]Read, p. xli.

[4]Flannagan, Letters, p. 100.

[5]Read, p. xliii.

rude rock is partly protest against Art as mere ornament, and rather an affirmation of vigour. Flannagan.[1]

On Vitality and Abstractness of Form

For me a work must first have a vitality of its own. I do not mean a reflection of the vitality of life, of movement, physical action, frisking, dancing figures and so on, but that a work can have in it a pent-up energy, an intense life of its own, independent of the object it may represent. When a work has this powerful vitality we do not connect the word Beauty with it.

Beauty, in the later Greek or Renaissance sense, is not the aim in my sculpture.

Between beauty of expression and power of expression there is a difference of function. The first aims at pleasing the senses, the second has a spiritual vitality which for me is more moving and goes deeper than the senses. Moore.[2]

My sculpture is becoming less representational, less an outward visual copy, and so what some people would call more abstract; but only because I believe that in this way I can present the human psychological content of my work with the greatest directness and intensity. Moore.[3]

Abstract qualities of design are essential to the value of a work, but to me of equal importance is the psychological, human element. If both abstract and human elements are welded together in a work, it must have a fuller, deeper meaning. Moore.[4]

In the austere elimination of the accidental for ordered simplification, there is a quality of the abstract and lifeless, but lifeless only contra

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[1] Flannagan, The Letters of John B. Flannagan, p. 73.

[2] Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xl.

[3] Read, p. xlii.

[4] Ibid., p. xxxix-xl.

spurious lifelikeness. Instead of which a purely sculptural attempt by the most simple unambiguous demonstration of tactile relations, the greatest possible preservation of cubic compactness, carved to exclude all chance evasive spatial aspects to approximate the abstract cubical elemental forms and even to preserve the identity of the original rock so that it hardly seems carved, rather to have endured so always--inevitable. The artistic representation of the organic and living now takes on an abstract lifeless order and becomes, instead of the likeness of what is conditioned, the symbol of what is unconditioned and invariable, as though seeking the timeless, changeless finality of death. Sculpture like this is as inevitable. Flannagan.[1]

Pure abstraction is dead....Make it come alive by the use of living form. Warm the cold geometry of abstraction with a naturalism in which the superficial and accidental have been eliminated by their union with pure form. Flannagan.[2]

Over and above the tactile organization of lines, planes and masses should brood the mystery of a living thing. Flannagan.[3]

Tactile

I think I judge a real sculpture by the sensitivity of tactile surface, like texture, etc., because to get it one must love stone. Flannagan.[4]

Rhythm

Rocks show the hacked, hewn treatment of stone, and have a jagged nervous block rhythm.[5]

With such abstract purpose, instead of classic poise, there is more of the dynamic tension that is movement, even accentuated by devices that are restless such as a deliberate lack of abvious balance

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[1]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 8.

[2]Ibid., p. 11.

[3]Flannagan, The Letters of John B. Flannagan, p. 99.

[4]Ibid., p. 92.

[5]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xxxix.

> in design and the use of repetition to heighten the occult activity with velocity, as in the psyche of our time-speed without pauses or accents. Flannagan.[1]

There exist two other similarities that the sculpture of Moore, Flannagan, and the pre-Columbian have in common that I wish to discuss in more detail. Their sculptures serve as symbols and capture an archetype. Sculpture "should be of a generalized universal symbolic nature... man, woman, child, animal."[2]

Herbert Read wrote on the Animal Style stating, "In such representations there is no attempt to conform with the exact but casual appearances of animals; and no desire to evolve an ideal type of animal. Rather from an intense awareness of the nature of the animal, its movements and its habits, the artist is able to select just those features which best denote its vitality, and by exaggerating these and distorting them until they cohere in some significant rhythms and shape, he produces a representation which conveys to us the very essence of the animal."[3] The above holds true for the animal sculpture of Flannagan and the Aztec.

The pre-Columbian's animal sculpture, besides capturing the "animalness of the animal," function as magico-religious

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[1]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 8.

[2]Flannagan, The Letters of John B. Flannagan, p. 99.

[3]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xxvi.

symbols. Because the ancient Mexican lived in such close relationship to nature he often gave to his gods attributes that he observed in animals. By a magico-religious operation the animal can become so identified with the god that the animal is both an animal and the symbol for the god. Both the animal and the god are vehicles for the same metaphysical concept. To see this more clearly let us take the toad. It undergoes metamorphosis. This change in physical state becomes in the mind of the pre-Columbian associated with the concept of resurrection. From the earth all things are born, die, and are reborn again. The toad, the animal of the earth, became associated with the Aztec god Tlaltecuhtli, Lord of the Earth, and was considered to be one of his manifestations. The toad was a toad and yet was a symbol for Tlaltecuhtli.

Flannagan lived close to nature, especially during his stay in Ireland. From his writings we have learned that he had an animistic concept of the world. He realized that the animal form could serve as a symbol for metaphysical concepts. He said this about his sculpture, "Jonah and the Whale--Rebirth Motif," "Its eerie to learn that the fish is the very ancient symbol of the female principle."[1] Flannagan spent most of his sculptural career in an attempt to plastically symbolize the creative aspect of nature. This is apparent when one views his sculptures: "Triumph of the

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[1]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 8.

Egg I,"[1] "Triumph of the Egg II,"[2] "Dragon Motif" (1940),[3] "Not Yet,"[4] "New One,"[5] and "Beginning."[6]

"It might seem from what I have said of shape and form that I regard them as ends in themselves. Far from it. I am very much aware that associational, psychological factors play a large part in sculpture. The meaning and significance of form itself probably depends on the countless associations of man's history. For example, rounded forms convey an idea of fruitfulness, maturity, probably because the earth, woman's breasts, and most fruits are rounded, and these shapes are important because they have this background in our habits of perception. I think the humanist organic element will always be for me of fundamental importance in sculpture, giving sculpture its vitality."[7]

I have already mentioned that the Aztec represented the creative-destructive aspects of nature in the feminine earth symbol "Coatlicue." Moore has been motivated throughout his sculptural career with the drive to give plastic expression

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[1]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 2.

[2]Ibid., p. 37.

[3]Ibid., p. 36.

[4]Ibid., p. 35.

[5]Ibid., p. 31.

[6]Valantiner, Figure 138.

[7]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xlii.

to the archetypical female principle through his two major sculptural motifs: the mother and child, and the reclining figure. He has frequently shown the creative aspect of the female as the eternal mother. In Moore's reclining figures such as the elmwood "Figure"[1] of 1936 and that of 1939[2] we find the archetype of the earth goddess. Here we see full, supple, rounded forms reminding one of the breasts and hips of the fertile earth mother; the human female figure is metamorphosized into the earth and the earth is metamorphosized into the human figure. She is the mother of all being. The transitions flow like a lover's or child's caress from one form to another and are given further unity and rhythm through the fine use of the grain. The flow in the "Figure" of 1936 from the hip up into the arch-like form of the shoulders and breasts creates a sheltering, and inviting cave as does the penetrating hole in the "Figure" of 1939.

The destructive aspect of the female principle is manifested in Moore's "Reclining Figure" (1939, bronze).[3] The forms are barren, sterile, thin, and machine-like. The polish gives the surface a cold, mechanical look which repulses the tactile sense. There is less mass than space

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[1]Read, Plate 184-86.

[2]Ibid., Plate 86A.

[3]Will Grohmann, The Art of Henry Moore, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), Plate 31.

and thus no shelter offered. There are no round fruit-like forms. Here the earth mother's domain is not that of the fertile soil, but of the desert, the barren wasteland.

In one sculpture by Moore, the bronze "Reclining Figure" of 1951,[1] he combines both creative and destructive forces as does the Aztec sculpture, "The Great Coatlicue," the Earth Goddess. The meanings of these two sculptures are the same although the forms are different. In Moore's sculpture the aspects of creator and destroyer change as the viewer moves about whereas the "Coatlicue" is a composite of both from different angles. From the view in Figure 76 in Neumann we see the full, organic, hip-like forms, the symbol of fertility and in Figure 44 of Grohmann the full rounded breast-like forms also. From these views the sculpture appears full-bodied and round and thus gives an image of fertility. But now as the viewer moves around at 180 degrees, he comes to grips with a disembodied, spectral form, almost machine-like, rigid, and spidery. The gaping, clefted head is one meant to devour. From the back view one can see that the hollow form is not that of the womb, but of the tomb. "Jagged, wild, charged with sinister energy this recumbent figure is more like the destroying goddess of late 1939."[2]

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[1]Erich Neumann, The Archetypical World of Henry Moore, (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1959), Figs. 76 and 77, pp. 108 and 109; and, Grohmann, Figures 44 and 45.

[2]Neumann, p. 109.

This aspect, too, is found in the Aztec Goddess. She is creation in its entirety, in each of her manifestations and phases, in perpetual struggle with herself, creating without end and without end destroying.

V. CONCLUSION

With the exception of Gauguin in the latter part of the nineteenth century, pre-Columbian sculpture did not exert any influence upon Western artists until the first decade of the twentieth century. Pre-Columbian sculpture's simplicity of form, directness of approach, and vitality of expression, helped to stimulate the modern sculptors in their attempt to establish a new, vital, plastic art. By direct comparison we have seen that Moore and Flannagan were the two modern sculptors most profoundly influenced by ancient Mexican sculpture. Moreover, in comparing Moore's and Flannagan's concepts on nature and art with those of the pre-Columbian we have found similarities. These similar concepts motivated Flannagan, Moore, and the pre-Columbian to evolve similar plastic forms. Because of this they were better able than other artists to appreciate and absorb the essence of pre-Columbian sculpture.

> The stone cutter, worker of metal, painter, those who think and feel by hand, are timeless, haunted by all the old dreams.[1]

> If one could get rid of bias when viewing sculpture of any age one would realize "there are universal shapes to which everybody is subconsciously conditioned and to which they can respond if their conscious control does not shut them off."[2]

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[1]Flannagan, The Sculpture of John B. Flannagan, p. 8.

[2]Read, Henry Moore Sculpture and Drawings, p. xli.

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