Seeking a new paradise for mankind: Rockwell Kent in Tierra del Fuego and the creation of a new national image for Chile

Fielding D. Dupuy

Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/artelogie/6946>

DOI: 10.4000/artelogie.6946

ISSN: 2115-6395

Publisher

Association ESCAL

Electronic reference

Fielding D. Dupuy, "Seeking a new paradise for mankind: Rockwell Kent in Tierra del Fuego and the creation of a new national image for Chile", *Artelogie* [Online], 3 | 2012, Online since 12 September 2012, connection on 07 January 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/artelogie/6946> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/artelogie.6946>

This text was automatically generated on 7 January 2022.

Association ESCAL

Seeking a new paradise for mankind: Rockwell Kent in Tierra del Fuego and the creation of a new national image for Chile

Fielding D. Dupuy

'Mr. Kent is already author of a most notable work on Alaska. Undoubtedly what he writes and what he draws will be of wide interest to North American readers, and cannot but be of value to the territory which he describes.'

— George P. Putnam, President of G.P. Putnam's Sons, May 17, 1922¹

'El señor Kent está mui bien impresionado de nuestro país y se propone darlo a conocer en Estados Unidos.'

— Vicente Fernández Rocuant, Governor of Magallanes, to the President of Chile, February 3, 1923²

- 1 Although unknown in Chile today, Rockwell Kent (1882-1971) must be counted among the leading creative minds ever to capture the landscape of Tierra del Fuego. At the time of his travels there, in 1922-23, no other U.S. artist of equal stature had gone before him and his Tierra del Fuego images were—for many North Americans—the first they had seen of that distant land. Kent was also a writer and the articles he published about his travels in the influential magazine, *Century*, and his book, *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan*³, were widely disseminated in the United States.
- 2 In the course of his long life, Rockwell Kent would rise to fame in the United States—becoming a household name in the years before World War II—only to come crashing down in the anti-Communist frenzy of the Cold War. Few artists have led a life as varied

and productive. To call him simply a painter is to ignore his work as one of the leading American printmakers of his day. To call him a visual artist overlooks his impact as a literary figure who wrote bestselling books and illustrated classic works of literature. And to label him a creative artist disregards his role as a lecturer, labor leader, and peace activist who took courageous stands during a dark era in the history of the United States, the years of the Red Scare in the 1950s and 60s.

- 3 Through his works and cultural influence, Rockwell Kent introduced his countrymen to the natural splendor of Tierra del Fuego, helping define a new national image for Chile. As such, these Tierra del Fuego works comprise a vital—albeit unrecognized—part of Chile’s cultural heritage.

Making wilderness known to civilization: Nineteenth century landscape painting and travel writing

That night I sat . . . and felt the wilderness about me and something of the terror and the wonder of that darkness there, of the huge pitiless quiescent might of those mountains, felt the vast loneliness of that whole land, was homesick and afraid—and proud that I still loved it.

— Rockwell Kent, Tuesday, October 18, 1922⁴

- 4 These words were written by Kent shortly after first setting foot on the desolate shores of Tierra del Fuego. He was more than six thousand miles from his home in the northeastern United States. In his many adventures—to Alaska, Greenland, the Soviet Union—Kent would never be as far from his native soil as those months exploring the southernmost tip of South America.
- 5 Why did Kent travel so far to endure the homesickness and danger he knew he would face in a region often referred to in the United States as “the sailor’s graveyard”? In his diary from the trip, Kent writes he had longed for “the wild glamour of these lands that draw you to them, stories of ice and cold, of hardship and danger.” He frequently mentions his fears—of the cold and the desolation, the terrible power of the wind—and his drive to overcome those fears by confronting them and, having done so, “to stand on a hill top overlooking the unpeopled waste, to beat my chest and cry, ‘I, I alone am Man!’”⁵

Figure 1 - Rockwell Kent (left) with his traveling companion, Ole Ytterrock, known as Willie, on board the SS *Curaca* bound for Punta Arenas, Chile, 1922

Photographer unknown. Hand colored glass lantern slide. Plattsburgh State Art Museum, no. 5708

Courtesy of Plattsburgh State Art Museum, State University of New York, USA, Rockwell Kent Collection, Bequest of Sally Kent Gorton. All rights reserved⁶

- 6 But, it was about more than conquering fear. Kent also writes about wanting to “improve the land [. . .] with gardens and meadows and fruit trees” thereby imagining a desolate place turned to paradise through his efforts. This belief system—that wilderness is to be feared but, by the hand of man, an earthly paradise can be constructed from it—was central to the popular conception of the United States, dating from the colonial period.⁷ It was particularly strong beginning in the nineteenth century when westward expansion and increasing influence in hemispheric affairs began to inform ideas of a “manifest destiny” to exercise dominance—if not outright control—over neighboring lands. In viewing the vast wilderness before him, Kent speculates on what the land would look like if Yankee industriousness were applied and even goes so far as to question whether the owners of the land have what it takes to turn wilderness into paradise. He writes in his journal, “it may be that the Chileno is not fitted to colonize.”⁸
- 7 Seemingly contradictory—desiring wilderness and fearing it, seeking out the wild and then mentally imposing civilization upon it—these values were not uncommon in nineteenth century U.S. and European thought. The transcendentalist philosopher and naturalist, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), believed man’s ‘optimum environment is a blend of wildness and civilization.’⁹ Indeed, this blend is evidenced in the juxtaposition of cultured, urban audiences, gazing longingly at wild landscape paintings or portraits of savage Indians from the comfort of paneled salons in New York and London. This tension between the wild and the civilized explains, in part, why

landscape painting was, in the words of historian, Kenneth Clark, 'the chief artistic creation of the nineteenth century'.¹⁰

Figure 2 - Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

Daguerreotype by Benjamin Maxham, ca. 1856

- 8 Thoreau was known for his efforts to live in harmony with nature, but when he faced the full force of the wilderness on a trip to northern Maine, he became fearful, calling the landscape 'savage and dreary'.¹¹ Thomas Cole (1801-1848), perhaps the father of North American landscape painting, wrote that in the wilderness, 'man may seek such scenes and find pleasure in the discovery, but there is a mysterious fear [that] comes over him and hurries him away. The sublime features of nature are too severe for a lone man to look upon and be happy'.¹²
- 9 Mentally imposing images of civilization onto wilderness was common amongst the Victorian-era explorers. Richard Burton (1821-1890), on discovering Lake Tanganyika in East Africa describes the beauty of the scene but then complains that, 'like all the fairest prospects of these regions, [it] wants but a little of the neatness and finish of art—mosques and kiosks, palaces and villas, gardens and orchards. . .' Burton's contemporary, James Grant (1827-1892), made a sketch upon discovering Lake Victoria N'yanza, 'dotting it with imaginary steamers and ships riding at anchor in the bay'.¹³
- 10 As a landscape painter and an explorer, Kent in Tierra del Fuego was responding to these nineteenth century attitudes for he was himself raised amidst the value system of the Victorians.¹⁴ But, in his journal, Kent also exhibits purely North American attitudes, particularly Theodore Roosevelt's conception of the "strenuous life" in which man can only better himself through struggle and fortitude and—by analogy—only those nations whose people evidence such traits can be trusted to lead the world. "In the last analysis a healthy state can exist only when the men and women who make it up lead clean, vigorous, healthy lives . . . [and] know how to wrest triumph from toil and risk." Through these virtues Roosevelt believed the United States would claim its rightful place "among the great nations of the earth."¹⁵

- 11 In her pioneering work on the subject, Mary Louise Pratt shows that every travel writer operates in—usually silent—dialogue with the people he meets. 'Every travel account has this heteroglossic dimension; its knowledge comes not just out of a traveler's sensibility and powers of observation, but out of interaction and experience usually directed and managed by 'travelees', who are working from their own understandings of their world . . .'¹⁶ a process Pratt calls transculturation.
- 12 Examples of transculturation abound, whether it is the 'discoveries' of Burton and Speke—literally carried to the sources of the Nile on the backs of their African bearers—or the Peruvian peasants whose centuries-old knowledge allowed Humboldt to 'discover' the fertilizing properties of guano. Kent escapes this somewhat in his one true 'discovery' in Tierra del Fuego, a pass over the Darwin Range connecting Bahia Blanca and Yendegaia. At the top of the pass Kent encounters the moldering remains of a native hut, evidence others—indigenous Kaweshkar—had been there first. Kent could have left this piece of information out of his account but—in a sign of increasing distance from the Victorians—he not only acknowledges the hut, he modifies his discovery by claiming only to be the first 'white man' to discover the pass.
- 13 But transculturation in Kent's writing is evidenced in the omission of the bloody Patagonian worker revolt of 1919-20 that cost the lives of perhaps as many as ten thousand laborers and peasants.¹⁷ This omission is all the more curious in light of Kent's lifelong Socialist Party membership and labor union activism. He was vaguely aware of unrest in Patagonia from the Boston adventurer, Charles Wellington Furlong. And, on Dawson Island, he hears from a rancher about a strike that had taken place a few years earlier.¹⁸ But he does not explore this, nor does he mention it in his published accounts. Kent spoke fluent German and passable French but no Spanish indicating his understanding of the region was supplied entirely by local elites, all of whom would have participated in—or at least supported—suppressing the labor uprising.
- 14 Kent's understanding of the cultural dynamic reflected his Euro-centric background in the United States. The Chilean, Croatian, and Italian laborers upon whose backs the Patagonian economy was based he generally ignored and thus his concept of the region was largely—although not completely—binary. He was drawn to the English, French, and German-speaking elites by a shared heritage and his need to communicate. And, reflecting his late-nineteenth century upbringing in the United States, he romanticized the natives, longing to see them before they were exterminated or put on reservations and civilized.
- 15 This romanticizing of the Indian was a common theme in the U.S. from the middle of the 19th Century—that is, after the Indian had been removed as an existential threat to whites. The image of the settlement-burning Indian of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was replaced in the nineteenth by that of the noble savage, living in harmony with wilderness.
- 16 This change in attitude was partially responsible for the nineteenth century surge in landscape painting. Not only was the wilderness now relatively safe for painters like Thomas Cole to travel through, urban elites began to see the wilderness as a unique—non-European—aspect of North American culture.¹⁹ Cole was followed by others like Frederick Church (1816-1900), George Caleb Bingham (1811-1879), and George Inness (1825-1894) in a movement generally called the Hudson River School, after the majestic river that flows through the state of New York and on whose banks the young Rockwell Kent was reared.

Figure 3 - Thomas Cole. View of the Round-top in the Catskill Mountains (Sunny Morning on the Hudson), 1827

Oil on panel, 47.31 x 64.45 cm (18 5/8 x 25 3/8 in.)

Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 47.1200

- 17 As the nineteenth century progressed, the frontier moved ever westward and those wild places became less wild or disappeared altogether until—in the 1890s—the consensus was the American frontier had closed. Roosevelt worried the end of struggle against the wilderness would sap the nation's vitality.²⁰
- 18 The closing of the American frontier not only meant the Indians were no longer a threat, it limited opportunities for landscape painters to bring fresh images of the wilderness to the urban centers. What adventure lay in traveling by train to a national park or an Indian reservation to paint? In the early twentieth century the intrepid landscape artist would need to look abroad to find the ideal conditions: dangerous natives, rough frontiersmen and, above all, unknown valleys and virgin peaks. So, Rockwell Kent would travel far beyond the confines of the United States—to the territory of Alaska,²¹ to Tierra del Fuego and, ultimately, Greenland—to find that new paradise for mankind where he could test himself against the wilderness and bring back to civilization images and impressions of lands unknown.

A life well lived, and long

- 19 Rockwell Kent was born in 1882 in Tarrytown Heights, New York, an affluent suburb of New York City. The death of his father when Rockwell was only five plunged the family into genteel poverty—surrounded by wealth and culture but dependent on the financial support of relatives and friends.
- 20 He showed early artistic promise and his family enrolled him in painting classes under the American impressionist, William Merritt Chase (1849-1916). Chase encouraged the

boy's talent but Kent's family wanted him to pursue a profession with more economic and social potential: architecture. From 1900 to 1903, Kent dutifully studied architecture at Columbia University before abandoning it to take up painting full-time. Throughout his life, however, Kent would acknowledge his debt to the draftsmanship he obtained at Columbia.

- 21 At the New York School of Art, Kent studied under the great teacher, Robert Henri (1865-1929), leader of the 'Ashcan School' of urban realists. Henri was a magnet for talent and among Kent's classmates were the painters George Bellows (1882-1925) and Edward Hopper (1882-1967). But Kent was less attracted to urban themes than to the landscape of rural America and so he traveled to New Hampshire to work with Abbott H. Thayer (1849-1921), an avid naturalist and master of plein-air painting. Thayer would have a great impact on Kent's concepts of life, nature, and art. He also introduced Kent to the Icelandic sagas, enticing him further into the allure of cold, windswept islands and the people who scratch out a living from rock and sea.²²

Figure 4 - Abbott H. Thayer. *Spring Hillside*, c. 1889

Oil, 17 x 23 in. Private collection

- 22 When Kent went out on his own, in 1905, he followed Henri's advice and traveled to Monhegan, a rocky island off the coast of Maine. Monhegan had inspired a number of U.S. artists, most notably, Winslow Homer (1836-1910). On Monhegan, Kent would produce some of the most powerful works of his career. While these were critically well received, they did not sell so Kent supported his growing family by other means including building houses, working as an architectural renderer, and teaching. He also produced satirical drawings of New York society for leading magazines which he published under the pseudonym, Hogarth, Jr.

Figure 5 - *The Road Roller*, 1909

Oil on canvas; 34 1/8 x 44 1/4 in. (86.7 x 112.4 cm.)

The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., acquired 1918

- 23 The fame Kent sought would come following a 1918-19 winter sojourn in Alaska with his 10 year-old son. His Alaska paintings and drawings were a critical and financial success. Even more so was Kent's first book, *Wilderness: A Tale of Quiet Adventure in Alaska*. After the horror of mechanized warfare in Europe, the elegant story of man and boy facing the wilderness together touched America's nostalgia for its lost frontier and the idyll of pioneer self-sufficiency. Kent was hailed an American original. The British magazine, *The New Statesman*, called *Wilderness* 'easily the most remarkable book to come out of America since [Walt Whitman's] *Leaves of Grass* was published.'²³ At the age of 38, Kent found himself suddenly a success. He was swept into the swirl of the very New York society he had mocked in his satirical drawings. But fame and society—as much as he had craved them—proved distracting and Kent would soon seek escape by fleeing New York for southern Patagonia.

Figure 6 - *Wilderness*, ca. 1919. Pen and ink. From *Wilderness: A Tale of Quiet Adventure in Alaska*

New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press, 1920

- 24 Immediately upon disembarking at Punta Arenas in July, 1922, Kent and Ole Ytterrock, a Norwegian-born mariner known as Willie,²⁴ set out to build a sailboat in which they planned to sail to Cape Horn. It was a mad plan and, in the end, an unsuccessful one. But the story, as told in his book, *Voyaging*, is one of extreme adventure on sea and land, complete with near-death experiences. It is also a tale of the natural splendor of Tierra del Fuego and of the warm-hearted people who live there. The story—and the drawings that illustrate it—captivated North American readers when it was published in 1924; *Voyaging* remains in print today, attesting to its continued appeal.

Figure 7 - *Highways, Greenland*, 1933-37

Oil on canvas, mounted on panel, 33 x 44 in
Plattsburgh State Art Museum

- 25 Following Tierra del Fuego, Kent spent time in Europe and, later, Greenland. In the meantime, he became increasingly sought-after as a book illustrator. One commission, from the Lakeside Press, in Chicago, was to illustrate Richard Henry Dana's classic maritime memoir, *Two Years Before the Mast*, but Kent countered with Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Melville was largely forgotten in the United States at that time but the publishers agreed to take a chance on Kent's idea. Their bet paid off and the resulting work—and the influence it had on the American literary landscape—make it perhaps the pinnacle of Rockwell Kent's literary and cultural influence.²⁵ Later that same year, 1930, the publisher Random House used Kent's illustrations in the first edition of *Moby Dick* for a mass audience. Astonishingly, Random House omitted Melville's name from the book's cover, listing only Kent's, making it clear who was the greater literary personality.

Figure 8 - Cover of *Moby Dick or The Whale*, (Illustrated by Rockwell Kent)

New York: Random House, 1930

- 26 As America slid into virulent anti-Communism after World War II, Kent found himself increasingly isolated. Public commissions, exhibitions, and illustration offers came to an end as Kent's political views pushed him outside the American mainstream. In 1953, Senator Joseph McCarthy called Kent to testify in Washington before his committee investigating communist influence in U.S. art and letters. While he had previously denied being a communist—including under oath in a New York court—Kent refused to answer McCarthy's infamous question as to whether he was a member of the Communist Party because he felt it contrary to the spirit of American liberty and believed the hearings themselves were leading to totalitarianism. Unfortunately, this principled stance only confirmed the belief Kent was—if not a Communist—at least a sympathizer.²⁶
- 27 Several years earlier, the government had refused to renew Kent's passport. He was one of many punished in this way for their political views, among them the singer, Paul Robeson, and the playwright, Arthur Miller. Rather than suffer in silence Kent sued the Department of State. The case was long and costly—exhausting his financial resources—but in the end the United States Supreme Court, in *Kent v. Dulles*,²⁷ affirmed the right of U.S. citizens to travel regardless of political belief. Kent's passport was returned, as were those of all the others denied the freedom to travel.
- 28 Between 1943 until 1969, there were no significant exhibitions of Kent's work in the United States. But Kent and his works were lauded in the Soviet Union and, in 1967, he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize. Kent showed his continued disdain for U.S. foreign policy by donating a portion of the prize money to the South Vietnamese Liberation Front, in recognition of Vietnam's suffering at the hands of the United States.²⁸

- 29 In 1969, two years prior to his death, the Bowdoin College Art Museum, in Maine, mounted an exhibition of Kent's early paintings. This exhibition marked the beginning of the gradual return from wilderness for a man who—decades before—had been among America's most famous artists. That rehabilitation continues today.

Adventuring in a wild and mysterious land: Kent's Tierra del Fuego writings

A revelation finer even than the wilderness of Chile is the courtesy and hospitality of the Chilean people. I dedicate my story to them.

— Rockwell Kent, *The Century* magazine, July 1923²⁹

- 30 The *Century* magazine occupied an important position in American literary affairs, serializing authors as diverse as Henry James, Mark Twain, and Jack London. Many of Theodore Roosevelt's ideas first appeared in the pages of the *Century* magazine and his influential book, *The Strenuous Life*, was published by the Century Co. largely from articles in the magazine. Another thinker whose ideas appeared in *Century* was the environmentalist, John Muir. In a series of articles in the 1880s and 90s, Muir argued for the creation of national parks to protect wild places, challenging Americans to preserve their fast-disappearing wilderness. Muir can be seen not only as the father of the conservation movement in the United States but as one of the last of the transcendentalists—the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) called Muir, “more wonderful than Thoreau.”³⁰

Figure 9 - Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), left, and John Muir (1838-1914) on Glacier Point in Yosemite National Park, 1903

Photographer unknown

- 31 Whether or not Kent read Muir and Roosevelt in *Century*, as a product of those times he could not have escaped their ideas. It is particularly easy to imagine the young

Rockwell—growing up fatherless in New York—coming under the outsized influence of Roosevelt. Known nationwide for his exploits as an adventurer, writer, and dashing cavalry officer, Roosevelt was a towering figure in New York where he served as a reformist New York City Police Commissioner and, later, as Governor before becoming Vice-President and then President of the United States (1901-09). Roosevelt, the popular embodiment of the Spanish-American War (1898), makes an oblique appearance in Kent's Tierra del Fuego diary. While sitting in the little cinema on Dawson Island, Kent reflects, "I revisited my youth and found myself a child again straining my eyes against the flickering views of America's late war with Spain."³¹ Indeed, Roosevelt's influence was referenced years later by Edward Hopper in a 1956 *Time* magazine article. According to Hopper, students in Robert Henri's classes 'split into two camps: 'the Simple Life Party' and the 'Strenuous Life Party.' Hopper belonged to the first, Rockwell Kent and George Bellows to the second."³²

- ³² We can imagine then Kent's satisfaction when—just two years after his publishing debut—he was offered a commission by the *Century* for a series of articles about his pending travels in Tierra del Fuego. In a general letter of introduction from the *Century*'s editor, Kent was identified as a "well-known artist and writer [. . .] charged with important commissions for the *Century* magazine."³³ And, in his letter to the President of Chile, Magallanes Governor Fernández highlights this, stating Kent is "a representative of the well-known *Century* magazine of New York."³⁴
- ³³ Today, *Voyaging* is seen as the definitive account of Kent's Tierra del Fuego travels but, at the time, *Century* was the more noteworthy of the two writing commissions he carried with him when he left New York for southern Chile. This is clear in the company he kept in those pages. Robert Frost, Theodore Dreiser, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Katherine Anne Porter, and Carl Sandburg were among the illustrious names appearing alongside Kent's in the July through October 1923 issues of *Century*. The *Century* commission was also more pressing as the first installment was due immediately after Kent's expected return from South America.
- ³⁴ With these literary commissions, Kent saw himself charged with bringing back impressions of a distant land unknown in the United States.³⁵ In doing so, he had the chance to place himself—if but in a minor way—in the line of the great explorers whose exploits he so admired. A full understanding of Kent's Tierra del Fuego period requires acknowledgement that he traveled south not only as a painter but also—and perhaps foremost—as a chronicler and explorer.³⁶

Figure 10 - Map Showing our Route Across Brecknock Peninsula from Admiralty Sound to Beagle Channel, 1923

Pen and ink. From *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan*
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press, 1924

- 35 Encountering Fuegian natives was one of Kent's objectives on his journey and it was his good fortune to meet—and photograph—representatives of each of the three races—Yaghan, Kaweshkar, and Selk'nam.³⁷ By 1922—a mere fifty years after the first whites settled in Tierra del Fuego—all three tribes were nearing extinction. The Yaghan and Kaweshkar were wiped out largely by western diseases. The Selk'nam, too, suffered from diseases but they were also exterminated by settlers who coveted their prime grazing lands on the eastern half of the island. Today, these tribes are virtually extinct.
- 36 It was the settlers, however, with whom Kent associated most. In the 1920s, economic power in the region was held largely by immigrants from western Europe—mainly Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Scandinavia. Kent was extremely grateful to the settlers who welcomed him and, quite literally, made his journey possible. He expected to find a wild, lawless lot. Instead, he was struck by their kindness and hospitality and was so taken he dedicated his *Century* articles to them.
- 37 *Voyaging* appeared in the fall of 1924, a year and a half after Kent returned from South America, thus it is more reflective than the *Century* series. And what Kent reflects upon primarily is the people. Their kindness—even more than the story of Kent's struggle against the wind and waves—is what defines *Voyaging* and gives it structure. From the first pages to the last, Kent remarks on the strangers who took him in, fed him, and kept him safe in spite of his mad quest to sail to Cape Horn in a converted lifeboat. In the introduction he acknowledges this, “over and above the protection of my own craft and [Willie's] formidable strength, was the persistent kindness and generosity of those with whom our adventures threw us.” He goes on to thank forty-five people, from the governor to a rough Selk'nam.³⁹ In the face of Tierra del Fuego's harsh climate and topography, Kent was surprised to find such tenderness. But, having found it, it permeates his book.
- 38 Where the *Century* articles differ most from *Voyaging* however, is its ending. *Voyaging* closes—as it opens—with a tribute to the good people of Tierra del Fuego. The *Century*

series ends with Kent's bitter failure to reach Cape Horn. On the final day before he must leave for Punta Arenas to catch his northbound steamer, Kent finds himself in a borrowed sailboat mere miles from his goal. But those miles cross the worst waters in the world, the sailor's graveyard. As they near Cape Horn the wind picks up and seas break over the boat. Kent writes that Willie, "watched the sea with concentration so intense that his face had an expression of agony." The pilot—a Swede who knew the waters better than any white man—tells Kent they must abandon the effort. "Can't we make it?" Kent asks. "I tank not," replies the Swede. Reluctantly, Kent agrees: "We were wet and cold and miserable and it was dark and terrible, and I was afraid . . . and the voyage of six thousand miles was ended and the Horn was lost."⁴⁰

- 39 In this admission of failure Kent is counting on his audience—schooled in the ideals of virtuous strife—to applaud the attempt and see in the poignancy of that final failure the success of the voyage as a whole. As Roosevelt wrote in the *Strenuous Life*, "We admire the man who embodies victorious effort. . . It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed."⁴¹

A place where man does not belong: Kent's Tierra del Fuego paintings and drawings

—these pictures are as literal and factual transcriptions of the scene as it was in my power to make them be. Sailors could steer by them, travelers could identify the peaks.

— Rockwell Kent⁴²

- 40 The Tierra del Fuego paintings were acclaimed when first exhibited. The critic, Henry McBride, writing in the *New York Sun*, praised them as 'spirited transcripts of a frosty section of the earth.'⁴³ To recent critics, however, these works are outliers in Kent's oeuvre, distant and lacking in passion. The curator, Constance Martin, said 'Kent's Tierra del Fuego paintings generally fail to convey that drama or spiritual rapport with a place that characterizes his work from Monhegan and [Alaska].' One explanation is that Kent was constantly on the move in Tierra del Fuego and this lack of a base to which he could return after each painting session meant the paintings could not evolve over time, to ripen and come into their own while he was still in the region.⁴⁴

Figure 11 - *Mountain Lake*, 1922-25

Oil on wood panel, 15 5/8 x 20 1/8 in

The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. Acquired 1925

- 41 But more likely it is that the luminous tones familiar in Kent's other works—cerulean skies, blue-white snow—are absent in the Tierra del Fuego paintings. Also missing are the foreground fields of snow or pasture common throughout Kent's oeuvre. Instead of that solidity, the Tierra del Fuego paintings present viewers with unsettling foregrounds of sea. To those who have traveled to Tierra del Fuego, however, Kent's palette is instantly familiar. While summer days can reveal periods of intense sun, rain and dark, dramatic clouds are more the norm. Thus, the panel painting, *Mountain Lake*, with its sparkling, cloudless sky, is the anomaly and it is rather the lowering clouds in Kent's other Tierra del Fuego paintings in which he captures the prevailing truth of that region.

Figure 12 - *Parry Harbor*, 1922-25

Oil on canvas, 34 1/2 x 52 in

Private collection

- 42 In the land forms, too, Kent is faithful to what was before him. Almost to a fault he captures elements he could have omitted for the sake of composition, as in the distinctive “y”-shaped scoring in the mountainside in *Admiralty Sound, Tierra del Fuego* (formerly known as *Dead Tree*).⁴⁵ In Tierra del Fuego, Kent is the explorer-guide, showing us the way through a remote and unfamiliar region. In the catalogue to a 1942 exhibition, Kent writes of his paintings that “Sailors could steer by them, travelers could identify the peaks.”⁴⁶ Indeed—and unlike his earlier paintings—in his Tierra del Fuego work every peak is recognizable, every islet in its proper place.

Figure 13 - *Admiralty Sound: Tierra del Fuego*, 1922-25

Oil on canvas, 33 x 43 1/3 in., The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets

- 43 The Tierra del Fuego paintings are notably devoid of the human figure.⁴⁷ This is in such contrast with Kent's other works that it must not be ignored. Kent is telling us here is a land in which man has no place. The mystical elements in Kent's Alaska work—with the human form set against the wilderness—have been replaced in Tierra del Fuego with what Kent would later refer to as “stark, uncompromising realism”.⁴⁸ Kent strives to capture the Tierra del Fuego he saw, a dangerous land where icy peaks thrust from a churning sea only to be consumed by angry clouds pressing down from above. Surely this is a place where man does not belong. If this fidelity to the cold and wet—to the loneliness—of those lands means the paintings do not appeal to our expectations of the Kent aesthetic, it is due to the artist's uncompromising desire to give testimony to the reality he experienced.

Figure 14 - *Calm*, 1922-5

Oil on canvas, 34 x 44 in. Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine
Museum purchase with funds donated anonymously

- 44 These observations—the lack of human forms, the dark, low clouds, the faithfulness to the landscape—reveal Kent's intent in these paintings. Rather than his prior preoccupation with man's relation to nature, Kent removes any trace of man. In fact, he attempts to remove human self-consciousness entirely in exchange for a depiction of pure landscape. Kent wrote he wanted people to see his Tierra del Fuego paintings and feel the self-forgetfulness he experienced in the face of “nature in its noblest forms or grandest aspects”.⁴⁹ To drive this point home, he put this quote from St. Augustine on the cover of the catalogue to his 1924 and 1925 exhibitions at New York's Wildenstein Galleries where the Tierra del Fuego works were first shown: “And the people went there and admired the high mountains, the wide wastes of the sea and the mighty downward rushing of the streams, and the ocean and the course of the stars, and forgot themselves.”⁵⁰

Figure 15 - *Azopardo River*, 1922-25

Oil on canvas, 34 1/8 x 44 in

The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. Acquired 1925

- 45 The limited number of paintings from Tierra del Fuego—there are only twenty-two extant—means we know Kent's vision of that land primarily through the pen and ink drawings and maps that illustrate *Voyaging*. In these he captures the land with a sparseness of line that hints at the wood engraving technique he would master later in his career. This effect is exemplified in the masterful *Land Legs*. The linearity of these drawings is striking, with Kent adeptly expressing the interplay of sea and shore, plain and slope. This virtuosity can be seen in *Near the Timber Line* where the layering of sky, lake, forest, and snowfield are expressed in alternating short—or long—parallel lines.

Figure 16 - *Land Legs*, 1923

Pen and ink. From *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan*
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press, 1924

Figure 17 - *Near the Timber Line*, ca. 1923

Pen and ink. From *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan*
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press, 1924

- 46 One of Kent's earliest wood engravings dates from Tierra del Fuego. Called *Voyaging* (or *the Wayfarer*), it is an idealized self-portrait, depicting Kent resting at the top of a mountain pass, his arms draped over a heavy backpack.⁵¹ It shows the artist in the

midst of his greatest accomplishment of the journey, crossing the Darwin Range. This four-day trek over a previously unknown pass was done without a map or proper equipment, all vital belongings, including Kent's bulky cameras and painting supplies, stuffed into two sixty-pound packs. One wonders at the fortitude of those two men trudging ever onwards into the unknown—wet, tired, and footsore—rejecting, day after day, the impulse to return to the warmth and certainty of their little boat anchored in the turquoise waters of Bahía Blanca.

Figure 18 - *Voyaging (or The Wayfarer)*, ca. 1924

Wood engraving, image: 6 x 6 in
Plattsburgh State Art Museum

The artist as photojournalist: Kent and the camera in Tierra del Fuego

Meanwhile and between periods of painting I was kept occupied by a new profession that the clamoring of innumerable new acquaintances had forced upon me—portrait photography.

— Rockwell Kent, October, 1922⁵²

- 47 Rockwell Kent took hundreds of photographs while in Tierra del Fuego and they represent a treasure for historians of the region. Many of the people Kent met were leading figures and his images of the few remaining natives—already at the point of extinction when he traveled there—are of particular interest.⁵³
- 48 Kent traveled to Tierra del Fuego with two cameras, a Graflex and a smaller Kodak.⁵⁴ The care and maintenance of these cameras would be a source of vexation throughout his travel in that wet land. Placing two cameras in his limited kit underscores the importance Kent placed on photography from the outset.

- 49 The feverish pace required to build and launch his sailboat—named *Kathleen*, after Kent's wife—just two months after arriving in the territory is reflected in an almost complete lack of photographs of Punta Arenas, aside from several shots of the harbor. This is unfortunate because Punta Arenas was a bustling melting-pot. The opening of the Panama Canal had diminished her port but Punta Arenas was still an important city in 1922, hub of Patagonia's rich export economy and boasting cinemas, libraries, theaters, and newspapers published in German, English, and Spanish. According to the historian, Mateo Martinic, the city was unusually cultured, boasting a literacy rate of nearly 80% compared to less than 30% in the rest of the nation at this that time.⁵⁵

Figure 19 - '*Kathleen*' As She Was, ca. 1923

Pen and ink. From *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan*
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press, 1924

- 50 Kent was a novelty in Punta Arenas—a famous painter likely to meet his death in local waters—and the town's leading citizens flocked to visit him on the *Lonsdale*, the dismantled sailing hulk that served as both lodging and workshop where *Kathleen* was built.⁵⁶ There are a few photographs of Kent posing on the deck of the *Lonsdale* with local notables but the vast majority of his images record the construction and launching of *Kathleen*.
- 51 The near-sinking of *Kathleen* on her first day out of Punta Arenas forced Kent and Willie to put into the shipyard on Dawson Island for repairs. It also damaged the Kodak and, upon reaching a sheltered cove, Kent immediately attempts a repair. "I went to work on my camera, taking the shutter apart and finding rusted and broken springs, almost a hopeless mess."⁵⁷ But he made good use of the Graflex, for on Dawson Island Kent becomes a portraitist.
- 52 Besieged by residents wanting to have their portraits done, Kent obliges, although he soon complains of the "ordeal" in his diary: "Pictures by the roll are wanted . . . It has to stop. I say my plates are all used up."⁵⁸ One striking image shows five mounted Carabineros in front of their post, lances aloft, the Chilean flag rippling in the wind.

That these men were the subject of Kent's repeated ire from the moment they were sent to arrest him his first day on Dawson is not apparent in this fine image.⁵⁹

Figure 20 - *Dawson Island Carabineros*, Port Harris, Chile, 1922

Glass lantern slide

Plattsburgh State Art Museum, no. 5804

- 53 As Kent and Willie sailed south from Dawson Island, we see Kent experimenting in his photographs with framing and texturing. There are numerous images taken from the cockpit of *Kathleen* while under sail, low-aspect shots angling up from the choppy waters to grimacing peaks above. These photographs may be the genesis of the marine foregrounds so prevalent in the Tierra del Fuego paintings, as if the idea had been brewing in Kent's mind during his long hours at the helm of *Kathleen*.⁶⁰ Kent also took his camera into the mountains, capturing quilt-works of snow, rock, and forest and—far below—a patch of sea or lake.
- 54 Kent continued to take portraits as he edged ever southward. Among these, the images of children are most notable. Kent's playful eye is evident in a portrait of Carlos Mulach son of the manager of Estancia Isabel on Lago Fagnano. Kent depicts "Little Charlie" as a pint-sized cowboy astride his pony, a toy six-shooter on his hip. In an image of John Martin Lawrence—one of Ushuaia's leading citizens—holding his infant son, man and boy seem to mimic each other as they squint into the setting sun.⁶¹ At Harberton, east of Ushuaia, Kent produced dozens of photographs, many featuring the six Nielsen and four Lundberg children at play. It was Christmas time and Kent was missing his own children back home. Writing in a Punta Arenas newspaper before departing for the U.S., Kent remarks, 'And if I live to be one hundred and fifty (as I no doubt shall) my memory of Christmas there, with that dozen of happy children of the Nielsens' and the Lundbergs' will never fade.'⁶²
- 55 Kent's was anxious to see the last of the fierce, supposedly cannibal, Fuegians before they vanished from the earth. Kent knew they were not cannibals but he makes use of that label in his writings, obviously to titillate his readers.⁶³ The first "cannibals" he encountered were a family of Kaweshkar living at the southern end of Dawson Island.

In his diary Kent describes in exceptional detail their dwellings and the squalor in which they lived: “They were tramps, if you like, miserably poor and abjectly filthy. [. . .] The Indians were dressed in white man’s rags.” Kent notes the younger man—“a bright, decent fellow”—had a crippled arm and swollen hand, apparently from a recent fracture. The dwelling, and man’s inflamed hand, are visible in Kent’s photographs from the encounter.⁶⁴

- 56 Towards the end of his journey, Kent stays at a Selk’nam camp at the eastern end of Lago Fagnano. One Selk’nam girl nearly steals his heart. She was “so ravishingly beautiful that one must marvel how I ever parted . . .”⁶⁵ To Kent, the Selk’nam—he used the alternate term, Ona—were immediately distinguishable from the Kaweshkar and Yaghan. He writes, “The Onas as I saw them appeared a superb race. What dignity they must have possessed in their savage state . . .”⁶⁶ The Selk’nam were plains dwellers, tall, skilled with the bow, and able to run long distances in pursuit of prey—or enemies. Reared on the romance of the North American Plains Indians, it is no surprise Kent warmed to the Selk’nam more than to their squat ‘canoe people’ neighbors.

Figure 21 - *Selk’nam girl*, near Lago Fagnano, Argentina, 1923

Hand colored glass lantern slide
Plattsburgh State Art Museum, no. 5727

- 57 In his failed dash to Cape Horn, Kent spends several days in the company of two Yaghan, a stout young mother, Margarita, and Berté, an old hunter, wiry and short. They were part of a band of poachers scraping out a living on treeless Bayly Island, far from the law. Margarita and Berté spoke some English—thanks to Anglican missionaries—and Kent was able to converse directly. They may be the source of the fascinating footnote on p. 170 of *Voyaging* in which Kent relates the dalliances of the 19th Century Anglican missionary, “Mr. B—” (Leonard Burleigh), with his native charges. The scandalous story does not appear in the histories of Tierra del Fuego yet in her final book, the late Anne Chapman—the undisputed expert on Tierra del Fuego’s natives—writes extensively about Kent and gives credence to his account.

“Understandably, all this was not alluded to by Burleigh’s missionary colleagues, but it was, with all due respect, mentioned by some of the Yaghans I knew.”⁶⁷

- 58 Margarita and Berté appear in several of Kent’s photographs from Bayly. In another image—likely taken by Willie—Kent cradles Margarita’s infant daughter whom he has—apparently without embarrassment—just ‘baptized’ Kathleen Kent Garcia.⁶⁸
- 59 Rockwell Kent holding Kathleen Kent Garcia (the infant he just ‘baptized’), Bayly Island, Chile, 1923. Photographer unknown. Hand colored glass lantern slide. Plattsburgh State Art Museum, no. 5812.
- 60 The importance Kent placed on the camera helps explain his motivation. Unlike his earlier sojourns in high latitudes, the Tierra del Fuego voyage would be journalistic, as the multitude of photographs makes clear. Monhegan, Newfoundland, and Alaska were already known to audiences in the United States but Tierra del Fuego—that cannibal-infested land with the terrible name—was not and, moreover, it still contained white spaces on the map. It was one of the few places on earth where a traveler in 1922 could discover virgin land. If Kent could discover something, anything, the journey to Tierra del Fuego would allow him—at least in a minor way—to place his name alongside those of the great explorers he so admired. But, if not, at the very least his trip to Tierra del Fuego would allow him to take credit for introducing a wild, unknown land to his countrymen.

Revealing Chile to the United States

- 61 It may seem counter-intuitive that a man entirely unknown in Chile could have had an impact on its national image (*imagen-país*). But this is less problematic when we reflect that the core of a country’s national image is most frequently built outside its borders, through the impressions of foreign readers, travelers, and consumers.⁶⁹ This understanding was not lost on Kent’s generation as the two quotes at the beginning of this article—one by a Chilean, the other by a North American—make clear.
- 62 Through his words and images, Rockwell Kent helped to fill-out and add color to the monochromatic, one-dimensional view of Chile that existed in the minds of North Americans. To the extent Chile was known in the United States at all it was as a land perilous to mariners, possessing the terrors of Cape Horn and the worst lee shore in the world. Valparaíso—a vital port in the California trade before the opening of the Panama Canal—was known mainly for the charms of its women and the cunning of its thieves.⁷⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century, guano was added to the still inchoate image of Chile in the United States.
- 63 Kent not only relayed his impressions of Chile through his writings and the exhibitions of his drawings and paintings, he aggressively publicized them. Being the man he was—craving public adoration—he made sure his adventures were known by as large a segment of the American people as possible. Within days of his homecoming in early 1923, Kent was garnering attention for his South American exploits. He saw to it his deeds received extensive coverage. The *Boston Sunday Post* ran a full-page story on his travels, using Kent’s own photographs. The article—with the sensational title, ‘Vermont Artist Finds New Land Route to Tip of Cape Horn, Subdues Savages with Music and Roughts it with ‘Learned Murderer’—was quickly picked up by other newspapers around the country.⁷¹ And the coverage continued. From 1923 until his first voyage to

Greenland in 1929, almost every article about Kent—and there were many—made reference to his harrowing adventures in the 'sailor's graveyard'.

- 64 Kent used his renown—and his outstanding speaking ability—to create a secondary career as a paid lecturer. He traveled the United States, talking about his adventures and illustrating his lectures with hand painted, glass lantern slides of his photographs, disseminating the national image of Chile to thousands of people longing to travel vicariously to dangerous lands with the daring artist/adventurer.

A new generation and a new national audience

- 65 By 1929, the Tierra del Fuego works had gradually been replaced in Kent's exhibitions by more recent paintings. While *Voyaging* remained a popular book, it too was supplanted on the bookshelves by *N by E*, Kent's gripping 1930 account of sailing a small boat to Greenland.⁷² Twenty years after his voyage, however, a new generation would discover Tierra del Fuego through a fascinating traveling exhibition Kent organized with the Wildenstein Galleries in 1942-43, shortly after the United States entered the Second World War. Carrying the patriotic title, *Know and Defend America: Forty Paintings of our Country and of the Outposts of our Hemisphere by Rockwell Kent*, it aimed to show North Americans of the war generation the lands Kent had introduced to their parents twenty years earlier.

- 66 In a series of letters—including one to Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of president Franklin D. Roosevelt—Kent describes his motivation.

And now . . .the places where I have lived and painted in the past—Alaska, Tierra del Fuego, and Greenland—have suddenly come to be important in the thoughts of everyone, for they are the three apexes of that triangle which is the Western Hemisphere. They are the outposts of our defense. [. . .] I think that the exhibition would be so timely in its subject matter that it should make a stir.⁷³

- 67 And make a stir it did, traveling throughout the United States.⁷⁴ Kent called this 'art for defense's sake', believing that 'to know our continent and our Hemisphere better would be to love it more. And that loving it more we would defend it even better.' Kent envisioned the triangle formed by Greenland, Alaska, and Tierra del Fuego, as a giant 'V' for victory. 'Let Victory be a synonym for the Western Hemisphere and 'V' a symbol for it,' Kent wrote in the catalogue. Five Tierra del Fuego works were shown in the exhibition and Kent lamented he had no more to include.⁷⁵

- 68 Ironically, this popular exhibition was Kent's last hurrah in the United States as an artist. In the decades following Kent would remain in the public eye, but for his political activity, his labor activism, and his presumed communism rather than for his art. There would not be another major exhibition of his work until the one at Bowdoin College in 1969.⁷⁶ But if Kent's leftist activism closed the doors on his art in the United States, new ones were opening behind the Iron Curtain. In 1957, Kent was invited to exhibit at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow. The show—the first solo exhibition by a U.S. artist in the museum's history—was received with great enthusiasm as thousands flocked to see Kent's paintings. The next year a larger exhibition toured Moscow, Kiev, Riga, and Leningrad.

Figure 23 - Catalogue to the Rockwell Kent exhibition at the Hermitage State Art Museum, Leningrad, 1958

- ⁶⁹ So moved was Kent by this reception he decided to donate the bulk of his private collection—some 900 works, including 80 paintings—to the people of the Soviet Union. Included were four canvases from Tierra del Fuego. Kent also sent several copies of his books, including *Voyaging*, to be translated into Russian.⁷⁷ The collection was displayed in Moscow before being divided among the Pushkin, Hermitage, Kiev Museum, and the National Gallery Art in Yerevan. Each museum has a Tierra del Fuego painting. Thus, another generation, in another nation, was exposed—in word and picture—to Rockwell Kent’s image of Chile.⁷⁸

Coming full circle: Introducing Rockwell Kent to the people of Chile

- ⁷⁰ Kent traveled to Tierra del Fuego with a narrative mission as much as a painterly one. He would bring back stories and photographs and artworks so faithful to the landscape, that “a sailor could steer by them, a traveler could identify the peaks” but he would also discover new lands, meet strong and gentle people, and relate these discoveries to his burgeoning audience back in the United States.
- ⁷¹ There can be no doubt that through his works Kent contributed to the understanding—to the development of a national image—of Chile in the United States. It is time now to bring the Tierra del Fuego works of Rockwell Kent to Chile and to see if the impressions he imparted to his countrymen ninety years ago will now come full circle and—in an example of twenty-first century transculturation—influence how Chileans view their land and themselves.

Figure 24 - Map of Tierra del Fuego and environs (showing Kent's route), ca. 1924

Pen and ink. From *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan*
 New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press, 1924

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AUGUSTINE of HIPPO, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*. Circa 520. Translated by E. Pusey. New York: Random House/The Modern Library, 1949.
- BRADY, John T., 'Vermont Artist Finds New Land Route to Tip of Cape Horn.' *Boston Sunday Post*, 15 April 1923.
- CHAPMAN, Anne, *European Encounters with the Yamana People, Before and After Darwin*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010.
- CLARK, Kenneth, *Landscape into Art*. 1949. New York: Harper & Row, 1979.
- DARWIN, Charles, *Voyage of the Beagle*. 1839. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.
- DUPUY, Fielding, 'Over the Ultimate: Rockwell Kent's journey to the End of the Earth' *The Kent Collector* Plattsburgh State Art Museum, State University of New York, Plattsburgh, Summer (2011); Fall (2011); Spring (2012).
- 'Ex America Semper Aliquid', *New Statesman*, Jul 31, 1920: p. 482.
- KENT, Rockwell, *It's Me, O Lord*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1955.
- KENT, Rockwell. *Know & Defend America: Forty Paintings of our Country and of the Outposts of our Hemisphere by Rockwell Kent*. Exhibition catalogue, New York: Wildenstein Galleries, 1942.
- KENT, Rockwell. *N by E*. New York: Random House, 1930.

KENT, Rockwell. *Retrospective Exhibition of the Paintings and Drawings of Rockwell Kent*. Exh. cat. New York: Wildenstein Galleries, 1924.

KENT, Rockwell. *Tierra del Fuego Journal of Rockwell Kent*. Unpublished journal, 1922, ts. ca. 1960. Rockwell Kent Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

KENT, Rockwell. *The Tierra del Fuego Paintings of Rockwell Kent*. Exh. cat. New York: Wildenstein Galleries, 1925.

KENT, Rockwell. *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press, 1924.

KENT, Rockwell. "Voyager's Log." *Century* July (1923): 323-34; Aug. (1923): 536-48; Sep.(1923): 741-55; Oct. (1923): 935-949.

KENT, Rockwell. *Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press, 1920.

LEGOUPIL, D., M. CHRISTENSEN, and F. MORELLO, "Una Encrucijada de Caminos: El Poblamiento de la Isla Dawson (Estrecho de Magallanes)." *Magallania* 39.2 (2011): 137-52.

MARTIN, Constance. *Distant Shores: The Odyssey of Rockwell Kent*. Exh. cat. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press in association with Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, Mass., 2000.

MARTINIC B., MATEO, *A Brief History of the Land of Magellan*. Punta Arenas: Ediciones de la Universidad de Magallanes, 2002.

MCBRIDE, Henry. 'Tierra del Fuego Landscapes.' *New York Sun*, 18 April 1925.

MELVILLE, Herman. *Moby Dick or The Whale*. 1851. New York: Random House, 1930.

NASH, Roderick, *Wilderness and the American Mind*. 4th ed. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2001.

ODONE C., Carolina and Pedro MEGE R., "Imágenes misionales. Sueños y fotografías del extremo sur. Isla Dawson, Tierra del Fuego, 1889-1911" in *Fueguinos: Fotografías siglos XIX y XX, Imágenes e imaginarios del fin del mundo*. Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2007. 37-48.

OTANO, Rafale, 'A la búsqueda de un relato para Chile', *Diseña: Revista Escuela de Diseño*. Santiago de Chile: Pontifica Univ. Católica de Chile, Oct. 2009: 44-49.

PRATT, Mary Louise, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.

ROOSEVELT, Theodore. *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*. 1899. New York: The Century Co., 1911.

"Round the Town." *Magellan Times* 26 July 1922: 8.

SWETT, John. "John Muir." *Century* May 1893: 120-23. "The Silent Witness." *Time* 24 Dec. 1956.

TRAXEL, David. *An American Saga: The Life and Times of Rockwell Kent*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

VEGA DELGADO, Carlos, *La Masacre en la Federación Obrera de Magallanes: el movimiento obrero Patagónico-Fueguino hasta 1920*. 2nd ed. Punta Arenas: Impresos Ateli, 2002.

WIEN, Jake Milgram, *Rockwell Kent: The Mythic and the Modern*. Exh. cat. Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills Press in association with Portland Museum of Art, 2005.

NOTES

1. From a general letter of introduction. Rockwell Kent Papers, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of America Art, Washington, D.C., reel 5241, frame 170. [Henceforth, RKP].
2. 'Mr. Kent is very impressed with our country and intends to make it known in the United States.' The quote is from a letter of introduction and request for a meeting between Rockwell Kent and Chile's president on Kent's return north from Punta Arenas. Vicente Fernández Rocuant to Arturo Alessandri Palma, President of Chile, February 3, 1923. RKP 5241/211.
3. Rockwell Kent, 'A Voyager's Log,' *Century* July-Oct. 1923 and *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons/The Knickerbocker Press), 1924.
4. Rockwell Kent, *The Tierra del Fuego Journal*. Unpublished, 1922 (typescript ca. 1960), 40. RKP 5249/583-695. [Henceforth, *Journal*].
5. *ibid.*, 3-4.
6. Unless otherwise indicated, works depicted in this article are by Rockwell Kent (or were part of his private collection) and are published courtesy of the Plattsburgh State Art Museum, State University of New York, Rockwell Kent Collection, Bequest of Sally Kent Gorton. All rights reserved.
7. Roderick Nash. *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th edition. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 25.
8. *Journal*, 84, 29.
9. Nash, 81.
10. Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), ix.
11. As quoted in Nash, 90.
12. Nash, 79.
13. As quoted in Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. (London: Routledge, 1992), 201, 205.
14. Rockwell Kent. *It's Me O Lord*. (New York: Dodd Mead & Company, 1955), 79. [Henceforth, IMOL].
15. Theodore Roosevelt. *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*. (New York: The Century Co., 1911), 1-21.
16. Pratt, 135
17. Carlos Vega Delgado, *La Masacre en la Federación Obrera de Magallanes: El Movimiento Obrero Patagónico-Fueguino Hasta 1920*, (Punta Arenas: 2002). And in conversation with the author.
18. RKP 5184/1456. Also, *Journal*, 21.
19. Nash, 67.
20. *ibid.*, 149.
21. Alaska was not granted statehood until 1959.
22. IMOL, p. 109. See also, David Traxel, *An American Saga: The Life and Times of Rockwell Kent*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 23.
23. 'Ex America Semper Aliquid', *New Statesman*, Jul 31, 1920: 482.
24. Willie was 3rd Mate on the SS *Curaca*. Kent met him on board and convinced the young man to accompany him on his journey to Cape Horn.
25. Jake Milgram Wien, *Rockwell Kent: The Mythic and the Modern*. exh. cat. (Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills Press in association with Portland Museum of Art), 2005.
26. A lifelong member of the Socialist Party, Kent was never a communist. While he admired the Soviet Union for many things—notably its heroic defense against Nazi aggression—he railed against its lack of individual liberty and free speech. For more, see Traxel, 205.
27. John Foster Dulles was the U.S. Secretary of State.
28. Traxel, 210.
29. "Among our Contributors," *Century* July 1923.

30. John Swett, "John Muir," *Century* May 1893: 120-23. For more on Kent and Transcendentalism, see Constance Martin. *Distant Shores: The Odyssey of Rockwell Kent*. (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2000, 19. Also, see Traxel, 18-21.
31. *Journal*, 24.
32. "The Silent Witness." *Time*, 24 Dec. 1956. Also, IMOL, p. 86.
33. Letter from Glenn Frank, May 22, 1922, RKP 5241/173.
34. 'El señor Kent. . . es un distinguido pintor i escritor, representante de la notable Revista 'Century' de Neuva York. . .' Vicente Fernández Rocuant to Arturo Alessandri Palma, President of Chile, February 3, 1923. RKP 5241/211.
35. Cape Horn figured prominently in North American maritime lore but exploration of Tierra del Fuego was almost exclusively European.
36. Among the Tierra del Fuego papers at Columbia University is a page in which Kent has sketched a rough image of the globe and, beside it, listed the names of the great explorers, including an inordinate number of polar explorers like Frobisher, Davis, Barrents, Weddell, etc.
37. "Round the Town," *Magellan Times* July 26, 1922: 8.
38. A few mixed-blood Yaghan live on Navarino Island and a handful of Kaweshkar near Puerto Eden; there are no remnants of the Selk'nam. A fourth tribe, the Haush, were largely wiped out by the Selk'nam before the Europeans arrived.
39. *Voyaging*, vii-ix.
40. *Century*, Oct. 1923: 948-49.
41. Roosevelt, 2.
42. Rockwell Kent, *Know and Defend America: Forty Paintings of our Country and the Outposts of our Hemisphere*, exh. cat. (New York: Wildenstein Galleries), 1942.
43. Henry McBride, 'Tierra del Fuegan Landscapes,' *New York Sun*, April 18, 1925.
44. Martin, 31. Also, letter to the author from Jake M. Wien, August 28, 2010.
45. This feature was immediately apparent when the author stood where Kent painted and yet it clearly distracts from the overall composition of the painting.
46. *Know and Defend America*.
47. Only one painting, *Snow Peaks*, now missing, featured human beings.
48. IMOL, 353-4.
49. Letter to Nikita Bolotnikov, to be used as preface to Russian edition of *Voyaging*, May 1965, RKP 5250/1500-07.
50. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, book X, 205, as quoted in Rockwell Kent, *Retrospective Exhibition of the Paintings and Drawings of Rockwell Kent*. (New York: Wildenstein Galleries), 1924 and *The Tierra del Fuego Paintings of Rockwell Kent*. (New York: Wildenstein Galleries), 1925.
51. The wood engraving appeared as the frontispiece of the limited, deluxe edition of *Voyaging*. It does not appear in the trade edition.
52. *Journal*, 14.
53. One photograph recently illustrated an article by a Franco-Chilean archeological team. D. Legoupil, M. Christensen, and F. Morello, "Una Encrucijada de Caminos: El Poblamiento de la Isla Dawson (Estrecho de Magallanes)," *Magallania* 39.2 (2011): 137-152.
54. *Voyaging*, 26-27, 102.
55. Mateo Martinic, *Brief History of the Land of Magellan*. (Punta Arenas: La Prensa Austral, Ltda.), 2002, 83-84.
56. *Lonsdale* is still in Punta Arenas, beached now, and deteriorating on the shore, it is maintained as a monument to the sailors who perished in local waters.
57. *Journal*, 7.
58. *Journal*, p. 14-15.
59. The arrest, mentioned in the *Century* and *Voyaging*—and repeated in Kent's autobiography, *It's Me O Lord*—appears to be literary license because his diary contains no mention of the

Carabineros boarding *Kathleen* and saying, “Ustedes están arrestados” (You are arrested). Rather it describes a friendly encounter led by Alejo Marcou, manager of the island’s sawmill. Marcou had mistaken *Kathleen* for a vessel of Russian bandits reported in the area and set out with the Carabineros to capture them. But, when the group pulled up to the *Kathleen*, the U.S. flag at the masthead, they became a welcoming party. *Journal*, p. 7

60. For more on Kent’s painting methods in Tierra del Fuego, see Dupuy, ‘Over the Ultimate: Rockwell Kent’s journey to the End of the Earth (Part II),’ *The Kent Collector*, Fall 2011.

61. That boy, Martín Juan Lawrence, is today the only living link to Kent’s Tierra del Fuego voyage; he resides in Buenos Aires.

62. Rockwell Kent, *Magellan Times*, Jan. 21, 1923.

63. The cannibalism myth derives from Charles Darwin and his towering reputation perpetuated this long after closer observers had dismissed it. Charles Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle*. (New York: Penguin Books), 1989, 178.

64. *Journal*, p. 34-35. Kent initially believed he was meeting the last of the Selk’nam brought to Dawson in the 1890s by Salesian missionaries who hoped to save them from ranchers encroaching on their lands in the east and murdering them by the score. But the Selk’nam suffered miserably in the wet climate of Dawson and hundreds died of disease and heartbreak; by the end of the first decade of the new century, virtually all were dead and the mission was shuttered. For more, see Odone and Mege, “Imágenes misionales. Sueños y fotografías del extremo sur. Isla Dawson, Tierra del Fuego, 1889-1911.” *Fueginos: Fotografías siglos XIX y XX, Imágenes e imaginarios del fin del mundo*. (Santiago: Pehuén Editores), 2007, 37-48.

65. *Magellan Times*, 8.

66. *Voyaging*, 180-181.

67. Anne Chapman, *European Encounters with the Yamana People, Before and After Darwin*. (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press), 2010, 608-612.

68. *Voyaging*, 169. The author has been unable to locate any trace of Kathleen (or Catalina) Garcia.

69. Rafael Otano, ‘A la búsequeda de un relato para Chile,’ *Diseña: Revista Escuela de Diseño*, Oct. 2009, Santiago de Chile: Pontifica Universidad Católica de Chile.

70. Sailors on U.S. ships regularly sang working songs (sea shanties) that referenced Valparaiso.

71. John T. Brady, *Boston Sunday Post*, April 15, 1923.

72. *N by E*, is a classic of sailing and adventure literature and became an immediate bestseller. His other books about Greenland are *Salamina*, 1935, and *Greenland Journal*, 1962.

73. Letter to Felix Wildenstein, September 20, 1941. RKP 5177/1142.

74. The exhibition traveled from New York to Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Stockton, Milwaukee, Beloit, Pittsburgh, and Boston.

75. Letter to Olive Lyford, Office of Inter-American Affairs, December 3, 1941. RKP 5177/1155.

76. A small exhibition called *The Right to Travel*, was mounted in New York and Cambridge but it featured mainly prints and drawings and was conceived as a fundraising event for Kent’s costly passport fight; two small gallery shows were held in 1966, at Harbor Gallery in Cold Spring, New York and Larcada Gallery in New York City. For a list of Kent’s solo exhibitions, see Wien, 159-61.

77. The manuscript of the *Tierra del Fuego Journal* was among those works and its current location is unknown. Fortunately, Kent had had a typescript made before sending it to Moscow. The manuscript of *Voyaging* is at Columbia University.

78. It may be Kent is best known today in the former Soviet Union. An example is a meeting the author had at the Russian embassy in Santiago in 2010. Shortly into a standard speech about Kent, the ambassador held up his hand and exclaimed, ‘Please, I know very well who is Rockwell Kent.’

ABSTRACTS

¿Es posible que un foráneo desconocido en Chile haya sido parte de la construcción de la imagen país de esta nación? Si. Los ojos del explorador foráneo pueden revelar la nación a sí misma y devolverla gradualmente a través de las percepciones generadas afuera de sus bordes. Un ejemplo es la apropiación en Sudamérica del efecto generado por Humboldt en las audiencias europeas. Este artículo trata sobre cómo un trasmisor foráneo contribuyó en la construcción de la imagen país de Chile. El multidisciplinario y talentoso Rockwell Kent (1882-1971) presentó a los norteamericanos sus imágenes y asociaciones sobre Chile existentes en Tierra del Fuego, zona virgen sobre la cual ellos podrían construir mentalmente el paraíso que habían perdido en el cierre de la frontera Norteamericana.

Est-il possible qu'un étranger inconnu du Chili puisse contribuer à la construction de l'image nationale de ce pays ? Certainement. Le regard d'un explorateur étranger a toujours joué un rôle important dans la révélation d'une nation à elle-même. En effet, les impressions étrangères se sont progressivement diffusées à l'ensemble de la nation, après leur acceptation par des publics hors de ses frontières. Ainsi en est-il des observations de Humboldt, qui avait acquis une audience européenne. Ainsi en est-il également, dans l'article suivant, du talentueux Rockwell Kent (1882-1971). Par des images et des écrits, celui-ci a transmis à une génération d'américains du Nord, l'existence au sein du Chili, en Terre du Feu, d'une nature sauvage remémorant le Paradis qu'ils avaient eux-mêmes perdu, en raison de la fermeture de la frontière aux États-Unis.

INDEX

Mots-clés: national image, landscape art, Rockwell Kent, transculturation, Tierra del Fuego, Theodore Roosevelt, wilderness theory

Palabras claves: imagen nacional, pintura de paisaje, Rockwell Kent, transculturación, Tierra del Fuego, Theodore Roosevelt, teorías del "wilderness"

AUTHOR

FIELDING D. DUPUY

Independent researcher, Mr. Dupuy's studies focus on transnational artists in New York City in the first half of the twentieth century. In addition to his work on Rockwell Kent, Mr. Dupuy is compiling the catalogue raisonné of the Swiss-born, American sculptor, Arnold Giessbuhler (1897-1994). He resides in Quito, Ecuador.

fieldingdupuy[at]yahoo.com