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## An inter-American study of William Sydney Porter's Latin American stories

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AN INTER-AMERICAN STUDY OF WILLIAM SYDNEY PORTER'S LATIN AMERICAN STORIES

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Inter-American Studies

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Inter-American Studies

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by

Anthony Joseph Gutierrez

June 1968

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This thesis, written and submitted by

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

William Sydney Porter's (O. Henry's) first published volume, Cabbages and Kings (1904), has a small Central American country as its setting. Porter wrote eight additional short stories which have Latin American settings and published them in other volumes ("The Fourth in Salvador" in Roads of Destiny; "On Behalf of the Management" in Roads of Destiny; "Two Renegades" in Roads of Destiny; "Supply and Demand" in Options; "He Also Serves" in Options; "A Ruler of Men" in Rolling Stones; "The Day We Celebrate" in Sixes and Sevens; and "The World and the Door" in Whirligigs). These stories are referred to as Porter's Latin American stories. No study has been made of them because of their limited literary scope and Porter's literary immaturity at the time he wrote them.

Statement of the problem. This paper is an examination of William Sydney Porter's Latin American stories in light of their inter-American significance. The basic point of view from which the study is made is that Porter is a North American writing about Latin America at the beginning of the twentieth century. The paper

examines the Latin American and North American characters which appear in the stories and catalogs them into groups of stereotypes.

The aim of this study is to discover Porter's ideas, views, and concepts of Latin America, Latin Americans, and North Americans in Latin America, as they are expressed in his stories. This study cannot establish what Porter's personal thoughts on Latin America and Latin Americans actually were, for Porter never published a first-person report of these thoughts. Much of the study depends entirely on the views, opinions, and feelings of the speakers and characters in the stories. Many of Porter's North American characters demonstrate a negative attitude toward Latin America and its people, an attitude which is in keeping with their characters. This is particularly true of Porter's North American soldier of fortune type, speculator type, adventurer type, and fugitive type. However, in order to point out the general attitude toward Latin America which is developed and expressed by Porter in his stories, it will be necessary to lump together the views and opinions of all his speakers and characters.

No attempt is made in the study to give an account of Porter's stay in Honduras or to give a literary evaluation of the stories.

Importance of the study. Inter-American understanding is the chief goal toward which all scholars in the field of inter-American studies are striving. North Americans, in general, share

a prejudiced and biased conception of Latin America and its people. To the Latin American public, North Americans are also a well-defined and equally stereotyped people. William Sydney Porter's stories, drawn from his experiences in Honduras, illustrate some of the misconceptions and biases shared by both Latin Americans and North Americans in the nineteenth century as well as today.

Organization of the thesis. The thesis is divided into five chapters and an appendix. Chapter I presents the problem; Chapter II offers a general background and a general survey of the stories; Chapter III defines the Latin American setting of the stories; Chapter IV deals with the Latin American character types; Chapter V discusses the North American character types; and the Appendix contains the summaries and conclusions.

## CHAPTER II

### GENERAL BACKGROUND AND SURVEY OF STORIES

The present chapter offers (1) a very brief but necessary discussion of William Sydney Porter's life from 1862 (birth) to 1904 (publication of Cabbages and Kings) which explains how Porter fled to Latin America as a fugitive from justice, and (2) a general survey and description of all Porter's Latin American stories which will give the reader a general knowledge of the stories and what they are about.

#### I. GENERAL BACKGROUND

William Sydney Porter was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, on September 11, 1862, the son of Algernon Sydney Porter and Mary Jane Virginia Swain.<sup>1</sup> William attended school in Greensboro until his fifteenth birthday; at that time he left school to work in his uncle's drugstore. He worked in the store until 1882, when he decided to leave North Carolina and travel to Texas. For two years, he lived on a ranch in La Salle County managed by friends who had

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<sup>1</sup>Most of the information presented in this brief sketch of Porter's early life is general information found in any of the following biographies of Porter: Carl Van Doren, "William Sydney Porter," in Dumas Malone, (ed.), Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), XV, pp. 105-7; Eugene Current-Garcia, O. Henry (William Sydney Porter), (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963), pp. 17-47; Gerald Langford, Alias O. Henry: A Biography of William Sydney Porter (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1957), pp. 1-248; C. Alphonso Smith, O. Henry Biography (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1916).

preceded him from Greensboro. He then moved to Austin, Texas, and lived with a family from North Carolina. In Austin, he held a number of positions secured for him by friends. From 1885 to 1887, he was a clerk and bookkeeper; from 1887 to 1891, he held the position of a draftsman in the state land office; and from 1891 to 1894, he was a bank teller. During this Austin period he married Athol Estes, a young girl of seventeen.

In 1894, Porter resigned his position in the bank to devote all his time to editing a humorous weekly, the Rolling Stones. The publication brought him encouraging letters but failed to support him, and he was forced to discontinue it after one year. Porter became desperate for a job. In October, 1895, he gladly accepted a position on the reportorial staff of the Houston Post. He remained with the Post until July, 1896.

Then began a series of events which led to Porter's criminal flight from Houston to Honduras.

In the summer of 1894, a bank examiner had found a discrepancy in the book of the Austin bank where Porter was employed as a teller. The evidence pointed to Porter's possible guilt. After several preliminary investigations, Porter was indicted for embezzlement in February, 1896. In the middle of March, Porter filed an affidavit in Austin declaring that he had secured the services of an attorney. At that time he asked for a continuation of his case; his request was granted, and the trial was set for the July term of court.

During the first week in July, 1896, Porter left Houston to

stand trial in Austin. At Hempstead, fifty miles out of Houston, he changed trains and went to New Orleans. How long he remained in New Orleans is not clearly established. From New Orleans he took a ship to Honduras.

Porter's life in Honduras is virtually shrouded in darkness. Almost nothing is known concerning his living conditions or his acquaintances. The two basic sources of information concerning his life in Central America are his Latin American stories and a fantastic and unreliable account, Through the Shadows with O. Henry (1921), written by Al Jennings, a notorious North American train robber who befriended Porter while they were both in Honduras avoiding the law.<sup>2</sup> Jennings' book pretends to give a historical account of Porter's peregrinations with Jennings and his brother all around Mexico, Central America, and South America. However, it is obvious that the book is a fictional adventure story and not an accurate, historical account of Porter's stay in Latin America. C. Alphonso Smith demonstrates poor judgment in his authorized biography of Porter by accepting Jennings' work as an authentic and reliable source of Porter's voyage through South America:

O. Henry joined them (Al Jennings and his brother) and together they circled the entire coast of South America. This was O. Henry's longest voyage and certainly the strangest.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Al Jennings, Through The Shadows With O. Henry (New York: The H. K. Fly Company Publishers, 1921).

<sup>3</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 140.

Whatever Porter's life in Latin America truly was like will probably never be known. However, it is clear that Porter found life in Honduras a blessed relief from the troubles at home.<sup>4</sup> His biographers report that he experienced a tremendous sense of freedom while living in Honduras, a sense of freedom that he remembered and cherished all his life.<sup>5</sup> According to Smith, Porter wrote letters to his wife informing her that he had determined to make Honduras his home and that he was making arrangements for her to join him.<sup>6</sup>

No one knows exactly how long Porter lived in Latin America because it has never been established with certainty what day he departed from New Orleans. He could not have lived in Latin America for very long because he was forced to return to Austin early in 1897 when he received a letter informing him that his wife was seriously ill. His wife died that same year, and, in 1898, he was tried, found guilty of embezzlement, and sentenced for five years to the Federal Penitentiary in Ohio.

The majority of Porter's stories which have Latin American settings were written in the years from 1898 to 1904, his first productive years as a short story writer and when his Latin American experiences were fresh in his mind. In 1904, he published his first book, Cabbages and Kings, a loosely unified collection of stories

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<sup>4</sup>Current-Garcia, op. cit. p. 33.

<sup>5</sup>Langford, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>6</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 138.

based on his Central American experiences. This work is described in detail in the following section.

## II. SURVEY OF PORTER'S LATIN AMERICAN STORIES

In all, there are twenty-six Latin American stories, eighteen of which are bound up together as "chapters" in the simulated novel Cabbages and Kings; the remaining eight are separate stories published for the most part after that book appeared. When Cabbages and Kings was published in 1904, it was thought to be largely an original piece of writing, the various parts of which had been artfully designed to hang together. Actually, all but two or three of its eighteen "chapters" were carved out of seven earlier stories published two or three years before in Ainslee's, Everybody's, McClure's, and Smart Set; slight changes of chapter headings and names of characters and places were made to conform to novel requirements.<sup>7</sup>

The backbone of Cabbages and Kings is an earlier, rather long short story, "Money Maze," which first appeared in Ainslee's Magazine for May, 1901, over three and a half years before the publication of the novel in October, 1904. This tale comprises practically the entire plot element of the novel.<sup>8</sup>

The principal plot of Cabbages and Kings concerns the deposed

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<sup>7</sup>Current-Garcia, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>8</sup>p. S. Glarkson, "A Decomposition of Cabbages and Kings," American Literature, VII (May, 1935), p. 196.

President Miraflores of the Republic of Anchuria, who escapes with the beautiful Isabel Guilbert as well as with the national treasury. This couple is arrested and taken to New York by "Shorty" O'Day, a New York detective, who mistakes them for J. Churchill Wahrfield, absconding President of the Republic Insurance Company, and his daughter. The latter pair, mistaken for the first, is apprehended by Frank Goodwin and his revolutionary compatriots. Mr. Wahrfield, misapprehending the object of his captors, commits suicide, and is buried as President Miraflores. Frank Goodwin marries Miss Wahrfield, who is believed to be Isabel Guilbert, and returns the stolen funds to the Insurance Company.

Throughout the work this principal plot is continually interrupted by the narrations of many tales which have little or nothing to add to the basic plot. Chapter II, "The Lotus and the Bottle," tells how Willard Geddie, United States consul of Coralio, solves his love problems in the tropics. Chapter V is about Johnny Atwood, another United States consul with love problems. Chapter VI interrupts the basic plot with the story of Homer P. Mellinger, a North American adventurer who gains a powerful position in the Latin American Government. Chapters VIII and IX tell the story of Felipe Carrera, the half-wit native fisherman who becomes Admiral of Anchuria's Navy. Chapter X is about a North American soldier of fortune's escapade in Guatemala during a revolution. Chapter XI is somewhat connected with the principal plot, but its main purpose is to introduce "Beelzebub" Blythe, the North American derelict and

drunk. Chapters XII and XIII stray far from the principal action with a fantastic story concerning a North American speculator's attempt to sell shoes in the tropics. Chapter XIV, "Masters of Arts," tells how two North American adventurers take advantage of the president-dictator of Anchuria; this episode takes place in the same setting and at the same time as the principal plot but is completely isolated in every way from the main action. Chapters XV and XVI are devoted to the separate and compact story of Dicky Maloney, the mysterious "foreigner" from North America who turns out to be a Latin American revolutionary.

Therefore, Cabbages and Kings is hardly a novel, and, for the purposes of this study, it will be treated as a collection of short stories which deal primarily with the adventures of North Americans in a Latin American setting.

Porter's Latin American stories are very much like his tall tales of the West. They are filled with colorful characters, ironic twists and surprises, impossible coincidences, extravagant and fanciful plots, and sentimentality.

The remaining eight Latin American stories which are not included in Cabbages and Kings are cut from the same colorful cloth.

"On Behalf of the Management" tells of an attempted revolution, or rather a dishonest election campaign, planned and financed in New York but abortively conducted in an imaginary "postage-stamp-sized country" somewhere in the vicinity of Ecuador.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>O. Henry, Roads of Destiny (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1904), pp. 243-57.

"A Ruler of Men" tells of a fake revolution which an Irish giant named O'Connor is tricked into leading in an unnamed Latin American republic. Robbed of funds, he is thrown in jail until rescued by his partner; he ends up back in New York City, ruling men happily by cramming them into over-loaded subway trains.<sup>10</sup>

"Two Renegades" deals with the intervention of two odd-ball American individuals in a Panamanian revolutionary escapade, one of whom, a Yankee named O'Keefe, is ransomed from a firing squad by the other, Doc Millikan, a loyal Confederate rebel. Doc Millikan pays twelve thousand dollars in Confederate currency to ignorant Latin American officials who set O'Keefe free.<sup>11</sup>

"The Fourth in Salvador" is a ludicrous tall tale about a drinking spree in which four or five Americans, an Englishman, and "a buck coon from Georgia" shoot up the town while celebrating the Fourth of July and incidentally contribute in doing so to the success of a revolution which makes them heroes in the eyes of the new government.<sup>12</sup>

"The Day We Celebrate" is a farcical account of a scrap between two drunken derelicts in the jungles of Costa Rica. One of them is a North American and the other a British subject. After

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<sup>10</sup>O. Henry, Rolling Stones (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1911), pp. 8-33.

<sup>11</sup>O. Henry, Roads of Destiny, pp. 289-301.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 171-83.

laboring for months on a banana plantation, they walk to a small coastal town where they join other North Americans in what they believe to be a celebration of the Fourth of July. After engaging in a patriotic fistcuffs, they are informed that it is a Christmas celebration.<sup>13</sup>

"Supply and Demand" is a fantastic yarn about the exploitation of an innocent tribe of Central American Indians, who, having no awareness of the exchange value of gold, supply it freely in quantity to a swindling Irishman, Patrick Shane, until another North American adventurer-entrepreneur shows up with a cargo of mirrors, cheap jewelry, and safety razors and infects them with a knowledge of good and evil.<sup>14</sup>

"He Also Serves" is another tale of Indian exploitation, located in the Aztec area of Mexico. An educated North American Indian is commissioned by the United States Government to study Aztec ruins. The story is flavored with pagan reincarnation rites in a ruined Aztec Temple.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Porter's story, "The World and the Door," tells of a romance between two well-to-do fugitives from justice, Ralph Merriam, and Mrs. Conant, who confesses to having poisoned her husband. So long as each knows of the other's guilt they are deliciously happy in

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<sup>13</sup>O. Henry, Sixes and Sevens (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1904), pp. 275-83.

<sup>14</sup>O. Henry, Options (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1909), pp. 84-103.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 134-39.

their shared company; but when Merriam's "victim" unaccountably shows up alive and well and bearing no grudges, and when Mrs. Conant learns from an old newspaper that her husband did not die but got a divorce, both of them quietly make plans to escape and to separate without seeing each other again.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>0. Henry, Whirligigs (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1910), pp. 3-21.

## CHAPTER III

### THE LATIN AMERICAN SETTING

The present chapter deals with the Latin American setting. The discussion covers the basic features of Porter's physical and spiritual Latin setting. The physical features of the setting include the small coastal towns, the jungles, the steamships, the fruit exporting monopoly, and the homes and offices of foreigners. The spiritual features of Porter's Latin setting include romanticism, isolationism, and revolution. An attempt is made to reveal Porter's attitude toward Latin America by studying these basic features of the setting in their context.

#### I. THE TROPICAL COASTAL TOWNS

Without exception, all of Porter's Latin American stories take place in or near a tropical coastal town. None of the stories deals with life in the Latin cities.

The towns are small and provincial. They possess very poor means of communication and transportation. They have no railroad station or harbor, and the few roads that exist are mere trails. For the most part, there is little activity, commercial or other. The economy of the towns is based on government salaries and the exportation of fruit. Tramp fruit steamers make irregular visits to the towns to pick up bananas:

. . . There is no harbour [sic] at Coralio.  
~~Vessels of the draught of the Valhalla must ride~~

at anchor a mile from shore. When they take on fruit it is conveyed on lighters and freighter sloops.<sup>1</sup>

The small coastal town of Coralio is the Latin setting for all the stories in Cabbages and Kings. Coralio is described in greater detail than the other coastal towns and stands as a good example of the tropical coastal town in Porter's Latin American stories.

Coralio consists of a few large wooden structures and many small adobe huts with grass roofs. In the middle of the town is a plaza. The major buildings which tower above the adobe huts are a church, the President's summer house, the customshouse, and the cuartel (the army barracks). Other large buildings of lesser importance are the hotel, the general store, and the post office. There are few sidewalks and no gutters.

The narrator of "Fox-in-the-Morning" gives a realistic picture of what Coralio looks like to a stranger:

These side streets were covered by a growth of thick, rank grass, which was kept to a navigable shortness by the machetes of the police. Stone sidewalks, little more than a ledge in width, ran along the base of the mean and monotonous adobe houses. At the outskirts of the village these streets dwindled to nothing; and here were set the palm-thatched huts of the caribs and the poorer natives, and the shabby cabins of negroes from Jamaica and the West India islands. A few structures raised their heads above the red-tiled roofs of the one-story houses -- the bell tower of the Calaboza, the Hotel de los Estranjeros [sic], the residence of the Besuvius Fruit Company's agent, the store and residence of Bernard Brannigan, a ruined cathedral

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<sup>1</sup>0. Henry, Cabbages and Kings (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1904), p. 27.

in which Columbus had once set foot, and, most important of all, the Casa Morena -- the summer "White House" of the President of Anchuria. On the principal street running along the beach -- the Broadway of Coralio -- were the larger stores, the government bodega and post-office, the cuartel, the run-ships and the market place.<sup>2</sup>

Porter's different descriptions of the tropical coastal town are consistently derogatory. In the above description the smallness of the town and the poor quality of the buildings stand out. Everything is "mean and monotonous." The streets are overgrown with weeds and "dwindle to nothing." Only a "few" of the structures are large enough to be seen above the roofs of the inferior huts.

In another episode a North American businessman gives the following harsh account of Coralio to a stranger:

"Not much of a town," said Goodwin, smiling. "A banana town, as they run. Grass huts, 'dobes, five or six two-store houses, accommodations limited, population half-breed Spanish and Indian, Caribs and blackamoors. No sidewalks to speak of, no amusements. Rather unmoral. That's an off hand sketch, of course. . . . There are no afternoon teas, no hand-organs, no department stores -- and there is no extradition treaty. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

The description above is, again, an uncomplimentary one. Generally speaking, anywhere the narrator "focuses in" to give a detailed description of a coastal town setting, the result is usually negative.

In the following selected passages, repeated emphasis is

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

placed on the poor sidewalks and streets, the few and poorly built structures, and the inadequate accommodations for visitors:

He strolled about the street that bore such high sounding names and were but narrow, grass covered lanes.<sup>4</sup>

On Hooligans Alley, as I prefer to call the street our headquarters was on, there was a row of flat 'dobe houses with red tile roofs, some straw shacks full of Indians and dogs, and one two-story wooden house with balconies a little farther down. . . . Right across the street was a private residence built like a combination bake-oven and folding-bed.<sup>5</sup>

From all the descriptive passages quoted above, it is clear that the author's point of view is strictly North American rather than Latin. The coastal town is described as an uncomfortable place for a North American, or other foreigner, to live in.

## II. THE TROPICAL JUNGLE

The hot, tropical jungle is the second major feature of Porter's Latin American setting. These dense, impenetrable jungles surround the coastal towns where the main action of the stories takes place.

The jungles function to isolate Porter's Latin setting from the outside world. The jungle is a tremendous obstacle to the freedom and development of the natives. It limits their movement, growth, commerce, and communications. It isolates each coastal town from the outside world and each other.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>5</sup>O. Henry, Rolling Stones (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1911), pp. 17-18.

The jungle treks made by President Miraflores and Don Sabas Placido in their attempt to escape political punishment are two separate incidents which dramatize the confining and restricting forces of the jungle. When Don Sabas and his two companions finally arrive at the coast on muleback, their appearance illustrates the difficulty involved in crossing the jungle:

. . . three men, mounted upon mules, crashed through the tropic tangle to within a dozen yards of the river's bank. There they dismounted; and one, unbuckling his belt, struck each mule a violent blow with his sword scabbard, so that they, with a fling of heels, dashed back again into the forest. . . . The clothes of all were drenched, bespattered and rent by the thicket. Some stress of circumstance must have driven them, diabe á quarte, through flood, mire and jungle.<sup>6</sup>

Jungle settings play an important role in "He Also Serves," "The Day We Celebrate," and "The Shamrock and the Palm." "He Also Serves" is about a North American student of ethnology who is commissioned to examine and make a report on some excavations discovered off the Caribbean Coast of Mexico:

. . . High Jack and me, prowling around strikes a plain path into the forest, and follows it a good four miles. Then a branch turns left. We go a mile, maybe, down that, and run up against the finest ruin you ever saw -- solid stone with trees and vines and underbrush all growing up against it and in it and through it.<sup>7</sup>

In "The Day We Celebrate" a British and a North American vagabond

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>7</sup>O. Henry, Options (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1909), pp. 140-41.

are forced to work in an isolated banana plantation deep in the jungles of Costa Rica:

It was only twelve miles to Soledad, but it took me and Liverpool two days to get there. It was banana grove nearly all the way; and we got twisted time and again.<sup>8</sup>

In "The Shamrock and the Palm" a North American adventurer tells how he was deceived into signing a contract of servitude. He believes he is joining a national revolutionary army but actually joins a captured labor force to work on a railroad in the jungles of Guatemala:

"We worked in swamps that smelled like there was a leak in the gas mains, trampin' down a fine assortment of the most expensive hot-house plants and vegetables. The scene was tropical beyond the wildest imagination of the geography man. The trees was all sky-scrapers; the underbrush was full of needles and pins; there was monkeys jumpin' around and crocodiles and pink-tailed mockin'-birds, and ye [sic] stood knee-deep in the rotten water and grabbed roots for the liberation of Guatemala. Of nights we would build smudges in camp to discourage the mosquitoes. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

Like the small, isolated coastal towns, the jungles are a part of Porter's stereotyped and derogatory Latin American setting. They are most often described as being "unbearably hot" and "a tangled mess." There is nothing romantic or adventurous about Porter's jungles.

Also, the rare and strange jungle animals, which may have been used to lend an atmosphere of travel and adventure to the stories, are always described in terms of the irritating noises they make at night which prevent the unfamiliar visitor from falling asleep:

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<sup>80</sup>. Henry, Sixes and Sevens (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1904), p. 279.

<sup>90</sup>. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 173.

From every density of the foliage the giant tree frogs sounded their loud and irritating clatter. Further out, where the by-ways perished at the brink of the jungle, the guttural cries of marauding baboons and the coughing of the alligators in the black estuaries fractured the vain silence of the wood.<sup>10</sup>

In "The Day We Celebrate" the night cries of jungle animals evoke the loneliness and isolation felt by men who live in the tropics:

"At night we and Liverpool herded in a lot of grass huts on the edge of a lagoon, with the red, yellow, and black employés of Don Jaime. There we lay fighting mosquitoes and listening to the monkeys squalling and the alligators grunting and splashing in the lagoon until daylight with only snatches of sleep between times."<sup>11</sup>

### III. THE STEAMSHIP IN THE LATIN SETTING

The steamship is a very important part of Porter's Latin American setting because it provides the basic link between North America and Latin America. In every story there is a transition from a North American city to a Latin American coastal town. The following passage is an example of one such transition:

From Washington we railroaded it to New Orleans, and there took a tramp steamer bound for Belize. And a gale pounded us all down the Caribbean, and nearly wrecked us on the Yucatan coast opposite a little town without a harbour [sic] called Boca de Coacoyula.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-64.

<sup>11</sup>O. Henry, Sixes and Sevens, p. 278.

<sup>12</sup>O. Henry, Options, p. 138.

The steamers mentioned by name in the stories are the Valhalla,<sup>13</sup> the Karlsefin,<sup>14</sup> the Andador,<sup>15</sup> the Salvador,<sup>16</sup> the Traveler,<sup>17</sup> the Thor,<sup>18</sup> the Carrero,<sup>19</sup> and the Pajaro.<sup>20</sup> Some of these steamers belong to regular lines which carry passengers and freight; however, most of them, such as the Karlsefin, are tramp fruiters which follow an unplanned, irregular schedule:

The Karlsefin was not one of the line operated by the Vesuvius Fruit Company. She was something of a dilettante, doing odd jobs for a company that was scarcely important enough to figure as a rival to the Vesuvius. The movements of the Karlsefin were dependent upon the state of the market. Sometimes she would ply steadily between the Spanish Main and New Orleans in the regular transport of fruit; next she would be making erratic trips to Mobile or Charleston, or even as far north as New York, according to the distribution of the fruit supply.<sup>21</sup>

In some stories a steamship becomes involved in more adventurous schemes, such as small revolutions and contraband trade. One of the stories deals with the forced importation of cheap labor:

So, regular, the steamers travelled [sic] to the United States to seduce labor. Usually the imported spade-slingers died in two or three months from eatin' the over-ripe water and breathin' the violent tropical scenery. Wherefore they made them sign contracts for a year, when they hired them, and

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<sup>13</sup>O. Henry, Gabbages and Kings, p. 27.    <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 211.    <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 280.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 145.    <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>19</sup>O. Henry, Whirligigs (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1910), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 12.    <sup>21</sup>O. Henry, Gabbages and Kings, p. 45.

put an armed guard over the poor divils [sic] to keep them from runnin' away.<sup>22</sup>

Although the steamships are an ever-present part of the Latin setting, they are actually a foreign element in the setting; for they are generally owned by North American or European companies and are operated by foreign crews.

In each story the arrival of a steamship brings new life and activity to an otherwise dormant community. The steamship brings trade and travelers to enliven the economy and the curiosity of the natives:

The Andador, a fruit steamer that visited Corralio regularly, drew into the offing and anchored. The beach was lined with spectators while the quarantine doctor and the custom-house crew rowed out to attend to their duties.<sup>23</sup>

It was an alluvial town, called Soledad, where there was no harbour [sic] or future or recourse. Between steamers the town slept and drank rum. It only woke up when there were bananas to ship.<sup>24</sup>

#### IV. THE FRUIT EXPORTING MONOPOLY

The Vesuvius Fruit Company plays an important role in the eighteen stories of Cabbages and Kings. Like the steamship, it brings a foreign element to the Latin setting. It is owned and operated by foreigners and, in fact, controls or owns most of the steamships mentioned in the preceding section of this study.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-71.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>24</sup>O. Henry, Sixes and Sevens, p. 276.

The power and influence of this fruit monopoly is shown to be immense and unlimited. The relationship between the Vesuvius Fruit Company and the government of Anchuria is explained in the following selected passage:

The most impolitic of the administrator's moves had been when it antagonized the Vesuvius Fruit Company, an organization plying twelve steamers and with a cash capital somewhat larger than Anchuria's surplus and debt combined.

Reasonably an established concern like the Vesuvius would become irritated at having a small, retail republic with no rating at all attempt to squeeze it. . . . [the Vesuvius Company] had worked with the republic in goodwill and with advantage to both. It would lose an immense sum if compelled to move out.<sup>25</sup>

The Vesuvius Fruit Company literally owns and controls all the coastal "banana towns" of Anchuria by controlling the economy. The foreign-owned company goes so far as to involve itself in an armed revolution against a government which will not submit to its demands:

It was rumoured that the revolution was aided by the Vesuvius Fruit Company, the power that forever stood with chiding smile and uplifted finger to keep Anchuria in the class of good children. Two of its steamers, the Traveler and the Salvador, were known to have conveyed insurgent troops from point to point along the coast.<sup>26</sup>

The narrator of "Rouge et Noir" in Cabbages and Kings tells how the Vesuvius Fruit Company is successful in its attempt to overthrow President Losada.

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<sup>25</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, pp. 278-79.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

V. THE HOMES AND OFFICES OF  
FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN AND OFFICIALS

Other features of Porter's Latin setting which bring a foreign element to the setting are the homes and offices of foreign businessmen and officials. The better homes of the community are those owned by foreign businessmen. In Coralio, Frank Goodwin, a rich, North American businessman, owns the "big house on the hill." In the following passage Goodwin's home is contrasted with the inferior dwellings of the natives:

With purpose in his steps Blythe now moved rapidly through the town by way of its landward environs. He passed through the squalid quarters of the improvident negroes and on beyond the picturesque shacks of the poorer mestizos. From many points along his course he could see, through the umbrageous glades, the house of Frank Goodwin on its wooded hill. . . . Beyond the lagoon the lands of Goodwin began to slope gently upward. A grassy road, shaded by a magnificent and diverse array of tropical flora wound from the edge of an outlying banana grove to the dwelling. . . . Goodwin was seated on his coolest gallery. . . .<sup>27</sup>

The business agents of the Vesuvius Fruit Company also possess superior living quarters:

The Vesuvius Company had invested large sums in wharves and plantations along the Anchuria coast, their agents had erected fine homes in the towns where they had their headquarters.<sup>28</sup>

Conversely, the home and office of the United States consul of Coralio presents another story. Instead of being one of the finer structures

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 196-97.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

of that coastal town, it is described as being primitive, uncomfortable, and unimportant:

This home of a great nation's representative was a wooden structure of two rooms, with a native-built gallery of poles, bamboo and nipa palm running on three sides of it. One room was the official apartment, furnished chastely with a flat-top desk, a hammock, and three uncomfortable cane-seated chairs. Engravings of the first and latest president [sic] of the country represented hung against the wall. The other room was the consul's living apartment.<sup>29</sup>

## VI. THE ROMANTIC AND IDYLIC SETTING

Porter definitely creates a romantic atmosphere about his Latin setting. Most of his romantic descriptions of the Latin setting are only introductory and superficial comments which, for the most part, are not very relevant to what happens in the stories. The following is a good example of one of these general introductory statements which attempts to create a romantic mood about the land:

For there are yet tales of the Spanish Main. That segment of continent washed by the tempestuous Caribbean, and presenting to the sea a formidable border of tropical jungle topped by the overweening Cordilleras, is still begirt by mystery and romance.<sup>30</sup>

Many of the stories begin with a romantic, panoramic description of a small coastal town as it might look far off at sea. From such a distance, to the stranger, the small town appears to be some kind of paradise:

"But the town looked fine from the bay when we sailed in. It was white, with green ruching, and lace ruffles

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

on the skirt when the surf splashed up on the sand. It looked as tropical and dolce far ultra [sic] as the pictures of Lake Ronkonkoma. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Coralio reclined, in the mid-day heat, like some vacuous beauty lounging in a guarded harem. The town lay at the sea's edge on a strip of alluvial coast. It was set like a little pearl in an emerald band. Behind it, and seeming almost to topple, imminent, above it, rose the sea-following range of the Cordilleras. In front the sea was spread. . . . The waves swished along the smooth beach; the parrots screamed in the orange and ceiba-trees; the palms waved their limber fronds. . . .<sup>32</sup>

Moonlight, music, and landscapes of the Cordilleras and the sea are common images in Porter's romantic setting:

There was a great, full moon; and the sea was mother-of-pearl. Almost every sound was hushed, for the air was but faintly stirring; and the town lay panting, waiting for the night to cool. Off-shore lay the fruit steamer Andador, of the Vesuvius line, full laden and scheduled to sail at six in the morning. There were no loiterers on the beach. So bright was the moonlight that the two men could see the small pebbles shining on the beach where the gentle surf wetted them. . . . It was a scene set for the land of the lotus. The authority of the sea and the tropics, the mystery that attends unknown sails, and the prestige of drifting music on moonlit waters gave it an anodynous charm.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout his Latin American stories, Porter develops the concept that his Latin setting is the romantic and idyllic "land of the lotus," a land of perpetual afternoon, perfect climate, and no worries:

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<sup>31</sup>O. Henry, Rolling Stones, p. 14.

<sup>32</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-89.

He was happy and content in this land of perpetual afternoon. Those old days of life in the States seemed like an irritating dream. . . . The climate as balmy as that of distant Avalon; the fetterless, idyllic round of enchanted days; the life among this indolent, romantic people -- a life full of music, flowers, and low laughter; the influence of the imminent sea and mountains, and the many shapes of love and magic and beauty that bloomed in white tropical nights. . . .<sup>34</sup>

Another factor which contributes to the idyllic setting is the description of the people who live in this "land of the lotus." The natives are described as being carefree and happy. Their romantic custom of strolling through the plaza in the evenings while a band plays music is described in a number of the stories:

When Keogh and White reached their destination, on the return trip of the Karlsefin, the gay winter season was well begun. As they stepped upon the beach they could hear the band playing in the plaza. The village maidens with fireflies already fixed in their dark locks, were gliding, barefoot and coy-eyed, along the paths. Dandies in white linen, swinging their canes, were beginning their seductive strolls. The air was full of human essence, of artificial enticement, of coquetry, indolence, pleasure. . . .<sup>35</sup>

The romantic element in the stories is further developed by many themes of love. In the first story of Cabbages and Kings President Miraflores is passionately moved "to escape from the country with the public funds and also with Dona Isabel Guilbert, the young American opera singer."<sup>36</sup> In "The Lotus and the Bottle" Willard Geddie, consul for the United States in Coralio, has a

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 32-33.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

romantic affair with Paula Brannigan which culminates in their marriage. Other pairs of lovers in Cabbages and Kings are Frank Goodwin and Miss Wahrfield, Johnny Atwood and Rosine Hemstetter, and Dicky Maloney and Pasa Ortiz. "The World and the Door" in Whirligigs tells of an illicit affair between two North American fugitives of justice in Peru.

## VII. THE SETTING OF QUIET ISOLATION

A major characteristic of Porter's Latin setting is that it is isolated. Isolation has been discussed in the sections dealing with the coastal towns, the jungles, and the steamships; all of which contribute, in one way or another, to the isolation of the characters in the stories. This section deals with the kind of isolation found in Porter's Latin American stories and how it affects the characters.

First of all, it is a quiet isolation. The settings are usually still and soundless, with nothing important happening. The coastal towns are asleep, waiting for a steamship to pass by and wake them from their slumber. Even the regular sound of the ocean's surf seems to entice one to sleep:

We landed at Solitas, forty miles up the coast from here. 'Twas a palatable enough place to look at. . . . There was a block of skyscraper mountains in the suburbs; and they kept pretty quiet, like they had crept up there and were watching the town. And the sea was remarking "Sh-sh-sh" on the beach; and now and then a ripe cocconut would drop kerblip in the sand; and that was all there was doing. Yes, I

judge that town was considerably on the quiet.<sup>37</sup>

While working in a banana grove, one of the characters in "The Day We Celebrate" finds it "so still that you can hear the stalks growing again after you chop 'em down."<sup>38</sup>

The isolated settings are too peaceful, too quiet, and too boring for the North American visitor. The passage of time is slow and difficult to keep track of: "In Corralio time folded his wings and paced wearily along his drowsy path."<sup>39</sup> Days, months, and seasons run into each other and become indistinguishable:

We soon lost all idea of what time of year it was. It's just about eighty degrees there in December and June and on Fridays and at midnight and election day and any other old time. Sometimes it rains more than at others, and that's all the difference you notice.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, complete and total isolation of the Latin setting brings about the inevitable feelings of aimlessness, hopelessness, and depression:

The night programme in Corralio never varied. The recreations of the people were soporific and flat. They wandered about, barefoot and aimless, speaking lowly and smoking cigar or cigarette. Looking down on the dimly lighted ways one seemed to see a threading maze of brunette ghosts tangled with a procession of insane fireflies. In some houses the thrumming of lugubrious guitars added to the depression of the triste night.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 95.    <sup>38</sup>O. Henry, Sixes and Sevens, p. 278.

<sup>39</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 259.

<sup>40</sup>O. Henry, Sixes and Sevens, p. 278.

<sup>41</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 209.

Feelings of depression caused by isolation play a very important part in Porter's stories. Chapter III of this study will explain how some characters relieve their depression through drinking.

Along with causing feelings of depression and aimlessness among the people, isolation causes the stagnation and underdevelopment of the communities. As the narrator of "He Also Serves" exclaims, "Boca de Coacayula was a dead town."<sup>42</sup> Stagnation in Porter's Latin coastal towns leads to corruption:

Smuggling in Corralio was much nearer than competition to being the life of trade. One spoke of it slyly, yet with a certain conceit, when it had been well accomplished.<sup>43</sup>

#### VIII. SETTINGS OF REVOLUTION AND

##### THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

Over half of Porter's Latin American stories are about political revolution in a small Latin country. Among the natives there is a strong but latent desire to revolt. A deep rooted sense of futility and frustration which lies just beneath their quiet surface can and does explode into violent reaction against the government.

In the introductory chapter to the stories in Cabbages and Kings, Porter points to the Latin American traditional setting of revolution and conquest as the foundation and basis for the revolutionary zeal shared by the characters in the stories:

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<sup>420</sup>. Henry, Options, p. 139.

<sup>430</sup>. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 68.

In past times buccaneers and revolutionists roused the echoes of its cliffs, and the condor wheeled perpetually above where, in the green grove, they made food for him with their matchlocks and toledos [sic]. Taken and re-taken by sea rovers, by adverse powers and by sudden uprisings of rebellious factions, the historic 300 miles of adventurous coast has scarcely known for hundreds of years whom rightly to call its master. Pizarro, Balboa, Sir Francis Drake, and Bolivar did what they could to make it a part of Christendom. Sir John Morgan, Lafitte and other eminent swash-bucklers bombarded and pounded it in the name of Abaddon.<sup>44</sup>

The stories show the natives to be incurable conspirators and plotters; H. P. Mellinger, North American private secretary to the president of Anchuria, describes them as such in "The Phonograph and the Graft":

Carrambos! I get sick at times of this country. Everything's rotten. From the executive down to the coffee pickers, they're plotting to down each other and skin their friends. If a mule driver takes off his hat to an official, that man figures it out that he's a popular idol, and sets his pegs to stir up a revolution and upset the administration.<sup>45</sup>

A number of factors in Porter's Latin setting combine to encourage this spirit of revolution -- political and economic isolation of the country, foreign ownership and control of the fruit exporting monopoly, low standard of living, and dictatorial rule by a selfish and manipulating executive. In "Rouge et Noir" President Losada antagonizes the masses by associating himself too closely with the military and giving the military too free a hand in the country:

It has been indicated that disaffection followed

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

the elevation of Losada to the presidency. This feeling continued to grow throughout the entire republic. There seemed to be a spirit of silent, sullen discontent. Even the old Liberal party to which Goodwin, Zavalla and other patriots had lent their aid was disappointed. Losada had failed to become a popular idol. Fresh taxes, fresh import duties and, more than all, his tolerance of the outrageous oppression of citizens by the military had rendered him the most obnoxious president since the despicable Alforan. The majority of his own cabinet were out of sympathy with him. The army, which he had courted by giving it license to tyrannize, had been his main, and thus far adequate support.<sup>46</sup>

In "Masters of Arts" the narrator describes a typical Latin American scene of violence and terror in which the natives attempt to overthrow the president:

On that night in Corralio and in other towns, their ire found vent. Yelling mobs, mercurial but dangerous, roamed the streets. They overthrew the great bronze statue of the president that stood in the center of the plaza, and hacked it to shapeless pieces. They tore from public buildings the tablets set there proclaiming the glory of the "Illustrious Liberator." His pictures in the government office were demolished. The mobs even attacked the Casa Morena but were driven away by the military, which remained faithful to the executive. All the night terror reigned.<sup>47</sup>

But after such violent outbursts, the spirit of revolution is soon exhausted, and the people settle once again into complacency and quiet toleration of abuse:

After the ineffectual revolt against the administration of President Losada, the country settled again into quiet toleration of the abuses

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

with which he had been charged. In Corralio old political enemies went arm-in-arm, lightly eschewing for the time all differences of opinion.<sup>48</sup>

A number of the revolutions described in the stories are sponsored by foreigners and foreign powers. The powerful fruit monopoly and other foreign interests take an active part in either supporting or opposing the government. In "Two Renegades" Porter alludes to the North American traditional policy of "Dollar Diplomacy." In that story he jokingly defines the Panama Revolution as a U. S. supported "property revolution":

You know that was the time they staged them property revolutions down there, that wound up in the fifth act with the thrilling canal scene where Uncle Sam has nine curtain-calls holding Miss Panama by the hand. . . .<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>49</sup>O. Henry, Roads of Destiny (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1903), p. 293.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LATIN AMERICAN CHARACTERS

The Latin American characters of William Sydney Porter's Latin American stories fall into certain stereotyped Latin American types. In the following chapter, the Latin American characters are grouped into specific types. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the major Latin American figures, and the second part deals with the minor figures. An attempt is made to reveal Porter's general attitude toward Latin Americans.

#### I. THE MAJOR FIGURES

The major Latin American figures fall into three groups: they are the high-ranking civil officials, the military officials, and the females of the aristocratic class. These characters are important mainly because of their social status in the Latin American society which Porter describes. In most of the twenty-six stories, these Latin American major figures actually play a minor role. Few of Porter's stories are about Latin Americans. Most of the stories are about North Americans in a Latin American setting. In Porter's twenty-six Latin American stories, only five Latin American characters emerge as principal characters who play active roles in the stories in which they appear. These five characters are President Losada, president of Anchuria; Don Sabas Placido, aristocratic minister of war who attempts to overthrow the president; General Rompiro and General

De Vega, two insurgent army generals; and Felipe Carrera, a mentally retarded fisherman.

The high-ranking civil officials. The most important Latin American type who belongs in this group is the "president-dictator" type. Porter's president-dictator type is a stereotype of the nineteenth-century Latin American tyrant, the ruthless but highly-cultured political leader. This president-dictator type enjoys the refined qualities of the aristocratic class. He is highly educated. His behavior and manners are smooth and polished. Possessing brilliant administrative and manipulative ability, he is a master politician. However, his good qualities are overshadowed by dark and corrupting forces of ambition and unquenchable greed. Porter's president-dictator type is directly related to the classical Latin American caudillo, the rural, political boss who governs his locality on horseback by means of terror and violence. The caudillo works his way into the presidency through diligent plotting and brutal strong-armed methods. Once he obtains the presidency, he becomes drunk with power.

The president-dictator type demands that the masses pay him homage. He wants to be popular among his people, to be loved by every person in his country. He carefully distributes propaganda throughout the country proclaiming his glory and excellence.

In "Masters of Arts," Porter's description of President Losada clearly indicates his president-dictator personality traits:

President Losada -- many called him Dictator -- was  
~~a man whose genius would have made him conspicuous even~~

among Anglo-Saxons, had not that genius been intermixed with other traits that were petty and subversive. He had some of the lofty patriotism of Washington (the man he most admired), the force of Napoleon and much of the wisdom of the sages. These characteristics might have justified him in the assumption of the title of "The Illustrious Liberator," had they not been accompanied by a stupendous and amazing vanity that kept him in less worthy ranks of the dictators. . . . In every town he caused to be erected statues of himself bearing legends in praise of his greatness. In the walls of every public edifice, tablets were fixed reciting his splendor and the gratitude of his subjects. His statuettes and portraits were scattered throughout the land in every house and hut.<sup>1</sup>

The Latin American president-dictator type keeps himself in power by proclaiming himself the political savior of the country. He makes the people believe that his regime is responsible for great steps toward the economic, social, and political development of the country. He creates an illusion of progress and prosperity by spending a sizable portion of the national treasury on public works projects. Behind the scenes, this despot proves to be primarily concerned with organizing the wealth of the country for his personal profit.

It is clear that Porter's attitude toward the Latin American president-dictator type is a typical nineteenth-century North American attitude. Porter views President-Dictator Losada as a benevolent and necessary figure. To support his view, Porter emphasizes Losada's public works projects:

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<sup>10</sup>. Henry, Cabbages and Kings (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1904), pp. 233-34.

Yet he did his country great service. With a mighty grasp he shook it nearly free from the shackles of ignorance and sloth and the vermin that fed upon it, and all but made it a power in the council of nations. He established schools and hospitals, built roads, bridges, and railroads and palaces, and bestowed generous subsidies upon the arts and science. He was the absolute despot and the idol of the people. The wealth of the country poured into his hands. Other presidents had been rapacious without reason. Losada amassed enormous wealth, but his people had their share of the benefits.<sup>2</sup>

President Miraflores, another one of Porter's president-dictator types, and President Losada both follow the common path of the Latin American tyrant. They overestimate their strength, underestimate their opposition, and are overthrown by a stronger and more cunning politician.

Another high-ranking civil official, whom Porter develops beyond a very simple and flat characterization, is the aristocratic Don Sabas Placido, Minister of War for President Losada. Don Sabas Placido embodies the Latin American landed aristocracy. He is Porter's aristocratic type. Don Sabas' most characteristic traits are his whimsical behavior and his light-hearted attitude toward serious matters, traits most notable among members of a privileged class. Like Presidents Miraflores and Losada, Don Sabas represents the Latin American of high breeding, culture, and education. He differs from them only in his highly-developed artistic tastes and temperament; he is a collector of fine arts, a poet, and a scholar.

Don Sabas Placido represents a class of Latin American

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 234.

aristocrats who make a game of politics:

At the head of the insurgent party that Hector and learned Theban of the southern republics, Don Sabas Placido. A traveller [sic], a soldier, a poet, a scientist, a statesman and a connoisseur -- the wonder was that he could content himself with the petty, remote life of his own native country.

"It is a whim of Placido's," said a friend who knew him well, "to take up political intrigue. It is not otherwise than if he had come upon a new tempo in music, a new bacillus in the air, a new scent, or rhyme, or explosive. He will squeeze this revolution dry of sensations, and a week afterwards will forget it. . . ."3

A second figure who falls in the same "aristocratic" category as Don Sabas is Colonel Emilio Falcon, the private secretary of President Losada. Like Don Sabas, Colonel Falcon is a cultured and capable diplomat:

Colonel Falcon, a handsome and urbane gentleman of Castilian courtesy and debonnaire manners, came to Corralio. . . . The position of private secretary to a tropical president is a responsible one. He must be a diplomat, a spy, a ruler of men, a body-guard to his chief, and a smeller-out of plots and nascent revolutions. Often he is the power behind the throne, the dictator of policy.<sup>4</sup>

Two minor characters who must be included in this discussion of high-ranking civil officials are two justices of the peace. The first justice, who appears in "A Ruler of Men," is an aristocratic type:

"I went to his office in a lemon grove on a hill at the edge of town; and there I had a surprise. I expected to see one of the usual cinnamon-colored natives in congress gaiters and one of Pizzaro's

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

cast-off hats. What I saw was an elegant gentleman of a slightly clay-bank complexion sitting in an upholstered leather chair, sipping a highball and reading Mrs. Humphry [sic] Ward."<sup>5</sup>

In the above passage, it is important to note that the North American speaker is unexpectedly surprised and delighted with the Latin American justice of the peace.

Because the Latin American justice of the peace is light skinned, sitting in a leather chair, drinking a highball, and reading English, the North American speaker is convinced that he is in the presence of a civilized man.

In most of Porter's stories, the Latin American characters only function as objects of ridicule and humor; they are the butts of humorous comments and jokes. Only those Latin American characters who look and act like North Americans or who are educated in North America are treated in a positive manner by the narrator or the North American characters in the stories.

The second justice of the peace, who appears only briefly in the story "Ships," functions as a minor comic figure. In the story, a North American speculator opens a shoe store in a small, Caribbean coastal town, and, finding little demand for shoes, his friend creates a demand by spreading thousands of prickly burrs throughout the town. In the following passage, the justice is described as he steps out of his house and lands on one of the burrs:

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<sup>50</sup>. Henry, Rolling Stones (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1911), pp. 30-31.

Don Senor Ildefonso Federico Valdazar, Juez de la Paz, weighing twenty stone, attempted to convey his bulk to the pulperia at the corner of the plaza in order to assuage his matutinal thirst. The first plunge of his unshod foot into the cool grass struck a concealed mine. Don Ildefonso fell like a crumpled cathedral, crying out that he had been fatally bitten by a deadly scorpion.<sup>6</sup>

The military officers of high rank. The military officer of high rank is definitely a stereotype in Porter's Latin American stories. His most characteristic traits are his vanity in dress and his hunger for political power. Porter makes fun of this military type by ridiculing his ornate uniforms and medals, his untrained and barefooted soldiers, and his clumsy attempts at conspiracy and revolution.

General Mary [sic] Esperanza Dingo, a minor character in Porter's "The Fourth in Salvador," is one of these clumsy and ridiculous military conspirators:

"He was some pumpkin both in politics and colour, and the friend of me and Jones. He was full of politeness and a kind of intelligence, having picked up the letter and managed to preserve the former during a two years' residence in Philadelphia studying medicine. . . . While he was in the States he had acquired a synopsis of the English language and the art of admiring our institutions. By and by the General gets up and tip-toes to the doors and windows and other stage entrances, remarking 'Hist!' at each one. They all do that in Salvador before they ask for a drunk of water or the time of day being conspirators from the cradle."<sup>7</sup>

General Esperanza was educated in North America and admired North

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<sup>6</sup> Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 224.

<sup>7</sup> Henry, Roads of Destiny (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1903), pp. 174-75.

American institutions. These are two typical characteristics of Porter's major Latin American figures.

General Rompiro of "On Behalf of the Management" and General De Vega of "The Shamrock and the Palm" are the best examples of Porter's military type. These two generals share a number of characteristics. They are both small in stature, dark colored, and unattractive; also, both are unscrupulous conspirators who unsuccessfully attempt to install themselves as presidents of their small country.

Although both generals demonstrate polite manners, neither of them possesses the aristocratic polish of a Don Sabas Placido. General De Vega is more a merchant and businessman than a professional military officer. Unlike an aristocrat, he is proud of his wealth and shows it off with a large and flashy diamond ring:

"There stood a little, round, fat man with a brown face and white clothes, a first-class-looking little man, with a four-karat diamond on his finger and his eye full of interrogations and respects."<sup>8</sup>

When De Vega's revolutionary plot fails him, he is forced to flee from his country like an ordinary criminal, secretly hidden in the hull of a banana freighter bound for North America:

"Just then I saw another man crawl up about ten feet away and reach out and skin a banana and stuff it into his mouth. 'Twas a dirty man, blackfaced and ragged and disgraceful of aspect. Yes, the man

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<sup>80</sup>. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 164.

was a ringer for the pictures of the fat Weary Willie in the funny papers. I looked again, and saw it was my general man -- De Vega, the great revolutionist mule-rider and pick-axe importer."<sup>9</sup>

General Rompiro is an even more ridiculous and unattractive figure than General De Vega. General Rompiro is described as a "little foreign person in a double-breasted frock-coat, trying to touch the floor with his toes."<sup>10</sup> He is also referred to as a "'coon,"<sup>11</sup> a "burnt effigy,"<sup>12</sup> and a "little chocolate-brown fat man."<sup>13</sup> General Rompiro distinguishes himself by "leading the army in pursuit of a couple of sailors who had stolen the plaza -- or the carramba, or something belonging to the government."<sup>14</sup> Because of his "valiant" act, the general fancies himself a national hero and attempts to finance a revolutionary movement from his exiled residence of New York City. However, when his plot fails and his funds run out, he is more than content to become head waiter of the Hotel Brunswick:

"He takes me by the arm and walks me to the dining-room door. There was a little chocolate-brown fat man in a dress suit, with his face shining with joy as he swelled himself and skipped about the floor. Danged if Denver hadn't made General Rompiro head waiter of the Hotel Brunswick."<sup>15</sup>

One last military type whom Porter holds up to ridicule is Colonel Encarnacion Rios, who becomes infatuated with a married woman

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 180.    <sup>10</sup>O. Henry, Roads of Destiny, p. 246.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 248.    <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 257.    <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

and "delicately hinted at his sentiments by donning his dress uniform and strutting up and down fiercely before her window."<sup>16</sup>

Of all Porter's high-ranking military figures, only two, Colonel Falcon and General Pilar, possess noble character traits and are not objects of Porter's derisive humor. Colonel Falcon was discussed in the preceding section dealing with the aristocratic type.

Old General Pilar is one of the few Latin American characters in Porter's stories who is respected for his loyalty and honesty. General Pilar is completely out of place with the other high-ranking and civil officials. He is the only truly noble figure among them:

General Pilar was one of the most distinguished citizens of the republic. Hero of three wars and innumerable revolutions, he was an honoured guest of European courts and camps. An eloquent speaker and a friend to the people, he represented the highest type of the Anchurians.<sup>17</sup>

The aristocratic Latin American females. The major Latin American female characters in Porter's stories are of the aristocratic class. The two main female characters who represent this aristocratic type are Paula Brannigan and Pasa Ortiz.

The most important point to be made concerning Porter's Latin American female type is that she is more North American in character than Latin American. When Porter describes Paula Brannigan, he is careful to explain that she is of Irish and Spanish descent, light

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<sup>16</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 267.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

skinned, and educated in North America.<sup>18</sup> His highest praise for Paula Brannigan is that one can hardly detect any difference between her and North American girls of high society:

A handsome vivacious girl neatly dressed in flowing white leaned over the railing and smiled. . . . She was no darker than many an Andalusian of high descent. . . .<sup>19</sup>

Few of the native girls could be compared with her. She had attended a convent school in New Orleans for two years; and when she chose to display her accomplishments no one could detect any difference between her and the girls of Norfolk and Manhattan.<sup>20</sup>

Pasa Ortiz is almost indistinguishable from Paula Brannigan. Her basic character traits are the same as Paula's. She is of proud Spanish ancestry, light skinned, and educated in North America:

Pasa was descended from the proudest Spanish families in the country. Moreover, she had had unusual advantages. Two years in a New Orleans school had elevated her ambitions and fitted her for a fate above the ordinary maidens of her native land.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, even this Latin American female aristocratic type is not immune from Porter's satire. In Porter's story "Ships," one such female is an object of ridicule:

Doña Maria Castillas y Buenventura de las Casas stepped from her honoured doorway, as was her daily custom, to procure fresh bread from the panaderia across the street. She was clad in a skirt of flowered yellow satin, a chemise of ruffled linen, and wore a purple mantilla from the looms of Spain. Her lemon-tinted feet, alas! were bare. Her progress was majestic, for were not her ancestors hidalgos of

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 33.      <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 33.      <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

Aragon? Three steps she made across the velvety grass, and set her aristocratic sole upon a bunch of Johnny's burrs. Doña Maria Castillas y Buenventura de las Casas emitted a yowl even as a wild-cat. Turning about, she fell upon hands and knees, and crawled -- ay, like a beast of the field she crawled back to her honourable door-sill.<sup>22</sup>

## II. THE MINOR FIGURES

The minor Latin American figures fall into three groups. The first group consists of characters who hold unimportant military and governmental positions. The second includes the small business class. And the third group takes in the common people. These minor figures function more as a part of Porter's Latin American setting than as characters. They blend in with the tropical jungles and the dilapidated coastal towns to form an integral part of Porter's Latin American setting. The only Latin American figure in these three groups whom Porter develops into a real flesh and blood character is Felipe Carrera, the feeble-minded fisherman who is the leading character in "The Admiral" and "The Flag Paramount."

Minor military and civil officials. As mentioned above, there exists a group of Latin American characters who fall into the general classification of minor military and civil officials. However, the members of this group do not actually adhere to any specific character type. They are merely minor figures of the military and government

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

who serve a comic purpose.

Like the majority of Porter's Latin American characters, they are objects of derisive humor. Some of the characters who are in this category are pompous government inspectors, petty clerks, incompetent policemen, barefooted and dirty soldiers, and dishonest politicians.

In "The Fourth in Salvador," two government inspectors of the Department of Mercantile Concessions are described as two "little brown, oily nosers in red trousers."<sup>23</sup>

In "Two Renegades," a detachment of government soldiers is scornfully referred to as "a detachment of coloured postal-telegraph boys carrying Enfield rifles."<sup>24</sup>

In "The Admiral," a customs collector and his staff are described as they perform their tedious duties. Having no real work to do, they busy themselves with unimportant tasks. Porter makes fun of the pompous attitude they take in performing their unimportant duties:

The collector, in white linen and canvas shoes, philandered with papers on an antique desk. A parrot, perched on a pen rack, seasoned the official tedium with a fire of choice Castilian imprecations. Two rooms opened into the collector's. In one the clerical force of young men of variegated complexions transacted with glitter and parade their several duties.<sup>25</sup>

In another story, Porter makes fun of petty customs officials who "crowded importantly into their boat and rowed out to the Karlsefin"<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>O. Henry, Roads of Destiny, p. 171.   <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 295.

<sup>25</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, pp. 135-36.   <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

to check for any possible passengers.

An unattractive political boss, the governor of a small district, and his "gang of conspirators" are described in "The Phonograph and the Graft." This governor figure is one of Porter's most repulsive Latin American characters:

" . . . in slid the king bee, the governor of the district. . . . That was a big, squashy man, the colour of a rubber overshoe, and he had an eye like a head waiter's. . . . The governor man had a bit of English under his hat, and when the music was choked off he says:

'Ver-r-ree fine. Gr-r-r-r-racias, the American gentlemen, the so esplendeed moosic as to playee.'"<sup>27</sup>

The small businessmen. In Porter's Latin American stories, there are a number of minor Latin American characters who make up a group of small businessmen. For the most part, these small businessmen are "inkeepers," the owners and operators of small shops, run-down hotels, and saloons. These characters exist in the background; most of them are not even named. Their role in the stories is to serve the foreigners who unexpectedly drop into town. Their little shops and hotels are usually dirty and empty. The characteristic attitude of these inkeepers is an indifference toward business. They do not expect to have much business, and they prefer not to work too hard. Madam Timotea Ortiz of "Smith," who is the proprietor of the Hotel de los Extranjeros, is a good example of Porter's inkeeper type:

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-6.

The Hotel de los Estranjeros [sic] was a dreary hostelry, in great disuse both by strangers and friends. . . . On the bottles of brandy, anisada, Scotch "smoke" and inexpensive wines behind the little counter the dust lay thick save where the fingers of infrequent customers had left irregular prints. The upper story contained four or five guest-rooms which were rarely put to their destined use. . . . Madama sat behind her bar content, not desiring to quarrel with Fate. If anyone required meat, drink or lodging at the Hotel de los Estranjeros [sic] they had but to come, and be served. Está bueno. If they came not, why, then they came not. Está bueno.<sup>28</sup>

These small hotels and shops are kept open because of tradition and habit and not because of public demand or the profit motive. To this unusual business class, the hotel, small shop, or saloon functions more as a home or place of residence than as a place of business. In one story, the narrator states that the profits of a small shop "for the sale of tobacco, dulces and the handwork of interior Indians" is "next to nothing."<sup>29</sup>

Esteban Delgado, the barber of Coralio and "a man of travel and education,"<sup>30</sup> who appears now and then throughout the stories, is one of these small businessmen types. Esteban is developed a step beyond the anonymous inkeeper or small businessman type; he is also a political activist:

. . . Estebán Delgado, a barber, an enemy to existing government, a jovial plotter against stagnation in any form. This barber was one of Coralio's saddest dogs, often remaining out of doors as late as eleven, post meridian. He was a partisan Liberal.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 52-53.    <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 225.    <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

The peasants or natives. The majority of Porter's Latin American characters are the laboring Caribs (the Negroes), the mestizo peons, and, to a lesser extent, the Indian servants. These three groups comprise Porter's peasant or native type.

Here, again, Porter's Latin American characters function as part of the Latin setting or situation and not as live characters who interact with the North American characters who dominate the stories.

This native type is characterized by his poverty and laziness:

The intelligent natives of the country were too lazy to work. Indeed, the saints know 'twas unnecessary. By stretchin' out one hand, they could seize the most delicate and costly fruits of the earth, and by stretchin' out the other, they could sleep for days at a time. . . .<sup>32</sup>

Other basic traits and characteristics of Porter's native type are his gay and carefree attitude and his love for music, parades, and social excitement of any kind. The native is also extremely naive and easily taken advantage of.

The natives in Porter's stories are the butts of jokes and humorous comments. Porter's narrators and North American characters ridicule their impoverished living conditions as well as their skimpy, unattractive clothing (or lack of clothing):

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>330</sup>. Henry, Sixes and Sevens (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1904), p. 278.

You put a pair of shoes on one of these Caribs or Spanish brown boys and what'd he do? Stand on his head and squeal until he'd kicked 'em off. None of 'em ever wore shoes and they never will.<sup>34</sup>

It has been mentioned that few of these native types play a significant role in the stories. In Cabbages and Kings, there are two Indians who are little more than mentioned by name. They are Old Galvez, the mysterious and proud grave tender, and Old Simon Cruz, the "half-breed fisherman and smuggler who lives in a hut on the beach."<sup>35</sup>

In the story "Supply and Demand," a North American adventurer hired an Indian to act as his interpreter and guide. There, too, the native type functions as an object of derisive humor:

"I hired a black mozo, who was supposed to be a mule-driver and an interpreter too. It turned out that he could interpret mules all right, but he drove the English language much too hard. His name sounded like a Yale key when you push it in wrong side up, but I called him McClintock, which was close to the noise."<sup>36</sup>

Only one of Porter's peasant types emerges as an important figure in the stories. "The Admiral" and "The Flag Paramount" tell about Felipe Carrera, a mentally handicapped peasant fisherman who is appointed admiral of Anchuria's non-existent navy as a result of Don Sabas Placido's playful day in congress. The story of Felipe is a humorous and sentimental one. The story ends with Felipe's death.

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<sup>34</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 217.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>36</sup>O. Henry, Options (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1909), p. 92.

He is shot and killed as he attempts to capture the rebellious Don Sabas Placido.

Felipe is one of the few Latin American characters whom Porter describes with noticeable sympathy and feeling. Even though Felipe's mental deficiencies are an obvious source of humor, it becomes clear that Porter wishes the reader to sympathize with Felipe when he continually refers to him as "el pobrecito" and "the poor little crazed one."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NORTH AMERICAN CHARACTERS

The present chapter is a discussion of the North American characters in William Sydney Porter's Latin American stories. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the major North American characters and to catalog them into Porter's basic types. According to Porter's stories, the North Americans who traveled to Latin America in the latter part of the nineteenth century were rather unusual and eccentric adventurers, opportunists, and exploiters who, for the most part, had little interest, understanding, or appreciation of the Latin Americans, their culture, or their society. The six basic North American types which are found in the stories are the United States consul, the businessman-speculator, the revolutionary, the adventurer, the vagabond, and the fugitive.

This chapter does not divide the North American characters into major and minor figures because most of Porter's North American characters are major figures. Moreover, instead of exhibiting sharp differences in terms of social position and culture, most of the North American characters share social, cultural, and personal traits which make them less distinguishable from each other in terms of class and culture.

#### I. THE UNITED STATES CONSULS

The United States consuls in Porter's Latin American stories

are characterized by their desire to alienate themselves from the affairs of the world. They are individuals who enjoy the quiet, secluded, and simple life of the coastal village. Some of them are running away from problems at home; others are searching for the "land of the lotus," where work is replaced with leisure and responsibility with perfunctory duties. These consuls are also attracted to alcohol and afternoon naps.

Seven different consuls appear in Porter's stories. Willard Geddie, consul of Corralio in Cabbages and Kings, and Johnny Atwood, who replaces him, are the two major consul figures in the stories.

Willard and Johnny have a number of things in common. They are both young, and they are both self-exiled in Corralio because of romantic problems. Willard and Johnny use their consulate office as a hiding place, removed from the affairs of human beings. The following passage which describes Willard Geddie demonstrates how complete his isolation from the world is:

Geddie took his seat, and unrolled with luxurious laziness his bundle of newspapers. Here in Corralio for two days or longer he would read of goings-on in the world very much as we of the world read those whimsical contributions to inexact science that assume to portray the doings of the Martians.<sup>1</sup>

Porter describes Willard Geddie and Johnny Atwood as "lotus eaters" who are addicted to the easy life of the tropical coastal town and their bottle of brandy:

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<sup>1</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1904), p. 30.

Johnny De Grafenreid Atwood ate of the lotus, root, stem, and flower. The tropics gobbled him up. He plunged enthusiastically into his work, which was to try to forget Rosine.

Now, they who dine on the lotus rarely consume it plain. There is a sauce au diable that goes with it; and the distillers are the chefs who prepare it. And on Johnny's menu card it read "brandy."<sup>2</sup>

Johnny makes friends with a North American drifter by the name of Keogh. He and Keogh spend every night drinking and singing until dawn. Each night, after Johnny has had enough brandy, he tells Keogh about his unfortunate love affair with Rosine and explains why he came to Corralio to try and forget her:

The brandy would be kept moving; and before midnight sentiments would begin to stir in the heart of the self-exiled consul. Then he would relate to Keogh the story of his ended romance. Each night Keogh would listen patiently to the tale, and be ready with untiring sympathy.<sup>3</sup>

These consul characters have little respect for their positions and their work. When Willard Geddie first lands in Corralio, he attempts to maintain some interest and enthusiasm for his work, but he soon realizes that he holds an insignificant post, and he loses interest in his work:

The consul was interested in his report. He was only twenty-four; and he had not been in Corralio long enough for his enthusiasm to cool in the heat of the tropics. . . . Perhaps, he thought, the State Department. . . would notice -- and then he leaned back in his chair and laughed. He was as bad as the others. For the moment he had forgotten that Corralio was an

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

insignificant republic lying along the by-ways of a second-rate sea.<sup>4</sup>

The United States consul who appears in "A Ruler of Men" is a shabby alcoholic who lives in a run-down shack on the beach:

I went down on the beach to the United States consul's shack. He was a grizzly man, eighty-two pounds, smoked glasses, five foot eleven, pickled.<sup>5</sup>

The consul in "Two Renegades" who "comes around with a pair of glasses on his nose and a dozen or two inside of him" is also identified with a drinking habit.<sup>6</sup>

Kalb, the vice-consul in the story "The World and the Door" is described as a lazy parasite:

Kalb, the vice-consul, a Graeco-American citizen of the United States, born in Hessen-Darmstadt, and educated in Cincinnati ward primaries, considered all Americans his brothers and bankers. He attached himself to Merriam's elbow, introduced him to everyone in La Paz who wore shoes, borrowed ten dollars and went back to his hammock.<sup>7</sup>

The consul who replaces Johnny Atwood in "Masters of Arts" is "a young man fresh from college, who lived for botany alone." In that story, the United States consul does not completely conform to Porter's consul type. He does not drink, nor is he running away from a problem. However, one trait which he does share with the other consul figures is his lack of interest for his consular duties.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>O. Henry, Rolling Stones (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1911), p. 28.

<sup>6</sup>O. Henry, Roads of Destiny (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1903), p. 295.

<sup>7</sup>O. Henry, Whirligigs (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1910), p. 6.

His only interest is to study tropical plants: "he filled the cool, back porch of the consulate with plants and specimens so that space for a bottle and chair was not to be found."<sup>8</sup>

## II. THE BUSINESSMEN-SPECULATORS

The North American businessman-speculator type is an important figure in Porter's Latin American stories. In many of the stories this type commands a dominate role. The businessman is characterized by his bold spirit and his willingness to gamble for high gains. This businessman type is ruled only by a passion for wealth and power. He is the major source of power and change in Porter's Latin American communities. He brings life to the small coastal towns by investing in bananas, rum, or revolutions. Porter refers to these businessmen-speculators as "gold men, rubber men, mahogany men -- anything but men of living tissue."<sup>9</sup>

The best example of Porter's North American businessman type is Frank Goodwin who is the main character in a number of episodes in Cabbages and Kings:

He was the most successful of the small advance-guard of speculative Americans that had invaded Anchuria, and he had not reached that enviable pinnacle without having well exercised the arts of foresight and deduction. He had taken up political intrigue as a matter of business. He was acute

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<sup>8</sup>0. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 235.

<sup>9</sup>0. Henry, Whirligigs, p. 7.

enough to wield a certain influence among the leading schemers, and he was prosperous enough to be able to purchase the respect of the petty office-holders.<sup>10</sup>

Frank Goodwin is treated with warmth and respect by the natives of Corralio. He is also completely accepted by the upper-class Latin Americans. He is admired by the women for his handsome features and by the men for his financial success. The Latins call him "the big American":

The ox-eyed women gazed at him with shy admiration, for his type drew them. He was big, blonde, and jauntily dressed in white linen, with buckskin zapatitos. His manner was courtly, with a sort of kindly truculence in it, tempered by a merciful eye.<sup>11</sup>

Goodwin, who made his fortune by investing in the different products of the country is said to be "a banana king, a rubber prince, a sarsaparilla, indigo, and mahogany baron."<sup>12</sup>

Denver Galloway, the skillful organizer and manager of Porter's story "On Behalf of the Management," is another of these businessmen-speculators. But, unlike the average North American businessman type, Denver is more interested in the art of managing and making money than he is in the money itself.<sup>13</sup>

Another businessman type is Bernard Braunigan, "the great

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<sup>10</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>O. Henry, Roads of Destiny, p. 244.

merchant of Coralio," who maintains a train of pack mules to carry on a lively and profitable trade with the interior towns and villages. Brannigan also owns and operates the only dry goods store in Coralio. Like Goodwin, he is completely accepted by the upper-class Latins and has even married a native of Coralio "of high Castilian descent."<sup>14</sup>

Porter's story "He Also Serves" introduces Major Bing, an unscrupulous North American speculator who takes advantage of the ignorant natives. Major Bing is a mixture of Porter's North American adventurer type and businessman type:

"Major Bing was the ointment around the fly. He had the cochineal, sarsaparilla, logwood, annatto hemp, and all other dye-woods and pure food adulteration concessions cornered. He had five sixths [sic] of the Boca de Thingama -- jiggers working for him on shares. It was a beautiful graft. . . . Major Bing's idea was this: He had the population go forth into the forest and gather these products. When they brought 'em in he gave 'em one fifth for their trouble. Sometimes they'd strike and demand a sixth. The Major always gave in to them."<sup>15</sup>

Although the majority of Porter's North American businessmen are successful in their schemes, others are sad failures. Most notable among the failures are Mr. Hemstetter of "Shoes" and Hicks of "On Behalf of the Management." Both are minor figures. Mr. Hemstetter, an "oldish, impractical man -- one of that numerous class of erratic businessmen who are forever dissatisfied, and seeking a change," invests every cent he owns in a stock of shoes to speculate on the Latin American shoe market. His investment proves

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<sup>14</sup>0. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup>0. Henry, Options (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1909), pp. 139-40.

to be a very poor one which brings him close to bankruptcy.<sup>16</sup>

Hicks is an example of the North American investor who succeeds in establishing a profitable business in Latin America but who loses his spirit in the struggle:

There was one American, named Hicks, used to come and loaf at the headquarters. Hicks had had fourteen years of Espiritu. He was six feet four and weighed in at 135. Cocoa was his line; and coast fever and the climate had taken all the life out of him. They said he hadn't smiled in eight years. His face was three feet long, and it never moved except when he opened it to take quinine. He used to sit in our headquarters and kill fleas and talk sarcastic.<sup>17</sup>

### III. THE REVOLUTIONARIES AND SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

In Porter's Latin American stories there are a number of North American characters who are revolutionaries and soldiers of fortune. These characters embody the nineteenth-century North American spirit of imperialism and domination.

The figure who best demonstrates the characteristics of Porter's North American revolutionary is Barney O'Connor of "A Ruler of Men." Like the majority of the North American characters who are the leading characters in Porter's Latin American stories, Barney is a "tall, fine, handsome man" whose physical features are far superior to the Latin Americans. Barney sets out from New York to "liberate" a small

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<sup>16</sup>. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 214.

<sup>17</sup>. Henry, Roads of Destiny, p. 255.

Central American country single-handedly:

"'The whole world over,' says he, 'the O'Connors have ruled men, women, and nations. To subdue a small and indifferent country like this is a trifle. Ye see what little, barefooted manikins the men of it are. I could lick four of 'em single-handed.'"<sup>18</sup>

Another revolutionary is James Clancy who appears in "The Shamrock and the Palm." Clancy meets General De Vega on a New Orleans wharf, and, believing that the General is making preparations to liberate his country from the clutches of a tyrant, Clancy quickly joins De Vega's forces:

"'Monseer,' says I, leanin' over the table and grasping his hand, 'I don't know where your country is, but my heart bleeds for it. The heart of a Clancy was never deaf to the sight of an oppressed people. The family is filibusterers by birth, and foreigners by trade. If you can use James Clancy's arms and his blood in denudin' your shores of the tyrant's yoke they're yours to command.'"<sup>19</sup>

In the story "Fox-in-the Morning" Clancy and his partner, Billy Keogh, another soldier of fortune, are forced to turn their talents to some trade other than warfare because no Latin American country is in a state of armed revolution:

. . . Billy Keogh, scout of fortune and progress and latter-day rover of the Spanish Main. Tintypes and photographs were the weapons with which Keogh and Clancy were at that time assailing the hopeless shores. Outside the shop were set two large frames filled with specimens of their art and skill.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Henry, Rolling Stones, p. 21.

<sup>19</sup>Henry, Cabbages and Kings, pp. 166-67.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

Bill Bowers, a secondary figure in "A Ruler of Men," joins forces with Barney O'Connor and for a small wage dedicates himself to a revolutionary cause: "three dollars a day was the price for which I joined the cause of liberating an undiscovered country from the ills that threatened or sustained it."<sup>21</sup>

Other revolutionaries include members of Porter's North American business community in Latin America. These wealthy speculators find it convenient, and at times necessary, to involve themselves in the political upheavals. Frank Goodwin, Porter's successful North American speculator, is also an active revolutionary:

There was always a revolutionary party; and to it he had always allied himself; for the adherents of a new administration received the rewards of their labours. There was now a Liberal party seeking to overturn President Miraflores. If the wheel successfully revolved, Goodwin stood to win a concession to 30,000 manzanas of the finest coffee lands in the interior.<sup>22</sup>

Another businessman and speculator interested in investing in revolutions is Bob Englehart: "An American, who lived in San Mateo, the capital city of Anchuria. . . . Englehart was a gold miner, an ardent revolutionist and 'good people.'"<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Henry, Rolling Stones, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup>Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 15. In the passage quoted, the term "Liberal party" should not be confused with a party devoted to social and political reform. In Latin America, Liberal party usually means a conservative party which opposes the party in power.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

#### IV. THE ADVENTURERS

Porter's North American businessmen-speculators and revolutionaries are certainly adventurers in every sense of that word. They both attempt to reach their goal by dubious and dangerous schemes. However, they differ from the adventurers discussed in this section because they have a goal. The revolutionaries want to fight, and the speculators want to get rich. The adventurer type described here is characterized by a simple desire for pure adventure and excitement.

These adventurers come from the large, crowded cities of North America. In North America they live quiet, ordinary lives. Many of them are waiters and bell-boys who patiently save their money until they can embark on some risky enterprise:

The big city is like a mother's knee to many who have strayed far and found the roads beneath their uncertain feet. At dusk they come home and sit upon the door-step. I knew a piano player in a cheap café who has shot lions in Africa, a bell-boy who fought in the British Army against the Zulus, an express-driver whose left arm had been cracked like a lobster's claw for a stew-pot of Patagonian cannibals when the boat of rescuers hove in sight.<sup>24</sup>

Hunky Magee of "He Also Serves" is the best example of this North American adventurer type:

I first knew Hunky when he was head-waiter at Chubb's little beefsteak restaurant and café on Third Avenue. . . . I caromed against him in the little streets of the Big

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<sup>24</sup>O. Henry, Options, p. 90.

City after his trip to Alaska, his voyage as a cook with a treasure-seeking expedition to the Caribbean, and his failure as a pearl-fisher in the Arkansas River. Between these dashes into the land of adventure he usually came back to Chubb's for a while. Chubb's was a port for him when gales blew too high; but when you dined there and Hunky went for your steak you never knew whether he would come to anchor in the kitchen or in the Malayan Archipelago.<sup>25</sup>

Isabel Guilbert in Cabbages and Kings is one of Porter's female adventurers. Unlike the ordinary North American girl, Isabel is not interested in the quiet and domestic life. She is an opera singer who enjoys an adventurous life filled with travel and excitement:

Elsewhere than at Coralio one learns of the impetuous career of Isabel Guilbert. New Orleans gave her birth and the mingled French and Spanish creole nature that tintured her life with such turbulence and warmth. She had little education, but a knowledge of men and motives that seemed to have come by instinct. Far beyond the common woman was she endowed with intrepid rashness, with a love for the pursuit of adventure to the brink of danger, and with the desire for the pleasure of life.<sup>26</sup>

Other North American characters who share the traits of Porter's adventurer type are Patrick Shane in "Supply and Demand," Homer P. Mellinger in "The Phonograph and the Graft," and Carolus White in "Masters of Arts." These three characters not only share the common characteristics of the adventurer type, but they also exhibit a common criminal tendency. Patrick Shane gains control of an isolated and ignorant tribe of Peche Indians and exploits them.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 134-35.

<sup>26</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup>O. Henry, Options, p. 94.

Homer P. Mellinger is a criminally minded opportunist who discovers that honesty is his most profitable "graft." Once he establishes a reputation for being the most honest man in a Latin American country, he is made chief adviser and aide to the president and becomes a powerful influence on the political scene.<sup>28</sup> Carolus White is a poor and obscure New York artist who travels to Latin America and presents himself as a famous and expensive portrait artist on vacation. He takes advantage of President Losada's vanity by charging him ten thousand dollars for his portrait.<sup>29</sup>

#### V. THE VAGABONDS

A few of Porter's Latin American stories deal with North American vagabonds. These vagabonds represent those North American adventurers, speculators, and soldiers of fortune who invest their youth and capital in Latin America but fail to succeed, run out of funds, and are forced by adverse circumstances to remain there with little hope of returning home. The vagabond type is characterized by his laziness, his despair, his alcoholism, and his willingness to gain his means of support through begging and borrowing.

The best example of this type is the character called "Beelzebub" Blythe:

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<sup>28</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 101.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

To Blythe money was now but a memory. He had drained his friends of all that their good-fellowship had to offer; then he had squeezed them to the last drops of their generosity; and at the last, Aaron-like, he had smitten the rock of their hardening bosoms for the scattering, ignoble drops of Charity itself.

He had exhausted his credit to the last real. With the minute keenness of the shameless sponger he was aware of every source in Corralio from which a glass of rum, a meal or a piece of silver could be wheedled.<sup>30</sup>

Porter's story "The Day We Celebrate" is essentially the story of the North American vagabond type in Latin America. The story tells how two men, a North American and an Englishman called Liverpool Sam, tried their luck in Latin America, lost everything they owned, and became tramps:

"We were, as it were, stranded on that section of the Spanish main [sic] with no money to speak of and no friends that should be talked about either. We had stoked and second-cooked ourselves down there on a fruit steamer from New Orleans to try our luck, which was discharged, after we got there, for lack of evidence. There was no work suitable to our instincts; so me and Liverpool began to subsist on the red rum of the country and such fruit as we could reap where we had not sown. . . . When me and Liverpool got so low down that the American consul wouldn't speak to us we knew we'd struck bed rock."<sup>31</sup>

Another pair of vagabonds appear in Porter's story "Two Recalls":

Two men sat on a stringer of a North River pier in the City of New York. A steamer from the tropics had begun to unload bananas and oranges on the pier. Now and then a banana or two would fall from an over-ripe bunch, and one of the two men would shamble

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>31</sup>O. Henry, Sixes and Sevens (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1904), pp. 276-77.

forward, seize the fruit and return to share it with his companion.<sup>32</sup>

One last North American character who clearly falls into the category of Porter's vagabond type is Bill Casparis of "The Fourth of Salvador." Bill Casparis invests what little money he has in a scheme to manufacture and sell ice in the tropics; however, his ice machine stops functioning and his fortune rapidly declines:

"'You're all kinds of a fool, Bill Casparis,' I says to myself. . . . Your business is busted up, your thousand dollars is gone into the kitty of this corrupt country on that last bluff you made, you've got just fifteen Chile dollars left, worth forty-six cents each at bedtime last night and steadily going down. To-day you'll blow in your last cent hurrahing for that flag, and tomorrow you'll be living on bananas from the stalk and screwing your drinks out of your friends.'"<sup>33</sup>

## VI. THE FUGITIVES

In the light of Porter's personal reason for leaving North America and settling in Honduras, it is interesting to note that a few of his North American characters are also fugitives from justice.

Ralph Merriam and Mrs. Florence Conant in "The World and the Door" are both fugitives from justice. During a barroom brawl, Merriam shoots a wealthy acquaintance and secretly leaves New York City that same night:

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 293-94.

<sup>33</sup>0. Henry, Roads of Destiny, p. 177.

. . . at eleven o'clock the next morning Merriam, with a new suitcase full of new clothes and hair-brushes, stepped quietly on board a little 500-ton fruit steamer at an East River pier. . . . Merriam had his bank balance of \$2,800 in his pocket in large bills, and brief instructions to pile up as much water as he could between himself and New York.<sup>34</sup>

In a small, harborless coastal town, Merriam meets Mrs. Conant. One night while proposing to her he confesses his crime. She, in turn, informs him that she has also fled from North America as a fugitive from justice after poisoning her husband.<sup>35</sup>

A third fugitive from justice is J. Churchill Wahrfield who appears in Cabbages and Kings. As President of the Republic Insurance Company, Wahrfield leaves New Orleans for Latin America carrying one hundred thousand dollars cash which belong to his company.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>O. Henry, Whirligigs, pp. 5-6.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>36</sup>O. Henry, Cabbages and Kings, p. 296.

## APPENDIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As a whole, William Sydney Porter's Latin American stories present a distorted and, at times, derogatory image of Latin America, Latin Americans, and North Americans in Latin America. The stories imply that Latin America is a barbaric and uncivilized land where North American criminals, exploiters, and lazy alcoholics flourish. The Latin American characters are primarily objects of Porter's derisive humor. Porter's stories tend to support the view that Latin American culture and society are generally inferior to North American culture and society.

Porter's Latin American settings reflect a stereotyped Latin America. The stories equate Latin America with tropical jungles, hot climate, bananas, monkeys, rum, and revolutions. The stories give a poor impression of Latin America because most of them are set in obscure and dingy coastal towns of the Caribbean. The most notable physical features of these towns are their inferior dwellings and unpaved streets. Porter's narrators and characters consistently call attention to the inferior qualities of the Latin American setting. However, in a number of stories Porter does describe the Latin setting in terms of its natural beauty, its beautiful seashores, mountains, and tropical nights; but these passages are usually short, introductory, and greatly outnumbered by passages which present a derogatory view of the setting.

The Latin American characters in Porter's stories are clearly stereotypes who are of secondary importance in the stories. All but a few of the Latin Americans are objects of ridicule who hardly function as real characters. Judging from the stories, the Latin Americans whom Porter considers important and worthy of North American attention are those Latin Americans of the upper class who are involved in running the Latin American governments. These include the president-dictators, the generals, the aristocrats, and the high government officials. The many minor Latin American figures, which include the members of the small business class, the petty officials, and the common people, are usually described as lazy and inferior beings who are easily manipulated and taken advantage of.

The North American characters are of primary interest and importance in the stories, but they, too, are largely stereotypes and are also objects of Porter's derisive humor. They are United States consuls, speculators, soldiers of fortune, revolutionaries, adventurers, vagabonds, and fugitives. Porter's preoccupation with these North American types tends to support the view that Latin America is an uncivilized and dangerous land where only the brave and adventurous dare travel.

To conclude, it should be noted that the views, ideas, and opinions which are described in this study as biased and faulty conceptions shared by North Americans and Latin Americans are not entirely erroneous. It is true that much of Latin America is composed of small and isolated jungle villages; it is true that Latin American culture

and society is in many ways inferior to North American culture and society; and it is also true that the North Americans who travel to Latin America, rather than to Europe, tend to be adventurers, speculators, revolutionaries, fugitives, and the like. However, these and other views which Porter's Latin American stories deal with are only partial truths which do not present an accurate picture of Latin America, Latin Americans, and North Americans in Latin America.

It must finally be noted and emphasized that William Sydney Porter wrote his Latin American stories to entertain a North American audience. Porter's primary goal was humor rather than satire, and Porter found his humor at the expense of the Latin Americans and the unfortunate, and sometimes pathetic, North Americans in Latin America. Also, Porter was writing in accordance with the views and opinions of his time (a time when imperialism was glorified, and North American intervention in Latin America accepted as a necessary evil for progress). Porter did not approach the subject of Latin America as one does today, nor should one expect him to; he did not consider his characters to be stereotypes or his views anti-Latin America. Instead, as the present study indicates, Porter contributed his part in the development of Latin American and North American characters who are today recognized as stereotypes and to the development of views concerning Latin America which are recognized as distortions and half-truths.

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