



The Spanish Legacy in North America and the Historical Imagination

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# *The Spanish Legacy in North America and the Historical Imagination*<sup>1</sup>

DAVID J. WEBER

The past is a foreign country whose features are shaped by today's predilections, its strangeness domesticated by our own preservation of its vestiges.

David Lowenthal, 1985<sup>2</sup>

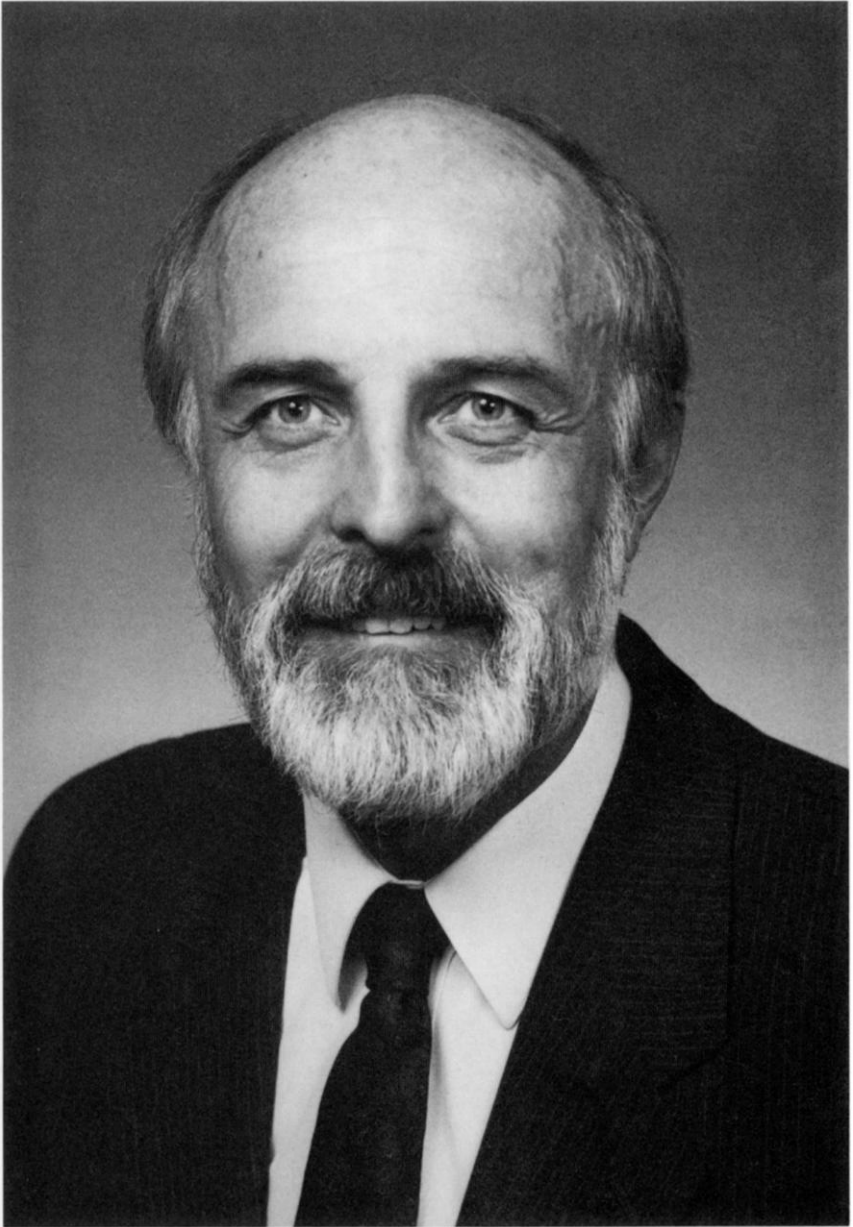
**A**cross the southern rim of the United States, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, aged buildings stand as mute reminders of an earlier Spanish America that has vanished. On Florida's Atlantic coast, some seventy miles south of the Georgia border, a great symmetrical stone fortress, the Castillo de San Marcos, still occupies the ground where its bastions once commanded the land and water approaches to Spanish St. Augustine. Founded in 1565, the town of St. Augustine remains the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in the continental United States. Farther west, in the Florida Panhandle, the ruins of the eighteenth-century Spanish forts of Barrancas and San Carlos look out over the shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico at Pensacola. In New Orleans's vibrant French Quarter, nearly all of the oldest buildings were constructed in the city's Spanish era, between 1763 and 1800. Fires of 1788 and 1794 obliterated the earlier French-built New Orleans, so that even those venerable and much-modified landmarks on Jackson Square—the Cabildo, the St. Louis Cathedral, and the Presbytère—date to the era when New Orleans and all of Louisiana belonged to Spain.

Still farther west, across southwestern America from Texas to California, preserved or reconstructed Spanish forts, public buildings, homes,

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is derived from *The Spanish Frontier in North America* scheduled for publication in 1992 by Yale University Press. I am grateful to two colleagues at Southern Methodist University, John Chávez and Jim Early, Jerry Poyo of Florida International University, and Oakah Jones of Purdue for valuable criticism. For convenience, I, like many geographers, anthropologists, and historians, employ the term *North America* to mean the continent north of Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, ENG, 1985), xvii.



David J. Weber  
Twenty-ninth President of the Western History Association

and missions dot the arid landscape. Today, some of those structures serve as museums—perhaps the best known being the old stone mission in downtown San Antonio, popularly known as the Alamo, and the long, one-story adobe Palace of the Governor facing the plaza in Santa Fe. Other southwestern buildings continue to serve their original functions. Near Tucson, for example, desert-dwelling Pima Indians still receive the sacraments inside the thick walls of the dazzlingly white mission church of San Xavier del Bac.

Old walls of stone and adobe remain the most visible reminders that the northern fringes of Spain's vast New World empire once extended well into the area of the present-day United States. Less evident, but of greater significance, are the human and environmental transformations that accompanied Spanish exploration and settlement in North America. Spaniards introduced an astonishing array of life forms new to the continent, ranging from cattle, sheep, and horses to the grasses those animals ate. At the same time, Spaniards unwittingly introduced alien diseases that ended the lives of countless Native Americans and inadvertently created new ecological niches for the peoples, plants, and animals that crossed the Atlantic.

Spain's long tenure in North America, which began at least as early as 1513 when Juan Ponce de León stepped ashore on a Florida beach and did not end until 1821—the year in which Mexico won independence and the United States acquired Florida, also left an enduring mark on American historical memory. In our historical imaginations, we have produced multiple interpretations of the Spanish frontier in North America—constructions that have contended with one another over time to transform our understanding and to become, in themselves, powerful legacies of Spain's centuries in North America.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Englishmen and Anglo Americans who wrote about the Spanish past in North America uniformly condemned Spanish rule. Implicitly or explicitly, they sought to vindicate English or American expansion into Spanish territory. Centuries of Spanish misgovernment, these early writers believed, had enervated all of Spain's New World colonies. When these Anglo writers sought the cause of Spanish misrule, they found it in the defective character of Spaniards themselves.<sup>3</sup> From their English forebears and other non-Spanish Europeans, Anglo Americans had inherited the view that Spaniards were un-

<sup>3</sup> For earlier examples of such writing by Englishmen, see William Roberts, *An Account of the First Discovery, and Natural History of Florida* (1763; facsimile reprint, Gainesville, 1976); and Alexander Forbes, Esq., *California: A History of Upper and Lower California from Their First Discovery to the Present Time, Comprising an Account of The Climate, Soil, Natural Productions, Agriculture, Commerce, &c. A Full View of the Missionary Establishments and Condition of the Free and Do-*

usually cruel, avaricious, treacherous, fanatical, superstitious, cowardly, corrupt, decadent, indolent, and authoritarian—a unique complex of pejoratives that historians from Spain came to call the Black Legend, *la leyenda negra*.<sup>4</sup>

It mattered not, then, if Anglo Americans ever met a Spaniard or visited a Spanish-American colony. The Black Legend informed Anglo Americans' judgments about the political, economic, religious, and social forces that had shaped the Spanish provinces from Florida to California, as well as throughout the hemisphere. The intensity with which Anglos of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries denigrated the Spanish past in North America, however, varied according to regional circumstances that distinguished southeastern America from southwestern America.

One circumstance that colored Anglo American attitudes toward Hispanics was racial mixture. In southeastern America, where little Spanish-Indian blending had occurred, this was a moot issue. From Texas to California, on the other hand, Anglo Americans were shocked to meet a predominantly mestizo population. Through much of the nineteenth century, Anglo Americans generally regarded racial mixture as a violation of the laws of nature. Many would have subscribed to the views of Thomas Jefferson Farnham, a New England attorney who toured California in the 1840s, and observed that a child of racially different parents was condemned biologically to "a constitution less robust than that of either race from which he sprang." Racial mixture in California, Farnham suggested, had produced "an imbecile, pusillanimous, race of men . . . unfit to control the destinies of that beautiful country."<sup>5</sup>

Another circumstance that shaped the depth of Anglo Americans' Hispanophobia was the degree to which they saw Hispanics as an obstacle to their ambitions. This issue, too, was of less importance in the Southeast than in the Southwest, for the Hispanic population of southeastern America was so sparse that it presented no threat, once Spain withdrew the last of its officials and troops in 1821. In the years immediately following U.S. acquisition of Louisiana and Florida, then, it served little purpose for

*mesticated Indians. With an Appendix Relating to Steam Navigation in the Pacific. Illustrated with a New Map, Plans of the Harbours, and Numerous Engravings.* (London, 1839). The English consul in Tepic, Forbes apparently never set foot in California.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Wayne Powell, *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World* (New York, 1971), remains the best general introduction to this subject in English.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Travels in California* (1844; reprint, Oakland, CA, 1947), 161, quoted in David J. Weber, "Scarce More than Apes': Historical Roots of Anglo-American Stereotypes of Mexicans," in *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West*, ed. David J. Weber (Albuquerque, 1979), 295. See too, 300.

Anglo Americans to denigrate the local Hispanic population or its history. To the contrary, compared to many of the fortune-seeking, rough-and-tumble American frontiersmen who drifted into Louisiana and Florida, the stable Hispanic community seemed virtuous by comparison. Indeed, reporting from Pensacola in 1822, Governor William P. DuVal told President James Monroe that “the Spanish inhabitants of this country are the best even among the most quiet and orderly of our own citizens.”<sup>6</sup>

The way in which Anglo Americans in the Southeast regarded their Hispanic contemporaries affected their view of history. In the absence of bitter contention with racially mixed Hispanics for political or economic power, and with no need to justify further acquisition of Spanish territory in the Southeast, Anglo American writers merely repeated the conventional wisdom of the Black Legend, but without the vitriol that characterized similar writing about Spaniards in the Southwest. In Florida and Louisiana, writers condemned the “barbarities” of Hernando de Soto, the “demoniac malignity” of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, and the “jealous and occlusive system” of the “perfidious Spaniards.”<sup>7</sup>

Southwestern America posed a different problem for Anglo Americans. The Spanish era had ended in 1821 with newly independent Mexico in control of the region from California to Texas. There, Hispanics did block American expansion, at least until the Texans’ successful armed rebellion in 1836, and the United States invasion in 1846, which put New Mexico, Arizona, and California in American hands.

Americans who wrote about the Southwest in the first half of the nineteenth century, turned fervently to the past to justify their nation’s expansionist impulses. Their rationalizations combined with Hispanophobia and racism to produce a more vituperative portrait of Hispanics and their history in the Southwest than existed in the Southeast.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> William P. DuVal to President James Monroe, Pensacola, 10 September 1822, in Clarence Edwin Carter, comp. and ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. 22: The Territory of Florida, 1821-1824* (Washington, D.C., 1956), 532. Similarly, W. G. D. Worthington to John Q. Adams, St. Augustine, 8 January 1822, characterized the local Hispanics as “a good, quiet, industrious people,” in Carter, comp. and ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, 22:330.

<sup>7</sup> “Barbarities,” is from James Grant Forbes, *Sketches, Historical and Topographical, of the Floridas; More Particularly of East Florida*, with an Introduction by James W. Covington (1821; facsimile reprint, Gainesville, 1964), 11; “demoniac malignity” is from Charles B. Vignoles, *Observations Upon the Floridas*, with an Introduction by John Hebron Moore (1823; facsimile reprint, Gainesville, 1977), 18; “jealous . . . system” is from [William Hayne Simmons], *Notices of East Florida*, with an Introduction by George E. Buker (1822; facsimile reprint, Gainesville, 1973), 22; “perfidious Spaniards” is from John W. Monette, *History of the Discovery and Settlement of the Valley of the Mississippi* . . . , 2 vols. (New York, 1846), 1:97.

<sup>8</sup> For introductions to this subject, see Cecil Robinson, *With the Ears of Strangers: The Mexican in American Literature* (Tucson, 1963), 1-131; Weber, “Scarce More than Apes,” 293-

Hispanophobia found its most strident and enduring rhetoric in Texas. Writing from the United States in the spring of 1836, where he had gone to seek aid for the cause of Texas independence, Stephen F. Austin characterized the conflict between Texas and Mexico as nothing less than “a war of barbarism and of despotic principles, waged by the mongrel Spanish-Indian and Negro race, against civilization and the Anglo-American race.”<sup>9</sup> The bloodshed in Texas at the Alamo, Goliad, and San Jacinto, which had no parallel elsewhere in the Borderlands, hardened attitudes on both sides and left a deep reservoir of Anglo-American hatred toward Mexicans and their Hispanic forefathers. As one Texas historian noted several years later, the “extermination [of Mexicans] may yet become necessary for the repose of this continent!”<sup>10</sup>

After their victory, Anglo-American rebels controlled not only Texas, but the writing of its history. Not content with the role of victors, they portrayed themselves as heroic—a “superior race of men.”<sup>11</sup> Heroes needed villains, of course, and Texas’s earliest historians found them in the Hispanic past. The first detailed history of the Spanish era in Texas to appear in English (and the standard work until the twentieth century), concluded with a gloomy scene.

We have herein traced the history of Texas through the dim records of a hundred and thirty-six years, rarely finding in that long period a congenial spot for human happiness. Ignorance and despotism have hung like a dark cloud over her noble forests and luxuriant prairies.<sup>12</sup>

Painting the Spanish era in dark hues enabled Texas historians to contrast it with the enlightened Texas rebellion. In essence, the Texas rebellion had been little more than a struggle for political and economic power, but early Texas historians elevated the revolt against Mexico to a

307; and Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 208-48.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen F. Austin to L. F. Linn, New York, 4 May 1835, quoted in David J. Weber, “Re-fighting the Alamo,” in *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest: Essays by David J. Weber* (Albuquerque, 1988), 139.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Stuart Foote, *Texas and the Texans: or, Advance of Anglo-Americans to the South-West; Including a History of Leading Events in Mexico, From the Conquest by Fernando Cortez to the Termination of the Texan Revolution*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1841), quoted in John H. Jenkins, *Basic Texas Books: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Works for a Research Library* (Austin, 1983), 164.

<sup>11</sup> Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, 2:7.

<sup>12</sup> Yoakum, Esq., *History of Texas from Its First Settlement in 1685 to Its Annexation to the United States in 1846*, 2 vols. (New York, 1855), 1:208. In generalizing about Spanish America, Yoakum drew heavily from William Robertson’s *History of America* (London, 1777). The earliest English-language histories of Texas skipped lightly over the events of the Spanish period as unworthy of investigation, but they vilified Spaniards in general.

"sublime collision of moral influences," "a moral struggle," and "a war for principles."<sup>13</sup> The inconvenient fact that some Mexicans had joined Anglo-American rebels in Texas was forgotten, and a repudiation of the Spanish past became an essential part of Texans' self identity. Hispanophobia, with its particularly vitriolic anti-Mexican variant, also served as a convenient rationale to keep Mexicans "in their place." Hispanophobia lasted longer in Texas than in any of Spain's former North-American provinces. Well into the twentieth century, it retarded the serious study of the state's lengthy Spanish heritage, leaving the field open to distortion and caricature.<sup>14</sup>

But, with or without the rancor that characterized Texas historiography, Anglo Americans repudiated the Spanish past all across the Borderlands, judging Spain's legacy in North America an unmitigated failure and replacing its vestiges with their own institutions and culture. Even much of the widely respected Spanish civil law was rejected. As the California Senate concluded in 1850, the Spanish legal system "was based on the crude laws of a rough, fierce people, whose passion was war and whose lust [was] conquest."<sup>15</sup> Crossing America in 1877, an English journalist expressed surprise at the transformation of the old Spanish provinces. "The effacement of the Spanish element in New Orleans is enough," he wrote, "but its disappearance in California is even more complete. The '*nombres de Espana* [España]' only remain; the '*cosas*' thereof have entirely vanished."<sup>16</sup>

Spanish "things," however, had not vanished entirely. An appreciative view of Spanish culture had run like a feeble countercurrent through American thought and letters, represented most conspicuously in the works of Washington Irving and William H. Prescott. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, war with Spain in 1898 notwithstanding, that current grew stronger until it became the mainstream. Indeed, in some areas of the old Spanish Borderlands, things Spanish became not only appreciated, but fashionable, and a new historical sensibility came to rival the old Black Legend. Walt Whitman caught the spirit in a letter that he addressed in 1883 to some of the leading citizens of Santa Fe. "It is time

<sup>13</sup> Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, 1:14 and 2:27. Italics were Foote's.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Stagner, "Epics, Sciences, and the Lost Frontier: Texas Historical Writing, 1836-1936," *Western Historical Quarterly* 12 (April 1981): 168; David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin, 1987), 223-25, 305; and Weber, "Refighting the Alamo," 139, 149-51.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Iris W. Engstrand's introduction to Daniel Tyler, *The Mythical Pueblo "Rights Doctrine": Water Administration in Hispanic New Mexico* (El Paso, 1990), 4.

<sup>16</sup> George A. Sala, *American Revisited: From the Bay of New York to the Gulf of Mexico, and from Lake Michigan to the Pacific*, 2 vols. (London, 1882), 2:205, quoted in Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York, 1957), 35.



to realize," Whitman wrote, "that there will not be found any more cruelty, tyranny, superstition, &c., in the *résumé* of past Spanish history than in the corresponding *résumé* of Anglo-Norman history." Whitman urged an appreciation of the "splendor and sterling value" of Hispanic culture in the Southwest, which he saw as enriching "the seething materialistic" ethos of the United States.<sup>17</sup>

California, populous and prosperous after the discovery of gold in 1848 changed it from a Hispanic Siberia to an American Mecca, became the center of a pro-Hispanic movement in America. In the Golden State, the reinterpretation of the Hispanic past became both cause and effect of a growing Hispanophilic sentiment. Whereas an earlier generation of Anglo Americans had portrayed *californios* as indolent, ignorant, and backward, Americans of the late nineteenth century reimagined the *californios* as unhurried, untroubled, and gracious. California's premier historian, Hubert Howe Bancroft, expressed this new sentiment succinctly in 1886: "Never before or since," he wrote of Hispanic California, "was there a spot in America where life was a long happy holiday, where there was less labor, less care or trouble."<sup>18</sup>

Bancroft's fictive and condescending simplification of California's impoverished and often turbulent history had a counterpart in the sentimental historical fiction of Bret Harte, Helen Hunt Jackson, Gertrude Atherton, and others, who portrayed California for a wide readership. The *californios*, wrote Helen Hunt Jackson, had lived "a picturesque life, with more of sentiment and gaiety . . . than will ever be seen again on these sunny shores."<sup>19</sup>

This remarkable turnabout in understanding California's Hispanic past coincided with changes in Anglo-American society. As the nation became more urbanized and industrialized in the late nineteenth century, many Americans recoiled from what they saw as excessive commercialism,

<sup>17</sup> Whitman to Messrs. Griffin et al., Camden, New Jersey, 20 July 1883, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman, as Prepared by Him for the Deathbed Edition*, 2 vols. (New York, 1948), 2:402-403.

<sup>18</sup> Herbert Howe Bancroft, *California Pastoral, 1769-1848* (San Francisco, 1888), 179, quoted in David J. Langum, "From Condemnation to Praise: Shifting Perspectives on Hispanic California," *California History* 61 (Winter 1983): 284. Like many writers of his day, Bancroft conflated the Spanish and Mexican eras of California into a single "golden age." Charles Edward Chapman, *The Founding of Spanish California: The Northwestward Expansion of New Spain, 1687-1783* (New York, 1916), 418, 434-35, portrayed the closing decades of the Spanish era in similar terms.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Franklin Walker, *A Literary History of Southern California* (Berkeley, 1950), 126. Walker is one of many scholars who has examined the nostalgic writing of this era in California, and the shift in perspective that this writing represents. For Bancroft's racism and contempt, see Bancroft, *California Pastoral*, 76-79, 180, 292.

materialism, vulgarity, and rootlessness, and longed for pastoral values that they imagined had existed in a simpler agrarian America.<sup>20</sup> In bustling California, which enjoyed unprecedented growth in the 1880s, newcomers found themselves rootless and often alienated. But writers, artists, architects, and scholars, who gave shape, meaning, and perspective to the historical experience, came to the rescue. By sanitizing California's Hispanic past, they made it an acceptable source of tradition and continuity for Anglo Americans, and a model of pastoral tranquility for those who wished to escape, at least in memory, to a less hurried era.

California's Mediterranean-like shores lent themselves to experimentation with implanting Italian and Greek traditions (as with the construction of the community of Venice on the Pacific in 1904-05, with its Renaissance palaces, canals, and gondolas), but only the Spanish past, even in a fictive reincarnation, had verisimilitude—"had behind it the force of history."<sup>21</sup> Conveniently, the force of history had also reduced the influence of California's Hispanic residents; by the 1880s, *californios* comprised only a tiny percentage of the state's population. It became possible, then, for Anglo Americans to look back with nostalgia at the *californios'* past, for the descendants of the *californios* posed no challenge to Anglo dominance of politics, commerce, or social life.<sup>22</sup> Then, too, by focusing their admiration on historic Spain and pre-modern Spanish California, Anglo Americans could simultaneously and without contradiction have contempt for modern Spain, whom they humiliated in the Spanish-American War.

This nostalgia for the Spanish past also extended to the arts, artifacts, and architecture of the old *californios*, for the objects and monuments of the vanquished had become, in the words of one of our most astute cultural historians, "'safe' to play with in recombinations emptied of previous vital meanings, as in tourist souvenirs, antiquarian reconstructions, or archaizing revivals."<sup>23</sup> Thus, just as they converted the mundane daily lives of the *californios* into the picturesque "days of the dons," California romanti-

<sup>20</sup> Walker, *Literary History*, 121; Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (New York, 1973), 395; Langum, "From Condemnation to Praise," 288-89; and Burl Noggle, "Anglo Observers of the Southwest Borderlands, 1825-1890: The Rise of a Concept," *Arizona and the West* 1 (Summer 1959): 129. See, too, T. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York, 1981).

<sup>21</sup> Starr, *Americans and the California Dream*, 390. See, too, 365-414.

<sup>22</sup> David J. Weber, ed., *Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (Albuquerque, 1973), 148; and Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley, 1966), 281, 284, 290.

<sup>23</sup> George Kubler, "On the Colonial Extinction of the Motifs of Pre-Columbian Art," in *Pre-Columbian Art and Archeology*, ed. Samuel K. Lothrop et al. (Cambridge, MA, 1961), n.p., quoted in William Wroth, "Introduction: Hispanic Southwestern Craft Traditions in the 20th Century," in *Hispanic Crafts of the Southwest: an exhibition catalogue*, ed. William Wroth (Colorado Springs, 1977), 3.

cizers also reinvented the dwellings and places of worship of Hispanic Californians. In the Spanish era, *californios* had lived in simple one-story adobes, many with flat, tar-covered roofs; few had wooden floors, glass windows, fireplaces, or tree-shaded landscaping. Anglo Americans reimagined those modest structures as elegant two-story, red-tile-roofed structures, with carved woodwork and cantilevered balconies that looked into tree-filled patios where water played in fountains.<sup>24</sup>

The search for an authentic indigenous architecture led Anglo Americans to build such structures, and also to apply features of the California missions to domestic and public buildings. This architectural style, which came to be called Mission Revival, had its origins in California in the 1880s, but its vocabulary of stucco walls, red tiles, arched logias, and bell towers, spoke to the nation as well as the state after the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago gave Mission Revival a wide audience. By the 1910s, mission-style railroad depots appeared in communities as far from California as Bismark, North Dakota, and Battle Creek, Michigan.<sup>25</sup>

California romanticizers also reimagined the missions and the missionaries. Once despised by many Anglo Americans as bigoted zealots who imposed a corrupt Catholicism on recalcitrant natives, the Franciscans of Hispanic California came to be remembered as kindly Christians who ministered to devoted Indians. The mission structures themselves, most of them neglected since their secularization in the 1830s and fallen into ruins, came to be appreciated as picturesque and began to be refurbished. Masquerading as historical preservationists, the rebuilders of California's missions often ignored the realities of archeological and documentary records to produce the buildings and grounds that appealed to their imaginations and to the tastes of local businessmen.<sup>26</sup>

Ironically, if anti-commercialism had provided part of the impetus for the nostalgic reinvention of the Hispanic past, it was commercialism that gave the new nostalgia and its adherents high public visibility. Properly laundered and packaged, California's picturesque Spanish heritage at-

<sup>24</sup> The quote is from Trent Elwood Sanford, *The Architecture of the Southwest: Indian, Spanish, American* (New York, 1950), 247. The best discussion of this phenomenon in California is in Harold Kirker, *California's Architectural Frontier: Style and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Santa Barbara, 1973), 1-22.

<sup>25</sup> Kirker, *California's Architectural Frontier*, 120-24; David Gebhard, "Architectural Imagery, the Mission and California," *Harvard Architecture Review* 1 (1980): 137-45; and Karen J. Weitze, *California's Mission Revival* (Los Angeles, 1984), 134.

<sup>26</sup> For the fictive nature of much of the restoration work, see David Hurst Thomas, "Harvesting Ramona's Garden: Life in California's Mythical Mission Past," in *Columbian Consequences, Volume 3: The Spanish Borderlands in Pan American Perspective*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington, D.C., 1991), 119-57; and John O. Pohlmann, "The Missions Romanticized," in *Los Angeles: Biography of a City*, ed. John and LaRee Caughey (Berkeley, 1976), 242.

tracted tourists and gave its infant cities a patina of permanence and tradition. As Charles Lummis, Southern California's most exuberant Hispanophile, crassly put it: "the old missions are worth more money . . . than our oil, our oranges, or even our climate."<sup>27</sup>

No other part of America witnessed the enthusiasm for things Spanish that manifested itself in yeasty Southern California, but many of the same ingredients could be found in other parts of southwestern and southeastern America: the decline of Hispanic economic and political power, the yearnings of newcomers for pastoral traditions, anti-commercialism, the ballyhoo of hucksters and publicists, and visible reminders of the Spanish past—particularly in the form of buildings and people.

In parts of southeastern America, the romanticization of the Hispanic past began earlier than in the Southwest.<sup>28</sup> With the end of the Civil War, the completion of railroad lines into the South, and the beginnings of Yankee tourism, the Hispanic past became a commodity to market if not a heritage to cherish. Histories and guide books sentimentalized local history and deemphasized or abandoned the Black Legend.<sup>29</sup> George Fairbanks's *History of Florida*, published in 1871, helped set the new tone. For example, instead of lingering on Hernando de Soto's harsh treatment of Indians as earlier writers had tended to do, Fairbanks explained it away as "a measure of policy" and presented De Soto as a "gallant adventurer."<sup>30</sup> Fairbanks asked his readers to admire "the perseverance and hardihood" of De Soto's band: "three hundred mounted men, on noble Andalusian steeds, richly caparisoned . . . all gentlemen and noble cavaliers, hidalgos of rank and scions of the noblest families of Spain."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> A letter to the Santa Barbara *Morning Press*, quoted in Walker, *Literary History*, 132, [Walker provides no date]. See, too, Pitt, *Decline of the Californios*, 290.

<sup>28</sup> There is little secondary literature on this subject. A few suggestive remarks are in George E. Buker, "The Americanization of St. Augustine," in *The Oldest City: St. Augustine, Saga of Survival*, ed. Jean Parker Waterbury (St Augustine, 1983), 174.

<sup>29</sup> Although their prose became less choleric, some writers kept the Black Legend alive and well. Sidney Lanier, *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History*, with an Introduction by Jerrell H. Shofner (1875; facsimile reprint, Gainesville, 1973), mixed romanticism (p. 50, for example), with a bit of rhetoric of the Black Legend (pp. 64, 177, 193, 198). See, too, Richard L. Campbell, *Historical Sketches of Colonial Florida*, with an Introduction by Pat Dodson (1892; facsimile reprint, Gainesville, 1975), 25, 33, 56, 152; and John R. Spears, *A History of the Mississippi Valley From its Discovery to the End of Foreign Domination. The Narrative of the Founding of an Empire, Shorn of Myth, and Enlivened by the Thrilling Adventures of Discoverers, Pioneers, Frontiersman, Indian Fighters, and Home Makers* (New York, 1903), 157-61.

<sup>30</sup> George R. Fairbanks, *History of Florida: From its Discovery by Ponce de Leon, in 1512, to the Close of the Florida War, in 1842* (Philadelphia, 1871), 58, 73. While he romanticized the early explorers, Fairbanks saw Spanish rule as regressive and Spaniards as "greatly deficient in industry and enterprise" (241, 170, 245).

<sup>31</sup> Fairbanks, *History of Florida*, 70.

No southern community celebrated its Spanish past more enthusiastically than St. Augustine, which played upon its position as America's oldest continuously occupied European community.<sup>32</sup> In 1885, for the benefit of wealthy winter tourists, the city's boosters invented a tradition of celebrating Ponce de León's "romantic" discovery of Florida—with historic reenactments, parades, concerts, fireworks, and yacht races.<sup>33</sup> But being first was not enough. St. Augustine, along with the rest of the Southeast, lacked two of the essential ingredients for a full-course Spanish revival such as the oldest communities in California, Arizona, and New Mexico enjoyed. First, descendants of the first Hispanic settlers had long since vanished across much of the South, as had Hispanized Indians. "Most tourists expect to find here a Spanish population," one guide to St. Augustine explained in 1892, but "the swarthy Spaniard stalks through the streets no longer."<sup>34</sup>

Second, throughout the South, Spanish architecture—the most potent visual reminder of continuity with the Hispanic past—had also disappeared, in large measure, by the mid-nineteenth century. In contrast to the Southwest, the region had no ruins of Spanish missions to stir the souls of tourists. Some overzealous historians and amateurs tried to fill the region's void in mission architecture by portraying the remnants of prosaic nineteenth-century Georgia sugar mills as the romantic ruins of seventeenth-century Spanish missions. That idea gained momentum during the first three decades of the twentieth century, before it ran squarely into a competing vision of Georgia's colonial origins. In the 1930s, the Georgia Society of the Colonial Dames of America sponsored an investigation that effectively debunked the stories of the Spanish mission ruins in Georgia. In the South, community standards had limited the extent to which the past and its symbols could be reshaped.<sup>35</sup>

The Hispanophobia of the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century has endured to the present day, but among American writers of history,

<sup>32</sup> George R. Fairbanks, *History and Antiquities of St. Augustine, Florida, Founded September 8, 1565*, 3d ed. (Jacksonville, 1881), 2.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Graham, "The Flagler Era, 1865-1913," in *The Oldest City*, ed. Waterbury, 192. Patricia C. Griffin, "The Impact of Tourism and Development on Public Ritual and Festival: St. Augustine, Florida, 1821-1987" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, Gainesville, 1988), 115-16, 120-29, describes the event as celebrated sporadically until the 1920s, when it became an annual event (except for the depression years).

<sup>34</sup> Charles B. Reynolds, *The Standard Guide to St. Augustine* (St. Augustine, [ca. 1892]), 14.

<sup>35</sup> For the rise of the mission myth in Georgia, see Marmaduke Floyd, "Certain Tabby Ruins on the Georgia Coast," in *Georgia's Disputed Ruins*, ed. E. Merton Coulter (Chapel Hill, 1937), 161-89. See, too, David Hurst Thomas, "Saints and Soldiers at Santa Catalina: Hispanic Designs for Colonial America," in *The Recovery of Meaning: Historical Archaeology in the Eastern United States*, ed. Mark P. Leone and Parker B. Potter, Jr. (Washington, D.C., 1988), 78-81.

the pro-Spanish and often sentimentalized view of America's Hispanic past that emerged in the late nineteenth century has prevailed through most of this century. This viewpoint found its most authoritative voices in Herbert Eugene Bolton and the large cadre of doctoral candidates that he trained while teaching at the University of California at Berkeley, between his arrival there in 1911 and his death in 1953. That Bolton did his own prodigious research and writing in California and produced a bumper crop of 104 Ph.D.s and 323 M.A.s there is not surprising. The seedbed of the Mission and Spanish revivals in America, California was also the most affluent state along the continent's southern rim. It could support libraries, researchers, writers, and readers as could no other state in the Southwest or the Southeast, and it had nourished the most vigorous historical writing on Hispanic North America even before Bolton's arrival.<sup>36</sup>

From his first days at Berkeley, Bolton's explicit goal was to enlarge the scope of American history beyond its well-known English, Dutch, and French antecedents, to include the nation's Hispanic origins—a story he regarded as important but little understood.<sup>37</sup> As he promoted that story, Bolton tried to compensate for what he regarded as the distortions of the Black Legend. He emphasized the heroic achievements of individual Spaniards and the positive contributions of Hispanic institutions and culture, often to a fault.<sup>38</sup> Through his solid scholarship ran an unabashed strain of sentimentality, as when he characterized the history of the Borderlands as “picturesque” and “romantic,” or when he uncritically endorsed the idea that the remnants of Georgia sugar mills were ruins of seventeenth-century missions.<sup>39</sup>

The Bolton school dominated American historical scholarship on the Borderlands until the 1960s. His disciples and other like-minded historians reexamined Spain's frontier institutions and culture, and found positive Spanish influences on many aspects of American life, including agri-

<sup>36</sup> In 1929, the first year in which the U.S. Census recorded per capita income on the state level, California's per capita income, at \$995, was substantially higher than that of any other state in the Sun Belt.

<sup>37</sup> See, in particular, Herbert Eugene Bolton, “Need for the Publication of a Comprehensive Body of Documents Relating to the History of Spanish Activities within the Present Limits of the United States,” in *Bolton and the Spanish Borderlands*, ed. John Francis Bannon (Norman, 1964), 23-31. For Bolton's life, work, and complete lists of his M.A. and Ph.D. students, see John Francis Bannon, *Herbert Eugene Bolton: The Historian and the Man, 1870-1953* (Tucson, 1978).

<sup>38</sup> Lewis Hanke, *Do the Americas Have a Common History? A Critique of the Bolton Theory* (New York, 1964), 22-23, 47.

<sup>39</sup> Herbert Eugene Bolton, “Defensive Spanish Expansion and the Significance of the Borderlands,” in *Bolton and the Spanish Borderlands*, ed. Bannon, 32-33. See also Floyd, “Certain Tabby Ruins,” 174-76.

culture, mining, ranching, architecture, art, law, language, literature, and music.<sup>40</sup> Bolton himself had so celebrated Spain's contributions to America that he had written of "Spain's frontiering genius." Implicitly or explicitly, many of his disciples echoed him.<sup>41</sup> For example, Alfred Barnaby Thomas, a Bolton protégé who translated documents that revealed serious weaknesses in Spain's governance of its empire, lauded "the genius of Spanish civilization."<sup>42</sup>

Beginning in the 1950s, historians began to chip away at Bolton's historical construction from several directions. Some struck at the very foundation of the Bolton school by challenging the claim that the Spanish past was relevant to explaining the history of the United States. In an influential essay published in 1955, Earl Pomeroy argued that scholars had exaggerated the roles of Hispanics and other "local foreign groups" in respect to their relative importance. "Actually," Pomeroy wrote, "the native Spanish and Mexican elements in many parts of the West—particularly California where they are revered today—were small and uninfluential."<sup>43</sup> American historians seldom took this position in print, but they implicitly regarded the activities of Spaniards as inconsequential to understanding the nation's history. Many studies, as John Caughey pointed out in 1965, treated the old Spanish provinces "as though they were an exotic prior figuration extraneous to all that developed later," and textbooks in American history have continued to give the Spanish era short shrift.<sup>44</sup>

Other critics granted the relevance of the Hispanic past, but accused the Bolton school of misinterpreting the past. From within the ranks of historians involved in the study of colonial Latin America, came charges

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, William R. Shepherd, "The Spanish Heritage in America," *Modern Language Journal* 10 (November 1925): 75-85; Arthur P. Whitaker, "The Spanish Contribution to American Agriculture," *Agricultural History* 3 (January 1929): 1-14; Harry Bernstein, "Spanish Influence in the United States, Economic Aspects," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 18 (February 1938): 43-65; Otis E. Young, "The Spanish Tradition in Gold and Silver Mining," *Arizona and the West* 7 (Winter 1965): 299-314; and Donald E. Worcester, "The Significance of the Spanish Borderlands to the United States," *Western Historical Quarterly* 7 (January 1976): 4-18.

<sup>41</sup> Herbert Eugene Bolton, "The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish American Colonies," in *Bolton and the Spanish Borderlands*, ed. Bannon, 211.

<sup>42</sup> Alfred Barnaby Thomas, ed. and trans., *Teodoro de Croix and the Northern Frontier of New Spain, 1776-1783: From the Original Document in the Archives of the Indies, Seville* (Norman, 1941), 65-66.

<sup>43</sup> Earl Pomeroy, "Toward A Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41 (March 1955): 590.

<sup>44</sup> John Caughey, "Herbert Eugene Bolton," in *Turner, Bolton and Webb: Three Historians of the American Frontier*, ed. Wilbur R. Jacobs et al. (Seattle, 1965), 66; and James Axtell, "Europeans, Indians, and the Age of Discovery in American History Textbooks," *American Historical Review* 92 (June 1987): 621-32.

that the Boltonians had idealized the past.<sup>45</sup> From another direction, some historians criticized the Boltonians for overemphasizing Spaniards and losing sight of the fact that culturally and genetically the society of northern New Spain was essentially Mexican. Carey McWilliams, the most vocal of this latter group of critics, had argued in 1948 that southwestern America had fallen under the spell of what he called “a fantasy heritage” — “an absurd dichotomy between things Spanish and things Mexican.”<sup>46</sup> Those Anglo Americans who glorified the region’s Spanish heritage while ignoring or discriminating against living Mexicans, McWilliams charged, were deluded by this fantasy. So, too, were those Mexican Americans who preferred to identify themselves as Spanish in order to disassociate themselves from more recent immigrants from Mexico. (This phenomenon had its counterpart in St. Augustine where descendants of Minorcans began, in the 1950s, to suggest that their lineage was of Spanish nobility).<sup>47</sup>

The world of scholars had mirrored the schizoid view of Hispanics in southwestern America that McWilliams described. Bolton himself simultaneously celebrated “Spain’s frontiering genius,” while suggesting that Mexican “half-breeds—mestizoes or mulattoes” were naturally vicious and unruly.<sup>48</sup> In Bolton’s day, social scientists who studied living Mexican Americans explained the group’s relative poverty as a pathological condition caused by cultural deficiencies, including passivity, laziness, and an inability to look beyond the present.<sup>49</sup> At best, the fantasy heritage split the history of Hispanics in the Southwest into two disconnected parts, tacitly denying Mexican Americans their historic roots in the region. At worst, it implied that long-time residents with strong Indian features, or immi-

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Eleanor B. Adams, ed., *Bishop Tamarón’s Visitation of New Mexico, 1760*, Historical Society of New Mexico’s Publications in History vol. 15 (Albuquerque, 1954), 22-23 (Adams had not been one of Bolton’s students); José Cuello, “Beyond the ‘Borderlands’ is the North of Colonial Mexico: A Latin-Americanist Perspective to the Study of the Mexican North and the United States Southwest,” in *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Council on Latin American Studies, Vol. 9: Continuity and Change in Latin America*, ed. Kristyna P. Demaree (San Diego, 1982), 1-34; Michael C. Scardaville, “Approaches to the Study of the Southeastern Borderlands,” in *Alabama and the Borderlands: From Prehistory to Statehood*, ed. R. Reid Badger and Lawrence A. Clayton (University, AL, 1985), 188; and Benjamin Keen, “Main Currents in United States Writings on Colonial Spanish America, 1884-1984,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 65 (November 1985): 662.

<sup>46</sup> Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (1948; reprint, New York, 1968), 44.

<sup>47</sup> John R. Chávez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque, 1984), 84-99; and Griffin, “The Impact of Tourism,” 131-37.

<sup>48</sup> Bolton, “The Mission as a Frontier Institution,” 211.

<sup>49</sup> For a brief introduction to this question and some of its literature, see David G. Gutiérrez, “The Third Generation: Reflections on Recent Chicano Historiography,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 5 (Summer 1989): 282-84.



grants from Mexico, were inferior aliens in a new land. "Pure Spaniards," the eminent historian Walter Prescott Webb opined in 1931, had pushed the Spanish frontier northward, cutting "like a blade of Damascus steel," but as the frontier advanced and Spaniards mingled with "sedentary Indian stock, whose blood . . . was a ditch water," the steel lost its temper.<sup>50</sup>

Although a few specialists deplored the "fantasy heritage," their objections went largely unheeded until the late 1960s, when a small number of Chicano scholars set out to recapture the past for Mexican Americans.<sup>51</sup> They had to start from scratch. Unlike other peoples who invented enduring myths about themselves in their own lifetimes, Hispanic elites on the impoverished frontiers of North America had produced a meager literature of self glorification—one that most Chicano historians quickly rejected.<sup>52</sup> Sympathizing with the exploited rather than the exploiters, Chicano historians (like their Mexican counterparts) tended to identify themselves more closely with their Indian or mestizo ancestors than with Spaniards.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, some of the most influential Chicano scholars adopted a long-range Indian perspective that reduced the three-century Spanish era to a relatively brief interlude. At the heart of that indigenous perspective was the powerful idea of a Chicano homeland called Aztlán.

Metaphorically, if not in fact, some Chicano intellectuals embraced the idea that the American Southwest was Aztlán, the mythic ancestral home of the Aztecs. The Southwest, these scholars argued, had been the homeland of the Aztecs or Mexica peoples before they migrated southward to achieve greatness in central Mexico in the fourteenth century. Thus, the descendants of the Aztecs, Mexicans who had immigrated to the United States in the twentieth century, had simply returned home to the cradle of Mexican civilization when they crossed the border. This vision of the past contained more poetry than prose and offended a number of historians, Mexican Americans among them. It did, nonetheless, extend Chicano claims to the Southwest farther back in time than those of Spaniards

<sup>50</sup> Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston, 1931), quoted in *Foreigners in Their Native Land*, ed. Weber, 76-77.

<sup>51</sup> Chávez, *The Lost Land*, 99-101, discusses the work of Arthur Campa in folklore and George Sánchez in sociology, in particular. Pitt (*Decline of the Californios*, 1968) was one of the first historians to take McWilliams seriously (see pp. 288-96).

<sup>52</sup> This stands in contrast to the seventeenth-century Dutch or eighteenth-century English-Americans. Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (1987; reprint, Berkeley, 1988); and Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York, 1988).

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Mario T. García, "A Chicano Perspective on San Diego History," *Journal of San Diego History* 18 (Fall 1971): 14-21, an explicit critique of the Bolton school, broader than its title suggests; and Manuel Patricio Servín, "California's Hispanic Heritage: A View into the Spanish Myth," in *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier*, ed. Weber, 117-33.

or Anglo Americans, and it established Chicanos as natives rather than immigrants in the region.<sup>54</sup>

The myth of Aztlán, which became a powerful symbol for the Chicano movement, provided a semblance of historical unity for the distinct historical experiences of *californios*, *arizonenses*, *nuevomexicanos*, and *tejanos*, but could not, of course, serve to unify all Hispanos in America in the twentieth century. The two other largest Hispanic groups, *portorriqueños* and *cubanos*, had their own "homelands" offshore, and the diversity of America's Hispanic population made unity elusive, if not impossible. Indeed, no unified history of Hispanics in America emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, but there appeared instead histories of Hispanic groups, organized on the basis of national origin.<sup>55</sup>

The value of Aztlán as a symbol had faded by the 1980s, but the solid historical scholarship that emerged from the Chicano movement has endured. Although some students of Mexican-American history have dismissed the Spanish era as irrelevant, others have plumbed the Spanish past to illuminate the present.<sup>56</sup> In particular, a number of Chicano historians have explored themes that resonate with problems of Mexicans in America, as well as with concerns of contemporary social historians: migration, exploitation of labor and women, class struggle, racism, accultura-

<sup>54</sup> For a cogent explanation of the social and political context of this formulation, see Chávez, *The Lost Land*, 129-31, 141-42, 147-48, and the illuminating essays in Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco A. Lomeli, eds., *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* (Albuquerque, 1989). For a highly critical view, see Ralph H. Vigil, "The New Borderlands History: A Critique," *New Mexico Historical Review* 48 (July 1973): 189-208.

<sup>55</sup> Alejandro Portes and Cynthia Truelove, "El sentido de la diversidad: recientes investigaciones sobre las minorías hispanas en los Estados Unidos," in *Hispanos en los Estados Unidos*, ed. Rodolfo J. Cortina y Alberto Moncada (Madrid, 1988), 33, and several other essays in this collection, which emphasize the diversity of Hispanos. Puerto Ricans and Cubans did not, of course, neglect their Spanish heritage in North America. José Agustín Balseiro, a Puerto Rican writer, has explained Spain's explorers as "men of epic heroism and fortitude" and the Spanish heritage in the United States as worthy of "our grateful reverence," in his introduction to José Agustín Balseiro, ed., *The Hispanic Presence in Florida* (Miami, 1976), 17-18. For two attempts at single-volume histories of Hispanic Americans see Harold J. Alford, *The Proud Peoples: The Heritage and Culture of Spanish-Speaking Peoples in the United States* (New York, 1972); and L. H. Gann and Peter J. Duiquan, *The Hispanics in the United States: A History* (Boulder, 1986).

<sup>56</sup> Some did so explicitly; see, for example, Arthur Corwin, "Mexican-American History: An Assessment," *Pacific Historical Review* 42 (August 1973): 271. Others did so implicitly. For example, Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco, 1972), begins with the American conquest of the Southwest and neglects to explain how or why mexicanos were there in the first place. The earlier role of Hispanics as colonizers apparently did not fit neatly into his model of Chicanos as colonized. Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Rivera, *The Chicanos: A History of Mexican Americans* (New York, 1972), on the other hand, integrated the colonial period into the larger story, as did Carlos E. Cortés in his essay on "Mexicans" in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge, MA, 1980), 697-719.

tion, accommodation, urban life, crime, punishment, family, faith, and the fortitude and adaptability of common folk who endure in times of rapid change and stress.<sup>57</sup> In so doing, they have transcended the view of New Spain's northern frontier as "romantic" or "picturesque," and have gone beyond seeing events solely through the eyes of explorers, missionaries, soldiers, or government officials.

Like the myth of Aztlán, this new construction provides historical continuity for Mexicans that the romantic view denied them. Descendants of those Mexicans who remained in the region after the U.S. seized it in 1848, or who have entered it since, need no longer regard themselves as outsiders in a new land, but rather as residents of a "lost land." Moreover, possession of a homeland with a history that is their own has further empowered Mexicans in America to demand political and social justice and self determination.<sup>58</sup> Nowhere has this been clearer than among the Hispano villagers of northern New Mexico. There, an expanded historical identity for a people whose ethnicity has been long marketed as a commodity for tourists has provided collective strength and converted lost rural land into a powerful symbol of ethnic resistance.<sup>59</sup> In southeastern America, conversely, no such symbol has emerged.

At the same time that Chicano historians attacked the Boltonians for elitism and romanticism, a growing group of scholars challenged the Bolton school for its failure to tell fully the Indian side of the story. Bolton and his followers had, by no means, overlooked the impact of Spanish colonization on American Indians (and were more attentive to Indian history than their Turnerian counterparts), but they had slighted it. In some of their more exuberant efforts to whitewash the Black Legend, some traditional Borderlands historians neglected to question stereotypical views that portrayed Indians as benighted, if not bedeviled and malevolent "un-

<sup>57</sup> For a guide to some of the recent literature see David J. Weber, "John Francis Bannon and the Historiography of the Spanish Borderlands: Retrospect and Prospect," *Journal of the Southwest* 29 (Winter 1987): 344-47, 356-58; and Gerald E. Poyo and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, "Spanish Texas and Borderlands Historiography in Transition: Implications for United States History," *Journal of American History* 75 (September 1988): 393-416. Recent examples include Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley, 1990); and Gerald E. Poyo and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, eds., *Tejano Origins in Eighteenth-Century San Antonio*, illustrated by José Cisneros (Austin, 1991).

<sup>58</sup> Chávez, *The Lost Land*, sees this theme as clearly articulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but subordinated until it "reemerged from the collective unconscious of the region's Mexicans" in the late 1960s (p. 129). In exploring what he terms the "myth of the lost land," Chávez has also, of course, helped create it.

<sup>59</sup> Sylvia Rodríguez, "Land, Water, and Ethnic Identity in Taos," in *Land, Water, and Culture: New Perspectives on Hispanic Land Grants*, ed. Charles L. Briggs and John R. Van Ness (Albuquerque, 1987), 322-23, 381-82, 387.

tamed savages.”<sup>60</sup> In their desire to find Spanish heroes, the Boltonians had often neglected to give Indians their due as rational historical actors who made choices that circumscribed the scope of Spaniards’ actions. As they sought to demonstrate the lasting contributions that Spain made to America, Borderlands scholars had frequently failed to make clear that Spaniards achieved many of their “successes” at agonizing cost to Indians.<sup>61</sup> Those ethnohistorians who have sought to reconstruct the past of North American Indian groups have begun to deconstruct the traditional Eurocentric, triumphalist vision of the past and to offer in its place a multi-sided historical reality. Along the old Spanish rim, those scholars have been especially effective at taking us into the missions and reimagining them from Indian angles of vision.<sup>62</sup>

In the 1980s, evidences of the Hispanophile view of the Spanish Borderlands promoted by the Boltonians could still be found, but it had fallen from fashion, even among many scholars sympathetic to the field, and no new paradigm arose to take its place.<sup>63</sup> Instead, there exists a variety of competing ways to understand the Spanish colonial era in American history. Hispanophobia and the Black Legend continue to have adherents, of course—“The Black Legend is in many respects an accurate interpretation

<sup>60</sup> The quote is from Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century: Studies in Spanish Colonial History and Administration* (1915; reprint, Austin, 1970), 19. For the rise of ethnohistory in the 1950s, see Donald L. Parman and Catherine Price, “A Work in Progress: The Emergence of Indian History as a Professional Field,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 20 (May 1989): 186-87.

<sup>61</sup> Weber, “John Francis Bannon,” 336-37.

<sup>62</sup> For critiques of Borderlands scholarship from the ethnohistorical viewpoints, see Willard Rollings, “In Search of Multisided Frontiers: Recent Writing on the History of the Southern Plains,” in *New Directions in American Indian History*, ed. Colin G. Calloway (Norman, 1988), 79-96; Thomas E. Sheridan, “How to Tell the Story of a ‘People Without History’: Narrative versus Ethnohistorical Approaches to the Study of the Yaqui Indians Through Time,” *Journal of the Southwest* 30 (Summer 1988): 168-89; W. R. Swagerty, “Spanish-Indian Relations, 1513-1821,” in *Scholars and the Indian Experience: Critical Reviews of Recent Writing in the Social Sciences*, ed. W. R. Swagerty (Bloomington, IN, 1984), 36-78; and David Hurst Thomas, “Columbian Consequences: The Spanish Borderlands in Cubist Perspective,” in *Columbian Consequences, Volume 1: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands West*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington, D.C., 1989), 3-7. For mission historiography from Indian viewpoints, see David J. Weber, “Blood of Martyrs; Blood of Indians: Toward a More Balanced View of Spanish Missions in Seventeenth-Century North America,” in *Columbian Consequences, Volume 2: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands East*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington, D.C., 1990), 429-48; and James Sandos, “Junipero Serra’s Canonization and the Historical Record,” *American Historical Review* 93 (December 1988): 1253-69.

<sup>63</sup> Perhaps the most prominent and eloquent recent example is Stewart L. Udall, *To the Inland Empire: Coronado and Our Spanish Legacy*, photographs by Jerry Jacka (Garden City, NY, 1987), who, in his passionate argument against the distortions of the Black Legend, exaggerates the humanitarianism and tolerance of Spaniards.

of history," one distinguished historian bluntly explained in the nation's premier historical journal in 1988.<sup>64</sup> Some historians have continued to dismiss the Spanish past as irrelevant, while others insist that it needed to be more fully integrated into the nation's understanding of its history. Some Chicano scholars find the regional roots of their mestizo past on the Spanish frontier, and many ethnohistorians regard the European invaders with the reproachful gaze of the invaded. It is also possible to scrutinize the Hispanic past from the neglected perspectives of environment and gender.<sup>65</sup> If this is not confusing enough, these various historical reconstructions can also look very different depending upon the tools that historians choose, or the theoretical stance they adopt.<sup>66</sup> Finally, in well-nuanced work, a single historian might portray Spaniards from opposing viewpoints, as both conquerors and conquered, victors and victims.<sup>67</sup>

How, then, are we to comprehend the Spanish frontier in North America? For those with an aversion to ambiguity or a strong need for absolute truth, the current answer is not comforting. There are many viewpoints, some of them contradictory and all of them valid, even if not of equal merit. This is not to deny the existence of an objective past, or our ability to ferret out data and documents about the past. The past itself, however, has ceased to exist. What remains of importance is only our understanding of it, and that understanding, as historian Peter Novick has squarely put it, "is in the mind of a human being or it is nowhere."<sup>68</sup> Lacking omniscience and possessing only a partial record of the past, we humans reconstruct time and place in highly imperfect ways, recounting sto-

<sup>64</sup> Wilbur R. Jacobs and James Axtell in "Communications," *American Historical Review* 43 (February 1988): 283. In advancing this view, Jacobs joins distinguished company. See, for example, Benjamin Keen, "The Black Legend Revisited: Assumptions and Realities," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 49 (November 1969).

<sup>65</sup> For environmental perspectives, see for example, Henry F. Dobyns, *From Fire to Flood: Historic Human Destruction of Sonoran Desert Riverine Oases* (Socorro, NM, 1981); and Del Weniger, *The Explorers' Texas: The Lands and Waters* (Austin, 1984). For gender, examples include Salomé Hernández, "Nueva Mexicanas as Refugees and Reconquest Settlers, 1680-1696," in *New Mexico Women: Intercultural Perspectives*, ed. Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller (Albuquerque, 1986), 41-69; Rosalind Z. Rock, "'Pido y Suplico': Women and the Law in Spanish New Mexico, 1697-1763," *New Mexico Historical Review* 65 (April 1990): 145-59; and, especially, Antonia I. Castañeda, "Gender, Race, and Culture: Spanish-Mexican Women in the Historiography of Frontier California," *Frontiers* 11 (1990): 8-30 and Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford, 1991).

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Thomas D. Hall, *Social Change in the Southwest, 1350-1880* (Lawrence, 1989).

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York, 1987), 222-58.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, ENG, 1988), 582.

ries that often tell us more about the teller than the tale.<sup>69</sup> The Spanish past in North America, then, is not only what we have imagined it to be, but what we will continue to make of it. Like all historical terrain, the Spanish frontier seems destined to remain contested ground, transformed repeatedly in the historical imaginations of succeeding generations.

<sup>69</sup> This epistemological phenomenon affects not only the social sciences and the humanities, but the so-called "hard" sciences as well, where knowledge is also socially constructed. See, for example, Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York, 1989) and Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).