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**“Call me a *Californio*”:  
Translating Hemispheric Legacies in Helen Hunt Jackson, Don Antonio  
Coronel, and José Martí**

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Abstract

This thesis uses translation theory and practice as a new critical framework to revise dominant readings of Helen Hunt Jackson and her novel *Ramona* (1884). Rather than assuming both author and novel as origin-points of Southern California’s “Spanish Revival” tradition, I investigate a less recognized, pre-Anglo, Spanish-language thread of revivalism, the practice of constructing Spanish-influenced identity within the *Californio* population. Through close analysis of unpublished Spanish-language texts and early *Californio testimonios*, I read this alternative revivalism as a paradigm of temporal cultural translation: *Californio* history-and-identity-making, traceable within and across time through linguistic terms that carry cultural meaning, both synchronically and diachronically. Reading Jackson’s novel through a translational framework, I reconceive her role in these revivalisms not as originator, but as translator-ethnographer, who deploys language and time in *Ramona* to inscribe an invented Spanish Southern California subject into the region’s historical memory.

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## Introduction

Helen Hunt Jackson and her blockbuster novel *Ramona* (1884) are famously credited with the creation of the “Spanish Revival” in Southern California, as if there were a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the romantic old Spanish California setting of her “Indian story”<sup>1</sup> and the production of the Spanish imaginary in the region. Often touted in well-known histories of the region, mainstream texts like Kevin Starr’s *Americans and the California Dream* (1973) and Carey McWilliams’ *Southern California* (1946), Helen Hunt Jackson makes regular appearances as the author-originator of California’s tradition of Spanish revivalism. Jackson’s enlarged fame overshadows the region’s lesser-known yet long and ongoing—if troubled—legacy of reviving “Spanishness,” of which I argue Jackson to be (sometimes double) agent, not originator. My thesis begins by investigating this forgotten revivalism through neglected texts of early California’s Spanish-speaking people. Symptomatically unnamed, unlike the Anglo-generated and -codified “Spanish Revival,” this movement is revivalism in practice, a self-conscious construction of Spanish heritage by the Spanish-speaking that, contrary to popular belief, was already ongoing before the Anglo takeover of 1846. Positioning Jackson’s novel as the beginning-point of California’s Spanish revivalist impulse as many mainstream histories do accounts for just one strand of revivalism at the expense of a

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson refers to *Ramona* in such terms in letters to friends and colleagues, believing her Indian characters’ tragic romance and displacement by Anglo-American settlers would “move people’s hearts” enough to rally protest for the Indian cause (Mathes 298). The “Spanish” setting however left the longest-lasting impression on readers.

larger, longer movement that includes this unnamed revival and its other speaker-agents: the racially and nationally diverse Spanish-speaking settlers of Alta California, who come to call themselves *Californios*.

I take these two revivalisms as intertwined and overlapping cultural acts with competing values and interests yet with a common impulse towards calling on Spanish-language roots to construct a fable of origins rooted in an invented “Spanish” past, often driven by nostalgia. First named by Renato Rosaldo (1989), in its strictest sense, *imperialist nostalgia* explains the colonizer’s own feelings of loss upon the destruction of the land and peoples he colonizes, which he deals with by later romanticizing both. Imperialist nostalgia is thus a most fitting term for the Anglo drive to enshrine the tragically romantic *Californio* in the post Mexican-American War context of “Spanish Revival,” which sought to revive Southern California’s Spanish past through Spanish-style architecture, festivals and tourist attractions to create an idyllic place out of newly-conquered territory (Kropp 1-5). Meanwhile, the Spanish-speaking *Californios* constructed their own memory of a Spanish past, reviving Spanish-heritage roots through what I call “preservationist nostalgia” that resuscitated a past to preserve *Californio* continued existence throughout California’s belonging to various political and national powers, both pre- and post-Anglo. Both named and unnamed revivalisms have been questioned for drawing on origins that are not “theirs”—the Anglo-driven Spanish Revival clearly borrows freely from a non-Anglo California history and culture, and the degree of “pure” Spanish blood amongst

the self-identified Spanish *Californios* has been largely downplayed<sup>2</sup>—but my way into these historical legacies of the region reads them outside these boxes of truth/falsity. Rather than point out the problems with the use of the fictional construct of nostalgia, as do others, such as Carey McWilliams when he critiques the performance of Spanishness as a “Fantasy Heritage,” my thesis reads imperialist and other nostalgias as mechanisms of the revivalist impulse, and beyond, as a form of historical consciousness that functions outside the limits of the truth/falsity binary, and performs the meaningful cultural work of history-making.

Reading the revivalisms in terms of their cultural work this way provides me with the opportunity to apply a new critical lens to the historical context of early Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo California. My thesis excavates the revivalisms as comparative instances of cultural translation, for which time functions as a unit of translation. Indeed, imperialist and other nostalgias translate the Spanish past onto Anglo and *Californio* presents for each group’s distinct historical, social, and political ends. This “temporal cultural translation,” as I term it, extends further into the linguistic sphere of the revival of the Spanish-speaking. These linguistic and Spanish-speaking threads of revivalism are equally overshadowed by the Anglo-generated and -historicized “Spanish Revival” and its primary attention to architecture. In my first chapter, I attempt to “revive” this linguistic thread and its speaker-agents in an attempt to recover a neglected history of Spanish revivalism amongst the Spanish-speaking. I offer a case study of Don Antonio Coronel, a Mexican-born *Californio*

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<sup>2</sup> See McWilliams (1948), Pitt (1966), Monroy (1990), Almaguer (1994), and Haas (1995).



now known as the essential Spanish Don for his role as Jackson's primary informant in mainstream histories, to show the active self-conscious construction of *Californio* identity through the use of different ethnic terms for California's Spanish-speaking people. My recovery of an unpublished document written by Coronel which registers a preservationist nostalgia through the linguistic mode also serves to resituate and recognize the Don as an agent in his own right in the Spanish-speaking thread of revivalism, as well as restore a forgotten Spanish-language text in California history.

I look to retranslations of early California *testimonios*, originally collected by Hubert Howe Bancroft for his famous multi-volume *History of California* (1884-1890),<sup>3</sup> to further analyze class and race-based terms and their shifting meanings over time for the Spanish-speaking. Taking the translation of specific terms in a synchronic sense, such as *Californio* and its counterpart *gente de razón*, I show how these instances of linguistic translation alternately inscribe and carry cultural meaning diachronically, through time. Linguistic and cultural translation are thus not separable, but two modes within the same function: a process in which the politics of language and culture enact and negotiate an exchange of cultural codes, markers, and meaning. Time is the third axis which crosses language and culture. My first chapter grounds translation in historically specific moments of Spanish colonial California as well as Mexican-governed California, yet also approaches temporal disjunctures, and

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<sup>3</sup> Bancroft's ambitious history compiled hundreds of *Californio testimonios* that did indeed include a sense of preservationist nostalgia, misinterpreted by Bancroft and Anglo readers to mean *Californios* belonged to a passing era now giving way to Anglo ownership of the territory (Kropp 28-42). Genaro M. Padilla's *My History, Not Yours* (1993) and Rosaura Sánchez's *Telling Identities* (1995) show these *testimonios* to be counter-discourses to this Anglo domination; I draw most heavily on the most recent installation in this line of recovery work, *Testimonios* (2006), by Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz.

specifically the moments of transition between these historical periods, as potential sites of cultural translation. For *Californios* like Angustias de la Guerra and Juana Machado, whose *testimonios* I draw heavily on to further recover neglected parts of the history of the Spanish-speaking, time itself also becomes a unit of translation; not only linguistic signifiers but also the linguistic moments to which they are attached get translated, past context mapping onto present culture. The self-consciousness of this function demonstrates *Californio* term-use as a kind of self-translation, an auto-ethnographic construction of Spanish-influenced *Californio* identity and culture.

Reading revivalism and its mechanisms beyond the category of fictional construct and as such instances of linguistic and spatio-temporal cultural translation, I offer a way to open up the *Ramona*-centered literary and cultural history of Spanish revivalism in the region and explore a new approach to historiography, as a process and product of translation. In my second chapter, “temporal cultural translation” frames Jackson’s author-function in *Ramona* and the Anglo-driven Spanish Revival as one of translator-ethnographer, whose multiple yet essentially invisible acts of both linguistic and cultural translation create an ethnography of Spanish and Mexican Southern California. Time also matters in Jackson’s translation: nostalgia in *Ramona* enacts a cultural translation, rendering Jackson’s ethnographic object an Other through the temporal mode that Johannes Fabian (1983) has identified. Here, I part from common critiques of Jackson that would fault her *mistranslating* of the Spanish and Mexican culture through devices such as nostalgia and instead attempt to reveal how these multi-layered levels of linguistic and cultural translations operate:

functions of time and language such as nostalgia and dialect intertwine to create an ethnic portrait of Jackson's subjects that comes to hold a place in both the historical and popular imagination. The novel and myth of *Ramona* also serve as entry-points to go further into the politics of translation and ethnography, of language- and time-uses in what James Clifford (1986) calls writing culture. Jackson's multiple disappearing acts, effacing her own author-function as translator as well as her informants as sources, add to the intrigue of the *Ramona* myth and ironically amplify Jackson's larger-than-life figure. Making visible not only Jackson as translator-ethnographer, but other compound functions of the Anglo-generated Spanish Revival's famous figures, including Don Antonio Coronel, extends the political aspect of my project by working to revise known histories and offering alternative narratives.

Reading *Ramona* and its wider socio-historical context through translation and ethnography also questions and expands both the frame and units of historical-literary study. My concluding section identifies my contributions to a rethinking of California literary and cultural history through my focus on less-investigated intersections in literary and cultural practices in Spanish-speaking California, the US, and the Americas more broadly. Using translation as a critical lens supports my move out and away from the truth/falsity dichotomy that haunts discussion of the representation of the Southern California Spanish imaginary. This translational turn conceives of the *Ramona* phenomenon and revivalism not as "inauthentic" expressions of historical consciousness that, to borrow terms directly from traditional translation studies, "betray" the "original" source, but a process of textual (in the broad sense that

everything, including culture, is text) re-generation in different contexts. This turn also attends to the fraught power relations between languages and the unevenness of exchange among speakers/writers in these contexts. Taking Southern California as a case study, my close reading of the relationship between *Ramona* and revivalism not as causal but as translational expands my reading of literary-cultural texts and practices of the Americas. Read as translations, we can see them not simply in/of one point in space and time, as tied to the nation, but as part of what Walter Benjamin calls the afterlife of a text, unfolding in multiple space-times. Taking one more turn of the translational screw, I turn to Cuban revolutionary Jose Martí at the end of my project. His Spanish translation of *Ramona* and declaration of its status as “our novel” is part of the *Ramona* afterlife that shows a translational conception of *Ramona* and revivalism crosses the spatio-temporal boundaries of the Americas and the nation-based, monolingual, and period-bound ways we know them, and imagines the possibility of a hemispheric literary legacy.

“Call me a *Californio*”:  
The Aesthetics and Politics of an Unnamed Spanish Revival

Historians generally trace the tradition of Southern California’s Spanish revivalism back to the restoration of the Missions. Carey McWilliams formally marks 1888 as the year “the Spanish saga...all began”—that is, the year the founding of the Association for the Preservation of Missions formalized the Anglo<sup>4</sup> practice of cultivating Spanish heritage, enacted primarily through the restoration and architectural imitation of the Missions, and taken up to promote the region’s growing attractiveness to tourists as an exotic Spanish locale as well as to establish California culture and place as “America’s Mediterranean littoral” (McWilliams 1946:77, Starr 414). McWilliams also contends “with the publication of *Ramona*, the Spanish background began to be rediscovered”, marking Helen Hunt Jackson’s 1884 romantic novel as a complementary origin of this late nineteenth-century Anglo cultivation of Spanishness and documenting, as do most California historians, the *Ramona* phenomenon in which Anglo tourist boosters promoted the “real” *Ramona* and “real” sites from the novel to draw tourists en masse (70-77). In another temporally-driven move, McWilliams further enshrines Jackson as creator of the region’s larger tradition of Spanish revivalism, claiming that it was not only *Ramona* “which firmly established the Mission legend in Southern California,” but that Jackson herself was also originator of the emerging Missions project: “A flood of books began to appear about the Missions,” McWilliams writes, “with Mrs. Jackson’s *Glimpses of*

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term “Anglo” to keep in step with McWilliams’ term for this strand of revivalism, as well as to use the common nomenclature for Americans and whites during this historical context.

*California and the Missions* (1883) being the volume that inspired the whole movement” (73, 77).

This “whole movement” McWilliams refers to comes to be known by other mainstream historians such as Kevin Starr (1973) as the Spanish Revival. The multiple “beginning points” McWilliams offers—1888, 1884, 1883—stand collectively as *the* beginning of the phenomenon of cultivating Spanishness in California, reflecting the multiple threads of revivalism connected to the figure of Helen Hunt Jackson. Though 1888 takes center stage, the architectural thread of Spanish revivalism having received the most attention in historical accounts of the Spanish Revival, like Starr’s, which favors Charles Fletcher Lummis<sup>5</sup> to Jackson because he “made a more informed identification with the Spanish associations of Southern California,” “despised the sort of fake mission romance engendered by *Ramona*...[and] campaigned for both the preservation and proper interpretation of the missions” (397, 400). The impulse to locate the origin-point(s) of the Spanish Revival coincides with the Revival’s own impulse to recover an origin-point, seeking as it does the “real” roots of California’s Spanish background. I approach the Spanish Revival through the inevitable uncertainty of these origins, using its preoccupation with fixing temporalities in order to explore it as a case of temporal cultural translation, a conscious history-making heavily invested in temporal thinking, whether marked or unmarked. McWilliams, on the other hand, historicizes the

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<sup>5</sup> Lummis (also known as “Don Carlos”), with his countless projects promoting Spanish Southern California history and culture, could indeed be seen as the ultimate revivalist: in addition to restoring the missions, he wrote scholarship (*Land of Poco Tiempo* may be his most illustrative title), edited the *Los Angeles Times*, studied Spanish borderlands folklore, and built his own adobe (Starr 397-401).

Spanish Revival in two concrete ways: he first periodizes it in terms of the launching of the Missions project, tracing its temporal origins to the late nineteenth-century context of the Anglo rediscovery and restoration of Mission architecture; and second, he places Jackson at its center, crediting her as the primary source for what we might aptly call “Ramonaism” and the Missions project that together inspired the Hispanicization of California’s landscape. Solidifying this theory, McWilliams tellingly refers to the Spanish Revival as “the Ramona-Mission revival in Southern California,” irrevocably fusing Jackson, *Ramona*, and the Missions project as parallel origin-points of the Anglo-codified Spanish Revival (1946:79).

Yet McWilliams’ Spanish Revival has a silent partner. His work *North from Mexico* (1948) documents and analyzes an unnamed yet ongoing self-conscious Spanish revivalism on the part of the Spanish-speaking of Southern California as well. The book’s subtitle, *The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States*, conveys McWilliams’ challenge in identifying the subject of his history. Because the heterogeneous groups in early California resist any strict classification,<sup>6</sup> McWilliams explains, “Spanish-speaking” is the most acceptable term (though he admits it has its limitations), as it encompass the diverse origins of peoples in the Southwest and captures the fact that, despite little agreement in nomenclature among the California- and Latin American-born groups, there still emerged a sense of ethnic cohesiveness

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to the indigenous Indians, after 1769 and the establishment of the Missions, Alta California became peopled with Spanish settlers, creoles, and mixed-race *mestizos* from central Mexico. This mixed population continued growing (however slowly) due to steady colonization efforts by the Mexican government (Monroy 103-112). The Gold Rush (1848) that immediately followed the Anglo conquest also brought immigrants to California from all over Latin America (Pitt 53).

(7-8). The logic behind the term “Spanish-speaking” takes shared language as the lowest common denominator of the group, yet that does not come without irony, as the speakers of Spanish have been effectively silenced, even spoken for, by the primary Anglo-American voice of Spanish Revival and its privileging of architecture. Indeed, the lack of a stable name for the Spanish-speaking is itself a symptom of the erasure of the other unnamed revival.

The unstable nomenclature used to describe the Spanish-speaking persists in major 20<sup>th</sup>-century histories on the region like those by Carey McWilliams and Leonard Pitt, perhaps best captured in the term *Californio*. *Californio* has a long history of distinct social and ethnic meanings. The most common definition, McWilliams’ underscores the class-consciousness of the term, and equates it with the ruling class of early California of Spanish descent, also called the *gente de razón*—the people of reason, or, more specifically for McWilliams, the people of quality (1946:40). Indeed, *gente de razón* and *Californio* operated as interchangeable terms that both described the land-owning class as well as signaled Spanish cultural status.<sup>7</sup> For his part, Pitt defines *Californio* as a “native-born Californian of Spanish-speaking parents,” placing more emphasis on the “native” component to the term which underscores its investment in the temporal and its tendency towards nativist ideologies (310). Newer variations on the term range from slashed ethnic identities to

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<sup>7</sup> *Gente de razón* as a category grew out of the social relations of the Missions era, when the European-born settlers and their descendents used it to differentiate themselves from the Indians, based on their assumed possession of *razón* (reason) which the indigenous lacked (Haas 31, Monroy 57). I take this matter up later to explore *gente de razón* and its counterpart *gente sin razón* (“people without reason”) as the early codifying of social and racial groups in Spanish and Mexican California that often worked in conjunction with the term *Californio*.



the overtly political: in *Ramona Memories*, Dydia Delyser describes *Californios* as the landed aristocracy of “Mexican/Spanish descent”, a slashed identity likely employed in order to keep with Jackson’s conflation of Mexican and Spanish in *Ramona*, yet seems to duplicate the obfuscation; and in *Cultures of Letters*, Richard Brodhead problematically refers to the same group as Chicanos (Delyser 196, Brodhead 177). Such variation demonstrates the impossibility of fixing a stable definition of *Californio*,<sup>8</sup> and the evolution of its terminology reveals the *Californio* identity as subject to temporal cultural translation, made especially clear in *Decline of the Californios* (1966), where Pitt’s Glossary of Ethnic Terms shows itself to be a record of definitions that unwittingly underscores the instability of terms like *Californio* and reveals the impossibility of fixing them in its own attempt to do so.<sup>9</sup>

Yet inevitably for these and many historians and literary critics, coupled with whatever variant of *Californio* they espouse is an assertion of it as a fabrication of Spanish racial identity. They emphasize that while *Californio* and *gente de razón* both implied Spanish heritage in early California, most who invoked the term *Californio*

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<sup>8</sup> Here I stress texts by Anglo-American writers who have sought to neatly define the term. I do not forget the important recovery work of Genaro M. Padilla (1993) and Rosaura Sánchez (1995) that demonstrates the *Californio testimonios*, originally collected for Hubert Howe Bancroft and his exhaustive *History of California* (1884-1890), as sites of *Californio* agency and resistance to domination after the US-Mexico War (1846-1848). They re-read these *testimonios* to show how *Californios* countered Anglo representations of them in the Spanish Revival and constructed a collective “Californio” identity of their own.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Pitt attempts to make a distinction between *Californio* and the category “native Californian,” but seems to problematically collapse the two categories and subsume another group: Mexicans. He defines a native Californian as “one who is born in California of Spanish-speaking parents,” (essentially his same definition for *Californio*) as well as “one who is born in Mexico but is a long-term California resident” (310). Most interestingly, perhaps, is this afterthought: “Strictly speaking, the term should be applied only to Indians” (310). While this project focuses on the preoccupation of the Spanish “origins” of California, it must not be forgotten that the region was already inhabited by indigenous Indians, who suffer the most silencing of all.

and made claims to “pure” Spanish blood were rarely Spanish-born emigrants. However, the instability of *Californio* and its uses in standard historiographies and critical works do not simply reflect a confused or conflated sense of identity inherent in the Spanish-speaking group of early California. Rather, the shifting language and terminology found in texts such as *testimonios* dramatize the terms’ translational nature and speak to the aesthetics and politics of the Spanish Revival’s silent partner. The slipperiness of such terms is both a problem and solution of revivalism, as these terms, especially *Californio*, are taken up, invoked, exchanged and reworked by the Spanish-speaking as part of a conscious practice of constructing Spanishness. This linguistic thread of Spanish revivalism, downplayed by the attention to architecture that dominates the Anglo-generated Spanish Revival, can be read as a process of temporal cultural translation in which the terms’ meanings vary over and across time, obtaining from and inscribing into the social and cultural fabric of the given historical moment.

Another temporally-driven aspect of Spanish revivalism that can be read translationally is its use of imperialist and other nostalgias. Revivalism by the Spanish-speaking, though historically less-recognized than the Jackson-centered, formally named “Spanish Revival,” is not non-existent: McWilliams’ text alludes to the role of this revivalism in the historical consciousness of the Spanish-speaking, particularly the *Californios*, as a function of imperialist nostalgia, a claiming of romanticized Spanish identity based on a Spanish past that reaches, at times, as far back as the Conquest. Calling it the “Fantasy Heritage,” McWilliams writes, “[A]fter

all Spain had discovered America; so the romantic and heroic aspects of the tradition were artificially divorced from its prosaic accomplishments and preserved like a rusty suit of armor in a museum” (1948:19). If 1888 serves an invented tradition<sup>10</sup> by the Anglos, the glorified time of Conquest functions similarly in the Spanish heritage invented by and for the Spanish-speaking. In the case of this New World Discovery, the vastness of the era, tied more to the romance and splendor contained in the glory of the Spanish Golden Age broadly than to a precise historical moment, is in its own way as indefinite and malleable as the moment of 1888—an imagined moment that gets revived by and for Spanish revivalism.

But nostalgia in this imperialist mode is only one kind of nostalgia driving revivalism. Multiple nostalgias perform directly revivalist and preservationist functions, consciously recasting the past to serve the present and preserve the future culture. In this way, these nostalgias can be thought of as varieties of historical consciousness that, together with a registering of historical ruptures and epochal shifts, evidence temporal cultural translation in the practice of revivalism and its creation of the *Californio* consciousness. Rather than McWilliams’ critique of Spanish revivalism as a “Fantasy Heritage,” Benedict Anderson argues that “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (6); indeed, the meaning and significance of California’s Spanish heritage lie not in its truth or falsity, but in the aesthetics and politics of its invented tradition.

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<sup>10</sup> I borrow this concept from *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) by Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger.

The self-conscious, selective interpretation of “Spanishness” that becomes an established tradition in early California is not one limited to the colonial era, nor is it bound by nostalgia for the old glory of Spanish Conquest and the Golden Age. Rather, the imperialist and other nostalgias underlying and informing the performance of Spanishness continue well into the Mexican and Anglo eras of California, and correspond to the distinct yet significantly overlapping histories and losses experienced under each regime. While Renato Rosaldo’s configuration of imperialist nostalgia is based on a binary relationship between colonizer and colonized, in the unique case of California and the Spanish-speaking, this relationship actually applies doubly. As a creole<sup>11</sup> class subordinate to imperial Spain during the colonial era, a distant group of settlers in an isolated territory of the Mexican nation after 1821, and later, subjugated by Anglo conquest, the case of the *Californios* can be aptly conceived of as a colonial quartet, an adaptation of Rosaldo’s colonial binary. This configuration best captures the layered and overlapping relationships and related mechanisms of nostalgia as well as the awareness of historical ruptures in this heterogeneous population of the Southwest, revealing the multiple histories of the Spanish-speaking of California and the tradition of revivalism as translational and palimpsestic.

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<sup>11</sup> Anderson defines creole (criollo) as a “person of (at least theoretically) pure European descent but born in the Americas” (47, footnote 1). He argues, “[Criollos] constituted simultaneously a colonial community and an upper class. They were to be economically subjected and exploited, but they were also essential to the stability of the empire...crucial to the sovereign’s power, but also a menace to it” (58-59). His discussion of the position of creoles in relation to both Mother country and colony is helpful in thinking of the instability of *Californios* as creoles in the colonial quartet of Spain, Mexico, California, and later the US.

## **The Sliding Ethnos of *California***

In 1881, prominent *Californio* Don Antonio Coronel stood before a crowd and delivered a speech<sup>12</sup> in commemoration of the 100-year anniversary of the founding of Los Angeles. The speech traces the history of the region since the arrival of the Spaniards that, although somewhat brief, features several losses and gains of power—in the one hundred years after its founding in 1781, Los Angeles, and the rest of California, changed hands from the Spanish crown to the Mexican government after the War of Independence (1810-1821), and to the Anglos after the US-Mexican War (1846-1848). In one way, Coronel’s story of these regime changes is placed in a teleological framework, threaded through a narrative of progress that becomes the object of commemoration on this centennial day. However, a mood of nostalgia hovers over Coronel’s words, gesturing towards a certain sense of loss that exists alongside the progress. Though at moments Coronel lapses into romanticizing the past—reflecting on the Spanish colonial epoch, for instance, he acknowledges that although “carecieron sus habitantes de los medios de educación y sólo tenían las doctrinas que los misioneros habían adoptado... fueron felices por que gozaban de una completa tranquilidad de espíritu [the inhabitants lacked the means of education and only had the doctrines the missionaries had adopted...they were happy because they enjoyed a complete tranquility of spirit]”—his nostalgia is not merely a one-

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<sup>12</sup> This speech was found in the archives of the Coronel Papers. Whether it was delivered or not remains somewhat open; my attempts to find what was written about it in the centennial event coverage in local Los Angeles newspapers (Spanish-language *La Crónica* as well as the *Daily Herald* and the *Daily Commercial*) yielded no results (though the *Daily Commercial* takes care to note Don Antonio led a famous Spanish dance, alluding to his signature role in the Anglo-driven Spanish Revival). This missing piece underscores the erasure of Coronel’s alternative role in the Spanish-language thread of revivalism.

dimensional longing for days gone by, but reflects an anxiety conflictive with the teleology of progress his speech is built around.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, Coronel's story of California's glorious civilizing and developing processes is punctured by a preservationist nostalgia, creating holes through which the region's histories of loss and identity struggle are exposed. Despite this—or rather, because of this—the centennial speech serves as a case study for a pre-Anglo Spanish-language revivalism and its modes of temporal cultural translation.

The rhetoric of progress and attendant anxiety are no more apparent in Coronel's speech than in his reflection upon the final stage of the evolution of California's political regimes: US statehood. Coronel reflects on Los Angeles and its new nation, listing the feats of industry and commerce that within a hundred years brought it from its “primitivo estado natural [primitive natural state]” to one that is “cultura y civilizada [cultured and civilized],” an accomplishment achieved largely through “contact con naciones más adelantadas [contact with more advanced nations]” that delivered California “bárbaros [barbarians]” to modernism.<sup>14</sup> Despite Coronel's apparent approval and even celebration of the region's integration into a national and global economy and civilization, California's fusion with the States is a form of this “contact” that is troubled by contradictions of simultaneous gain and loss,

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<sup>13</sup> Coronel Papers. Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. Translation mine.

<sup>14</sup> Coronel Papers. Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. Translation mine. I would also like to point out the parallel to *Civilización y Barbarie* (Civilization and Barbarism) (1845) by Argentine liberal thinker Facundo Sarmiento, a work whose positivist theories about development and modernization, and their converse, in Argentina have left a lasting impact on discourse about Latin America that resonates here.

development and lack—an anxiety captured through his unstable use of national and ethnic terminology:

Es posible, probable, cierto quizá, que el continuo contacto de más pueblos con otros borre hasta cierto punto el tipo original, la fisonomía propia que los distingue; (como nos está pasando a los Californios) pero este inconveniente por mucho que se abulte estará compensado con mucho y que para nosotros los mejicanos sería sensible referir, pasó una vasta rica y preciosa parte del territorio mejicano a la de los Estados Unidos[.]

[It is possible, probable, certain even, that the continuous contact of more peoples with one another erases, up to a certain point, the original type, the distinctive features that distinguish them; (just as what is happening to *us*, *the Californios*), but this inconvenience as great as it may be will have many compensations, *and for us, the Mexicans*, it would be painful to recall that a vast, rich and precious part of Mexican territory was passed to the United States.]<sup>15</sup>

Here, integration into the US leads to erasure, and the speech's attention to such cultural and political loss outweighs its celebratory message. The double-invocation of the terms *Californio* and *Mejicano* brings together an “us” that shares this mutual loss. Coronel calls upon the Spanish-speaking in the audience to recall the memory of Los Angeles and collectively mourn *their* losses, his successive use of *Californio* and

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<sup>15</sup> Translation and emphasis mine.

*Mejicano* reflecting both Mexico's loss of territory generally and the *Californios*' loss of Alta California specifically after 1848. But with what "us" does Coronel identify with here? One phrase is grammatically simple ("for us, the Mexicans") while the other forces the audience to infer that he also self-identifies as *Californio* through a more complicated structure where *Californio* takes on the status of indirect-object pronoun of the action-verb ("what is happening to us, the *Californios*").<sup>16</sup> Simultaneously reflecting and shaping the political and cultural moment of a once-Spanish and Mexican California now-becoming American, Coronel's linguistic move is informed by a nostalgia distinct from imperialist in that it registers the present moment becoming lost during the time of speaking ("as what is happening to us"), instead of remembering a long-ago past, as when the colonial Spanish epoch gets revived elsewhere in the speech. The anxiety of present loss points to a desperation for continued existence; in this sense, Coronel's nostalgia in this moment functions as a preservationist nostalgia, a mode of resistance to the present Anglo domination, yet which predicts the later imperialist nostalgia that fully flourishes when taken up by the Anglos to romanticize the *Californio* in "their" Spanish Revival. Coronel's intentional term-use enacts a process of temporal cultural translation, demonstrating the contribution of language and ethnic terminology to the evolving collective consciousness of the region's population in this moment of transition.

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<sup>16</sup> The Spanish version of this phrase more fully registers the loss of the *Californios*: "como nos está pasando a los Californios" underscores the indirect-object pronoun twice through "nos" and "los Californios", a structure that does not exist in English but which doubly emphasizes the impact of what is "happening" ("pasando") to those on the receiving end.



At the same time that Coronel addresses his audience as both/and *Californio/Mejicano*, these overlapping racial terms produce a thread through which to trace the region's layered, and at times troubled, histories and identities. Though he refers to the *Californios* collectively as "us," grouping together the Spanish-speaking members of his audience and himself under the category *Californio* as he mourns *our* losses, he obliquely addresses their decline in a curious parenthetical aside—as though he cannot say with full confidence which group he is addressing, or which group he is a part. Immediately following, he invokes another collective "us"—"the Mexicans"—in a rhetorical move that speaks to the sometimes indistinguishable and uneasy relation between the two groups, who in the earlier context of New Spain and then under the Mexican government, experienced overlapping and yet conflicting interests and identities. Essentially all colonial subjects, the populations of Alta California and the rest of Mexico, including Baja California, still clashed over civil and political issues, particularly after the Mexican War for Independence sparked a struggle for *Californio* autonomy from the new Mexican government.<sup>17</sup> Coronel's speech captures the aesthetics and politics of revivalism, showing *Californio* and *Mejicano* to be in-flux—sometimes both/and, sometimes either/or—but ultimately a thread of civil, political, and cultural identities that cannot be fully unraveled from each other as they are called forth to preserve the place of the Spanish-speaking in the

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<sup>17</sup> In fact, in their isolated territory, *Californios* were largely ignorant of the revolutionary rumblings of independence that were stirring in the center of Mexico in the 1810s. In favor of the conservative Spanish crown and resistant to liberalism, they were less supportive of Mexican Independence. (Though there are certainly exceptions: Mariano Vallejo to name perhaps the most famous example). In one example, Pitt humorously describes the famous revolutionary Bouchard's landing at California, whose intention to "imbue it with the 'spirit of liberty'" was unceremoniously met by men who "preferred to stay at home with their panicking womenfolk and children" (1-3).

history and region.<sup>18</sup> Coronel’s terminological use literally speaks to the presence of these multiple identities that, through language, get translated within and inscribed onto the historical consciousness of the region’s Spanish-speaking.<sup>19</sup>

Such oscillation between *Californio* and *Mejicano* registers the ambiguity of racial signifiers in 19<sup>th</sup>-century California (also common in other parts of Mexico with similar creole and mixed-race peoples), but not simply as a symptom of identity confusion, a common view of the *Californios*. Rather, Coronel’s speech shows a sliding ethnos of Californian race, ethnicity, and nation during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the movement among a continuum of Spanish, *Californio*, *Mejicano*—or somewhere in between—revealing the overlapping Spanish and Mexican histories and heritages that get negotiated within the production of *Californio* identity.<sup>20</sup> Tracing further evidence

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<sup>18</sup> In their introduction to *The Squatter and the Don*, Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita argue that Ruiz de Burton’s sense of “Californio,” while primarily class-based, shows the term “means different things at different times”—regional, continental, linguistic/national, religious, and political identities (38-39) are all contained in the term. It is such a perspective on *Californio* which has inspired my inquiry into Coronel, and which also makes me attentive to the slipperiness of the term. Indeed I do not assume all *Californios* used *Californio*—and for that matter, *Mejicano*—the same way.

<sup>19</sup> Coronel’s own background is also subject to temporal cultural translation: a Mexican-born schoolteacher who rose to elite *Californio* class status after striking gold in 1848, Coronel’s ethnic category is itself unstable and translational, slipping between *Mejicano*, *Californio*, and even in one instance, español-americano in a range of both English and Spanish-language documents and histories. In an 1873 letter to Mariano Vallejo for example, who set about an ambitious undertaking of writing the entire history of California and the North American continent, Coronel says the history Vallejo intends to write “será un honre para el pueblo español-americano” [will be an honor for the Spanish-American people]. Coronel Papers. Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

<sup>20</sup> In an 1875 letter to Coronel, this sense of a haunted Spanish past emerges as Vallejo explains his intention for writing the history of the continent: “hacer justicia a nuestros antepasados de gloriosa memoria que con valor y perseverancia lograron redimir de las garras de un millón de indios este pulcro suelo que hoy es la perla más brillante de la poderosa union norte americana” [to do justice to our ancestors glorious memory, who with strength and perseverance were able to redeem from the claws of a million Indians this beautiful land that today is the most precious pearl of the powerful North American union]. This self-conscious history-writing is explicitly revivalist, aligning Vallejo, Coronel, and other *Californios* with the Spanish by direct connection to the Spanish Conquest. Coronel Papers. Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

of an emerging *Californio* consciousness in documents such as *testimonios* throws light on the unstable yet significantly negotiable nature of *Californio* identity, demonstrating it as flexible, adaptable, and essentially translational.

### **Actor-Historians and Auto-Ethnographies**

*Testimonios* from Alta California show how this emerging *Californio* consciousness is constructed in part through nostalgia for a past Spanish identity that is on one level mythologized. But just below this flattened nostalgia lies the presence of an additional historical consciousness at work, one that shows the past is apprehended and remembered not merely as a nostalgic collapsing of time, but attuned to moments of historical rupture and epochal shifts. Such consciousness of the changing material, political, and social realities of the *Californios* becomes apparent as *Californios* perceive them in this different temporal register, discontinuous with the past. Seizing and constructing new temporal contours that separate them from the past that defines them, in their treatment of time *Californios* engage in what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) calls “auto-ethnographic expression”: the colonized subjects’ ethnographic representation of self. In the *testimonios* to follow, *Californios* reframe time itself, not as passive observers but actor-historians, simultaneously participating in and recording the historical changes brought on by the shifting power relations between Spain and Mexico.

In *Testimonios: Early California through the Eyes of Women* (2006), Beebe and Senkewicz retranslate and recontextualize the interviews *Californio* women

provided for Hubert Howe Bancroft and his researchers for the multi-volume *History of California* in the years between 1874-1878.<sup>21</sup> Juana Machado is among the interviewees. The granddaughter of four of the earliest settlers of California in 1781, she bore witness to the many stages and changes that occurred in the short life of Spanish and Mexican California; her recollections of the regime change between Spain and Mexico after the War of Independence in particular reveal the conflicting emotions that shape the *Californio* experience of a discontinuous existence (119-121). Actively registering time not as a smooth continuous flow of nostalgic memory, but disrupted by discontinuities and ends, she marks the day California was declared part of Mexico by her memory of the changing of the Spanish flag to the Mexican flag:

The next day, the soldiers were ordered to cut off their braids. This produced a very unfavorable reaction in everyone—men and women alike. The men were used to wearing their hair long and braided...The order was carried out. I remember when my father arrived home with his braid in his hand. He gave it to my mother. His face showed such sorrow. My mother's face was not any better. She would look at the braid and cry (127-128).

Nostalgic on the surface, Juana Machado's mourning is not limited to a rhetoric that revives a vague and glorious past (as the Anglo-generated Spanish Revival and

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<sup>21</sup> Beebe and Senkewicz pay special attention to the gendered nature of these *testimonios*, arguing they demonstrate *Californio* women's agency in public and political spheres, overlooked by Bancroft's interviewers and translators, and that their retranslation brings out the nuances in language that illustrate this overlooked aspect of California history. See also Genaro M. Padilla, *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican-American Autobiography* (1993) for an excellent chapter that makes a similar argument about the gendered nature of *Californio* women's *testimonios*.

Bancroft's *History of California* sometimes suggest); rather, it is the lack of sentimentality in representing the loss that is most striking about her account. In a detached, matter-of-fact style, Juana Machado distances herself from both her own account and the events themselves: "The order was carried out." As actor in the story, Juana Machado acknowledges her memory of the occurrence; as historian, she removes herself and creates a strictly factual chronology of events. The braid brings together her function as actor-historian: a concrete, physical detail, the cutting of the braid, narrated alongside the changing of the flags, reflects the historical passing of California from Spanish to Mexican hands that Juana Machado both participates in and recounts decades later.<sup>22</sup> Juana Machado's dual narrative act, her apprehension of the moment and her later marking of it through the braid, shows that she registered the loss on the one hand immediately and viscerally, and on the other hand meta-historically, as a punctuated point in the evolution of the region's political and cultural society, coalesced in the concrete image of the braid.

The sense of political and cultural loss, felt especially by conservative *Californios* as the region changed hands from the Spanish crown to the liberal Mexican government, are further intertwined with social and economic losses. The transfer of power also resulted in one of the most massive overhauls of California's economic and social system: secularization of the Missions, which "cut the last cord

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<sup>22</sup> Certainly, California was not "passed" from Spain to Mexico like the spoils of war; it had always been a part of the Mexican territory under New Spain and was simply gaining its independence along with the rest of Mexico. Though some experienced the regime change this way, here, Juana Machado's account registers the transition indeed as a changing of hands of power, represented by her father's literal handing-over of a part of himself, his braid, a regional emblem of Spanish cultural heritage he was forced to cut from his body.

still linking California to its Spanish ‘mother.’ It upset class relations, altered ideology, and shifted the ownership of enormous wealth” (Pitt 7). The 1878 *testimonio*, delivered to Bancroft’s associate Thomas Savage by Angustias de la Guerra, a member of one of the most prominent *Californio* families, captures this historical tension. Her strange retelling of the slow crumbling of the system, a four-page interlude in her *testimonio*, contains a successive listing of all the padres known to her throughout her life—and the dates when they died. “Almost all the missionary Fathers whom I knew in my time died here,” she says, following the assertion by matter-of-factly relaying details of each padre in a series of deaths, narrated as though they constitute a death record, recorded by an authority providing evidence of the end of a society. The reader, or rather listener, as the medium is the *testimonio*, senses the primacy of both the speaker and the impending destruction of a civilization through the shock value of the repeated litany of deaths:

Father Juan Moreno, I believe he died at Santa Inés. I was not here, nor did I find out if he had anything left. Father Pedro Cabot died at San Fernando. His *sínodos* were given to his nephew, who came from Spain. He was the son of one of his brothers. Father Bas Ordaz, at San Gabriel. I believe he left nothing. Father Barona died at San Juan Capistrano. I never knew him. (237)

And so on. De la Guerra’s death record marks the passage of time through the passing on of the padres. The reader/listener is repeatedly confronted with death over and over, from the individual level to the Missions system at large, and finally, to Spanish

society and culture that were fundamentally restructured and, to the *Californios*, threatened under the Mexican regime.<sup>23</sup> As actor in her own account, De la Guerra places her own authority as witness at the forefront of her narrative; as historian, she registers the events meta-historically. Indeed, her preoccupation with quantifying deaths is also a preoccupation with legitimizing her own—and thus other *Californios*'—historical existence, evidenced through an intimate connection to and authoritative knowledge of the Church, a foundational institution of Spanish California. Violent in its excess of death, Angustias' auto-ethnography not only mourns the destruction of Spanish colonial California she witnessed and the fleeting existence of *Californios* under Spanish rule, demonstrated by the fleetingness of the Missions period (1769-1834), but attempts to revive it, as if through her litany the dead padres could themselves be revived. Similar to that of Coronel, Angustias' nostalgia is preservationist, asserting ties to a historical moment in an attempt to legitimize *Californio* existence, past and present, in the Anglo nation in which—and to whom—she delivers the *testimonio* in 1878.

In their treatment of time, the recollections of both Juana Machado and Angustias de la Guerra demonstrate temporal cultural translation, showing the

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<sup>23</sup> Secularization, begun after Mexican Independence in 1821, initiated a struggle between the federal government of Mexico and the California territorial deputation over who would control the newly-freed lands, goods and Indians that previously belonged to the Missions. The federal government wanted to encourage as much colonization of California as possible by redistributing the land to Mexican immigrants and even foreigners; in contrast, the *gente de razón* fought to maintain jurisdiction over secularization and thus their territory, particularly evident in the *Manifiesto a la República Mexicana* (1834). Lisbeth Haas emphasizes this document demonstrates the “*Californios*’ interpretation of freedom and definition of their territorial identity...remained closely tied to the ideas that had sustained the colonial regime” and that part of their reasoning was that *Californios* considered themselves more “Castilian” than other regions of Mexico. See Lisbeth Haas, *Conquest and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936* (1995), pgs. 32-38.

varieties of historical consciousness that take part in Spanish revivalism among the Spanish-speaking as the region becomes Mexico. Recalling they were collected by English-speaking Anglo historian Bancroft, these *testimonios* are themselves a paradigm of temporal cultural translation and contain a multiplicity of translational situations: textual translation between oral and written history, linguistic translation between Spanish and English, and ideological translation between colonizer and colonized, all invested in and informed by the translation between pasts and presents. Delivered to an Anglo-American audience, these *testimonios* are shaped by the realities of that conquest, which overlap with other conquests—and defeats—of the *Californios*' Spanish and Mexican pasts. Apprehending these regime changes in the temporal registers of preservationist nostalgia and the auto-ethnographic opens up a space in which Spanish and/or Mexican identities come into conflict and negotiate a *Californio* culture and identity.

Though it remains unstable, the *Californio* consciousness strengthens in these moments of regime change, exhibited in the structure of these *testimonios*. More than subjects of translation, the accounts of Juana Machado and Angustias de la Guerra are forms of historical representation that Hayden White shows reflect both the annal and the chronicle, two kinds of history writing (now rarely in use). Indeed, in putting together her account of the crumbling Missions system, Angustias de la Guerra selects the events for remembrance—the padres' deaths—for their reflection of the “liminal nature” of the sociopolitical moment of secularization, highlighting the sense of Spanish “culture hovering on the brink of dissolution” which must be established



and preserved in historical memory in the face of the new powers that be (and doubly so, for though she refers specifically to the Mexican context of California, we must not forget her account is told within the American moment, when the Spanish-speaking are facing another loss of land and power in the Anglo dismantling of the rancho system) (7). White underscores both the annal and chronicle lack basic coherence and closure in their form, a distinction that places them apart from historical narrative and where Angustias' account seems to fall categorically, for its ordering of events lacks a clear structure of meaning on its own and it is we, the reader/listener, who must reconstruct it. Though the structure may be discontinuous, the content—the repetition of deaths of the padres—is clearly continuous, an aspect of Angustias' account that, as shown, establishes the existential continuity of the Spanish *Californios* through time. This temporal cultural translation bolsters Angustias' actor-historian role. Not only does she become the all-knowing authority of events, one defining feature of the chronicle, but she places herself directly *in* them, effectively fashioning Spanish *Californio* historical discourse through her own self-conscious narration of it (White 18). Once again Angustias' *testimonio* reflects and serves the auto-ethnographic function of revivalism, showing it to be a self-conscious form of historical representation itself.

### **Becoming *Californio***

Juana Machado's and Angustias de la Guerra's representations of moments of transition and emerging *Californio* consciousness are further informed by California's

paradoxical position in the colonial quartet. On the periphery of both colonial New Spain and the Spanish Mother, the residents of California were well-positioned for a distinct *Californio* consciousness to take root, a nativist sense of identity that, as a Spanish-founded and -governed province on an isolated frontier, led *Californios* to cling mostly to their Spanish civil and cultural, if not provincial or racial, roots. The successful outcome of the war in 1821 subsumed the California territory under Mexico's direct political power, a moment where the nation's independence for both/and *Californios/Mejicanos* resulted in tension between the double identity, which began to operate more as either/or partly due to *Californios'* growing "ambivalence toward Mexico or things Mexican," only to increase with the influx of Mexicans during the Gold Rush (Pitt 6). A kind of protonationalist<sup>24</sup> nativism that relied on claims of essential *Californio* difference based on Spanish civil identity gained momentum in its service of *Californio* political, social and cultural goals. *Testimonios* show this nativist ideology was self-consciously constructed and employed in response to this change of power, another instance of Spanish revivalism unaccounted for in many histories of California's Spanish-speaking that is also traceable through language: like the meta-historical interpretations above, *Californios* engaged in auto-ethnographic construction through the meta-linguistic function of nativist ethnic terms.

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<sup>24</sup> In *Telling Identities: The Californio Testimonios* (1995), Rosaura Sánchez distinguishes protonationalism from nationalism as an ideology of territorial states that are not defined by nationhood yet share "already existing constructs of a community...identities generated by discourses on religion, ethnicity, language, kinship, culture, and earlier 'historical nations'" (228). This configuration is especially fitting to the *Californio* context.

Despite a legacy of obedience to the Spanish monarchy, *Californios* paradoxically adopted liberal Mexican doctrines in order to serve their own fight for *Californio* autonomy (Pitt 4). The revolt against Chico Gutiérrez led by the likes of Mariano Vallejo, José Antonio de la Guerra and Antonio María Osio in 1836 is one such example; in the words of Angustias de la Guerra, “The purpose of the revolt was to make California independent. The fact is that a congress was convened that declared California a free and sovereign state” (246). Louise Pubols also observes that these men “sharpened their pens” and on November 6, 1836 declared in writing California’s immediate sovereignty and freedom from Mexico (148). Angustias de la Guerra’s further reflections capture the strengthening of the *Californio* identity during this political moment: “They [*Californios*] held fast to their idea of having native sons of California govern them, because these men knew their countrymen and they also were aware of the needs of California” (248). The language of “native sons” and “countrymen” in conjunction with *Californio* speak to the feeling held by *Californios* like Angustias de la Guerra that they were not only different from their Mexican counterparts in terms of nationality, but also essentially, by virtue of their birthright—their local roots and identities. Effecting a *Californio* consciousness through a meta-linguistic use of “native sons” and “countrymen”, Angustias de la Guerra’s claims to “native” California birth in the political moment of 1836 and in the textual moment of 1878, when she delivered her *testimonio*, demonstrate their self-conscious revivalist function in the name of the *Californio* identity, reflecting their use across time and

texts and thus their translational nature, in both the linguistic and temporal-cultural modes.

The nativist signifiers that emerged during this time also brought implicit racialization to the fore.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Antonio María Osio boldly declares that his fellow rebels of 1836 “wanted to be called *californios* and not Mexicans,” an assertion that demonstrates the *Californio* category was consciously mobilized based on difference and exclusion to achieve *Californio* political ends (qtd. in Pubols, 148). This difference, established linguistically by Osio, demonstrates how such meta-linguistic translations directly affect the cultural context, as Osio sets up an essential binary between the categories *Californio* and Mexican. Indeed, the *Californio* identity emerged partly out of opposition to the growing numbers of Mexicans in California, for after Independence, “Mexico continued to use California as a dumping ground for its unwanted elements,” and shipped its ex-convicts North (Monroy 157). Pitt succinctly summarizes the impact on *Californio* identity: “Resisting the ‘degraded’ influences of Mexico made men conscious of their California birth. In response to the new identity, the local nomenclature changed, until the native-born ceased calling themselves *Españoles* or *Mexicanos* and began to insist on the name *Californios*” (7). While perhaps not identifying themselves literally with the term *Español*, the adoption of the term *Californio* still carried with it many of the ideologies contained within *Español*, rooted in the racial and social hierarchies of the Spanish Missions system. Other terms were taken up to further differentiate these “degraded” ex-

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<sup>25</sup> *Californio* nativist sentiments also actively forget the historical natives of the region, the indigenous.

convicts and itinerant laborers from *Californios*, who classified them as Mexican “cholos,” the derogatory signifier against which they identified themselves that we will see gestures back to the earlier linguistic moment of *gente de razón/gente sin razón*. These linguistic moments, equivalent instances (at different times) of temporal cultural translation in revivalism, contribute to the codifying of the social and cultural relations of Spanish and Mexican California, and provide an early context for racializing practices in the region.

Returning to Juana Machado, we see the *Californios*’ pathologizing of Mexicans through the term “cholo.” Recalling the arrival of a group of Mexicans in 1842, she states: “[Governor] Michelterona brought with him a large retinue of officers and an infantry batallion that our people called *cholos*. The batallion...was made up of thieves and criminals taken from the prisons in Mexico as well as prisoners from Chapala...We were so afraid of them that we hid everything” (139). Angustias de la Guerra similarly refers to these *cholos* as “consummate thieves” and recounts how they robbed her (259-60). Contemptuous labeling of Mexicans, plainly criminalizing and demonizing, is a function of revivalism which sought to define and distinguish a *Californio* identity superior to Mexicans from central Mexico. Angustias’ recollection suggests these regional and class differences between *Californios* and *cholos* overlap with racial differences. She paints an image of peaceful *Californios* over and against an image of these Mexicans as downright violent: “I must confess that the *Californios* never gave signs of favoring human bloodshed like their compatriots in *other* parts of Mexico” (239, emphasis mine). In

her active othering of Mexicans, Angustias not only refutes the notion of California and Mexico as a unified Nation, her reference to *other* parts of Mexico spatially separating the *Californios* from their “compatriots,”<sup>26</sup> but she effectively dehumanizes Mexicans as barbaric lovers of “human bloodshed,” a rhetorical move that establishes the *Californios* as racially superior to the Mexicans and anticipates the kind of racialization of Mexicans that becomes socially and structurally implemented by the Anglos throughout the following century.

These linguistic moments provide early contexts for *Californios*’ conscious self-definition and self-distinction vis-à-vis the Mexican population.<sup>27</sup> I read the linguistic moment of *Californio* and its active, self-conscious mobilization after the Mexican War for Independence as a translation of the earlier linguistic moment of *gente de razón*, a category used interchangeably with *Californio* since the settling of California effectively created a creole class. Douglas Monroy employs the term when he explains, “the *gente de razón* needed to find a way to distinguish themselves from these migrant Mexicans, who were the same race as they. Consequently, they began to identify themselves more as Californians than as Mexicans,” echoing the process Antonio María Osio and Angustias de la Guerra engage in above (158). Monroy

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<sup>26</sup> Later in her *testimonio*, she also states that *Californios*, despite their North-South rivalry between Baja and Alta California, were still united “against the Mexicans from the mainland,” invoking a spatial separation between the territories, as if California were an island off the mainland of Mexico (265).

<sup>27</sup> I am particularly interested in the post-Independence moment, and how the *Californios* dealt with the simultaneous problem (for them) of the rising Mexican population and struggle for autonomy from the central Mexican government. However, it should also be noted that the *Californios* also sought to differentiate themselves from the Mexicans after the Anglo conquest (1846-1848), when appearing Euramerican was a way to maintain a place in the new social order (Almaguer 4). This certainly plays into both *testimonios* of Juana Machado and Angustias de la Guerra, who deliver them to an Anglo audience in the late 1870s.

continues, “they came to associate their very name, *gente de razón*, with Europeanness” (158). Yet Monroy’s contention overlooks the fact that *gente de razón*, a term used to describe the Spanish and creole classes of California since the Spanish colonial period, has always contained an ideology of Europeanness. As do *Californio* and *cholo*, the early linguistic moment of *gente de razón* and its counterpart *gente sin razón* articulates the *Californios*’ self-definition and self-distinction from the indigenous and mestizo populations. A close reading of the construction of *gente de razón* and *gente sin razón* and the social groups they correspond to resonates with Benedict Anderson’s observation that the growth of creole communities in the Americas “led inevitably to the appearance of...Euramericans, not as occasional curiosities but as visible social groups,” and that “their emergence permitted a style of thinking which foreshadows modern racism” (59). Spanish revivalism takes up *Californio* for the very reason that it translates to *gente de razón*, and by extension Europeanness, demonstrating *Californio* consciousness-making is invested in an essentialized Spanishness that reflects and foreshadows early racial moments in California.

Hierarchies of race and class cut across this essentialized Spanishness. McWilliams reminds us *gente de razón* means literally “the people of reason,” a sort of catchall category that incorporated the European-born Spaniards, the Euramerican creoles, and Mexicans of prominent landed status—in short, the non-Indian and non-working class. Rooted in the context of Spanish-Indian labor relations of the Missions, early in the colonial period there developed clear dichotomies between

these European and non-European groups, based on who possessed productive means—most importantly in California, land—and those who labored—that is, the Indians (Monroy 100-101). Yet the interchangeable categories of *Californio* and *gente de razón* and the groups that became collapsed under them were not drawn by class lines alone; rather, these class lines were cut by “racial fault lines,” to borrow a phrase from Tomás Almaguer (1994), further reflecting Anderson’s words that such a growth of creole communities foreshadows early racialization practices in the Americas.

These foreshadowings can be found in tracing the development of *gente de razón* in the Spanish colonial period as the unmarked category in opposition to the marked category of the Indian. Monroy writes of the Spanish padres’ intent to indoctrinate the Indians into Catholicism, describing the process as one of de-naturalizing the Indians’ “savage” habits and desires, so that it was not nature or the body that controlled their beliefs and behaviors, but rather, mind and reason—that is, *razón* (57). This emphasis on “reason” has clear origins in the European Enlightenment and its Cartesian philosophies that privileged the rational mind. In the roughly seventy years of the Missions system, however, it became apparent that as a whole the padres had failed to successfully instill Catholicism and its attendant European *razón* into the Indians. They woefully deemed them *gente sin razón*, “people without reason,” whose lack would forever relegate them to savagery (57). While Indians became essentialized as simply *gente sin razón*, the category *de razón* strengthened in opposition, and the term “came to be used interchangeably with



‘español’ to mean simply ‘non-Indian’” (Pubols 134).<sup>28</sup> This early racialization of the Indians in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century thus contributed to a sharper *gente de razón*—and thereby Spanish and *Californio*—sense of racial identity vis-à-vis the indigenous that was also linked to early notions of whiteness,<sup>29,30</sup> an ideological pattern rooted in European thought that would be repeated under the Mexican regime by privileging the Spanish over the Mexican referent, or what McWilliams has named the Fantasy Heritage.

The “racialized nature of class relations” strengthened under the rancho economic system in Mexican California, when it became further apparent that in terms of the landed elite and rancho laborers, “appearances, racial and sartorial, distinguished those who owned land and those who labored on it” (Almaguer 101, Monroy 102). Almaguer elaborates the structuring of class and race relations in this land-tenure system of the Mexican period, making explicit the relationship between race and labor: the Indians provided the bulk of hard, unpaid labor, and existed at the bottom of the hierarchy as dependents of the rancheros; slightly above the Indians were the mestizos, skilled and semi-skilled laborers who worked in towns and on ranchos for pay (47-48). The rancho class, who owned the land and means of

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<sup>28</sup> An 1813 questionnaire given by Spanish officials inquired into the caste system of Alta California, yielding responses from missionaries that echo the construction of *gente de razón/gente sin razón*. Missionaries at Santa Barbara wrote: “It cannot be known with any certainty into how many castes the inhabitants of the presidio adjoining this mission are divided. Although it is very well known that not all are genuine Spaniards either of European or American origin, yet at least they regard themselves as such. Furthermore if they were told to the contrary they would consider it an affront, so we are unable to state anything further on this particular matter.” See “Genetics and the *Castas* of Colonial California,” by John R. Johnson and Joseph G. Lorenz, in *Alta California* (2010), page 159.

<sup>29</sup> Responding to the Spanish questionnaire of 1813, Missionaries at San Gabriel wrote: “We have to attend to a town of whites who are known as *gente de razón*” (qtd. in Johnson and Lorenz, 159).

<sup>30</sup> In *A Description of California in 1828*, José Bandini writes, “The inhabitants of these pueblos are white people, and in order to distinguish them from the Indians they are commonly called *gente de razón*” (qtd. in Rosales, 86).

production and essentially did not perform work,<sup>31</sup> were at the top of the hierarchy; regardless of racial background, the landed class was the elite class, the *gente de razón*, and defined themselves ethnically, as noted before, with the interchangeable terms “Spanish” and *Californio*. One example is the story of the famous Pico family: Santiago de la Cruz Pico was one of the original settlers of California, a child of mulatto and mestizo parents, who was granted Rancho San José de García de Simi in 1795; his grandchildren, notably Pío Pico, came to govern California, amass terrific wealth, and “epitomiz[e] those with the title of don in the pastoralist imagery of rancho California” (Monroy 135-6). Don Pío Pico’s story is not uncommon; most *Californios* were of mixed descent. But it is precisely for this reason that constructing “Spanishness” over and against the indigenous, and the Mexican, was critical for the *Californio* class. It became even moreso after the Anglo takeover in 1846 which led to the dispossession of the landed class; effectively proletarianized under the colonizer, the *gente de razón* could be collapsed economically and socially with the mestizo and Indian working-class, a problem which led to their “racial ambiguity” in the eyes of the Anglo (Almaguer). Hence the *Californio* desire for distinction, which they sought through reviving their class and racial superiority over the Mexicans whom they otherwise structurally resembled.

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<sup>31</sup> This lack of labor on the part of the rancheros, combined with their penchant for festivities such as *bailes*, is what led the enterprising Anglos to label the Spanish-speaking as “lazy” and “indolent,” a trope that has persisted to the present day. As Almaguer and Monroy point out, however, not working the land and hosting elaborate activities were significant markers of gentility, social status, and hospitality for the *Californios*, elements of a different value-system (Almaguer 52-53, Monroy 138-139).

Thus the Spanish revivalism by the Spanish-speaking is invested in racial, classist thinking, a feature not unlike the Anglo-driven Spanish Revival which also privileges the Spanish over the region's Mexican and Indian heritages, but differs in terms of its work. As do the various instances of nostalgia examined here, this form of revivalism serves a preservationist function: *Californios* sought to construct an ethnicity and social standing that would legitimize and guarantee a continuing existence throughout the regime changes that made their land, autonomy and culture subject to neocolonial powers. *Californio* race and ethnicity are themselves instances of temporal cultural translation, constructions that shift through time along with the changing social, political, and cultural terrain of California, unstable within the colonial quartet. Examining this other alternative revival, overlooked by the named Spanish Revival and its attention to architecture, gives voice not only to revivalism's silenced partners but also to language's lesser-known role in the aesthetics and politics of the revival impulse and its racial thinking.

### **Closure: The Problem of the “real” Revival**

Neither strand of Spanish Revivalism, the historically recognized Anglo-codified “Spanish Revival” nor the less-recognized Spanish-language revival, was originated by Helen Hunt Jackson; nor can either one be traced to 1888, as McWilliams marks its beginning. Neither is it, as McWilliams also calls it, a “Fantasy Heritage,” a term which dismisses the Spanish-speaking revival impulse as an illegitimate form of expression in comparison to the Anglo-generated,

institutionalized and historicized “Spanish Revival.” Once again echoing Anderson, Spanish revivalism is the style in which communities, like that of the *Californios*, are imagined, and in which the invention of tradition becomes established through a multiplicity of linguistic and temporal cultural translations.

In its imaginings, revivalism actually creates historiographical narratives. While Angustias de la Guerra’s death record shows itself to be a chronicle, a self-conscious form of historical representation, on its own it does not qualify as “narrative” because it fails to ascribe the coherency and closure that White argues is necessary to narrative’s ends. But on a larger scale, when looked at as a cultural movement, both strands of revivalism, including their competing values and interests and distinct aesthetics and politics, demonstrate what White has us further stop to consider: “events are real not because they occurred, but because, first, they were remembered”, and furthermore, remembered in such a way that their telling entails a plot, a connection of time and events, an order of meaning by which they become a narrative (20). History is thus no longer taken as “real” by virtue of its having happened, but by its status as events of remembrance, emplotted within a story and connected to a beginning, middle, and end—that desired offering of closure—which all work to establish a historical and cultural legacy in a culture and time. The Spanish and *Californio* histories that get revived by the Anglo and Spanish-speaking communities both seek to establish roots and cultural and social relevancy—the Anglo in order to fashion a romantic Spanish history and place in their new territory, the Spanish-speaking in an attempt to retain theirs—moves for which they have both

been accused of cultural appropriation and fabrication. But the impulse to revive is really the impulse to narrativize, to put past events into coherent meaning, and narrativity, White contends, is necessarily imaginary, an invention of historical order and closure (24).

Thus whether events be true or untrue, it is through their narrativizing that they become “real,” and take their place in history. Looking for moments that reveal the workings of Spanish-language revivalism through texts such as Coronel’s speech and the *Californio testimonios* I draw on here shows its place in the historicity of the region. Overwhelmed by the Anglo-generated and-codified “Spanish Revival,” the muted revival of the Spanish-speaking shows its marginalization is partly a result of the narrativizing of the Anglos, whose story of Spanish history and culture, invented upon acquiring the region, becomes institutionalized in the *Ramona*-inspired tourist industry, the Missions-style architecture revival, and in mainstream, traditional history texts, written by and for the English-speaking Anglo. The popular reading of Helen Hunt Jackson as the origin-point of the practice of Spanish Revivalism has itself been institutionalized through text, fundamental to the historiography of the Spanish Revival phenomenon and the overall history of Southern California, with the similar result that it actually becomes the voice of the “real” history of the region, obscuring the voice of the *Californio*.

What White helps us see as the process of Spanish Revival becoming “real” enables us to read it beyond claims of its truth/falsity, and instead as a culture-making process that produces, through multiple translations, an invented tradition that shapes

the built-environment—the “real” in the sense of physical, tangible space—and, perhaps more importantly, the popular historical imagination, whose legacy and impact on the region and its peoples are arguably just as, if not moreso, “real.” Some scholars, Phoebe S. Kropp, for example, refer to Ramonism and the Anglo-generated Spanish Revival as the making of “cultural memory,” while others, such as Dydia Delyser, term it “social memory.” Call it what you will, its significance lies in the fact that fiction becomes just that—fact—by active meaning-making processes by different agents and speakers. Indeed, we see in the historically unnamed Spanish revival how speakers become actor-historians, their language inscribing meaning into the culture through auto-ethnographic representation and intentional terminological use that, regardless of roots in either truth or falsity, contribute to a collective sense of ethnic and historical consciousness.

Time’s role is still central to these acts of narrative and memory. Pasts and presents frame, and get reframed by, both strands of revivalism, influencing each one’s aesthetics and politics, and ultimately providing the contours that shape the sense of historical existence. Despite their varying levels of recognition by formal discourse and disciplines, the histories of each group are created as such through the narrativizing of revivalism, for which time is used not simply as signposts of events, but is itself reconceived and restructured to create temporal inclusions and exclusions for each group to assert their historical and cultural legacy: the work of temporal cultural translation.

*Ramona* Speaker-Agents and Double Agents:  
Who is the Author?

The linguistic and cultural translatability exhibited in the sliding ethnoses of *Californio* ethnicity, race, and nation are tied together in the figure of Don Antonio Coronel. A range of both English and Spanish speakers, including the Don himself, construct his ethnicity on a sliding scale, moving among the ethnic signifiers of *Mejicano*, *Californio*, and *gente de razón* in different social and political contexts, a phenomenon reflected in his transformation from humble Mexican status into elite *Californio* when he struck gold in 1848. While writing the history of the “Spanish-speaking” of North America (to again borrow McWilliams’ term) Mariano Vallejo calls upon Coronel as an agent of the multiple and conflicting California histories: invoking Coronel as a symbol of Mexican history for his prominent position in the Mexican government during the years of its dismantling, Vallejo simultaneously references him as one of “los viejos Californios,” who “poco a poco van desapareciendo” [the Old Californios...who are disappearing little by little],<sup>32</sup> the very reason Vallejo provides for the urgency of the project and for Coronel’s investment in it.<sup>33</sup> Coronel’s translational ethnic status is thus reflected not only in his own use of *Californio* and *Mejicano* in his centennial speech in 1881, but also in texts

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<sup>32</sup> My translation. Letter to Coronel, 23 May 1875, Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

<sup>33</sup> Vallejo’s first personal attempt to write the history of North America from the point of view of the Spanish-speaking began in 1867 but was tragically thwarted when his 900-page manuscript (along with 12,000 books in his library) were destroyed by a house fire, a freak accident that oddly reflects the *Californio* struggle for historicization in the region. He did not take up the project again until the mid-1870s. See Padilla, *My History Not Yours* (1993), pgs. 77-108.

and projects that get taken up in the larger phenomenon of revivalism among California's Spanish-speaking like Mariano Vallejo. Yet this malleable function of Coronel's ethnicity is not restricted to this historically less-recognized Spanish-language revivalism. Coronel's shifting ethnicity is also a major mechanism in the named and recognized—we might say, recalling Hayden White, narrativized and historicized—Anglo-generated Spanish Revival as well.

Indeed, Don Antonio Coronel is a major player in mainstream histories of Southern California and the Spanish Revival. Reflecting the imperialist nostalgia behind what McWilliams calls the “Fantasy Heritage,” these histories name Coronel among the most emblematic *Californios* of “old Spanish California,” actively forgetting his Mexican heritage and enshrining him as the essential Spanish Don, embodying a bygone era. This trend is further informed by *Ramona*, a novel simultaneously reflective and anticipatory of the Spanish Revival moment of the 1880s which delivered the perfect mix of nostalgia and sentimentalism that satisfied Anglo desire for the development of California's future based on its colorful, tragically romantic Spanish past. To Anglos, Coronel embodied this past, for the novel's romantic Spanish setting and characters were (and are) said to have been largely based on the Coronel home and family, an element of the *Ramona* myth for which Jackson is largely credited. Documents from the Anglo-generated Spanish Revival informed by this “Ramonism” show Coronel's heightened *Californio*-Spanishness and downplayed Mexicanness, a highlighting of Coronel's Spanish cultural and ethnic markers over his Mexican ones which reflect the Spanish



Revival's construction of characters and cultural terrain according to Anglo desire for a Spanish California.

Coronel is thus an actor in both revivals, each distinguished by its competing values and interests. The Anglo imagining of California through Coronel, *Ramona* and the Spanish Revival fever influenced the marketing of a Hispanicized Southern California lifestyle and its booming consumer and tourist industry, marked in Spanish-style buildings, Anglo-influenced "fiestas" and Spanish-language street names, a strand of revivalism which stands in stark contrast to that of the Spanish-speaking. Many literary critics and historians emphasize the former revival's appropriation of the latter's implicit social and political critique and resistance to the Anglos, rightly pointing to its repackaging into a simplified longing and romance for a Spanish past, made consumable for Anglo audiences. In taking this comparative approach, however, my intention is not to separate and oppose the revivals, but rather take them as interlocutors of two intersecting forms of cultural memory. Indeed, the question I am pursuing is not "whose revival?", but rather, who's performing the reviving, and what is the moment or origin that is being remembered? As projects of cultural memory, both post Anglo-conquest strands of revivalism are self-consciously invested in constructing a past to create a present and future identity: divorcing and upholding the Spanish from the Mexican/Indian past in the Anglo-generated Spanish Revival serves the Anglo goal of achieving an American Mediterranean<sup>34</sup> whereas recalling the glory and eminence of pre-Mexican-American-War *ranchero* and

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<sup>34</sup> I allude here to Susan Gillman's work, which traces the emergence of the "American Mediterranean" construct and its multiple cultural meanings through time.

Mission days asserts social and political agency for the *Californios* who were quickly being disenfranchised under the American government.

At the same time, these two interlocutors speak to each other. The revival of the Spanish-speaking becomes incorporated into—indeed becomes central to—the Anglo-generated Spanish Revival, demonstrated by texts like Hubert Howe Bancroft’s *History of California* and Helen Hunt Jackson’s novel *Ramona* that both translated, linguistically and culturally, the stories and memories of locals like Coronel.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the figure of Don Coronel brings both texts and both revivals into dialogue. His dual role consists of his Mexican-*Californio* identity, however unstable, in the preservationist function of the Spanish-language revival, and of his emblematic *Californio*-Spanishness, perceived to be tragically disappearing from Southern California and thus “revived” by Anglos. Much as the *testimonios* of the historically unnamed revival remain segregated in mainstream histories, the silencing of evidence gets duplicated in and by *Ramona*: Coronel becomes Jackson’s own silent partner, known by Jackson’s readers only as her primary informant, his *testimonios* read mostly in terms of his heightened Spanish caricature produced by the novel and its afterlife (Kropp 32).<sup>36</sup> Reconceiving the revivalisms gives voice to alternative

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<sup>35</sup> Coronel was summoned by Bancroft’s assistant Thomas Savage in 1877 for Bancroft’s *History of California Project* (letter to Coronel from Manuel Torres, Coronel Papers. Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County). Coronel’s *testimonios* were ultimately transcribed in a document now known as “Cosas de California.”

<sup>36</sup> Kropp underscores that, like other *Californios*, Coronel’s *testimonios* romanticized the Spanish and Mexican past to legitimize their place in the present, a nostalgia taken by Anglos as evidence of *Californios*’ discontinued existence. It is only fairly recently, with the publishing of *My History Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography* (1993) and *Telling Identities: The Californio Testimonios* (1995) that Coronel has been repositioned as an agent in his own right within a *Californio*-generated historical discourse.

literary-cultural histories and their agents like Coronel. In reconceiving revivalism I also reconceive Helen Hunt Jackson's author-function: Jackson is not creator but synthesizer of the Spanish revival impulse and moment,<sup>37</sup> and her role in *Ramona* is one of invisible translator-ethnographer of *Californio* life and culture.

### **Invisible Translators and Ghostwriters**

From George Wharton James to Dydia Delyser and Phoebe Kropp, literary critics and historians alike speculate on the “real” *Ramona*.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the question begs its own asking: an overwhelming absence pervades Helen Hunt Jackson's work, for the author makes no mention of her sources in *Ramona*. Jackson does not acknowledge her informants, nor the heavily involved research and interview process that takes place behind the scenes of her novel—variously in English and Spanish—of which Coronel and his wife Mariana are main subjects.<sup>39</sup> Effectively hiding this evidence, Jackson disappears Coronel and the rest of her informants from whose

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<sup>37</sup> Indeed, crediting Jackson as originator of Spanish Revival is to perform our own forgetting of other literary and historical pasts—our own imperialist nostalgia.

<sup>38</sup> James' *Through Ramona's Country* (1909) traces the “facts and fictions” of *Ramona*, including its geography; Delyser's *Ramona Memories* (2005) considers “the real” in *Ramona* popular culture and tourism; and Kropp's *California Vieja* (2008) is the most recent installment in a line of works that discusses the debates about the “real” *Ramona*. It is also Kropp who refers to Jackson's informants as her “ghostwriters.”

<sup>39</sup> Unlike Bancroft for instance, who transcribed Coronel's words in “Cosas de California,” Jackson does not attribute Coronel directly; as well, she neglects to mention who she spoke to at Rancho Camulos, the Ventura County ranch she visited in 1882 which is said to be the basis for the Moreno estate in *Ramona*. For a fascinating history of Rancho Camulos, see Smith, *This Land Was Ours* (1977).

*testimonios* she constructs—I would say translates—a Spanish Southern California.<sup>40</sup> Jackson’s non-transparent process of linguistic and cultural translation renders her informants her ghostwriters, and she herself becomes a version of what Lawrence Venuti (1995) calls “the invisible translator,” who eludes showing the life of her work, and her own self, to be either subject or agent of translation. Jackson’s evidence exists, but only paratextually: letters between Jackson and the Coronels, as well as others connected to Jackson’s literary world outside the novel, document the linguistic and cultural translations that occur while Jackson gathers sources, visits ranchos, and writes the novel; yet, such documentation of her role of translator-ethnographer actually fuels the speculation and theory of Jackson-as-Spanish-California-originator.<sup>41</sup>

Jackson’s subordination of primary informants, predominately Don Coronel, contributes to this inflation of her own role. Hiding her sources as she does brings about her own inadvertent elevation into absolute icon for the *Ramona* myth and phenomenon. The *Ramona* industry grows around her, and expands to incorporate the

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<sup>40</sup> In fact, Jackson doubly disappears her informants: Abbot Kinney, Jackson’s Spanish-English interpreter—her literal translator—who accompanies her throughout her travels in Southern California, is also left an unacknowledged source in Jackson’s translation process, a matter to be further discussed.

<sup>41</sup> Jackson writes to the Coronels in November, 1883: “I am going to write a novel, in which will be set forth some Indian experiences in a way to move people’s hearts... The thing I want most, in the way of help, from you, is this: I would like an account [of the Temecula Indians ejection]... If you think of any romantic incidents, either Mexican or Indian... please write them out for me” (Mathes 299). In February 1884, she also requests that the Coronels “ask those Indian women... the words for *blue eyes*” to translate and use for the name of Ramona’s and Alessandro’s baby (“Eyes of the Sky”) (316). Jackson makes additional requests for historical evidence from others like Ephraim Morse, prominent member of San Diego civil society, and Jackson’s letters to editors Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Charles Dudley Warner, confidant Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and other close friends document aspects of her research and writing process. See Mathes, *The Indian Reform Letters of Helen Hunt Jackson, 1879-1885* (1998), 225-352.

already ongoing Spanish Revival that would eventually credit her with its own origins, a contradiction that catches up to Jackson herself: the inflation process ultimately leads to her deflation. For while Jackson sets in motion the conditions for a myth that inscribes itself into California land and culture, it also sweeps her up in its path, and in its relentless expansion, disappears her as well: both Ramonism and the Spanish Revival name Jackson as their arbiters, enshrining her in the historical narrative of Southern California as the creator of two intertwining cultural phenomena for which she is ironically *not* singlehandedly responsible. The process that inadvertently shows that she is not the singular origin is the very one that says that she is. Jackson's authorship is overwhelmed by this inflation into icon, which obscures her actual author-function, and, to use an analog to the intransitive verb "to disappear" that stresses the active, invisibilizes the story she intended to tell.<sup>42</sup> In this way Jackson is rendered a doubly invisible translator: both self and informants become disappeared.

#### Extra-Ramona, beyond-Ramona, and para-Ramona works

Adding to the contradictions around her authorship, ironically, Jackson does name her informants for her extra-*Ramona* works. In "Echoes in the City of the Angels," one of a series of travel narratives written for *Century Magazine* in 1881,

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<sup>42</sup> Jackson intended for *Ramona* to be a protest novel to rally Americans against the maltreatment of the Indians, which her first "Indian book" (as she referred to it) *A Century Of Dishonor* failed to do. It is well known from her letters that Jackson felt this book failed because it relied on dense, heavy empirical data; for this reason, I suggest she did not want any factual evidence directly connected with *Ramona*. See Mathes, *The Indian Reform Letters of Helen Hunt Jackson 1879-1885* (1998), 293-299.

Jackson illustrates a condensed and highly romanticized history of Los Angeles and its Spanish founders, literally naming Coronel among them: “of whom—by his most gracious permission—I shall speak by his familiar name, Don Antonio” (193). An elaborate description of the Coronel adobe’s Spanish and Mexican relics, including saints’ images, Mission artifacts, and Spanish-language books, evokes the aura of a California descended from Spain and Mexico (which always privileges Spanish over Mexican cultures and histories, as McWilliams reminds us), the objects serving as markers for Jackson’s sentimental stories of Coronel’s past. Though “Echoes” relays many details of Coronel’s involvement in *Californio* affairs, adventures and uprisings, the Don’s life becomes eclipsed by the following shadow of Ramonism, and not just due to Jackson’s characteristic nostalgia. Extra-*Ramona* texts show Coronel’s multiple histories and heritages are incorporated as punctuation marks to a larger history, the life of the *Ramona* myth. No better evidence can be found than Anglo-American extra-*Ramona* writings symptomatically titled “The House of Don Antonio Coronel,” “‘Ramona’ and the Old Coronel House,” and “Glimpses of Old Spanish Days in Southern California.” In every case, the Don’s multi-dimensional Spanish-Mexican-Californio role is essentially reduced to agent only of *Ramona* and the Anglo-codified Spanish Revival, his *Ramona*-related “Spanishness” becoming the lowest common denominator. Historically speaking, this is the “known” Coronel, divorced from and upheld over all his other identities; only after Jackson, *Ramona* and claims of Coronel as primary source in extra-*Ramona* texts did this image of Coronel become crystallized, taken up and placed at the center of the Anglo-

generated Spanish Revival, the result once again of English-language documentation and history-writing.

Ramonaism and mainstream histories have likewise created the icon Helen Hunt Jackson, only one aspect of which is her inflated role as creator of the Spanish Revival. Jackson is traditionally read as a regionalist and travel writer, whose work is typically categorized alongside many other prolific female authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (such as Sarah Orne Jewett, for example) who traveled and wrote, often sentimentally and nostalgically, about the rapid disappearance of rural, traditional US lifeways in the face of expanding industrialist capitalism.<sup>43</sup> While Jackson's work can certainly be read in terms of these literary categories, *Ramona*, taken together with the novel's para-, beyond-, and extra-*Ramona* life, can break with traditional readings based on genre or the novel's comparisons to "the real."<sup>44</sup> Instead of being placed in either of these boxes, Helen Hunt Jackson as author-translator can emerge both as producer and product of linguistic and cultural translation. But "invisible translator" is only one half of Jackson's author-role; "ethnographer" completes her compound function. Indeed, 19<sup>th</sup>-century regionalism can be defined as a form of "ethnic imagining" that qualifies as a version of early ethnography; just so, many of Jackson's works including *Ramona* take their characters as ethnographic subjects (Brodhead 177, 121). More than a dual role comprised of two distinct functions, reading Jackson as an

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<sup>43</sup> See *Helen Hunt Jackson: A Literary Life* (2003) by Kate Phillips for an in-depth discussion of Jackson as a regionalist and travel writer.

<sup>44</sup> See "Whose Protest Novel? *Ramona*, the *Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Indian*" (2012) by Susan Gillman for further discussion on the limitations of truth/falsity comparisons between *Ramona* and "the real," as well as how *Ramona* can offer new ways to read comparatively as a whole.

invisible translator-ethnographer allows us to read ethnography and translation as two modes within a single function; in the words of social anthropologist Talal Asad, who acknowledges that the anthropologist as cultural translator creates her subject through the very act of writing about it, “the construction of cultural discourse and its translation [are] facets of a single act” (160).

### ***Ramona* Times and Other Pasts**

The extra-, beyond-, and para-textual life of *Ramona* demonstrates the novel itself is a node in the series of temporal cultural translations in Spanish Revivalism, evidenced first by the outgrowth of *Ramona*-derived texts as cited above, and next by the novel’s multiple adaptations, from novel to pageant and even film, all of which inscribe the *Ramona*-inspired Spanish cultural memory of Southern California. This macro-scale afterlife of *Ramona* gestures towards the novel’s ethnographic function, further illustrated on a micro-scale, at the level of narrative. Indeed, Jackson’s writing is invested in the enterprise of the ethnographer, cultural translation. “[A] social practice rooted in the modes of life,” cultural translation seeks to bring foreign life and thought into cultural coherence, a process of inscribing the Other that Asad points out is inherently subject to the uneven power relations between dominant and dominated cultures and languages (151, 156). *Ramona* inscribes the Other through its infamous use of nostalgia, a temporal mode of cultural translation often found in 19<sup>th</sup>-century ethnography. In much the same way anthropologist Johannes Fabian (1983) theorizes the function of temporality as an otherizing tool in ethnography, imperialist



nostalgia in *Ramona* collapses and contains the Spanish-Mexican-Californio-Indian cultures and histories and relegates them to a homogeneous and essentially Other past—a temporal move through which the translation of the Southern California culture is made for *Ramona*'s readers. Imperialist nostalgia, as we saw in its naming by Rosaldo (1989), expresses the colonizer's mourning of the passing of "the traditional" as a result of his civilizing process. The ideology of imperialist nostalgia naturalizes the colonizer's dominance, establishes his innocence, and serves his desire for preserving the sacred, rapidly-disappearing past.

It needs no repeating that *Ramona* illustrates this ideology. Jackson has come under great fire by historians and literary critics alike for "misrepresenting" her subjects in *Ramona* and "starting" a Spanish Revival through her use of the fictional construct of imperialist nostalgia.<sup>45</sup> But, as we saw in the context of Spanish-language revivalism, beyond representing culture, history and peoples based on notions of truth and falsity, it is the way time itself is conceived, constructed, and framed by actor-historians themselves that performs the cultural work. Jackson's compressing, collapsing, and conflating of time periods show one way cultural translation, and its close cousin ethnography, are achieved. Jackson, a Northeasterner, mourns and

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<sup>45</sup> McWilliams criticizes Jackson for her "Pre-Raphaelite" romanticization of Alessandro and Ramona and "most extravagant" veneration of the Franciscans, which he not only critiques for its historical inaccuracy ("such Indians were surely never seen upon this earth," he says, and implies the Franciscans were also guilty of mistreating the Indians) but argues "it is this legend which largely accounts for the 'sacred' as distinguished from the 'profane' history of the Indian" (1946: 75). Similarly, Starr dismisses the social protest in Jackson's novel, "which moved in the direction of a glorification of a Southern California suffused with the golden memory of pastoral days" and whose idealization gave the Missions revival its "biggest boost" (396-397). For Carl Gutiérrez-Jones, the novel sets the stage for a "historical amnesia", influencing "neo-Spanish 'revival'" and "a newly exoticized 'Mission' culture", and ultimately denies "an entire historical period representing *mestizaje* (the mixing of racial heritages) itself" (58, 60, 68).

resents her nation's maltreatment of the Indians, the subject of her main moral and political crusade, and folds the long history of their suffering into the shorter 19<sup>th</sup>-century struggle of the Spanish and Mexican Californians in *Ramona*.<sup>46</sup> This flattening of temporalities de-historicizes and conflates cultures and histories, containing them to a past glossed with mournful sentiment, and ultimately achieves what Rosaldo calls "a portrait [that] presents the culture as a tableau frozen in...time" (78). This temporal disjunction in *Ramona* enacts a still-life portrait of Southern California history, culture and ethnicity. Representing culture as static-in-time in this way is indeed a main tool used by the traditional ethnographer to create a fixed, essentialized subject, translating and actively inscribing the cultural Other for the reader/viewer.

The dichotomy between observer and observed that gets set up by representing culture-as-tableau is no more apparent in *Ramona* than in the scenes with the famous veranda, where Jackson captures all of California's cultures in one frame for ethnographic analysis. Imaging the veranda for her readers as though it were a stage with characters performing—much like an ethnographic exhibition, fashionable in Jackson's day—Jackson describes "the greater part of the family life" which took place on the veranda: "babies slept, were washed, sat in the dirt, and played," "the women said their prayers, took their naps, wove their lace," "the herdsmen and shepherds smoked," and, emphasizing the full range of social life which took place on the veranda, "there the young made love, and the old dozed" (14). The reader is

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<sup>46</sup> I deliberately use "Spanish" and "Mexican" over "Californio" here to keep with Jackson's own use of "Spanish" and "Mexican," and un-use of "Californio," (to be further discussed).

presented with a portrait of daily life in California that brings together not only members of different eras, but those of different race and class as well. Later in the novel, for example, when the son of the house Felipe is laid up ill on the veranda, an ethnic milieu gathers for observation: the Mexican servants, the (self-defined) Spanish Señora Moreno, half-Scottish, half-Indian Ramona, and the Indian Alessandro each perform the rituals fitting to their class and ethnic status. This manners-and-customs portrait—another device employed by the typical ethnographer—collapses temporalities and ethnicities, framing California life as a still-life, and essentializing a homogeneous Southern California subject based on the snapshot of that moment. The spatial element of the veranda adds to the ethnographic exhibition effect, the physical dimensions not only reflecting the distance between observer and observed, but effectively containing the relations of its gatherers, its bounded space clearly demarcating and marking the ethnographic Other for the reader’s consumption. As a domestic site, the veranda also reflects Carl Gutiérrez-Jones’ (1995) contention that *Ramona* collapses public struggles into the private sphere (one reason the novel failed to incite the protest it called for), enacting the “cultural solitary confinement” which I argue constructs, through the translation of time, the ethnographic subject in *Ramona* (54, 63).

Indeed, the veranda’s physical boundaries also function as temporal boundaries, containing the conflated cultures and histories to a different temporal category—the past. A mood of nostalgia hovers over the veranda (indeed the entire novel), especially apparent in the romantic, sentimental longing for the traditional

found in Jackson's tone as she describes the rancho's customs and characters. Señora Moreno, Felipe, Alessandro, and Father Salvierderra, all frequent visitors of the veranda, each stand for a period of picturesque colonial California now regretfully lost to American rule—much like Don Antonio comes to represent in the Spanish Revival—their stories of Missions, neophytes, and the old Mexican regime conveying their non-pertaining to the American present: they are themselves mere containers of Other past(s). The veranda's spatial confines and resemblance of an ethnographic exhibition reinforce this sense of containment of the Spanish-Mexican-Indian Other to a separate space/time.

Thus temporally foreignizing the Southern California subject, imperialist nostalgia in *Ramona* shows how time works in ethnography to constitute its object, the racialized Other (Fabian). Functioning in terms of what Fabian calls mundane or typological time, the “grand-scale periodizing” that “likes to devise ages and stages” such as “archaic” and “primitive” (23, 30), nostalgia in *Ramona* constructs “the olden time...gone, gone forever” (Jackson 5, 7) in which Spanish, Mexican, and Indian life are no longer present. Fabian persuasively argues such ideological time-uses distance the observer from observed and portray the object as living in an Other time, creating the *denial of coevalness* that leads to uneven power relations in ethnic groups and cultural discourse (31). Jackson's temporal othering of the inhabitants of California certainly denies their coevalness with her fellow Americans by relegating them to a tragically romantic, yet irrelevant past—the touted explanation for why *Ramona* did not incite more social protest in its readers—but beyond these more oppressive uses,

time's significance is also located in the afterlife of the translation. In the Anglo-generated Spanish Revival, for example, in which the novel plays such a part, imperialist nostalgia dwells as a culture-making mechanism, inscribing, through a conscious use of the past, a Spanish Southern California history into popular memory and the built-environment.

Of course, such a translation of time is tied to the modes of linguistic-cultural translation. Parallel acts of ethnicizing time and temporalizing ethnicity take place in the Anglo-generated Spanish Revival, where time becomes named and represented by ethnic terms, and vice versa. "Spanish Revival" is a label that takes its significance from this relationship between time and ethnic categories, in which California's "Spanish-speaking" (of European descent) becomes the ethnic referent for a time period. Indeed, *a time* is ultimately what is being translated by "Spanish" in the term Spanish Revival, not a place, nor even a people; since "*Spanish* referred less to a people than to an era" (Kropp 10), the term essentially connotes bygone days, a quaint picturesque past containing (in its double meaning of both holding and enclosing) a foreign culture. The Spanish, Mexican, and Indian caricatures in *Ramona*, such as the elegiac Señora Moreno and Father Salvierderra, show how ethnicity serves as a signifier for time-lost and time-past. This temporally-driven romantic racialism,<sup>47</sup> rather than guilty of creating a "false version of history," informs Southern California's cultural memory (Kropp 7); its presence in both

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<sup>47</sup> George Frederickson puts forth the concept of "romantic racialism" in *The Black Image in the White Mind* (1971) to refer to the romantic, sentimental, and paternalistic way slaves and Negroes were often depicted in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, which can be extended to how the Spanish-speaking were perceived by the Anglos in California (and arguably still are). Kate Phillips also makes this point (180).

*Ramona* and the Spanish Revival shows it operates as an expression of race(ism) and nation(alism), constructing place-based history and identity not just from racial inclusions and exclusions, but temporal as well.

### **Transcribing, Translating, Textualizing: How *Ramona* Was Made**

Despite this mutually constitutive relationship between language and ethnicity, it remains, for both the ethnographer and Jackson, largely invisible. The discipline of ethnography and the novel *Ramona* both construct the ethnic Other through their treatment of time, but they are each invested in another kind of translation as well, textual translation, first in the literal sense of transcription (creating a cultural text), and second as a bringing of culture into text (creating culture *as* text) through literary modes, for which the role of the translator remains behind-the-scenes. Made well-known by the cultural turn in anthropology, these parallel forms are infused with ideologies of time, and capture culture as static, ahistorical, and essentialized. Indeed, the logic and function of early ethnography was the “textual preservation of a traditional society,” a form of salvage anthropology which aimed to rescue the “disappearing” culture through capturing it in text (Rosaldo 85, Clifford 1986: 115). The ideology of “salvage” not only makes cultures appear fixed in unchanging time, but obscures the ethnographer’s own impact on the culture as well, effectively disappearing the ethnographer/writer, much like the erasure of Jackson-as-translator-ethnographer.

Clearly a temporal project, the textualization of culture does not simply bring culture into writing, but encodes it through writing's literary devices (Clifford). *Ramona* reflects this making of "culture as book." Returning to the veranda, we see "the process through which unwritten behavior, speech, beliefs, oral tradition, and ritual come to be marked as a corpus," as the activities and interactions among the novel's characters coalesce into a single legible portrait containing a set of symbols that can be read as a representation of California culture (1988: 38). Moreover, as a textualized tableau the manners-and-customs portrait is significantly "separated out from an immediate discursive or performative situation" (38), and becomes a set of symbols for a fixed culture disconnected from its historical context. Capturing California culture as frozen-in-time as Jackson does reflects the use of the "ethnographic present," a tense typically employed by the ethnographer which crystallizes culture in a microcosm of present-time and extends it temporally to represent the whole history (32). To borrow from Clifford's formulation, the microcosm of time containing the veranda can be read as a synecdoche, a piece of the present that stands for the whole of Southern California culture and history; in ethnography, "fields of synecdoches are created by which parts are related to wholes, and by which the whole—what we often call culture—is constituted" (38). Jackson's temporally-driven textualization of California's subjects (both Spanish-speaking and other) in *Ramona* shows the synecdochic relation between the ethnographic parts of the Moreno estate and the Spanish-speaking whole in California that they come to represent in the novel and its afterlife.

“Culture as book” also gets created in *Ramona* through the transcription process, in the literal textual translation of oral to written life. As in the case of the ethnographer and the “native informant,” Jackson translates to text the oral *testimonios* of research subjects like Coronel, albeit doubly so, for even Coronel’s own words are literally translated through his English-speaking wife Mariana, and Jackson herself is accompanied by a translator throughout her tour of California (Phillips 242, 239). Jackson leaves these layers of translation, however, unaccounted for in the novel’s making; so thoroughly has Jackson’s editorial role been erased (along with her informants’) that she is rarely thought of as such. But Jackson as invisible translator can be analyzed more productively than indicting her for her writerly process. Her acts of omission (typical of the early ethnographer) reflect the multiple mediations of the ethnographer, illuminating her complex and contradictory author-function.

In another twist in the transcription story, Jackson’s research during her 1882 tour of Southern California, done explicitly for her work commissioned by *Century Magazine*, often gets conflated with her research for *Ramona*. Jackson visited many ranchos and Missions that year, seeking material for four topical essays for *Century* that would also eventually be published in *Glimpses of California and the Missions*, including her essay on Coronel, “Echoes in the City of the Angels” (Phillips 236-240). Somehow this 1882 topical research gets taken for *Ramona* research<sup>48</sup>—though

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<sup>48</sup> An interesting note in the first pages of *Glimpses of California and the Missions* (1914 edition) reads, “[Jackson’s California essays] now reappear with illustrations by Henry Sandham, who visited California with Mrs. Jackson when she was accumulating material for ‘*Ramona*,’” the most direct



Jackson did not conceive of her “Indian novel” until 1883.<sup>49</sup> Kropp recounts the first meeting between Jackson and Coronel during this 1882 tour: “Apparently, Jackson was so taken with Coronel and his home that she proposed centering a novel around his household,” Kropp writes, alluding to claims that Jackson already had a novel in mind while visiting Southern California that year (32). Smith picks up the thread of the myth Kropp alludes to and furthers it by saying “[i]t was Mariana Coronel who turned aside Mrs. Jackson’s suggestion that she use their home as a story locale” (179) and who assures her instead that ““there remained but one Spanish homestead where the original life of a California *hacendado* could still be studied in all its poetry and importance””: Rancho Camulos (qtd. in Smith, 180).<sup>50</sup>

Jackson’s January, 1882 visit to the Ventura County ranch is thus credited as the inspiration for the Moreno estate in *Ramona*.<sup>51</sup> An interesting strain of the *Ramona* myth which still circulates about (and within) Rancho Camulos says Jackson visited with the intention of taking notes and collecting informants for *Ramona*. Even

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example of the conflation of Jackson’s research for *Century Magazine* with *Ramona*, found in the paratext of a later publication of the very essays Jackson originally published for *Century*. Sandham himself reappears as his own character in the myth of *Ramona*, a matter to be further discussed.

<sup>49</sup> Jackson has famously stated that the novel’s “whole plot” came to her in a flash one morning in October 1883; she began writing in December, and finished in March 1884 (Phillips 252-253, Smith 191).

<sup>50</sup> Smith’s version of Jackson’s visit to Camulos in its own way injects the *Ramona* future into his retelling of the past: “Josefa and Belle were the only members of Ysabel’s brood likely to have been at home and not in school,” he writes, alluding to the rancho’s owners, the Del Valle family, “when the future author of the best-selling *Ramona* called” (177). This disjoint look forward to Jackson’s future figure “calling” on the Del Valles in the past predicts the later fate of Camulos and Jackson in the *Ramona* myth.

<sup>51</sup> This is not without its own debate and search for evidence and informants. Smith stresses the only record of the Camulos visit are two letters (one to the Coronels, the other to Abbot Kinney) and that Jackson never says with whom she spoke at the ranch—yet it “undoubtedly was the inspiration for the Moreno home” (177, 179, 183). Dydia Delyser compares Rancho Camulos and its “Close Second: Rancho Gaujome” as two ranchos in the running for most inspirational for the Moreno home (65-97).

the story of *Ramona*'s publication echoes this, as Henry Sandham, Jackson's illustrator, writes in his introduction to the illustrated 1900 Monterey Edition that his sketches of Camulos' bells, chapel, and altar cloth were "made on the spot with Mrs. Jackson close at hand suggesting emphasis to this object or prominence to that" (qtd. in Smith 191).<sup>52</sup> The plot thickens: in fact, Sandham did not join Jackson in California until three months after she visited Camulos, and what's more, it is not until nearly two years later that Jackson decides to use Southern California as the setting for her novel (Smith 190-191). In a letter to the Coronels in November 1883, she reveals her recently-decided plan for an Indian novel, and writes: "I wish I had this plan in my mind last year...I would have taken notes" (qtd. in Smith 191), a confession that does not stop the mounting claims in extra-*Ramona* texts that Jackson's notes were indeed taken in the presence of the Coronels at the Coronel estate: W.A. Corey writes in "Glimpses of Old Spanish Days in Southern California" that during a tour of the Coronel home he was in fact "shown the table upon which Mrs. Jackson wrote out her notes for 'Ramona'", a claim which illustrates the fixation with fixing Jackson's "known" sources and once again underscores the gaps behind her fieldnotes, as well as the disjoint temporality of our reconstruction of her work.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> I experienced this strain of the myth during my own visit to Rancho Camulos in July, 2011, when a museum docent maintained Jackson had come to Camulos with the intent to use it as her setting for *Ramona*.

<sup>53</sup> This last source not only contributes to but also requires in its own way a kind of disjoint reconstruction of extra-*Ramona* works: I discovered "Glimpses of Old Spanish Days in Southern California" in original publication form in the Coronel Papers archives. It has no known date, but was written after both Jackson and Coronel had passed away, leaving us to speculate on both its publication date and the process behind its writing.

The facts don't add up, but such confounding strains of the *Ramona* myth tell us more than the holes in Jackson's research. It is through its very contradictions that the myth reveals how Jackson's voice becomes to *Ramona*'s followers the fountain of truth for a Spanish Southern California.<sup>54</sup> As the common ethnographer, Jackson constructs her ethnography in a different time and place than where she conducts her fieldwork, translating her fieldnotes—or at least, those she had taken for *Century Magazine*—into narrative form suitable for a novel in Colorado Springs, over a year after her journey to California. Always the double agent, Jackson (at least) twice filters the dialogical interactions and individual encounters she had with the inhabitants of California, composing a novel based on data and *testimonios* collected for earlier works (such as “Echoes in the City of the Angels,” a likely source for *Ramona*, which reflects the intertextual translations of Jackson's California-inspired works), and letting her sources drop from the novel. These unaccounted-for mediations, common in ethnography as a genre, are indeed problematic. But as *Ramona*'s individual agents and actors such as Coronel and Mariana are “severed from their productions,” the process by which the voice of “ethnographic authority” gets created is revealed: “a generalized ‘author’ must be invented” to speak for the authorial presences hidden in the text (Clifford 1988: 39).

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<sup>54</sup> Starr points out those like Lummis and the more mystic writer Mary Austin rejected Jackson's false characterization of California (400), and Kropp notes many Southern Californian locals were both dismayed with the onslaught of tourism and Jackson's accusations against their treatment of Indians (40). Nevertheless, the fever around “the real” *Ramona* that upset them so is evidence enough that Jackson inspired a wide fascination with the fiction novel's “factual” representation of California.

It is the textualization of culture through literary devices such as free indirect discourse in which statements made by a general speaker that seemingly align with those by informants create this “purveyor of truth” (25). *Ramona*’s narrator frequently adopts this anonymous yet authoritative “voice of culture” (1988: 48). When describing Señor Felipe, the Mexican gentleman of the house, the narrator makes an oblique reference to the hospitality customs of the Spanish-speaking that so shocked the Anglo, saying, “It could not enter into the head of a Mexican gentleman to make either count or account [of his guests]”, an assertion of one aspect of Mexican culture which underscores its fundamental difference with the Anglo (7). Commenting on cultural objects around the house, the narrator marks them as “made by the Indians, nobody knew how many years ago, scooped and polished by the patient creatures, with only stones for tools”, a description of indigenous culture that leans heavily on notions of “the primitive” and “the traditional” (16). This free indirect discourse characterizes the Other as if the narrator herself had “entered into the head” of the inhabitants, showing the contradictory, somewhat circular author-making process that occurs for both the ethnographer and Jackson: a narrator, created by the author Jackson, speaks, her voice becoming identified with the anonymous yet omniscient native informant, and ultimately accepted as the author-ity of the culture. Reading Jackson as translator-ethnographer this way also reveals her alternate inflation and deflation: her ethnographic authority later leads to her larger-than-life figure in Ramonism and the Spanish Revival in which she is seen as author-originator of both

cultural phenomena, but also in which she herself is swallowed up as they both obscure her actual author-function.

### **Linguistic Presences, Absences, and “Corruptions”**

Jackson’s varied engagement with different languages also makes *Ramona* a case study of uneven power relations among languages in ethnography. Writing exclusively in English, Jackson dramatizes the power of English over Spanish in the hierarchy of languages in which the translator holds predominant power (Asad 1986). Indeed, the varying presences—and absences—of English and Spanish in *Ramona* speak to the muted voices of Jackson’s ethnographic subjects. Along with this significant lack of Spanish, another linguistic element goes missing: the term *Californio*. Symptomatically, Jackson uses “Mexican” and “Spanish” interchangeably to refer to the Spanish-speaking members of the Moreno household and never uses “Californio,” echoing the debate that we also saw in the Spanish-language revival over what, in fact, to call the Spanish-speaking who dwell on the outskirts of what was previously Mexico (and previous to that, Spain). Demonstrating just how far the sliding ethnos of *Californio* can actually go, Jackson totally omits the term, if not the subject, from her ethnography, and her resulting conflation of “Mexican” and “Spanish” not only reflects the power of the translator over language and terminology choice, but shows how such choices lead to the construction of an invented ethnic referent in ethnography. In keeping with the many paradoxes of Jackson’s work and their impact on the cultural context of Ramonaism, despite the pervasive absence of

the term throughout, the popular concept of *Californio*—a Spanish don whose customs and culture belong to an earlier time—has been largely constructed through the novel and its afterlife. The missing referent thus emerges in its own absence, reflecting the essence of ethnography, which creates a stable cultural referent, ironically through many invisible translations.

Jackson's own engagement with language and the power relations therein are almost entirely invisible. *Ramona* contains a number of mistranslations—or linguistic “corruptions,” to use what I would call an unnecessarily derogatory sibling term, which raises the specter of the hierarchy of right/wrong translations—of Spanish-language names. The old, elegiac “Father Salvierderra” half-nods to Father Salvatierra, a Spanish padre that settled California in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (an example of Jackson's harkening back to the earliest origins of Spanish California), and “Alessandro” is most certainly a gesture towards “Alejandro” that misses its mark. These so-called corruptions go unnoticed as such by Jackson's readers, highlighting Jackson's invisibility as a translator, while demonstrating the power of the translator to both aurally and orally bend the source language to her own. The case of “Alessandro” in particular reflects this ideological framework through which the translator often works. Kate Phillips, drawing on Jackson's *Report on the Condition and Needs of the Mission Indians* as well as her earlier essay “Alamosa,” suggests Jackson changed the *j* in Alejandro to *s* “so that American readers would at least pronounce it euphoniously...because Americans so often botched the pronunciation” (322.n91). Like all translators, Jackson seeks coherence

between (at least) two languages and cultures; though she locates the source of that coherence partly in her readers' harmonious pronunciation of the Spanish language (which she ironically does not speak), she attempts to achieve this oral aesthetic by aurally modifying the Hispanicized names so that they better fit the speech habits of her English-speaking readers, and, so to speak, roll off the tongue better.

The strength of English thus defeats the weakness of Spanish.<sup>55</sup> This figuration of languages aligns with one of Asad's main arguments regarding cultural translation:

[B]ecause the languages of Third World societies—including, of course, the societies that social anthropologists have traditionally studied—are 'weaker' in relation to Western languages (and today, especially to English), they are more likely to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around.  
(157-158)

As a sample of what I argue to be early ethnographic writing that studies California partly as what Richard Henry Dana, Jr. in 1840 characterizes but does not name a "Third-World society,"<sup>56</sup> *Ramona* follows the same pattern of traditional anthropological work that molds "lesser" languages to serve higher-prestige

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<sup>55</sup> As California place-names literature, which marks Spanish and English place names, points out, technically Alessandro is an Italian name (see Gudde 1969). However, I maintain this point, since the translation is still first and foremost filtered through Jackson's own tongue, English.

<sup>56</sup> In one of the earliest examples of the third-worlding of California, Dana's travel narrative *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840) famously describes California as lacking in civilization: a land of "revolutions" with "no law but will and fear"; a land of abundant resources that "in the hands of an enterprising people, what a country [it] might be!" if it only weren't doomed to "California fever (laziness)" (236-237).

languages. As Asad rightly notes, this tendency is not strictly one found in the discipline of Anthropology, known to examine and write about other societies in a dominant language, but is part of the production of Western discourse and knowledge more broadly. Indeed, even the history of the Spanish Revival has come to be understood through mainstream, English-language history books written by Anglo-American authors like Carey McWilliams and Kevin Starr, while the other unnamed Spanish revival from the Spanish-speaking community of early California remains a noticeably missing link.<sup>57</sup>

#### The Aesthetics and Politics of Dialect: “Indian-speak”

Unlike the linguistic presences, absences, and corruptions, invisibilized by Jackson’s non-transparent translation process, dialect in *Ramona* is made highly visible. Dialect is where we briefly glimpse Jackson as a visible translator, half-uncloseted through her use of aurally/orally marked speech. Ramona’s and Alessandro’s dialect “Indian-speak” is a version of what linguist John McWhorter (2001) would call “pidgin,” but Jackson shows them both to be equivalent instances of linguistic and cultural translation in *Ramona*, vehicles of the ethnographic function of the novel.

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<sup>57</sup> I have elsewhere alluded to the scholarship of Padilla and Sánchez that works to recover *Californio testimonios*, but this line of scholarship goes in a different direction in that it stresses the agency and resistance of the speakers against both Spanish and US colonialisms, and works to establish a proto-Latino sense of authorship. Part of my intervention is to point to where and why *Californio testimonios* demonstrate a desire or incentive to identify with the Spanish, much less pronounced in these other histories.



Though highly visible—and, as in the case of “Alessandro” above, audible—“Indian-speak” is less recognized by *Ramona* critics. Nearly all critics are quick to point to Aunt Ri’s unmistakably Southern accent, rendered in exaggerated phonetic realism, as a sharp contrast to the unmarked speech of the Spanish-speaking and Indians of the novel.<sup>58</sup> As dialect literature critic Gavin Jones, echoing Asad, says, dialect writing reflects “racial hierarchies of speech” and the struggle for “linguistic hegemony” (though Jones’ overall thesis accounts for dialect’s power to resist hegemony as well) by establishing a linguistic norm against which all other variations—and subsequently the race and class of their speakers—are seen as different and thus inferior (2). In *Ramona*, Jackson arguably inverts these hierarchies by standardizing the speech of the non-white, Spanish-speaking and Indian characters (further underscored as standard as their words match the narrator’s formal, grammatically correct speech), and showing the speech of the white American settlers as non-standard, even foreign. “Their linguistic foreignness indicates that they do not naturally belong in the land they have conquered” (262), Phillips argues, mirroring Jones’ contention that dialect writers of the time saw language as “confer[ring] the virtues of proper citizenship” and the right to national heritage (18); confirming this view, Phillips states that through this inversion of dialect Jackson is “urging that [the Americans] should respect the preeminent rights of the region’s earlier inhabitants” (262).

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<sup>58</sup> “This woman, here, she’s ez sweet a creetur’s ever I seen; ’n’ ez bound up ’n thet baby’s yer could ask enny woman to be; ’n’ ’s fur thet man, can’t yer see, Jeff, he jest worships the ground she walks on?” exclaims Aunti Ri upon meeting Ramona and Alessandro for the first time in just one example of Southern dialect (286).

But Indian-speak, the counter-dialect to that of Aunt Ri and the white settlers, shows the aesthetics of dialect don't just come down to politics as usual in *Ramona*. Surely, the novel engages with how language and dialect in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century functioned as indicators of national character and a way through which the "spirit of the nation" manifested, questions intimately tied to race (hence, the anxiety around establishing "a national language" that still persists) (Jones 19). While Phillips correctly asserts Jackson's dialect use in one way aims to show which race has a "natural right" to belong in California, I argue that beyond the question of "natural right" as national belonging, Jackson sees "natural right" as racial. This racialization of the novel's speakers emerges through their dialect, demonstrating Jackson's translator-ethnographer role. Indian-speak in particular serves the novel's ethnographic function by attempting to capture the spirit and essence of the Indian race through speech, or to borrow from Walter Benjamin, translating the *intentio* of Indian race and culture.<sup>59</sup>

While we know much has been said about Aunt Ri's dialect, *Ramona's* curious adoption of Indian-speak has been downplayed, privileging the non-normative speech of the whites as evidence of the novel's social and political cause. Indian-speak complicates this reading of dialect's function in the novel.<sup>60</sup> After

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<sup>59</sup> In the "The Task of the Translator" (1923), Benjamin puts forth the concept of the *intentio* as that which must "harmonize" between two languages in order for the translation to be achieved. This notion of "harmonization" between languages lends them a spiritual essence, which becomes the object of translation. I extend *intentio* to apply to race and culture here.

<sup>60</sup> Indian-speak is an example of "linguistic foreignness" that does not align with Phillips' argument about Jackson's ideological use of dialect. It is true Jackson's intent behind the novel was to show the Native Americans as the legitimate inheritors of the land; if Jackson marked her Indian characters with dialect according to Phillips' logic, she would be showing the Indians do not belong in the region

marrying Alessandro, Ramona is re-named—baptized, one might say—with a new Indian name, Majella, or “wood-dove,” which more than symbolically turns her into an Indian. Suddenly, she speaks as a stereotypical Indian would, communicating in metaphors of the natural world, the supposed place of the Indian. Noting Alessandro’s taciturn nature, she says, “You speak as the trees speak, and like the rock yonder, and the flowers, without saying anything!” to which Alessandro replies, “And you Majella...when you say that, you speak in the language of our people; you are as we are” (209). Ramona’s becoming-Indian emerges in and through her speech, her ability to commune with nature—“the language of our people”—showing her to be essentially one with it, a seemingly innate connection that authenticates her “real origins” as an Indian. In this case, the dialect of Indian-speak is expressed not through phonetic accuracy that demonstrates nation-based belonging, but a romanticized, lyrical speech that naturalizes the Indian as a primitive race, tied to the land and nature.

Indian-speak also adds to the “local color” of *Ramona*’s characters. A term equated with regional realism in Jackson’s day, “local color” writing mirrors the style of painting at the time that focused on everyday, local scenes (Phillips 35) and thus carries the same ethnographic undertones as the kinds of manners-and-customs portraits found in *Ramona*. A style which loosely refers to the “flavor,” “ethos” and “essence” of a place and its peoples (all slippery translations of “local color” in themselves but noticeably akin to *intentio*), “local color” is often conveyed by

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based on their different language-use, the opposite of what she intended. Phillips seems to overlook this conundrum of marked Indian speech.

“coloring” the locals through their words.<sup>61</sup> The connection between “color” and race here, unlike the more figurative “local color,” is literal: Alessandro and Ramona are “colored”—racialized—through their language. Jackson marks Alessandro’s and Ramona’s poetic speech syntactically with a peculiar structure that reveals its pidgin-like status, such as when they (and only they) oddly refer to each other and themselves in the third-person. During a weak moment, for example, Alessandro mourns, “But what can Alessandro do now?...Majella gives all; Alessandro gives nothing!” and Ramona—“insensibly falling into his mode of speaking,” the narrator points out—exclaims, “Alessandro can do one thing...one thing for his Majella: never, never, never say that he has nothing to give her” (243). Theatrical and grand, the lofty speech calls up notions of the “perfect primitive” (an ideology also informed by imperialist nostalgia); yet this “strange talk” as Jones would call it also images a patronizing picture of a simple-minded Indian, racialized as such through Jackson’s foreignizing translation of Indian-speak. The archaic mode, in stark contrast to the more standard and contemporary style of the other characters, further temporalizes the Indian race as “primitive” in comparison, reinforcing its belonging to the past.

Here, Jackson’s lapse into stereotyping is obvious. But the burden of this paper has been to get away from indicting Jackson for such missteps and to demonstrate how these authorial moves create an early version of Southern California

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<sup>61</sup> Jackson’s letters often include allusions to the “local color” she aspires to produce in *Ramona*. In an 1884 letter thought to have been addressed to friend and once-rumored romance Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Jackson writes, “You know I have for three or four years longed to write a story that should ‘tell’ on the Indian question...I could not do it; knew I had no background,—no *local color* for it...Last spring, in Southern California, I began to feel that I had;...—and the old Mexican life mixed in with just enough Indian...would be the *perfection of coloring*” (emphasis mine). See Mathes, *The Indian Reform Letters of Helen Hunt Jackson, 1879-1885*, (1998) pg. 313.

ethnography. In both instances of Indian-speak, Jackson creates an ethnic portrait of Alessandro and Ramona as perfect primitives, members of a tragically disappearing culture and race. More than just a political statement, this essential Indianness is conveyed and constructed by and through Indian-speak; indeed, Indian-speak is simply the lesser-discussed dialect, next to Aunt Ri and the white Southerners, that shows how language and dialect in *Ramona* serve to construct the ethnographic subject by translating the *intentio* of race and culture. For Indians like Alessandro and Ramona, for better or worse, this includes their purported ability to commune with the natural world, part and parcel of their “perfectly primitive” race.

So powerful is this Indian ability to communicate on another plane that at one point it becomes otherworldly. In a scene appropriately set in a cemetery, Ramona waits with Carmena, an Indian woman from the village, for Alessandro’s return. No longer able to bear the suspense, Ramona gets up to go, explaining herself “in the soft Spanish, of which Carmena knew no word” but yet is able to understand, and responds in kind in the San Luiseño tongue, foreign to Ramona, “which yet somehow conveyed Carmena’s meaning” (224). Linguistic translation from Spanish to San Luiseño between the women is impossible, yet the reader sees they perfectly communicate in an exchange in which nothing is lost in translation. On the contrary, their mutual understanding reaches an elevated plane. Upon his return, an astonished Alessandro asks, “How did you understand her speech?”; Ramona replies, “I do not know. Was it not a strange thing? She spoke in your tongue, but I thought I understood her” (225). Ramona’s magical power to commune with her fellow

Indians goes beyond the level of language and onto the level of the *intentio*, of spirit, evidently because they are of the same race. Communicating not through linguistic translation but that of the *intentio* further authenticates Ramona as a real Indian, verified as such through her apparently spiritual understanding of Carmena which demonstrates her racial and cultural belonging; Carmena, rounding out the supernatural element, breaks into a chant: “She is one of us!” she repeats.

Ramona’s adoption of Indian-speak and its accompanying magical powers thus echoes a traditional belief held in the field of ethnography (by now largely called into question by writers such as Clifford) that foreign language acquisition enables a deeper understanding of the “truth” or “ethos” of the Other, an *intentio*-like element that Asad refers to as the alien culture’s “implicit meanings” (160). Now miraculously privy to all things Indian, Ramona’s mastery of Indian-speak confirms her belonging; she has gone fully native. The ethnographer’s analysis of this phenomenon in the field registers with the ways Jackson represents language acquisition in the novel, extending from Ramona to Jackson as translator-ethnographer herself. Acquiring the “native tongue” has at times been a major tool for the travel writer and ethnographer alike, an access-key to unlocking the symbols and meanings contained within the language of the other culture, that can then be laid bare for the Western consumer. The ethnographer, endowed with “the business of identifying unconscious meanings” present in an alien culture (161), is problematically understood as an authority on these meanings for her possession of that culture’s language (which, on another level, Clifford points out can never be

“mastered” anyway, for language, as McWhorter says, is ever-evolving<sup>62</sup>). Unlike Ramona’s attainment of Indian language, Jackson never acquired competency in Spanish; but in subsuming its speakers along with their words into her text while refusing to acknowledge such translations, she effectively passes off their language as hers—and most certainly passes as the authority on their culture.

Jackson and Ramona both share the ethnographer’s experience of the slippery slope between acquiring the language and disappearing into it. For one thing, “competency” in the native tongue suggests mediations between languages and their attached cultures are seamless linguistic transactions that occur without translation or interpretation, a notion that promotes the ethnographer as such a capable cultural translator that she is, in fact, no longer a translator at all, but a “native informant” herself (no such thing, Clifford would say), her role as translator downplayed, forgotten, erased—just as Helen Hunt Jackson’s, the invisible translator-ethnographer. And while language generally implies access, it does not actually level the playing field between speakers; one language-speaker often overpowers and absorbs the other, as happens to Ramona. Whatever Jackson attempts to promote about the Indian cause through the linguistically foreignized English-speaking characters like Aunt Ri gets cancelled out by the oft-cited defeatist end of the novel, Ramona’s re-assimilation into the Moreno household and her and Felipe’s following flight to Mexico, a removal from her Indian roots anticipated earlier on the level of speech when Ramona learns English from Aunt Ri: “It was wonderful what progress

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<sup>62</sup> McWhorter illustrates this point pithily when he says, “Dialects is all there is” (53).

in understanding and speaking English Ramona had made in these six months. She now understood nearly all that was said directly to her” (290).

Yet while Ramona is absorbed into the English language—a linguistic example of her cultural assimilability, an aspect of her and Alessandro’s Indianness that adds to both their palatability to Anglo audiences and limits the imperative of Jackson’s call to action, according to Carl Gutiérrez-Jones—neither Aunt Ri nor the other white settlers demonstrate any understanding of Spanish or San Luiseño. Indian-speak and Spanish have been placed lower on Asad’s hierarchy of languages, beneath English. In the historical context of the Americas, McWhorter refers to this imposition as an “eating up” of indigenous languages that occurred across the continent after colonization, demonstrated at the localized level of speech by the tendency of strong languages to dominate the subordinate even when they combined to form pidgin languages (135). The swallowing up of Ramona into the English language signals two overlapping ends: the conclusion of the novel where Ramona and Felipe flee from a land that is no longer linguistically theirs, and the anticipated end of an Indian and Spanish California, brought on by the inevitable takeover of Americans and with them, their English language.



## Martí's Jackson: Towards a Conclusion

Despite the multiple linguistic and historical endings implied in the novel's final pages, California's Spanish past does not die out in any of the ways the text imagines it to. Quite the opposite: the much-documented *Ramona* myth shows the novel as a process that continually revives the region's Spanish memory in *Ramona*-inspired performances, festivals, and architecture (and perhaps in more meta-*Ramona* research projects such as this). Revealing the translational processes behind this history-making through tracing the linguistic thread of both the Anglo-driven and Spanish-language revivalisms has been my aim here. A similar translational reading of the novel highlights *Ramona*'s continuing life through its translation into other languages. Martí's 1888 Spanish translation of *Ramona*—which not so coincidentally shares the date of McWilliams' touted beginning of "Spanish Revival"—and accompanying prologue show how that text enacts the linguistic and cultural border-crossing of the Americas. Jackson and her novel reemerge in Martí's America as a source of reimagining national literatures and languages.

A close look at Martí's prologue to *Ramona* shows his vision of a unitary literature for a plural America. Martí celebrates the fact that Jackson "pinta con luz americana paisajes, drama y caracteres nuestros [paints with American light our landscapes, dramas, characters]," accessing "our" America (despite her North American identity, he reminds us) in such a way that Jackson herself becomes, as Raúl Coronado points out, Spanish-Americanized, she and *her* America joining forces

with “ours” (Martí 11, Coronado 212). Her championing of “los indios” and the ambiguously named “alguien más [someone else]”, a half-spoken reference to the Spanish-speaking element of California, establishes for Martí a kinship between her/our Americas, the indigenous and colonial histories they share, and the possibility of a common future, a sort of American union imagined through literature. As if to seal the deal, Martí declares that Helen Hunt Jackson “ha escrito quizás en *Ramona* nuestra novela [has perhaps written in *Ramona* our novel]” (12). “Nuestra” here predicts the “nuestra” Martí later invokes in his call for unity amongst Latin Americans in “Nuestra America” (1891), but similar to the obscured “alguien más”, the ambiguously defined referent requires the reader’s translation in both Martí’s prologue and manifesto. The pronominal usage and its required translations not only recall the shifting use of *Californio* in revivalism but also point us toward a certain elusiveness in Martí’s writing that holds the tensions of language itself. Jackson-as-author of “nuestra novela” further sets up a “dialectics of our America”<sup>63</sup> between the “ours” of “Nuestra America” and her *Ramona* America, not yet but potentially “ours.”

Martí’s prologue paratextually reveals the stirrings of an early conception of what Fernández-Retamar calls the Hispanoamerican novel (7). While several critics have made this claim, my view of the hemispheric legacy through *Ramona*’s translation comes more by way of Walter Benjamin, whose theory of translation can move the framework of analysis beyond the limits of a two-nation timeline and

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<sup>63</sup> I borrow this phrase from José Saldívar (1991).

towards—though Benjamin’s own dialectics of temporality show it to be crucially never-reaching—essential unification. He reads translations as part of an afterlife in which “[t]he original’s life achieves its constantly renewed, latest and most comprehensive development” (77). In Benjamin’s configuration a translation does not have an essentially separate existence as traditional comparative studies imply but lives instead as a continuation through change of the original’s own historical life, carrying out a later, different incarnation of its expression. Continuation, however, is not simply forward movement in an uninterrupted flow of time. The afterlife changes the original *and* its earlier historical location, recasting the “early” and “late” to an intimate set of temporal relations that take meaning from each other’s changing textual-temporal moments.

Similar to my attempt to take the revivalisms not as opposing but intertwining cultural phenomena, thinking Martí’s *Ramona* as an afterlife sees it not simply as a before-and-after with Jackson’s, a copy that comes at a later and fundamentally different point in space and time (and language). Instead, Martí’s translation becomes part of the *Ramona* text-network, an ongoing life whose meaning is “renewed,” in both the sense of revived and made new again, in other historical contexts. What this means for *Ramona* and the Americas is that, in a Benjaminian process of what I have called temporal cultural translation, Martí’s *Ramona* connects the Americas not only spatially but also temporally, extending backward to incorporate multiple American pasts that shift according to the moment of their reinvention through translation as well as forward to imagine a future history, encompassing an American hemispheric

literary-cultural legacy, both “mine” and “ours.” *Ramona*-as-afterlife expands our sense of space-and-time-bound literatures, those we read in terms of monolingualism, discrete periods and bounded nation-states, and challenges us to read the Americas in a more worlded context, hemispherically.

The afterlife’s simultaneous movement backward and forward, not simply a sliding from one pole to the other but a reconstitution of each in its movement, breaks with any preoccupation with singular “origins” that often drives both translation theory and literary studies. In the same spirit, my thesis attempts to turn questions concerned with ownership and origins—“Whose Spanish Revival?” “Who’s/Whose Spanish?”—into a more productive inquiry to reveal the translational meaning-making processes behind California’s Spanish legacy—“Who’s doing the reviving, and what is the work being done?” Applying Benjamin’s concept of the afterlife to *Ramona* demonstrates how we can get beyond the search for and enshrining of origin-points in Jackson’s text on multiple levels. Rather than read *Ramona* as the origin-point of Martí’s translation to which it must be faithful (or similarly read the named “Spanish Revival” as the origin-point of revivalism in Southern California), Martí’s translation can be read as an unfolding of *Ramona*’s afterlife in the other America. A potential utopian American union is brought out through Martí’s translation and metalingual prologue in the way Benjamin imagines the emergence of the linguistic utopia of “pure language.” Though translation always points us toward language’s (and by extension literature’s) essential unification, it can never be reached; Benjamin’s dialectics show we can only know “how distant what is hidden within

them is from revelation, how present it might become in the knowledge of this distance” (78).

Martí’s *Ramona* registers Benjamin’s temporal and spatial dialectics. As in “Nuestra America,” America in Martí’s prologue is often figured in opposition to the other America, “Norteamérica,” where “nuestra America” gets defined as *not* the America of the North. It is indeed only in spite of Jackson’s “haber nacido en Norte América [having been born in North America]” that she is able to portray the poetry of the other America, and yet, as Coronado does well to point out, Martí “is at pains to make Jackson ‘ours’” (213). Martí works to close the gap between “our America” and the America that is not ours—but yet somehow could be, and in fact must be for Martí’s argument to hold—through the figure of Jackson. Martí as a Benjaminian messianic thinker creates through Jackson a multi-sited American future based on shared pasts captured through literature, breaking out of place- and period-based categories of national literatures that historically dominate the field to span the Americas through space and time. Seeing the novel in this Benjaminian light enables us to read the translated text as a new original within the chain of *Ramona* translations that changes our temporal understanding of “earlier” and “later” American literary legacies. The same could be said about revivals, early and late, recognized and submerged. This historical materialist reading also takes into account the reconstitution of multiple American home bases in addition to their temporal locations: “Nuestra America” and the America that is not “ours” get recast, projected into a desired future where the gaps between American literatures are closed. Yet the

dialectics of our America shows these gaps are necessary, pre-conditions to our seeing the potential of their union. Indeed Benjamin acknowledges a messianic finality “remains out of human reach,” a sentiment Coronado echoes when he remarks “the difference between Jackson’s North American origin and the Spanish America to which she belongs is that much more pronounced” by Martí’s belabored efforts to make her “ours” (Benjamin 79, Coronado 212).

We must not downplay language as an axis that crosses the space-and-time-bound planes on which literature is conceived, and reconceived here. Again reading *Ramona* through a composite Martí-Benjamin figure can take us beyond one-to-one equations, such as language equals nation and/or culture, and the symptomatic assumptions that American literature and culture are written only in English, and towards a framework in which we can think of American Literature as a literature of the Americas, fundamentally plural and multi-lingual. Martí’s translation and adaptation of a US text into Spanish America echoes the concept of American literature in languages other than English. It is indeed through Jackson’s very use of language that as Martí argues she is able to capture “nuestros países de América [our countries of America]”; her words “relucen como joyas [shine like jewels]”, Martí writes, “...en sus graves versos tiene la claridad serena de nuestras noches y el morado y azul de nuestras hipomeas [in her weighty verses she has the serene splendor of our nights and the purple and blue of our ipomea trees]” (11-12). Jackson translates what Martí might borrow from Benjamin to call the *intentio*, or spirit, of his America, that could reach toward its highest expression, paradoxically and

incompletely, through Jackson's representation of it in English. He points towards this potential for highest expression through his translation of Jackson's prose as "versos", turning Jackson into a kind of poet of who through English "verses" translates the *intentio* of "nuestra America." These seeming linguistic paradoxes, both prose-to-poetry and Spanish-to-English translations of "nuestra novela", are themselves two parts of the dialectic of language that speak directly to Martí's imagining of the possibilities of a Benjaminian utopian sphere of "pure" language—indeed what Benjamin himself finds as the highest purpose of translation—and the possibility of an American union through language and literature.

The harmonies Martí finds in Jackson's work between his America and the Ramona America point toward a possibility for what Benjamin calls the liberation of languages, here extended to include the literatures they "belong to"—or are "imprisoned" in, Benjamin might say (82). In this linguistic utopia, languages, freed from the need to overcome difference with one another, would no longer do violence to one another, as they do in translation. An American literary studies that posits literature as a monolithic nation-based unit of study ("American Literature" most often translates to "United States Literature" in the field) places language in a kind of prison-house of English monolingualism and secures literature within the limits of the bounded nation. Martí's translational reading of *Ramona* imagines an other American studies, a plural Latin American literary studies that could at times join forces with the English-language US-American studies, awakening the echoes within each and setting their languages and literatures free from the constraints of national language.

Following the movement of Benjamin's dialectic, however, we are called to remember that this kind of post-nationalist utopia where language is not mine nor yours but "ours" can paradoxically never be reached. Martí's overflowing yet obscure "nuestra" attests to both the impossible desire and language's insufficiency to close the distance between the Americas and her languages. Yet in so doing, Martí fulfills the task of the translator: at once messianic and materialist, futurist and historical, a worlding of America.



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