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The Campaign for Literary Practice: Mexican American Writers in the Age of Realism and Regionalism, 1885-1940

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For my parents and sister

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Campaign for Literary Practice: Mexican American Writers
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by

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The Campaign for Literary Practice provides an intervention into American literary studies by reframing Mexican-American writings from 1885 to 1940 as central to understanding the value and limits of realism and regionalism. The key intervention of this project is the concept "the campaign for literary practice" that illustrates these writers' attempts to navigate the literary marketplace of their time and partake in professional authorship, for income as well as status. In order to encourage new readings of U.S. literary genres and history, each chapter examines an aspiring yet struggling Mexican-American writer alongside a commercially successful contemporary.

Chapter 1, "'I'll Publish Your Cowardice All Over California': Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don* in the Age of Howells and American Realism," considers the first Mexican American to publish fiction in English alongside William Dean Howells,

'the Dean' of American letters. Using these writers' 1885 novels, I argue for a reconfiguration of East Coast-dominated realist studies based on Ruiz de Burton's literary production in California. Chapter 2, "Mexican Vistas in an Expansionist Literary Marketplace: Stephen Crane's 'Form and Color' and María Cristina Mena's New Regionalism," offers a new generic framework through which to study Mena's early twentieth-century 'local colorist' writings. As 'new regionalism,' Mena's stories on Mexico emerge authoritatively in response to previous ruminations on the country, such as those written by the naturalist writer Crane for newspapers and magazines. Chapter 3, "'Why Do You Hate the South?': The Limits of Visionary Regionalism in González and Raleigh's *Caballero* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*," reads *Caballero* and *Absalom* as failed 'southern romances' of the late 1930s. Together, these novels offer alternative, imaginative, and visionary ways of reading the Southwest and South during the United States' major mid nineteenth-century wars. My final chapter, "Regionalism, Geomodernism, and the Depressions of John Steinbeck and Américo Paredes," explores the major novels of these writers against the Great Depression and World War II. Paredes's work, in the end, demonstrates the way global awareness emerges in the region, even if it is at odds with the nation and its rulers.

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Introduction:

The Campaign for Literary Practice

> *"Look to the East!"*
>
> *The Father turned, and, as the fog broke away before the waving plume, he saw that the sun was rising. Issuing with its bright beams through the passes of the snowy mountains beyond, appeared a strange and motley crew. Instead of the dark and romantic visages of his last phantom train, the Father beheld with strange concern the blue eyes and flaxen hair of a Saxon race. In place of martial airs and musical utterance, there rose upon the ear a strange din of harsh gutturals and singular sibilation. Instead of the decorous tread and stately mien of the cavaliers of the former vision, they came pushing, bustling, panting, and swaggering. And as they passed, the good Father noticed that giant trees were prostrated as with the breath of a tornado, and the bowels of the earth were torn and rent as in convulsion. And Father José looked in vain for holy cross or Christian symbol; there was but one that seemed an ensign, and he crossed himself with holy horror as he perceived it bore the effigy of a bear.*
>
> —Bret Harte, "The Legend of Monte del Diablo"

Published in *The Atlantic Monthly* amid the ongoing carnage of the Civil War, Bret Harte's "The Legend of Monte del Diablo" (1863) confirmed to American readers that California's romance might still be found, though it, like the Spaniards who had once ruled the region, threatened to ebb and vanish. For the eighteenth-century protagonist of Harte's story, Father José Antonio Haro, the devil appears in the guise of a Spanish hidalgo and imparts to the missionary a vision of what the future holds: the flurry of the mid nineteenth-century Gold Rush and, thereafter, the permanent displacement of the father's people by those of "Saxon" lineage (12). In attempt to dismantle the unwanted vision, the father musters all of his religious courage to accuse the devil of bribing him with "sordid treasure": "This, then, Sir Devil, is your work! This is your deceitful lure for the weak souls of sinful nations!" (13). At once righteous and, throughout the story, increasingly ridiculous, Father José emerges in "The Legend of Monte del Diablo" as the

star in Harte's parody of 'legends' such as these. Far from being an honest and reliable man of God, the father is instead a zealous frontiersman with a dubious claim to the "wilderness" and its "heathen" "savages" (4-5).

Harte made it easy for the astute reader of the *Atlantic* to see how, in larger scheme of the story, the father is actually attacked by a bear, not tempted by the devil. Throughout "The Legend of Monte del Diablo," tension grows between, on the one hand, the bear and reality and, on the other, the devil and romance. Given the playful distance achieved by Harte's narrator and the insistence on how this story is indeed a 'legend,' we might say that in the world of the literary and in the history of California, the bear triumphs. Not only is this bear an emblem of the state's short-lived Bear Flag revolt and republic, but it is also the future cover illustration of Harte's western literary magazine *The Overland Monthly*, which was established five years later in 1868. Father José and other "romantic" figures like him would remain, in the words of the story, "the theme of thrilling and whispered narrative" (15). As literary magazines and publishers kept their eye on the West in the mid to late nineteenth century, California's romantic heritage continued to run counter to the perceived stark reality of dominant industries like mining, railroading, and large-scale farming. Harte, who is to this day the figurehead of the literary West, helped forge for many readers in the nineteenth century the view that the Spanish and Mexican past would forever remain the implied background to the western Anglo-American foreground.

Yet "The Legend of Monte del Diablo" elides the history of Mexican rule in California. Although Harte's story is set in the Spanish mission era of the eighteenth

century, its composition context of the early 1860s might instead evoke, in the very recent memory of Americans, the triumph of the "pushing [and] bustling" (12) United States Army over Mexicans at the culmination of the U.S.-Mexican War of 1848. Granted, the current and future displacement—physical, cultural, and socioeconomic—of Mexicans by Harte's "Saxon race" is not the subject of "The Legend of Monte del Diablo," but that Harte chose to tell of a more romantic time intimates the larger project of American writers, editors, and publishers to omit or eventually overwrite Mexican figures. Between the years following the publication of Harte's story and the early twentieth century, Mexicans and Mexican Americans "entered the [United States'] public imagination" with steady vigor, but they regularly emerged in American literary production in stock format—as, for instance, still-Spanish, picturesque Californios or, at the end of that spectrum, dangerous bandits (Rivera 73). American writers in these decades were responding to what literary historian John-Michael Rivera calls "the Mexican question in U.S. print culture"—that is, a nineteenth-century Anglo-American interrogation of "the very constitution of . . . Mexican peoples who lived in the 'frontier'" (54)—and what Marissa K. López poses as the cultural inquiry with which early twentieth-century intellectuals were obsessed: "What is Mexico?" (96). Each of these scholars addresses the intense interest American writers took in Mexicans living in the U.S. and Mexico following major events that caused contact, either physical or intellectual, such the U.S.-Mexican War, the Gold Rush, the Homestead Act, the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and much later, as López discusses, the Mexican Revolution. Because Americans wanted to appease readers who were curious

about Mexicans, the former tended to illustrate the latter as simultaneously mysterious and knowable. Literary magazines such as the *Atlantic* in which Harte printed his story and the *Overland*, which he helped found, could help manage if not clear the cultural fog that separated Americans from Mexicans and, in the case of "The Legend of Monte del Diablo," from Spaniards. Appropriately, Harte's story ends when Father José awakens from a foggy daze. The father's arm is bandaged by his side, and his muleteer Ignacio tells him: "the bear, Holy Father, . . . attacked your worshipful person while you were meditating on the top of [the] mountain" (14). But instead of taking Ignacio's words to heart, the father proceeds to infantilize and hush the muleteer, as he wants his own story of temptation to remain the authoritative version of events. In the father's world, a miraculous story garners religious credence and power, and in Harte's world, mysterious stories about the frontier sell, especially because American readers are privy to what 'really' transpired.

The Mexican-American writings in this dissertation emerged from within this very literary world of misrepresentation. While the recovery of these works in the 1990s was not for the sole purpose of combating American literature that had gotten the events and people 'wrong,' that recovery did attempt to regain the voices of unknown or forgotten authors who could further parse such events and people, and who might provide a different version of the past as it was and as it might have been. The writings I examine, then, do not necessarily have a corrective function in the scheme of American literary history; rather, they mend perceivable cultural fissures and provide, as Kirsten Silva Gruesz expresses, an alternative set of historical "markers" and a stronger, "more usable

past" (*Ambassadors of Culture* 205-10). My writers—María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, María Cristina Mena, Jovita González, and Américo Paredes—provide a body of realist and regionalist literature that reclaims the Mexican character and landscape of the past and offers different ways of reading the United States and American literature at large.

When I first started this project, I was surprised and excited to see the way early Mexican-American literary production resonated with contemporaneous American works, both canonical and marginal. Similar financial and professional exigencies, for instance, drove Mexican Americans to write because they, like their (mainly) Anglo-American counterparts, wanted to earn money for their intellectual labor and literature. And when similar cultural and political themes were visible in Mexican-American writings, I was struck by the sheer possibility of such parallel concerns. Why, for one, was Ruiz de Burton's novel *The Squatter and the Don* (1885) published the same year as William Dean Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), and why did it also tell about a businessman? Why did *The Squatter and the Don* seem to pick where Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) left off, in terms of the western inquiry posed by the latter novel when a small boy decides to "light out for the Territory" (320)? For Ruiz de Burton, as for the other Mexican-American writers examined in this dissertation, participation in a national literary culture was key. These writers did not operate within a cultural or ethnic vacuum; they wrote to engage publishers and readers, and they wrote through a keen awareness of other writers and literature—to tell stories that both countered and confirmed the stories of former and contemporaneous writers. The recovered letters of Ruiz de Burton and Mena, for instance, make clear that these writers

had an agenda. As Ruiz de Burton frankly expressed in a letter to a friend, "I would like to make the venture [i.e., her writing of a novel] a little bit profitable. I did not write for glory" ("Letter to Barlow" 438). Mena's recently recovered archival writings that are dated to the 1950s likewise suggest she wrote in popular genres specifically for income; whereas with her writings from the early twentieth century she may have hoped for literary status in addition to income, her later work provides evidence of her strategic financial navigation of the literary marketplace. All of the authors examined here wrote at key junctures in the history of American letters: Ruiz de Burton in the realist era, when William Dean Howells exercised editorial authority on the East Coast and literature in the United States was professionalizing; Mena in the local color era, when the United States expressed a cultural interest in Mexico and was expanding its literary marketplace accordingly; González in the era of renewed literary regionalism and historical romances, such as the landmark and popular *Gone With the Wind* (1936); and Paredes during the Depression and at the start of World War II, when modernist tragedy still haunted U.S. literary production.

In describing these writers' ambitions as a "campaign for literary practice," two sources of inspiration unfold. Each source tells of past writers' efforts to engage with certain genres and participate meaningfully in U.S. literary culture. The first is the political, organizational, and even militaristic language used to describe Howellsian realist practice in the 1880s, when this dissertation begins. William Dean Howells's realist project, in short, is often referred to by realist critics as a "campaign" that attempted to improve the quality of literary production and edify readers through fiction.

Sarah B. Daughterly, for instance, describes Howells's "realism . . . as a campaign that failed," and calls attention to the way the aging Howells felt he had fallen short of his friend Mark Twain's success; the former possessed a keen and tragic "sense of his own failure," in spite of his professional influence in the world of American letters (25). Michael Bell Davitt likewise says of Howells that his "centrality to the category of 'American realism' is not based on his fiction but on his public campaign for literary realism" (14). In boosting the careers of "major" realists like Mark Twain and Henry James and being a "minor" producer of fiction himself, Howells is also seen as a "colonel" who leads "an army of generals" (Davitt 14). The list goes on. At every turn, Howells's efforts are read as a meaningful but perhaps insufficient or ailing set of objectives and goals.

The second source of inspiration for my use of the concept the "campaign for literary practice" is the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project, which has, since its inception in 1990, attempted to show how Hispanic writers have "challenge[d] us to critically examine anew issues of nomenclature, periodization, genres, and the politics of textual production and reproduction" (Gutiérrez and Padilla 25). To borrow from the language used for Howellsian realism, we may very well conceive of this project as a 'campaign' for literary recovery. My dissertation would not exist without the painstaking archival efforts of the scholars associated with the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project. This project examines Hispanic writers' movements across literary spheres, and poses their writings as culturally valuable and necessary. For the purposes of this dissertation, I extend these scholars' efforts onto the realm of realist

and regionalist fiction-writing among Mexican Americans. The literary efforts of Ruiz de Burton, Mena, González, and Paredes might likewise be read as a campaign for authorial practice. The intervention of my dissertation, in this regard, is its illustration of the way Mexican-American writers attempted to navigate the literary marketplace of their time and partake in professional and culturally meaningful authorship.

In order to best assess my selected Mexican-American writers' contributions to and positions within American literary history between 1885 (when Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don* was published) and 1940 (when Paredes completed *George Washington Gómez*), I use a historical methodology that centers on two factors: 1) realist and regionalist literature emerged in a time of unprecedented activity in the literary marketplace due to improved print technologies and expanded transportation systems like the transcontinental railroad, and 2) in an era of Manifest Destiny and westward expansion, the literary marketplace furthered the expectation that northeastern fiction was 'serious' writing, while western writing was sub-literary and picturesque. To grapple with these factors, I examine primary and secondary sources composed between 1885 and 1940: Mexican-American novels and short stories, many of which failed commercially, often in the West, and/or were published posthumously by recovery-project efforts; commercially successful novels and short stories that appeared in literary magazines; and 'current fiction' reviews printed in newspapers and literary magazines. Using a hybrid theoretical framework that bridges together realist and regionalist studies (which are predominately white) and Mexican-American literary studies, I argue, without creating an Anglo/Mexican binary, that Mexican-American literature from 1885 and 1940 diversifies

the realist and regionalist era of American letters and helps us better understand the American literary histories and print cultures of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

It would be unfair to say that realist and regionalist studies overlook Mexican-American writings altogether, or that Mexican-American studies ignore these writers' places in 'American' literary traditions. Some regionalist studies such as *The Uses of Variety* (2001) by Carrie Tirado Bramen and the anthology *Regionalists on the Left* (2013), edited by Michael C. Steiner, include thoughtful and cogent criticisms on Mexican-American writings. Reading Ruiz de Burton alongside Hamlin Garland and W.E.B. Du Bois, for instance, Bramen argues that the three writers "configured the region as a contemporary place of struggle rather than a nostalgic projection of a past community"; these writers, in other words, separated themselves from or had outgrown the more wistful local color movement (131). Steiner's anthology, in a similar way, places Américo Paredes in the realm of radical regionalist practice, such as that exercised by Paredes's contemporary John Steinbeck. A chapter on Filipino writer Carlos Bulosan also shows how minorities (i.e., Bulosan's Filipinos and Paredes's Mexicans) struggled through the Depression and Second World War far differently than, say, the white populations of *The Grapes of Wrath*.[1] As far as realist criticism goes, its inclusion of Mexican-American writers is noticeably sparse next to regionalist scholarship. Melanie V. Dawson's categorization of *The Squatter and the Don* as "hybrid, flexible, and . . .

[1] See Stephen J. Mexal's chapter on Carlos Bulosan, "Toward a Transnational Liberalism of the Left," in Steiner's anthology. Mexal's piece will be referenced again in the final chapter of this dissertation.

emotionally resonant strain of realism" is arguably the strongest reading of a Mexican-American writer as a practitioner of a variant of realism (47).

Notably, scholarship centered on Mexican-American literary production such as Vincent Pérez's *Remembering the Hacienda* (2006) and John Morán González's *Border Renaissance* (2009) includes excellent discussions of these writers' roles in the U.S. literary traditions and genres of their respective generations. Pérez , for one, examines Jovita González and Eve Raleigh's *Caballero* (late 1930s/1996) as a historical romance whose composition might have been inspired by Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*. And John González reads Paredes's *George Washington Gómez* (1936-1940/1990) as a modernist response to contemporaneous Texan writings such as the "racist works" of renowned historian and folklorist J. Frank Dobie (*Border Renaissance* 132). For Paredes, González explains, the "agonist [with which Mexican Americans had to grapple] was modernity itself, or the economic, political and social processes that had radically reconfigured everyday life for [this population]" (132). In spite of this criticism, however, and as far as I can tell, this dissertation is the first book-length study dedicated to Mexican-American realist and regionalist literary production that pays specific attention to the professional developments occurring in American letters when these authors wrote in their respective genres. I also examine, in this regard, what commercially successful contemporaneous authors were writing at the time, and why, for instance, they were achieving recognition and Mexican Americans were not. *The Campaign for Literary Practice*, then, attempts to patch this hole in American literary history. It is inspired not only by the writing produced by struggling Mexican-American writers, but also by the

rigorous literary histories that emerged out of and in conjunction with the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project. Studies such as Kirsten Silva Gruesz's *Ambassadors of Culture* (2001), John-Michael Rivera's *The Emergence of Mexican America* (2006), and Marissa K. López's *Chicano Nations* (2011) take seriously the "changing demographics of the United States" and "issues of canonicity"; for Gruesz, Rivera, and López, the goal is "not so much to accommodate Latinos to an existing national tradition, but to reconfigure that tradition to acknowledge the continuous presence of Latinos within and around it" (Gruesz 10).

What Ruiz de Burton, Mena, González, and Paredes have in common—not just with one another but also with literary figures like Bret Harte—is their desire to write commercially successful literature and, especially in Paredes's case, literature that could engage and parody popular discourse in the name of minorities. Whereas the three female writers I examine descended from elite families (and Ruiz de Burton and González actively identified as white), Paredes came from a working class background and was able, because he eventually pursued academia and became a professor, to maintain an active relationship with literary and cultural production throughout his life. Examining these writers' major works in realist and regionalist contexts between the years of 1885 and 1940 helps us witness Mexican Americans as full participants in the making of U.S. literature as an institution. It also allows us to recast literary traditions in Mexican-American terms, as fundamentally incomplete without the voices of these writers. The appearance of Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don* as a realist novel in 1885, for example, helps us better understand some of the historical and literary phenomena

described by Nancy Glazener in her seminal study *Reading for Realism* (1997). On a basic level, where Ruiz de Burton—like Howells and Twain—mocked the sentimental romance genre throughout *The Squatter and the Don*, we can start to discern how Ruiz de Burton's work comprises a part of realism's historical formation: "the construction of realist authorship as professional authorship around the 1880s," Glazener explains, "was simultaneously the construction of sentimental and sensational authorship as unprofessional" (14). Although Ruiz de Burton exercised no literary influence socially, she must have known that her act of writing was a professional undertaking and that *The Squatter and the Don*, as a product, offered a better and implicitly more 'real' story than a contemporaneous romance like Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884).

In reading Mexican-American works from 1913 to 1940 (i.e., from Mena to Paredes) as regionalist, even amidst the globalizing tendency in literary studies (and especially in Chicana/o-Latina/o literary studies), this dissertation offers new ways of understanding the nation's revived interest in Mexico and the southwestern regions of the United States amid processes of modernity and community formation during the Mexican Revolution, First World War, and the Depression. With the case of María Cristina Mena who wrote for such established literary magazines as *Century* and *American* between 1913 and 1916, her short stories offer incredible insight into the United States' literary-commercial obsession with Mexico. Following from Stephen Crane's western and Mexican writings in the late nineteenth century, which show a literary abandonment of Mexican people (i.e., Crane believed he had failed to understand and illustrate Mexicans), Mena's Mexico stories bespeak her determination to write Mexicans, at the very least,

humanely. Mena's professionalism, self-proclaimed authority and expertise, and literary connections (however tenuous at times) to writers such as D.H. Lawrence and T.S. Eliot helped transform her into a writer that we can read today as practitioner female-authored, indigenous-centered "new regionalism." Unlike Mena who lived in and was able to publish her work in New York, Jovita González and Eve Raleigh, residing and writing in Texas in the opening decades of the twentieth century, tried but failed to get their landmark novel *Caballero* in print "between the late 1930s and the 1950s" (J.M. González, *Border Renaissance* 183). Significantly, *Caballero*'s belated publication lends eerie distance to its historical subject matter (i.e., the mid nineteenth-century U.S.-Mexican War), bringing the novel closer to the contemporaneous and now canonical *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), *William* Faulkner's failed "southern romance" that told of the United States' Civil War.[2] González and Raleigh's novel was supremely marketable, but it imparted a story of an apparently unimportant and forgettable South Texas region and its Mexican population. Today, *Caballero* ought to stand in American literary history as an example of what I call "visionary regionalism," an attempt to reimagine a region's history and configure its present and future according to present-day needs. Emerging around the same time and place as *Caballero*, Paredes's *George Washington Gómez* grappled with the present-day reality of the Depression and World War II. Its articulations of South Texas life and conflict complicate regionalist representations in the popular and canonical *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Paredes's novel helps this

[2] According to Jeff Karem, *Absalom* failed to meet readers' romantic expectations of the South (38-39). I will discuss this further in Chapter 3.

dissertation engage with the previously mentioned global predisposition of literary studies. While I speak of the globe in generic terms, I certainly mean to show that Paredes's geographic landscape reaches horizontally farther than Steinbeck's. And, in the modernist scheme of things, Paredes better or more critically plumbs the racialized, poverty-stricken mind of its Mexican-American protagonist—a member of a perpetually disenfranchised community.

The Campaign for Literary Practice thus aims to revise the currently negligible role of Mexican-American writers in realist and regionalist literary history. Its long-term goal is to contribute to the reshaping of not only these literary traditions but also U.S. literary canons. Mexican-American writers are far from being random additions in the genealogy of American letters; they constitute the very fabric of U.S. literature and are a prime reason why literary culture matters. Chapter 1, "'I'll Publish Your Cowardice All Over California': Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don* in the Age of Howells and American Realism," provides this project's central instance of a Mexican-American writer attempting to navigate the literary marketplace at a key juncture in the history of American letters. Drawing on materials associated with the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project and digital literary magazine archives, this chapter examines the publication and commercial failure of *The Squatter and the Don*, one of the first novels written in English by a Mexican author in the United States. In treating *The Squatter and the Don* as a realist novel and placing it in the context of the professionalizing environment of late nineteenth-century American letters, a central purpose of this chapter is to destabilize its canonization as a historical romance and, subsequently, to suggest a

revised framework for reading the novel within the dominant literary establishment in the country at the time of its publication. Examined in this manner, *The Squatter and the Don* articulates an unprecedented Mexican-American literary realism that not only emerges out of the West, California specifically, but that also participates in and departs from the East Coast establishment cultivated by Howells, 'the Dean' of American letters. I focus on Ruiz de Burton and Howells's use of the realist novel as a means to grapple with perceptions of modern-day business in a time of U.S. territorial expansion and to parse their personal anxieties about fiction's ability to edify its audience. The realist novel enabled Ruiz de Burton and Howells to locate their thinking about the United States' imperialist gaze within a new cultural allegory, that of the honest and aging businessman's retreat from the increasingly ruthless landscape of capitalism and monopolistic conduct. Writing these novels in their midlives, Ruiz de Burton in her early fifties and Howells in his late forties, both realists coincidentally portrayed the rise of younger, more energetic businessmen with the ability to orchestrate the still-expanding frontier of the United States. Chapter 1 concludes by showing how *The Squatter and the Don* and Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* posit parables of realist authorship through their respective characters' triumphs and failures.

Chapter 2, "Mexican Vistas in an Expansionist Literary Marketplace: Stephen Crane's 'Form and Color' and María Cristina Mena's New Regionalism," moves away from Ruiz de Burton's struggles in the literary West to the cultural terrain of Mexico, one in which early twentieth-century newspapers and magazines were very much interested. Stephen Crane's under-examined writings on the West and Mexico provide—in spite of

their representative shortcomings—a starting point for examining Mena's Mexican stories as new regionalist compositions. Crane's writings appeared over a decade before Mena's, in the late nineteenth century, and are clear indications of northeastern publishers' desires to breach this southern, international frontier. Whereas Crane eventually abandoned the literary task of representing Mexicans in his commissioned journalistic writings, and upon his return to New York wrote stories of "weakly constructed Mexican[s]" (Klahn 127), Mena mustered all of her cultural authority and knowhow to correctly and authentically (in her eyes, of course) draw Mexicans for influential literary magazines such as *Century* and *American*. Crane, on the one hand, found it emotionally draining and impossible to sketch Mexicans with proper "psychological perception," as he called it ("Above all Things" 74). What he could perceive instead was the "form and color" of things, people, and locales—self-evident physical appearance, rather than emotional depth (74). Mena, on the other hand, engaged in a new regionalist practice where she wrote of and on behalf of Mexican Indians, mediating their emotions, experiences, and ways of seeing the world. Because Mena spoke negatively of local color and because scholars have already written about Mena's complex relationship to this genre, I introduce "new regionalism," which is defined by regionalist literary critics as the attempt of American writers to introduce readers to indigenous populations and the latter's more world-conscious ways. While new regionalism was a grandiose practice and a flawed one, it nevertheless provides a different and productive lens through which to read Mena's strategic literary ambition in a time of increasing newspaper and magazine publications on Mexico and Mexicans.

Chapter 3, "'Why Do You Hate the South?': The Limits of Visionary Regionalism in González and Raleigh's *Caballero* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*," examines two 'historical' novels from the late 1930s as intricate responses to the region's past, present, and future. These novels' parallel obsessions with the defeated populations of the U.S.-Mexican War and the U.S. Civil War—respectively, Mexicans and Southerners—complicate the way we read Texas and Mississippi's rural regions in American literary history. Here, I introduce the term "visionary regionalism" to suggest that González and Raleigh needed to rewrite the past and future in order to help improve the Texas-Mexican population's second-class citizenry in the present 1930s. Faulkner, unlike González and Raleigh, imparted a starker historical vision, complicating the region's continued existence and relevance in the context of the Depression and alongside impassioned views of the South. Faulkner's status as an established author granted him freedom to experiment in the realm of the literary, though this came at a great cost to his reputation, when the novel plummeted upon its publication. When examined together in American literary history, *Caballero* and *Absalom* show yet another instance of non-publication (in González and Raleigh's case) versus publication and eventual canonization (in Faulkner's case). While both novels failed in the literary marketplace of their time, we might read that failure as a product of these authors' challenges to the victory culture espoused by powerful public figures in the Southwest and South. Whereas *Caballero* posited Texas-Mexican history as a challenge to the outpouring of 'Remember the Alamo'-centered discourse in the 1930s, *Absalom* challenged the South's foundational narratives and drew them as grotesque and gruesome. Together, then, these

novels offer new ways of reading the region, history, and memory in twentieth-century American literature.

Chapter 4, "Regionalism, Geomodernism, and the Depressions of John Steinbeck and Américo Paredes," closes this dissertation with a reading of the major novels of these writers as Depression-era ruminations of the region and the region's relationship to the nation and globe. Steinbeck's immensely popular *The Grapes of Wrath* imparts what Michael Denning calls "racial populism," or a proudly Anglo-American version of Dust Bowl events (267), whereas Paredes's belatedly published *George Washington Gómez* offers a glimpse into early twentieth-century migrations' effects on a Mexican borderland community in South Texas. These novels offer simultaneously parallel and competing visions of the Depression; while Steinbeck's novel takes pains to recuperate an agrarian ideal where 'the people' own land and function autonomously, Paredes's novel makes clear how the cultural and physical violence with which people deal in the present is a difficult reality that will continue with the onset of the Second World War. In *George Washington Gómez*, the region and globe come together, albeit fleetingly, where we see how the occurrences in the borderlands are perhaps bound to be repeated across the world, affecting not just Mexicans but also other displaced and racialized people. As it offers a geographically- and racially-critical lens that *The Grapes of Wrath* lacks, *George Washington Gómez* pulses with geomodernist possibility, showing how Mexicans' locatedness in the region does not entirely limit their global outlook. At the same time, however, Paredes's novel leaves its title protagonist rootless and alienated, a self-proclaimed American patriot but a modernist figure defeated by internalized racism and

violent, institutionalized Americanization. George Washington Gómez, the troubled Mexican-American character, fights for what he calls "my country" (302), while Steinbeck's Oklahomans take up arms against it. So ends my dissertation—with a final look into publication and non-publication, and with an inquiry into how recovered Mexican-American literature adds tremendous value to U.S. literature overall.

In closing, I offer another anecdote involving the western writer Bret Harte. In 1892, Mark Twain complained to his dear friend William Dean Howells that Harte was "blind as a bat. He never sees anything correctly, except California scenery" (qtd. in Bell 42). While mischievous and certainly unfair—since Twain and Harte were literary rivals and once friends—Twain's words offer a symbolic lens through which to view almost a century of U.S. literature that elided, featured, overwrote, and generally misrepresented Mexicans and Mexican Americans. If we imagine Harte's strained illustration of California scenery as connected to all of the "literary offenses" committed by the Anglo-American writers in this chapter[3]—that is, alongside Howells's literary abandonment of the West, Crane's "form and color" sketches of Mexico and Mexicans, Faulkner's eventual turn toward a reactionary view of race, and Steinbeck's racial populism—we might also begin to see a critical need for a diversity of American voices. My selected Mexican-American writers used their limited resources between 1885 and 1940 to impart different stories of a minority population. Although these stories failed in the literary

[3] I borrow the term "literary offenses" from Twain's famously mean (and playful) essay, "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses" (1895). Twain faults the early nineteenth-century writer Cooper, above all else, for "inaccurate observation" (293). While I certainly do not see Howells, Crane, Faulkner, and Steinbeck as unable to portray 'reality' or illustrate the world 'accurately,' I do think their sometimes one-sided visions of the United States and Mexico need to be supplemented by the contemporaneous visions of Mexican-American writers.

marketplace then, because the public's imagination was not broad enough to encompass them, they prove that Mexican Americans did not simply stand by and watch the world of American letters materialize. My writers tried their luck, as full participants in a campaign for literary practice.

"I'll Publish Your Cowardice All Over California":
Ruiz de Burton's *The Squatter and the Don* in the Age of Howells and American Realism

I.

In 1885, when literary realism had reached its crescendo in the United States, William Dean Howells and Mexican-American writer María Amparo Ruiz de Burton published strikingly parallel novels featuring the businessmen of the late nineteenth century. Howells's *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, serialized in New York's *Century Magazine* between November 1884 and August 1885, was well received across the country. A review from San Francisco's literary magazine *The Overland Monthly* hailed the novel as the "best" of Howells's work thus far and dubbed Howells "the most significant man in American literature today[,] the man who has given American novel writing its standing" (553). Judging *The Rise of Silas Lapham* with criteria it had picked up from 'the Dean' of American letters himself, the *Overland* imbued its review with an appreciation for the "the simple, natural, and honest":[4] "When was the romance of business—the anxiety of pain and desire that do, in fact, make business life almost as full of human emotion as love affairs—so brought out, as in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*?" (553-54). The *Overland* borrowed the term "the romance of business" from one of Howells's own characters to propose a framework for reading and valuing American literature whose lingua franca, in an industrial age, was not love but money.[5] As if

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[4] These three words comprise Howells's famous trinity or criteria for American realism. See *Criticism and Fiction*, pp. 11-17.

[5] Howells's comically over-civilized character Bromfield Corey, a man who laments the passing of a "real aristocracy" (59), says to his son Tom Corey, a young man who is looking for an occupation: "[T]here's no doubt but money is to the fore now. It is the romance, the poetry of our

discovering a secret it already knew, the *Overland* used Howells's own realist standards to proclaim *The Rise of Silas Lapham* a quotidian story about a character it recognized and admired as the United States' "rough man of success" (554).[6]

Although it also strove to illustrate the "romance of business" in its protagonist's prolonged struggle to modernize his trade, *The Squatter and the Don* experienced a different reception in early 1885. Failing to garner the attention of the superior literary marketplace of the East Coast, Ruiz de Burton's novel was instead published by Samuel Carson & Company, *The Overland Monthly*'s publisher at the time but "a small San Francisco bookseller" (Gruesz, "Mexican/American" 464). Like Howells's novel, *The Squatter and the Don* received favorable reviews, but these appeared in Californian newspapers, not in culturally influential literary magazines. *The Daily Examiner* of San Francisco called *The Squatter and the Don* "a book with purpose [that] narrat[ed] a story of every-day life" and suggested its writer possessed a "literary ability of no mean order"

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age. It's the thing that chiefly strikes the imagination" (56). In this passage, Bromfield Corey is complaining about the newly-rich and their influence on the way Americans now perceive money. Conceivably, Howells uses this moment not only to parody the aristocratic and static Corey but also to provide a metaphor for how to read the present and its literature. Money has, in short, overtaken the American imagination; aristocracies are declining, people like Tom Corey have to work to earn a living, and Americans must try to understand the current meaning of money. See also Eric Sundquist's "Introduction: The Country of the Blue" in his edited collection *American Realism*. Discussing Frank Norris's *McTeague*, Sundquist writes: "The age of realism in America is the age of the *romance of money*—money not in any simple sense but in the complex alterations of human value that it brings into being by its own capacities for reproduction. As it defines, by changing, our notions of a self, so too it may define a change in our notions of a novelistic hero" (19; emphasis in original).

[6] Of book reviews in literary magazines like *The Atlantic Monthly*, Nancy Glazener states: "Book reviews . . . not only endorsed certain ways of reading that shaped the reception of texts, but they also affected authors' ways of reading and authors' understandings of the readings their works were likely to receive, understandings that in turn were registered in the authors' productions" (15).

(565-66). Other reviews also commended *The Squatter and the Don*'s achievement with what would seem like the Howellsian terms of simple, natural, and honest by emphasizing the novel's "attemp[t] to paint in realistic style" (*San Francisco Chronicle* 568). San Francisco's *Daily Alta*, attuned to the novel's business dimension, noted the "fervid eloquence [used by] the author [to] depict the baleful effect [of a railroad monopoly in] Southern California" (567). Similar reviews abounded, yet they spoke of an unknown, pseudonymous author and *The Squatter and the Don*'s potential "contribution" not to American literature but to the "incipient literature of the Pacific Coast" (*Daily Alta* 566). Suffice it to say that in the American literary scene of 1885, Ruiz de Burton stood far below the recognizable and powerful William Dean Howells.

These reviews signal a simple but foundational resemblance between Ruiz de Burton and Howells's novels by showing how both writers employed the keynote landscape of the realist generation, the "every-day" world of business. Taking into account Eric Sundquist's longstanding distinction between the mid nineteenth-century writer's "Captain Ahab" and the realist's "Captains of Industry" ("Introduction" 5), it makes sense that Ruiz de Burton and Howells, writing in the 1880s, would choose to narrate businessmen's lives against their respective industrializing backdrops. In spite of this resemblance, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* has been called "the first realistic portrayal of a businessman in American literature" (Thomas 122), whereas *The Squatter and the Don*'s claim to realism remains largely unacknowledged. I argue, to this end, that *The Squatter and the Don* eludes realist studies because it emerged out of the West, in a seemingly agrarian or regionalist form, in a time when realism was the cultural capital of

white male writers in the urban Northeast. Furthermore, the love story featured in *The Squatter and the Don* tends to keep the novel classified as a historical romance, which belies Ruiz de Burton's effort to write of "a contemporary occurrence in California."[7] Notably, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* also features a love story, but it is meant to be subsumed under the greater plot of Silas Lapham's business trials and tribulations. In the spirit of realists who, as Amy Kaplan explains, used "romance" as their "favorite whipping boy" (16), both Ruiz de Burton and Howells mocked their own love stories to enact a more serious literary tone.

Appearing the same year in cities that were the West and East Coast publishing hubs of the late nineteenth century, Ruiz de Burton and Howells's novels engage in a critically overlooked cross-national and cross-cultural conversation. I suggest that in reading these novels together, we can alter the dominant trajectory of American literary history and strengthen current discussions about American realism, the literary marketplace, and U.S. territorial expansion. Bearing this in mind, it is important to consider what *The Squatter and the Don's* commercial failure in 1885 means in light of the literary and historical contexts that made Howells's northeastern fiction prime national literature but that consigned Ruiz de Burton's novel to western, regional, and/or marginal literary status, to the point where it was altogether forgotten until the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project reissued it in 1992. In treating *The Squatter and the Don* as a realist novel, a central purpose of this chapter is also to

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[7] These words comprise *The Squatter and the Don*'s subtitle. They suggest the contemporaneity of the novel's content, rather than a focus on 'history' or the past (as is generally the case with a *historical* romance).

destabilize its canonization as a historical romance and, subsequently, to suggest a revised framework for reading the novel within the dominant literary establishment in the country at the time of its publication.[8] Of the scholarship that calls attention to the difference between the two genres, Melanie V. Dawson's article, "Ruiz de Burton's Emotional Landscape: Property and Feeling in *The Squatter and the Don*," comes closest to placing Ruiz de Burton's novel within a distinctly realist category. *The Squatter and the Don* is "a variant of nineteenth-century realist production," explains Dawson, and it is perhaps "Ruiz de Burton's identity as a woman and a Mexican national . . . that influence[s] [the novel's] critical reception as a historical romance" (48). Dawson's essay, however, is not concerned with the novel's relationship to Howellsian realism; Howells is mentioned only briefly, and *The Rise of Silas Lapham* makes no appearance in her piece.

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[8] A number of scholars have described *The Squatter and the Don* as a variant of the historical romance or as an admixture of genres. The following literary critics provide some examples. In their introduction to the novel, Sánchez and Pita call *The Squatter and the Don* a "romance of denunciation," where history seems to eventually trump romance (48). In *The Troubled Union*, John Morán González explains that *The Squatter and the Don* eventually "abandons the historical romance genre altogether," allowing "the supersession of the national allegory [or the romantic union between the Anglo-American and the Mexican] by the allegory of proletarianization [wherein Mexicans become America's labor force]" (103-04). Carrie Tirado Bramen, in *The Uses of Variety*, argues that *The Squatter and the Don* enacts a variant of regionalism she calls "strategic residualism": here, "regional narrative expediently uses an elegiac mode primarily to advocate an emergent politics of adaptation" (131). José F. Aranda Jr. suggests *The Squatter and the Don* experiments with "naturism, realism, and muckraking journalism" and that "Ruiz de Burton resorts in the end to a most American political tradition: 'fighting words'" (25). Finally, in "María Amparo Ruiz de Burton Negotiates American Literary Politics and Culture," Amelia María de la Luz Montes argues that "Ruiz de Burton's writing reveals multiple levels of genre (realism and naturalism) which later writers would develop: William Dean Howells, Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser" (208). Although Montes incorrectly refers to Howells as a "later" writer, her scholarship has long positioned Ruiz de Burton's work as a direct challenge to any straightforward or strictly 'romantic' genre delineation.

I also privilege the genre of the realist novel here because Ruiz de Burton published *The Squatter and the Don* precisely when American literary realism was defining itself, for better or for worse, against the West. Although traditional realists like Howells did not plot their novels in the West, they evoked the region, if only fleetingly, in very significant ways. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), for instance, Mark Twain engages the hostile antebellum geographies of North and South, but the novel famously ends with little Huck on the verge of "light[ing] out of the Territory" (320), a gesture recognized by many literary critics as a reflection of the United States' own westward gaze at the time of the novel's publication.[9] In the case of *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, numerous scholars including Martin Bucco, Nicolas S. Witschi, and Matthew J. Lavin have discussed the way Howells positions the West as the "implied . . . background" to an eastern "foreground" (Bucco 309). Witschi, in particular, offers a useful paradigm for reading the larger implications of this occurrence by stating that "Howells very deliberately buil[t] a definition of realism by using the idea of the West, with all of its associations with a thing called 'Nature,' as one of his key touchstones for the real" (70). Grounding his premise in the historical fact that "western nature had by Howells's age become the chief source of American raw materials," Witschi creates an important parallel between Howellsian realism and the United States' expanding industrial economy: put simply, each relied on the West for its own reinvention and improvement (83). Without the West, and by extension without the frontier, *The Rise of*

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[9] See John Morán González's *The Troubled Union*, pp. 1-4.

Silas Lapham would lack its "distinctive flavor" and representative claim to reality (Witschi 78). As a novel that prides itself on a detailed business plot, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* inevitably features the very-real business activity taking place in the West and, as I will discuss in detail later in this chapter, in Mexico and South America, the southern commercial frontiers of the imperial United States. Under these circumstances, *The Squatter and the Don* articulates an unprecedented Mexican-American literary realism that not only emerges out of the West, California specifically, but that also participates in and departs from the East Coast literary establishment Howells, 'the Dean' of American letters, spent years cultivating.

To address the specific contents of this chapter, I return to genre as that which best unifies *The Squatter and the Don* and *The Rise of Silas Lapham* in American literary history. I focus on Ruiz de Burton and Howells's use of the realist novel as a means to grapple with perceptions of modern-day business in a time of U.S. territorial expansion, and to parse the authors' personal anxieties about fiction's ability to edify its audience. The realist novel enabled Ruiz de Burton and Howells to locate their thinking about the United States' imperialist gaze within a new cultural allegory, that of the honest and aging businessman's retreat from the increasingly ruthless landscape of capitalism and monopolistic conduct. Writing these novels in their midlives, Ruiz de Burton in her early fifties and Howells in his late forties, both realists coincidentally portrayed the rise of younger, more energetic businessmen with the ability to orchestrate the still-expanding frontier of the United States. As if tracing the reprise of Manifest Destiny through these younger men, Ruiz de Burton and Howells anticipated in their novels the final stages of

western settlement as well as the continued growth of United States empire abroad. Notably, the symbolic removal of Ruiz de Burton and Howells's generation from a position of power makes more palpable the fact that *The Squatter and the Don* was Ruiz de Burton's second and final novel and the decade of the 1880s was Howells's "most personally trying" (Abeln 13).

Through the generic conventions of the realist novel, then, Ruiz de Burton and Howells show how their aging characters are unfit for acceptance into a geographically and commercially expanding nation. I argue that Ruiz de Burton challenges this occurrence in *The Squatter and the Don* by revealing its irreversible repercussions. Her protagonist Don Mariano, unlike Howells's Silas Lapham, passes away before his time because he has no place to go; as a landed Mexican whose participation in an emergent capitalist market is precluded, Don Mariano cannot be incorporated into the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. This death compels Ruiz de Burton's narrator to intercede in the novel's closing chapter and "speak the truth" (336) about businesses, monopolies, and the unfair treatment of the author's fellow Californios. Ruiz de Burton's realism thus bears an urgency that remains untouched in Howells's novel. Although Howells believed that the "true realist" always "risk[ed] over-moralizing" (*Criticism and Fiction* 16), he endeavored in his fiction not to cross this line. The "moral spectacle" Howells presents in his closing chapter is Silas Lapham's financial collapse as right and necessary, given the protagonist's age as well as his series of misconducts (*Rise of Silas Lapham* 319). Perhaps because Ruiz de Burton had no authorial or editorial space outside of her novel to evoke her politics, her realism spoke louder than Howells's did.

The words that comprise this chapter's title—"I'll publish your cowardice all over California"—are taken from *The Squatter and the Don*. The titular squatter, William Darrell, utters them in a fit of rage as he accuses Don Mariano of foul play in the business world: "[W]hy didn't you think of your dignity when you paraded your daughter (like a pretty filly for sale) before my son, to get his money! Damn you! [C]an't I make you fight? Won't you be insulted, you coward? I'll publish your cowardice all over California" (230). Implied in Darrell's outburst as well as in the don's subsequent emotional restraint is a dim yet suggestive critique of the cheapened and fictive material printed in newspapers that were published on a mass scale when Ruiz de Burton and Howells wrote their novels.[10] Similar to Howells and other realists who were "war[y] of the newspaper business" (Kaplan 26), Ruiz de Burton, at least in this pivotal scene, understood such a published medium as an instrument used to promote partial or fabricated knowledge, not reality.

In using these words as part of this chapter's title, I reimagine them as spoken by Ruiz de Burton in attempt to expose the "cowardice" of, primarily, a railroad monopoly and the state and federal governments. These words, in a way, also speak to the fact that *The Squatter and the Don*, whether or not Ruiz de Burton intended it, became a national project from a marginalized Californian standpoint and a response to East Coast realism. In publishing *The Squatter and the Don* in 1885, then, Ruiz de Burton helped repair some of the cultural fissures in the American realist imaginary. Through anger and bravery, she

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[10] This perspective on newspapers belongs to the narrators and authors, not to me.

tried her luck in the professionalizing and competitive literary environment of the late nineteenth century. Although Ruiz de Burton failed then, her novel today poses a unique challenge for those seeking to interrogate the establishment of American literary realism and the making of American letters. While it is uncertain if Ruiz de Burton and Howells knew one another, we can at least conceive of them as writing the very same country at the very same time. Together, their visions create a complementary portrait not only of American realism but also of the United States at the threshold of twentieth-century modernity.

II.

Since the 1992 republication of *The Squatter and the Don*, scholars have discussed the novel's lucid portrayal of Manifest Destiny and westward expansion by drawing attention to Ruiz de Burton's concern for the threatened social status of landed Mexicans in California. Although *The Squatter and the Don* has long been accused of elitism and racism because it is deeply "enmeshed within a Spanish/Mexican colonial logic that [claims] whiteness [for] Californios" (J.M. González, *Troubled Union* 87), the novel is valuable precisely because it takes as its subject the plight of Mexicans in California, which no other realist novel of the time cared to do. Born to a prominent and landed family in Baja California, Mexico on July 3, 1832, Ruiz de Burton experienced the diffusion of Manifest Destiny firsthand. In the aftermath of U.S.-Mexican War and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), Ruiz de Burton and her mother, Doña Isabel Ruiz Maytorena, left for Alta California as refugees to be afforded full U.S. citizenship. Here, upon newly annexed United States territory, Ruiz de Burton married

Captain Henry S. Burton, a New York-born man who had served in the U.S. Army during the war. Ruiz de Burton's marriage to Captain Henry S. Burton was, in large part, the reason she crossed such vast geographic and cultural terrain in her lifetime. In the early 1850s, when Henry S. Burton was ordered to San Diego, the young couple purchased a land grant from Pío Pico, a Los Angeles councilman and former governor of Mexican-ruled Alta California. This land, called Rancho Jamul, would become the real-life counterpart to *The Squatter and the Don*'s litigated ranch. When Henry S. Burton was deployed East prior to the U.S. Civil War, Ruiz de Burton and their two children went with him, first to Rhode Island and, over the next decade, to New York, Washington, Delaware, and Virginia. After her husband's death in 1869, Ruiz de Burton returned to the West Coast and spent the rest of her life trying to remain afloat financially. Like *The Squatter and the Don*'s struggling protagonist Don Mariano, she fought a series of legal battles to maintain ownership of her San Diego ranch.[11]

Ruiz de Burton's return to California in 1870 would become an opportunity for her to attempt to write professionally, for income as well as literary status. By this point in her life, she had experienced not only the U.S.-Mexican War but also the U.S. Civil War, the keynote event of the realist generation which contemporaneous writers like Howells and Twain had missed. Ruiz de Burton's first novel, *Who Would Have Thought*

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[11] For the main source of these biographic details, see Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita's introduction to *The Squatter and the Don*, pp. 7-49. See also Amelia María de la Luz Montes and Anne Elizabeth Goldman's "Chronology of Events in the Life of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton," pp. 245-46.

It? (1872), published in Philadelphia by J.P. Lippincott,[12] responds to the Civil War through a comedic distortion of the traditional domestic and sentimental novel genres. Scholars who discuss Ruiz de Burton's cross-national insight and familiarity with the United States' major mid nineteenth-century wars have noted the parallels between Southerners and Mexicans in *Who Would Have Thought It?*—each group having lost to the 'Yankee' North in its respective conflict.[13] Although Ruiz de Burton's late husband had served in the Union Army and Ruiz de Burton herself held northern ties through her acquaintance with President Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary Todd Lincoln, the Mexican-American writer sympathized with the South because she felt she understood the region's dispossession and plight. *Who Would Have Thought It?* parodies the shallow Republican values Ruiz de Burton had witnessed in her own husband's family and positions certain northern abolitionists as vicious and racist people. In the novel, a young Mexican woman named Lola Medina finds herself living on the East Coast after a good New Englander rescues her from Indian captivity in the U.S. Southwest. Lola, to a certain extent, occupies the symbolic position of unfortunate Southerner because, in addition to being from Mexico (and, later, from the Southwest where she is rescued), she is treated cruelly by many of the 'Yankees' who surround her. As is the case in *The Squatter and the Don*, an intermarriage between the young Mexican woman and an Anglo-American

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[12] John-Michael Rivera speaks to the historic merit of *Who Would Have Thought It?*: "This achievement of being the first Mexican novel written in English and published by a very prestigious publishing house, Lippincott, should not go unnoticed in Mexican American literary history. Moreover, it is important to point out that the American literary public spheres had never seen anything like her in the history of American letters" (90). See Rivera's chapter "Embodying Manifest Destiny" in his book *The Emergence of Mexican America*, pp. 82-109.

[13] See Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita's 1995 introduction to *Who Would Have Thought It?*, pp. vii-lxv. See also Vincent Pérez's *Remembering the Hacienda*, pp. 49-92.

man ultimately helps Mexicans avert complete submission to greedy Northerners.[14] One might say that unlike in *The Squatter and the Don* where the deliverance of Mexicans in the U.S. is left partially ambiguous, *Who Would Have Thought It?* sends Lola and her husband (a New Englander) to the former's native Mexico where they are presumably safer from Northerners yet unable, or perhaps unwilling, to partake in U.S. citizenry.

Given the painstaking historical recovery of Ruiz de Burton's life and small body of literary work, it is difficult to bypass her undercurrent of distrust of, if not disgust toward, the U.S. Northeast. Ruiz de Burton's frustrations with the region noticeably escalated in early 1869, just prior to her husband's death and her departure from New York. In February of that year, she wrote a letter to her dear friend Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, former military commander and politician in California, in which she attacked "Manifest Destiny," a doctrine that represented, according to Ruiz de Burton, the worst of U.S. entitlement and expansion:

> Of all the wicked phrases invented to rob us Mexicans, there is none more repulsive than that one; it is the most offensive and the most insulting; my blood boils when I hear it, and I see in an instant, as in a photograph, all that the Yankees have made Mexicans suffer—the theft of Texas, the war; the theft of California; the death of Maximilian! . . . To believe in "Manifest Destiny," I would have to cease to believe in justice or divine

[14] This view of Northerners/Yankees comes from the narrator of the novel and Ruiz de Burton herself; it is not my view. Ruiz de Burton's questionable if not totally problematic (emotional) support of the South has been discussed by a number of critics, including Rosaura Sánchez, Beatrice Pita, and Vincent Pérez.

> wisdom. No, my friend, Manifest Destiny is nothing more than "Manifest Yankie trick [*sic*]." (82)[15]

In her two novels, Ruiz de Burton casts certain northeastern people and places as metonyms for the corruption she believed Manifest Destiny harbored. Republicanism is rendered a hypocritical "Yankie" scheme in *Who Would Have Thought It?* And in *The Squatter and the Don*, "Manifest Yankie trick" is even more detailed, as Ruiz de Burton spends the length of the novel depicting the Californio community's struggle against insatiable Yankee squatters, the West's version of carpetbaggers.

The Squatter and the Don redirects the literary and political concerns surrounding *Who Would Have Thought It?* by shifting Ruiz de Burton's frame of reference from East to West. Whereas with *Who Would Have Thought It?* Ruiz de Burton feared for the novel's reception on the East Coast (and tried, rather feverishly, to get it reviewed in New York newspapers),[16] with *The Squatter and the Don* she worried about the actual printing

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[15] I have translated this passage from Spanish. Although I have altered a few words to make the translation smoother, I have tried to leave the idiosyncratic punctuation as it was, with very minor changes. I have also left "Manifest Yankie trick" as it was because Ruiz de Burton wrote this part specifically in English. For the original letter in Spanish, see pp. 81-83 in *En Otra Voz*, edited by Nicolás Kanellos.

[16] An astute businesswoman, Ruiz de Burton was well aware of the importance of promoting her novels in major newspapers that would attract the attention of a larger reading public. When attempting to promote her first novel, she sought the aid of someone with influence to intervene in the marketplace on her behalf and have *Who Would Have Thought It?* reviewed in none other than New York City, the print capital of the United States. In a letter to New York lawyer Samuel Latham Mitchell Barlow with whom she was in frequent contact, Ruiz de Burton expresses frustration with her publisher Lippincott for sending copies of *Who Would Have Thought It?* directly to New York newspapers, with no one to intercede and put in a good word for the novel and its author. She tells Barlow: "I will write today to Mr. Lippincott telling him to send *you* a copy [of *Who Would Have Thought It?*], and then you must really do all you can for me . . . I hope you will give me all the benefit of your influence with the New York Press, for I would like to make the venture a little bit profitable. I did not write for glory" (437-38; emphasis in original). Though powerless in the sense that she could not rely on her anonymous novel alone to attract

of the novel and risked the little money she had to see its fruition.[17] Notably, *The Squatter and the Don* started out as a short story intended for publication in *The Californian*, then a literary magazine in San Francisco. The idea of writing something for the magazine came from Ruiz de Burton's friend Professor George Davidson who believed, no doubt, that a story about the aristocratic population of Mexicans in California would behoove the writer and magazine alike. But the short story genre proved insufficient for the larger tale Ruiz de Burton had in mind. She penned the following lines to Davidson in 1880:

> You must not think laziness prevented me from writing for the *Californian*. I began a story, and my notes got to be so many, that I found myself spinning out quite a long yarn. Then I thought I would write a story that would run for several months, and there it rests, for I got sick and disheartened, then [my daughter] got sick, and then we moved to the rancho. I may try again some of these days, and I shall rely on your assistance. (484)

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positive reviews in a busy and competitive New York literary environment, Ruiz de Burton saw a solution to that problem in the powerful figure of Barlow, a white man with a good name and a potentially lucrative network.

[17] Ruiz de Burton wrote Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo about her frustration with *The Squatter and the Don*'s publisher Samuel Carson for apparently not holding up his end of the deal. In a letter that was likely written in late December of 1884, she tells Vallejo, much to her dismay, about having to pay Samuel Carson again for *The Squatter and the Don*'s printing to begin: "Suffice it to say that people have not been keeping their promises and last night my publisher wrote to tell me he needed $100 for the printing to begin! Surely you would understand why I feel harrassed. I wish you were here to…" (506; ellipses in original). I have translated this passage from Spanish. As with the other translation, I have altered a few words to make the writing smoother but tried to keep the punctuation as it was. For the Spanish version, see pp. 506-07 in *Conflicts of Interest*, by Ruiz de Burton and edited by Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita.

Between writing this letter and publishing the "long yarn" which she finally gathered into *The Squatter and the Don*, Ruiz de Burton lost, if ever she ever truly had, the opportunity to publish a serialized novel in a literary magazine. The "story" Ruiz de Burton once envisioned as "run[ning] for several months" never appeared in *The Californian* or, for that matter, in *The Overland Monthly*, which absorbed the former magazine in 1883. When Ruiz de Burton wrote Davidson again in mid 1884, she had apparently forgotten about installments altogether and focused instead on just getting the novel published. She asked Davidson to help her increase her widow's pension to cover printing expenses: "Will you try to help me? Please do so. If I am able to pay for the stenotype plates I will make something; if not, all the profit will go [to] the pocket of the publishers and book-sellers" (505).

Ruiz de Burton's letters to Davidson are remarkable because they make clear her awareness of the way the literary marketplace functioned in her time. They also intimate her desire to become a part of the professional world of authorship that Howells would describe a few years later in "The Man of Letters as Man of Business" (1893). In his essay, Howells discusses, for instance, how "authors live now, and live prettily enough, by the sale of the serial publication of their writings to the magazines" (7).[18] And he also explains that "a good novel will often have wider acceptance as a book from having been a magazine serial" (10). That Ruiz de Burton lacked access to serial publication put her novel at a disadvantage from the start. She funded *The Squatter and the Don*'s

[18] Howells suggests that in an era of magazines, periodicals, and newspapers, the bound novel was not an ideal medium.

publication out of "need,"[19] to make up for the resources she lacked and to gain something in return—if not literary status, then income. What starts to become clear in this context is that the material conditions surrounding *The Squatter and the Don*'s publication in the West contributed to its commercial failure. The East Coast literary world described by Howells was out of her reach.

The Squatter and the Don emerged in a time of unprecedented activity in the literary marketplace due to "cheaper and more efficient print technologies" and "expanding transportation networks" (Glazener 20). Although improvements in both print and transportation might have leveled out the literary playing field, they did, as Nancy Glazener explains in a similar context, "just the opposite" (20). With the continued rise of the Northeast as the center of literary production and cultural authority—an aftereffect of the North's Civil War victory, according to Glazener (27)—an unspoken standard of aesthetic judgment arose: more often than not, northeastern fiction was serious, literary writing, while western fiction was subliterary, regional, and/or picturesque.[20] For the purpose of this chapter, then, it is important to view the novels of Ruiz de Burton and Howells within the simultaneous contexts of westward expansion and, as Tom Lutz writes, "the literary imperialism of Boston and New York" (25). Whereas Howells's novel was promoted as a representation of realism—of American literature and

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[19] In "The Man of Letters as the Man of Business," Howells explains that writers fund their works' publications only "in those rare instances[,] through need or choice" (33). In Ruiz de Burton's case, she needed to fund her novel's publication to attempt to make a profit.

[20] See Witschi's "Introduction: The Genres of Realism," pp. 1-14, in his book *Traces of Gold*. Here, Witschi argues that western literature plumbed the depths of so-called 'nature' (or the natural landscape) and was not merely a picturesque enterprise. Like East Coast writers did in their cities, those who lived in and wrote about the West attempted to formulate their own realism.

modernity, of business and the city, and so on—*The Squatter and the Don* was, rather prematurely, routed into a box of western tourism by its publisher. The novel could not be imagined outside a western literary tradition that had developed in response to readers' growing, expansionist-like curiosity about the region.

Just prior to *The Squatter and the Don*'s publication, Samuel Carson & Company advertised the novel in the January 1885 issue of the *Overland* alongside three travel books that were more in line with popular expectations of literary production in the West. Intending to boost tourism and procure financial investment for its region, the advertisement headlined not its 400-paged and only novel *The Squatter and the Don* but rather a 150-paged "new book on California and the New Southwest," titled *With the Invader*. In the words of the advertisement, this was "[o]ne of the most delightfully written books of travels in the Southwest yet published [that traces] the picturesque features of New Mexico, Arizona, and Northern Old Mexico." The remaining two books in the advertisement, *A California Pilgrimage* "told in verse," now in its second edition, and *A Trip to Alaska*, likewise engaged the tradition of western travel, recounting the history of the region's seemingly bygone Indian, Mexican, and Spanish populations. Read in the context of the renewed sense of Manifest Destiny that characterized the United States in the 1880s, the advertisement makes clear the publisher's desire to capitalize on the "cultural currency" (Glazener 205) of California and the "New Southwest."

Over a century later, it is easy to see how *The Squatter and the Don* stands out in Samuel Carson & Company's advertisement as a non-touristic piece. Instead of focusing

on travel, Ruiz de Burton's novel exposes the bleak social conditions of its time, in this case, "the sufferings of Southern California from the non-construction of the Texas Pacific Railroad." *The Squatter and the Don* also encompasses a broader or national geographic scope, moving "across the continent," in the words of the advertisement, "by way of San Francisco" to "New York and Washington." In employing major American place names, Samuel Carson & Company attempted to fit if not force *The Squatter and the Don* into the travel genre of the other three books in the advertisement, showing how the novel, too, took its reader on an overland journey. But to the Ruiz de Burton critic, the place names make visible an American-wide context that joins western cities to eastern ones and that positions the West as a part of, and not apart from, the United States. Ruiz de Burton's "California novel," after all, is about the effort of Californios and their fellow settlers to connect San Diego to other major cities in the Untied States through the railroad—to participate in a national economy. Whereas Ruiz de Burton aimed to comment on the condition of California with respect to the United States, then, Samuel Carson & Company advertised her novel as a lens through which Americans could gaze upon the West generally and California specifically.

Although Ruiz de Burton sought to make *The Squatter and the Don* a profitable venture, writing for something other than authorial "glory,"[21] as she once called it, she did not participate in the western literary practice of selling California through

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[21] This word comes from Ruiz de Burton's letter to Barlow (see note 16). Significantly, unlike Howells who struggled with the moral implications of selling his literature for money—a result of the professionalization of literature in the late nineteenth century—Ruiz de Burton was unabashed by the prospect of writing for profit and "not . . . for glory" (438). She was, in this sense, more of a realist.

picturesque vistas. Melanie Dawson argues, in this regard, that Ruiz de Burton rejects "scenic realism," the popular late nineteenth-century practice of "treat[ing] the landscape with detailed attention" (47). "The novel's avoidance of the scenic California vista (which is never described, in fact)," writes Dawson, "makes it impossible to attach a hospitable or comforting dimension to material realities" (56-57). In the chapter "The Don in His Broad Acres," Ruiz de Burton focuses on Don Mariano's *use* of his land, not on romantic ruminations of it, and suggests that the land's utility is jeopardized by the squatters who descend upon and misuse it. In Don Mariano's pragmatic approach to cultivating the land, Ruiz de Burton alters the ideology of idle (western) abundance and scenic beauty propagated not only by the publisher Samuel Carson & Company but also by the *Overland* magazine. "Believe me," Don Mariano tells the men occupying his land, "it will be a great godsend to have a thriving, fruit-growing business in our county. To have the cultivated land well fenced, and the remainder left out for grazing. Then there would not be . . . useless acres" (88). The land's commercial value here displaces any semblance of aesthetic effect; the don's "broad acres" are certainly not the stuff of poetry.

The Squatter and the Don's departure from the aesthetic standards supported by its publisher Samuel Carson & Company indicates why, perhaps, the novel was not fit for serialization in the *Overland Monthly*, which Samuel Carson & Company printed between 1883 and 1885 (Mott 402).[22] While not all Californian writing upheld the

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[22] One might assume that the *Overland*'s editor at the time, Milicent W. Shinn, would have supported a writer like Ruiz de Burton given their similarities; they were, among other things, industrious women with strong ties to California. In her twelve years as editor of the *Overland* (Mott 402), however, Shinn seemed to value the kind of writing that glossed the *Overland*'s western keynote of picturesqueness. Shinn endorsed such writers as Ina Coolbrith and Mary

western keynote of picturesqueness and promoted the landscape with sensory description, there was enough of it to comprise an aesthetic tradition, one from which *The Squatter and the Don* clearly departed. It was not until the early twentieth century that these scenic pieces really started to give way to more critical accounts of the political, economic, and cultural fissures that ruptured the western landscape.[23] Taking this into account, one might say Ruiz de Burton was ahead of her time, using her limited resources to publish a scathing critique of political disturbances in California in 1885. While an incomplete archive makes it difficult to know if *The Squatter and the Don* was sent somewhere aside from Samuel Carson & Company for publication and, indeed, to *The Overland Monthly* specifically, it appears that this publishing house remained Ruiz de Burton's only option.

III.

Set between 1872 and 1876, *The Squatter and the Don* recounts the struggles of Don Mariano Alamar and his Californio family to grasp the material changes resulting from the arrival of 'Yankee' squatters on their ranch and the rise of the Central Pacific as

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Austin, each of which was known, at one point or another in her career, to write the Californian landscape in conventional, scenic-realist style. That Shinn, too, was implicated in this tradition suggests her writing and aesthetic preferences were at odds with Ruiz de Burton's. In the June 1883 issue of the *Overland*, Shinn published an essay titled "Thirty Miles," which was "a vividly detailed description of the sights that greeted [Shinn] as she traveled from her rural home in Niles, California, to her editor office in San Francisco at different times of the day and in different seasons of the year" (Scarborough 53). See Mexal's *Reading for Liberalism*, pp. 1-16, for the *Overland*'s development of its western aesthetic. For more on Shinn's editorship, see p. 117 in Mexal's *Reading for Liberalism* and p. 407 in Mott's *A History of American Magazines*.

[23] In *Traces of Gold*, Witschi suggests that it was with Californian writer Mary Austin in the early twentieth century that western writers really started to "challeng[e] the representability of the [western] region as simply natural" (5-13). Even Austin's work, however, started out as a scenic realist enterprise. In the introduction to *The Land of Little Rain*, for instance, Robert Hass says of a piece Austin's piece "One Hundred Miles on Horseback" (1889): it "is almost comically the voice of the tenderfoot" or "tourist" (xx-xxi). Of course, this voice would change with later writing, especially in the 1903 version of *The Land of Little Rain*.

a railroad monopoly. In the aftermath of such instituted legal measures as the Homestead Act of 1862 and the No Fence Law of 1872,[24] Don Mariano is forced to stand by as the government declares his San Diego ranch open for taking. Entitled squatters stake claim after claim on the don's property and, with the sanction of the law, shoot his valuable cattle with impunity. Don Mariano makes a number of efforts to "adapt to his new reality" (Sánchez and Pita, "Introduction" 22). Among other things, he invests heavily in the Texas Pacific Railroad, a transcontinental project intended to "bring population and prosperity" to San Diego by connecting it to the southeastern United States (Ruiz de Burton, *Squatter* 115). Don Mariano also attempts to work with the men occupying his land not only to make peace with them but also to improve the larger region's commercial utility. Every effort Don Mariano puts forth, however, is thwarted in one way or another, usually by squatters or the railroad monopoly. In the days leading up to his death, Don Mariano continues in the fight to preserve his livelihood. Squatter activity compels the don to move his cattle to safety toward the Colorado River, where his future son-in-law Clarence Darrell will take charge of the herds and drive them into Arizona. But along the excursion, Don Mariano is caught in a snowstorm and contracts pneumonia and lung fever, which prove to be the penultimate illnesses of his life. Although the don recovers, he remains symbolically debilitated and is dealt a final blow when he learns the

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[24] In *The Squatter and the Don*'s introduction, Sánchez and Pita explain that "the Homestead Act of 1862 . . . allowed families to migrate west and stake claim on 'public lands,' as Indian lands were known" (18). This act was "meant to populate new lands, create individual property owners and additionally, relieve labor pressures in the eastern cities" (18). Regarding the No Fence Law of 1872, George Henderson, in *California and the Fictions of Capital*, states: "With the no-fence law, in 1872, which made stockmen liable for crops damaged by wandering cattle, the legislature acknowledged [an] accomplished fact: The supremacy of cattle ranching had come and gone" (221).

Texas Pacific Railroad will not come to San Diego, in spite of everything he and his fellow settlers have done.[25] After a hostile meeting with the historical figure Governor Leland Stanford, one of the "Big Four" railroad monopolists,[26] Don Mariano simply passes away, uttering these words on his deathbed: "The sins of our legislators have brought us to this . . . Pray for me" (304).

Considering the spirit with which Don Mariano fights the drawn-out battle against those who threaten his business ambitions, it seems that what the novel laments most in the don's passing is his derailed dream of participating in an expanding economy. Scholars interested in Don Mariano's business endeavors have described him as a "man with foresight" (Sánchez and Pita, "Introduction" 22) who attempts but eventually fails "to reposition [himself] within a modernized California" (Bramen 131). Far from being stuck in a "feudal past," explains Carrie Tirado Bramen, Don Mariano is a "cosmopolitan subject[,] willing to [see his way into] a commercial economy of speculation and

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[25] Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita provide an important distinction between Ruiz de Burton's use of "settler" and "squatter" in *The Squatter and the Don*: settlers "become farmers, i.e., property owners, individual capitalists" who pay for the land they occupy, whereas squatters are "landless, generally with no capital to buy the land, but at the same time . . . gambler[s] . . . who [are] land-hungry [and] willing to work land that [they] may eventually lose" ("Introduction" 23).

[26] Sánchez and Pita describe the sheer power of the "Big Four": "Completion of the western railroad by the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific in 1869 signaled full monopolistic control of California's transportation by the Big Four, the Sacramento group which first formed the Central Pacific Railroad Company in California. Through their corporation, the four—Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker and Mark Hopkins—established a monopoly which would control not only the inter- and instra-state movement of freight and passengers but the economic resources of much of the state, as well as its governing bodies" ("Introduction" 27-28). Later, in the 1880s when *The Squatter and the Don* was written, these four would build the Southern Pacific which "linked Oregon with California and the Southwest" (Schwantes and Ronda 129).

investment" (131).[27] As the novel's afflicted protagonist, Don Mariano provides a necessary voice for Californio inclusion, one that combats the discriminatory view held by squatters in the novel—and, by extension, the racist Americans of Ruiz de Burton's time—that "old Spaniards never will be businessmen" because "you can't teach 'an old dog new tricks'" (83).[28]

Rather early in *The Squatter and the Don*, Ruiz de Burton foregrounds Don Mariano's entrepreneurial abilities by showing him in a negotiations meeting with the men occupying his land. The don speaks the language of money to appeal to these men, claiming that all will profit, including himself, if they do as he says and raise cattle and grow fruit in the region, the way Californios had been doing for decades. In contrast to the railroad monopolists we meet later in the novel—a handful of men who "crowd and crush [their] fellow[s]" (335)—Don Mariano offers a vision of a cooperative ranching society meant to benefit those who surround him. In the following scene, Ruiz de Burton presents the don as a pragmatic and trustworthy ranchero-businessman who knows his trade but needs the cooperation of others for it to continue to prosper. The don is "willing

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[27] In this context, Don Mariano is an American businessman seeking to partake in capitalist enterprise—much like Ruiz de Burton herself and her real-life friend and colleague Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, the inspiration for and namesake of Don Mariano. In *Chicano Nations*, Marissa López offers a relevant discussion about Vallejo's business ambitions and ventures as extending well beyond his northern California region and into the larger hemisphere. See López's chapter "*Mexicanidad* at Home" in *Chicano Nations*, pp. 60-89. Of course, the fictional Don Mariano's business goals likewise exceed his Southern California region, reaching across the country to the southeastern states.

[28] Historian Tomás Almaguer discusses this very discriminatory view in his book *Racial Fault Lines*: "European Americans' arrogant belief in their cultural superiority and their destiny to spread 'modern American civilization' also colored their views of the ranchero class. This sentiment contributed to the old landed Mexican elite being viewed as an obstruction to Yankee 'progress'" (90).

to" let the men keep the "land [they] have taken" from him and even "give [them] cattle" to jump-start their currently stalled earrings:

> You are too good of businessmen to suppose that I should not reserve some slight advantage for myself, when I am willing you should have many more yourselves. All I want to do is to save the few cattle I have left. I am willing to quite-claim to you the land you have taken, and give you cattle to begin the stock business, and all I ask you in return is to put a fence around whatever land you wish to cultivate, so that my cattle cannot go in there. So I say, plant vineyards, plant olives, figs, oranges; make wines and oil and raisins; export olives and dried and canned fruits . . . I feel very sure that San Diego will be selected for [its produce]. (87-88)

In attempt to steer men away from dubious farming practices imported from the U.S. Northeast and Europe, Don Marino also warns against the planting of wheat in Southern California:

> [I]t is a mistake to try to make San Diego County a grain-producing county . . . This county is, and has been and will be always, a good grazing county—one of the best counties for cattle-raising on this coast, and the very best for fruit-raising on the face of the earth . . . Why, then, not devote your time, your labor and your money to raising vineyards, fruits and cattle, instead of trusting to the uncertain rains to give you grain crops? (87)

Much to the narrator's chagrin, however, Don Mariano's business plans fall on deaf ears. A squatter answers the don's question with a terse response and no thoughtful consideration that leads to action: "It takes a long time to get fruit trees to bearing" (87). Throughout the course of *The Squatter and the Don*, Ruiz de Burton shows how the don's history of past success and anticipation of future prosperity fail to come together. Resources are wasted, the railroad never arrives, and, as Don Mariano's wife describes later in the novel, hardworking and "innocent [people] suffer ruin and desolation" (336).

Don Marino's speech imparts one of the framing divisions that will structure the novel's realist course: the desire to become a part of the West's expanding economy and the preclusion of this practice. Ultimately, the Central Railroad monopoly poses the largest threat to the don's ambitious business plans. Ruiz de Burton's staging of the final meeting between Don Marino and railroad king Leland Stanford illustrates the differences between, respectively, the trustworthy businessman of the soon-to-be past and the ruthless monopolist of the present and future. When Governor Stanford accuses Don Mariano, ironically enough, of having no "business principles" (292), we see that these principles are no longer based on the ethos of "'[l]ive and let live'" in which Don Mariano believes; rather, they reflect the emerging reality of the corporate monopoly—an unrelenting and soulless entity, according to Stanford (295). As Don Mariano explains his devastations to the Governor, he evokes such an ethos one last time, positioning the railroad, which is under Stanford's control, as the answer to a stagnant rural economy: "My land will be very valuable if we have a railroad and our county becomes more settled; but if not, my land, like everyone else's land in our county, will be unsaleable,

worthless. A railroad, soon, is our only salvation" (292). Don Mariano understands the railroad's non-construction will keep his region isolated and unable to capitalize on the United States' westbound economy. Although the don speaks of San Diego County specifically, perhaps his words also apply to entirety of the United States since those who occupy the don's land or live in its vicinity are from the East Coast and other parts of the country. The don becomes, in this sense, a spokesperson for an entire country (and not just county) of American traders and businessmen seeking modernization in developing parts of the United States. Stifled by the monopoly, however, Don Mariano cannot survive in a world where rabid money-making is key and, in Stanford's words, "business [means] everyone for himself" (292). Before his death, Don Mariano displays the signs of old age, but these signs stem out of a broken "spirit," for the railroad monopolists have "quench[ed] the light of [his] li[fe]" (302).

Don Mariano's motions for inclusion and arguments against regional marginalization are depicted as valiant, but they are not romanticized. They resemble, to some degree, Ruiz de Burton's own struggles to partake in the modern institutions she witnessed for the first time in New York. Ruiz de Burton attempted throughout her life to bridge the industrial gap between East and West, or, as Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita describe, "between the prosperous, industrializing East Coast and the still backwaters of California" (*Conflicts of Interest* 181).[29] As in Don Mariano's case, Ruiz de Burton's

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[29] Upon her initial arrival to New York in 1859, Ruiz de Burton was "especially impressed" by trains—by "their speed and the technology that enabled [efficient] travel" (Sánchez and Pita, *Conflicts of Interest* 181). Like Don Mariano, Ruiz de Burton wanted a railroad in San Diego, and she "blamed the Big Four" for "the demise of the railroad project" (Sánchez and Pita, *Conflicts of Interest* 385).

"grandiose [business] plans [were soon] frustrated," and her "dreams and schemes for accessing power, privilege, and wealth" never "came to fruition" (Sánchez and Pita, *Conflicts of Interest* 179). With regard to her novel's failure in the literary marketplace, one might say the "Manifest Yankie Trick" that killed her protagonist also "doomed [*The Squatter and the Don* to] obscurity" (Gruesz, "Mexican/American" 464). Ruiz de Burton published her novel in California, not in the Northeast where it might have fared better, in a time when western literature was to promote scenic vistas and sensational events. She sketched California life as she saw it lived by her fellow Californios, in steady decline and not in the phase of flourish promised by the institutions of U.S. empire. Notably, the two major events to which *The Squatter and the Don* builds—Don Mariano's defeat and the marriage of the don's daughter (Mercedes Alamar) to the titular squatter's son (Clarence Darrell)—are depicted, in the end, rather anticlimactically, in a realist form that gives attention not to a grand finale but to the detail of the slow trek across a difficult emotional landscape.[30]

The failed endeavors of Don Mariano's business and Ruiz de Burton's publication articulate the larger tragedy of the Mexican American's attempt to become a viable part of national markets in the late nineteenth century.[31] Recognizing that survival depends

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[30] I borrow the phrase "emotional landscape" from Dawson's essay which explores *The Squatter and the Don*'s detailed examination of, as the essay's title makes clear, "property and feeling" (41). Instead of featuring a scenic realist landscape, then, the novel provides an "emotional" one.

[31] See Almaguer's chapter "The Ravages of Time and the Intrusion of Modern American Civilization," pp. 75-106, in his book *Racial Fault Lines* for a detailed account of landed Mexicans' failed business endeavors in late nineteenth-century California. Among other things, Almaguer covers "the dispossession of Mexican rancheros" like Don Mariano as well as the "rapid emergence of intensive agriculture" which Don Mariano attempted to prevent, albeit in a fictional world (90).

not on regional isolation but on the need to branch out to a larger network, Ruiz de Burton enacts in her novel the very nationalist impulse in which her contemporary Howells believed. According to Amy Kaplan, Howells "acknowledges that social coherence cannot be constituted in a preindustrial community but has to be reconceived on a national scale. Rather than simply chart the breakdown of traditional community, [Howellsian] realism seeks to construct new forms of social cohesiveness" (25). *The Squatter and the Don* takes pains to illustrate the "breakdown of traditional community" through Don Mariano's death; we see, in other words, the way the regional society collapses when it cannot join in the United States' broader movement into the future. As such, this death compels Ruiz de Burton to propose a new form of "social coherence" that integrates the remaining Californios into the nation's social structure. (As I cover in detail later in this chapter, such a feat is partially accomplished through Don Mariano's son-in-law Clarence Darrell, a young Anglo-American businessman with 'Yankee' roots and a western sensibility.) If Howellsian realism, as Kaplan explains, ultimately "has a utopian impulse that strives to contribute to the formation of a new kind of public sphere, controlled neither by the traditions of an elite nor the dictates of the marketplace" (25), Ruiz de Burton's realism, at least as we see it in *The Squatter and the Don*, seems skeptical about any idealized outcome.

In *The Squatter and the Don*'s West of 1876, the year the novel ends, Don Mariano verges on obsolescence primarily because his participation in an expanding western economy is precluded; the don passes away after trying but failing, believing he was never given a fair chance. The close of the nineteenth century, which Ruiz de Burton

did not live to see, would bring ruin upon the Californio way of business and life. The wheat farming Don Mariano once warned Anglo-Americans against would become widespread in California, as seen in Frank Norris's naturalist novel *The Octopus* (1901). And in the opening years of twentieth century, California would, to an even greater extent, turn away from the ranching and selective farming advocated by Don Mariano and engage in a series of destructive water wars, as depicted in Mary Austin's regionalist novel *The Ford* (1917). In the literary history of American realism, one that begins before the California novels of Norris and Austin, Don Mariano's defeat happens, temporally and symbolically, alongside that of William Dean Howells's best-known character, Silas Lapham. Together, Don Mariano and Silas Lapham constitute a generation of businessmen fading from the United States' expansionist imaginary. Like *The Squatter and the Don*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* features a monopolistic, westbound railroad and an honest, aging businessman's retreat from the industrializing world around him. Although Silas Lapham and Don Mariano are worlds apart culturally and regionally—the former is a self-made capitalist from a Vermont farm and the latter a landed Mexican from California—they face the verdict of modernity at the same time.

IV.

On the eve of his financial defeat, Silas Lapham speaks the following words to his wife, describing not only his impending loss but also the sense of resignation he feels in his middle age: "If this had happened then, I shouldn't have cared much. I was young then, and I wasn't afraid of anything. But I noticed that after I passed fifty, I began to get scared easier. I don't believe I could pick up, now, from a regular knockdown" (245).

Similar to Don Mariano who cannot get past the blow he receives in his midlife, Silas Lapham experiences, in his fifties, a most brutal setback because of a railroad monopoly. Although *The Rise of Silas Lapham* traces Lapham's trajectory and eventual decline in paint business more generally, the meaning of the novel's title hinges on the moment the railroad monopoly strikes. At the center of Lapham's moral 'rise' is whether or not he will sell some mills out West, near Dubuque, Iowa, to protect himself financially. Although Lapham knows the mills will lose their value once the westbound Great Lacustrine and Polar Railroad (G. L. & P.) attempts to obtain them, he chooses to keep the worthless land and receive the "knockdown" himself, thereby protecting prospective buyers who do not know of the monopoly. In *William Dean Howells and the Ends of Realism*, Paul Abeln reads Silas Lapham's acceptance of defeat as a "*felix culpa*" that gives the businessman "expensive liberation from morally dubious consequences" (12). Because the reward for Lapham's good behavior is peace of mind and not money, that peace of mind costs Lapham his wealth and prominent place in business.

Significantly, what Abeln suggests here extends to Howells, the author, as well: such "expensive liberation from morally dubious consequences," Abeln explains, is just as if not "more understandable as a function of [Howells's] own uncertainty about the consequences of his art" (12-13). At the same time that Lapham recognizes "his own fate [in the railroad monopoly], so Howells begins to realize the 'deeper game' within his own increasingly ambitious literary projects during the 1880s" (Abeln 13). According to Abeln, Howells struggled with the "impossibility of meaningful individual thought and action in a republic that had outgrown—through population growth, immigration,

industrialization, and incorporation—[the] idealized liberal democracy" in which past writers such as "Emerson" and "Whitman" lived and wrote (13). In a case like this one, what impact, if any, would Howells's realist novels have on his readers? Was it possible, in the end, to edify readers? Abeln argues that any "culturally transformative action" or "heroic self-culture" inspired by the written word "seemed disingenuous in the America" of Howells's time (13). Howells learned, as a result, to "formulat[e] his realism with a troubled faith in a novel's capacity to engage" on a profound level with American readers (Abeln 13). Examined with Howells's realist project in mind, then, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* shows us two middle-aged men—one fictional, one real—refusing to "act and produce immeasurable consequences" and retreating into a sort of "personal failure that is perfectly measurable" (Abeln 12).

Even if *The Rise of Silas Lapham* is not meant to function as a parable of realist authorship, the novel does, in some sense, capture Howells's mixed feelings about the business of (honorable) American letters vis-à-vis the rise of mass-market publishing. As he expresses in his essay "The Man of Letters as a Man of Business," Howells found that in the consumer culture of the late nineteenth century, the "taste" of readers was constantly changing, making it difficult if not impossible for writers to keep up (9). "Authors are largely matters of fashion, like this style bonnet, or that shape of gown," Howells explains: "Last spring the dresses were all made with lace berthas, and Smith was read; this year the butterfly capes are worn, and Jones is the favorite author. Who shall forecast the fall and winter modes?" (33). As an experienced magazine editor, Howells believed that while no one could "forecast" the next best-selling author, the

"publisher of books" could better gage, by reviewing book sales, which author was no longer in "fashion": "The publisher of books [need only see] the declining sales of a writer; but the editor of the magazine, who is the best customer of the best writers, must feel the market with a much more delicate touch. Sometimes it may be years before he can satisfy himself that his readers are sick of Smith, and are pining for Jones; even then he cannot know how long their mood will last" (32). As his career progressed, Howells never fully resigned from the impossible task of predicting or controlling what readers desired. He fought back the "publisher of books" that had doomed his realist generation to a lifetime of competition with writers of what Howells deemed to be cheap, sensationalist fiction, or fiction "that merely tickle[d] [one's] prejudices and lull[ed] [one's] judgment[,] clog[ging] the soul with unwholesome vapors of all kinds" (*Criticism and Fiction* 96). When Howells left his ten-year editorship at the *Atlantic Monthly* to pursue fiction writing full time, he seemed keen on regaining control of the literary in the stories his novels told. Howells's novels show a persistent effort to illustrate the act of learning to become better and more discerning humans and, naturally, better and more discerning readers of texts. The uncertainty felt by Howells—and the uncertainty his fictional Lapham would come to feel—seemed bearable only when he could offer a quality or "refined" product to consumers that would, in turn, improve them ("The Man of Letters" 9). Howells's *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), a compilation of nonfiction essays and "Editor's Study" columns he wrote for *Harper's Magazine*, gives one the impression that readers had to work to discern quality, to "edify" themselves in the process of reading, lest they become an "unthinking multitude" or, worse yet, "puerile, primitive,

[and] savage" (111). Amy Kaplan, in this regard, sums up what Howells believed his writing accomplished in an age of best-selling but unsubstantial fiction: "As work rather than entertainment, [Howells's] realism produce[d] knowledge, the knowledge of oneself and others joined in a social whole" (21).

A metaphor for "refined" literary production might be found in Silas Lapham's "Persis Brand" paint, which Lapham continues to produce even after he loses his main business. When the Kanawha Falls Paint Company of West Virginia—the more benign of the protagonist's nemeses—buys out Lapham near the end of the novel, the company "willingly le[aves] the field to him" because it "could not produce those fine grades" (310). Named after his loyal and industrious wife, the Persis Brand gives Lapham a sense of purpose in his middle age; it helps him maintain "hope" and "set himself to work" once again "against bad times and ruinous competition" (310). Notably, the narrator first shows us the Persis Brand through the perspective of the muckraking journalist Bartley Hubbard, a rather despicable character in the scheme of Howells's novels, as if to suggest that the paint's value cannot be merely gazed upon but must be learned. In this opening chapter, we are made aware of "tin cans of various sizes" near Lapham's work desk, "arranged in tapering cylinders, and showing, in a pattern diminishing toward the top, the same label borne by the casks and barrels in the wareroom" (12). Hubbard's "whole attention" immediately goes "to a row of clean, smooth jars, where different tints of the paint showed through flawless glass" (12). Here, Hubbard seems mesmerized by the paint's physical appearance rather than the quality Lapham claims for it, which indicates, on a basic level, a difference in taste between a man who can produce only on a mass

scale (i.e., Hubbard through his muckraking journalism) and a man who chooses, in the end, to only produce that which is refined (i.e., Lapham at the end of the novel). Lapham's beloved product is not unlike Howells's carefully crafted novel. In Lapham's case as well as in Howells's, a consumer must actively seek the better product.

As a semi-retired businessman living on his childhood Vermont farm by the end of the novel, Lapham looks to his son-in-law Tom Corey for vicarious entrepreneurial fulfillment. Howells promotes, in the character of young Corey, the need to work with diligence as well as with creativity and innovation. Coming from a high-society Boston family whose future involves work instead of inheritance, young Corey learns soon enough to carve his own financial path. Early in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* when Corey returns from Texas and what seems to be an attempt at cattle ranching, he tells his over-civilized father: "I must do something. I've wasted time and money enough. I've seen much younger men all through the West and Southwest taking care of themselves. I don't think I was particularly fit for anything out there, but I am ashamed to come back and live upon you, sir" (59). Corey's lack of "fit" in the rugged Texan society compels him to seek work with Lapham; the cosmopolitan and polyglot young man proposes to take the latter's business to the next level by "introduc[ing] paint into . . . foreign markets" (66). Going from the cattle industry to the one of paint, Corey follows the pattern of western "toughening up" undergone by Lapham himself a generation earlier (Lavin 370). "I cleared out West too," Lapham says in the novel's opening chapter, "Went to Texas. Texas was all the cry in those days. But I got enough of the Lone Star in about three months, and I come back with the idea that Vermont was good enough for me" (8). If

Texas was the frontier of Lapham's "days," then this frontier, the novel suggests, is closed. Corey's effort to make himself and his fortune in Texas is as belated as it is ill-fitting. In *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, Corey uses, in a most creative way, his multilingual skill-set to find his own frontier. He turns to Latin America, which reflects the United States' current phase of expansion in Howells's actual world.

Tom Corey's "manifest destiny," according to the novel, is to spread Lapham's paint business abroad (60). His knowledge of languages and cosmopolitan upbringing make him a prime candidate to do so. Corey learns the ins and outs of the field from Lapham, yet when Lapham is bankrupted, Corey completes the task of international sale with the West Virginian paint company. In the final chapter of the novel, young Corey is about to venture into Latin America with the West Virginians:

> [Tom Corey] was to be first in the city of Mexico, and if his mission was successful he was to be kept there and in South America several years, watching the new railroad enterprises and the development of mechanical agriculture and whatever other undertakings offered an opening for the introduction of paint. [The West Virginians and Corey] were all young men together, and Corey, who had put his money into the company, had a proprietary interest in the success which they were eager to achieve. (311)

The outcome of Tom Corey's commercial venture in Mexico City and South America remains unnarrated in the novel, but Lapham, the proud father-in-law, helps us see its promise: "Well," Lapham says to a friend, "young blood was what was wanted in a thing of that kind. [Corey and the West Virginians are] all young, and a perfect team!" (318).

Through the figure of Tom Corey, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* acknowledges the historic growth of U.S. commercial empire abroad via the railroad, modern agricultural developments, and commodities like paint (as the passage shows). Corey's unnarrated venture here posits this empire as a growing force that has yet to reach its fullest elaboration. Not until the publication of Howells's novel *The Minister's Charge* (1887) a couple of years later do we learn that Corey is still abroad and has made a decent fortune (248-49).

Here, we ought to pause to consider why, perhaps, Howells sends Corey to Latin America instead of, say, farther west to California. What is the relationship between the larger, international frontier (instead of the western frontier) and Howells's realist project? Why do Corey's feats require a Latin American platform? When Howells's characters leave Texas and bypass the westernmost, still-growing state of California, is Howells, as an author, at least partially closed off to western and Californian civilization and culture? Scholars have noted that Howells's promotion of western writers was, to some degree, at odds with the way he always saw them as regionalists who were separate from, and possibly even below, his urban station (Witschi 70). Recalling the literary East to which Howells forever bound himself, Susan Goodman and Carl Dawson explain:

> [Howells] chose to go east rather than west from Ohio [where he was born and raised], and he later declined an offer from yet another United States president, Rutherford B. Hayes, to tour California. He *became* rather than joined the Eastern literary establishment, and he died in New York a relatively wealthy man, having learned, like Garfield and Lincoln, that

> regions east of the Appalachians could be as perilous as those beyond the Rockies. (4; emphasis in original)

In *Criticism and Fiction*, when Howells uses the language of geography and territorial expansion to describe the current state of American literature, he somehow manages to diminish the West or make it seem irrelevant one more time. "Indeed," Howells writes, "I should call the present American work, North and South, thorough rather than narrow . . . [Its] breadth is vertical instead of lateral[,] and this depth is more desirable than horizontal expansion in a civilization like ours" (142). The "North and South" of *Criticism and Fiction* echoes, if only dimly, the North and South of Corey's commercial venture.

The western and international frontiers function differently in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*; the West is where a man turns for an introduction to business and Latin America, where the future lies. We should recall that Lapham's business first flourishes when non-flammable paint is needed "out West" where some "boats had burnt up" and "a lot of lives lost" (9). The exploitation of the western frontier was key to Lapham's success, just as it was for the railroad monopoly that brings him down; for Corey's introduction to business; and finally, as discussed earlier in this chapter, for Howells's realist authorship. The inclusion of a Latin American frontier at the end of *The Rise of Silas Lapham* bespeaks not only a broader and uncharted geographic terrain but also, in some way, a diminishing interest in the West. Granted, Howells does not ignore the phenomenon of westward expansion, but he does almost naturalize it—that is, make it a normal and forgettable aspect of the American businessman's development.

To summarize, we must recognize that Lapham uses the West to start his business, but by the end of the novel, that West fades, along with his larger paint enterprise. The Great Lacustrine and Polar Railroad heads toward a western region Lapham cannot and will not have anything to do with. For Howells's morally-awakened protagonist, only the Persis Brand remains, to be taken abroad perhaps. Fundamentally unlike Don Mariano who passes away, Lapham regains some control over his life. "Persis" is the brand that saves his life; it is a brand the West Virginians cannot replicate and a brand that precedes young Corey and his cosmopolitanism. The parable of realist authorship here—if there is one—uses and abandons the West, a place where society is rugged, where the future no longer lies, and where, implicitly, literature is cheap and too full of adventure, too devoid of substance. Lamentably, this was the selfsame era in which Ruiz de Burton published a most ambitious western and Mexican-American realist novel.

V.

The Squatter and the Don's significance during the period of American realism and late nineteenth-century westward expansion relies on Clarence Darrell's move to San Francisco, which provides a symbolic close to the character's business trajectory as well as to Ruiz de Burton's illustration of the frontier. On a basic level, Ruiz de Burton's placement of Clarence in the city, a seemingly permanent post, suggests he is at the threshold of a still westward-bound and growing financial world. "San Francisco is a good business field," Clarence says to his wife Mercedes and the Alamar family in the penultimate chapter of the novel: "So we can all locate ourselves there, and . . . go into

business easily . . . San Diego is dead now, and will remain so for many years" (332). Clarence offers to buy from the Alamar matriarch Doña Josefa what remains of Don Mariano's ranch in San Diego—the significantly depleted land and cattle—in order for the Mexican family to obtain capital and start a new bank business with him in San Francisco. While the act appears to be charitable, Clarence tempers it with self-interest, for he looks to sell the San Diegan land further down the road. He tells Doña Josefa playfully, "Don't forget I am a money-making Yankee . . . I am not a bit generous. I am trying to make money out of you" (332). Ruiz de Burton, of course, infuses this speech with a self-deprecating tone instead of a serious one, allowing Clarence to remain a trustworthy businessman rather like Don Mariano and Silas Lapham. Clarence's status as a 'Yankee,' however, is worth further parsing because it separates him from Ruiz de Burton's ailing Californio characters.

Clarence's role as (a trustworthy) western businessman begins on the East Coast, in New England specifically, where he was born. At the start of *The Squatter and the Don*, we learn that the Darrell family has traveled West in 1848, sans the railroad, presumably at the end of the U.S.-Mexican War and at the beckoning of the Gold Rush. Headed by Clarence's father William, the main 'squatter' in the novel, the Darrells have left behind "a flourishing New England farm [and] a good account in a Boston bank" (58). The years and money William Darrell loses are only symbolically recompensed near the close of the novel, after Clarence obtains land lawfully and embarks on his own business ventures across the Southwest, and not, as in William Darrell's case, on Mexicans' property. Although Clarence was probably but a child when his family

journeyed Overland, he retains his father's Yankee identity—an identity he, as previously shown, evokes in attempt to differentiate an outsider like himself from a Californio. Clarence's self-naming, however playful, hearkens not only to his father's ill-conceived westward move but also to the moves of hordes of squatters seeking to occupy California and drive out Mexicans (according to the novel, of course).

That Clarence conquers significant western industries with little effort throughout *The Squatter and the Don* ought to alert us to his status as a Yankee outsider who takes a hand in altering the industrial landscape of the West. These industries range from the management of real estate and cattle ranching in San Diego to the ownership of mining stocks in the state of Arizona. As a continuation of these feats, Clarence casts an even wider net in San Francisco with his plans to set up a bank business with his brother-in-law near the end of *The Squatter and the Don*. Considering that plans for this bank had originally started in San Diego but were deferred following the railroad's bypass of the city, it is possible to read the San Franciscan bank as emblematic of Clarence's general western success; the establishment, in other words, would place him at the center of others' financial decisions, which Ruiz de Burton likely saw as key to his continued prosperity. Ruiz de Burton's orchestration of Clarence's business activities, all aligning in San Francisco at the novel's close, corrects, if only fictionally, the actions of ruthless plutocrats like the railroad magnates whose investments in San Francisco are meant to profit a few individuals. Clarence appears in San Francisco not a moment too soon, as one who can hold his own in the midst of emergent monopolies and help integrate a Mexican family into the altered social and physical landscape of the United States.

Clarence Darrell's grand purpose in *The Squatter and the Don* is laid out rather neatly for us in his final meeting with his father. William Darrell, who had once shunned Clarence for conducting secret business with Don Mariano (that is, for buying land from the don instead of simply 'squatting' on it), now tells his son to make up for the troubles he caused the Alamar family in his squatter days: "[A] merciful God brought you back [to me]," William Darrell says, "and I know you will devote your life to repair as much as it is possible the wrong your father did" (331). Appearing in the novel's penultimate chapter, these words suggest the "wrong" committed by William Darrell and other squatters cannot be undone. Don Mariano is dead, his land is lost, and the legacy of his cattle ranching is dissolved. The "repair" of which William Darrell speaks is not about reversal but about putting matters right in the future. From the start of the novel until nearly the end of it, Clarence's inheritance of his father's Yankee entitlement to land is replaced by Clarence's new task of saving and serving the Alamars in their California.

If Clarence's role as new, albeit idealized, westerner is defined in relation to the retreat of both Don Mariano and William Darrell from the novel, it is also defined by the transformation of California's regions into loci of modernity. By the 1870s, when *The Squatter and the Don* takes place, California's economy had expanded rather exponentially on the fronts of mining (mostly of gold), railroading, and extensive "petit-bourgeois farm[ing]" which would give way to "large-scale capitalist" agriculture by the time Ruiz de Burton published her novel (Almaguer 30-31). Considering that these three industries influence Clarence Darrell's rise to power in one way or another, we might say that Ruiz de Burton, clearly aware their dominance, sought to alter the traditional

"European-American," "young and male" face who ruled them (Almaguer 26-32). Through the honorary Mexican figure of Clarence Darrell, Ruiz de Burton anticipated and attempted to prevent the following socioeconomic condition described by historian Tomás Almaguer:

> European Americans [by the turn of the twentieth century] monopolized the most coveted employment opportunities and gained virtual control of the middle and upper tiers of [a] new class structure [in which the Mexican ranchero class had disintegrated]. It soon became apparent that avenues for social mobility and other fruits of unbridled capitalist development were to be reserved jealously for a single group: the white 'producing class' [that would not include Mexicans like Ruiz de Burton's Alamar family]. (32)

The Squatter and the Don does not make it as far as the twentieth century, but the novel does show the historical phenomenon outlined by Almaguer in its early stages. Ruiz de Burton uses Clarence Darrell to stave off a situation that might prevent the Alamars from taking part in this modernizing California.

In the scope of American literary history, Clarence helps diversity, if paradoxically, realism's portrayal of the white businessman's journey to the West. Unlike any other realist and naturalist characters of the era—from Howells's Tom Corey (1885) to Frank Norris's Magnus Derrick (1901) and Theodore Dreiser's Frank Cowperwood (1912)—Clarence invites a Mexican family to partake in the modern American future by settling in San Francisco, which figures as the novel's symbolic locus of late nineteenth-

century prosperity. Clarence saves, in particular, the younger generation of Alamars, who risk being racialized and becoming proletarian within the new economic structure discussed by historian Tomás Almaguer. To this end, a number of scholars have highlighted the way Clarence helps Don Mariano's son Gabriel Alamar forestall a lifetime of "manual labor" as a "mason" (Ruiz de Burton 315), thereby interrupting the "downward mobility" set in motion by Californios' loss of property and livelihood (J.M. González, *Troubled Union* 88). Clarence offers the Alamar males the opportunity to participate in California's expanding economy through the white-collar work of banking in San Francisco, a city that is more industrialized and commerce-centered than their rural San Diego. Such white-collar workers, including Clarence Darrell himself, flood realist and naturalist novels which understand the West as a place to invest and make capital. Ruiz de Burton takes part in this literary tradition on culturally different terms, using Clarence, her new westerner, as the key to economic and cultural survival for Californios.

Unlike Howells's Tom Corey, then, Clarence Darrell remains faithful to the western frontier in his final relocation to San Francisco. This suggests, perhaps, an embittered Ruiz de Burton's attempt to position the larger West as a central, not marginal, part of the United States. *The Squatter and the Don* thus posits an important geographic and ideological shift in the way we read realist novels, adjusting our focus, finally, from East (or even from Howells's "North and South") to West. Considering the novel's undercurrent of discontent with Yankees, Congress, and the railroad monopoly, it is possible to conceive of San Francisco—insofar as Clarence and the Alamars now

inhabit the city—as the new and improved threshold of the impending twentieth century. Although Clarence's faith in San Francisco as a "good business field" evokes the earlier, mid nineteenth-century sentiment of railroad kings who believed the city would be just as if not more vital to the U.S. than a place like New York (George 300), perhaps that faith is meant to restore integrity to business both within and well beyond San Francisco.

In the end, one might see San Francisco in light of Ruiz de Burton's own experience of it. She spent a significant amount of time residing, writing, and conducting business there in the 1870s and 1880s. While Ruiz de Burton encountered "distrustful people" in the city on several occasions, she accepted San Francisco's status as the headquarters of business and modernity on the West Coast (*Conflicts of Interest* 455). San Francisco was also the West's literary capital and home to *The Squatter and the Don*'s publisher Samuel Carson & Company. In spite of Ruiz de Burton's disagreements with this publisher, it was Samuel Carson & Company that brought her important novel to life in the first place. Ruiz de Burton owed both failures and small triumphs to the western city. Her ambiguous feelings toward San Francisco suggest, on the one hand, disappointment about Don Mariano's generation of Californios having no visible place there or in the modern world more generally, and, on the other, hopefulness about Clarence Darrell's ability to help "improve [conditions] slowly but perceptibly" (*The Squatter and the Don* 333).

VI.

In the very final pages of *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, William Dean Howells gives rest to the Tom Corey/Latin American plot and leaves us instead with the aging Silas

Lapham alongside the insightful Reverend Sewell, a character that scholars have time and again identified as Howells himself. The presence of Reverend Sewell compels readers to face Howells's realist project or the "moral spectacle" encoded within the novel one last time: that is, Lapham's ability to regard "changed conditions" with honesty and equanimity (319). As we consider the closing image of Sewell and Lapham, characters that represent some aspect of the real Howells's being and life, perhaps it also becomes possible to see Tom Corey's move to Mexico as a symbolic banishment, if only a temporary one, from the northeastern United States which constituted Howells's literary domain. In this case, Howells, 'the Dean' of American letters and 'the man of business,' figuratively controls the younger generation of writers (i.e., the younger businessmen) whom he would foster in the years to come and who would eventually turn against his realist campaign (Crowley 73). Given the advantage of retrospect, such a reading captures, if overgenerally, some of Howells's literary and worldly anxieties.

The final pages of *The Squatter and the Don* similarly depart from the subject of the frontier-bound businessman to rail against the unjust actions taken by the government and railroad magnates, and to lament the present condition of Mexicans like the Alamar family in California. Taking stock of California's situation, Ruiz de Burton suggests, is the first step toward achieving justice and freedom for American citizens. The "fighting words" (Aranda 25) and didacticism Ruiz de Burton evokes in the end help balance Clarence Darrell's particular brand of heroism. Through his disappearance from the novel's closing chapter, Ruiz de Burton is able, rather like Howells, to wrap up realism's business story and address matters that are closer to home. *The Squatter and the Don*'s

final tone makes it seem as if Ruiz de Burton thought her novel would reach a broad audience, but sadly, such was far from the case. Unlike *The Rise of Silas Lapham* which was serialized in a reputable literary magazine in New York City and associated with brand-name author, *The Squatter and the Don* was published under a pseudonym in San Francisco only as a bound book. Needless to say, the material changes Ruiz de Burton once envisioned never came to pass. She died in 1895, a decade after *The Squatter and the Don*'s publication and just short of the century in which American capitalism assumed its fateful form, continuing to supplant Ruiz de Burton's Californios with the aid of laws that favored Anglo-American railroads and wheat fields. Howells would go on to live another twenty-five years—a fact that oddly represents the literary celebrity he would experience in his lifetime, in contrast to Ruiz de Burton's negligible presence before American readers. Because of an occluded historical record, it is difficult to know whether Ruiz de Burton and Howells ever crossed paths or were familiar with one-another's writings. Be that as it may, their 1885 realist novels bring them together in American literary history, at once showing their overlapping imaginaries and signaling their divergent realities.

Mexican Vistas in an Expansionist Literary Marketplace: Stephen Crane's "Form and Color" and María Cristina Mena's New Regionalism[32]

I.

In 1895, the year María Amparo Ruiz de Burton passed away in Chicago, the naturalist writer Stephen Crane cleared out West and then into Mexico, commissioned by a New York newspaper syndicate to sketch these places for a largely northeastern audience. Read in the context of a closing nineteenth century, Ruiz de Burton and Crane's reversed trajectories enact a symbolic erasure of the former from the United States' literary map; as Ruiz de Burton dies in the Midwest and her Mexican West remains unknown, Stephen Crane's writings on the West and Mexico gain broad visibility and are dubbed, incorrectly in 1979, the first "serious" treatment of "Mexico and Mexicans in . . . American fiction" (Bergon 16). Here, representation of Mexican culture in American literature belongs to Crane, not to the woman who struggled and failed in the literary marketplace over the course of many years. Crane's predisposition to engaging nominally realist and regionalist works led him in 1893, the year *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* was published, to the 'Dean' of American letters himself. In an interview for the *New York Press*, William Dean Howells spoke of Crane's potential career as writer of American literature: he "is very young, but he promises splendid things" (65). Howells and Crane's emergent professional friendship in the 1890s, to some

[32] Stephen Crane used these words—"form and color"—to describe what he perceived as a tourist and foreigner in Mexico; "form and color" were the only things of which Crane could be certain, especially when he found it difficult to understand the country's people and culture. In this chapter, I use "form and color" as a genre of sorts. I will continue to describe it in the following pages and throughout the chapter.

degree, further separates Ruiz de Burton from the northeastern literary circle to which they belonged.

Yet Crane's death from tuberculosis in 1900 cut tragically short this promising career. His writings on the West and Mexico, appearing in print between 1895 and 1898, ought to be read accordingly, with careful attention to Crane's limited literary production and his manifold, albeit sometimes questionable, insights into the regions. These writings appeared in syndicated newspapers across the country, and his most 'literary' work among them, "A Man and Some Others," a naturalist story of U.S.-Mexico frontier violence with moments of unexpected western parody, was published in *Century Magazine* in 1897. During the four months Crane toured the West and Mexico, he was seemingly too busy trying to meet journalistic demands and finalizing revisions for *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) to really get to 'know' and appreciate the Mexican people he encountered. In fact, he grew bored of playing journalist and found Mexicans to be inscrutable in the end. In his final article on Mexico and Mexicans, "Above all Things" (1895), Crane proclaimed that a "stranger" in a "foreign" country (like himself) "can be sure of two things, form and color"; any "attempts at psychological perception" would be veritably useless (74). Crane's ideas about "form and color" here, which I will further examine throughout this chapter, provide a metaphor for how to read his work on the West and Mexico: whereas when it came to Americans in the West Crane could achieve "psychological perception" by identifying and sympathizing with, for instance, struggling farmers, when it came to Mexicans in Mexico, Crane knowingly put up a wall between himself and these people. He excused his own potentially shallow and local colorist

writing by acknowledging his inability if not unwillingness to patiently write Mexicans. This act of literary abandonment, in the scheme of late nineteenth-century imperialist writings on Mexico, is neither entirely good nor bad. On the one hand, it is perhaps good of Crane to admit defeat rather than pretend to really know or care about Mexicans; yet, on the other hand, why does he give up so easily?

For the purposes of this chapter, Crane's writings on the West and Mexico are best understood in American literary history alongside the writings of María Cristina Mena, the first Mexican American to publish fiction in English in a literary magazine. Like Crane, Mena lived in New York for the majority of her life and was able, unlike María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, to make her way into the elite literary circle to which Howells and Crane belonged. Although Mena knew neither of these men—for Crane passed away before Mena arrived in New York and Howells was an aging man by the time she published short stories in magazines such as *Century* and *American*—the Mexican-American writer established her own literary connections in the Northeast. She married the Australian playwright and journalist Henry Kellet Chambers in 1916 and sustained a life-long friendship with the English writer D.H. Lawrence (López, "A Tolerance for Contradictions" 63). Mena also knew T.S. Eliot, who reprinted her first *Century* story, "John of God" (1913) in *The Monthly Criterion* in 1927 and wrote her the following year that he had "so much enjoyed [this story]" and "look[ed] forward to seeing [her] new [work]" (332). Born in Mexico City in 1893, the year *Maggie* and Howells appeared in Crane's life, Mena emigrated to New York at the age of fourteen where she eventually made her mark, however small at the time, in the literary scene. She

"lived the life of privileged person," Mena scholar Amy Doherty explains; she was "well-educated, and fluent in Spanish, English, French, and Italian" ("Introduction" xii). When Mena was commissioned to write stories on Mexican life by *Century* in 1913, she assumed the task with utmost authority and wrote the editor Robert Sterling Yard to this end: "I believe that American readers, with their intense interest in Mexico, are ripe for a true picture of people so near them, so intrinsically picaresque, so misrepresented in current fiction, and so worthy of being known" (xxii). Mena's desire to write "stories of Inditos" (xxii), the diminutive version of Mexican Indians or the laboring class of indigenous peoples in Mexico, was, from the start, laced with authorial ambition and problematic elitism if not racism. Yet important to note here is that rather unlike Crane, Mena considered herself a writer who knew Mexicans very well, to the point, inevitably, of literary overcompensation. Mena picked up where Crane—unable to parse Mexico and Mexicans—left off.

This chapter places Stephen Crane's ideas on Mexican "form and color" (i.e., his writings as reflections and refractions of "form and color," often lacking emotional depth) in conversation with Mena's "new regionalism" (i.e., her writings of and on behalf of Mexican Indians). While scholars have indeed written of Mena's engagement with local color, they have yet to explore her work in the genre that followed from local color and emerged as a direct response to it. New regionalism was, in the early twentieth century, an attempt to introduce American readers to indigenous populations and their practices, which, according to new regionalist practitioners, were pure in comparison to modern American ways or imperialist and touristic ways of seeing the world. A flawed

and romanticized practice to say the least, new regionalism is nevertheless a useful literary tradition and lens through which to view Mena's early short stories, especially because so much of Mena's scholarship looks to her 1913 publications.

Whereas Crane, in the end, abandoned the task of illustrating Mexicans because he could not achieve proper "psychological perception" (74) and instead inserted these people into his sensationalist fiction and local color articles, Mena was very much bound to the idea of being, as she would be called in 1931 by *The Household Magazine*, "the foremost interpreter of Mexican life" (137).[33] The problem with Mena's stories which attempt to translate indigenous Mexican life is that the Mexican Indian, after embarking on some sort of adventure or being introduced to new things and people, ends up right where he/she started. No actual mobility is afforded to Mexican Indians, and when faced with change, these Mexicans are precluded from embracing it and, implicitly, from committing further mistakes. In a literary world like this, the author always knows best, and Americanization is always a negative process. Here, Mena tries to recreate and restore for her American audience the wholeness and holiness of the indigenous practices of which she writes. Although Mena considered herself noble for doing so, she casted the indigenous population of Mexico into a bubble that was simultaneously penetrable and patchable. Mena's indigenous Mexicans are by and large a homogenous group that worships the Virgin of Guadalupe and triumphs over Americans and their ways only by accident. If the Mexican Indian were equipped with some intelligence and intentionality,

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[33] I borrow this blurb, which is connected to Mena's story "A Son of the Tropics," from *The Collected Stories of María Cristina Mena*, by Mena and edited by Amy Doherty.

he might pose a greater ideological threat in the world of U.S. print; he would be an agent instead of an instrument in Mena's defiant fiction and nonfiction.

Like Mena, Stephen Crane wrote of the picturesqueness of Mexico's indigenous population, stating that "[t]he Indian remains the one great artistic figure . . . in his serape, with his cotton trousers, his dusty sandals[,] and his old sombrero" ("The Dress of Old Mexico" 66). Recognizing his own limited ability to capture Mexicans' interiority, though, Crane found it best to leave the Indian at that. He concluded, accordingly: "[the Indian's] true character is impenetrable" (66). Crane's language of resignation, however, was often contradicted by his assertions and generalizations about Mexicans that remind one, oddly enough, of Mena's. The Mexican Indian "has two great creeds," expressed Crane: "One is that pulque as a beverage is finer than the melted blue of the sky. The other is that Americans are eternally wealthy and immorally stupid" (66). The difference, finally, between Crane's Mexicans thinking Americans are "stupid" and Mena's Mexicans triumphing over stupid Americans is that the former's Mexicans are afforded a "creed" other than faith in the Virgin of Guadalupe; they know how to take advantage of Americans in a time of need because they have apparently practiced doing so. One might argue that allowing Americans into the community, or allowing anyone else in for that matter, helps Crane's Mexican Indians confront a world that is always changing because they are part of that changing world. In a more balanced scenario, one that neither Crane nor Mena achieves, one might see how "[p]assage into and out of the community . . . ensures that community is a process of creation and renewal, not a fact encumbering the individual, reflecting old conditions and closed judgments" (Joseph 154).

II.

On January 30, 1895, Stephen Crane penned these lines to his friend Lucius L. Button about his impending adventure out West: "Hello, Budge, I am en route to kill Indians . . . Write me at Lincoln . . . Lincoln, Nebraska, I mean" (qtd. in Katz xii).[34] While Crane, a naturalist writer, could hardly be taken seriously in this regard, his letter shows the extent to which such racist frontier thinking had characterized decades of writing on the West. From the very inception of his great tour, Crane's job was, presumably, not to write adventure stories about 'killing Indians' but, perhaps as any realist's, to "get the truth, whether his articles [were] sensational or not" (qtd. Katz in xii). Simultaneously problematic and playful, Crane's joke offers a proper starting point for examining what his work accomplished when it came to matters of the literary West and Mexico. On the one hand, Crane tried to distance himself from the sensationalist material that realists such as Howells and Ruiz de Burton despised, and, on the other, his work shows the vestiges and incorporation of that material and is best understood as a late nineteenth-century naturalist response to it. As a journalist, Crane took his work very seriously. When writing about American folk in the Midwest, for instance, he maintained, for the most part, a tone of reverence, and he even partook in a scenic form of realism when describing "the imperial blue sky of Nebraska [that] had made a promise to the

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[34] Little biographic information exists on Lucius L. Button. Stanley Wertheim writes the following about him: "Nicknamed Budge, (or Budgon, by Crane), he was one of the medical students with whom Crane shared lodgings during the fall and winter of 1892-93 in the boardinghouse on Avenue A in New York City they referred to as the Pendennis Club. Button received one of the first copies of the 1893 *Maggie* inscribed by Crane. Their friendship continued through 1895, and they exchanged a number of letters" (44).

farmer[,] to compensate him for his great labor, his patience, his sacrifices" ("Nebraska's Bitter Fight" 3).[35] Whereas in Nebraska Crane wrote of hard-working farmers, when he reached San Antonio, Texas, he wrote elegiacally of the Alamo mission and its well remembered 1836 battle: "the spirit that lives in this building, its air of contemplative silence, is as eloquent as an old battle flag" ("Patriot Shrine of Texas" 38). As Crane moved from Nebraska to Texas, the reverent tone clearly persisted. Yet when it came to writing about Mexicans, which Crane did upon reaching the U.S.-Mexico border in South Texas, Crane's prose seemed a bit troubled. [36] Here, in his dealings with Mexicans, he incorporated a sense of adventure and sensationalism that readers and scholars may not have expected from him. We might say, then, that Crane's writings, both nonfiction and fiction, on the West and Mexico evince a generic mixture of serious journalism, scenic realism, local color, and parody—the last of which was, unfortunately, often at the expense of Mexico and Mexicans.

When Crane arrived in the town of Eddyville in Dawson County, Nebraska, he was struck by the starkness of the landscape and the trouble in which farmers, who "had suffered heat, drought, and violent winds that turned the soil into dust," found themselves (Katz xiii). In a literary move that is comparable to the famous one made by John

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[35] For more information on "scenic realism," please refer to my first chapter. See also Melanie V. Dawson's essay "Ruiz de Burton's Emotional Landscape."

[36] Joseph Katz also remarks on the difference between Crane's Americans and Mexicans, though Katz's focus is more on class: "[Crane] had no trouble [sympathizing] with the Nebraska farmers, poor as they were: they struggled against their fate. But the foreign poor, especially the Mexican Indians, gave another and less attractive face to the human condition. They neither struggled nor protested. They existed, passively . . . Crane viewed them as aliens, ultimately less than people. In several of the sketches they are presented as brutes and beasts of burden—dumb, animal, and motivated by instincts Crane could not see himself sharing" (xxii).

Steinbeck, who documented the plight of Oklahoma farmers in the Dust Bowl era, Crane wrote a solemn article titled "Nebraska's Bitter Fight for Life" (1895). The article, in short, "resolv[ed] [farming] statistics with color through a focus on the fundamental point that bad things were happening to admirable people who did not deserve defeat" (Katz xiii). Crane's attention to the dwindling if not bygone beauty of the landscape in this piece reads almost nostalgically, as an extension of the farmers' memories of and faint hopes for the region. As these farmers struggle to survive drought and other natural disasters in 1895 (i.e., when Crane visited them), they wistfully recall, in Crane's presence, the land that had once flourished and might yet flourish. "Almost any man in the district will cease speaking of his woes," Crane writes, "to recite the beauties of the times when the great rolling prairies are green and golden with splendor of young corn, the streams are silver in the light of the sun, and when from the wide roads and the little homesteads there arises the soundless essence of a hymn from the happy and prosperous people" (14). "But then," Crane laments, "there now is looming the eventual catastrophe that would surely depopulate the country. These besieged farmers are battling with their condition with an eye to the rest and success of [the] next [season]" (14). The overwritten phrases throughout this article are balanced somewhat by the recurring presence of what Crane calls the "inscrutable wrath of nature" (4). He writes, accordingly: "These farmers now found themselves existing in a virtual desert. The earth from which they had wrested each morsel which they had put into their mouths now abandoned them" (5). That these farmers might have overworked the land does not appear in Crane's piece outright, but

the possibility is hinted. And survival, Crane suggests, is and is not in the hands of those who have stayed in the region to brave whatever nature brings.

Crane's article, "Patriot Shrine of Texas" (1895), which focuses on San Antonio and its lionized Alamo mission, refers again to human courage, although this time, the implied enemy is not nature but Mexico and Mexicans. That Crane's description of the Alamo and its heroes is thematically similar to his tale of the Nebraska farmers and their land suggests that for Crane there is something intrinsically worthy if not mystic about the land and monuments that brave men have touched. "The Alamo remains the greatest memorial courage which civilization has allowed to stand," writes Crane: "The quaint and curious little building fronts on one of the most popular plazas of the city and because of Travis, Crockett, Bowie and their comrades it maintains its dignity amid the taller, modern structures which front it. It is the tomb of the fiery emotions of Texans who refused to admit that numbers and Mexicans were arguments" (38). Whereas the opening of Crane's article very clearly seeks to engage those looking for some local western color—"San Antonio . . . seemed to symbolize for [all people] the poetry of life in Texas" (36)—by the time Crane gets to Mexicans, that local color seems troubled, to say the least. Crane's soft spot for the "poetry of life" and for the brave Alamo men who gave their lives is pierced by the parodic description of Mexicans that follows. What we might consider local color at its worst, Crane reduces Mexicans, both men and women, into a single unflattering paragraph that begins with the costume of men and ends, randomly, with the ugliness of 'old' Mexican women. The "apparel" of Mexican men, Crane describes, "has become rather Americanized, but the [wide-brimmed] hat of

romance is still superior" (40). Of Mexican women, Crane states: "Many of the young girls are pretty, and all of the old ones are ugly. These latter squat like clay images and the lines upon their faces, and especially about the eyes, make it appear as if they were always staring into the eye of a blinding sun" (40). Mexican costumes are described, and Mexican vices like gambling are reduced to a humorous—for the Anglo-American reader, that is—sentence: "A Mexican may not be able to raise enough money to buy beef tea for his dying grandmother, but he can always stake himself for a game of monte [i.e., a Spanish card game that involves gambling]" (40-41). Crane reduces the history of Mexicans' labor and way of life into abstraction when he says that "[m]odern inventions have driven [Mexicans] toward the suburbs, but they are still seen upon the main streets in the ratio of one to eight and in their distant quarter of course they swarm" (40). Crane's overall attention to the incursion of modernity in this article is rather difficult to pin down. On the one hand, he admires the Alamo for the way it stands out in the midst of modern, and implicitly ahistorical, buildings—the way it, in other words, helps San Antonio retain its "poetry." Yet when it comes to Mexicans, Crane suggests they are driven to the periphery because of "modern inventions" (i.e., because their labor is not needed as it once was), but their displacement has no real signification. Being affected by modernity does and does not matter, according to the article; the Alamo is a shrine of history, and Mexicans are still somewhat 'romantic' in the modern scheme of things.

Unlike his more serious articles and fiction on the American West, Crane's writings on Mexico tended to oscillate between problematic local color and the adventure genre. The distance Crane felt from Mexicans culturally fueled the critical distance that

one can feel in his writings. He was fundamentally unable—because of language and custom barriers, for instance—to really empathize with Mexicans. He left their country earlier than planned after seeing an American woman and feeling the gulf that now separated the two of them: "I had been so long in the mountains and was such an outcast," Crane wrote in a letter to a friend, "that the sight of an American girl in a new spring gown nearly caused me to drop dead. She of course never looked in my direction. I never met her. Nevertheless I gained one of those peculiar thrills which a man only acknowledges upon occasion. I ran to the railroad office. I cried: 'What is the shortest route to New York.' I left Mexico" (qtd. in Bergon 19). Joking aside, contradictory feelings characterize a lot of Crane's writings on Mexico. Even if in the above passage Crane has been absorbed into Mexico and can no longer identify with an American woman, he is still somehow an outsider in a foreign country and cannot, for the life of him, empathize with Mexicans.

Notably, the first fictional pieces Crane published upon his return were fables that attempted to explain Mexican culture and customs. These pieces were sold as "Mexican Tales" (1895) by Crane's New York publisher Bacheller, Johnson & Bacheller.[37] The fable "How the Donkey Lifted the Hills" (1895) recounts, for instance, how Crane's go-to Mexican creature, the donkey, became a best of burden in Mexico. "Many people suppose that the donkey is lazy," the fable reads: "This is a great mistake. It is his pride"

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[37] "Mexican Tales" may have been the newspaper heading used to identify Crane's three Mexican fables. According to Stanley Wertheim, for instance, the first fable, "The Voice of the Mountain" was "syndicated in newspapers by Bacheller[,] but the only appearance that has been observed is in the *Nebraska State Journal* under the heading 'Mexican Tales'" (354).

(84). The fable tells about a wager made and lost by a donkey based on his ability to carry a range of mountains upon his back. When humans begin to shovel dirt on the poor donkey until he is buried, the donkey gives in for the sake of his survival and gives himself over to being the "slave" of Mexicans (87). The fable concludes, appropriately, by calling the donkey's "infinite slowness" not laziness but "pride," the only thing he has left (87). "How the Donkey Lifted the Hills" is hardly a literary feat, but it does show Crane's attempt to appease an audience's appetite for the exotic and his publisher's need to sell. Crane's interest in the 'beast of burden' of Mexico appeared in his articles as well, albeit his focus shifted to the Mexican Indian, who, as Crane wrote him, likewise bore loads for people in the city. In his article "Stephen Crane in Mexico: II" (1895), Crane illustrates both donkeys and Mexican Indians as bearers of physical burdens, calling the latter "Indian porters" and the two together "sympathetic spirits" (54). While a problematic and even racist side-by-side depiction because humans are made to seem animal-like, Crane might have considered the comparison an accurate portrayal of labor in Mexico.[38]

Crane seems to have written of Mexicans not out of desire but out of journalistic duty. There was for Crane a constant struggle between having to write and wanting to write, between meeting the expectations of editors who wanted their audience to learn of Mexico and experiencing Mexico as something other than an ignorant tourist: "I would

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[38] In "Stephen Crane in Mexico: II," Crane says of the over-burdened and ever-working donkey (or "burro" in Spanish): "The burro, born in slavery, dying in slavery, generation upon generation, he with his wobbly legs, sore back, and ridiculous little face, reasons not at all. He carries as much as he can, and when he can carry it no further, he falls down" (53).

tell you of many strange things I have seen," Crane expressed in a letter to his friend Lucius L. Button, "if I was not so bored with writing of them in various articles" (qtd. in Katz xix). Upon his return home, Crane, perhaps to diminish the memory of the boredom he had undergone, published an adventure story titled "One Dash—Horses" (1896), which told of the thrilling chase of a New Yorker named Richardson and his servant José by a group of armed Mexican bandits in Mexico.[39] Stereotypes abound in "One Dash—Horses": the servant José is loyal and brave, but he is also a coward; Richardson, unable to sleep at night, "dream[s] of his far and beloved North" (33); the characters speak 'Mexican,' not Spanish; and the bandits are led by a man simply referred to as the 'fat Mexican.' Richardson and José are saved, in the end, by "cavalry corps of the Mexican army which polic[e] the plain so zealously, being themselves the law and the arm of it" (Crane, "One Dash" 40-41). Richardson is happy to be alive after the chase, and next to Mexican José who "was exultant, defiant, and, oh, brisling with courage," the former "longed for speech, but he could only . . . pat [his horse]" (42). A light story compared to Crane's more ambitious literary feats, "One Dash—Horses" shows how Crane, in writing the West and Mexico, constantly seemed to straddle parody and seriousness. It is, finally, his naturalist story "A Man and Some Others," which was published in *Century* a year later, that can help us see the East Coast writer's difficulty parsing not only Mexico but also the U.S.-Mexican borderlands.

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[39] "Syndicated by Bacheller, Johnson and Bacheller in American newspapers during the first week of January 1896" (Wertheim and Sorrentino 247), the story is of the western adventure genre, but it takes place in Mexico. It is based, apparently, on a real chase that Crane experienced while touring Mexico.

III.

When Stephen Crane sent Theodore Roosevelt a draft of "A Man and Some Others," a story about an Anglo-American sheepherder's encounter with Mexicans in southwestern Texas, the latter penned the following lines asking for a better ending to the frontier tale: "Some day I want you to write another story of the frontiersman and the Mexican Greaser in which the frontiersman shall come out on top; it is more normal that way!" (227). For those familiar with Crane's "predisposition to realism and parody," Teddy Roosevelt's request, however playful, manifested a brand of "racism and haughty chauvinism" that Crane would deliberately try to avoid throughout his career (Rodríguez, "Hell in Mexican Texas" 349). Between sending the draft to Roosevelt and publishing "A Man and Some Others," Crane set out to disappoint readers like the future president of the United States who expected clearly defined opposing races and people. If Roosevelt's letter asked Crane to reproduce the white frontier mythology of the mid nineteenth century, Crane, who had experienced the West and Mexico firsthand, responded with "late nineteenth-century fin-de-siècle skepticism" (Rodríguez 350) and "inscribe[d] naturalism onto the [U.S.-Mexico borderlands]" (Rivera 75).

Written after Crane's return from his tour of the West and Mexico and published in *Century Magazine* in 1897, "A Man and Some Others" tells of an Anglo-American sheepherder's death upon violent borderland grounds. The sheepherder Bill did not always live in the borderlands, we are told early in the story; he "had been a mine-owner in Wyoming, a great man, an aristocrat, one who possessed unlimited credit in the saloons" (Crane 74). Gambling and crime lost Bill his fortune and kept him on the run

working odd menial jobs in the East and Midwest until he reached South Texas. He had worked, for instance, as a cowboy on a ranch (where he killed a man), a "brakeman on the Union Pacific," and a "bouncer of a saloon on the Bowery in New York" (74-75). He was also a "deserter from the United States army" and a participant in the "hobo wars" (74). A regular transplanted rogue, Bill seems, at first glance, a fit protagonist for a story about the West at the close of the nineteenth century. As the story progresses, however, Bill becomes a caricatured man doomed to die because of his Roosevelt-like rashness and sense of entitlement. Not only does his death bear a critique of sensationalist fiction about the West, but it also marks the start of naturalist thinking with regard to Mexicans in the borderlands.

While "the Others" in the story are little more than two-dimensional, serape- and sombrero-wearing Mexican characters who are stealthy and speak ungrammatical English ("Beel, you mus' geet off range . . . We no like. Un'erstan'? We no like." [73]), they nevertheless pose a real threat to Bill's life. In the context of violent encounters between Americans and Mexicans throughout the nineteenth century, the Mexican Others—along with their hatred of Bill—also represent very real racial antagonisms taking place between the neighboring countries. Literary critic Jaime Javier Rodríguez, examining the story with regard to the aforementioned "fin-de-siècle skepticism," offers a cogent reading of Bill's death as necessary in an American world where "all-or-nothing" characterizes the frontier-mentally of people like Teddy Roosevelt ("Hell in Mexican Texas" 351). "For Bill," Rodríguez explains, "being killed by Mexicans constitutes the ultimate American death" (351) and "captures a fundamental fact about ongoing anxieties

about Mexicans in the [United States]" (366). In other words, Bill cannot exist in a world where Mexicans literally lurk in the shadows and threaten to strike with or without warning. But Bill's insistence on fighting the Mexicans who ask him to leave is ridiculously gratuitous. When an Anglo-American horseman encounters and befriends Bill, the former, referred to as "the stranger" throughout the story, is troubled by Bill's decision, the only one decision there is to make apparently:

> [The stranger asks Bill:] "And what are you going to do? Fight?"
>
> "Don't see nothin' else to do," answered Bill, gloomily[.]
>
> "Well, why . . . don't you go get the sheriff?" cried the stranger.
>
> "Oh, h—!" said Bill. (78)

Having internalized the need to stand his ground and fight (in a most irrational matter, one might add), Bill cannot even rationalize his thinking to a seemingly rational stranger.

The central event of "A Man and Some Others" is the gunfight at the end of the story that results in Bill's death. Although a painfully real event for the frontiersman, the gunfight is showed by Crane as a parodied and diminished staple of the classic western myth. Bill is a proud man who solemnly believes in his marksmanship and ability to kill the "greasers [who] are goin' to chase [him] off the range" (78). When the Mexican José tells Bill to leave the region because he and 'the others' "no like" him, Bill refuses to go and recognizes the only thing for him to do is stand his ground. Of course, prior to this climatic gunfight, western stereotypes throughout the story are parodied if not inverted. When José first threatens Bill, the former emerges from out of nowhere—a typical stealthy Mexican, like the stock Indian character in the western, bearing a threat to the

white man's life. This act of emerging from out of nowhere happens a few more times in the story but to different ends. Bill also meets the Anglo-American "stranger" in this way, when the latter, donning a "serape and sombrero, and even . . . Mexican spurs as large as pies" emerges from the dark (77). Bill, we are told, possesses the "instinct of [a] plainsman" who just knows when "the shadowy sea of mesquit[e]," "the stillness, the desolation, [is] invaded" (77). In yet another section of the story, Bill and the stranger sneak up on a Mexican named Miguel in the dead of night to begin the execution of the eight "greasers" who are out to get him. Notably, Crane opens this section of the story in complete racial ambiguity, making it difficult for readers to discern who is sneaking up on whom. It is likely, of course, that Crane's readers in 1897 believed that "the black things that moved like monster lizards toward the camp" were Mexicans, when they were in fact Bill and the horseman (79). Such a racialized inversion—the lurking "black things" as violent white men and not Indians or Mexicans—shows Crane's larger disruption of western myth as the one-sided story of white male ruggedness and heroism. There is nothing romantic about murder, Crane suggests; it is both planned and random and committed by whites and nonwhites at gross whim.

"A Man and Some Others," to this end, deliberately evokes the term "romance" to show its parody of if not disassociation with the literary tradition. In the midst of the scene previously described, where Bill and the horseman sneak up on Miguel, a brief interlude about 'hair-raising' plot elements—staples of romantic and sensational tales—ensues:

> A romance relates the tale of the black cell hidden deep in the earth, where, upon entering, one sees only the little eyes of snakes fixing him in menaces. If a man could have approached a certain spot in the bushes, he would not have found it romantically necessary to have his hair rise. There would have been a sufficient expression of horror in the feeling of the death-hand at the nape of his neck and in his rubber knee-joints. (79)

Hair-raising plot elements, the story shows, are gratuitously romantic and just not "necessary" in the late nineteenth-century Mexican-American borderland. If the cell full of snake eyes is the stuff of romance, then the borderland is reality, a naturalist type of landscape that is random and full of oscillations, as Bill's experience shows, between bravado and fear. Crane's naturalist world, where two white men open fire on an unsuspecting Mexican victim—who, asleep, "smil[es] with tender dreams of assassination" (79)—is unpredictably stark and humorous and violent and peaceful. At the end of the scene, after Bill and the horseman flee the Mexican's campsite because they are frightened by the "demonic" laughter of some unknown entity in the bushes, the "tired flames [of the campfire] s[i]ng the fire chorus, the ancient melody which bears the message of the inconsequence of human tragedy" (80).

Bill's mistake in "A Man and Some Others," or what likely gets him killed, is his adherence to a romantic vision of himself as a rogue in the West. Throughout the story, readers see hints of Bill's sense of entitlement in the region; as a lone sheepherder who was once on the run throughout the Midwest and East, he feels a strong sense of

belonging in the West. When Bill first encounters the stranger, for instance, the former casts judgment on the latter and sees right through his costume.

> Bill saw [in the stranger/horseman] a type which did not belong in the mesquit[e]. The young fellow had invested in some Mexican trappings of an expensive kind. Bill's eyes searched the outfit for some sign of craft, but there was none. Even with his local regalia, it was clear that the young man was of a far, black Northern city. He had discarded the enormous stirrups of his Mexican saddle; he used the small English stirrup, and his feet were thrust forward until the steel tightly gripped his ankles. As Bill's eyes traveled over the stranger, they lighted suddenly upon the stirrups and the thrust feet, and immediately he smiled in a friendly way. No dark purpose could dwell in the innocent heart of a man who rode thus on the plains. (77)

The stranger/horseman, in other words, does not know how to be a horseman, but Bill does. At one point in the story, Bill confounds the stranger by calling him an "eddycated man" (i.e., an educated man who does not belong in the borderlands), to which the latter, while trying to dodge bullets amid a gunfight, replies with a confused, "What?" (82). Through the story's narrator, Bill casts a northern identity upon the stranger which may or may not be accurate. As a former 'city man,' the stranger presumably now views himself as an apt frontiersman, but the story assures us he is not: "Here was evidently a man who had often stormed the iron walls of the city of success," the narrator tells us, "and who now sometimes valued himself as the rabbit values his prowess" (77). The

irony, of course, is that the same might be said of Bill, but Bill firmly believes in his own identity as a frontiersman. And this, Crane suggests, is the problem. Bill makes for himself a transcendent form of reality[40] in his frontiersman identity that is as empty as it is dangerous.

Because Bill's reality consists of living and surviving in the dangerous borderlands, when his life in this region is threatened, he simply will not have it; he has no place else to go, and he must stand his ground as Mexicans attempt to drive him off. Throughout the story, Bill does not believe in the stranger's ability to survive in the region, yet it is the stranger who survives the gunfight (again, through sheer luck). And Bill dies because he cannot suppress his frontiersman bravado. Making passionate but empty threats to the Mexican aggressors who shoot at him from the bushes, Bill mocks José: "'Hello, José!' he called, amiable for satire's sake. 'Got your old blunderbusses loaded up again yet?'" (83). When no response comes, he continues: "'You come out here,' called Bill, again addressing the landscape, 'and I'll give you some shootin' lessons. That ain't the way to shoot'" (83). The Mexicans, who seem to understand Bill's self-made identity more than Bill himself does, proceed to call him "nine kinds of coward, a man who could fight only in the dark, a baby who would run from the shadows of such noble Mexican gentlemen, a dog that sneaked" (84). When these insults to Bill's manhood get Bill riled up, he lashes out. Our narrator tells us that "men do the furious

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[40] My use of "transcendent form of reality" comes from Michael Davitt Bell's work on Crane in *The Problem of American Realism*. I will discuss Crane's "transcendental realism" (according to Bell) momentarily. See Bell's chapter, "Irony, Parody, and 'Transcendental Realism,'" pp. 131-48.

and desperate thing from . . . emotion" (84). And so Bill, making himself visible to the Mexicans who insult him, gets himself killed.

One of the key naturalist elements of a "A Man and Some Others"—that is, the "aloof, omniscient narrato[r] who understand[s] [the] characters as the characters can never understand themselves" (Bell 114)—is best examined through what Michael Davitt Bell has identified as Crane's "transcendental realism." According to Bell, "the distance achieved by Crane's irony, the distance between the readers and the characters, stems from our recognition of the parodic emptiness of the characters' conceptions of reality" (140). Bill's 'transcendental reality,' in the above scenario, is his odd desire to stand his ground when he knows the chances of being killed. In other words, Bill, who "see[s] nothin' else to do" but stand his ground and fight Mexicans, is trapped by his own unwillingness to "see [*something*] else to do," or to act through something other than aggression (78). Notably, Bill's death is one of the few predictable moments of "A Man and Some Others." Governed by emotion and the reality he has made for himself, Bill's life hinges on a gunfight he might have avoided. His decision—the only decision there is to make, in his estimation—to remain in the dangerous borderlands and fight constitutes his final performance as a frontiersman in southwestern Texas. The gunfight where, as Roosevelt desired, the "frontiersman comes out on top," is Bill's reality, but Crane shows the fissures in this white male construction. Bill's death is predictable because his emotion gets in the way; whereas he was previously sly and calculating, by the end of the story, he is little more than an adventure-story time bomb trapped in a naturalist landscape.

Between the time Crane toured the West and Mexico and when he returned to New York to write this story for *Century*, we might say distance helped the naturalist writer grapple with the inscrutable landscape he had traversed. Again, while the Mexican characters in this story are little more than caricatures, they are also complex and difficult to understand. The narrator of "A Man and Some Others" ultimately presents these Mexican characters as strange and stealthy people to be reckoned with. Bill's death clears the path for the Mexican to continue to haunt the borderlands, or to chase off and kill unwanted Americans with impunity. The Mexican's skill-set, especially in contrast to Bill's bravado, is flawless when executed with intention. Mexicans are the rightful owners of the land, the story suggests, because they know the land and because they know Americans like Bill far better than Bill knows them and himself. But "A Man and Some Others" is, in the end, a small anecdote in the long and violent frontier history of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands. Chapters 3 and 4 bring this conflict to a fuller elaboration.

Rather than depicting Crane as an imperialist writer set on further subjecting Mexicans to U.S. influence and dependence, it helps to read his first and final articles on Mexico as thematic bookends that show his flickering appreciation for 'foreign' neighbors. Joseph Katz, in this regard, remarks on the thoughtful retrospection Crane finally achieved when he returned to New York: "Looking back on the trip in the first 'Stephen Crane in Mexico' article, he projected himself not as a cowboy or frontiersman but, ruefully, as an archeologist" (xix). While Crane is too self-deprecating to be seen as such, he certainly provides a few meaningful insights into Mexico and its people in that first article Katz references, "Stephen Crane in Mexico: I" (1895). Using the language of

conquest—"The train again invaded a wilderness of mesquite" (45)—Crane described, on more than one occasion, the train ride into Mexico as an act of an industrial and cultural invasion. Crane's fellow travelers in this article are, fittingly, a capitalist and an archeologist (hence the respective industrial and cultural invasions). These Americans, Crane explains, were "hungry for color, form, [and] action," and they "strove to penetrate with their glances these black curtains of darkness which intervened between them and the new strange life" (46). An imperialist gaze characterizes Americans, Crane suggests, and he knowingly participates in the practice of this gaze to engage their interest: "As this train conquered more and more miles towards its sunny destination," he observed in the article, "a regular progression in color could be noted" (47). When Crane continues to describe this "color," he partakes in a sober type of local color practice. He tells, for instance, of a "baby, brown as a water-jar and of the shape of an alderman, [which] paraded the bank in utter indifference of ignorance or defiance" (49). This first article is also where Crane intimates, again ruefully, that the U.S.-Mexican border is difficult to understand because it separates two nations that are and are not very different from one another. Crane writes of the capitalist and archeologist to this end: "The travelers had somehow expected a radical change the moment they were well across the Rio Grande. On the contrary, southern Texas was being repeated. They leaned close to the pane and stared into the mystic south" (45). The border, Crane suggests, is man-made; although it can be breached, it can also be abandoned. Either one feels confident enough to conquer Mexico, like the capitalist and archeologist who disembark the train in the City of

Mexico and see that "[t]he city of the Aztecs was in their power," or one gives up on the impossible task, as Crane seemingly did.

Crane's final article on Mexico, "Above all Things," is a resigned attempt to parse the Mexican Indians who constitute the "lower classes of Mexico" (75). "Above all things," Crane writes, "the stranger [i.e., Crane himself in this scenario] finds the occupations of foreign peoples to be trivial and inconsequent":

> The average mind utterly fails to comprehend the new point of view and that such and such a man [as the Mexican Indian] should be satisfied to carry bundles or mayhap sit and ponder in the sun all his life in this faraway country seems an abnormally stupid thing. The visitor feels scorn. He swells with a knowledge of his geographical experience. "How futile are the lives of these people," he remarks, "and what incredible ignorance that they should not be aware of their futility." This is the arrogance of the man who has not yet solved himself and discovered his own actual futility. (74)

Crane, in other words, might be as futile to the Mexicans as they are to him. And implicitly, attempting to understand one-another when cultural barriers abound and overwhelm is a futile practice. Crane goes on to provide an odd comparison and point of contrast between these lower classes of Mexico and the "people of the slums of our own [American] cities" (75). Whereas the latter group exists in "silence" yet could, if pushed, break that silence "by a roar of war" and "rebellion" because "[t]hey are becoming more and more capable of defining their condition [i.e., understanding their oppression]," the

former do not seem, to Crane, to "feel at all the modern desperate rage" of their exploited labor and abject condition (75).

But Crane, who cannot verbally communicate with these Mexicans, much less understand their thoughts, to some extent breaks his own rule of representation by making this assumption. Although this is not quite the "psychological perception" Crane warns is impossible to achieve of foreign others, it is an act of going beyond merely describing the Mexicans' physically, through "form and color":

> It seems that a man [here, a writer] must not devote himself for a time to attempts at psychological perception. He can be sure of two things, form and color. Let him then see all he can but let him not sit in literary judgment of this or that manner of people. Instinctively he will feel that there are similarities but he will encounter many little gestures, tones, tranquilities, rages, for which his blood, adjusted to another temperature, can possess no interpreting power. The strangers will be indifferent where he expected passion; they will be passionate where he expected calm. These subtle variations will fill him with contempt. (74)

By the end of the article, Crane "refuse[s] to commit judgment upon the lower classes of Mexico," but, in a sense, he has already done so by believing they may not possess the desire or ability to rebel (77).

It may very well be, then, that Crane is responding here—in this "form and color" discourse—to his implied readers' expectations; like the capitalist and archaeologist characters in Crane's first article on Mexico, readers want to know (and implicitly

conquer) Mexico and Mexicans, but Crane sees that he cannot properly represent the country and its people, and he opts out of doing so. He halfheartedly tries, and he methodically fails. Crane explains this very impossibility to readers so that they themselves may one day resign from the act of pretending to really know Mexico and Mexicans. The "form and color" that Crane can indeed replicate bespeak only physical and visual appearance—that is, the shapes of things and the way landscapes, buildings, and bodies look, and the way some things have and lack color. Crane could not add to the "form and color" the "psychological perception" that would have made his work, in his estimation, stronger. These things left Crane bored and unable to plumb the depths of Mexican people because he did not and could not understand them.

IV.

Understanding the literary terrain onto which Stephen Crane and María Cristina Mena emerged in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century begins by asking ourselves what the magazines and, in Crane's case, newspapers that employed these two writers sought to gain from their writings on Mexico. Scholars such as John-Michael Rivera and Marissa López suggest, to this end, that the United States' imperial incursions and wanderings into Mexico in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries spurred the literary realm to follow in the country's footsteps. Both Rivera and López discuss the intellectual and often invasive curiosity at the heart of these magazines' interests in Mexico. Rivera, for one, uses John O'Sullivan's foundational essay "The Mexican Question"—published in the *North American Review* in 1845, a year prior to the United States' militaristic invasion of Mexico—to create a framework for discussing the broader implications of

O'Sullivan's inquest in U.S. print culture and public thought.[41] For Rivera, the "Mexican Question" was a nineteenth-century Anglo-American interrogation of "the very constitution of Mexican peoplehood that found its rhetorical dimensions within the perimeters of democratic expansion and racialization of the Mexican peoples who lived in the 'frontier'" (54). Examining essays published in influential East Coast literary magazines such as the *North American Review, Democratic Review, Atlantic Monthly,* and *Scribner's* from the mid- to late-nineteenth century, Rivera explores how this question was used to posit Mexicans as subordinate people and justify major historic events like the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-48) and territorial expansion into the West in the decades that followed. When the essay "The Mexican Question" is read as a metonym for "magazine culture" at large, we see how that "culture helped perpetuate in the public sphere . . . a benevolent U.S. history that depicted America as a moral, not an imperialist, nation that was civilizing an unjust Mexican nation. Article after article cast Mexico as an inferior nation whose racial people and civilization were barbaric and not capable of natural rights" (63-64).

Marissa López's analysis of magazine culture begins where Rivera's leaves off, as López looks into the opening years of the twentieth century but at a different aspect of magazines' interest in Mexico and Mexicans. While magazines and newspapers had

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[41] Rivera explains that in the article "Annexation," published in *Democratic Review* in 1845, O'Sullivan "coined what has become perhaps one of the foundational geopolitical phrases of U.S. history, 'Manifest Destiny.' For O'Sullivan, Manifest Destiny gave the United States the 'right' to 'overspread and to possess the whole of our continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us'" (qtd. in Rivera 58).

certainly established a legacy like the one of which Rivera speaks, the event of the Mexican Revolution from 1910 to 1920 opened a new line of thinking in U.S. print culture that offered, in many cases, a sympathetic vision of Mexican history and culture. Using John Kenneth Turner's essays that were published in *American Magazine*—one of the magazine's in which María Cristina Mena published her stories—López shows how Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship in Mexico in the early twentieth century inspired Americans who lived on the other side of the border to attempt in their writings not only to uncover what was happening to Mexicans, but also to figure out what the country and its people were about. López argues that Turner's opening question in his essay on slavery in the Yucatan—"What is Mexico?"—"captures the early twentieth-century zeitgeist of that country. Mexican revolutionary politics coalesce around the question of what, and where, Mexico is" (96). Rivera and López parse the ideological implications of magazine queries to better understand why American writers took such an apparent interest in their southern neighbor. Whereas for Rivera nineteenth-century magazine writers helped the United States conquer and tame their latest imperial frontier, for López selected early twentieth-century writers paid attention to Mexico's history, culture, and current conditions.

Tiffany Ana López's examination of the touristic advertisements, articles, and stories published in *Century Magazine*, where much of Mena's writing appeared, is relevant here as well. For López, Mena's early twentieth-century work emerges from within a context of imperial and leisure-class gazes into the Southwest and Mexico. The magazine's advertisements, according to López, use specific images to position darker-

skinned Mexicans as being "at [the] service" of their Anglo-American neighbors ("María Cristina Mena" 28). In *Century* as well as in other literary magazines, the "depiction of people of color as servants becomes part of a system of images associated with darker skin color and Otherness, particularly emphasized in narratives concerning travel" ("María Cristina Mena" 28). This pattern is clearly visible in Mena's story "The Gold Vanity Set" (1913), where a Mexican Indian woman encounters and serves a group of American tourists.[42] And it is also clear in Mena's story "John of God, the Water-Carrier" (1913), which *Century* printed along with picturesque illustrations of the title protagonist, a Mexican Indian boy.[43] Mena's early work, López concludes, offers "images of Mexicans that [are] not politically threatening" to a U.S. audience and that are intended for leisurely consumption by "white readers" (25-26).

Reading a touristic element in Mena's work leads us to examine that work's longstanding association with the 'local color' tradition, which reached its prime in the late nineteenth-century Northeast and flourished in elite magazine circles because of its ability to bring to light the little-known corners of the United States. Among contemporary understandings of local color's narrator-reader relationship, Amy Doherty, one of Mena's lead recovery scholars, argues that local color pieces tended to separate the "urban narrator," who often spoke like the author or on the author's behalf, from the "rural subject" ("Redefining the Borders" 168). Mena certainly took part in this practice,

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[42] This story will be discussed later in the chapter in relation to not only tourism but also new regionalism.

[43] The *Century* version of "John of God" can be accessed through the Hathi Trust Digital Library, which houses the magazine's archives. The story is in the November 1913 issue of *Century*, pp. 39-48: http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.32106010576046;view=1up;seq=115.

given that her "upper-class perspective allow[ed] her to write in dialogue with *Century*'s portrayals of Mexicans," but she was also able "to negotiate with her editors about the subjects of her stories" (Doherty 169). That Mena's "local color" stories appeared a decade or two after the genre visibly started to shift indicates why she may have been better equipped to use the genre to her own advantage. Perhaps similar to Charles Chesnutt, who was known for his deft maneuverings within the realm of local color fiction and clearly subverted editorial expectations by granting lower-class African-American characters trickster power,[44] Mena imbued Mexico's poor indigenous population with the skills and virtues necessary to defeat self-absorbed and ignorant American tourists.[45] Doherty concludes, to this end, that Mena "use[d] the local color genre to confront her Anglo-American readers with their own presumptions," shifting if not challenging the way *Century* "presented Mexico as a site of tourism and imperialism" (169).

Similar to Stephen Crane's stories and articles which illustrated the ways industry had infiltrated Mexico, Mena's writings "allude[d] to [the country's] modernization, which contrast[ed] with the *Century*'s representations of an undeveloped Mexico"

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[44] Chesnutt's 'local color' stories were packaged as *The Conjure Woman* in 1899. Subverting the conventions of southern local color established by Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus* (1880), Chesnutt granted African-American characters (former slaves) a type of subversive power. Unlike Harris's harmless ex-slave Uncle Remus, for instance, Chesnutt's characters are far from being simple-minded and trustworthy.

[45] For more on Mena's 'trickster' proclivities, see Tiffany Ana López's article "María Cristina Mena: Turn-of-the-Century La Malinche, and Other Tales of Cultural (Re)Construction" in the anthology *Tricksterism in Turn-of-the-Century American Literature* (1997). Though López does not write of Mena in relation to Chesnutt—because this is not López's project—she does offer an insightful reading of Mena as a writer of early twentieth-century trickster tales. Of course, Chesnutt's landmark work *The Conjure Woman* is discussed in this same anthology.

(Doherty, "Redefining the Borders" 171). Mena's first story, "John of God, the Water-Carrier," published in *Century* in November 1913, shows an indigenous community grappling with industrial change and attempting to maintain its quotidian and religious practices. "John of God" tells about a boy named Juan de Dios who is forced to leave his poverty-stricken region to work as a donkey driver in Mexico City so he can support his family and marry his love interest, Dolores. When Juan de Dios is finally able to return to his beloved water-carrying practice because he has made sufficient money and his younger brother Tiburcio is now old enough to take over the business in the capital, Juan de Dios is shocked to find that "a spirit named 'modern improvement'" (that is, plumbing) threatens to bring him down (19). For Juan de Dios, "[t]he plumber—worker of evil and oppressor of God's poor—had been exercising his malign spells. Was it the will of God," the boy wondered, "that water should run upstairs, except in jugs sustained by the proper legs of a man?" (19). Juan de Dios begins to lose his water-providing business to plumbers and '*aguadores*' who are willing to work the "patented American force-pumps" (20). In his five-year absence from the village, Juan de Dios's loses on the front of love as well; Dolores falls for his brother Tiburcio, and Juan de Dios becomes violently opposed to their union.

Clearly commenting, albeit grandiosely, on capitalism's influence on pure and sacred in Mexico, Mena shows how the passage of time and the arrival of American modernity to Mexico disrupt the lives of the poor. When Juan de Dios leaves his brother Tiburcio in charge of completing the water-carrying tasks for the day, Tiburcio is duped into pumping water for customers: "[G]etting free of his jugs and rolling up his trousers

he attacked the business [of pumping] with confidence" (22). This results in severe soreness for Tiburcio, which is immediately confused by the 'inditos' as paralysis and crippling. Afraid for Tiburcio's life, Juan and Dolores resolve to take him on a pilgrimage to the Villa de Guadalupe for the "miracle" of healing (28). The rest Tiburcio is afforded when taken up the steps by his brother to the Virgin of Guadalupe is very likely what allows Tiburcio, by the end of the pilgrimage, to "lan[d] on his feet, supple and free from pain" (28). The event, however, convinces Juan de Dios of his life's calling; he gives Tiburcio and Dolores all of his money so that they may marry, and he decides to "continue to be an *aguador*, carrying water from the sacred well to the top of the sacred hill with which to refresh pilgrims, especially the sick and crippled, after the ascent" (28). We learn, in the end, that Juan de Dios himself "was crippled, never recovering the stiffness of one knee, which remained bent" (28). Hard work, in other words, leaves Juan de Dios bent, as if in offering to Virgin of Guadalupe herself; he will forever remain a servant, hunched, "his head bowed as if in prayer" (18).

Juan de Dios's restoration of something sacred is an implicit rejection of Americanization—a triumph, if you will, of indigeneity over modernity, as if the two were necessarily in opposition. Mena's attention to the natural resource of water places Indians closer to nature and closer to a most sacred aspect of the Mexican landscape. When Juan de Dios can continue to carry water, we see a regionalist value mended and taken to the status of the holy; the Indian practice of carrying water takes precedence again, and, by the end of the story, we have forgotten about plumbing. Notably, the earthquake at the beginning of "John of God," unlike American capitalism, indeed

influences the Mexican Indian's life; Dolores, for instance, loses her mother and finds refuge with Juan de Dios's family. But that earthquake fails to, in a figurative sense, shake their faith the way American capitalism might. Here, Mexicans manage to save themselves from what is presumed to be an American form of corruption. In their Mexican bubble, they have averted a version of the apocalypse.

In Mena's stories, there is always a tension for scholars between what Mena perceived to be her role as cultural interpreter of Mexico's indigenous people and the racist way she often depicted these 'inditos.' On this very matter and the story "John of God," Amy Doherty observes the following:

> [D]espite its upper-class perspective, Mena's narrative draws attention to the treatment of the Mexican Indians and subtly comments on the influence of American capitalism in Mexico. In her letters to *Century*, she represents her role as a translator for the dispossessed Mexican Indian [by stating]: "I expect to write more stories of Inditos than of any other class in Mexico. They form the majority; the issue of their rights and wrongs, their aspirations and possibilities, is at the root of the present situation in my unhappy country, and will become more and more prominent when the immense work of national regeneration shall have fairly begun." (qtd. in "Redefining the Borders" 171)

For Doherty, as for Tiffany Ana López and John-Michael Rivera, Mena simultaneously participates in and departs from established traditions in the print world of middlebrow magazines; she shows the 'inditos' picturesquely, but she also critiques U.S. imperial and

literary practices. To continue to investigate Mena's stated ambitions and unique use of the local color genre, I spend the next section of this chapter introducing a recently recovered archival essay written by Mena as well as Mena's own brief comments on local color. I argue, in the end, that these materials, alongside Mena's story "The Gold Vanity Set," show the writer's affiliation not so much with local color but with something regionalist critics call "new regionalism."

V.

Recently recovered archival materials, such as an essay titled "My Protocol For Our Sister Americas" (1943/2013), suggest that Mena believed in her ability to represent Mexico in a time when no other writer could write of the country and its people properly. Published (or recovered) in 2013 by *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, Mena's 1943 "protocol" outlined, in short, how the people of the United States might better "kno[w]" and "underst[and]" Latin Americas (355).[46] The piece was written, according to literary critic Margaret A. Toth, for *Pan-American Magazine* "in response to its invitation for essays on 'How to approach the Latin American mind'" (337). In the essay, Mena takes a moment to reflect on her successful writings for *Century*. Now forty years old, she quotes nostalgically from the magazine editor at the time, Robert Underwood Johnson: "I think your story [presumably "John of God"] is the first Mexican story where the Mexicans are not called 'greasers[.]' . . . It is, in my opinion, the first story of authentic Mexican life, where the people think and move as human beings" (355-

[46] Mena used her married name "Chambers" for this essay. In this dissertation's works cited section, the essay can be found under the last name Chambers.

56). Mena had given herself in the early twentieth century the grand task of representing Mexico's people for a U.S. audience: "To me," she explains in the 1943 essay, "the problem of having the people of the United States know and understand the country of my birth (Mexico) has been my life's work" (356).

Mena's language throughout the essay "My Protocol For Our Sister Americas" to some degree echoes William Dean Howells's realist criticism, in particular, the "grasshopper" metaphor he used to argue that American letters needed to focus on the "real" and the "simple, natural, and honest" (*Criticism and Fiction* 11-12). The "real grasshopper" was, in Howells's estimation, a stand-in for a 'real' or 'common' human being whose daily life was worth examining and writing, even if it was not as exciting as the life of someone in a romantic tale (11). For Howells, "the ideal grasshopper, the heroic grasshopper, the impassioned grasshopper, the self-devoted, adventureful, good old romantic cardboard grasshopper, must die out before the simple, honest, and natural grasshopper can have a fair field" (12). Although Mena did not rely, for obvious reasons, on an insect metaphor to illustrate a method for reading common people and their struggles, she did, like Howells, lean toward representation of the "masses," or of the people who lived less exciting lives and worked for a living (Chambers 358). She writes: "for the purpose of research into the very characteristics of . . . people [in a given country], one can't very well ignore the PEOPLE—the masses—who <u>are</u> the Nation. If we speak of only the bankers and industrialists and their families, who travel, who used to go to Europe and who come to the United States; the picture of the Mejicanos or of the Peruanos or of the natives of Brazil we are giving, with enthusiasm and hope for a better

understanding, will fail of its purpose" (358; emphases in original). Understanding Latin Americans, Mena suggests, begins with understanding the people whose mundane existence and work constitute the very countries in which they live. Good literature can provide a link between the people of the United States (who wish to learn of the 'sister' Americas) and their Latin American neighbors. Ironically, of course, Howells and Mena tended to romanticize the very "simple" subjects or "masses" they hoped to depict. Their writings were at odds with their stated aims because these aims over-relied on an abstract notion of common people; Howells and Mena were convinced they could provide the proper lenses through which to view and understand such people.

Mena's own ideas about the "local color" genre—a genre for which Howells advocated and in which Crane semi-engaged—are complicated and cannot, especially because of an incomplete historical record, be entirely identified. Mena, in fact, uses the term "local color" in a profile article she wrote for *Century* about a Mexican musician, titled "Julian Carrillo: The Herald of a Musical Monroe Doctrine" (1915). Beginning with a description of Carrillo's humble background and telling of how he hailed from a "Mexican pueblo with a census of a hundred souls," Mena provides an idiosyncratic if not awkward transition into further information about the musician's race or "blood," which, we are told, "is pure Mexican, not a drop of it being traceable to any European fount" (753). "This would seem a good place for 'local color,'" Mena explains (seemingly in attempt to move from the details of Carrillo's humble background to those of his "blood" type), "but the writer resists that fatal allurement. Nor will she couple with her hero the august phrase 'pure Castilian blood,' chiefly because in Mexico most of our

leading Castilians are money-lenders or something in the small grocery line" (753). Mena's conception of the local color tradition here might be that it exploits the charming aspects of place (i.e., the "Mexican pueblo" in which Carrillo was born) and the customs of that place's inhabitants. Carrillo's success, we learn, happens in spite of and not because of his pueblo and particular upbringing; he is a hard-worker and a "prodigy" from the start (753). At the same time, however, Mena might have dismissed local color to preclude her readers' potential ruminations on the "Castilian" in Mexico, given, in this context, local color's tendency to romanticize Mexico's Spanish legacy. Whatever Mena's reason for casting local color in a negative light, her desire to distance her article from the tradition is clear. Yet as hard as Mena tried to highlight Carrillo's vast, transamerican vision of carrying out an "American Symphony Orchestra" (759), she used his status as a "ruddy-brown American of the aboriginal breed" to show the organic and unprecedented value of that vision. Carrillo's "day-dream of patriotism [which] embraces the Western Hemisphere" (759) was valuable, in other words, precisely because it was homegrown and could be traced back to the local source of his Mexican pueblo.

Given the contradictions visible in Mena's work, we might best appreciate her literary accomplishments if we temper her self-proclaimed insider knowledge about Mexico with her desire to present something new about the country's people. In an age where the arbiters of U.S. print culture had shifted their gaze from the West to the American frontier of Mexico, Mena felt she possessed what Anglo-American writers of the elite northeastern literary circles lacked. The emergence of Mena's writing in the early twentieth century—especially in light of Mena's public rejection of local color—is

perhaps best understood, then, within the framework of new regionalism. Mena's adherence to recreating an authentic Mexico, along with her apparent love for the 'inditos' who populated the rural and urbanizing landscapes, reflects the new regionalist thought of U.S. writers who penned the often neglected regions and (generally indigenous) people of California and the larger Southwest in the early twentieth century. The literary movement of new regionalism, according to literary critic Philip Joseph, "challenged the old assumption that some places, namely cities on the East Coast, were broader and more representative in scope than others" (15). New regionalists believed, furthermore, that the "local color of the 1890s catered to the fantasies of a homogenized literary public rather than to the concrete reality [they] pursued" in their work (Joseph 16). Of the California based Mary Austin and like-minded writers, Joseph explains:

> Wary of tourism's effects on local communities, [new regionalists] cringed at having [their regions] so visibly subjected to the exigencies of the American mass market . . . [T]he problem with local color was not at all that it denied public influence to fringe communities, but rather that it compromised their cultural difference. The job of the artist was to reproduce the community in its pristine form, prior to its mass market exposure. Only through the process of saving and reproducing the organic community would the nation ever recover from the ills of modernity. (87-88)

Writers such as Austin, Mena, and, to some extent, Crane did not shy away from showing the incursion of tourism and modernity into the region; rather, they showed and critiqued

this instance by shedding light on how it affected the natives of that region. The act of reproducing the organic community in new regionalist writing was, in a sense, the act of showing what the region used to be and could still be in spite of changes brought about by the United States' imperial, industrial, and touristic energies.

There is, of course, nostalgia in this kind of thinking. The implication here is that the region was once whole and could be repaired—in the case of new regionalist writers—through proper representation. New regionalism relied if not capitalized on the different vision it could impart of the region, focusing on the indigenous communities that were generally overlooked in (northeastern) local colorist production. Mena's short story "The Gold Vanity Set" depicts, in Joseph's words, "tourism's effects on local communities" (87), at the same time that it tries to maintain an indigenous community's "cultural difference" (88). The story is seen by scholars as a sharp critique of American "materialism" and "capitalistic influence . . . on Mexico" (Doherty, "Introduction" xxv-xxxi).

Published in *American Magazine* in 1913 and set in a rural region of Mexico, "The Gold Vanity Set" tells of a beautiful, albeit domestically-abused, Mexican woman's encounter with an American tourist. From the very start of the story, tourism is rendered a hollow practice, as readers witness a group of Americans arrive in a zealous whirlwind at an "inn for *peons*," where the Mexican protagonist Petra lives (2; emphasis in original). The title of Mena's story hinges on the American tourist Miss Young's gold vanity set, which is surrendered by its owner when Petra finds, uses, and then offers the object to the Virgin of Guadalupe, believing it harbors the sacred power to keep her safe from abuse.

In reality, however, Petra uses the vanity's makeup which simultaneously confounds her husband and convinces him of Petra's undeniable beauty, and he resolves to no longer strike her. Miss Young, moved to tears by Petra's offering of the vanity set to the Virgin, says at the end of the story: "Well, if it saves that nice girl from ever getting a beating, the saint is perfectly welcome to my vanity set" (11). Similar to Miss Young who is "unused to the observances of such a place [i.e., of the Catholic Church and rural Mexico]" (11), readers might have been surprised by the odd occurrences in Mena's story, in particular, by the way a Mexican woman could give the vanity new and religious utility.

A complex story to say the least, "The Gold Vanity Set" illustrates tourism's negative effects on Mexican locals. Petra and Miss Young meet for the first time under circumstances that "[i]mmediately" show how "the [peons'] inn was *invaded*" by unexpected and, implicitly, unwanted Americans (3; my emphasis). The brief description of "astonished inhabitants" (2) in this early scene evokes, at least to some degree, the sense of shock experienced by Mexican Indians across centuries of invasions by white people. The invasion in this context, given its touristic objective, is more commercial than ever. Petra's refusal to have her picture taken by Miss Young upon their first and subsequent meetings has been deemed by John-Michael Rivera and other scholars as a culturally significant refusal to "become an exotic object, so popular in the turn-of-the-century public spheres" as well as "[i]n the very same magazines that Mena was writing her stories" (80). Mena's act of writing this particular story works to inspire U.S. readers not only to become more critical of their touristic practices, but also to take the time to

read and empathize with their Mexican neighbors, rather than simply gaze at them. Of course, Mena's empowering illustrations, if we can call them that, are always in balance with her depictions of what are ultimately, in Marissa López's concise words, "saintly, if stupid, Indians" (100). At the same time that Mena "resist[s] the objectifying logic of consumption, as Petra does when Miss Young tries to take her picture," she also "flirt[s] with indigeneity" and "produce[s] a vision of Mexico [throughout her stories] for U.S. consumption" (López 100).

Mena's attempts to restore Mexican Indians' cultural difference in the wake of Anglo-American tourism are complicated and often problematic. As such, they constitute the basic issue at the heart of new regionalism. However triumphant Petra emerges in "The Gold Vanity Set," she remains a "historical relic" (M. López 97), one who is shrouded by mystery yet knowable, and one who will continue, both physically and symbolically, to enter "the dark, ancient front of the Chapel of the Virgin of Guadalupe" where she has left the vanity (Mena 10). While Petra's religious practice, in such a context, can be read as a beautiful and enduring tradition, it can also be read as an obstruction to her attainment of modern intelligence and knowhow. The ritual would mean something very different if the planter in the story, Don Ramón, who acts as tour guide to the Americans, did not speak so openly about Mexican Indians on the narrator or Mena's behalf. Of Petra's odd observance and Mexican Indians in general, he says to Miss Young: "The ways of the Indito are past conjecture, except that he is always governed by emotion . . . You may observe that we always speak of them as *Inditos*, never as Indios . . . We use the diminutive because we love them. They are our blood.

[W]e never forget that it was their valor and love of country which won our independence" (10). 'Inditos' like Petra are, in other words, historical metonyms for Mexico. While Mena suggests they teach Americans something of non-materialistic value, they could also, by remaining stagnant, potentially "impose" "limitations" on one-another and "on modern individuals, both women and men, Native and Anglo" (Joseph 99).[47] In reinforcing the cultural difference that 'inditos' possess, Mena imbues that difference with "emotion" rather than intelligence and with the past rather than the modern present. Notably, a dark, ancient image (like the previously described Chapel) closes the story. Petra's husband "cuddle[s] his guitar and [sings]" the following lyrics: "Into the sea, because it is deep, / I always throw / The sorrows that life / So often gives me" (11). The cultural difference that new regionalists like Mena and Austin worked so hard to achieve was often oppressive to those being depicted. Figuratively speaking, the sea that drowns the Mexican Indian's sorrows at the end of "The Gold Vanity Set" is also the sea that can swallow him whole; the 'indito' belongs to the past and to Mexico's ancient lands and waters.

The feminist logic in this story offers another way to view Mena's ambitious yet troubled new regionalist vision. Although Mena's feminist proclivities have long been documented in American literary studies by scholars such as Tiffany Ana López, Amy Doherty, and Marissa López, they have not been discussed in relation to her new regionalist practice and the way she viewed herself as a prime spokesperson for Mexico's

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[47] Although Joseph does not include Mena in his book *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age*, his discussion of new regionalists like Mary Austin easily applies to Mena and her work.

indigenous community. Mena may not have outright considered herself a defender of this community, but she certainly wrote its people in a time when magazines like *Century* considered them "literary undesirables" (Doherty, "Introduction" xxii). Her connection to 'inditos' resembles, albeit in a problematic and patronizing way, a connection between a mother and a child; Mena, in this case, speaks on behalf of the helpless and innocent people whom she considered "so intrinsically picturesque, so misrepresented in current fiction, and so well worthy of being known and loved, in all their ignorance" (qtd. in Doherty, "Introduction" xxii). While this language is far from feminist, it is, in an unconventional sense, maternalistic. The language here also anticipates how Mena would later, in her essay "My Protocol for Our Sister Americas," transform U.S. Monroe Doctrine fraternal discourse into a sororal if not maternal plea for illustrating the common or lowly 'people' in fiction (as previously discussed). What literary critic Philip Joseph says of Mary Austin's new regionalist female authorship could not be more true of what I have observed in Mena's work:

> What the [Untied States] desperately needed, [in the estimation of writers such as Austin and Mena], was . . . contact with an indigenous population distinguished for purity of blood and absorption of local geographies. In order for the indigenous communities of the Southwest [and Mexico] to have any . . . value [in the United States], mediators were needed to reproduce the lifestyles and artistic expressions of a given community in their original, purely local forms. Such a process of intact transmission called for the talents of [educated and generally] Anglo-American

> women.[48] Gifted with the innate ability to forge connectivity, women were, in [these writers'] view[s], ideally positioned to convey the cultural essence of a community to an ailing nation of alienated individuals. (98)

Examined with attention to the grandiose authorial role Mena gave herself, the new regionalist fiction she published in magazines like *Century* and *American* offer visions of indigenous cultural triumph over U.S. capitalism and its industrial influence in Mexico. Mena's job as a self-proclaimed authorial mother to the Mexican indigenous community was not only to preserve their quotidian practices as pure and morally superior to modern industrial practice in the United States, but also to show how the humanity of Americans might be restored. Miss Young, for one, might become a better person because of what Petra does with the gold vanity set. Leading by what it believed to be an example, Mena's new regionalism was ambitious, but it relied on the impossible literary act of "intact transmission," of perfect mediation between the intuitive female writer and the indigenous population. If the authentic Mexico and the authentic people of Mexico were in any way broken (i.e., susceptible to negative U.S. influence), they were—rather fortunately, in Mena's estimation—reparable by virtue of healing words.

"The Gold Vanity Set" and "John of God" illustrate change in the Mexican community as a nostalgic process; in the face of Diaz's regime and U.S. infiltration, the stories seek the wholeness and wholesomeness of timeless indigeneity. Mena's desire to

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[48] Although Mena was neither an Anglo-American woman like Mary Austin nor white-identified like María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and Jovita González, Mena was certainly privileged, educated, and fair-skinned. Here, Joseph writes specifically about Anglo-American women, but I have adjusted the passage to suit Mena and her work.

restore a pure Mexican vision is, perhaps, an attempt to patch a hole in the historical fabric of the literary magazine. Americans' ignorance about Mexicans was Mena's perceived strength, and this strength overcompensated for the lack of representation of 'inditos' in U.S. public spheres. Unfortunately, Mena's stories tended to assume Mexican Indians were unchanging and that they could maintain a strong sense of morality inadvertently or through sheer dumb luck.

VI.

Not surprisingly, some of Mena's best stories focus on characters outside of Mexico's laboring indigenous population. Her story "The Education of Popo" (published in *Century* in 1914), which tells of the young Popo's introduction into "manhood" (54), provides a more complex instance of the good Mexican's triumph over the greedy American, a convention Mena had clearly established in her fiction. The son of a Mexican governor, Popo does not live to labor as some of Mena's other characters, and he is free to fall for the blonde American divorcee whom his family hosts. By the end of the story, when the divorcee Alicia Cherry returns to her ex-husband after using and abusing Popo, the young Mexican is heartbroken and confused, but he manages to stand up for himself and restore his pride, to an extent. He calls Alicia, we are told, "by a name which ought not to be applied to any lady in any language" (61). The parody of local color and romance in the story help make "The Education of Popo" a more self-reflexive literary feat. While Alicia acts like she knows Popo's physical and emotional world inside and out, and finds her surroundings (i.e., his home) generally exotic and "romantic" (51), the reader sees that her impudence and general ridiculousness far exceed

Popo's naivety and innocence. Told for the most part from the perspective of Alicia Cherry, "The Education of Popo" makes fun of a character whose 'insights' betray her believability at every turn. In the end, Popo's small world is shifted a bit by the "education" Alicia has given him, and he, in return, attempts to educate Alicia about her "iniquity" and how she "ought to remarry [her husband]" (61). Unlike Mena's poor Mexican Indians, Popo is afforded some deliberate action and "revenge" (62). Once again, Mena troubles the touristic American gaze in a *Century* story. Alongside "John of God" and "The Gold Vanity Set," then, "The Education of Popo" fits in thematically. This story does not, however, rely on the poor laboring population of Mexico to encounter and unknowingly defeat the American and American ways. Here, for instance, Popo gains knowledge about an American divorcee and speaks out, rather indignantly, against her.

Mena's feminist literary critics turn to "The Vine-Leaf" and "The Sorcerer and General Bisco" to illustrate the way some of Mena's more powerful female characters combat cultural oppression, which is generally American or European. Published in 1914 and 1915 respectively, these stories appeared in *Century Magazine* after "The Education of Popo." "The Vine-Leaf," which centers on Mexico's landed and noble classes, clearly borrows from Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birth-Mark" (1843) and briefly *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) in its references to a veiled marquesa who gets her birthmark removed by an inquisitive and empirical doctor. Mena's story, however, radically shifts the course and outcome of Hawthorne's tale by imbuing the marquesa with intelligence and sexual power that she uses for her own convenience; it is her choice to get the

birthmark removed, not a crazy scientist's, and the removal of this birthmark frees her from unwanted identification. Unlike Mena's earlier stories, "The Vine-Leaf" shows how a Mexican woman can posses and deliberately use her cunning and ingenuity to get ahead of her enemies. Whereas the marquesa executes a plan, Petra from "The Gold Vanity Set" and Juan de Dios from "John of God" mend the wrongs in their lives inadvertently.

Also focusing on the competence of an upper-class Mexican woman, albeit on a larger communal scale, "The Sorcerer and General Bisco" illustrates how female resourcefulness and clairvoyance, in the context of the Mexican Revolution, can benefit an entire nation of oppressed people. In the story, the female protagonist Carmelita and her lover Aquiles work together to free General Bisco from the spell of 'the sorcerer' Don Baltazar, a rich and oppressive man who "ruled as absolutely as any medieval baron" and took advantage of "honest Mexicans" (101-02). Tiffany Ana López notes that "[t]his story could be and probably was read as a metaphor for political struggles in Mexico. Bisco would represent Pancho Villa, the Mexican revolutionary who joined the rebels and fought vigorously for President Madero," while Don Baltazar "would represent [Porfirio] Diaz" or even the "United States," given the "current political tensions of the time" ("María Cristina Mena" 45). Carmelita, who leaves repressive wifehood and becomes part of the revolution, saves the general by means of a clairvoyant act: after seeing in a dream how the sorcerer is torturing General Bisco, she manages to get the latter out of his hypnosis so that he can defeat his oppressor. Carmelita's female intuition feels exaggerated, of course, as an attempt on Mena's part to show the importance and heroism of Mexican women. In spite of this, "The Sorcerer and General

Bisco" is among Mena's most celebrated works. It marks an "overtly political" turn in Mena's writing and illustrates the "increasingly active role of women from varied classes [not only] in the Mexican Revolution" but also in Mexican culture at large (Doherty, "Introduction" xliii).

Granted, Mena's earliest stories, those I have identified as "new regionalist" products, were written with an eye toward editorial desires, and as such, Mena may have lacked freedom to experiment or show indigenous people engaging in thoughtful practices. Although the Mexican Indians in Mena's stories have faith in their religion and way of life, that faith is rather flattened by their lack of common sense. Had Mena herself not believed in what she called "their ignorance," Mena's 'inditos' might have been less "intrinsically picturesque" (qtd. in Doherty xxii) and more intentionally intelligent. Illustrating something picturesquely—using local color conventions to capture the beauty of life and culture—is not a harmful act in and of itself. But there ought to be a higher degree of criticalness, a greater indication, for instance, that change in a culture and intercommunal engagement are not necessarily negative processes. Scholars like Raymond Paredes have dismissed Mena because of her use of hegemonic local color,[49] while others like Amy Doherty have defended Mena's practice of engaging this genre because she uses its elements unconventionally. Mena's own evocation of the term, as previously shown, intimates her desire to be distanced from it, even if her work, in the

[49] In his article "The Evolution of Chicano Literature" (1978), Raymund Paredes famously called Mena's stories "trivial and condescending" (85). "Mena's genteelness," according to Paredes, "simply is incapable of warming the reader's blood" (85). Feminist scholars have long since recovered Mena as a writer of complex—and not simply elitist or racist—fiction.

end, does show traces of it. Because of these complicated and conflicting factors, I have introduced "new regionalism" here to show how Mena rather genuinely believed in her ability to represent Mexican Indians in current fiction. Her inadvertent failure to represent Mexico's laboring indigenous population respectfully and more thoughtfully is, accordingly, a failure of her new regionalist practice as well.

My use of "new regionalism" in this chapter is an attempt to provide new language and a different genre through which to study Mena, who is presently the earliest Mexican-American writer to publish fiction in English in a literary magazine of *Century*'s stature. Paired with Crane's writings on the West and Mexico, Mena's work emerges authoritatively, as the answer to the grand question that Crane's work left behind: who, indeed, is the Mexican? Although Mena composed writings outside of the regionalist or local color genre, her earliest stories will likely remain the starting point or a central feature in the study of her work. Reading Mena's authorial ambition as a new regionalist practice makes even clearer her effort to distance her work from the short stories centered on quaint East Coast towns and struggling Anglo-Americans. As Mena's archival work continues to emerge, scholars will undoubtedly continue to shift her place in American literary history.[50]

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[50] Margaret Toth's article "María Cristina Mena, Transnationalism, and Mass Media" (2013) explores recent archival findings of Mena's work. Toth reads Mena as a transnational modernist (with regard to her early twentieth-century work) and as an author of sensationalist fiction for women's pulp magazines (with regard to her recently recovered mid twentieth-century work). (Toth estimates that Mena wrote these latter pieces in the 1950s, after her husband's death.) Mena's sensationalist fiction, Toth explains, featured "such subjects as illicit sex, drug and alcohol abuse, and figurative and literal prostitution. These stories are quite different from her earlier published work, particularly in voice, tone, and diction, and demonstrate both Mena's facility with various literary styles and her awareness of a changing publishing industry" (335).

"Why Do You Hate the South?": The Limits of Visionary Regionalism in González and Raleigh's *Caballero* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* [51]

I.

There are few depictions of history in American literature as unrelenting as William Faulkner's in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). The indeterminacy, violence, and tragedy of this history have long been documented in American literary studies as the prime components of Faulkner's modernist if not postmodernist experimentation—his view that, as he writes in the story "A Rose for Emily," "all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches" (129). This history reveals, furthermore, that Faulkner "explicitly crafted *Absalom* to disappoint the expectations of great-house charm that had surrounded his earlier reception" (Karem 38). Upon its publication, *Absalom* was read with an eye toward the southern romance genre that Faulkner's earlier work engaged, and this caused his novel to be met with "the worst reception of anything Faulkner had written thus far" (Karem 39). Literary critic Jeff Karem explains, in this regard, that if "readers of . . . *The Sound and the Fury* were frustrated by the occasional opacity of Faulkner's experimental prose but had faith in the overall authenticity of his portrait [of the South], reviews of *Absalom* were infuriated by the displaced narrative structure, and they accused him of monumental inauthenticity" (39). *Absalom* went out of print by the early 1940s, but scholars managed to rescue it later that decade (Hobson 5). *Absalom*'s poor reception, however, forever changed the

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[51] This quote comes from *Absalom, Absalom!* In the penultimate paragraph of the novel, Shreve McCannon asks Quentin Compson this question (303). The inquiry's implications will be addressed later in this chapter.

course of Faulkner's writing. It marked what is seen by Jeff Karem, Brian McHale, and other literary critics as the end of Faulkner's highly experimental work and his "return to 'conventional views' about the South and the Civil War" (Karem 41).

Absalom's incessant vision of southern history, as well as its status as a failed 'southern romance,' is shared by the perhaps unlikely source of the recovered Mexican-American novel *Caballero*, written by Jovita González and Eve Raleigh between approximately 1937 and 1939 but published a generation later in 1996. As the first fictional account of the U.S.-Mexican War from the defeated Mexican perspective (an oblique parallel to *Absalom*'s account of the U.S. Civil War from the defeated southern perspective), *Caballero* set out as an ambitious "historical novel" that offered an array of memories featuring, rather similar to *Absalom*, indeterminacy, violence, and tragedy.[52] More so than *Absalom*, however, *Caballero* tried to "follow the rules" of historical novels and romances (Rodríguez, *Literatures* 213) and completely failed in a literary marketplace that had grown accustomed to the perfect southern sensationalism of a novel

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[52] González and Raleigh, on the title page of *Caballero*'s manuscript, provide a genre for readers: "An historical novel" (xxix). Notably, *Caballero* has, for the most part, been called historical 'romance' by scholars, which James J. Donahue defines and differentiates from the historical 'novel' as follows: "The romance, as opposed to the novel, is not bound to historical fidelity, or even the normal operations of the world in which we live. If the novel is the vehicle for realism, the romance is the vehicle for imagination, for the world not as it is but as it could be . . . or, in the Historical Romance, as it could have been" (7). Appreciating the authors' attempts to provide a genre for readers, I abide more to the 'historical novel' category; González and Raleigh do, after all, try to impart an 'accurate' version of Texas-Mexican history. However, I also recognize that the 'romance' in the novel, which leads to intermarriage, provides an allegory for Mexicans' integration into the U.S. from the mid nineteenth century forward—a vision, if you will, of how the world "could have been" and "could be." In the end, calling the novel "regionalist" allows me to better read it alongside contemporaneous and similar works and within its 1930s literary context, while still taking into account *Caballero*'s ambitions as a novel that includes romance and, of course, history.

like Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* (1936). Upon *Caballero*'s completion in 1939, González and Raleigh immediately submitted the work to "three major publishers, Macmillan, Houghton-Mifflin and Bobbs-Merrill, only to have it rejected" (Limón, "Introduction" XIX). Revisions to *Caballero*, following reader reports, still failed to amount to publication.[53] As a result, the (presumed) lead author of *Caballero*, Jovita González, an extremely talented Mexican-American writer, turned her full attention to teaching. The majority of her fiction would be published in the 1990s, through the painstaking efforts of the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project.

That *Absalom* and *Caballero* appeared and failed simultaneously in the late 1930s seems, at least initially, peculiar. Each novel is obsessed, for instance, with history and memory, war, family lineage, marriage, and race and gender. Each explores and deconstructs the foundational and usually parochial narratives of its respective region—the South (or the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi) in *Absalom* and the Southwest (or the South Texas-Mexico borderlands) in *Caballero*. That *Absalom* and *Caballero* could exist at the same time—responding, in parallel ways, to celebratory views of the region in the 1930s—is not only a testament to Jovita González's desire to partake in and possibly disrupt American literary traditions, but also evidence that *Caballero* uses genre as a vehicle to address historical and political matters tied to the region, the borderlands, Texas (as a republic and state), and the Continental United States.

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[53] According to John Morán González, *Caballero* was submitted to publishers "between the late 1930s and the 1950s" (*Border Renaissance* 183).

The "perplexity, disbelief, and outrage" with which *Absalom* was met in 1936 (Sundquist, "Absalom" 120) seems better, in some sense, than the complete lack of interest that *Caballero* encountered in 1939; a reactionary response, lamentably in this case, is better than no reaction at all. Both novels failed, we might say, because they formulated a cosmopolitan regionalist discourse that challenged the victory culture espoused by public figures in the South and Southwest. For Faulkner, that culture was inspired by popular plantation mythology and Southerners' efforts to assert their difference in a modern era, whereas for González, it was born out of the folklore movement and the one-sided, Anglo-American discourse of the Texas Centennial, which celebrated statehood through commemorative history and events but elided Mexicans' longstanding presence in the state. Emerging in the Jim Crow-ridden context of the 1930s, both novels sought to parse the immeasurable, violent histories of their regions by offering a series of lesser-known and invented memories and creating, in the end, alternative ways of reading the past. Only when these novels are examined together—when we internalize *Absalom* to read *Caballero* and *Caballero* to read *Absalom*—can we arrive to a better understanding of their joint place in American literary history and of the significance of their regions and histories.

Although *Absalom* today occupies a place in modernist studies, offering a productive alternative to transatlantic and 'high' modernist literature, and *Caballero* is examined as a historical romance, given, for some scholars, its 'nostalgic' look at a major past event and former era, I suggest we read these novels together as late regionalist products that emerged out of the national Depression context. Far from offering "stories

of rootedness," as many Depression narratives did (Lutz 185),[54] *Absalom* and *Caballero* examined the region's failings by looking back to the mid nineteenth century when the region in the South and Southwest was under siege, not only by external forces (the Union Army in *Absalom* and the U.S. Army in *Caballero*), but also by the seigneurs who ruled them (respectively, the southern lord and the Spanish/Mexican ranchero). *Absalom* and *Caballero* showed the potential fissures in people's attempts to retain their roots or plant themselves all too firmly in the region and, implicitly, in one's selfish plans, designs, beliefs, customs, histories, and memories. Viewing *Absalom* and *Caballero* within a regionalist schema, then, will allow us to see these novels' failures in the literary marketplace and deal with their authors' vexed relationships to genre and its refractions of traumatic history and memory.

Extant regionalist criticism and theory offer useful paradigms for reading the region in American literature, but these studies tend to overlook Mexican-American writings despite their apparent claims to the region. First and foremost, then, this chapter seeks to revise that gap in criticism and theory by adapting and altering these paradigms and proposing, in the end, its own standard for reading regionalist literature of the 1930s—something I will term "visionary regionalism" here. Visionary regionalism in a literary text accounts for that text's ability or inability to illustrate a future with respect to the region and its people. Possessing or lacking a visionary aesthetic does not mean a text is, respectively, good or bad. Rather, seeking this aesthetic helps us better track that text's

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[54] These "stories of rootedness" were literary responses to being left financially and emotionally adrift in the U.S. For more on this subject, see Lutz's chapter "After 1930: The New New [*sic*] Regionalism and the Future of Literature" in *Cosmopolitan Vistas*.

emergence onto the literary scene (e.g., what are the conditions under which a novel like *Caballero* emerged?); assess its contribution to American regionalist literature alongside contemporaneous works (e.g., how does *Caballero* change the way we view *Absalom* and the South?); and grapple with why that text either does or does not see a future for the region and its people (e.g., why must *Caballero*'s characters leave the region, and will they return to it?). The history featured in *Absalom* and *Caballero*—the mid nineteenth-century war—shows the region's implosion, but what do the characters make of the implosion and why? What literary and regionalist messages do these novel send?

Literary critic Tom Lutz, in *Cosmopolitan Vistas*, comes closest to articulating the kind of regionalist theory this chapter values and will explore. Lutz compels us to assess the range of perspective encompassed in a regionalist text, from the local color sketch to the novel of new regionalism, and argues that scholars must understand the way regionalist authors purposely frame an "oscillation" between "urban" and "rural" views in their texts (67). The "oscillation," Lutz explains, "is the standard technique of [regionalist] fiction":

> Its effect is to suggest an implied author who stands above the fray, who sees both sides of the argument and can thus move back and forth, first empathizing here and then there, never finally taking sides. Through this oscillation a cosmopolitan overview is offered to readers, since only the implied author and the reader can see both sides: [no one character] is capable of the full overview of [a given] situation . . . [Often, a] story's

> melancholy appeal, in fact, stems in part from [the] characters' inability to escape their limited perspectives. (67-68)

Lutz's Bakhtinian theory applies to *Absalom* and *Caballero*, of course; these novels oscillate between parochial and cosmopolitan visions, showing how dangerous it is to be, on the one hand, confined by a backward way of thinking that keeps one trapped in the region and, on the other, ignorant of or resistant to the region's customs and histories—"a cosmopolitan outsider in the local world" (Lutz 65). Lutz, like a number of regionalist critics, values Faulkner's work precisely for this reason: "Faulkner's literary impulse," Lutz explains, "was always additive. He kept adding the perspectives of different family members, of the older generation, of those who travel beyond the local, of those whose race or occupation or gender or family life or some combination of these make them see their local world in different ways. [The characters] represent discrepant cosmopolitanisms" (160). What Lutz says about Faulkner's additive literary impulse—and his creation of appendixes and genealogies—is found in *Caballero*, albeit through different registers. *Caballero* features a character list, a glossary, and a floor plan of the hacienda,[55] and it also offers a foreword that sets the historic precedent to which the novel returns, as if haunted by a ghost. The difference in the placement of these "additive" materials, however, bespeaks the literary freedom exercised by Faulkner—he placed everything at the end of the novel—and the type of precaution taken by González

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[55] *Caballero* was submitted to publishers with these supplemental materials as well as a brief authorial note, labeled "Authors' Notes" (xxx). González and Raleigh wanted the novel to be accessible and understood.

and Raleigh, who placed everything upfront to help the reader navigate, from the start, the many visions the text would impart.

The additive literary impulse in both *Absalom* and *Caballero* compels this chapter, finally, to consider not just characters' competing perspectives but also the way the novels themselves grapple with the complicated realms of history and memory in the nineteenth-century United States. Vincent Pérez, author of *Remembering the Hacienda*, offers a useful paradigm for locating, in the case of *Caballero*, modern disenchantment (stemming from the 1930s, when the novel was written) in the very place where the characters dwelled in the mid nineteenth century—the hacienda. For Pérez, *Caballero* ends with the death of the patriarch not only to demonstrate the end of his reign but also to suggest that his reign must be remembered in the present (i.e., in the 1930s). His life and death, in other words, constitute an important part of the Texas past, and the authors use his character to preserve "the genteel . . . culture [he] embodies" (112) and affirm Mexicans' "historical primacy" in the region (qtd. in Pérez 112). Like Pérez, I seek to examine the patriarch and his hacienda, Rancho La Palma, as regionalist symbols that bear the traces of history and memory. Pérez's evocation of "memory-place," which will be further explored in my final chapter, shows how *Caballero* returns to a former, more "sacred" world so that its author Jovita González could parse her current environment (198).[56] At first glance, this idea seems ill-conceived for *Absalom* because there is no

[56] In *Remembering the Hacienda*, Pérez borrows the term "memory-place" from the French historian Pierre Nora, which the latter coined in his book *Realms of Memory*. Pérez quotes Nora to explain the concept: memory-places are "fleeting incursions of the sacred past into a disenchanted [modern] world; vestiges of parochial loyalties in a society that is busily effacing all

sacred past to which to return; slavery and race haunt the novel and take Quentin to his famous denouement, "I dont hate [the South]!" (303).[57] Even still, there is, in the character of Thomas Sutpen, a drive to build his plantation that parallels Faulkner's desire to build in the realm of the literary—again, the additive impulse.[58] If González returns to the past because she may subconsciously or partially long for it, then perhaps Faulkner is obsessed with Sutpen's Hundred because this is where he could manifest his modernist angst. Pérez and other regionalist critics who examine memory like Michael Kreyling remind us to see how history is always tied to a particular place and how place itself is subject to impart different memories for different people. *Absalom* and *Caballero* make sense in American literary history together because they struggle through the convolutions of the past under similar circumstances; again, both texts emerged in the 1930s and hearkened back to the violent nineteenth centuries of the South and Southwest, respectively.

This chapter begins with a look into *Caballero*'s ambitious literary project within the context of the Texas Centennial and the rise of Anglo-Texan folklore and history. I trace the way the region and its history are constructed in the past and present, and I also examine characters' abilities to imagine the region in creative ways and/or their failures to move outside of what they believe is expected of them. I then move to *Absalom* to

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parochialisms" (qtd. 198; Pérez's brackets). See also the first volume ("Conflicts and Divisions") of Nora's *Realms of Memory* (English translation in 1996).

[57] In *Absalom*, Faulkner does not use apostrophes for contractions such as "do not" and, as we will see later in this chapter, "will not." Rather than mark all of these instances with "[*sic*]," I make note of the occurrence here.

[58] The plantation and the hacienda are counterparts here. For more on this comparison, see Pérez's chapter "History and Memory in Jovita González and Eve Raleigh's *Caballero: A Historical Novel*" in *Remembering the Hacienda*.

discuss how Faulkner challenges the popular plantation tradition by showing the perversion behind the South's foundational narratives (including, for instance, narratives centered on racial purity, familial lineage, male chivalry, and benign slavery). Faulkner's more tragic view of the region intimates, to some extent, his privileged authorial ability to erase the South almost altogether by the end of the novel. Whereas *Absalom*, then, makes it difficult to imagine a future that does not end with Quentin's suicide, *Caballero*'s imaginative characters, unlike Faulkner's, long to become a part of the American future. I end this chapter by considering how *Absalom* and *Caballero* complement one another and complicate otherwise celebratory, non-critical views of the region's past.

Lamentably, an exclusive if not racist literary marketplace prevented *Caballero*'s publication. My hope here is to bring *Caballero* face to face with *Absalom* so that scholars of American regionalist studies learn to read González and Raleigh's Texas and Faulkner's Mississippi as places simultaneously embroiled in the ongoing dispute between mainstream and marginal history and memory, both real and imagined. The failure of *Caballero* and *Absalom*'s 'southern romance' reminds us that victory culture often erases violence and omits marginal perspectives. The characters who best assess the region in these novels are, not surprisingly, the most imaginative or visionary. While these characters survive and are able to view the Southwest and South from the outside, others pass away as victims and villains caught inside of the region physically or mentally. Together, *Caballero* and *Absalom* parse the violent and tortuous mid nineteenth-century past in order to make better sense of history's many elisions and the present's insistence on resurrecting that 'history.'

II.

By the time González and Raleigh completed *Caballero* in 1939, González had already produced a lot of writing centered on her beloved South Texas region. The folklore and history she had studied at the University of Texas at Austin, under the tutelage of the renown folklorist J. Frank Dobie, would become the seed for the majority of her writing, both fiction and nonfiction. Following a longer, non-traditional education path due to limited finances, González earned her undergraduate degree from Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio in 1927, where she gathered funds by teaching Spanish and "tutoring fellow students" (Cotera, "Introduction" 11). Having started higher education at UT Austin, González longed to return to this institution and was finally able to do so when "her mentor [in San Antonio] introduced her to . . . Dobie, the celebrated professor of English who had put Texas folklore studies on the map" (Cotera 11). González earned her Master's degree from UT Austin in 1930 with a thesis that examined social life in three South Texas counties. In the 1930s, González wrote for the Texas Folklore Society, where she would serve as the first Mexican-American president between 1930 and 1932. González also became a member of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a Mexican-American civil rights group, in which she both supported civic and cultural causes on her people's behalf and challenged the group's patriarchy (J.M. González, *Border Renaissance* 174). In 1939, González moved to Corpus Christi with her husband where she would teach, not so much write, until her death in 1983.

Since its inception, *Caballero* was a decidedly more ambitious project than anything González had written thus far. Composed in a time when the Depression had reached Texas and a Jim Crow-like setting forced Mexicans to struggle with mistreatment and segregation, *Caballero* emerged as a detailed and unprecedented account of the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848 from the defeated Mexican perspective. González was spurred, not doubt, by the lack of representation of her community as well as by the one-sided and generally racist depictions of Mexicans that flooded Texas in the early twentieth century (much of which González encountered in the form of Texas folklore and history). Such a racist environment may have also prompted González to take on a coauthor for *Caballero*. In the introduction to the novel, José E. Limón speculates that Eve Raleigh (or the real-life Margaret Eimer) was brought into the project because of her Anglo-American surname and potential to contribute to the 'romance' aspect of *Caballero*. Letters between González and Raleigh and the recovered manuscript of *Caballero* itself show not only that Raleigh's name was initially listed above González's, but also that Raleigh actually did a lot of the interacting with publishers, as if mediating between the Mexican-American González and the undoubtedly white publisher. As previously mentioned, however, strategies for publication were fruitless in the end. *Caballero* faded into obscurity, until the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage project printed it in 1996. A generation later, it became possible for the editor José Limón, along with his co-editor María Cotera, "to restore Jovita González's name to the first-author status affirming what [was deemed] her primary role in the production of *Caballero*" (xxi).

The plot of *Caballero*, unlike *Absalom*'s, is linear, but the novel itself enacts a disruption of American literary history, shifting our attention from the paradigmatic U.S. Civil War to the U.S.-Mexican War. Set in the South Texas borderland region between 1846 and 1848, *Caballero* traces the lives of Don Santiago de Mendoza y Soría and his family as they attempt to grapple with the geographic and cultural changes arising from the U.S.-Mexican War. Don Santiago, a rigid patriarch who believes it is his divine right to rule those around him, spends the majority of these years witnessing his family and peonage workforce slip through his grasp. Three of his four children find unprecedented freedom and happiness in American customs, and Don Santiago's 'good' son Alvaro—a violent, lustful, and sexist young man—is killed by encroaching Texas Rangers on the family's property. Don Santiago's peons, who seek to move beyond their current state of exploitation, see that working for wages for the newly-arrived Americans is better than working for nothing at all for the Mexican landowner. By the close of the novel, Don Santiago's family and hacienda have all but disintegrated. Don Santiago dies alone atop his favorite bluff at Rancho La Palma, seeing everything that has been destroyed as a result of the U.S. invasion of Mexico. Yet an unchanging patriarch seemingly until the end, Don Santiago holds a fistful of dirt when he is discovered by his despised son-in-law, a Virginian officer of the U.S.-Mexican War named Robert Warrener.

It may come as no surprise that since *Caballero*'s republication in 1996, criticism on the novel has often been divided along antihegemonic and hegemonic lines.[59] As an

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[59] My attention to scholars' "antihegemonic" and "hegemonic" readings is inspired by Tom Lutz's *Cosmopolitan Vistas*. See his chapter "Toward a Theory" (pp. 24-26 specifically).

antihegemonic text, *Caballero* helps mend a fissure in the trajectory of Mexican-American or Chicana/o literature and challenges Mexican patriarchal culture through its feminist discourse. Antihegemonic criticism, especially that which aligns *Caballero* and its author Jovita González with Chicana feminism, tends to show excitement about the novel's recovery and its contribution to Chicana/o literature. A lot of this criticism has since been deemed 'romantic' in more recent scholarship on the novel. María Cotera's founding essay on *Caballero* (which serves as the epilogue to the 1996 publication), for instance, has been critiqued for the comparison it draws between González's feminist discourse and that of more radical Chicanas like "Ana Castillo, Cherrie Moraga, and Gloria Anzaldúa" ("Hombres Necios" 339). In response to Cotera's line of thinking, Vincent Pérez suggests that *Caballero* "upsets a narrowly defined Chicana/o literary recovery model through its striking southern historical and aesthetic affinities" (93). The novel's elite, even racist, moments "problematiz[e] [its status] as subaltern" (93).

As a hegemonic text, *Caballero* is casted as elitist and racist, and it imparts an "imperialist nostalgia . . . for a past when conquistadors of aristocratic means ruled the land" (Guidotti-Hernández 138). Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, in reading Jovita González's "special brand of Texas-Mexican racism" (138) and challenging scholars who admire *Caballero*'s so-called resistance narrative, questions the novel's current place in Chicana/o literary studies: "What does locating the novel *Caballero* in the pantheon of Chicana/o literature do to valorize González's position as an intellectual? [H]ow does this valorization, based on the claim of resistance, eclipse the question of racism in González's work? Why locate González's body of work as a precursor to or as part of an

unbroken continuum of resistance that has been articulated through the channels of both Chicana/o nationalism and U.S.-third world feminism?" (137-38). Guidotti-Hernández's questions, while valid, fail to consider the literary oscillations within the novel itself—that is, the novel's reluctance to take sides. *Caballero* is far more complicated than being, on the one hand, a racist novel (i.e., a hegemonic text) and, on the other, a novel that gives voice to oppressed Texas-Mexican women (i.e., an antihegemonic text). Guidotti-Hernández, in particular, overlooks *Caballero*'s complexity as a regionalist product of the 1930s, discussing it mainly through the gloss of other critics whose scholarship is in fact among the novel's oldest.

Vincent Pérez provides an example of a more balanced form of criticism, arguing that "*Caballero* captures the conflicted cultural and political status of middle-class Mexican Americans and particularly Mexican-American women [like González] during the 1930s" (12). *Caballero* was written in a time when social conditions in "Texas and elsewhere in the Southwest" resembled, at least to some degree, those in the South: "anti-Mexican sentiment," Pérez explains, "had become institutionalized in the states' segregation discourses and laws regulating relations between whites and non-whites, particularly Mexican Americans and African Americans" (109). Pérez goes on to show, however, that "[a]lthough this fact certainly suggests the two [racialized] groups' shared historical condition under Jim Crow, in other ways their histories diverge, particularly in the striking patterns of affiliation between Mexican Texas and the *white* South, as illustrated [by González and Raleigh] in *Caballero*" (109; emphasis in original). Pérez sums up these "patterns of affiliation" by referring to nineteenth-century U.S. history:

> Quite distinct from the war against the United States in which Texas participated, the region's semifeudal agrarian origins as a Spanish colonial territory and its nominal solidarity, as a part of Texas, with the Confederacy during the Civil War make the analogy perhaps more obvious than it might first appear. Cultural identification with a semifeudal agrarian social order—the hacienda and the plantation—which was eroded as a result of military defeat at the hands of 'northerners,' further binds these two regions, as *Caballero*'s southern affinities again demonstrate. (109)

Pérez, in the end, highlights *Caballero*'s attempt to "recove[r] forgotten regional history" (105), but he also parses the "historical irony" that links, on the one hand, Mexican Americans in South Texas to African Americans in the South in the 1930s and, on the other hand, Mexicans in South Texas to 'dispossessed' whites in the South in the nineteenth century (109). In these contexts, *Caballero* emerges as a text that encompasses opposing positions and must be read very carefully.

Notably, Pérez's scholarship strikes a balance not unlike the one Jovita González and Eve Raleigh meant to establish in *Caballero*. In a letter to John Joseph Gorrell—unidentified upon *Caballero*'s initial publication—González attempted to explain the authors' even-handed and therefore oscillating stance:

> We are not partial. We picture the Mexican hidalgos with their faults as well as their virtues, with their racial and religious pride, their love of tradition and of the land which they inherited from their ancestors. We . . .

> picture the American officers, their kindness to the conquered race, but we also picture the vandals who followed on the trail of the army, hating anything and everything that was Catholic and Mexican, and who used the battle cry Remember the Alamo as an excuse to pillage and steal. (xix)

González believed she and Raleigh had created, with the aid of archival materials, a balanced portrait of the U.S.-Mexican War period: "[W]e have pictured life as it existed in those days, material which has taken me twelve years to compile from memoirs, traditions and of course historical sources into which I have delved at . . . the University of Texas" (xix). Criticism that fails to acknowledge the pains taken by these authors to illustrate the contradictions of the period—both the mid nineteenth century when *Caballero* takes place and the 1930s when it was written—ought to reconsider the novel's varied and variegated stances.

The push and failure to get *Caballero* published speaks to González and Raleigh's efforts to participate in the national literary culture of their time and create a literary product that followed, in its own way, "the rules" of the historical romance genre (Rodríguez, *Literatures* 213). González and Raleigh needed (in the 1930s) to restore faith in the gentility of the Mexican people, and they did so, in large part, by aligning their noble loss with that of the South and by signaling their ability to assimilate into American culture.[60] For the American readership to accept Mexicans, the Texas region needed to be

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[60] González held a rather complex stance on assimilation. I do not have the space to discuss that stance here, but suffice it to say that the Mexican-American writer found it necessary to assimilate or 'become American'—to some extent and for legal purposes—to retain one's Mexican culture or to feel safe to practice that culture. As one of González's characters in her

accessible and not closed off from the rest of the country. Of course, as numerous scholars have noted, intermarriage between the Virginian Robert Warrener and the Mexican Susanita de Mendoza y Soría highlights not only *Caballero*'s southern romance sensibility (of star-crossed lovers, etc.) but also the connection between the seigneurial U.S. South and South Texas. For the purposes of this chapter, I use Warrener alone to explore the connection—a through line in the novel, really—between South Texas and the U.S. South (here, figured in Virginia) to which an honorable man such as Warrener belongs. Many scholars have shown how this Virginian, like Don Santiago, is a caballero or gentleman, not to be in any manner confused with the working-class squatters or greedy 'Yankees' who came to Texas in the later half of the nineteenth century, often without the slightest concern for Mexican land and culture. That Don Santiago is survived, upon his death, by a white Virginian officer cements the aforementioned connection and intimates, however tenuously, that Warrener, in his time, may witness a parallel history unfold when his own southern region collapses in 1864. Although the Civil War remains unnarrated in *Caballero*, González and Raleigh hint at its arrival in the figure of Warrener (at the end of the novel) as the last man standing. Warrener plans to stay in South Texas and will probably lend a hand in modernizing the region, but he also wants to see the South again and introduce Susanita to his family and southern customs. Will Warrener, in this sense, have to grapple with the dispossession that Southerners, like Mexicans, felt upon the culmination of their formative war?

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novel *Dew on the Thorn* (1997) says, "It seems strange . . . that we should have to become Americans in order to remain Mexicans" (154).

Another of González's novels, *Dew on the Thorn* (1997), which is set in the early twentieth century but covers nineteenth-century history as well, clearly positions the Civil War as the South's version of the U.S.-Mexican War by illustrating Southerners' migrations to Texas. "The close of the . . . Civil War," the narrator explains, "[brought] a new type of American . . . to the border":

> People from Virginia, Kentucky, and the Carolinas, people of culture who had been impoverished by the Civil War [arrived in Texas]. They did not come to profit by the spoils of war; they were victims of war coming to look for peace and a new home. Carpetbag rules and the persecutions which they had gone through in their own homes made them have a kindly feeling for the *rancheros* who had undergone the same fate as a result of another war. They saw in the simple, easygoing life of the few remaining *rancheros* a similarity to rural life they had been accustomed to and this, together with the fact that both had been unfortunate made them become friends. (10)

As a Virginian, Warrener anticipates the arrival of these "people of culture" to Texas. While Warrener's fate in *Caballero* is unknown (i.e., will he fight in the Civil War, or will he remain in South Texas and become a better, more compassionate regional seigneur than Don Santiago was?), his existence in the novel as an honorable figure yet as a figure who perhaps, similar to Don Santiago, verges on obsolescence (unless he modernizes) is extremely telling. Warrener helps González and Raleigh to infuse the rise and fall of the landed Mexican in U.S. history with a relatable southern cadence.

For this very reason, reading *Caballero* alongside Faulkner's *Absalom* may seem an odd choice at first, especially if we consider how González and Raleigh's novel may have been indebted to a more nostalgic text like Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* (1936), the southern romance which had set the vogue for historical (and sensational) romance in general. Vincent Pérez, who draws one of the most cogent critical comparisons between *Caballero* and *Gone With the Wind*, also fuels my decision to read these novels as participating in divergent aesthetic and political projects. Pérez joins the two female-authored novels because they simultaneously "emplo[y] nineteenth-century history to explore and resolve social and cultural dilemmas of the modern (i.e., post-World War I) era" (95). Still "mo[re] importantly," Pérez writes, "like *Gone With the Wind*, *Caballero*'s attack on patriarchy as a metonym for the semifeudal order asserts the benefits of integration within the modern (capitalist) U.S. social order" (96). The "integration" of which Pérez speaks, however, while clear in *Caballero*'s "[i]nterethnic romance" (96), is questionable in *Gone With the Wind*—unless that "integration" is on gendered lines instead of racial ones (i.e., Scarlett O'Hara adapts to a modernizing environment). Pérez later argues, without mentioning *Gone With the Wind* this time, that "in stark contrast to southern literature's use of the plantation myth [which] justif[ied] the entrenched racial hierarchy" in the region, *Caballero*'s "hacienda theme and particularly the unions between Anglos and Mexicans instead would have functioned—had the novel been published in the era in which it was written—as an argument *against* Jim Crow segregation" (106; emphasis in original). For many readers and scholars of *Gone With the Wind*, the novel indeed evokes an "entrenched racial hierarchy." As James W. Loewen

explains, Mitchell's "book convinced [a lot of] whites that non citizenship was appropriate for African Americans" (563).

On the matter of African-American slavery, *Caballero*'s ambiguous stance suggests slavery is an antiquated rather than horrific practice. *Caballero* stages a debate centered on the existence of U.S. slavery between the intelligent and forward-looking French Catholic priest (as oxymoronic as that sounds), Padre Pierre, and the characters who live on the East Coast, the Virginian Robert Warrener and his older friend Captain Devlin from Maryland. Padre Pierre, on the one hand, cannot wrap his head around how a "progressive" "nation" like the U.S. can have slaves: "Black slaves! . . . A man should be a slave only if he wishes it. Slavery as such does not exist [in South Texas], but we have peonage which is almost as bad" (45). Of course, by the end of *Caballero*, peons make their escape from landed Mexicans like Don Santiago to work for newly arrived Americans for wages; this is 'freedom,' so to speak, but peons are never deemed equal to high-born, white-complexioned Mexicans. The mere possibility of this improved condition, Padre Pierre intimates, is why peonage "is *almost* [but not quite] as bad" (my emphasis). Warrener and Devlin view slavery as a natural condition, one that is difficult if not impossible to change. "There are negroes who do the work," Warrener at one point explains to his future mother-in-law Doña María Petronilla, to show that his "way of living is not so different from [her] own" (228). Captain Devlin, who seems at first to support slavery more openly (even though he is a northerner), nevertheless leaves the matter on an existential note: "There would be chaos if the blacks were freed unless they were sent back from where they came. Freedom—who then was free? Was anyone,

ever?" (46). Although *Caballero*'s stance on slavery cannot be entirely pinned down, the novel does place it morally below peonage when it comes to matters of bondage and freewill. The novel does not parse slavery's violence (unfortunately), but it does show moments of brutality in the world of peonage. Perhaps *Caballero* shies away from outright condemning slavery because of its loyalty, however misguided, to the cultured Southerner Robert Warrener. Yet Warrener, the novel suggests in its 1930s context, seems to constitute a part of the harrowing nineteenth century that González and Raleigh do not want to see repeated. This may also be why Warrener plans to go back to Virginia, even if it is only to visit; he is not, in the scheme of the novel, quite modern enough.

III.

Caballero's most ambitious achievement is not its attempt to forge a connection between the South and Southwest on the basis of a common seigneurial past; rather, it is the way the novel critiques the dangerous parochial vision at the heart of history itself. This is, finally, what makes a connection between *Caballero* and *Absalom* more appropriate than a connection between *Caballero* and a more popular novel like *Gone With the Wind*. In *Caballero*, this critique begins with González's own desire to push against, on the one hand, the Centennial narratives of her time and, on the other hand, the limited perspective of the protagonist Don Santiago who embodies a static patriarchal past. This latter point is strategically balanced in the novel with the different purview of characters who understand the need for change.

To begin, then, *Caballero* and *Absalom* challenge two-dimensional, local colorist representations of their regions. *Absalom* disappointed readers who expected a

conventional southern romance or a commemorative version of the South's collapse following the Civil War. *Caballero*, in a similar way, emerged out of a social landscape that insisted on a heroic brand of Texas history, on 'Remembering the Alamo,' so to speak. Literary critic John Morán González has discussed *Caballero*'s emergence in the late 1930s as a literary and political response to the Texas Centennial of 1936, which celebrated one hundred years of the state's independence from Mexico with a festival of 'Texan' culture and history. According to John González, numerous Mexican-American writers like Jovita González "reproached . . . the Centennial's racialized representations of Mexicans as the main obstacle to Anglo-Texan freedom in the past and as a persistent social problem for the state in the present" (*Border Renaissance* 1). Examined in this context, *Caballero* "[c]ontest[s] the triumphalist premises of [the] Centennial" and corrects such "representations of Mexicans" as simple, backward, and, still worse, passive objects in the history of Texas (J.M. González, *Border Renaissance* 176). For Jovita González, the Centennial erased the longstanding presence of the landed Mexican population in the region, and she used *Caballero* to challenge what she saw as a "common tendency among Anglo-Americans [in Texas] to look down upon the Mexicans of the border counties as interlopers [and] undesirable aliens" (*Life Along the Border* 41). "Those . . . who have this opinion," Jovita González states, "should . . . consider [how] the majority of these so-called undesirable aliens have been in the state long before Texas was Texas" (*Life Along the Border* 41).

In *Caballero*, the Mexican family arrives to the region in the eighteenth century—in other words, "long before Texas was Texas." The novel's foreword illustrates the

moment when Don Santiago's grandfather stakes his claim upon "new . . . untrodden, unconquered land" (xxxvi)[61] to establish a dynasty and way of life that would historically last until the turn of the twentieth century. *Caballero*, in this regard, imparts a different frontier and settlement history than the Centennial, which "invoked potent symbols of robust pioneers, ragtag revolutionaries, and rugged cowboys" as the markers of an "organic community in a modern age of extreme social and economic displacement" (J.M. González, *Border Renaissance* 32). The decade of the 1930s compelled Jovita González to look into the symbols of her own community, and she offered, in *Caballero*, a Spanish-Mexican frontiersman who told of an unacknowledged past.

Needless to say, *Caballero* does not side with these Spanish-Mexican frontiersmen completely. Because they are crucial symbols of the Texas-Mexican past and its rich history, the novel wants them to be known but not celebrated. On the contrary, then, González and Raleigh spend the length of *Caballero* dismantling the Spanish-Mexican patriarchs' one-sided visions of the spaces they inhabit and rule.[62] Following the foreword, for instance, *Caballero*'s first chapter opens with an image of the protagonist Don Santiago relishing in a moment of solitude and glory:

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[61] Later in this chapter, I discuss *Caballero*'s problematic treatment of Texas's settlement with regard to Native American history.

[62] Discussing *Caballero*'s self-reflexivity and its status as a complex response to one-side "Centennial discourses," John Morán González writes: "Implicit in González's condemnation of the exuberantly antidemocratic actions of Anglo-Texans toward Texas-Mexicans is her critique of how racism shaped the state's imagined community in deeply unjust ways. For González, any true history of Texas had to tell these shameful stories of dispossession along with the tales of heroism, something Centennial discourses resolutely failed to do" (*Border Renaissance* 179). In *Caballero*, González and Raleigh tell "shameful stories" not only about Anglo-Texans but also about Texas-Mexicans.

> Don Santiago de Mendoza y Soría strode through the wide gateway when the three clangs of the bell that hung in an arch above the well in the center of the patio had shattered into a chorus of notes against the house walls calling to each other . . . This was the time he loved best, when the sun tipped to meet the nebulous skyline and leave a blaze of splendor over Rancho La Palma, and old Paz [the housekeeper] rang the bell for *El Alabado*, the ranchman's evening prayer. The household had orders to wait until the last thread of sound was scattered before the vespers assembly, so the master could have these heart filling moments alone. (3)

Faulkner's *Absalom*, to use a better-known example of regionalist isolation, likewise opens with an image of Miss Coldfield and Quentin Compson sitting in the ethereal solitude of the South. Although isolation in *Caballero*'s image is willed and in *Absalom*'s inevitable, it produces a similar effect in the course of each novel: the wrought silence will, in Texas and Mississippi, give way to nonexistence. Like the bell that lingers yet fades in *Caballero*'s opening sentences, the Mexican ranchero and the southern aristocrat are fundamentally doomed. González and Raleigh's narrator shows that Don Santiago's "heart filling moments" are singular and suggests that the ranchero views his power as if through a tunnel, unable to see the serious threat lying in the periphery:

> [L]ife was good, here in Texas in the spring of 1846. All these rumors that Texas no longer belonged to Mexico was the talk of fools easily frightened . . . Because these blue-eyed strangers trespassing here had made a flag with one star—what did that mean? . . . The fools! Making a flag and

> thinking this made a nation! It was not long before they would be gone again, back to their own country. [Don Santiago] moved a hand before his face to rid his mind of the thought of them, as one would a bothersome fly[.] (4)

Here, González and Raleigh set the tone for Don Santiago's denial and obstinacy. Throughout *Caballero*, we see that his pride and arrogance make any sort of change impossible. Don Santiago never loosens his grip on those he rules—his wife, children, servants, and peons—and he certainly never accepts the Americanos who now tread upon his land. The static region envisioned and desired by Don Santiago is, in some sense, then, similar to the Centennial's, which was authoritative and unchanging.

Caballero's opening structures the novel's divided regionalist course: on the one hand, Don Santiago emblematizes the stagnant and provincial past and, on the other, those who understand the need for change following the U.S.-Mexican War provide a critical outlook on the American future. Don Santiago possesses a set of rigid patriarchal values that have been passed on through the generations of rancheros in Texas. In the foreword of *Caballero*, we see how these values are lived by all—landed families and peons alike—yet benefit only the patriarchs who have established them. As a child, Don Santiago is told by his grandmother upon his grandfather's death: "You will some day be master of Rancho La Palma de Cristo . . . It was your grandfather's dream, which he built into reality. It was my entire life" (xxxix). A marked difference between "dream" and "life" bespeaks, respectively, the abstractions with which men imagine and the tangibility with which women (and, as we see later in the novel, peons) actually feel and live. Bound

by the unchanging legacy imaged by rancheros, Don Santiago lives in his South Texas region the way his forefathers lived a hundred years ago. Jovita González, elaborating on this phenomenon in the related nonfiction context of her master's thesis, says of individuals like Don Santiago: "As provincial people, they considered themselves the elect of the community and looked down [on others] in disdain . . . The landed aristocracy, impregnable in their racial pride, lived in a world of their own[,] sincerely believing in their rural greatness" (*Life Along the Border* 110). By the end of the novel, Don Santiago's "provincial inability to deal realistically and fully" (Lutz 19) with women, peons, and the newly-arrived Anglo-Americans brings about his own destruction.

Throughout *Caballero*, Don Santiago's survival and his construction of history depend on his memorialization of this patriarchal lineage. When the lineage fails to hold up—when the present moment introduces, for instance, the possibility of other family lines, whether through Robert Warrener or, as we will later see, the New Yorker-turned-Texan Red McLane—then Don Santiago can no longer survive. The earth Don Santiago grips in the novel's final paragraph is, in large part, his inability to let go of the past his ancestors have made for him. Tellingly, Don Santiago struggles in *Caballero* to suppress a single traumatic memory about his younger brother; accepting this memory would, in effect, rupture the pristine past the don wishes to remember. Although the memory is not as recurring as it might be in a novel of Faulkner's, it does intimate Don Santiago's struggle to move beyond the unwanted aspects of the past. Early in *Caballero*, when Santiago learns of the arrival of Americanos in 1846, the memory of his brother Ramón

dying a decade earlier, after the latter's return from the Alamo battle, resurges. Within this memory, Santiago has entangled his father's response to Ramón's death—complete devastation not only because of the death but also because of Ramón's praise for Americans: "I wished, when I fought them, that I were one of them . . . We, not they, were the cowards, *papá*" (19).[63] When Ramón speaks these words, his father Don Francisco deals him a "dreadful blow" (19). While Ramón had already been "dying when he walked into [Rancho La Palma]," this familial beating seems to accelerate his death (19). In *Caballero*, Santiago cannot control the resurgence of this memory, as much as he would like to forget it; the memory comes, we are told, from "the turmoil of his soul" (16). It contradicts, for one, what his father "had pictured [regarding] the homecoming: Ramón riding ahead of his escort[,] triumph a living thing unfurling like a banner streaming in the wind" (17)—a romantic vision, to say the least. And two, it foreshadows Santiago's own son's death, which I will later discuss. Santiago, like his father Don Francisco, cannot dismantle the mental border that separates his own past and reality from that of others. And while Don Santiago fails at crossing this border, others in the novel do succeed.

Significantly, *Caballero*'s regionalist landscape is marked by figures who traverse the borders of their South Texas region in order to "advanc[e] the judgment of the group and [present] news of . . . problems that need resolving" (Joseph 160). These figures

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[63] Although here *Caballero* seems to support the Centennial's version of Texas history with regard to the Alamo, González's "account of nineteenth-century Texas [in general] seems scarcely recognizable to those . . . raised on Davy Crockett and the 'heroes of the Alamo'" (Cotera, "Introduction" 18). In this context, Ramón is a martyr, rather similar to conventional Alamo heroes. He shows, furthermore, that Mexicans are far from cruel and barbarous; they sympathize with the plight of others.

function as harbingers of change and mediate between the old world of the masters of Rancho la Palma and the onset of modernity in Texas in the decades following the U.S.-Mexican War. González and Raleigh balance Don Santiago's narrow-mindedness, then, with characters who posses foresight and are absolutely willing—because of the life Don Santiago has made for them—to change. Don Santiago's eldest daughter María de Los Angeles (Angela), for instance, is one who strives for cosmopolitanism in the midst of provinciality. Although Angela initially seeks to become a nun but is prevented from doing so by her father, she eventually decides on a pragmatic marriage to the merchant Alfred "Red" McLane for the sake of saving her people, helping the poor, and creating a necessary bridge between Mexican and Anglo cultures. This marriage, as numerous scholars have noted, does not require 'true love' to succeed and resembles, in some way, a business transaction that allows the couple to accomplish "socially meaningful goals" (J.M. González, *Border Renaissance* 188). Angela's desire to make a difference and create some equity in her society shows how she can see from *within* the region that the society needs fixing. And when she moves with her husband to San Antonio, an up-and-coming "urban space" with resources (Rodríguez, *Literatures* 223),[64] Angela's view and purview are bound to expand. *Caballero*, as the case of Angela suggests, stages a series of competing claims not only between the rigid patriarch and the oppressed, but also

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[64] For more on San Antonio as an "urban space" in *Caballero*, see John Morán González's *Border Renaissance* (p. 188 specifically) and José E. Limón's essay "Mexicans, Foundational Fictions, and the United States" (p. 246 specifically). Notably, Raúl Coronado, in *A World Not to Come*, also discusses San Antonio as an urban space for "young Latinas" like Jovita González who sought education (382).

between ranch life and city life, tradition and modernity, stagnancy and mobility, love and business, and so on.

María de Los Angeles's husband Red McLane is *Caballero*'s most conspicuous border-crosser because he is a frontiersman. When readers first meet Red, we learn his northern 'Yankee' identity has been discarded for a new Texan one. As Captain Devlin recounts to Robert Warrener the story of Red's rise to power in Texas, Red is initially shown, not unlike María de Los Angeles and her siblings, as fleeing the parochial clutches of his father, a Presbyterian minister who expects his son to "follow in [his] footsteps [and] stand with [him] in the pulpit" (69). Possessing a precocious "flair for politics," Red, at the age of sixteen, embarks on a southwestward journey because opportunity awaits him in the wake of U.S. territorial expansion (69). *Caballero*'s narrator characterizes Red as a "product of the frontier [and] a true Texan" who leaves behind his northern self and helps redefine Texas—in all of its "vastness and rawness"—as a locus for change and new Americanhood (69-71). Rather than maintain a legacy like Don Santiago, Red wishes to forge one since for Red, Texas was "like a chunk of soft clay upon which a man might leave the impress of a hand" (69). Red's connection to the historical frontiersmen or 'founders' of Texas—Sam Houston and Stephen Austin (70)—bespeaks his foundational role in the making of a modern American Texas, albeit with more of a Mexican sensibility. Angela, to this end, will help Red achieve "political power" among her people, while Red's "wealth" will help Angela "philanthropically minister to the . . . Mexican community" (J.M. González, *Border Renaissance* 188). Red, in this regard, invites Angela to become a part of the geographic and cultural frontier of

change on her own terms. That Red and Angel's mutually beneficial relationship will reach its fullest elaboration in the city of San Antonio and not in the rural borderland region indicates their foresight as well as their desire to eventually return to the region to improve it. While it is unlikely that the pair will ever live in Rancho La Palma or Matamoros again, Red and Angela become harbingers of culture and modernity through their visits to the region—through their ability to go in and out of it and provide knowledge to others.

The border that Don Santiago believes will separate Rancho La Palma (or South Texas) from Anglo-Americans remains, throughout *Caballero*, crossable. This border—a promise for characters such as Angela and Red—becomes a problem where ignorant figures, who do not know how to coexist with the current Mexican inhabits, begin to trespass. One of the most violent episodes in the novel comes, in fact, when squatters arrive on Don Santiago's land and try to set up camp: "It was a scene that was to be repeated in variation for many years to come," *Caballero*'s narrator explains, "until an empire of state would rise on land that had scarcely a square yard of it that had not been wet with blood" (195). González and Raleigh use dialect with the squatters who arrive in South Texas to show their poverty and provinciality.[65] One of the men in the party is described as "red-faced" (194) so as to intimate, in a physically visible and derogatory way (on the part of the authors), his association with the 'redneck' population; he is, in *Caballero*, noticeably rural, reactionary, and working-class. As stubborn as the Texas-

[65] Notably, González and Raleigh also use a little bit of dialect when Red McLane speaks, but his use of words like "loot'nant" (or lieutenant) suggest a self-fashioned Texas accent, which the authors are probably mocking.

Mexican patriarchs, this man gets himself killed because he threatens Don Santiago, who is trying to get him off the property, with a gun. While it is unclear from where exactly the party hails, they are presumably from a rural region of the Midwest, South, or even Northeast. The narrator, rather didactically, posits this "red-faced" man as a representation of future frontier-bound men and women; he is an extension of all of those Americans who have no direction but west to go, whether for survival or adventure:

> The fugitive, like the ["red-faced"] man [who had been] shot; the land-greedy who justified their rapaciousness with the word "pioneer" and used it as a blanket to cover their evils—sullying the good word and the constructive men entitled to it; the trash, the "*puerco*" [an epithet used by Don Santiago to suggest these people's poverty and pig-like filth], squeezed out of a community that refused to support them any longer; the wanderer, fleeing from nothing but himself; the adventurer, his conscience and his scruples long dead. All these, and more, came to Texas like buzzards to a feast. (195)

Although the narrator attacks their sense of entitlement, the narrator also reveals Don Santiago's cruel manner of dealing with these people. The episode is balanced, in the end, where the narrator depicts both sides of the dispute but ends the chapter with Luis Gonzaga—the ultimate and best border-crosser who is present at this scene of blood-shed—leaving the rancho, the parochial past, altogether. Notably, Luis is the don's youngest son and an artist, in spite of his father's disapproval. In *Caballero*, he exudes intelligence, creativity, vision, compassion, and kindness.

To close this discussion of *Caballero*, I suggest that Luis Gonzaga, the artist, constitutes the apex and limits of the novel's visionary regionalism. Luis Gonzaga's art in *Caballero* is extraordinary because it encompasses both "traditionalism" and "modernity," thereby balancing elements that would seem otherwise irreconcilable in mid nineteenth-century South Texas (Lutz 111).[66] In their regionalist studies, Tom Lutz and Philip Joseph have discussed the importance of the mobile artist in a community that is otherwise static or insular. Joseph, in this regard, states: "Through the artist figure, the community gains both a powerful means of self-improvement and a voice with which to impact the world" (161). Here, the artist is "cooperative" and he holds "the interests of the community at heart" (161). Tom Lutz likewise argues that "imagination is a powerful force in [the artist's] relationship to the land, and the general lack of it, on others' part[,] is at the root of all problems among family, friends, and neighbors. Imagination is necessary for adequate human relations and the lack of it is deadly" (110). Although banished from the region by his father, Luis remains wedded to it because he keeps its spirit in his art. Luis's love for his region is manifested early in the novel where he continues to paint its people in spite of the American invasion that frightens others: "Only Luis Gonzaga was happy," the narrator tells us, "for he had discovered a flair for caricatures and practiced it among the *peon*s, much to their delight" (29). However problematic the combination of caricatures and peons is in this moment, it is important to note that Luis's imagination and resourcefulness, his ability to play with apparently real

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[66] Tom Lutz uses the quoted words to describe the artist figure in Willa Cather's landmark regionalist novel *O Pioneers!* (1913). He does not use them to describe Luis Gonzaga or any aspect of *Caballero*. I simply borrow his schema.

or objective physiognomy, stands in stark contrast to the way his father pictures Rancho La Palma (along with its people)—that is, as something to possess. Fundamentally unlike his father, Luis delves into the world he lives in by looking at his fellow humans deeply and "delight[ing]" if not enlightening them through his art. He survives and eventually thrives in *Caballero* precisely because he can alter the tragic reality of life for the landed Mexican (himself included) and the exploited peon. Many scholars have discussed Luis's famous skeleton drawing (i.e., his re-interpretation of the one Captain Devlin had drawn for "The Skeleton" saloon) as evidence of the "soul" he imbues in his art work in general (M. López 123):[67] Luis's rendition looked "exactly as [Devlin's]; yet not exactly, for it had life which the other lacked" (González and Raleigh 102).

Luis's talents take him to the East Coast, where he is bound to receive appreciation for his art and the formal training he cannot access in his region. In a letter he sends home after leaving Rancho La Palma, Luis tells his family and friends he is still making "sketches where [he] makes a little fun of . . . people," but this time he sells them for "shockingly high" prices (293). Luis's homegrown art, which improves on the East Coast as he learns new techniques like "painting with oils" (293), is not the culmination

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[67] John Morán González argues, for instance, that "Luis Gonzaga brings Latin passion to complement Devlin's cold Yankee technique" (*Border Renaissance* 189). "Their relationship," González adds, "implicitly suggests that Mexican Americans could be recognized as true U.S. citizens through linguistic acculturation, political engagement, and aesthetic integration without abandoning their cultural heritage. At the same time, Anglo-Americans could learn to appreciate the accomplishments of Mexican American culture without having dismissive racialist reactions, a precondition for ensuring equitable treatment. The cultural antagonisms of the borderlands can be symbolically resolved within a modernist aesthetic cosmopolitanism even while proving the cultured fitness of Mexican Americans for U.S. nationalism, a premise brokered by *Caballero* itself as a collaborative aesthetic effort between an Anglo-American woman and a Tejana" (189-90).

in the novel of what the art can possibly be in the future. Luis, we learn from the letter, is about to embark on an even greater transatlantic journey into Spain, where he will be able to access his region symbolically (since Spain is home to his ancestors) and possibly learn nineteenth-century art modes such as romanticism, realism, and impressionism (which eventually gave way to the immense modernist art of the early twentieth century, in Jovita González's time).[68]

Luis's potential journey into Spain, however, moves him even further away, geographically speaking, from his home and from his mother who continues to occupy his "heart" (293). Upon Luis's decision to leave South Texas, the narrator tells us he and his family will never be "together again" (201). While this suggests that Luis's mobility as an artist is cut short because his reentry into South Texas might not happen, it may also mean that Luis's letters home function as a proxy for his art, a way to inform and teach others to imagine the world outside the region. Either way, what we might gather here is the impossibility of Luis's imaginative, cosmopolitan vision *in* South Texas; his region cannot accommodate that vision's vastness. In this sense, *Caballero*'s visionary regionalism—its effort to see a future for the region and its people—falls short of accommodating someone whose vast imagination makes him an artist in the first place. There is, it seems, no place or future for the artist in the region. But again, if Luis's art and vision may conceivably make it back into the region, whether through a letter or a

[68] It is important to consider how impressionism seems more like Luis Gonzaga's style, given his predisposition to play with or distort reality. His current art, for instance, does not rely on a sober use of emotion and the imagination (as romantic art does) or stark and sometimes gritty mimesis (as realist art does). If we are able to link Luis to a future of impressionist or even modernist art, he becomes more modern in the scheme of *Caballero*.

painting sent home, then *Caballero* shows an inkling of a promising future, where the people in the region have the potential to become more informed and more open to tolerate others at large.

What might it mean, in the end, that the most imaginative character in *Caballero* is casted out of the region, possibly never to return? On the one hand, it intimates that a full vision of nineteenth-century South Texas is impossible; the novel, like Marissa López argues, is aware that certain "things" like the "history" of the region "can never be adequately narrated, will always be incompletely explained" (145). Within the region, we have Don Santiago and his father's parochial views, and we also have 'national' views from East-Coast figures like Red McLane. But the region itself may never encompass Luis's cosmopolitan view and, implicitly, infinitely more views. Yet on the other hand, Luis's imaginative vision is now boundless, as the artist travels the globe, suggesting perhaps—if *we* ourselves are imaginative—a metaphor for González and Raleigh's desire to publish and disperse *Caballero*.

The region in *Caballero* is both limited and limitless; its borders are simultaneously open, inviting, fenced, breached, and intruded upon. Perhaps what *Caballero* tries to teach, in this regard, is that a critical perspective (which ought to comprise a region's history) is made up of multiple and contradictory views. Only the rigid, unchanging perspective in this scheme—only the inability to see the various topographies and fissures within a region—is dangerous; it makes visionary regionalism difficult if not impossible. And worse, this perspective leads to death, as is the case with Don Santiago, his father before him, and, most tragically, his young heir Alvaro. Luis

Gonzaga's survival relies on his imagination, and yet his imagination means, in 1848, that he cannot come home. Even still, he may teach Americans and Spaniards a bit about South Texas—Mexico's Texas—and South Texans about the generally unimaginable world beyond their reach.

IV.

The critical success of *Absalom, Absalom!* hinges on the indistinct puzzle Faulkner made of the white man's attempt to grapple with the burden of racial history. In the macabre character of Thomas Sutpen, the self-made plantation seigneur, Faulkner delved into the dense web of southern history that the previous generation of regionalist and local color writers made to seem so linear. Unlike writers such as Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page who sought to capitalize on the popular plantation tradition during and after the Reconstruction, Faulkner fundamentally complicated the making of the South as well as its status in the twentieth century by obscuring each of its foundational components. Faulkner's characters, unlike Harris's, for instance, "enter the fiction trailing behind them clouds of familial and regional qualifiers . . . the grandparents, parents, and siblings . . . whose cumulative significance is the indispensable background of identity" (qtd. in Pérez 154-55). *Absalom*'s overdetermined characters, locales, and objects help us conceive of the past in the South as something that is always present and never really passes out of existence; slavery and the years of violence inflicted upon black bodies and minds will forever haunt the region. Similar to *Caballero*, then, Faulkner's *Absalom*, on the one hand, imparts a regionalism that revises

an otherwise singular process of reading and remembering history and, on the other, responds to parochial visions of the South.

Like González and Raleigh, Faulkner wrote during the Great Depression, and he scattered, throughout the course of *Absalom*, the traces of its upheaval in the rural community. Literary critic Robert Jackson explains, to this end, that "[e]specially in the South, whose lack of industry and loss of cheap black labor to the North limited its economic prospects[,] the depression was a key influence on [the] thought [of southern writers]" (69). Whereas the "desperate economic condition" (Jackson 69) compelled writers like the Southern Agrarians to launch a regionalist manifesto—*I'll Take My Stand* (1930)—in defense of "local affiliation [and] against modernity" (Lutz 150), Faulkner worked on a decidedly different version of the region. Unlike the work of the Agrarians and rather like González and Raleigh's *Caballero*, Faulkner's *Absalom* showed how the region lacked determinacy. And more than this, it showed the region at its worse. In light of this historical context, it makes sense that *Absalom*'s protagonist, a once dirt-poor boy named Thomas Sutpen, occupies the tragic core of the novel.

Of all the perspectives that are shown in *Absalom* and the stories that are told about Thomas Sutpen, what Faulkner emphasizes, first and foremost, is Sutpen's status as the inverse of the grand seigneur of the South. Among other things, Sutpen comes from poverty and lacks an intact familial lineage, and his money or "Spanish coin" comes not from the plantation of his father before him (because his father was a poor farmer from the West Virginia mountains) but rather from a Haitian enterprise and a part-black Haitian wife, whom he repudiates (26). The narrations of Sutpen's character help us piece

together that the man basically carved his plantation "Supten's Hundred" from the wilderness; it was not, as is the case with a typical southern lord, already there for him to inherit. Supten's "wild" slaves (27), who appear to hail from Haiti, are meant to stand in contrast to the plantation myth's romantically loyal slaves of the U.S. South. As *Absalom*'s twisted plot progresses, readers become privy to a memory (which no character could possibly have access to) that explains why Sutpen desires to become a rich southern planter in the first place. In one of Faulkner's most vivid and recurring images, we see that Sutpen, as a young and very poorly dressed boy, was told by a gaudily dressed African-American slave to "go around to the back [door] before [the former] could even state [his] business" (189). This is Sutpen, the boy's, first real or non-"innocent" vision of the seigneurial South (186)—and it is what compels him to go to the "West Indies" to get rich (183). It is in this moment that Sutpen realizes there is a "difference not only between white men and black ones, but [also] between white men and white men" (183): the young Sutpen watches a rich white man in "a hammock . . . with his shoes off" and wishes, however subconsciously at the time, that he could do the same (185).

Throughout *Absalom*, Sutpen tries to restore something that never was: if Sutpen never constituted a part of the southern planter class, why would he work so feverishly toward this end? In building Sutpen's Hundred, he builds a new past for himself, one that corrects, however fictionally, the traumatic moment in his life where he was sent to the "back" door. Yet Sutpen's Hundred, like other southern plantations during the Civil War, begins to crumble in its master's absence. When Quentin and Shreve imagine Sutpen's

return from the war, Shreve supposes that Sutpen "didn't even need to be a demon now but just mad impotent old man who had realised at last his dream of restoring his Sutpen's Hundred was not only in vain but that what he had left of it would never support him and his family" (147). "[B]efore his foot was out of the stirrup," Shreve tells Quentin, Sutpen "set out to try to restore his plantation to what it used to be, like maybe he was hoping to fool the Creditor by illusion and obfuscation by concealing behind the illusion that time and change had not elapsed and occurred the fact that he was now almost sixty years old until he could get himself a new batch of children to bulwark him" (146). Caught in his own deadly obsession with the plantation, Sutpen cannot see the ravages brought about by the war and his own violence over the years. It is as if "time and change" do not affect his memory because all he sees is the plantation that haunted his youth—the plantation that belonged to the man in the hammock, the plantation that he turned into Sutpen's Hundred. Both versions are, in the end, interchangeable and unsustainable.

Quentin's narration of Sutpen's unitary vision also bespeaks the latter's intention to revise his past in an improved but recognizable present. "The design," Quentin says:

> Getting richer and richer. It must have looked fine and clear ahead for him now: house finished, even bigger and whiter than the one he had gone to the door of that day and the nigger came in his monkey clothes and told him to go to the back, and he with his own brand of niggers even, which

> the man who lay in the hammock with his shoes off didn't have,[69] to cull one from and train him to go to the door when his turn came for a little boy without any shoes on and with his pap's cutdown pants for clothes to come and knock on it. (210)

Sutpen wants his own "little boy" to torment, to send away for being too poor to be worthy of entrance through the front door. One might argue, in this regard, that the dirt-poor man Wash Jones, who works for Sutpen and ends up killing Sutpen for impregnating his granddaughter in 1869, becomes this very "little boy" who goes to the back door.[70] That Wash Jones kills Thomas Sutpen creates an odd, symbolic circle where Jones operates as a figurative younger Sutpen (i.e., Sutpen, the boy who is sent to the back door) who kills the 'real' Sutpen who returns from the war to find a ruined plantation.

As is the case with Don Santiago who attempts, throughout the course of *Caballero*, to maintain the 'reality' of his grandfather's life as well as the patriarchal legacy, Sutpen, here, holds fast to the vision of his youth in attempt to maintain *and* alter it, casting himself as the protagonist of this grand southern fiction—of the man in the

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[69] Notably, there is a brief mention of Sutpen in a hammock in *Absalom*, which suggests this is something he did regularly or leisurely, probably while he watched his own slaves work. In this particular instance, he is having what seems to be an drunken and inappropriate conversation with Wash Jones: "Sutpen would drink from the demijohn and the bucket of spring water which Wash fetched from almost a mile away, Sutpen in the barrel stave hammock talking and Wash squatting against a post, chortling and guffawing" (99). The Sutpen in this hammock is supposed to be, in the world of the novel, a disgusting and despicable man—one who tries to imitate the original 'man in the hammock' but perhaps cannot fully do so.

[70] Throughout *Absalom*, Wash Jones seems to just lurk in the background. When Henry Sutpen kills Charles Bon, for instance, Shreve speculates that "maybe Wash Jones was hanging around somewhere in the *back* yard and so he was there to help [clean up the murder]" (286; my emphasis).

hammock. Of course, in each man's respective self-ennobling dynasty, we are shown how the foundations cannot hold up. Perhaps the greatest symptom of the doomed dynasties is the death of each man's first-born son, an event that happens, in both novels, in a most violent yet anticlimactic manner. Although the death of Charles Bon haunts the text of *Absalom* and is, in many ways, the central occurrence to which the novel returns time and again, it happens not during the war, as might be expected, but upon the war's culmination, right outside the gates of Sutpen's Hundred. Henry, Sutpen's legitimate white son, prevents Bon, the rightful but unacknowledged heir, from entering and claiming, however incestuously, the family that repudiates him. The death of Don Santiago's son Alvaro likewise happens on border of the family's property—the "south boundary of [the] land" (305), to be specific. While "south" here suggests the U.S.-Mexican border, it also, for the purposes of this chapter, hints at Faulkner's region. That both deaths occur at borders raises questions about the violent insistence of the border. Why is it there, and what is it separating? In *Absalom*, that gate is a division between Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon, white and black, U.S.-southern and Haitian-southern, parochial and cosmopolitan, and, perhaps most complexly, history and counter-history. As the gatekeeper of his flawed southern legacy, he cannot let his older half-brother through; such an action—that is, Bon getting through—would destroy not only the means for Henry's inheritance (since Bon is older) but also their sister's virginity in the most grotesque manner possible (through incest). Henry, who up until his moment adored Bon and "aped" everything he did (81), seizes control, in the end, by fundamentally losing

control—by killing his brother and keeping the South's pure racial history as intact as possible.

In the same way that Henry Sutpen acts as gatekeeper to maintain a racial divide, so too does *Caballero*'s Alvaro. What initially spurs Alvaro to shoot and kill the Anglo-American Texas Ranger—one who is racialized in the novel and described, from Alvaro's point of view as being "[r]aged [and] brown as [an] Indian" (305)—is realizing that the latter wears the ring Alvaro had given one of his lovers, the "[d]ark, wicked-eyed Cruz," whom he met while part of the rebel army of General Antonio Canales (306). Not to be outdone in the ensuing racial-virile battle, the ranger says about the ring, to infuriate Alvaro, that it was "a present" (306). Similar to *Absalom*'s Henry, Alvaro attempts to maintain control over a woman's sexuality, but because he has already lost this battle, he kills the 'brown-as-an-Indian' (i.e., non-Spanish-white) ranger. Notably, for Alvaro, the memory of Cruz is entangled with the memories of, one, getting caught by the enemy in a skirmish and, two, his sister Susanita with Warrener "unattended by a woman" (262). Prior to the Alvaro's shooting of the ranger and his own death, González and Raleigh take us into a stream-of-consciousness-like narration of Alvaro's thoughts:

> Cruz his woman; Cruz in love with him, demanding, restricting; Cruz throwing a knife at him when Carmen came and offered redder lips and a body less riddled with the lusts of men; Cruz wild with jealousy, spitting venom and vowing vengeance, disappearing. The ambush, when [Alvaro] and his confederates took their usual foray for food; the humiliation of being prisoner of the Rangers . . . Susanita with Warrener, before Hays—.

> Quick as thought itself ran the pictures, as Alvaro looked at the beautiful ring he had given Cruz, and which she had bestowed on an enemy to whom she had betrayed him (306).

As is the case with Henry Sutpen, Alvaro's violent breaking point—committing murder—is tied to his loss in a personal battle (and ultimately a larger war) as well as his sister's virginity, here, the thought of Susanita "with" Warrener. While both Henry and Alvaro participate in wars, the key murders they commit lie outside of it. As a result, Bon dies at the gates of Sutpen Hundred and Alvaro, killed by a Texas Ranger, dies at the border of his father's home, near a river that would "run red for many a year" (321).

The physical and imaginary borders erected by Don Santiago in *Caballero* and Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom* render, in the end, their own deaths as well as violence for the generations that follow. Like Don Santiago and Thomas Sutpen, Quentin Compson in *Absalom* is confined within similar borders and the history of his region. Although the Civil War happened well before Quentin's time, the event comprises a central part of his life because it wrought the collapse of the South and families like his own. That Quentin is traumatized by the war (or by its surrounding familial, racial, and socioeconomic histories) as if he had participated in it may remind us that he dies, in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) in 1910, missing the single post important war of his generation, World War I. Quentin views the past in *Absalom*, therefore, through Faulkner's World War I-inspired modernist lens: his view is fragmented, fundamentally incomplete, and revolves around the death of Charles Bon, Sutpen's 'black' son. Although Quentin's ability to imagine the past would seem, at first glance, to produce a positive outcome in his life (i.e., in

Caballero, imagination is a good thing), this ability is limited by Quentin's projection of the southern past as he believes it should have been: where white is above black and master is above slave, and where men are honorable and in control and family lineages are 'pure' and intact.

Absalom's modernist construction, on this note, does not collide with its regionalist affiliation; on the contrary, it suggests that Faulkner's South—like any cosmopolitan city—is a strange and permeable place, one that is fractured and not entirely knowable. This is not surprising given that the "key cultural influence[e] of [the southern renaissance era, of which Faulkner was a part] included first and foremost the recently ended Great War" (Jackson 68). World War I haunted the modernist generation, just as the Civil War had haunted the earlier generation of local color and regionalist writers. According to Robert Jackson, the First World War granted southern writers like Faulkner "a more immediate understanding of the Civil War": "it brought them back from Fort Sumter into a national context, as soldiers, citizens, and perhaps patriots of the United States of America, the nation their Confederate South had repudiated in 1860. [R]eentry into this particular national context was no less complex than the South's fractured cultural identity before the war" (69). A swarm of "regional and national issues," Jackson explains, entered the "consciousness" of southern writers, "giving their small-town southern roots a more immanent and visible context in the life and history of the rest of the world" (69). *Absalom* makes clear the bridging of these wars in the southern literary imaginary and their impact on the aesthetic tradition Faulkner attempted

to foster in the 1930s. The effects the wars would produce converge in the character of Quentin Compson, even though the First World War has yet to happen.

The fragmentation inspired by World War I is evident throughout the novel, but the war itself is only mentioned in the "Genealogy" of *Absalom*. Here we learn that *Absalom*'s northernmost character Shreve has served in and survived the war: "Shrevlin McCannon, Captain, Royal Army Medical Corps, Canadian Expeditionary Forces, France, 1914-1918" (309). Shreve's participation in the war makes palpable not only Quentin's absence from it (because of his suicide, which readers experience in *The Sound and the Fury*), but also the Canadian's status a cosmopolitan figure (alongside the parochial Southerner that is Quentin). As far as we can tell from the Genealogy, Shreve is still alive and well many years later—a "practising surgeon" in "Edmonton, Alta," no less (309). He functions in *Absalom* as Quentin's inverse and as one whose particular imagination and physical and emotional distance from the South allows him, whether intentionally or not, to torture Quentin. Situated at Harvard in the early twentieth century, Shreve and Quentin are supposed to be distanced from the Civil War, but this is far from the case with Quentin who is, in the scheme of Faulkner's novels in general, locked inside of its history. Shreve, a Canadian and a symbolically American northerner through his affiliation with Harvard, only knows the Civil War in a superficial and sensationalized manner, as if he learned of it through the local color or picaresque pieces of earlier American writers. He refers, for instance, to Rosa Coldfield—Miss Coldfield—as "Aunt" Rosa, which racializes her, or, as literary critic Michael Kreyling observes, "[t]he correct address is 'Miss Rosa[,]' for 'Aunt Rosa' would mark the woman as black . . . Shreve

knows race and history are inseparable in southern memory, and he likes to prick Quentin with that shiny electrode" (181). Shreve, the one who goes on to fight in the Great War, and the one who survives in a novel where all are meant to die, is not bound by history the way his doomed friend Quentin is; Shreve invents and purposely misremembers. This circumstance, in the end, raises the following questions for imaginative readers of *Absalom*: If Quentin had fought in World War I, would he have made it out its trenches? Was he too trapped within the trenches of his own mind? Envisioning the history of his region as it should have been, in spite of its perversions, and "[k]eeping the lines between races makes Quentin southern, and makes him psychotic" (Kreyling 181).

In his study *The South That Wasn't There*, Michael Kreyling marks an important distinction between the way the memory of the South and its Civil War works for Shreve and Quentin:

> For Shreve, memory is [like] a movie, to be cut, scored, and edited one way and then another and another: memory without a real South to set its limits. But for Quentin, memory locates the southerner in time and place; it *is* the thing to look at everyday, the thing that makes one and makes one responsible for one life only . . . For Quentin, . . . the thingness of memory never goes away. Of course, there is the down side to inevitable southern memory: race and class and gender conventions that indict as they indentify. The "one life only" has to be (as far as Quentin can see) a life of guilt. (181; emphasis in original)

Shreve is able to "taunt" Quentin, then, because "memory works differently in Quentin's consciousness than it does in Shreve's" (Kreyling 181). The stories that Shreve and Quentin piece together about Thomas Sutpen and past events are unreal for the former but fundamentally real for the latter. Shreve derives pleasure from gathering details and hearing the stories about the South. "*Tell about the South*," Quentin remembers Shreve or another (indistinguishable) Harvard student saying to him: "*What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all*" (142). The absence of question marks here gives the inquiries—another's curiosity—a sense of finality and seriousness for Quentin; each sentence here is a painful prod at the young man's dreadful southern reality. The last question, of course, seems more a construction of Quentin's own consciousness than anything else, since the implication for Quentin is always this: 'Why live at all?'

The reality of memory, the "thingness" of which Kreyling speaks, is especially evident when Miss Rosa narrates her longest, most convoluted story and Quentin stops listening altogether because he transports himself to the past—to the moments surrounding Charles Bon's violent death:

> But Quentin was not listening, because there was also something which he too could not pass—that door, the running feet on the stairs beyond it almost a continuation of the faint shot, the two women, the negress and the white girl in her underthings . . . : the two of them, brother and sister, curiously alike as if the difference in sex had merely sharpened the

> common blood to a terrific, an almost unbearable, similarity . . . *Now you cant marry him. Why cant I marry him? Because he's dead. Dead?* (139)

The moments Quentin remembers and conflates here are these: somewhere nearby, Charles Bon has been "shot" and killed; Clytie and Judith prepare the latter for her (unconfirmed) marriage to Charles Bon; Henry and Judith, the "brother and sister" who are "alike," see one another for the first time since the start of the Civil War; and finally, Henry tells Judith she cannot marry Charles Bon "*because he's dead*." Of course, for readers familiar with *The Sound and the Fury*, those final lines of dialogue may well be an echo of a former or future conversation, either imagined or real, between Quentin and his sister Caddy. The fragmented memories in the above passage—the way parts of the fragments themselves evoke race, violence, incest, and death—coalesce permanently in Quentin's mind. As is the case with Don Santiago's most unpleasant and traumatic memories of his brother Ramón and the Alamo battle, Quentin's memories here, though far from being suppressed like Don Santiago's, narrate and cut short his tragic life. Quentin's regionalist vision, though involving the ability to imagine the past, does not contribute to his well-being because there is no future in sight. Far from being visionary like *Caballero*'s characters (i.e., Angela, Red, and Luis), Quentin digs into the dark past—that which was or might have been—and finds no redeeming light. Even in Shreve's case, visionary regionalism is precluded because he has already assumed or written the loss of the South. Both Quentin and Shreve tell and retell the stories of the past, but the stories always lead to the death of Thomas Sutpen and Charles Bon and to the South's collapse.

Shreve, unlike Quentin, however, is at least able to cast memory upon a larger historical terrain—one he has undoubtedly constructed out of other people's recounting of the past more generally. Furthermore, Shreve's knowledge about American history, post U.S.-Mexican War, is imagined sensationally. One of the most important stories Shreve tells of the central moment in *Absalom* where Henry kills Charles Bon is that of what happened to Henry afterwards. Imaging Sutpen's return home after the war, Shreve says that the "son [Henry] had fled to Texas or California or maybe even South America" (147). For the purposes of this chapter, Texas operates briefly but significantly as the implied background to a Mississippi foreground. Both are frontier spaces (especially if we consider Sutpen a frontiersman), but "Texas or California or maybe even South America" constitutes a terrain for presumed ruffians, where men go to escape their past and make something different of themselves in the future. Whereas Sutpen had escaped his past by working plantations in Mississippi and Haiti, Henry is, in Shreve's estimation, bound to repeat his father's actions (read mistakes) and do so in the West. Shreve's understanding of the West, after all, is probably linked to the historical process of American expansion; the West is a place to make a good, albeit palimpsestic, life—to leave, at the very least, this awful southern one behind. In the imagination of a Canadian like Shreve, the far-off places of U.S. Empire—Texas, California, and South America—are practically indistinguishable; for a southerner like Quentin, these places are just non-southern.

Texas reappears but once later in the novel when Quentin tells of the dubious business activities conducted by Sutpen and Mr. Coldfield, Rosa's father. As Shreve pries

about the unknown and unknowable business that took place between them, Quentin says: "Nobody ever did know for certain. It was something about a bill of lading, some way [Sutpen] persuaded Mr Coldfield to use his credit: one of those things that when they work you were smart and when they dont you change your name and move to Texas" (208). In *Absalom*, Texas, even more so than Mississippi, is a frontier that belongs to anyone willing to embark upon its land. As terra incognita, any man—northern or southern—can write his history upon it. The major difference between the frontier spaces of Texas and Mississippi in the scope of *Absalom*, then, is that Mississippi already has a history, and Texas's is missing or, at the very least, untold in the novel. Taking this into account, Sutpen has perhaps made the wrong choice: he picked a place—the South—where he tried not to write history but to rewrite it with himself as its protagonist. *Absalom*'s evocation of Texas, while brief, further links the novel to *Caballero*, where men also try but fail to relive the history that they perceive as unchanging and fundamental truth.

Do *Absalom* and *Caballero*, in this regard, seem more concerned with the end of an era than with the start of one, with closing, if you will, a chapter of regional history? Although some of *Caballero*'s characters have better lives to look forward to (especially Luis Gonzaga, who may be the one exception here), the novel overall is about "becoming a minority":

> [It is] about becoming dependent, not independent [and] about transformation of the Mexican self into the role of the cultural other within an American nation, family, cultural structure, and language . . . [The

> novel] does not portray Texas becoming an independent Latin American [or Mexican] nation, but a region within America and subordinate to American government. What was *already* part of a nation is now just a region absorbed into the [United States]. (Kaup 575; emphasis in original)

The South in *Absalom* is likewise "becoming dependent," likewise "a region absorbed into" the U.S. Even if certain writers in the 1930s celebrated the South's difference and offered visions of proud cultural heritage, Faulkner somehow reminded others of the region's inescapable failings. The characters that survive in *Absalom* and *Caballero* and escape "becoming a minority"—most notably, Shreve, Red McLane, and Luis Gonzaga—leave the region and write the future on their own terms, almost as if the histories of Mississippi or Texas matter less in their lives. Imagination for these three seems to matter more than their current realities.

In this chapter, visionary regionalism implies a better future and, as such, it evades *Absalom* since only two characters survive according to the Genealogy: Shreve, who goes on to fight in the Great War and become a surgeon in Canada and Jim Bond, Sutpen's black great-grandson who leaves Sutpen's Hundred in 1910 and whose "[w]hereabouts [are] unknown" (309). *Absalom* ends, in fact, with Shreve's racist vision of the future, but this vision is less 'visionary' than it is a malicious jab at Quentin's psyche: "I think that in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere. Of course it wont quite be in our time and of course as they spread toward the poles they will bleach out again like the rabbits and the birds do . . . [I]n a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings" (302). "Now I want

you to tell me just one more thing," Shreve says to Quentin: "Why do you hate the South?" (303). Here, Shreve conflates the past, present, and future, suggesting that he and Quentin "have [already] sprung from the loins of African kings" because the "Jim Bonds" have already "conquer[ed] the western hemisphere."[71] This latter point is also perhaps a nod at the Haitian slave rebellion of the larger "western hemisphere" which Sutpen suppressed (or conquered) in the world of the novel, but which, in Faulkner's actual world, had already occurred to a successful end.[72] In *The South That Wasn't There*, Michael Kreyling provides an eloquent reading of Shreve's final words: by "[p]ositing racial 'amalgamation' (the unthinkable taboo of the present to Shreve as well as to Quentin) as the redemption of the South in the future[,] [*Absalom*] indicts the racial separatism of the South in the past and the present" (182). If Shreve's vision, however tenuously, redeems the South and its decades of racial separatism, it also casts the region within a realm of savage racism and violence, captured in Shreve's animalistic description of "Jim Bonds." Faulkner uses Shreve's timeless vision at the end of *Absalom* to expose the depth of Quentin's "guilt" (Kreyling 182). With regard to the future in *Absalom*, then, especially when we compare the novel to *Caballero*, any future seems impossible without first moving outside of the past's clutches. Quentin and so many other

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[71] Of this moment, Michael Kreyling cogently argues that "Shreve's prediction . . . changes [the] past, for the whiteness he claims in the present of his utterance will become African in a future time. Memory will reverse its own current and flow into the future" (182).

[72] For more on *Absalom's*/Faulkner's anachronistic use of the historic slave revolt in Santo Domingo, Haiti, see Richard Godden's chapter "*Absalom, Absalom!* Haiti, and Labor History: Reading Unreadable Revolutions" in Fred Hobson's edited collection *William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!: A Casebook*.

regionalist characters fail to move physically and mentally beyond the region—and beyond, of course, that region's prevailing and violent nineteenth-century history.

Absalom's ability to confront and grapple with the South's racist past extends, if only briefly, to Native American history as well, for the year Thomas Sutpen appears in Yoknapatawpha County to "tak[e] up land" and "build is house" (305), 1833, evokes the Indian Removal Act of the 1830s and its ensuing Trail of Tears. Scholar Clyde Woods speaks to the simultaneity of "militaristic plantation production" and "the anticipation of epic profits from [available] and alluvial [lands]" gathered in the wake of the Removal: "Considered one of the most barbaric single events in US history," writes Woods, "the seven-year horror appropriately known as the Trail of Tears signaled the ideological and territorial consolidation of the Deep South plantation regime. At the heart of this barbaric regime was Mississippi, already considered the most undemocratic state in the nation" (45). "Between 1833," the year Sutpen builds his plantation, "and 1836," possibly the time when Sutpen conducts business with Mr. Coldfield, "the federal government sold 8.3 million acres in Mississippi to . . . speculators" (Woods 45).[73] In *Absalom*, Sutpen purchases, in what seems like a dubious business transaction, one hundred square miles of Mississippi land from Indians, possibly Chickasaw (25); or, according to Shreve, Sutpen "skuldugged a hundred miles of land from a poor ignorant Indian and built the biggest house on it you ever saw" (145). Although the land purchase is mentioned only a few times throughout the novel, the act casts Sutpen's violent reign in a newly horrid

[73] Here, Woods is not discussing the fictional *Absalom*. I have mixed in the novel's plot details with Woods's history.

light; his plantation is haunted not only by the slavery he brings to it, but also by the Indians dispossessed in the scheme of its design. Sutpen's Hundred was doomed from the very start.

The same might be said of Don Santiago's Rancho La Palma, which in the world of the novel is made possible with his grandfather's act of "coloniz[ing] the Indian-infested region" (xxxvii). The phrase "Indian-infested" reappears much later in *Caballero* through Don Santiago's perspective (282), and Indian similes are used problematically throughout the novel to racialize unlikable, lower-class characters such as the Texas Rangers (as previously shown). Had Jovita González not used this selfsame phrase in her master's thesis as she provided context for "Indian attacks" in South Texas (47), its presence in *Caballero* might have been attributed to the narrator, not the authors; but this is clearly and unfortunately not the case. *Caballero* would be, of course, a stronger novel if it parsed or even sympathized with this critical aspect of Texas's past. The novel's general tone of disgust toward Indians hearkens, at least to some extent, to the historical circumstance where "Indians," according to historian Juliana Barr, "retained control of the region [and even] asserted control over Spaniards" (7). The "region's eighteenth-century history is not one of Indian resistance, but of Indian dominance" (7), and this "dominance" would carry "into the nineteenth century" (289). *Caballero* posits Indians as the common enemy of landed Mexicans, the U.S. Army, and, eventually, the Texas Rangers, in spite of the latter's comparison to them. If *Absalom* treats Indians as helpless people (i.e., "poor ignorant Indian[s]"), then *Caballero*, which illustrates them as menaces, remains painfully ignorant of Indians' rightful claim to the region. In both

cases, Indians are removed from the region to clear a path toward what is perceived to be 'civilization.' From the start of Don Santiago and Thomas Sutpen's violent reigns, then, the mistreatment or killing of Indians becomes the historic and symbolic first misstep.

V.

Contrary to *Absalom*, *Caballero* sees some semblance of a future, even as its region becomes, in Monika Kaup's words, "absorbed into" the U.S. (575). Luis Gonzaga, who travels the farthest, tells his family and friends he will keep the region (i.e., the memory of his mother) in his "heart" (293). Luis will use his art, we are to presume, to spread his love for the region globally. Similarly, María de Los Angeles, who remains closer to the region but not inside of it, will continue to use philanthropy to help those whose rural poverty gives them little to no mobility. Because of the anti-Mexican context in which González and Raleigh wrote they could not afford to bypass a visionary form of regionalism—a regionalism where the future becomes, however slightly, imaginable and designable. *Caballero* needed to envision a future that could lead to sympathy for Mexicans in 1930s Texas and toward their integration into the modern United States. That *Caballero*'s vision of the future is cast in a mid nineteenth-century setting suggests the difficulty of bringing it to fruition; mistreatment of Mexicans or the one-sided history that posits their inferiority, in other words, is longstanding, and must be dealt with not only in the present but also in the past and in the way the past is perceived.

Still, it is important to note, that both *Caballero* and *Absalom* end tragically, as if to remind or convince readers, once and for all, of the danger lurking in the inability to see beyond the region and, implicitly, beyond any singular (i.e., one-sided, close-minded)

perspective. While Don Santiago at the end of *Caballero* clenches "tightly" to a fistful of "earth, brown and dry" (337), Quentin tries to convince Shreve and himself that his memories of the South have not defeated him altogether: "'I dont hate it,' he said. *I dont hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark: *I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!*" (303). If Don Santiago and Quentin managed to remember and imagine the past in *Caballero* and *Absalom*, they did so to the same, invariable end; their psyches longed for a region ruled by a seigneur, where whites stood above non-whites and intermarriage did not exist, and where war did not end in their loss and modernity did not threaten the structure of their quotidian lives. Don Santiago and Quentin, until the end, held dangerously parochial views of the region. And as hard as Quentin tried to imagine and reimagine the past, whether its setting was the South or Haiti, he inevitably saw that it ended only with death—his own death included.

Caballero and *Absalom* failed to impart, in the late 1930s, holistic and wholesome visions of their southwestern and southern regions. Judged as historical or southern 'romances,' these novels failed apparently because they did not exude the proper kind of charm and because they did not provide acceptable, whitewashed views of the past "as it could have been" or of the "world . . . as it could be" (Donahue 6). Ironically enough, both novels did just that; they showed the region in ways that were historical and imaginative and, in *Caballero*'s case, visionary. But a Mexican Texas was far from ideal, and a perverted, doomed South would inspire few readers in 1936. If we read these novels today as regionalist products, failed southern romances upon their completions, they demonstrate critical and creative ways of reading the Southwest and South in

American literature. The region, for both González and Faulkner, constituted a terrain that could not be fully known but that could be imagined and reimagined. That González and Faulkner relied on characters to read the region from the outside—such as Luis Gonzaga and Shreve—indicates, finally, how both *Caballero* and *Absalom* need readers who live on the outside to be more careful in their regionalist reading practices.

Regionalism, Geomodernism, and the Depressions of John Steinbeck and Américo Paredes

I.

Jovita González and William Faulkner's subdued moments of visionary regionalism give way, in final this chapter, to Américo Paredes and John Steinbeck's similarly troubled glimpses into the future. Paredes's *George Washington Gómez* (1936-1940/1990), a novel centered on a Mexican-American boy who comes of age in the poverty-stricken and violent Texas-Mexico borderlands, coexists and clashes here with Steinbeck's celebrated Dust Bowl 'saga' *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). A number of scholars have suggested that Paredes's novel reads like Steinbeck's because both writers engaged with a "tradition of left-wing regionalism in the West that defied reactionary stereotypes" about uncritical and "deep-seated love of the land and the people" (Steiner 11). Often, however, it seems odd that a novel about a disconcerted Mexican-American boy as Paredes's could have much in common with novel about white migrants seeking to survive physical and emotional hardship and verging, again and again, on death. To clarify from the start why these novels are paired together in this chapter, it is important to foreground not only their veritably simultaneous compositions during the Depression, but also the way they engage in an important conversation about regionalism, community, and peoplehood in the late 1930s. Although *George Washington Gómez* focuses on the title protagonist, the novel is not merely a Mexican-American Bildungsroman. *George Washington Gómez* clearly engages with the national genre that American studies scholar Michael Denning calls the "proletarian novel." For Denning,

"[i]t is a mistake . . . to see . . . writers [like Paredes] as simply 'ethnic,' that is, as [composing] the national literature of [a] distinct ethnic grou[p]" because "many of [these writers] insisted on their common proletarian outlook" (238-39). As a novel emerging out the "historical situation" of early twentieth-century Anglo-American and European migration to the Southwest—a "situation" that resulted in the displacement and "racializ[ation]" of Mexicans (Denning 239)—*George Washington Gómez* came into being precisely when *The Grapes of Wrath* illustrated the white, dust-bowl aspect of these migrations. Thus, although Paredes's novel tells about a boy, it also tells of the very "historical situation" that, on the one hand, altered Mexicans' socioeconomic and racial status in South Texas and, on the other, gave rise to Steinbeck's famous work.

As beautiful and enduring as some readers and literary critics consider Steinbeck's novel to be, *The Grapes of Wrath* has since its inception promoted a problematically romantic view of the southwestern agrarian region that treats the histories of foreign and minority labor in California in passing. The problem here is not so much the aforementioned "deep-seated love of the land and the people" (Steiner 11) but the fact that "the people" in *The Grapes of Wrath* are a homogenous group of Anglo-American farmers who sometimes reflect a singularly white and misplaced sense of entitlement. *George Washington Gómez*, conversely, shows the quiet struggle of Mexicans and Mexican Americans who have long ago surrendered their land and who continue to confront, culturally and physically, the Anglo-Texans whose presence and power in the region rises. Caught in the middle of these groups of people, the protagonist George

Washington Gómez feels pressured to become the "leader of his [Mexican] people,"[74] but by the end of the novel his notion of 'the people' is ruptured. This reflects, in turn, the insidious processes of Americanization and cultural whitewashing that occurred in the late 1930s, especially as the United States faced the ongoing threat of World War II. Whereas Steinbeck's novel closes with a symbolic and fleeting recuperation of a lost agrarian past, Paredes's novel shows how the violent world of the present and future—the United States' involvement in World War II—that unfolds in the borderlands resonates elsewhere, intimating a dubious future not only for Mexicans in South Texas but also for racialized people across the country and globe.

Examining *George Washington Gómez* alongside *The Grapes of Wrath*'s versions of romantic and uprooted regionalisms, which will be defined later in this chapter, I place Paredes's novel within a geomodernist framework to show how the local, national, and global exist in complicated ways in the recovered Mexican-American work. "Geomodernism," according to Laura Doyle, "is an art oriented toward the global world, pressingly aware of it" (134). Further, it "signals a locational approach to modernisms' engagement with cultur[e] and politic[s]," encompassing "marginal" modernist literary production that features "local . . . settings" but "global" "horizon[s]" (Doyle and Winkiel 3). This geomodernist impulse in Paredes's work is clearest at the end of the novel and must be excavated by the reader who can sense how the protagonist's "local alienation" is

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[74] This is the title of the final section of *George Washington Gómez*: "Part V: 'Leader of His People'" (281). It is also a phrase used throughout the novel with regard to the title protagonist's presumed destiny. The Mexican people believe that George will provide a bridge and mediate between their culture and that of the Anglo-Americans in Texas; George will save them and help preserve Mexican ways and traditions.

at odds with the Mexican community's potential to seek and find "global connection" (Doyle and Winkiel 2). If Paredes's novel is indeed more critical than Steinbeck's about the possibility of regionalist community in a time of national crisis, it is not because *George Washington Gómez* possesses this geomodernist impulse per se, but rather because it shows a flickering relationship between, on the one hand, people's attachments to local places and affinity for global matters and, on the other, the protagonist's eventual rootless alienation—an alienation that extends across time and space and leaves him in the borderlands suppressing the past of his ancestors and entangling it with ongoing violence of the day. [75]

As was the case with Jovita González's novel, Paredes's did not see publication until a generation later. While it is unclear if he actually sent *George Washington Gómez* out for publication, it is still important to consider the novel's non-publication as a common occurrence in the scheme of recovered Mexican-American literature before the Chicano Movement of the 1960s. On the contrary, of course, *The Grapes of Wrath* was born out of Steinbeck's commissioned writings on Dust Bowl migrants and grew to the status of immediate national sensationalism, earning Steinbeck the Pulitzer Prize in 1939. The film adaptation of the novel that appeared a mere year later likewise speaks to the vast success and relatability of Steinbeck's story of struggling and revolutionary people.

George Washington Gómez signals a final turning point in this dissertation because its author—unlike Ruiz de Burton, Mena, and González—went on to become

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[75] I borrow the term "rootless alienation" from Tom Lutz. I will discuss the term throughout this chapter. See Lutz's *Cosmopolitan Vistas*, p. 191.

one of the founding figures of Mexican-American and Chicana/o studies, in spite of the once occluded history of his literary production and its general non-publication. His cultural and scholarly celebrity in Texas, particularly in Brownsville and Austin, parallels Steinbeck's continued legacy in Salinas and Monterey, California. The regions, towns, and cities remember these writers because they wrote local people in a time when U.S. literary culture was very interested in the concept of 'the people'; their most famous works, those discussed in this chapter, emerged out of the Depression and out of the country's desire to revisit the region. After *George Washington Gómez* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, Paredes and Steinbeck went on to work internationally, serving the country in parallel but different journalistic capacities during the Second World War.[76] As a result of his time in Japan and Asia during postwar occupation, Paredes learned to formulate his literature and cultural scholarship through a continued awareness of global occurrences, especially vis-à-vis local ones. According to Ramón Saldívar, it was abroad that Paredes learned to "comprehen[d] the limitations of cultural nationalism, the restrictions stimulated by a community's own internally divisive racial and class structures, and the effects of global realignment at the beginning of the cold war era. These were in addition to his familiarity with the homegrown factors of American racism and modernization" (401). Although this overt global turn in Paredes's intellectual projects would happen after *George Washington Gómez*, I argue that, if we look closely enough, we can see in

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[76] Steinbeck worked as a war correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1943. He traveled (in this order) to England, Italy, and the Mediterranean (Schultz 152). Paredes enlisted in the U.S. Army in August 1944, and the war ended a month after he arrived in Japan. He remained in Japan and worked as a journalist for *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, the U.S. Army's newspaper (Morin 56).

the novel a global flicker beneath the region's surface, even in spite the protagonist's obsession with policing the border and serving as an American patriot. Especially alongside *The Grapes of Wrath*'s circumscribed and white-centered "racial populism,"[77] *George Washington Gómez* evinces a geographically and culturally broader affiliation with poor and racialized people. Together, these novels show a final case in this dissertation of how Mexican-American and canonical white-authored American literature exist not only contemporaneously and complementarily, but also as necessarily dependent on one-another in literary history. Without *George Washington Gómez*, for instance, *The Grapes of Wrath* imparts only a story of U.S. internal migration; the former fills in literary-historical fissures by examining what happened to minorities as others migrated to their regions.

II.

Today, *The Grapes of Wrath* retains its heroic 'saga' status with the aid of Steinbeck scholars who continue to commemorate the way the novel imbues dignity in 'the people' and their labor. One of the lead Steinbeck scholars in the country, Susan Shillinglaw, has published two books in the last couple of years which value *The Grapes of Wrath*'s ambitious meditation—namely, that the "human condition, stripped down, dispossessed, can be a thing of wonder—resilient people, defined by the tools of their

[77] This term comes from Michael Denning who argues that "[i]n the racial populism of Steinbeck, the noble white Americans of *The Grapes of Wrath* are set against the minstrel show Mexican Americans of *Tortilla Flat*" (267). This "racial populism," seen in the context of Steinbeck's writings on Mexicans, might remind us of Stephen Crane's predisposition to glorify Nebraska farmers and the Alamo's heroes and write Mexicans as caricatures.

work" (*On Reading* 7).[78] In each of her books, Shillinglaw imports, seemingly out of reverence, Steinbeck's ecological and universal thinking. Commemorating the novel upon its seventy-fifth anniversary, she writes somewhat romantically, "*The Grapes of Wrath* reminds us that the Joads' story is, in many ways, our own—if we consider the American experiment as communal, . . . if we embrace an 'enlarged horizon of consciousness'" (*On Reading* 186). Steinbeck, inspired by his dear friend the marine biologist Ed Ricketts, was obsessed with analyzing "the intricate ties that bind humans to one another and to their habitats and histories" (Shillinglaw, *On Reading* 10). In 1933, he had developed and implemented a theory called "Argument of Phalanx" which examined men's capacity for group behavior and action. Steinbeck believed "that a group of men acting together [took] on the properties of an individual and that the strength of such a group [exceeded] the sum of its parts" (Schulz and Li, *Critical Companion* 308). In *The Grapes of Wrath* the phenomenon exists where migrants begin to bind together, where an individual "I" becomes the communal "we." Admirers (and scholars) of Steinbeck seem to find both emotional and intellectual solace in the migrants' struggle because it is deemed common, of 'the people'—large enough to encompass the stories of all.

Of course, racial realities belie such grandiose thinking. Steinbeck had hoped *The Grapes of Wrath* would impart a strong sense "group survival"—at least, this is what he

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[78] Shillinglaw's two very recently published books are *Carol and John Steinbeck: Portrait of a Marriage* (2013) and *On Reading the Grapes of Wrath* (2014). Shillinglaw's publication of these books around the seventy-fifth anniversary of *The Grapes of Wrath* (in 2014) is telling. Whereas *On Reading the Grapes of Wrath* was specifically written to celebrate this anniversary, *Carol and John Steinbeck* spends some time examining the role Steinbeck's first wife Carol played in bringing *The Grapes of Wrath* to life. Both books remind readers of *The Grapes of Wrath*'s continued relevance (and, I would add, popularity) today.

expressed in the journal he kept while writing the novel (*Working Days* 88)—but perhaps far from doing so, *The Grapes of Wrath* buries the histories of foreign and minority labor of which Steinbeck very much knew. In 1936, three years before *The Grapes of Wrath*'s publication, *The San Francisco News* commissioned Steinbeck to write a series of articles on migrant labor problems in the agricultural valleys of California. Published as consecutive articles by the title of *The Harvest Gypsies* for the *News* that same year and again in 1938 as a pamphlet for the Simon J. Lubin Society called *Their Blood is Strong*, Steinbeck's journalistic writing, which provided the social groundwork for *The Grapes of Wrath*, imparted an odd undertone of eugenicist if not racist thinking.[79] Notably, while the former title makes questionable the presumed white skin of Anglo-American migrants seeking seasonal work by racializing them as 'gypsies,' the latter taps into a eugenic notion so prevalent in Steinbeck's time of white people's superior 'blood.' Communicating what was ultimately the same story (*Their Blood is Strong* would add an eighth chapter), *The Harvest Gypsies* and *Their Blood is Strong* lay bare the tentative racial foundation on which *The Grapes of Wrath* was built.

In the opening article of *The Harvest Gypsies*, Steinbeck reduces the complex history of California migrant labor to a story that glorifies white workers' rise to majority in the region:

> The earlier foreign migrants [Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, and Mexicans] have invariably been drawn from the peon class. This is not the case with

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[79] As Charles Wollenberg explains, the Simon J. Lubin Society was "[n]amed for a Progressive reformer who had fought for workers' rights" (xiii). The society "struggled mightily to assist the migrants' cause" (xiii).

> the new migrants. They are small farmers who have lost their farms, or farm hands who have lived with the family in the old American way . . . And they have made the crossing [into California] and have seen often the death of their children on the way. Their cars have been broken down and been repaired with the ingenuity of the land man . . . They have weathered the thing, and they can weather much more for their blood is strong . . . They are descendants of men who crossed into the middle west, who won their lands by fighting, who cultivated the prairies . . . And because of their tradition and training, they are not migrants by nature. They are gypsies by force of circumstance . . . It should be understood that with this new race the old methods of repression, of starvation wages, of jailing, beating and intimidation are not going to work; these are American people . . . The names of the new migrants indicate that they are of English, German and Scandinavian descent. (22-23)

In his introduction to the reprint edition of *The Harvest Gypsies*, California social historian Charles Wollenberg observes that "[n]either Steinbeck nor the [*San Francisco*] *News* stooped to the crude racist vocabulary so common to the era, but both in effect were contending that only white Americans could successfully resist conditions which had regularly been imposed on non-whites and immigrants" (xi-xii). "The dust bowl migrants," Wollenberg explains, "still considered themselves independent farmers and found it difficult to give up their traditional rural individualism" (xii). Steinbeck likewise "viewed the migrants as displaced Jeffersonian yeomen who needed and deserved their

own plots of land" (Wollenberg x). Recognizing, before long, the unlikelihood of land ownership for the migrants, Steinbeck, a New Deal liberal, "call[ed] for a vast expansion of the federal camp program" where workers could at least live with some "dignity and self-respect" (Wollenberg ix-x). To drive home his point of what this "new race" of people deserved, Steinbeck concluded the penultimate article of *The Harvest Gypsies* with these bold but problematic words: "Foreign labor is on the wane in California, and the future farmworkers are to be white and American. This fact must be recognized and a rearrangement of the attitude toward and treatment of migrant labor must be achieved" (57).

At the heart of *The Grapes of Wrath* lies the broken promise of agrarianism—the unheard-of scenario where white communities cannot tend their own land. In the novel, Steinbeck renders the now-mythic farm as hard-earned, sacred terrain and farmers as longstanding Anglo-American working folk. But the memory of agrarianism that *The Grapes of Wrath* imparts is fundamentally misplaced in the California setting where such farming never existed. According to Wollenberg, the "state's rural economy had never been dominated by small, Jeffersonian yeoman farmers. If corporate agribusiness is a fairly new phenomenon in most of the United States, in 1936, when Steinbeck . . . first toured Central Valley fields, it was already an established fact of life in California" (x). Agribusiness, which from the start relied on foreign labor, dated back to the Gold Rush era, moving into and beyond "the completion of the trans-continental railroad in 1869 [and the subsequent] wheat boom" (Wollenberg x). Although familiar to Steinbeck, California's foreign labor history plays a negligible role in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Susan

Shillinglaw notes that the novel is set "against [a] background of hostility to ethnic workers," but Steinbeck's "focus was on a new wave [of] white workers entering California to work the fields" (*Carol and John* 177). Michael Denning, in a similar way, observes that "[t]he depression years had seen white migrants from the Southwest displacing the Mexican and Filipino farmworkers who were repatriated and deported" (267). Steinbeck's novel, "gain[ing] much of its popularity because it . . . told [of] white Protestant 'plain people,'" diminishes this non-white history (Denning 267).

Approximately half way into *The Grapes of Wrath*, an interchapter opens with what initially seems like a broadened perspective of foreign labor in California but which quickly gives way to a defense of Oklahoma migrants who "ain't foreign" and possess loftier aims than the laborers of the past (233-34):[80] "Once California belonged to Mexico and its land to Mexicans," the interchapter reads; "and a horde of tattered feverish Americans poured in . . . [The Americans] put up houses and barns, they turned the earth and planted crops . . . [The Mexicans] could not resist, because they wanted nothing in the world as ferociously as the Americans wanted land" (231). As the narrative continues, we eventually see the rise of agribusiness, along with its reliance on foreign labor, pit against the threatened sharecropper ethos of the Oklahomans: "crops were reckoned in dollars, and land was valued by principal plus interest, and crops were bought and sold

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[80] These migrants, according to the novel, "wanted only two things—land and food; and to them to two were one" (233). A sense of simultaneous need and entitlement characterizes what the "Okies" want and will demand or take by force (again, unlike the foreign/minority laborers of previous migrant waves in California): "the wants of the Okies were beside the roads, lying there to be seen and coveted: the good fields with water to be dug for, the good green fields, earth to crumble experimentally by hand . . . The temptation was before [them] always. The fields goaded [them], and the company ditches with good water flowing were a goad to [them]" (234).

before they were planted . . . Now farming became an industry, and the owners . . . imported slaves, although they did not call them slaves: Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, and Filipinos" (231-32). The white migrants enter the historical narrative as ideal farmers and people of the land. Unlike foreign laborers, Steinbeck's interchapter suggests, the white migrants have a history of sustaining themselves with the farms they once owned and kept. And unlike the current California "[land]owners [who] no longer wor[k] on their farms" but continue to run them, the white migrants eat by the sweat of their own brows (232). One might argue that the white Dust Bowl migrants of the 1930s begin to resemble—in Steinbeck's condescended history of California labor—the white landowners who are presumably from the mid nineteenth-century Manifest Destiny era. Both the noble white migrants and the despised land owners, for instance, are described as "squatters" who "lust" for land, and both, at least implicitly, are motivated by a westering impulse; the former partake in "a gold rush for work" (231-38), and the latter likely came to California around the time of the 1848-49 Gold Rush. Be that as it may, the California landowners are depicted, in Manichean fashion, as slave drivers, and the white migrants are, by the end of the interchapter, described as "good people" (239). The inherent differences between the two eventually outpace the similarities, and the new white migrants become the potential heroes who can put an end to the landowners' tyranny. Tellingly, as Steinbeck's interchapter opens with the rise of landowners to uncontested power and closes with the impending rise of white migrants in their battle against oppression, Steinbeck's Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, and Filipinos occupy an in-between position literally and symbolically; the history of their labor becomes one that

can be skimmed and forgotten, and their erasure comes with the perceived victory of white migrants.

Steinbeck's friend and renowned American studies scholar Carey McWilliams assumes a similar attitude when addressing the battle between growers and white migrants. In his landmark work *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (1939), McWilliams predicts that white migrants may indeed put an end to the deplorable migrant worker conditions of the 1930s:

> [The growers] failed to perceive that, with the arrival of the dust-bowl refugees, a cycle of exploitation had been brought to a close. These despised 'Okies'. . . were not another minority alien racial group (although they were treated as such) but American citizens familiar with the usages of democracy. With the arrival of the dust-bowl refugees a day of reckoning approaches for the California farm industrialists. (306)

Here, McWilliams's characterization of California's newest labor force as the answer to exploitation resembles Steinbeck's, but the two writers generally approached the topic of migrant labor differently. Also, McWilliams's seemingly dated language here (e.g., "minority alien racial group") is more a product of the political and legal language that was used to describe minorities at the time than McWilliams's view of them as, say, unwanted or useless laboring 'aliens.' McWilliams's book *Factories in the Field*, appeared the same year as *The Grapes of Wrath*, but it imparted a more inclusive and chronologically longer tale about migrant labor in California. Scholars such as Douglas C. Sackman and Michael Denning have discussed the critical differences between the two

works; whereas Steinbeck "mobilized in the form of the Joads the imagery of yeoman farmers [which was] deeply impressed with whiteness," McWilliams did "much more to awaken his readers to the intricate involvement of race in California agriculture . . . [A]ny reclamation of agrarianism [for McWilliams] would require an excavation if its hidden history of race" (Sackman xv).[81]

McWilliams's *Factories in the Field* tells, accordingly, of the various waves of foreign and minority labor in California before the arrival of white migrants from the southwestern United States. Beginning with the exploitation of Chinese workers in the 1860s and 1870s, McWilliams goes on to discuss the arrival of Japanese workers in the 1880s and 1890s, Armenian workers near the end of the nineteenth century, Mexicans workers after World War I, and ends finally with the arrival of Filipinos in the early 1920s (67-130). The Filipinos' unprecedented ability to unionize, McWilliams observes, caused growers and landowners to see these laborers, by the early 1930s, as "more disturbing and more dangerous than any other Asiatic group that has ever been brought into the state" (qtd. in McWilliams 133). And, in contrast to the "Mexican [who could] be deported," the Filipino could not be "handled" as such and had to be dealt with (qtd. in McWilliams 132). Yet as McWilliams's history shows, even the Filipino labor force

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[81] Similarly, Michael Denning states: "Though the two books [i.e., *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Factories in the Field*] have been linked since their appearance and the McWilliams book has often been characterized as the non-fiction *Grapes of Wrath*, they tell remarkably different stories. *Factories in the Field* begins not in the Dust Bowl but in the great agricultural valleys of California, reconstructing their history and the history of the Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, Armenian, Filipino, and Mexican workers who farmed them. The climax of his book is the great strikes of 1933 and 1934 and the farm fascism that emerged in their wake; the story of the Dust Bowl migrants in the final chapter takes its place in the longer history of migrant farm labor" (267).

started to dwindle and give way to the arrival of white migrants during the Dust Bowl. "But the pattern of exploitation" in the history of California's migrant labor, McWilliams concludes, "has not been altered":

> The established pattern has been somewhat as follows to bring in successive minority groups; to exploit them until the advantages of exploitation have been exhausted; and then to expel them in favor of more readily exploitable material. In this manner the Chinese, the Japanese, the Filipinos, and the Mexicans have, as it were, been run through the hopper. From what source, then, was the latest army being recruited? The answer was soon forthcoming: from the stricken dust-bowl areas, from Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas. The new recruits were refugees from drought and disaster. (305-06)

Since *Factories in the Field* appeared a mere four months after *The Grapes of Wrath*, McWilliams apparently did not have the chance to mention the latter in his work. But he did signal Steinbeck's *San Francisco News* articles (i.e., *The Harvest Gypsies*) as "excellent stories" (316) and say of *In Dubious Battle* (1936) that it exposed many "details of [the labor camps in California] which were incredible to many readers" (318). While McWilliams and Steinbeck's books on migrant labor differed on many accounts, given perhaps first and foremost the books' completely different genres, both writers seemed to have faith in the white migrants ability to organize and unionize.[82] And while

[82] In the introduction to Steinbeck's *The Harvest Gypsies*, Charles Wollenberg contradicts what Steinbeck and McWilliams had believed about these white migrants: "In fact," Wollenberg

McWilliams's book was more critical, it did use outdated and problematic language, forwarding assertions as these: "The race problem [in migrant farm work] has, in effect, been largely eliminated" (324).

Another rather contemporaneous vision of California migrant labor comes in Filipino writer Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* (1946). Notably, Carey McWilliams, who had befriended Bulosan during the long migrant workers' struggle, wrote an introduction to *America Is in the Heart* in 1973, seemingly upon the book's fortieth anniversary and well after Bulosan's death in 1956. *America Is in the Heart* is the poignant and critically-written autobiography of Bulosan,[83] which begins with his boyhood in the Philippines and traces his life as a migrant laborer in agricultural regions like the Salinas Valley of California as well as in urban centers like Los Angeles, Seattle, and Portland. McWilliams calls the book a "social classic" that "reflects the collective experience of thousands of Filipino immigrants who were attracted to this country by its legendary promises of a better life or who were recruited for employment here" ("Introduction" vii). For the purposes of this chapter, *America Is in the Heart*, like *The Grapes of Wrath*, tells of the broken promise of work and well-being, of seeking the opportunity to earn a living and finding either nothing or terribly poor working conditions

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writes, "Okies proved less willing to organize and join unions than the Mexicans and Filipinos who had preceded them in California fields. The union organizing drives of largely immigrant workers in 1933 and 1934, while ultimately failing, were far more successful than those of 1938 and 1939, when American-born Okies dominated the labor force" (xii).

[83] Michael Denning makes an excellent case for how *America Is in the Heart* "is not really an autobiography," arguing that "the narrative refuses to obey this structure: every turning point and intellectual awakening is followed by retreat into despair and aimless movement; every moment of political struggle is juxtaposed with incidents of petty crime and brutal violence . . . The migrant narrative of the 'Filipino pea picker' is finally less a sentimental education in Americanism than 'one long flight from fear'" (274).

that offered veritably no recompense. Of course, unlike Steinbeck's novel, Bulosan's book is about the larger process of immigration and of the Filipino males' need to keep moving, to keep migrating up and down the United States for the possibility of earning small wages from menial work. Bulosan, who was not tied to a family as Steinbeck's Joads were, speaks firsthand of the racism, violence, poverty, and starvation he encountered and endured throughout United States (particularly along the western seaboard), and of what it was like to be not only a struggling migrant laborer in the country but also a Filipino (an unwanted minority, to say the least) in the 1930s and 1940s. Of his experience in California, he writes, sadly:

> I came to know . . . it was a crime to be a Filipino in California. I came to know that the public streets were not free to my people: we were stopped each time . . . vigilant patrolmen saw us driving a car. We were suspect each time we were seen with a white woman. And perhaps it was this narrowing of our life into an island, into a filthy segment of American society, that had driven Filipinos . . . inward, hating everyone and despising all positive urgencies toward freedom. (121).

If *The Grapes of Wrath* tells of the 'Okie exodus'—of the expulsion of Anglo-Americans from a state within the United States because of natural disaster and the failure of the American homestead—*America Is in the Heart* imparts the tragedy of itinerancy on the simultaneously individual scale of the Filipino male and the communal scale of Filipino immigrants. Bulosan tells of something the Joads would never know—of the ongoing

threat of deportation because one was a foreigner and a minority in a country that extinguished hope and "filled [one] with great loneliness" (Bulosan 325).

Bulosan and the larger Filipino community's struggle and eventual ability to "transcend a United States of violence," explains Michael Denning, bespeaks the "sentimental, populist, and humanist nationalism that . . . characterized the wartime" context in which Bulosan wrote (273-74). Bulosan's final image of "Filipino pea pickers in the fields" constitutes the 'heart' of the book overall; it reminds Bulosan, in short, of his own "defeats and successes" (*America Is in the Heart* 326). He continues to have "faith in America," in the end, because he learns to see the country through its laborers and through the work they have put forth in order to build the country's agricultural infrastructure (326). The "American earth was like a huge heart unfolding warmly to receive me," Bulosan writes:

> I felt it spreading through my being, warming with its glowing reality . . . It was something that grew out of the sacrifices and loneliness of my friends, of my brothers in America and my family in the Philippines—something that grew out of our desire to know America, and to become a part of her great tradition, and to contribute something toward her final fulfillment. (326-27)

Contrary to the work done by Carey McWilliams and John Steinbeck, then, Bulosan's story emerged out of his own supremely racialized status in the country as well as his own experience as a laborer on California's vast fields. Literary critic Stephen J. Mexal provides insight into what Bulosan thought of Steinbeck's writings on farmworkers and

their toils. For Bulosan, "Steinbeck [was] merely 'describing the disease' of America [without] tracing its origins. And though John Steinbeck . . . influenced [Bulosan] in [his] ability to wed place to progressive politics while narrating the American scene, [Bulosan ultimately] dismissed [Steinbeck] as 'writ[ing] in costume'" (Mexal, "Toward" 312-13).[84] Authenticity of experience, according to Bulosan, was necessary for heartfelt political-social literature. Even if we cast his belief in authenticity aside, Bulosan's narrative remains more critical than Steinbeck's novel of the role race, ethnicity, and citizenship played in the migrant worker's life.

Returning to Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, we see, then, that its vision of land ownership and sharecropping in the dust-bowl Southwest raises fundamental questions about racial entitlement, privilege, and power. Unlike the non-white Californian labor histories Bulosan evokes, for instance, the Joads' Oklahoma migrant history seems a more one-sided story. Here, it is also important to consider the ways *The Grapes of Wrath* downplays not only non-white migrant history, but also the histories of violence that affected indigenous peoples in the making of the American homestead. Rather early in the novel, Steinbeck treats the killing of Native Americans almost in passing, problematically linking genocide to Anglo-Americans' generational struggle for rightful land appropriation. The theft of indigenous land is made to appear natural, harmless even, in this particular interchapter: "Grampa [*sic*] took up the land, and he had to kill the Indians and drive them away. And pa was born here, and he killed weeds and

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[84] Here, Mexal cites Bulosan's essay "My Education," printed for the first time in *Amerasia Journal* 6.1 (1979) and reprinted in *On Becoming Filipino*. See Mexal's essay "Toward a Transnational Liberalism of the Left" (p. 324 specifically).

snakes . . . An' we was born here" (33). The narrative continues, making "killing" central to acquiring and keeping land in Oklahoma: "Grampa killed Indians, Pa killed snakes for the land. Maybe we can kill banks—they're worse than Indians and snakes. Maybe we got to fight to keep our land, like Pa and Grampa did" (33-34). Indians, snakes, and banks are lumped together as generationally—albeit inconceivably perhaps, for the astute reader—parallel obstacles to American farming.

If Steinbeck's interchapter is read through even a dim awareness of Oklahoma history, the generation of "Grampa" seems to have arrived to the region sometime in 1880s or 1890s, when Native Americans struggled to keep their land in the midst of not only homestead, cattle, railroad, and oil related agitation, but also the passing of legal measures like the General Allotment Act (or the Dawes Act) of 1887, which by 1934, had resulted severe land loss for Indians (Olson and Wilson 68-73). By the time the aggrieved Tom Joad generation comes of age (i.e., the purported 'bank-killers' in *The Grapes of Wrath*), "approximately . . . two-thirds of the original Indian landholding . . . had passed out of Indian ownership" (Kirby 672-74). The sentimental and fierce attachment white Oklahoma farmers feel to the land contradicts that land's deeper, more painful history. On a related noted, if *The Grapes of Wrath*, as Susan Shillinglaw contends, evokes the "[m]ythic stor[y]" of the "Cherokee Indians' 'Trail of Tears' into Oklahoma, which took place exactly a century before Steinbeck wrote [the novel]," then why is that "story" so suppressed in *The Grapes of Wrath*? Conceivably, it is a younger and dwindling generation of these Cherokee who are slaughtered in Steinbeck's unbalanced depiction of land ownership in Oklahoma.

The Grapes of Wrath's deceased Indians do not haunt the farmworkers who have killed them; the former's presence is fleeting and fails to become a critical and thematic thread that persists in the novel. What does persist, however, is the agrarian ideal of the white migrants, or what David Wrobel has identified as "regionalism uprooted" (345). Of the Indians' deaths and the migrants' continued search for home throughout the narrative, Wrobel states: "This is no rose-scented regionalism, to be sure—Indians were killed and driven away for the land to be taken up—but it is a regionalism that somehow transcends land values; the land is useless, but it means too much [for some Oklahomans] to leave it" (344). Even as the Joads are "evicted from the land," they "hold on to their sense of place" (345). Their "regional consciousness does not dissipate and disappear in the wake of migration from place to place. It is maintained on the road as migrants listen to each other's stories about the land" (345). For Wrobel, the Joads' "regionalism uprooted" is the dream of one day "restor[ing] [that] regionalism" and recuperating land in California (345), a dream that, of course, never becomes reality in the novel.

The tragedy of the Oklahomans' situation here does, of course, inspire sympathy. But to read the novel critically, that sympathy ought to remain wedded to the foreign, indigenous, and minority peoples whose presence in *The Grapes of Wrath* is fleeting. While the Joads' "regionalism," in the sense that Steinbeck wrote it and Wrobel understood it, is admirable, it is also really only for the white migrants who starred in the novel and, a year later, in its film adaptation.[85] The Indians, for one, have been erased

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[85] The Twentieth Century Fox film adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath*, released in 1940, promoted this same picture of struggling yet strong white laborers, lending credibility to—and, in

from the region, and exploited minority workers like Carlos Bulosan, who were hardly if ever able to afford their own land in the United States and California, are not privy to this Anglo-American lifestyle. As we will also see in *George Washington Gómez*, the Mexicans and Mexican Americans who once owned land have long given up on the hope of recuperating that land. Granted, Bulosan and Paredes, like Steinbeck, illustrated the sense of community experienced among, respectively, Filipinos and Mexicans. But that sense of community regularly—and in Paredes's case, permanently—gave way to depictions of the loneliness and alienation of the individual in a modernizing world. Steinbeck, of course, looked not only to the Joad family but also to the many white families the Joads represented. In the novel, Ma calls them and herself "the people."

It is possible to conceive of the final scene in *The Grapes of Wrath*—where Roseasharn breastfeeds an old, sickly man in a barn—as a dim yet suggestive recuperation of lost agrarianism. In this primitive imagery, the surroundings of agribusiness and industrialized labor give way not only to the idea that the barn, in all of its associations with farming and nourishment, is home, but also to what Steinbeck had

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some sense, exaggerating—the Joads' status as America's people. Notably, the film replaces the novel's famous ending of Roseasharn breastfeeding a starving old man with Ma speaking as the prime representative of those who struggle. What results is the film's wide-reaching populist keynote which seems, given Ma's closing words (i.e., "We're the people"), to exceed Steinbeck's own literary reach. The film succeeded in bringing to life and expanding Steinbeck's vision of struggling but supremely relatable white folk. According to Peter Lev, "*The Grapes of Wrath* was Fox's most successful film at the box office in 1940, and only modest objections were raised to its political themes" (*Twentieth Century Fox* 60). "High society," in particular, flocked to see *The Grapes of Wrath* film; these people clearly supported Fox's artistic and sympathetic rendition of America's "little guy" (Lev 60-61). Building upon the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel's achievement and Steinbeck's painstaking illustration of America's people, the film's projection of pitiable white faces on the big screen made possible a resemblance, however fictive, between rich and poor Anglo-Americans. It is doubtful that a story, novel, or film of America's non-white laborers would have caused the same sensation or encountered the same success.

termed “group survival.” Roseasharn and the old man rely on one-another and partake in symbiotic relationship that is best exercised within a shelter they already know and consider theirs; the barn is and has always been their home, and here Roseasharn provides sustenance, just as the animals who used to inhabit the barn provided sustenance to Americans like Roseasharn and the old man. In a California landscape marked by modern agriculture, the barn stands as a “memory-place” which French historian Pierre Nora and Mexican-American literary critic Vincent Pérez describe as a “fleeting incursio[n] of the sacred (past) into a disenchanted (modern) world,” a “vestig[e] of parochial loyalt[y] in a society that is busily effacing all parochialisms” (Pérez 198). As the rainstorm and flood threaten to sweep the Joads from the Californian landscape, they encounter, by chance, a barn that is needed, “sacred” even, and certainly a reminder of the world in which they once lived. And as a “parochial” emblem—that is, as an emblem of the Anglo-American midwestern farm and home and of the farming in which the Joads still want to believe—the barn has yet to be effaced. It still stands, literally and symbolically, in *The Grapes of Wrath* as a restoration, however “fleeting,” of the Joads’ regionalist practices and their agrarian “past.” Lamentably, of course, this sacred past is painted white, and California’s foreign and minority labor history has been whitewashed in the popular imagination. It takes a critical eye to unearth the past of indigenous, foreign, and minority others.

Steinbeck considered calling his Depression novel *The Oklahomans*, which, given the focus on white migrants, might have been a more fitting title. Chosen by his wife at the time, Carol Steinbeck, the title *The Grapes of Wrath* comes from the Civil War poem

"Battle Hymn of the Republic" (1862), written by American writer and abolitionist Julia Ward Howe after she visited a Union Army camp. A likeness between the valiant Union and the noble Oklahomans is evoked where both groups, if only figuratively for the latter, fight those who own and drive slaves. Like Howe, Steinbeck visited a camp, but his, of course, was the migrant camp in which he found destitute southwestern laborers seeking work and fending off death. While we might appreciate this ambitious comparison, we should view it very critically, for early twentieth-century (white) migrant work conditions do not equal the horrendous conditions of Civil War-era slavery. An exaggerated sense of white righteousness, in the end, veers Steinbeck's novel off the course of inclusive social protest. Racially coded labor becomes abstracted, as Oklahomans become the face of migrant farmworkers.

III.

If *The Grapes of Wrath* views change nostalgically, even as its characters attempt to adapt to that change, *George Washington Gómez* depicts change as change. The land that the Joads do not want to see themselves without, for instance, has long been surrendered by the Mexicans in Paredes's novel. Like *The Grapes of Wrath*, *George Washington Gómez* opens with a desperate need for migration; the protagonist's family moves from a violent border town overrun by Texas Rangers to one where a larger Mexican community exists. George Washington Gómez's family has no property, and land ownership among Mexicans seems rare if not impossible. Although the histories of agriculture and modernity in Steinbeck's California and Paredes's Texas are vastly

different, we see in *George Washington Gómez* that Texas is also evolving to accommodate industrialized farming in the early twentieth century:

> [T]he American had begun to "develop" the land. He had it cleared and made into cotton fields, into citrus orchards and towns. And it was the Mexicotexan's brown muscular arms that felled the trees. He wielded the machete against the smaller brush and strained his back pulling tree stumps out of the ground. For this he got enough to eat for the day and the promise of more of the same tomorrow. As day laborer clearing more chaparral, as cotton and fruit picker for as few cents a day as he could subsist on. Every stroke of the ax, every swing of the mattock clinched his own misfortune. (42)

While there is "the promise" of a "few cents a day" for the Mexican (whereas there is no work for the Joads), the Mexican, too, has become an unskilled laborer and lost his land, here the "chaparral and the flats [that] had made cattle-raising possible" (42). According to *George Washington Gómez*, "[i]t was the lot of the Mexicotexan that the Anglo Saxon should use him as a tool for the Mexican's undoing" (42). If "lot," in this context, intimates one's condition in life as a matter of seemingly random fate, then there is nothing for the Mexican to do but accept that fate. While Paredes would hardly advocate a stance like this one himself, he nevertheless showed how the current situation for the Mexicotexan laborer was now an embedded part of Texas's political and socioeconomic structure. Rather than lament the industrial fact that had changed the Mexican's life,

Paredes showed what that change meant currently, for the Mexican and Mexican Americans still living in the region.

As we transition to *George Washington Gómez*, it is also important to foreground how Paredes simultaneously builds and deconstructs the sense of community and peoplehood raised in a popular novel like *The Grapes of Wrath*. While tragedy is not what makes Paredes's novel stronger than Steinbeck's, it is what complicates and distorts the "glorious racial [and agrarian] past" that weaves in and out of Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize winning novel.[86] Paredes's novel is devastating because its protagonist cannot grasp what the Joads do: the family "restor[es] seemingly banished social possibilities" and subsists on "communal self-determination" (J.M. González, *Border Renaissance* 146-47). Whereas *The Grapes of Wrath* retains a form of romantic regionalism, *George Washington Gómez* cannot parse the modernist environment in which its protagonist is trapped.

Completed in 1940 but not published until 1990 as part of the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, *George Washington Gómez* chronicles the life of the title character from his lowly birth in South Texas in 1915 to his ascension to first lieutenant in the U.S. Army just prior to the country's entry into World War II. Throughout the novel, moments of U.S. and Mexican history appear simultaneously but incongruously, rupturing, time and again, George Washington Gómez's sense of being. Named after the first president of the United States because of his parents' ambitions for

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[86] I borrow the term "glorious racial past" from John Morán González who uses it in a different but related context. I will evoke it again later in this chapter. See González's *Border Renaissance*, p. 75.

him to become the "leader of his people," George Washington Gómez is known by family and friends as "Gualinto," the Spanish pronunciation or the ironic *mis*pronunciation of "Washington."[87]

The novel traces Gualinto's development as a young man growing increasingly conscious of societal inequities. We learn, for instance, that the school Gualinto attends in Jim-Crow South Texas is racially integrated, an anomaly for the time, but designed to weed out Mexicans: "It was a process of not-quite-so-natural selection, and it did wonders for the school budget [and for local politicians running for re-election], while the few Mexicans who made it through high school did so by clawing their way to the top" (116-17).[88] An intelligent boy, Gualinto challenges the Anglo-Texas history in his schoolbooks, knowing the cry 'Remember the Alamo' evokes the memory of only white heroes, not his Mexican ancestors. Although by the penultimate section of the novel Gualinto seems destined to become the leader of his people, experiencing racism and poverty firsthand and fighting cultural battles in the name of Mexicans, he embarks on an alternative course in the end. Gualinto returns to his hometown after attending college and law school, joining the military, and marrying a young white woman from Colorado who studies Texas sociology (or Texas Mexicans) and whose father was once a Texas Ranger. As a grown man, Gualinto has legally changed his name to "George G. Gómez"

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[87] Of course, Paredes writes this naming scene with wit and humor. The Mexican characters, for instance, try to understand U.S. history for the sake of their baby boy (so that it might shape his future), but their knowledge is clearly lacking. Gualinto's father says of Washington: "Once he crossed a river while it was freezing. He drove out the English and freed the slaves" (16).
[88] Notably, Paredes describes segregated schools in Texas as "separate but *un*equal" (116; my emphasis). Gualinto does not attend one of these schools, but he still has to grapple with a number of inequities in education.

and calls his hometown a "filthy Delta" and the Mexicans who inhabit it "yokels" (300). George G. Gómez has, in short, become a World War II spy seeking Japanese and German intelligence in the Texas-Mexico borderlands. In a fit of bitterness, Gualinto's uncle—the man who raised Gualinto—tells him, "I hope you're smart enough not to mistake a slant-eyed Indian from southern Mexico for a Japanese agent. That has been done before, you know" (299).

While *George Washington Gómez* is often referred to as a Bildungsroman, this classification cannot be conceived of in the traditional sense of the term. The "narrative of broadened consciousness" that literary critic Tom Lutz sees as central to the genre (191) is contracted to the point of Gualinto's repression of his Mexican self. Gualinto partakes in a series of generally insidious Americanization programs, from grammar school to the U.S. Army, and at every turn, he is shown and told that Mexican Americans are inferior to Anglo-Americans. To better appreciate the drastic turn Paredes's narrative takes in the last section, which is ironically titled "Leader of His People," we need to see how the sense of community offered in South Texas is now fundamentally at odds with the protagonist's lack of sense of place. Gualinto's "consciousness" is not broadened in the end, even though he is now a traveled man, geographically speaking. Rather, the consciousness dissipates, and Gualinto is left haunted by the memories of his youth (i.e., he has nightmares about the past) and becomes a firm believer in his new occupation as an American (read whitewashed) patriot. To better appreciate Paredes's complex depiction of South Texas and the protagonist's lack of sense of place, we might consider Tom Lutz's view on the "literary value" of regionalist American literature: "The more

literary the book," Lutz writes, "the more a romantic attachment to locality is juxtaposed to . . . rootless alienation" (191). In *The Grapes of Wrath*, perhaps all we get is "romantic attachment to locality." Becoming homeless and itinerant, though supremely tragic, does not break the spirit of Steinbeck's 'American people'; they seem to always know the land is or should be theirs. In *George Washington Gómez*, "rootless alienation" reaches a tragic denouement: George's college and military experiences result in internalized racism and his perplexing decision to become a World War II spy. For George G. Gómez, the American, modern conditions prove surmountable only because cultural difference is erased.

If we use Michael Denning's classification of 1930s proletariat literature, we might also consider *George Washington Gómez* a "ghetto pastoral," the counterpart of what Denning has termed the "grapes of wrath" migrant narrative.[89] Ghetto pastorals, according to Denning, "were tales of growing up in . . . ethnic working-class neighborhoods . . . written by plebian men and women" (230).[90] These neighborhoods—the "barrio," in Gualinto's case—emerged because of the internal migrations happening

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[89] Denning defines the "grapes of wrath" genre as "the narrative of the migrant agricultural workers in California" (259). About the genre's namesake, he states: "Indeed, the 'Okie exodus,' the tale of southwestern farmers traveling out of the drought-ridden Dust Bowl of Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, and Missouri to California remains one of the most striking examples of a Popular Front narrative becoming part of American mass culture. It has always been taken as an emblem of depression-era populism, embodying the 'documentary impulse' of representing 'the people'" (259).

[90] Of "plebian writers," Denning states: "Few of [them] went on to become novelists, in the sense of having a career writing fiction. Several of their novels were aborted or unfinished; only a handful were critical or commercial successes. Many of them eventually adopted non-fiction forms: labor journalism, popular and scholarly history-writing, and professional and technical writing. Moreover, the ghetto pastoral itself hesitates on the line between fiction and autography" (241-42). This was certainly the case with Paredes and Bulosan.

in the United States. "[P]lebian writers [like Parades and Bulosan] were united by a common historical situation that was not a common ethnicity but a common ethnic formation," Denning explains: "the restructuring of the American peoples by the labor migrations of the early twentieth century from Southern and Eastern Europe and the sharecropping South. These people were ethnicized and racialized by that social formation" (239). Set in the fictional South Texas town of Jonesville (based on Brownsville, Texas), *George Washington Gómez* functions as a landmark ghetto pastoral of twentieth-century American literature, commenting on the making of a marginalized, minority community along the border because of Anglo-American migration to the region. Early in the novel, Jonesville's settlement history is laid bare for readers, and we clearly see the making of the ghetto Gualinto will come to inhabit:

> For more than half a century Jonesville remained a Mexican town, though officially part of the United States. A few English-speaking adventurers moved in, married into Mexican landowning families, and became a ruling elite allied with their Mexican in-laws. But Spanish remained the language of culture and politics, and Mexican money was legal tender in local commerce. Then came the railroad early in the 20th century, and with it arrived the first real-estate men and the land-and-title companies, and a Chamber of Commerce, of course, which renamed the little town 'Jonesville-on-the Grande' and advertised it to suckers from up north as paradise on earth: California and Florida rolled up into one. Mexicans labored with axe and spade to clear away the brush where the cattle of

> their ancestors once had roamed. To make room for truck farming and citrus groves. And the settlers poured in from the U.S. heartland, while Mexicans were pushed out of cattle raising into hard manual labor. It was then that Jonesvill[e] came to have a Mexican section of town, and it was this section of Mexican *barrios* [in which George lived]. (36)

While the Jonesville barrio is undoubtedly better than a Hooverville camp, it exists, like the camp, because people have been "pushed out" of their homes. Mexicans in Texas, as Anglo-Americans in Oklahoma, once practiced a trade of their own (here, cattle raising) before large-scale agriculture—"truck farming and citrus groves"—became a common fact of life. The "hard manual labor" that Mexicans performed is similar to the menial picking the Joads seek in California. Again, the displacement that Gualinto's family and other Mexican people experience happens because others have come into the region to set up industrial agriculture. And rather than leave the region altogether, Mexicans have become the labor force of these landowners and growers. As a result, Gualinto grows up in an ethnic working-class neighborhood, hating the Anglo-Americans who have both directly and indirectly put him there. Once he is a grown man and can leave and return to the region, he sees the barrio as a place ridden with filth and ignorance. Gualinto assumes the perspective of the outsider and, as such, makes Paredes's ghetto pastoral purposefully disconcerting. Denning, accordingly, considered this genre a "yoking of naturalism and the pastoral, the slum and the shepherd, the gangster and Christ" (231). Gualinto, the troubled Mexican American, is the sum of the genre's messy parts.

Group survival and resistance make tenuous appearances in the lives of Paredes's characters. Rather early in the novel, a statement is made to this effect. Contrary to the white migrants' belief in bonding together, "[b]order Mexican[s] knew there was no brotherhood of men" (19). Paredes's novel confronts modern conditions in the Texas-Mexico borderland region by disrupting the sense of cultural unity evoked in the previous decade, the 1920s, when the Mexican Revolution had inspired a popular rise against oppression. In Paredes's estimation, the 1930s had vanquished the revolutionary fervor so central to the concept and practice of peoplehood. Furthermore, it was difficult for Mexicans to celebrate peoplehood "in the Depression years and the New Deal Era" when the "idea of an American collective 'people' was [being established and] widely debated" (Rivera 140). As Paredes's novel shows, especially alongside Steinbeck's, the "people" hardly included "many racial, ethnic, sexual, and gendered groups" (Rivera 141). Literary critic John-Michael Rivera signals first and foremost "the racism that pervaded the United States" at this time, "which was antithetical to the liberal ideals espoused by white Americans who attempted, but failed, to forge a populist message" (141). The notion of an American people, that is to say, might have worked in a novel like *The Grapes of Wrath* where poor Anglo-Americans are featured in the struggle to procure a respectable and stable form of livelihood. *George Washington Gómez*, on the other hand, shows how Mexican Americans needed but very much struggled to forge their own sense of community in South Texas; the novel's modernist tragedy is the result of the project's failed implementation.

In 1936, the very year Steinbeck visited and wrote about migrants, Paredes grappled with the Texas Centennial, the one-hundredth anniversary celebration of the Texas War of Independence which resulted in the victory of Texas colonists over Mexicans. Literary critic John González, who sees *George Washington Gómez* as a product of this historic moment, states:

> For Paredes, the Centennial was the victory march of Anglo-Texan empire builders over their prostrate Texas-Mexican victims, capping a century of injustice, violence, and despoliation. In squaring off with the Centennial, Paredes's ideological agonist was . . . modernity itself, or the economic, political and social processes that had radically reconfigured everyday life for Texas Mexicans during the first half of the twentieth century. (132)

George Washington Gómez responds to the romantic, local colorist historical and literary representations embedded in the Centennial, including, especially, Anglo-American authored folklore about Mexicans. In the penultimate section of the novel when Gualinto graduates from high school, Paredes caricatures the historic figure of J. Frank Dobie, an early twentieth-century Texas folklorist who made a tremendously successful career writing Mexican history and culture and serving as an authority on Mexicans. Dobie, all too familiar to Paredes in the 1930s, was part of a generation of Anglo-American writers who helped vanquish the Mexican Revolution- and corrido-fervor of the 1910s and 1920s by taming Mexicans in his folklore to the point of picturesqueness.

In *George Washington Gómez*, Paredes provides a tongue-in-cheek observation about men like Dobie: "They were needed [apparently] to point out the local color [and]

make the general public see that starving Mexicans were not an ugly, pitiful sight but something very picturesque and quaint, something tourists from the North would pay money to come and see" (271). "By this same process," Paredes continues, "bloody murders became charming adventure stories, and men one would have considered uncouth and ignorant became true originals" (271-72). If Dobie was Texas's cultural spokesperson at the time, a version or caricature of Dobie plays the keynote speaker at Gualinto's graduation. Paredes gives him the similar sounding name of "K. Hank Harvey" and describes him as "a self-made man," where "self-made" intimates not hard work and ingenuity but opportunism and fraud:

> [In the early 1930s] K. Hank Harvey . . . was considered the foremost of authorities on the Mexicans of Texas. Hank Harvey had been born in New York City some sixty years before. He had gone to grade school and then worked in a delicatessen to make some money so he could come down to his dreamland, Texas. In Texas he arrived, at the age of twenty-one, his soul on fire with the wonders and beauties of this most wonderful and beautiful of states . . . [W]ith only a few years of schooling, he had resolved to become an authority on Texas history and folklore. In a few years he had read every book there was on the early history of Texas, it was said, and his fellow Texans accepted him as the Historical Oracle of the State. There was a slight hitch, it is true. Most early Texas history books were written in Spanish, and K. Hank didn't know the language.

> However, nobody mentioned this, and it didn't detract from Harvey's glory. (270-71)

A Yankee-turned-Texas cowboy and self-proclaimed regional expert, the fictional figure of Hank Harvey hovers in the novel as an emblem of the ludicrous misrepresentation of Mexicans and Mexican history in the United States. Harvey's keynote address is characteristically one-sided. He evokes the 1836 Battle of the Alamo as a site of martyrdom and pride, telling an auditorium full of Mexican high school graduates and their families: "May they [the graduates] never forget the names of Sam Houston, James Bowie, and Davey Crockett. May they remember the Alamo wherever they go" (274). As literary critic John González explains, Dobie's—or here, Harvey's—obsession with the Alamo as a prime locus of Texas history is a testament to the "glorious racial past" in which he believed: "The monuments of Texas history, Dobie suggested, should be not merely to great men but to the genius of a great race that created Texas during the course of a century-long struggle with nonwhite races" (*Border Renaissance* 75). K. Hank Harvey, the character, emerged out of Paredes's personal experience of Dobie in the 1930s, when the renowned folklorist came to Brownsville to give a talk at Paredes's school. Finding the talk "long-winded and condescending," Paredes set out in *George Washington Gómez* to satirize Dobie and take "'revenge by making [Harvey] look ridiculous'" (qtd. in Davis 121-22). Paredes's portrait of Harvey and the man's writings is successful not only because it casts a dubious eye on Dobie's narrow and pastoral vision, but also because it functions self-referentially, as an episode that brings attention

to the literary sophistication of *George Washington Gómez*, a novel born out of the difficult Centennial traditions and modern conditions of the 1930s.

Paredes's parody of Dobie's early folklore would reach its fullest elaboration over half a century later, in his collection of Mexican jokes and oral narrative wittily titled *Uncle Remus con Chile* (1993).[91] Paredes's title plays with that of Dobie's folkloric work *The Flavor of Texas* (1936), but it also responds to Joel Chandler Harris's wildly popular late nineteenth-century collection of black folktales, *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1880). In *The Flavor of Texas*, Dobie likens Mexicans to Uncle Remus, a white southern journalist's creation of an obedient and grandfatherly ex-slave storyteller. Dobie writes: "the popular idea that the Mexicans are a class of treacherous knife-stabbers is gross and unjust; the lower [or laboring] class of Mexicans are in fact as loyal and kindly as the idealized Uncle Remuses of the Old South" (32). In his book, Paredes transforms these perceived Uncle Remuses into subversive characters—"con chile," that is—capitalizing on and inverting the longtime tradition of minstrelsy performed by men like Harris and Dobie.[92] Paredes's attention to the cultural and literary shortfalls of Dobie and Harris makes his own work, from *George Washington Gómez* to *Uncle Remus con Chile*, an eloquent counter history to the white narratives that attempted to 'color' the United

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[91] In an interview, Paredes refers to *Uncle Remus con Chile* simply as a "joke book." See Ramon Saldívar's *Borderlands of Culture*, p. 141.

[92] A reader might also consider here the 'trickster figures' in such sketches and folktales as these. For more on the trickster Brer Rabbit and his relationship to Uncle Remus in Harris's stories, see the introduction to *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* by Robert Hemenway. On a related noted, Paredes's *Uncle Remus con Chile* might fruitfully be discussed alongside Charles Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman* (1899), since this latter book is a clear 'trickster' response to and parody of Harris's work.

States' regions but often rendered stereotypical minorities and glorified Anglo-Americans in the process.

Similar to Paredes's Texan cultural rival, John Steinbeck partook in a form of literary minstrelsy and problematic idealization that arose from his proximity to Mexico and Mexicans. In writing of Steinbeck's longtime affinity for the country, Susan Shillinglaw describes the sense of romance he experienced there: "To John, Mexico had always been 'the golden something,' a place he longed to visit . . . Steinbeck sought in life and art a kind of authenticity that he associated with Mexico . . . In Mexico he sought life lived close to the bone" (*Carol and John* 148).[93] In 1935, a year prior to Paredes and Dobie's encounter with the Centennial, Steinbeck and first wife, Carol, embarked for Mexico. By the time of their departure, Steinbeck had rather exhausted his local materials by publishing his Monterey County/Salinas Valley stories consecutively: *The Pastures of Heaven* in 1932, *The Red Pony* in 1933, *To a God Unknown* in 1933, and *Tortilla Flat* in 1935.[94] In this context, Mexico was for Steinbeck the opportunity to gather new and more exciting (or exotic) writing material and a break from what he considered oppressive U.S. civilization.

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[93] In 1932, Steinbeck had hoped to complete a short story cycle like *The Pastures of Heaven* based on the "local sagas" of Mexico (Shillinglaw, *Carol and John* 148). But Steinbeck, who had planned to make a lone journey into Mexico for this project, "tabled what would have been a quest of many months. Renewed harmony in the marriage . . . made any solo trek unwise" (149). For more on this subject, see Shillinglaw's chapter "Viva Mexico!" in *Carol and John Steinbeck*, pp. 148-63.

[94] Steinbeck's novel *In Dubious Battle* was published upon his return from Mexico in 1936. *In Dubious Battle* is also based in Monterey County, but its interest in migrant labor and farmworkers' rights makes it the precursor to Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*.

Steinbeck's flight into Mexico in the mid 1930s, when seen alongside Paredes and Dobie's writing, raises questions about the country's appeal to Americans in the Depression era. Susan Shillinglaw provides useful historical context to this end, explaining that at the time, "more and more 'cultural pilgrims' traveled to Mexico": Steinbeck and his wife "were among those who appreciated the 'enormous vogue of things Mexican,' . . . when improved diplomatic relations [between the U.S. and Mexico] made the [latter] country seem safer [and] more alluring" (*Carol and John* 150). It was a similar post-1920s, post-Mexican Revolution environment, then, that invited Steinbeck, as it had once invited Dobie to write folklore; Mexico had, in short, transformed into a terrain for literary clarity and vision. But Steinbeck's anticipated Mexico writings halted upon his return to California, and he did not pick up this Mexican thread again until the 1940s—that is, after *The Grapes of Wrath*, his first divorce, and his brief stint in Hollywood.[95] *George Washington Gómez* wages literary and cultural battles against writers like Steinbeck and Dobie. Whereas Mexico might have appealed to white

[95] According to Susan Shillinglaw, "[w]hat [Steinbeck and his wife] sought in Mexico was what [past folklorists] researched and [the Mexican artist Diego] Rivera painted—the folk of Mexico, accorded dignity . . . All of Steinbeck's subsequent work on Mexico—*Sea of Cortez* [1941]*, The Forgotten Village* [1941]*, The Pearl* [1947]*, Viva Zapata!* [1975]—would seek to reveal . . . the lives and cultures of indigenous peoples as they confronted a rapidly changing world" (*Carol and John* 150). If we separate Steinbeck's depiction of Mexicans into pre- and post-Mexican sojourn categories, his earlier *Tortilla Flat* Mexicans stand as caricatures alongside his later, more admirable and even noble indigenous Mexicans. Literary scholar Eric Skipper makes a very similar point: "[T]he purity of Indian blood seems to be the real litmus test for Steinbeck. His Mexican characters with all or mostly Indian blood have the most heroic traits . . . Once Indian blood is diluted, some of the dignity is compromised for comic traits . . . Steinbeck's paisanos are often caricatures who are given to silly deeds like stealing wine and growing marijuana in the flower pots of the public plaza" (83).

"cultural pilgrims" at the time, it was the Mexican American's current condition that confounded Paredes.

Paredes paid careful attention to the way the United States' intense interest in the (white) people's movement during the Depression left Mexican Americans and other minorities out of the picture.[96] It is no surprise, then, when Paredes parodies Depression-era imagery in *George Washington Gómez*. In the penultimate section of the novel, he shamelessly writes the following:

> [T]o the Mexican laborer who tilled the American landowner's fields and orchards, such a thing as a depression was beyond his understanding. He could not imagine a state of things where he would be poorer than he already was. He heard about the people of Oklahoma, who were leaving their land, getting on their trucks and going west. To the Mexicotexan laborer, anybody who owned a truck was rich. He heard of some sharecropper families who had nothing to eat but flour and bacon. The Mexican laborer, who had subsisted on tortillas most of his life, wondered how people who could afford biscuits and bacon could be poor. He heard how people in the big cities were lining up to receive free soup and bread because of the Depression, and he would joke with his friends, "I wish

[96] Although *George Washington Gómez* does not speak at length of migrant labor, the novel does show a complementary view of the Depression. Gualinto, for instance, grows up with his uncle Feliciano, whose possession of a stable and non-menial job is illustrated as an anomaly: "Feliciano had been spared [laboring in the fields]. He had a quiet well-paying job in the shade" (42).

> what they call the Depression would come down here so we could get some of that." (195)

Here, Paredes describes, playfully, of course, the somewhat belated arrival of the Depression to South Texas in the world of the novel. But on a more serious note, we see how living one's daily life abjectly, as a socially rejected human being, is not unfamiliar to the Mexican laborer. Poverty, too, is a regular and known condition. In this context, Mexicans have neither the financial independence to afford "a truck" nor the support of generous Americans or American programs to receive "free" food. *George Washington Gómez* suggests the Mexican is on his own. Gualinto himself is the prime example of this. The overwhelming presence of the Depression—of everything it stands for culturally and ideologically—is what renders his descent into intolerance and racism.

IV.

In the last section of *George Washington Gómez*, Gualinto, who now goes by "George," looks back on his boyhood—his dreams of revolution and Mexican victory—with smug amusement. Of course, "George" may have found a calling in the U.S. Army, but he is, without question, left mentally adrift. His former childhood ambitions of exacting revenge on "gringos" haunt his dreams as a grown man, where, in spite of his extreme American patriotism, he subconsciously revises the outcome of historical events like the Battle of San Jacinto. In the recurring dream, this decisive Texas Revolution battle results not in the defeat of Mexico but in the capture of Sam Houston and the restoration of the belief that "Texas and the Southwest will remain forever Mexican" (281). While George finds it "Goddam ridiculous [that] the daydreams of his boyhood

[came] back to him in his sleep" (281), these daydreams clearly stand for forgotten or suppressed desires to recover and rewrite Mexican-American history. George refers to the daydreams as "[p]laying with his little wood soldiers" (281) to diminish their importance and the subconscious message they bear. Far more annoyed than concerned, George thinks to himself, "Why do I keep on fighting battles that were won and lost a long time ago?" (282). Here, the image of Gualinto, the boy, playing with little wood soldiers is perhaps meant to evoke the image of an Anglo-American engaging in the same activity and a problematic game like "Cowboys and Indians." For the first time in the novel, we see Gualinto's racist desire to "exterminate the Comanches," an American Indian tribe of the Southwest that threatens "the northern provinces of the new Republic of Mexico" in the early nineteenth century (282). Gualinto, the boy, however, also longs to assemble, in the mid nineteenth century this time, a "well-trained army that included Irishmen and escaped American Negro slaves" that "would defeat . . . not only the army of the United States but its navy as well. [Gualinto] would reconquer all of the territory west of the Mississippi River and recover Florida as well" (282). This latter desire reverses somewhat the "Cowboys and Indians" impulse of Americans, insofar as the racialized peoples will now defeat the cowboys.

But these are the daydreams of a boy, the novel suggests. George returns to Jonesville only because work takes him there, to secure the border and seek suspicious activity in Japanese and German intelligence now that the Second World War is underway. In this last section of *George Washington Gómez*, we can start to see a latent geomodernist landscape, one that cannot reach its fullest elaboration because the novel is

told from the perspective of a character who has closed his mind to anything but his "country" (302). The regional barrio and the nation are to remain painfully at odds. The barrio, furthermore, seems to have more in common with the globe than with the United States, especially insofar as the United States is now represented by "George." When George takes a physical tour of his former barrio in the novel's final pages, we become privy to the many histories and global entities buried in the town of Jonesville. Nowhere in the novel does the presence of region/globe vis-à-vis U.S. imperial power feel more palpable than here. China and the Chinese, Japan and Germany, Mexico City and New York City are all evoked, as the novel's Mexican characters discuss their relation to these places and its people. Columbus Day is discussed and playfully criticized by local Mexicans in a barbershop. U.S. territorial expansion is also talked about: "They're going to have to expand pretty soon and grab more territory," one man says (297). The others in the barbershop join in this "territory" conversation and argue that the U.S. should not "expand to the south again" (i.e., further into Mexico here) but should make use of its own "Midwest [where] there's lots of land" (297). Joking ensues, and the U.S. Depression is parodied once again: "Yes," another Mexican man says, "but all that land is not good. I've been in the Nebraskas and the Oklahoomas myself. And in places there is nobody because in summer it is hell and in winter it freezes every day" (297). As Gualinto tours Jonesville, then, many geographies and histories begin to emerge. Mexicans in the barrio are linked to others who have seen not only the Depression but also the battles that extend beyond the current World War.

Although these things are mentioned only passing, they converge here to imply the worldwide occurrence of displacement, dispossession, and/or racialization. To borrow Laura Doyle's description of what she calls the geomodernist "horizon reversal," we can see how although *George Washington Gómez* is set in Jonesville and focuses on Gualinto, it also evokes "an altered backdrop" that gives us a glimpse into how Mexicans see the larger world. Jonesville here gives way to and "registers the larger violent environment" in which people like these poor Mexicans find themselves (136-37).[97] One of the best examples of this, as previously discussed, comes when George's uncle warns George not to "mistake a slant-eyed Indian from southern Mexico for a Japanese agent" (299). These words might also serve as a warning against the United States' impending internment of Japanese Americans, where those of Japanese descent were "mistake[n]" or taken as potentially untrustworthy and disloyal. Although, in the end, the globe is a generic landscape in *George Washington Gómez*, its presence critically situates the novel within a more inclusive geographic realm. Racism, along with the violent process of racialization and racial profiling that ensued in the Depression and World War II years, was veritably boundless. *George Washington Gómez* ends bleakly because modern conditions have defeated the Gualinto of the past and created instead a culture-less patriot named George. As a result, the town of Jonesville cannot exercise global awareness and unity in a time of war because it has lost its 'leader.'

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[97] Doyle does not write about Paredes's *George Washington Gómez*, but I borrow her words to show what I consider to be the novel's geomodernist predisposition.

The flickering of global possibility, then, might only be detected by the reader. Paredes's "map-based model of narration" (Berman 286), his physical and cultural tracing of George's final visit home, tells a story of people's relationship to place and history, the past and the future, the town and nation, and the region and globe. But for George, there is only the present threat of war and anti-American deeds that might disfigure his great country. Modernist tragedy—George's rootless alienation—ensues because communal and global possibilities are difficult to come by in a time of depression and war. Because, in the world of *George Washington Gómez*, the nation offers little or nothing to Mexicans unless they are willing to suppress ethnic tradition and culture, the future of Mexicans seems bleak. George's uncle Feliciano, for instance, tells his nephew at the end of the novel: "This is one of those times when I wish I believed in another life, in a life after death . . . Then I could look forward to seeing your father in purgatory or limbo or wherever it is that Mexican yokels go. We could sit down and have a good long talk about you" (302). An embittered Feliciano, frustrated by George's whitewashed ways, cannot make sense of George's abandonment of Mexican culture in favor of an abstracted sense of his "country" that does not seem to "include the Mexicans living in it" (302). Notably, Feliciano speaks of George's physical movement away from the region and Mexicans in global terms, casting his nephew's newfound maturity and patriotism as products of visiting places but seeing nothing or seeing only the same "American" thing: "Where will you go this time? China? It seems like every time you come home for a visit you go farther and farther away from where you were born" (298).

Discovering a more promising geomodernist thread in *George Washington Gómez* takes work, and the novel's ending must be conceived of alongside moments of play and parody. The barbershop talk, for one, is witty and intelligent. Even George, the American, before he dismisses it, is amused by the talk because he understands its humor. These Mexican regionalist characters, in a sense, know more about the world than George does because he now views the region, the nation, and the globe through a tunnel of empty patriotism. And they certainly know more about Texas and its ties to U.S. and world history than the self-proclaimed Texas and Mexican expert "K. Hank Harvey" presumes to know.

V.

Unlike *George Washington Gómez*, *The Grapes of Wrath* writes regional desires as national ones, as those of 'the people.' In Paredes's novel, regional affinity is simultaneously affirmed and questioned and put into conversation with global awareness. Even as these novels impart very different stories in the end, they offer contemporaneous lenses through which to view the United States' emergent relationship to its people. Whereas in *The Grapes of Wrath* Oklahoma migrants hold the United States to its promises, in *George Washington Gómez* Mexicotexans know from the start that these promises are fundamentally flawed and have not been made to minorities. Instead of turning to the country for support, Mexicotexans seek one-another and others in the regional and global community of racialized and displaced peoples.

In my desire to construct realist and regionalist American literary history that includes Mexican-American writers, I have been tempted to say that *George Washington*

Gómez picks up where *The Grapes of Wrath* leaves off since it, too, is profoundly invested in histories of displacement and cultural erasure. But *George Washington Gómez*'s historical trajectory spans a longer time, from the start of World War I to the start of World War II, and it offers a wider representation of the Depression's literary genres. Unlike *The Grapes of Wrath* which found immense success—even among censorship charges and book burning ceremonies—and seems hopeful of organizing among the American people, something about *George Washington Gómez* stops one cold. It was published a generation late, and perhaps its belated recognition as valuable American literature speaks to the belated telling of a Mexican-American story as part of the 'American people' story. *George Washington Gómez*'s bleak ending alone merits being read; it feels more provocative than Steinbeck's Roseasharn—and it sends a different yet intensely meaningful message about a tormented human in a region of the U.S. Southwest.

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