

— *When We Arrive* —

A NEW LITERARY HISTORY OF
MEXICAN AMERICA

José F. Aranda Jr.

The University of Arizona Press
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Manufactured in the United States of America

First Printing

08 07 06 05 04 03 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Aranda, José F., 1961–

When we arrive : a new literary history of Mexican America /

José F. Aranda, Jr.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8165-2141-7 (acid-free paper)

1. American literature—Mexican American authors—History and criticism. 2. Mexican Americans—Intellectual life. 3. Mexican Americans in literature. I. Title.

PS153.M4 A73 2002

810.9'86872—dc21

2002006412

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

CHAPTER THREE

All Strangers in a Strange Land

When Anglo and Mexican Histories Collide

In 1898, the year of the Spanish American War—ostensibly the last colonial war fought in North America—Mary C. Morse read at a gathering of the Ladies' Pioneer Society an account of her memories of San Diego when she arrived in 1865.¹ Then she was known as Mary C. Walker. Miss Walker had been sent by the state superintendent of schools in San Francisco to be San Diego County's official and only schoolteacher. In her story, not unlike that of Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years before the Mast* (1840), she finds a landscape that is desolate and barren. Nowhere does she see green. Like many of her New England compatriots between 1848 and 1880, Mary C. Walker felt she had stepped into an alien world. She writes of "wild looking horsemen, flourishing their riatas," dilapidated buildings made of adobe, braying donkeys, and fearsome mosquitoes. Of her school, she remembers that it "was composed mostly of Spanish and half-breed children, with a few English and several Americans. Many American soldiers and some sailors had come to San Diego in the early days, and married pretty señoritas. Hence the half-breed children" (258–59). What made San Diego alien to this northeastern schoolmarm was ultimately less the landscape than how the region itself retained the cultures that had existed before the war?

What really caught her attention, what she remembers most vividly, are what she saw as the exotic gatherings of Californios, Native Americans, and their children, at dances, weddings, bullfights, and the seasonal circus. Muchachos lassoing pigs are recalled alongside the elite Californianas. At a wedding, a bride is "surrounded by her lady friends, each

with a cigarita between her white gloved fingers." At circus performances of "trapeze and tight rope [that] looked especially weird and fantastic in the smoky light of those primitive lanterns," the "Americans and Spanish" watched from one side of the corral, while "the Indians squatted on the ground on the other" (259). She adds: "The dinners to which I was invited by the Spanish were to me a novelty and very enjoyable. The table was spread in the garden under the trees, and outside was an oven in which was roasted a pig, a sheep, or a kid whole and served with a dressing composed largely of olives, red peppers and various savory herbs, also a sauce of tomatoes and [chili] peppers, half and half. A small quantity of this would bring tears to the most stony eyes" (259-60). Within two years of her arrival, Mary C. Walker would marry E. W. Morse, known in 1898, and now as one of the cofounders of modern San Diego. Except for noting this brief moment among the Ladies' Pioneer Society, regional historians relegate Mary C. Walker to the role of wifely appendage to E. W. Morse. Morse is widely credited, along with Alonzo E. Horton, with having transformed San Diego from its "sleepy Mexican origins" into its turn-of-the-century status as an oasis for Easterners seeking the salubrious climate of southern California.

The story of Mary C. Walker dramatizes the degree to which social relationships, racial hierarchies, and political structures in California had changed in the fifty years following the Mexican-American War. Without an iota of irony, Walker confidently tells her audience: "The Old Town of today is quite a modern town compared with the Old Town of thirty-three years ago" (257). I purposely have begun this chapter with this "insider's" sense of change so as to contextualize processes that forever after marked the lives of people of Mexican descent in California. In particular, I start with Walker's memory of San Diego in 1865 because it relates both culturally and biographically to the primary interest of this chapter: the life and writings of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton. Ruiz de Burton knew both Mary C. Walker and E. W. Morse. In fact, Morse handled some of her legal matters in the 1870s, and very badly in her estimation. Furthermore, Morse was instrumental in helping to edge prominent Californios, like Ruiz de Burton, out of their land-grant claims even to the extent of supporting squatters. In this regard, E. W. Morse shows an uncanny resemblance to the thieving lawyer Peter Roper represented in Ruiz de Burton's 1885 novel, *The Squatter and the Don*. Roper makes his livelihood through ruthless exploitation of the law.

Walker's story thus provides a convenient entry point by which we can measure the collisions between Anglo and Mexican histories at a crucial moment: when the United States began to recapture the social relations of the newly won territories away from those more characteristic of their previous colonial masters. In reconstructing the life and writings of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton in the following pages, I attempt to recover the worldview of one Californiana whom Walker would rather remember as "Spanish," not Mexican, a woman who in fact married an Anglo soldier, and subsequently gave birth to "half-breeds." Significantly, she wrote plays and novels, and during the Civil War befriended such diverse public figures as Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln and Jefferson and Varina Davis. While these facts alone might interest historians and literary critics alike, the real potential of the cultural biography of Ruiz de Burton lies in revisiting the historical terrain traversed by Californios during the Mexican-American War and its aftermath.

Ruiz de Burton's life and writings vividly bridge and incorporate the two colonial histories that anchored, often for the worse, the social fabric of her generation. To clarify the profound cultural and political upheaval she experienced, this chapter provides an extended biography, much of which comes from my research on her extended New England in-laws and the other relationships she forged while living on the East Coast. I examine the fluidity of nationalist loyalties during and immediately after the Mexican-American War, and finally I offer a reading of Ruiz de Burton's 1872 satire of New England society, *Who Would Have Thought It?* Altogether, I demonstrate the role that history, biography, and culture might play in analyses of Mexican American texts that preceded the political ethos of the Chicano/a Movement.

Given the social and legal consequences of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Chicano/a scholars like Rosaura Sanchez and Genaro Padilla generally employ postcolonial criticism when studying the lives and writings of the Californios of Alta California.⁵ For them, the Californios are to be considered "subalterns." While the concept of the subaltern may be applicable in instances, by and large its usefulness/appropriateness is directly linked to how one interprets individuals' and groups' relationships to Mexican colonialism. For example, Rosaura Sanchez interprets the oral voices, transcribed in the Bancroft Collection of early California histories, as linguistic vestiges of subalterns. But what is striking to me is that these voices remember and reconstruct their subject

positions via narratives that portray their own colonial domination of California. That there's a contradiction between the theoretical valence of the word "subaltern" and the political and historical record of the California as an imperial colonizer is, I am sure, not lost upon Sánchez. What's at issue for her and other like-minded Chicano/a scholars is the theory of historical agency best suited to promote a sociopolitical agenda for today's Mexican American community.

In other words, like many U.S. historiographers in the twentieth century, Chicano/a scholars have sought a "usable past" in the historical record. That usable past has been deployed as a corrective to the ethnocentric bias and racist portrayals in American culture of people of Mexican descent. Elsewhere, that usable past has been used to intervene on the low voting practices of twentieth-century Mexican Americans that imply, wrongly, disinterested citizenship. As I argued in chapter 1, a nosé and celebratory vision of the multiracial pasts of indigenous, Spanish, and Mexican peoples was fused in Chicano/a studies to create an alternative nationalism and sense of direction for contemporary Mexican American political life. Significantly, this fusion was itself articulated through and legitimized by linking Mexican American history to a highly visible national ideology that affirms immigration as a fundamental feature of nation formation. Like its counterpart in a Puritan myth of origins, the usable past constructed by Chicano/a studies invoked a progressive sense of history that had much in common with many other narratives of immigration to North America since 1620. More will be said on this topic in chapter 4, but what's important to reiterate is that the usefulness of this past was tied to its perceived differences from and opposition to U.S. history.

Yet the historic record that remains in archives, published materials, and even oral records from the nineteenth century suggests a more complicated story. Chicano/a historians, especially those involved in New Western History, have delved into the colonial record of a Mexican American past for some time now. Their findings suggest that by 1846 Mexican society in the northern territories was clearly stratified into racial and economic classes; the legacy of three hundred years of Spanish colonial policy and social practices. Violence against Native Americans was still common in 1846, as was racial discrimination—although Mexico had abolished slavery by 1826. Attempts to colonize the northern ter-

ritories continued after Mexican independence. And some of the policies actually encouraged Anglo settlement. For their part, longtime northern inhabitants had developed longstanding economic relations with Anglo traders from Texas to California. Historian David Weber cites established economic relations as a contributing factor to what he calls "the Americanization of the North," a social and economic transformation of the northern territories that actually paved the way for U.S. domination of the area.⁴ All this would suggest that among northern peoples there exists a more complex history than that of simple victimization. From time to time, these northern Mexicans exercised the kind of agency normally attributed to Anglo Americans. While Chicano/a historians have begun to work out the comparative aspects, literary critics have yet to venture onto this terrain.

In favor of more complex models of historical agency, I argue against Rosaura Sánchez's and Beatrice Pita's construction of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton as a "subaltern" and her biography as an unproblematic counterimperialist history.⁵ I prefer not to identify her as a "subaltern": I am more comfortable with historicizing her, and her Californio peers, as products of competing colonial enterprises in Alta California. The critiques and contradictions that surface from the writings of these Californios about U.S. colonialism do so not from new subordinated subject positions but rather from enraged and embittered equals, who in losing the cultural and material privileges of elite society resort to "words"—literature, letters, diaries, histories—to set the record straight about the American invasion. Precisely because in the course of her life Ruiz de Burton comes to prefer her prior identity as a white Mexican colonialist, despite all its compromises and failures, we come to understand the subtle dimensions of two colonialisms, not just one, and importantly how they do and do not overlap with each other.

Overall, the goal here, and in the chapters to follow, is to offer a case study of how we might renarrate American literary history from the vantage point of New Chicano/a Studies. In this literary history, Mexican Americans, far from being marginalized entities, are also figures who have played a historic role in producing U.S. culture and literature since 1848. Ruiz de Burton's life and writings, for example, document a much more broad-based and lively engagement of Mexican Americans with discourses linking literature, aesthetics, and the nation than was

previously assumed. Until the advent of the Recovery Project, these discourses about national formation were believed to be the exclusive purview of nineteenth-century Anglo and African American writers. Like those of many of her California peers, Ruiz de Burton's observations and judgments about New England society and U.S. politics are informed by her prior status as a Mexican citizen. Few canonical writers of this century share such a distinction. Whereas many U.S. writers have critiqued the nation by means of various strategies of distancing (Hawthorne through the Puritans, Melville through South Sea Islanders, Thoreau through even the Mexican-American War), Ruiz de Burton relies on her own memories of a Spanish-Mexican colonial tradition to fathom her alienation from the culture and society that dominated her worldview after 1848. This alienation grounds her critiques of the United States in terms that are not instantly recognizable: in effect, she comes at her subject matter directly, and from the "outside," in contrast to those writers working indirectly from "inside." Yet at the same time, Ruiz de Burton's life and writings disallow any naively conceived hero worship of her. At times she was all too much a product of her century.

*A Short Biography of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton*⁶

The moon shone but dimly
 Beyond the battle plain
 A gentle breeze fanned softly
 Over the features of the slain
 The guns had hushed their thunder
 The guns in silence lay
 Then came the señorita
 The Maid of Monterey.
 She cast a look of anguish
 On the dying and the dead
 And made her lap a pillow
 For those who mourned and bled
 Now here's to that bright beauty
 Who drives death's pangs away
 The meek-eyed señorita
 The Maid of Monterey.

Although she loved her country
 And prayed that it might live
 Yet for the foreign soldier
 She had a tear to give
 And when the dying soldier
 In her bright gleam did pray
 He blessed this señorita
 The Maid of Monterey.
 She gave the thirsty water
 And dressed each bleeding wound
 A fervent prayer she uttered
 For those whom death had doomed
 And where the bugle sounded
 Just at the dawn of day
 They blessed this señorita
 The Maid of Monterey.⁷

A short time after the Mexican-American War, the above verses were composed and sung as a ballad in honor of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton. According to turn-of-the-century historian Winifred Davidson, Ruiz de Burton's winsome ways inspired broad admiration from everyone.⁸ Ruiz de Burton's first residence in Alta California was Monterey, California, where Henry S. Burton, her husband, was posted. Soldiers under his command were the likely composers of this ballad. There is no evidence yet to determine whether she was pleased by their tribute. But the ballad tells us a lot about how the Anglo American soldiers of the war wished to see her. Again, whether she mirrored this wish in any substantial way, apart from her marriage to Henry S. Burton, is not yet known. By the end of her life, the one-time Maid of Monterey would come to rue the events and forces that ceded Alta California to the United States and reduced her to a second-class citizen. Yet, if these changes caused her to grow bitter over time, they were also responsible for her move to Alta California, her marriage to an Anglo American West Point officer, the birth of their two children, and her maturity as a political commentator.

Ruiz de Burton's life and writings bear witness to an incredibly complicated time in Mexican American history. Born a Mexican citizen, heir to Mexico's particular and influential colonial history in the Americas,

Ruiz de Burton's life is a glimpse into the tremendous changes that occurred when Mexican citizens, like her, were suddenly beholden to an entirely different nation grounded in a non-Mexican colonial past. To make matters worse, the elitist privileges of her past slowly gave way to demotion in class and social status that rendered her indistinguishable from lower-class Mexican Americans. In sharp contrast to her influential Anglo friends and acquaintances, Ruiz de Burton slipped into anonymity soon after her death.

Fortunately, Ruiz de Burton's novels were recovered through the impressive detective work of Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita. Together, they have firmly established a place for Mexican American authors within studies of nineteenth-century American literature. Before too long, other scholars will join Sanchez and Pita in redrawing the racial map of U.S. literary history, by calling attention to the writings of Hispanics who were the contemporaries of authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Jacobs, and W. E. B. Dubois. In a feat not to be underestimated, Ruiz de Burton's recoverers have disrupted the tendency to view the nineteenth century exclusively within white/black racial histories, and thus have expanded literary studies beyond the authors featured in E. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* on the one hand and the feminist recovery of Anglo and African American women writers on the other. This diversification of racial binaries alone makes Ruiz de Burton an important figure in the evolution of American literary history and criticism.

Eleven years after the Treaty of Córdoba and sixteen years before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton was born on July 5, 1852, in Loreto, Baja California, to an aristocratic family. According to Sanchez and Pita, her maternal grandfather, Don José Manuel Ruiz, was a military commander of Baja California's northern frontier and governor of the territory from 1822 to 1825. Because of his military service and familial connections, Don José would come to own ranch lands in Baja California. Though these same connections would later help Ruiz de Burton relocate to Alta California in 1848, overall, according to Sanchez and Pita, the family's aristocratic and military affiliations did not translate into economic prosperity. This discrepancy between economic prosperity and noble lineage would haunt Ruiz de Burton, at times overtaking her own ambitions and overshadowing her accomplishments.

Having successfully manufactured a military confrontation with Mexico, President James Polk asked for a declaration of war from the U.S. Congress on May 11, 1846. Congress declared war on Mexico by the end of that same day, putting into motion a series of national events that would forever transform Ruiz de Burton's life. Far from the more devastating theaters of war, Baja California was nevertheless invaded and occupied by U.S. military forces. Among the officers occupying La Paz was Captain Henry S. Burton of Norwich, Vermont.⁹ Captain Burton was one of several officers ordered in late spring of 1847 to quell an armed resistance in Baja California. Successful in his mission, Captain Burton and María Amparo Ruiz apparently met and fell in love during his tour of duty. The citizens of Baja California showed little resistance to their new invaders. This was probably due to their small population, their distance from the political and military leadership of Mexico City, and the fact that the U.S. navy effectively controlled all the navigable harbors. Given the unlikelihood of the Mexican military coming to their rescue, Ruiz de Burton's family must have sought out, as did other families, cordial relations with Anglo American officers.

After the Battle of Cerro Gordo on April 18, 1847, a long period passed before a treaty was drawn up and signed. During that period, it was not clear what would happen to Baja California. This uncertainty came as a surprise because President Polk, prior to 1846, declared his intentions to make Alta California part of the United States in any conflict with Mexico. When the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed on February 2, 1848, it became shockingly clear that Baja California would not become part of the United States. For some of the elite citizenry in La Paz who had been supportive of the American invasion, this was a dangerous setback. Captain Burton and his fellow officers petitioned their superiors to evacuate these individuals and their families to protect them from Mexican government reprisals and to repay their loyalties during the war. United States authorities in Monterey, California, granted the petition. Over 550 residents of Baja California were relocated to Monterey, California, on two transport ships. The military commander at Monterey welcomed these Baja residents as individuals who had aided the cause of the United States during the war. By provisions of the peace treaty, Mexican citizens who remained or took up residency in newly conquered territories would be deemed to have elected U.S. citizenship.

María Amparo Ruiz and her immediate family—mother Doña Isabel,

brother Federico, sister Manuela, and Pablo de la Toba, her sister's husband—were among the several hundred who left for Alta California. Eventually, some of this group returned to Baja California. Others, including María Amparo Ruiz and her family, stayed and took up residence in Monterey as new U.S. citizens. The courtship between María Amparo Ruiz and Captain Burton that began in La Paz soon turned to marriage plans. Following the news of their engagement, however, controversy erupted over religious differences and nationalist sentiments. A jealous suitor of María Amparo Ruiz protested to Catholic authorities that marriage was out of the question because Burton was not Catholic. In turn, according to historian Frederick Oden, California Governor Richard B. Mason forbade state authorities from recognizing any marriage that joined a Catholic to a non-Catholic. In the end, María Amparo Ruiz and Henry S. Burton were married secretly by Reverend Samuel H. Willey at the home of Captain E. R. S. Carby on July 9, 1849.

Married just six days after her seventeenth birthday, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton began a new life, with a West Point officer, in a rapidly changing U.S. territory. The discovery of gold in 1849 at Sutter's Mill accelerated not only internal emigration from Anglo America, but also California's petition for statehood and entry into the Union. The California Convention of 1849 created a mixture of excitement and dread among longtime Californios, who had much at stake in the proceedings. As the convention drew to a close, it was apparent that race would become a defining feature of the laws that protected property and ensured civil rights. Contemporaneously, abolitionists and anti-abolitionists in the eastern states were debating the expansion of slavery to the newly acquired western territories. The Missouri Compromise of 1850 led to an accommodation of slavery, but it could not ameliorate the moral and political differences of opinion that existed between the North and South. By the end of the Civil War, the Californios would come to understand firsthand the consequences of racial and ethnic discrimination in the United States through the loss of their lands, social standing, and political representation.

But during the early period of the state, Ruiz de Burton and the Captain settled down into family life. Ruiz de Burton gave birth to their first child, Nellie, on July 4, 1850. Two years later, in 1852, Captain Burton was posted in San Diego. Their second child, Henry Halleck Burton, named after Captain Burton's friend and comrade-in-arms Henry Wager

Halleck, was born on November 24, 1852, in the New Town section of San Diego. In 1853, the Burtons purchased land from Pío Pico's Jamul land grant—no doubt facilitated by Ruiz de Burton's kinship ties to the Pico family. It may have been during this period that Ruiz de Burton began to reveal herself publicly as a writer. Oden relates that while she lived at Mission San Diego in 1855, Ruiz de Burton seems to have written some of the more popular productions for Mission Theatre. Ruiz de Burton's social standing as a Californio and her marriage to Captain Burton surely made her literary debut a grand affair locally. She was well suited to this role. She had a French tutor as a child, and read with vigor the passionate novels of Victor Hugo.

Ruiz de Burton was particularly well connected among other Californios and was a great letter writer in Spanish as well as English, keeping up extended correspondence with relatives and friends throughout her life. As for the Captain, he was treated like a war hero and a favorite son of the new state. He was apparently well known for his avid, if not excessive, hunting of quail in the region. The only real shadow that plagued the family was the Captain's penchant for extravagant spending and a tendency not to pay his bills. After his death, Ruiz de Burton would have to contend with a number of lawsuits deriving from his spending habits and poor judgment in business dealings.

In 1859, Ruiz de Burton uprooted her family when the Captain was ordered to return east. She would stay on the Atlantic coast for ten years, following her husband through various assignments. The Burtons ended up making homes in several states: Rhode Island, New York, Washington, D.C., Delaware, and Virginia. With civil war imminent, these were heady but fearful times for Ruiz de Burton. According to historian Kathleen Crawford, Ruiz de Burton and the Captain attended Lincoln's inaugural ball, meeting the president and First Lady.¹⁰ As in California, Ruiz de Burton circulated within the most prominent social and political circles. In fact, during the Civil War she had an audience with President Lincoln, making the case that her husband should be promoted. He was promoted to colonel after that meeting. After the war, Ruiz de Burton would become very good friends with Varina Davis, the wife of Jefferson Davis. The former president of the Confederacy was a prisoner of war at Fort Monroe in Virginia. Henry Burton became commandant of the fort and Davis's warden in late 1865. Varina Davis wrote that she and Ruiz de Burton would drink tea and talk badly about the Yankees.¹¹

Throughout her life, Ruiz de Burton often held contradictory political loyalties that did not necessarily impede her personal relationships with individuals. Despite being married to a Union officer, Ruiz de Burton was not unusual in her sympathies for the South. Early in the war effort, Mary Todd Lincoln, the First Lady, was often vilified by pro-Union journalists and politicians as a Southern sympathizer. As a matter of public record, she did have friends in the South, but so did many Northerners, if not most people in Washington. The war fueled a hysteria hard to combat. In fact, all members of the Democratic Party, from the North as well as the South, were periodically harassed throughout the war even if they publicly supported the Union. Such were the cultural politics of the war that even President Lincoln's loyalties were questioned from time to time. Ruiz de Burton's own political affiliations and how she negotiated her political friendships during the Civil War should be viewed in the context of this suspicious climate.

Although the family survived the military campaigns and the politics that came with it, the war inevitably took its toll. Although breveted brigadier general for his efforts to capture Petersburg, Virginia, Henry Burton had also contracted malaria there. His health would never be the same. Moved to lighter duties whenever possible for health reasons, Henry Burton nevertheless died from complications due to malaria and hepatitis on April 4, 1869, at Fort Adams, Newport, Rhode Island. At his death, Ruiz de Burton was three months shy of her thirty-seventh birthday. His death was devastating to her: her romance with the Captain, nourished during a time of war, was a central part of her identity. Yet, such was Ruiz de Burton's own pride and personal resourcefulness that she lost little time in recognizing that she was the only person who could provide for her family: Ruiz de Burton and her children, Nellie and Harry, returned to San Diego in 1870, desirous of taking up residence again at the Jamul ranch, which she had left in the care of her brother and mother. Except to attend to one of the suits against her that reached the U.S. Supreme Court, Ruiz de Burton would never return east again.

The Jamul ranch, which originally comprised over half a million acres, had deteriorated badly in their absence. Complicating matters were the auctions held in the family's absence to pay off debts from before the war. From then on, Ruiz de Burton seems to have devoted herself to securing the family's livelihood: according to Sánchez and Pita, she was involved in "the large scale cultivation of castor beans and . . .

the building of a water reservoir at Jamul . . . land finally establishing a Cement Company to exploit the Jamul limestone deposits that her husband had first used in 1856 to make lime." Most of these ventures ended badly, costing her more money than she had, especially given that she executed her own suits to secure title to the Jamul ranch and Rancho Ensenada de Todos Santos in Baja California. Unfortunately, both ranches would be a source of lasting legal troubles for the family. In the case of the Jamul ranch, the promise of a major railroad line passing through the property on its way to San Diego motivated Ruiz de Burton's economic interests. Hampering her legal efforts were the laws that did not recognize women as owners of property, or as citizens due equitable legal representation. Interestingly, Mexican laws at the time offered her more protection, both as a female citizen and as a property owner.

Ruiz de Burton's Jamul title came under question when various Anglo homesteaders in the 1870s sued, claiming the land fell within the public domain. Eventually, Pío Pico's own title to the land was rejected by the infamous Land Commission that judged land disputes in the years following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Sánchez and Pita note that Ruiz de Burton's legal troubles with the Jamul ranch took odd twists and turns. She secured title from the state in 1870, only to fend off a series of lawsuits by illegal squatters. In October 1872, Ruiz de Burton scored a tremendous victory when her political friends persuaded the Supreme Court to dismiss an appeal that sought to overturn the 1870 ruling in her favor. Afterward, in order to save a fraction of the original ranch, she applied for a homestead, which the California Supreme Court belatedly granted in 1889. However, by 1889 Ruiz de Burton had incurred numerous legal costs and, at various points, had mortgaged parcels of land in order to finance her family's livelihood, as well as her legal suits and business ventures. In 1895, Harry, Ruiz de Burton's son, was forced to sell the remaining portion of the ranch in order to pay off a variety of family debts.

Despite all her financial woes and court battles, Ruiz de Burton found enough time to seriously pursue a literary career beginning in the 1870s. In doing so, she joined countless other women writers of the nineteenth century who took to writing to support their families. Instrumental in helping to secure publication for her first novel was a well-known New York lawyer, Samuel L. M. Barlow.¹² Like many of her friends and acquaintances, Barlow was an ironic choice for Ruiz de Burton. He

had made his initial fortune and fame by settling a number of cases over land disputes that resulted from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. He went on to become a nationally and internationally sought-after lawyer because of his ability to settle disputes out of court. Barlow's abilities typically placed him in the middle of national controversies, as in the 1857 Supreme Court case of *Scott v. Sanford (Dred Scott Case)*. According to historian Richard M. Gatten, he was the executor of the will of Charles P. Chouteau that listed Scott as a slave.¹⁵ He made a memento of a copy of the Supreme Court decision that ruled against Scott's suit. On this copy, Barlow wrote: "At the time of this decision Dred Scott belonged to me." This very complex man was a major collector of Americana relating to the European discovery of the Americas, not unlike the more famous John Carter Brown or James Lenox.¹⁴ Not surprisingly, Barlow was also a major political player in the election of James Buchanan as president of the United States in 1856. It was Barlow who put Ruiz de Burton in contact with her first publisher, J. B. Lippincott of Philadelphia.

In 1872, J. B. Lippincott published Ruiz de Burton's *Who Would Have Thought It?* The novel, a biting satire, is based heavily on her experiences in New England and her dealings with her husband's relatives and neighbors. In the course of the novel, Ruiz de Burton takes on what she judges as the sanctimonious righteousness of New England culture, New England clergy, the institution of republican motherhood, abolitionism, and the gap between the rhetoric of democracy and the corruption of government all come under severe scrutiny and criticism because of their blatant hypocrisy. Despite her own positive dealings with Lincoln, even the president is ridiculed and censured. Throughout this satire, there is nevertheless a belief in the perfectibility of government, and not just that of the United States. The novel provides evidence that Ruiz de Burton might have seen herself as an early Pan Americanist, interested in just government throughout the Americas. That her novel was published in Philadelphia, where the Declaration of Independence was penned and signed, that Lippincott was the most successful publisher of his time (by 1876, Lippincott was the largest distributor of books in the United States), testifies to the cultural authority Ruiz de Burton's very first novel wielded.¹⁵

As a playwright, Ruiz de Burton wrote *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1876), a comedy in five acts, based on Miguel de Cervantes's 1605 novel. This play was published by J. H. Carmany & Co. in San Francisco. Carmany

was an interesting figure in the early Anglo publishing history of the state of California. He bought the magazine *The Overland Monthly*, which Bret Harte as editor and contributor had made famous to readers on both coasts. When Harte left to pursue more lucrative offers, the magazine's popularity quickly faded. Given the literary company she kept with Carmany and his Anglo western readers, one wonders what cultural politics were at stake for Ruiz de Burton in presenting Cervantes during a period that idolized Shakespeare in everything from the theater to vaudeville acts. (The Duke and the Dauphin in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* [1885] represent a good example of Shakespeare's cultural capital in this period.) One might read Ruiz de Burton's *Don Quixote* as purposely written to forward a Spanish alternative. Coincidentally, Bret Harte was also very good friends with Samuel Barlow.¹⁶ It is unknown whether Ruiz de Burton had any contact with Bret Harte. However, it is known that Bret Harte, as critic Raymond Paredes has noted, parodied Cervantes's *Don Quixote de la Mancha* when depicting the old California world, as in the short story "The Devotion of Enriquez" (1894).

The Squatter and the Don was published in 1885. As in her first novel, Ruiz de Burton converts autobiographical elements of her life into fiction—in this case her troubles with the Jamul ranch. The novel also criticizes the effects of transportation monopolies on the local regional economy as well as the illegal dispossession of Californios of their land. Again as with *Who Would Have Thought It?*, this novel contains fictionalized versions of people Ruiz de Burton knew personally, as well as public figures. For example, Ruiz de Burton holds railroad magnates Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker and Mark Hopkins—California's Big Four—ethically and morally accountable for their questionable business practices and their corrupting influence on society. Because of the book's content, and unlike her first novel, *The Squatter and the Don* was published under the pen name C. Loyal. Sánchez and Pita note that C. Loyal was an ironic pseudonym, given that it was common usage at the time in Mexico to close a letter with *Ciudadano Loyal*, which means loyal citizen. They suggest that C. Loyal is Ruiz de Burton's symbolic attempt to claim for herself a social credibility that she lacked in daily life. According to Oden, the novel was probably financed in part by Ruiz de Burton herself, or a friend, William Winder, in order to avoid publisher's fees and thus secure better profits from the book's sales. Sánchez and Pita also note that the novel was copyrighted by Ruiz de Burton and

published by S. Carson and Company in San Francisco in the same year. She borrowed money from longtime friend George Davidson to finance the publication.

Numerous letters and documents of Ruiz de Burton are held in archives in California. Among them is an unpublished biography that Ruiz de Burton wrote of her maternal grandfather, Don José Manuel Ruiz (1878). In the 1870s, Hubert Howe Bancroft, the collector's namesake, began what is today a well-known project to compile a history of California, from its Spanish period to the early days of territory and then statehood. Oden writes that Ruiz de Burton was excited about the project and saw it as an opportunity for the Californios to narrativize their own histories and presence in the country. On Bancroft's behalf, she solicited contributions from her own Californio friends. However, in a letter to Bancroft, she lamented that many of her peers did not share her enthusiasm, or take the opportunity to record the injustices suffered by Californios.

Questionable Differences: Mexicanos y Anglos in Baja California, 1848

I want to explore further a little-known historic event briefly mentioned above: the transportation of Mexican refugees from Baja California to Monterey, California, in 1848. Among the refugees were María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and her immediate family. In addition to speaking about this event and its relationship to the Mexican-American War, I will endeavor to establish a set of common terms that might link the Recovery Project to the ongoing efforts of Chicano/a historians and New Western historians and help us to understand the racial and nationalist discourses that framed the war and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. What is intriguing about this episode is twofold: One, the U.S. military leadership in Baja California convinced its government to reward local Mexican citizens who aided in the pacification of the region with monetary compensation and U.S. citizenship. Two, prominent Baja Californios registered their sense of betrayal and demanded some form of redress for their loyalty when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo did not include U.S. annexation of Baja California.

By highlighting this episode, I emphasize the need for a model of

historical agency that can more carefully explain the competing colonial discourses inhabiting North America in the nineteenth century. A closer examination of these refugees from Baja California destabilizes easy notions of nineteenth-century political, cultural, and military hegemony in North America. Thus, a more differentiated model of historical agency would address why certain peoples of Mexican descent opted to align themselves with Anglo Americans, while others did not. Equally important, under this revised model, is to understand anew those moments during which Anglo Americans recorded either their ambivalence about Manifest Destiny or their admiration for the different colonial project they encountered in both Alta and Baja California. In both regions, Anglo Americans evidenced a willingness to realign their own nationalist loyalties during a political period otherwise dedicated to the consolidation of a continental United States.

According to historian Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., when President James K. Polk assured Congress on December 7, 1847, that both Alta and Baja California were under firm U.S. control, he was grossly mistaken.¹⁷ While both Californias succumbed early in the war to U.S. military rule, guerrilla-style attacks throughout 1847 by Mexican forces in Baja California ended the cordial occupation that had been brokered through the efforts of elite Baja Californios in La Paz and San José del Cabo and Anglo military officers. Though wrong in his assessment, President Polk had little to worry about Baja California, because he never envisioned lower California as part of the United States anyway. His public statements to the contrary were mere rhetoric deployed in advance of negotiations with the Mexican government over territory. Unfortunately, Polk's military and some cabinet members took it as policy that Baja California would one day become American soil.¹⁸

This misunderstanding or confusion, as Nunis puts it, placed the Anglo invaders and the pro-American faction in Baja California in a serious quandary at the end of the war: Not only had some of the Americans fallen in love with the country, like William R. Ryan who remarked that La Paz offered more culture and elegance than Monterey (Nunis, 50), but some, such as Lieutenant Colonel Henry S. Burton of the New York Volunteers, had fallen in love with the country's people, in his case with fifteen-year-old María Amparo Ruiz of La Paz. Further, prominent officials like Governor Francisco Palacio Miranda and individuals like Padre

Ignacio Ramirez y Arollona of La Paz had gone out of their way to welcome the Americans and publicly support the U.S. annexation of Baja California.

When details of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo reached La Paz, the reaction was severe. Anglos and their Baja Californio friends felt betrayed that the United States had not insisted on the annexation of Baja California. Henry Burton spoke for many of his peers when he wrote to Governor Richard B. Mason in Monterey on June 27, 1848, requesting that something be done to protect these Mexican citizens who sided with the American cause (Nunis, 60). In turn, Baja Californios took up their grievances with Commodore Thomas Catesby Jones. While they found in Commodore Jones a sympathetic audience, they also knew these were times that required definitive action. On July 5, 1848, rebellious Baja Californios established a junta, with the expressed purpose of securing annexation to either the United States or Great Britain. Though serious about their goals, these Baja Californios hoped more to impress upon Commodore Jones their fear of retribution from Mexico. They succeeded.

Anxious for their safety, Commodore Jones intervened and convinced Secretary of the Navy John Y. Mason to grant political asylum to Baja Californios who feared reprisal from guerilla leaders like Manuel Pineda and the priest Gabriel Gonzalez (Nunis, 70). In the end, over 350 refugees were transported to Monterey, California, and were fed and housed at the military's expense. When they began to arrive, Governor Richard B. Mason issued the following order: "Justice and humanity alike require that they should be sheltered and fed, and their sick provided for at the public expense until they are enabled to look around and provide for themselves" (Nunis, 149–50). Additionally, Commodore Jones authorized the payment of war reparations in the amount of \$57,698. Risking charges of insubordination by their superiors in Washington, these Anglo officers and officials did their best to help their wartime friends.

How do we make sense of this historic moment? Traditionally, the Anglo view was that such Mexican citizens as these supportive refugees from Baja California were few and far between. The vast majority of Mexican citizenry were obstinate, according to general Anglo opinion, in refusing to recognize the superior gifts of civilization that the United States offered the continent. Like their counterparts in Alta California,

these Baja Californio refugees were viewed positively as taking advantage of the ideals of liberty and property espoused in the United States. Theirs was a faith in the democratic system of checks and balances. In other words, because these refugees were well aware of the deficiencies of Mexico, they chose pragmatically to acknowledge the deficiencies of the United States.¹⁹

A related explanation of the new loyalties of these refugees lies in the ethnocentric observations about the Californios that clustered around stereotypes assigned to Mexicans in general.²⁰ In the nineteenth century, Anglo Americans commonly believed that Mexicans were lazy, illiterate, overly fond of music and dance, prone to alcoholism and bad tempers, reckless with money and resources, untrustworthy, incompetent administrators, thieves, and morally unfit as citizens. This view framed Baja Californios, like their counterparts in Alta California, as calculating opportunists who cared little for the day-to-day governance of nations; they welcomed the American invasion because they had little or no stomach to realize the potential of the region. In short, Baja Californios preferred to import a successful colonialism rather than to work among themselves to reform the underlying structures of their own government, society, and culture.

Surprisingly, despite the critiques of Chicano/a and non-Chicano/a historians since the 1970s, a dichotomy continues in historical analysis in which the Californios are viewed either as unique in recognizing the benefits of Manifest Destiny or as simply dilettantes at governance. As late as 1989, John S. D. Eisenhower writes: "The Californios, as a group, exhibited the Mexican proclivity to be easygoing, fun-loving, and extraordinarily hospitable. It was said that, along with the all-night fandango, the California man loved his horse above all else, and he was, truly, an unparalleled horseman. But being such an individualist, the Californio was not a good civic participant. He was not overly concerned as to who ruled him, so long as his own rights and religion were not disturbed."²¹ While Eisenhower does make use of David Weber's thesis in *The Mexican Frontier* (1982)—that geography, demography, and economic interests played an uneven role in whether Mexican citizens would come to view the American army as friend or foe—he does so only to focus on the growing influence of Anglo settlers on longtime Californios. In other words, Eisenhower precludes any consideration of the reverse: of Californio influence on Americans like Thomas O. Larkin or European

immigrants like John A. Sutter, or the possibility that Californios in both Alta and Baja California had been developing a colonial culture and philosophy that actually invited American curiosity.

I'll come back to American curiosity shortly, but for now the point is to emphasize general consensus among Chicano/a historians of this period. With respect to the Californios, Nuevo Mexicanos, and others who welcomed the American invasion, Alex M. Saragoza summed up the situation nicely for Chicano historians in a 1987 review essay:²² During the height of the Chicano/a Movement, one would have been hard-pressed to find a Chicano/a historian laboring to unravel the ironies and contradictions of the Californio. The cultural context of the Chicano/a Movement, the Vietnam War, and the general fight for civil rights required a clear rhetorical split between the oppressed and the oppressor. This "‘them versus us’ perspective of Chicano-Anglo relations," according to Saragoza, centered much of the ideological force behind landmark texts like Rodolfo E. Acuña's *Occupied America* (1972). As a paradigmatic frame for Chicano/a historiography, this model lingered well into the late 1970s. But by 1978, Chicano historians such as Richard Griswold del Castillo, Albert Camarillo, Mario T. Garcia, and Juan Gómez-Quinones were producing detailed labor histories that followed up David Weber's economic analyses of the Mexican frontier prior to 1846. While histories of racism and civic disfranchisement continued to provide the philosophical infrastructure for these new studies, the goal was now to document and theorize the "differences that marked the historical experience of Chicanos" (Saragoza, 28).

This shift in emphasis among Chicano/a labor historians had the effect of validating the material culture found in the historical record, no matter if unrelated to the ethos of the Chicano/a Movement. When it came to the nineteenth century, narratives of resistance and conflict gave way to narratives of complex racial and economic compromises. Even class analyses of pre-1846 Mexican communities revealed a rigid feudal structure that separated elites—*gente de razón*—from the lower classes, mestizos, and Native peoples—*gente sin razón*. More intriguing, as David Weber has shown, were Mexican communities that registered a growing affinity for Anglo-style capitalism long before 1846.²³ We can see, thus, that the refugees from Baja California were part of larger cultural processes that affected all of Mexico's northern territories, especially their elite citizenry.²⁴

Having set out this complicated history of the northern frontier, I would like to put further pressure on analyses of the colonial process to question how cohesive and hegemonic Anglo American nationalism was in fact during westward expansion.²⁵ For it seems to me that there has been a long and misleading habit of collapsing American expatriates with American travelers, like Richard Henry Dana, or with explorers commissioned by the U.S. government, like Zebulon Montgomery Pike or John Charles Fremont, and even with short-term residents, like Walter Colton, author of *Three Years in California* (1851).²⁶ Misleadingly included in this "westward vanguard" have been longtime Anglo residents like Thomas O. Larkin of Monterey, California, or Stephen F. Austin, Jr., of Texas, who no doubt participated in their respective wars against the Republic of Mexico. Yet the historical record shows the intense degree to which some men, like Larkin and Austin, had assimilated into and embraced Spanish Mexican societies. One wonders what Texas would have been like in 1836 *without* the political influence of more recent immigrants like Sam Houston, or supporters of Texas independence like Davy Crockett, both of whom were more likely to share with each other a Jacksonian politics than was Austin—a man often criticized by other Anglo Texans for liking Mexicans too much.

Interestingly, recent scholarship on Anglo participants in the Mexican-American War emphasizes the alternative nationalisms at work in attitudes of officers and soldiers about the moral righteousness of the war. Contrary to historical treatment of U.S. army officers as largely self-interested expansionists, Samuel J. Watson argues that "officers [during the territorial expansions of 1815 and 1846] came to serve the nation-state not as individual free agents and loose cannons like Andrew Jackson, nor as ad hoc enforcement officers and diplomats like Winfield Scott . . . but ultimately as the politically accountable military agents of an empire that many of them (like Zachary Taylor, commander of the Army of Occupation in Texas) were privately reluctant to see absorbed into the United States."²⁷ In general, professionalism became the standard of officer conduct and decorum after 1815. According to Watson, professional officers saw themselves as an "accountable instrument of U.S. foreign and national security policy" (70). Their identification with foreign policy created an avenue for class mobility into elite circles. Watson writes: "Like other Americans among the nation's elite and aspirants to that status, officers sought authority and prestige by identifying their

values with those of the Old World and its elites, including European military officers" (75). By the eve of the Mexican–American War, the officer corps had developed a "careerist neutrality," writes Watson (98). Officers greeted the Mexican–American War with a sense of duty and honor, but otherwise they were unenthusiastic about the specific expansionist goals of the war.²⁸

In contrast to the insulated culture of these elite U.S. officers is that of the controversial Mexican battalion known as St. Patrick's Battalion. Michael Hogan finds that the participation of battalion members in the war revealed other common rifts in national identity among noncommissioned U.S. soldiers. Although many believed at the time that the battalion was mainly composed of Irish deserters from the United States, defectors were less than half of the group's total number. Hogan writes: "Critical to the issue of desertions from the American Army (which were higher in the Mexican War than in any other in United States history) was the lack of a sense of national identity. Americanism was a concept that had not yet been concretized by the majority of the inhabitants of the United States. There was little real sense of national unity, of cohesion. Loyalties tended to be personal, local, or at best regional."²⁹ According to Hogan, less than one percent of these deserters were apprehended or prosecuted, because xenophobia and the discourse of white racial superiority otherwise maintained the soldiers' focus on defeating the Mexican army (95). Ironically, winning the war produced for the United States the national identity it had sorely needed to sustain the conflict in the first place (Hogan, 115).

What emerges from Watson's and Hogan's treatment of the Mexican–American War is a more subtle understanding of the colonizing mentality that advanced the military confrontation on behalf of the United States.³⁰ When applied to the refugee incident in Baja California, their studies explain why Anglo officers became fast friends with the educated and aristocratic elite of the region. It explains in part why Henry Burton, for example, fell in love with María Amparo Ruiz. She came from a military family of aristocratic origins; she was, in short, an eligible and appropriate romantic prospect. Watson's and Hogan's analyses of alternative nationalisms also shed light on why Anglo veterans of the war immortalized Ruiz de Burton in their ballad "The Maid of Monterey." Unlike the majority of the war fought elsewhere in Mexico, the battles in Alta and Baja California were less brutal, took fewer lives, destroyed less

property, and involved a much smaller percentage of the lower classes on both sides. These differences allowed for a cordiality that was nurtured by Anglo and Baja Californio alike.

Having focused on the colonial mentality of the aggressor, I return now to the culture of colonialism that Anglo Americans encountered in Alta and Baja California. Obviously much has happened within Chicano/a historiography since the publication of Ramón Gutiérrez's *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away* (1991). There are now a number of studies that look more closely at the cultures of colonialism produced in the northern frontier of New Spain and Mexico before 1846: Tomás Almaguer's *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy* (1994), Lisbeth Haas's *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769–1936* (1995), Martha Menchaca's *The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California* (1995), Deena J. González's *Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820–1880*, and Albert L. Hurtado's *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (1999). But much remains to be done. This is where the Recovery Project provides more than a helpful hand. If Lisbeth Haas's use of Californio *testimonios* and Ruiz de Burton novels are any indication, western and Chicano/a historians will find, in Recovery Project materials, yet another way to measure the material culture of these communities, as well as the differences between them. But unlike labor histories that conceive of labor only in terms of products of husbandry, agriculture, or industry, the Recovery Project will make the case that cultural production—novels, poetry, diaries, memoirs, and newspapers—enrich the historical record in original and efficacious ways.

How might a Recovery Project-inspired study shed new historical insight on the refugee incident? It would begin, as I have suggested, with marking the behavior of these Baja Californios, not as aberrant and isolated behavior, but as part of a deliberate, well thought out, and sophisticated political philosophy that had its origins in the establishment of the mission system throughout the Californias in the late eighteenth century. In reading the novels of Baja Californio Ruiz de Burton or the memoirs of her close friend Californio Guadalupe Vallejo, what one finds striking is their level of engagement with history, Pan American politics, and competing economic philosophies. One finds that even the anti-American Californio faction in Alta California, like their counterparts in Baja California, proceeded less on some romantic notion of

Mexican nationalism—though it existed—and more on a regional national-
cal process. The recent translation of Antonio María Osio's *La Historia de*
Alla California (originally published 1851) documents how Californios
agreed to despise the central government of Mexico and therefore pur-
sue secessionist dreams, but disagreed when it came to the American
invasion. Despite the kind of opposition Osio's narrative exemplifies, one
can read in Spanish-language newspapers of the 1860s, like *El Nuevo*
Mundo, a belief in the pluralist possibilities of a U.S. society that included
people of Mexican descent.⁵¹ Altogether, the political beliefs of these
Californios provide a unique way to appreciate the "structures of feeling"
of a group of people who endured tremendous changes to their way of
life after 1848. Understanding their role in the transformation of Mexican
California is one aspect of the Recovery Project's offerings to historians.

Elsewhere in North America, similarly elastic nationalist loyalties
were to be found among Anglo Americans who ventured west from the
1800s on, and often "went native." Captivity narratives, diaries, travel
narratives all attest to the seduction of abandoning the cultural and
nationalist traits of the young nation, even as expeditions, like Lewis and
Clark's, busily mapped the path for future westward expansion. Along
the old Spanish borderlands, commercial contact with Mexico encour-
aged many an Anglo American to adopt Spanish customs, language, and
dress, and Catholicism. Rather than seeing these Anglo Americans as
mere opportunists, we should take more seriously when such individ-
uals took oaths of allegiance to be citizens of Mexico, as in the case of
Stephen F. Austin, Jr., in Texas, and countless others throughout the West.
One final conclusion to be drawn from these observations is that colo-
nial discourse in the nineteenth century is much more fluid and contra-
dictory than previously imagined, a discourse deployed by Mexican and
Anglo governments and citizens alike, but to different ends because of
different colonial histories, cultures, and perceived futures. Given this,
the refugees of Baja California and their Anglo American benefactors
demonstrate the power of colonial discourse in the nineteenth century
to override any single rhetorical referent: be it American or Mexican. Not
even the intense Anglo-Saxonism of John L. O'Sullivan's Manifest Des-
tiny could dissuade all Anglo Americans from becoming intimately in-
volved in the lives of the people they just conquered, or vice versa.