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Becoming Mexican American:

The Spanish-Language Press and the

Biculturation of Californio Elites,

1852-1870

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BECOMING MEXICAN AMERICAN: THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE PRESS AND THE BICULTURATION OF CALIFORNIO ELITES, 1852-1870

The acquisition of California by the United States at the end of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848, brought with it the incorporation of an established Mexican community. For many years, Mexico mourned its lost citizens as "our brothers who were sold."[1] Indeed, this exchange of territory and people entailed severe social, economic, and political dislocation. Assuredly, it brought psychological conflict as well for Spanish-speaking Californians. The period 1852-1870 witnessed the erosion of the economic and political power of most Mexican Americans and the crystallization of their minority status. "The transfer from Mexican to American California," noted one historian, "was a period of traumatic change for Spanish-speaking peoples compelled to grapple with their new 'Mexican American' reality."[2]

How did the Mexican American community perceive itself during this transition from Mexican to American citizenship? The purpose of this study is to ascertain the cultural orientation of Mexican American elites, the californios, as reflected by the Spanish-language press during this time. As purveyors of Mexican American thought, Spanish-language newspapers were a form of cultural expression of the middle and upper classes. In this regard, they may be taken as a gauge of the ethnic identity of that segment of the Mexican American community.

In the two decades after the Mexican War, the Spanish-language press reflected an incipient process of biculturation among californios. The perspectives in the newspapers, of course, were primarily those of members of the upper social strata, whose position and literacy afforded them access to

the press. Nineteenth-century society generally reserved social leadership for the educated and affluent and recognized elites as the guardians of culture. Thus, it was the more well-to-do who articulated and, to some degree, manipulated culture through journalism. Biculturation as evinced in the press, then, should be seen as a process involving primarily the middle and upper classes, not the entire Mexican American community.[3] Responding to a changing social reality, Mexican American elites began exhibiting Anglo as well as Mexican cultural traits. At the height of Manifest Destiny, biculturalism became the key to ethnic integrity, producing a modified "Mexicanness" that allowed californios to weather the American juggernaut and, more importantly, to lay the foundation for an adaptive and stable way of life for future generations.

Mexican American biculturalism has been the subject of commentary by numerous historians and social scientists over time. Historian Leonard Pitt noted the ramifications of the meeting of Anglo and Mexican cultures in post-Mexican War California.[4] Similarly, Albert Camarillo juxtaposed Chicano biculturality with Mexican immigrant culture in pre-Depression Santa Barbara.[5] Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio characterized Mexican Americans of the 1920s as "a peculiar nationality, within the United States," exhibiting the material aspects of American culture but living emotionally and intellectually in the Mexican tradition.[6]

More recently, the term "cultural blends" has been adopted to denote persons who draw from American and Mexican culture but, importantly, are not an "idealized fusion" of both:

> These individuals participate selectively in both cultural orientations, but they are not equally proficient in both cultures. They recognize that they

> are not Mexicans, and they do not identify as Mexican, noting, for example, their lack of fluency in Spanish or their nonacceptance of some Mexican cultural practices. At the same time, Cultural Blends draw a clear distinction between themselves and Anglos, and although they appear comfortable in many aspects of American life, they have many ethnically based preferences that keep them separated from Anglos. [7]

The boundary dates of this essay encompass the years during which the subordinate status of most Mexican Americans was established in Californian society. The year 1852 marks the beginning of hearings held by the Board of Land Commissioners for the verification of Spanish and Mexican land grants, the result of which was ruinous for many californio landowners. While not the sole determinant, the loss of lands incurred by this costly validation process was a major contributor to the decline of Mexican American prominence in California. It initiated the deterioration of economic power that, coupled with other factors, ultimately sealed this fate.[8]

The second boundary date, 1870, indicates the approximate beginning of "a new cultural experience" for californios.[9] By that year, the prosperous rancho economy had been supplanted by one based on American capital, and the Spanish-speaking population had been dwarfed by the post-Civil War migration of Anglo Americans. These economic and demographic changes combined to alter California society radically, making newly-arrived Anglo Americans an entrenched majority and long-established Mexican Americans "foreigners in their native land." Minority status and cultural dislocation had become a reality for californios within two decades after the Mexican War.[10]

The change from Mexican to American citizenship technically took only the stroke of a pen—the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in

1849. But the social and psychological adjustment by californios to the new milieu was a gradual and ambivalent process, due to the violence that buffeted the community during this transition.

The perception of the californio community under siege is well documented in Mexican American history. Numerous studies of the post-Mexican War period are peppered with references to "cultural conflict," "race war," and "lynch law," especially, but not limited to, the decade of the 1850s.[11] Anglo American violence against Spanish-speaking people was both random and organized, springing from individual outlaws and mobs as well as from legally constituted authority. In the eyes of the Mexican American press, Anglo violence stemmed from "their singular hatred of la raza española." Indignant accounts of atrocities perpetrated against Hispanics were standard fare in the Spanish-language press in the two decades after the Mexican-American War.[12]

Lynch law and other forms of violence were the most brutal, but certainly not the only kinds of discrimination that Mexican Americans felt were directed against them because of their Mexicanness. Californios felt dismayed as well by Anglos' flagrant abuse of the judicial system and their enactment of discriminatory legislation. The passing of the Foreign Miners' Tax Laws, the "Greaser" Law, and Sunday "blue" laws rankled the Spanish-speaking population. Furthermore, Mexican Americans early on became conviced that a double standard of justice existed for them. The Spanish press exuded a strong cynicism in this regard. It was expected that Anglo wrong-doers would escape punishment simply because they were Anglos, while conversely, Mexican Americans felt the scales of justice were automatically tipped against them because of their ethnicity.[13]

In addition to sundry forms of violence and discriminatory laws, landowning californios faced the formidable economic threat of losing their properties to a combination of squatters, devious lawyers, and the courts. As noted earlier, many historians have pointed out the detrimental effects of the California Land Law of 1851 that challenged the validity of Spanish and Mexican land grants. Robert Cleland, for example, concluded that "it violated the spirit of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo...and did irreparable injury to a great body of legitimate landowners...."[14] In noting the litigation cost incurred by a local californio, one editor sarcastically commented: "Sublime indeed are the effects of the laws the supreme government imposes on us."[15]

Added to the specter of economic disaster was a keen awareness of threats to the very heart of Mexican culture, Catholicism. The Spanish-language press constantly guarded against forces that might undermine the religious undergirding of Mexican American society. Random affronts to the community—such as the replacing of church crosses with American flags-were well publicized. In addition, the more serious threat posed by groups such as the Know-Nothing party prompted constant warnings from Spanish-language newspapers.[16]

Thus, the pages of the Mexican American press amply revealed the basis for Anglo-californio strife in the years following the Mexican War. The nature of the conflict was multifaceted. Mexican Americans felt the sting of racial epithets, were often the victims of unrestrained violence and discrimination, and faced organized threats to their economic welfare, as well as attacks on their religious and cultural heritage. Undoubtedly, these circumstances colored Mexican Amercians[1] perceptions and feelings as they wrestled with cultural identity and allegiance in their transition "from Mexican to Mexican American." In the 1850s and 1860s, californio elites faced

polar options—separatism or assimilation—or the middle ground of biculturalism.

During the latter 1850s, some members of the community considered the option of separatism in the form of exile. In fact, a small number eventually moved south into the Mexican state of Sonora. Historian Leonard Pitt described a sentiment of the times:

> Perhaps the best answer to their Job-like sorrows and afflictions was for the Californians to leave home altogether and start life anew on more friendly Mexican soil: perhaps "Exodus from Egypt" was the solution. In the bad times after 1855, some Californians at least toyed with this idea.[17]

The idea of Mexican Americans leaving their woes behind them in California was fueled to a degree by the Spanish-language press. Readers were enticed, for example, by reports of gold discoveries near Acapulco and by calls from Mexican authorities for foreigners to work the new mines.[18] In addition, sympathetic editorials in newspapers from the interior of Mexico, such as El Siglo XIX, found receptive audiences in California.[19] Undoubtedly, some californios were influenced by such reportage.

In March 1855, La Estrella de Los Angeles announced the formation of La Sociedad de Colonización de Nativos de California para el Estado de Sonora (the Colonization Society of Native Californians for the State of Sonora), under the direction of Andrés Pico and other prominent Mexican Americans. Though the group disbanded, rumors continued to circulate about plans to abandon California and other parts of the Southwest.[20] A San Francisco paper, La Crónica, issued a scathing editorial against "Californian

hospitality" and reported Mexicans and South Americans leaving the region "daily."[21]

In October 1855, El Clamor Público reported the formation of the Junta Colonizadora de Sonora, a colonization committee created by Don José Islas for the purpose of settling 500 to 1,000 families in Mexico. After many setbacks, Islas gained the blessing of the Mexican government in the spring of 1856. The grand project did not attract great numbers of californios, though, and it was almost a year after its inception, September 1856, before some two to three hundred individuals set out for the promised land of Sonora. Other similar projects likewise failed to enlist Mexican American supporters who, as Pitt observed, "never seriously accepted exile as a cure for their ills, but preferred, for better or worse, to stay at home."[22]

The rejection of exile by californios should not be seen as a denial of Mexican culture. By refusing to migrate, Mexican Americans were neither cowering before "love it or leave it" ultimatums nor rushing to embrace assimilation. On the contrary, the lack of enthusiasm for migration attested to cultural affirmation. It reflected a deep-seated cultural autonomy that had evolved over nearly a century of frontier isolation and an adamant desire to retain at least the essential elements of the californio way of life.

Granted, the intolerance of the times mitigated against ethnic integrity. Anglo antipathy undoubtedly led some Mexican Americans to abandon their heritage in hopes of gaining acceptance through assimilation. But cultural ties and identity are neither easily denied nor destroyed. Moreover, the gulf of race, class, and culture that separated most Anglos and Mexican Americans effectively precluded assimilation for all but a miniscule number of californio elites (primarily wealthy women through intermarriage). Recognizing these realities, some middle- and upper-class Mexican Americans strove to retain

their cultural heritage, as well as adopt the Anglo American traits they hoped would bring them fuller participation in the new order. Social reality rendered biculturalism a more palatable and pragmatic choice for californio elites than separatism or total assimilation. The Spanish-language press, then, became an agent and mirror of upper- and middle-class accommodation —an option that perforce precluded the masses of Mexican Americans in California.

Significantly, the establishment of a Spanish-language press did not occur until after the American conquest of California. However, at least one invitation for starting a newspaper was made during the Mexican era in Monterey in 1834. Having earlier opened a printing establishment, Augustin Zamorano issued a public notice stating his printing rates for "gentlemen who may wish to establish any periodical." Apparently no one took advantage of Zamorano's call and California remained without a newspaper until the American occupation of Monterey in 1846. In August of that year, the aptly named Monterey Californian made its appearance. The "first paper printed on the Pacific Coast between Oregon and the Equator" ironically was printed on the old Zamorano press and contained, according to a contemporary journalist, "some news scraps in Spanish." Other English-language papers subsequently carried a Spanish page, but a Spanish-language newspaper under Mexican American editorship did not appear until 1854, with the initiation of San Francisco's La Crónica. Los Angeles followed with El Clamor Público in 1855. A spate of other Mexican American newspapers then ensued, growing to a total of 132 by the year 1900.[23]

It is intriguing that the advent of a Spanish-language press came in the wake of conquest. On the one hand, given the obvious limitations imposed by the frontier environment—a small readership and scarce economic

resources and materials—it is not surprising that newspaper journalism had not developed in the pre-Mexican War years. On the other hand, the basic characteristics of the Spanish-speaking community did not change so radically after the American takeover as to explain the sudden appearance of Mexican American newspapers. Californios did not suddenly become a largely literate society. Moreover, their economic fortunes worsened. What, then, explains the abrupt appearance and sustained publication of Spanish-language newspapers after the Mexican-American War and not before?

In view of the fact that the new social order of the post-war years threatened the traditional californio way of life, the rise of a Spanish-language press can be explained in part as a conscious effort to preserve mexicano cultural integrity. In a lengthy article about journalism in California, the editor of San Francisco's El Eco del Pacífico asked rhetorically if there was a need for a Spanish-language newspaper. "In no other place," he answered explicitly, "is the need for a Spanish newspaper more evident than in California." The newspaper's mission was candidly stated as well: "[A]s Americans and members of the noble Spanish people...it is our duty to raise our voice...to denounce before the supreme tribunal of public opinion the injustices, abuses, and outrages of which our people have been and continue to be victims."[24]

Feeling increasingly overwhelmed in an alien and hostile environment, Mexican Americans instinctively clung to the familiar and traditional. As a survival strategy, they sought to maintain their cultural heritage, often invoking the spirit of the United States Constitution and the guarantees of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo as moral and legal grounds for their assertions. The fundamental theme of protecting la raza (the Spanish-speaking people) and its culture echoed throughout the period in the pages of

the Mexican American press.[25] It grew to be more than a newspaper's raison d'etre, however. Preservation of lo mexicano (Mexicanness) provided the foundation for californio biculturation, the Mexican stock unto which Anglo traits were grafted.

The presence of a Spanish-language press, then, reflected the ethnic consciousness of middle- and upper-class Mexican Americans. Through its newspapers, the californio community reinforced the various components of its culture—religion, literature, history, etc.—and propagated the Spanish language itself. Implicit in the very existence of the press was the cultural importance attached to the mother tongue. The defense of cultural integrity, one scholar has noted, "consisted in an explication and glorification of Mexican culture and history, as well as the Spanish language itself."[26]

In various ways, the Mexican American press manifested the desire to retain the use of the Spanish language. Numerous calls were made, for example, for the publication of state laws and local ordinances and reports in Spanish. In addition, private tutors and schools used newspapers to advertise the teaching of Spanish. Inevitably, the language question became a controversial educational issue as californios sought, with limited success, to maintain Spanish-language instruction in their schools.[27]

The tenacious adherence to the Spanish language, however, coincided with a recognition of the importance of English. It is significant to note that Mexican American newspapers printed official notices and ordinances in English as well as Spanish.[28] In addition, there were numerous advertisements of individual teachers and boarding schools that offered English-language instruction.[29] The opening of Don Luis Vignes' "Escuela Católica" (Catholic School) in Los Angeles in 1856 is instructive. Francisco P. Ramírez, editor of El Clamor Público, addressed himself to the English-

speaking community as well as to californios in his endorsement of the new "learning establishment." "We have the pleasure of announcing to all parents," he stated, "as well as to all those of la raza española, the opening of a new school...(which) should receive the support particularly of those who wish to be educated in their native language, as well as those who want to learn English with perfection."[30] In a revealing change one week after its opening announcement, the "Catholic School" was renamed the "Patriotic Institute" (Instituto Patriótico), in an effort perhaps to attract Anglo students, obtain state support, and thus legitimate itself.[31]

Editor Ramírez strongly espoused the learning of English. His belief that failure to learn the language had cost many californios their lands led him to institute an English page on several occasions.[32] Ramírez pleaded with parents to provide their children "a thorough training of the English tongue." Noting that German and French immigrants quickly mastered English, Ramírez asked: "Why not Mexicans, and those of Castilian descent?"[33]

Not surprisingly, then, a San Francisco newspaper, La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo, showered editorial praise on Alejandra Castañeda and her Spanish-surnamed classmates who did exceptionally well in their English examinations. When the following week the English-language Courier lauded the children's performance, the californio editor proudly printed a translation of the congratulatory remarks. Significantly, the translation was a condensed version of the Courier piece, ending with the cryptic remark: "What we have translated suffices for our purpose."[34]

What indeed was that purpose? Why publicize Anglo approval of Mexican American achievements, mundane ones at that? This seemingly trivial account points to the role of the Spanish press as a bridge between

cultures. It illustrates the wish to transcend cultural animosity by reducing one of the barriers that separated Anglos and Mexican Americans—language. The editor's "purpose" was a message to both communities that said, in effect, bilingualism was positive as well as pragmatic.

The transcultural nature of the language question during this time is evident. Signs emerged among both Anglos and Mexican Americans of the utility, if not the cultural or aesthetic appreciation, of each other's language. For example, San Francisco's Spanish press advertised "a young americano" wishing to study Spanish with a respectable Spanish family, and a "young mexicana" offering English lessons. [35]

Larger signs than these, however, were noted of linguistic flexibility. The Spanish-language press revealed in 1868 that "a great number of Anglo Americans" had petitioned San Francisco public school officials to institute the teaching of Spanish. A translated article in the Examiner pointed out that the city's cosmopolitan character, the state's historic ties with Spain and Mexico, and "unlimited commercial opportunities," justified the cost of hiring a teacher of Spanish.[36] Earlier, between 1850-1854, the Los Angeles community had followed a debate over bilingual education in the columns of the Star and its Spanish page, La Estrella. Again, language value and utility were the focus of the proponents' arguments. "On the one hand," observed historian Ricardo Romo, "Spanish was important to the Mexicanos, since they could conduct business and maintain social contacts with the older generation whose members did not have the benefit of schooling." On the other hand californios also wanted their children to learn English, the language of government and state affairs.[37]

The californio community undoubtedly viewed the bilingual education debate with cautious optimism. For in hinting at the desirability of

bilingualism, these tentative signs of biculturation also held out a faint hope of social harmony in troubled times. As mirrored by the Spanish-language press, Mexican American cultural ambivalence hinged largely on language. In addition to being the daily mode of communication, Spanish was, of course, inextricably linked to the californio cultural and literary heritage. Understandably then, the Mexican American press reflected a clear preference for the Hispanic tradition in the fine arts.

The careers of cultural and literary figures of the Spanish-speaking world received considerable attention. Rave reviews followed the performances of operatic and dance stars such as Lola Montes and "la Señorita Peralta," and their international itineraries were often noted. Professional acting companies based in San Francisco and Los Angeles, such as the Estrella and Márquez troupes, received extensive newspaper coverage as well.[38]

The partiality for Mexican art forms is nowhere more apparent than in the case of literature. Post-Mexican War californio writers continued to be firmly rooted in the Hispanic literary tradition. One scholar noted that "for at least one generation after the end of the war, the artistic and literary sensibility and practice of these people were not palpably different from those of Mexico."[39] Consequently, the californio press gave prolific expression to Mexican literature of every genre. Poetry "of better-than-average quality" was especially abundant, and a good portion of it was the work of editors like Manuel C. Rojo of La Estrella and Francisco P. Ramírez and José E. Gonzales of El Clamor Público.[40]

Clearly, these writers wished "to protect" Mexican literature, as Aurelio L. Gallardo explicitly stated when he announced his forthcoming volume of poetry in July 1868.[41] This inclination to preserve lo mexicano, however, was accompanied by an interplay between the Anglo and Hispanic literary and

cultural worlds. There is evidence that, in the aesthetic sphere, art transcended nationality.

Hispanic and Mexican theatrical productions, for example, played to both Spanish-speaking and Anglo audiences and were well received in the English-language press. In 1847, the Monterey Californian reviewed Spanish stage performances which were attended by mixed audiences.[42] The custom of Anglo Americans frequenting Hispanic theatre carried over into the postwar years, as did the practice of English-language press reviews. "The performances at the Spanish theatre in this city are certainly very creditable," declared the Los Angeles Star in 1852, "and we hope to see the establishment well supported."[43]

Another English-language paper, the Los Angeles News, added on separate occasions during the 1860s:

> Mr. and Mrs. Castillo will rank with the best performers in the state. Mrs. Castillo's imposing and attractive form, handsome features and graceful and charming ease with which she moves through all her representations, is alone well worth the price of admission.
>
> Señora Estrella del Castillo took...the difficult role of 'Maria' in Troubador which she played with happy effect...Señora Castillo exhibited genuine talent in all parts of the play....[44]

The Castillo troupe's departure from San Francisco in December 1864 occasioned yet another display of trans-cultural appreciation. Prior to the company's leaving, El Nuevo Mundo reported that Joe Murphy and Walter Bray's minstrels gave a benefit performance in their honor.[45]

Just as some Anglo Americans partook of Mexican American culture, californios for their part were not disinclined to borrow occasionally from the English literary tradition. From time to time, Hispanic appreciation for the Anglo American heritage manifested itself in the form of translations of English works, with poetry being the most common among various translated genres.[46]

The interplay noted between the Anglo and Hispanic literary worlds is pregnant with implications. In publicizing cultural and literary exchange, the californio press revealed its desire for mutual cultural acceptance. Clearly, Spanish-language newspapers sought to preserve the Mexican literary heritage. But a pressing need for better ethnic relations gave rise to a tentative recognition and appreciation of the Anglo American heritage as well. Taken together these developments can be viewed as subtle indicators of an inchoate biculturation among middle- and upper-class Mexican Americans. They evidence, as well, an ambivalence toward the new cultural reality wrought by the Mexican War.

For californio poets and journalists, the decades following the Mexican War were undoubtedly critical. The second half of the nineteenth century comprised the years in which the "conflict of the soul" of the Mexican American was most apparent, caught as he was between two cultural traditions. Time made equivocality toward biculturation increasingly apparent in Mexican American literature after the 1870s.[47]

As early as 1856 however, an anonymous poem appeared in El Clamor Público which clearly reflected misgivings about the new cultural and political environment. The poem, entitled "La Justicia" (Justice), protested a judicial double standard:

Allá en la Corte Suprema
Donde reina la integridad
Veo que no hay igualdad
Por llevar otro sistema
Quién es el que no se queja
Al mirar que el tribunal
No nos considera igual
Ni en su ultima providencia.
Dándole la preferencia
A don fulano de tal.

There in the Supreme Court
Where integrity reigns
I see that there is no equality
For he who abides by another system.
What person does not complain
When he sees that the Court
Does not consider us equal
Not even it its final ruling.
It gives preference
To any Tom, Dick or Harry.

In the ensuing stanzas, the poet observed that "justice always goes to those who have money" and that "injustice increases day by day." The californio—"he who abides by a different system"~undoubtedly was conscious of the liabilities that inhered in his cultural distinctiveness. It followed that resentment often accompanied bicultural citizenship.[48]

Mexican Americans' uneasiness with the confluence of Anglo and Hispanic cultures sometimes revealed itself as mild ridicule of the Anglo American way of life. A newspaper advertisement by a Mr. Mortimer for a prospective wife provided an opportunity for El Clamor Público to critique Anglo American society. The californio editor marveled at how "modern civilization" allowed matrimony to be treated as "a purely commercial question, announcing the sale of men and women as if they were barrels of lard or cases of wine."[49] Through his simple analogy and without specific reference to Anglos, the editor simultaneously called attention to the new

economic order, as well as to the markedly different cultural milieu that impinged on Mexican Americans.

Anglo Americans and their culture were not without their supporters in the Spanish-language press, however. Editor Francisco Ramírez combined his fierce defense of the Spanish-speaking people with enthusiastic calls for them to "become Americanized all over—in language, in manners, in customs and habits."[50] Even while condemning Anglo injustice and supporting repatriation, Ramírez managed to compliment the dominant society. The Sonora repatriates, he stated in revealing terminology, were a productive and energetic group, "schooled by contact with the Saxon race."[51] In a similar vein, when El Clamor Público published a Mexican traveler's observations that belittled American customs, a local californio called for fair play in his letter to the editor: "If we are to denounce the Americans, we should do so like honorable men, without saying anything, especially not lies, about their customs."[52]

Apparently, Mexican American opinion varied greatly regarding the "worth" of each culture. Sometimes frustration with "an insolent North American press" surfaced in biting editorials that contrasted Anglo materialism with Hispanic spiritual values.[53] Eventually a less abrasive way evolved that promoted both cultural integrity and better race relations. Accordingly, californio elites were portrayed as highly sophisticated and the equal of the Anglo affluent. Articles about social gatherings always detailed with admiration the elegance of dress and decorum among the Hispanic well-to-do. It was noted that "the utmost harmony reigned" at these affairs.[54]

The middle- and upper-class readership revealed its sensitivity to image also. In a letter to San Francisco's El Tiempo, one writer complained that the paper's overemphasis on lawlessness in Mexico made the homeland

look like "a den of evil-doers."[55] Conscious of the need to offset the effects of negative press, many editors highlighted "refined" californio activities, thereby projecting a positive image of Mexican Americans to the community at large. In doing so, the Spanish-language press sought to build a foundation for social acceptance that citizenship did not automatically assure.

Mexican American ambivalence toward citizenship was closely related to the political turmoil that engulfed Mexico and the United States in the 1860s. During the contemporaneous Franco-Mexican and American Civil Wars, californios were forced to examine their loyalties.[56] Attitudes toward these upheavals were mirrored by Spanish-language newspapers, revealing further insights into the biculturation of californio elites.

The events that swept the United States into the Civil War were closely followed in Mexican American newspapers. During the middle and latter 1850s, sectional and racialist poitics figured prominently in the editorial columns, as Mexican Americans became increasingly engaged in the crisis that gripped the nation. Slavery was consistently denounced and anti-South positions were generally the rule among Mexican American editors. The Spanish press thus reflected the community's clear preference for the Republican party and an overwhelming loyalty to the Union cause.[57]

The affinity with the Republican party grew out of unique historical circumstances that had racial and cultural significance for Mexican Americans. Given their mestizo heritage, californios were inclined toward abolitionism and racial tolerance. They were understandably alienated when they read about affronts to prominent community leaders. Antonio F. Coronel, for example, was the target of racial slurs by his Democratic party opponents in the Los Angeles mayoral race of 1856. Similarly, another highly respected figure, Manuel Domínguez, was barred from testifying in a San

Francisco court when Anglos called attention to his Indian ancestry. Venting the Hispanic community's outrage, El Eco del Pacífico assailed the expulsion as "anti-republican and anti-liberal."[58]

Rampant Hispanophobia in California undoubtedly influenced Mexican Americans to support the Republican party. Moreover, as an integral part of American expansionism, it complicated californios' feelings about their adoptive country. Nothing stirred Mexican American cultural pride (and anger) as quickly as the denigrating rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. One historian noted: "Between 1856 and 1859 one can hardly scan a California newspaper without seeing a slur on Mexico's honor, a plan or a rumor of filibuster, or advocacy of colonization somewhere to the south."[59] Throughout the 1850s and occasionally during the 1860s, the Spanish-language press strongly decried filibustering activity and warned against American designs on Mexican and Latin American territory.[60]

Despite the pervasive jingoism of the period though, Mexican Americans remained surprisingly optimistic about their future as citizens. Occasionally, a glimmer of hope issued from the English-language press. In May 1856, El Clamor Público reprinted one such account from "one of the better American dailies in California." Condemning American filibusters, the Anglo American editor predicted that "we as a nation will pay dearly for the sins of the few."[61] At times the Mexico City press also downplayed the rumors of American aggression, assuring that expansionist ideas were supported by some journalists but not by the American government or the majority of its citizens.[62] The paucity of such reportage, of course, did not neutralize the plethoric chauvinism in the English-language press. Still, californio editors and readers alike probably interpreted such news as

evidence that all was not bad with America—a modicum of hope for the future.

The test of the faith californios had in America (and vice versa) came almost simultaneously, with the outbreak of the American Civil War followed soon by the French intervention in Mexico. The advent of the Civil War found the United States government unsure of its hegemony in the Southwest and uncertain about the allegiance of its conquered citizens in California.[63] Mexican Americans soon dispelled doubts about their loyalty by volunteering to form a battalion of "Native Cavalry." La Bandera Mexicana of San Francisco proudly announced that Manuel Torres, of Marin county, had been honored with an appointment to recruit californios for the Union cause.[64]

The function of the Native Cavalry—to patrol the Mexican border region to head off a supposed linkup between the Confederates and the French occupying Mexico—is revealing. It illustrates that californios perceived the American Civil War and the resistance of Mexican President Benito Juárez as one struggle—the common cause of liberalism. Also, this perception further explains Mexican American allegiance to the Republican party.

In his recruitment for the Native Cavalry, José Pico fervently blended the defense of liberty at home and abroad:

> Our country calls, and we must obey. This rebellion of the southern states must be crushed. They must come back into the Union, and pay obedience to the Stars and Stripes. United, we will become the freest and mightiest republic on earth. Crowned monarchs must be driven away from the sacred continent of free America.[65]

In 1863, San Francisco's La Voz de Méjico published a letter from "A True American" who accused the Democratic party of favoring the French in Mexico, stealing Mexico's northern provinces through wars, and fleecing californios of their lands. His letter concluded with an exhortation for patriots to unite "to suppress the rebellion of the South and then, with the help of time and the grace of God, we will throw Napoleon out of Mexico." The following year, the newspaper editorialized against the "Copperhead Party and its doctrines" and urged Hispanics to support the Union party.[66]

Other Spanish-language newspapers during this period called attention to the "identical principles" and "noble cause" that linked the destiny of the United States and Mexico. Editors argued that Napoleon III wanted not only to conquer Mexico but to assure a military victory by the Confederacy as well.[67] Mexican Americans felt supported in these sentiments when General Ulysses Grant's opinion on Mexico became known. In 1865, El Nuevo Mundo reported Grant's belief that the turmoil in Mexico had been created by the American Civil War, which would not be completely ended until the French were driven from Mexico.[68]

Historians of the Mexican American experience have noted the significant impact of the French intervention on californio society.[69] A dramatic resurgence of identification with the mother culture manifested itself in various ways. Fund-raising for the Juárez resistance, for example, was carried on by the juntas patrióticas (patriotic societies) that mushroomed during this period. These organizations received extensive coverage in the Spanish-language press. In addition, cinco de mayo (May 5th), commemorating an early victory over the French, became a holiday second only to Mexican Independence Day in importance. The growing number of

Mexican American newspapers—another by-product of the French invasion—unfailingly reported the enthusiastic celebration of these holidays.[70]

It is important to note, however, that in addition to observing Mexican holidays, californios also observed American Independence Day. This practice was not new, for it was evident in the 1850s. As early as 1853, La Estrella of Los Angeles editorialized about the Fourth of July, urging the veneration of "the illustrious heroes" of 1776.[71] Even in the mid-1850s, during the period of worst race relations, El Clamor Público allocated substantial print to glorify United States history, institutions, and the founding fathers.[72]

Throughout the 1860s, fervently patriotic editorials appeared in the Spanish press around the Fourth of July, as did articles about festivities, translations of the Declaration of Independence, and biographical sketches of George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson.[73] Historical parallels were also a favorite. The similarities between George Washington and Father Miguel Hidalgo were featured, and Abraham Lincoln had his historical counterpart in Benito Juárez. In death, President Lincoln was eulogized by the californio press as "the North Star, guardian of all America."[74] The Lincoln-Juárez parallel grew dramatically closer in June 1868, when La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo revealed the discovery of a plot to assassinate Juárez as he sat watching a performance in a Mexico City theater.[75]

Thus, in the context of the Civil War and the French Intervention, californios found additional ways to express their loyalty to the United States. Their outpouring of patriotism for both Mexico and America evidenced their desire to accommodate themselves to the unique phenomenon of bicultural citizenship. The ideological nexus that Mexican Americans perceived in the two nations' struggles squared perfectly with the interconnectedness of their

bicultural heritage. The Civil War in America and the Juárez resistance in Mexico symbolically captured both the pain and the promise of the Mexican American reality.

In the two decades after the Mexican-American War, californios struggled to adjust to a dramatically altered cultural environment. Unwilling and unable to totally separate themselves from the Anglo world or assimilate into it, Mexican American elites developed a way of life that incorporated elements of both cultures. Biculturalism was essentially a strategy for self-preservation. Through it, californios retained the cultural pride and self-esteem needed to weather social dislocation, and they began to build a foundation for fuller participation in the new social order of the post-Mexican War era.

The Spanish-language press played a crucial role in californio biculturation. It was both a mirror and an agent of the process. Newspapers reflected feelings about Hispanic and Anglo culture, as well as the degree of adherence to one or the other. In addition to being a gauge of cultural orientation, the press actively promoted cultural change~biculturation~in a manner that varied from subtle to clamorous.

When editor Francisco Ramírez recognized the permanence of American rule in California, he urged the acquisition of Anglo American traits on the grounds of "expediency," that is, for survival.[76] It is critically important to acknowledge that Ramírez coupled his advocacy with an ardent defense of Hispanic culture and peoples. Neither he nor his colleagues in the Spanish-language press ever espoused abandonment of Mexicanness. In this sense, californios foreshadowed today's ethnic groups which, as Robert Rosenbaum observed, "are now saying that they are Americans, that they

neither can nor want to leave the country, but they neither can nor want to relinquish their heritage any more than Anglos have relinquished theirs."[77]

During the 1850s and 1860s, the Spanish-language press promoted and reflected the beginnings of biculturalism—the first tentative, ambivalent steps that were both necessary and unavoidable in the transition "from Mexican to Mexican American."

NOTES

1. Carey McWilliams, North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1949; reprint ed., New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 103.

2. Albert M. Camarillo, Chicanos in California: A History of Mexican Americans in California (San Francisco; Boyd & Fraser Publishing Co., 1984), 14.

3. Of course, the essential elements of californio culture—history, religion language, etc.--were a generalized and cohesive phenomenon shared by all social classes. For class stratification at the time of the Mexican War, see Albert M. Camarillo, Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California. 1846-1930 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 10-12, 102-103; see also Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Rivera, The Chicanos: A History of Mexican Americans (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 44; David J. Weber, The Mexican Frontier. 1821-1846 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 208-211.

4. Leonard Pitt, The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890 (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 124-125, 267-268.

5. Camarillo, Chicanos in a Changing Society. 187-191.

6. Manuel Gamio, Mexican Immigration to the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930; reprint ed., New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 64-65.

7. Susan E. Keefe and Amado M. Padilla, Chicano Ethnicity (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 96. The authors' distinction between "bicultural" and "cultural blend" is an important one. However, for stylistic convenience the term "bicultural" is preferable, and will be used in this essay as synonymous with the definition suggested by Keefe and Padilla for "cultural blend."

8. For the dispossession of californio lands, see Pitt, The Decline of the Californios, chaps. 5 & 6; see also Robert G. Cleland, The Cattle on a Thousand Hills (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1951).

9. The year 1868 is cited as a turning point in Mexican American cultural history in Michael C. Neri, "A Journalistic Portrait of the Spanish-Speaking People of California, 1868-1925," Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly. LV (Summer 1973), 193-208. For a participant's account of change in southern California in the late 1860s, see J.M. Guinn, "Los Angeles in the Later Sixties and Early Seventies,"Historical Society of Southern California Publications. Ill (1893), 63-68.

10. The transformation of Mexican American majority-to-minority status occurred first in northern California in the wake of the discovery of gold in 1848. The massive influx of 100,000 "forty-niners" submerged the Mexican population there and the decimation of the ranchos quickly ensued, changing the social makeup and way of life in the north almost overnight. Anglo domination followed inexorably, though more slowly, in southern California. For example, Anglo Americans did not reach population parity with Mexican Americans in Los Angeles until the early 1860s. But, by 1870, Mexican Americans comprised less than 40% of that city's population. Coinciding with these demographic changes were the arrival of the railroad and the wholesale breakup of the southern ranchos, which paved the way for expansion of the new economic and social order. A standard work on the transfer of Mexican to American control of California is Pitt, Decline of the Californios. For succinct overviews, see Meier and Rivera, The Chicanos. 74-88; David J. Weber, Foreigners in Their Native Land (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), 147-160; Rodolfo Acuña, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (2nd ed., New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 95-120; Camarillo, Chicanos in California. 13-23.

11. For examples see, passim, Pitt, Decline of the Californios, chap. 9; Acuña, Occupied America, chap. 5; Weber, Foreigners in Their Native Land, chap. 4; Camarillo, Chicanos in a Changing Society, chaps. 1-5. The following section on cultural and racial strife is based primarily on the above works. See also Robert L Rosenbaum, Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest: The Sacred Right of Self-Preservation (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 55-67; Reginald Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 210-211, 277-278.

12. Indeed, the very name of one newspaper, El Clamor Publico--The Public Outcry—bespeaks the outrage of Mexican Americans in the face of Anglo violence. For examples see El Clamor Público (Los Angeles, hereafter cited as LA), 3, 17 July, 14, 21, 28 August 1855, 7 June, 26 July, 2 August 1856; see also La Bandera Mexicana (San Francisco, hereafter cited as SF), 11 December 1863; La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 5 June 1868. Quote in El Clamor Público (LA), 17 July 1855. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

13. For explicit references to the advantage under the law of being a "Yankee" as opposed to the liability of being Mexican, see El Clamor Público (LA), 3, 21 July, 21 August 1855.

14. Cleland, Cattle on a Thousand Hills. 43.

15. El Clamor Público (LA), 25 September 1855.

NOTES (continued)

16. El Clamor Público (LA), 19 June, 3 July, 9 August, 4 September 1855.

17. Pitt, Decline of the Californios. 210.

18. El Clamor Público (LA), 19 June 1855.

19. El Siglo XIX (n.p.), quoted in El Clamor Público (LA), 7 August 1855.

20. La Estrella (LA), 15 March 1855, cited in Richard Griswold del Castillo, The Los Angeles Barrio. 1850-1900 (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 120-121.

21. La Crónica (SF) n.d., quoted in El Clamor Público (LA), 11 September 1855.

22. Pitt, Decline of the Californios. 210-213.

23. Spanish-language newspapers were rare in California during the 1850s. In San Francisco, El Eco del Pacífico (1852-1857?) evolved from the Spanish page of L'Echo du Pacifique. It was complemented by La Crónica (August 1854-October 1855). In Santa Barbara, the Gazette ran a Spanish page for seven months in the latter part of 1855. In 1858, the Gazette was reorganized as La Gaceta, published in San Francisco and distributed by mail into the early 1880s. The only completely Spanish-language paper in Los Angeles during the 1850s was El Clamor Público (August 1855-December 1859). Earlier, the Los Angeles Star had published a Spanish section, La Estrella, between 1851-1855. The 1860s witnessed a dramatic increase in Spanish newspapers, almost exclusively however, in San Francisco. Los Angeles had El Amigo del Pueblo for only six months (November 1861-May 1862). San Francisco boasted several papers of varying duration in the 1860s: El Nuevo Mundo (1864-1867); La Voz de Chile v El Nuevo Mundo (1867-1883?); La Prensa Mexicana (1868-?); La Sociedad (1869-1888?); El Tiempo (1868-1869?); La Voz de Méjico (1864-1866?); El Republicano (?August 1868-January 1869?); La Bandera Mexicana (December 1863-February 1864?). See Edward C. Kemble, A. History of California Newspapers. 1846-1858 (Los Gatos: Talismán Press, 1962), 52-59, 237-239, 254, 280, 297; Herminio Ríos and Lupe Castillo, "Toward a True Chicano Bibliography," El Grito. (Summer 1970), 17-24; Muir Dawson, "Southern California Newspapers, 1851-1876," Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly. 32 (March-June 1950), 156-157; Félix Gutiérrez, "Spanish-Language Media in America: Background, Resources, History," Journalism History. 4:2 (Summer 1977), 38; La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 21 August 1868.

24. Quoted in El Clamor Público (LA). 23 February 1856. For similar sentiments, see the inaugural editorial of El Clamor Público (LA), 19 June 1855, and its subscription advertisements during March 1856.

25. In explicit phraseology beneath their mastheads, numerous papers claimed to be the organ of the Spanish-speaking community and champion of its "noble ideas and legitimate interests." See El Eco del Pacifico (SF), 23 July 1856; La Bandera Mexicana (SF), 11 December 1863; El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 27 March 1865; La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 28 May 1868.

26. Neri, "Journalistic Portrait," 195.

27. El Clamor Público (LA), 17 July, 21 August 1855, 1 March 1856, 7 March 1857; La Voz de Chile v El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 5 June 1868; La Sociedad (SF), 15 December 1869; for efforts to establish bilingual or Spanish-language instruction in public schools, see Camarillo, Chícanos in a Changing Society. 16-17; Pitt, Decline of the Californios. 225-227.

28. El Clamor Público (LA), 5 April, 9 August 1856.

29. El Clamor Público (LA), 8 March 1856; El Eco del Pacífico (SF), 7 January 1864; La Voz de Chile v El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 5 June 1868.

30. El Clamor Público (LA), 8 March 1856.

31. El Clamor Público (LA), 15 March 1856.

32. For examples, see El Clamor Público (LA), 9 February 1856, September-November 1856 passim, 31 October 1857, 18 June 1859.

33. El Clamor Público (LA), 18 June 1859.

34. La Voz de Chile v El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 30 June, 3 July 1868.

35. El Eco del Pacifico (SF), 19 May 1854; La Voz de Chile v El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 28 May 1868.

36. La Voz de Chile v El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 9 June, 17 July 1868.

37. Ricardo Romo, East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 25; Henry W. Splitter, "Education in Los Angeles: 1850-1900," Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly. 33 (June 1951), 101-105.

38. La Estrella (LA), 2 July 1853; El Clamor Público (LA), 7 June 1856; El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 3 July 1867; La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 30 June, 18 August, 4 September 1868; see also Nicolás Kanellos, "Nineteenth Century Origins of the Hispanic Theatre in the Southwest," Crítica (Spring 1984), 79-90.

NOTES (continued)

39. Cordelia Candelaria, Chicano Poetry (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 15-16.

40. William B. Rice, The Los Angeles Star. 1851-1864 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), 52; Charles M. Tatum, Chicano Literature (Boston, O.K. Hall & Co., 1982), 39-42; Julio A. Martínez and Francisco A. Lomeli, Chicano Literature (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 281, 284. For examples of various genres published in the press, see La Estrella (LA), 2 July 1853; El Clamor Público (LA), 23 October 1855, 6 December 1856; El Eco del Pacífico (SF), 7 January 1864; El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 22 September 1865; La Voz de Chile v El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 16 June 1868; El Republicano (SF), 22 August 1868; La Sociedad (SF), 24 December 1869.

41. La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 17 July 1868.

42. Kanellos, "Nineteenth Century Origins," 81-82.

43. Rice, The Los Angeles Star. 50.

44. The Los Angeles News also occasionally carried Spanish-language advertisements about Spanish plays. Kanellos, "Nineteenth Century Origins," 85.

45. Ibid.

46. El Clamor Publico (LA), 26 June 1855; El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 3 July 1867; La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 16 June 1868; Rice, The Los Angeles Star, 52.

47. Martínez and Lomelí, Chicano Literature. 281; Candelaria, Chicano Poetry. 16.

48. El Clamor Público (LA), 29 March 1856; translation in Tatum, Chicano Literature, 42.

49. El Clamor Público (LA), 9 February 1856.

50. Ibid., 18 June 1859.

51. Ibid., 28 August 1855.

52. Ibid., 23 October 1855.

53. El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 29 June 1867; El Clamor Público (LA), 23 October 1855.

NOTES (continued)

54. El Clamor Público (LA), 16 October 1855, 19 July 1856; La Sociedad (SF), 24 December 1869; La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 30 June, 4, 18, 25 August 1868.

55. El Tiempo (SF), 9 February 1869.

56. For Mexican American responses to these conflicts, see Pitt, Decline of the Californios. 229-244; see also Meier and Rivera, The Chicanos. 83-85.

57. El Clamor Público (LA), 24 July, 30 October 1855, 12 January, 1 March 1856; Meier and Rivera, The Chicanos. 83-85.

58. Pitt, Decline of the Californios. 200-202.

59. Ibid., 208.

60. El Clamor Público (LA), 7 August, 4 September, 30 October 1855, 1, 15 March, 19, 26 April, 17 May, 14 June 1856, 31 January, 7 February, 30 May 1857, 24 July, 7 August 1858, 15, 19 January, 27 April 1859; El Eco del Pacífico (SF), 23 July 1856; La Estrella (LA), 2 July 1853; El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 29 June 1867; La Voz de Chile y El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 10 July 1868; La Sociedad (SF), 15 December 1869.

61. Chronicle (n.p.), quoted in El Clamor Público (LA), 31 May 1856.

62. El Diario Oficial (Mexico City), n.d., quoted in La Sociedad (SF), 22 December 1869.

63. Meier and Rivera, The Chicanos. 83.

64. La Bandera Mejicana (SF), 15 January 1864.

65. Pitt, Decline of the Californios. 230-231. Quotation in English.

66. La Voz de Méjico (SF), 1 September 1863, 13, 15 October 1864, cited in Richard Morefield, The Mexican Adaptation in American California (San Francisco: R&E Associates, 1971), 66.

67. La Bandera Mexicana (SF), 1 February 1864; El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 28 April 1865.

68. El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 22 September 1865.

69. Pitt, Decline of the Californios. 244; Meier and Rivera, The Chicanos. 85.

70. La Voz de Méjico (SF), 26 August 1862, 20 August, 14 October, 24 December 1863, 1864 passim, cited in Morefield, Mexican Adaptation. 56-57; La

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Bandera Mexicana (SF), 11 December 1863, 11, 15 January, 1 February 1864; El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 27 March, 28 April, 22 September 1865, 29 June 1867.

71. La Estrella (LA), 2 July 1853.

72. El Clamor Publico (LA), 19 June, 3, 10 July, 22 December 1855, 29 March 1856.

73. El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 3 July 1867; La Voz de Chile v El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 3 July 1868.

74. El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 28 April 1865.

75. La Voz de Chile v El Nuevo Mundo (SF), 16 June 1868.

76. El Clamor Público (LA), 18 June 1859.

77. Rosenbaum, Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest. 152-153.