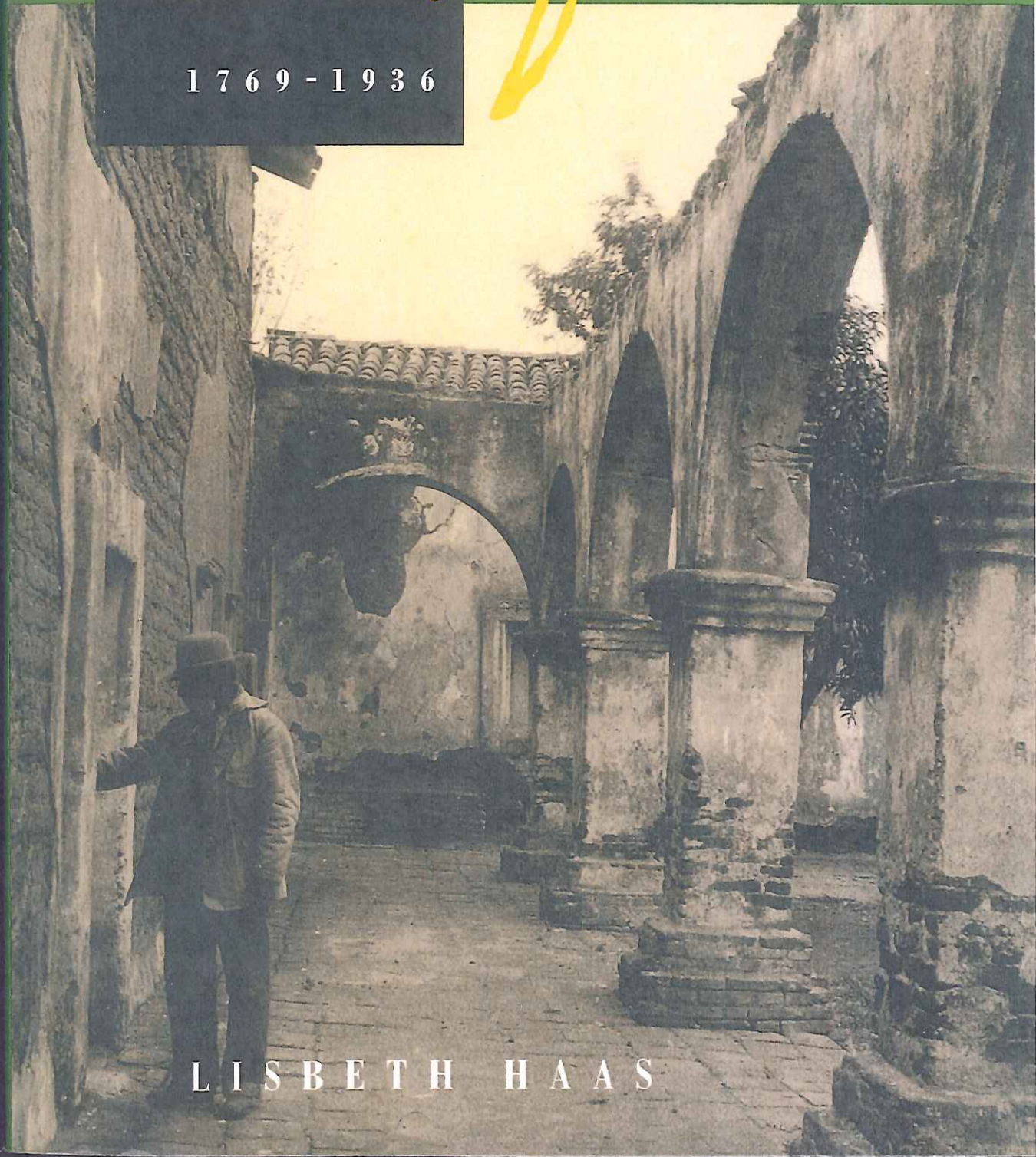


CONQUESTS
AND HISTORICAL
IDENTITIES
IN *California*

1769-1936



LISBETH HAAS

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Acknowledgments

I am grateful, first of all, to those individuals who have shared stories about their lives with me. They include my very first informants, people who had been deeply engaged in urban struggles during the 1970s and early 1980s in Santa Ana, California, and whose consciousness of rights came out of their understanding and interpretations of the past; they focused my attention backward in time. I met women who, like Jovita Hernandez, awakened my appreciation for the central role of women in history and subsequently helped to shape my manner of inquiry and interpretation. I thank members of the Juaneño Council of San Juan Capistrano, especially Donald Doram, Evelyn Villegas, and David Belardes, who contributed material that enabled me to finish this book. I am also compelled to express my deep appreciation to those I met, indirectly, in archival documents. Their behavior and ideas defined crucial dimensions of the society in which they lived their lives. Their records informed my understanding of change and endeared them to me.

I am extremely appreciative of the rich body of historiography that historians in my field have produced over the past twenty-some years. My debt to them, and to my colleagues at the University of California, Santa Cruz, is great, and primarily expressed through citations and references to their work in the following pages. I want especially to thank my professors Albert Camarillo, Jeanne Chase, Mary Ryan, Jon Wiener, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, whose mentorship and ideas shaped my early work on this subject. I was fortunate to have developed fundamental parts of my intellectual life with Victor Zamudio, and will always

be grateful to him for those years we shared. From our reading groups at UCSC I want particularly to recognize the astute and helpful commentary of David Anthony, Nancy Grey Osterud, Cynthia Polecristi, Lynn Westerkamp, and especially Dana Frank, who has been a close friend and critic. Their comments on versions of this manuscript enabled me to define this project more clearly. I thank Michael Schuster for his reading of chapter 4; our discussions of popular theater, and the very special relationship between our families, sustained me as I wrote the first chapters of this book. Ramón Gutiérrez and Sarah Deutsch read the entire manuscript; they provided excellent, detailed criticism that guided my revisions and challenged me to examine and refine my formulation of key concepts. Their own work influenced me substantially, and their comments definitively shaped the final version of this text. My colleagues who were fellows at the Minority Discourse Seminar at the University of California Humanities Research Institute provided an exceptional context to carry my thoughts into new projects after this book was finished. I especially thank Norma Alarcón and George Sánchez for the relentless intellectual engagement they brought to reading this and other work; they have inspired me to make yet further interventions into the copyedited text.

My research assistants contributed tremendous energy and intelligence at each stage of the writing of this book. José Orosco provided useful commentary and careful notes as we carried out research in the court archives during the summer of 1988. Over the next two years Cerina Herrera created a huge census data base and helped to analyze the output. Her care and insight were invaluable as I worked on the outline of this book, and as I wrote chapter 1. Toni Nelson-Herrera worked intensively on many aspects of the book as I wrote. Her keen insight and tireless effort and our endless conversations about the larger implications of each piece of the research made my writing more meaningful. Jesus Cisneros provided valuable assistance as I completed the final revisions of the manuscript.

I am very grateful to the University of California, Santa Cruz, for the Faculty Senate Research Grants that supported research assistance and travel as well as manuscript preparation. The Minority Internship Program at UCSC contributed money for research assistance through a valuable mentorship program. I thank the University of California MEXUS program and the UCSC Humanities Division for funding research in Mexico and California. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities enabled me to examine theater archives at the Ben-

son Latin American Library, Mexican-American Collection, University of Texas, Austin. I am also grateful to UCSC for providing course relief so that I could finish this book. My teaching informed my writing, and I thank my students for their many questions and ideas, which in turn helped me to refine my own.

Zoe Sodja and Cheryl VanDerVeer at UCSC prepared the manuscript with patience and care. They always made it possible for me to finish promptly. Barbara Reitt was the first to edit the manuscript, and her excellent suggestions helped me to revise it. I have enjoyed the skillful editing of copy editor Anne Geissman Canright, who understood the book well. For their effective comments and support I heartily thank Anne, project editor Dore Brown, and general editor Lynne Withey of the University of California Press. Finally, I am very grateful to Chip Lord for his loving presence and careful reading as I completed the book, and to Sophia, for her thirteen years of intelligence, sensitivity, and imagination.

Introduction

“This Land Belongs to Me”

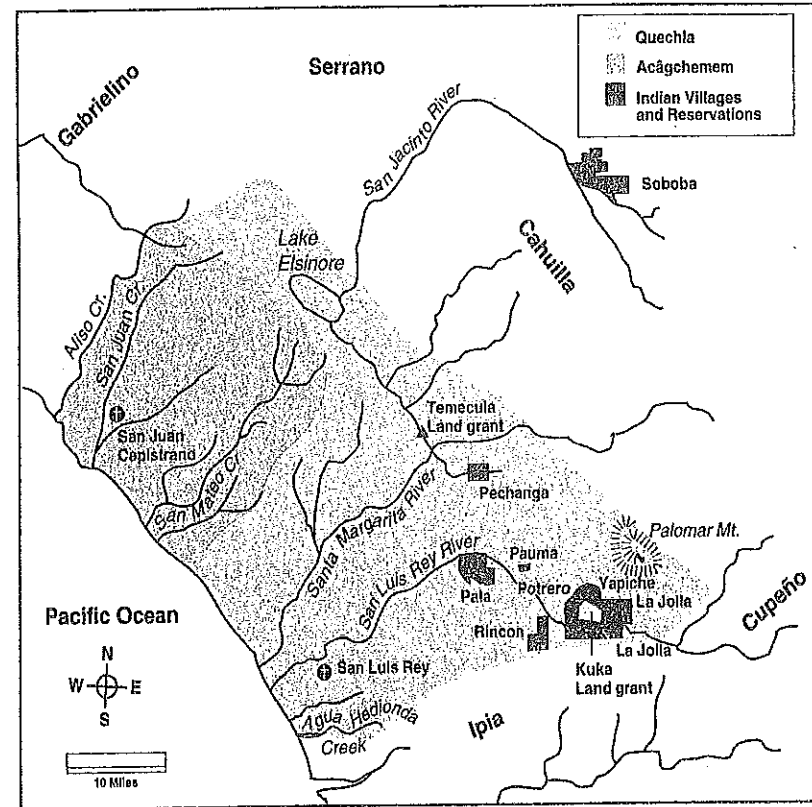
In 1889 a young woman, Modesta Avila, was brought to trial in Orange County Superior Court, accused of placing an obstruction on the tracks of the Santa Fe railroad, which had recently been laid some fifteen feet from the doorstep of her home in San Juan Capistrano, a former mission and Mexican pueblo. The obstruction was simply a heavy fence post laid across one rail and another one hammered into the ground between the tracks, with a paper stuck to it that read: “This land belongs to me. And if the railroad wants to run here, they will have to pay me ten thousand dollars.”¹ Max Mendelson, merchant, postmaster, and express agent in San Juan, was waiting for the daily train when he discovered the obstruction. As he quickly dismantled it, Modesta Avila sat quietly watching from her door. Mendelson reported that he told her not to do that, as someone could get hurt; she responded, “If they pay me for my land, they can go by.” Avila reported forcing the railroad to compensate her to individuals who represented the new economic order and legal authority established in the American era: a banker, bank teller, sheriff, and judge, all from Santa Ana, the American town that had been founded in 1869, some twenty miles to the north of San Juan. At the bank she inquired about the quickest method to receive the anticipated payment of ten thousand dollars. She then asked the sheriff whom she could hire to keep peace at a dance

she was giving in Santa Ana to celebrate receiving the money. While holding this dance, she was arrested for disturbing the peace. At her arraignment, she also told the judge about her purported victory over the railroad. Avila paid dearly for her defiance. She was sentenced to three years in prison and subsequently died in San Quentin. At the time of her death she was in her mid-twenties.

Avila's story is significant to this book because it addresses the dynamics of power that shaped land policy. Modesta Avila was born in 1867, in the midst of the American conquest. During the decade of the 1860s, Californios lost the vast majority of their land to settlers from elsewhere; Avila was thus motivated to take action by her generation's experience of land loss. Her story is one among many stories of individuals I will tell because they vividly depict the processes and implications of the conquests of this region.²

In the following paragraphs, let me briefly introduce my subject, my terminology, and my orientation. I will also describe San Juan Capistrano and Santa Ana, where most of the events in this book took place. By *conquest* I mean the process that extends the political, economic, and social dominion of one empire, nation, or society over another one. Because conquest involves the systematic acquisition of land, it is intricately linked with policies of territorial expansion. During the conquests of North America by Spain and the United States, populations were submerged and reconfigured partly by being renamed. The populations from colonial Mexico that settled on the California frontier between 1769 and 1821 called themselves *gente de razón*, people who possessed reason. Indian peoples, in contrast, were assigned such names as *indios*, *neofitos* (neophytes), and *gente sin razón*, people without reason. Mission Indians were identified by the mission of their birth or baptism.

San Juan Capistrano was founded as a mission in Acâgchemem territory in 1776; by 1796, nearly one thousand Acâgchemem resided at the mission (see map 1). Between the late eighteenth century and 1812, the mission gained control of the entire Acâgchemem country, changing its cultural, economic, political, and spatial order. These peoples called themselves Acâgchemem through the early nineteenth century; by mid-century, however, they went by the name *gente* (people) and *Juaneños*, after the mission. Mission San Luis Rey was established in 1798 in Quechla, the territory of the Quechnajuichom, who became known as *Luisenos*. Sometime in the latter part of the nineteenth century, most *Juaneños* were forced to leave their villages; they relocated to Quechla. Some of these villages became reservations. Anthropologists have sub-



Map 1. Reduction of Acâgchemem and Quechla territories from the preconquest period to the early twentieth century.

sequently studied both populations as a single cultural and linguistic group under the name *Luiseno*. The colonial experiences of mission Indians provided an element of shared historical identity when mission Indians federated and demanded recognition in the early twentieth century.³

Californios first articulated their own territorial identity during the early 1830s, in political debates between the California territorial legislature and the Mexican federal government over the emancipation of neophytes and secularization of the California missions. Californios used Spanish colonial ideas to define their territorial government's right to control the land of mission Indians. When emancipation and secu-

larization were enacted in 1834, Californios gained control of the countryside. Most of the rural area along the California coast was granted in ranchos. Californios were also granted the extensive lands immediately around San Juan in 1841, when the mission was made into a pueblo. (See map 2 for the imprint of this process on the land around San Juan Capistrano.)

Californios defined their status against that of Indians, who were virtually dispossessed of the lands they claimed during the Mexican era (1821–1848). In the official documents written during this period, individual Indians were referenced with only a single, Spanish name; in census records, the many skills they possessed and tasks they performed were not recorded. Indians typically did not receive title to the rural village and town lands that a majority of former neophytes were allotted upon their emancipation from the missions—a fact that simplified matters for the U.S. government when it sought to claim Indian lands as public domain in the American period.

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) initiated the second territorial conquest. By the end of the 1860s, most of the ranchos depicted on map 2 were sold or lost, a divestment of property that affected large numbers of Californio heirs and Indian peoples alike. The legal partition of Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana in 1868 partially illustrates this process (map 3).

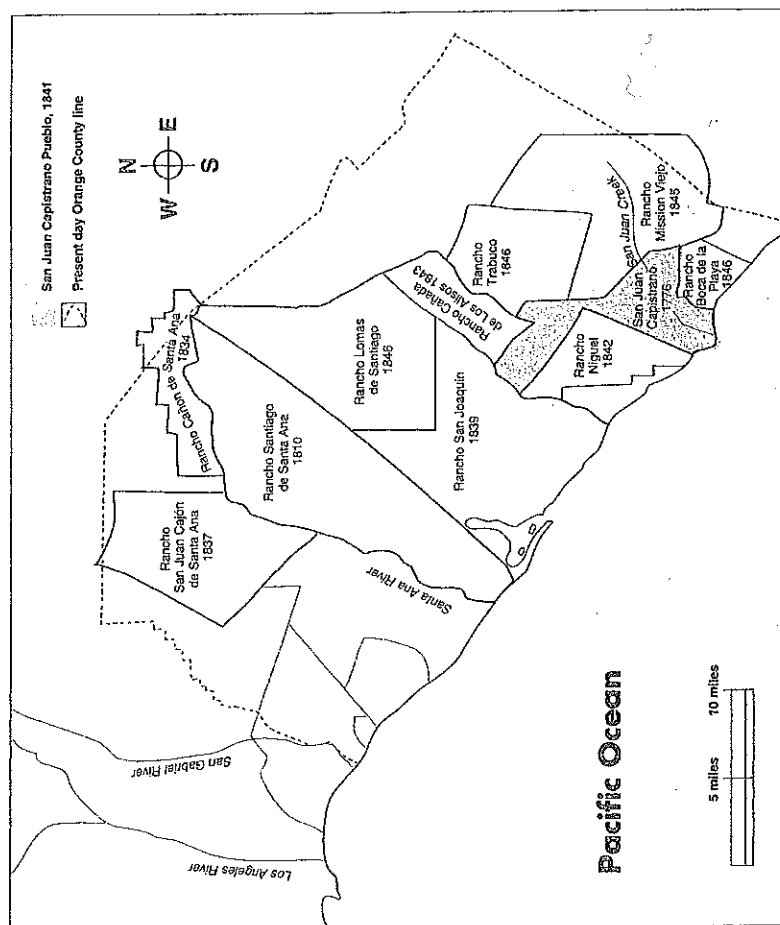
In 1870, Santa Ana was one of three American towns that had been established on this former rancho. By the time Orange County was founded in 1888, the Anglo-American farmers who had settled the town were the largest ethnic population in the area. The land politics that shaped the American conquest were similar to those that sustained capitalist agriculture elsewhere in the nation: land and natural resources became commodities, while people who had capital monopolized credit and transportation and established the conditions for an agricultural industry. In coastal Southern California and elsewhere in the Southwest, capitalist industrialization required that Indian populations be further deterritorialized, meanwhile supporting the interests of (usually self-defined “white”) squatters and land speculators.

The core of this book is the problem of identity. I am concerned, that is, with the encounters that produced a sense of historical consciousness. Hence, although the book covers over 160 years—from 1769, the date of the Spanish conquest, to 1936, when regional strike waves in agriculture generated a new sense of collective interests on the part of the Mexican American population—it is not primarily organized

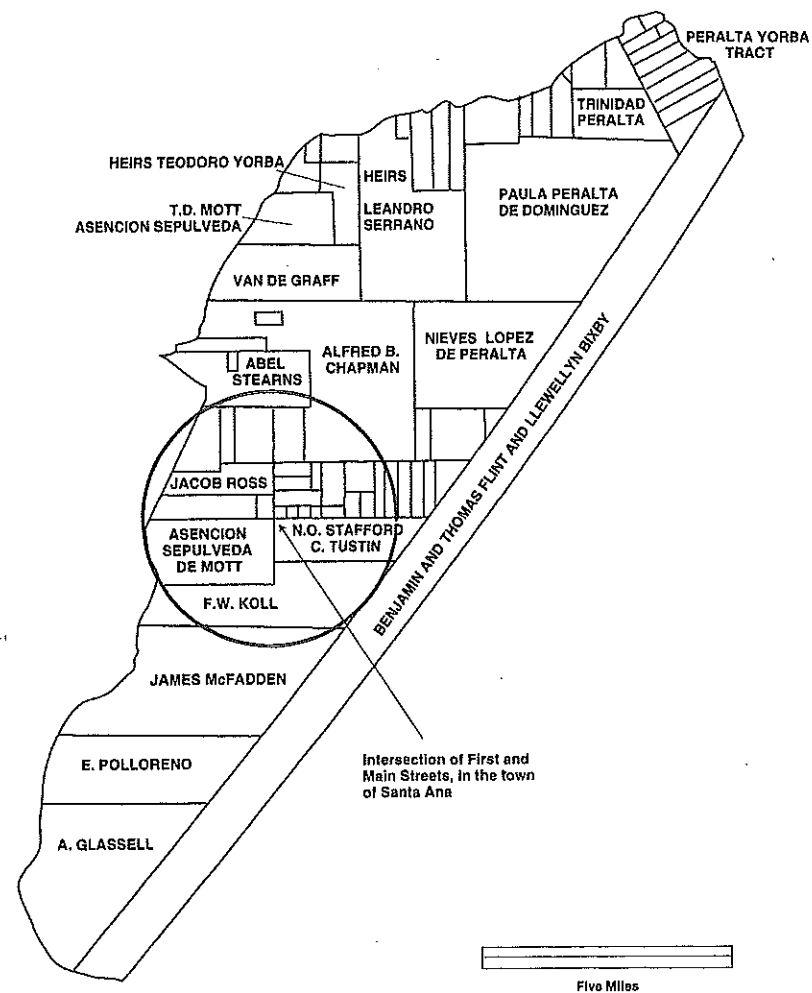
according to a linear chronology. While the first two chapters do proceed along a historical time line from Spanish conquest through U.S. territorial conquest, with the consequent loss of land and spatial isolation of Californios and Indians, in the second half of the book the focus shifts to explore some of the more qualitative dimensions of this multiethnic history around the turn of the century (roughly 1880 to 1930): the persistence of Californio and Indian societies, the meanings these groups gave to the past, and the larger historical imagination that took hold during this process of social self-definition. Included in this analysis are the ideas about history, nation, and religion conveyed by Mexican regional culture. The book takes an extended look at the historical references and shared language of patriotic and religious history that shaped part of the meaning of Mexican-American identity in the twentieth century. As a sort of case study, the book also examines the construction of racial and national identities in the American town of Santa Ana.

In paying particular attention in this book to places (such as Indian communities, towns, barrios, and the imaginary ties that link specific places together) I am influenced by writers who view space as an active agent in social change. For Edward Soja, social meaning is derived largely through the organization of space. Soja laments that geography became a field primarily authorized to describe and set the stage for action. During the course of its development, he says, geography increasingly turned positivist and instrumentalist, attending ever less to “the formative spatiality of social life as a template of critical insight.”⁴ The favoring of time and devaluation of space in social theory and history is similarly problematic. The linear story—the story built around time—necessarily submerges and peripheralizes the geographical or spatial imagination.

Space, according to Soja, is an analytic category with a multiplicity of theoretical and methodological underpinnings. Soja, like Michel Foucault, finds relations of power and discipline inscribed into “the apparently innocent spatiality of social life.”⁵ Foucault, for example, notes how metaphors such as field, region, and territory can serve to designate particular forms of domination. Spatial metaphors, he argues, are “equally geographical and strategic” because geography grew up in the shadow of the military.⁶ This emphasis on the spatial embeddedness of power relations has strongly informed my work. I thus ended up situating this history within a geographical framework that embraces



Map 2. Ranchos and the pueblo lands of San Juan Capistrano.



Map 3. Legal partition of the Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana, 1868. The American town of Santa Ana was established in 1869 and expanded to incorporate the land within the circle.

the Spanish colonial world, the culture of Greater Mexico, the U.S. Southwest as a region, and the Borderland.⁷

The Annales school of social historians incorporated spatial issues into their analyses of rural society and region, and their work represents another influence on my own.⁸ In studying the social and economic connections between regions, they rethought historical time, questioning the importance of the "event" in history. Instead they examined the imaginary, the symbolic, and the history of beliefs and mental structures. They conceived of large questions and issues by examining themes not previously covered by historians, including the history of the face, *l'histoire du visage*, and the history of national memory, as in the series of books dedicated to monuments and other *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory).⁹

Spatial dimensions of change, such as territorial conquest and the formation of the barrios, were among the first things studied by Chicano historians. Albert Camarillo originated the term *barrioization* to describe "the formation of residentially and socially segregated Chicano barrios or neighborhoods."¹⁰ The process Camarillo depicted involved social, economic, familial, urban, and demographic change. Many historians have studied the formation of the barrios as urban and social history; the barrios also figure large in the work of novelists, poets, and artists.¹¹

During the 1970s the barrios garnered attention thanks to land-based grassroots politics, which drew in well over a generation of scholars and artists, including myself. This movement embraced multiple peasant- and migrant-led land takeovers in Mexico, especially in Tijuana and elsewhere in northern border states, and urban movements in U.S. cities. I became interested in the grassroots movement that arose in the city of Santa Ana in the early 1980s partly because of the stories barrio residents told to the press about their neighborhoods. The women and men who engaged in this neighborhood insurgency made the barrio part of their claim to power; its historical space gave them a sense of their right to demand representation in urban politics and funds for neighborhood improvement. Telling their stories to all who would listen, they encouraged people to see the barrio as descriptive terrain recording the social interrelationships that had developed over time. The stories I heard created a social meaning for the neighborhood, a meaning that was layered in the physical place.¹² I wanted to capture that sense of place and of collective history in my work.

In urban struggles, and in the scholarly literature cited above, the

politics of space is closely connected to the formation of collective identities that are grounded in particular interpretations of the past. In this regard Stuart Hall's discussion of the relationship between identity and history is instructive. He argues that cultural identities are not fixed in a single or hidden history but are "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of a past just waiting to be found, . . . identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past."¹³ Joan Scott also writes against unilinear accounts of experience, identity, and politics. She says,

If identities change over time and are relative to different contexts, then we cannot use simple models of socialization that see gender as the more or less stable product of early childhood education in the family and the school. We must also eschew the compartmentalizing tendency of so much of social history that relegates sex and gender to the institution of the family, associates class with the workplace and community, and locates war and constitutional issues exclusively in the domain of the "high politics" of governments and states.¹⁴

Identities are grounded in the particular relationships formed through histories of race, gender, class, and place. One identity does not displace another. Historical identities, especially, are generally structured in relationship to particular readings of geographic areas, such as are found in the "imagined community" of the nation.¹⁵

Despite critical studies of the formation of nationalisms, many historians still work with a bipolar model of national culture. That approach has meant that Mexican immigrants are understood by scholars as having just two options: to "become American" or "remain Mexican." George Sánchez criticizes such a static notion of ethnic identity. In the United States, he argues, the invention of new "traditions" and the abandonment or radical transformation of older customs are in fact common. He also reminds us that in Mexico a similar invention of traditions has worked to forge national unity. Mexican American ethnicity in Los Angeles, Sánchez says, developed from interactions between Mexicans and Mexican Americans as well as "through dialogue and debate with the larger cultural world encountered in Los Angeles."¹⁶

The views of other scholars complement that of Sánchez. Paul Gilroy, for example, calls race "socially and politically constructed" and charges that "elaborate ideological work is done to secure and maintain

the different forms of 'racialization' which have characterized capitalist development."¹⁷ David Roediger, documenting the pervasiveness and centrality of racial identification for white Americans, examines "white" identity as it is assumed by a sector of the U.S. working class. Race, says Roediger, is constructed differently over time by people in the same social class, and differently at any given time by people of varying class positions.¹⁸ In this book, I examine the way a white racial identity was given meaning in the American period not within a particular class, but as it was configured through urban and institutional structures.

Although ideas about "race" were present in the identities forged during all three periods that I cover, the meaning of color was never singularly interpreted, nor was color status ever entirely nonnegotiable. In the Spanish colonial and Mexican periods, the ascriptive status of the Spanish/*casta* population as *de razón* (having reason) allowed that group to downplay the significance of racial background and emphasize instead the simple distinction between Catholic settlers and *indios*. But that comparatively ample tolerance for color difference was not shared by the Anglo American population, which had generally accepted a set of ideas about "white" racial superiority just prior to the Mexican-American War of 1846. After 1900, difference in terms of skin color superseded all other distinctions, and it became harder for Californios to negotiate a favorable status. Thus, race identity became central to the construction of national identity, with "American" being equated with whiteness. The notion of white racial superiority reaffirmed the equation of "white" with "American" and "citizen," and that mindset came to define urban politics and to prevail in individual and collective statements of identity.

This book is a multiethnic history that examines the politics of space and the construction of identities. Chapter 1 looks at the Spanish conquest. Here I build on Ramón Gutiérrez's description of conquest and colonization as a process whereby missionaries sought to establish their authority over native peoples, an effort that in turn shaped important dimensions of society.¹⁹ I also discuss the comparable process of emancipation and address the questions central to New World politics in nations where enslaved or coerced peoples were emancipated: What did freedom mean? Who owned the land? Who controlled labor?²⁰

Chicano historians have described the capitalist transformation of the countryside in California, though in some accounts the American conquest plays the central role in this transformation, with little or no attention given to the general economic transition that was in fact oc-

curing nationwide. Moreover, while historians have provided a needed analysis of the ethnic dimension of this transition, they have tended to define ethnic and national categories in static terms, as being constant over time.²¹ An exception to this rule is David Montejano, whose work on the emergent meaning of "white" and "Mexican" in south Texas simultaneously explores the political economy of the transition to capitalist agriculture.²² In chapters 2 and 3 of the present study I explore some of these ideas, focusing on the effects of territorial conquest and land politics on Indian peoples as well as on Californios. Like Ramón Gutiérrez, Sarah Deutsch, Deena Gonzalez, and others, moreover, I also address the gender politics of conquest.²³

By providing a detailed view of the social world of San Juan Capistrano at the turn of the twentieth century, chapter 3 traces the history of change in San Juan's preindustrial, multiethnic (but primarily Californio and Indian) society. This town's history is similar to that of others in the Southwest, places where the regional Mexican and Indian populations remained demographically strong even as they lost economic and political power.²⁴

Américo Paredes, in examining the role of history in south Texan culture, situates the Southwest within the larger cultural area of Greater Mexico.²⁵ I follow his lead in chapter 4, where I examine Spanish-language theater and cinema, modes of representation that form part of the content and expressive means of a regional culture that is Mexican, Mexican American, and highly influenced by Spanish peninsular culture and performance.²⁶ The historical imagination that shaped interpretations of the past in Californio society was informed by this vibrant regional culture.

The theater was one way of telling patriotic stories and shaping national identity; in chapter 5, we see how the ordering of institutional and social space served a similar function. Here I examine the history of the American town of Santa Ana and its barrios, to present a case study on urban politics and race relations in an early-twentieth-century southern California community populated by people of widely diverse backgrounds and allegiances.

This region has been shaped, in part, by the distinctive histories of Indian peoples, Spanish, Mexican, and American colonists, and transnational migrants, yet, as are other regional histories, its story is wholly American. Central to the story are the processes of conquest and immigration, by which the nation changed fundamentally as new populations merged to create a multiethnic society. During the years of in-

dustrialization particularly, ideas about what constituted America and the American changed so rapidly that native-born citizens and immigrants alike constantly confronted them as new. "The very things which strike the native born (Americans) as foreign seem to her (the new immigrant) as distinctly American," stated a member of the Immigrant Protection League in 1913.²⁷ Organizing the perception of "the American" was one of the central processes that defined American society during this period. Hence, the pivotal question asked in this book is not, How was a population "Americanized" or, at an earlier date, "Hispanicized"—that is, persuaded to adopt Spanish customs, dress, and speech? Rather, the core question is, How and why did ethnic and national identities acquire their particular meanings? They were forged, I argue, through the struggles between contending social groups over who had access to the land and to the rights of citizenship.

CHAPTER 4

Regional Culture

Colonial and Mexican regional history continued to be meaningful in the collective memory of residents of San Juan and persons of Juaneño and Californio background elsewhere in Orange County. This foundation for historical culture was strengthened after 1900 when immigration expanded the kinds of live performance offered. The ideas about history, society, race, and national identity presented in a vast array of theatrical genres and in cinema constituted a shared body of knowledge that connected local populations to a larger and international Spanish-language culture.

Plays and other live performances portrayed a world distinct from that embodied in English-language productions, one that proved invaluable for interpreting contemporary society. Entertainment was expanded and changed further with the development of the film industry. Silent movies complemented many a tent theater, popular circus, or high drama performance prior to 1930; after that date, although the movies became more widely available than live theater, actors, actresses, and family tent companies continued to circulate among the Spanish-speaking populations of the Southwest.

In this chapter my focus shifts from the local area of Orange County to examine the Spanish-language theater (defined in the broadest sense to incorporate multiple genres and types of performance, including film) that was, according to Nicolás Kanellos, "the most popular and culturally relevant artistic form" in Hispanic communities throughout the United States from 1880 through 1930. Large professional compa-

nies and smaller, traveling tent theater troupes and circuses performed all along the border and in such subregions as south Texas and the California central valley. The *carpas*, or tent theaters, would announce their performances by means of the *convite verbal*, an oral invitation delivered throughout the neighborhood by a clown or by local children from the barrios who would thereby gain free admission to the show. Entrance to these performances might be obtained with an egg, other goods, or a small sum.¹ Even following the rise and then dominance of the cinema during the 1930s, the worldview and sensibility fostered by the theater persisted, both in movies and in those companies that continued to travel from community to community to share their offerings.

Theater was integral to the process of building and defining an ethnic community in the Southwest during the crucial period when Mexican immigration dramatically expanded the region's population and migrant pathways established new social and geographical links between places like Orange County and distant towns and rural populations.² The infrastructure for these developments was laid in the late nineteenth century. The railroads that increasingly interconnected this cultural area were built partly by Mexicans and Americans of Mexican descent, and in the decade of the 1880s rail routes multiplied markedly. In 1881, for example, three railroads entered El Paso, Texas, connecting this long-established commercial stop on the Spanish trail to places on both sides of the border and, by 1884, directly to Mexico City.³ The early 1880s saw the construction of a line through New Mexico and Arizona by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, which connected these territories to the Gulf of California via the Sonoran railway. The Southern Pacific's "Sunset Line" was completed in 1881. Larger companies and the smaller *carpas* traveled this route and its many feeder lines to perform in small pueblos on both sides of the border and in the rural interiors and urban centers of each country. With the onset of the Mexican revolution of 1910, larger companies settled in cities, and notable theater centers developed. Laredo and San Antonio in Texas, Tucson and Los Angeles hosted touring companies from Mexico, Spain, and other countries in Latin America. Indeed, despite its eventual identity largely as ethnic theater in the United States, the international dimensions of this early flowering cannot be underplayed. By the 1910s, companies moved along the southwestern circuit bringing productions to San Antonio, Laredo, and Los Angeles that had originally been performed before audiences in Madrid, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and New York.⁴

As the most popular artistic form, theater shaped a collective sense of history among Spanish-speaking populations that, though of diverse origins, came to reside together in long-established places like San Juan and in newer agricultural, mining, and railroad towns and cities. Theater audiences were conversant with representations of Spain, colonial Mexico, and other areas of Spain's New World empire. Well over half of the plays presented by the larger companies were written by Spanish dramatists. These playwrights, together with their counterparts in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, recreated sixteenth-century intrigues in the Spanish court and described life among the merchant and religious elites in colonial and postcolonial capitals from Havana to Mexico City to Manila. In a single evening of entertainment, the audience could see a melodrama in verse that reenacted political history in Mexico or critiqued New World slavery, and a modern social drama. The large, family audiences that frequented the theater were used to imagining past and present events in Spain and its former colonies, and to seeing plays that drew upon their religious imagination. In *La llorona* and *Las cuatro apariciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, for example, audiences recognized well-known legends drawn from oral tradition and religious theater (see below). Oral tradition incorporated written cultural products and, in turn, contributed stories and themes, language and style, to written pieces. In their travels, actors and actresses encountered variations on old stories, tales, and formulaic elements of language; these they incorporated into their repertoire through improvisation of character or speech. Such innovations enabled the theater to speak to common elements of a shared historical and religious imagination.

The complexity of knowledge and ideas that defined the oral culture discussed in chapter 3 becomes evident through a study of the theater. Literacy rates for Orange County (see figure 11) suggest the significance of orality as a cultural practice among the Mexican-origin population who were unlettered in 1910.⁵ The rise of literacy rates among Californios and Californianas from 1860 probably reflects trends elsewhere in the Southwest among regional peoples of Mexican descent. At the same time, the theater addressed regional audiences of Californios, Tejanos, and Tucsonenses who came from communities in which the older people were embedded in a folk culture centered primarily on orality and the traditions, legends, and historical references common to the culture of Greater Mexico. Despite the growing literacy of Californios and other regional groups in the Southwest, their sensibilities were also shaped by the formal elements of orality and by local cultures that de-

veloped out of the Spanish colonial experience. These shared dimensions of culture established the basis for growth of a southwest regional culture, despite variations in language, tradition, and history by state and locality within Mexico and the United States. Literate and unlettered adults of 1900 and 1910 were able to participate in a formal culture that incorporated the "high" arts within a popular setting. Audiences of all levels of erudition and social class attended productions together. The seating configuration, rather than the genre of entertainment or selection of repertoire, was what signaled social differentiation.

Formulaic elements and rhyme, serving as mimetic devices, are critical aspects of both oral cultures generally and the theater that arises in such cultures. The dominance of such formulas and rhyme in nineteenth-century theater pieces continued into the twentieth century in the works performed by Spanish-language troupes. A reliance on dialogue, long-drawn-out explanation, and such ploys of classical romanticism as the sinister villain, the perfect hero, and the formulaic plots of melodrama similarly addressed this aesthetic sensibility shaped by orality. A strong oral basis is suggested in the fact that through the 1910s the most popular dramas were written in verse, a form that helps to convey the plot to memory, or they were sung in the form of light comic opera, or *zarzuelas*, which relied on proverblike sayings and repetitive phrasing to draw audiences in. Although by the 1910s dramatic and vaudeville companies and the *carpas* were also performing modernist pieces, which departed from traditional forms by having minimal staging and an absence of formulaic dialogue, these companies did not discard their old repertoire. Rather, they continued to feature oratory, recitation, and the practice of *buen hablar*, a form that emphasized dexterity of speech and wordplay. Many of the 130 plays in one collection, *La Compañía Cómico-Dramática Villalongín*, were written by hand (perhaps as it was being dictated to an actor), copied from a text, or transmitted verbally, and dated. Published copies may well have been scarce at times (the plays in this collection dated from the 1840s through the early 1920s); the *apuntador* (prompter) who copied these plays thus performed the service of the *escriban* in committing the words to writing. The possession of each text is clearly defined by handwritten notations placed throughout the text, or with the stamp of the performer. These markings of possession and also of stage direction suggest the vital relationship between the spoken and the written word that constitutes the performative dimension of theater.

In the Southwest, traveling theater joined highly localized cultures

together in a broader regional culture, and there, as in Mexico, it helped shape national identities. In the United States in particular, popular theater began to give expression to the bilingual and bicultural sensibilities of the immigrant generation and their children. It contributed to building a common language of group identity and shared worldview. The following discussion of the theater rests on a conception of the United States as a country built on ethnic cultures of regional dimensions, connected through language and historical experience to cultures beyond national borders. The theater provides a graphic sense of the content of that historical consciousness and imagination, and some of the ways in which collective identity has been shaped.

An "Ethnic" Theater

Spanish-language circus, tent, religious, and dramatic theater was performed in California from the beginning of the colonial era. After 1848, steamships traveled regularly along the California coast, often bringing itinerant companies to perform in the older pueblos. Between 1860 and 1890, Mexican touring companies settled in Los Angeles and performed at newly established Spanish-language theaters and in the Opera House, sometimes presenting the work of local playwrights. Performances, announced in English-, French-, and Spanish-language newspapers, attracted an ethnically and socially diverse public, the varying status of which was reflected in seating arrangements (that is, by the price of a ticket).⁶

An evening's program would be very similar in structure to that found in professional theaters throughout the nation. Shakespeare and what would become the classic English-language stage repertoire were presented in a long evening of performance that might also include orators, orchestral music, jugglers, singers, minstrels, dancers, and acrobats. Yet whereas in English-language theater a split eventually occurred between "highbrow" and "lowbrow" offerings and audiences, such was not the case in Mexican theater.⁷

In Mexico, theaters in both the capital and the provinces (including the southwestern United States) continued to accommodate a broad sector of the population, and "high" culture remained standard fare for all classes.⁸ Because this theater was developed for a Mexican national and immigrant audience that, despite increasing literacy, was still rooted

in an oral tradition, it was accessible to lettered and unlettered, young and old people alike. The theater's long program bills thus carried a nineteenth-century tradition into the twentieth century. This enduring relationship between the legitimate theater and its broad-based audience is one feature that gave Spanish-language companies the classification of ethnic theater. New theatrical genres developed, but never in opposition to legitimate theater.

The social class distinctions that defined this audience of immigrants and native born were reflected in the hierarchy of seating within the larger theaters. In 1909, for example, seats in Teatro Calderón in San Antonio, Texas, ranged in price from 15 cents for the balcony to \$1.00 for the *luneta*, or front circle; in the Teatro del Progreso in San Antonio, that range was slightly greater, from 10 cents for gallery seats to \$1.50 for the *luneta*. In smaller houses, a single, general admission price might be charged. One production of *Tierra baja*, for example, had a ticket price of 30 cents, while *La abadía de Castro*, which was performed in two parts over successive nights, cost 10 cents per performance.⁹

To state the important differences between English- and Spanish-language theater is not to divorce the latter from central currents in American cultural life during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Other ethnic companies, especially those devoted to Yiddish theater and Italian opera, performed classic works in the original or translation, giving actors and actresses who later worked on the English-language national stage and in films their first break. Many English-language tent theaters had playbills similar to those common among traveling Spanish-language companies, with dramatic melodrama and a variety of other acts the standard fare. Tent theater, which built on traditions of medicine shows, Uncle Tom's Cabin troupes, acrobatics, and menagerie displays, was performed before English-speaking rural audiences throughout the nineteenth century, reaching its height of popularity in 1919. By then, the hundreds of touring tent theaters had begun writing their own plays, using smaller casts and fewer acts, and "making the dramas more relevant to small-town and rural life."¹⁰

English-language vaudeville also expanded its audience during these years. For the multiethnic troupe that performed on the vaudeville stage, performances were "egalitarian in a competitive way . . . the key criterion for success [being] the ability to put an act over."¹¹ Despite the emergence of highly centralized circuits and monopoly chains that dominated the forty or fifty theaters across the nation where big-time acts could be seen, there were about ten thousand other theaters or

showplaces in the United States where vaudevillians could work. "The earnings of a small-time actor," one critic argued, "might be as much as \$100 for a week, if he worked a full week, which compared very favorably with what he might have earned as an unskilled worker or even as a skilled craftsman."¹² While rooted in the immigrant and working-class backgrounds of its players, vaudeville spoke to a broad national audience, shaping over a generation of ethnic American identities.

Although the productions and performance styles of the Spanish-language stage crossed national boundaries and shared elements with other theater in the United States, the relationship between this theater and its audience was characteristic of ethnic theater in the way it shaped and affirmed community. Interaction was facilitated by the proximity of the *teatros* to downtown barrios—areas where Mexicans lived, worked, and shopped—and the frequency with which performances were mounted in neighborhood cultural centers, mutual aid societies, and churches. Audiences could be expected to attend with little prior notice. Broadside for productions of Spanish-language legitimate theater in San Antonio, for example, announced "un gran función para hoy"—a performance to be held that same day. This broadside was written in a characteristically direct and personal style. The performance, it promised, reflected the delicacy and good taste of the modern, internationally acclaimed piece being offered, *Tierra baja*, which had been translated from Catalan into Castilian and other languages. The announcement thus appealed to the literary appetite of the anticipated audience, who were made aware of the performance's broad-based, contemporary appeal.¹³

This announcement was typical. Broadside and playbills regularly assumed an avid audience available for hours of long entertainment. Employing a personal voice, they gave the illusion, at least, that a personal relationship existed between company and audience. Carlos Villalongín of the San Antonio-based Villalongín Company, for instance, addressed his announcement of the French drama *La abadía de Castro* to "las distinguidas familias que cariñosas acuden siempre á mi llamamiento" (the distinguished families who have always lovingly responded to my call). To affirm its value for the whole family, the company's publicity called the play "moral, sublime, and passionate." The full program also included orchestral music and silent film clips, shown during intermissions.¹⁴ Similarly, a Spanish *zarzuela* company in 1909 announced six performances of comic light opera that constituted entertainment for the entire family. The playbill defined this company's pro-

ductions as *altamente morales*, or highly moral, and emphasized the plays' high literary quality—a claim that underlines the points made above about the Spanish-language theater's presentation of "high culture" to a socially diverse audience.¹⁵

The name of the Los Angeles theater house known as California-El Teatro Digno de la Raza (California-Dignified Theater of the Race) reveals the personal relationship that theater companies attempted to establish with their public, again in a manner reminiscent of oral culture.¹⁶ The name emphasizes that this is a "dignified" playhouse where legitimate theater, *teatro de revista* (a form of Mexican vaudeville), and variety acts were performed. The broadside for this particular evening was written in the voice of the actress Elisa García López, who stated that she dedicated the dramatic piece "con gran cariño a la colonia mexicana de esta ciudad" (with great affection to the Mexican colony of this city). In a warm, sentimental, highly personal invitation, she explained that her father was the author of the play and that he had died a few hours after finishing it. She would, she said, perform the play according to his last wishes. Thus the audience was invited into "her" family drama by means of the broadside: the melodramatic mood was established even before the performance began. After the play, García López recited prose and gave a speech; she was followed by a singer billed as the *Gardel mexicano* (after Carlos Gardel, the highly popular tango singer from Argentina, who was a cultural icon across the Americas), a dancer, and a couple with a variety act, who closed the show.¹⁷

The name California-El Teatro Digno de la Raza is also significant in that it reflects a notion of Mexican nationhood as articulated by the revolutionary generation of 1910. The term *raza* contests the racial nationalism that equated whiteness with citizenship, a concept then prevalent in the United States, Europe, and most of Latin America, by establishing the *mestizo* (mixed "race" of Spaniard and Indian) as the symbol of Mexican national identity.¹⁸ A number of plays that were widely performed, especially around the time of national celebrations, illustrate in abbreviated form how the theater was involved in building a patriotic consciousness that often infused Mexican-American ethnic identity. Two well-known pieces that explain the origins of the Mexican War for Independence (1810; independence from Spain is celebrated on September 16) reveal two very different interpretations. *El grito de Dolores* was written in 1850 by the Cuban playwright Juan Miguel de Losada; *El Cura Hidalgo, o El glorioso grito de independencia* was written in 1910 by the Mexican playwright Constancio Suarez.¹⁹ Each play was

performed by the Villalongín company through 1920, though Losada's play was apparently edited to conform to early-twentieth-century patriotic ideas. A similar story line marks both plays: the priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, from the town of Dolores, is presented as the leader of a local group of conspirators who are plotting to overthrow Spanish rule in Mexico. Learning that their plans have been revealed to Spanish authorities, they are forced to begin the revolt earlier than anticipated. Hidalgo gives the *grito*, or call for rebellion, from his church balcony, and the play ends with the revolt against the Spaniards in full swing.

Juan Miguel de Losada's 1850 play was written in long monologues of rhymed verse and focused on the drama of intrigue attendant on the betrayal of the rebels' plans. The promptbook was heavily edited to abbreviate this laborious form and to revise Losada's presentation of the independence struggle and the resulting nationalistic spirit. Losada had used the mode of heroic narrative so that he might compare Hidalgo favorably to the Spanish conquerors Cortés and Pizarro—a comparison that would be unthinkable for a Mexican playwright, especially by 1901, when Suarez wrote his piece. For Losada, Hidalgo was significant as a hero of Latin American independence, a cause for which he and other Cubans were fighting in 1850 (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines did not gain independence until 1898). He therefore articulated an identity that embraced all the peoples of the Spanish Americas—"antes que todo soy americano" (above all I am American)—rather than the more narrow, national identity of Cuban or Mexican. The *apuntador* and director who worked from this promptbook crossed out references to *el águila americana* (the American eagle), replacing that symbol of national independence with the Mexican eagle. Arguments for independence that did not correspond to what was developing as "official memory" in Mexico were also cut—such as the phrase, spoken by a servant woman, "De unas maneras o de otras, al cabo, para nosotras habrá siempre despotismo" (in one way or another there will always be despotism for us—that is, women). This character's critique of gender inequity as part of the political ideology of the independence struggle is characteristic of Losada's embrace of universal rights and principles, as opposed to the specific, and generally more sexually and socially conservative, defense of the national group.

Suarez's 1901 play, in contrast, reflects a language of twentieth-century Mexican nationalism, including the notion of the *inspirada patriota*, or "inspired woman patriot." In his version, it is a letter from just such a woman, who has been arrested, that prompts Hidalgo to

issue the call for independence and begin the war. Suarez also engages the religious imagination through the person of Hidalgo's niece, who prays to the Virgin of Guadalupe fervently, in a manner that would draw the audience itself into the act of prayer. Through this character, the play builds on the religiosity of an "imagined community" of Mexicans, a term used by Benedict Anderson to describe the phenomenon by which "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members . . . yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." During the past two centuries, Anderson argues, these imaginings have created nations "where they do not [in fact] exist."²⁰ Suarez assumes Mexican nationhood from the very first encounter with the Spanish. As Hidalgo states, "Lo que a mi me entristece en alto grado, es el estado humillante y servil que guarda nuestra patria, dominada hace tres siglos por España" (What saddens me to the extreme is the humiliated and servile state that our country is in, dominated for three centuries by Spain). For Suarez, Mexican nationhood rests squarely on an idealized Aztec past. Hidalgo refers to Mexicans as "hijos de Anáhuac," possessing "la ardorosa sangre de Cuauhtémoc!"—sons of the place of Aztec origin, possessing the ardent blood of the last Aztec ruler, Cuauhtémoc. This nationalist trend is augmented in the promptbook by a new ending that twice denounces the conquistadors and that glorifies the fight for equality and liberty.

The theater, in short, was an important medium for formulating ideas about national identity and history and bringing them into public discussion. In Mexico and the southwestern United States, plays were often used to tell the national story. And depending on where they were performed, those plays took on various meanings. *El 5 de Mayo*, for example, written in verse by Luciano Frías y Soto, concerns the origins of the national holiday that memorializes a battle fought between young Mexican republicans and the forces of Emperor Maximilian, who ruled Mexico's French-imposed empire between 1864 and 1867.²¹ The day commemorates, in effect, the effort of patriot rebels to remove foreign rulers from Mexican soil, and in this sense it took on an added significance in the southwestern United States, which was looked on as Mexican territory that in 1848 was usurped by the United States. The promptbook suggests that *El 5 de Mayo* was performed each May, along with *Maximiliano I, emperador de México*, an exemplary piece of patriotic melodrama written by an anonymous playwright.²² This play opens on a weak Napoleon speaking to his advisors about setting up an empire in Mexico. It then follows Napoleon to Austria, where he discusses with

Maximilian, a liberal noble interested in reform, the latter's appointment as emperor of Mexico. Most of this long drama, however, focuses on the story of republican resistance against Maximilian that brought Benito Juárez, Indian governor of Oaxaca, to power as the most impressive liberal president of nineteenth-century Mexico. In addition, the play stresses, resistance to the French was kept alive, to an important degree, by the actions of women patriots. The love stories that weave the play together are impressive for their complicated equation of romantic love, family love, and love of the patria.

Although the national story was often featured on the stage, dramatic offerings were not restricted to the narrow bounds of nationalist exposition. The *teatro de revista*, for instance, commented on the political life of the nation and brought the sacred, whether of patria or church, into the realm of irony and laughter. While plays with nationalist themes and melodramatic pieces generally conformed to what Jean Franco discusses as the new codification of gender roles after independence in Mexico, the range of theater pieces and genres that developed in the century following independence embraced multiple representations of women—including peasant and working women with diverse voices, attitudes, and behavior.²³ This diversity of representation is explained in part by the theater's structure. Women actresses held important positions in the family-based companies; they often directed these companies or established ones of their own. In the social world of the theater, women's independent judgment and actions were accepted. They often married more than once, for example. Families that enforced conservative gender roles for their daughters would not allow them to consider acting or singing as a career, yet these same families did not hesitate to attend performances that often included complex and contradictory gender behavior.

The theater's success was evident in the multiplication of Spanish-language theater houses in the United States between 1910 and 1930. Los Angeles, for example, supported five permanent houses with Spanish-language programs that changed daily. The California-El Teatro Digno de la Raza, mentioned above, was among fifteen other theaters that presented Spanish-language productions on a more irregular basis. Performances through the 1920s continued to feature many pieces of Spanish and Mexican origin, but during this decade playwrights of Mexican descent living in Los Angeles also began to add their plays to the repertoire, with stories based on local history and politics: land loss and

ethnic conflict, the Los Angeles of the immigrant, the massive deportations of Mexicans during the 1930s, and the problem of racial injustice in the United States.²⁴ Men and women like Francisco Torres, who was lynched in Santa Ana in 1891, were represented by these playwrights, whose own experiences and close relationships to their immigrant audiences enabled them to address past and contemporary injustices with power and insight. Thus the Southwest attained a new prominence within the culture of Greater Mexico thanks to the efforts of these *émigré* and Mexican-American dramatists.

The movement of actors and theatrical companies across the international border effected a close interconnection between theater in Mexico and the Southwest. The life of Lalo Astol typifies that of many actors and actresses from Mexico who lived and worked for extended periods of time in both countries. The son and grandson of traveling actors, Astol was born in 1906 in Matamoros, Coahuila, Mexico, while his mother was on tour with the family company. From 1915 through the early 1920s he lived in Mexico City, where his mother and stepfather directed the Teatro Hidalgo, one of the most prominent legitimate theaters in the Mexican capital. During this period Teatro Hidalgo still presented the standard "*obras del teatro antiguo llamadas dramones*," old-fashioned melodramas that often lasted up to seven hours. Astol played both boy and girl parts in these productions with his brothers and sisters.

Actors who lived and worked in family-based theater companies could find work relatively easily in cities on both sides of the border. Late in the revolution of 1910, Astol's mother had formed a company to take to the provinces, including the states of Michoacán, Guanajuato, and beyond. Astol's brother later formed a touring company in Mexico City targeted at the Southwest, and in 1921, at the age of fifteen, Astol went to the United States with them. Lalo's purpose was to meet his father, who was an actor in Laredo, Texas. Warmly greeted, he was immediately invited to join the *Compañía Teatral de Manuel Cotera*; he spent a season with them in San Antonio and toured other towns in Texas, then returned to Mexico City during the 1920s following an illness. Once recuperated, he continued to perform with his mother. Later, he returned to Texas and joined the *Compañía Azteca*, which took high drama and variety acts to the pueblos of south Texas.²⁵ His career followed the traveling routes along the border to California, and by the 1930s he was performing in Los Angeles.

When the audience for legitimate theater and variety declined, Astol began working in radio. His first programs were broadcast on an English-language station that included some Spanish programming. In 1947 he took a job in San Antonio, with the exclusively Spanish-language station started by Raúl Cortéz, and later he worked in television.²⁶ Actors with a background in legitimate theater brought to film and radio a solid knowledge of the historical production of culture. Through at least the 1940s, moreover, the interlocking of genres and media was common. Films were adapted for theatrical performance and vice versa, while the "old" repertoire of melodrama and modern pieces that Lalo had performed from 1910 through the 1930s continued to be offered long after the theater had lost its large audience.

Astol's career exemplifies the geographic extension of the theater across Greater Mexico and the versatility that actors developed performing large repertoires with small companies. These same characteristics define the history of the Compañía Cómico-Dramática Carlos Villalongín. Like many performers in nineteenth-century Mexico, Carlos Villalongín, born in 1872 in Chihuahua, began his career in the dramatic troupe of his father, touring northern Mexico and the southwestern United States. When his father died, the company disbanded and Carlos joined the provincial troupe of Encarnación Hernández, formed in 1849, which performed in the northern Mexican states of Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Nuevo León. After Encarnación's death in 1879, his widow, the actress Antonia Piñeda de Hernández, took over the direction of the troupe; she widened the company's geographic scope, targeting now the interior of Mexico, Mexico City, and sometimes the border areas. In 1900, the troupe played the newly constructed Opera House in San Antonio, Texas, to a packed opening-night audience. In 1904 Carlos Villalongín, by now married to Antonia Piñeda de Hernández's daughter, the actress Herlinda Hernández, took over directorship of the company. The two families of Hernández and Villalongín performed together as the Compañía Dramática Hernández-Villalongín until about 1910, when some members of the Hernández family broke off and the company was renamed La Compañía Cómico-Dramática Carlos Villalongín.²⁷ During the revolution the company settled in San Antonio, where they remained permanently based until their dissolution in the 1920s. From there they performed on both sides of the long Texas border and in northern Mexican cities; by 1915 they had extended their reach from Laredo, Texas, to Los Angeles, California.²⁸

Toward a Collective Historical Consciousness

The plays performed by legitimate companies suggest a shared body of historical and contemporaneous references—ideas, images, and language that might have aided persons across generations to construe their world, invest it with meaning, and infuse it with emotion.²⁹ The plays provide a sense of the collective historical, religious, and social imagination of a broad audience. Each Spanish-language theater company had a large repertoire of plays that included melodramatic pieces by nineteenth-century authors, morality plays, dramatic essays, one-act tales, *juguetes cómicos* (comic one-to-three-act proverb-plays), *zarzuelas*, and burlesque pieces. Some works were performed repeatedly. Familiarity was a valuable asset, drawing the audience into the story line and enabling it to participate with the players in the construction of meaning.

Historical melodramas were the most common full-length plays presented to Spanish-speaking audiences in both Mexico and the United States from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1910s. The most popular pieces tended to be written by Spanish dramatists and set in Spain. Most plays were fashioned around the great myths and stories of tragedy and valor from Spain's literary Golden Age. The court, the monasteries, the nobility, and particular representations of the populace were familiar, as were the Spanish peninsular and New World cities depicted against the backdrop of conquest and empire.

One popular melodrama, Antonio Cortijo y Valdés's *El cardinal y el ministro*, takes place in 1712 Madrid.³⁰ Typical of nineteenth-century melodramas, the play is written in rhymed verse. The story begins with a problem: the cardinal, a foreigner who represents not only the power of Rome but also the influence of France and Italy, wants to become the archbishop of Toledo, of *nuestra España* (our Spain). The minister, Macanáz, seeks to protect the crown and the Iberian empire from the danger that this cardinal poses. Intending to warn the king, however, he is thwarted by the cardinal, who secures his arrest by writing a treasonous letter under the minister's name. The minister is taken prisoner; the cardinal becomes archbishop of Toledo. In the final scene, the minister is being sent into exile accompanied by his daughter. At the final moment, a letter arrives from the king; it acknowledges the conspiracy of the cardinal against both the crown and the minister, and gives

Macanáz authority to do what he will to the cardinal, who is, indeed, sent back to Rome by the minister.

This melodrama revolves around intrigue and deception. Ultimately, though, it is about the need to protect imperial sovereignty and Spanish identity—hence the nationalistic tone, which reappears as a dramatic element throughout. The audience thus confronts a version of eighteenth-century Spanish history that, however, crosses borders and time periods in its presentation of nationalist sentiment, a strong cultural and intellectual trend in nineteenth-century Mexico. The melodramatic quality of the play is maintained by the minister's daughter, whose love for her persecuted father is declared in long monologues that draw the audience into her despair. As she says, "es un tormento tal, que no es bastante un solo corazón para sentirlo" (it is too much torment for one heart to bear).³¹ This love for her father is stronger than romantic love and reinforces the importance of family loyalty. It was in fact typical of these melodramas to have women express the deep love and devotion of parent or child, as well as to convey the feelings that bring the audience to sorrow, pain, joy, and pleasure.

Whereas Spanish playwrights depicted imperial Spain in their works, Mexican dramaturgists wrote plays that closely resembled peninsular style but represented colonial Mexico. Mariano Asorno's *San Felipe de Jesús, protomártir mexicano*, a four-act historical drama, is a good example.³² The story takes place in the early seventeenth century, in the home of a wealthy family in Mexico City and in convents there and in Manila, ending in Japan. The plot incites both a historical and religious imagination. Felipe is a spoiled boy who has been sent by his father to a convent to become a good and dignified man capable of carrying on his father's name. By a ruse he escapes, leaving his cousin in his place, and ships off to the Philippines to become a rich merchant. As the audience is told, "que todo el que a Filipinas de comerciante se ha ido ha vuelto a los años con mucho oro en los bolsillos" (all who have gone to the Philippines as merchants have returned years later with a lot of gold in their pockets). Felipe is successful, grows to repent the disobedience of his youth, and joins a religious order in the Philippines. He willingly goes to Japan as a missionary, where he gives his life as a martyr in response to the choice posed by the emperor of Japan: "Queréis vivir felices en mi imperio o morir en la cruz?" (Do you want to live happily in my empire or die on the cross?). The dramatic emotion is carried by the characters of the maid and Felipe's mother, who suffer, are deeply sad, have premonitions, and seek hope through prayer. Here

again is a play written in verse and rhyme, that has a straightforward moral, affirms a religious sensibility, and opens the historical world by representing the particular places of monastery and merchant household.

The most tenacious piece to survive the decline of nineteenth-century melodrama was *Don Juan Tenorio* by José Zorrilla y Moral, a romantic drama written in 1844 that became famous all over Latin America.³³ Founded on a folk tale, *Don Juan Tenorio*, through the use of metaphor, spoke to the sensibilities of an audience steeped in oral tradition. The action, set in Seville in the year 1544, takes place around the institutions of commerce and the church, then hard at work reshaping the New World. The plot involves the tension between good and evil, as embodied in the character of Don Juan Tenorio. When his actions are driven by love, they speak to the "higher principles" of his day: purity, beauty, truthfulness. Yet he is also driven by evil genius, which brings him to his death. He is allowed to repent, however, and his soul is redeemed at the end of the play. The archetypal power of this morality tale is exemplified by the fact that it was still playing before live audiences throughout the Southwest and Mexico over a century after it was written. By the late nineteenth century, moreover, it was performed throughout the cultural area of Greater Mexico to celebrate the Day of the Dead on November 1.

Mexican religious history was incorporated into the national theater by the late nineteenth century in such plays as *Las cuatro apariciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe*. Forming part of a seasonal calendar of performances, these accessible plays strengthened the theater's relevance for a broad public. *Las cuatro apariciones*, for example, a pageant of religious and national history, was performed by professionals and non-professionals throughout Mexico for the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, December 12. This play reenacts the legendary appearance of the Virgin to Juan Diego, an Indian, in 1531 on Tepeyac, a small mountain where the Aztec goddess Quetzalcoatl/Tonantzin's temple drew people from great distances to worship. In four apparitions, a brown Virgin instructed Juan Diego to go to the bishop with the message that the Virgin of Guadalupe wanted a temple dedicated to her on that site. The bishop was hesitant and sent Juan Diego back for proof. In the last meeting she performed miracles that gave Juan Diego the proof he needed. The play ends with the words "Hoy la nación mexicana te proclama por patrona" (Today the Mexican nation proclaims you its patroness), underlining the role that this myth has played in the devel-

opment of Mexican national iconography, if not identity and consciousness per se.³⁴

The incorporation of popular religious themes was crucial to establishing theater as the most culturally relevant artistic form.³⁵ José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *La noche más venturosa*, for example, was based on a shepherds' play, or *pastorela*, performed from the period of Spanish conquest and well known throughout Greater Mexico.³⁶ *Los pastores* was a nativity play the Jesuits had introduced during their evangelization of Europe; Franciscans and Jesuits brought versions of these plays to the New World to aid in the "spiritual conquest" of indigenous peoples. The seven basic parts were the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ to the shepherds; their journey to find and worship him; the attempts of Lucifer and his devils to stop the shepherds; the battle between Archangel Gabriel and Lucifer, with the triumph of the archangel; the arrival of the shepherds at Bethlehem; their presentation of gifts; and a closure with song and dance. Originally, popular versions that played throughout Mexico had been intended to celebrate the birth of Christ as an event in which good triumphed over evil. Yet because the play was transmitted verbally, which allowed for improvisation and variation, performances often took on bawdy secular or political meanings. As a consequence, its production was finally prohibited by the Spanish government in 1769.³⁷ *La noche más venturosa* is a *pastorela* that José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi wrote down to be performed on the professional stage as a symbol of national unity and triumph over colonial rule shortly after Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821. Although he was perhaps more interested in national identity than religiosity, his appropriation of the religious folk tradition reinforced that aspect of popular culture.

The legitimate theater often adopted plays with familiar story lines, as Lizardi did with *los pastores*, with local variations being incorporated into the translations. Nonprofessional performances of *los pastores*, for instance, used local costumes, masks, and character types that expressed syncretized indigenous and European imagery and ideas.³⁸ These variants were then brought to the Southwest by immigrants from Mexico, with further relationships between culture, religion, and community being added. In the Santa Ana barrio of Delhi, for example, a resident related his version of the play to the neighborhood priest orally; the priest then wrote it out into a script, but eliminated those parts he considered irreverent or satirical. *Los pastores* was rehearsed in a pool hall donated by a community member who had a prominent role in the

play. When performing the piece, the actors reinserted all the omitted passages and performed it the way they had in Mexico. The actors even sent to a pueblo in central Mexico for the masks used in the play.³⁹

Delhi was but one of a number of Mexican communities in Orange County where immigrants performed *los pastores*. The center of such productions during the 1920s and 1930s was the barrio of Santa Fe, in Placentia. The group performed in Placentia, elsewhere in Orange County, and in certain barrios in Los Angeles County.⁴⁰ Regional themes and variations incorporated into these plays were then passed on through memory, a technique that encouraged both persistence and variety. This instance of popular theater illustrates the cultural connectedness of twentieth-century barrios such as Delhi with barrios and pueblos throughout the Southwest and Mexico, where *los pastores* was still performed and had been in some cases for centuries.

A final example of legitimate theater's incorporation of popular tradition is *La llorona*, a play by Francisco Neve that presents one of three foundational legends of Greater Mexico. Neve's play is taken from an early-colonial version of the tale that is critical of the social stratification and gender relations of postconquest society in central Mexico. The main character, Luisa, a mestiza of humble, strongly indigenous background is betrayed by her lover and the father of her child. This man, the son of the conquistador Hernán Cortés, is a central figure within the Creole nobility; he betrays Luisa by marrying a woman of his own class. Driven insane by his duplicity, Luisa vengefully kills their son. She is prosecuted and executed, then appears as a ghostly figure who cries out in anguish during the night. Her apparition so terrifies her former lover that he dies, begging forgiveness.

Countless versions of *La llorona* (which means "the weeper") exist throughout Mexico and the Southwest, melding elements of European and indigenous cultural forms. Neve's version, which played to huge audiences on the professional stage, made stark references to the social injustices committed against Indians, and in particular Indian women and children, during the conquest and colonial times. Neve also created a strong and defiant character in Luisa. The coloration that Neve gave the legend seems to support José Limón's interpretation that it is chiefly the story of a woman who violates patriarchal norms. "Symbolically destroy[ing] the familial basis for patriarchy, . . . she kills because she is also living out the most extreme articulation of the everyday social and psychological contradictions created by those norms for Mexican women."⁴¹

The social criticism that was so much a part of oral tradition was enacted by the theater as well, and became increasingly overt in the melodrama and modern drama written from the 1890s on. The issue of race was one theme that, widespread in American melodrama by the latter part of the nineteenth century, easily found its way into the repertoire of Spanish-language legitimate theater. *El mulato*, for example, written by Alfredo Torroella and situated in 1870 in a factory town near Havana, presented an abolitionist view of Cuban slavery and the inequities of a color-based society.⁴² Another play in this genre was *La cabaña de Tom, o Esclavitud de los negros* (Tom's Cabin, or Black Slavery), adapted in 1893 by Ramón Balladares y Saavedra from the influential American novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe.⁴³ Race melodrama criticized not only slavery and color injustice, but also the sexual exploitation of nonwhite women in the Americas.

Realist and modernist pieces were popular in Spain, Mexico, and the Southwest after 1900. For example, the play *El pan del pobre, o Los explotadores del trabajo* (The Bread of the Poor, or The Exploiters of Work) by peninsular authors Félix González Llana and José Francos Rodríguez, was first produced in Madrid in 1894. The action takes place in a pueblo on strike, with the characters including workers, women and children, factory guards, and soldiers. According to the prompt-book, the play was performed extensively between 1911 and 1921.⁴⁴ Its popularity points to the solidarity frequently evidenced between the theater and a socially diverse but largely working-class audience.

Modernist plays were innovative in form, bringing everyday life on stage with direct language, sparse scenery, well-constructed dramatic plots, and penetrating psychological analysis. They introduced complicated or sophisticated inquiries in place of the formulaic structures of nineteenth-century plays, though the most popular pieces, such as Jacinto Benavente's *La malquerida*, remained highly melodramatic.

When Mexican playwrights working in the United States wrote about regional history, two major influences were at work: Spanish-language theater and Hollywood films. *Ramona*, for example, was adapted to the stage and film from Helen Hunt Jackson's enormously popular 1884 novel *Ramona: A Story*.⁴⁵ The Spanish-language version created by Los Angeles playwright Adalberto Elías González, titled *Los amores de Ramona*, broke all box office records in June 1927, drawing more than fifteen thousand people after only eight performances. That play soon found its way into repertoires all over the Southwest, and it was made into a film starring Dolores del Río in 1928.⁴⁶ A later version,

Ramona: drama californiano, was adapted from the movie by Juan Padilla in 1930.⁴⁷

Jackson wrote the novel as a defense of American Indian land rights and echoes the hostility toward Californios and Mexicans that was common during this period. The story line concerns the Californio family of Señora Moreno, a cruel matriarch. Ramona is a mestiza born illegitimately to a Scotsman and an Indian mother; she is adopted by Señora Moreno's sister, who dies, but not without having arranged for Ramona to be raised as a daughter by Señora Moreno, who, however, hates the beautiful and angelic mestiza. Ramona falls in love with the mission Indian Alessandro, a spokesperson for his village. The refinement of Alessandro is attributed to the missionaries, who are presented as wise and benevolent. Ramona and Alessandro's romance is the centerpiece of a story that portrays a countryside invaded by rough, anti-Indian American squatters. The elevated figures of the mission Indian and the missionary contrast sharply with Jackson's derogatory portrayal of the elite Californiana matriarch, Mexicans, and white squatters.⁴⁸

Juan Padilla's adaptation from the film, in contrast, transformed Californio rancho society, with the glorified *hacienda* and its *hacendado* and *campesinos* (owner of the land and peasants) now posed as central figures. In this version, Señora Moreno owns property in both California and Mexico—an interesting touch, because it in fact reflected the situation of some landowning families in the nineteenth-century Southwest. Yet the play drops Jackson's focus on American Indian land rights and anti-Californio, anti-Mexican sentiment, building the story line instead around the Señora's hatred toward Ramona because of her illegitimate birth and the eventual resolution of this dilemma. In other words, by presenting a picture of old California that featured lavish haciendas rather than the simpler ranchos that actually existed, the play built a distinct historical paradigm; even so, it was one that at least addressed rural California history and made the area a subject for artistic exploration and representation.

Teatro de Revista and the *Carpa*

A new theater, the *teatro de revista* (theatrical revue), came to fruition with the Mexican revolution. This highly urban offshoot of vaudeville provided a commentary on contemporary politics,

society, and culture through the use of language and humor that were highly irreverent, ironic, satiric, and iconoclastic. Offering a space in which audiences could "have access to modernity and become familiar with musical innovations whose place of origin was otherwise inaccessible to the gallery," the *teatro de revista* took up themes characteristic of vaudeville, but it did so "always in terms of appropriation, of Mexicanizing the foreign, of experimentation with one's own."⁴⁹ With this new form of theater, vaudeville became a national cultural production as actors appropriated foreign representations of the modern while they experimented with national themes. Brought to the United States during the 1910s, it influenced the content of much Spanish-language urban theater after 1920. *Teatro de revista* maintained the close relationship with the audience that had developed with legitimate theater. As a result of its popularity, performers trained in melodrama, *zarzuela*, serious drama, and comedy in small family-based dramatic companies found themselves doing variety acts by necessity during the 1920s.⁵⁰

The *carpa*, or tent theater, was essentially a version of *teatro de revista* but performed with fewer resources and often in a rural or neighborhood setting for the whole family. The Mexican circus, or *circo-teatro*, had long presented acrobatics, clowning, and trapeze work along with theater pieces. These would be accompanied by puppetry, comedy acts, one-act farces, dramatic monologues, short comic operas, pantomime, dance, and other attractions, depending on the company's talents.⁵¹ From the turn of the century until the late 1940s, the *carpas* represented a common form of variety entertainment throughout the Southwest. Raising tents on vacant lots, on level bits of dusty land in remote rural areas, and on the outskirts of barrios, *carperos* cultivated loyal audiences.

In *carpa* performances, *corridistas* sang folk ballads about traditional heroes and historical events. *Declamadores*, or orators, kept alive stylized forms of *buen hablar*, an oral-based tradition of elaborate speech, thus satisfying the public's respect for and pleasure in verbal dexterity and linguistic virtuosity. Although *carpistas* might speak with an overlay of literary respectability, they managed at the same time to subvert the socially respectable through their use of *picardía* (roguery) based on sexual and political allusions. In this way the *carpa* addressed the changing social reality effected by revolution and immigration.

A central figure in the *carpa* was the *pelado*, or feisty underdog, whose ironic commentary on society and politics was prominently featured in humorous sketches. The figure of the *pelado* took on the established order and played with the same themes of modernity that were

worked out in the *teatro de revista*. Epitomizing *rascuachismo*, a term that defines "a way of confronting the world from the perspective of the downtrodden, the rebel, the outsider," by the 1920s the *pelado* had begun to draw on a hybrid mix of English, Spanish, and *barrio caló*, or slang, to express a bilingual, bicultural sensibility.⁵²

Carpa and *variedad* (variety) shows in the Southwest helped to establish a new sense of identity for the immigrant generation, just as other "ethnic" theater had in previous decades. *Variedad* built on the *teatro de revista* as well as comic opera and operetta, and incorporated the *carpa's pelado* as a comic figure whose bawdy humor colored critical commentary on politics and, in the United States, the situation of the immigrant. *Variedad* expressed the new spirit of a population both becoming increasingly urbanized and confronting new forms of entertainment: movies, radio, and phonograph records.

In the 1930s, as theater audiences began to turn to the movies for their amusement, performers joined the *carpas* to take their talents to small cities, barrios, and *colonias*. Demonstrating their solidarity with audiences made vulnerable by the depression and the forced repatriation to Mexico of tens of thousands, the *carpas* performed at benefits to raise money for mutual and legal aid and community relief.⁵³ In the massive San Joaquin cotton strike of 1933, which paralyzed production along a hundred-mile stretch, a Mexican circus installed itself in the largest camp of strikers and performed for them to keep their spirits up. As the performers moved through the San Joaquin Valley, in addition to entertaining the idled workers, they carried news of events, rallied support elsewhere, and raised funds for the cause.⁵⁴

The *carpas* made regular appearances in Orange County. In 1935, for example, the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana brought a *carpa* to Artesia barrio in Santa Ana for a number of days, with part of the proceeds going to the committee for relief work in the local community.⁵⁵ A few months later the Comité Oficial de Festejos Patrios brought a *carpa* to the same barrio for a six-day entertainment extravaganza; this time, part of the proceeds were used to raise funds for the Sixteenth of September Independence Day celebration.⁵⁶ One traveling company, the Gutiérrez Show, staged numerous performances immediately prior to the major citrus strike of 1936. Its sponsor was the local chapter of the Alianza Hispano-Americana, which worked with the other organizations mentioned above to generate support for the strikers. Fifty percent of the receipts from the Gutiérrez Show were used for Mexicans in need of relief.⁵⁷

Mexican Cinema

Movies eclipsed the theater in popularity during the 1930s. As early as 1910 it was not uncommon to show films between performances of serious drama; a decade later this relationship was reversed, with *carpistas* and *revista* providing the intermission entertainment between film features. Even so, the vibrant relationship between audience and performers that had been cultivated by the stage was carried into audience expectations of and responses to the movies. Film stars made personal appearances at Spanish-language movie houses to sing songs and talk. Movie houses would also host live theater, inviting traveling and local companies to perform favorite and seasonal plays such as *Don Juan Tenorio*.⁵⁸ It should therefore come as no surprise that the repertoire of melodrama and high drama that helped shape audience tastes during the era of live theater was also successful on the screen.

In large cities, Spanish-language cinemas were established in theater districts, but in smaller cities, where such districts did not exist, attending the movies could be difficult. In Santa Ana, for example, established cinemas in the downtown area began to relegate "Mexicans" (meaning identifiable mestizos) to the balcony during the 1910s. Josefa Andrade recalled that her father came home one day and "swore he would never again go to such a theater," speaking of one of the four or five English-language movie houses where Mexicans were relegated to the balcony. "He said he wasn't an animal and only animals are segregated like that."⁵⁹ Individuals contested these policies, but their efforts did not change the structure of things until much later, when federal law and local political pressure produced by a growing civil rights consciousness during the late 1940s finally eroded the practice.⁶⁰

It is true that the movies brought all ethnic groups into the same theater houses in small towns throughout the United States. Yet segregation clearly contradicted what some have cited as the movies' egalitarian promise. "Here was a revitalized frontier of freedom," writes Lary May, for example, "where Americans might sanction formerly forbidden pleasures through democratized consumption." After 1914, in May's opinion, the break with formality represented by classless seating and sexual mingling was only intensified by an architecture that mixed foreign and domestic, high and low culture together.⁶¹ These reflec-

tions, however, neglect the experience of those who were not allowed to mix freely in the movie theaters.

Despite certain continuing inequities, the power of the cinema as a medium of mass culture and a promoter of change is undeniable. As Cathy Peiss effectively argues, moreover, the movies formed part of a commercialized leisure that evolved in close relationship with America's immigrant working class. The movies spoke to the immigrant, but rather than "Americanizing" people, film prompted the development of new ideas about what it meant to be American. The immigrant experience and stylized humor were presented on the screen side by side with new sexual norms. In the formula films of Cecil B. deMille, for example, sex, romance, money, and the enticing foreigner are intertwined to show that metamorphosis is possible through consumerism and sexual freedom. Peiss found that 40 percent of the working-class movie audiences were women, who came from every ethnic background.⁶²

As part of the culture of consumption, film—on both sides of the border—was central to creating ideas about America and Mexico, "the American" and "the Mexican." Hollywood westerns systematically rendered offensive depictions of Mexican villains; films set in urban America depicted no Mexicans whatsoever; and films set south of the border presented all Mexicans as "greasers." With the exception of film stars such as Rita Moreno, Ramón Novarro, Dolores Del Río, and Lupe Velez, Mexicans and other Latins were routinely portrayed as "bad guys," from the era of silent film into the 1930s. In an official letter of complaint written in 1919, the Mexican government warned that U.S. production companies might be restricted from filming in Mexico, and in 1922 movies featuring derogatory depictions of Mexicans were banned from Mexican cinema screens. In the mid-1930s Spain and other Latin American countries signed a reciprocal agreement with Mexico to ban all films that "attacked, slandered, defamed, insulted, or misrepresented peoples of Hispanic or Spanish origin."⁶³ Yet even despite such distortions, American films dominated the Mexican market by the early 1930s. Between June 1932 and July 1933, for example, 92 percent of the films shown in Mexico were produced in the United States, with Spanish soundtracks or subtitles added in Hollywood.⁶⁴

In the nationalist atmosphere of the Lázaro Cárdenas administration (1934–1940), Mexico's own cinema industry turned toward the representation of Mexico's rural people and the Mexican revolution, and it embraced Mexican music. The movie that set the trend, *Allá en el ran-*

cho grande (1936) by Fernando de Fuentes, evoked a romanticized, mariachi-filled world of *haciendas*, *hacendados*, and *peones*, helped along by melodramatic romance and comic relief. Mexican films of the 1930s and 1940s tended to present the desire for mobility and wealth negatively, as *agringado* (Americanized). After 1940, during the conservative years that followed the Cárdenas era, formula plots exalted the family, peasantry, and working class and identified these groups as "lo mexicano," or the genuine Mexican. *Cine del pueblo* in fact idealized poverty, affirming its inevitable presence and transfiguring the poor into the emblem of the nation.⁶⁵

Mexican immigrants' process of defining their identity during these years was strongly influenced by cultural productions created on both sides of the border. The derogatory language and images used to define Mexicans in the United States made contending definitions of *lo mexicano* that much more critical. Yet the popularity of English-language film continued.

The complexities of cultural life and cultural politics are apparent in the story of Luis Olivos, the owner of a Spanish-language theater in Santa Ana.⁶⁶ His is a story of cultural politics directed at dispelling the myths about Mexico and Mexican identity that his generation encountered at every turn in American society. Olivos was born in Santa Ana in 1918. His father had migrated to the United States from Mexico four years earlier to join his brothers, and his immediate family followed. Luis was raised on a ranch just outside town, graduated from high school in 1936, and did field work before securing a job as balcony usher at the Princess Theater.

He already loved the movies and had gone every Friday night to one of Santa Ana's five, always-packed movie theaters to see westerns. "I was a cowboy buff" who loved "western lore," he stated. But working the segregated balcony motivated him to seek a better situation, and after a little over a month Olivos met with the owner of the theater and suggested that a Mexican movie be screened the following week. The owner agreed. Soon Olivos was traveling an eighty-five-mile route throughout the county posting playbills to announce the weekly showings. "They call it in the business, 'beating the bushes.'" The Princess soon became known for its Mexican films, and a Mexican restaurant opened next door, serving food late into the night. Olivos eventually ran and then purchased the theater himself. After World War II, he bought the large Yost Theater in downtown Santa Ana, where he put on movies, stage shows, and plays.

Olivos states his intentions this way: "My first idea to run a movie house and have pictures with culture was to give the people a cultural look at what really Mexico is. . . . It's full of history. It's uplifting because it evolved from revolutions . . . monarchies and invasions, but . . . in school we were told that we were backward people. All we could see in the textbooks were Indians sitting on the sidewalk, big hats . . . that we weren't stable and we weren't to be trusted and that the Mexican was always the outlaw or the damaged. . . . We were the bandits. We were the dirty people. We were the uncouth people. We were this and that. We were the ones that beat up people."

Olivos's theater created an important site in Santa Ana for Spanish-language cultural productions. During the 1940s he began to rent radio time in Tijuana, Mexico, a few hours' drive away. He insisted that this publicity drew many immigrants to the city, having heard from a customer, "Know why we decided to come to Santa Ana? 'Cause when we going across the desert . . . we heard that in Santa Ana they're showing such and such a movie . . . and they're also presenting our artists." For Olivos, his theater gave the public something of their own, including the live interaction between audience and artist that had been the tradition in Spanish-language legitimate theater. Other lines of continuity with the theater were to be seen in Olivos's close connections to and feelings of affection for his public, like those nurtured by earlier performers and theater directors, and his insistence that the movies were for the whole family and the movie house was a place of decency.

The movies expanded the culture of Greater Mexico in the Southwest, furthering a tradition started by the theater. As actors and actresses traveled through the networks of camps, *colonias*, small pueblos, and urban barrios, they spoke to a shared colonial history, religious imagination, oral tradition, and the multiple cultural referents provided by a common language. In contributing to this regional culture, the theater, in all its performative dimensions from legitimate stage to *carpa*, drew on and added to an oral culture shaped by sophisticated verbosity and stylized elements that facilitated the commitment of plots and ideas to memory. Many of the theatrical pieces reflected religious tradition, iconography, and thinking, which they built into the expression of a Mexican patriotic sensibility and national identity, while the *carpa* and *teatro de variedad* addressed the new complexities of a bilingual and bicultural reality.

The construction of such an ethnic culture should be seen not as some sort of aberration within an otherwise homogeneous "American

culture"; rather, the United States as a whole was in the process of being redefined. "Ethnic," "racial," and regional subcultures developed in relationship to changes that were taking place in American society and culture. This shift takes us beyond the discussion of culture to examine the "politics of space," or the way in which the political ordering of land and society molded images of nation and race.

CHAPTER 5

Racial and Ethnic Identities and the Politics of Space

Events in the American town of Santa Ana provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the early-twentieth-century experience of Mexicans, Californios, and Indians. Founded in 1869 on the former Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana (see chapter 2), this town was where Modesta Avila went to report her defiance of the railroad, and, hence, of the new economic and legal order. Santa Ana was the business and financial center where decisions were made that transformed the countryside. It was also the heart of American society in Orange County.

English-speaking migrants of American birth and American parentage constituted the overwhelming majority of the population in Santa Ana, although after the town became the urban center of the county in 1888 it developed a more diverse population. Native whites of native parentage declined from 71 percent of the population in 1890 to 67 percent in 1930. Californios and Indians from San Juan moved to Santa Ana to secure year-round work and to join family members. By 1900 Santa Ana had a small population of Californio and Mexican residents who lived throughout the city in sparsely built neighborhoods. By 1910, their numbers were augmented by new immigrants from Mexico, and the city became segregated as a result of strong race prejudice against all dark-skinned people, regardless of what language they spoke.

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The politics of spatial segregation led to the creation of the barrios, where a vibrant community life developed in the spaces of the neighborhood. Within the barrios a Mexican-American identity formed.

It constituted a collective identity sharply distinct from the one generally attributed to "Mexicans" by the dominant population and culture.

In Santa Ana, as in other American towns, spatial segregation defined and sustained a white racial identity in opposition to supposed characteristics of a "Mexican" race. The terms *white man*, *white farmer*, and *American schoolchildren* (a designation that excluded all nonwhite children) pervaded the language used by local government, administrators, and the English-speaking population in general. This language reflected regional and national trends. Its employment emphasized the consistent affirmation of the supposed dichotomy of "white" and "Mexican," without which the set of social relations sustaining white privilege—and hence the notion of a white "race"—would have become meaningless. In fact, "white" did not describe the biological or ethnic makeup of a group; rather, its meaning was always fixed in overt or implied relationship to constructed "racial" groups, the ascribed attributes of which were uprooted from the actual histories of the groups in question. The meanings of these constructed groups, in other words, were not based on the national identities that developed in Mexico, China, Japan, and elsewhere in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nor did they embrace the collective identities that developed in ethnic communities within the United States. Instead this politics of race was anchored solidly in language, and it was delineated in the social spaces of towns and cities, institutions, and workplaces.

The segregation of Mexicans was illegal in California. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans were considered white by law and so could not be segregated on the basis of race. Yet de facto segregation was maintained, through the actions of government officials, the voters who supported them, agricultural, industrial, and business interests, the residents of white Santa Ana neighborhoods, Parent-Teacher Association members—in short, all those who constituted the self-identified white public.

Racial antagonisms against people of Mexican descent had underlain the territorial conquest of the Southwest.¹ In fact, public support for the Mexican-American War of 1846 was the culmination of the transition from a belief in equality through "race improvement" (consistent with the Enlightenment belief in human progress) to the notion of "the innate superiority of the American Anglo-Saxon branch of the Caucasian race."² A purported "science" of racial difference had originated in Europe in the early nineteenth century and spread to the United

States, where it was transformed into a systematic justification for slavery and Indian removal. By 1840 American phrenologists writing for a broad public were disseminating their racial classifications and assumptions about the innate mental capacities of designated racial groups. Popular journals blended ideas on race from a variety of sources, including scientific treatises, monographs on history and philosophy, and novels and poems. But the catalyst for the overt adoption nationwide of racial Anglo-Saxonism was the meeting of Americans and Mexicans in the Southwest. After the war with Mexico only the most vigorous abolitionists defended Mexican rights, and even they generally agreed that "whites" were a superior race. As the abolitionist congressman Joshua Giddings of Ohio argued about Mexico, "It is true that their population is less intelligent than that of our free States; it is equally true that they are more rapidly improving their condition than are our slave States."³ Giddings found Mexicans to be inherently inferior to Anglo-Saxon Americans in the free states, but more intelligent in their social policies, having abolished slavery in 1829.

Even as race ideas were shaping territorial conquest in the period 1850–1890, the meaning of race difference was being actively negotiated. For a few precious years, the politics of reconstruction challenged the ideas and laws that supported racial inequality. Yet violence against African-Americans and other actual or perceived nonwhite groups soon brought these negotiations over race difference to a halt. By the end of the nineteenth century a "scientific" nationalism had established the criteria by which to judge the achievements of large invented, and generally misconstrued, national groups. The idea of the Anglo-Saxon American came to subsume other branches of the Caucasian "race": "citizen" was now equated with "white."⁴

Race ideas obscured and misrepresented the collective histories, worldviews, and cultural practices of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Informed by the cultural systems of Greater Mexico and the ideas and iconography that developed among the Mexican-descent population, Mexican and regional Spanish-language culture offered interpretations of life and group identity distinct from those constructed in U.S. society. These ethnic interpretations had their foundation in history; work in agriculture and related industries, specifically ones with a highly seasonal organization of labor; and life in the neighborhood. The streets, alleys, backyards, shops, bakeries, restaurants, storefronts, and house lots where multiple dwellings were often built to accommodate large, extended families were spaces in which a close-knit community could

be created. The relatively small barrios of Santa Ana, situated near fields, factories, and railroads, were populated in part by means of informal migration networks that linked family and kin; this connectivity, together with the small barrio size and the (often) shared nature of work and leisure, encouraged close interaction. The barrios were defined by a distinct politics of space that involved the appropriation of these places during a period when official land-use policies implied, and often enforced, an absence of rights to such.

Nineteenth-Century Racial Politics and Ideas

The manner in which self-defined white Americans constructed racial meaning prior to establishing a de facto segregated society after 1900 is illustrated in the lynching of Francisco Torres in Santa Ana in 1892. The event itself and the newspaper coverage of Torres's story are strongly revealing of racial attitudes in this town of American migrants. The purpose of both the lynching and the English-language reportage—which constructed clear racial identities of Mexicans, Indians, Californios, and whites, as well as interpreting the meaning of places like San Juan—was clear: each was an attempt to shape white racial hegemony. In a town where the increasing ethnic and social differences among residents were not yet inscribed on city space, and in a region where nuanced understandings of peoples from the former Mexican territory were still acknowledged, and diverse ethnic communities composed of Indians, Californios, Mexicans, Europeans, and a few Latin American and Chinese immigrants shared the social landscape with the majority Anglo-American population, the tide was about to turn.

Torres was lynched in jail during the early-morning hours of August 20, 1892, by a group of masked men. They entered the jail and asked another inmate if he was “the Mexican.” “I told them I was a white man,” the man stated, acknowledging the race attitudes that made Torres the object of this attack. When they found Torres, they pulled him from his cell and hanged him from a pole on the main street of town.⁵

The lynching had been anticipated. Torres was accused of killing the foreman on the ranch where he worked. The foreman had withheld \$2.50 of Torres's \$9.00 weekly wage to pay a county tax collector for a

road poll tax that Torres reportedly owed. Torres, refusing to accept the deduction, the next morning demanded his full wage. A quarrel ensued; a short time later the foreman, McKelvey, was found dead. Torres disappeared. As soon as the news broke groups of men discussed hanging him, and the *San Francisco Chronicle* from upstate reported the story under the headline “Lynching Probable.”⁶

The newspapers and rumors built Torres up as a dangerous bandit, using the incident to construct racial meaning. One newspaper, for example, argued that Torres was one of “a class of outlaws in Southern California most of whom are Mexicans [who] regard the world as their lawful prey.” The press referred to the “good Mexicans” who cooperated in the investigation, and described the court interpreter as “one of our best Spanish citizens” (though Torres himself requested to have the man dismissed because of his antagonistic stance). This “Spanish citizen” was the son of a Californiana and a man named Carpenter, who had migrated from New York in the late Mexican period and who had committed suicide when he lost the rancho gained in part through his marriage. As is the case in the historic construction of race identity, the interpreter's mother's background defined his own for this English-speaking public. Unlike this “Spanish citizen,” moreover, Torres was described as “a low type of the Mexican race, evidently more Indian than white.”⁷

With such phrasing the newspapers drew on an ideology of race that had already been used to justify Indian removal and extermination policies. Torres's high proportion of Indian blood, they asserted, explained his purported violence.⁸ “The sooner such savages are exterminated,” one paper stated, “the better for decent civilization.”⁹ Most Mexicans, being racially and, hence, socially similar to Torres, were implicated too, for example in the sheriff's alleged suspicion that the descriptions of Torres given by his “Mexican associates” were unreliable. One article stated that Torres “was never observed close enough by white persons to obtain a very minute description from that quarter,” implying a much greater physical distance than actually existed in this society.¹⁰ A relationship between racial background and social menace was insinuated in the way the Californio and Indian communities through which Torres was chased were characterized: Mesa Grande, for instance, where Torres was finally apprehended, was described as a place “principally inhabited by Indians, half breeds, Mexicans and other . . . thieves and outlaws.”¹¹

Had Torres been jailed in Mesa Grande or a similar town, the outcome would have been different, as this population, some of which

owned land, existed on a terrain of racial encounter and negotiation very unlike that found in Santa Ana. In townships inhabited primarily by Californios, Mexicans, and Indians, a fairer trial might have been provided. In fact, Torres was lynched even as the judge was deliberating moving the case to another court. The sign hung on Torres's dead body read "Change of Venue"—a vicious acknowledgment of the violent racial injustice that was always a possibility in the Western town.

Torres's capture and incarceration was a much-anticipated event because of what was at stake: the enactment of racial tensions in the public arena. Villagers waited at the train station in San Juan to see Torres as he traveled from San Diego to Santa Ana. In Santa Ana, where he was jailed, the city streets were thronged. Prominent in the crowds were Californios and Mexicans from all over the county, many of whom expressed strong sympathy for Torres when conversing with him through his jail cell window.¹² When the prisoner was brought before a crowd in front of the jail, a watermelon peddler offered Torres a melon from his wagon. Torres spoke to him and others in the crowd, but, one English-speaking journalist lamented, "all attempts to get other Mexicans to translate the remark proved without avail."¹³

This ethnic solidarity was also evident in the Spanish-language press, which echoed Torres's own plea of murder in self-defense. Contrary to what the English-language press reported, Torres seems not to have been at all villainous. He roomed with three Californio and Mexican laborers on the ranch where he worked, which was owned by Polish immigrants. He ate his meals with other workers at the home of the Monterolas, about a mile down the road, whom he paid Saturday nights for his week's board. His mother lived in Anaheim.¹⁴ The newspaper *Las dos repúblicas* argued that Torres's guilt "perhaps consisted solely in his nationality" and insisted that the Mexican counsel in Los Angeles demand an investigation to find his murderers.¹⁵ The counsel's request was dismissed by local authorities, however, who never sought to find the guilty parties—men who were rumored to include "prominent citizens" of Santa Ana.

The newspapers articulated ideas about the meaning of "white," "Mexican," and "Indian" that had gained stature in the United States between the 1836 Texas movement for independence from Mexico and the 1846 Mexican-American War. Despite anti-Mexican sentiment, the legal and property rights of citizens of Mexico had been guaranteed under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. But the individual Mexican's racial status, as the Torres case makes clear, was not toward the upper

end of the spectrum of the new race paradigm. Torres was made into a criminal figure by the fact that he was "more Indian than white." For the newspapers that supported the lynching, his racial status placed him outside the rights of citizenship that would otherwise have allowed him full access to legal representation as defendant.

The very process of classification emphasizes the contending understandings of race and ethnic identity in the 1890s, and the importance of place to sustain these understandings. Despite the many acts of violence that were justified by such ideologies of race, the racial status of "Mexicans" (that is, citizens of Mexican descent) remained potentially negotiable through the late nineteenth century because of their land-ownership, which facilitated the negotiation of status.

Torres was lynched at the beginning of a decade in which lynchings were at their height nationally, especially in the South and Southwest; these vicious acts formed part of a larger trend to end negotiation over the meaning of racial difference and equality.¹⁶ For three decades, a time marked by the postwar Reconstruction and westward expansion, race relations and the meaning of racial difference had been fundamental political questions on the national scene. For Chinese in the West, negotiation of rights had been largely foreclosed by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The debates over exclusion focused on the rights of the white farmer as distinguished from the "coolies and other foreign serfs," and the rights of the white working man as defined by the California Workingmen's party during the 1870s.¹⁷ Discriminatory legislation against the Chinese had been accepted by the California Supreme Court when an 1850 state law that barred Indians and African-Americans from testifying in courts was extended to the Chinese.¹⁸ As Sucheng Chan points out, the assumption that the Chinese were passive victims who worked as cheap labor to enrich the state's agricultural and industrial interests has been reasserted in a historiography that has wholly ignored the substantial role Chinese farmers played in developing the state's agriculture both before and after exclusion.¹⁹

The nineteenth-century language of racial prejudice that established the dichotomy of white citizen/nonwhite alien or semicitizen was already shaping the California historiography during this period. It was in fact part of the process of defining the terms *Californio*, *Indian*, and *Mexican*. Herbert H. Bancroft, a historian and publisher who organized the first systematic recording of California's colonial and Mexican history, stated his ideas about race in a travel account he wrote in 1874 while conducting research in southern California.

Bancroft was not just any observer of California. His literary workshop of the 1870s employed people from Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States. He and his assistants performed thorough research in colonial and Mexican archives, copying and purchasing documents. In addition, two assistants recorded the narrative histories of some 150 Californios and California Indians (some of which were discussed earlier in this book). They produced the seven-volume *History of California* and the book *California Pastoral, 1769–1898*. Writing in the positivist tradition, Bancroft states: “My conception of the province of history is a clear and concise statement of facts bearing upon the welfare of the human race in regard to men and events, leaving the reader to make his own deductions and form his own opinions.”²⁰ A man of his era, he believed that “the facts” spoke for themselves. His selection and interpretation of “facts,” however, was steered by his assumption that history is about progress and the hierarchy of civilizations.

In his travel account, Bancroft writes of Californios as “native Californians (greasers),” with the parenthetical reference explained only insofar as he defined Californios: “The pure blood of old Castile, already somewhat mixed with that of the descendants of the people of Montezuma, was still further reduced by occasional unions of Mexicans and California Indians.” Shortly thereafter he explains that in California “whiteness was the badge of respectability, and the white Anglo-American could take his choice from among the rich dusky daughters of Mexican descent . . . a too close scrutiny of the blood with which they allied themselves is not always palatable to the fathers of dark complexioned children, especially if the fathers are rich and respectable, and the sons and daughters educated and accomplished.” For Bancroft, the authentic “whiteness” of the Anglo-American was superior to the “badge of respectability” claimed by the “white” Californio whose purity of blood had been “reduced” by racial mixture. Bancroft often details the features and color of people from the former Mexican territories, while leaving assumed the whiteness of Americans and Europeans, whom he never describes by color. The workers on the Coutts ranch, for example, are described as “a multitude of every size and color,” whereas Colonial Cave Coutts, a southerner who had served in the U.S. army, been an Indian agent, and married into the landowning and elite Bandini family, is, together with Don Juan Forster, the Englishman discussed in chapter 3 who married into the well-off Pico family, are described simply as “the autocrats of the region.” Bancroft took careful note of these men’s

Californiana wives, however, describing Mrs. Forster thus: “Her features have rather an Indian cast though not unpleasing nor lacking intelligence,” while Mrs. Bandini is “this pretty Mexico-California relic” (in but one of Bancroft’s frequent references to Californianas as relics of the past). Californios, conversely, he describes as beaten men, living symbols of loss.²¹ Both images have influenced the historiography—the image of the disoriented and destroyed former patriarch, for one, standing in sharp contrast to the stories I told in chapters 2 and 3.

Bancroft’s description of pueblos like San Juan carries his notion that Spanish and Mexican society in California was a subordinate and now dead civilization, all traces of which would disappear with the advance of American society. Moreover, he assumes erroneously that the mission Indians had disappeared, a notion that not only shaped his interpretation of what he saw (and of what he did not see) but also continues to inform contemporary historiography. A clear example is his description of San Juan Capistrano, which begins: “driving through an adobe wall round to the backside of the adobe hotel (everything is adobe here even the people). . . .” Thus the architecture is equated with the people, and both are synonymous with decay. The villagers are described in one half-sentence: “After completing our observations” of the mission, he reports, “we spent the afternoon in writing up our books and taking notes on early California from dusky-imaged ancients, the results of which will be given in another place.” His only reference to a historical Indian presence involves the “irregularly placed out-houses in which the Indians lived, some of them still standing and some in ruins.” His ability to see the Indian population was clearly circumscribed by his interpretation of San Juan’s former neophyte population, whom he describes later in the text as the “savage and semi-savage retainers” of Don Juan Forster when he lived at the mission “in a princely fashion” from 1846 to 1864.²²

Bancroft’s many assumptions inform his interpretation of Californio society in subsequent works as well. He turns to the “Black Legend,” for example, which, generated in sixteenth-century England, emphasized the brutality of the Spanish (in contrast to the English) conquests in the Americas, and he did not acknowledge native American peoples as active agents in colonial society. His idea of the superiority of Anglo-American society led him to attempt to integrate this region into American national history through an overlay of multiple “facts” about Californio society that, however, leave it outside the great push of civilization, a concept that he venerated. Although his efforts to document

this past led him to build the body of personal narratives from which emerge distinct voices describing California's past, Bancroft's own historical writing virtually eradicates those voices. Portions of these texts, Genaro Padilla observes, were set "into footnotes below the main narrative, revised and in many cases discounted."²³ As a result, I find it impossible to draw on the history that Bancroft wrote for information about California because he has selected and discussed the material without accounting for Californios, Californianas, and Indians as they understood and presented themselves. His assumptions of white and American superiority are tightly woven into his interpretation.

The Creation of a Segregated City

The society that fostered these ideas was mirrored by the American town of Santa Ana, where Torres was lynched. First plotted in 1869, Santa Ana was home to many of those who organized the farming economy, trade network, and industrial base that changed California's rural society. The small city, whose residents were overwhelmingly born in the United States for at least two generations back, replaced the ethnically diverse town of Anaheim as the urban center of Orange County when the county formed in 1888.²⁴ Through the 1890s the mixed population of farmers, skilled and unskilled workers, professionals, merchants, bankers, and industrialists lived scattered throughout the town rather than in socially stratified neighborhoods. Status was indicated not by location, but by the size of one's property and the nature of one's house. As in San Juan, chickens and other poultry, vegetables, and fruit trees were raised on town lots. City land served the subsistence needs of many of the town's working-class families, who were virtually self-sufficient in their production of edible goods. Up until around 1910, their children worked as laborers in the seasonal harvests, picking, pitting, and drying selected fruits; the wages they earned enabled them to purchase basic items.²⁵

While Americans made up the majority of the population, English-speaking Canadians and a small number of Europeans, Californios, Mexicans, and Chinese also lived in Santa Ana.²⁶ Ethnic affinities characterized the individual households, which included immediate family as well as boarders and servants. The pattern of urban development seemed unrelated to ethnic allegiances, however. The railroad tracks on

the east side of town created a juncture for the distribution of goods and nascent industry, and this was a place where working-class residents tended to live. But even near the tracks the class character of the neighborhood was tempered by the existence nearby of field crops, orchards, and the homes of merchant farmers. In the areas to the immediate south and northeast of Santa Ana's downtown, large landowners, professionals, merchants, and wealthy farmers built homes during the 1890s; even so, unpaved streets and the prevalence of rural production, of working farmers and tradesmen close by, produced a cityscape as yet unmarked by sharply differentiated neighborhoods.

The boardinghouse population, which was characterized by a regionally diverse group of native-born Americans, Europeans, Canadians, and an occasional Japanese family, illustrates the absence of class and ethnic differences in Santa Ana's urban geography at the turn of the century. These boardinghouses were located within the ten-block radius of downtown, often above shops and offices. Run by women heads of households, they provided an entrée into the town for single women and men, families with working adults, and migrants who arrived with capital to invest in farms, small factories, and real estate. One typical boardinghouse, at 510 N. Main Street, a block from the center of downtown, was run by a woman from Missouri, and she had four families of lodgers. The working adults included a capitalist from New York, a dealer in wood and coal from England, a seamstress from Indiana whose daughter was a dressmaker, and a housekeeper from Germany. The location and attributes of the rooms they rented—whether on an upper or lower floor; whether marked by warmth, airiness, ease of access, and good size—reflected the residents' relative social standing, just as the value of city lots and homes measured their owners' worth. The Richelieu and Rossmore hotels, too, had a good mix of renters, coming from across the United States and Europe and working in jobs as diverse as cigarmaker, capitalist, tailor, cabinetmaker, salesman, mining engineer, owner of the waterworks, and owner of a business college. These individuals represented the migration that would build the small town into a more highly differentiated cityscape in the next decade.

In 1905 the Pacific Electric Interurban Railway connected Santa Ana to Los Angeles, Santa Monica, and Watts, a change that encouraged the reordering and revaluation of urban property.²⁷ After this date land within the city limits was increasingly turned to residential use, and land values rose; this proved profitable for landowners who either ceased

their farming operations or moved them to the city limits and beyond. Edwin Halesworth, for example, arrived from Cuba, Illinois, in 1876, purchased a large block of land in the northern corridor of town, and cultivated grapes, becoming a major producer and shipper of raisins. In 1906 he sold all his land except two lots. On those, he constructed a house for his family and another to sell. The rest of his former land was built in homes of standard bungalow style for middle- and working-class newcomers.²⁸

New neighborhoods for a specifically middle-class population formed adjacent to the interurban railway tracks within an approximately five-block radius. At the same time industry, such as the Pacific Coast Soda Company, which employed fifty workers, began to locate on the western outskirts of town, where beans had previously been grown. By 1908 the Chamber of Commerce declared that Santa Ana had "passed the crucial village stage and has now entered the city list"; while an urban way of life is not yet featured in the boasting pamphlet, the material foundations for a differentiated urban geography had been established. Within less than a decade the city had paved three miles of streets and seventy-five miles of sidewalks, allowing for promenades through new uptown neighborhoods; extended gas and electrical services to most neighborhoods; and built a sewer system, a fire department, and a modern hospital.²⁹

Two daily and two weekly newspapers published in Santa Ana by 1906 provide a record of how class differences in the walking city were bridged by an ideology of common access to property and respectability. Advertisers directed themselves to "gentlemen," "workingmen," and "ladies." H. C. Daves and Company, for example, sold "Correct Clothes for Gentlemen." T. Wingood's Dry Goods Store was "The Place Where They Treat the Workingman Right." The real estate agents Hickox and Barker asked readers: "Are You a Wage Earner? And Do You Pay Rent? Come and see . . . a home for you on the installment plan." Ads like these play on the general assumption that social stratification was an acknowledged difference bridgeable by consumption. What is not specified in these ads, but is understood, is the equation of the workingman and wage earner with white men. This equation was assumed in the state and national labor movement, and accepted by a broad spectrum of the population.³⁰

The city space in Santa Ana was not socially differentiated in its aggregate structure, the significant exception being "Chinatown," a small area with as few as fourteen residents within two blocks of the new

interurban railway depot and organized along the more chaotic pattern of the late-nineteenth-century town. In 1906, with the expansion of urban development downtown, Chinatown was declared a "public nuisance" by the city trustees, who ordered its buildings burnt to the ground. The Chinese (men who had been left stranded without wives and family by the Chinese Exclusion Act) were forced to seek other habitation, which the city trustees assumed would be located in what they called "the Chinese gardens in the suburbs," a large area where Chinese truck gardeners farmed on leased land.

The Chinese had made their home in Santa Ana for quite some time. In previous decades, they had lived scattered throughout the city and worked in a variety of jobs that included washing and brickmaking. The Chinese community appears to have been consolidated in a hierarchic structure by the turn of the century, when two Chinese merchants rented the town land on which the buildings of "Chinatown" were constructed. These merchants rented rooms to a total of twelve lodgers. The lodgers worked as clerks in the merchants' stores, farm and day laborers, vegetable peddlers, and cooks. The merchants may also have acted as intermediaries for the Chinese farmers who leased land in the area around Anaheim, and as labor contractors for the farm and day laborers. Chinese peddlers sold fresh produce door-to-door and were the town's most important source for fresh vegetables. This working community, with its cats, dogs, chickens, and other small animals, plus a horse, was perhaps an obvious target for the local press. Chinatown was described as "one big dwelling and a row of smaller shacks." One of the dirt-floored rooms in the row of "shacks" was described as "barely large enough for a miserable bunk." This dehumanizing language was similarly used to describe the Chinese men, who were referred to only as an amorphous group, never as individuals, in the newspaper coverage of the burning. In an outright effort to undercut even their commercial role in the city, journalists warned against buying any vegetables from the "yellow vendors," who were "wily enough to hide the loathsome signs [of disease] as long as possible."³¹

The burning fits within a long history of violence against Chinese residents throughout the West; in this case, it was generated by the city government's intention to promote standardized growth for a public consisting of "gentlemen, workingmen, and ladies."³² Although the ostensible reason for the burning was the report of a case of leprosy to the health department, the press, the lawyer representing the woman who owned the property, and even the city trustees themselves sug-

gested that this allegation of leprosy could not be substantiated. Before issuing the order to burn the buildings, therefore, the city trustees entered into a political understanding with the district attorney, who assured them that "no criminal action could be taken on the matter . . . as the complaint in such case would have to be issued by me." Even though the burning was not an example of the mob violence that had long plagued Chinese immigrants, it reflected an anti-Chinese sentiment that was strong in California's racial politics. Hence, the occasion took on the character of a great spectacle. The decision to burn the buildings was made in the early afternoon and was not announced to the public, but word spread quickly, and soon a crowd of a thousand had gathered to watch the early-evening burning. The alleged leper, Wong Woh Ye, had resided in the city for twenty years, yet the newspapers did not attempt to provide any information about him. Only the property owner and the Chinese counsel protested the burning.³³

The trend toward differentiating city space according to the logic of standard urban growth, to move agriculture to the outskirts of town, and to build new and architecturally uniform neighborhoods was accompanied by demands on the part of city residents that "racial restrictions" be placed on residential property. Citizens who had previously defined their status by family reputation, civic involvement, and the appearance of their home now began to look to the Chamber of Commerce and city government to promote an urban order that would establish their social standing through affiliation with a desirable neighborhood.

As the city's population expanded from 8,500 in 1910 to 30,000 in 1930, new migrants came to constitute the majority of the population. The racial politics that they either confronted or participated in creating was foreshadowed in the pages of the 1910 manuscript census, a federal census conducted every decade, written out by hand; the census was arranged by household and recorded information on every person in a household. On the Orange County sheets of this document, the census enumerator stamped or wrote "MEXICAN" beside most Spanish surnames, whether their bearers were recent immigrants from Mexico or not. Frank O'Campo, for example, was born in California and settled in Santa Ana sometime in the late nineteenth century. He married twice, each time to women born in California; his second wife was a Juaneño woman who had been born and raised on a peanut farm near the city of Orange. At the time of both the 1900 and 1910 censuses, O'Campo lived on the east side of town in multiethnic, largely working-class

neighborhoods near the railroad tracks. At each date he lived in a home that he owned, and he worked as a fish dealer peddling fish from a wagon throughout the city. Despite his California birth, length of stay in Santa Ana, the fact that English was the language spoken in his house, and that his now-deceased first wife was a Californiana, he and his children had "MEXICAN" stamped alongside their names in 1910. His son, Joe O'Campo, related the family story that around that same year the family awoke each morning to find cow dung slung on their house by neighbors who were trying to get the family to move out of the neighborhood. They eventually did move into one of the city's rapidly expanding barrios.³⁴

Before the early-twentieth-century upswing in immigration, the county's Mexican population had decreased in size until it constituted only a small percentage of the Mexican-descent populations in San Juan, Yorba, Anaheim, Orange, and elsewhere. Between 1900 and 1910, however, this relationship began to change: the number of Mexican households in Orange County rose from 56 to 263, while the number of Californio households rose from 153 to 207. The increase in the Mexican population continued through the 1920s, so that by 1930 Orange County had the eighth largest Mexican population in California and the state's fourth largest number of Mexicans under eighteen years of age.³⁵ Recent immigrants from Mexico constituted 12 percent of Santa Ana's population in 1930, and 15 percent of Orange County's population.³⁶

The "Mexicans" counted above for 1930 included Californios and California Indians with Spanish surnames. Yet that tabulation does not entirely misrepresent the identities that emerged over these years, in which "Mexican" came to mean more than national origin alone. As I argued earlier, ethnic and historical identities are grounded, to an important degree, in the physical place of community and the meaning given to that place. The historical distinctions that served to separate Californios from recent immigrants decreased markedly as they moved into the same barrios with these newcomers. Indeed, after 1910, with the exception of San Juan, Mexicans outnumbered Californios and Indians in all the county's mestizo and Spanish-Mexican-descent communities. Particular regional identities were thus superseded by other expressions of collective identity. Community came to be shaped by a shared experience of work and race prejudice, a shared (but not homogeneous) culture of Greater Mexico, and a common language—elements

that embraced not only Mexicans but also Californios and Indians who lived in the barrios of the American towns.

Barrios were an integral part of the creation of social status and identity through the (re)ordering of city space. By 1916 Santa Ana had three large barrios: Artesia, Delhi, and Logan (see map 7). Artesia barrio was built on the west side of the town, in an area that had been swamp until it was partially drained for the construction of the Pacific Electric on Fourth Street in 1906.³⁷ Its first residents lived on the worst part of this land close to the city limits, among fields and orchards. Minnie A. Bray and others described this core area of the barrio when lodging a complaint regarding the "sanitation situation of the Mexican quarters" to the city council. "The premises," she stated, "are inhabited by Mexican families in disease breeding huts and tents of 30 or more in number on said plot of ground, without sewage, cess [sic] pools, or any provisions according to law."³⁸ Here small one-room dwellings and house-courts existed alongside tents and other substandard residences. An investigation of the area by the Chamber of Commerce recorded "no sewer connections in that particular part of town."³⁹

The low cost of land within the heart of the barrio facilitated its purchase on a monthly credit system; from the early days of this barrio, therefore, some residents owned their lots and built homes with the help of family or kin. Lots and houses might also be sold or rented out. "The lower and cheaper land was bought by the Mexicans, and the better and more expensive land was bought by some white people and those Mexicans who could afford it," explained Helen Walker, a social worker, in 1928.⁴⁰ Note Walker's reference to "Mexicans" in contrast to "white people," reflecting the status of "Mexican" as a racial category by this time. Walker pointed to the fact that both groups could buy more expensive land when able, and that some Mexicans did. Meanwhile, because the core area of the barrio was damp and susceptible to flooding, over the years the white population slowly moved away and Artesia became the largest barrio in Santa Ana. Processing and packing plants pervaded the barrio, and fields and groves formed part of barrio space.

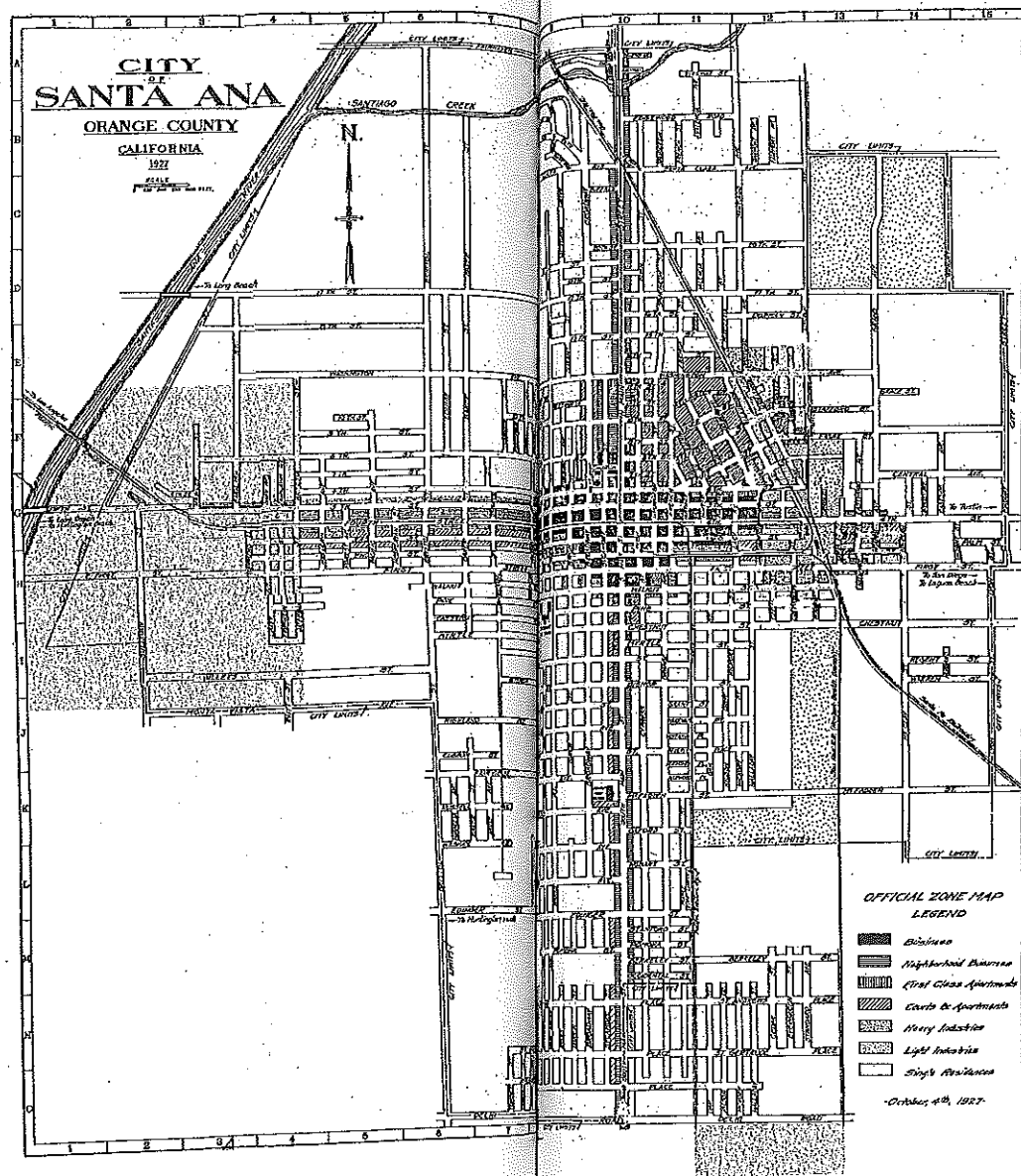
Delhi barrio (known originally as Glorietta), located at Santa Ana's southern city limits, was also built on farmland and swamp between 1910 and 1920, and grew quickly because of a sugar beet factory built nearby in 1910. The family of Señor Camarillo, who had been born in an Orange County *colonia* shortly before, moved to Delhi in 1910, among the first Mexicans to do so. The Camarillos were soon joined

by many other families when a housing subdivision opened near the factory. By 1920 Delhi barrio had approximately one hundred Mexican home owners, whose property was generally valued at \$25 each. Most families lived in their own homes, but the barrio also had house-courts and some houses were rented out. A few non-Mexicans bought or already had land they farmed in the environs of this addition; if they lived on their property, it tended to have a higher value than surrounding properties because of its location or size and the value of improvements. The least valued property among these owners was assessed at \$55 for the lot and \$50 for improvements.⁴¹

Delhi barrio remained highly rural, even after its incorporation into the city in 1928. Sr. Camarillo described the area around his house during his youth in the early 1920s thus: "Santiago Carranza lived across the street. On the other side there was a *ranchito*, a *lechería* [dairy], and a water plant," and not far from the barrio, but connected to the *ranchito*, was "another *pueblito* [little settlement]."⁴² The children from the surrounding *colonias* and *pueblitos* attended the "Mexican school" that was subsequently built in the barrio.⁴³

The sugar factory was recruiting Mexican laborers at the U.S.-Mexican border in El Paso by 1919; informed networks among Mexican workers across the West also passed the word when new factories opened. María Holguín was born in the state of Aguascalientes, Mexico, and her family finally settled in Delhi barrio in 1920. Her grandparents had come north to the United States in 1913 with their children and grandchildren, working at first in Montana. Her family settled in Delhi because "one of my grandparents' sons had gone to work in the sugar factory in Delhi. He had left his wife with his parents and then called for them all. . . . Many knew Delhi," Holguín stated, "because of the sugar factory. The factory got people from all over to come and work there."⁴⁴ Cecilio Reyes, born in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, was recruited at El Paso to work in the Los Alamitos and Delhi sugar fields; he arrived in the United States in 1922.⁴⁵

The third barrio, Logan barrio, was formed in a working-class neighborhood near the tracks on Santa Ana's east side. In 1910 Californios and Mexican immigrants resided primarily on one street of this neighborhood, working largely as domestic, agricultural, and day laborers. Their absence from other trades and professions, together with their relative nonparticipation in business, is notable even in this working-class neighborhood, whose other residents worked in a larger variety of jobs.⁴⁶ By the 1920s many more Mexicans had moved to Logan, often



Map 7. The barrios of Santa Ana, zoning map, 1927. Most of the city is zoned for single-residence homes. The shaded barrios, in contrast, are on land zoned for industry, house-courts, and apartments. Logan barrio, to the northeast, is the largest of the three eastside barrios. The westside barrio of Artesia was built in part on swampy land. Delhi barrio, a portion of which is shown, lies to the south, next to a sugar factory. Courtesy Orange County Archives, Santa Ana, California.

drawn by work in the walnut groves that lay almost entirely within the barrio, and by the availability of low-cost lots and houses for purchase or rent. In addition to the walnut groves and increasingly dense areas of housing, packing and processing plants and a laundry defined this small barrio. The residents of Logan barrio maintained close connections through a church jointly built with residents from other eastside barrios and *colonias* near the railroad depot.

Urban barrios often formed around a particular place of work where property values were low, or where lots had been subdivided again and again for the profit of a land speculator, whereas outside the city limits employers and packing houses often supplied company housing in an effort to promote a stable work force.⁴⁷ In the larger area of Orange County, the historian Gilbert Gonzalez found that many *colonias* and barrios were established as citrus camps, where workers were initially tied to a single employer or packing house. Residential patterns ranged from company-built housing areas to communities in which workers laid out the streets, built their own homes, developed small businesses, and, as was also done in Santa Ana's barrios, engaged in the domestic production of clothing, livestock, and vegetables.⁴⁸

Urban barrios were distinguished from other neighborhoods by several prominent features, which were related largely to the racial politics of employment. Women in the barrios, for instance, continued to produce clothes and subsistence foods for a longer period of time than other working-class residents in the city. Seasonal life and the temporal order of the barrio were defined by agricultural production; this marked, in turn, patterns of unemployment and migration. The built spaces of the barrios were less standardized than those elsewhere in the city, where new subdivisions for the middle and working classes tended to be built in the relatively inexpensive craftsman-style housing, often with family labor. Kits for these homes (generally one story and simple, featuring square rooms with elaborate woodwork and porches) could be purchased at prices affordable to workers, but not to those who labored primarily in fields and packing houses or as day laborers and domestic workers.⁴⁹

Downtown: Urban Space and Ethnic/Racial Identities

Before we explore the ways in which barrio residents appropriated local space for community life, it is necessary to establish

how public space *outside* the barrios was ordered and used, a process that in turn contributed to shaping ethnic identities. During this era of segregation, the "Mexican" and "white" populations interacted on downtown streets, in stores, and in parks, but they did so within the parameters of restricted "interiors." For example, the city prohibited Mexican-, African- and Asian-Americans from swimming in the public swimming pool except on the day before the pool was cleaned. Mexicans were required to sit in the balcony in movie theaters, and they were excluded from some restaurants by signs in the windows. Even so, some former residents of Santa Ana, like Jessie Mejía, who was born in Delhi barrio in 1918, spoke about the downtown of her youth favorably: "You could see everyone on Saturday nights right there."⁵⁰

Santa Ana's downtown was the commercial, financial, government, and entertainment center of the county. Santa Ana residents shopped there daily for groceries, and those from more farflung areas shopped weekly or monthly on special trips. Recall Luis Olivos's eighty-five-mile route distributing flyers to announce the city's Spanish-language movies. From the 1890s on, Mexican peddlers like the one who offered Francisco Torres a watermelon plied their goods in the streets of central Santa Ana. In this downtown core by the 1920s, K. Estrada ran a fruit stand, C. Sánchez ran a tamale wagon, and J. Chávez ran a popcorn and peanut wagon. And in 1920, Ida Quívez ran a Mexican restaurant at a key location on Broadway—the only one among the Mexican shop, restaurant, and grocery store owners to cross the ethnic boundary of Main Street, though she did so by only one block.⁵¹

The Main Street divide emerged as the downtown developed and was not yet firmly established in 1910, when the children in figure 13 marched downtown. In 1916, the downtown core area extended for six blocks across Main Street: three blocks to the east, which became the "Mexican side," and three blocks to the west, which remained the "white side." In this core area residents of the town and county made their daily or weekly shopping trips, visited dentists, doctors, and lawyers, did their banking, attended the county's first city college or one of the professional schools, dined out, and went to the county's first movie theaters. In 1916 the 600 block of East Fourth Street, just east of Main, had cigar stores, druggists, insurance and real estate agents, a department store, professional buildings, a jeweler, fruit stores, barbers, a dairy shop, hardware stores, grocers, and bakers. Only one business on this core-area block had a Spanish name or owner. In the next two blocks of East Fourth Street, two Mexican restaurants, run by Mexican families for Mexican patrons, had already been established. By 1922 a



Fig. 13. Schoolchildren on parade, Santa Ana, 1910. Courtesy Seaver Center for Western History Research, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, photo no. H7931.

Mexican tailor, Juan Ramírez, had a shop in the 300 block of East Fourth, catering to a mixed clientele. On the next block east, La Estrella grocery store was serving the downtown's Mexican population. Farther along East Fourth Street one finds, in 1922, Mexican merchants running a drug store, a confectionery store and factory, groceries, restaurants, a boarding house, and a billiards room. Down six city blocks to the east of Main Street was a working-class district of rooming houses and small homes inhabited by working-class whites and a few Mexicans. Mexicans from smaller barrios that did not have their own commercial area

shopped here daily. Another strong component of the area was the packing and processing plants near the East Fourth Street depot, around which clustered small canteens serving breakfasts, lunches, and dinners to the workers.

By the early 1930s, East Fourth Street had emerged as a well-defined Mexican commercial district. R. Rangel, a Santa Ana merchant who grew up in Delhi, affirmed this fact, saying that East Fourth Street was "an old Mexican shopping area; there was a lot of discrimination, so we knew where to shop."⁵² Inexpensive department stores such as J. C. Penney and Montgomery Ward, discount stores like Gallenkamps and Thrifty Drugs, and the five-and-dime stores of J. J. Newberry and Kress predominated in the area of Fourth Street in the downtown's center, though in the 100 block there was also a bank, some dentists, and a conservatory of music that served the white public predominately. Mexican grocery stores and restaurants were fairly numerous by 1930, and the Princess Theater showed Mexican films from 1937 on. East Fourth Street ran toward the packing houses and railroad depot; West Fourth Street ran toward the county government offices, as well as the courthouse, law library, and handsomely housed professional offices and banks. West Fourth also had the more expensive department stores and neighborhood shops, including a chocolate shop, tea shop, and barbers, butchers, bakers, and druggists.⁵³

Segregation did not mean invisibility, regardless of the misrepresentation of Mexicans to justify policies of exclusion. At least annually, Mexican organizations joined together to mount celebrations marked by parades, dances, speeches, and other events that expressed a Mexican and Mexican-American identity quite unlike that insinuated in the harsh language used to sustain segregation. One of the most significant of these celebrations took place every September 16 to commemorate Mexican independence from Spain. In 1920, for example, the *grito de Dolores* (cry of Dolores), which marked the beginning of the independence movement in Mexico in 1810, was made in Birch Park, downtown Santa Ana—at dawn, rather than at midnight as in all the plazas of central Mexico. A parade, which was organized by local Mexican organizations, included bearers of an American and a Mexican flag, a Mexican band, two floats and decorated cars, and marchers dressed in holiday attire. In the afternoon, Mexican patriotic speeches were given, and an evening of entertainment concluded the celebration.⁵⁴

By 1931, the parades and the spectacle of public celebration had grown more visible and complicated, in that the organizers had begun

to draw in a larger number of city government officials and businessmen. A queen was elected a few days prior to September 16, at a dance attended by over 3,210 persons; Sol Gonzales, a well-known merchant in Santa Ana, announced the winner, and she was crowned queen by the Mexican consul of Los Angeles, Rafael de la Colina, at the opening of the festivities in Birch Park. The full program of the celebration was announced ahead of time in the newspaper, with Mexicans and Americans from throughout the county expected to attend. Evening events included patriotic speeches and musical entertainment. Floats entered in the parade the next day were sponsored by numerous car dealers, the creamery, and other local businesses. The afternoon speeches and games in Birch Park were followed by a huge public dance at the high school, to which everyone, the newspaper stated, was invited. In 1935, augmenting these offerings, a Mexican orchestra played downtown all day, and young girls passed flowers out to passersby.⁵⁵ A Mexican aviator flew over the parade route, performing a program of air stunts. City and county officials were expected to give short speeches at the afternoon celebration. Over 1,500 Mexicans from throughout the county attended.⁵⁶

Such celebrations are a consistent feature of immigrant America. Challenging exclusion from the national paradigm until they were incorporated into it, they provided alternative versions of ethnic and patriotic identities for their own group. The urban festivities enacted in Mexican barrios and *colonias* throughout Orange County by 1920 contrast sharply to the Sixteenth of September celebration hosted by Felipe Yorba in 1900.⁵⁷

Like some Californios, Felipe Yorba was proud to assert his affinity with a Mexican national identity, in part to affirm Mexico's heritage of free and independent government, but also to counter the race/citizen dichotomy by which persons of Mexican descent were deprived of their civil rights. In that first year of the new century, over one thousand people attended Yorba's Independence Day barbecue in the town of Yorba, on the large acreage his family continued to hold. The American and Mexican flags hung on either side of a platform that had been constructed for the program, and the colors of the two republics were entwined about the speakers' podium. Judge R. P. Manriquez was the master of ceremonies, presenting the entire program in Spanish. Manriquez read the Mexican Declaration of Independence and gave a long oration on the 1810 revolution and subsequent Mexican political history. Emphasizing that President Benito Juárez was a "pure Aztec," he noted

his equivalence to George Washington as a national symbol (in fact, Juárez was not Aztec but Zapotec; yet by then Aztec had become a dominant symbol of nationhood). Manriquez elaborated on the triumph of the liberal constitution of 1857, and discussed Indian and mestizo heritage as a central component of nationalism.

The content of this speech did not differ greatly from that of those given during the 1930s. Different, however, are the location of the celebration, the public who attended, and the way the festivities and speech were covered by the English-language press—which was with great respect. This was not the case for celebrations dominated by the immigrant generation. The 1900 crowd represented the diverse origins of the county, with American and German town dwellers and farmers, Americans from Anaheim, and Californios and Mexicans from Yorba, San Juan, and the few other communities that then had a Spanish-Mexican-descent population. The entire crowd of one thousand was given a splendid dinner by Yorba, who thus displayed a kind of wealth not achievable by most Californios and the immigrant generation.

Racial Identities and the City Schools

The period in which individuals like Francisco Torres paid dearly—sometimes with their lives—for the race prejudice of the dominant population soon passed into one in which entire populations were defined as inferior racial groups through systematic policies of exclusion. By the 1920s such notions of inferiority were being justified by "scientific" studies. One of the most influential theoretical and practical measurements of group intelligence was developed in France beginning in 1890, when educators began to experiment with assessing differences between individuals of specified "national" and "racial" groups on the basis of "recall, moral judgment, and mental addition."⁵⁸ Standardized testing procedures were pioneered at Columbia University during the 1890s. It was primarily in the 1910s that the application of these procedures began to produce a body of "knowledge" about "white" and "nonwhite" races that defined white intellectual, moral, and emotional characteristics as superior to those of black, Mexican, and other ethnic groups. As one psychologist of racial difference argued in 1916, "We are at last beginning to get comparative mental measurements of the white and colored elements in the population of the United States." This

author cited an experiment conducted by a (white) psychologist who was "accustomed to negroes" and therefore able to classify his subjects "into full blooded, three quarters, mulatto, and quadroon on the basis of color, hair, and features." While that researcher admitted a certain margin of error in this classification, he was able to reach "the clear result that, in the more intellectual tests, success increased with the proportions of white blood. . . . Full-blooded negroes secured [scores] about 64 percent . . . the quadroons . . . 96 percent" as high as whites.⁵⁹

This new means of scientific classification was seized upon by educational reformers with the idea of enhancing the efficiency of schools and their role in shaping the social order. Typically, reformers argued that identifying innate racial capacities would enable the school to steer a child along paths of "self-realization and social service [for] which he is best adapted by reason of his mental, moral, social, and physical endowment."⁶⁰ Opposition to racial classification was voiced by a mere minority. One scientist, for example, argued that "whenever the attempt is made to talk about the abstract 'race' as if it existed in the actual world, we are faced by contradiction and halted by absurdities."⁶¹ The overwhelming majority, however, adhered to the notion that either environmental or inherited characteristics define difference; in either case, the need for educational methods tailored to fit the perceived differences was affirmed.

In the Southwest, *de facto* school segregation began in Texas in the 1890s; by the 1920s most Mexican and native-born children such as Californios, Tejanos, and American Indians were placed in separate schools.⁶² Santa Ana established its first segregated school in 1912. Designated for "Spanish children," it incorporated into a single category the children of recent immigrants as well as Californios. In Santa Ana as elsewhere in the Southwest, the school curriculum was similar to that used in Southern schools for African-Americans and in other parts of the country for southern and eastern European immigrants. The children learned "spoken and written English," including reading, writing, and spelling, and the "most simple and practical use of numbers." Girls and boys also received gender-based training: girls studied sewing and mending, while boys were taught "carpentry, repairing shoes, basketry, haircutting and blacksmithing." The curriculum emphasized "better habits of living." At the close of the school year the superintendent recommended that the program be continued, "to the end that we may, as far as possible, make of those children self-respecting, respectable and intelligent citizens."⁶³ The superintendent's objective was not to prepare

students for admission to regular schools through English-language instruction, but to impart qualities of citizenship and intelligence that were, in his opinion, difficult to engender in "this class" of students.

Segregated classes in Santa Ana were initially held in temporary structures, old schools, the domestic science training building, or any available rooms.⁶⁴ By 1915 these facilities were located in four areas of the city and its outskirts, near or inside the emerging barrios, and the schools educated the children through the third grade.⁶⁵ In 1918, however, representatives of the (white) Lincoln Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), representing Logan neighborhood, appeared in force at a school board meeting to protest the presence of Mexican children, "whether in the main school building" or in a "Mexican make-shift school upon the Lincoln grounds." Apparently the school board had already promised the PTA that it would arrange the physical removal of Mexican children. The proximity of their children to Mexican children, the parents now argued, constituted a "rank injustice to our school, our teachers and our children"; segregation, they stated, was necessary on "moral, physical and educational" grounds, thus echoing prevailing ideas that moral judgment and mental ability were related and could be measured. The school board approved a resolution in support of the PTA and appeased the parents by passing a further resolution to "segregate the sub-normal pupils in the grammar schools."⁶⁶

Six months later the board sought a more elaborate classification system that could not be legally disputed by Californio and Mexican parents whose children were being segregated. In January 1919, the school board invited the city attorney to discuss the legal ramifications of the systematic segregation citywide of all children of Mexican national descent. At this same meeting, the Mexican Pro-Patria Club presented a petition to the school board which demanded that all children subject to segregation be returned to "their respective schools."⁶⁷ The protesters included the parents of children who had been attending regular city schools and club members who supported their civil rights. Any discussion of the petition that took place was not recorded. Instead, the minutes noted the remarks of the district attorney to justify school board policy. He stated: "It is entirely proper and legal to classify [students] according to the regularity of attendance, ability to understand the English language and their aptness to advance in the grades to which they shall be assigned." To circumvent a lawsuit in a state that legally segregated Chinese and American Indian but not Mexican or African-American children, he added that this classification was to be carried

out "regardless of race or color": in other words, it could be taken to embrace all "sub-normal" students.⁶⁸ "Mexican" students were subsequently placed in "Mexican schools" on the basis of perceived racial characteristics alone. Joe O'Campo, who attended the Fremont Mexican School, stated that the school authorities were "blatant about it being a Mexican school. And, if they saw that you were dark skinned then ZAP, you'd be thrown in that school."⁶⁹

By September 1919 four permanent Mexican schools had been built in or near the barrios to the west, east, and south of town.⁷⁰ In addition to whatever formal and theoretical justification for segregation prevailed, local politics also expressed the notion that whites had the right to a particular education by virtue of their being identified wholly and exclusively as "Americans" or "citizens." This political view simultaneously suggests how notions of whiteness had to be constantly reaffirmed by the deliberate spatial ordering of society, an ordering that was tied not only to a social segregation but also to a related economy of monetary worth. The notions of "white" and "citizen," essential to the construction of difference, were defining property values.

These values are apparent in the language of prejudice used not only by the school board but also by the Chamber of Commerce Advisory Committee and even by the teachers in the Mexican schools, who employed it in their deliberations over the location and quality of Mexican schools in 1928 and 1929; because the Mexican population had grown substantially, schools in each barrio needed to be enlarged. "White schools," "American school children," and "the Mexicans" were common terms in these debates. The constructed notions of race and nationality that were reflected in this language found their way not just into the curriculum, but also into decisions regarding school buildings and the selection and salaries of teachers.

The first question addressed in the yearlong deliberations about new Mexican schools was their appropriate cost. The school superintendent, always cautious for legal reasons, stated that although "fine buildings" for Mexican schools were a good idea, "the population among the Mexicans has proven so migratory that permanent buildings have not been advisable." This misrepresentation of Santa Ana's Mexican population was bolstered by the school board's business manager, Mr. G., who argued against costly buildings because of the "type of work being carried on" in the Mexican schools, which required "a different type of building arrangement than the white schools." Mr. G., in short, did not want to spend a large sum "on a Mexican school, especially when

we do not have proper facilities for the American school children."⁷¹ New rooms for Artesia and Delhi Mexican schools were estimated to require an outlay of \$2,500, whereas rooms for the white schools required an estimated \$8,000.⁷²

Teachers in the Mexican schools were paid a minimal salary. In 1921, for example, the head teachers at five schools each received \$2,000 annually, but at the Fifth Street (Mexican) School the head teacher received only \$1,800, and at both Logan and Santa Fe (Mexican) schools the head teachers received a mere \$1,675.⁷³ A politics of gender that discriminated against hiring married women teachers because their husbands could support them intersected with racial politics to provide lower pay to Mexican school teachers. In 1923 the school board decided to hire married women teachers to teach at the Mexican schools alone. The majority of these teachers were white and, because they were married, had trouble getting work elsewhere.⁷⁴

The geographic location of Mexican schools reflected the political economy of an urban structure designed to affirm notions of whiteness through segregation. By 1928 "race restrictions" were in place in all of Santa Ana's residential neighborhoods. The Chamber of Commerce Advisory Committee argued strongly that all new Mexican schools should be placed within the barrios, as "any effort to locate a Mexican school outside the district itself will meet with decided and instant opposition."⁷⁵ Artesia Mexican School was already located outside the boundaries of Artesia barrio; a school board member argued that if the board approved a second Mexican school in that neighborhood outside the barrio, "all the voters in that district would do all in their power to defeat any school bonds." In fact, "over 200 white residents of the district" brought a petition to a January 1929 meeting affirming their "decided opposition" and demanding that the proposed school be moved "further west and north or south of the present site."⁷⁶ The board then entertained the idea of moving all Mexican children to a proposed "Mexican center" in Delhi barrio, just outside the city limits. Logan barrio's Mexican school was by now also far too small. The idea of placing this school outside the barrio on undeveloped land was countered by the argument that "the next residential development of the city" would be to the east of Logan barrio and that this property "should not be marred by a Mexican school site" in the vicinity.⁷⁷

The logic of property ownership and value was continually used against the Mexican families who, even when property owners, lived in neighborhoods where the city had not extended sewage and flood chan-

nels or paved the streets. Instead of improving infrastructure within the barrios, urban planners sought to contain or displace the Mexican population. At the end of the yearlong deliberations of 1928–1929, it was decided that Artesia's Mexican school should be built with fourteen classrooms near, though not within, the barrio because flood conditions within the barrio proper made such a large building too precarious. Logan Mexican School was "kept in the center of the Mexican district," and homes in the surrounding neighborhood were condemned to allow its expansion. For city planners and the board, this displacement of families by condemning property anticipated a demographic shift in the eastern portion of the city. The school was intended as a "temporary school" because, the Chamber of Commerce Advisory Committee stated, "the Mexican will likely be crowded out soon."⁷⁸

One teacher alone in the Mexican schools joined her voice with those of the parents. She canvassed residents in Artesia barrio to learn of parents' objections to busing their children to the proposed "Mexican center" in Delhi. Also utilizing the logic of property rights, she stated that "from one-third to one-half of the Mexicans own their homes" in Artesia barrio; what's more, she said, these home owners opposed their children's removal to south of the city.⁷⁹ In contrast, the majority of the teachers in the Mexican schools voiced an opposite opinion, arguing instead for a spatial politics that would remove the children from the influence of their neighborhoods. One teacher, Mrs. W., objected to the establishment or expansion of Mexican schools inside the boundaries of the "Mexican settlements" because "adults lounged around the buildings during the day as well as at night." The teachers who worked in the barrios were annoyed, she stated, by "Mexicans hanging around the grounds which was not good."⁸⁰ To this objection, an advisory committee member responded quite bluntly: "Mexicans would hang around any public place as they do around the city park, and going across the track would not eliminate that feature."⁸¹

The attitudes expressed in these debates were lodged in the memories of children who received their education in the Mexican schools. Joe O'Campo, born in Santa Ana in 1922, attended Fremont Mexican School. When asked about the curriculum, O'Campo said that it consisted of "woodshops" and "language"—if, he added, "prohibiting [us] from speaking Spanish was teaching English." "That was [the extent of] it," he stated emphatically. O'Campo's description suggests the extent to which school policy shaped subjective experience. His sardonic remark indicates clearly the negative attitudes that Mexican

students endured, as embodied in the school's emphasis on manual training and its coercive use of language to enforce a particular culture and worldview.

The internal order of the Mexican school was meant to shape the meaning of difference. School policy, moreover, discouraged Mexican children from pursuing their education beyond elementary school. In the Artesia (Fremont) Mexican School, O'Campo recalls, explaining how school authorities deliberately prolonged a Mexican student's grammar school years, students went "to kindergarten and then primary-first and then secondary-first and then the following year to the primary-second and so on and so on."⁸² The relatively advanced age at which students graduated from Fremont (which O'Campo noted to be two or three years different from other students) left them either ready to work, out of their obligation to the family economy, or "embarrassed" to go on to the advanced grades. O'Campo reported being one of only three from his class who continued their education at the junior high school level. These reflections give added meaning to an otherwise innocuous note in the school board minutes: "It was necessary to transfer thirty elementary school students from Fremont and other Mexican schools to the facilities at Willard Jr. High."⁸³ The occasional pressure brought to bear against the school authorities prompted them to transfer older children to the junior high. "Overageness" was a common trait among students of Mexican, African-American, and certain other ethnic backgrounds. In San Bernardino County in 1928, for example, approximately 79 percent of the Mexican students were overage for their grade, as opposed to only 33 percent of the white students.⁸⁴ This difference reflected school policy rather than scholastic competence or innate ability.

Josefina Andrade, born in the Logan neighborhood in 1932 and schooled in the late 1930s and early 1940s in the Logan Mexican School, also remembers a school schedule and curriculum that emphasized the attitudes of the administrators. Logan School, she stated, was in session for only half the day, the teachers, Andrade recalled, having been sent to Logan on a part-time basis from neighboring white schools; the students worked the other part of the day in agriculture to help their parents. The school records suggest, however, that Logan School had the half-day schedule only for the duration of the approximately three-week walnut harvest in the fall. All the more valuable, then, is Andrade's recollection because it suggests how official policy structured her memory of childhood: Logan School seemed to her to have been organized

in a piecemeal fashion, without committed, regular teachers or a curriculum and class schedule that compensated for school time children lost when they were at work. Andrade, like O'Campo, emphasized the prohibition against the use of Spanish, the punishment being getting one's mouth washed out with soap. Both Andrade and O'Campo went to high school, but Andrade dropped out when family circumstances required her to work.⁸⁵ Although her generation had a somewhat higher rate of graduation from high school than did O'Campo's, the long-established pattern of the pre-World War II years, when approximately one to three Mexican students graduated from high school annually, was still common.

Child and Family Labor in Industrial Agriculture

The consequences of not finishing high school among the population at large were formidable. A 1940 study on employment in Orange County reported that anyone who did not receive a high school education or equivalent training would be relegated to working in agriculture or an unskilled occupation. Although most jobs in the county were in these areas, the average starting hourly pay was only 25–34 cents an hour, while more skilled jobs earned 35–44 cents; the agricultural wage, moreover, did not rise significantly, even after a lifetime spent in the fields and associated packing plants.⁸⁶

Mexican children were not the only ones to work in agriculture nationally; rather, their employment and preparation by the schools for work in agriculture fit a national pattern. Work in industrialized agriculture structured the world of native-born and immigrant workers alike in many areas of the United States. Wherever cotton, tobacco, sugar beets, berries or cranberries, orchard crops, or large-scale truck farming entered into industrial production, migration had a significant impact. The family-based system of agricultural labor was widespread in fourteen states of the union during the 1920s, and the rate of child labor was high. From 1920 to 1924, a series of studies of child labor in agriculture was conducted, covering approximately 13,500 children; it was found that they worked in such diverse places as the sugar beet-growing sections of Colorado and Michigan, the cotton-growing counties of Texas, the truck and fruit farming areas of southern New Jersey, Mary-

land, Virginia, Illinois, Washington, and Oregon, the wheat and potato regions of North Dakota, and the tobacco-growing districts of Kentucky, South Carolina, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Other studies show children as migratory cannery workers in New York, Delaware, and Maryland. Children and adults would go from the city to the countryside to harvest the tobacco crop, and women and children worked long hours in the nearby cigar and tobacco factories.⁸⁷ In Georgia children shelled pecans in factories where they worked alongside their mothers. In one factory employing four hundred, about one-quarter of the workers were children. A Southern teacher who taught adult education classes complained that many children attended night school because during the day they worked beside their mothers in factories on piece work. "This is one reason," she said, "why the illiteracy is so high in Georgia."⁸⁸ Similarly, a Mrs. Smith, who was a principal in Roswell, New Mexico, wrote the Children's Bureau, in the Federal Department of Labor, to report that "many of our school children are kept out of school months to pick cotton for home folks, also for remuneration."⁸⁹ While some of these examples derive from the Depression years, other studies from the 1910s and 1920s show that child labor was a common fact in earlier decades as well. In 1919, for example, a considerable number of persons who worked in the oyster and shrimp canning industry on the Gulf Coast migrated seasonally from Baltimore and New York, causing their children to miss school for long stretches.⁹⁰ Sugar beet field work, which was particularly tedious and painful, was performed largely by immigrants (child and adult workers) from Europe and Mexico. The Mexican workers, however, in some cases at least, received the worst housing.⁹¹

This, in essence, was America's industrialized agriculture. Men, women, and children worked in monotonous and tiring tasks for longer hours than did laborers in factories, and under just as much pressure. By 1930, sixty-seven thousand child wage earners aged ten to fifteen and another four hundred thousand "unpaid family workers" (meaning wives and children) were working in April, which was only the start of the season for work in commercial agriculture.⁹² Although certain crops brought the whole family into the harvest, some, such as oranges, were harvested primarily by men and boys, while other family members went to work in canning, packing, and allied sectors. Because family and community were closely tied to the agricultural production schedules, family time, in a sense, became an outgrowth of industrial time.⁹³

Orange County's agricultural industry thus has to be understood in

the context of rural and urban development nationwide. For here and elsewhere, low wages and the pattern of seasonal employment created a family economy in which multiple wage earners were needed if the family was to survive. Many students by their early teens had to quit school to supplement the family income. The interests of the industry, rather than of barrio students, were foremost in the minds of school officials as they made decisions. Theirs was a collaborative effort to restrict some children's access to an education that might lead to other and better work.

In 1934, for example, Mexican parents from Delhi barrio petitioned the school board to start school in August and suspend it during the month of September "in order that children may help their parents during the walnut season." In response, a school board member conferred with the principals of the Mexican schools, who "did not recommend that this change be made. . . . Mexican schools," explained the board member, already "are in session on a minimum school day or half-day" during the walnut season. The school principals argued that change was not advisable, despite the fact that walnut picking generally required families to move away from the area, or if not, it certainly disrupted the daily rhythms needed for schoolwork to get done. At the meeting at which the issue was discussed, one board member requested that "the petitioners' names be checked."⁹⁴ This suggestion had ominous overtones, for 1934 was a period of massive deportation and repatriation of Mexican nationals, and a time characterized by much worker harassment in response to a virtual mass strike in southern California agriculture that had begun in 1933.⁹⁵ The power relations starkly visible in this interaction—a petition, its denial, and implied surveillance and punishment—reveal the cornerstone of this overall policy of educational segregation: its fundamental motive was to ensure a steady supply of labor for agriculture.

The connection between the politics of segregated education and industrial agriculture is further revealed by the school policy shift that took place after a mass strike paralyzed production of the orange crop in 1936. This strike was one of many that signaled the dawning of an era when local labor and civil rights activists, inspired by Mexican worker activism through the Southwest, joined together in a regional labor movement (see below). In September 1937, in response to these threatening changes, the school board met in closed session to establish school boundary lines. Segregation policies were now leveled at specific

neighborhoods, which made the possibility of legal challenge even more remote.⁹⁶

Another Politics of Space: The Barrio

The recollections of Mexicans who grew up in this era (1920 through 1940) emphasize that the barrio was a place where the convergence of past and present, ideas and experience, work and religion, contributed to shape collective identities. The barrios have a central place in poetry, in literature, in older people's memories, and in the expressions of youth culture—where the *cholo* and *pachuco* have appropriated the barrio in their lexicon and symbolic systems.⁹⁷ To examine the articulation of Mexican identity during this era through the politics of space is to understand how the barrios developed and how their spaces were appropriated for community life.

As we have seen, the barrios in Santa Ana had begun to take form by 1910. Most immigrants settled in a barrio only after having lived in a number of *colonias*, labor camps, or other barrios.⁹⁸ Josefina Ramírez, from Santa Anita barrio (outside the city limits of Santa Ana, just across the river from Artesia barrio), exemplifies this migratory life. She first immigrated with her mother and uncles to Texas, where they lived in a railroad camp together with other Mexican-, African-, and Anglo-American families. She then came with her mother and sisters to California, where in Casa Blanca (Riverside County) she met and married Ramón Ramírez. The couple moved to a rancho in Buena Park, where they worked "regando betabel" (irrigating beet fields); then to Colonia Independencia in Westminster, Orange County; then on to "un otro rancho" (another ranch); and finally they returned to Colonia Independencia. At that point they had children, and rather than continue changing locations, Josefina's husband "iba a trabajar en las naranjas hasta Riverside y luego venía—iba y venía" (would go to work in the orange groves in Riverside and then return home—he would go and return). When he found more permanent work in orange groves in Tustin, Orange County, in the late 1920s, the family moved to Santa Anita, where they bought a lot onto which they moved a house in the mid-1930s.⁹⁹

These migration patterns shaped the social ordering of the entire Southwest. Family and fictive kin were joined across this broad region

as each sector of the family moved to a given place and persons from the same town or region in Mexico migrated across the network thus formed. The ties that linked Southwestern barrios both to one another and to localities in Mexico further defined the region after 1900, enabling potential immigrants and people already on the migratory path to acquire a broader knowledge of the United States than they could have gained in one place alone. This knowledge was also informed by the nature of other kin's experiences in widely separated communities, experiences that were also incorporated into and passed on via the formal cultural productions created in this region. Bonds among family, friends, and neighbors were not weakened by seasonal migrations. Many families worked each year in particular crops, often traveled in the company of extended kin, and returned to their barrios when they could work locally. An urban subculture, embracing Mexican and Mexican-American identities, developed in similar fashion in barrios across this larger region: that is, it arose partly because of the physical movement of individuals and families.¹⁰⁰

Seasonal employment defined the temporal dimension of the barrios. It set the tempo of community life, of people's movement on the streets. These work rhythms distinguished the barrio from the rationalized eight-to-five schedule of the year-round service, trade, and professional jobs that dominated neighborhood life elsewhere in the city.

These daily and seasonal rhythms are strong in the memories of those who lived in the barrio. Josefina Andrade, for example, recalls that her father would come home at the end of the season with "a big bag of beans, flour, fat, a large sack of oranges he placed near the kitchen door, and canned goods, bought with the season's pay." The family would have "chickens and other things around the house for that nonwork period of winter."¹⁰¹

Seasonal employment also meant working in a variety of generally unskilled jobs, the only ones available to Mexicans. During the winter months, un- and underemployment among Mexican agricultural workers was chronic. Manufacturing jobs (most of which were agriculture-related) also tended to be highly seasonal. In 1919, for example, only 63 percent of the men and 10 percent of the women who worked in manufacturing jobs in Santa Ana had year-round employment.¹⁰² Income varied among barrio families according to the number of gainfully employed family members and the degree to which the principal wage earner was able to find steady work.¹⁰³ Employment began at an early age. One man who lived in Logan barrio remembers starting to work

at age eight. Although his early employment and that of his mother were precipitated by the death of his father, his story was not uncommon. "Hey you name it, I did it. I started picking sugar beets in Talbert. Just a kid then. . . . My mother went to work after our father died. She got a job as a maid in some apartments in that Grand Central Market area downtown."¹⁰⁴

The way the barrio was laid out actually helped families to overcome these low-wage economies by providing room for additional living space or a small business. The irregular pattern of already-built homes allowed for a certain amount of expansion. Wherever lots were large enough, dwellings were built in the rear to accommodate larger families, married children, relatives, and sometimes renters or boarders. In Logan barrio in 1923, 7 percent of the houses were built to the rear of others; by 1933, that number had risen to 16 percent, and by 1941, to 21 percent, the highest density achieved. The barrios themselves expanded in size and density over time as white residents on adjacent streets moved to other neighborhoods, and nonstandard structures, such as small buildings in alleys, rear dwellings, and house-courts (one-to-two-room residences built around a central courtyard that contained all the plumbing) were erected (see appendix 5).

The social relationships embedded in the physical world of "houses, rooms, stairways, streets, sheds and alleyways" contributed to the use of the neighborhood as community space, thus infusing it with further meaning.¹⁰⁵ The communal space of the streets was augmented by neighborhood businesses. An observer in 1928, for example, noted that Logan barrio had regular grocery stores that served as general stores and "specialty stores and shops, located in the homes of the entrepreneurs. There is a 'nextamalia,' where Americans as well as Mexicans go to buy tamales, enchiladas, or tortillas; a candy shop down an alley where delicious 'dulce calabazas' may be bought; a potter sells hand-made ollas, bean jugs and jars, made in his own yard."¹⁰⁶

In Logan the busy commercial main street was also the most densely populated. The Ruíz and Martínez General Store stood in the center of the barrio, together with a Mexican-owned barbershop and a white-owned grocery store. By 1933 the Logan Mexican School, a second grocery store and barbershop, a billiard room, and a tamales shop (most of which were owned by barrio residents) served as meeting points for the neighborhood and for people from other Santa Ana barrios. The core streets of Logan and Stafford were paved in 1928 on the request and at the expense of their residents. At the street dance held to cele-

brate the event, a "Mexican orchestra" played into the night and "people (Mexican mostly) came from far and near to join in the fun."¹⁰⁷

The paving of the street was the result of strong community ties, in which commerce played an important role. In addition to spearheading similar efforts aimed at urban improvement, the *comerciantes* formed committees to negotiate for urban amenities, provided aid in times of labor strife, mediated between civic bodies and barrio residents, sponsored celebrations and cultural events, and engaged in benevolent work. Examples of their work abound.¹⁰⁸ They were in turn enthusiastically supported by barrio residents.

In Artesia barrio, some residents operated small service businesses out of their homes—such as the soft drink and cigar stand run by E. Pérez—or ran pushcarts in the streets, as Pedro Gonzales did.¹⁰⁹ The city council considered numerous requests for licenses to operate such businesses in the 1930s, evidence of the viability of small commerce.¹¹⁰ Restaurants, barbershops, bakeries, tortilla factories, pool halls, grocery stores, other enterprises, and workshops were run out of homes. Artesia barrio also had a formal commercial core where merchants, artisans, and a few professionals operated.

Each barrio had particular qualities that defined it as a neighborhood. Delhi barrio, for example, which originated outside the city limits near the sugar factory that was built in 1910, had a significant population of home owners by 1920, and virtually all its residents were from Mexico. By 1928 the barrio had a post office, a few grocery stores, several barbershops, a number of small restaurants, a dance hall, several pool halls, and a Catholic church. The most densely populated part of the barrio were those blocks on or surrounding Central Street near the church and the union hall.

Catholic churches were extremely important places in the barrios, and the money for their construction was often gathered by barrio residents themselves. The presence of priests and churches meant that the religious calendar celebrated in Mexico was superimposed on the seasonal rhythm of agricultural production in the United States, thus adding a further nuance to the organization of barrio time. The priest of the Delhi church, José Origel, had come from Mexico in 1927, a refugee of the Cristero revolts.¹¹¹ He was a conservative who cast a watchful eye over the community, intent on reinforcing the traditions and customs that residents had brought from Mexico. In 1922, the people of Logan (which had no church of its own), Artesia, and other eastside barrios formed the first Spanish-speaking Catholic parish in Santa Ana. They

raised money to build a small, beautiful church on East Third Street. Artesia barrio also secured a parish, Our Lady of Pilar, sometime in the 1930s. Until the congregation raised enough money to build a larger church, people sat in their cars or on the church grounds to listen as the mass was broadcast from the first little chapel.¹¹² The formal places of church and church hall were supplemented in most homes by altars, which allowed for daily reverence and cultivated a particular kind of memory, one conveyed through sacred images.

The community life of the barrios fostered certain collective interests and identities; work engendered other expressions of identity. Indeed, an agricultural worker's entrance into labor meant becoming skilled in fast-paced production in field, orchard, and packing house. As barrio populations became more established, a pattern of specialization in particular jobs and particular crops occurred. As Lucas Lucio, a representative of citrus workers in 1935, began his testimony to a U.S. Senate subcommittee: "In the first place, the orange pickers are a skilled group and many of them have been working for ten or fifteen years or more at the business of picking oranges, and for the same packing houses."¹¹³

Specialization made sense because the work and the way labor was contracted differed for each crop. By 1917, for example, orange picking was done "more and more . . . by a gang of skilled pickers under the direction of the packing house."¹¹⁴ A foreman, who was often Mexican, would organize the crew, usually picking them up in the barrio and returning them at the end of the day. He would also determine who would work where in the grove. Because trees had different bearing capacities, this selection could affect the pickers adversely. To know and be on the foreman's best side was important to workers, whose low hourly wage was derived from or supplemented by piecework in which a predetermined number of cents was paid per box of oranges picked.

The highly tedious job of harvesting beets also required tremendous field skill, strength, and endurance, since the hand labor requirements for the crop remained "almost unaffected by technological improvement from the inception of beet growing until 1940."¹¹⁵ The beet crop had two labor peaks, one in the spring, when thinning was done (on hands and knees), the other in the fall, when the beets were pulled from the ground, their tops were cut off with a long, hooked knife, and they were tossed into a pile. Significantly, the two sugar factories near Delhi barrio paid more for factory work than for field work; moreover, it was mostly white workers who got signed on for factory operations, with Mexicans being employed at the factory only to haul the beets.

Walnuts were generally picked by the whole family. One observer described the season in 1928 like this: "In trucks or wagons, buggies or Fords, entire Mexican families go out into the orchards and camp right there until the picking time is over. The children pick, the uncles and aunts pick, the mother and sisters pick, while the father and the big brothers shake the trees."¹¹⁶ In this operation, families were often allotted a given acreage to work.

The skills that workers developed in these crops strongly influenced their sense of collective identity as laborers. During strikes workers attempted to get those skills acknowledged, but they also acted according to a very deliberate logic because of their respect for those skills. One contemporary study explained that logic thus: "The Mexican agricultural worker thinks of himself as a specialist in some certain crop such as citrus fruits, celery, or melons. There are occasional interruptions of employment because of weather conditions, but even when such interruptions occur, Mexican laborers do not compensate for reduced earnings by working Saturdays and Sundays. They usually work about ten hours daily from Monday through Friday. Only in extreme instances can they be prevailed upon to work Saturday mornings."¹¹⁷

Whereas men tended to define themselves as skilled workers, women generally articulated their role as workers through their relationship to their families—as mothers, wives, and blood and fictive kin. Many women, however, developed astute skills in paid work of various types. Around World War I, for example, Mexican women began to secure jobs previously held by non-Mexican women workers in the numerous packing and processing plants that were being built near the barrios. They first acquired the least skilled jobs available, but whether the work they performed was grading, sorting, packing, or recording the quantity and quality of fruit, vegetables, and nuts, it required skill, speed, and care.¹¹⁸ In the orange-packing plants, machines did the brushing and washing and eventually took over much of the grading process by 1917, but the perishable fruit still needed to be hand-wrapped in tissue paper and packed in boxes. In walnuts, although the packing process began to be mechanized around 1912, cracking, a tedious and difficult job, was not mechanized until the mid-1920s.¹¹⁹

Wives were rarely employed on a permanent basis in the fields and factories, however.¹²⁰ Daughters thus often took jobs outside the home to supplement the wages of the principal male wage earner, a pattern found among other immigrant groups in America when the male head of household's steady employment was precarious.¹²¹ In one study of

Mexican women's employment in Los Angeles and Orange counties conducted in 1927 and 1928, the majority of those interviewed stated that they worked because of the men's irregular work and the combined effect of low wages, high rents, and large families to support.¹²²

Lucy Romero, for example, had extensive experience in canneries, orange picking, vegetable cultivation, and domestic work. In vegetables, she said, "We did everything like a man," hoeing the ground and sowing and transplanting peppers, cucumbers, and tomatoes. For her, the male worker was the point of comparison by which she measured and defined the work task. And although she took pride in the work she and other women did in the fields in work groups, she placed the responsibility for the family income squarely on her husband. Indeed, although Romero sometimes worked field jobs during the day, she preferred night shifts in the walnut packing plants during the four months of that crop's production; that way she could be home cooking, sewing, and taking care of the children during their waking hours.¹²³ Like many Mexican women of her generation, she worked with the consciousness of a mother—that is, for her children's benefit.¹²⁴ Whenever possible, however, women with children worked in paid labor only out of necessity. Serefina Andrade, for example, stayed home and saw to household needs while her husband and sons worked in the fields and factories and her older daughters worked in the packing houses and laundries.¹²⁵

The prevalence of women in wage work lent a particular order to the use of space in the barrio. Jovita Hernández described her neighborhood, where residential patterns—such as houses built in a square pattern rather than in a row—facilitated child care. When the mothers were away at work, one of the grandmothers would watch all the children from the four contiguous houses. When family wasn't available, neighbors would watch out for one another's children.¹²⁶

The ties between neighbors were strengthened by a work structure that brought persons into jobs through the family and fictive kinship networks that defined most barrios. Orange picking incorporated this structure into the formal organization of the picking crews. The beet industry relied for workers on the neighborhoods built around the fields and beet factories. Walnut processing drew on the entire county for workers. Vegetable production relied largely on word of mouth and often employed women during the picking season.

Lucy Romero told a story in which this sense of community solidarity plays a role. She was working with a group of women in a vegetable field. The boss asked her to keep the crew going while he stepped out

for a while. When he left she told everyone, "'All right, let's take a break.' And we stopped and rested, laughed and told stories, moved about. Then I said, 'Let's get back and work so hard he won't know we stopped.' The boss was pleased when he returned; he had no idea that we had rested."¹²⁷ This memory affirmed not only the women's close bonds, but also the fact that her subversion of the boss's authority was possible only because she knew their capacity to work fast and efficiently; remembering the incident produced great pleasure for Mrs. Romero in her old age. Her workplace experience and her consciousness of women's capacity to do grueling labor for pay formed an important part of her identity, even though she relied on her husband to support the family and made the male worker the point of comparison to define the difficulty of a task. Throughout her story, however, paid work is partnered with her obligations at home: home, community, and workplace are solidly linked.

Identity and the Meaning of Place: The 1936 Strike

The connections between home, community, and workplace are clearly reflected in the organization and nature of the labor movement as it developed during these years. The first unions among Mexican workers in Orange County were conceived in the barrios. Among them was the Confederación Uniones Obreras Mexicanas (CUOM), which had a large presence in Santa Ana and elsewhere in the county. The fifteen Orange County locals (out of twenty-four in southern California as a whole) in fact accounted for a significant proportion of the approximately 2,500 CUOM members in 1928; the next year Orange County was home to eight of the union's eleven remaining locals, four of which were in Santa Ana alone. CUOM locals promoted a "strong cultural campaign" to build schools and libraries, "exclusively Mexican hospitals," orphanages, and almshouses; in addition, the central leadership asked each local to establish a defense committee in their barrio to protect the legal rights of Mexicans. The CUOM stopped functioning in 1933, but the social programs it had designed remained on the agenda of *mutualistas* (Mexican mutual aid societies) thereafter.¹²⁸

The large number of CUOM locals in Orange County suggests that

the organizational links necessary to launch the massive strike wave that paralyzed crop production in California between 1933 and 1936 were in place early on.¹²⁹ Many of these strikes spread from Los Angeles and Riverside counties into Orange County; others were initiated in Orange County. In 1935, for example, Orange County vegetable workers staged a major walkout, and orange pickers were ready to strike if their union demands were not recognized prior to the start of the 1936 picking season.

Mexican immigrants of this era have been understood as a generation shaped by their participation in and experience of the Mexican revolution of 1910 and its antecedents.¹³⁰ This consciousness was accorded a central role in the recorded memories of labor organizer Dorothy Healey, who stated: "What stands out in my memory, first of all, is the fact that Mexican women were playing leading roles. You were still dealing . . . with that generation that had come from Mexico after the struggles of revolutionaries in Mexico."¹³¹ As we saw in chapter 4, the revolution contributed to the development of Mexican national identity on both sides of the border. But as significant as that event was to some, the collective experiences that shaped life in the United States were, to others, equally important. For many of this generation, it was the barrios that made it possible to survive difficult economic and social conditions, through the forging of community.

The 1936 citrus strike illustrates the political nature of the barrio and the way in which this space fostered collective identities. The protest grew out of the momentum created by the mass strikes in agriculture from 1933 on. In early 1936, the Confederación Uniones Campesinos Obreros Mexicanos allied with the Agricultural Industrial Workers Labor Union and the Filipino Labor Union to form the Federation of Agricultural Workers of America. In March this group sent a petition to the citrus packing houses outlining three central demands: union recognition; the establishment of a uniform family wage for the male citrus worker, regardless of race or ethnicity; and a new structure to define labor-management relations.¹³² Instead of negotiating, the industry responded by forming its own organization, the Associated Farmers, to control labor and coerce striking workers.¹³³ On June 11, 2,500 orange pickers struck, and not an orange was picked in northern Orange County that day. The strike was concerted and included workers from Santa Ana, Santa Anita, Orange, Fullerton, Placentia, La Habra, Villa Park, San Juan Capistrano, El Toro, and Atwood.¹³⁴

Nightly strike meetings were held within the barrios, with represen-

tatives from each barrio—not from the workplace, significantly—forming the general strike committee that decided how to play out the strike. Meanwhile, the workers were being represented by delegates elected from their barrios, the Mexican consul in Los Angeles, and union officials. The overall solidarity of Mexicans countywide was evident not only in the dedicated participation of women, men, and children in strike committee discussions and the distribution of food and other supplies to striking families, but also in the visual spectacle of protest. Truckloads of women “hecklers” rode through the county harassing the strikebreakers and police, and people along the roads called out to the caravans of arrested workers, “Hurrah for the strikers! Don’t give in!” as the strikers waved back.¹³⁵

Attacks on the barrio were now launched, reflecting the way in which race politics fortified coercive labor structures. Vigilantes attacked participants in the nightly strike meetings in each barrio, sometimes using tear gas. On July 7 during a meeting of 115 Mexican men, women, and children in Placentia, “one hundred ranchers drove up . . . each . . . armed with a new axe handle.” In Anaheim and El Modena, simultaneous strike meetings were broken up. In one barrio truckloads of masked men drove up to the meeting place and threw bombs into the hall, destroying an adjoining storefront. On the single evening of July 10, vigilantes smashed the windows of a meeting place in Anaheim while the meeting was in progress, disrupted a large meeting in La Habra, and broke up a smaller one in Placentia, where they hurled twenty tear gas bombs into the room and wielded clubs against those who ran out. Barrio residents said they could not sleep because the tear gas filled their homes. The sheriff had already issued a “shoot to kill” order against the strikers, thus implicitly giving license to vigilante activity. Meanwhile, white women and children took to the orchards to pick oranges in defiance of the strikers, and white college students from Los Angeles helped staff the roadside barricades.¹³⁶

The decision to end the strike was finally reached on July 25. None of the central demands were met, though the growers did make some concessions. Yet the articulation, through this and other strikes, of the complex identities of two generations of immigrant and native-born southern Californians continued to reveal new directions for collective action and politics. The labor and civil rights struggles that began in the 1930s and 1940s thus slowly forced an end to behavior that affirmed the notions of “white,” “American,” and “Mexican,” notions so strongly and disturbingly characteristic of this era.¹³⁷

Conclusion

Two conquests of the rural society around San Juan Capistrano, one originating in Spanish colonial times and the other the result of war, the United States’ territorial expansion, and the simultaneous capitalist transformation of the countryside, produced new landscapes but were unable to obliterate memory of the past. Pablo Tac left a record of Luiseño and Quechnajuichom identities. Modesta Avila symbolically protested Californios’ loss of land and wealth. Luis Olivos discovered in Mexico, and in Mexican films, a sense of his own history that had been misrepresented in the schools he attended in Santa Ana during his youth. Each acted from a particular understanding of the past that drove him or her to challenge the prevailing structures of domination. The pain of conquests and race politics is recorded in each of their lives: ultimately, all three suffered early death or met tremendous defeat even as they attempted to contest these structures.¹

The tension between the destruction of Indian societies and their endurance was repeated in this local history numerous times. And expression of this tension, and a critique of the way Indians are studied as artifacts, is made by James Luna, a Luiseño/Diegeño artist. One of Luna’s installations, entitled “The Creation and Destruction of an Indian Reservation,” communicated a pervasive sense of emptiness and void with a barbed-wire fence, a few personal artifacts, a sign, and a video monitor replaying the performance of the opening night’s destruction continuously, near the remains. This piece was about La Jolla Reservation, one of the villages I mentioned earlier, to the southeast of