

“The Multiple Sources of Racial Thinking in Nineteenth Century California”

Douglas Monroy, The Colorado College

Nineteenth century California is a remarkable place for so many reasons. People who looked distinct from one another, who organized production differently, and who asserted or defended singular customary ways to various degrees, all encountered one another on a fabled landscape. In ways we can think of California as a "frontier," first New Spain's far northern, then the United States' far western. And, in many ways, the frontier paradigm is useful: when two peoples, each with deeply developed spiritual and cultural principles that give them their sense of being human, converge on a frontier there is often barbarism. This was true in California in the 18th and 19th centuries first for the calamitous encounter of the Catholic Spaniards and the tribal Indians, then for the violent confrontation of crusading Yankee Protestants with Mexican Californios and remnant, but by then chaotic, native peoples. Those dramatic moments of Spanish soldiers capturing Indians who fled the missions and then lassoing Indian women to satisfy their lust, or of American men either lynching Mexicans who challenged Anglo supremacy or firing into helpless villages of Indians, stunningly reveal the horrible consequences of one people constructing other people in racial ways. It is these episodes, ones that condense and display people's racial thinking in frightful and dramatic moments, which have usually attracted, with good reason, those of us interested in what usually is called frontier California.

It may well be, though, that California throughout its post-contact history can be understood not only as a frontier but as a place where different people met and then

shared the landscape together. In this context the development of racial thinking becomes not only associated with expropriation of lands and exploitation of labor but with explanation, that is it is a way people accommodate, however hierarchically, to the presence of strangers on the landscape, and the spectacles of their religious practices, dress, labor, and (in this case) social and cultural decay, on a day-to-day basis. Nineteenth century California is particularly compelling in this context because so many different people have lived together in the cities, towns, and countryside for so long, and because there has been some fluidity for individuals and groups in the matter of their rank. And it is a place where people very different in appearance and belief systems have encountered one another, a process that continues profoundly to this day.

Indian peoples lived upon the landscape of what would become California in small tribes or even bands; while anthropologists may group people according to language families and culture areas, life revolved around the small villages and the spirits unique to each, and around their hunting and gathering by which they had achieved self-sufficiency and a delicate balance with nature. While there were some commonalities between the various peoples, they had few secure and faithful bonds between them; they lived in decentralized villages, which squabbled, exchanged, and fought with one another; indeed retributive warfare, but not conquest or empire as in ancient Mexico, prevailed.

The Spanish could not have been more different: they, too, were several peoples--Castilians, Catalonians, Mallorcans, even Basques--but they were united under one Royal Crown and by One True God. Having been conquered by Romans,

Visigoths, and Moors they themselves moved to conquer new worlds in 1492, the year in which not only did Columbus sail but the last the of the Moors and Jews were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. The cross and the sword would be the twin, but often antagonistic, means of conquest. With actually little to offer the self-sufficient peoples of the Americas, the Spanish priests and civil authorities could only extend the Word of God and the promise of unity under the Crown, or put another way, the destruction of the Indians' spirit world and village societies. The idea, though, was that the indigenous peoples would be Christianized and civilized such that they would become loyal subjects of his Catholic Majesty.

The Spanish not only conquered Indian peoples of the New World, but mixed with them. The blending of foods and of blood through concubinage and marriage brought forth in Mexico a profound racial and cultural *mestizaje*, or mixture, of the Spanish and Indian peoples. Among these *mestizos* were many of the people who would call themselves *Californios*, a regional variety of the new Mexican nation that would win independence from Spain in 1821. Their lives revolved around their extended families, their faith, and simultaneously having some Indians work for them and then engaging in desperate warfare with others.

From the east would come the Americans to California, which was to them the golden prize of the Mexican American War (1846-8). Their understandings of the peoples who differed from their own fair-skinned appearance had mostly to do with the fights with warrior Indians of their east coast and the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys, not the missionized Indians of California or those who had avoided the missions and whom the Americans called "diggers," allegedly because they dug for

roots. Or their experience with African slavery, which twisted into their minds all manner of ideas about non-white peoples and about the mostly repulsive, but sometimes attractive, practice of racial mixing. In contrast to the Spanish, the Americans (owing to their English Puritan history) only rarely contrived to convert indigenous peoples into dedicated citizens of the nation, but rather to rid the place of them so that white, republican families could assume their place on the landscape. The Spanish, the Californios, and the Americans all presumed that their activities fulfilled God's plan.

On the one hand, in nineteenth century California, and most everywhere at most every time, racial thinking has been so easy to dissect and refute--and thus condemn--because of its logical contradictions, its lack of scientific evidence, or its gross misuse of science. But perhaps it is these very inconsistencies, its rejection of evidence and logical rigor, that provide so much of the satisfaction of racial thinking. Notions of race, now so facilely deconstructed in the post-modern academy, have compelling explanatory powers that enable people, like those of early California, to harmonize that which seems so incongruous to them, especially when encountered on a strange terrain.

My point here will be that racial thinking, a phrase I prefer over racism at this point in my analysis because I am first concerned with how people get certain ideas implanted in their consciousness, has been a way that people reconcile to what they know to be right and true the activities, beliefs, and conduct--in other words, the spectacle--of alien people they encounter either in their travels or when strange people come, voluntarily or under various forms of coercion, to their place. How, in

other words, people experience one another at ground level. I will wrestle with the idea, scary in its implications, that what people look like, their dress or their phenotype, proved to be the most ready explanation for various 19th century Californians' emotional and cognitive solutions to their disorienting and anxiety-producing encounters with people from different cultures and nations.

One cannot help but be struck with how the thinking of the Spanish priests changed as the native peoples they encountered did not cohere with their European Christian scheme of embracing the True Word of God. The Viceroy in Mexico City, Antonio María Bucareli, waxed optimistically in 1774 when he entertained "strong hopes of extending, among the many heathen tribes..., the dominion of the king and the knowledge of our true religion (which is the principal purpose of his Majesty...) by means of the missions." All boded well, for, as Father President Fermin Lasuén, successor to Padre Serra, put it in 1771 "the country is most beautiful, the heathen very numerous and very docile, and by planting crops we may be able to replant our voices, with all assurance that with the favor of God the most abundant harvests for things both eternal and temporal may be reaped." The priests referred hardly at all to the Indians' phenotype, though, in the matter of appearance, that, in the words of Father Zalvidea, "they are much addicted to nudity," could hardly escape their gape.¹

It should be apparent how for these European men of the cloth Indian people could become more fully human by two simple steps: they could adopt the True God and wear clothes. In the brilliantly revealing words of Cabeza de Vaca, garbed and screaming at naked Indians, "I am more human than you are. I have a God!" In California, Father President Lasuén put the matter more thoughtfully: "Here then we

have the greatest problem of the missionary: how to transform a savage race such as these into a society that is human, Christian, civil, and industrious."² With that policy in mind about the qualifications for "being human," it is not difficult at all to imagine the incomprehension of the priests and the civil authorities about Indian intransigence about realizing their potential as human beings. quote here about not doing it

The priests, armed with faith, albeit lagging, in the equality of the souls of all of God's children, remained more sanguine about the missionizing project than the civil authorities for whom the natives seemed much like the detritus of an otherwise fruitful countryside. Yet the more optimistic priests and the actually more pragmatic functionaries of the crown quickly came to similar understandings of the Indians' continuing with their familiar spirits and lack of dress. "The Indian by nature is apathetic and indolent," said Padre Narciso Durán, father president of the missions from 1825 to 1827. "Their characteristics are stupidity and insensibility," Padre Venegas expatiated frankly; "want of knowledge and reflection; inconstancy, impetuosity and blindness of appetite; and excessive sloth and abhorrence of fatigue; an incessant love of pleasure, and amusement of every kind, however trifling or brutal; in fine, a most wretched want of everything which constitutes the real man, and renders him rational, inventive, tractable, and useful to himself and society." One of the grandees of southern Alta California, Don Juan Bandini, simply claimed that "The Indians are naturally dirty and lazy; their heritage is misery, ignorance, and stupidity, and their education is not calculated to develop their reason...and the *gálico más refino* [venereal disease] among them is very natural."³ How else but to explain the obvious and abysmal failure of the missionizing effort but to say that there was

something inherently wrong with the Indians? This was not a time when Catholic priests could know of the contingency of religious belief and practice, only of the mono-Truth of the One True God and His transforming power. When the priests did not rely on the Devil as an explanation for Indian intransigence, then it was their "nature" that made comprehensible a notion as was otherwise incomprehensible as the rejection of the Christian God.

There is another point to be made here: when these religious and governmental potentates expressed themselves, they did so in response to the actual condition of the native Indian peoples. Let us put aside for the moment the obvious and profound reality that the Indians' dreadful condition owed to the wreckage of their spirit world, the alienation of their lands, and especially the horrible, mysterious diseases that the Spanish brought. (It is utterly true that the syphilis and gonorrhea that the soldiers introduced proved the most horrific in terms of both physical and spiritual destruction of the Indians' bodies and souls.) Contact with the missions had succeeded not in Christianizing the Indians but in unraveling their societies and cultures, something about which most everyone commented with various degrees of incomprehension. Prefect Mariano Payeras noted in 1819 "that the majority of the Indians were dying exceedingly fast from dysentery and the *gálico*..." and a year later that "they live well free but as soon as we reduce them to a Christian and community life they decline in health, they fatten, sicken and die. It particularly affects women." "They have at present *two* religions," observed a Scottish resident of San Gabriel, "--one of custom and another of faith...The life and death of our Savior is only, in their opinion, a distorted version of their own life." Said Father President Lasuén, "The

majority of our neophytes have not acquired much love for our way of life; and they see and meet their pagan relatives in the forest, fat and robust and enjoying complete liberty. They will go with them, then, when they no longer have any fear and respect for the force, such as it is, which restrains them." What Padre Durán said about those who stuck around the Spanish outposts resonates through out the historical record as a indictment of the Spanish soldiers and a description of Indian life: "It is said that prostitution, drunkenness and gambling with the Indians are continuous."⁴

In other words, the religious impulse of missionization, when it failed to create of the Indians gente de razón, Hispanicized Christians that is, created instead the spectacle of a deracinated, disease-ridden, demoralized people. This display of cultural wreckage provided the spectacle upon which other people who traveled to, or stayed on in California would know the Indians and then base their understanding of Indian nature on. I wish to introduce now the idea of how contingent the formation of racial ideas can be: the mission Indians which the Spanish created out of the indigenous peoples, and then the Indians which resisted or fled the Spanish, were unique to California. They were not the great warriors of the Plains like the Sioux or of New Mexico like the Apaches and Navajos, nor were they like the agricultural Pueblos of the Rio Grande Valley, nor were they as violent and intransigent in their rejection of the Spanish as the Yaquis, nor did they experience the calamitous fall from greatness and power to conquest and disease as did the Aztecs. Race, or at least what we call race these days, for the Californios, or those mestizo and creole peoples who settled Spanish and Mexican California from the interior of Mexico, took on a mix of meanings.

Let us return now to this issue of contingency and racial thinking and to the Californios. It must be said now that these Californios who encountered the Indians were not just any non-Indians, but ones who suffered the issue of the Indian with out and the Indian within. In other words, like all mestizo peoples, the Californios were well aware of the fact that they were part Indian, or, if they weren't, how an unfortunate marriage could taint a family's blood. Recall, too, the particularities of the Indians with whom they lived: these were technologically rudimentary ones who had first been missionized, but who had since become fearsome.

And there can be no doubt but that Indians who refused missionization, or who escaped it, increasingly terrorized California society in the early and mid 19th century. To give only one notable example for now: in February 1824 neophytes of the missions Santa Barbara, Santa Inez, and La Purísima revolted against the mission fathers and especially against the soldiers who putatively protected the missions. The soldiers, angry and incontinent given their imprudent neglect in the context of Spains' battling against Mexico's struggle for independence, responded against the rebels furiously and viciously; the Indians burned mission buildings, and, in the anguished words of Padre Ripoll, "separated the exchanged wives and returned them to their proper husbands," or, in other words and as confirmed by other observers, brazenly offended every precept of Christian morality regarding monogamy and chastity when "they exchanged their women for those of the gentiles without distinction as to married and unmarried women."⁵

It is not for us here to discuss matters of sexual virtue and vice or the consequences of involuntary sexual repression, but rather to emphasize the dread

and trepidation with which the *gente de razón* would have seen such an episode. Think about how modern people armed with psychoanalytic theory or romantic notions about escaping the confines of bourgeois monogamy, or opponents of imperialism and monotheism, would think about such an episode, and then imagine exactly the opposite--that is how 19th century Spanish Catholics would have thought about the event, this multi-faceted spectacle of rebellion against God and Christian morality. It's not just that they would have found the behavior of Indians abhorrent, which they did, it's that they were so concerned, as mestizo people--a mix of Spanish and Indian--that they were them. An interesting twist in our narrative of racial thinking, no doubt.

The cleaner the blood, the greater the distance from this sort of possible deportment. Thus those without Indian blood, and indeed there were some few, strove to keep their families that way, and those *gente de razón* with Indian blood, quite apparent in even many of the leading families, sought to distance themselves from it in various ways. In 1777 on the day of her birth the parents of Maria Antonia de Lugo promised her in marriage to Ygnacio Vicente Vallejo, and at the time of menarche, when she was 14, she married the ex-soldier who was 40 years old. The reasoning behind this utter care about marriage emerges when Vallejo, immediately after his marriage, petitioned for a decree of *legitimidad y limpieza de sangre*, or legitimacy of pure Spanish blood. The decree, granted after fifteen years, affirmed that the Vallejo name had been untainted by Jewish, African, Indian or any other non-Christian blood. The intense concern was not lost on the three daughters issued from this marriage, two of whom married Euro-Americans and the other a Frenchman.

Similarly, the five legitimate daughters of the shamelessly womanizing and frequently besotted Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado all married Anglo Americans.⁶ Marriage, in other words, was quite bound up with racial thinking: it was one way that racial ideology and ritual practice converged. Fearful of any association with putatively naked, licentious, and alcoholic Indians, Californio parents guided, or even determined, their children's marriage partners not only on account of property concerns but to guard closely "the blood."

Among other elite families matters proved more difficult. That most prominent family of the south, the Picos, had running through their veins the blood of Africans and Indians, and quite apparently so. pp. 135-6 Another grandee of the south, Manuel Dominguez, in the American period could not testify in court because of his Indian phenotype, in spite of the fact that he was a signer of the new state constitution. In these cases we are witnessing the other half of the Mexican raciological coin. In Monterey, for example, between 1773 and 1778, 37% of marriages were interracial, mostly soldiers and Christianized Indian women, something the Church encouraged. After that the rate declined to about 15%.⁷ What is so intriguing, in part because of its apparent contradictoriness, is that consciousness of "race purity," of being "pure Spanish," existed side-by-side with the practice of officially sanctioned race mixing. The Spanish priests' famous disregard of Indian phenotype--usually attributed to the Iberian peninsula's history with the Moors--but huge disquiet over their nudity and idolatry, also figures in to this cognitive mix. (Another obvious contradiction must be pointed out here: Iberians, Celts, Romans, Visigoths, and Moors have all peopled the Iberian landscape making the notion of "pure Spanish" an interesting one.)

Again the historical record confronts us with the contingencies of racial thinking. Factors and tensions distinctive to specific historical moments, tensions, and peoples combine to create particular racial ideologies. These have provided satisfaction to peoples perplexed and conflicted about not only phenotype but about sexuality, nudity, and personal deportment, especially when their own behavior has shamelessly mirrored their objects of scorn. When there has been social and sexual race mixing as was the case in California, then these dispositions towards racial thinking are diversified and intensified.

The concept of *shame* is crucial here: Part of what made the native people of California *indios* was the fact that they were *sin verguenza*, or shameless, and part of what made the Californios *de razón* was that they did have *verguenza*, shame. And thus it was that mestizo and creole Californios, apprehensive about the Indian within and the Indian with out, came to re-make the Indian peoples in ways that were quite particular to this place, in ways that were quite curative of their tensions, and in ways that would make reconciliation between the two peoples impossible, indeed create scenarios that would play out in fire and blood.

This matter of shame, moreover, expressed itself in the appearance and activities of all Californians' bodies. Like with African slaves in the American South, so much of peoples' ideas about one another formed in their close proximity, in the spectacle of their bodies and quotidian activities. "In those times," Juana Machada could not help but remember forty years later, "female Indians did not clothe themselves except for a cover of rabbit skins that covered their shameful parts (*partes vergonzosas*)." Apparent in this quote are several matters: the difference in dress of

the two people, obviously--Californios prided themselves and were reknowned for their sartorial splendor; that how the body was displayed manifested so much about what was considered civilized; and what about God's creation was considered shameful in the minds of the Catholic Californios.⁸ In this spectacle of deportment what people saw was what informed them about who and what these other people were.

What everyone who visited or lived in California saw was that Indians did all the work. Padre Narciso Durán noted with disgust in 1831 that

If there is anything to be done, the Indian has to do it; if he fails to do it, nothing will be done. Is anything to be planted: The Indian must do it. Is the wheat to be harvested? Let the Indian come. Are adobes or tiles to be made, a house to be erected, a corral to be built, wood to be hauled, water to be brought for the kitchen? Let the Indian do it.

"The Indians," concurred Richard Henry Dana in 1834, "do all the hard work, two or three being attached to the better house; and the poorest persons are able to keep one at least..."⁹

But this same spectacle displayed more about the Californios: "But what about the other class that calls itself 'gente de razón'?" Durán continued indignantly.

"Nothing. With them it is walk about, play the gentleman, eat, be idle,..." Priests, travelers, and merchants repeated this description over and over. This display of Indian labor achieved not only production of goods and services but Californio graciousness and more Indian disgrace. José del Carmen Lugo verified the legendary hospitality of the Californios: "The traveler could go from one end of

California to the other without it costing him anything in money, excepting gifts he might wish to make to the Indian servants at the missions or on the ranchos."¹⁰

Again, what people saw as they traveled the 19th century California landscape generated their knowledge of who Indians were. They were heathen, naked (or, when they adopted the white man's clothes, laughed at), disorganized, and living in a state of servitude.

Recent writing about the history of California in the years after Mexican independence has added an important emphasis on everyday life: the threat of violence. It's not that there hadn't been bloody resistance against Spanish religious imposition in the years previous, but by 1820 so much of the Indians' traditional lands had been subsumed by the missions, and then yet more of them by the granting of ranchos to ex-army officers, that Indian peoples--some of them ex-neophytes, many of them simply those who refused missionization--had come to understand the missions and the ranchos as fair game for their simple subsistence. Thus Indians, once the "the heathen very numerous and very docile," had become powerfully threatening.

At first, and really before very many settlers had come to California in the decades when Spanish settlement centered around the mission, the Indians had become, by European standards, quite utterly disgraced. That is they had usually been defeated by the Spanish military when they resisted missionization, and their women had been violated. These "soldiers," in the famous description of Father President Serra in 1773, "clever as they are at lassoing cows and mules, would catch an Indian woman with their lassos to become prey for their unbridled lust. At times

some Indian men would try to defend their wives, only to be shot down with bullets." There is the horror for Indian families revealed here--"even the children [muchachos] who came to the mission were not safe from their baseness"--but also the Indians' infamy, their civil death, their lack of any legal or moral standing.¹¹

"During part of 1823 the Indians from the missions in the middle of the mission chain plotted an uprising with unexpected discretion," chronicled Antonio María Osio. "The ultimate goal was to kill the *gente de razón*, those who did not belong to the Indian race." Exactly what the Indians' goal was--the restoration of their old cultural ways, rebellion against the outrages of the soldiers and mission discipline, the affirmation of sexual desire--will remain ambiguous. What is clear, though, is that *indios*, whether neophytes, or still "in the wild," or, most menacing, in league with each other, had effected a new place upon the physical and psychological landscape of California. No longer infamous, they had become notorious, that is their new presence resounded in the imaginations of the Californios, not as docile heathens but as fearsome barbarians.¹²

The complexities of historical contingency are writ large here and so too are their consequences for racial thinking. Recall here what had happened with the native peoples of coastal Alta California: Many became reduced to Christianity and dependent on the missions for their simple subsistence by disease and the concomitant dissolution of their spiritual world. Indians outside the missions simultaneously adapted their old forging grounds--now the pastures of the Californios or of the missions and each full of horses and mules--and pillaged these animals. Some they ate and others they used to engage in modern ways of free trade with

Hispanic New Mexicans and Anglo Americans--ever desirous of marketable goods, even ones which Indians had harvested from the ranchos and missions. This made them seem all the more brutish and ominous. Our post-modern perspective might be helpful here. The same people, the same historical context, the same acts can be seen in different ways: Savages refused civilization and resorted to crime instead; native people resisted their expropriation through fighting back; the Indians inventively did what was necessary to adapt to the new conditions of hoofed beasts on their old lands and a market for them. Neither Indians, nor missionaries, nor Californios, nor arriviste americanos would articulate the situation in any of these ways, but there can be little doubt but that Californios and Americanos, the divide of the events of 1846-8 notwithstanding, were similarly in a state of confusion, bewilderment, and aggressive tizzy about the Indians.¹³

Again we see the possibilities and satisfactions of racial thinking. The immense complexities of such a situation could be reduced to ideas about peoples' innate qualities. "The Indians are so utterly depraved," stated *síndico* Vicente Guerrero in 1840 "that no matter where they may settle down their conduct would be the same, since they look upon death even with indifference, provided they can indulge in their pleasures and vices." The Los Angeles Star in 1852 referred to "the most degraded race of aborigines upon the North American Continent," while Indian agent T. Butler King reported to the Secretary of State that "They use the bow and arrow, but are said to be too lazy and effeminate to make successful hunters..."and "seemed the lowest grade of human beings." The Indians' spectacular and unsettling degradation-

-a very particular creation of missionization, European disease and alcohol, and military conquest--was explained with racial thinking.¹⁴

What I am arguing for here--the importance of seeing, the ways in which the spectacle of people functioned much like ritual drama, that is the dynamic of the interaction between performer and viewer--produced racial thinking that was both peculiar to this region of the world and likely generally illustrative of the ways in which racist ideas have been generated. This is not to say that Indians, in their animist beliefs, relative nudity, and subsistence ways; Californios, in their Roman Catholicism, sartorial splendor, or their rituals of generosity and feigned leisure; or lower class cholos were culpable for the nasty ideas that would be generated about them, only that interlopers would see their display and react and create comforting ideas that would make these troubling behaviors explainable.

Indian men could hunt quite well, witness their ability to appropriate horses from the Californio and American ranches; it's just that it was called "stealing." That their presence should be undermined necessitated this reconfiguration of their manliness. Since it is men's actions that foreigners usually judge, their activities had to be construed in a particular way. Similarly, Indian women had to be contrived, but since it is usually their appearance that is most meaningful, how they looked figured most importantly in the Americans' eyes.¹⁵

The Indians, in their cultural and productive ways, displayed themselves in contradictory ways to the Euro-Americans. There were those few who remained around the missions and usually farmed and worshipped in the Faith. Others hung around the towns, largely in disarray. Then there were those who provided the labor

force in California everywhere from Sutter's Fort, to the ranches of the southern and central counties, to the agricultural fields, to households north and south, and who lived in close proximity to Californios and Americans. Then, too, there were those in the interior, and San Diego, who had never been missionized or otherwise integrated into the Spanish or Mexican systems, or who had resolutely rejected the ways of the intruders, and who proved to be fearsome raiders. Each group suffered disease and alcoholism, though to varying degrees.

What sense the Americans, who began arriving in significant numbers after 1840 and who conquered the place in 1846-8, would make out of this contrasts remarkably with the Spanish. Yes, the priests imperiously and consistently referred to the "*conquista espiritual*;" they reviled the Indians' nudity and they marshaled soldiers against the practice of their religious ceremonials. Then when Father Zalvidea, that earnest fisher of men at Mission San Gabriel journeyed to the village of Taliuilimit he told how he "baptized 3 old women, the 1st of 60 years, who had lost the use of one of her legs. To her I gave the name Maria Magdalena." You see, the Spanish had compassion for those they understood to be inferior: Zalvidea gave this decrepit woman a revered name, one indicative of his hope for her. As I have pointed out elsewhere, *passion*, in Spanish *pasión*, derives from the Latin *pati*, "to endure" or "to suffer," as Christ did on the cross. *Compassion* thus means "to endure with," which is often how the priests saw their task. They "endured with" the Indians in their lack of knowledge of the Word of God. But the Indians would come to know God. They would come to be "civilized." Thus the Indians were the future of, the key to, "civilization," as the Spanish understood that now all-too-well deconstructed notion, in California.¹⁶

To the Americans the Indians, especially those still less affected by the Spanish and the Mexicans and still occupying lands in the interior, Indians represented an impediment to civilization. This is because of the fact that they occupied lands that white American farmers, those most closely associated with the "march of civilization," should be free to occupy. Both thought the Indians groveling, heathen, dirty, and potentially lethal, but they construed their relationship to European civilization entirely differently. From Cuzco to Tenochtitlan to the Rio Grande Valley to California the Spanish--in the form of priests and single men--sought to change the peoples of the New World to *gente de razón*, "people of reason," hispanicized Indians that would be bound to the land and loyal to the Crown of Castile and the Holy Faith. And they had faith that this civilizing process, one that would hold these lands forever for the Crown, could succeed. From New England to the Great Plains to California the English settlers--mostly in the form of families--sought not to populate the lands with transformed indigenous peoples, but to hold those lands for either the English crown or the American republic by sending their own people there, a strategy that necessarily entailed the ridding of those lands of Indians. And in some cases they were family farmers and in others they were slave holders, but certainly they knew that only white Europeans could bring civilization to the landscape of North America.

California Indians appeared to the Americans to be darker in color than those of the Plains. This put them closer to blacks than to those who were occasionally categorized as noble savages, that is the defeated warriors of the places the Americans had already conquered. Yet another source of racial thinking about the native peoples thus presents itself: White Americans' cognitive baggage about race

predisposed them to apply many of the ideas about race already twisted into their minds to the aboriginals of the Golden State. James Rawls quotes the following two:

"Their complexion is a dark mahogany, or often nearly black, their faces round or square, with features approximating nearer to the African than the Indian," said one traveler in 1850. Another, arriving at Monterey at the end of the Mexican American War, saw them as "the most hideous-looking creatures that it is possible to imagine. They are very dark, indeed I may almost say black, with a slight tinge of copper colour; the features are, in all other respects, as purely African in their cast..." As we might expect, comments about "a fair supposition of a brain...(were) miserably small." That this observer referred so quickly to their *color* reveals much about the quickness with which people with white-tinged skin jumped to conclusions based upon their notions of more customary dark-skinned people, and that he was British. It is remarkable indeed how many different people saw the same thing: The German Georg Von Langsdorff observed some decades earlier that "These Indians (in the San Francisco Bay area) are of middling or rather short stature, and their color is of such a dark brown that it approaches black. This color is owing very much to their filthy mode of living, to the power of the sun's rays, to their custom of smearing their bodies with mud and ember dust, and their slovenly way of wearing their scanty covering." Seemingly inevitably it followed that "we were all agreed that we had never before seen the human race on such a low level." Each, in other words, jumped to conclusions; each illustrates our points here about "seeing." And each re-iterates a previously-made suggestion about racial consciousness: it is the continual ingression of the "the new" implanted upon the received wisdom, foolishness,

nastiness, intelligence, or, most often, simple bequeathed presuppositions of the old.¹⁷

The values of family and civilization (always associated with race), then, expressed themselves in what many Anglo settlers in California at mid-century called all too chillingly and frankly "extermination." While the Spanish frankly sought the extermination of the Indians' abhorrent culture and devilish hearts, their clothed and disciplined bodies and converted souls would become the basis for civilization in California. The Americans were different: "To place upon our most fertile soil the most degraded race of aborigines upon the North American Continent," railed the Los Angeles Star in 1852, "to invest them with the rights of sovereignty and to teach them that they are to be treated as powerful and independent nations, is planting the seeds of future disaster and ruin..." In the north of California, near Humboldt, the leader of a local militia unit, William Kibbe claimed in 1860 that his guards had killed over two hundred Indians, and that "Some twenty-five families of this year's immigration have already taken up claims in these valleys. And this is the country which has been hitherto almost exclusively occupied by Indians."¹⁸

What, though, counted for civilized behavior constituted another dilemma for both Anglo and Hispanic Californians. Readers of this essay should already be taken aback at the putatively indiscriminate murder of Indian peoples living on their own lands. Even if we consider the raids and the counter-raids of Indians and militias over horses and mules something of a "fair fight," Indian men's defense of their wives and daughters against the attacks of drunken, single white men--the riff-raff of the Gold Rush mostly--can only be understood within the realm of "family values." The

dispossession of Indian farms, often as not tended by Christianized natives, would seem utterly contradictory. Yet, these are the things that happened. Helen Hunt Jackson's monumental and unprecedented novel Ramona revolves around the actual dispossession of the lands of Christian, ex-mission Indians. During her research for the novel and her dramatic exposé Century of Dishonor, an Indian agent told Jackson about a white man who filed a claim for some land which ex-mission Indians of San Luis Rey had been farming: "He owned, the agent says, that it was hard to wrest from these well-disposed and industrious creatures the homes they had built up; but, said he, 'if I had not done it somebody else would; for all agree that the Indian has not right to public lands.'" Albert Hurtado quotes a San Francisco Bulletin of 1856 telling how "some of the agents, and nearly all of the employees" in charge of some reservation Indians were "daily and nightly...kidnapping the younger portion of the females, for the vilest purposes" and that the "wives and daughters of the defenseless Diggers" were "prostituted before the very eyes of their husbands and fathers, by these civilized monsters, and they dare not resent the insult, or even complain of the hideous outrage."¹⁹

In each case here there is positive acknowledgement that certain elements of American society acted not in accord with precepts of civilization; that there is some degree of guilt or remorse about such behavior; and, through professed powerlessness over the actions, that the legal/rational system of justice--Max Weber's distinction between civilized and tribal justice--would not be brought to bear upon the transgressors. Readers may need to be reminded here that the California Constitution of 1851 barred Indians from testifying in court, a provision which,

obviously, precluded their use of the courts for redress. Perpetrators used racial thinking to commence their deeds, and authorities used racial thinking--referring to "Diggers" and "creatures"--to neglect prosecution. Helen Hunt Jackson has Aunt Ri, a character who comes to love Ramona and accept the Indians as persecuted and worthy, say after Ramona's and Alessandro's land had been swindled from them: "Why, they take folks up, 'n' penitentiarize 'em fur life, back'n Tennessee, fur things thet ain't so bad's thet!" A brilliant comment on the ability of racial thinking to efface the rule of law and justify actions that violate one's cultural norms indeed.

This sort of racial thinking on the part of the Americans had now evolved into full-fledged racism: ideas about the nature of Indians now accompanied their horrific treatment. Again, these sorts of ideas derived mostly from peoples' lived experience, anxieties, and what they saw of Indians in California. To state the obvious: Indians looked and acted different. And not only did these new imperialists arrive on the scene with different cultural baggage about racial thinking than their Spanish predecessors, the Americans encountered Indians in California who had been undergoing dramatic cultural changes; they ranged from alcoholic dregs to rugged, desperate warrior raiders. As our present narrative has only hinted at, an immensely complicated series of human actions had created this perplexing situation for the Indians, but it could not be complexity which the Americans would appreciate. They needed, and then opted for, simplicity and reference to what was already known about people who looked different to explain the Indians' baffling condition. And to vindicate their actions against them.

Matters of the Americans and race continue on in California, of course, and this issue of appearance takes on new dimensions when the Americans start to process those who do, and don't, "look" like them. And, importantly "look" takes on two meanings here: first, it refers to what (post)modernists would refer to as the signified--that is those who are looked at--but also at the signifiers--that is those whose gazes fall upon the same peoples (yes, Indians here). To give away the point of this part of the present narrative: to the Americanos some Californios "looked" Indian, many of them "looked" somewhat European in their phenotype and especially their dress, but they all "looked" to be different in their deportment. But, second, the Californios and the Americanos evidently "looked" at Indians in some very similar ways.

As we have already noted Californios' treatment of the race question varied from family to family. Some affirmed and protected their "limpieza de sangre," others arrived already mixed, others mixed in California, and yet others endeavored to marry their daughters to the *ojos azules*, as the Yankees and British businessmen were often called. The Americans (almost exclusively men), then, often found the Californios strange in their ways: these were pastoralists who aspired to gentility and leisure, and who gave away rather than saved to affirm their status. Yet the Americans could not always racialize the ways in which they differed owing to these two peoples' shared disdain for Indians, lower class Mexican *cholos*, and Anglo trappers, and the fact that many of the young women had become their wives and the patriarchs their fathers-in-law.

The most famous of American commentators on the Californios, the Boston Brahmin Richard Henry Dana, attributed the differences to environmental factors. In

his widely and continuously read Two Years before the Mast, a book published in 1840 and read by California public school students through the 1960s, Dana asserted how "in their domestic relations these people are not better than in their public. The men are thriftless, proud, extravagant, and very much given to gaming: and the women have but little education, and a good deal of beauty, and their morality, of course, is none of the best." Mostly, though, he attributed these characteristics, ones with some truth to them--they used generosity to affirm status, raced horses, and exuded pride in their seigneurial status--to environmental factors, something he called "California fever." "Indolence" proved the inevitable outcome of this malady with the further consequence that those upon this "soil in which corn yields from seventy to eight-fold," in "climate than which there can be no better in the world," wasted their opportunity. In a stunning prediction of things to come, he concluded his comments with "In the hands of an enterprising people, what a country this might be!"²⁰

Like most Americans, Dana had an ambivalent attitude toward the upper class Californios: he could be alternately drawn to their genteel ways and condemning of their quotidian gratifications. And, most certainly, this conjecture about the men being proud and the women beautiful reveals much about his standards. Other Americans--men such as Abel Stearns, Alfred Robinson, John Temple to name only a few--intermarried with the daughters of the Californio dons. Elite men shared not only blood lines, but notions of hierarchy. They all disdained Indians--both those who did all the work in the towns and on the ranchos and those with whom they fought over cattle and horses--and they spurned the unwashed lower classes of both cultures, be they the crude cast-offs of the United States or of Mexico.

Meanwhile, though, Dana's antecedents on the prolific landscape, with help of debt, drought, and the market, proceeded to dispossess the Californios--regardless of what they looked like--of their bounteous lands.²¹ But it was the lower class of Mexican Californians, those most likely to be mestizo, those "hungry, drawling, lazy half-breeds," as Dana (and plenty of others) called them, who would most experience the racial violence of the conquering Americans. This is a complicated and difficult story, one rooted in the conquest of the Mexican American War (1846-8), the chaos and degradation of those overpowered that virtually inevitably accompanies such defeat, the need to secure the land and labor of the vanquished, the resistance to conquest and transfer of economic opportunity, and racial thinking that justified and motivated the whole endeavor.

Let us begin with an illustrative moment, one both dramatic and frighteningly common. In February 1857 a group of Anglo vigilantes captured a Mexican robber in the vicinity of Mission San Gabriel and summarily killed him. Then, according to an eyewitness and reported in the Mexican newspaper, *El Clamor Público*, "when they brought the body, a justice of the peace of the mission took out his knife and cut off the head and rolled it around with his foot as if it were a rock; then he thrust the knife into his chest several times, with a brutality rarely seen even amongst these very barbarians." The well-armed lynch mob had pressed a good part of the modest and mostly unarmed Mexican population of the vicinity into witnessing the spectacle, and then executed two of the innocents; they were, as the paper put it, "hanged as suspects."²²

We have here in the decade of the 1850s something beyond mere racialization, something *El Clamor Público* called "la guerra de las razas." It was a consequence of conquest. What happened between the Spanish and the Indians was a conquest, no doubt: the sincerity of the intent to bring the Indians something as sublime as everlasting salvation cannot obscure the coercion, guns, and disease that brought the Indians under the culturally calamitous rule of the Franciscans and the soldiers. The Americans had not such exalted intent: the "civilizing" of California, with the exception of the acceptable members of the Californio populace, would entail a mixture of removal, the sequestering in forgotten enclaves or reservations, and rugged discipline of the lower orders--read more "colored"--of that society. Naked force would be the means to this end.

That the Mexicans of California, and everywhere in the newly conquered lands, looked like, and were, a mixed race people captured the imaginations of Americans. In one of the nastier expressions of racial thinking about them D. L. Phillips explained in 1877 how

The fruits of the intermarriages between the converted Indian women and the Spanish soldiery had given here, as in New Mexico, a class far more vicious than the Indians, and without a redeeming trait of the pure Spaniard.

Ignorance, laziness, indolence and vice, were and are the characteristics of the moribund race, the fruits of an experiment which has failed in all the past, and will in the future.

We see here that a people's race insinuated certain attributes, and that, actually, the mixed races emerged as the most faulty because they tended to combine the worst traits of the original two. This notion derived from Americans' thinking about the miscegenation that took place within slavery and between lower class whites and free blacks. Then, too, such thinking facilitated the expropriation of the Mexicans' land, the appropriation of their labor, their general criminalization (like what we saw in a previous paragraph), and their general exemption from equal treatment under law.²³

"About one-fifth of it (Los Angeles) is occupied by that part known as 'Sonora,' the home of the genuine Mexican...This mixed Spanish-Mexican-Indian race are (sic)," continued our Illinois commentator who seriously undercounted the indigenous population, "for all industrial purposes--male and female--about utterly worthless. They are poor, lazy, ignorant, vicious and drunken. The Americans are enterprising, intelligent, and in the main prosperous." Indeed such Protestant American sojourners and settlers saw a pastoralist, conquered people upon the land of California, ones who sought continuity of their family ways, who worshipped in a fundamentally medieval and folk Catholicism, who enjoyed wine and dance, and who in some few numbers took to brigandage for some combination of sustenance and revenge; and whose any other ambition for political or economic advancement vigilante groups would thwart. Emblematic of such a situation were those who took reprisal against the americanos--the great bandidos such as Joaquin Murieta and Tiburcio Vásquez--who may have gained a measure of vengeance and given their country people a modicum of satisfaction. In the end, though, these fighters only further convinced the americanos of Mexicans' criminal tendencies and brought down

more meanness at the hands of official and unofficial enforcers of the law. Thus when Anglo Americans saw a Mexican Californian of the lower class, they "saw" someone whose mixed-race looks betrayed an idolater, an indolent and unclean idler, and someone whose deportment ranged from dishonest to criminal. "The men, as a rule, are greasy, black-haired, moustachoed fellows that one would not want to meet in the dark--fellows who would make you feel that it would be proper for a Christian to be well armed with carnal weapons." Again, comments about character follow in the same sentence as observations about appearance. And most apprently and powerfully so does a justification for pre-emptory violence.²⁴

That, as another Anglo traveler noted, the "large Mexican population, but semi-civilized at best...as a class, hate the Americans with an inveterate hatred," should not be surprising. As a consequence of all this violence and animosity Mexicans, and Indians, in the decades after the Mexican American War sequestered themselves, the former in small towns and urban barrios, and the latter on reservations and in the mountains. Each emerged on occasion to work, owing to their loss of other means of subsistence. Yet they could not even come close to meeting the labor needs of the expanding Anglo economy especially in the north where the violence against the Indians was most intense and from which most Mexicans had fled in those brutal years during and right after the Gold Rush. In other words, the Americans had fewer and fewer people to work for them: the Indians were dying, the Mexicans were scared of the Americans and didn't like them, and both preferred their familiar and safe enclaves. In the three decades following the war, the Chinese population of the United States increased fifteen fold, from 7,520 to 105,465. Most of the Chinese lived

and worked, as single males usually, in California, and especially in San Francisco where they amounted to nearly half of the wage earners the city's key industries.²⁵

They were good workers, but they looked different.

Much went into American perceptions of the Chinese, most of it based on their experiences with other groups, and not all of it negative. Mostly, employers liked the mysterious but hard working Asians, while workers, newspapermen, and middle class people found them threatening and repugnant. Those who believed in the ideology of free labor, such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, claimed that the "when the coolie arrives here he is as rigidly under the control of the contractor as even an African slave was under his master in South Carolina or Louisiana." Then, too, our sojourner with the nasty comments about Mexicans quoted above claimed "to have not seen, among all these thousands of Chinamen, a single disorderly or drunken one up to this day." In the Chinese quarter "all was order, peace and good-will. No one ever sees an idle, lazy Chinaman," he continued.²⁶

The sources of racial thinking are many and particular to time, place, and the people involved. Upon the same landscape, and upon the same people, different imperial Christians--Americans and Spaniards--evolved entirely different ways of creating what they called civilization as regards the natives. Then, too, those that came in between, the criollo and mestizo Californios, contended with Indianness in remarkably unique ways.

What we have here, and this maybe the contribution of this particular essay to theories of racism, is that racial thinking is gratifying because it is explanatory and thus comforting. But each of the situations it explains is local, contingent, and time-

specific. If, then, racial thinking is about satisfying tension and wonder about the conduct of those others whose relationship to pleasure, work, the body and its functions, dirt, and the spirit world, then the origins of such racialization will always differ from place to place, from conquest to conquest, from anxiety to anxiety.

Reading the Americans' geographic and verbal expatiations in which they can only analyze others in terms of their putative likeness to those they already know who differ in looks, I was reminded of Herodotus's Histories. He continually reflects upon the new people he meets in his travels only in relation either to his people or to those strangers he has already met. This prompts me to think that we of the modern, even post-modern, world, are not so different from our predecessors who have wandered in their travels and then ruminated about what they saw. Indeed, the whole comparative effort of this volume may speak to we humans' need to make understandable by establishing the resemblances of troubling human interactions and strange people to what we have already observed, however superficially, but profoundly in their consequences. We understand those who are new based upon what we know about ourselves and those near us. Thus we must know ourselves and our neighbors much better.

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1. Antonio María Bucareli to (Juan) Arriaga, Mexico City, January 27, 1773, in Herbert Eugene Bolton, Anza's California Expeditions, vol. 5, Correspondence, 53; Fray Fermín Lasuén to Fray Pangua, April 23, 1774, in Bolton, Anza's California Expeditions, vol. 4, Font's Complete Diary of the Second Anza Expedition, 141; Zalvidea is quoted in E.B. Webb, Indian Life at the Old Missions (Los Angeles, 1951), 43
 2. Lasuén, *Writings*, 2:202.
 3. Durán is quoted in Irving Berdine Richman, California under Spain and Mexico, 1535-1847 (Boston, 1911), 254; Venegas is quoted in Alexander Forbes, California: A History of Upper and Lower (London 1839), 184; Juan Bandini to Eustace Barron, December 8, 1828, Stearns Papers, Huntington Library, Box 4.
 4. Zalvidea to Governor (?), San Juan Capistrano, December 3, 1832, Santa Barbara Mission Archives; Payeras' first statement is quoted in Engelhardt, Mission San Gabriel, 109 and the second in Archibald, Economic Aspects of the California Missions, 157; Cook, Conflict, 28. Hugo Reid, letter no. 22, in Scotch Paisano; Lasuén to Fray Antonio Nogueyra, January 21, 1797 in Lasuén, Writings, 2:6; Durán is quoted in Cook, Conflict, 106
 5. Amador, "Memorias," 74; Maynard Geiger trans. & ed., "Fray Antonio Ripoll's Description of the Chumash Revolt at Santa Barbara in 1824," Southern California Quarterly, LII (December, 1970), Padre Ripoll is quoted on page 354 from his letter to Father President Vicente Francisco Sarría, Santa Barbara, May 5, 1824; "Testimony, June 1, 1824," De la Guerra Documents, quoted in Cook, Conflict, 108; Bancroft, History of California, II, 527-537; Webb, Indian Life, 51; de la Guerra Ord, Occurrences, 7-9; George Harwood Phillips, Indians and Intruders in Central California, 1769-1849. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, 65-67.
 6. Antonia Castañeda, "Engendering History," 241-242; Robert Ryall Miller, Juan Alvarado: Governor of California, 1836-1842. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. 181
 7. Castañeda, 241
 8. Juana Machado, "Los Tiempos Pasados," 16; on the sartorial splendor the Californios see Monroy 138; much of this discussion of shame derives from Gutiérrez, When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away.
 9. Durán is quoted in William Marvin Mason, "Indian-Mexican Cultural Exchange in the Los Angeles Area," 129; Richard Henry Dana, Two Years before the Mast (New York, 1963), 63.

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10. Lugo, "Life of a Rancher," 223-24; Monroy, Thrown among Strangers, 144-149.
 11. Serra to Bucareli, May 21, 1773, in Serra, Writings, I: 359-363; Gutierrez, When Jesus Came
 12. Osio, 55, 268-9; Sandos; Monroy
 13. This is one of the main points of the entire Phillips, Indians and Intruders.
 14. Vicente Guerrero is quoted in Guinn, Historical and Biographical Record, 67; Los Angeles, Star, March 13, 1852; King, Report on California, 16.
 15. John Berger, Ways of Seeing (New York, 1977), 45-47.
 16. Monroy, 22-24; Diary Of José María Zalvidea, July 19 to August 14, 1806, Santa Barbara Mission Archives.
 17. Rawls, Indians of California, credibly discusses Anglo Americans' association of Africans with Indians. pp. 196-98 and the quote is on pp. 196-7 and is from Ryan, Persoanl Adventures 1:73, 92-93; Nicolai Petrovich Rezanov and Georg Von Langsdorf, "The Rezanov Voyage," in Joshua Paddison ed., A World Transformed: First Hand Accounts of California Before the Gold Rush (Heyday Books, Berkeley, 1999), 111-2.
 18. Los Angeles Star, March 13, 1852; William C. Kibbe, Report of the Expedition Against the Indians in the Northern Part of the State, 6, 8, 10 quoted in Rawls, Indians of California, 179; on "extermination see Robert F. Hizer and Alan T. Almquist, The Other Californias: Prejudice and Discrimination under Spain, Mexico, and the United States to 1920 (Berkeley, 1971), 26-44.
 19. Jackson, Century of Dishonor, 459-60, 495; Hurtado, 181 but he gets it from Hizer, Destruction
 20. Richard Henry Dana, Two Years Before the Mast (Bantam, New York, 1959), 135-137.
 21. Pitt, The Decline of the Californios, 83-119; Cleland, Cattle on a Thousand Hills, 33-50, 102-137; Monroy, Thrown among Strangers, 222-232.
 22. *El Clamor Público*, February 14, 1857.
 23. D. H. Phillips, Letters from California: Its Mountains, Valleys, Plains, Lakes, Rivers, Climate and Productions. Springfield Ill. 1877; Pitt, Decline of the Californios, 148-167; Monroy, Thrown among Strangers, 205-219; Rodolfo Acuña, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 112-129.

24. Phillips, Letters from California, 119; Pitt, Decline of the Californios, 148-180; Monroy, Thrown among Strangers, 214-219.

The present author does not attend church on Sundays but instead usually plays tennis and does not shave in honor of the day. After a match that last description may well apply.

25. Ronald Takaki, Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America. New York, Oxford University Press, 1990), 216, 232.

26. San Francisco Chronicle, March 6, 1879, quoted in Takaki, Iron Cages, 216-217; Phillips, Letters from California, 134.