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**LAND, GENDER, AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY FORMATION:
UNCOVERING HISPANA/MEXICANA VOICES IN THE SOUTHWEST**

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
American Studies**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July, 2011

Dedication

For my Mom...the bravest & strongest woman I know.

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ABSTRACT

The southwestern United States has an exceptional history that makes the region a prime focus for study concentrating on culture, tradition, language and land. As an area closely tied to the concept of conquest, the Southwest has had its share of issues related to colonization, imperialism, Manifest Destiny, and cultural erasure. This study focuses on the Southwest as a region that is closely linked to the land as it relates to the formation of identities of its people. Mexican Americans in the Southwest have historically experienced struggle, particularly after 1848 and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, when native *Californios*, *Nuevo Mexicanos*, *Tejanos* and others were thrust into American citizenship without many of the benefits afforded other citizens. They were also at the center of a battle for their land—land that was highly contested as the ideological concept of Manifest Destiny promoted the idea of westward expansion and takeover of “undiscovered,” “unclaimed,” and “virgin lands.”

This study provides a comparative analysis of Hispana/Mexicana *testimonios herederas*, a concept I use to identify the shared, or inherited, history of women's struggle and resistance across historical contexts. The specific *testimonios* examined develop from the cultural production of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Jovita González, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca and Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce. By using an interdisciplinary approach, this dissertation demonstrates the diverse range of historical materials that can be used in academic research related to Hispana/Mexicana land-related struggles. These include ethnographic, autobiographic, historical, and literary materials, all of which help to re-imagine traditional conceptions of identity, gender, history, and culture.

The hybrid methods employed by the Hispanas/Mexicanas reveal what Chicana feminist Emma Pérez (1999) calls the "third space[s]," where social, individual and community commentary emerge(s). This study demonstrates that women were active agents in land struggles long before the Chicano movement and Chicana identity politics. Specifically, it suggests that female agency was present in the fight for land in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries across the Southwest, in California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The analysis demonstrates that the women do not follow dominant narratives despite their social status as elites. This action indicates that, as a whole, Hispanas/Mexicanas pushed back, forcing contemporary scholars to acknowledge that regardless of class level, they actively engaged in the land struggle early on.

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Introduction

The Southwestern United States is a region easily identified by its vast landscapes, unique climate, and diverse cultures. Anyone who has visited the Southwest can attest to the fact that its beauty is indescribable, and its history, complex. Its story has been based upon notions of tri-cultural harmony—the idea that the three main “cultures” typically found in the Southwest: Anglos, Spanish/Mexicans, and Indigenous, peacefully exist in the region. This idea is depicted in art, tourist paraphernalia, and standardized history books claiming to provide accurate representations of the region and its peoples. Those who have studied or resided in the area, though, recognize that the myth of the Southwest is just that. While its diverse peoples have worked for centuries to establish working and personal relationships, the Southwest is more correctly a region defined by race, class, and land issues. Recent studies have worked to correct the stories in which the myth has been perpetuated. Theirs are tales of conquest, displacement, and loss.¹

This study supports the idea that the history of the Southwest is complex. It also acknowledges that conquest, displacement, and loss took place in the region, and continues to occur implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, on many levels. As a native New Mexican, I am fully engaged in the process of correcting the standardized histories that fail to account for the significant struggles faced by the peoples of the region.

I draw upon those efforts to rewrite the history of the Southwest, and urge that those narratives become part of the mainstream literature in high schools, colleges, and libraries. Similar to those stories, this study provides an alternative history—one that accounts for the missing pieces of the historical puzzle. It acknowledges the importance of race, class, and culture as they relate to the story of a people proud of their heritage and a region rich in

tradition. Part of that heritage includes an attachment to the land. Specifically, this study points to the issues surrounding the land comprising the Southwest, and argues that the history of land tenure, ownership, and heirship are important to describing the way in which the peoples of the Southwest define themselves.

Today, land is viewed as a commodity—bought and sold on a daily basis—an investment that has the potential to bring wealth to those who can afford to purchase or sell it. However, to the peoples of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the eras that are the focus of this study, the land signified much more—it formed part of their identity. The idea of the land in relation to identity is not novel. In fact, many contemporary histories attempt to document this idea, some of which are noted above. The narrative that occurs as a result suggests that Anglos in search of new territory displaced the Indigenous, Mexicano, and Spanish people who resided in the Southwest for centuries prior. This study acknowledges the effects that displacement had on Indigenous peoples, and recognizes that many individuals involved in current land struggles claim ties to indigenous identity.² My intention is not to erase or ignore the implications of indigenous land struggles. However, that history is not the focus of this dissertation, though it appears in some of the narratives included for analysis. Rather, this study originates from the cultural discourse that is designed to displace Hispano/Mexicano peoples. It argues that Hispanos/Mexicanos were not passive, but rather, they pushed back, acting as agents who fought to maintain their culture and land.

The struggle endured by Hispanos/Mexicanos is significant. It suggests that while the outcome did not produce results in their favor, Hispanos'/Mexicanos' action is the noteworthy result. More specifically, the study contends that Hispanas/Mexicanas were active agents in the fight for land. Hispana/Mexicana participation in land-related struggles

has scarcely been documented, in particular, the history related to those women who were active in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³ This study works to correct the omission of women's participation in the land-related struggles that plagued the Southwest. It will be the first book-length study that acknowledges women's active participation in land issues during these eras. The study also reveals that Hispanas/Mexicanas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were active agents and precursors to the land movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

My interest in this topic developed from my tenure as a research assistant for the Land Grant Studies Program at the University of New Mexico, a program supported by the Southwest Hispanic Research Institute. The program was designed to involve a new generation of land grant heirs and students interested in learning about land grants throughout the state of New Mexico in internship opportunities within land grant communities. Part of my duties included attending land grant committee meetings held throughout the state. Through my participant observation, I noticed women's active participation in the highly male-dominated sphere of land grant activism. The women expressed their opinions and experiences with land-related issues very clearly, and piqued my curiosity about women's history of involvement in the land movement.

Of the few studies on women's participation in the land grant movement, all focused on the period between the 1960s and 1970s. At this time, Reies López Tijerina had established the Alianza Federal de Mercedes in an effort to help land grant heirs reclaim their land. Women such as Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez, Valentina Valdez, and Enriquetta Vasquez worked with the movement by documenting the actions of the Alianza in *El Grito del Norte*, a community newspaper dedicated to the cause. Scholars interested in the land grant movement in Northern New Mexico paid homage to the participation of Vasquez and

Valdez. In 2005, University of New Mexico graduate student Federico Reade included a section in his dissertation that discussed how Valdez became interested in the land grant movement, and described the activity that centered upon the land struggles occurring at that time. Later, in 2006, Chicana/o historians Lorena Oropeza and Dionne Espinoza penned *Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito del Norte*, a text that discussed Vasquez's contribution to both the Chicano and Land Grant Movements in the 1960s and 1970s, paying special attention to the articles and editorials she wrote during her term working for *El Grito del Norte*.

This dissertation acknowledges the participation of women in the land grant movement during the 1960s and 1970s. The focus of this study is to demonstrate that women were involved in land struggles prior to the Chicano movement and were precursors of Chicana identity politics. By analyzing the writings of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Jovita González, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, and Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce, it reveals that women were active participants in documenting these land struggles for centuries prior, and suggests that although the desired outcome was different from the one anticipated through the current movement—redress of the lost land—the action taken by each of the women in this study suggests that female agency was present in the fight for land in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This research also works to prove that Hispana/Mexicana agency was in existence across the Southwest as a region—in California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, indicating that as a whole, Hispanas/Mexicanas in the Southwest pushed back, forcing contemporary scholars to acknowledge their activity and agency in early land struggles.

A Briefing on Methodologies

The study works from an interdisciplinary framework that engages archival research, literary analysis, autobiographical theory, and feminist theory. By mining the archives of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca in the Center for Southwest Research at the University of New Mexico, and the Reuben Wilbur Papers in the Special Collections Library at the University of Arizona, I was able to examine personal correspondence, notes, articles, and records related to the history, families, and communities of the Cabeza de Bacas in New Mexico and the Wilburs in Arizona. In addition, Arizona State University's Special Collections and the Arizona Historical Foundation offered access to numerous primary and secondary sources related to the Wilbur Ranch and family history. At both locations I was also able to review books, newspaper articles, and biographical information about the Wilbur-Cruce family.

I have incorporated some of the historical information that I discovered during my research into this study to provide a context for the social and political issues occurring when the women in this analysis were writing. The archival material is also included as a way to demonstrate how the issues that occurred prior to the women's documentation of significant land-related historical events would play an important role in their inherited histories. An examination of the historical material indicates that at times, though the year may have changed, the struggles associated with land, race, and culture remained the same.

In addition to the archival material, I examined the correspondence of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, bound in a collection unearthed by Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita (2001), during their extensive research of Ruiz de Burton's biography and literary works. The correspondence provided insight into Ruiz de Burton's personality, as well as her desperate appeals to politically significant friends. In addition to exposing clues about Ruiz

de Burton's character, the correspondence also reveals the importance of identifying non-traditional methods of documentation, such as letters, that can effectively enhance our understanding of historical events. The use of non-traditional methods of documentation such as correspondence, recipe books, *dichos* (sayings), and literature, challenges customary conceptualizations of what is considered authentic representations of history. I employ feminist theory to suggest that these methods serve as decolonial tools (Emma Pérez, 1999) that counter dominant modes of historical representation.

A case-in-point comes from my review of Jovita González's Master's thesis—what would typically be considered an academic text—to suggest that it works in a non-traditional way to provide a familial and community history in addition to a history of the Texas borderlands. Forming the core of this study's analysis are what I call the *testimonios herederas*, a concept I use to identify the shared, or inherited, history of women's land struggles and strategies of resistance across historical contexts. For Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce, part of their *testimonios herederas* develop in the form of novels. Therefore, this study also uses literary analysis to reveal how the novels function as testimonies to the land issues occurring in their respective areas of residence. I explore the novels as historical texts that provide insight into personal, familial, and community histories, and consider how each woman also offers critiques about important social, political, and racial issues occurring regionally, nationally, and transnationally.

This study is significant to gender studies. The application of feminist theory allowed me to investigate how each woman inserted her voice into the historical record. I argue that each woman's *testimonio heredera* works as what Pérez (1999) describes as a “decolonial tool” to demonstrate that Hispanas/Mexicanas engaged in deconstructing dominant narratives

about land-related history, and asserted their voices in an effort to document their participation in this important historical movement. Their work highlights that they were forward thinking women, committed not only to serving as cultural brokers, but also to participating in the struggles present during their respective lifetimes. They were the precursors of Chicana feminists, demonstrated by the way they took on the responsibility of documenting the social, political, racial, and gendered injustices occurring during their lifetimes. Most significant is Ruiz de Burton's correspondence, which reveals clearly her understanding of the ramifications of her gender to the fight for land in the nineteenth century.

An examination of Hispana/Mexicana *testimonios herederas* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reveals the spark of what would develop into the Chicana feminist consciousness that would evolve in the 1980s with such significant Chicana feminist scholars as Pérez, Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Chela Sandoval, to name a few. Although it is important to indicate that each of the women in this study self-identified as *California*, *Hispana*, and/or *Mexicana*, we must take into consideration the era in which they lived and the significance of identity labels during their lifetimes. This study demonstrates that we must look beyond that labeling in order to appreciate the value of their work as gendered and racialized subjects who challenged dominant patriarchal norms.

Used together, the methods in this study develop into an interdisciplinary study of history, literature, race, class, gender, and culture. The methods reveal how, when combined, they form a comprehensive study that acknowledges diverse perspectives, and is relevant within a variety of disciplines. Finally, this interdisciplinary methodology helps uncover the

importance of acknowledging the traditional and non-traditional, old and new, and ways of combining them.

Discussion of the Chapters

Chapter One discusses the history of land-related struggles in the Southwestern United States. The literature review provides a discussion of women's participation in the construction of life histories and social movements. Specifically, the chapter addresses the genre of *testimonio*, a form of life writing that produces personal and community histories typically relayed by third world subjects. I describe how the application of feminist theory and the genre of *testimonio* work in unison to develop the *testimonio heredera*. The chapter acknowledges the involvement of women in land ownership and inheritance, a concept that was unique to the Southwest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It also argues that women's agency was enhanced through their ability to own and sell land, and it also made them highly sought after by Anglo newcomers in the region.

Chapter Two introduces María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, a *California* actively engaged in the land grant struggles in California and Mexico. As the granddaughter of an original land grant heir who had acquired a substantial amount of land through a grant from the Spanish government, Ruiz de Burton spent much of her adult life fighting for the reclamation of the land she inherited. Through her correspondence and the construction of her novel, *The Squatter and the Don* [1885] (1997), what I label as her *testimonio heredera*, I argue that Ruiz de Burton asserted her agency as a Hispana/Mexicana actively engaged in the struggle for land.

Chapter Three describes how Jovita González used both her Master's thesis and her novel, *Caballero: A Historical Novel* (1996), to document the land struggles occurring in

Texas. In this chapter, I argue that González's *Caballero* is as an extension of her thesis—a combination of the factual with the fictional—and both serve as her *testimonio heredera*. Through her work, González counters the dominant cultural discourse that was designed to displace Hispanos/Mexicanos in the Southwest. Full consideration of González's writing as a counter-narrative that pays specific attention to land-related struggles has never been given, and this study suggests that her work indeed engages the issues of land loss and displacement.

Chapter Four presents the narrative of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, a prominent Hispana from New Mexico. The Cabeza de Baca family held direct ties to a large land grant in Las Vegas, New Mexico, and claimed a genealogical link to one of the original explorers of the Southwest—Álvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. Cabeza de Baca deems it her duty to document New Mexican culture and traditions, and her work has most commonly been studied as folklore. This chapter explores her autobiographical novel, *We Fed Them Cactus* [1954] (1994), as her *testimonio heredera*, suggesting that she bases her familial and community history on the politics that defined and divided her family. Additionally, the chapter provides evidence to suggest that Cabeza de Baca documents clearly the land-related struggles faced by Hispanos/Mexicanos as a whole, and her family in particular, using displacement to activate her voice.

Chapter Five launches a discussion about *La Pistolera*, Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce. The chapter argues that Wilbur-Cruce, too, develops a *testimonio heredera* to document the land issues in Arizona. Her story is different from the others in that she clearly establishes *querencia*, or a pure love and respect for the land, from a very early age and through her rearing as a *ranchera*, or rancher. In her account, Wilbur-Cruce points to the importance of

the land in relation to identity formation for the peoples of the region, and particularly *rancheros*. She inherited this understanding from her father, Agustín Wilbur, whose father was the initial *ranchero*, Dr. Reuben Wilbur. Wilbur-Cruce's is a unique case that demonstrates that inherited land struggles do not necessarily stem from land grant battles, but also, through a deep appreciation for the land and its people.

As a whole, the dissertation reveals that Hispanas/Mexicanas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were active agents in the battles for land that defined the Southwestern United States. Their action is significant to the history of land struggle—a struggle that persists currently. The impacts of the ongoing battle for land and the contemporary Hispanas/Mexicanas who have taken on the task of participating in and documenting the land struggles are discussed in the Conclusion. The evidence found in Ruiz de Burton's, González's, Cabeza de Baca's, and Wilbur-Cruce's *testimonios herederas* indicates that women's participation in social activism and documentation of unjust land issues occurred prior to the Chicano Movement—a period in which social activism was at its height. This study contributes to the scarce amount of documentation that currently exists with regard to land-related history, gender, and race. My research uncovers the Hispana/Mexicana voices that have been overlooked as important to the historical record of land-based issues.

Notes on Terminology

People of Indigenous, Spanish, and/or Mexican descent have struggled for centuries with identity labels. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, class and social status significantly determined race, and an individual's gender controlled his or her political and citizenship status. These conclusions are not surprising, nor are they new to the discussion of race, class, or gender. We also know that historically, race is constructed within

a black/white binary, where whiteness has been, and still is, associated with power and privilege.

To put the discussion of race and ethnicity labels into a historical context, in the nineteenth century, many Mexicans in the Southwest classified themselves as white, and often brokered themselves into whiteness. As a comparison, Mexicans in the south similarly brokered their way into whiteness. Historian Julie M. Weise suggests that Mexican Americans in the South deliberately attempted to assimilate into white society as a way to gain access to white privilege—privilege reinforced by Jim Crow segregation laws that created a black/white racial binary that essentially gave and took away power (2008, 749-778). In her study of race, Professor of Law and American Studies Laura E. Gómez (2007) similarly states that Mexican Americans in the Southwest and in New Mexico specifically, claimed white racial categorization via their connection to pure Spanish caste systems in an effort to maintain their unusually predominant political power in the region. This was also a way to separate themselves from Indians, who were thought of in a similar way that blacks were considered in the South—inferior.

This quest for whiteness was rampant throughout the Southwest. Historian Neil Foley, too, suggests that Mexicans in Texas ruptured the black/white binary, but confirms: “The overwhelming majority of Texas whites regarded Mexicans as a ‘mongrelized’ race of Indian, African, and Spanish ancestry” (1997, 5). Foley goes on to say that “In Texas, unlike other parts of the South, whiteness meant not only not black but also not Mexican” (1997, 5). In her discussion of race, Anthropologist Martha Menchaca suggests that:

“Mexican Americans are one of the peoples of the world who are of mixed racial origin. This racial background has historically placed Mexican Americans and their ancestors in ambiguous social and legal positions—they are discriminated against

because they are only partially White, yet they have been spared the full impact of discrimination because they descend from Spaniards, one of the White peoples of Europe.” (2001, 37)

These historical facts suggest that the racial categories that developed were complex, and clearly tied to political, social, and economic power. We can see how this situation created a transnational racial and class conundrum. This complex history centered upon race is important to this study in that it demonstrates the climate faced by the women included in my research. The issue of race persists. It is mentioned here, but not covered in-depth, as that is a study on its own.

The women in this study were subjected to race issues in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In fact, the women of the twentieth century demonstrate clearly how race and class issues persisted, as they inherited the effects of race, class, and gender hierarchies. Class is used not in the Marxian sense, but rather, to describe social rank. I use the terms *Hispana* and *Mexicana* to identify the women whose works are analyzed in this dissertation. At times, I refer to the women based on their area of residence (i.e. Ruiz de Burton is often referred to as a *California*, González a *Tejana*, and Cabeza de Baca a *Nuevo Mexicana*). The women themselves self-identify as all three, which indicates the complexity of racial categorical selection.

It should also be noted that the women are associated with certain class privileges, in the sense that in some way, they are all tied to “landed” families, or families who were land rich, but perhaps money poor. María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca stand out as the two women in this study who benefited from their social and/or class standing. Both claimed ties to pure, Spanish bloodlines. Typically, elites are expected to follow dominant narratives; however, the women examined here demonstrate that this is not

always the case. The common theme in each woman's work is land. Through the analysis of the women's *testimonios herederas*, the study reveals the factors that contributed to their views of the land, and demonstrates why their solidarity on this topic is important. Ruiz de Burton's, González's, Cabeza de Baca's, and Wilbur-Cruce's work as Hispanas/Mexicanas who exerted their agency by challenging dominant historical narratives is significant, and the focus of this study

I use the term Anglo to refer to people of European ancestry. In the *testimonios herederas*, the women also use the terms White, Anglo-Saxon, and Euro-American. I make reference to the Indigenous people of the Southwest region. This term refers to native peoples who, prior to the arrival of Europeans, occupied what is now deemed the Southwestern United States. Each of the women included in this study also refers to the Indigenous population, though in differing ways. I also use the term Indigenous to refer to those involved in the current land struggles throughout the Southwest, and New Mexico in particular. Many of those invested in land grant struggles in Northern New Mexico claim ties to Indigenous identity, demonstrating how racial designations have shifted over time.⁴ I do not deny that Hispanos/Mexicanos are a mixed race people. However, I base my choice to use the terms Hispana/o and Mexicana/o on the fact that this was how the women in my study self-identified. To ignore their self-designated racial labels would be to deny their voice, and the historical record indicates that this has been a pattern that this study intends to break.

Chapter 1:

Gender, Genre, and the History of Land Struggle

The Southwestern United States has an exceptional history that makes the region a prime focus for study concentrating on culture, tradition, language and land. As an area closely tied to cycles of conquest (Spanish, Mexican, and American), the Southwest has had its share of issues related to colonization, imperialism, Manifest Destiny, and cultural erasure. An examination of early documentation from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demonstrates how conflict amongst the indigenous peoples of the Southwest, and the influx of those interested in exploring and taking over the territories comprising the highly contested land of what is now the southwestern United States, resulted in the formation of a unique identity for Indians and Hispanos residing in these areas.

Indo-Hispano accounts tend to overlap, and neither can be undermined since both groups experienced extreme forms of colonization. Also, as Historian James F. Brooks reminds us, cultural mixing began taking place in different forms as Spain colonized the people of the region. In addition to Queen Isabella mandating intermarriage, Brooks says, “in-group survival depended to some degree on social and economic interactions with out-groups” (2002, 26). Further, Brooks underscores the fact that both indigenous and European peoples practiced cultural negotiations, intermarriage, and enslavement, arguing that “native and Spanish men shared similar notions of honor, shame, and gender, with the control of women and children as central proof of status” (34). Professor of Chicano Studies, Michael L. Trujillo, similarly notes “Spanish colonialism [can be classified] as a gendered act of domination and sociocultural interpenetration” (2009, 43). From these quests for power and

control, a racial hierarchy developed and was only exacerbated in the coming centuries by new forms of colonialism and conquest.⁵

Fast-forward to the subsequent eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and later historical accounts demonstrate continued colonization efforts. The land became a central focus for Anglo newcomers—land that had already been important to the Indo-Hispano people who relied on it for their existence and livelihood for centuries prior. What occurred as a result of these quests of exploration was a blending of cultures, traditions and ways of life but also and most important, cultural and identity loss. Historian Robert J. Rosenbaum suggests that Anglo American views of Indians and Hispanos in the region were problematic because “Indians who came from the land formed one category in the American scheme of things; Europeans made up another. Mexicanos combined elements from both, thereby embodying a contradiction that confused the issue of citizenship in Anglo minds” (1998, 6). These Anglo American views would contribute to the tensions that already existed between Indians and Hispanos in the region, and they would serve as the impetus for the continued battles over possession of what would become the Southwest. The historical documentation detailing these accounts is of utmost importance to maintaining the history and cultures of the region. This study focuses on those stories passed down through the oral and written traditions and highlights their importance in our understanding of the past.

In his study, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico* (2006), Professor of Geography, Jake Kosek, reveals the need to re-member the stories of the past because they provide evidence of a history of struggle that has been prevalent for centuries. Those stories remain important to communities tied to the land, those who study the struggles and people of the region, and to the politics that define those communities. This

project attempts to give voice to women's experiences of struggle across time and region. Specifically, the study examines works from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to reveal similarities and differences across centuries and throughout the Southwest. Historian Virginia Scharff reminds us that "we have to acknowledge, imagine, and examine the presence, the power, the utterances of women...whose movements to this day, and for the foreseeable future, shape the landscape" (2002, 4). Scharff focuses on women as they contributed to "the historical geography of the American West" (4). I expand Scharff's idea of analysis by focusing on the Southwest as a critically significant region where Hispanas/Mexicanas⁶ were actively contributing to history. Because women are the purveyors of culture and tradition and the cultural brokers, ignoring their stories is detrimental to formulating a more accurate representation of the history of a region or community. This study pays particular attention to how Hispanas/Mexicanas in the Southwest enacted their agency by documenting, writing, and speaking about issues related to land (loss, gain, importance, etc.), gender, race, and class.

As its theoretical basis, this study utilizes the genre of *testimonio* as a way to examine individual and collective identity. *Testimonios* are one form of personal narrative or autobiographical expression. However, I introduce *testimonio* as a form of analysis that pushes beyond the traditional constraints of autobiography, a genre that emphasizes the individual, rather than the collective. This study defines *testimonios* as historical and literary "texts" containing the voice of Hispanas/Mexicanas in the Southwest from the nineteenth century to the contemporary moment. Through this examination of *testimonios*, I uncover the Hispana/Mexicana voices that address women's ties to land and how these ties in turn

affected their identities. I seek to understand how these *testimonios* aid in the formation of community histories and collective identities.

I examine the *testimonios herederas* (a concept discussed in-depth below) of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Jovita Gonzalez, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, and Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce. In their work, each of these women discusses issues related to land loss, recovery, and/or politics, in varied forms. Each of the women is the product of a landed, elite family. Their *testimonios herederas* are significant because they challenge preconceived notions of the elite following dominant narratives. Rather, Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce demonstrate that this is not always the case, as they create narratives of resistance. By examining their hybrid methods, I locate those “third spaces,” (1999, 5) as Chicana Feminist Emma Pérez describes, where social, individual and community commentary emerges. I use the novels, letters, autobiographies, folklore, and oral stories forming the *testimonios herederas* of the women to archive the “decolonial imaginary” (5) that each envisioned. Prior to discussing specific cases, a basic overview is necessary to describe how autobiographical methods of documenting history function in this study.

Life Histories & the Female Voice

Life narratives, autobiographies, *testimonios* and oral histories have deep roots in the establishment and dissemination of the stories defining our past. From these histories, we gain important knowledge about culture, traditions, and notion of community. These forms of documentation are not novel, but rather, stem from a long-standing tradition of oral-based cultures. Autobiographical theorists Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2001) point out that self-representation in pre-literate and some literate non-Western cultures was dependent upon orality as a means of communicating biographical information and/or traditions within

cultures (84). Further, Smith and Watson argue, by ignoring autobiographical materials that do not stem traditionally from a literary-based form, we miss an entire segment of self-representation that is rich with meaning (119). Examining various forms of texts and oral histories reveals the processes of self-discovery and identity formation, as well as the politics surrounding a particular region. Moreover, textual material and oral histories provide insight into who was documenting cultural events and histories. Traditionally, males served as the political representatives, heads of household, and public figures within the family and community at large. However, we know that men were not working alone at these tasks and cannot solely be given credit for historical documentation, leadership, and social status.

Testimonios: The Formation of Collective Identity

Testimonies are traditionally conceptualized as declarations given by a witness. In cultural studies, *testimonios* can be a genre of literature that provides historical accounts of events and experiences, or from an autobiographical theorist's standpoint, a form of life writing that allows "postcolonial subjects" a form of "cultural agency" (Smith & Watson, 2001, 45). Professor of Literature, Dorris Sommer, suggests that *testimonios* are interrelated to struggle, class, and ethnicity (1998, 2). She also suggests that the narrator represents her community as a member of that group (129). To expand upon the idea of *testimonio*, I coin the phrase *testimonio heredera* (heir's testimony) to describe how Hispana/Mexicana voices cross historical contexts to reveal a shared or inherited history of struggle over land, gender, and race. *Testimonios herederas* also reveal strategies of resistance across centuries. The interdisciplinarity of this study works in union with the genre of *testimonio* because similar to the multi-faceted approach applied in this project, the *testimonios herederas* included in the study use hybrid methodologies that make use of history, autobiography, ethnography and

memoir. Additionally, as pointed out by Critical Theorist Rosaura Sánchez, *testimonios* stem from a genre “in which literary and nonliterary, popular and elite, historical and fictional discourses overlap” (1995, xi). In this study, I argue that *testimonios herederas* written by Hispanas/Mexicanas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are used as tools for decolonizing dominant narratives that describe land struggles.

Based upon Pérez’s notion of the decolonial imaginary, I suggest that *testimonios herederas* provide a space in which Hispanas/Mexicanas demonstrate their agency by telling their own stories of struggle and resistance. Pérez argues that the typical silences that exist with regard to Chicana history “become the negotiating spaces for the decolonizing subject” (1999, 5). Conceptualizing *testimonios herederas* in this way allows the opportunity to fill in the gaps left out by traditional methods and historiography. *Testimonios herederas* are defined in this study as a subset of *testimonios*. They are also intended to signify the literal and metaphorical inheritance of struggles involving race, gender, and land. Beyond that, *testimonios herederas* allow the reader to understand the “consciousness of duality,” as Gloria Anzaldúa describes it (1987, 37). Anzaldúa sees this consciousness of duality as a place in which people have to “live in the interface between two” realities and are “forced to become adept at switching modes” (37). The need to switch also works metaphorically and literally for the Hispanas/Mexicanas in this study, as they navigate borders of race, class, and gender. There are two added variables in this research. One is the land, and how it plays a significant role in Hispana/Mexicana identity formation. The other is that unlike most *testimonios*, the *testimonios herederas* are not mediated or produced by an outsider. Rather, the women construct their own *testimonios* using non-traditional autobiographical formats that allow them to include their ties to collective identity.

The *testimonios herederas* examined in this study employ a hybrid methodological approach, which in some cases, is standard in a contemporary view of *testimonios*. Although she does not specifically describe them as hybrid, Sánchez details some of the hybrid approaches found in the Californio *testimonios* she examines. She states, “Poetry, popular ballads, short stories, picaresque episodes, humorous anecdotes, sketches, manifestos, letters, legal documents, and newspaper articles are also included” (1995, 35) in the straight question and answer formats of the Californio *testimonios*. By acknowledging the importance of these non-traditional methods of historical documentation, as scholars invested in revisionist histories, we similarly acknowledge the agency that Hispanos/Mexicanos exert in their ability to provide their own accounts of historical events. While they do not necessarily address land-related issues, examples of the hybrid testimonial approach to documentation appear in Pat Mora’s *House of Houses* (1997), Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands—La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), and Patricia Preciado Martin’s *Songs My Mother Sang to Me: An Oral History of Mexican American Women* (1992).

Mora provides a detailed account of her inherited family history through the incorporation of photographs, maps, *dichos*, stories, and letters. She tells tales of her own experiences, describes the stories about her family, and combines them so that they are both ethnographic—things she witnessed, and autobiographical—things she experienced. Mora’s goal in writing *House of Houses* is not to discuss issues related to land struggle, as the women in this study, but it is to chronicle the family story, “so we will know where we came from.”⁷ Similarly, in *Borderlands—La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Gloria Anzaldúa utilizes a multi-faceted approach to discuss her new *mestiza* identity—an identity formed through links to tradition, culture, oral and written stories, and land (the borderlands,

specifically)—that is made up of literary and poetic style. Though not specifically discussing land grant issues, Anzaldúa focuses on the land comprising the borderlands of Texas and Mexico as they affect her identity. Anzaldúa demonstrates the complexity of Chicana/o identity and specifically examines how the borderlands play a significant role in reminding us about the various components of that identity. In *Songs My Mother Sang to Me: An Oral History of Mexican American Women* (1992), Patricia Preciado Martin points to the importance of oral histories and *testimonios* as they relate to Hispano/Mexicano identity. She gathers the testimonials of 10 women that reveal their relationship to tradition and culture, and most relevant to this project, the land. Preciado Martin's project demonstrates the significance of collecting autobiographical oral histories, and describes how her project aids in constructing her own Mexicana identity. The three works referenced here provide historical and traditional documentation, in addition to creating imprints that are relevant to *testimonio*, autobiography, culture, and Southwest studies. This study focuses on *testimonios herederas* as a way to read identity through mediated utterance,⁸ or those instances where we are forced to “read between the lines.”

Sánchez's reference to overlapping discourses mentioned earlier also highlights how *testimonios* work to bridge the connection to orality, since this form of documentation is the origin of the declarations in testimonies, and typically ties to community histories. She defines *testimonios* in her study as discourse that is linked to textual narrative, but acknowledges that *testimonios* provide the opportunity for subject to “speak” about his or her experiences (1995, 3). Sommer further explains the idea of how bridging narrative discourses and orality works when she says, “as a device, the orality [of *testimonios*] helps to account for the testimonials' construction of a collective self” (1998, 118). Through the examination

of *testimonios*, the reader/listener gains valuable insight into the multiple discourses at play. Sánchez suggests that the “testimonials function not only as socially symbolic acts to resolve conflict, but as sites of struggle for the power of representation. As sites of contention, sites for the construction of identity, for a recentering of collective subjectivity, for contestations of dominant representations of Californios [and Hispanos/Mexicanos as a whole], these narratives are necessarily concerned with the politics of representation” (1995, 36). In this study, the examination of *testimonios herederas* opens the possibility to engage multiple lenses through which to understand collective identity, and to identify how the representation of land struggles forms a central part of the narratives created by Hispanas/Mexicanas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

By focusing on *testimonios herederas*, what emerges is a critical analysis of genre, voice, agency, and subject matter (in this case, the land). This happens because the *testimonios herederas* reveal important information about sites of struggle, representation, and identity formation told and constructed by the subject herself. *Testimonio herederas* allow for this critical analysis because in addition to straightforward historical accounts, the subjects providing the testimonies demonstrate the collective struggle that they have inherited through familial and/or community ties. Additionally, in the *testimonios herederas* in this study, gender and genre play important roles. The subjects, all female, assert their agency by creating the *testimonio heredera* using hybrid methodologies that highlight the importance of non-traditional methods in constructing community and/or family histories. These *testimonios* challenge dominant narratives that were designed to displace Hispanos/Mexicanos generally, and Hispanas/Mexicanas specifically.

Sommer describes the usefulness of studying *testimonios* as a way to further understand what the examination of traditional autobiographies leaves out—the connection of the individual to the collective. She states, “By understating the difference, we may miss the potential in what I am calling the testimonials’ collective self: the possibility to get beyond the gap between the public and private spheres and beyond the often helpless solitude that has plagued Western women even more than men since the rise of capitalism” (1998, 110). Specific to this study, an analysis of the *testimonios herederas* of Hispanas/Mexicanas in the Southwest helps to uncover how this form of documentation allows for historical, cultural, and individual commentary, but also provides a self-constructed collective or representative methodology. In this sense, *testimonios herederas* allow for greater agency as the person giving the testimony is able to recount a history of her or his collective identity in relation to the land and sense of place. Smith and Watson expand upon this idea when detailing the work accomplished by *testimonios*, which they say, unfold “through the fashioning of an exemplary protagonist whose narrative bears witness to a collective suffering, politicized struggle, and communal survival” (2001, 71).

Testimonios herederas force the reader to look beyond the superficiality of the text, as the individual giving the testimony provides much deeper meaning within her or his narrative because she/he is not first delivering the testimony to an outside mediator, but rather, directly constructing her/his own *testimonio*. Sommers argues that these “testimonial ‘scribes’ set out to perform a corollary recuperation of others’ experience into published discourse” (1998, 117). The function of the “testimonial scribes” in this study is to create *testimonios herederas*, and to place the subject in a position of authority to narrate and document her own narrative. This process defies the historical pattern that typifies Hispano/Mexicano

testimonios. Literary Critic Genaro Padilla demonstrates the depth of redefining Hispano/Mexicano cultural production in his extensive recovery project of Mexican American autobiographical material. He says “Discovering, identifying, reading, and categorizing autobiographical narrative is a major undertaking, especially when such work has little and often no precedent” (1993, 5). Research like that performed by Padilla demonstrates the need to locate, examine, and reveal the stories of Hispanos/Mexicanos generally, and Hispanas/Mexicanas specifically. This study takes on that challenge and uncovers some of those stories by examining the *testimonios herederas* of four Hispanas/Mexicanas who were vested in documenting their experiences.

A case-in-point of a *testimonio heredera* is found in Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert’s *We Fed Them Cactus* [1954] (1994), a case I take up at length in Chapter 4. In *We Fed Them Cactus*, Cabeza de Baca highlights issues related to the land struggles faced by her family and other *Nuevomexicanos* (New Mexicans) who were similarly affected by the influx of settlers and land loss. A second important example appears some ten years later as New Mexico becomes home to Enriqueta Vasquez, an activist involved in the land grant movement of the 1960s and 70s. Lorena Oropeza and Dionne Espinoza (2006) have organized a collection of Vasquez’s writing, or *testimonios*, from *El Grito del Norte*, a community newspaper that featured Vasquez’s articles and columns as they appeared at the height of the Chicano Movement. Vasquez addresses not only issues about land, but as Oropeza and Espinoza point out, “issues of social justice, ethnic pride, environmental well-being, a skewed economy, poverty, and feminist issues” (ix).

Together, Cabeza de Baca Gilbert and Vasquez demonstrate that women were documenting their histories across decades. They documented their experiences in very

different ways, but each was attempting to make sense of her individual and collective (community-based) lives. These points are critical to the genre of *testimonio* because, as noted by Sommer, “the power of testimonial discourse derives from its collective use, which can temper or delay innovation. Similarly, the lack or paucity of foremothers gives the narrators a mandate to construct themselves, and us along with them, in ways that respond to particular historical conditions and not to existing models” (1998, 122). Smith and Watson support Sommer’s perspective on *testimonios* when they say that they [*testimonios*] “inscribe a collective ‘I’ that voices stories of repression and calls for resistance in ways that have influenced political struggle around the globe” (2001, 107). Both Cabeza de Baca Gilbert and Vasquez challenged traditional modes of historical documentation in their writing or discussion of issues related to land, while simultaneously challenging traditional gender roles. As they wrote, Cabeza de Baca Gilbert and Vasquez performed tasks unexpected for women in these periods, perhaps more so for Cabeza de Baca.

By combining *testimonios herederas*, identity formation, gender, and land struggles in the Southwest, I develop a critical “textual” analysis that centers upon a historically significant region, through the lens of Hispanas/Mexicanas who were documenting land-based struggles in unique ways. This study engages Sánchez’s description of multiple forms in *testimonios*, defining them as hybrid, non-traditional methodologies that include letters, novels, diaries, memoirs, *dichos*, and songs. Through this critical textual analysis, we can understand how varied forms of *testimonios herederas*, or texts, address issues related to land, including displacement, ownership, cultivation and *querencia*.⁹ By identifying, locating and recovering *testimonios herederas* produced by Hispanas/Mexicanas in the Southwest region, it is my hope that they demonstrate women’s prominent role, voice, and agency

concerning struggles over land and its role in the politics of identity formation. This study works to prove that Hispana/Mexicana *testimonios herederas* demonstrate shifts in representation and identification, as well as the understanding of and connection to the land. They reveal that Hispanos/Mexicanos were active agents in their struggles over land. The examination of Hispana/Mexicana cultural production demonstrates how, across time, identification and dis(identification) with the land is a main theme in the *testimonios herederas*, and positions women as powerful actors in land struggles.

Social Movements & Hispana/Mexicana Agency

One way that Hispanas/Mexicanas have been associated with the land is through their participation in historical social movements. Of significance to this project is a movement that occurred in Northern New Mexico—the land grant movement of the 1960s and 70s. An examination of the *testimonios* at this time provides a clear link to orality as a means of articulating notions of displacement, the meaning of land and *querencia*. For instance, in his study of the Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico courthouse raid, Federico A. Reade Jr. pays special attention to an oral narrative given by activist Valentina Valdez, the “first full-time volunteer for the Alianza...” (2005, 62). Valdez was reared to recognize the importance of the land to its people, and worked from a very young age into adulthood in the social activism surrounding the land grant movement in Northern New Mexico. Reade’s work produces textual material (i.e. Valdez’s *testimonio*) that can be used as a way to read identity through a mediated expression or utterance. The nontraditional modes of documenting history that are found in the *testimonios herederas* included in this study provide a way to understand how identity formation is tied to the land. The *testimonio heredera* demonstrates that a communal identity is formed, and that unconventional types of textual material such as

the *corrido*, stories, recipes, diary entries, etc., provide insight into the historical, social, and political climates at the time they are written or told. Through the *testimonios herederas*, we gain a deeper understanding of the social and cultural affects of land loss, gain, and attachment for both the communities and individuals experiencing the struggles.

Specifically, this project highlights the need to examine the register from which Hispanas/Mexicanas speak, as Genaro Padilla (1993) has done when considering language of accommodation in his book, *My History, Not Yours*. This project serves as an acknowledgement of the importance of Hispanas'/Mexicanas' writing and oral histories. Padilla reminds us about the detriment of historical and cultural erasure that has plagued Hispanos/Mexicanos for decades. He also discusses how struggles against social, political and other forces have been a significant barrier for the dissemination of various forms of Hispano/Mexicano life writing. My analysis of the *testimonios herederas* of Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce reveals how each woman pushed back against the forces mentioned by Padilla.

Uncovering Hispana/Mexicana Voices

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, is a Californian who experienced first-hand, the implications of being thrust into the confines of American rule and ways of life. She, however, had never been particularly shy when it came to expressing her thoughts and opinions. She was steadfast to critique what she thought were unjust and controversial laws imposed upon her people, but was very keen about defending her rights as a property owner. Ruiz de Burton was already exposed to the meaning of being both an insider and outsider, as she navigated the Mexican/US border between what became Baja and Alta, California, and more personally, as she traversed the nation through class lines from west to east through her

marriage to Captain Henry S. Burton. Hardly one to quiet her sentiments, Ruiz de Burton revealed her experiences by penning two novels—the first in 1872, *Who Would Have Thought It?*, and the second in 1885, *The Squatter and the Don*. What emerges through these novels are critical assessments of class, gender, race, and national identity as they relate to Mexicanos' shifting identities and positions of power.

Her correspondence, mainly housed at the Huntington Library, similarly reveals the social and political critic attempting to navigate her Mexicana identity against a society that placed Mexicans, and particularly female Mexicans on the lower rungs of the social and political hierarchies. In her work, Ruiz de Burton challenges rules of class, gender and race. She points to the constraints of what it means to be a Mexicana in the nineteenth century, particularly in a highly patriarchal society, while simultaneously including depictions of Mexicanas as powerful actors despite the odds stacked against them (i.e. Lola Medina in *Who Would Have Thought It?* and Doña Josefa in *The Squatter and the Don*). These women tend to mirror Ruiz de Burton herself, who demonstrates her strong will and perseverance most blatantly in her correspondence. Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita (2001) supply a thorough analysis of her correspondence as a whole in their collection *Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton*. The correspondence details her involvement with important political figures and the issues she faced with regard to her land. In addition to her novel *The Squatter and the Don* [1885] (1997), it is in her correspondence where Ruiz de Burton details the struggles she endured as a Mexicana as she attempted to lay claim to the land that would end up defining her life.

This study seeks to help remedy the issue of discontinuity that has historically prevented one generation of Hispanos/Mexicanos to learn about the concerns or

achievements of prior generations. This remains consistent in Chicano/a history by bringing together *testimonios herederas* written across centuries. Ruiz de Burton was writing about gender, identity, and land in the nineteenth century, similar to the women who would follow her in the twentieth century. My study attempts to bring Hispana/Mexicana writers from different eras—Jovita González, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca and Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce into conversation with Ruiz de Burton, as they similarly engaged in documenting the struggles that their families, friends and neighbors endured because of American laws and shifting regimes of power in the region. Bringing these very different women from dissimilar times into conversation with one another is complicated, but provides a venue from which to understand how land is and has been tied to Hispano/Mexicano identity intergenerationally. This combination also points to the agency of Hispanas/Mexicanas as they challenged societal norms of gender and race by engaging in documenting historical events, providing critiques of government, patriarchy, and culture.

Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca and Wilbur-Cruce demonstrate “the decolonial imaginary,” as Pérez describes it, as a “theoretical tool for uncovering the hidden voices of Chicanas that have been relegated to silences, to passivity, to that third space where agency is enacted through third space feminism” (1999, xvi). Although writing in different centuries, each of the women in this study confirms that issues centered upon land, gender and identity persisted over time. Through their *testimonios herederas* we also gain a deeper understanding of the complicated intersection of race, class and gender. As females writing and talking in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they work to create a new consciousness that challenges the negotiations of Hispana/Mexicana identity. Each utilizes hybrid methodologies to construct her version of the historical events occurring around her.

Specifically, this study focuses on how Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca and Wilbur-Cruce use hybrid methodologies such as ethnography, autobiography, *testimonio*, historiography, and literature to document the land struggles that were disrupting and redefining themselves and their communities. Their work positions Hispanos/Mexicanos in active positions working against dominant forces attempting to displace them. Finally, the women force a reconceptualization of elite narratives, as each one challenges the expectation that her class and/or social status would influence her to follow dominant narratives about land issues.

Similar to Ruiz de Burton, Cabeza de Baca was born into a landed family, although she experienced land issues in a very different way than her California counterpart. During Cabeza de Baca's lifetime, Hispanos/Mexicanos were engaged in a battle not only for land, but also for identity. New Mexico's status as a territory and new statehood (1912) with a strong Hispano/Mexicano political stronghold placed its people in compromising positions with the shifting of national governments. The people of New Mexico, like their neighbors the *Californios*, *Tejanos*, and Arizonians were caught in the conundrum of citizenship and assimilation versus maintaining a strong connection to Spanish/Mexican tradition, values and rules. This struggle surfaces in Cabeza de Baca's *testimonio heredera* as she points to how incoming Anglo Americans affected her family, and particularly, her father.

Ruiz de Burton was the first of the women in this study to experience what it meant to navigate borders, be they literal or metaphorical. Like Cabeza de Baca, Ruiz de Burton responded to the imposition of the American government, perhaps in a less nostalgic way. She saw the value of carving out what today we would call the "third space" that Pérez describes to stress the importance of her people, her gender and her agency. Ruiz de Burton

struggled between abhorring and embracing capitalism, modernity, and American rule. Perhaps because she was experiencing the impacts directly in the nineteenth century when a new way of life was fresh for Mexicans, the critiques that materialize in her work are more abrasive than those of González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce.

Jovita González experienced border life along the Texas/Mexico borderlands—an equally sought after space that felt the effects of American migration. Similar to Ruiz de Burton’s experience in California, and Cabeza de Baca’s experience in New Mexico, González detailed the cultural, economic, racial and political changes that were occurring in Texas. In addition, she shared the cultural and familial ties to the land, as her family was engaged in ranching in south Texas. González details the shifts from Mexican to American forms of government and social order as early as her Master’s thesis in 1930, in which she provides a “social history of the borderlands” (Cotera, 2008, vii). Through her work in constructing that history, González parallels the other Hispana/Mexicana women who define this study. She shares with Cabeza de Baca the commitment to exalting the importance of folklore in maintaining Hispano/Mexicano culture. Likewise, they acknowledge the significance of ranching culture, a feat that Wilbur-Cruce also takes on in describing her family’s ranching life in Arizona.

Probably the lesser known of the four Hispanas/Mexicanas in this study, Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce, brings to the discussion the experience of growing up along the Arizona/Mexico borderlands. The daughter of a half-Mexican *vaquero*, Wilbur-Cruce offers detailed descriptions of ranch life in Arivaca. Wilbur-Cruce’s life experiences, close relationship with her father, and writing style can be likened to that of Cabeza de Baca, but with a twist. Known as a gun-toting Mexicana committed to protecting her land and her

horses, Wilbur-Cruce may have been seen as one of the “uncouth” female neighbors that Cabeza de Baca writes about in *We Fed Them Cactus*. Because of her deep connection to the land and her even stronger personality exhibited through her open critiques of land and government, Wilbur-Cruce at times reflects similar traits as Ruiz de Burton, in terms of her dedication to the resolution of land issues.

All four women bring varying perspectives to the discussion about gender, land, and identity formation that comprises this study. Their *testimonios herederas* cross historical contexts to reveal their shared or inherited history of struggle and strategies of resistance. Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca and Wilbur-Cruce employ hybrid methodological strategies to re-imagine traditional conceptions of identity, gender, history, and cultures as these areas are associated with land-related struggles in the Southwest. Some are recognized as “experts” in their communities, while others are acknowledged simply as Hispana/Mexicana figures who documented family and community life. This study distinguishes them as important actors who were committed to cultural and political movements in various ways and on various scales. Each was concerned with changing public perceptions of Mexicans in the Southwest as a region, in addition to challenging the constraints that have typically been placed upon gender in a patriarchal-based society.

Despite having lived in a different century, the historical context within which Ruiz de Burton writes sets the stage, so to speak, for the women who would follow her. Comparing the four Hispanas/Mexicanas in this study seems necessary as we conceptualize the importance of land to the identity formation of Hispanas/Mexicanas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through this study, I explore the similarities between each of their experiences and point to the divergent strategies used in their modes of recounting those

experiences. Their knowledge aids in helping contemporary scholars understand the ways in which meaning is made and identities are formed. Examining the *testimonios herederas* of these important Hispanas/Mexicanas helps also to demonstrate the agency that each possessed, despite attempts by society at large to silence women, and particularly women of color during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their *testimonios herederas* allow contemporary Chicana/Hispana/Mexicana scholars to understand and appreciate how women such as Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca and Wilbur-Cruce used the interstitial space that Pérez describes, to her advantage (1999, 5-7; 59). The women in this study invoke that third space to document their versions of history, allowing us to “recogniz[e] what is left out” (Perez, 1999, 55) of the prescribed histories we are subjected to in a patriarchal society.

Similar to the way in which María Eugenia Cotera comparatively analyzes Jovita González, Ella Deloria, and Zora Neale Hurston, identifying that they

need not have thought about culture, history, identity, and gender in exactly the same way; what is important, and ultimately more interesting, is that they pondered the questions of identity, history, and culture through the lens of their particular (yet interconnected) experiences as gendered and racialized subjects whose status, class, and cultural positioning constituted a unique epistemic vantage point on the mechanics of social life. (2008, 10)

I examine how Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca and Wilbur-Cruce pondered similar questions, but focus on how land plays an integral role in how they responded to my inquiry through their work. By examining the hybrid methods employed by the Hispanas/Mexicanas in this study, I am able to locate the gaps where each inserts her social, individual and community commentary. This study highlights the use of what would traditionally be considered “nonacademic” texts to demonstrate how meaning is made and history is documented by these women. It is through works such as the ones that constitute

this study that contemporary Chicana/Hispana/Mexicana scholars base their own areas of interest and model their hybrid methodologies to emulate the work that preceded theirs. Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce employed multidisciplinary approaches in their nineteenth and twentieth century work prior to its popularity and more common use today.

The works of Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce can be conceptualized in much the same way that Cotera describes the texts of Ella Deloria, Jovita González, and Zora Neale Hurston in her study, *Native Speakers* (2008). Cotera says, “Their multidisciplinary texts embody this ‘in-between’ status and reveal the decolonizing mechanics of a feminist consciousness located at the crossroads” (17). Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce are unapologetic for their stance, and their works reveal historical differences and similarities across the region, time, communities, and even between and amongst Hispanas/Mexicanas.

A study such as this one works to reconceptualize mainstream analyses and standardized versions of Southwestern history. My intention is not to homogenize the experiences of the Hispanas/Mexicanas selected for this study. It is, however, to point to each of the women’s *testimonios* as she brings her experience and knowledge to participate in the construction of the decolonial imaginary, as Pérez suggests, in an effort to “retool and remake subjectivities neglected and ignored” (1999, 127). Part of that Southwestern history that prompted each of the women in this study is described next.

Historical Background

Each century in the history of what is now considered the southwestern United States holds a wealth of information about the peoples of the time and contributes to our knowledge

of incredible stories that define Hispanos/Mexicanos. This study specifically focuses on the Southwest as a region that is closely linked to the land as it relates to the formation of identities of its people. Mexican-Americans in the Southwest have historically experienced struggle, particularly after 1848 and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, when native Californios, Nuevo Mexicanos, Tejanos and others were thrust into American citizenship without many of the benefits afforded other citizens. For instance, as Rosenbaum points out, "...the articles of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo providing for full citizenship and property rights did not result in economic opportunity or social integration for *mexicanos*" (1998, 7).

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, then, did not actually provide Mexicanos with complete protection even though on paper it appeared that they were indeed full citizens. In her discussion of Mexicans in New Mexico, Professor of Law, Laura E. Gómez asserts that the citizenship status given to Mexicans was "legally vague" and further, "New Mexico's status as federal territory meant that its residents held a hollow federal citizenship" (2007, 43-44). The effects of this hollow federal citizenship were detrimental to Mexicanos because that status placed them in a liminal position. Their status as citizens was *de jure*, not *de facto*. Social Anthropologist Martha Menchaca states that "Almost immediately, the United States abandoned its federal responsibilities to its new citizens. Within a year of the treaty, the U.S. Congress gave the legislators of the ceded territories and states the right to determine Mexicans' citizenship status" (2001, 217). This action positioned legislators with vast amounts of power.

Rosenbaum says that Mexicans were then viewed as coming "with the land," and further, that "Anglo Americans took an ambivalent view toward the territorially acquired

citizens, particularly since they came through war” (1998, 5). Across the Southwest, and nationally, Mexicans who were not considered racially “White,” found their rights to be disregarded. This view is similar to how Gómez details the result of Mexicanos’ liminal position in questions of citizenship status. She says

Although Congress allowed Mexican men to enfranchise themselves as ‘white’ rights-holders, it would not yield to the notion that Mexicans were true Americans, entitled to state citizenship alongside federal citizenship. Instead, Mexican Americans entered the nation as second-class citizens very much identified as racially inferior to white Euro-Americans. (2007, 45)

The lack of complete protection for Mexicans’ rights was most evident in the way in which Mexican land and legal property ownership was considered. Mexicanos were at the center of a battle for their land—land that was highly contested as American exceptionalism and the ideological construct of Manifest Destiny promoted the idea of westward expansion and takeover of “unsettled, unappropriated, unsocialized” people and lands (María E. Montoya, 2002, 5). What we do know is that these lands were not undiscovered, unclaimed or virgin lands, but rather, were utilized parcels granted by the Spanish and/or Mexican governments to the people, who relied on the land for their livelihoods.

As Mexicans became Mexican Americans, the lives that they knew shifted swiftly and in major ways. American Government took over Mexican Government, and with that change came identity and land loss. Historian John R. Chávez argues that despite the fact that “Mexicans felt themselves increasingly alienated from the southwest, they continued to see it as their homeland” (1984, 43). This meant that Mexican Americans were forced to navigate between two worlds—the world they formerly knew as Mexican citizens and land-based people, and the new American world that sought to extinguish Mexican rule, dominate the people through colonization, and pilfer the lands comprising the Southwest. Rosenbaum

states “The history of *mexicano-americano* coexistence in the southwestern United States is a history of the confrontation between cultures” (1998, 7). Race became a main point of contention, and the United States government worked to deconstruct the political power that Mexicans held prior to westward expansion. Mexicans were seen as a mongrel race that could not manage themselves, which in turn meant that surely they could also not manage their own land. Gómez confirms that “Mexicans, like blacks, were stereotyped as essentially “child-like” a characterization that implied they were unfit for self-government and for citizenship” (2007, 61). Because of this positionality as second-class citizens, Mexican Americans were subject to poor treatment of their civil and property rights. John Nieto Phillips maintains that “[l]egal ‘equality’ for Nuevomexicanos under federal rule was accompanied by appropriation of their lands and socioeconomic displacement” (2004, 47). Mexicanos experienced displacement on many levels, particularly when it came to the issue of land.

The legitimacy of land titles being granted by the Mexican and/or Spanish governments was questioned as incoming settlers emerged in the region and the government shifted from a Mexican to an American form of rule. Mexican Americans across the Southwest experienced such struggle, and as Phillip B. Gonzales states, those with claims to land via land grants, “grieve[d] that the United States despoiled territory from ancestors who belonged to another sovereign in violation of a nineteenth-century treaty” (2003, 294). Changes were made to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that would affect Mexicanos significantly. Through the removal of Article X of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexican Americans essentially lost their ability to claim the lands they had cultivated and lived upon for many years prior.¹⁰ David J. Weber affirms that “Article X, which had

validated all Mexican land grants in the Southwest, was stricken from the treaty because some senators feared that old Mexican grants might take precedence over the later holdings of American settlers” (1996, 163). To quell any sort of resistance from Mexico, a protocol was added to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to describe the changes made.¹¹ What was seen as cultural capital to newcomers was the traditional livelihood to those who resided on the land when westward expansion was most at its prime.

The loss of land and identity was felt cross-regionally as those living in what is now New Mexico, Texas, Arizona and California experienced the stronghold that the United States placed upon the territories it planned on making states. Land had been granted to Hispanos/Mexicanos in California, New Mexico, Texas and Arizona by their former government, but the American political system saw land and former Mexican citizens as two things that required major change in order for a successful American-based system of government and rule. Rosenbaum states “The two peoples [Anglos and Mexicans] differed in their views about the size of the communities to which they belonged, in their perceptions of the boundaries of the world in which it was possible and desirable to act. Put another way, the two differed in the degree to which nationalism provided a socially established structure of meaning” (1998, 8).

For centuries across the region, Hispano and Mexicano families had ruled themselves and established political systems that worked to help them maintain their communities and to use their land as they saw fit. As a land-based people, Hispanos/Mexicanos used the land for ranching and farming to sustain their families, and saw it as more than just landscape—it was a part of them. Loss of political control and land was detrimental to Hispanos/Mexicanos across the Southwest. For instance, in their study of California, Rosaura Sánchez and

Beatrice Pita remind us that “It bears recalling that in the Southwest, the dispossession of *californio* landowners would for the most part, come after military aggression, and with their loss of political and economic power. New regimes of power constituted, transformed, and enforced after the war created differential circumstances and structured both possibility as well as inequity in the conquered territory” (2001, xiii). This dispossession was occurring not only in California, but throughout the Southwest, in the neighboring territories of New Mexico, Arizona and Texas.

The Mexican government recognized the impact of the deletion of Article X of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. So, under the guise of remedying the issue the United States government added the Protocol of Querétaro.¹² The protocol explained changes made to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Weber, 1996, 163). Later, through a second treaty,¹³ the United States purchased additional acreage of Mexican land to add to its already vast landholdings. Legal scholar Malcolm Ebricht argues that “the United States looked at the treaty [the Gadsen Purchase] as an enormous real estate deal; it expected to get clear title to most of the land it was paying for regardless of the rights of Mexicans” (1994, 30). That this kind of devious deal was occurring on such a large scale across an entire region is significant to land grant history. It demonstrates the value, or lack thereof, that the United States government placed on Hispano/Mexicano land owners. Rosenbaum declares that “To nineteenth century nativist eyes, *mexicanos* clearly embodied the racial and papist threats, and as time went on they were seen as a political threat as well” (1998, 14). Mexicanos were politically threatening because land ownership equated with power. Anglo Americans sought that land and power and used any means to gain both.

In California, American officials spared no effort attempting to settle claims quickly in an effort to take advantage of the gold rush and the influx of settlers entering the area. Because of its potential wealth, California's statehood came earlier than its neighboring territories, although as will be demonstrated in this study, *Californios* were not immune to land claim issues (See Chapter 2). In this way, California was a test run for land claims. When the California Board of Land Commissioners was established, this body asserted that the burden of proof of ownership be placed upon the Mexican land owners. These landowners were already being subjected to unjust laws and deceptive attempts to swindle them out of their property ownership through such acts as the deletion of treaty articles.¹⁴

In Texas, which joined the Union in 1845, *Tejanos* had endured similar land struggles under American rule. Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen write that the original descendents of Mexican Texas had endured struggle over a thirty-year period and "tried as best as they could to hold on to their lands, money, and status. It was during that period of time that change, often rapid change, came to mark the region" (2003, 3). In this sense, the events occurring in Texas at this time mirrored those occurring in New Mexico, Arizona, and California, which added to Texas' already prevalent land struggles as it became a Republic. In addition to loss of land, questions of citizenship became extremely important, and in the blink of an eye, people's identities shifted as Mexicans throughout the Southwest became "Americans." Gómez reminds us that citizenship status was questionable, and that unclear wording or definitions created an ambiguous state of citizenship for Mexicanos (2007, 42-43). Menchaca similarly notes that the U.S. Congress made the decisions about how to interpret citizenship status for people of

color throughout the nation (2001, 275-277). These actions resulted in unfavorable consequences for Mexicans.

It should come as no surprise that with a new citizenship status, language barriers, and new laws, Hispanos/Mexicanos were untrusting of the newly appointed officials and rules. The changes forced Hispanos/Mexicanos to learn what this would mean for their future as “American citizens.” To top off the already questionable means of acquiring the territories comprising the Southwest, once United States control reigned supreme, the actions that followed the acquisition placed Hispanos/Mexicanos in vulnerable positions with regard to their now highly sought after land. With the creation of the Office of the Surveyor General in 1854, and later, the Court of Private Land Claims in 1891, the United States government essentially sealed the fate of the Hispanos/Mexicanos who had previously held control of their own land, including its boundaries, use, and importance. Ebright affirms that the difference between Mexican and American property law was great and “Hispanos did not understand or have any trust in the American system of land ownership” because “[t]heir use of the land was more important in establishing their ownership than were any documents” (1994, 38). Hispanos/Mexicanos saw their land as their livelihood, not as capital investment. Americans new to the area understood land in a very different way.

According to American law, the burden of proof of ownership shifted to the Hispanos/Mexicanos having to demonstrate their claims to the land that had been in their families for centuries and that had been used by community members as common land. Professor David Correia states “Despite treaty guarantees and decades of adjudication, millions of acres in scores in common-property Spanish and Mexican land grants lingered in legal limbo” (2010, 54). The United States did not understand the importance of the common

lands to Hispanos/Mexicanos. “Anglo Americans,” Rosenbaum says, “brought their version of the English common law to the conquered territory. *Mexicanos*, particularly *los pobres*, accustomed to the more personalized and traditional procedures of the *alcaldes*, found Anglo law confusing” (1998, 16). Because of this change, numerous Hispanos/Mexicanos lost their land at alarming rates. Many were afraid to turn over their land title documents to the Surveyor General out of fear that they would not be returned or would be lost (Ebright, 1994, 38). Individuals who did turn in their documents had their acreage assessed by the Surveyor’s staff, and the return was much less than that originally granted by the Spanish and/or Mexican governments. Ebright suggests that the skewed acreage figures may have been due to the fact that “claims were not surveyed until after they were confirmed, ”which meant that “neither the surveyor general nor Congress had any idea how much land was being confirmed” (39).

The establishment of the Surveyor General and the Court of Private Land Claims was supposed to aid in a more expeditious process of adjudicating the lands granted, but in reality, it not only complicated the procedure, but it also worked against the Hispano/Mexicano landowners by eradicating the acreage that had been held in their families for centuries. The backward procedures of the Surveyor General and the Court of Private Land Claims changed the idea of Spanish and Mexican land grants substantially. Ebright notes that in New Mexico in particular, rather than protect the grants of Hispanos/Mexicanos as they should have, “the courts and congress were excessively lenient when they were deciding on the fate of huge private land grants like the Maxwell, that were claimed by a few speculators, but were excessively strict when adjudicating community grants like San Miguel

del Bado, claimed by hundreds of families scattered throughout the grant in small villages” (40). In this way, much of the land originally granted to Hispanos/Mexicanos was lost.

Deena González points out that “90 percent of resident Spanish-Mexicans [as a whole] lost their lands to colonizers,” (1999, 10) and many women and men in the region lost land at alarming rates to the United States Government. What were considered communal lands central to the identities of Hispanos/Mexicanos became public lands as identified by Government agencies. “In this way,” Laura E. Gómez points out, “millions of acres of land in New Mexico [and elsewhere in the southwest] were transferred from collective ownership by Mexican Americans to the federal government, which could do any number of things with the property.”¹⁵

In his study of the Las Vegas land grant common lands, Correia notes that the United States’ government refused to recognize the common lands in the territory of New Mexico, despite the treaty negotiations (2010, 54). Common lands were central to Hispano/Mexicano communities because they provided an area for use of natural resources. The loss of the use of common lands is significant to Hispano/Mexicano history in the Southwest and plays a major role in how identities are formed in the region. In his study of forest politics in Northern New Mexico, Jake Kosek (2006) supports Gómez’s claims about the federal government’s gatekeeping role with regard to land ownership and use. Speaking specifically about New Mexico and the Forest Service, though the case is similar elsewhere in the Southwest, Kosek says “The Forest Service lays claim to 60 percent of the land in the region; it has been the land’s primary caretaker and arbiter and enforcer of access to the water, forest, grass, and resources that are bound up with that land” (66). He goes on to say “the Forest Service is still primarily the product of technocrats, charismatic leaders, and politicians, who

exist far from the lived daily practices” (66) not only of Forest Service personnel, but also the residents who use the resources. To put it simply, what the study reveals is the continued control that the government holds over those who live off of the land.

Kosek’s work is important in that he strives to articulate that “these histories are important not as artifacts of the past...but for the possibilities they afford for the future” (34). The land is central to our identity, and that is confirmed clearly in the *testimonios herederas* included in this study.¹⁶ The importance of the land is also demonstrated in the current struggles for land. Land loss has historically been and continues to be detrimental to Hispanos/Mexicanos. The land grant movement of the 1960s led by Reies López Tijerina is probably the most widely recognized social and political movement that brought national attention to the land grant struggle. Tijerina’s story is not the focus of this study, but his connection to the New Mexico land grant struggle cannot go unnoted. His efforts brought nationwide acknowledgement of the unjust land issues that were occurring in New Mexico, such as the United States government deliberately taking land from land grant heirs, and deeming it National Forest land and/or unusable for the people who had lived off of and worked the land for centuries prior. Although she writes specifically about New Mexico, Gómez’s assessment of the results of land loss can also be linked to other Southwestern states including California, Texas, and Arizona. Gómez says land loss meant that

The tens of thousands of Mexican Americans in New Mexico who lost their communally owned lands at this time and in this manner reacted in two ways. The loss of these lands required many of them who had been subsistence farmers and ranchers, living close to the land, to become wage laborers who often had to migrate out of the region seasonally to earn a living. Yet many Mexican Americans who lost their communal lands did not simply sit idly by but instead participated in a variety of political mobilizations closely linked to their status as a colonized, racially subordinated group. (2007, 130)

This study seeks to confirm Gómez's point through the *testimonios* that are comparatively analyzed in the subsequent chapters. Land loss disrupted life for people whose lives centered upon the land.

In addition to the United States government's role in the unjust adjudication process, lawyers, many of whom held important legal status for American interests in mining, also played a role in appropriating Hispano/Mexicano land. Ebright reveals that the group known as the Santa Fe Ring, consisting of "judges, politicians, businessmen, and a sympathetic press" were involved in land speculation and "also dealt in ranching, mining, and railroad interests" (1994, 43). Land across the Southwest was deemed prime for expanding the capital-driven endeavors that guided American mentality at this time. Land issues stemming from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo vexed Mexicanos in the Southwest for many decades and their effects continue to be felt today. Inappropriate government maneuvers, devious lawyers and groups such as the Santa Fe Ring, and laws of convenience are just some of the numerous pieces that play an integral role in the puzzle that tells the story of the land issues in the Southwest.

Land and Female Agency

One piece of major importance that is especially worthy of mention in this study is the role that Hispanas/Mexicanas in the Southwest played in property ownership prior to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and American takeover. Under Spanish, and later Mexican law, women were able to acquire and own property in areas that had once been a part of Spain and Mexico. This legal provision is a major difference between Spanish/Mexican and American laws. Prior to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, it was not uncommon for Hispanas/Mexicanas to be property owners in California, Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico,

as will be demonstrated by the cases below and this dissertation as a whole. The history of the Southwest is unique in that, unlike many other states and territories, property was not solely inherited by males, but females were also an important part of the process of land inheritance and ownership. The fact that women were able to inherit and own property indicates that the Southwest was progressive in terms of its system of government and civil laws, in comparison to other areas at this time. This difference highlights the divergence between Spanish and Anglo-Saxon colonization.

In her study of women and property in Colonial America, Deborah A. Rosen states that “because [Spanish] women inherited property from parents and had full ownership rights to community property of their marriages after their husbands died, they had property to sell during and after their marriages, they had property to litigate over, and they had property to bequeath to others when they died” (2003, 360). This is significant also, in terms of women’s rights during this period, but also points to the delicacy with which Hispanas/Mexicanas had to consider their property when they married.

The fact that those women’s voices are scarce in the histories detailing this period is not surprising, but it is important that we recognize that women were not completely forgotten in matters of property ownership and claims to land. It should also come as no surprise that Hispanas/Mexicanas were sought after by Anglo American newcomers as brides or otherwise wished to enjoin with them on land claims because of their ability to claim land. Often, Hispana/Mexicana women were land rich, but economically poor, which encouraged such marriages. In her study of the racial and ethnic makeup of property owners in Santa Fe in 1880, Linda Tigges analyzes census data and reminds us that “because 35% of the women with non-Hispanic husbands bought, inherited, or were given property in their own name, it

appears that non-Hispanic men sometimes took advantage of their opportunities to marry Hispanic women with property or with inheritance rights to property” (1993, 168).¹⁷ This information highlights the importance of the role of women in constructing identity and power during a historically significant period. The historical documentation indicating that women in the Southwest were heirs and property owners thus helps acknowledge Hispanas/Mexicanas as powerful actors in the principal history of the Southwest.

There are many cases exemplifying how Hispanas/Mexicanas played an important role in land ownership and its results. In their extensive study of some of the exceptional land-owning families of the Lower Rio Grande Valley along the Texas/Mexico border in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen and Margaret H. McAllen underscore the significance of that role when they state, “It is within this system of applying for grants that the strength of a woman’s position in the region is seen. Women, who enjoyed equal property rights in Spanish colonial society, found themselves just as adept in controlling the dispensation of these major land grants as the men” (2003, 3). They go on to detail the story of the Santa Anita grant in which matriarch Doña Rosa María Hinojosa de Ballí played a considerable role in the process of land granted within the Santa Anita boundaries. Hinojosa de Ballí exemplifies a representative exertion of agency that was common for Hispanas/Mexicanas at this time.

At other times, however, Anglo-American men used deceptive means to acquire property owned by Hispanas/Mexicanas. Deena J. González presents a number of cases such as this in her book, *Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880*. For instance, González highlights the story of “the widow Chaves,” who González argues was “played upon because she owned property and because the new men with whom

she dealt carried prejudices to Santa Fe regarding women's intelligence or wherewithal" (1999, 79). Chaves demonstrates the power and agency held by Hispanas/Mexicanas in the region. As part of a landed family, Chaves, "had inherited land and livestock, and had managed to preserve and improve her estate" (González, 1999, 79). As a powerful actor with regard to property ownership, Chaves was almost the victim of an unscrupulous lawyer and priest. Chaves was in ill health, and invoked the help of a law clerk, Edward Dunn, to help her draw up her will because she could neither read nor write in English. Dunn agreed, but, believing that the widow would not show the will to anyone else, he manipulated the will to indicate that Chaves was leaving a substantial amount of money to the church, the poor, and of course, Dunn himself for his legal services. Luckily, Chaves showed the will to her son, who had been travelling during the time the will was drawn, and he discovered that Dunn and the local priest were colluding to steal Chaves' money, and consequently, his inheritance (González, 1999, 79-83).

Through Chaves' experience, González reminds us that Hispanas/Mexicanas were not helpless or passive. Unfortunately, Chaves' story is similar to other Hispanas'/Mexicanas' stories in the region. Already subject to a highly patriarchal society, Hispanas/Mexicanas who were also heirs to land at this time had to be especially careful. As González reminds us, "They [Euro-American men] manipulated their stories about women, popularizing one type over another, to achieve a similar end: to contain the local population, to quell resistance toward Euro-Americans and discussions of resistance, and to secure the lands and properties of the colonized for themselves" (81). Scenarios such as these placed women in especially compromising positions, and from these stories we gain insight into the important roles that women played with regard to land ownership and their "wealth" to Anglo-American men. In

the *testimonios herederas* that are examined in this study, these insights include views about land, race, class and gender, topics that are seldom addressed in public forums by women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

At times, it was through ties to Hispanas/Mexicanas that Anglo-American men gained access to considerable amounts of land in the Southwest. A case-in-point comes from María E. Montoya's discussion of the well-known Maxwell land grant case. Montoya points out that Lucien B. Maxwell, owner of a substantial amount of land in New Mexico, acquired his land grant by "marrying María de la Luz Beaubien, who was the daughter of the wealthy and prominent Carlos Beaubien, one of the original owners of the Beaubien/Miranda Land Grant" (2002, 48).¹⁸ This is an indication that women were an integral component of land grant history as Hispano/Mexicano landowners across what is now the Southwest were forced to demonstrate ownership of the land they inhabited and cultivated for many generations prior. McAllen Amberson, J.A. McAllen and M.H. McAllen provide another pointed example through their description of María Salomé Ballí, "a young woman who had already begun to acquire parcels of land in the Santa Anita grant from her Dominguez cousins," and married John Young, "a Scotsman who arrived in Matamoros" (2003, 4). Ballí, like her counterpart in California, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton (discussed in Chapter 2), attempted to purchase pieces of the grant in an effort to become the sole owner of the Santa Anita grant. Although Ballí's Anglo-American husbands played a role in her successful business endeavors, it is Salomé Ballí herself who had the power to acquire the land that afforded her family the ability to become successful merchants. Hispana/Mexicana power and agency in the early to mid-nineteenth century was not uncommon, though it cannot be

denied that Hispanas/Mexicanas were subjected from one patriarchal-based system to another.

In her article about Mexican American women in San Antonio in the years 1830-1860, Jane Dysart notes the significance of the vast amount of Anglo-Hispana/Mexicana unions in a short, 30-year period during the Republic period in Texas. Out of 88 Anglo-Hispana/Mexicana marriages from 1837-1860, almost half “involved women from high status families” (1976, 369-370). Marriages between Mexican men and Anglo women were rare— “[o]nly five unions can be verified in the records between 1830 and 1860” (370). This is not necessarily surprising. Dysart states that “because Mexican *ricos* more than likely regarded retention of political influence an economic necessity,” many Mexicanas were allowed to marry Anglos (370). The power struggle worked both ways, though. Anglo American men sought out Hispanas/Mexicanas in an effort to secure access to vast amounts of land. Dysart tells of James Trueheart:

Through his marriage to Margarita de la Garza, James Trueheart, a San Antonio politician, acquired a large tract of valuable land, formerly part of Mission Espada. There he lived in the style of a *patrón* with a number of peon families who maintained his farming operations. Several other Anglo men like Trueheart advanced their own economic position considerably by marrying the daughters of land-rich Tejanos. (371)

Hispanas/Mexicanas were equal to their brothers in that they, too, could inherit property. This positioned them as highly sought-after women, and many Anglo men would go to great lengths to latch on to woman of Hispana/Mexicana descent. Dysart lists the examples of James Bowie, who married Ursula Veremendi, the “daughter of the liberal Mexican governor of Texas,” to gain political power, the daughters Rodríguez, “whose family was counted among the aristocracy” and were also “land-rich”, and the Seguíns and Navarros who each

owned in excess of twenty thousand acres and town lots and married Anglo men (371). These unions are specific to the time and region, but specifically point to the amount of power that came along with marrying a Hispana/Mexicana from a landed family.

In his study of the construction of national identity for New Mexicans and Texans in the early to mid-nineteenth century, prior to American takeover in these areas, Andrés Reséndez notes that the Catholic church acted as a form of gatekeeper, but that did not stop Anglo men from seeking out Mexican women to marry. Reséndez says marriages between Anglo men and Mexicanas “enabled them [Anglo males] onerous legislation that specifically targeted foreigners, increase their opportunities to acquire land and become naturalized, and access ready-made networks adopted in their adopted country” (2005, 144). During the Mexican Period, the increased incidence of intermarriage became more common and was based on the supposed mutual benefits afforded to both the Anglo male and the Mexicana’s family. Reséndez suggests that intermarriage was “the easiest and most convenient way to legitimize their [Anglo males’] economic activities and consolidate their social standing” (129). While these unions may have been beneficial for trade purposes, later cases demonstrate the dangers as well. Once land in what is now considered the Southwestern United States was conceptualized as a commodity, these types of unions were a detriment to Mexican families and Hispana/Mexicana identity.

Despite the fraudulent nature of the case, an example from nineteenth century Arizona demonstrates the importance of establishing ties to Hispana/Mexican identity and land is the Peralta-Reavis Grant. Two entire reels of microfiche are dedicated to this extensive court case, which is included in the Court of Private Land Claims section of the Spanish Archives located at the New Mexico State Records and Archives Center in Santa Fe,

New Mexico. The case was brought to the Court by James Addison Reavis, who, at the time, was a newspaperman for the San Francisco *Examiner* (Cookridge, 1967). Reavis falsified documents and manipulated his wife's identity in order to claim heirship to a massive land grant that extended from New Mexico to Arizona. What is particularly interesting about this case is that it demonstrates the extent to which Reavis went to claim ties to his wife's "Spanish identity" and matrilineal lineage to the Peralta-Reavis Grant. Not only did Reavis create false documents and photographs, but he also invented an elaborate story that he convinced Doña Carmelita Sofía Loreta Macaela de Maso y de Peralta to corroborate. Essentially, Doña Carmelita believed herself to be an heir to the Peralta-Reavis Grant, even after the claim was found to be fraudulent.¹⁹ This case is essential for consideration because it reveals the importance of Mexican/Spanish women to land-related issues, establishes that ties to matrilineal lineage were vital to land claims, and demonstrates the extent to which Anglo-Americans went to declare ties to land.²⁰

What makes these stories unique is that they all center upon women (Ballí, Chaves, Beaubien, de la Garza, de Mas y de Peralta). In these examples the women are not writing their own accounts. However, they still demonstrate the agency that Hispanas/Mexicanas had during the nineteenth century, and served as a prompt for this dissertation. The *testimonios herederas* that comprise this study were written by the women with the lived experiences. Their work provides insight into the struggles faced, but more importantly, they reveal the actions taken by Hispanos/Mexicanos in their efforts to push back against the dominant forces that eventually displaced them. Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce base their *testimonios herederas* on the history described above. Through their writing, it becomes evident how this history impacted them, their families, and their

communities. Their *testimonios herederas* go beyond retelling the history, and provide counter narratives that force us to rethink the importance of their work as simple literary and folk tales.

Chapter 2:

Californio Land Struggles and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton

“Si me faltasen las fuerzas... entonces le suplico de antemano no me juzgue con severidad. Acuérdesese que soy mujer... y Mexicana... con el alma en una jaula de fierro, pues así nos encierra ‘*la sociedad*’ luego que nacemos, como los chinos los pies de sus mujeres.”

- María Amparo Ruiz de Burton

Like many Mexicans in the southwestern region of what is now the United States, *Californios* experienced struggle over citizenship, identity and land. California is unique in that it was divided into two territories: Alta or Upper California and Baja or Lower California. A large number of land grants in Baja were issued to individuals who intended to farm or ranch. In this sense, *Californios* were similar to their counterparts in nearby Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, as they utilized the land for subsistence.²¹ *Californios* were also subjected to the same complex racial and social climate that the large majority of Mexicans faced in the nineteenth century. To Mexicans in the Southwest, westward expansion meant not only a loss of language, land, and culture, but it also advanced the idea of placing Mexicans into a specific racial category in an effort for Anglos to gain political power. This, in the predominantly Mexican-controlled territories comprised of what would become the western states. Mexicans were designated as “white” in order to further isolate Indians and blacks in the racial hierarchy, and to provide a false sense of Mexican equality with Anglos toward political control in the region.

While the efforts to provide a false sense of assimilation to Mexicans was common throughout the Southwest, what made California distinctive was the Gold Rush that drew immigrants and those seeking capital wealth to stake a claim in the area. Land was important to the proponents of Manifest Destiny, and land rich in mineral resources such as gold were

even more sought after. The population in California expanded rapidly, and this change affected Mexicans in a number of ways. First, as John R. Chávez notes, “by 1850 Anglo-Americans outnumbered the Spanish-speaking three to one,” (1984, 44) signaling that the Mexican majority that once reigned in California was most likely coming to an end. Chavez suggests that the *Californios* “felt threatened” and “like foreigners” (44-45) by the influx of newcomers, and rightfully so. Not only did the influx signify significant changes to the political system already in place, but it also posed a threat to *Californio* land owners.

After the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, *Californios*, like many in neighboring territories, were forced to prove ownership of their land.²² Land grant adjudication was a central focus of the United States Supreme Court, and rather than protecting Mexican landowners, the Court and the Treaty placed Mexicans in a precarious position with regard to their land claims. Malcolm Ebright states, “Pressure on Congress to deal with the land title problem came first from California because of the discovery of gold there and its early admission as a state into the United States” (1994, 32-34).²³

Increased population prompted the value of property to rise, which in turn created a stronger demand for land. Chávez suggests that, “Anglo squatters, believing in a ‘right to conquest,’ had challenged the validity of Spanish and Mexican land grants” (1984, 49). *Californios* then, lost much of their land because of the combination of new “American” laws, lawyers taking land as payment, and the squatters who refused to leave the land they believed either to be vacant or theirs for the taking. Additionally, because of the high cost of legal fees, land was used as collateral to secure attorney’s services in land grant claim cases.²⁴ This increased the amount of land lost in California (and throughout the Southwest), as the socioeconomic status of *Californios* and other Mexicans in the Southwest was located

on the lower levels of the economic scale. Despite the fact that, as Ebricht argues, “[T]he record of land grant adjudication in California was better” (1994, 37) than its neighboring territories, *Californios* felt the onus that the courts placed upon them in establishing and settling their land claims.

It is this land-based struggle that prompted *California* María Amparo Ruiz de Burton to document, write and talk about the issues surrounding land claims in the nineteenth century and to critique the implications of Manifest Destiny on *Californios*. Prompted by her personal land claims and ties to her *Californio* identity, Ruiz de Burton recognized the necessity to document the land-related struggles occurring in California and created her *testimonio heredera*. This historical documentation would have strong implications for the representation of *Californios*’ and specifically Spanish-Mexican women’s identity for centuries to come.

In her *testimonio heredera*, Ruiz de Burton addresses her own struggles with regard to land, gender, class, and race, and also comments on the struggles that *Californios* as a whole experienced because of U.S. takeover. Her work demonstrates that despite being a member of an elite class, she was subject still to displacement. However, Ruiz de Burton asserts her agency throughout her novels and correspondence—a unique stand for Mexican women at this time. As a Mexican American female telling the stories of her own land issues, as well as those of her close friend Mariano Vallejo via her “fictional” novels, Ruiz de Burton employs what feminist theorist Emma Pérez (1999) would today call the use of a “third space” in order to decolonize her experiences as a landed *California*.²⁵

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton (July 3, 1832 – August 12, 1895)

An extraordinary woman with drive and determination, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton (MARB) primarily stands out as the first female Mexican American author to pen a novel in English. She was a woman born in a century ripe with political strife and disputes. Highly controversial issues such as borders, citizenship, and power may have been the catalysts for Ruiz de Burton's character. She revealed a strong personality, a woman with a knack for knowing how to get what she wanted, even if it required a hint of manipulation, appeals to her politically significant acquaintances, or her own persistence. Ruiz de Burton is a significant figure in the fields of Mexican American history, Chicana/o literature, and feminism. Numerous scholars have noted her literary work as particularly powerful because it provides explicit critiques of social, political and racial issues occurring in the nineteenth century.²⁶

Ruiz de Burton's first novel, *Who Would Have Thought It?* [1872] (1995), provides a pointed critique of politics, domesticity, class status and race, extending from the mid- to the late nineteenth century. In the introduction to this novel, Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita identify the work as a "mapping of social geography," (Sánchez & Pita, 1995, xvi) as Ruiz de Burton's characters traverse different regions throughout the U.S. and Mexico. Through the introduction and storyline following the main character, María Delores (Lola) Medina, the text also highlights the importance of the Southwest region as a site of exploration, cultural difference, and racial prejudice. In her second novel, *The Squatter and the Don* [1885] (1997), Ruiz de Burton aptly comments on the land struggles occurring throughout the Southwest, but specifically in California. With specificity she addresses the unjust

procedures that *Californios* were forced to adhere to in an effort to claim their land and protect it against the influx of squatters.

The novel focuses upon the notion of displacement—a theme that will be seen throughout all of the “texts” examined in this study. Ruiz de Burton articulates the effects of displacement on *Californio* land owners and specifically on Don Mariano and the entire Alamar family. Finally, Ruiz de Burton also offers a compelling critique on capitalism, monopolistic power, and politics as she recognizes the effects of governmental corruption on the people of California. The themes in Ruiz de Burton’s novels are reminiscent of personal and historical events that characterize her work as a *testimonio heredera*. In it, she also asserts her agency to tell the story of her people and her own experiences, thus developing a narrative of resistance.

Ruiz de Burton was a progressive woman who established her authority when necessary and took strident steps to accomplish what she wanted. She was strong, and many times, manipulative, as demonstrated by her biography and correspondence below. Born in the Mexican state of Baja California, Ruiz de Burton expressed a deep affinity for her country of birth, but was not afraid to express her criticisms when she did not agree with decisions made by those in charge of either the Mexican or American governments. Ruiz de Burton is a prime example of an individual who was able to successfully straddle the borders of nations, race, and gender—a rare model who set the bar for historically remarkable Mexican American women.

Ruiz de Burton lived during a period when race, class, and gender were important indicators of status. In the introduction to her first novel, *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1995) [1872], Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita acknowledge Ruiz de Burton’s position

and discuss how it may have affected her views and writing. They state, “Crucial also is her personal history as a member of a displaced ruling class in California that was conscious of Mexico’s loss not only of half of its territories to the U.S. but of its immense mineral resources” (1995, viii). From a young age, Ruiz de Burton was aware of the implications that a family name, race, and class status had on a person’s ability to navigate both physical and implied borders. Sánchez and Pita have done an extensive job excavating Ruiz de Burton’s biographical information, correspondence and literary work, and it is from this work that the following important biographical work is drawn.

Ruiz de Burton employed her maternal last name because of the “prestige and influence” (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 4) that it carried in California. The decision to utilize this name rather than her father’s last name of Maitorena, is an indication that Ruiz de Burton recognized the necessity to claim identification with a landed class in order to make a name for herself, whether politically or in the literary world. She clearly recognized the power that came with the name of a landed or politically significant family. Another shift occurs later as she takes her husband’s name to gain access to different circles on the East Coast. In California, Ruiz de Burton used the Ruiz surname for “political recognition and social status” (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 6). Additionally, the name provided access to land—a much sought after commodity in the Southwest and the capital investment that she desired. It was through her grandfather, Don Manuel Ruiz, that Ruiz de Burton claimed ties to the land granted by the Spanish government.

The land, known as *Ensenada de Todos Santos*, comprised 8,678.8 acres, and it is land that Ruiz de Burton held a strong attachment to, as noted by Sánchez and Pita when they affirm that “this property played a key role in MARB’s life; in fact, she died fighting for her

claims to these lands” (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 7). Along with her bloodline, Ruiz de Burton’s persistence and efforts to claim title to the lands were ways to enable her to gain political power. Her name linked her to *gente de razón*, both in family relations and established friendships with such figures as Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo.²⁷ Ruiz de Burton’s relationship with Vallejo is especially important because it is through their correspondence²⁸ that we see the progression of her attempts to claim her land titles on both sides of the border, as well as her personal desire for wealth and understanding of land as capital through Vallejo’s influence. The association between Vallejo and Ruiz de Burton forms a central portion of this chapter.

Experiencing the effects of displacement and land loss in California, Ruiz de Burton’s position was unique as she was also privy to the changes that were occurring on the opposite side of the nation. There modernization and industrialization were creating an environment that fostered capitalism. This exposure came through Ruiz de Burton’s relationship and marriage to Captain Henry S. Burton. A review of Ruiz de Burton’s history reveals that she was a woman motivated to break traditional social prescriptions through such acts as marriage outside of her religious faith and race and performing feats unheard of for women at the time, such as the public presence of her literary efforts. Her correspondence leads us to believe that she was not timid, though at times she was disheartened by the position that her gender placed on her. In order to compensate for that, Ruiz de Burton chose to marry Captain Burton, who provided “the military rank and access to inner circles of power” (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, xi). Through her husband’s positioning, Ruiz de Burton was able to engage with powerful political figures, such as President Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary, and experience aristocratic life after having lived on the East Coast for approximately a decade.

Her way of life there differed significantly from her experiences in California. However, the status that came with Captain Burton was not trouble-free. He was constantly in debt and confined by financial burdens. Thus, Ruiz de Burton inherited her husband's difficulties which affected her ability to gain complete control over her attempt at property ownership and business endeavors.

But the hurdles she faced did not stop her. Ruiz de Burton was forced to find alternative means of accomplishing her goals and would stop at no one's expense. Of particular interest is the struggle that Ruiz de Burton faced regarding her claims to land. Coming of age at that time, she witnessed the United States' role to overtake and claim Mexican land, and with it, some of its citizens. Through Ruiz de Burton's *testimonio heredera*, developed in her novels and correspondence, we find evidence of a woman who was caught between two nations. She was forced to navigate both worlds, often having to depend on one to gain footing in the other—planning her own survival in the new capitalistic world of which she had become a part.

In their extensive study of Ruiz de Burton's life, Sánchez and Pita uncover the Ruiz de Burton that they claim was “an underdog with aristocratic pretensions and a sense of superiority, a liberal with monarchist tendencies, a U.S. citizen with a racial memory of her *latinidad*, an anti-imperialist with opportunistic tendencies,” but who duly “defended her fellow *Californios*, whom she nevertheless tended to see as indolent and unclear as to the true dimensions of the changes at stake” (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, x). This assessment of Ruiz de Burton projects the image of a complicated woman, enveloped by a variety of challenges. A close reading of Ruiz de Burton's correspondence reveals a woman who would stop at nothing to get what she wanted. In contrast, her novels reveal a critic who justifiably finds

fault with with the U.S. government. These characteristics force her readers into a love/hate relationship with her.

As a precursor to feminist modes of thinking and action, Ruiz de Burton is admirable. During the nineteenth century, women's roles were clearly demarcated by gender-specific expectations, and their stories remained in the margins or footnotes of historical accounts. Ruiz de Burton attempted to dispel these prescribed roles and expectations. As literary scholar Genaro Padilla states, Ruiz de Burton's actions remind us that women's "subjectivity was situated, therefore, not in the home or in patronymic affiliation, not even in the memory of home or husband, but in a woman's life in the public realm, in the spoken recovery of an authority measuring personal accomplishment, political acuity and agency, self-taught literacy, and heroism against the threat of foreign invasion" (1993, 111).

In his analysis, Padilla references the well-recognized work of Hubert Howe Bancroft, which includes narratives provided by *Californios* in the late nineteenth century. He identifies and notes Bancroft's positioning of women's narratives as secondary to men's. This is not unheard of, especially at the time the *testimonios*²⁹ were collected. What is significant about Bancroft's work is that it did not include a *testimonio* by Ruiz de Burton, a significant Mexican American woman in her time. It has been suggested that Ruiz de Burton chose not to be included in Bancroft's studies (Fisher, 2004, 236). Bancroft did, however, mention her in *California Pastoral* (1888), but only focused on her marriage to Colonel Henry S. Burton (331). This too, is not surprising the time in which the narratives were taken. Ruiz de Burton was keen enough to recognize the impact of Bancroft's work. In response to her absence, she makes it a point to remind him of her position within Californio history when she dedicates her play, *Don Quixote de la Mancha: A Comedy in Five Acts*, to him.

Ruiz de Burton asserts her agency and develops a resistive “text” through her play. Amelia María de la Luz Montes suggests that by doing this, Ruiz de Burton makes a statement, as she does in her other works, as “a woman who began her life as an aristocrat but spent most of her adult life defending her aristocratic heritage despite her destitute and second-class citizenry on lands that have become American and appropriated by rogue squatters” (De La Luz Montes, 2004, 221-222). Ruiz de Burton sets examples for perseverance, gender and racial equality, civil rights and power. She uses her ability to document these inherited struggles through her *testimonio heredera* as a decolonizing tool, although she may not have labeled it as such in the nineteenth century.

Ruiz de Burton’s strong-willed character enabled her life-long quest for her stake in land in the California area and makes her stand out in this study. Her history in relation to this land is far from simple. It begins with the major struggles that Mexicanos of the time were facing in claiming their title to land—land granted to them through either the Mexican or Spanish governments. Not only were Mexicans fighting for their citizenship rights, they were also contesting claims made by Anglo settlers and the U.S. Government that argued that the properties comprising the Southwest were vacant. As unoccupied lands without titles and deeds they were there for the taking. This struggle was cross-regional, as Mexicans in California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona were equally besieged by the fight for their civil and property rights. However, for *Californios*, the struggle relied heavily on a claim to an identity that had both regional and national implications.

Sánchez and Pita avow that political boundaries dictated how Mexicans such as Ruiz de Burton would identify. This resulted in positioning herself in a way that would advantageously promote her individuality “culturally, racially, and geographically—

particularly if she was to claim property rights on both sides of the border” (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 2). Ruiz de Burton was actively engaged in transnational acts in the nineteenth century—a phenomenon that would later become a predominant subject of twentieth and twenty-first century cultural studies worldwide.³⁰ Her attempt to cross borders begins with her move from Baja to Alta California. This relocation solidifies her positioning as an American, and strengthens her ability to petition for land. This positioning however, did not guarantee that she would receive the land she requested. In this respect, Ruiz de Burton was caught in the conundrum of being both an “insider and outsider” (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 18). Ruiz de Burton’s struggles were similar to those experienced by other Mexicanos in nearby Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Race and class were overtly significant in terms of citizenship status, and *Californios* in the nineteenth century, like those in its neighboring territories, were considered white, racially, if they accepted new American laws that separated them from Indians and blacks.³¹ However, the citizenship offered to Mexicans was based on class level and principal, not practice, leading to further issues.

Along with citizenship issues and American laws, concerns about land surfaced. As the United States Government attempted to convert political power from Mexican law into its own, *Californios* felt the effects of U.S. invasion. Long-standing Mexican and Spanish land grants became subject to scrutiny, and landed *Californios*, similar to their counterparts in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona, were forced to demonstrate property ownership through title paperwork and property deeds to the land they occupied and owned. Ruiz de Burton’s movement within different areas in California (from Baja to Monterey to San Diego), along with her ties to the Ensenada land grant held by her grandfather, and Rancho Jamul, purchased by her husband, allowed her to witness the implications of U.S. law and the

detriments it imparted upon *Californio* land owners. These experiences prompted Ruiz de Burton's eye-opening experience with land, race, and economics, as she began to understand how land grants such as Jamul and Ensenada were tied to capitalism across national borders.³²

Land issues in California mimicked others in the Southwest, demonstrating how Mexicanos suffered at the hands of U.S. law that, in effect, worked to transfer land out of Mexican ownership into that of newcomers or into the hands of the Government. As Mexicans were forced to confirm their land grants, many lost their land due to "litigation costs, tax burdens, and the need to mortgage the ranches" and the result was that "almost always [the large tracts of land were] validated for the newcomers" (Sánchez and Pita, 2001, 99). This very situation is what plagued the Burtons in their attempt to confirm their ownership of Rancho Jamul.

For the greater part of her life, Ruiz de Burton struggled to claim title to Jamul. The history behind this large tract of land stems from a land grant held by the last Governor of Alta California, Pío Pico. He inherited Jamul from Governor Manuel Victoria in 1831, but later struggled to have the title confirmed by U.S. courts because the land was not officially certified until more than 10 years after it was initially granted to him. Pico, who was forced to flee to Mexico at the start of the Mexican-American War, left his brother-in-law in charge of his affairs. Upon his return, Pico would learn that in his absence his brother-in-law had since sold Jamul to four individuals, promising to provide them with the deed to the land purchased. Of course, Pico and his brother-in-law did not agree on this sale, and as a result, Pico never confirmed the sale of the land to the individuals, which required that he present the deed upon payment. This deal gone wrong is what led to the long-standing dilemma that

Ruiz de Burton faced as she and her husband purchased and attempted to gain title to Jamul. The Burtons spent at least 17 years attempting to acquire the title to the land, and it was eventually through Ruiz de Burton's persistence that Pico finally recognized her title to the land.

Ruiz de Burton, like many Mexican Americans at the time, was engaged in a long-standing battle to claim title to her land regardless of personal cost. Ruiz de Burton virtually died in poverty, similar to many other Mexicanos who were displaced and dispossessed of their land. She is unique in that she viewed land and property in a different way than many of the other Mexican American women who were documenting land-related issues. For a woman actively engaged in land disputes in the nineteenth century, Ruiz de Burton demonstrated a much more blatant approach in both claiming her land and in how she considered land. Although she appears to have clung to the idea of a "Mexican identity" as she traversed from the west to the east coast, Ruiz de Burton was not shy about exhibiting her desire to gain land as a capitalistic investment. This straightforward, business approach to gaining capital wealth is much more apparent in her correspondence than in her novels, where she appears to be a bit more nostalgic when conceptualizing what land loss meant to *Californios* at the time.

Sánchez and Pita chronicle Ruiz de Burton's ties to land on both sides of the Mexican border, stating that she laid claim to two pieces of land in Baja California. One of the tracts "was her claim to the mines at San Antonio, situated eighty-seven miles south of San Diego and said to contain rich copper and silver deposits" (Sánchez and Pita, 2001, 135). Her second claim, as mentioned earlier, was to the grant of Ensenada, originally held by her grandfather. Based upon what we know of Ruiz de Burton from the extensive historiography

provided by Sánchez and Pita, it appears that she was often driven by a desire for wealth, sometimes even at the expense of family members. Sánchez and Pita note, “she [Ruiz de Burton] found that access to legal discourses and political power could spell the difference between having no property at all and having potential property at least. MARB, moreover, learned that potential capital was as important as liquid assets themselves” (2001, 139). Because of the power that wealth afforded, Ruiz de Burton engaged in actions that can be characterized as manipulative and driven by self-interest.

Ruiz de Burton’s desire for capital appears most evidently in her correspondence with Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. In addition to seeing herself as equal to Vallejo on an intellectual and class level, Ruiz de Burton also demonstrates the influence that he had on her desire to acquire the land she believed she was entitled to own. Sánchez and Pita suggest, “It was perhaps from observing Vallejo and his multiple projects and undertakings that MARB began to value land as capital” (2001, 71). Vallejo was not only interested in maintaining his own land, but also in positioning himself as a central figure in California history. Genaro Padilla reminds us that Vallejo, though hesitant at first, played a key role in the construction of Hubert Howe Bancroft’s collection of California history. Padilla says, Vallejo “recogni[z]ed the stakes involved in historical and self-representation” and understood that Bancroft could not build his collection “without his [Vallejo’s] rich archive of official documents and his own memoirs” (1993, 24). Vallejo was politically significant in the region and through their shared love of literature and eventually liquid assets, Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo became confidants. Both endured long struggles over their land claims, and their lives ended under similar circumstances—in poverty, never quite seeing the benefits they hoped to gain or acquire in their fight for land.

Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo were subject to the repercussions of American expansion, and demonstrated strong feelings about the U.S. takeover of the west, though in slightly different ways. Padilla suggests that Vallejo was “[i]mpressed with American democratic rhetoric,” (1993, 23) and to a certain extent, he may have persuaded Ruiz de Burton on this too. After all, the duo did engage in “American”³³ business ventures, which influenced their shifting view of land from something that held strong cultural, familial value as a homeland that invoked *querencia*,³⁴ to land as capital. In this sense, both Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo straddled the border between progressive, modernist thinking and maintaining cultural and political power, or even, clinging to a nostalgic view of the California *de ayer* (of yesterday). Vallejo’s writing, Padilla maintains, “constitutes a deliberate act of historiographic preemption against an aggregation of negative representations of Mexican Californians that rationalized the American conquest and the deforcement of his people after 1848” (1993, 24). Ruiz de Burton demonstrates a similar undertaking in her writing. She was extremely critical of Manifest Destiny both in her novels and correspondence. In a letter to Vallejo she contends

De todas las malvenidas frases inventadas para hacer robos, no hay una más odiosa para mí que ésa, la más ofensiva, la más insultante; se me sube la sangre a la mollera cuando la oigo, y veo como en fotografía en un instante, todo lo que los Yankies nos han hecho sufrir a los mexicanos—el robo de Tejas; la guerra; el robo de California; la muerte de Maximiliano!...Si yo pudiera creer en el ‘Manifest Destiny’ dejaría de creer en la justicia o la sabiduría divina. (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 117)

(Of all the unfortuitous phrases invented to make theft, there is not one that is most detestable to me than that, the more offensive, the more insulting, it makes the blood rise to the top of my head when I hear it, and I see like in a photograph in an instant, everything that the Yankees have made us Mexicans suffer—the theft of Texas; the war; the theft of California, the death of Maximilian! ... If I could believe in 'Manifest Destiny' I would cease to believe in justice or divine wisdom).

Like many other Mexicans, and particularly Mexican landowners at this time, Ruiz de Burton's anger was not unfounded. Not only did Manifest Destiny signify cultural erasure, but more significantly, it served as the source of displacement forced upon Mexicans. Ruiz de Burton's criticism of the ideological concept of Manifest Destiny and its results stemmed from both personal implications and the effects of it on her people.

In much of her correspondence, Ruiz de Burton's personal investments overshadowed her communal interests. It is in this sense that Ruiz de Burton differs from her California or Mexicana contemporaries and those women who follow her in this study of Spanish-Mexican women invested in land struggles. This is not to say that she did not fight for her land—land that she was entitled to. On the other hand, Ruiz de Burton's motives were different with regard to how and why she wanted the land. It is well recognized that Ruiz de Burton spent much of her life attempting to rightfully claim the land grant that was originally made to Governor Pio Pico and that should have been passed on to the Burtons after they purchased the title. However, Ruiz de Burton learned that capital equated with advancement and opportunity, and she wanted both.

Ruiz de Burton was constantly involved in endeavors that involved liquid capital, investments, and land dealings that would further her interests in money and progress. Though critical of American takeover, Ruiz de Burton was intrigued by the concept of investments, and particularly investments that would exploit the resources found on the land that she owned. She was not above taking advantage of her own family in order to pursue her own interests, especially when it came to land holdings that she believed were rightfully hers.

Throughout her fight for land, Ruiz de Burton held tight to the idea that the land (Ensenada de Todos Santos) owned by her grandfather, José Manuel Ruiz, should be held in

the family, and it was. However, the land was passed on to the husband of one of Ruiz's daughters, rather than equally divided among the four daughters he had. Because Ruiz de Burton could read and write in English, her mother and two aunts who had not received their share of the land called upon her to assist them in filing their inheritance claim. The negotiations apparently went sour when Ruiz de Burton attempted to have her mother and two aunts sign over their rights to the land, under the guise that she would serve as their power of attorney, so that she could obtain the patent to the land. Though not confirmed, there is much speculation that Ruiz de Burton intended to develop the land, a feat she believed her aunts and mother were incapable of accomplishing (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 138).³⁵

Because of her strong political connections, Ruiz de Burton saw this as an opportunity for power and acquisition of assets. This act speaks to her character, and reminds us, as Sánchez and Pita point out, that she “was not above committing fraud to achieve her objectives” (138). Therefore, while Ruiz de Burton sometimes demonstrates a nostalgic connection to land, country, race and the struggles associated with those areas, acts such as this one with her mother and aunts undermine her good intentions as a Mexican American woman legitimately interested in preserving the communal identity that defined Mexicans in the Southwest at this time. Rather, this act positions Ruiz de Burton as a power-hungry woman, not too far off characteristically from the unscrupulous lawyers who sought Mexican land. Eventually Ruiz de Burton did receive and claim title to the Ensenada land—in her own name—and accomplished this goal through her affiliations with politically significant men across the nation.

Ruiz de Burton's *testimonio heredera*, part of which appears in her correspondence, and in the understories³⁶ present in her novels, reveals a sense that she was experiencing some semblance of displacement, (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 180) especially as she traversed the nation to the east coast. This could be one reason why she deemed it necessary to position herself in alignment with powerful and politically connected men and women throughout the Southwest and east coast.³⁷ Sánchez and Pita contend that Ruiz de Burton "was an outsider culturally and politically," but note that she was "a citizen with access," which provided her with "a foot on each side of the border" (184). While on the east coast, Ruiz de Burton was engaged with a number of historically significant and powerful people, and navigated the space masterfully, as noted by Sánchez and Pita when they say:

Letters from MARB indicate that her stay on the East Coast during this decade enabled her to meet a number of diplomats, military officers and their wives, congressmen, and other officials, as she moved from Georgetown to the Washington area, from New York to Vermont to spend the summers, and on to Baltimore, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, South Carolina, Fortress Monroe, Newport, Rhode Island, and New York again, with shifts in address corresponding to [Henry] Burton's latest assignment. As the wife of Colonel Henry S. Burton of the Union Army, she also had access to the White House, where she met President Buchanan, and later President Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln, who became a friend. (2001, 187-188)

Ruiz de Burton was no stranger to high society, where she was able to develop relationships with those who would serve her political needs in the future. Her ability to navigate these spaces is interesting because in a sense, it was a façade, since she ultimately died in poverty, as did her good friend Vallejo. Much like Vallejo, Ruiz de Burton spent much of her time wrangling with legal battles over land. At times, both Mr. & Mrs. Burton worked to gain access to land they purchased, such as when they sought recognition by the Mexican government for rights to the Ensenada land grant and the San Antonio mines in 1859

(Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 191). The Burtons wanted to test the land for the mineral wealth they believed it had, and exploit these resources available for financial gain. They were also interested in the potential wealth that their real estate could generate if they sold it in order to further their mining interests. Sánchez and Pita reveal that the Burtons “accessed this world of speculation by putting MARB’s Baja California properties on the market for purposes of acquiring venture capital for fuel mining and development projects in Baja” (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 223).

Ruiz de Burton & Vallejo: Doppelgängers in Disguise

Ruiz de Burton was most influenced in both her personal and professional life by her relationship with Vallejo. In Vallejo, Ruiz de Burton found not only a confidant, but also a mentor who was similarly interested in land as capital. Sánchez and Pita claim that, “MARB’s letters to Vallejo are striking” because “At times they are like letters between two old friends and partners, who enjoy bickering and contradicting each other” (2001, 222). Through the correspondence, there is a sense that Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo are playful with their dialogue, yet critical in their views of politics and American takeover. Based on what we know about Ruiz de Burton’s personality as a strong, independent and confident woman, it is not surprising that she viewed herself on equal footing with such a politically significant man as Vallejo. Sánchez and Pita argue that Ruiz de Burton’s correspondence with Vallejo reveals “multiple sides to MARB, including her mobilization of womanly wiles, her nasty temper, her sarcasm and irony, and her demanding tone, but they especially allow us to see her evolving politics, her economic ambitions, her persistence, and her incisive assessment of U.S. society in the late nineteenth century and to note how these views correlate and diverge from Vallejo’s” (2001, 73).

The correspondence between the two begins with simple conversations about life and exchanging of literary material, or books that almost entirely are transferred from Vallejo to Ruiz de Burton. As the years pass and Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo go beyond being acquaintances, the correspondence shifts to more serious subjects such as Manifest Destiny, legal and land issues, and political and racial critiques. For example, in an undated letter (it is assumed to have been written in 1867) Vallejo responds to a comment Ruiz de Burton makes about race, as she indicates that her race is not doomed to eternal inferiority by the Yankees, but rather, the alternative is to mix with the Yankees racially. This comment obviously strikes a chord with Vallejo, as he argues back to Ruiz de Burton

¿Qué [es] esto Da. Amparo? ¿Ud. cree que la raza nuestra es inferior a la Yankee? Pues le juro que jamás lo he pensado; ni por asomos se me ha ocurrido; al contrario, creo que nuestra *sangre* es mejor y que la de ellos (los Yankees) ganamos en huesos, en espíritu mercantil, empresarios, locos sin mas Dios que dinero. (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 159)

(What is this Mrs. Amparo? You believe that our race is inferior to the Yankee? Well I never thought; nor did it occur to me; on the contrary, I think that our blood is better than theirs (the Yankees) we gain in bones, in mercantile spirit, entrepreneurs, crazy without more God than money).

The comments in Vallejo's letter demonstrate that he challenges Ruiz de Burton and forces her to justify her statements. It appears that he helps to change her mind on how she views the Yankees and the repercussions of their taking over Mexico, as seen in later letters.

While Ruiz de Burton always seemed to have a deep affinity for Mexico, through Vallejo's influence, and most likely because of her dealing with the government in her land cases, she demonstrates a slight shift in her opinions. This shift is interesting because Vallejo himself shows signs of changing opinions throughout their correspondence. In some of the letters he sends to Ruiz de Burton, he is adamant about the damage the "Yankees" caused to

Mexicans in California. However, as Genaro Padilla reminds us, Vallejo was often seen as “gracious and pleasant—at least in public, where he kept up the cheerful semblance of a man not only reconciled to the Americanization but pleased by the socioeconomic possibilities of the transformation” (1993, 80). In this sense, Ruiz de Burton demonstrates similarities to Vallejo. Both shifted their thoughts and opinions of Americanization and what Manifest Destiny meant to *Californios*. Both are interested in modernization, capitalism, and the idea of progress. But, as two *Californios* fighting for their land rights and not as privy to the rights enjoyed by the influx of Americans into the region, Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo were disapproving of American ideals and Republican form of governmental rule.

Ruiz de Burton is sometimes brazenly critical of how the U.S. government dealt with the annexation of Mexico. For instance, in a letter dated September 14, 1869, she contends:

Convengo con Ud. [Vallejo] que México está ‘completamente desquiciado’...pero no lo creo ‘muriendo’-...Está muy enfermo, sí, y en sus ratos de delirio puede suicidarse, pero si no se suicida, vivirá!...Y ¿sabe Ud. qué clase de suicidio hay más fe que es ahorcándose, ahorcándose con la cuerquita que su ‘Sister Republic’ le ha regalado, cuya cuerquita Manifest Destiny, con su propia manos nos hizo el honor de tejer, él mismo...¡Qué Gloria para los mexicanos que adoran prosternados en el polvo el Coloso del Norte! (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 216)

(I agree with you that Mexico is ‘completely insane’...but I do not believe ‘dying’-...He [Martí] is very sick, yes, and in his times of delirium can commit suicide, but if he does not commit suicide, he lives! And do you know in what type of suicide there is more faith that is hanging, hanging with the rope of his ‘Sister Republic’ he has given us, whose rope Manifest Destiny, with his own hands he gave the honor to weave, he himself... What Glory for the Mexicans that adore prostrate in the dust the Colossal of the North!).

In many of her letters, she similarly challenges Vallejo, as he did her. In a letter dated August 26, 1867, she exposes her love for Mexico, despite the conflicts occurring between the United States and Mexico at this time and despite Vallejo’s judgment for stating this opinion. Ruiz de Burton asserts, “‘Está bien si Ud. quiere dejar de ser mi amigo porque quiero tanto a

México y porque no adoro a los Titanes que nos devorarán, está bien.” (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 215). (It is fine if you stop being my friend because I care so much about Mexico and because I do not adore the Titans that will devour us, that is fine). Through quotes such as this one, it is evident that Vallejo’s opinions of Americans were changing, while Ruiz de Burton’s were slower to emerge.

However, as becomes evident in later correspondence, both Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo struggled with clinging to their *Californio* identities and accepting the Americanization of the Southwest. At times, both appeared unsure about how to navigate dual identities. Americanization meant a loss of power. This loss of power was unacceptable for the pair. For Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo, waning power equated with the loss of land. Because land was so important at this time, it is no wonder why both Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo died fighting for their land. Without it, what remained? As will become evident through the other individuals in this study, land held a much different meaning for Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo than it did for other Mexicanos in the Southwest. Based upon the content of their letters and Ruiz de Burton’s novels in particular, land was equated with strength and political influence. While their land was being taken away or held in limbo by the American Government, Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo sought alternate means of communicating their frustration about the issues affecting *Californio* landowners at this time.

For Vallejo, this meant giving in to the demands of Hubert Howe Bancroft, an American historian who wanted Vallejo to share his collection of important political documents for his history of California project. Bancroft was interested in Vallejo for his own personal reasons,³⁸ and similarly, Vallejo became interested in Bancroft’s project as a springboard for his ability to construct his personal memoir about his life in California.

Genaro Padilla states that, “Vallejo was too much the public figure, however, to let do with expressing his grievances in private letters alone. During his travels to San Francisco and throughout the state, he saw that what had befallen him had befallen other elite families and that the lower classes were even more desperate” (81). Vallejo used the opportunity to expand his private concerns in a very public way. He wanted to avoid a misinterpretation and misrepresentation of *Californios* and saw Bancroft’s project as a way to construct his own representation of his people (and essentially himself) and the issues they were (and he was) encountering because of American takeover of Mexican land. Padilla argues, “Because Vallejo well understood how much was at stake in shaping historical and personal representation, he developed a form of political-literary strategizing through which he would oversee the construction of California history, in which he and his people were central” (82).

Ruiz de Burton similarly engaged in attempting to represent her people accurately. She does so in a slightly different way than Vallejo, through her *testimonio heredera*. Ruiz de Burton combines factual history with fictional characters. Written about the same time that Vallejo was being encouraged to aid Bancroft in the California project, Ruiz de Burton published her first novel, *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872). As a Mexican-American woman writing in the 1870s, Ruiz de Burton was progressive. What is even more impressive is that this novel was considered the first to be penned in English by a Mexican. In it, Ruiz de Burton offers pointed critiques extending from the mid- to late nineteenth century on politics, domesticity, class status, and race. The novel also highlights the importance of the Southwest region during the mid- and late nineteenth century as a site of exploration, cultural difference, and racial prejudice. Literary Critic Jesse Alemán suggests, “Ruiz de Burton’s construction of Mexican whiteness is a characteristic response to the colonial conditions in California.

Many *Californios* emphasized their *sangre azul*, their pure, 'blue' Spanish blood, as a way of distinguishing their regional, Californio identity from the rest of Mexico's mestizo citizenry as well as from California's Indian population" (2007, 6). Understanding Ruiz de Burton's novel in this way allows us to see how she, like Vallejo, considered herself different from her Mexicano counterparts throughout the Southwest who were fighting similar battles during the American takeover of Mexican land.

But theirs is a unique positioning because both Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo seem to struggle between fighting for "their people," as seen in their correspondence described above, and their quest for acquiring American standards of status, wealth, and political power. Alemán's analysis suggests that *Californios* were unique in their attempt to claim their *sangre azul*, and at this time, that is true. Later, in other areas of the Southwest, such as New Mexico, Mexicanos similarly attempted to claim ties to a strong Spanish (read: European) identity, that they associated with status, power, and purity of bloodlines. This link to similar ways of claiming identity in New Mexico is not to undermine the distinctive position of *Californios* in the nineteenth century. Rather, it highlights the specific reason(s) behind this calculated move. As Alemán also thoughtfully notes "...*Californios* had to reposition themselves as white in Anglo America to secure the country's real and imaginary citizenship rights," and "U.S. *Californios* also brokered on their class status, hoping their material and cultural capital would buy them entry into the emerging Anglo nation" (13). Alemán's point here clearly identifies why Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo straddled between Mexicano, *Californio*, and American identities. Citizenship rights and cultural capital were enticing to the doppelgängers, as they saw themselves as elite *Californios*, especially those who were

connected politically in both the *Californio* system and across the nation via their ability to traverse from the Southwest to the east coast quite easily in their prime.

The pivotal theme in *Who Would Have Thought It?* is race-centered. Discussions of race cannot be separated from those of class.³⁹ When conceptualizing Ruiz de Burton's constructions of race and class in her writing, she clearly links another theme to both concepts: land. In her second novel, *The Squatter and the Don* (1885), race, class and land dominate the narrative. The novel addresses the land issues occurring in California about the time that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, and a number of Mexicans experienced their greatest loss of identity and land to the American government and the influx of Anglo squatters. It also identifies a period when racial mixing occurred, as many of the characters in the novel inter-marry (all are Mexican and American interracial relationships). Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita argue that *The Squatter and the Don* is far more than a sappy romance novel. Rather, they interpret it as a mission to address issues of "land and justice" (1997, 7).

In her novels, there is a sense of Ruiz de Burton's battle for social justice. This strong sense of injustice is more clearly demonstrated in her novels, rather than her correspondence. While it is clear in her correspondence (especially with Vallejo) that land was important to her, Ruiz de Burton more blatantly critiques the historical struggles faced by Mexicanos, and more specifically, *Californios* in her novelistic endeavors. The reason for this is not exactly apparent. It seems safe to assume that Ruiz de Burton feels comfortable articulating her thoughts and opinions to Vallejo about the historically significant events occurring at this time. In fact, at times, as we have seen in some of the quotes selected from her correspondence with him, she is blatantly bitter and hostile about anything "Yankee."

However, this correspondence was most likely intended for reading and safekeeping in the private sphere. After all, a relationship such as the one held by Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo was somewhat distinctive for men and women in the nineteenth century. Perhaps the relationship between Ruiz de Burton and Vallejo was excused, in a sense, because he was married to a cousin of hers, which may have offset the social unacceptability of any relationship between a married man and a married woman who are not spouses.

The Squatter and the Don

Although not specifically named, it can be surmised that Vallejo ultimately plays a role in *The Squatter and the Don*, as one of the main characters, Don Mariano Alamar. Similar to Vallejo, Alamar is also a *Californio* rancher fighting for his land against the American government and Anglo squatters. In this particular novel, Ruiz de Burton demonstrates her doppelgänger characteristics in the likeness of Vallejo in his collaboration with Bancroft as she “create[s] a narrative space for the counter-history of the subaltern, the conquered Californio population” (Sánchez & Pita, 1997, 7). In her novels, Ruiz de Burton takes even further liberty than she did in her correspondence with Vallejo to provide strong critiques about the complex and layered issues affecting her people. The critiques stem from her experiences. Those personal ties, along with the way in which Ruiz de Burton asserts her agency in a narrative of resistance and as a member of the *Californio* population fighting for its land are what qualify the novel as her *testimonio heredera*.

In *The Squatter and the Don* Ruiz de Burton touches upon notions of modernity and capitalism, but also addresses questions of displacement, identification, and (dis)identification with the land. Chicano literary scholar José F. Aranda Jr. suggests that Ruiz de Burton “employs an altogether alternative form of narrative persuasion that is

aggressive, impatient, and vigilante” (2004, 18). Based on Ruiz de Burton’s personality, her strong California identity, and desire for capital wealth, this is not surprising. The reality is that the shifting regimes and changing laws meant that Ruiz de Burton would lose the power she had as a Mexican American female who could inherit, buy, and sell property—a situation unique to Mexicano culture, and an ability that placed her on equal ground with her male counterparts.

Ruiz de Burton’s discussion of displacement is clearly centered upon Mexicanos, as Sánchez and Pita point out, “*The Squatter and the Don* avoids addressing the dispossession of the Indians, seen here only as ranch hands and servants...” (1997, 10). Her dismissal of Indians is not surprising. Ruiz de Burton focused upon a certain class of landowner in the text. This is in contrast to Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce (discussed in a later chapter) who also wrote about land, though later in time. Ruiz de Burton does allude to notions of displacement for squatters, such as the William Darrell family; however, her focus is on *Californios*. For Ruiz de Burton, displacement meant *Californio* land loss, and even more specifically, loss affecting the elite, such as her confidant, Vallejo, and herself.

Displacement and dispossession are central to Ruiz de Burton’s novel. Initially perceived as a romance novel, *The Squatter and the Don* accomplishes two things: It highlights “Loss, both real and feared, of the beloved and of land,” (Sánchez & Pita, 1997, 17) and develops an argument about the U.S. Government’s involvement in the dispossession of *Californios*, and essentially a large majority of Mexicanos throughout the Southwest. Professor of English, Melanie V. Dawson notes that Ruiz de Burton comments upon the U.S. government “as it fails its new citizens by privileging cultural imperialism, specifically by promoting an Anglo-American ascendancy through property ownership” (2008, 43). The

upsurge of Anglos as powerful actors, due in part to their ability to own property resulted in *Californios*' and more specifically, *Californias*' dislocation of power. For Ruiz de Burton, this was unacceptable.

As a form of resistance, she uses *The Squatter and the Don* to interject her voice into the public sphere and demonstrate her dissatisfaction with the maneuvers of the U.S. government and big business' attempt to industrialize the Southwest. Aranda claims that Ruiz de Burton used "'fighting words'" (2004, 25) to interrupt the dominant narratives that had defined the historical record in California and the Southwest. Literary scholar Vincent Pérez suggests that *The Squatter and the Don* is one of the first literary works to "examine the repressive social, political, and cultural impact of conquest that has formed a lasting historical legacy for the region's Mexican American population since the mid-nineteenth century" (2004, 27). I argue that Ruiz de Burton developed a *testimonio heredera* with *The Squatter and the Don* to address the issues in a way that allowed her to blur fact with fiction, to be able to comment on the factual issues, but still protect her family name as part of the landed gentry. Even though she reveals a different type of personality in her correspondence with Vallejo, Ruiz de Burton clearly identifies with the *gente de razón* (people of reason), and seeks to protect that image of landed *Californios* and question how the U.S. government failed them.

For instance, she spends a significant amount of time discussing the U.S. court system in her story of the Alamar's struggle to keep their land. Through this discussion, Ruiz de Burton reminds us that the courts established to help Mexicanos maintain their claims to land actually worked against them and, more specifically, her. For example, in one section of the novel, Ruiz de Burton tells of the squatters who are discussing the lands they plan to occupy

as they settle into the area. One of the main squatters, William Darrell, demonstrates his satisfaction in how the law has made it so easy for him to squat. Ruiz de Burton states, “The stakes having been placed, Darrell felt satisfied. Next day he would have the claim properly filed, and in due time a surveyor would measure them. All would be done ‘according to law’ and in this easy way more land was taken from its legitimate owner” ([1885] 1997, 73).

In a later example, Ruiz de Burton again presents the squatters discussing how they plan to negotiate with Don Alamar regarding the land that they are taking from him in their claims. Clarence Darrell, the squatter in the novel with an apparent conscience, is trying to convince the others that they must not threaten the Don, whose daughter Clarence will eventually marry. The other squatters, with the exception of one, Romeo, are not so generous in how they choose to approach the Don, and point out that their actions are all being done according to the law. As they discuss their upcoming meeting with the Don, they say:

‘That is understood; we want to be polite, that’s all,’ explained Mr. Pittikin.

‘And that is all I have requested,’ Clarence said. ‘I do not ask anyone to accept any proposition against his will.’

‘That is fair enough,’ said old Hancock.

‘And little enough, considering we are in possession of land that the Don believes to be his own,’ said Romeo.

‘But it ain’t,’ said old Hager.

‘It has been for more than fifty years,’ Romeo asserted.

‘But he lost it by not complying with the law,’ said Hughes.

‘Yes, if he had not neglected his rights, his title would have been rejected; he went to sleep for eight years, and his right was outlawed,’ said Miller.

‘That was the fault of his lawyers, perhaps,’ Clarence said.

‘Of course it was, but he should have watched his lawyers. The trouble is, that you can’t teach ‘an old dog new tricks.’ Those old Spaniards never will be business men,’ said Pittikin, sententiously. (83)

In this example, Ruiz de Burton brings forth a number of issues affecting her and her people at this time: squatters erroneously taking land that did not rightfully belong to them; Mexicans owning land for many years prior to the influx of Anglo-American squatters; the detrimental effects of lawyer’s negligence with regard to protecting Mexican land owners; and the view that many Anglo squatters carried of Mexican landowners as set in their old ways; all of which contradicted the ways promoted by American law and government.

As noted in the Introduction of this study, the Surveyor General’s Office and the establishment of the Court of Private Land Claims played a significant role in determining land claim and loss for Mexicanos in the nineteenth century throughout the region. The Surveyor General’s Office was supposed to adjudicate property rights for Mexicans—rights that were originally guaranteed through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. However, Mexican property owners endured tremendous struggle in claiming title to their land once the U.S. Government removed Article X of the Treaty. The Court of Private Land Claims was established some 40-plus years later because the original laws centered upon land were deemed faulty.

Ruiz de Burton acknowledges this historical error in *The Squatter and the Don*. Specifically, she uses the example of the Alamar Ranch, land that was held in limbo because of the legal action taking place at this time, similar to her own land. Ruiz de Burton goes so far as to quote the Land Act of 1851 in Chapter V – The Don and His Broad Acres. She quotes “‘No. 189. *An Act to ascertain and settle the private land claims in the State of California,*” says the book” (84). To illustrate her point, Ruiz de Burton goes on to say, “And

by a sad subversion of purposes, all the private land titles became *unsettled*. It ought to have been said, ‘An Act to *unsettle* land titles, and to upset the rights of the Spanish population of the State of California.’” (84). In this chapter, Ruiz de Burton is extremely critical of the U.S. Government and the effects of its laws on her people—an elite group that should have been protected. Dawson argues that “Both cultural and racial privileges...figure prominently in the contest between local property owners and newly arrived squatters who claim their land” (2008, 47). Beneath the main narrative in the novel exists Ruiz de Burton’s own veiled personal narrative that addresses an individual history of fighting the court system that was designed to protect her, as an elite *California*. Although she was concerned with *Californio* landowners as a whole, her personal interests remain at the heart of her critiques.

Ruiz de Burton’s *testimonio heredera* is her historical account of land struggles in the Southwest that affected her community and herself. Despite the fact that she clearly sees the elite landowners as the most affected, the way that she chooses to document events results in a counter-narrative defying the dominant narrative she is expected to follow. Sánchez and Pita argue that Ruiz de Burton’s novel “primarily reconstructs the loss of land and power of the conquered population from the perspective of one who, although acculturated, had a forceful voice and, more importantly, a clear memory. It is, interestingly, a collective memory” (1997, 49). This collective memory is what makes the novel a *testimonio* in structure.

Doris Sommer reminds us that, “(1) testimonials are related to a general text of struggle. They are written from interpersonal class and ethnic positions. (2) But the narrator’s relationship to her social group(s) is as a particular individual. Therefore, she represents her group as a participant, rather than as an ideal and repeatable type...” (1998, 129). *The*

Squatter and the Don is a more non-traditional form of *testimonio*. I argue that is better classified as a *testimonio heredera* because Ruiz de Burton relays her personal history of inherited struggle. She also uses “fictional” characters to detail the communal struggle that Mexicanos inherited because of their race and land. Ruiz de Burton is the epitome of a non-repeatable type, a manipulative personality who pushes the boundaries of race, class, and gender. Through her *testimonio heredera* she highlights the struggles that *Californios* specifically, and Mexicanos in general, were facing with regard to claiming their land, and underscores the shift in power from the landed *Californios* to squatters and those invested in capital development via the railroad.

Ruiz de Burton anchors her *testimonio heredera* with descriptions of the significant effects of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the false pretenses surrounding its discussion of guaranteed property rights for Mexicans. She specifically uses the character of Clarence Darrell to provide the critique of American government and its questionable means of obtaining and subjecting Mexicans (now Mexican Americans) to its laws. In one section of the novel, Clarence discusses with Don Mariano the “no fence law” and his father’s refusal to pay for the land where his family squats. Clarence says

‘I think this ‘no fence law’ the most scandalous, bare-faced outrage upon the rights of citizens that I ever heard of,”...’It is like setting irresponsible trespassers loose upon a peaceable people, and then rewarding their outrage. To let anyone take up your lands right before your eyes is outrage enough, but to cap the climax by authorizing people to plant crops without fences and then *corral* your cattle, which must be attracted to the green grass, I call positively disgraceful, in a community which is not of vandals. It is shameful to the American name. I am utterly disgusted with the whole business, and the only thing that will make matters a little tolerable to me will be for you to do me the favor of permitting me to pay for the land we have located.’ ([1885] 1997), 96)

Through Clarence, the audience receives Ruiz de Burton's own critique—her testimony to the shocking ways in which American regulations were loosely interpreted for Anglo squatters, and enforced with a heavy hand for Mexican land owners. Clarence's words are reminiscent of the correspondence Ruiz de Burton sends to Vallejo, as she uses powerful words to express her disgust—irresponsible, disgraceful, and shameful.

As Ruiz de Burton's *testimonio heredera*, *The Squatter and the Don* demonstrates the characteristic of an overlapping discourse that includes fact and fiction, rich and poor, traditional literature and non-traditional cultural production, items Rosaura Sánchez would describe as characteristic of *testimonios* (1995, xi). By self-constructing the *testimonio heredera*, Ruiz de Burton asserts her agency to tell the story. Her writing includes many of the characteristics that define *testimonios*, such as stories of struggle and discussions of class. *The Squatter and the Don* is specifically based upon a historical struggle with personal implications. It cannot go unnoted that the novel is an elite space that provided the opportunity for Ruiz de Burton to comment on the historical occurrences of the time. As a woman in the nineteenth century, to have access to a publishing house is unique in and of itself, even if she gained access surreptitiously,⁴⁰ which is not surprising to anyone who has studied Ruiz de Burton's character. But to be further able to comment upon unjust practices of the American government in its enforcement of new laws surrounding land claims and issues is quite another extraordinary feat for a Mexican American woman writing in the nineteenth century. In this sense, Ruiz de Burton challenges preconceived notions of narratives written by the elite, and particularly, an elite Mexican American woman.

Her social commentary is blatantly critical. In another example in which Ruiz de Burton uses Clarence Darrell to articulate her feelings toward the land issues enveloping

Californios at this time, she says “It is our duty and privilege to criticize our laws, and criticize severely” (97). Later Clarence (Ruiz de Burton) notes that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is better categorized as a law of confiscation saying, “That would have been a national shame, but not so great as that of guaranteeing, by treaty, a protection which was not only withheld, but which was denied—snatched away, treacherously—making its denial legal by enactments of retroactive laws” (97). Ruiz de Burton’s treatment of the political, racial, legal, and land claim issues affecting *Californios* is similar to the jarring critiques presented in her early correspondence with Vallejo. The fierceness that appears to be more prominent in her early correspondence with Vallejo begins to emerge in *The Squatter and the Don*. This vitality and the rigorous political and racial debates she and Vallejo had may have sparked the harsh critiques found in Ruiz de Burton’s novels.

Her writing in the *Squatter and the Don* is testimonial in form and serves as an allegory for the difficulties that Ruiz de Burton faced in the struggle for the confirmation of her own land grant. For Ruiz de Burton, the battle was essentially life-long. She expresses her frustration about the need for Mexicanos to be responsible for the burden of proof in confirming ownership of *their own* land—an issue she experienced first-hand. In her *testimonio heredera*, Ruiz de Burton addresses the difficulty that the establishment of the Land Commission placed upon Mexicanos in the Southwest. She presents her critiques by using Don Mariano as a case in point. Don Mariano explains to Clarence the process of land grants, the subterfuge that he believes Congress performed in order to appropriate Mexican land, and the unjust shifting of the burden of proof of ownership from the settlers to Mexicanos.

Furthermore, Ruiz de Burton brings into the discussion the added challenge that Congress's decision placed upon Mexicanos as they were forced to pay taxes on the land that was legally in question. At this time, not only did Mexicanos have to submit their land titles for confirmation, but they were also required to pay taxes on land that squatters were claiming for themselves while the land grants were being confirmed by the government. This portion of the narrative also stems from Ruiz de Burton's personal experiences. Through the discourse between Anglos and Mexicanos included in the novel, she tries to make sense of the social and political situations occurring around her. For example, in his explanation to Clarence, Don Mariano discusses the implications of Congress's acts. He says, "If the law had obliged us to submit our titles to the inspection of the Land Commission, but had not opened our ranchos to settlers *until it had been proved that our titles were not good*, and if, too, taxes were paid by those who derived the benefit from the land, then there would be some color of equity in such laws" (164). Don Mariano's experience emulates those real life experiences of both Vallejo and Ruiz de Burton. Just as Don Mariano was fighting the squatters for his land, Ruiz de Burton was "fighting the squatters through the courts with the help of the Clevelands (her lawyers)" (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 387). Using Don Mariano's story as a representation of the impacts of American imposition on Mexican land, Ruiz de Burton is able to provide her own *testimonio heredera* to the hardships forced upon Mexicanos in the mid- to late nineteenth century, and also demonstrates how Alamar and other Mexicanos fought back. Though the outcome was not as favorable as they would have preferred, the Alamar family attempts to secure their lands through judicial proceedings.

In one section of the novel, Ruiz de Burton employs the judicial proceedings to open a conversation about race. She uses the squatters to demonstrate the biases of both incoming

American squatters and the United States Government when conceptualizing how Mexicanos should and would be treated. Specifically, Ruiz de Burton calls upon the character of the elder Darrell to exemplify the race and class issues that surfaced at this time. At one point in the narrative Darrell does not take kindly to the news that Don Mariano's appeal was dropped and the court found the case in his favor. Darrell, who throughout the novel is not as sympathetic to the Mexicanos as his son has been, expresses his dismay. He says, "Congress ought to have confiscated their lands and 'only allowed them one hundred and sixty acres *each*.' The idea that they (the conquered) should be better off than the Americans! They should have been put on an equality with other settlers, and much honor to them, too, would have been thereby, for why should these *inferior* people be more considered than the Americans?" (205). Through this example, Ruiz de Burton not only provides a glimpse into the racial prejudices present during the nineteenth century, but she also furtively refers to the Homestead Act of 1862, a federal law that granted 160 acres to applicants who improved their land and filed a property deed to claim title to that land. Settlers and squatters most often benefitted from this Act, and Ruiz de Burto had personal experience with its implications.

Because of her experience, Ruiz de Burton responds to the Act with much concern. In a letter to Vallejo dated January 10, 1870, she expresses her trepidation of losing her land to the squatters. She writes to Vallejo with great urgency, saying that her brother Federico sent a card to her saying that "los squatters habían hecho petición al Surveyor General para que se les midan los terrenos que se han apropiado en Jamul y que en febrero se les medirán 160 acres a cada uno!" (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 333) (the squatters petitioned to the Surveyor General to measure the land they have been appropriated in Jamul and in February they were

measured for 160 acres to each one!). Ironically, however, Ruiz de Burton was eventually forced to apply for a homestead herself. This allowed her to acquire part of the Jamul land for which she fought for the better part of her life.

Interestingly, Ruiz de Burton sees herself on a certain social and class level, but her self-conceptualization cannot help with the racial and class issues that plagued her and many of her contemporaries, such as Vallejo. Ruiz de Burton begins the novel with a conversation between Darrell and his wife, Mary—a dialogue that engages the discussion of the difference, if any, between settlers and squatters. This conversation is important because it highlights not only the racial and social climate of the time, but it also reveals the sense of entitlement held by squatters such as Darrell. He understands that the Alamar ranch sits on prime land for the development of the railroad, and rather than admit that the land rightfully belongs to Don Mariano, capitalism and land values drive Darrell to stake a claim on the Alamar *rancho*. Prior to their experience with the Alamars, the Darrell family had “run-ins” with other Mexican and Spanish families in the Napa and Sonoma Valleys where they attempted to squat. Darrell had a bitter taste in his mouth from those negative experiences in which he was driven out of town. Darrell’s opinions of Mexicans as an inferior race are similar to how the large majority of Americans viewed Mexicans during the nineteenth century.⁴¹ Throughout the Southwest, Mexicanos were placed on the lower rungs of the racial hierarchy, despite their dominance in land ownership and political control before the detrimental consequences of the quest for American expansion. Ruiz de Burton makes many references to the racial climate and Mexicanos’ racial and social positions in *The Squatter and the Don*. Most often, the idea of Mexican inferiority is demonstrated through Darrell’s comments.

Ruiz de Burton also uses the group of squatters who back up and influence Darrell to reveal the general racism prevalent at this time. Piggybacking on Darrell's comments regarding Don Mariano's successful lawsuit noted above, squatter William Matthews insinuates that it was because of his (Don Mariano's) Anglo son-in-law that he was victorious in court. Matthews says, "I don't know about that; these Californians are too ignorant to know how to defend their rights, and too lazy to try, unless some American prompts them," and later, "And what influence have they, unless it is by the aid of some American?" (210). This quote both contradicts and mirrors Ruiz de Burton's own experiences. Sánchez and Pita argue that Ruiz de Burton models the squatters found in the novel after the squatters with whom she fought for her land, and particularly a problematic squatter, "Squatter Robinson," whose actions caused much strife for Ruiz de Burton. The squatters described in *The Squatter and the Don* represent those like Robinson, who were benefitting from The Land Act of 1851⁴² through the devious plots of the American government and American lawyers. Both attempted to gain control of Mexican land: the government by instituting laws that they knew Mexicans would not understand, and the lawyers by taking land as payment as they claimed to "help" the Mexicans in their legal land cases.

By situating *The Squatter and the Don* as a *testimonio heredera*, I acknowledge Ruiz de Burton's writing as both personal and community history detailing issues of race, class, and land in the nineteenth century, such as those mentioned above. Classifying *The Squatter and the Don* as *testimonio heredera* also identifies Ruiz de Burton as a Mexican American woman who exhibited great agency in her commitment to documenting the historical struggle for land that became her life's work. Ironically though, Ruiz de Burton too had to rely on the

help of Americans in her claims to Jamul. However, both *The Squatter and the Don* and Ruiz de Burton's biography demonstrate Mexicano participation in the fight for land. Evidence of this action and call for help surfaces in her correspondence, researched by Sánchez and Pita (2001).

Shifting Identities: From Doppelgänger to Dependent

Ruiz de Burton's correspondence reveals that she employs the assistance of her American lawyers in her quest to obtain the title to her land. In addition, she seeks out Vallejo to aid in her land struggles. It is here, in her later correspondence with Vallejo, that we begin to see a different side of Ruiz de Burton—one that demonstrates her vulnerability and concerns about being a woman in this period, particularly, a woman fighting for her land titles. Peppered throughout these later letters, are instances where Ruiz de Burton often lets her guard down and she positions herself as a helpless woman. This is a definite shift from Ruiz de Burton's earlier attitude. Could it be that the shift was due to Ruiz de Burton simply being tired of fighting for her land? Or perhaps Vallejo played the role of her surrogate husband after Colonel Henry S. Burton died? It is also possible that it was another one of Ruiz de Burton's manipulative strategies. She obviously trusted Vallejo and shared much of her personal and professional life with him through her correspondence. Sánchez and Pita suggest that "Of all of MARB's correspondents, her exchanges with Vallejo are the most extensive and detailed, allowing for a tracing of their views on the U.S., and the increasing plight of the *Californios*, providing us a glimpse into the character and evolution of their relationship and friendship-at-a-distance" (2001, 221). Vallejo and Ruiz de Burton shared a similar story in their battle for land and eventual deaths in poverty. As noted by Sánchez and Pita,

MARB also appealed to Vallejo for aid on several occasions, as in the case of her Baja land documents, which were left by her husband in San Francisco with George C. Johnson, who, after Burton's death, never returned them to her. Once Vallejo had intervened to obtain her documents from Johnson, she next requested that he help her, by contracting Morse in San Diego, who had failed to answer her letters. (2001, 222)

Ruiz de Burton even went so far as to give Vallejo the power of attorney (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 230; 334) to handle her land dealings and engage with her attorneys. Vallejo did hold political clout, and the ability to help Ruiz de Burton, especially since he was engaged in such a similar struggle for the confirmation of his own land grants. It is not surprising that she would call upon him for advice and assistance. What is surprising, though, is that she reveals a different side of her personality in her letters to Vallejo.

Ruiz de Burton was, without a doubt, a strong woman. However, her reliance on Vallejo demonstrates her vulnerability, which could actually be interpreted as the way Ruiz de Burton manipulates those around her. Although she has enjoyed the benefits, prestige and power that her marriage to Colonel Burton provided, Ruiz de Burton recognizes that her race and gender prohibit her from fully retaining the level of power afforded her while her husband was alive. There are many instances in her correspondence to Vallejo where Ruiz de Burton makes herself out to sound helpless. For instance, in a letter dated August 12, 1869, Ruiz de Burton writes to Vallejo saying, "Si me faltasen las fuerzas... entonces le suplico de antemano no me juzgue con severidad. Acuérdesse que soy mujer... y mexicana... con el alma en una jaula de fierro, pues así nos encierra '*la sociedad*' luego que nacemos, como los chinos los pies de sus mujeres" (Sánchez & Pita, 2001, 290) (If I lacked the strength... then I would beg beforehand that you don't judge me with severity. Remember that I am a woman... and mexican... with the soul in an iron cage, that is how the society locks us up and then we are born, like the Chinese with the feet of their women). Based on the personality

that Ruiz de Burton revealed in her earlier correspondence and the steps she took to begin the fight for her land, her motives are questionable. She feels locked up, or bound, so Ruiz de Burton uses Vallejo to intercede in personal matters, and push her lawyers and land struggles forward.

Another letter to Vallejo dated January 15, 1870, reminds him of his friendship and family ties to Ruiz de Burton. She uses these ties in her quest to gain his assistance. She says, “No se enfade con tanta molestia. Acuérdesse que soy su amiga, su paisana, su prima y que estoy tan solita, tan desamparada y tan llena de dificultades, dificiles de vencer” (2001, 337) (Do not be angry with so much bother. Remember that I am your friend, your country-woman, your cousin and that I am so alone, so helpless and so full of problems, difficulties to overcome). Through letters such as this, Ruiz de Burton’s sense of desperation and great effort to engage the help of Vallejo could be seen as the way that she demonstrates her *querencia*, or deep love for her land. Many of the letters to Vallejo even express her concern about the potential destruction that the squatters are doing to the land comprising Jamul. These letters give the reader the impression that Ruiz de Burton is concerned about the land as it relates to her livelihood and that she seeks to maintain and cultivate it for her family’s use. Her concern is more capital driven, though, and she is very clever about employing the help of Vallejo under the guise of her *querencia* for the land. Ruiz de Burton is very careful in selecting her word choice, and appeals to Vallejo on an emotional level.

For example, she assures Vallejo that she will not continue to bother him once the land dealings are settled. In another 18-page letter to Vallejo dated November 23 and 24, 1869, she says, “No crea, Don Guadalupe, que lo voy a estar importunando con mis encargos de este modo por largo tiempo. Lo hago ahora porque no tengo otra alternative en mi triste

situación. Pero como ya dije, antes que sufrir estas congojas, luego que me sea posible iré yo misma en persona, y en persona también espero darle mis gracias por sus bondades, tantas, tantas” (2001, 322) (Don’t think, Don Guadalupe, that I’m going to bother you with my orders of this type for a long period of time. I am doing this now because I don’t have an alternative in my sad situation. But as I have told you, after you suffer this anguish, then as soon as possible I will go myself in person, and in person I also hope to give my thanks for your kindness, many, many). In this example, Ruiz de Burton is very thankful to Vallejo, yet very dramatic as she discusses her “sad situation.” Part of what her correspondence demonstrates is her action against American imposition. The letters are telling, and provide insight into Ruiz de Burton’s motives, struggles, and actions.

The major shift in Ruiz de Burton’s tone and attitude in her correspondence to Vallejo is indicative of the weight that the struggle for land placed upon Mexicanos throughout the Southwest. Ruiz de Burton’s situation was common for a number of Mexicans at this time, with variances, of course, depending upon the motives behind their quest for land. For many, their deep love for the land was the driving force in their fight against squatters and the government. For others, like Ruiz de Burton, land held some semblance of *querencia*, but it also equated with capital power. Despite her efforts, the outcome was loss. Sánchez and Pita that Ruiz de Burton eventually lost Jamul in 1891, with the exception of the homestead that the government granted to her (2001, 390). They also note her changing attitude and health when they say “Yet the growing problems were also taking their toll on MARB’s health and spirit; as she tells Vallejo in a letter she was beginning to feel, as she said, numb: ‘Me siento como si tuviese el alma entumida, en un frío, estupor’ (9-4-74) (I feel as if I were a numb soul, in a cold, stupor)” (391). Being engaged in a life-long fight for land would, of course,

exhaust even the strongest willed woman. Through the progression of her correspondence with Vallejo, the reader sees a woman who would not back down from getting what she wanted, using any means possible to acquire the land and capital that she so desired. Ruiz de Burton provides an example of a Mexican American woman who was not afraid to back down to the strongest of political men and/or the government in order to persevere in her fight for land she believed she had a right to claim. She was an agent seeking change, as were many of the Hispanos/Mexicanos who were similarly displaced.

Conclusion

As demonstrated, it was upon Vallejo whom Ruiz de Burton relied to help her claim title to Jamul and Ensenada. The Burtons, and specifically Ruiz de Burton, fought for almost 20 years for the title. The relationship between Vallejo and Ruiz de Burton was unique—two doppelgängers involved in the historic battle for land reclamation in a period where Mexicans were seen unfavorably in the eyes of the “Yankees,” as Ruiz de Burton would say. Her personal life mirrored those of the Hispanos/Mexicanos in *The Squatter and the Don*, who also fought for their rights and land.

María Amparo Ruiz de Burton exemplifies the strength of Mexican women of her time. In addition to documenting and reacting to the struggles that Mexicans, and specifically *Californios*, faced with the impending American expansionist efforts, Ruiz de Burton’s *testimonio heredera* also raised other important issues, such as those related to gender. This effort is one that would prompt contemporary Mexicana/Hispana/Chicana women to continue their quest for equality. Ruiz de Burton reminds us that women played an integral role in relation to land and power. Sánchez and Pita point out that rather than view women as objects, Ruiz de Burton’s work, particularly in *The Squatter and the Don*, demonstrates the

importance of women in relation to “land and power,” as she uses the “daughters of Alamar” to deconstruct the myth that “women are commodified, [as] part of the landscape” (1997, 45). Ruiz de Burton was anything but “commodified,” and fought until her death for the land she believed was rightfully hers.

Although at times her motives were questionable and her actions manipulative, Ruiz de Burton aptly critiqued the government, the legal system, and the squatters who worked in unison to disempower the Mexicans of the nineteenth century. The work performed by Ruiz de Burton in this important struggle is work that continues to resonate into the present. Not only are land struggles still prevalent in the Southwest, but so too are gender, race, economic, and political issues. Ruiz de Burton’s serves as the primary powerful voice of a group of women in this study dedicated to the land, cultural and collective memory, or *testimonio heredera*, and gender equality. Her life-long active fight in the struggle for Hispano/Mexicano rights and land in the nineteenth century is part of the historical participation that the other three women in this study would document in the twentieth century.

Chapter 3:

Texas, Tejas & the Struggle for Land & Identity

Although it shared many of the same struggles as California, New Mexico, and Arizona with regard to American expansionism and the impacts of colonization and land loss, Texas presents a unique example of a historical battle for belonging. Unlike its neighboring territories, Texas' status as a Republic from 1836-1846 gave it separate power as a nation, but also placed it in a liminal position enticing both Mexico and the United States to battle for its acquisition. In his study of the Chicano homeland in the Southwestern United States, John R. Chávez highlights Mexican officials' concern with Texas joining the United States, and suggests that recognizing Texas' independence would make it "a buffer against the northern aggression that Spain and Mexico had feared for centuries" (1984, 38). This aggression stemmed from the United States' overt and covert attempts to gain Texas as part of its land base.

If such an acquisition occurred, the effects of the United States' taking of Texas would place Mexican Texans in a precarious position because of citizenship, loyalty and land issues. Chávez argues that "Mexicans saw the separation of Texas as a deliberate attempt on the part of the United States to expand at their expense" (36). Chavez's assessment mirrors situations occurring throughout the region. As leading Tejano historian David Montejano confirms, the acquisition of Texas presented opportunity for the development of a new trade route from the United States to Mexico. The Mexican War, he claims, aided in accomplishing the goal of securing the Texas borderlands as prime real estate for elite Anglo merchants (1987, 20). The assertions made by Chávez and Montejano are an important part of the discourse that defines Mexican history in Texas.

This chapter suggests that the precursors to these historical texts cannot be overlooked. Uncovering alternative versions Texas history completed prior to those of contemporary historians reveals the active participation of women in historical documentation using non-traditional methods. One noteworthy person who accounts for the history of the Texas borderlands in non-traditional forms, a Master's thesis and a novel, comes from an unlikely source—a Mexican American woman writing in the 1930s and 1940s under the guidance of an esteemed Anglo folklorist. Although her work was most often categorized as folkloric, Jovita González challenged social and political norms by developing two critical *testimonios herederas* about the land issues in South Texas. As a daughter of the Texas borderlands, she counters the dominant narrative that was designed to displace Mexicanos by penning her own version of Texas history—an account that would challenge her mentor, prominent historians of her time, and the patriarchal system that had dictated women's place inside and outside of the home. González's thesis and novel—her *testimonios herederas*—reveal literal and literary representations of the struggles she inherited over land, class, race, and gender.

Through her work, González pays particular attention to South Texas, an area where Mexicans were the majority. This is not to discount the fact that, as historian Andrés Reséndez confirms, “Demographically, the part of the Texas population called “Mexican” was in fact a small minority” (2005, 20). In fact, this was unusual for an area that was once a part of Mexico, and located in what would become the Southwestern United States, where typically, Mexicans were the majority. However, Texas' population was sparse in comparison to California and New Mexico, which may account for the discrepancy between the Mexican and Anglo populations. González focuses on the areas of Texas where Mexicans

were the majority as a way to acknowledge Mexican agency, as will be discussed later. That Mexicans were the minority in Texas is significant to understanding the history of Texas land and race issues. One effect of the skewed population numbers was that it presented an opportunity for Anglo newcomers to have immense control of the state politically and racially.

That sparseness soon changed as “Mexico opened the doors for alien colonization in Texas in 1820, and Stephen F. Austin established the first Anglo colony” (Rosenbaum, 1998, 34). This history is important to note because it highlights the fact that land was now highly sought after by incoming colonists. These new border crossers “were mostly industrious peoples seeking fertile Texas lands” (Reséndez, 2005, 26). Anglo immigrants flocking to Texas were to swear “allegiance to Mexico,” but as historian Robert J. Rosenbaum states, “most *americanos* brought traditions about land ownership, language, law, and government that they had no intention of giving up” (34). Because of their refusal to adhere to the initial agreement to pledge allegiance to Mexico, Anglo Americans would force Mexican Texans to experience a double colonization. Tejanos were first subjected to Spain’s rule, and with the incoming Anglo Americans, a second colonization was inevitable.

Historian Leroy P. Graf’s examination of colonizing projects in Texas south of the Nueces River in 1820-1845, where Mexicans were the majority, reveals just how this double colonization occurred. Because of Texas’ small population, a series of colonization laws in Tamaulipas were established to encourage settlement in the region (1947, 432-433). During the early to mid-1820s, grants of land were given to Mexican ranchers, and because of Texas’ revolving status, the intentions of providing Mexicans with land turned into the State of Texas giving land to incoming settlers with the idea of colonization at its root. According

to Graf, part of the reasoning behind the land grant and colonization push was an effort to deter illegal trade or smuggling, not necessarily to establish towns (435-436). Many of the colonization efforts failed, but those failures did not lessen the impact of Texas' semi-ambiguous status.

Politicians, citizens and incoming settlers held differing views of how Texas' position should be navigated. Reséndez states that “in the absence of a constituted state and an established nation, institutions like the civil bureaucracies and land administrations, the army, and the Catholic Church were the principal vehicles to expand the reach of the nation and disseminate a nationalist ideology” (148). The hub of the battle in Texas was over land, race, and political control. Folklorist and literary critic José E. Limón notes that the United States' expansionist mission was “aimed at acquiring from Mexico what is now the Southwest, with California and Texas as the principal prizes” (1996, XII). Limón continues, saying the contested area of what is now South Texas, the area located between the Rio Grande and the Nueces River, was at the center of the struggle for land and occupation between Mexico and the United States (XIII). This particular area was significant to the González family, which is why Jovita González focused upon it in her writing.

With both the United States and Mexico staking claim on Texas land, conflicts were inevitable, particularly over ideas of land use. Mexicans viewed land as communal, to be used for cattle grazing, ranching and farming. This view differed substantially from Anglo conception of the land, which, as Montejano points out shifted to the idea that “Land was now a marketable commodity” (21). The history of Texas land issues would no doubt surface in the stories told by Mexicano *abuelos* (grandparents) and *parientes* (relatives) to the younger generation prone to feel the effects of the battle. We can imagine a young Jovita

González listening to the stories her grandparents told about the complexity of South Texas land and race issues.

Colonization and the new view of land as a commodity affected Mexicans in Texas (and throughout the Southwest) greatly. In their historical study of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the Santa Anita land grant in Texas, Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, James A. McAllen and Margaret H. McAllen reiterate the struggles faced by Mexicanos over this long period:

An especially crucial period was from 1836, when Texas lay claim to the area north of the Rio Grande, to the conclusion of the Mexican War in 1848. The citizens of the region struggled to hold on to their lands as the territory north of the Rio Grande was claimed by the Texas Republic, annexed by the United States, and finally, in 1848, formally ceded by Mexico. The original colonists and their descendents stemmed the changing tides as their citizenship converted three times over a thirty-year period. They tried as best they could to hold on to their lands, money, and status. (2003, 3)

Historian David J. Weber states that “most Mexicans in Texas found themselves caught in a struggle between two cultures, not knowing whether to remain loyal to Mexico or become loyal to Texas—whether to be traitors to Mexico or traitors to Texas” (2003, 93). The situation occurring in Texas resembled that of California and New Mexico, but the difference stemmed from the immense amount of violence that defined the Texas struggle for citizenship and land rights.

Violence on the Texas Borderlands

When the United States finally annexed Texas in 1845, Mexican officials saw that as an aggressive act indicating that war was on the horizon. Texas becoming part of the Union would lead to considerable changes for the people of the region, and change the Southwest forever.⁴³ Anti-Mexican sentiment, sale to speculators, force, and intimidation drove Mexicans from their lands (Weber, 2003, 155). The Mexican American War of 1846

signified the end of Mexican control of its land and people. At this time, families like the González's were driven off their land. The subsequent Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo acted as the official record indicating that the War was over, and affected Mexicans, now Mexican Americans, in substantial ways. Montejano reminds us that "Laws, public customs, authority, even the physical appearance of old settlements became foreign and alien to the native people" (1987, 25). González describes these shifts in her historical and "fictional" accounts. The enactment of new, American laws on citizenship and property law were the most significant. Specific to this study, those laws affecting the land grants originally imparted by the Spanish and later, Mexican governments, are especially noteworthy.

Examining this period of Southwest history, and particularly the history of Texas, reveals how it was distinctive in comparison to California, New Mexico, and Arizona. Because Texas was deemed a Republic, its land laws were dealt with more than ten years prior and in a different way than its neighbors. Montejano describes Texas' unique status and land laws saying:

Since Texas had, under the arms of statehood in 1845, retained jurisdiction over all of the land within its borders, it claimed to be exempted from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Thus the former republic carried out its own deliberations concerning the status of the annexed Mexicans and their land grants. (38)

Texas differs from California, New Mexico, and Arizona in that, as Weber points out "The federal government played no part in these land matters in Texas, for when Texas entered the Union in 1845 it retained control of its public lands, a situation unique in American history" (2003, 156). While those states were guaranteed protection of their lands under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Texas followed a slightly different path because it did not have to rely on the federal government as expressed in international treaty law.

Instead, in Texas, as Montejano found, “Governor Peter H. Bell appointed William Bourland and James Miller to investigate the validity of Spanish and Mexican titles” (1987, 38). The investigations were not beneficial to Mexicans because they allowed time for squatters to claim land, and required Mexicans to acquire assets with which to pay for legal proceedings to hold claim to their land. According to Montejano,

Squatters and adventurers were everywhere; tales of fraud and chicanery were common; and deliberations in the Texas Legislature and Texas courts all suggested an eventual confiscation of Mexican-owned property. The considerable expense of legal proceedings to defend old Spanish and Mexican titles, together with the uncertainty of the outcome, prompted many owners to sell to interested American parties at low prices. (30)

In addition to litigation costs and squatters, many Mexicans lost their land because titles were not recognized by the American government, documents were lost or stolen, and land was given to attorneys who took it in lieu of monetary payment (Montejano, 1987, 31). This intense history of land issues would directly impact Jovita González, both as a Mexican American whose family held claims to land in South Texas, and as a woman who studied with the Anglo historians documenting the history of the borderlands—her land—but who failed to acknowledge the impacts on Mexican peoples.

Jovita González (1904-1983)

Jovita González was a Tejana from the Texas/Mexico borderlands, best known as a Texas/Mexican folklorist. She studied under the guidance of well-known folklorist and Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin, J. Frank Dobie, described as “the principle figure to engage south Texas Mexican-American culture” during the mid-1900s (Limón, 1994, 43).⁴⁴ In her extensive studies of González, María E. Cotera proclaims that González’s father was “a native of Mexico,” and her mother came from a family that “owned

land on both sides of the border for over five generations” (2006, 6). González’s family history resembles that of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca (discussed in Chapter 4) in that their families were descendants of the original settlers in their respective regions. Cotera notes that Gonzalez’s “maternal grandparents were direct descendants of the colonizers who had established the first settlements in Nuevo Santander under the leadership of Don José Escandón,” [a South Texas colonizer] (Cotera, 2006, 6-7). Whereas Cabeza de Baca’s land inheritance stemmed from her paternal grandparents, González’s developed through her mother’s side of the family, but both claimed ties to the original colonizers of their regions—González in Texas, and Cabeza de Baca in New Mexico.

Similar to other Mexicano families in the Southwest, the González family was driven off their land during the Mexican American War when racial tensions were at an all-time high. Anti-Mexican sentiment stemmed from the series of wars over land along the Texas/Mexico border, and led to wars centered upon race (Cotera, 2006, 8). The emergence of groups like the Texas Rangers increased the severity of racial tensions, and Mexicans were targets of discrimination and death by force if necessary. In their extensive study of the Texas Rangers, Julian Samora, Joe Bernal and Albert Peña confirm the racial tension and violence brought on by such groups saying, “Once Texas earned statehood in 1845, all those ‘citizens’—now called Mexican Americans—residing within the new state boundaries were doomed to an existence of inequality, poverty, maltreatment by Ranger lawmen, and a judicial system that had no justice for the Mexican American” (1979, 2).⁴⁵ The Rangers contributed to the extreme violence that enveloped Texas at this time. Limón describes the Rangers as “paramilitary units...veterans of the Texas war for independence—assigned to assist [Zachary] Taylor’s troops with their special talent for indiscriminate killing of

Mexicans, a talent acquired since 1836” (Limón, 1996, XIII). These historical experiences directly impacted the González family, and are part of what prompted Jovita to document the historical atrocities occurring in the nineteenth century. The Rangers, in fact, appear in her novel, *Caballero*, as a team of aggressive men who hated anything Mexican.

González was tied the violent history of Texas as a member of a “landed, relatively affluent *hidalgo* and *ranchero* class,” (Limón, 1996, XVIII) and would transfer the story into her *testimonio heredera*, which I argue, is apparent in *Caballero*. Her *testimonio* is unique in that it begins in her Master’s thesis, *Life Along the Border*, and continues into *Caballero*. Combined, the two provide literal and literary representations of González’s inherited struggles of land, class, race, and gender. The facts and statistics provide her with the base for the issues faced by the fictional characters in *Caballero*. The characters in the novel are clearly based upon her own family and community members, or those individuals and families that she references in her thesis.

González’s handwritten autobiographical manuscript discovered by Limón in the E.E. Mireles and Jovita González de Mireles Papers in the Special Collection & Archives at Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi reveal her family’s roots in the Texas/Mexico borderlands. In her autobiographical notes, González provides her family history, stating that she was “born in Roma, Texas,” and that her father, “Jacobo González Rodríguez, a native of Cadereyta, Nuevo León, México, came from a family of educators and artisans,” while her mother, “Severina Guerra Barrera... came from a long line of colonizers who had come with Escandón to El Nuevo Santander” (Limón, 1997, ix). González’s decision to leave these autobiographical clues is not without purpose. With them, she is able to provide insight into

her family and Texas history, demonstrate her ties to both sides of the border, and point out the importance of women in the nineteenth century.

González immediately establishes the historical context surrounding her family history, explaining that her mother was “a descendant of a Texas landowner,” and her grandfather, Francisco Guerra Guerra, was “born in Mexico” (1997, ix). She therefore, has dual interest in the Texas/Mexico border region. González also suggests that the historical violence discussed above prompted her relatives to cross over to the Mexican side after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to escape the acts of vengeance of the American colonizers (1997, ix). Probably most significant to this gender-focused study about land is that González’s family history also reveals the importance that women played in relation to land ownership and inheritance.

When González’s family returned to Texas, it was her great-grandmother, Ramona Guerra Hinojosa, who financed the return of her family’s land. She provided her son, Francisco, González’s grandfather, with the capital to purchase *Las Víboras*, what was once a part of the family’s land, and what would become Francisco’s ranch in Starr County (1997, x). It is because of this direct tie to land-related issues that González is featured as a person of interest in this study. She is most often noted for her work as a folklorist, but González’s work extends beyond her folklore, and is of far greater importance to the history of Texas, the Southwest, and Mexican landowners in the region.

In her Master’s thesis, she provides historical facts, detailing life along the Texas/Mexico borderlands. She asserts her authority and agency to relay historical information at a time when that type of documentation was most commonly written by men, and namely, Anglo men. González’s writing in *Caballero* is much like María Amparo Ruiz

de Burton's in *The Squatter and the Don* in that she combines fact with fiction in an effort to document history and also to provide pointed critiques of the government. Despite numerous failed attempts to get the novel published, González's critiques, had they been published, would have been parceled out to a large audience, and challenged those depictions of Texas/Mexican history developed by the Anglo males with whom she trained.

Acknowledging González's work as *testimonio heredera*, and outside of folklore likewise recognizes the authority with which she claimed knowledge of Texas/Mexican history and culture. It also confirms that Mexican American women were active in the construction of their respective local histories, while simultaneously commenting upon the larger national and what we would today call the transnational issues. Her work is a precursor to feminist studies today. González's work has never been examined as *testimonio*, or for its direct relation to land issues in South Texas, which this study argues are two prominent features of her writing.

The Education of Jovita González

The land upon which she grew up held significance to her from an early age. According to González, *Las Víboras* served as the point of formal and traditional education for the González children. *Las Víboras* was her father's "headquarters" for the "school that was to bring Mexican education to the border boys" (1997, x). The ranch also doubled as the informal classroom where González says she and her sister "went horseback riding to the pastures with my grandfather, took long walks with father, and visited the homes of the cowboys and the ranch hands" (x). González's experiences at this time are reminiscent of those experienced by Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, some few years later in neighboring New Mexico, and Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce in Arizona (discussed in-depth in Chapter 5). Both

González and Cabeza de Baca would eventually become invested in folklore, and all three women were devoted to *ranchero* culture, and land-related issues as experienced by their families.

For González, her investment in South Texas as her homeland would develop from the stories she inherited from her family. In her autobiographical notes, she describes a conversation with her great-grandmother prior to her family's move to San Antonio. From what was most likely her deathbed, her great-grandmother Ramoncita, who had financed the land purchase of *Las Víboras* tells González and her siblings:

‘Your mother tells me you are moving to live in San Antonio. Did you know that land at one time belonged to us? But now the people living there don’t like us. They say we don’t belong there and must move away. Perhaps they will tell you to go to Mexico where you belong. Don’t listen to them. Texas is ours. Texas is our home. Always remember these words: Texas is ours, Texas is our home’ (1997, xi)

We can only surmise what these words meant to a young González, and what she would do as a result of Ramoncita's advice. I argue that González heeds Ramoncita's words, taking to heart what they meant. The effects are apparent through González's *testimonio heredera*, particularly as she describes and critiques the land struggles faced by Mexicanos in the Texas borderlands. González says “I have always remembered the words and I have always felt at home in Texas” (1997, xi). In examining González's *testimonio heredera* closely, we see that she was attached to Texas, and ultimately, to its people.

While in San Antonio, González attended an American school, learned English, and went on to receive a teaching certificate from a Summer Normal School (xii⁴⁶ González enrolled at the University of Texas, but had to return home due to lack of funds, and began teaching to save money to re-enroll at the University. She eventually attended Our Lady of

the Lake College in San Antonio, where she was able to teach high school in exchange for room, board, and tuition.

It was at this time that she met her soon-to-be mentor, J. Frank Dobie, a professor of English at the University of Texas, and a well-known folklorist. It was Dobie who initially sparked González's interest in pursuing folklore studies of her people. Scholars invested in González's history have surmised that she saw herself as a "native intellectual" (Limón, 1993, 459; Cotera, 2006, 5). Her work has additional merit. González was dedicated to her culture, people, and region. Cotera recognizes this saying, "...González never truly stood apart from her culture. Indeed it was her deep and abiding commitment to that culture and her concern for the future of Mexican communities in Texas that drew her back to the borderlands armed with the tools of ethnographic meaning making" (2008, 104). In this way, González was very much like Fabiola Cabeza de Baca in her commitment to preserving culture.

González begins her commitment to her community by writing her Master's thesis, what I argue is the first section of her *testimonio heredera*. The thesis then extends into the second portion of the *testimonio*, her co-written historical novel, *Caballero*. Here, González blends fact with fiction, using facts uncovered in her thesis to form the historical base of her novel. Both items are based upon her family and community history, and illuminate the inherited struggles that González acquires via those histories. Through her experience as a member of a *ranchero* family, research of South Texas in her thesis, and expertise in Texas folklore, González demonstrates her authority to tell her own version of Texas history, both in academic and literary form.

González's family ties to the *ranchero* and *hidalgo* experience in South Texas in the mid-nineteenth century, along with her experience in the social and political climate dominated by Anglo males prompted her to author her own versions of Texas borderland history. I argue that these important works serve as González's decolonizing tools to speak against the dominant narratives that were designed to displace her. Often, these narratives came from people like her infamous mentor, Dobie, who claimed to have grown up with Mexicans in South Texas.⁴⁷ Many scholars are critical of the way in which Dobie wrote about and characterized the Mexican people of South Texas. I agree with those critiques and deem it important to note that he was known as having a "constructive memory," (Hudson, 1964, 5) and "embellish[ed]" some of his folk tales "with an overlay of romantic idioms" (Limón, 1994, 51). However, González, not Dobie, is the focus of this chapter. Therefore, it is important to recognize who served as her mentor,⁴⁸ for that information provides insight into why she chose to develop counter narratives in her *testimonios herederas*.⁴⁹

It is clear that González used her professional relationships with prominent Anglo males to establish herself within the ranks of the experts on Texas history and folklore. By doing this, she was able to develop her agency by recounting South Texas history through the lens of a gendered and racialized subject who inherited the struggle for identity, power, and land. Limón suggests that González "often repressed the better part of her political consciousness," (1994, 74) but her thesis and critiques in *Cabellero* suggest otherwise. Both provide historical and familial ties to the race, class, and gender issues experienced by Mexicanas/os in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is no coincidence that the story line in her novel is reminiscent of the experiences that her own family and other Mexicanos

underwent as Texas transitioned from Mexican to American rule, with its status as a republic in between.

Cotera reminds us that the Gonzalez family, like other Mexican families in the region, experienced the negative effects of capitalism, expansion, and land issues. To put the historical times in which González lived into context Cotera says,

On July 1904, the rail line from Corpus Christi to Brownsville was completed. Financed largely by Anglo ranchers and businessmen, the Saint Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway opened up the Rio Grande Valley to massive land speculation, bringing South Texas firmly into the fold of the U.S. market economy and enabling wealthy Anglo ranchers to take part in the economic and social transformation taking place across the nation. (2008, 106)

This passage reveals the continued struggles that Mexicans faced into the twentieth century. The transformation that occurred signified changes for both Mexicans and Anglos, but in very different ways. While Mexicans were left disenfranchised, Anglos prospered as they gathered Mexican land.

González uses this history in her *testimonios herederas* to demonstrate that despite the struggles that Mexicanos as a whole faced, they actively engaged in the fight for power and land. Cotera suggests that it was an:

astonishing fact, that a Mexican American woman in 1930 would have thought it reasonable to submit for review a piece of work that contested the very foundational fictions upon which Texas historians were building a seemingly unassailable edifice...especially since so much of the conventional wisdom about González figures her as a benign collaborator with power. (2006, 6)

If being benign means being compassionate, then that is an accurate adjective to describe González, as she was definitely concerned about her people and history. However, the charge against her as a “collaborator” must be challenged.

Through her work, González asserts her agency as a Mexican American woman and anticipates what Emma Pérez labels as the “decolonial imaginary.” Based on her interactions with folklorists and historians such as Dobie, Eugene Barker, and Walter Prescott Webb, González developed the ammunition that she needed to counter their paternalistic, patriarchal, and race-based stories of the Texas borderlands. González recognized that aside from the folklore, Texas history was based upon the loss of land by Mexicanos like her family, who used the land for subsistence. The folk tales being created by Dobie and others merely served to further romanticize the Texas/Mexico borderlands and the relationships between Anglo pioneers and Mexican *rancheros*. By writing a Master’s thesis that provided historical facts, González countered the dominant narratives that were surfacing. She carried those facts into her novel, thus incorporating her historical and folk knowledge. She brings to the surface the literal and metaphorical struggles she inherited as a Mexican American woman from a family who was struggling for survival and their land. These actions do not support the idea that González was a benign collaborator, but rather, underline her commitment to Tejanos.

The fact that González uses her cultural and historical knowledge to turn the literary into the literal reveals her talent and authority. She is more than a folklorist, as Dobie saw her. She is deeply connected to the Texas/Mexico borderlands as the descendant of a *ranchero* class, whose lives depended upon the land. Both her thesis and *Caballero* are clearly about the land issues that defined the nineteenth century in the Southwestern United States. Literary and Ecocritic Priscilla Solis Ybarra notes that, “[a]lthough she did not inherit a grand ranch, she [González] took very seriously the cultural inheritance available to her:

stories of her ancestors and culture” (2009, 177).⁵⁰ She begins telling those stories in her Master’s thesis.

Establishing Authority on the Border

Jovita González committed herself to documenting Tejano history through folklore, historical research, and literature. Like the men with whom she worked and studied, she was invested in telling the story of the people of Texas—*her* people. González did this with a somewhat different perspective than her counterparts, though. Cotera implies that J. Frank Dobie, Eugene Barker, and Walter Prescott Webb were “producing popular books that—for the most part—functioned as nostalgic apologias for Anglo imperialism” (2006, 4).

Meanwhile, González was navigating her way through predominantly white control of Texas history and culture. As a Mexican American woman writing in the 1930s, González faced different barriers with regard to education, race, and gender. However, she did not cower from making her presence known within the predominantly Anglo world. I argue that González used her experiences with the Anglo majority in venues such as the Texas Folklore Society to produce counter narratives of Texas history through the construction of her *testimonios herederas*.

Cotera argues that the Master’s thesis developed by González “represents an extended and quite open argument against the rhetoric of dominance that was at the time of its writing consolidating itself in the discourse of the very figures to whom she presented her work” (2006, 5-6). I agree and suggest that the thesis does more than that. First, it highlights González’s understanding of the importance of the land to Mexicanos in the Texas/Mexico borderlands. Second, because she deliberately chose to focus on the areas of Texas with majority Mexican population, the thesis underscores the value of identifying Mexicano

strength, rather than implying that they were completely helpless. Thought of in this way, González's thesis demonstrates the agency that Mexicanos claimed in Starr County.

Despite criticisms that González wanted to mimic her mentors, we see how her work challenges those who see her work as an extension of Dobie and others. As a Mexican woman in the 1930s she was subject to studying with the Anglo pioneers historically noted for their skewed views of American expansionism at the expense of Mexicans across the Southwest. What is noteworthy is that she chooses to forego a study of folklore in her graduate work, to instead produce a historical account documenting the inherited struggles she, her family, and Mexicanos as a whole faced, and point out that in some areas, such as Starr County, Mexicanos did retain some control. She was born in the twentieth century, meaning that she inherited the stories and the struggles faced by her family in the nineteenth century. Unlike Ruiz de Burton's power to engage in the land battles as a woman living in the nineteenth century, González's power came from being able to document those stories in her thesis a century later. In this sense, she "use[s] the master's tools" to "dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984, 13).⁵¹

Through the research and writing of her thesis, González challenges the authorities of Texas history, including those who trained her. But she deemed her thesis as necessary for contributing to the existing history, as her counter narrative. On this matter Cotera says:

For González, the 'foundational moment' for Texas came almost a century before the Texas Revolution, with the founding of the first permanent Spanish settlements just north of the Rio Grande. González's refusal to follow the accepted storyline of Texas history—especially her rejection of the Texas Revolution as a foundational moment in Texas history—placed her at odds with the version of history popularized by [Eugene] Barker, Walter Prescott Webb, and even J. Frank Dobie. (2006, 17)

González's thesis serves as part of her *testimonio heredera*, and she uses it to first describe the historical struggles faced by Mexicanos in the Texas borderlands—the story of her own family's struggles—but also points to the fact that Mexicanos fought back.

Law of the Land

It can be inferred that the González family had a close connection to land grants in Texas. As owners of *Las Viboras*, located in Starr County near Roma, Texas, the González's had a vested interest in the land laws that were put into affect with the onset of American takeover. González immediately establishes her authority on Texas history, and specifically that history related to land and the differences between Anglo and Mexican ownership by citing facts and providing statistics. She notes the historical land struggles that existed, and highlights the fact that these land issues persisted into the twentieth century, when she was writing her thesis. González suggests that Mexicanos held agency since they were the majority landholders in many of the counties in South Texas, and developed the towns in which they worked.

For example, she states that in the 1900s, and at the time she was writing her thesis (1930), Mexicanos made up 83.73% of landowners in Duval County, 99.38% in Zapata County, 83% in Starr County, and 72.9% in Jim Hogg County (72). These landowners, she says, are a combination of “the two classes which prevailed for many years in the border: the landed proprietors and the working masses” (70). González's citation of these facts indicates that the struggle for land persisted over time, but also that Mexicanos were not the lazy or gun-crazy group as Dobie painted them out to be in his writing. Rather, they worked hard to establish their towns and villages and actively fought to acquire and maintain their land.

González does not deny that racial tensions existed, but she makes it a point to identify Mexicano power in some areas along the border. González states that “Approximately 60 percent of the big landowners in the countries under consideration, Zapata, Starr, and Cameron, are descendants of the original grantees [Spanish and Mexican]” (70). This number includes her own family, who were original grantees to the land in question in her thesis. González maintains that grants were given by the Mexican government to its citizens “to encourage the movement of Mexican colonists into Texas with the hope that it might serve to counter balance the influx of American colonization in the province” (68). She also disqualifies the fact that incoming settlers were greeted by barren, uninhabited land, and acknowledges that there was Mexican presence in the area long before the expansion, indicating the Spanish government prior had also given grants to Mexican citizens in the area.

González spends a significant amount of time explaining *ranchero* culture and Mexicans’ ties to the land via the social structures that existed. Even though she’s describing the hierarchies, what remains in the background is that land played a significant role in status designation and cultural identity, and the fact that Mexicanos fought to own land. She describes the various classes of Mexicanos, who all sought land ownership. She says, the landowner was master of his land (in addition to being master of his *peones*), but also acknowledges that the *vaquero* was similarly tied to the land as “son of the small landowner who did not have enough to occupy him at his own ranch,” and further, the *peón* worked the land (76). These descriptions demonstrate that Mexicanos’ identities are formed via their connection to the land, and their agency exists in their ability to decide how the land would be used.

González does not deny that issues of race and class existed. In both parts of her *testimonio heredera*, her thesis and *Caballero*, she acknowledges that incoming Anglo settlers created a racial, political and social divide, and she specifically addresses Mexicans' classification as second-class citizens. She underscores the unjust treatment and reminds her reader:

...the majority of these so-called undesirable aliens have been in the state long before Texas was Texas; second, that these people were here long before these new Americans crowded the deck of the immigrant ship; third that a great number of the Mexican people in the border did not come as immigrants, but are the descendants of the *agraciados* who held grants from the Spanish crown. (no page number listed)

Like Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, who in Chapter 4 is described as a *Nuevo Mexicana* who claimed kinship to the original colonizers of New Mexico, González, too is a descendant of the original colonizers. By acknowledging Mexicans' involvement in the founding of the Texas borderlands, she claims their agency. She says "These frontier cattlemen, with the approval of Escandón, were instrumental in founding the towns and villas along the Rio Grande, which were later to form the nucleus of the Hispanic-Mexican migration into Texas" (48). The Gonzálezes were direct descendents of Escandón, who founded some of the original settlements along the Rio Grande. These towns held significance because they were central to American expansionist plans to use the river in much the same way that the Mississippi River was used as the major trade route from one coast to the other (Montejano, 1987, 16-18).

Relative to this study, in her thesis, González emphasizes the importance of land grants to the initial inhabitants of the region, citing their customary use. She confirms that grant land was common land to be used by the people. This conceptualization of land was unique to Spanish and Mexican grants and much different than the way land is thought of

today. González provides examples of how common lands were used, telling the story of Don Vicente Guerra, a native of the region who founded a villa along the river. She says “He proposed to bring without cost to the royal treasury, and at his own expense, the necessary number of families to found the proposed town, adding that he would also cede part of his own land to the colony provided it were held in common” (48).

Continuing her discussion of common lands she says, “When these settlements were created, no division of land was made but a common grant sufficiently large was set aside for the use of the whole colony” (50). The grants were mutually beneficial for all members of the colony who could use the land for ranching and farming, and essentially, for the livelihood of the community. González underscores the idea that Tejanos who were part of these communities developed *querencia*, or deep love and appreciation for the land. This view of the land is also demonstrated through the *testimonio heredera* of Cabeza de Baca in New Mexico and Wilbur-Cruce in Arizona, suggesting that Mexicanos throughout what is now the greater Southwest saw the land similarly.

González continues establishing her authority on Texas history and land grants as she begins the third chapter of her thesis. She offers definitions of grant classifications and asserts that the grants were given to counter American colonization occurring in the region.

She says

The Mexican grants, issued between 1830 and 1835, were given to leading Mexican citizens of the northern Mexican states. This was done to encourage the movement of Mexican colonists into Texas with the hope that it might serve to counter balance the influx of American colonization in the province. (69)

Despite the fact that the majority of this land now belongs to Anglos, González suggests that Mexicans were given some measure of power by the granting of land. She does not deny that

the outcome was dispossession, but recognizes that Mexicanos enacted their agency by owning land and attempting to fight for it.

This is not to suggest that Texas land history was not violent. The Rio Grande was clearly a highly sought after waterway with the potential to lead to great wealth for incoming merchants invested in establishing international trade. Montejano suggests that when Texas declared its independence, “the young republic, embarking on an ambitious and aggressive strategy, claimed the entire length of the river as its boundary with Mexico. It was a paper claim, of course, for the republic had no control or influence beyond the Nueces” (1987, 18). Mexico did not want to acknowledge Texas’ independence, but was forced to when annexation occurred. Rosenbaum states that, “Warfare, therefore, continued after 1836, with the disputed territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande serving as the battleground between *americano* and *mexicano*, between Federalist and centralist” (1998, 34). Once Texas became part of the United States in 1845, it was inevitable that American forces would attempt to lay claim to this important strip of land along the Rio Grande.

The desire for control over the area along the Rio Grande led to the Mexican American War. The experience in Texas was one of aggression and violence.⁵² This was not necessarily the case in New Mexico, Arizona, and California. There is no doubt that each area experienced extreme cases of blatant racism, but the fight to maintain their land claims were significantly different. What makes Texas’ experience unique is that the largest landholder of its neighbors was the federal government. In addition, each of those states could call upon the Office of the Surveyor General and the Court of Private Land Claims, established to at least give the impression that Mexicanos’ land claims were protected, despite the actual shortcomings and backwards processes of both the Surveyor General and

the Courts, whereas Texas could not. Instead, Texas' liminal position as a Republic, and eventual incorporation into the nation, worked to increase the violence and lack of protection for the Mexicans who lived there, despite the fact that Mexicanos were now the majority, particularly in the settlements along the Rio Grande (Rosenbaum, 1998, 39). While she does not deny that this violence persisted in Texas, in her thesis, González uses the fact that Mexicans were the majority to emphasize their agency.

Cotera points out that, "Her [González's] research clearly centers on counties in South Texas in which Mexicans retained some measure of control over land and resources" (2006, 70). González's choice to do this allows for two things to occur: she is able to establish her authority and knowledge about South Texas, and she positions Mexicans in a powerful position of landownership, which repositions them within the social hierarchy. González notes that after Mexican independence, public lands found between the Rio Grande and the Nueces Rivers were "allotted to prominent Mexican citizens and soldiers" (64). The allocation of land did not erase the racial tensions that were present in Texas at that time, though. In fact, they increased with the annexation of Texas, and eventually led to the Mexican-American War of 1846. González's historical account aptly portrays the struggles that Mexicans faced in Texas' tumultuous history as a nation and state. Through her thesis, she is able to provide insight into how Mexicanos retained some agency and simultaneously provides her version of Texas history.

González suggests that the influx of Anglo Americans into Texas after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the years following it were "over ambitious men who soon bought out the small Mexican landowners, and became the cattle barons of the border" (96). The Americans, González suggests, saw Mexicans as "unwilling to assimilate," which "made

their masters consider them foreigners” (96). González critiques the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in this section of her text, identifying the fact that although on paper Mexicans were to be considered citizens of the United States, they were considered second-class citizens, if they were considered at all. These are facts that would make their way into *Caballero*, indicating that the factual is a part of her “fictional” text.

González does not dismiss or undermine the history of dispossession. As the descendant of ranching family, she emphasizes the racial tensions surrounding land and cattle ranching life. She indicates that Mexican *rancheros* felt the brunt of political friction along the border, saying, “While the big ranchmen prospered and profited, the small Texas-Mexican landowner was forced to abandon his property and either become a *peon* [a landless laborer] or leave the country” (52). Here, González suggests that Mexican *rancheros* suffered greater effects of the political turmoil running rampant along the borderlands. This assessment of the U.S. legal system is comparable to the assessments provided by María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca. González’s tone is most similar to that of Cabeza de Baca, in that she presents her case as straightforward facts, rather than display emotion like Ruiz de Burton. However, González’s investment in *ranchero* culture is endemic of both Ruiz de Burton’s and Cabeza de Baca’s work in that the families of each woman were affected by the American legal system and loss of land, even if the impact for each varied to some degree.

González saw Mexicans as a whole as wronged, but she also suggests that the elite Mexicano landowners maintained some sense of power, both politically and socially. This point of view is similar to Cabeza de Baca and Ruiz de Burton, who also aligned with the elite. In one section of her thesis González remarks “It must be remembered, however, that in

old Texas-Mexican towns such as Laredo, San Diego, Río Grande City, and Brownsville there has always existed a group of educated, cultured Mexican families who have always been leaders in their communities” (104). While the potential for criticism of these women’s views of the elite exists, González makes this statement to suggest that Mexicanos were able to maintain power on some level—they retained their agency as a people. While I do not condone the establishment of class hierarchies, I do acknowledge the time in which González, Ruiz de Burton, and Cabeza de Baca were living and writing and argue that that must be taken into consideration.

In her discussions about land, González definitively highlights the class differences present within South Texas, and among Mexicans. She also acknowledges that the lower classes of Mexicans were able to eventually purchase small parcels of land. González factually details the disparities between life as a landed *ranchero*, or *caballero*, and the landless, indebted *peón*. The historical facts that González provided in her thesis developed into one of the main storylines in *Caballero*, with Don Santiago Mendoza y Soria serving as the landed *ranchero* that looked down upon his *peónes*. For this behavior, González does not praise Don Santiago, but rather, includes it as a critique of patriarchy. In her thesis she says, “In his large, strongly built stone or adobe house, the *ranchero* led a patriarchal existence. As head of the family his word was authority, no other law was needed and there was no necessity for civil interference” (80). González translate this statement directly into the way in which Don Santiago ran the Mendoza y Soría household. She uses it not only to provide an accurate depiction of the landed patriarchal-minded *hidalgo*, but also to demonstrate how that dominant, patriarchal view is flawed.

Staking a Claim in *Caballero*

González depicts Don Santiago Mendoza y Soría as the quintessential *ranchero* in *Caballero: A Historical Novel*. He is the consummate patriarch, elite landed Mexicano, suspicious of the intent of the Americans he encounters, and set in his ways. Because of her family ties to *ranchero* culture, and probably some of her experiences with *ranchero* attitudes in her family and community, it comes as no surprise that González would write about the customs, traditions, and history of Mexican *ranchero* life in the nineteenth century. This significant period is indicative of Mexicans' experiencing the effects of new American laws, customs, and ways of life just after the Mexican War. As a *testimonio heredera*, the novel works to not only tell a familial and community history of the Texas/Mexico borderlands, one that was tied to notions of displacement, but it also functions as a way for González to demonstrate that Mexicanos were active agents in their struggle for land.

The origin of González's novel proves that histories penned by Mexican Americans were often overlooked, particularly those told by Mexican American women. Its "more than 500 pages yellowed and tattered with age," (Kreneck, 1996, IX) had been housed in an archive since 1992, when it was finally donated by a friend and employee of the Miereleses.⁵³ The fact that the manuscript had survived its rudimentary method of preservation was quite a feat, and the fact that it would eventually be published some fifty-plus years after it was written, quite another. Through a shared interest in Mexican American history and folklore, along with a chance conversation about González, Dr. Jose E. Limón and Dr. María E. Cotera (then a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin), (re)membered the manuscript penned by González and Margaret Eimer (a.k.a. Eve Raleigh), (Limón, 1996, XVIII)⁵⁴ during the 1930s and 1940s (XVII-XXII).⁵⁵

According to Limón, “By the late 1940s, no doubt discouraged by [publishing] rejections, the two women decided to set the project aside and go their separate ways....” (XXI). González, he says, would go on to solely teaching high school and not pursue her interest in novel writing, and Eimer would return to Missouri (XXI). The manuscript remained tucked away until 1992, when Cruz donated it to Texas A&M University. At that time, Limón took it upon himself to recover the manuscript, and he, along with María Cotera, would have the manuscript published in honor of González. *Caballero* would be González’s posthumous novel, a plan she may have cued Marta Cotera (María’s mother) to follow through with during an interview Cotera conducted with the Mireleses, as González non-verbally signaled to Cotera that the manuscript had not been destroyed, as had been stated by her husband after Cotera asked about it (XXI).⁵⁶ In 1996, *Caballero* was published by Texas A&M Press, and the once twine-wrapped, yellowed manuscript became a significant part of Texas history.

This study examines *Caballero* through a different lens than past investigations.⁵⁷ I argue that *Caballero* serves as the second part, or extension, of González’s *testimonio heredera*. In her *testimonio heredera*, González does two things: she exerts her agency as a Mexican American woman providing historical documentation using an unconventional approach: literature; she also demonstrates the agency with which Mexicanos engaged in the fight for their land. The fact that this particular work is labeled a “historical novel” is not necessarily unique, since for Mexicanos standard historical accounts were often supplanted by the creation of alternative histories in novelistic forms. But that it was written by a woman and situates Mexicanos as active agents in the land struggle of the nineteenth century is worthy of mention. González critiques issues of race, class, and gender, as Limón has noted

when he says the novel is “fraught with issues of racism and countervailing masculinized nationalism...especially as culture is deeply embedded in questions of class, patriarchy, and gender” (Limón, 1996, XXII). She also brings into her discussion the importance of land to the identity of Mexicanos in the borderlands, and in a veiled way, demonstrates that it is through marriage to Mexican women that Anglo men acquire power and access. The storyline in *Caballero* is an extension of González’s thesis, in which she provides a sound historical context for what would become her “fictional” novel.

As the descendant of a landed family, similar to her New Mexican equivalent, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, González saw herself in a certain class and social position because of this connection to status via the land. The way in which she creates her characters is also similar to the way in which Cabeza de Baca would construct the characters in her novel, *We Fed Them Cactus* (discussed in depth in the following chapter). Both women were vested in folklore, and how it contributed to cultural survival. However, as modern readers of Cabeza de Baca’s and González’s work, we are able to understand how their folk tales are more than just folk stories. Rather, on their own, the folk tales serve as forms of historical documentation.

It is very likely that González and Cabeza de Baca shared similar experiences of sitting around the fire, listening to their *abuelos* (grandparents) telling tales of their respective Texan and New Mexican histories. This experience would surely influence the choices that each made to go beyond the simplicity of the folk tale to their commitment to documenting historical events via these methods and more substantiated historical forms. Both learned about how their relatives and their community members engaged in a struggle for identity and land. They demonstrate that despite the outcome, Mexicanos were active participants in a

historical battle that would help to establish their position with the racial, social, and political systems surrounding them. Cabeza de Baca and González were, by extension, subjected to the patriarchal structures in existence during the period of which they write—the nineteenth century because they would inherit the struggles that originated during that time. From what we know about their experiences in the twentieth century, they were subject still to a patriarchal system that continued to place them in an inferior position with regard to their right to exert their expertise and authority. However, their family ties, education, experiences within the patriarchal structures, and drive motivated them to develop their own accounts in an effort to preserve their histories and maintain their authority to tell the stories of their families and communities.

The experiences González had within dominant institutions and with cultural and social mores influenced her choice to incorporate fact with fiction as she developed the characters in *Caballero*. Limón suggests, “In the development of these characters, González is clearly drawing on composites and fictive renditions of actual Mexican personages from her familial-ancestral background and, in the case of the Anglos, drawing on her intimate knowledge of mainstream Texas history as a professionally trained Texas historian” (XX). By also engaging the knowledge she gained as a historian, and working with noted Anglo historians and folklorists like Dobie, González was able to construct what we would today call her own decolonizing tool, or what I label her *testimonio heredera* to describe the inherited struggles she and her fellow Tejanos faced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like the other women in this study, González’s determination to make public her voice by penning her own version of prominent pieces of Texas history demonstrates what

today feminist theorists would call carving out her “third space”⁵⁸ in an effort to deconstruct the patriarchal and gendered confines that surrounded her at that time.

Despite the fact that González engages the assistance of Raleigh to co-author *Caballero*, the *testimonio heredera* demonstrates a very intimate knowledge of *ranchero* life and culture, something that González, not Raleigh, would have been privileged to experience based on her background. We can assume, then, that González penned this portion of the novel. The reader immediately gets a sense of the importance of the land as González begins the novel by referencing its significance. In this initial section, she discusses Don José Ramón de Mendoza y Robles, the great-grandfather of the novel’s main character, Don Santiago. She says:

He and a number of his friends, all rich landowners of the north, would colonize the Indian-infested region just explored in exchange for all the grazing land they could hold. The bankrupt, tottering vice-regal government which saw in this movement the holding of the land for Spain consented, and the colonization of the new land began. (González, 1996, XXXVII)

She immediately establishes the status of the Mendoza y Soria family, and from what we know about her familial history, this scenario also mirrors her own family’s experiences as original colonizers of the region.

With the influx of Americans seeking to conquer the Mexicans and claim their land, panic and anger were the sentiments that filled Mexican homes. González conveys this alarm through her description of Don Gabriel del Lago’s arrival at the Mendoza y Soria house to alarm the family of invading Americans. She says that in a rush of panic, family friend Don Gabriel announces to the Mendoza y Soria family “Los Americanos! All this land has been taken by them—all of it, everything!” (8). Don Gabriel’s declaration upsets the entire Mendoza y Soria family, because with American takeover would come the impending fate of

Mexicanos as powerless men and women in their own land. By including this significant part of history, González acknowledges the uncertainty that this news brought to Mexicanos, and we can imagine many Mexican families in the nineteenth century having similar conversations.

González then introduces Alvaro, the son who is the most celebrated in the Mendoza y Soria family because of his commitment to fighting against the Americanos at any cost. Despite his shortcomings as a stubborn, macho Mexican male, Alvaro's character demonstrates agency—the will to take on the Americanos in the battle for rights and land. He expresses his dismay at the news brought by Don Gabriel, and questions what news means to the family and community: “‘But,’ Alvaro sputtered, ‘that means that...what does that mean? If they have taken our land are we then...to be driven off like cattle and killed?’” (9) As the family members discuss the implications of what will occur as a result of American takeover, the reader gets a sense of the panic and shock that Mexicanos like the Mendoza y Sorias would have felt upon hearing this life changing news. Along with the taking of lands would come the transition of becoming Americanos, a betrayal to their mother land of Spain (9).

The historical record demonstrates that Mexican power and control of the land ended with the Mexican War, creating hostilities between incoming Anglos and Mexicans in the region. González's narrative works double duty as it first establishes the position that most elite Mexicanos, like the Mendoza y Sorias, took based upon the results of this new conquest: they feared a shift in power in a way that was anything but good for them. But she follows the initial reaction of fear by demonstrating that, despite the outcome, they would take an active stance against the Americans. She says:

The Mexican *hidalgo* and the high-bred *ranchero*, by nature slow to recognize the logic of events, failed to gauge the future by happenings of the past. Serene in the belief that his heritage of conquest was a sort of superbravery which must, inevitably, conquer again, he built a wall against the Americans—against everything American—and excluded himself within it. (23)

Mexicanos engaged in, and continued to fight for their land and to reassert the boundaries initially established prior to American dispossession of Mexican land. González expresses that Mexicanos had the will, and would go down with the sinking ship if required.

In her narrative, González works not only to make declarative critiques of government and Anglo aggression, but she also validates the attempts Mexicanos made to undertake the battle they were faced with. In this way, her writing is similar to that of Ruiz de Burton, who similarly points to Mexicano agency. González's writing differs from Cabeza de Baca in that although the women were writing at about the same time, Cabeza de Baca's writing is more implicitly critical of government. One reason that González's critique is more blatant most likely stems from the violent history that defined Texas in the nineteenth century and directly impacted her family. New Mexico was undergoing similar issues, though not in quite the same way.

It is also important to note that Cabeza de Baca's *testimonio heredera*, *We Fed Them Cactus*, was published, whereas González's *Caballero* was not published until Limón recovered it in 1996. The reason it may not have been published as easily as Cabeza de Baca's work is that the racial tensions in Texas were still high in the 1930s and 1940s when González and her co-author Raleigh were attempting to get the novel published. Limón suggests that the "still volatile South Texas racial climate of the 1930s and 40s" most likely contributed to the novel's publishing rejections (Limón, 1996, XXI). This racial and social climate was surely different for Cabeza de Baca, whose *Cactus* was published in the 1950s

by the University of New Mexico Press. This was a time in which Nuevo Mexicanas such as Cabeza de Baca were documenting many of the folk traditions as part of the Sociedad Foklórica, and some would argue, contributing to the Hispanophile⁵⁹ image of New Mexicans. In *Caballero*, González went beyond the folk tales, providing insight into battles encountered by Tejano Mexicanos, and documented how through their struggle, they retained some power to maintain their position as a landed people.

One of the issues between Anglos and Mexicans in Texas stemmed from border and boundary disputes. González critiques the factual shifting of the border between the United States and Mexico, as the Americans fought to move the border from the Nueces River to the Rio Grande. This shift too, upsets the characters in the novel, and the reader can empathize with the distress they felt. Don Gabriel tells Don Santiago that after the battle with Santa Anna, the Americanos also sought the changing of the boundary, and he says, “their greed knows no end; they will fight until the river runs red with blood for the land above it.” (11). González uses the character of Don Gabriel to express how Mexicanos felt uncertainty and fear. But she quickly strikes back by demonstrating the action taken against those fears. González describes how Alvaro Mendoza y Soria takes a more critical stance, bellowing, “They call the Río Bravo—or Río Grande, as they name it—the boundary. I myself shall do what I can to color the big river red—with their blood” (54). Although she does not condone these acts of violence, González’s portrayal of Alvaro being the Mexicano who would fight, to the death, for his people and his land, is significant. Through his display of intense emotion, she exposes the significance of Mexicano acts of resistance.

The altering of boundaries, no doubt upset Mexicanos in Texas. The land was more than capital to the Mexicanos in the novel, just like it was more to the Mexicanos

experiencing this shift in the nineteenth century. To them, the land was a part of their identity. It provided not only a space where families could be raised, communities could be built—it signified Mexican power in the region. Don Santiago most clearly illustrates this point when he says ““We may be *Americanos* now, but nothing can change the fact that we are always—*hidalgos*”” (11). Even though land equates with power, for the *hidalgos* in the novel, it provides more than monetary value. It is a sign of tradition and culture—a sign of knowledge, for to know and understand the land means the acquisition of a wealth that cannot be bought or sold. Throughout her text, González presents examples demonstrating that Don Santiago and the other Mexican *hidalgos* would fight for their land despite the expense.

At one point in the text, General Canales of the Mexican army arrives at a meeting where the *hidalgos* are discussing their plan of action against the *Americanos*. Before the other men see him, Canales listens intently to their words, and upset at what he hears, takes a stand, pointing out their cowardice for not acting against the Americans to maintain their lands and power. He specifically directs his dismay at the younger men saying:

‘You who spend your time riding aimlessly to show what fine *caballeros* you are, thinking only of love making and the pleasures of life, while your country lies bleeding at your fine-booted feet. Torn and wounded she writhes in agony, trampled by the infamous avarice of the invaders who are never satisfied in their lust for wealth, while you—you,’ he sobbed out the words, using his hands in passionate eloquence of expression [...] ‘You content yourself with hating them, riding past their camp and spitting at it like children. Why didn’t one of you kill the one who came to your dance, why haven’t you young men taken it upon yourselves to kill this McClane whose devil tongue wins over your fathers?’ He turned to Don Santiago. ‘And you, *amigo*, what have you been doing?’ (122-123)

With these harsh words, Canales ignites in the men a fiery passion to honor their good names by fighting against the American invaders for their land. Canales appeals to the younger

generation, but also reminds the older men that the struggle has been persistent since the days when General Antonio López de Santa Anna betrayed them and their country.

Canales' appeal demonstrates the historical struggle over land, and as he injects his personal loss into the discussion, he indicates that after he rebelled against Santa Anna, he received a letter from an American, General Haines, "proposing to take the land from Laredo to the mouth of the Río Grande and place the Texas flag on the Mexican side" (124). He goes on to describe how, inevitably, the land loss would continue, and at greater expense to the Mexican people: "Disgusted with this greed, knowing that I was to be used to give them more land rather than endanger the sovereignty of my country, I surrendered to Santa Anna. Since then my heart and my life have been embittered by the hatred I bear these people" (124). Despite the outcome, Canales encourages the *hidalgos* to fight back as part of their duty to Mexico.

This passage is packed with both implicit and explicit critiques. It reveals the corruption of both the American and Mexican governments, the deep level of betrayal by Santa Anna to his people, and the aggression of the *guerrilleros*. These are all important historical facts that provide understanding of the climate in Mexico. Most relevant to this study is that González's inclusion of these historical facts also reveals undertakings of the *hidalgos* in an effort to fight for their land. She does not condone the violent approach, but makes it a point to record the actions taken by Mexicanos, an important part of the historical record that often gets overlooked by the detrimental outcome.

In addition to demonstrating Mexicanos' active participation in fighting back, González does a very good job of articulating the idea of birthright and heritage, thus demonstrating the inherited struggles that were passed on to Mexicanos, like the Gonzálezes

and the Mendoza y Sorias. She provides many examples describing how birthright and action are intimately intertwined; having an inheritance to the land obliges that you will engage in battle to protect it. In one section, González describes just such a situation. As they attempt to deal with the struggles, the Mexican *hidalgos* and *rancheros* hold a meeting in which they discuss what should be done to counter American attempts to obtain Mexican land. Don Santiago, the esteemed *ranchero*, asserts:

‘I note that you too have all come in the dress of the *ranchero* and not in the finery of the *hidalgo*. It is as such that we are here tonight, binding ourselves together, as our ancestors gathered in Mexico a century ago to bind themselves together for the move to the new land to the north, this our Texas. But where they were applauded as conquerors of wilderness we sneak here as felons, as if we were guilty of a crime. We are considered undesirable foreigners in this land which was won by the sweat and blood of those brave men and held against the Indians for a hundred years. It was theirs by right of royal grants, ours by right of inheritance.’ (50)

The passage is packed with information: it highlights the history of conquest that has plagued Mexicanos for centuries, reinforces the idea that the struggles faced are inherited, both literally and metaphorically, and establishes that Mexicanos deemed it their responsibility to combat what was occurring around them. After being a part of a landed family that experienced issues similar to Don Santiago, and a Mexican American woman subject to a highly patriarchal environment at UT-Austin and the Texas Folklore Society, González too deemed it her duty to act by developing her *testimonio heredera*. In this way, she could enact agency and demonstrate her authority on *ranchero* culture and Texas history.

Is Mexico to Blame, Too?

Part of what makes González’s *testimonio heredera* unique is that she does not solely place blame for Mexican displacement on American expansionist efforts. In *Caballero*, she is also critical of the Mexican government. Her choice of characters for demonstrating this

criticism is interesting as well. For instance, she initially depicts her condemnation of the Mexican government through Padre Pierre, the local priest. As he tries to calm the *hidalgos* and *rancheros* that are plotting against the incoming Americans, Padre Pierre reminds them:

'What then has Mexico done for you? She gave your fathers' land that was worthless to her, beset as it was with marauding Indians, and let you use your own money to build the towns and missions. 'Royal grants' sounds very fine, be assured you would have received not a foot of ground had it been worth anything to Spain or the viceroy. The land's worth was in the taxes the Mexican government could collect after you had built your ranches. It was because of greed for more taxes to bolster a rotten, tottering regime that she betrayed you by inviting American colonists into Texas, and gave them huge tracts of land. *Gave it, señores*. When was it? Twenty-five years or so ago.' (56)

Through this severe critique, González demonstrates her judgment of Mexican official's decision to give land to Americans in an effort to colonize the region. Rather than solely focus on the American government's role in pushing Mexicans off their land and forcing them to become citizens of a new nation, González also points to Mexico's share of the blame.

In a continuation of her critique, she presents Luis Gonzaga, the effeminate son of Don Santiago, who establishes a relationship with Captain Devlin, a member of the U.S. Army. In the novel, Luis Gonzaga decides to defy his father and move East with Devlin, to pursue his interest in art. Prior to his move, Luis Gonzaga questions Devlin about Lieutenant Robert Warrener, an American soldier who has demonstrated a vested interest in Luis' younger sister, Susanita.

Through his questioning, Luis learns about American ways of life. Devlin explains that Warrener is the son of a plantation owner, pointing out that he is much like the *hidalgos* Luis knows in Mexico (107). Luis, somewhat confused about why, then, Americans would seek out Mexican land asks, "'Then why do your people come here?' ... 'Why do they take

what is ours and force us to be citizens of a government we cannot endure?” (107) Devlin explains, “That is not easy to answer, Luis. The mistake was for the Mexican government to invite settlers and give them land. Your vice-regal government did not play fair with anyone.” (107). Again, González suggests that the Mexican government played a central role in the demise of its own citizens. She is careful not to place blame on the *hidalgos* or *rancheros*. It is their government that wronged them, and the American government following it that continued the abuse. González’s choice to implicate the Mexican government in Mexican dispossession allows the ability to strengthen her case for why Mexicanos were just in their decisions to take action against what they believed were solely American attempts to displace them.

González focuses on the implications of the violent acts of aggression between American soldiers and Mexicano guerrillas and *hidalgos*, but underscores how the hostilities resulted in the fiercest form of abuse for the *hidalgos*—loss of land. González presents a concrete example through one *hidalgo*’s experiences, Gáspar de la Guerra, as he says, “They confiscated my land, my horses, my cattle, and sheep, because I am Mexican. And now I am little more than a beggar in the country where the king of Spain deeded land to the Guerras. You ask, what say I—need anyone ask what I say?” (51). González acknowledges that the act of seizing Mexican land was wrong. She also clearly establishes a case against both the American *and* Mexican governments.

The de la Guerra character could easily have been created in the like of her grandfather, also a Guerra who was subjected the abuse through land issues. González then, once again uses Padre Pierre to communicate her criticism of the two governments and problematic American law. Padre Pierre is positioned as a voice of reason, and at times, the

devil's advocate as he is also empathetic to some of the *Americanos* he encounters. He serves as the character in the novel who tries to bridge the misunderstandings between the *Mexicanos* and the *Americans*. He tries to calm volatile situations such as those where the *hidalgos* are meeting to discuss how they will counter American appropriation of Mexican land. To the *hidalgos* he says:

'There has not yet been an adjustment to the laws of the union, and many are flouting the laws of the republic, excusing themselves that the laws no longer hold. There is strife among the *Americanos*, one holding this law, another that, and the lawless take advantage of it. You, Don Gáspar, I will myself put in a protest against the stealing of your land to the proper authorities. There must be something you can do if you use your head.' (53)

Here, in addition to critiquing government, González also offers a jab at *machismo*, indicating that Mexican men, like de la Guerra, easily resort to violence to accomplish their goals. Padre Pierre suggests that there are alternative ways to deal with the situation at hand. Action must be taken, but retaliation through the act of violence is not the answer. Here, González envisions an alternative to the actual history wrought with hostility.

González goes on to allude to the American and Mexican governments' responsibility for their parts in the resulting land issues. She emphasizes how the *hidalgos* were faced with difficult choices that would require action to protect their property by engaging in a physical fight, or by taking protective action by adhering to American property laws. She demonstrates the internal struggle faced by the *hidalgos* in a later section of the novel where Gabriel del Lago is being criticized by the other *hidalgos* for wanting to record the title to his land to avoid losing it. Del Lago says "We are a beaten, conquered people, and we *rancheros* are a group apart and but a handful. It is all very high-sounding, this dying for a cause, but death is death, our families are left without protection when we are gone, our land

will be for anyone to take.” (217). Action must be taken, though to which end is questionable.

As del Lago sees it, the American government has placed the Mexicanos in this position, and so he, along with the other *hidalgos* should follow the new laws in order to maintain ownership. He continues, saying:

‘I speak of saving our land’...’We have titles, and I am told they are recognized but must be recorded with the new government, which seems sensible to me and should seem so to you [...] Now before it is too late, before the greedy ones come in hordes and finding the land unregistered take it by force, because they know there can be no dispute about it.’ (217)

Faced with much resistance from the other *hidalgos*, del Lago is faced with the question of what happens when the state comes in and erroneously takes land, as has already been the experience of some of the *hidalgos*. Del Lago responds by indicating that the loss is minimal in comparison to the land that can be kept in the hands of Mexicanos should they record their titles (217). To del Lago’s response:

Someone laughed decisively. ‘Some *gringo* will settle on those three leagues and it will be but one place to plant his feet firmly—for reaching. Once let them in and we are lost. Look what happened in East Texas twenty years ago when the Mexican government gave them land, they wanted more and more and in their insolence considered it their right to have it all.’ (217-218)

The quotes above reveal many things about González’s beliefs: She deemed the Mexican government wrong for their decision to give land to Americans in its effort to promote colonization of the Texas borderlands, and she notes that action had to be taken, whether it was to engage in warfare or to follow American laws. Perhaps González heard these critiques from her grandparents, in their discussions of the colonization of the region that their family played a part in founding, and the difficulty they faced in having to decide whether to act violently or give up some agency by following these newly imparted laws.

These critiques make González's *testimonio heredera* distinctive. The other feature that makes it unique is her record of the significance of Mexican women to land-related history. No doubt, these critiques stem from her knowledge of women's participation in land ownership and struggle, via her great-grandmother, and her experiences as a Mexican American woman in the twentieth century who was subjected, still, to a patriarchal society. Whatever the reason, González interjects into her version of Texas borderland history, the integral role of women in land ownership, their power relations with Anglo males, and the patriarchal system of Mexicano culture that confined them.

Behind Every Successful Man is a Successful Woman

González's *Caballero* has been noted for its focus on gender.⁶⁰ In the novel, González highlights the roles that Mexican women played within the patriarchal structures enveloping them. The female characters in *Caballero* are not necessarily depicted as authoritative. Rather, they are most often represented as being under the strong arm of Don Santiago. There are instances where Don Santiago's sister, Doña Dolores, has her moments of strength and wit. She is the female character in the novel who questions Don Santiago when he demonstrates his authority as the patriarch of the house. Most often though, the other female members of the Mendoza y Soria family adhere to Don Santiago's rule, rarely demonstrating their will or agency. González's decision to portray the women in this way is curious, but rather than simply leave the women in positions of inferiority, she uses the storyline in *Caballero* to illustrate how, historically, Mexican American women held power by being able to inherit one of the most significant forms of power during the nineteenth century—land.

González establishes the historical context in which the Mendoza y Sorias live, by explaining the potential disgrace and threat that Mexicanos felt from American men seeking Mexican women as their wives. In the novel, Don Santiago is committed to making sure that his daughters do not associate with the Americano soldiers residing in the area because of the war in the region. For the daughter of a *hidalgo* to establish relations with an Americano was to shame a Mexican family. As the heavy-handed patriarch, Don Santiago believed that his daughters would adhere to the rules established in his home.

However, he fails to notice when his prized daughter, Susanita, meets and falls in love with Lieutenant Robert Warrener of the American Army, who she initially encounters at a dance, a common social activity at this time. History Professor Jane Dysart notes, “Frequent social contacts coupled with a surplus male population promoted intermarriage between Mexican women and Anglo men” (1976, 371). González portrays these social events in *Caballero*, and also demonstrates how other types of encounters brought Mexicanas and Americanos together. Later in the novel, Don Santiago’s other daughter, María de Los Angeles, similarly establishes a relationship with American, Red McLane. The Mendoza y Soria daughters eventually end up marrying the Americanos who seek them out, defying their father’s wishes. Through this act, González demonstrates her attitude about male domination in Mexican households. Her critique of Mexican patriarchy is significant, and this study acknowledges González’s bold stance. The study argues that in addition to this critique, González makes it a point to recognize, both in her Master’s thesis and *Caballero*, the importance of Mexicana’s roles in the acquisition of land, and essentially, power.

In her thesis, González comments on the intermarriage between Anglos and Mexicans. We know that the majority of intermarriages were those between Anglo men and

Mexican women.⁶¹ González specifically tells the story of the Garzas, “original owners of the land” in Starr County. She says, “Many of the Garzas married Texas people. One of the Garza girls married Henry Clay Davis a Kentuckian who came with Taylor’s army of occupation. After his marriage in Camargo, Davis came to Texas, and on property inherited by his wife built the first cabin which was to be the nucleus for the present city of Río Grande” (1930, 62). González further comments on the strategic marriages between Anglos and Mexicanas saying, “During the fifties the Americans and foreigners who came were all single men. But they did not remain so for long; they married the daughters of the leading Spanish-Mexican families and made of Río Grande City a cosmopolitan little town” (1930, 62). This historical fact would eventually end up being portrayed in González’s historical novel, *Caballero*, as a number of the Mexican girls in the novel eventually end up marrying Anglo men, much to the dismay of their traditional Mexican families.

Montejano supports González’s point when he suggests that, “For the Anglo settler, marrying a Mexican with property interests made it possible to amass a good-sized stock ranch without considerable expense. The Americans and the European immigrants, most of whom were single men, married the daughters of the leading Spanish-Mexican families...” (Montejano, 1987, 37). Strategic marriages were all too common in areas where Mexicans were the majority landholders such as Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona.

In *Caballero*, González emphasizes the idea that through marriage to Mexican women, Anglo men were able to acquire more power politically, socially, and through acquisition of capital. González develops the character Alfred Isaiah “Red” McLane, an entrepreneur of sorts, who understands from an early age, that land equates with power. In

the novel, he is positioned as the man trying to gain Mexican support in an effort to sway votes. In one section of the novel, Red recalls meeting

James Bowie and his lovely wife Ursula Veramendi, daughter of the Mexican governor, and for the first time he was introduced to the graciousness of Mexican family life as it really was. McLane was assembling his knowledge with a growing shrewdness, and noting the position and power Bowie had acquired through this marriage, he told himself: 'I am going to marry a woman like Doña Ursula: one who has good looks and charm and is of a high-class family' (González, 1996, 70)

McLane was a strategist, and his understanding of the importance of land to control of the region resulted in his choice to become baptized Catholic, a requirement to own land under Mexican law (70), which allowed him to own "almost all of San Antonio" (71). In addition, he realized the importance of establishing political relationships with the *rancheros*, large landowners in the region. Dysart confirms González's inclusion of the factual story of Bowie and Veramendi in her "fictional" *testimonio heredera*, saying,

Before the outbreak of hostilities in the mid-1830s, upper class Tejanos often identified their own political liberalism with Anglo American ideals and welcomed newcomers from the United States into their homes. In this manner James Bowie met and later wed Ursula Veramendi, daughter of the liberal Mexican governor of Texas. After 1836 it was politically advantageous for Texas Mexicans, often indiscriminately regarded as enemies, to establish family connections with the dominant Anglo group. (1976, 370)

McLane's character surely mimicked many of the Americanos in the mid-nineteenth century who sought out Mexican women for marriage partners. González makes it a point to discuss this historical fact in *Caballero*.

McLane tells the American soldiers with whom he stays:

'I hear that all the *rancheros* around here are in Matamoros this winter instead of scattered in the towns up and down the *río*, as many as can crowd into the homes there. They are all citizens, and I can guess them to be not at all in favor of it [voting], and I want to look them over and feel out the sentiment inasmuch as I can.' (73)

But McLane's motives are deeper than just securing Mexicano votes. He also seeks a Mexican wife, which Captain Devlin of the American Army points out, saying, "Confess that you're going to keep an eye open for that wife also" (73). For McLane, his quest for a Mexican wife is not in an effort to secure an enduring love. Rather, it is for his selfish motives. Montejano notes that quests such as the one by McLane were common and at times typically beneficial for both the Anglo male and the Mexican *hidalgo*. He says, "Romance aside, marriage appeared to be mutually advantageous. As in so many historical situations where a defensive landed upper class and an ambitious mercantile group have met, marriages between the representatives of the two seemed to be a classic resolution, a suspension, of the conflict between these two classes" (1987, 49). González, too, suggests the appearance of mutual benefit in a scene where McLane visits the Mendoza y Soria house, but is promptly shooed away by Don Santiago (148).

González further highlights the importance that Anglos saw in marriages to Mexican women. She provides a scene in which McLane visits the Mendoza y Soria house again, under the guise of going to see his godson. In reality, he goes to get a glimpse of, and deliver a letter to, María de Los Angeles, one of Don Santiago's daughters who has caught his eye. Ike Mullins, an American soldier who accompanies McLane, questions his motives. He tells McLane he is being unfair, and the former disagrees, questioning how Mullins would come to that conclusion. In his lecture to McLane, Mullins scolds him, saying, "Everything. You want to marry a Mexican girl from the higher class because it'll be to your advantage to get the Mexicans on your side. This girl has a vulnerable spot and you work on it. She believes she is converting you to her church and that's a joke that isn't funny, Red" (213). As McLane contemplates what Mullins says, González provides commentary, saying, "Love? It

was not in his plans” (214). What he saw in María de Los Angeles was a loyal woman, committed to her religious beliefs, who could help him convince the Mexicanos to vote a particular way because they would trust her. María de los Angeles helped secure a certain amount of power and influence for McLane.

The type of marriage as that between McLane and María de los Angeles was all too common, and González deems it noteworthy to comment on the issue. She also includes the marriage with love, between Lieutenant Robert Warrenner and Susanita. While this marriage does not highlight the strategic goals of most marriages between Anglo men and Mexican women, it still points to the fact that Mexican women were highly sought after by Anglo males at this time. The Mendoza y Soria girls were powerless in their father’s home, but they exerted power as they entered the homes of their American husbands, though the level must have varied to some degree. She does not spend a significant amount of time emphasizing Mexicans’ power, but González’s attempt to at least hint at it suggests that she thought about it to some extent.

Conclusion

González’s *testimonio heredera* demonstrates how fact and fiction unite to develop an alternative view of history that seeks to counter the dominant narratives that came before it. As demonstrated through this analysis, González’s work also takes a different approach than contemporary historical texts that detail the history of the Texas/Mexico borderlands. Based on the critiques of both the American and Mexican governments that she develops, it is clear that González believed both were to blame for the appropriation of Mexican land. Her *testimonio heredera*, though, reenacts the agency with which Mexicanos fought back. Although the battle was ripe with violence and the outcome unfavorable for most Mexicanos,

González underscores the action taken by Mexicanos throughout the Southwest, and Texas in particular, significant to historical documentation.

González demonstrates her agency at a time when that type of action was uncommon for women, and particularly women of Mexican descent. Her work, though unknowingly to her, developed into an example of what today we would consider contemporary feminist theory in its attempt to decolonize Mexicanos/as. She studied alongside some of the most well-known folklorists and historians, and yet, she worked to counter the narratives that they produced. González's work far surpasses a simple acknowledgement of her expertise in folklore, and instead, also demonstrates her command of the history of her people and a region filled with race, class, and gender issues.

In her final thoughts, González reminds us of the importance of the land to Mexican identity and the implications of Americans invading the region, but she never forgets Mexican agency. She ends *Caballero* with a scene in which Don Santiago rides out to a bluff on Rancho La Palma de Cristo. His new son-in-law, Warrener, rides out to find him, thinking as he rides, about what the significance of incoming Americans meant to the Mexican families, like that of his beloved wife Susanita: "And already, he thought now, the men piling into the new state were asserting their rights as 'Americans,' wearing the rainbow of the pioneer as if it were new and theirs alone. Already talking loudly about running all Mexicans across the Rio Grande from this 'our' land" (336). Warrener finds Don Santiago, dead on the bluff, "A scoop of earth, brown and dry, trickled from the palm and lost itself in the sandstones" (337). Don Santiago's life ended and the Americans won the war, but they would never take from Don Santiago the land that he fought so hard to hold onto. For him, like many of the *hidalgos* who fought off American invaders, the idea of *tierra o muerte*⁶²

(land or death) signified more than a catch phrase—it symbolized the importance of fighting for the land that defined their identities and contributed to their livelihoods.

Chapter 4:

Not So “New” Mexico: The Struggle for Land & Agency

New Mexico, like neighboring California, Texas, and Arizona, fell prey to the U.S. legal system’s overhaul of the Mexican law that preceded it during the nineteenth century. With the influx of settlers and squatters encouraged to move west due in part to the ideological concept of Manifest Destiny,⁶³ and the imaginary conceptualization of virgin landscapes, a one-of-a-kind climate, and an ignorant indigenous population, the Southwest as a whole was a region subject to conflict on a number of levels. While many were drawn to the region based upon the misconception that the Southwest was undiscovered and uncharted, the truth was that the myth was just that, and Mexican citizens who had lived and worked the land for centuries were forced to follow American rule and new ways of life.⁶⁴ For Mexican citizens throughout the Southwest, this disruption in the way that their daily lives were lived caused much conflict and strife politically and culturally.

In New Mexico in particular, this meant a drastic change to the traditions that had defined a people for many centuries—a unique way of life that included pastoral traditions, holding the political majority, family strength, continuity, and women in powerful positions of land ownership. This chapter discusses New Mexico land-related issues, and focuses on one of the women who worked to document and disrupt the constraints of gender-restrictions.⁶⁵ Fabiola Cabeza de Baca’s family descended from one of the original Spanish colonizers of the region, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. Her connection to a European bloodline, a landed New Mexican family, and her prescribed role as a female placed her in a precarious position in her attempt to document New Mexico history, and particularly the land issues that defined the region. I argue that land dispossession was the force that activated

Cabeza de Baca's voice in her recording of New Mexico land issues in her *testimonio heredera*.⁶⁶

New Mexico's history as it relates to land-related struggles is vast. While it cannot be covered fully in a single chapter, some of the most significant issues related to land struggles in the territory will be discussed. New Mexico is distinctive in that the Hispano/Mexicano peoples held political control of the territory, which posed great threat to those interested in taking over the land. This local power meant that incoming Anglos had to forcibly take control. Laura E. Gómez reminds us that as Anglo takeover occurred, Mexicans in New Mexico were subject to second-class citizenship when she says that "New Mexico's status as a federal territory meant that its residents held a hollow federal citizenship," and further, "territorial status precluded New Mexico's population from controlling the *territorial* government" (2007, 44).

Mexicans living in what is now considered "New" Mexico held two deeply coveted items: political power and land. Because of this, the U.S. government and incoming settlers made many attempts to take Mexicans' land, similar to what had been done in California. The main difference was economics. Malcolm Ebright states that because New Mexico was not as economically stable as states such as a California, "Congress tended to minimize the importance of settling their land grant titles, so much that the procedure first set up in New Mexico was wholly inadequate to deal with this vast and complicated problem" (1994, 37). Not only did the fact that New Mexico lacked gold make it less appealing than California, but issues centered upon race also played a part. Gómez points out,

Simply put, California was far more desirable than New Mexico to gold miners and land speculators alike. Second, there were notable differences in the racial composition of the two regions. Within months of the peace treaty's ratification,

Euro-Americans outnumbered Mexicans in California, whereas in New Mexico, Euro-Americans always remained a numerical minority. Land was both less desirable and given these demographics, less easy to control given New Mexico's Mexican and Indian majority and its community of Mexican elites. (2007, 123)

These facts made takeover of New Mexico more difficult for incoming Anglos, requiring a different plan of action that, for the time being, was placed on hold.

However, the majority power that Mexicans and Indians in the region held did not last long after the U.S. government took over. The people of the region were subjected to new laws that contradicted what they were used to, including issues of citizenship and the shift from community to individual property. Mexicans and Indians who had generations of customs and their own working systems of government were forced to compromise with others entering the region who had other plans for the land and people of "New" Mexico. María E. Montoya suggests that "The U.S. government's difficulty with incorporating and respecting these prior regimes was based partly on legal and structural differences" (2002, 11). Essentially, the U.S. government sought total control of the region and its people.

In order to gain this control, the U.S. imposed new laws and invoked the aid of attorneys to deal with such things as land title claims. By approaching the issue of Mexican majority control of the region using land as an entry point, the U.S. government would be better able to gain leverage over the inhabitants in the area because land was such a highly sought after commodity. The government used several tactics to take over the land, including "local appointed officials (such as the Santa Fe Ring⁶⁷)," as Montoya points out, but also it relied on language in an attempt to trick the locals.

The newly established laws were written in English, which was not the first language of the inhabitants who occupied the area. Since the residents of New Mexico did not

understand the new American laws being imposed upon them, many did not file their land title documents when the Surveyor General's Office was finally established. Because of this, what was once land used for livelihood and cultivation, was being taken over by the Government and attorneys who gained land in lieu of monetary payment. These practices changed New Mexicans' lives forever. Their view of land as communal to be used by the people contradicted the U.S. government's perception of land as individual property.⁶⁸ Ebright notes that "Most Hispanos never conceived of the possibility that the common lands of their community grants were in jeopardy because under their laws and customs, the common lands could never be sold" (1994, 38). Unfortunately, both the individual and common lands were subject to sale per the new U.S. laws. No one could quite imagine that the detrimental effects of these new laws would affect Mexicans far beyond the nineteenth century, when they were originally established.⁶⁹ The changes presented many hardships, but Hispanos/Mexicanos were not passive. They fought back against what was occurring.

The new laws displaced Mexicans from their land and forced them to adhere to a way of life that differed considerably from what they were used to. Tey Diana Rebolledo argues that theirs (Mexicanos/Hispanos) "was a history of resistance and accommodation to the social, economic, and cultural hegemony of the white Anglo-Saxon people who came to dominate land and society in the Southwest" [1954] (1994, xviii). The accommodation resulted in a loss of language, culture, and of course, land. However, as Rebolledo also points out, resistance was also present, and came in the form of "social banditry, organized resistance by *gorras blancas*,⁷⁰ fence burning, the use of Spanish in public to encode messages, and struggle on the local level for control of such institutions as school boards" (1994, xviii).

For Cabeza de Baca, resistance developed in the form of writing. Not only did she push back as a Hispana/Mexicana female, but she was also documenting land struggles—a topic that was typically dealt with by men. Her actions counter arguments suggesting that women like Cabeza de Baca, who were writing at this time, “confront the unpleasant reminders of their own conquest and subordination [but they also] often retreat into whispers of discomfort, confused historiography, muted social criticism, or silence” (Padilla, 1993, 203). As a scholar invested in the agency of women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I believe it is important to acknowledge the action taken by these women, and also to take into consideration the social and political climates in which they lived. Muted criticisms and silence were the expected social norms for women at this time. But as Cabeza de Baca, the other women in this study, and additional Hispana/Mexicana women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have shown, they were the precursors to what we currently identify as feminist movements. Taking into account the historical context in which they lived, their “discomfort” is expected. The fact that they acted, though, is striking.

As a member of one of the families experiencing the effects of accommodation and resistance, Cabeza de Baca played a significant role in detailing what occurred as a result of Mexicano displacement. Some fifty-plus years later she penned the experiences of her father, Graciano, and her family to counter the dominant narratives already in existence that glossed over the effects of land issues on Hispanos/Mexicanos. Cabeza de Baca’s strengths were her role in discussing the notion of “community,” both as land was and is still conceptualized to Hispanos/Mexicanos, and in preserving community history. She incorporates hybrid methods to construct her version of New Mexico history, or her *testimonio heredera*, in which she

addresses issues of land loss and displacement, revealing the literal and metaphorical struggles that she inherited as a member of a landed family.

Rosaura Sánchez theorizes *testimonios* as “historical and literary texts” that help identify “cognitive mapping of local and global social spaces and social practices” (1995, x). In addition, she says that *testimonios* “can be viewed as representational spaces and as ideological fields for discursive struggle” (xi). Unknowingly, Hispanos/Mexicanos were using this genre in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to document their collective community histories and carve out their “third space” (Pérez, 1999) by telling their own stories. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca asserts agency in her *testimonio heredera* as she employs autobiographical characteristics, but goes beyond the confines of traditional autobiography by incorporating a communal and familial history in an effort to disrupt the cultural discourse that sought to displace Hispanos/Mexicanos. Sánchez asserts that *testimonios* are “narratives of identification,” that use “liminal space of mediated representation to ‘write’ or narrate identity” (12). Cabeza de Baca’s work adheres to the standards set forth by Sánchez and serves as a means of countering standard historical accounts of life on the Staked Plains.

Through Cabeza de Baca’s testimony, the reader understands better the reasons why she documented her familial and community history the way that she did. This study questions the absences present in Cabeza de Baca’s *testimonio heredera*, as Padilla does (1993, 203), but recognizes, as Sánchez points out, that “the gaps, the disjunctures, are important because what is not said directly is often implied or coded in a different way” (32). Cabeza de Baca’s *testimonio heredera* provides a way to re-imagine Hispano/Mexicano identity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as she presents poignant examples of the social, political, and cultural issues enveloping her people.

Fabiola Cabeza de Baca (1894-1993)

Fabiola Cabeza de Baca is a name that, over the years has become a signifier of *Nuevomexicanas* (New Mexican women) who went against the grain, so to speak, by documenting life as seen through a female-centered perspective. Typically, males did much early writing, and particularly autobiographical writing, but as a member of an elite landed class, Cabeza de Baca was afforded the privilege of writing in a variety of venues and using a number of different methods. The University of New Mexico hosts an entire archive dedicated to Cabeza de Baca's personal papers, which includes her correspondence, recipes, newspaper clippings, memoirs, photographs, and portions of her famous work, *We Fed Them Cactus* (1954). Along with other well-known *Nuevomexicanas* such as Cleofas Jaramillo and Nina Otero-Warren,⁷¹ Cabeza de Baca was engaged in documenting New Mexico life and history at a time when traditional gender roles relegated women to the home, without access to the "outside world," in the sense that history was definitively (his)story.

We Fed Them Cactus serves as Cabeza de Baca's *testimonio heredera*, as she provides the authoritative voice about her family and community histories, plus her own autobiographical story. Tey Diana Rebolledo echoes this point when she says, "there is a strong emphasis, particularly in the work of Cabeza de Baca, on a community discourse, on collective story telling" (1994, xxix). Although Rebolledo does not specifically name what Cabeza de Baca does a *testimonio*, I argue that Cabeza de Baca's work is indeed testimonial in form and structure.

Cabeza de Baca combines methods like autobiography, ethnography and history (both traditional and oral) to compile the *testimonio heredera*, and notes the importance of this hybrid approach. In the introduction, Cabeza de Baca states clearly her methodology,

highlighting the importance of the oral tradition of folklore, and also makes it clear that the *testimonio heredera* is her intervention into the dominant historical record. The displacement experienced by Hispanos/Mexicanos ignites her voice and serves as the catalyst to document the history from a Hispano/Mexicano perspective. She says, “This is the story of the struggle of New Mexican Hispanos for existence on the Llano,⁷² the Staked Plains” (Cabeza de Baca, 1954, ix). She asserts the importance of the stories that came from the Hispano/Mexicano people themselves, saying “the stories of buffalo hunters and other events on the Llano were handed down to us by my grandfather’s employees, by neighbors on the land, by our own ranch hands, and mostly by Papá, who spent a lifetime on the Ceja—the Cap Rock...” (ix). Through this statement she also counters the notion of her work as elitist by noting how Hispanos/Mexicanos from all class levels contributed to the *testimonio heredera*.

Cabeza de Baca establishes her authority to tell the story, noting the thoroughness of her methodology. She conducted archival research as one way to develop her *testimonio heredera* stating, “I consulted New Mexico histories and the Spanish archives of New Mexico” (ix). In a later chapter she calls attention to her ethnographic work saying, “While I gathered material for this book, I made visits to men and women who were living in some of the San Miguel County communities at the time of Los Gorras Blancas” (89). Cabeza de Baca’s methods demonstrate the care with which she gathered facts to develop an accurate account of the history she would tell. The methods also suggest that she recognized the importance of an inclusive history that combined the experiences of the landed with the landless to accurately depict the line of representation affected by the land struggle. The historical imprints left by Cabeza de Baca in her archive and *We Fed Them Cactus* demonstrate examples of twentieth century hybrid “texts” developed to push back against

dominant narratives that gloss over and/or fail to recognize the action taken by Hispano/Mexicano communities in their struggles for land and human rights.

Born in 1894 near Las Vegas, New Mexico, Cabeza de Baca's status as part of a landed family afforded her access to education and a unique New Mexican culture that centered upon tradition. After losing her mother at the age of four, she was raised by her grandmother, Estefanita, and spent much time with her father Graciano, as he served as the *patrón* (boss) of the Cabeza de Baca ranch. Raised in an elite Hispano society, Cabeza de Baca was able to navigate between life in the fairly privileged space, which for her included the ability to attend the prestigious Loretto Academy,⁷³ and life on the *rancho* with her father and brother Luis, where she "ruled the rancho like a queen" (138). Cabeza de Baca navigated these two very different spaces in a way that allowed her to document traditional *Nuevo Mexicano* life, and experience the privileges of being part of a long-established and well-recognized New Mexican family.

In her biographical overview of Cabeza de Baca, Rebolledo confirms that after high school, Cabeza de Baca "taught school in a rural area six miles from her father's ranch" (1994, xiv). She later attended New Mexico Normal School and in 1921, received her Bachelor's degree. Shortly afterward, Cabeza de Baca attended New Mexico State University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in home economics. This experience prompted her to become an extension agent with the Agricultural Extension Service, serving the small communities in Northern New Mexico. As she traversed the lands of New Mexico as a young girl on her father's *rancho* and as an adult in her role as extension agent, Cabeza de Baca developed a deep connection to the land through local traditions. Susan Pieper states that "at the ranch, household chores were minimal, and Fabiola often

rode across the land with her father (1995, 5). Like the other women in this study, Cabeza de Baca's experience was one of privilege, but she was grounded by her father's *querencia* for the land. Her connection to the land was quite different than Graciano's, but he would serve as her biggest influence about how she viewed the land.

While she was more invested in documenting the issues associated with it, Cabeza de Baca's father was deeply tied to the land, as we see through her descriptions in *We Fed Them Cactus*. She focuses on these experiences in her writing, but inevitably there were additional influences surrounding her. The influences of her family, and specifically, three of the Cabeza de Baca brothers—her father, Graciano (the rancher), uncle, Ezequiel (the journalist/Governor), and uncle, Manuel (the attorney), must have informed Fabiola's viewpoint. The history surrounding the Las Vegas Grandes land grant inevitably also played a role in the way that Cabeza learned and wrote about the land issues facing her family. The history of land struggle in New Mexico is complicated, to say the least. The next section provides a brief historical context for the Cabeza de Baca *testimonio heredera*.

Land Grant History & Its Implications on the Las Vegas Grandes Land Grant

It should come as no surprise that land speculators sought out land in the Southwest, and particularly in New Mexico because it had been portrayed by European businessmen, early settlers, land-hungry politicians, lawyers and the U.S. government as uninhabited, yet ripe with potential. What was left out of the story was the fact that the land was indeed populated with Indigenous and native Hispanos/Mexicanos who had their own form of government and property laws in place. Unfortunately, because of these differing views, the land in the Southwest, and New Mexico, specifically, was subject to question with regard to ownership and rights. María Montoya reminds us “The Southwest has been, and continues to

be, the scene of a collision between land regimes with radically different cultural conceptions of the land's purpose" (2002, 4). This idea of the cultural conception of the land will be developed further in the examination of Cabeza de Baca's *testimonio heredera* below. What Montoya highlights is that the U.S. government played a significant role in how Mexican property laws were translated with the inception of an American-based legal, social and political system.

The historical amnesia that occurred did not evolve from Hispanas'/Mexicanas' silences, but from the dismissal of Mexican legal and political systems, and the guarantees of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. These erasures reneged the rights of Mexicano/Hispano property owners, and property laws were re-written based on new standards that favored individual over communal property rights. In addition, as Montoya suggests, "Jicarilla Apaches, Hispano farmers, and Anglo homesteaders all had a complex network of understandings, obligations, and privileges governing their relation to the land and one another. Although this regime was not recorded in any statute or deed, it had the force of law for them" (11). Unfortunately, U.S. government officials did not see it the same way.

Rather than protect the property rights of Hispanos/Mexicanos, the territorial government in New Mexico set an agenda that included ignoring the pre-established systems in place, and replacing them with systems run by self-interested politicians, lawyers, judges, and land speculators. The outcome was ambiguity that weighed in favor of the latter systems being set in place. Traditional land use was misunderstood, and was eventually replaced with new visions of land exploitation. Additionally, and extremely significant were the shifts in conceptualization of property inheritance and ownership that took place as the old working system was eradicated, and the new U.S. system was developed.

Land displacement history begins long before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, as Indigenous peoples were dispossessed of their land by the Spanish and Mexican governments, and later by the U.S. government under the guise of protection. One case of dispossession occurred for the Jicarilla, who were subject to the disregard of Carlos Hipolite Trotier Beaubien and Guadalupe Miranda. Montoya specifically discusses the Beaubien/Miranda land grant case that came before Governor Manuel Armijo in 1841, providing an in-depth historical account of the questionable land “deals” that were occurring in the nineteenth century. In her discussion, Montoya points out the actions taken by Mexicanos in an act of resistance. She states that Father Antonio José Martínez (Padre Martínez), a local parish priest in the Taos area, led the group who objected to granting Beaubien and Miranda such a large tract of land. Martínez argued that “placing such a large tract of land in private hands would leave Indians and Hispanos without a livelihood” (35). In addition, Montoya points out: Martinez “opposed such large private land grants in principle because they deprived the local people of common grazing land, and consequently, their means of survival” (35).

This example demonstrates and foreshadows how land deals between/amongst politicians, entrepreneurs and land speculators led to the displacement of Indians and Hispanos across the region. Despite its shift in ownership from Beaubien/Miranda to Lucien B. Maxwell, the land grant had to undergo a number of shifts that strayed from the original intention of the Spanish/Mexican governments in creating communal land grants to be used by the residents of the grant. The story of Padre Martinez also demonstrates the agency of the Hispanos/Mexicanos in their attempt to fight against decisions that they knew were wrong.

Montoya's example sets the stage for a discussion of the Las Vegas Grandes land grant, of which the Cabeza de Baca family was a part. The intention in granting land in New Mexico was to establish communities where residents could build homes and use communal land for cattle grazing, gathering timber, or for access to natural water sources for watering crops. This is where the Beaubien/Miranda grant was not used exactly as intended. The Las Vegas Grandes grant went through a similar, though not nearly as intense, transformation. Historian Anselmo F. Arellano (1990) conducted an extensive study of the Las Vegas Grandes grant, noting the Cabeza de Baca's early connections to this area.

Arellano states that "Sometime before 1820, one Luis María Cabeza de Baca from Peña Blanca came to San José where he became *Alcalde Mayor*" (18). Based on his assessment of the fertile land comprising the area, Cabeza de Baca and eight other men petitioned for the land. According to Cabeza de Baca, the eight other men "acquired land elsewhere" and "relinquished their interest in the Las Vegas land to him" (Arellano, 1990, 18). Cabeza de Baca then filed suit for the land on his own behalf, and that of his "seventeen male children" (18). After proving that the other eight original men did not stake a claim, nor have any buildings or improvements to the Las Vegas land, Cabeza de Baca was granted possession of the land in 1823. Thus began the legacy of the Cabeza de Baca family with regard to land tenure in New Mexico. This legacy would define how his great-granddaughter, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, would inherit not only the physical, geographical land that her great-grandfather acquired, but also the political and social implications that were inherently tied to it.

The Cabeza de Baca family, led by Luis María, remained on the Las Vegas Grandes grant until they were driven off of the land by the Pawnee Indians, to whom they suffered

tremendous loss of cattle. The land grant went through various owners, but the Cabeza de Bacas remained tied to the grant in one way or another. After Luis María's death in 1833, "the property was split among his heirs" (Ponce, 1995, 44). In 1835, a petition was made by four men requesting the land that was originally claimed by Luis María in 1821. Mention of this petition is significant because it demonstrates the original intention of land grant lands as established by the Mexican government awarding the land. The men were granted the land on the condition that "the pasture and watering places would be held in common and free to all who occupied the enormous tract of land which contained close to 500,000 acres. It was also suggested to the petitioners that they were to establish a townsite for the settlers, and additionally, residential lots had to be provided for everyone" (Arellano, 1990, 68). Land cultivation and pasturing was the lifestyle of Hispanos/Mexicanos at this time.

Missouri traders and the railroad would aid Las Vegas in its eventual shift from a quiet, pastoral town into a booming and prosperous industrial town. This combination also contributed to discrepancies in how the Las Vegas Grandes grant was understood. Arellano states "The growth of American influence on the land grant during this transitional period uprooted and altered the social, economic, and political institutions of the established *mexicanos*" (Arellan, 1990, 249). Fast forward to 1890, and the Las Vegas Grandes grant suffered the impacts of most other grants throughout New Mexico—land speculators and the infamous Santa Fe Ring conjured up ways to extend boundaries on the grant that should have rightfully been designated as common lands. Arellano details how the

alleged political thieves would compound their abuses by stretching boundary distances beyond those the Mexican government had intended. As a result, many community grants, such as that of Las Vegas, were invaded. They would then fence their own boundaries within these grants, thereby depriving the poor people, who had

lived on them for generations, of the free use of grass, wood, and water on the public commons. (301)

These actions would ultimately affect the livelihood of the community members of the Las Vegas Grandes Grant.

Thus begins the history and actions of *Las Gorras Blancas* (discussed in-depth below) with regard to their discontent with newly imposed fencing laws, which also tied into the eventual division within the Cabeza de Baca family. The fencing laws and other land-related issues occurring at this time prompted the idea that the Las Vegas Grandes grant would be managed by a board of trustees—a decision that Ezequiel Cabeza de Baca supported in an effort to maintain the rightful use of the common lands of the grant, but disagreed with in terms of who was selected for the board. In 1903, the board of trustees ensured that “all unoccupied lands on the grant would remain free for grazing to all persons living within its boundaries” (Arellano, 1990, 348) which was a plus for the residents. However, the trustees had ulterior, self-interested motives, which Ezequiel did not agree with. He, along with his cousin, Margarito Romero, fought against the questionable dealings of the board. Ezequiel regularly expressed his dissatisfaction with the trustees’ management at public meetings and through the editorial columns of *La Voz del Pueblo*, a local newspaper discussed below.

Ezequiel Cabeza de Baca and Romero worked to incorporate Old Town Las Vegas, or West Las Vegas, with East Las Vegas. This meant that “the people could have a government working for the welfare of the community as a municipality” and essentially “regain control of their land grant” (Arellano, 1990, 350). E. Cabeza de Baca would fight for the rights of the people of Las Vegas until his death in 1917. This significant land battle affected the Cabeza

de Bacas in momentous ways. Not only was Ezequiel involved in land-related issues, but so too were his brothers, Manuel and Graciano. The history of the Las Vegas Grandes land grant provides insight into the complicated history that Fabiola Cabeza de Baca would eventually inherit and take action to document.

Merrihelen Ponce affirms that the “Spear Bar Ranch, [part of what remained of the Cabeza de Baca’s inheritance via the Las Vegas Grande grant] located in the Staked Plains, greatly impacted Fabiola’s formative years” (1995, 34). Cabeza de Baca’s *testimonio heredera* in *We Fed Them Cactus* provides insight into: her connection to and impact from the history of the Las Vegas land⁷⁴; her community, family and personal history; and the social and political climate affecting her writing and positionality.

Land of the Lost & the Cabeza de Baca Brothers

As she introduces us to her father, Graciano, Cabeza de Baca describes how he would sit out on the porch in the evenings, enjoying the starry skies of the *llano*, or the rain as it provided the much needed moisture for his pastures. After these descriptions, Cabeza de Baca notes, “A few rains and then sun, and the grass would be as tall as the bellies of the cows grazing upon it. And Papá was happy” (Cabeza de Baca, 1954, 14). It was those rains that were the lifeblood for Graciano and his family. To him, the rains indicated the possibility for successful grazing of his land, and for that, he was thankful. Hispanos/Mexicanos of his time relied upon the land for their livelihood, a century-old Hispano/Mexicano tradition that Cabeza de Baca details clearly in her account of life on the *llano*.

The initial loss of land impacted all Mexicano/Hispano land owners in the nineteenth century. However, the Cabeza de Baca family suffered the effects of American expansionism well into the twentieth century. The laws that followed due to land loss were similarly felt for

centuries to come. For example, as a result of the fencing laws implemented by the U.S. government, ranchers such as Graciano experienced consequences like a shift in the way that cattle were raised because the amount of property owned by Hispanos like the Cabeza de Bacas grew smaller. Fencing laws required that property be fenced to designate individual property, which changed the way that communal land was conceptualized by Hispanos/Mexicanos. Graciano's brother, Ezequiel, was invested in protecting Hispano ranchers who were unfairly being forced to fence the perimeters of their property, so he fought back. Historians Anselmo Arellano and Julian Josue Vigil state that during his gubernatorial campaign (1915-1916), "[m]any small landholders were seeking support from Ezequiel since, they knew he was for the working man..." and because "[t]he law had created problems for some of the small landholders who could not afford fences" (1985, 50). Ezequiel's interest and actions stemmed from his commitment as a public servant to serve his people and his family's investment in the land. Although Ezequiel was not considered a rancher, his brother Graciano did serve as the *ranchero* of the Cabeza de Baca family, indicating that community and family ties to the land likely influenced Ezequiel's stance.

Once he became governor (1917-1918), Ezequiel attempted to eradicate the fencing laws that he deemed unjust. In his argument he pointed to the issues with the law, suggesting that "the law was so complicated that many times it was impossible to comply with it" and "the unjust conditions of the fencing law had resulted in violence" (Arellano & Vigil, 1985, 31). Ezequiel's statement was made in reference to the historical struggles centered upon issues of land tenure that would indefinitely affect the Hispanos/Mexicanos of the Southwest. The statement's historical context stems from a group of masked raiders in the nineteenth century called *Las Gorras Blancas*.

The *Gorras* played a significant role in the land grant movement in Northern New Mexico. Through their main tactic of fence cutting, the *Gorras* created a reputation for themselves as social bandits wreaking havoc in the rural communities fighting conflicts over land ownership and use. Their work signified much more than social banditry, though—it served as a form of resistance against the imposition of American law, systems of government and ways of life. Robert J. Rosenbaum states that “the White Cap movement gave dramatic proof of Mexican American discontent with the Anglo territorial regime” (1998, 98). For the *Gorras*, fence cutting was just one way that they could make a statement about the social, political and racial struggles they faced. Their actions were metaphorical for the destruction of the lives they knew prior to American imposition. Malcolm Ebright states that the *Gorras*’ motivation stemmed from their stance on how public lands should be used versus the way that the United States government viewed common lands. Specifically he says, “They [the *Gorras*] certainly did not agree with the government’s position that the common lands belonged to the United States as public domain” (1994, 214). They also did not view the land as something that should be held as private property.

The people of Northern New Mexico had mixed feelings about the actions of the *Gorras*, as well as the results of those actions. On the one hand, their work signified the strength of Hispanos/Mexicanos as important political actors who were capable of organizing in an effort to demonstrate their resistance to outside forces. The counterargument suggests that the acts were violent and supported Anglo’s assertions that Hispanos/Mexicanos of the region were backwards and incapable of self-rule. Ezequiel Cabeza de Baca was tied to the issue of fencing and cutting in significant ways. The first was as a former journalist and co-editor for *La Voz del Pueblo*, “a Spanish-language newspaper published in Las Vegas, [that]

constantly defended *las masas de los hombres pobres* (the masses of poor men), and by implication Los Gorras Blancas, against the ‘capitalists, monopolists and land grabbers,’ although the paper never overtly condoned fence cutting” (Rosenbaum, 1998, 119). It was the most popular and important newspaper in Northern New Mexico. Second, Ezequiel’s connection to the actions of the *Gorras* was also linked to his political stance as a gubernatorial candidate, where he stated clearly his opposition towards fencing laws. Finally, Ezequiel held familial connections to the issues centered upon fencing, as they affected his father Tomás, and brother, Graciano, who worked the Cabeza de Baca family land as *rancheros*.

Ebright confirms that Ezequiel also worked to navigate the management of the Las Vegas Grant, a large part of which was owned by the Cabeza de Baca family. Ezequiel was committed to incorporating the town of Las Vegas so that a land commission of residents would be established to run the grant democratically (1994, 217). Understanding that a group of elites was attempting to take full control of the grant, Ezequiel spent much of his time fighting against this and provided explanations as to why such groups as the *Gorras* were acting out against such elitism in Northern New Mexico. This history is intricately tied to the ways that Fabiola Cabeza de Baca would compose and detail the facts of her *testimonio heredera*. The struggles that she inherited are clues about how and why she writes about land issues in *We Fed Them Cactus* and in her correspondence, letters and notes.

Throughout most of her writing, whether in her novels or letters, Fabiola is very careful about how she addresses the larger issues caused by or in relation to the government and land. She mentions the fencing issues in *We Fed Them Cactus* saying, “After the land was fenced, a new page was turned in cattle history” (1954, 126). She is absolutely correct,

and this history is significant. The fencing of land, and common lands specifically, signifies a major change in the way in which property was conceptualized through the United States government's eyes. Cabeza de Baca notes what occurred as a result of fencing for her family when she says, "We had to fence our lands, for the country was being settled and where once the boundaries over which our cattle grazed had been the earth's horizon, now we were being pushed in and in until it became necessary to build fences" (139). In this section of *We Fed Them Cactus*, Fabiola emphasizes the impacts that fencing had on her family specifically. She is very careful about how she addresses fencing laws in her work. She mentions *Las Gorras Blancas* briefly in a document included in her archive, labeled "Gorras Blancas – White Caps." In the document Cabeza de Baca says the *Gorras* were

An organization of respectable citizens for protection against Texas and other cattle companies who came here in the late 80's—a great many of these companies fenced the land—this was public domain. Grandfather's tents were burned by Tejanos—sheepherders abused and sheep driven out the pastures by cowboys. He had them arrested, they were prosecuted. (Cabeza de Baca Gilbert Papers, Box 1, Folder 16, n.d.)

She hints at the detrimental impacts of fencing laws, the issues between common/private land, and the effects overall, but in a very interesting way, leaving out a pointed critique or further commentary about fencing laws and/or the Homestead Act.

The Homestead Act in effect served to undermine the Mexican laws that preceded it, opening up the possibility of fencing common lands that were intended to be used by the community.⁷⁵ As part of Cabeza de Baca's *testimonio heredera*, this seems significant to her story. She mentions, again in passing, that "[t]he decision of the courts about land grants, the coming of homesteaders, the railroad over the Llano and the building of highways, caused a transition in the history of the Ceja and the Llano" (1954, 145). The courts' decisions

impacted New Mexicans' lives in great ways, but the way in which Cabeza de Baca references this history with very little follow-up is what stands out. In one sense she seems to imply that that history is insignificant, but at the same time, she acknowledges that despite the outcome, Hispanos/Mexicanos took action. She claims that "[t]his is the story of the struggle of New Mexican Hispanos for existence on the Llano, the Staked Plains" (ix). Her avoidance of a stronger critique makes it appear as though Cabeza de Baca was more heavily invested in preserving the stories of the Llano as folklore, but that is not her motive. She also does not delve into the greater effects of the U.S. government's efforts to rid Hispanos of their land. But what she does do is attempt to document the story of struggle—the actions taken and the emotions evoked.

Cabeza de Baca attempts to preserve the pastoral image of New Mexico that she held in her mind, and describe the *querencia* her father felt for the land. She avoids critiques and discussion of the larger impacts of what was occurring, though. While Cabeza de Baca was asserting her agency through her knowledge of the folklore that she was privy to, her treatment of larger political issues, especially those centered upon land, are intriguing. I argue that her reasoning was twofold: it stemmed from her confusion in having to navigate the delicate borders of support/opposition to the actions of the American government that stemmed from the inherited struggle occurring within her own family, and her approach allowed her to position Hispanos/Mexicanos as powerful actors regardless of the outcome. Her father and uncles were principle actors in dealing with the issue of displacement and American ideals.

While her uncle Ezequiel was fighting against the fencing laws in his gubernatorial campaign, and her father was struggling against incoming settlers who adhered to the fencing

laws, her uncle Manuel also provided influence. In addition to spending much time in her grandfather Tomás' library, "[t]he importance of writing history was made clear to Fabiola when her Uncle Manuel published" (Ponce, 1995, 35) stories in Spanish. Some of these stories centered upon the bandit Vicente Silva, which, according to Ponce caused strife between the Cabeza de Baca brothers, who were "often politically on opposite sides" (64). Literary critic Erlinda Gonzales-Berry states that Manuel "was a staunch Republican" (2000, 52) and similar to Ezequiel, Manuel dabbled in journalism. Gonzales-Berry suggests that Manuel's newspaper, *El Sol de Mayo*, "did not miss an opportunity to cast barbs" (52) at *La Voz del Pueblo*.

While Ezequiel was sympathetic to the *Gorras*' cause, Manuel was wholeheartedly against their actions and ideology. Cultural and literary critic A. Gabriel Meléndez says, "In an age in which the social order or pre-American days began to give way to factionalism and divisive politics, he saw his role as moral guardian of an older, and to his mind, more peaceful time" (2005, 78). In his view, the *Gorras* were engaged in illegal actions that he deemed immoral. Meléndez goes on to say that Manuel, "who had premised his public life and actions of ideas of moral rectitude and personal character, had little sympathy for what he considered to be illegal methods espoused by the *Gorras Blancas*. In his paper he openly accused them of fence-cuttings, barn burnings, and similar acts directed at Anglo ranchers" (79) Manuel's granddaughter, Elba Cabeza de Baca writes that as a child, her mother was sent by her grandfather to purchase a copy of *El Sol de Mayo* one day, and *La Voz del Pueblo* the next to "find out what insults Manuel hurls at Ezequiel" and "what insults Ezequiel hurled at Manuel" (1995, 30). Elba goes on to say that "when all the family gathered at the parents' home the two brothers acted as if nothing had happened" (30). These political and

social disagreements must have caused an interesting dynamic within the Cabeza de Baca family. One can only imagine how two brothers with such differing views would influence the rest of the Cabeza de Baca family, and particularly a young Fabiola, who was being reared in the home of Tomás and Estefanita.

Meléndez affirms that “the riff between the two [Ezequiel and Manuel] was well-known” (2005, 84). On some level, this interaction between two of the Cabeza de Baca brothers must have affected the other siblings, and particularly Graciano, who was the *ranchero*—whose profession was inadvertently at the center of their debate, and later, Fabiola, who was wholly invested in the details of the Cabeza de Baca family name and politics associated with such issues as land. I argue that Fabiola inherited the positionality that she claims in *We Fed Them Cactus*, as well as in her correspondence and the material placed into her archive. The seemingly contradictory positioning of her uncles, who inevitably must have affected her father, also affects Cabeza de Baca and I believe that her need to navigate all of these different opinions and positions arises in her work as a purveyor of culture, history and tradition.

Cabeza de Baca recognizes the necessity to comment upon the larger issues, such as land, and the action taken by Hispanos/Mexicanos to counter American expansionist efforts, even if the way that she does so creates some confusion regarding her own political and social position. She also recognizes the importance of the land as it relates to her father, the one Cabeza de Baca male who she obviously holds in very high regard, and whose story she is committed to telling because he is one of the Cabeza de Bacas we do not know much about. Here again, she establishes her agency and uses this as her “third space” (Pérez, 1999) to comment on what land meant to her father, and how he reacted to the changes occurring

around him. Cabeza de Baca constructs an image of her father as one rooted in the land. Rebolledo (1994) suggests that the land, weather and landscape are dominant in Cabeza de Baca's narrative. I agree with Rebolledo and use Professor of Landscape Architecture Anne Whiston Spirn's conceptualization of landscapes to describe how the Cabeza de Bacas viewed the land: "Some landscapes are sacred, some are homelands, others are cherished or abhorred for what once happened there" (1998, 33). Cabeza de Baca's tale of the *llano* provides information about the sacredness and meaning of the land to her people as a whole, even if she shies away from the more complex discussions of the political history surrounding the land struggles that affected and were affecting Hispanos/Mexicanos around her and within her immediate family.

Cabeza de Baca was obviously influenced by the historical events facing her family and community, such as fencing. She specifically points to the importance of the land to her family, and documents how outside migration to the Southwest affected the land of the region and its people. But, Cabeza de Baca is especially concerned with how these changes affected her father and the actions he took in response to those changes. She spends ample time explaining how her father viewed the influx of settlers and the detriment they caused to the sacred land that was a part of him. Although not in the public eye, her father was equally important to the land struggles in Northern New Mexico, as were her uncles Ezequiel and Manuel who were also active agents in this historical battle.

In her narrative, Cabeza de Baca reflects upon the changes affecting the *llano* and her father. She states:

Another people came to settle where once the New Mexicans of Spanish extraction had lived, where they had found the promised land for their flocks and herds. Gone

were the sheep and only a few cattle ranchers remained [...] Papá was unhappy as he saw the shacks of the newcomers rise on the acres which had been his pastures. (145)

Further, Cabeza de Baca recounts a conversation held between the ranch cook, *El Cuate* and Papá as they witnessed the effect of land surveys and incoming settlers as Graciano says: “If those ‘Milo Maizes’⁷⁶ have put their house on my land, they shall rue the day they came here. They will ruin the land for grazing and they will starve to death; this is not farming land” (146). Continuing his argument, Graciano says, “No one has a right to ruin pasture land and those idiots in Washington, who require that they break eighty acres for farming, are to blame for these poor fools destroying the land” (146). The despair felt by Graciano is similar to that of the fabled Don Alamar, some 50 years earlier, as described in María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don*. Examples such as these demonstrate that land issues were prevalent over centuries. They also demonstrate that the same land and fencing issues experienced by *Californios* were also felt by *Nuevo Mexicanos*, *Tejanos*, and those in Arizona.

Towards the end of *We Fed Them Cactus*, Cabeza de Baca details the detrimental consequences of the rough use of the land by the settlers and homesteaders. Specifically, she highlights Graciano’s dismay at the violence launched upon the *llano*. As the homesteaders were ironically forced from the land because of its conditions, Graciano says angrily, “Someday the land will be washed away, for there is no grass nor shrubbery to protect it. I may not live to see it, but you young folks will realize why I have been so perturbed over this colonization by the Nesters” (153). Graciano foreshadows the fact that land issues plaguing Hispanos/Mexicanos in the nineteenth century would also affect them in the twentieth century, and that the consequences would extend even further into the next century. Even

though they would become United States citizens, the Hispanos/Mexicanos of the region were still affected by the colonizing efforts of the U.S. government. Cabeza de Baca is committed to documenting the issues affecting her people, but her focus shifts because she is trying to navigate all sides of the Cabeza de Baca influence that are affecting her. Her treatment of the land issues is especially curious. I acknowledge Cabeza de Baca's important work in documenting the history, but still question some of her actions.

Avoiding the Obvious

In her various forms of documentation, and particularly in her *testimonio heredera* in *We Fed Them Cactus*, Cabeza de Baca notes the importance of land to her family and indicates the importance of place identity to the residents of the *llano*. She is quite nostalgic about how she describes her family's relation to the land. In that sense, *We Fed Them Cactus* is definitively a *testimonio* in form, with folklore as its basis. It is inevitable that Cabeza de Baca references these larger issues affecting the residents of the *llano* and the land that it comprises. However, the way in which she mentions the issues is interesting because she is much less critical than the other three women in this study. In fact, she is the most nostalgic of the four. Similar to the others, though, Cabeza de Baca uses displacement to activate her voice, and the way in which she delivers her *testimonio heredera* demonstrates her commitment to telling her father's story. In it, she makes references to major legal and cultural battles, noting that action was taken. But Cabeza de Baca stays committed to documenting Graciano's story, making the larger issues less important than his personal experiences.

For instance, in Chapter 7, "Chapels on the Llano," Cabeza de Baca reserves the last sentence of the chapter to say, "When the cattle companies and the homesteaders arrived, it

was the survival of the fittest. Much of the land had reverted to the United States government. It was No Man's Land. The Llano became a cattle and farming country and a few foresighted Hispanos abandoned sheep and took to cattle raising on a small scale" (67). The idea does not continue into the next chapter, but rather, leaves the reader to wonder how such a large statement could be left unexplained. That the United States government was taking Hispanos' land is a major part of U.S. history that had detrimental consequences for Hispano landowners, and specifically, her father. The displacement signified that the effects of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were still considerable in the twentieth century. Why Cabeza de Baca does not reference that history, nor make that a major part of her story is curious. Rather, she peppers mention of the history throughout the book. This is one of the ways that Cabeza de Baca's *testimonio heredera* stands out from the others in this story. She is dedicated to creating a narrative based on displacement, but tends to place more emphasis on her personal history more than a national history as Ruiz de Burton and González do in their *testimonios herederas*.

What remains constant in the *testimonio heredera* are the family ties to the land. Despite the fact that the Cabeza de Bacas were divided on some of their political views, their investment in the land was similar. All held an interest in the land whether it was for livelihood or capital gain. Part of Cabeza de Baca's hesitation in providing more strident critiques may have stemmed from her uncle Manuel's employment as a prosecutor. While her father felt the immediate effects of incoming settlers being granted land via the U.S. government's new homestead laws, her uncle Manuel worked to prosecute those using what he deemed "immoral" means to demonstrate their opposition to these new inhabitants of the

llano. This biographical fact points to the actions taken by different members of the Cabeza de Baca family, even if those actions were not for the same cause.

In another section of *We Fed Them Cactus*, Cabeza de Baca again references land grant-related history in passing. She says, “The Hispanos had almost no titles of ownership, and the few who did were not able to compete with the newcomers. The boundaries had been laid by means of indefinite markers and much of the land was lost even after it was taken up by the courts [who Manuel worked for]. The history of the New Mexican land grants would fill volumes, but it is not a part of this story” (73). Although this history was essential to all landowners in New Mexico at this time, Cabeza de Baca uses her father’s story to address the issue of displacement.

At the beginning of *We Fed Them Cactus* she explains the importance of the land to her family saying, “Through four generations, our family has made a living from this land” (ix). Rebolledo states that “It is clear that her [Cabeza de Baca’s] family depends upon the land...” (1994, xxiv). Her family history reveals that they fought for the land in various ways. Cabeza de Baca’s brief mention of the historical background and more clear focus on her father’s response indicates that her writing is not a form of silence, but its nostalgic tone combined with its attempt to document active participation of Hispanos/Mexicanos, and especially her father. It is also indicative of a woman who was trying to map various political and social lines. Cabeza de Baca does provide some accounts in which she recounts stories about how such historical issues as fencing affected her father, but she is very selective in her words. My examination of Cabeza de Baca’s work serves neither to celebrate nor condemn her, but to analyze why she took a specific approach to document land issues. I resolve that her selectivity stemmed from her need to navigate between/amongst the Cabeza de Baca

brothers and what each represented socially and politically to the Cabeza de Baca family name.

Cabeza de Baca's treatment of the issues affecting her family and community hark back to Genaro Padilla's argument that women such as Cabeza de Baca, "retreat into whispers of discomfort, confused historiography, muted social criticism, or silence" (1993, 203). Although Cabeza de Baca is very careful in the development of her critiques, she is neither confused about the historiography, nor silent. Her approach to social commentary, particularly about land issues, is also very different than that of Ruiz de Burton, who is upfront about acknowledging the ill intentions and corrupt acts of the U.S. government towards Mexicans. Ruiz de Burton's situation differs, though, because she was forced to literally fight for her land after her husband's death. However, it does not undermine the work of Cabeza de Baca, who generally shies away from such strident critiques. I do find it curious that she chooses to leave out further commentary about the impacts of land loss, but I do not agree with Padilla in his assertion that Cabeza de Baca's was a form of "historical amnesia" (204).

Arguing that Cabeza de Baca had historical amnesia works to not only once again silence the Chicanas/Hispanas/Mexicanas Padilla writes about, but it also works against the effort to promote women's agency. Cabeza de Baca knows the history. This analysis suggests that her need to navigate the delicate familial borders and her desire to demonstrate her father's actions and those who helped him, not historical amnesia, are the reasons why she chooses to describe the land issues as she does. Cabeza de Baca's own struggle develops as a direct result of the history she inherited through her father's and uncle's relations to the land, the *Gorras*, family dynamics, and politics.

Cabeza de Baca did further acknowledge the effects of land loss, but not in *We Fed Them Cactus*. These accounts are provided in sections of her writing found in the Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert Archive at the University of New Mexico. In one of the archive folders, a document that Cabeza de Baca labeled “The Land” provides a historical overview of the land issues in New Mexico that stemmed from the conquest led by Don Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in 1540. Although this document is only eight pages long, Cabeza de Baca mentions the effects of land loss to Hispanos in the region, and provides a somewhat veiled critique of the U.S. government. She says,

Over one hundred years of struggle for existence, living under two flags, the Spanish and the Mexican, again the province was confronted by a new rule, the American occupation. The new government promised them protection against warring Indians; it also promised to recognize the titles to their lands. The promise to protect property rights failed to function properly. The methods employed by the United States government became so involved[,] prolonged, expensive and complicated, that most of the grantees lost their claims. (Cabeza de Baca Gilbert Papers, Box 1, Folder 11, n.d.)

Cabeza de Baca acknowledges the detrimental consequences of U.S. takeover, indicating that she was not silent, as Padilla claims. In this same document, Cabeza de Baca also recognizes the fact that New Mexicans fell prey to the actions of attorneys who were willing to take advantage of them since they did not understand English or the intricacies of U.S. law. To write this into her history is significant because it adds to other historical documentation confirming that these malicious events occurred. Cabeza de Baca’s writing in this document also indicates that the land had been used by its inhabitants for centuries as a way of sustaining their livelihood. She says

The New Mexicans for over a century and a half had the privilege of open land for grazing. Their livestock had increased to millions. With the coming of the Americans, the loss of their lands, the passage of the homestead laws, and the coming of the Texas cattle companies, the New Mexicans had to reduce their herds and gradually

they were fenced in to the point whereby they could not make a living from livestock. Livestock had been the livelihood of the New Mexicans. It had been their means of trade with Mexico, California, and later the United States. (Cabeza de Baca Gilbert Papers, Box 1, Folder 11, n.d.)

This is significant history with regard to the Southwest and a people's way of life. It points to the severe consequences that New Mexicans, like their counterparts in California and Texas, had to face as a result of U.S. takeover. Cabeza de Baca's writing in this document is much different than her writing in *We Fed Them Cactus*. This makes sense considering that typically, archived material is released after the subject's passing—it was a safe venue to provide a more explicit critique and a place where she could demonstrate her historical knowledge. She establishes her authority in *We Fed Them Cactus*, but pays specific attention to her father's story, along with some of the community members' stories.

In another folder within her archive, Cabeza de Baca attempts to detail the history of land settlement in New Mexico. In this particular folder, she notes that “In 1812 the Anton Chico [land] grant was given to the people as a community grant by the Mexican government” (Cabeza de Baca Gilbert Papers, Box 1, History of Land Settlements Folder, n.d.). In these documents, she brings attention to the idea of community grants, as well as the founding of New Mexico, providing chronological details of each village settlement, such as San Gabriel, Santa Cruz de la Cañada, Puerto de Luna, Peñasco, Trampas, Embudo, Pojoaque, Cuyamungue, Truchas, and Anton Chico. She spends some time discussing the issues related to the Anton Chico land grant, pointing out how the grant is vast and serves as a prime example of how land was originally intended to serve as communal land. In these short paragraphs, Cabeza de Baca also emphasizes issues related to mineral rights, and the legal issues that centered upon the use of, and ownership of this particular land grant. The

amount of material on land-related issues to be covered, as Cabeza de Baca notes in *We Fed Them Cactus*, is great. Her archival material reveals that, clearly, she did not suffer from historical amnesia. Instead, *We Fed Them Cactus* forces us to re-examine Cabeza de Baca's purpose in writing it, and acknowledge her focus. It is her *testimonio heredera*—a story of all she inherited as a member of the Cabeza de Baca family and as a Hispana/Mexicana.

Cabeza de Baca's inheritance places huge responsibility on her: She inherits the need to navigate the borders that the Cabeza de Baca family struggles created, and had to maintain the family name as that of an elite, landed class, but one that also had to battle against the U.S. government and its laws. Cabeza de Baca also physically inherits property via her grandmother, Estefanita. In her archive, Cabeza de Baca includes the last will and testament of her grandmother. In the document, Estefanita states that her son, Graciano, and his children, Fabiola, Virginia and Luís will inherit her home in Las Vegas (Cabeza de Baca Gilbert Papers, Folder 3, Last Wills & Testaments, Related Materials Folder, n.d.). Cabeza de Baca literally inherits a name tied to European blood and a history of conquest; she inherits land, and symbolically inherits the struggles associated with the land. This history provides some explanation about why she presents the material in *We Fed Them Cactus* and her archive the way that she does.

Intricate Ties of Individual and Community Identity: Cabeza de Baca Carves Out Her Niche

The fact that Cabeza de Baca created a *testimonio* detailing life on the *llano* is significant. My intention is not to undermine the importance of what Cabeza de Baca does with regard to Southwest history and tradition. Her works serve as an indication of the importance of the oral tradition of folk storytelling, the importance of the people of the *llano*,

and the rituals and practices of the residents. Cabeza de Baca notes that importance throughout *We Fed Them Cactus*. In recognizing the herders and their significance to the *llano* she says, “When I think about the herders on the endless Llano, I know that they are the unsung heroes of an industry which was our livelihood for generations” (1954, 8).

Cabeza de Baca was active in a variety of venues, as she not only toured across the state during her tenure as a home extension agent, but she also traveled abroad as representative to the United Nations where she “set up demonstration centers among the Tarascan Indians where she trained extension agents from Central and South America” (Rebolledo, 1994, xv). In addition, Cabeza de Baca was documenting New Mexican culture in her correspondence, articles and novels. As a woman writing in the 1940s and 1950s, she challenged what was expected of women of her time. She utilized a number of literary techniques that allowed her to push boundaries, and more specifically gender boundaries placed on women’s writing, roles, and expectations. Cabeza de Baca created her “third space” (Pérez, 1999) and demonstrated her agency. By writing newspaper articles, novels, cookbooks, editorials, and constructing family genealogies, she proved that women were important both inside and outside of the home.

Through her writing, we see how Cabeza de Baca’s own Nuevomexicana identity was formed along the way. She uses the stories of her family and community in order to formulate her own story and define who she is and becomes. The land, combined with her familial and community experiences helped her create her own Hispana “consciousness.”⁷⁷ Through these stories Cabeza de Baca is also able to gain valuable insight into the identities of the people of the *llano*. Because she is able to understand the importance of the land, the cattle, the rain, etc. through the tales told to her, she too becomes a part of the *llano*.

Similar to other well known Nuevo Mexicanas such as Nina Otero-Warren and Cleofas Jaramillo, Cabeza de Baca was devoted to preserving the culture they thought was potentially being lost, but, as Rebolledo reminds us, “These women comprise a first generation of Nuevomexicana writers who were conscious of their heritage and cultural identity” (1994, xix). Each was committed to resisting the cultural erasure that they witnessed occurring in their communities. Cabeza de Baca in particular, does this by incorporating the *corridos*,⁷⁸ *dichos*,⁷⁹ and folk tales documenting place, tradition and land. Each of these items contributes to her identity formation and ties her to her community. In incorporating the various *corridos*, *dichos* and folk tales in her *testimonio heredera*, Cabeza de Baca demonstrates a hybrid methodological approach as she gathers each of these items through ethnographic, autobiographic, literary and oral history methodologies. For a woman writing in the twentieth century, a hybrid style is a fairly progressive type of methodology. By employing each of these methods, Cabeza de Baca contributes to modern cultural studies, such as this one, to demonstrate the importance that traditional folk tales, historical documentation, and familial and community histories play in contemporary studies of communities and regions.

Conclusion

Throughout the entirety of her work, Cabeza de Baca never forgets her family’s connection to the land. She constantly reiterates its importance, and goes beyond describing the land in literal and capitalistic terms. She states “We had never been poor, because those who live from the land are never really poor...” (1954, 11). Graciano had instilled in Cabeza de Baca this appreciation of the land. Because of his influence on her, she focuses specifically on the effects that the land struggles had on her father, who, out of all the Cabeza

de Baca brothers, would have the greatest impact on her views. She notes that despite the outcome, her father was constantly active in the land movement saying, “One by one they departed, and Papá bought or leased acres and acres of land from the disillusioned colonists and his pastures increased to good proportions, but it was bad land. So much of it had been plowed it would be years before grass would grow” (153). She goes on to say, “They have seen some hard times, but such is the lot of those who live from the soil—yet they have taken roots as Papá had on his land” (153). Through these descriptions, Cabeza de Baca notes her father’s action and pays homage to the land *de ayer* (of yesterday).

Her father’s connection to the land was strong, but like other Hispano/Mexicano landowners, he too faced issues with his property. Cabeza de Baca states “And Papá did sell; but he had taken deep roots on the Ceja, roots deeper than the piñon and the juniper on his land. He had endured hardships and had stayed on when others had given up in despair” (175). Through this description, we get a sense that Graciano was like Don Alamar in María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and The Don*, who similarly had established a deep connection to his land and had fought hard to maintain ownership. Graciano was perhaps different from his brothers Ezequiel and Manuel, who used public arenas to demonstrate their own attachments to land-related issues, but his action was nonetheless important.

Cabeza de Baca’s *testimonio heredera* offers a historical account, a “landscape story” as Spirn describes:

Landscape stories have common themes across cultures: struggle for survival; the character of human society (the relations of individuals to family, deities, state, or corporation); the nature of nature and the place of humans within it; where things came from, and how specific places came to be (stories of origin and creation—of mountains and rivers, of flowers and humans). (1998, 49)

Cabeza de Baca's *testimonio heredera* works to describe Hispano efforts for cultural survival, their experience with land struggles, and their tie to the land through experience and inheritance. Graciano's tie to the land is similar to Don Santiago's in González's *Caballero*, as Cabeza de Baca notes, "He had his children, but they never could be as close to him as the hills, the grass, the yucca and mesquite and the peace enjoyed from the land" (175).

For Graciano and the rest of the Cabeza de Bacas, the land was tied to identity formation. Viewed in this way, Cabeza de Baca's work does much more than archive the folk tales told on the *llano*. It reveals the significance of the land to its people and documents the struggles inherited by the people of the land. She chose to write it in a way that avoids very pointed critiques of the U.S. government, homesteaders, etc., but by developing an understanding of how her inherited struggles played a role in how she chose to disclose that history offers some consolation. Cabeza de Baca offers proof that women of Hispanic/Mexican descent were actively engaged in documenting their stories. Cabeza de Baca's dedication to preserving and creating the Hispano story is one way in which we learn about the land issues that plagued many Hispanos/Mexicanos at this time, as well as the after effects of such momentous incidents as the deletion of Article X from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Homestead Act, and the coming of the railroad.

She ends *We Fed Them Cactus* with a chapter titled "The Drought of 1918." It is in this final chapter where we hear the most about the outcome of the *llano*. In this chapter, Cabeza de Baca mentions briefly, the historical events that would define a people for centuries to come. She dedicates a paragraph to detailing what occurred as a result of General Kearny's false promises saying,

[H]e promised protection for the New Mexicans and their property and the United States in agreement with Mexico. He also promised that the Spanish and Mexican land grants would be respected. But New Mexico, isolated for so many centuries, did not have enough lawyers to plead the cause for its people. The owners of the grants and other lands were unable to pay for the surveying and gradually most of the land became public domain. Unaccustomed to technicalities, the native New Mexicans later lost even their homesteads because of ignorance of the homestead laws.... (176)

Based on what we know about Cabeza de Baca's character, she was not a woman who would typically shy away from expressing her opinion, but was committed to respectfully maintaining the family name. She was also invested in her people—that cannot be argued. Cabeza de Baca held her father in high regard, and through her *testimonio heredera*, recognizes the importance of the land to him. She also notes the changes in the landscape and their effects when she describes how the *llano* shifted from good land to becoming a dust bowl. Her people had used the land, but had not abused it, as the homesteaders had. Now, due to their abuse of the land, the purity of the *llano* was gone. Because he was so much a part of the land, Graciano, too changed as the land changed. Cabeza de Baca says, “The land which he loved had sucked the last bit of strength which so long had kept him enduring failures and sometimes successes but never one of tenor” (178). Through Graciano's story, Cabeza de Baca depicts the struggles faced, and the actions taken by him and other Hispanos/Mexicanos.

Cabeza de Baca's story reminds us that to Nuevo Mexicano communities, land was viewed as belonging to the group of families, friends and community members who worked and lived together. Some 40 years later, Phillip B. Gonzales reiterates a similar point when he reminds us that:

Throughout traditional New Mexico, regardless of variation in community structure, the heirs [of land grants] are convinced that social and cultural well-being are tied to the pride of once again possessing the mountains, valleys, and waterways as their

ancestors once did. The ideal of "community" holds special attraction as a response to the social dislocations affecting the populace. (2003, 322)

Cabeza de Baca acknowledges similar claims as Gonzales. Her family held strong attachments to the land as ranchers, politicians, and elite members of society.

Cabeza de Baca's work provides a model for contemporary studies that similarly seek to avoid cultural erasure by documenting how inherited struggles play a role in the process of identity formation. At the end of her *testimonio heredera*, Cabeza de Baca leaves the reader with a final thought about the importance of cultural existence, saying "Life so cruel and at times so sweet is a continuous struggle for existence—yet one so uncertain of what is beyond fights and fights for survival" (178). Cabeza de Baca sets the stage for us to recognize the "beautiful, cruel country," as described by Eva Antonia Wilbur Cruce in the next chapter.

Chapter 5:

“Rawhide Tough & Lonely”: Eva Antonia & the Arizona Land Issues

The “Grand Canyon State,” as Arizona has most commonly been known, is an area that draws tourists and retirees seeking refuge in its desert landscape and high winter temperatures. Prestigious retirement communities envelop the affluent city of Scottsdale, along with luxurious amenities that offer an adult playground for those who can afford it. The social climate is slightly different in the city of Tucson, located just 118 miles southeast of Phoenix. The city’s website boasts that Tucson is “one of the oldest cities in the United States,” and its “rich cultural heritage centers around a unique blend of Native American, Spanish, Mexican and Anglo-American influences” (City of Tucson, 2011). However, its current state of affairs with regard to issues of race, ethnicity, and borders would suggest that the idea of “protection” and acceptance of cultural difference in Arizona is arguable, particularly for those who are not part of the upper echelons of the social hierarchy or whose ethnicity is questionable. With the imposition of some of the toughest immigration laws and an attempt to ban ethnic studies programs in schools, Arizona history in relation to border and race disputes indicates that it has continually been a site of contestation. This chapter describes how these issues have played a key role in Arizona’s past, and describes how Pima County in Tucson is directly tied to the Wilbur family, and the issues they faced with regard to land and race.

Like its neighboring states of California, New Mexico, and Texas, Arizona’s history stems from an intense struggle for land, identity, and nation-building efforts. Historian Howard Roberts Lamar suggests that part of the reason for problems in Arizona and New Mexico as they vied for statehood was that they were seen as “Frontier” Arizona and

‘Mexican’ New Mexico,” (2000, 426) thus seen as two potential states with unfit populations for inclusion into the United States. As a result, citizens of Arizona and New Mexico were considered second-class once they were admitted as states. But their history with race and class issues begins long before statehood. Arizona’s draw in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries centered around the mining industry and the potential to establish more easily accessible trade routes. Assistant Director for Museums at the Arizona Pioneers’ Historical Society in Tucson, Sidney B. Brinckerhoff states that, “During the last decades of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth, Arizona was the scene of expanded church construction, ranching, and mining. These indeed were Spain’s ‘Golden Years’ in the region” (1967, 14), much later than the Spanish in New Mexico. This quest for expansion would eventually drive many people to the region.

In addition to Arizona’s land record, this chapter provides a detailed discussion of the Wilbur-Cruce family’s settlement in Arizona. The conversation following describes how Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce’s *testimonio heredera, A Beautiful, Cruel Country* (1987), provides a narrative of resistance that challenges gender expectations and allows her to exert her agency as a Mexicana fully invested in *ranchero* culture. The analysis of this *testimonio heredera* differs from the others in this study because the account was based on childhood memories, and written when Wilbur-Cruce was in her eighties. This fact requires that the analysis be developed not only from the primary source, but also from an examination of commentary from Wilbur-Cruce’s later life to conceptualize how she took the experiences she had as a child, and developed meaning from them as an adult. Her love for and dedication to the land clearly extended from her childhood until her death. In her *testimonio*, Wilbur-Cruce demonstrates how both her family and community were engaged in teaching her the

importance of the land and the region to *ranchero* culture. That history begins with the influence of Sonora on the region.

Sonoran Arizona & Indigenous Influence

Historian Rodolfo F. Acuña recounts Arizona's connection to Sonora saying, "The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) ceded the northern part of Arizona to the United States; the southern region remained as part of the Mexican state of Sonora—which had a population of over 100,000—until 1853 when it became part of the United States" (2010, 108). This number includes Indigenous who may not have considered themselves Mexican citizens. Prior to becoming part of the United States, Sonora-Arizona was deemed to be the ideal location for mining, farming, and ranching, as water was abundant along the border. This southern part of Arizona would also later be highly sought after by the United States, as its acquisition opened up the possibility to develop direct, faster trade routes, which would lead to greater capital potential in the region.⁸⁰

The Sonora-Arizona connection would be important well into the latter part of the nineteenth century, as Sonoran workers provided much of the labor along the borderlands. For the early peoples along the borderlands, though, life was complicated by colonization and issues of race. Acuña notes that, "Even after a century of cohabitation many of the indigenous peoples did not perceive themselves as Mexicans or even *Sonorenses*, and, at the time of Mexican independence, they still saw themselves as separate Opata, Pima, Tohono O'odham, and Yaqui nations" (109). Settlement along the border meant that the people of the region would have to find ways to cohabitate despite racial tensions that were present between the indigenous and Mexican populations.

Arizona's history cannot be told without mentioning the large indigenous population comprising the region. Their history has direct ties to the Wilbur-Cruce family, discussed later. The Yaquis, Tohono O'odham, Pimas, and Maricopas experienced numerous encounters with Spaniards and Mexicans prior to American takeover. They experienced struggle for land and from what we know today, identity, as incoming Spanish, Mexican, and later, Anglo peoples entered what is now Arizona. Acuña states that,

With the independence of Mexico and the secularization of the missions, Sonoran elites more actively exploited southeast Arizona and developed the area around Tucson, driving the Pima along the Santa Cruz River off their farms. Also, after independence from Spain, the Mexican government stepped up the parceling of large land grants, further usurping the natives' land and, thus, provoking the natives to fight to retain their custody over the river valleys. (110)

However, these indigenous groups did not sit back idly. Rather, as historian Eric V. Meeks points out, "During the Mexican period the indigenous peoples of northern Sonora increased the intensity of their resistance to Mexican incursions" (2007, 24). Like the indigenous peoples in neighboring New Mexico, Arizona's indigenous population fought hard to secure their identities and lands, but were eventually forced to submit to the stronghold of Spanish, Mexican, and American colonization efforts. Part of what drove newcomers into Arizona was the potential mineral wealth that existed in the region.

Brinckerhoff explains,

Mining also expanded in Arizona during the early years of the nineteenth century. There are indications that operations were conducted near Arivaca, and it is known that the Salero Mine was being worked in 1821 east of Tubac in the Santa Rita Mountains. The mineral potential, both placers and lodes, in these areas was well known to local residents in the 1770s, but the continual presence of Apaches had made mining hazardous. (1967, 17)

The Apaches were resistant to Spanish, Mexican, and other indigenous groups, and constantly raided and decimated villages.

Part of the resistance that indigenous groups had was that Arizona was being developed by Spanish and Mexican newcomers, pushing the indigenous peoples to the margins of that society. Spanish and Mexican *rancheros*, or ranchers, then sought land to establish their own communities. National Park Ranger Ray H. Mattison conducted an extensive study of early Spanish and Mexican settlements in Arizona. He notes that

During the latter part of the Spanish regime, these stock-raisers [*rancheros*] began to seek grants of land from the government. They continued to petition for additional lands until the late 1830s and early 1840s from the Mexican authorities. (1946, 285)

The cattle industry had its beginnings in the early nineteenth century, and prompted the desire to own land where the cattle could graze without worry. This industry would define the history of Arizona well into the twentieth century. Brinckerhoff confirms that

Stock raising became one of the major Spanish industries in southern Arizona. Frontier *rancheros* soon counted their herds in the thousands, and with peace they looked for new lands further north. Grants made in the San Pedro, Sonoita, and Santa Cruz valleys soon developed into large-scale ranches. (1967, 16)

With rapid growth and potential for increased capital, it came as no surprise that the land would be a highly sought-after commodity, and social hierarchies would develop, pushing certain groups out in order to dominate control and maintain power in the region.

This history is very similar to what was occurring in neighboring territories throughout what is now the Southwestern United States. Brinckerhoff verifies that,

In the valleys of Santa Cruz and San Pedro, Spanish and Mexican ranchers had claimed princely domains, while prospecting parties had climbed into the foothills of the lofty mountain ranges in search of mineral ledges. Church fathers, with Indian workers, had begun large permanent structures. A rudimentary reservation system had been established. Near the presidios, Spanish settlers had opened up new farmlands, and towns were rising. (19-20)

Despite the seemingly “peaceful” final years of Spanish Arizona,⁸¹ the history of conquest continued as Spanish rule ended, and Mexican rule prevailed. This, however, did not stop the

Apaches from maintaining the conflict that preceded the attempt at independence. The Apaches continued to institute warfare, causing chaos throughout the borderlands of Sonora and Arizona. Meeks states that, “In the three decades after Mexican independence in 1821, political turmoil led to the decline of Mexico’s hold on the northern borderlands. In the territory that would become south-central Arizona, Apaches repeatedly undermined Mexican colonization efforts” (2007, 24). In an effort to resolve some of the issues surrounding takeover of land, the Mexican government decided to grant parcels of land to Mexican ranchers.

Arizona differs from its neighboring territories in that the number of grants was miniscule in comparison. Meeks confirms that between 1821 and 1848, “the Mexican government approved only twelve relatively small land grants—far fewer than in the other northern borderland states and territories of Nuevo Mexico, Alta California, and Coahuila y Tejas” (24). Part of the reason for the small number of grants made or confirmed in Arizona stemmed from ever-changing governments and boundary disputes. In addition, as Acuña suggests, “Congress in 1870 authorized the surveyor general of Arizona ‘to ascertain and report upon claims. The surveys were purposely slow, dragging into the 1880s and thus encouraging squatters to occupy the land’” (2010, 114-115). With the passage of time between surveying and the deadlines for claiming the land, many of the cases were either dropped or sent to another level of the courts.

Historian Richard Wells Bradfute states that these delays resulted in “an unusually high proportion of Arizona cases [that] were appealed to the Supreme Court, and most of the decisions of the Court of Private Land Claims in the Arizona district were dependent on decisions made by that higher tribunal” (1975, 167). Though it differs slightly with respect to

its legal land issues, Arizona bears a more distinct resemblance to its neighbors in terms of land use patterns and purpose. Similar to grants in New Mexico, California, and Texas, though, the intent of the grant land remained the same. Spanish and Mexican grants were given with the idea that the lands would be used in common, for the livelihood of families, and as defined boundaries to secure a semblance of safety from Indian raiding.

For example, the Otero Ranch was part of a grant that was originally made in 1789. The grant could not be sold until after a period of four years and the owner of the grant was required to build a house on the land within two years of owning it, and reside in the home for a minimum of four years before acquiring possession. Mattison suggests that, “This grant appears to be the oldest one recorded in the General Land office Records at Phoenix” (1946, 282). Another, the Aribaca (Arivaca) grant was also part of the original settlement in Arizona. This grant was originally mined from 1790 to 1820, transferred to the Arizona Land and Mining Company in 1863, and eventually acquired by Colonel Charles D. Poston in 1870.⁸² However, the claims to ownership of this grant were questioned and sent to the Court of Private Land Claims for a final decision (Mattison, 1946, 306-309). The Arivaca grant will be discussed later, as it holds direct ties to the Wilbur family as part of it included what would become the Wilbur Ranch.

A final grant worthy of mention in relation to Arizona land grant history is the Peralta-Reavis grant. This grant illustrates Acuña’s suggestion that “[t]he nonfeasance and, in some cases, the malfeasance of the courts encouraged fraudulent claims and schemes to invalidate Mexican titles” (2010, 115). While the Peralta-Reavis grant was substantial in size, it was eventually found to be fraudulent. However, the extent to which James Addison Reavis went to claim ties to this grant is noteworthy. Reavis and his wife, Doña Carmelita

Sofía Loreta Macaela de Maso y de Peralta claimed that she was an heir of the 12,740,000-acre grant, which spanned across parts of New Mexico and Arizona. In their attempt to claim heirship to the grant, Reavis falsified legal documents and placed them in both the Spanish and Mexican archives (Mattison, 1946, 326). The Court of Private Land Claims pursued the case and found it to be fraudulent. This resulted in the arrest of Reavis and his incarceration. This case, despite its fraudulent nature, demonstrates the extremes that people went to in an effort to appropriate Mexican land. Arizona's land grant history is small in comparison to its neighbors, but it provides insight into settlement patterns in the region. Regardless of the small number of grants recognized in Arizona, the settlement and establishment of towns must have surprised Anglo newcomers. Mattison states:

When the first American pioneers, largely of Northern European descent, first came into this region in the the middle of the 19th century, they found portions of it already settled by people of Spanish origin. This latter group had first established itself in Southern Arizona a century and a half earlier, when the English colonists were settling the Atlantic seaboard. (273)

Nevertheless, they were quick to discover the potential benefits of settling in and around Arizona, which could provide wealth and expansion opportunities.

However, with potential for wealth found throughout what is now the Southwestern United States, Arizona was but one piece of the expansionist puzzle. Historian David J. Weber states that,

Although the United States acquired most of northern Mexico in 1848, southern Arizona below the Gila (along with part of southern New Mexico) remained Mexican territory until the ratification of the Gadsden Treaty in 1854. During its last decade under Mexico (1845-1854), southern Arizona saw considerable activity, as United States military forces, gold seekers, and filibusters passed through on their way elsewhere. (1977, 227)

Passing up of the potential for expansion and wealth in Arizona did not last long, though. The possibilities of a mining empire in Arizona, along with the potential to establish large-scale ranches proved to be too tempting to incoming Anglos and Mexican elites.

As the United States made its presence known in Arizona, the reign of control and population shifted dramatically. Meeks suggests that:

When the region that would become Arizona was acquired by the United States, most of its territory remained under indigenous control. After decades of neglect by the newly independent nation of Mexico and renewed raids and resistance from the Apaches, only about one thousand Mexicans remained in the area, most of them in Tucson and on ranches along the Santa Cruz River. (2007, 18)

What followed was a similar situation to what had occurred in New Mexico—powerful Mexican elites joined forces with Anglos in an effort to create and maintain a racial hierarchy. This placed elite Mexicanos and Anglos in a superior position to the indigenous groups who had retained power in Arizona until the Mesilla Treaty (or the Gadsden Purchase as it was more commonly known) when large numbers of Americans moved into southern Arizona.⁸³ It should be noted, though, that Anglos held and maintained the ultimate power in Arizona. Weber argues that, “Anglos most often held firm control of Arizona throughout the territorial period,” (2003, 144) with few Mexicans in positions of political power. The racial hierarchy would be established with the guise of providing Mexicans with power, even though that was not the case.

Meeks states “In Arizona the state played an enormous role in shaping the regional economy and in determining how certain groups would fit within it (i.e., as employers, property holders, wageworkers, or wards)” (5-6). With the United States invested in a nation-building project throughout the Southwest, government officials sought to create opportunities for capital growth for particular citizens. Such citizens were usually Anglos or

those that carried significant political and social status through such enterprises as mining, and inevitably land speculation.⁸⁴ This mission mirrors the plans for neighboring New Mexico, California, and Texas, as elite Mexicanos were positioned against other Mexicanos and indigenous peoples in what was essentially a class war. In her discussion of land tenure in New Mexico, Native American scholar Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz says, "...the struggle over land in northern New Mexico [and, as demonstrated in this dissertation, California, Texas, and Arizona], whether consciously expressed as such or not, is a class struggle, a struggle against the capitalization of land and resources" (2007, 128). The class struggle was inevitably tied to race.

Also similar to the elite Mexicanos in its neighboring territories and states, the elites in Arizona claimed ties to a Spanish-European lineage, which indicated superiority over their *mestizo* brothers and sisters who were not tied to untainted blood lines (Meeks, 2007, 24).⁸⁵ As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, ties to original Spanish colonizers of their respective regions allowed Mexican families such as the Ruiz de Burtons, González, and the Cabeza de Bacas to demonstrate their prestige and influence along their borderlands. In her Master's thesis, Jovita González spends a significant amount of time detailing the racial, social, and political hierarchies that prevailed during the nineteenth century. Meeks similarly points to the inner workings of those racial and class distinctions in Arizona saying,

At least through the 1870s, ethnic Mexicans who had earned their fortunes through ranching, freighting, and mining maintained substantial influence in local and territorial politics. This political power would be chipped away in subsequent decades, but at least until 1880, while the people of the region spoke of 'cultivated,' versus 'lower-class Mexicans' and 'peon,' 'savage,' or 'industrious and independent' Indians, these classifications had not become a strict racial divide. (17)

The racial divides, however, would rapidly grow more intense as the potential to establish greater wealth through capital investment established a parallel growth. Similar to the Rio Grande's ability to provide access to international trade for Texas, the coming of the railroad in 1880 had the potential to provide access to international markets for Arizona. Weber states, "The arrival of the railroad in the 1880s ended southern Arizona's dependence on Mexican trade routes and Mexican merchants" (2003, 211). In addition, Meeks notes that "These lines facilitated the movement of cattle, mining ore, and people back and forth across the border" (2007, 27). As development occurred, capitalism prevailed in the form of the mineral industry and large agri-business ventures. This interest in mines and cattle ranching is what would draw people like Dr. Reuben Wilbur to southern Arizona.

Dr. Wilbur's "Miner" Influence in Arizona

Dr. Reuben Augustus Wilbur was born to American parents of English descent in Taunton, Massachusetts on July 7, 1840 (Carl Hayden Biographical Files, n.d.). He attended Harvard University Medical College, and upon graduation, practiced medicine in his home town for two years. Through the influence of friends, Wilbur developed an interest in mining that prompted him to move to Arizona in 1865. Eager for the opportunity to learn more about mining, he eventually became the physician for the Cerro Colorado Mining Company, located some 50 miles south of Tucson. According to a biography of Wilbur crafted by his granddaughter, Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce, "he became a pioneer physician of Tucson," and "had letters of introduction from prominent physicians of Taunton, Mass.[,] from high standing business men and from the Congregational Minister of that city" (Carl Hayden Biographical Files, n.d.).

Wilbur's biography in relation to the history of southern Arizona is important to this discussion because he established the Wilbur Ranch, while expanding and maintaining working and personal relationships with many of the indigenous population in southern Arizona. The ranch and the relationships would carry into his granddaughter's *testimonio heredera*, written over 100 years later. In addition to serving as the attending physician for Pima, Maricopa, and Papago Indians, Wilbur was also appointed as the first Papago Indian Agent in 1871.⁸⁶ According to the Papago Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, "The main Papago Indian Reservation stretches 90 miles across Pima County in south-central Arizona, is bounded on the south for 64 miles by the Mexican Border and extends north to within 10 miles of Casa Grande, Arizona."⁸⁷

Although the Papago had little contact with the Mexican government once Mexico declared itself free from Spain, the Bureau of Indian Affairs states that once the United States appropriated Mexican land through the Gadsden Purchase, the Papago came "under the political jurisdiction and protection of the United States" (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1975). It was during this time that Wilbur was assigned as Indian Agent to the Papagos. Based upon the correspondence in the Reuben A. Wilbur Papers 1863-1897, housed in Special Collections at the University of Arizona Library, Wilbur took his role as Indian Agent very seriously. In numerous letters to the Department of Indian Affairs Office, he suggests the need to provide services and supplies to the Papagos, as well as to secure their land from incoming settlers. He sent numerous letters stating his case for over two years, each time expressing increased urgency for securing Indian land.

In a letter to a representative from the Department of Indian Affairs, H. Burdell, dated September 11, 1871, Wilbur writes in defense of the Papagos stating, "They of all Indians in

this territory certainly are deserving of the attention and assistance of our government, and my hopes for their future advancement and welfare are of the highest” (Reuben Wilbur Papers, Box 1, Folder 1). In another letter he suggests that he has paid out of his own pocket, the cost of repairing the Papagos’ agricultural tools.⁸⁸ In yet another letter, Wilbur urges the representative of the Indian Affairs Office to send seed to the Papagos for planting, which would maintain their livelihood. He states that with the influx of families moving to the area, more seed is necessary for planting, and, “They are becoming anxious to know whether they will be furnished with seed to put in crops with, you will remember that in my communication of October the 17th I called your attention to the probable need of seed ...” (Reuben Wilbur Papers, Box 1, Folder 1). The letters are important because they demonstrate Wilbur’s concern, as well as the treatment that was given to the Papagos, and most likely many of the indigenous groups of the region.

The most striking letters in Wilbur’s collection are those that address land-related issues. He was adamant about securing land for the Papagos, indicating his interest in the indigenous peoples, and also demonstrates an understanding of the importance of the land to the peoples of the region. In a letter to H. Burdell, M.D., of the Department of Indian Affairs dated December 31, 1871, he writes:

I would again call your attention to the necessity of some immediate steps being taken in regards to a reservation for these Indians—the settlers are fast crowding them around San Xavier so bad and taking up the best portions of the land—the longer this matter is delayed the more trouble and expenses Government will be at to give this land to the use of the Papagos—It would be almost a sacrilege (sic) to take them away from their church which their ancestors built hundreds of years ago... (Reuben Wilbur Papers, Box 1, Folder 2).

In that same letter, Wilbur again mentions the land issues:

I have said more on this subject than I should, had not circumstances convicted me that if any action is to be taken toward a setting apart of this land to the Indians the case calls for some immediate action and I would respectfully request that you bring this more immediately before the Department [that] the whites are continually encroaching upon this land... (Reuben Wilbur Papers, Box 1, Folder 3)

Over many years, he delivered this type of letter continuously to the Department of Indian Affairs, each time expressing greater urgency for action to be taken by the Department.⁸⁹ Based upon the letters that Wilbur submitted to the Department of Indian Affairs, it appears obvious that many of the recommendations he made as Indian Agent were ignored.⁹⁰ He was eventually released from his duties as Indian Agent in 1878, and a letter from the Department of Indian Affairs cites that the dismissal stemmed from his negligence to render services to the Papagos.⁹¹ However, an examination of the correspondence between Wilbur and the federal agency suggests that he was in an ongoing battle to receive payment for his services.⁹² What remains curious is that despite his suggestions for securing land for the Papagos, a formal reservation was not established until 1917, a fact that coincides with the information in Wilbur-Cruce's *testimonio heredera* (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1975, 29).

The letters included in the Wilbur Collection offer insight into Wilbur's character, and provide clues into the history that he would eventually pass down to his children and grandchildren. There is no doubt that he took advantage of the region in which he lived with regard to mining endeavors, but he also demonstrated care for the Papago people that he served. Despite being questioned, perhaps unjustly, by the Department of Indian Affairs about the health services he delivered and his use of appropriated funds for them (rather than for his own personal use) Wilbur remained calm and dedicated to his work.⁹³ His feelings about the Papagos and the governments' lack of concern and action on their part, therefore, would be information passed down to his family. The Papago people continued to play an

important role in the *testimonio heredera* of his granddaughter Eva Antonia. Wilbur's love of the land and the people prompted land purchases of his own, providing a place where he could raise his family and further develop interests in addition to mining.

As a resident of Pima County, Wilbur took an interest in ranching, a common means of livelihood for many residents of the area. According to his granddaughter, he established a ranch in Arivaca in 1876, amidst the thriving mining district. This ranch served as the Wilbur family place of residence and where they lived a *ranchero* life. In an article in the Arivaca newspaper, *The Connection*, Mary Noon Kasulaitis writes,

“Dr. Wilbur made a land claim on what was then the Arivaca Land Grant, choosing a site downstream from town, near a mill site formerly used by the operators of the Cerro Colorado Mines. He purchased horses and cattle and began ranching.” (1999, 1)

He was granted land via the Homestead Act, which allotted 160 acres to those applying for land. Acuña argues that, “The Homestead Act of 1862 encouraged the immigration of white colonists, intensifying competition for land and water” (2010, 114). As will be demonstrated, the Wilburs experienced such struggles, but were more conscious of the need to establish peaceful and respectful relationships with their Indian and Mexican neighbors, especially since part of the Wilbur family was Mexican. They differ, however, from the other families considered in this study because they did not claim heirship to any land. Despite the missing inheritance of a land grant, their ties to the land demonstrate a distinct sense of *querencia*, or deep appreciation, love, and respect for the land on which they worked and resided. In addition to claiming genealogical ties to one of the initial conquerors⁹⁴ (Lieutenant Moraga) of the land in southern Arizona along the Mexican border,

the Wilburs also held genealogical ties to Mexican heritage. Wilbur's wife was of Mexican descent, as was the wife of his son Augustín.

Intermarriage between Anglo males and Mexican women was common in Arizona, and as the previous chapters have demonstrated, it was also common in California, Texas, and New Mexico. Acuña confirms that, "In the 1870s, 62 percent of marriages involving whites in Pima County (where Tucson was located) were between Euro-American males and Mexican females. Between 1872 and 1899, intermarriage remained high, with 148 of 784, or 19 percent of all marriages, occurring between white men and Mexican females; during the same period only 6 marriages involved Mexican men and Euro-American women" (2010, 113). Although Wilbur did not acquire his land via his marriage to a Mexican woman, he proves to be one of the statistics for intermarriage.

Author and oral historian Patricia Preciado Martin conducted a series of oral history interviews that became part of a collection titled *Songs My Mother Sang to Me* (1992). The collection included interviews with ten Mexican American women who were asked to talk about daily life in Arizona in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She was interested in documenting cultural practices, heritage, connection to the land, and agrarian traditions. Additionally, she wanted to bring women's voices to the center of historical narratives and enhance understanding of Mexican American history. One of those interviews was given by Wilbur's granddaughter, Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce. The interview compliments Wilbur-Cruce's *testimonio heredera* by including both early memories and providing a lens into her later life. If combined with her earlier work in *A Beautiful, Cruel Country*, it could serve as an epilogue to the *testimonio heredera* written by Wilbur-Cruce some five years earlier.

In her interview with Preciado Martin, Wilbur-Cruce states that, “Grandfather Wilbur’s wife, my grandmother, was Rafaela Salazar, from Altar, Sonora. Her family had already moved to Arivaca, where he met and married her. Grandfather Wilbur homesteaded his ranch in Arivaca about a mile from the mining company [Cerro Colorado Mining Mill]. My father, the oldest of the three Wilbur children, was born on the ranch” (1992, 173). In addition to Wilbur-Cruce’s father, Augustín, the Wilburs had another son, Charles, and a daughter, Mary, who all resided on the ranch until their father fell ill.

Dr. Wilbur was a successful rancher, but when his health began to fail, he returned to Massachusetts to seek medical treatment. At that point, Kasulaitis writes, the family “left the ranch to the care of neighbors Bob Paul and the Figueroa family, who took care of the livestock, branding the horses and cattle and keeping a count of numbers...” (1999, 1). In Massachusetts, Wilbur contracted pneumonia and died in 1882. The family returned from Tucson to the ranch once Augustín was old enough to take charge of it. In Wilbur-Cruce’s *testimonio heredera*, it is Augustín who serves as the main *ranchero* in the story.

After the death of Dr. Wilbur, the rest of the Wilbur family would be subject to the land laws that were being put in place in the early twentieth century. The imposition of the United States government on *ranchero* lands continued from the land struggles faced by Mexicanos during the nineteenth century, though in slightly different ways. As Fabiola Cabeza de Baca notes in her accounts in Chapter 4, fencing became one of the prime issues in New Mexico, and it similarly affected *rancheros* in Arizona. Kasulaitis notes that,

When Arizona became a state, much of the public domain land became state land. Ranchers, including the Wilburs, obtained grazing leases on this state land. With the regulation of the government land and fencing, there was no more open range. (1)

This meant that the Wilburs would be forced to lease land from the government.

It is from Wilbur-Cruce's *testimonio heredera* that we gain the most insight into the daily life of the Wilbur family, and particularly, the ranch duties performed by Augustín and his *ranchero* crew, which included a young Wilbur-Cruce working alongside her father. It is a different view of the elite in that the Wilburs worked the land they owned. The small amount of documentation about the Wilbur Ranch after Dr. Wilbur's death only highlights the importance of Wilbur-Cruce's *testimonio heredera* to the history of ranching in southern Arizona in the twentieth century.

After Augustín's untimely death in 1933, caused by a fall from a horse, the Wilburs still had large numbers of horses and cattle. Kasulaitis speculates that "the Wilbur ranch apparently had some 700 head of horses and 250 cows" (2). This significant amount of responsibility would now fall on the shoulders of Augustín's eldest daughter, Eva Antonia, whom he had trained from childhood to understand *ranchero* customs and labor. Because of their close connection to the land, the Wilburs had instilled in their children, a deep appreciation and love for the land that sustained them. In the Foreword to Preciado Martin's collection of interviews, Vicki L. Ruiz says, "Having a deep sense of their own heritage and connection to the land, some families, like the Salazars and Wilbur-Cruces, retained a small portion of their holdings as their own historical marker..." (1992, xi). This historical marker was what would drive Eva Antonia to fight, until her death, for the land that she called home.

Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce (1904-1998)

Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce was born on February 22, 1904 on the Arivaca ranch owned by her grandfather, Dr. Reuben Wilbur. Although her grandfather migrated west in search of land and minerals, it can be argued that Wilbur-Cruce learned and retained a *ranchero* culture with deep roots in the land. Her father, Augustín, was a rancher, just like his

father, who learned how to ranch when he moved to Arizona. Her maternal uncles were also *rancheros*, and she describes the relationships that she had with them. A particular favorite is Uncle Mike, who was involved in many of the tales that Wilbur-Cruce relayed in her *testimonio heredera*. Wilbur-Cruce was, in a sense, is privy to both sides of the class and status coins, as she was the granddaughter of a prominent doctor, and held genealogical connections to *Sonorenses* (Sonorans). She establishes those ties early in her oral history interview with Preciado Martin saying,

My mother's name was Ramona. She was the daughter of Don Francisco Vilducea, whose father was from Florence, Italy, but my grandfather was born in Mexico, somewhere around Alamos. He married Margarita López. Grandmother and Grandfather Vilducea left Mexico because my grandfather was being pursued by the government. They walked across the country with their children. I think it took them about three months to reach the creek at the Wilbur holdings. (1992, 173)

In this short excerpt from her interview, Wilbur-Cruce establishes her mixed heritage, ties to the borderlands, and “earned” class status. Although it is hard to imagine that she would be privileged, based on her recollections in her *testimonio heredera*, *A Beautiful, Cruel Country*, Wilbur-Cruce did enjoy many of the luxuries afforded a well-established family in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

During her elementary school years, Wilbur-Cruce was homeschooled by her Aunt Mary. She learned to read and write, though with much criticism from both her aunt and her father. She recounts, “Aunt Mary used to give me very advanced work. I was reading *David Copperfield* before I could understand it. She used to tell my father, ‘She doesn’t have a brain in her head’” (Preciado Martin, 1992, 175). Wilbur-Cruce later entered a convent school in Los Angeles, when she was about thirteen years old. This was quite a change for her, since she was used to riding on the isolated, open range, and was now subjected to scores of girls

surrounding her at all times. In her interview with Preciado Martin, Wilbur-Cruce remembers an incident at the school where her background was the center of discussion. Although she came from a family of high status, she was still a *ranchera*, a culture that outsiders found difficult to understand. She remembers a girl at the school asking one of the Sisters about her:

‘Well, Sister, what’s the matter with Eva? What kind of person is that? Where did she come from?’ And the Sister said, ‘From someplace in Arizona—some wild place. I don’t know where it is, but they eat chicken and spareribs with their hands, and they point at people. Horrible people! You must be kind to her because she doesn’t know anything.’ And I sat there listening to every girl who came and talked, and I would guide myself by that. (186-187)

What the schoolmate did not know was that Wilbur-Cruce’s upbringing provided her with a different kind of knowledge than a formal school could provide. On the ranch, she learned what the land meant to *ranchero* culture, and developed a strong work ethic and deep appreciation for the land and the people who lived and worked it. This upbringing would lead Wilbur-Cruce to develop a counter-narrative that went against preconceived notions of elites’ participation in constructing the dominant record.

In the foreword to the Preciado Martin interview, Ruiz gives us a sense of Wilbur-Cruce’s early developed *querencia* for the land, when she says, “In tending a water hole miles from her home, she [Eva Antonia] made friends with the animals and the landscape” (1992, xii). She was taught from the young age of three to value the land and its people. Unlike the other women in this study, she actively and physically worked the land as a child and as an adult. This is different than Cabeza de Baca, who knew of the ranch culture, but did not actively participate, as this was men’s work according to the Cabeza de Baca standards. Cabeza de Baca says,

True to my aristocratic rearing, I had to lead a ladylike life and should not resemble that of our uncouth neighbors whose women were able to do men's work. I always envied any woman who could ride a bronco, but in my society it was not done. How skillfully they saddled a horse! I often watched them catch a pony out in the pasture, just as the mend did on our range, but it was never my privilege to have to do it (1954, 129).

Wilbur-Cruce would have been considered one of the uncouth neighbors because she was expected to know everything about *ranchero* culture, and fully participate in everything from cattle drives to saddling horses.

Additionally, Wilbur-Cruce says such things as “I wrote of the land, the animals, the rocks, the plants, of my parents, and grandparents, the neighbors, the vaqueros, the Indians—of myself and my feelings (xi). She clearly had established a relationship with everything that was a part of the *ranchero* (read: Mexican) culture. She identified with Mexican *vaqueros* and Indigenous peoples who helped her to appreciate the land and how, when it was taken care of, the land would take care of her. Most of the influence came from her father, but she was also influenced by her maternal (Mexican) grandparents and maternal aunts and uncles, who all played a significant role in her upbringing, and were all well-versed in *ranchero* culture, as they had participated in it most of their lives.

In this way, Wilbur-Cruce is tied to the land in a different way than Ruiz de Burton, González and Cabeza de Baca. Although the way in which the Wilburs tended to the land is similar to the Cabeza de Bacas, the difference stems from the way that the younger generation (Eva Antonia and Fabiola) participated in the physical labor performed on the land. Wilbur-Cruce was not privy to the more sheltered life that Cabeza de Baca experienced, or hiring workers to mine her land as Ruiz de Burton had, or, as in the case of González, she was not solely tied to the land via her maternal lineage. This is not to say that each of the

women did not have familial influence and/or a tie to the land in some way, but it was Wilbur-Cruce who actually shared in the duties of ranch work. Her *testimonio heredera* details her contributions, and describes ranch life in Arivaca. In this way, Wilbur-Cruce is able to assert her agency as a *ranchera* familiar with ranching culture—a feat uncommon for women at that time.

Her *testimonio heredera* thus differs from the others examined in this study in another way. It was written when she was in her eighties, although the stories of the *rancho* included in *A Beautiful, Cruel Country* depict Wilbur-Cruce's life as a young girl growing up on an Arizona ranch. She says, "I have written of the country as I remember it at the turn of the century, and of our lives—rawhide tough and lonely" (Wilbur-Cruce, 1987, xiii). Although written with these childhood memories in mind, the *testimonio* is indicative of the issues centered upon *ranchero* culture as they relate to use of and feel for the land.

The *testimonio heredera* is a precursor text to the Preciado Martin interview, prompted by Wilbur-Cruce's desire to "evoke that beautiful, cruel land of solitude for others in a form more accessible and permanent than it can take in my own memory" (viii). The other reason she cited for her decision to write the book was because of a prompt that came from her friend Linda's daughters, two pre-teens who came to visit the ranch but did not understand its importance to Wilbur-Cruce or ranch life. After walking the ranch land with her, the two girls finally started to appreciate nature after they could actually visualize what she was describing to them inside the home as they visited. As they toured the land, they asked many questions, played with the animals, and enjoyed their surroundings.

This experience prompted Wilbur-Cruce to write a letter for children like her nieces and nephews who, similar to the young girls, did not understand or appreciate the land and

animals. Surprised that she had written so much, Wilbur-Cruce's friend Linda suggested that she turn the 50-page letter into a book manuscript. She says that after writing and writing more, "I forgot about submitting anything for publication, as they had suggested, but writing for my own people was a great deal of fun, and I wrote on and on" (xi). The book served as a way for her to preserve her memories. She writes about life at the turn of the century, and

Of the appalling racial hatred, so prevalent for so many decades—a poison with which we came in contact every day, its only antitoxins the scriptures quoted by my humble Grandfather Vilducea and the saint-like life he, but few others, lived. Looking back, I wonder how I ever got this far with my 'letter.' (xiii-xiv)

Wilbur-Cruce's intentions in writing the book appear clear—to document ranch life in Arivaca, and in turn, develop her *testimonio heredera*, her inherited history.

A Beautiful, Cruel Country works to expand our perception of the literary imaginary by taking into account the importance of childhood memories and experiences—what can be argued are Wilbur-Cruce's inherited struggles, an inherent component of the *testimonio heredera*. While *A Beautiful, Cruel Country* serves as her *testimonio heredera*, later commentary from Wilbur-Cruce, such as the Preciado Martin interview, helps to flesh out the young girl's ideas and training. The reader is able to understand how the young girl's experiences developed meaning for her as an adult who now understood their implications. This commentary also helps establish what the land meant to the Wilbur-Cruce family, and depicts the struggles that continued well into Wilbur-Cruce's adult life. In interviews with her from various venues, we see that she continually refers back to the *testimonio heredera* in order to provide the context for the later documentation that we can conceptualize as a continuation of the original testimony.

Just One of the Guys

Anyone familiar with the Wilbur Ranch easily associates Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce with its operation. The ranch has been in the Wilbur family since the nineteenth century. But Wilbur-Cruce is adamant in pointing out that she did not inherit the family ranch, saying, “People are wrong when they think I inherited the ranch. No, I bought it” (1992, 192). What she did inherit, though, were the struggles associated with the land and *ranchero* culture. In her *testimonio heredera*, Wilbur-Cruce provides insight into the particulars of the daily *ranchero* life that she experienced as a young girl.

In the *testimonio*, it is her father, Augustín, who is the *patron* of the ranch. He took over the ranch after his father’s death, like Wilbur-Cruce took over the ranch when Augustín died. Augustín instilled in Wilbur-Cruce, the *querencia* for the land and its people. This love was inherited from his father, who was well-liked amongst the people of the ranch land in which he resided. In addition to her father’s influence, Wilbur-Cruce’s *testimonio heredera* suggests the importance of the roles her family, as well as the surrounding community members, played in teaching her about *ranchero* culture and instilling appreciation of the land. By compiling her story in this way, Wilbur-Cruce develops a *testimonio* that demonstrates the importance of family and community, providing details about the struggles faced by the group communally, and the representative struggles she would inherit—all key elements of a *testimonio heredera*.

In her account, Wilbur-Cruce notes both the beauty and harshness of the land. In the Prologue to her *testimonio heredera* she says, “One reason I have finally written this book was to evoke the beautiful, cruel land of solitude for others in a form more accessible and permanent than it can take in my own memory” (1987, viii). Wilbur-Cruce establishes the

importance of her *testimonio*—to tell the history of the land so that others would learn from it. She is also able to assert her agency by establishing her authority in telling the story of her family and community—as an individual, but representative perspective.

In places like the Prologue, Epilogue, and interviews, Wilbur-Cruce provides insight into how she interpreted what she learned as a child on the Wilbur Ranch into her life on the ranch in later years. Wilbur-Cruce's father taught her early on to appreciate the land and its meaning. That appreciation is clearly articulated in *A Beautiful, Cruel Country*. Through the early experiences with her father, she also learned about the implications of such actions as the government requiring fencing of land, for instance. Wilbur-Cruce says, "I constantly thank God for the privilege I have had of having seen and ridden the open range, back in the days when the national forest was open country and not criss-crossed with barbed-wire fences and riders everywhere" (viii). As a child, she was very inquisitive, and the lessons she was taught as a young *ranchera* were formative for her adult life.

Wilbur-Cruce begins her story by describing how upon her move back to the ranch after her father's death, she encounters Federico Lara, one of the original workers on the Wilbur Ranch. Lara tells Wilbur-Cruce, "We don't have anything here anymore. Our parents, friends—all gone or dead. We are surrounded by new people who don't understand us, and we don't understand them, Evita. Or perhaps you don't know what I mean?" She responds with, "I do know, Fed, I do know" (xii). The conversation between Lara and Wilbur-Cruce sets the stage for the rest of the story told in her *testimonio heredera*. At the price of progress, ways of life were changing, as was the land that they worked—the land that Wilbur-Cruce developed such a love for.

However, not everyone agrees that she had such a love for the land. In a 1999 article in *The Connection*, an Arizona newspaper, Mary Noon Kasulaitis argues that Wilbur-Cruce's reputation was that of woman who stole cattle, and was sent to jail for the crime. Tucson Weekly reporter Leo W. Banks explains that in 1943, Eva was sent to jail, along with her "longtime cowboy Luis Lopez, on four counts of killing a mare that belonged to an Eloy man, a former Arivaca resident, and branding its colt as her own" (2002, 2). Wilbur-Cruce was convicted on all four counts, although much speculation exists around what truly happened. Of the evidence that exists, it is unclear whether or not Wilbur-Cruce killed her neighbor's cattle, as she was accused of doing. In her interview with Preciado Martin she describes how, after her father's death, she returned to the ranch and an old townswoman warned her to go back to Los Angeles because of the ensuing cattle war that her father had been a part of. She tells Preciado Martin, "In a cattle war people kill each other's stock or they kill each other, if they possibly can. You can imagine how hard it was for me. I was alone and a woman" (192). Shortly after, she and her brother found a large number of their horses murdered. She may have acted in retaliation, which is why she ended up in prison, but that is pure speculation.

Kasulaitis, who grew up near the Wilbur Ranch, continually questioned Wilbur-Cruce's motives, and her opinion about Wilbur-Cruce is evident in her critique of *A Beautiful, Cruel Country*. She questions Wilbur-Cruce's memories included in the book, citing that after seeing the title, her (Kasulaitis') father told her, "This country here is the best cattle country in the world. It's beautiful country. It's not cruel. It was the Wilburs who were cruel" (1999, 3). While there is no doubt that some of Augustín Wilbur's and Wilbur-Cruce's actions were questionable, it could be argued that just like the potential "faultiness"

of Wilbur-Cruce's memories, those of Kasulaitis' father must also be taken with a grain of salt. Wilbur-Cruce states in her Prologue, "...I have falsified nothing that I am aware of" (1987, xiii). The focus of this analysis is not to place her on "trial," but rather to examine how she developed a connection to the land. From the archival material, additional articles, and Wilbur-Cruce's interviews, it seems obvious that the land was important to the family, despite contradictory claims.

Wilbur-Cruce begins recounting her story by discussing her grandfather Wilbur, with a history similar to the one described above. Dr. Wilbur's influence on his son, Augustín, was evident, as they both took ranching in Arivaca very seriously. Despite having a Mexican mother, Augustín was known as "*el Americano loco*" by his family and friends. Augustín would take charge of the ranch, employing the help of his wife, Ramona, their children, Eva Antonia and Ruby (William would come later, along with another child who is not mentioned in Wilbur-Cruce's *testimonio heredera*), his in-laws, Francisco and Margarita Vilducea, and their children. In addition to the Wilbur family, the ranch work was also completed by various Mexicanos and Indians who lived nearby. A young Wilbur-Cruce befriended a large majority of the employees who also appeared in her story. Through the depiction of her father, Wilbur-Cruce suggests that he expected a lot out of his eldest daughter. She says:

My father was a hard man. When something had to be done it had to be done on the spot and one had to go about it the right way. Neither man nor beast was spared. How unpleasant, difficult, or painful the task might be was not to be considered. When one of such tasks was assigned to me I was expected to go in shoes and all just like anybody else. Neither my sex, my age, or my sensitivity was ever considered. (46-47)

The tasks assigned to Wilbur-Cruce helped her understand *ranchero* culture, as well as to be alert to the land—to its topography, wildlife, and people.

Unlike the other women in this study, Wilbur-Cruce worked the land, so her connection to and understanding of it forced her to become one with the land. While her father expected a lot from her, he also made it a point to spend time out on the ranch land teaching her to recognize landmarks and to do tasks associated with *ranchero* culture. For instance, in one section of her *testimonio heredera*, she creates a scene in which her father has taken her out to examine the land:

‘Come,’ said Father. ‘Follow me and I’ll show you the mountain ranges on this side of the Cerro.’ And he walked around the peak, showing me the different ranges and indicating how far the cattle travel. ‘You see, Eva, that body of water over there? That’s the Laguna de Aguirre, and farther south is Sasabe.’” (60)

Augustín goes on to explain to Wilbur-Cruce how the cattle travel along those creeks and rivers, so that she would gain an understanding of the process. He also takes her to the peak of the Cerro, a mountain with a trail leading to it that her Grandfather Vilducea referred to as “*la vereda del diablo* (the trail of the devil)” (62). At just three years old, Wilbur-Cruce was traversing this rough land with her father, and when they reached the top, Augustín tells her, “I know the climb was very difficult and unpleasant, but the experience makes up for it. Everything is like that, Eva. You have to reach and work for the things you want” (63). Wilbur-Cruce was often reminded of her father’s words throughout her childhood, and would carry this valuable lesson into her adult life. Her experiences and her father’s lessons counter what we would traditionally consider an elite perspective.

Both Wilbur-Cruce’s mother and father spent time explaining to her the importance of the land and her surroundings as they related to her culture. She says, “There were many difficult lessons that I had to learn before I was allowed to romp and run free, with only Hunga [her dog] for company” (73). For Wilbur-Cruce, some of these lessons included

driving the animals on the ranch to their designated spots. She recounts a time when “[o]ne day Father asked me if I didn’t think it would be fun to drive the goatherd up the hill across the creek, let them graze, and then drive them back to the riverbank” (76). So, she eagerly drove the goatherd up the hill, and as she returned to the ranch, she remembered that “a sense of pride surged through me that could help Father just like one of the men” (77). Little by little, she was being formed into the *ranchera* that her father envisioned during her training.

These lessons would continue throughout much of her young life, as she modeled her behavior after her father’s. She would also become like Doña Tomaza, who, in Wilbur-Cruce’s *testimonio heredera*, was a skilled *ranchera*. She “lived and worked all her life on a cattle ranch...She had an imperious air about her, for Doña Tomaza was known and respected by everyone” (78)—everyone except Rafaela Wilbur, Dr. Wilbur’s widow, who thought that a woman’s place was in the home, not on the open range. Doña Tomaza, on the other hand, influenced Wilbur-Cruce to believe that the best place to be to learn how to work the land was indeed on the open range.⁹⁵ Like her parents, Doña Tomaza would also give her lessons to teach her about *ranchero* culture. In one section, Doña Tomaza informs Augustín that she would give her riding lessons. She asserts her authority to do so stating:

‘When I was young I rode better than my two brothers. And I managed a few cattle drives in my time. We used to start the cattle at Abilene, and by the time we got to Río Colorado we’d be driving fifteen hundred to two thousand head. We hired hands as the herd grew, but I was trail boss all the way.’ (78)

The lessons for Wilbur-Cruce would include teaching her how to drive stock, using her Uncle Mike to play the role of the calf, as well as lessons in tracking to teach her how to recognize who or what was roaming their ranch land (81). For a young child, the pressure of learning the rough lessons of *ranchero* life was great. Wilbur-Cruce says, “After the lessons

from such an authority as Doña Tomaza I was expected not only to know how to drive stock, but to be a fully seasoned cowhand” (82). Her father gave her tasks immediately to test the skills she learned from the highly respected Doña Tomaza. The experiences that Doña Tomaza had as a young girl resembled those of Wilbur-Cruce, for she too led cattle drives and was “the boss” of the *rancho*. At times, a five-year-old Wilbur-Cruce would be expected to serve as the *patrona* of the ranch in her father’s absence.

In her oral history interview with Preciado Martin, Wilbur-Cruce says, “Sometimes they [the Mexican men working for her father] would sit down and smoke, and I would tell them to get on with their work. But it wasn’t fun to be boss, you know. Mexican men are not bossed by women, especially in those days” (1992, 178). But she did not back down. She asserted her agency early on, and surprised her family and the Wilbur Ranch workers. For a young girl to know and understand *ranchero* culture was surprising, but her knowledge and skill made her father proud. He would often note her expertise, telling his workers how pleased he was with her. In a conversation with Federico Lara, the man who Wilbur-Cruce recalls in her Prologue, Agustín asks, “What do you think of my *vaquerita*, Federico?” He responds with, “She is great, Agustín (sic)! Nobody would believe it. How old is she?” Agustín responds, delightedly, “She is five years old” (95). For this child to be so aware of the land and the culture was incredible. Her early upbringing would definitely influence her to assert her agency from a young age, which was different from the other women in this study who were subjected to the idea that young women should be reared in the home, and be taught to be homemakers, teachers, and respectful to their male counterparts.

For the Wilburs, knowing the land was important because in doing so, they could navigate rough terrain, determine where water sources were located, find areas that were safe

for their cattle, and understand how to get from Point A to Point B, either away from danger, or to a neighboring Indian Village. Wilbur-Cruce was subjected to this required comprehension daily. In one scene in her *testimonio heredera*, she recounts how "...Father walked into my room one day and handed me a sheet of paper and a pencil. He ordered me to draw a map of Pima County and show exactly where I sat in relation to the range, section, quarter-section, and so forth" (179). This important lesson would prepare her for the upcoming tasks that Augustín deemed necessary for a *ranchera* to learn. In her interview with Preciado Martin, Wilbur-Cruce recalls:

I had to ride out of the fence into the National Forest to look for sick cattle. I would report their whereabouts and Father would go and find them and doctor them. I had to check the fences and see if they were down and report it. I was supposed to go and clean the water hole and see that the water was running well. If not, then my father would get a man to dig deep enough to bring the water up. I grew up doing these jobs from the time I was very young. The first two years I worked along the border. I was very resentful because I felt that I was the only girl in that country that was doing that kind of thing. (1992, 181)

Later in her life she understood what the National Forest land indicated for *ranchero* culture. Augustín's choice to rear her the way that he did indicates that he foresaw the struggles that she would face, as the one who was most likely to take over the ranch when he was gone. He instilled in her the idea that the land was beautiful, but cruel, and that from it, she would develop the *querencia* that he had for the land. Augustín presented this lesson in a way a young girl could understand, explaining that even her horse, *Diamante*, had that love for the land saying, "'This is his birthplace and his *querencia*—his favorite place'" (1987, 182). The Wilbur Ranch was also Augustín's and Wilbur-Cruce's birthplace, suggesting that they too, held an inherent *querencia* for the land.

However, that land and the *ranchero* customs and ways of life would change rapidly. A young Wilbur-Cruce would learn that a transformation was occurring. As her father prepared to leave for the Spring Corrida, or roundup, Barreplata, whose real name was Jesús Lopez, an elder who had lived and worked on the Wilbur Ranch since 1865, explained the changes to her. He said:

‘All this—the horses, the corrido, too—those things are dying. All you will see there on that road will be the machines—those new automobiles like the one Robles has, you know.’

‘Where will the cowboys be, Tata?’ I asked him, puzzled.

‘They will be ghosts. Dead.’

‘My father, too, Tata?’

‘Yes. Your father, your mother, your grandparents, myself, even Damián. Maybe you will live to see it, Chiquita. If you do, you must tell the world how beautiful this country was, for even the land will be dead, too, in a way—like us and like the remuda, the corrido. I do not think it will live for long.’ (211)

From this important discussion, Wilbur-Cruce was given the task of documenting the history of the *rancho*—to provide her *testimonio heredera* that would describe the Wilbur Ranch, the culture and traditions of the *rancheros* who worked and loved the land. Through the *testimonio*, she would assert her authority to tell the story, as a *ranchera* who had worked the land from a young age.

The primary *ranchero* of the Wilbur Ranch was Dr. Wilbur, and although Wilbur-Cruce does not spend a significant amount of time discussing him in her *testimonio heredera*, she mentions his efforts in some sections throughout. At one point in *A Beautiful, Cruel Country*, her grandmother, Rafaela Wilbur, comes from Tucson to visit the family. Although she does not demonstrate a kindred connection to her, Rafaela tells the young girl about her

grandfather's work in the region. As a young woman, Rafaela accompanied Dr. Wilbur on lengthy trips to search for missing Papago children taken by Apaches. Upon seeing Rafaela when she arrives at the ranch, Mateo, one of the Indians who helped the Wilburs on the ranch says:

'That's the woman my ugk [father] tells us about. He often describes her for us, and if you hadn't told me it was your mother, I would have known her anyway from my ugk's description. He tells us how she used to go with Dr. Wilbur on his long trips searching for the Papago Indian children who were so often stolen and sold during the Apache Indian raids, how they would go far into Sonora and bring back to the children to their parents. No wonder the Indians loved your parents, Augustín. She had to be brave!' (231)

A young Wilbur-Cruce, who had not met her grandparents until the time when Rafaela came to visit, was able to learn about them through the tales about Dr. and Mrs. Wilbur that the family and community members recounted, as well as the stories that Rafaela herself told. She says, "I fell silent, listening to Mateo talk about the sad stories he had heard from his father about my grandparents: how the doctor had struggled, how he fought for the Indians, how he took care of the sick without pay" (232). Augustín and his family would inherit these struggles, though in slightly different ways, as they did not provide medical care to the Indians, but offered them provisions and shelter as they migrated across the land. His father had performed this same duty so many years ago. Grandfather Vilducea reminisces:

'Your being here brings back memories for us also, Rafaelita,' said Grandfather. He went on to tell...how she and the doctor used to cook big vats of rice to feed the Indians. From there the talk turned to Indians and to the many problems my Grandfather Wilbur had when he was an Indian agent. (235)

Rafaela contributes to the story, recalling her memories about Dr. Wilbur, and the trips where she accompanied him with the goal of providing aid to the Indians. Her tales would teach Wilbur-Cruce about her grandparents and the struggles they faced, also helping her to gain an

understanding of why the family continued to perform the work her grandfather started so many years ago.

The End of an Era

While Dr. Wilbur believed he was protecting the Indians during his time as Indian Agent, asking for their lands to be secured through the establishment of a reservation, when they finally were sent to the reservation many years later, the Wilburs felt the loss and additional changes that occurred as a result. In the final chapter of her *testimonio heredera*, “Yours Is the Land,” Wilbur-Cruce describes how she and her family and community felt as the Indians transitioned to living on the reservation. Many of her friends and co-workers on the ranch who had watched her grow up and played a part in her rearing would be leaving the young girl. As he prepares to leave, Tomás José, one of her father’s *empleados* (employees) converses with her:

‘...I going to miss the good vaquerita who saved my life,’ [...] ‘You take good care of that Doradita, Eva.’

‘You coming back too, Tomás José?’

‘Yes, Eva. I want come back.’ He stopped talking and looked off at the *llano*. Finally, he went on. ‘Maybe long time, I come back.’ (299)⁹⁶

A young Wilbur-Cruce may not have understood the implications of the Indians’ migration. But she did understand what would be left as a result. As she watches the Indians leave from the Wilbur Ranch she says, “They disappeared around the curve of the *lomita* and I stood looking at the tracks of their horses going away. Soon the wind and the rain would come and wash them away. Then there would be only what Grandmother Margarita called *recuerdos* (memories)” (300). These important *recuerdos* would serve as a key component of her *testimonio heredera*.

As Wilbur-Cruce realized the changes that were on the horizon, it shocked the young girl, but set the stage for what she would experience as an adult. The young girl says, “I was jolted. For the first time, I think I realized that the Indians were leaving the country *forever*. I ran to Father who was getting some jerky for Viviana and pulled his jacket, ‘Pa, are the Indians going away for good?’” He replied, “‘Yes, Eva. For good’” (304). As the Indians made their way through the Wilbur Ranch and said their goodbyes, another one of the Indians who had helped Augustín, Pete, said his farewells: “He solemnly shook hands, holding his left hand over Father’s shoulder, saying, ‘Yours is the land and God is with you. We’re happy to know you stay in our home. You take care our land’” (308).⁹⁷ In the Wilburs, Pete instilled his trust that they would maintain the land that they had worked so hard, that had provided them with a livelihood and place to raise their families and pass on traditions.

At the same time that the Indians were leaving to the reservation, Rafaela Wilbur, too, was leaving back to Tucson. In his parting words, Grandfather Vilducea hints at the change that was ahead for all the Mexicanos and Indians in the region. He tells Rafaela:

‘Thank you, Rafaelita. *Dios te bendiga*, and don’t forget to pray for us all. We will need your prayers.’ He was silent for a moment. ‘I have a premonition of tragedies ahead. I don’t know why. I just don’t know,’ said Grandfather, shaking his head from side to side. ‘But we are facing a great change. There is turmoil ahead, Rafaelita.’ (310).

That change would mean new ways of doing things, learning to live without the Indians nearby, and fencing of the land they knew as the open range. For Wilbur-Cruce, these changes also meant that she was able to more fully understand the meaning of the beautiful, cruel country. She recalls that as her Grandmother Wilbur left the ranch, her departure served as “one more reminder that we were being left in a great space of harsh land, now emptier than ever before of the Indian humanity that had peopled it for so long” (312). Soon after the

Indians left the area, Grandfather Vilducea passed away, and the loss of the important people in Wilbur-Cruce's life was replaced by racial wars.

In addition to the migration of people out of the region, new laws were put into effect, one of which affected the Wilburs in particular—fencing. The *corridas* that Wilbur-Cruce had participated in as a young girl continued after the Indians left, but the need to fence the land changed the procedure. One of the men who participated with Augustín in the *corridas* was Juárez Sepulveda, a horse trader from Sonora.⁹⁸ Upon his return from New Mexico, Sepulveda tells Augustín, “. . .this problem of the horses roaming so far away will soon come to an end, because everybody is fencing now. Fencing, fencing everywhere. The open range will soon be a thing of the past” (Wilbur-Cruce, 1987, 314). In addition to the fencing issues, land was being taken by the government, so *rancheros* were forced to lease land from the government so their cattle could graze.

Through interviews conducted during her later years, we learn how the experiences that the young Wilbur-Cruce had in listening and seeing the changes that were occurring on the Wilbur Ranch affected her family, and how she analyzed them as an adult. In an interview with Preciado Martín, she describes the process of leasing the land from the National Forest to house the Wilbur cattle. She notes,

“In those days we paid a dollar a head to keep the cattle in the National Forest. The government would have roundups and count the cattle of a certain brand. They'd turn the cattle loose right there where they had the roundup. How far do you think cows go at night? Fifteen, twenty miles! So the next day they would have another roundup and round up the same cattle. Sometimes they'd count the same cattle five times. So Ramón, the Arivaca Cattle Company foreman, and my father and some neighbors decided to get together and bring the cattle in before the government started its roundup in the spring. That was stealing their own cattle back, but what could you do? Later, they actually ran the cattlemen out of the National Forest. It was a fight all the way. After they fenced the National Forest, you had to have a permit for so many

cattle, and if they found one more than your permit allowed, then you were fined.”
(1992, 189-190)

Through her account, the reader gets a sense of how the land was used to control not only the cattle, but the *rancheros* who relied on the land for their livelihood. The efforts of the government meant change for all of peoples of the land. Wilbur-Cruce’s narrative also points to the actions of Hispanos/Mexicanos like her father, against the government. Through her descriptions, she reveals the resistive strategies employed by her father and other Hispanos/Mexicanos in her community.

In another section of her interview with Preciado Martin, Wilbur-Cruce critiques the government and their supposed attempt to protect the sacred lands that belonged to the people. She says that her father sent her to pay a debt owed to one of their distant neighbors, Luis Romero. She met up with Romero who:

...came by in a wagon with some people who had bought or leased a place in the National Forest. They began to tear down the whole thicket of mesquite trees. The nopal came down, too, and they chopped it up. The foreman told me, ‘We’re doing everything we can to preserve this country. You’re going to see how nice it will be.’ The undergrowth was about waist-high. He said, ‘The undergrowth is bad. You’ll see. In twenty years the grass will be up above your stirrups. We’ll put this fence here; it will be beautiful, straight like an arrow.’ But twenty years later, after I had gotten married, I took my husband up there to show him the country. The water hole was dry. There was no undergrowth. The rocks were bare against the soil. There was one bull standing under an oak, alone. They destroyed the whole thing! There was no water hole, no prairie dogs, no hawks, nothing. I walked away sick. (Preciado Martin, 1992, 184)

The lack of care for the land by the government would begin a new era of abuse. The land would no longer produce as it was meant to do. Life in Arivaca would change drastically. She hinted at the coming changes in her *testimonio heredera*. In his examination of Wilbur-Cruce’s final chapter in *A Beautiful, Cruel Country*, Juan Bruce-Novoa reveals, “A way of life was ending, leaving what is now the past almost impossible to decipher, its semantic

system hidden or silenced” (1988, 133). But she would work against the silencing of that history. Because she was taught from such an early age about the land, the requirements for running a ranch, and the importance of the land to the people, Wilbur-Cruce was adamant about fighting for it, and also documenting the struggles that occurred because its importance. Her father had molded her to assert her agency, and like her father, she did this throughout her life. Hers was a narrative that defied dominant discourses and ways of life.

Concluding Thoughts on *La Pistolera*

Wilbur-Cruce describes one of the ways that her father influenced her in being able to stand up for herself. She notes that:

After I had suffered several ugly incidents at the hands of both hot-headed Anglos and Hispanicos (sic), Father finally put a gun in my hands and said, ‘I don’t ever want to hear or know that someone came inside this fence and hurt you again. This is your home. Defend yourself. If anyone comes without permission, order him out, and if he doesn’t leave, shoot him out.’ (1987, 316)

She took her father’s advice to heart, and became known as “*La Pistolera*.” In a *Tucson Weekly* article, Leo W. Banks says that “Wilbur-Cruce acquired a colorful nickname, *La Pistolera*, for her nasty habit of shooting at people who ventured too close to her ranch near Arivaca” (2002, 1). Despite her crazy antics, she remained true to the promise she made to her father that she would protect herself and her ranch. In her lifetime, she was witness to changing landscapes, migration of peoples, and later, cattle wars. Banks claims that, “For Eva, the cattle war never ended” (3). As this analysis claims, *ranchero* culture, including the cattle wars were clearly centered on more than just cattle. As Wilbur-Cruce herself notes, “Cattle wars are about land and water” (Preciado Martin, 1992, 192). She would fight these wars for her father after his death. Banks suggests that:

Certainly circumstance—walking into a cattle war after her father’s death—played a part in forming her character. But Eva was born with a rebel’s streak an acre and a half wide. She did as she wished. She yielded to no obstacle. She fought to get what she wanted no matter what. (2002, 5).

Wilbur-Cruce demonstrates the agency that she claimed as a Mexican-American woman in the twentieth century who had been subjected to the inherited struggles of her *parientes* (relatives).

In 1989, she sold the Wilbur Ranch, “except for 10 acres and the house—to the Nature Conservancy” (Banks, 2002, 6). Eventually, the land was included as part of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. The fact that Wilbur-Cruce sold the ranch surprised many people, including her sister. In an interview with Banks, Wilbur-Cruce’s nephew, Raymond Zimmerman says:

‘There’s always been a lot of heartbreak out at that ranch...My mom used to say, ‘I don’t want to go there. The place is jinxed.’ I know Eva suffered a lot to keep it, and I was surprised she sold to the government when she did. But I know she had no regrets about the cattle war. There was a lot of hate there, but she never regretted fighting them.’ (2002, 6)

Although she was forced to sell the land after the death of her husband, she did it in the name of preserving the land that had become a part of her. Wilbur-Cruce’s commitment to learning about the land and the *ranchero* culture that had defined her family since the nineteenth century demonstrates her commitment to it and the importance of maintaining its history through the development of her *testimonio heredera*.

Conclusion

The United States' nation-building project sought to undermine the power of the Indigenous and Hispano/Mexicano peoples of the Southwest in an effort to dominate control of the region. Historically, the peoples of the Southwest have been engaged in battles over citizenship status, property ownership, and racial categorization. One way that the United States was able to gain power was through the acquisition of land. This study concentrated on the land struggles faced by Hispanos/Mexicanos throughout the Southwest. A review of the historical record indicates that Hispanos/Mexicanos have suffered at the hands of those determined to displace them, but what remains constant is their resilience against these struggles across time. Despite the conflicts that they have faced, Hispanos/Mexicanos were not passive, but rather, remained committed to working against dominant forces that attempted to supersede their political power and their land.

Early documentation about Hispanos/Mexicanos details the struggles faced as colonization efforts were in effect throughout the Southwest. That record, along with a large majority of contemporary history about the Southwest was compiled by males, the representative scribes of historical documentation. This study has suggested that males were not the only active participants in chronicling events that contributed to the displacement of Hispanos/Mexicanos. To demonstrate this, the dissertation focused on the work of four Hispanas/Mexicanas: María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Jovita González, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, and Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce—to suggest that women played a significant role in historical documentation. More importantly, each of the women in this analysis developed a counter-narrative to dominant histories by generating a *testimonio*. Through their *testimonios*, the women exemplified how a diverse, or hybrid, range of materials can be used in

succession to record the history of land-related struggles. These include ethnographic, autobiographic, historical, and literary materials, all of which help to re-imagine traditional conceptions of identity, gender, history, and culture.

As its base, the dissertation employed the use of autobiographical theory to explain how the women interjected their agency into their work. By using life writing they were able to provide both personal experiences and opinions, and include familial and community commentary. This hybrid methodology helped to provide well-formed historical reports that took into account the stories of Hispanos/Mexicanos from different social, political, and class levels. More precisely, this study expanded the confines of the genre of life writing identified as *testimonio*. As seen in the examples in this dissertation, *testimonios* are not restricted to a structure based upon questions and answers performed by a subject and interrogator. Rather, by building upon the theory of *testimonio*, as individual and community commentary, this dissertation has demonstrated how the concept of *testimonio heredera* can be used to reveal the inherited history of struggle taken on by the subject.

Building upon the work of Rosaura Sánchez, who argues that *testimonios* “tell an important story of a struggle for representational space,” (1995, 49) this study also suggests that *testimonios herederas* provide representation of underrepresented subjects who have experienced struggle. By acknowledging that variations of “underrepresented subjects” exist, the *testimonios herederas* included in this analysis enable the ability to understand that they are not limited by class or gender. Through the selected works, the study demonstrates that while class plays an important role, *testimonios herederas* evolve from “decolonial” subjects who have also experienced issues related to unequal gender, race, and social hierarchies. The

innovation of *testimonios herederas* is that they reveal the literal and metaphorical inheritance of struggle (class, race, gender, political, etc.).

The *testimonios herederas* in this study remind us that by combining the narratives of elites into one category—that which follows the dominant, we lose sight of the critical commentary that emerged in some of the narratives. They also reveal that social status, such as that gained from being a property owner, does not shield racial subjects from an inferior status. This analysis has demonstrated that despite their status, the Hispanas/Mexicanas whose work was examined faced discrimination as gendered and racialized subjects because of their “inheritance.” The women I studied were elite in their societies, but still marginalized in this context. In addition, by ignoring the narratives of those considered elite by mainstream society, we miss women’s participation in historical discourse. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in addition to Anglos, only elite Hispanos/Mexicanos and less often, elite Hispanas/Mexicanas had the opportunity to offer public commentary, when it was accepted at all. This study disrupts preconceived notions of status. The *testimonios herederas* included in this analysis reveal that at times, the elite also provide narratives that follow unexpected patterns.

For example, the *testimonios herederas* of Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce serve as reminders of the important work that women have done to make their voices included in the historical record. They have challenged standard historical accounts, patriarchal structures, and commonly held assumptions about elites’ participation in the construction of dominant narratives. The way in which these women developed their narratives suggest, as Martha Menchaca so eloquently describes, that “individuals can acculturate and at the same time retain the knowledge and practices of their ancestors” (2001,

174). These women demonstrated that acculturation does not necessarily equate with silence or loss of autonomy. Rather, their work proves that as early as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women were commenting upon the social, political, and racial issues occurring around them.

As members of prominent, landed families, the way in which Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce construct their *testimonios herederas* suggests that elites can and do develop counter narratives and resistive strategies. Their solidarity in the way that they construct their stories implies that as elite women, they made a conscious effort to enact their agency to serve as authoritative voices. As a whole, the women prove that class status does not expunge the responsibility of documenting historical events that seriously affected the rights of their people at various levels of class and social status. Because of their commitment to creating revisionist histories, the works of Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce exhibits qualities similar to what we would conceptualize as the application of a feminist lens in current cultural studies. Their work can be used in feminist research to demonstrate women's active participation in historical and political events in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each of the women located her "third space," as Emma Pérez (1999) would describe it, to interject her version of Hispano/Mexicano land-related history.

As noted in the case of Ruiz de Burton, their motives were not always ethical. Attempting to swindle one's own mother and aunts out of their inheritance is something to abhor. However, Ruiz de Burton was selected for inclusion in this study because she, along with González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce, were predecessors to the Chicana feminist thought employed currently in research and activism. They each used the

professional and personal relationships they established to learn from, and move forward in their quests to relay history from a racialized and gendered perspective. This is quite remarkable for the times in which they were writing. Although they may not have considered their work feminist, the women contributed to challenging structures that were designed to undermine their efforts. Each was surrounded by patriarchal structures and societal norms that sought to limit their public participation in social and political action, but the women continued to advance their agendas.

Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce are the precursors to a feminist movement for women of color, committed to documenting the racial, social, and political inequalities experienced by Hispanas/os and Mexicanas/os. Their work must be added to the catalog of feminist production to reveal evidence of early feminist action. That action begins as early as the seventeenth century with Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a Mexican nun who fought against patriarchal, religious, and social structures to gain an education, an achievement that completely went against societal norms. The women included in this study provide evidence suggesting that this feminist action was also in place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their social status and privilege as part of landed families would lead us to believe that they would follow dominant patterns, but they disprove that assumption. The women's *testimonios herederas* are important in other ways.

Hispana/Mexicana *Testimonios* & Social Movements

As a whole, the women demonstrate that struggles over land, race, gender, and culture persisted over time, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their accounts reveal that women were active agents in the land struggles of their time. This suggests that women's participation in land-related struggles began long before the land grant movement

of the 1960s and 1970s, the most noted decades for social activism related to issues about land and race. The women's involvement forces us to acknowledge their positions as precursors to the Chicano movement and Chicana identity politics. Part of the value in their work is that it can be used in studies of social movements. Efforts such as theirs reveal that knowing and understanding the history of the cause, which in this case is the land and displacement of Hispanos/Mexicanos, serves as the foundation for action. Additionally, the way in which they responded to these issues suggests that social movements are not necessarily analogous with radical action. The women's weapon was the pen. Their resistive strategies stemmed from their approaches. Rather than solely focus upon the displacement that occurred after the Mexican American War and colonization efforts, Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce were committed to generating narratives that placed Hispanos/Mexicanos in important social and political positions. The women also included personal stories that authenticate their historical accounts and provide insight into their positionality on important social issues.

Their involvement in documenting land-related issues also suggests that women across the Southwest, from Texas to California, were committed to playing an active role in narrating Hispano/Mexicano land history. One way that they participated in this social movement was by incorporating historical events into their novels. Their writing provided a historical context for the land struggle by describing how the ideological concept of Manifest Destiny promoted the idea of westward expansion. As each one notes, this expansion came at the expense of the Hispano/Mexicano people. However, while the women deem this important historical material to include in their narratives, they go beyond simply retelling the story, and demonstrate the importance of action in the battles that ensued as a result.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz suggests that “active resistance...assures survival” (2007, 168).

Hispanos/Mexicanos across the Southwest have demonstrated this by historically taking steps against acts of hegemony. The women in this study have similarly acted, operating against dominant narratives.

Just as social and political expectations forced the women to acculturate on some levels, the women’s writing, in turn, forces its readers to expand their preconceived notions of identity, class, gender, and genre. The writing also presses an acknowledgement of the various strata of social activism, meaning that as scholars invested in Chicana/o cultural production, we must dig deeper to uncover the underlying meaning in text, art, and film. For example, this study examined the hybrid work of Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce that included novels, correspondence, a Master’s thesis, and folklore. The examination revealed that the genre of life writing identified as *testimonio*, can be expanded; its purpose and outcome redefined to acknowledge the idea of inherited struggle. Perhaps one of the most important results of the *testimonios herederas* developed by the women is that they reveal how their Hispana/Mexicana consciousness was formed through the quandaries they faced as racialized, classed, and gendered subjects, thus confirming that the land plays an important role in their identity formation on many levels.

The links to Hispano/Mexicano identity and the land are also revealed through the stories about their families’ and community members’ ties to the land. Cabeza de Baca and Wilbur-Cruce in particular, detail how their fathers were committed to the land, and instilled a great appreciation for it in their daughters. Their familial connections fostered a more nostalgic view of the land that becomes evident through the descriptions of the landscape in their *testimonios herederas*. Cabeza de Baca’s and Wilbur-Cruce’s writing most closely

resembles traditional autobiographical style in that theirs are non-fictional accounts. The other two women's work is nonetheless important to the historical record. In their *testimonios herederas*, Ruiz de Burton and González represent the importance of the land to Hispano/Mexicano identity through their novel's main characters, Don Mariano Alamar and Don Santiago Mendoza y Soria, the *hidalgos* who died engaged in battle for their beloved land. As has been suggested, these characters were based on the influential people in Ruiz de Burton's and González's lives. Each of the four women provides evidence to suggest that their familial, social and political ties influenced their positionality with regard to how they documented the larger issues about land. This confirms that their *testimonios herederas* are their inherited histories. The fact that they chose to document them provides evidence of the value placed on recording those stories.

Cabeza de Baca's inherited struggle affected her manner of writing the Cabeza de Baca family history. Of the four women in this analysis, she tended to shy away from critical commentary. Her approach stemmed in part from her desire to maintain the family name; keeping the internal family struggles private. For a politically significant family in the twentieth century, who respected the Hispano traditions of maintaining the privacy of family life, this is not surprising. However, what the *testimonios herederas* reveal is that Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce are clear about documenting the history of action and displacement that affected their people in very public ways.

For example, each identified the implications of Mexicans becoming Mexican Americans, and how that shift affected the citizenship and land rights of their families and Hispanos/Mexicanos throughout the Southwest. They did not forget the history of violence that defined the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries—the times when their

ancestors were subject to mistreatment and displacement, and the effects that would continue to shape them decades later. Nor did they ignore how, by not upholding its treaty agreement with the Mexican government, the United States reneged its responsibility for protecting Mexicanos' property rights. The women took that history one step further. Rather than solely focus on those issues, Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce suggested that the outcome is not the only thing that should be recorded. The commitment of Hispanos/Mexicanos throughout the Southwest to engage in the struggle was what they deemed important to emphasize. They repositioned Hispanos/Mexicanos in important roles, reestablishing their ranks in nineteenth and twentieth century societies.

Ruiz de Burton, in particular, took on a life-long battle to reclaim the land that belonged to her family. Due in part to her active battle over property titles, deeds and possession, she represents evidence of a precursor to the land reclamation projects that are active in current land movements in the Southwest. She proved that despite losing her husband in death, she possessed the drive to pursue her quest for land that she thought would bring her wealth and status. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Wilbur-Cruce provides evidence to suggest that women also actively worked the land. Her physical participation in *ranchero* culture evolved into a labor of love, or a *querencia*, a deep appreciation for the land. In this sense, Wilbur-Cruce is like Graciano Cabeza de Baca, or Don Mariano Alamar, who were both rooted in the land. In her *testimonio heredera*, Wilbur-Cruce demonstrates how her father's influence taught her to value the land. The biographical sketch of her Grandfather Wilbur also serves as a reminder that he too appreciated the land and its people, and Wilbur-Cruce would inherit this admiration of land that was so sacred to *ranchero* culture. The fact that she chose to preserve her land prior to her death, by selling it to the

Nature Conservancy reveals her commitment to maintaining the ranch that had been the livelihood of her family for generations.

Wilbur-Cruce's story, like the stories of the other three women in this study, reveals how these histories based upon struggle are passed down—through inheritance, both literally and metaphorically. The *testimonios herederas* reveal that the histories are transferred through oral traditions, and the women continued to pass them down through the written word. Each of the women recognized the importance of disseminating their stories to broader audiences to counter narratives that have undermined the actions of Hispanos/Mexicanos in the struggles over their land and identity.

By highlighting the undertakings of Hispanos/Mexicanos throughout the Southwest in their fight for land, the women remind us that despite the outcome, their people were active agents who pushed back. Ruiz de Burton's correspondence reveals the personal drive that compelled her to fight for her land, while *The Squatter and the Don* depicts how the semi-fictional Don Mariano Alamar engages in battle with squatters over his land through the court systems and personal relationships. González similarly uses semi-fictional characters to describe how *hidalgos* along the Texas/Mexico border collaborated to contest incoming Americans who sought their land and daughters. The characters in González's *testimonio heredera* are more aggressive in their approach, but action is taken by both the male and female characters, suggesting that both played a role in the land struggles. Cabeza de Baca and Wilbur-Cruce describe the acts of their fathers, who both worked the land and did what they could to maintain their ownership, specifically taking over as *patróns* of their father's ranches. Cabeza de Baca's biographical sketch reveals how her uncles also labored for land—one fighting for Hispano/Mexicano rights, and the other, working against them.

Wilbur-Cruce's *testimonio heredera* brings to light the relationship between Indigenous and Hispano/Mexicano land struggles, as she describes how both were affected by issues of displacement, yet continued to work together to sustain their land.

For the women themselves, taking the initiative to write about the issues that were prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries validates their importance in developing historical documentation, a duty characteristically reserved for men. Their decisions to devote their work to documenting land-related issues prove that males were not solely responsible for working and/or fighting for the land, but women were active participants as well. By choosing to use their social positions to document the historical struggles, Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce demonstrated their commitment to their families and communities. They would serve as the scribes that recorded the activity occurring around land issues. As a property owner in the nineteenth century, Ruiz de Burton literally fought the legal system to gain complete ownership of her land. Eighty-plus years after her father had taught her the importance of her homeland, Wilbur-Cruce similarly sought to protect her land, though with different intentions than Ruiz de Burton. González and Cabeza de Baca would protect the memory of the land—González by dedicating her Master's thesis to detailing the history of the South Texas borderlands and Mexicano land grants, and Cabeza de Baca by recounting the stories about the land, as told to her by her father, *El Cuate*, and the other *empleados* (workers) at the Cabeza de Baca ranch.

The Past Dictates the Future

Ruiz de Burton's, González's, Cabeza de Baca's, and Wilbur-Cruce's contribution to the land struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be likened to the women who are involved in the current land movements throughout the Southwest. In New Mexico in

particular, women are an integral part of the social activism that is intended to bring land reclamation and protection issues to the forefront of political debates. The women involved in land movements today are also active agents. Rather than serve as passive supporters of their husbands, brothers, and father's efforts, they hold much of the responsibility for ensuring that the current movement continues to thrive. The women are responsible for organizing meetings, serving as presidents and members of land grant boards and councils, teaching younger generations about the land, and promoting discussions about land-related issues in different venues, such as radio shows, in public forums, and through participation in land-related court cases. They, like the women in this study, actively assert their agency and continue to disrupt dominant narratives. Women in the contemporary land grant movement speak up and out, making their presence known and respected. The women in this study offer evidence to suggest that the past dictates the future. The struggles faced by Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce are evocative of the struggles still faced today.

As precursors to the more radical involvement of women in social activism that was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, the women in this study help identify the methods that were used to revise standard historical accounts. The written word provided a way for the women to interject their own accounts of historical events. Within their stories, they supply a snapshot of the social and cultural norms against which they fought in order to narrate their own versions of history. In their own ways, Ruiz de Burton, González, Cabeza de Baca, and Wilbur-Cruce created their own movements through their writing. With the pen as their weapon, they sought to develop resistive strategies against forces that attempted to silence them. Because they were daring and courageous, the women defied the rules and left us with their tools for (re)membering the land struggles in California, Texas, New Mexico, and

Arizona. Uncovering the voices of the Hispanas/Mexicanas of the Southwest who were devoted to the land is a step toward baring other types of revisionist histories that similarly attempt to expand our knowledge of the past.

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Notes

¹ See John R. Chavez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Robert J. Rosenbaum, *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest* (Dallas: Southern Method University Press, 1998); James L. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Richard R. Flores, *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Charles H. Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption: Heritage, Power, and Loss on New Mexico's Upper Rio Grande*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); David J. Weber, *Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003); John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race*. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007).

² See Jaelyn DeMaria, "Indo-Hispano Homeland," Produced by Jaelyn DeMaria, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, Southwest Hispanic Research Institute Archive, 2009), Online Video Documentary.

³ Lorena Oropeza and Dionne Espinoza address the participation of Enriqueta Vasquez, an activist for the Chicano and Land Grant Movements, in the 1960s and 1970s land grant fight in *Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito del Norte* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2006). Similarly, Federico Reade dedicates a section his doctoral dissertation, "La Voz del Pueblo," to a biography of Valentina Valdez, also an activist in the Land Grant Movement in Northern New Mexico in the 1960s and 1970s (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of New Mexico, 2005), 62-69. None of the scholars address women's participation in the land struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

⁴ See Jaelyn DeMaria, "Indo-Hispano Homeland," Produced by Jaelyn DeMaria, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, Southwest Hispanic Research Institute Archive, 2009), Online Video Documentary; Michael L. Trujillo, *Land of Disenchantment : Latina/o Identities and Transformations in Northern New Mexico*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Jake Kosek, *Understories : the political life of forests in northern New Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

⁵ For additional information about racial formations, see Martha Mencha. *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

⁶ I use Hispana interchangeably with Mexicana to identify women who are of Spanish and/or Mexican descent who were born in the Southwestern United States, or have resided in a Southwestern village or town.

⁷ Pat Mora. *House of Houses*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 22.

⁸ Stanton E.F. Wortham. "Socialization Beyond the Speech Event," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 15(1), 2005: 95-112, states that the construction of utterances are intertextual because they serve as a way to index

events where the speaker was an active participant, whether as perceiver, hearer, or other category. In this study, utterances provide insight into discursive social processes that can be “read,” or analyzed.

⁹ In this study, *querencia* is used in two different contexts: (1) as a way to articulate a great love, appreciation and respect for the land, and (2) going back to the Spanish root of the word, *querer*, to want, wish, or desire.

¹⁰ Phillip B. Gonzales. “Struggle for Survival: The Hispanic Land Grants of New Mexico, 1848-2001” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 77, No. 2, Minority Land and Community Security (Spring, 2003), 294. Gonzales convincingly argues that land grant movements in the contemporary moment signify the continued importance of the land to the Hispanic people of the southwest. He explains the importance of the land and its role in Hispano heritage when he says, “Integral to this particular cultural layer, the heirs have long seethed over what they allege has been the denial of their birthright to the land and the subsequent decimation of their traditional culture.”

¹¹ For additional information, see David J. Weber, ed. (*Foreigners in their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, [1973] 1996), 161-168.

¹² According to Malcolm Ebright (*Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), the Protocol of Querétaro “stated that the United States did not intend to annul legitimate grants by deleting Article 10, and that legitimate titles were those that were valid under Mexican law before the cut-off date of 13 May 1846” (29).

¹³ Malcolm Ebright. *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 30. Ebright recounts how the Gadsen Treaty, created in 1853, negotiated the purchase between Mexico and the United States of “twenty-nine million more acres of land for another ten million dollars, establishing the present boundaries between Mexico and the states of Arizona and New Mexico.” The treaty was “[n]amed after former minister to Mexico James Gadsen” and “can be seen as an amendment to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in regard to land grant adjudication.”

¹⁴ For further information on the California Board of Land Commissioners, see *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994, 32-37.

¹⁵ Laura E. Gómez. *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race*. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 122.

¹⁶ In this study, *testimonios* are referred to as Rosaura Sánchez (1995) defines *testimonios*: “social practices” that “require a historical interpretation” (14), and as historical and literary “texts” containing the voice of Chicanas/os.

¹⁷ Tigges also concludes that in the 1880s, property in Santa Fe was primarily owned by Hispanics, and that Hispanic women played important roles as property owners. By the late 1880s, the numbers of Hispanics who owned property dropped significantly, most likely due to increased migration of non-Hispanics to the region (178).

¹⁸ For further information, see María E. Montoya *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict Over Land in the American West, 1840-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 48.

¹⁹ For additional information on the history of the Peralta-Reavis Grant, see E.H. Cookridge’s *The Baron of Arizona* (1967).

²⁰ I was directed to the Peralta-Reavis case by my mentor and the director of my dissertation during my tenure as a Land Grant Studies Graduate Fellow through the Southwest Hispanic Research Institute at the University of New Mexico. The fellowship allowed me to conduct extensive archival and participant observation research related to land grant history.

²¹ Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita (*Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2001, 62) state that “Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the dominant form of production in Baja was the *rancho*, for cattle raising and, the small farm, for subsistence farming, where the sparse *colono* population grew corn, beans, lentils, garbanzo peas, wheat, and in some areas grapes, figs, dates, and sugar cane.”

²² The Land Law of 1851 placed the burden of proof on original land grant owners to demonstrate ownership of their estates.

²³ Malcolm Ebright (*Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 32-34. Ebright also argues that California law “placed the burden on the land grant owner to file a claim with the land board by 1853 or have his or her property declared public domain of the United States.” California land claims set the precedent for what would follow in neighboring territories as the influx of Anglo settlers increased.

²⁴ Malcolm Ebright (*Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 34. Ebright also suggests that in addition to being forced to hire an attorney, claimants were also responsible for providing documentation to support the claim (property deeds, etc.) and had the burden of paying for a survey of the land, which was another requirement of the Court.

²⁵ Emma Pérez (*The Decolonial Imaginary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 6-7. Pérez suggests that in using a third space to create a “decolonial imaginary... Women’s voices and actions intervene to do what I call sexing the colonial imaginary, historically tracking women’s agency on the colonial landscape.”

²⁶ Many scholars have written about Ruiz de Burton. In particular, Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita have done an expansive recovery and examination of her work. Other scholars of note who have written critically about Ruiz de Burton include Jesse Alemán in “Citizenship Rights and Colonial Whites: The Cultural Work of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s Novels.” *Complicating Constructions: Race, Ethnicity, and Hybridity in American Texts*. Eds. David S. Goldstein and Audrey B. Thacker. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007: 3-3, José F. Aranda Jr. in “Contradictory Impulses: María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Resistance Theory, and the Politics of Chicano/a Studies.” *American Literature* 70.3 (1998): 551-579, Amelia María de la Luz Montes and Anne Elizabeth Goldman in their collection of essays, *María Amparo Ruiz de Burton: Critical & Pedagogical Perspectives*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, and many others.

²⁷ Ruiz de Burton became acquainted with Vallejo during her tenure in Monterey, California (approximately 1848-1852). Vallejo was a prominent *Californio* who served as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1849 and a short-term senator in the Sonoma District from 1849-1851 (Sánchez and Pita, 2001, 71). Ruiz de Burton shared an affinity with Vallejo in that they were both considered “cultured” and “intelligent” (71) *Californios* who demonstrated clear interests in land claims. It is through her long-standing friendship with Vallejo that Ruiz de Burton found access to literature and political influence with regard to her fight for Ensenada and Jamul.

²⁸ Ruiz de Burton's and Vallejo's correspondence is presented in its entirety in Sánchez and Pita's collection, *Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2001).

²⁹ *Testimonios* are used in different contexts in this study. One way is to describe them as declarations given to such agencies as the Surveyor General's Office or Court of Private Land Claims agents, or individuals such as Bancroft, for legal, political, and scholarly purposes. They are also referred to as Rosaura Sánchez (1995) defines *testimonios*: "social practices" that "require a historical interpretation" (14), and as historical and literary "texts" containing the voice of Chicanas/os.

³⁰ Contemporary American Studies and Cultural Studies programs and research focus on "transnational studies" that observe culture beyond the traditional borders of the western United States. There is an extensive list of scholarly work that brings transnational studies into cultural studies discussions. Some examples include Claire Fox's *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border* (1999), Ramón Saldivar's *The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary* (2006), and Luis D. León's *La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life, and Death in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (2004).

³¹ Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 18, 40. Gómez discusses Euro-American attempts to separate groups based on race, particularly Mexicans from African-Americans and Indians. Although she focuses on New Mexico in her text, these efforts are replicated in California and Texas.

³² Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, *Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2001), 87. Sánchez and Pita argue that "Both the Jamul and the Ensenada land grants served to underscore the issue of land as capital on both sides of the border."

³³ "American" land values can be described as seeing the land solely as a capitalistic, individualistic investment, rather than as used communally for a group's or family's livelihood (i.e. farming, ranching, etc.).

³⁴ The deep love and appreciation of the land demonstrated by *querencia* is indicative of the way in which land was seen by Mexican families who owned and occupied the land for centuries before the influx of Anglo settlers. Land grants were often considered "communal," meaning that the community shared the land, and worked it together, as a family, for the good of the community. This is in strict opposition to the "American," or individual views of property that emerged via Manifest Destiny.

³⁵ Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, *Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2001), 138. Sánchez and Pita suggest that "The accusation and the facts of the case, suggest, at best, the deception by MARB."

³⁶ I take the term "understories" from Jake Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), and use it to mean the hidden connotations or ideas present in Ruiz de Burton's novels.

³⁷ Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, *Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2001), xix. Ruiz de Burton was engaged with such key political figures as Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, José Matías Moreno, Mexican Ambassadors Matías Romero and José María Mata, President Benito Juárez, Mexican President Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, Félix Gibert of La Paz, Secretary to the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Edward Plumb, Minister Blas Balcárcel, and Mary Todd Lincoln.

³⁸ Genaro M. Padilla, *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography*. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 115. Padilla points out that Bancroft was interested in “completing the definitive history of California” (89). That meant the political history of California, in which Bancroft sought out politically significant men in the region, such as Vallejo. Bancroft later includes women’s narratives, but essentially disregards their narratives as important, but rather, as Padilla states that Bancroft “constitutes them as objects of desire and derision.”

³⁹ Scholars such as Laura E. Gómez (2006), Neil Foley (1997), David R. Roediger (2002), John-Michael Rivera (2006), and Paul Gilroy (1991) are a few of the many that have argued that race and class go hand-in-hand, and one cannot be separated from the other in discussions centered upon status and/or citizenship.

⁴⁰ Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, Introduction to *The Squatter and the Don*. (Houston: Arte Público Press, [1885] 1997), 12-13. According to Sánchez and Pita, Ruiz de Burton’s first novel did not include her name, but rather, was later filed in the Library of Congress under H.S. and Mrs. Henry S. Burton. Her second novel indicates that the author’s name was C. Loyal, or Ciudadano Leal (Loyal Citizen).

⁴¹ See Laura E. Gómez’ *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race*. (New York University Press, 2007).

⁴² Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, *Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton*. (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2001), 387. Sánchez and Pita point out in that Squatter Robinson’s actions, “as well as the assault upon her home by new claimants who would trespass on the property and throw all her furniture and belongings out of the house in Jamul, served as the basis for her portrayal of the squatter Matthews and his cohorts in *The Squatter and the Don*.”

⁴³ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987) notes that “During the brief tenure of the Texas Republic, Texas Mexicans suffered from forced marches, general dispossession, and random violence. In 1839 over 100 Mexican families were forced to abandon their homes and lands in the old settlement of Nacogdoches in what is now East Texas” (27).

⁴⁴ José E. Limón, *Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas*. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 44-45. Limón also points out that Dobie’s parents were ranchers in South Texas, and in his young adult life, Dobie got his BA at Southwestern University in Georgetown, taught high school in West Texas, and received his MA from Columbia University.

⁴⁵ Additional information about the Texas Rangers can be found in Samora, Bernal, and Peña’s book, *Gunpowder Justice: A Reassessment of the Texas Rangers* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xii.

⁴⁷ José E. Limón notes that “He is the son of *pioneer* families in the area, he tells us, thus, in one word, erasing the Mexican historical presence.” The experience had by a member of a pioneer family would have been vastly different than that of a Mexican in South Texas, which is why Limón and other scholars are highly critical of Dobie. In “Folklore, Gendered Repression, and Cultural Critique: The Case of Jovita González,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*. 35, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 455.

⁴⁸ In many of his writings, Dobie romanticizes Mexican culture, or develops Mexican characters that perpetuate Mexicans as a whole as irrational, uncivilized, lazy, and/or violent. See J. Frank Dobie, “Happy Hunting

Ground,” Publications of the Texas Folk-lore Society, number IV, J. Frank Dobie, ed. (Austin: Texas Folklore Society, 1964 [1925]); *Tales of Old-Time Texas*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955 [1928]).

⁴⁹ José E. Limón, *Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas*. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 59. Limón suggests that, “J. Frank Dobie’s ideological construction of Mexicans served comedically to mask their social treatment in Texas.” González must have recognized Dobie’s treatment of Mexicans in Dobie’s work.

⁵⁰ Priscilla Solis Ybarra. “Borderlands as Bioregion: Jovita González, Gloria Anzaldúa, and the Twentieth-Century Ecological Revolution in the Rio Grande Valley” in *MELUS*, Volume 34, Number 2 (Summer 2009). Ybarra examines the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa & Jovita González to point out how Mexican Americans in the Rio Grande Valley experienced racism and exploitation.

⁵¹ In an essay titled “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” Audre Lorde suggests that racist, patriarchal structures will never be dismantled because one would have to use the dominant, patriarchal tools that created it, which would counter the act of deconstruction (*Sister Outsider: Speeches and Essays*. Trumansburg, Crossing Press, 1984, 13).

⁵² Robert J. Rosenbaum, states that, “violence [was] the most distinguishing facet of cultural interactions along the Rio Grande during the remainder of the century” *Mexicano Resistance in the Southwest*. (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1998), 39.

⁵³ Thomas H. Kreneck, Foreword to *Caballero: A Historical Novel*. José E. Limón and María E. Cotera, eds. (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1996), IX. Special Collections Librarian/Archivist at Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi, Dr. Thomas H. Kreneck, writes that “The original manuscript of *Caballero*—more than five hundred typed pages yellowed and tattered with age—is part of the E.E. Mireles and Jovita González de Mireles Papers in the Department’s permanent research holdings” (IX). He goes on to say that the manuscript was donated to the Library in 1992 “by Isabel Cruz, longtime friend and employee of the Mireleses and heir to the papers upon their deaths” (IX).

⁵⁴ José E. Limón, Introduction to *Caballero*, José E. Limón and María E. Cotera, eds. (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1996), XVIII. In his extensive research, Limón reports “we know very little about Eimer, although it has not been for lack of effort. Born in 1903 in Missouri, she died in 1978 in St. Louis, alone, a ward of the State of Missouri, with no relatives claiming her remains.”

⁵⁵ In the Introduction to *Caballero*, Limón refers to the research conducted by María Cotera’s mother, Marta Cotera, prior to the publication of *Caballero* in 1996. Marta conducted an interview with the Mireleses, and through her thoughtful questioning and González’s cues, deduced that the manuscript for the novel was still in existence, and had not been destroyed, as E.E. Mireles relayed to her. Limón states that María mentioned this to him, which prompted his interest in recovering the manuscript (XVII-XXIII).

⁵⁶ Limón states that in her recollection of the interview with the Mireles’, Cotera noticed that when she asked about *Caballero*, E.E. Mireles reiterated that the manuscript had been destroyed. However, “Jovita González, unobserved by her husband, made a brief wagging gesture with her hand to Cotera, clearly *negating* her husband’s statement. She then reinforced her negation with her eyes intently gazing upon Cotera” (XXII).

⁵⁷ Past studies of *Caballero* : Limón (2004) suggests that, “*Caballero* offers a complicated assessment of the overall benefits of U.S. violence and empire for Mexican women and peons in south Texas and Mexico” (28); Pérez (2006) examines *Caballero* as it addresses issues of memory and history; McMahon (2007) examines

Caballero as it "illustrates the important role of the domestic sphere as a site of both negotiation and resistance to U.S. imperialism and colonialism (233); Cotera (2008) examines *Caballero* as it "explores the politics of betrayal even as it outlines the perils and the possibilities of various forms of collaboration—political, artistic, erotic" (201); and J. Javier Rodríguez (2008) examines the "globalism that structures *Caballero's* sense of space and time;" (117).

⁵⁸ Emma Pérez describes the "third space" as a place in which Chicanas are able to insert their voice in an effort to decolonize dominant spaces (*The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas Into History*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

⁵⁹ Scholars such as Américo Paredes (1993) and Peter J. Garcia (1993) have suggested that *Hispanophiles* are tied to a Spanish Fantasy Heritage, where an individual upholds genealogical connections to Spanish-European heritage, thus dismissing their Mexican genealogical connections.

⁶⁰ See James McNutt. "Beyond Regionalism: Texas Folklorists and the Emergence of a Post-Regional Consciousness." (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1982); Gloria Velasquez-Treviño. "Cultural Ambivalence in Early Chicana Prose Fiction." (Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1985); José E. Limón. *Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas*. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

⁶¹ See (Jane Dysart. "Mexican Women in San Antonio, 1830-1860: The Assimilation Process," *The Western Historical Quarterly*. 7, no. 4 (October 1976): 365-375; Janet Lecompte. "The Independent Women of Spanish New Mexico, 1821-1846," *The Western Historical Quarterly*. 12, No. 1 (January 1981): 17-35; David Montejano. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Linda Tigges. "Santa Fe Landownership in the 1880s," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 68:2 (1993:Apr.): 153-180; Mary Margaret Amberson, James A. McAllen, and Margaret H. McAllen. *I Would Rather Sleep In Texas: A History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the People of the Santa Anita Land Grant*. (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003); Deborah A. Rosen. "Women and Property across Colonial America: A Comparison of Legal Systems in New Mexico and New York," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 60:2 (2003: Apr.): 355-381.

⁶² The phrase *tierra o muerte* was taken from Emiliano Zapata during his struggle in the Mexican Revolution. It is often associated with the infamous Tierra Amarilla Courthouse raid in Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico, led by Reyes Lopez-Tijerina.

⁶³ This study takes its definition of Manifest Destiny from Laura E. Gómez's *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race*, New York: New York University Press, 2007. In her book, Gómez says that although the concept was originally conceptualized as "a shorthand reference to a period in history (the 1840s) during which Americans' unbounded hunger for national growth was satiated by the acquisition of the Oregon Territory, Texas, and the Mexican Cession, including California as its jewel," it was really a way to "justify a war of aggression against Mexico" (3). Essentially, Manifest Destiny was a colonizing effort against Mexicans that worked to rob them of their most prized possession—land—in the name of capitalism.

⁶⁴ María E. Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict over Land in the American West, 1840-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), explains that the myth of the southwest was completely false when she states "the land, however, was not a wilderness without inhabitants. Nor were its people unorganized 'savages' who lacked a system of apportioning rights and resources. Jicarilla

Apaches, Hispano farmers, and Anglo homesteaders all had a complex network of understandings, obligations, and privileges governing their relation to the land and one another” (10-11).

⁶⁵ Women such as Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert, Cleofas Jaramillo, and Nina Otero-Warren were New Mexican women who were invested in documenting New Mexican life and culture at a time when women were traditionally seen as the purveyors of culture, though not outside the home, necessarily.

⁶⁶ In this study, *testimonios* refer to “social practices,” as defined by Rosaura Sánchez (1995), that “require a historical interpretation” (14). They are also historical and literary “texts” that provide communal histories through the incorporation of autobiographical methodology and history. The use of *testimonio heredera* serves to indicate the inherited or shared struggle that Hispanos/Mexicanos depict in constructing their history.

⁶⁷ The Santa Fe Ring was the name given to a group of “Lawyers involved with land grant speculation in the late 1800s, joined by judges, politicians, businessmen, and a sympathetic press” who were also considered “a network established for mutual gain.” Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 43.

⁶⁸ Phillip B. Gonzales describes the common lands as follows: the ejido proper, was held in common by all the grant settlers for grazing, obtaining resources such as firewood and building materials, threshing, fishing, hunting, and fruit-gathering. Essential to the economic survival of the community, the commons, typically formed 90 percent of the total land of an ejido and could not be sold (“Struggle for Survival: The Hispanic Land Grants of New Mexico, 1848-2001” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 77, No. 2, Minority Land and Community Security (Spring, 2003)).

⁶⁹ The laws put into effect in the nineteenth century would affect local Hispano and Indian peoples for centuries to come. The current land grant movement is working on land reclamation projects throughout the state in an effort to return land taken by the U.S. government to the land grant communities whose land was erroneously taken due to the implications of the removal of Article X of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

⁷⁰ The *Gorras Blancas* were a group of Hispano protestors that stemmed from the outrage caused by the U.S. governments’ and incoming settlers’ roles in the fencing of common lands within land grants. Malcolm Ebright says that the fencing was “often by outsiders claiming a portion of these lands through deeds from grant heirs or because of homestead claims” (1994, 210). The *Gorras Blancas* were specifically concerned with maintaining the rightful use of common lands as they were originally intended—for common use by the community, rather than designated as private land.

⁷¹ Tey Diana Rebolledo argues that “By the 1930s New Mexican women writers were beginning to figure prominently in the flourishing of the Northern New Mexican writing scene.” Women such as Cabeza de Baca, Otero-Warren, and Jaramillo, she says, “were not only active in their communities and in public life, but each of them produced several books in English that recorded the folklore and ways of Hispanic New Mexico: books that preserved the recipes of native peoples, collected folk tales, and at the same time, revealed many autobiographical details of their lives and those of their families” (Introduction to *We Fed Them Cactus*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, [1954] 1994), xix.

⁷² A plain, or level field.

⁷³ Loretto Academy was started by the Sisters of Loretto. According to the Loretto Chapel website, “The Sisters arrived in Santa Fe in 1852 and opened the Academy of Our Lady of Light (Loretto) in 1853. The school was started and grew from very small beginnings to a school of around 300 students, despite the challenges of the

territory (smallpox, tuberculosis, leaky mud roofs and even a brush with the rowdy Confederate Texans during the Civil War). The campus covered a square block with 10 buildings. Through tuition's for the girls schooling, donations, and from the sisters own inheritances from their families, they built their school and chapel" (<http://www.lorettochapel.com/history.html>). The Academy was considered to be a prestigious school, where only girls who had the financial means could attend. Because Cabeza de Baca was of a landed class, she was able to attend the school.

⁷⁴ Additional information about her relationship to the land is found in the Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico (1602-1996).

⁷⁵ See Malcolm Ebright, *Land Grants and Lawsuits in Northern New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 210-214, for a more in-depth discussion of the fencing of common lands.

⁷⁶ Cabeza de Baca says that Milo Maizes was a "name he [Papá] gave to those he disliked, because, milo maize was a hardy crop they planted for feed" (148).

⁷⁷ Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) coins the phrase "*mestiza* consciousness" to describe a new consciousness of the borderlands, but further describes it as a way to "break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended" (79-80).

⁷⁸ A Mexican ballad. Américo Paredes defines them in this way: "*Corrido*, the Mexicans call their narrative folk songs, especially those of epic themes, taking the name from *correr*, which means 'to run' or 'to flow,' for the *corrido* tells a story simply and swiftly, without embellishments" ("*With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*, University of Texas Press, 1958, xi). Genaro M. Padilla says that *corridos* [stage] an ideal of personal, especially masculine, heroics that expresses collective desire for sustaining presence against physical threat and sociocultural erasure" (*My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993, 38).

⁷⁹ Sayings, or expressions.

⁸⁰ Acuña explains that the United States claimed that it wanted to claim this area in order to develop a railroad route from El Paso to California, but in reality, he states that what "the United States really wanted was the port of Guaymas, Sonora. This was a reasonable assumption, since vast deserts separated the Arizona mines from California ports, and Guaymas had one of the finest ports on the Pacific Coast. Nearby Sonora, Mexico also had a pool of experienced miners and manual laborers as well as urban centers" (2010, 110).

⁸¹ Brinckerhoff explains that, "The last years of Spanish Arizona had indeed been full of hope and peace" (1967, 20), although we know that was not necessarily the case in the eyes of the indigenous population who were being displaced and maltreated.

⁸² Reports and statements from Messrs. Brunckow, Ehrenberg, Poston, Mowry, Parke, Emory, Bartlet, Parry, Schott, Gray, Blake, Ward, Wilson, and others were used to compile a document that would be included in the *Mining Magazine*, which stated: "In March 1856, several gentlemen who had spent several years in Sonora and the Gadsden Purchase, formed an association in Cincinnati Ohio, for the purpose of sending out a small party to secure by purchase or discovery one or more of the old deserted mining ranches. Chas. D. Poston, of Kentucky, with Mr. Ehrenburg and Mr. Frederick Brunckow, and a party of frontiersmen, were fitted out, and after several months of exploration, purchased the Arivaca ranch, near Tubac, and established the head-quarters of the company at the old mining town of Tubac, on the Santa Cruz river, and heart the Santa Rita mountains and the northern spurs of the Arizona or Arizuma Range" (*Arizona Odyssey, The Mining Magazine and Journal of*

Geology, Mineralogy, Metallurgy, Chemistry, and the Arts in Their Applications to the Mining and Working of Useful Ores and Metals, #1427, Vol. 1, No. 1, (November, 1859), 4.

⁸³ Meeks argues that, “Shortly after the Mesilla Treaty (also called the Gadsden Purchase) transferred what would become southern Arizona from Mexico to the United States in the mid-1850s, hundreds of Americans moved into the territory to improve their fortunes” (15).

⁸⁴ Meeks argues that, “In Arizona’s borderlands, the project of nation building—incorporating the region economically and politically into the United States while defining the cultural and racial boundaries of full citizenship—became problematic just as the region entered a state of rapid capitalist development through mining and reclamation and of political maturation through statehood in 1912” (10).

⁸⁵ In his discussion of the power of Mexican elites Meeks says, “These elites often justified their subordination of their Mexican and Indian workers by claiming superiority because of their European or American heritage and their lighter skin. Sonoran Mexicans had long pointed to their Spanish heritage as a mark of their superiority” (24).

⁸⁶ “Dr. Reuben A. Wilbur, a Tucson physician, was hired by Captain Grossman [of the U.S. Army, Special Agent to the Pimas] to vaccinate the Pimas in 1870. Wilbur may have been the physician hired to vaccinate the Papagos in that same year” (Frances E. Quebbeman, *Medicine in Territorial Arizona*. (Phoenix: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1966), 71.

⁸⁷ Bureau of Indian Affairs. *The Papago Indian Reservation and the Papago People*. [Washington, D.C.?] : Papago Tribe of Arizona : (Bureau of Indian Affairs Papago Agency : U.S. Public Health Service, 1975), 5. To provide further historical context about the Papago, I again refer to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, who also notes that, “The first important contact between Papagos and Europeans came about when Father Eusebio Kino, the missionary-explorer, started his missionary program in the late 1600’s and early 1700’s. According to Father Kino, who kept a remarkable diary, the Piman family as he called it, consisted of seven groups speaking dialects of the same language...” (1975, 6) The pre-Spanish Papago economy was one of limited irrigated farming and gathering of wild food products...” (6). The Bureau reports that, “In the late 1600’s the Papago economy underwent a great change due to the introduction of cattle and horses. Father Kino had stock from the missions of Sonora driven north and cattle and horses quickly became established in many areas of the ‘Papaguria.’ Unfortunately for the Papagos, the Apache in the mountainous areas to the north and east found Papago stock a strong lure for increased raiding activities” (7). Additionally, the Bureau reports that, “With Spanish exploration and occupation of the New World the Papagos came under the rule of the Spanish crown. As subjects of the King of Spain they received full citizenship and a large measure of local self-government. However, except through missionary activities, most Papagos remained isolated from Spanish contact. In 1821 Mexico declared itself independent from Spain and until 1853 the major portion of ‘Papaguria’ was under the political jurisdiction of Mexico. During the period of Mexican rule the Papagos continued to remain isolated, with little governmental contact” (7).

⁸⁸ In a letter to an attorney, H. Burdell, of the Indian office of the Arizona City dated October 17, 1871, Dr. Wilbur writes, “I have had their [the Papagos] agricultural implements repaired at my own expense so great faith have I that – Government will eventually do these people justice and hereafter allow the proper expenditure for this purpose” [Reuben A. Wilbur Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, courtesy of University of Arizona Libraries, Special Collections].

⁸⁹ In another letter dated December 6, 1872 to H. Burdell, Esq., almost one year after his initial letter, Dr. Wilbur states, “I would again suggest the importance of Govt. securing to these Indians the land in and around San Xavier for a reservation. They claim it as theirs by a long line of occupation having helped to build the church and for more than a century worshipped at its shrine” [Reuben A. Wilbur Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, courtesy of Arizona Libraries, Special Collections]. The Department of Indian Affairs was apparently not heeding Dr. Wilbur’s advice, which most likely caused frustration on his part.

⁹⁰ In a letter to Commissioner E.P. Smith dated July 29, 1873, Dr. Wilbur includes examples of two letters that he submitted prior to the Department—one dated August 31, 1872, and another dated October 4, 1872—documenting the theft of horses from the Papagos, and a request for replacements that was obviously ignored, for he sent a third letter reminding the Department of the two prior letters of request [Constance Wynn Altschuler Collection: Research Files, Indian Agents, R.A. Wilbur, MSS#113, Box 14/4. Arizona Historical Foundation].

⁹¹ In a letter from the United States Indian Service dated April 25, 1878, ___McMillan suggests that Dr. Wilbur has been replaced as physician to the Papagos because he has not rendered service to the Indians [Reuben A. Wilbur Papers, Box 1, Folder 8, courtesy of University of Arizona Libraries, Special Collections].

⁹² In a letter to Messrs. Clum and Digman, Washington, D.C. (Clum was at one time Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Dr. Wilbur writes, “I enclose to you answers to exceptions to my property a/cs in duplicate which I hope and pray may be sufficient to set me free, with a notice to my bondsmen that they are discharged, etc. – I am tired, and have grown old and gray headed thinking how and when I should be able to breath (sic) the free air of Heaven without the Dept’l ghost haunting me by day & by night – “[Constance Wynn Altschuler Collection: Research Files, Indian Agents, R.A. Wilbur, MSS#113, Box 14/4. Arizona Historical Foundation].

⁹³ Dr. Wilbur was cleared of charges suggesting that he was using government funds for his own use. The Auditor’s Office of the Treasury Department states in a letter to Dr. Wilbur dated March 10, 1881: “Sir: Your property accounts from September 25th, 1871, to April 13th, 1875, have been examined together with the additional evidence relating to them, and it is found that you have properly accounted for all the property that came into your possession. Your property account is closed on the Books of this office. Respectfully, C. Ferris, Auditor” [Constance Wynn Altschuler Collection: Research Files, Indian Agents, R.A. Wilbur, MSS#113, Box 14/4. Arizona Historical Foundation].

⁹⁴ In her *testimonio heredera*, Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce notes that her father says, “Lieutenant Moraga was the very last conquistador to come to Arizona and he is one ancestor I’m very proud of” (1987, 301).

⁹⁵ In one section of the novel, Rafaela Wilbur tells her son, Augustín, “Eva has not business up on the Cerro alone. You,’ she said to me [Wilbur-Cruce] with a very stern look on her face, ‘should stay home and learn to cook and sew. Someday you’ll grow up and get married and have your own home and your own family, you know” (276).

⁹⁶ This excerpt from the *testimonio heredera* is a racialized view of how Indians spoke.

⁹⁷ This excerpt from the *testimonio heredera* is a racialized view of how Indians spoke.

⁹⁸ According to Silke Schneider, who conducted extensive research on the story of the Wilbur-Cruce’s pure Colonial Spanish horses, Sepulveda “brought 600 head of horses to the Territory (today Arizona) in the late

1800s on his way to the stockyards in Kansas City” (*Arizona’s Spanish Barbs: The Story of the Wilbur-Cruce Horses*. Denver: Outskirts Press, 2007), 32.