From Tad Tuleja, *Looking South: Framing Mexico in the Tribal Twenties*.
University of Texas dissertation (1997).

Chapter 3:
Stigmatizing the Mexican: A Brief History

> There are no people on the continent of America, whether civilized or uncivilized, with one or two exceptions, more miserable in condition or despicable in morals than the mongrel race inhabiting New Mexico.
> -- Rufus Sage

> …enterprising, steady, and Protestant – in a word, civilized.
> -- Arthur G. Pettit

In surveying the Southwest borderlands and what lies beyond them, white Americans have spotted a panoply of defects that they have convinced themselves are typically Mexican. Among the traits most commonly identified as endemic – not only in Mexico, but throughout the Hispanic tropics – are (on the active side) treachery, cruelty, irascibility, and lust, and (on the passive side) cowardliness and a fatalistic indolence that ensures both technological and cultural backwardness. These traits have become embodied in a cast of characters marked in popular culture as South of the Border types. The duplicitous greaser, the bandido, the declining don, the Castilian dark lady, the spitfire, the Latin lover, the long-suffering duenna, the drunken general, the jovial buffoon – all of these avatars of the defective soul have served to validate the Anglo persuasion that the people of Mexico are as limited as they are colorful.

Superficially, the duenna and the bandido – to pick only one pair of contrasting types – would seem to have little in common. They are united, however, by more than the shared label "Mexican." No matter how disparate they

may appear, all Mexican types are complementary and interactive. They constitute a coherent semiotic system, one whose signs, whether couched as backward or barbaric, have been inscribed in and by the same conflicted history. An understanding of that history is therefore helpful in appreciating not only the system's organizing motifs, but the particular relations in which they are deployed *in* that history. This essay is a contribution to that understanding.

By tracing the evolution of the stereotyped Mexican, I hope to reveal that the various stigmata of what one Yankee called "Mexicanity" (Wilson 1847: 120) all point, however indirectly, to the same basic faith -- the steady, Protestant conviction that honest enterprise is, to use Max Weber's famous term, the West's rightful "calling," while failure to obey that calling is a sign of perdition. As abused and oversimplified as the Weberian thesis has often been, it is undeniably relevant to the clash of cultures (Lowrie 1967, A. Paredes 1978) that has characterized U.S. history, especially in the borderlands, for if one theme pervades all negative characterizations of the Mexican, it is that Mexican culture is deficient in the spirit of industry. Weber saw that spirit as distinctively Protestant, and Anglo expansionists consciously applauded themselves for it whenever they confronted the backward, priest-ridden south. To appreciate the social utility of the modern "greaser," therefore, we must begin in Reformation Europe, for American slurs about "Mexicanity" ultimately derive from the anti-Spanish sentiments of Elizabethan England.

Tree of Hate: The Black Legend

Historians of anti-Mexican sentiment generally agree that the locus classicus for Anglo "hispanophobia" was the Renaissance mercantile rivalry between England and Spain. Based on the personal as well as political animosity between Elizabeth I and Philip II, the rivalry generated a protracted global warfare in which commercial and religious antagonisms became so enmeshed that the

colonialist clashes were dubbed the Wars of Religion. Those wars, which became familiar to Americans in the 1930s through swashbuckler films, generated tendentious atrocity stories on both sides, and in Protestant Europe these came together as the Black Legend. The term was coined by the Spanish scholar Julian Juderias (1914), who applied it broadly to those Elizabethan philippics in which Spaniards were depicted, immutably, as "uniquely cruel, bigoted, tyrannical, obscurantist, lazy, fanatical, greedy, and treacherous" (Powell 1971: 11). The best account of the legend's development in England gives this summary of the resulting stereotype's chief features: "When the Spaniard has the upper hand, his cruelty and hauteur are insupportable. When reduced to his proper stature by some unimpeachably nordic hero, he is cringing and mean-spirited, a coward whose love of plots and treacheries is exceeded only by his incompetence in carrying them out" (Maltby 1971: 6).

The demonization here is what one might expect of military rivals, and indeed much anecdotal evidence for the Black Legend came from the battle tales of English seafarers. One of the most famous of these sailors' stories – widely repeated in the lanes of Elizabeth's England – told of Francis Drake discovering a Spanish governor's escutcheon which carried the motto *Non sufficet orbis*, "The world is not enough' (Maltby 1971: 70). Other tales denounced the notorious Inquisition, and these were elaborated by Protestant chroniclers who portrayed it as a touchstone of priestly barbarity.

Among these chroniclers was the English churchman John Fox. The bulk of his infamous *Book of Martyrs* (1563) actually condemns the excesses of an *English* queen, Mary Tudor, yet the small section of it devoted to the Inquisition ably fed the fires of anti-Catholic propaganda, helping to configure the Spanish in the English mind as "the perfect adherents of Popery, cruel, treacherous, avaricious, and tyrannical, a people whose history was an extended intrigue" (R. Paredes 1978: 145). As influential as Fox was Reginald Montanus, whose Latin expose (1567) of

the dreaded institution, graphically describing the tortures in Philip's dungeons, enjoyed a vogue in translation not only in England, but also among Spain's other enemies in France and the Netherlands (Maltby 1971: 33). Whether such accounts were accurate or whether they constituted "a formidable edifice of exaggeration" (Maltby 1971: 43), they were accepted as true by Philip's enemies, and this acceptance was integral to an emergent hispanophobia.

The durability of that phobia may be gauged by the appearance, during another high-water mark of British expansionism, of Charles Kingsley's hymn to the sea dogs, *Westward Ho!* (1856). In that enormously successful Victorian romance, the brother of the hero, Amyas Leigh, is betrayed by a monk and burned to death by the Inquisition. This elicits from Amyas a solemn request that God strike him down "if, as long as I have eyes to see a Spaniard, and hands to hew him down, I do any other thing than hunt down that accursed nation day and night, and avenge all the innocent blood which has been shed by them since the day in which King Ferdinand drove out the Moors" (Kingsley 1920: 336). Kingsley's comments on the defeat of the Armada suggest that his zeal for the imperialist pieties of *his* queen, Victoria, could be measured approvingly against the devotions of Elizabeth's captains. The 1588 debacle, he writes, has not merely ended a Spanish threat, but has "lulled for awhile the everlasting war which is in heaven, the battle of Iran and Turan, of the children of light and of darkness….A day of judgment has come…and, behold, the devil's work, like its maker, is proved to have been, as always, a lie and a sham" (ibid.: 392). That Iberian Catholicism could still generate such passion in 1856 testifies to the vigor of this critical piece of the Black Legend.

The central motif in the development of the legend, however, was produced, ironically, by a *Spanish*, and very Catholic, reformer. Bartolome de las Casas, born in Seville, came to the Caribbean in 1502, where for putting down native revolts he was rewarded with an *encomienda*, or the right to exploit the subjected peoples'

forced labor. A decade later, after becoming the New World's first ordained priest, he gave up that right and determined to devote his life to alleviating Indian suffering. As the "Apostle of the Indies" and bishop of Chiapas, Mexico, he waged a lifelong campaign against the *encomienda*, argued at the Spanish court for the humanity of his wards, and issued treatises detailing his countrymen's cruelty. The most famous of these, first published in 1552, was *the Brevissima relacion de la destruicion de las Indias*, or "Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies."

Even against the backdrop of Renaissance ferocity, de las Casas's account remains harrowing reading. With an unsparing eye for the grim detail, the friar depicted the Spaniards as despoilers of Paradise whose avarice was exceeded only by their appetite for torture. His brief book is as full of burnings, hackings, rapes, and the braining of infants, and the conquerors are doubly condemned because their victims are innocent children of nature – guileless *naturales gentes* who are ripe for redemption. Indeed, that was precisely the point of his gruesome report. Less sentimentally than didactically, he intended to alert his sovereigns not merely to their errant henchmen's bestiality, but to the fact that, blinded by gold, they had shirked their duty and virtually depopulated a region of salvageable souls. The real tragedy of conquest was that a tractable people – *digna de ser traida al conocimiento de su Dios* -- had been put to the sword *sin fe y sin sacramento* (de las Casas 1992: 61, 112).

De las Casas's career had a dual impact on New World history. On the one hand, it elicited precisely the reforms that he had demanded, in the form of the so-called New Laws of 1542, which restricted the enslavement of native peoples and modified the *encomienda*. On the other hand, well after these reforms had gone into effect, it provided Spain's enemies with justification for believing the worst of their commercial and religious antagonist. Like the authors of the Inquisition screeds, de las Casas has been accused of exaggeration; one scholar calls him, ungenerously, the "immortal zealot" (Powell 1971: 99). But his veracity

was not in doubt among the Protestant translators who, in the two centuries following the first English edition of 1583, put the *Brevissima relacion* through dozens of subsequent editions, fourteen of them brought out in the Netherlands alone.

Among the first of these was *The Cruelties of the Spaniards*, one of only four books with which Charles Kingsley allows young Amyas Leigh to be familiar (the others being the Bible, a prayer-book, and Caxton's *Mort d'Arthur*). The work was quoted by Hakluyt, condensed in Purchase, and printed as *The Tears of the Indians* in numerous editions. Few works in the history of colonialism have elicited more outrage than this churchman's scathing attack on conquistadorial savagery, and few have had more far-reaching effects in sustaining interethnic hatred on a global scale. Kingsley was not the only modern to find it useful. As part of the jingoistic preparation for the Spanish-American War, a New York publisher resurrected the good bishop's text in 1898, under the cover title *Horrible Atrocities of the Spanish in Cuba*. It is one of the curious ironies in the history of stereotypes that a principal source of evidence for "innate" Spanish cruelty was a Spanish priest whose life project belied the cliché.

In an ironic twist on the Black Legend, cruelty was also depicted as a congenital failing of the Spanish conquerors' most famous native victims. In his popular *History of America* (1777), William Robertson depicted the vanquished Aztecs as creators of a religious system which was "sophisticated essentially in its capacity for a brutality and sordidness which shaped the very character of the Mexican natives" (R. Paredes 1978: 156). Highlighting particularly the custom of human sacrifice, he supposed that "under the impression of ideas so dreary and terrible, the heart of man must harden and be steeled to every sentiment of humanity. The spirit of the Mexicans was accordingly unfeeling." (ibid.) This assessment was a critical addition to the economy of stereotyping, for modern Mexicans were a hybrid of conqueror and conquered. "Robertson offered to his

readers a Mexico populated by two extraordinary breeds of scoundrels already mixing their bloods" (ibid.: 157)   Given the dominant racialist paradigm of the 19th century, which held that the "progeny of racially different parents inherited the worst qualities of each" (ibid.: 158), it was unavoidable that Mexicans, in and out of the borderlands, would be tarred with the same brush as their progenitors. Thus violent excess, both Aztec and Spanish, entered popular convention as a Mexican inheritance.

Culture Clash in the Borderlands

In his brief, evocative study of Texas stereotyping, Arnoldo De Leon (1983) explores the cultural shortcomings that 19th century expansionists found on the border. As had been the case in previous encounters between expanding Europeans and New World others (Greenblatt 1991, Todorov 1984), these were typically projections of a "settling" people who were faced in the undeveloped hinterlands with "all that was beastly – sexuality, vice, nature, and colored peoples. Order and discipline had to be rescued from the wilds in the name of civilization and Christianity" (De Leon 1983:1). In these projections, horror of miscegenation played a significant role, as did deterministic notions of climate and degeneracy. Overall, to whites like Stephen F. Austin, the Americanization of the West was a civilizer's calling; his "only desire" for Texas was to "redeem it from the wilderness" (De Leon 1983:3).

In that redemptive project, stigmatizing the Mexican was not so much an elaboration as an energizing imperative, and the stigmatization proceeded partly on Black Legend lines, with racialist and religious animosity again providing fuel to the ongoing struggle between expanding nationalisms. "It was a small step, really, from 'Remember the Armada' to 'Remember the Alamo'" (Powell 1971: 118) – and to the second critical moment in the history of hispanophobia, that energetic

rumbling toward the foregone conclusion that 19th century historians called Manifest Destiny.

The term itself was not coined until 1845 (in an editorial calling for the annexation of Texas), but the impulse was underway a decade before, as the Jackson administration cleared the Southeast of its inconvenient natives and as "Remember the Alamo" poignantly encoded expansionist sentiment regarding Mexico's frontier state of Coahuila y Tejas. Texas had been a principal destination for the nation's "multiplying millions" since the 1820s, when the Mexican government first invited American colonization. The resulting influx was so great that Manuel Mier y Teran, Mexico's director of colonization, despairing that his new nation would soon be overrun, promoted "countercolonization" as a solution (Weber 1992: 171). The solution failed, the *norteamericanos* became a Trojan horse, and a new chapter in stereotyping was soon written, as the colonists turned on their hosts in the Texas Revolution.

Students of Texas history have long remarked that the bitterness of this conflict was a principal ingredient in the consolidation of a Mexican-Anglo animosity. True enough, but it should also be remembered that cultural differences were feeding borderlands stereotypes long before the opening of overt hostilities. The war, and its attendant atrocities, certified them. They had been created centuries before, and indeed the consistency with which early travelers depicted Mexicans as cruel and cowardly Spaniards vindicates Walter Lippman's (1922) famous definition of stereotypes as "pictures in our heads," awaiting confirmation.

The confirmation often turned on cultural differences. In a classic study of the factors leading to the Texas revolt, Samuel Lowrie, borrowing a term from William Graham Sumner, stressed the difference in "folkways" between Texans and Mexicans, particularly their divergent political and religious ideals. To democratic entrepreneurs like Stephen F. Austin, it was "ideas of innate and constitutional rights," unresolvable questions about the "functioning of

government," that provided the spark that led in the 1830s to separation (Lowrie 1967: 180). The Mexican affront to democracy, especially for Austin, could not be disentangled from priestly authority – that authority which kept all Mexicans in the servitude of ignorance. Writing from Monterrey in 1823, the future father of Texas stressed the need "to destroy the ecclesiastical power from the very roots" (Weber 1992: 81). In a Mexican prison not long afterward, he described Rome as "that mother of executioners, assassins, robbers, and tyrants who have destroyed the civilized world, filling it with mourning, terror, and ruin, and degrading mankind far below the level of brutes" (Lowrie 1967: 56). It was a catalog of castigation worthy of Voltaire.

But for Texans in conflict with Mexicans in the troubled borderlands, the abstractions of politics and religion were frequently translated into far more concrete manifestations of cultural difference. These too followed the prototype of Black Legend convention, emphasizing the cruelty and cowardice of Mexican antagonists. Border people also embellished the legend, putting more stress on laziness than the English had, as well as on the regressive characteristic of "popish" lust. To 19th century Protestants of a certain cast of mind, carnality was a well-established feature of Roman decadence, so it was not surprising to find "superstitious" Mexicans dancing the alluring fandango and bathing naked (De Leon 1983: 37-39). Such defective morality came with the territory of Catholicism.

In the middle of the 19th century, the image was enforced by the increasingly strident activities of militant Protestant groups, chief among them the Know-Nothing Party, which anticipated the Ku Klux Klan in its racial paranoia, its obsession with the threat of the flesh, and its hatred of Rome. In the same year as the fall of the Alamo, for example, such groups endorsed one of the United States' most remarkable collective fantasies – the *scandale risible* surrounding Maria Monk, a Canadian girl whose memoir *Awful Disclosures* told of her sexual abuse in a Montreal convent where, she averred, the infants of priests and nuns were

routinely murdered. Public debates surrounding the veracity of the "former nun's" allegations made the book "the most influential single work of anti-Catholic propaganda in America's history" (Billington 1962). In a climate where this anti-popish screed had hundreds of thousands of readers, it was easy to see the "Romish" Mexican as similarly infected.

The Texas Revolution itself confirmed the belief that moral aberrations were a Mexican norm, and it certified the picture of the "Spaniard" as the scourge of God. Thanks to the draconian misjudgments of Lopez de Santa Anna, white Americans from Bexar to Brooklyn were confirmed in their suspicion that Mexicans, whenever given the chance, would revert to bestiality. The conviction was ably endorsed by the fall of the Alamo, and even more vividly by the slaughter of prisoners at Goliad – a tragedy which made the battle cry "Remember Goliad!" a rival to "Remember the Alamo!" for the duration of the war. One ex-prisoner of the Mexicans, Thomas Jefferson Green, may have overstepped the mark when he described his captors' cruelty as "unprecedented in the history of civilized nations," but the sentiment that he expressed was widely believed, and it reinforced the cliché that Mexicans were inhuman – and, for that reason, undeserving of human consideration. To him and his comrades, he notes, killing a Mexican gave him no more pause than killing a snake or a louse (R. Paredes 1977: 11). The Texas gunman King Fisher, similarly insouciant, is said to have replied to a query about how many men he had killed, "Thirty-seven – not counting Mexicans" (McWilliams 1970: 98).

Such gallant callousness is a major element of the legacy which the Texas Revolution bequeathed to popular culture. Its most immediate impact was the prosecution of the Mexican War, which Mexicans quite reasonably understood as a political adventure saturated with visions of cultural superiority (Brack 1970). The dehumanization was only exacerbated by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which in theory gave a new civic entity, Mexican Americans, the same rights as Anglo

Americans but which in practice only encouraged their violation. At the same time, seeing the Mexican as less than human facilitated his displacement from the California gold fields (Pitt 1966: 55ff.; Kenny 1967), his dispossession at the hands of courts and legislators (Menchaca 1993; Surace 1982), and not infrequently his death at the hands of vigilantes. Americo Paredes's assessment is surely correct. The "old war propaganda" about the Alamo and Goliad "later provided a convenient justification for outrages committed on the Border by Texans of certain types, so convenient an excuse that it was artificially prolonged for almost a century" (Paredes 1958: 19). Mexican Americans by the end of the century were mounting numerous campaigns against this mistreatment (Limon 1974, Meyer 1978), but the abuses went on. The outrages, of course, were committed not only by Texans; the most flagrant abuse of Mexican American civil rights was committed in the 1940s in the City of Angels (Mazon 1984).

"Aqui Reposa Juan Espinosa"

The principal characters of 19th century "conquest fiction," according to its ablest historian, were "Saxon heroes, degenerate greasers, and declining dons" (Pettit 1980: 26). If culture clash in Texas elicited the most virulent stereotypes of the greaser, it was from the land of eternal summer, Old California, that his patrician counterpart, the listless hidalgo, emerged, and it was in novels and travelers' reports about that alleged bower of bliss that a second popular stereotype, the lazy Mexican, came to fruition.

The construction of this stereotype began as early as 1804, when the Yankee sailor William Shaler issued a report that attributed to the territory's Spanish population "an indolent, harmless disposition" (Langum 1978: 182). Over the next decades, numerous travelers noted what Richard Henry Dana in 1840 dubbed "California fever," the congenital disease of "an idle, thriftless people" (Dana 1959: 59, 137). Among the most vociferous critics of this people was attorney Thomas

Jefferson Farnham, whose *Travels in the Californias and Scenes in the Pacific Ocean* (1844), provided encouragement to filibusters and other Yankees who took it as a national mission to "improve" their southern neighbor. In a denunciation that echoed Hobbes's famous catalog of "natural man's" vices, Farnham described the slack Californian aristocracy as

> in every way a poor apology of European extraction; as a general thing, incapable of reading or writing, and knowing nothing of science or literature, nothing of government but its brutal force, nothing of virtue but the sanction of the Church, nothing of religion but ceremonies of the national ritual. Destitute of industry themselves, they compel the poor Indian to labor for them, affording him a bare savage existence for his toil, upon their plantations and the fields of the Missions. In a word, the Californians are an imbecile, pusillanimous, race of men, and unfit to control the destinies of that beautiful country. (Farnham 1947: 148)

By the middle of the 19th century, in explaining what they saw as the decline of the Californios (Pitt 1966), Anglo observers had come to accept as indisputable the image of Spanish California as a Land of Cockayne, a region of eternal repose whose defining characteristic was memorialized in the epitaph of an apocryphal native son: "Aqui reposa Juan Espinosa;/Nunca en su vida hizo otra cosa. (Here rests Juan Espinosa; never in his life did he do anything else)" (Weber 1979a: 61).

California, with its agreeable climate and stark racial and class distinctions, became the benchmark for the indolence stereotype, but the image was not confined to Mexico's farthest province; nor was its focus confined to aristocratic lassitude. Throughout the borderlands, Anglo travelers searched for sluggish Mexicans of all classes, and they seldom failed to find their preconceptions justified. Journalist and trapper Rufus Sage, whose tart comment opens this essay,

lamented the absence of "loftier aspirations" among the poor of New Mexico. His description of their amusements invites comparison with the "dancing darky" image of the antebellum South: "Half-naked and scantily fed, they are contented with the miserable pittance doled out to them by the proud lordlings they serve, while their wild songs merrily echo through the hills as they pursue their ceaseless vocations till death drops his dark curtain o'er the scene" (Weber 1987: 72).

Visitors to Texas expressed a similar astonishment, marveling at the Mexican residents' lack of ambition; their scandalous attachment to nudity, gambling, and the fandango; and their careless embrace of a "free-and-easy, loloppy sort of life" (DeLeon 1994: 25). The same unfortunate languidness was to be found in Mexico City itself. On an 1822 visit there, Stephen F. Austin proclaimed indolence "the general order of the day" (Lowrie 1967: 89); that same year, an anonymous appendix to future ambassador Joel Poinsett's *Notes on Mexico* summarized the Mexican character in the following words: "Their occupation seems to consist, principally, in removing fleas and lice from each other, drinking pulque, smoking cigars, when they can, and sleeping" (Weber 1979b: 298). From Vera Cruz to San Antonio, the picture was the same. In the words of George W. Kendall, a Republic of Texas press agent, the Mexican people as a whole were "an anti-go-ahead race" (R. Paredes 1977: 11).

The origins of the indolence characterization are to be found in the same expansionist moment that gave us the image of the wily, violent Spaniard. Distantly it derives from that aspect of the Black Legend which, in contrasting "the Spanish pick and the English hoe" (the phrase is historian Herbert Bolton's), imagines all of Philip II's adventurers as slave-holding fortune-hunters and all of the Virgin Queen's as industrious yeomen. It was abetted by the travelers' tales collected by Hakluyt, which advertised the lack of initiative not only of the Spanish, but also of the native peoples whom the Spanish were exploiting. In assessing these tales, Raymund Paredes suggests, "the most persistent charge against the Mexicans was

indolence. English travelers were appalled that the natives had so little exploited their land" (R. Paredes 1978: 149). Thus both Elizabeth's rivals and their subjects, according to English legend, suffered from the sin of acedia, an attitude of disengagement. That laziness should later have been discovered as endemic in the product of their union, the modern Mexican, was a perfectly logical development of the convention.

Laziness, like carnality, was a Roman failing. It was nourished, if not actually created, by the "worship" of saints whose feast days continually confounded the workaday calendar. The trope was so commonly noted as to become a cliché. To the average borderlands Yankee, the Catholic fiesta system was merely an excuse for periodic indulgences which, in addition to deflecting attention from the pursuits of industry, engorged a corrupt and corrupting clergy at popular expense. Throughout the "priest-ridden" south, Protestants perceived an unnatural alliance between Romanism and revelry, or in Frederick Pike's deft phrasing, between "popishness and pulque" (Pike 1992: 61). In lamenting the consequences of the fiesta system, 19th century Americans cited not only the "well-known" sexual license of the Latin clergy, but also

> … the priestly mania for draining parishioners of their meager income. This the priests accomplished by charging to administer the sacraments but above all by extracting money to finance festivals that, most Americans believed, contributed not to religious zeal but to drunkenness and debauchery. If the typical Latin American did not lose his money at the gambling table, he surrendered it to the priest" (ibid.: 82).

The cliché revels luridly in an ancient prurience: the intrepid burgher's fear of Babylonian whoredom – whose moral turpitude also leads to a failure to thrive. Rufus Sage's copula – "miserable in condition" and "despicable in morals" – went without saying, as the Roman church was condemned not only for immorality but –

what is worse for a burgher – for encouraging insolvency. “The Yankee,” said Richard Henry Dana, “couldn’t afford to be a Catholic.”

Confusion Worse Confounded: Forbidden Fruits

All of this was complicated by the fact that half of the Mexican population were women. Those women, moreover, were far from universally despised, even among the most committed racist stalwarts. Indeed, throughout early travelers’ accounts, the attractiveness of Mexican women is as common a motif as the physical and moral ugliness of their husbands and sons. “That Mexican women were “handsome” and desirable was attested to “by even those American chroniclers who could find nothing else to say in favor of Mexico” (Robinson 1963: 40). This was as true on the ruffian Texas border, where Mexican women were credited with “charm, courtesy, kindness, generosity, and warm-heartedness” (De Leon 1994: 39-40), as it was in Mexico proper, where one customarily stiff chronicler was moved to acknowledge, “The Mexican like the Spanish ladies have a natural gracefulness of manner, which has been observed by all travelers, and has captivated most foreigners who have taken up their residence in the country” (Robinson 1963: 41).

To Yankee observers, however, such favorable responses were mitigated by a sense of impropriety – not just because of the sexual inclinations implied, but because those inclinations were elicited by a “fallen” race. The Protestant confusion about sex here came to the fore, as the Mexican woman was configured – like her frontier counterpart, the whore with the heart of gold – as a natural temptress, both alluring and deadly.

The looseness of Mexican clothing encouraged this response. At a time when whalebone stays and cumbersome dresses were de rigeur for properly bred white women, it was astonishingly refreshing, albeit fearsome, to observe the relative casualness of Mexican dress – and the equal casualness with which that

dress could be discarded when women wished to partake in public bathing. In response to such immodesty, the reaction was mixed. At one end of the scale stood travelers like George Wilkins Kendall, who wrote from Texas in 1847 that the Yankee who encounters "the Eve-like and scanty garments of the females" soon comes to "look with some leniency at such little deficiencies of dress as the absence of a gown, and is not long in coming to the honest conclusion…that a pretty girl is quite as pretty without as with that garment" (Kendall 1929: 428). At the other end was the more common reaction of prurient dismay, the sense that debauchery and fornication were in the Mexican "blood."

As the righteous clucking over nude senoritas suggests, sexual fantasy was much on the minds of the Americans who were simultaneously condemning the senoritas' swains. To accommodate it, "some rationalization had to be made" (De Leon 1983: 40), and that rationalization had to reconceptualize the racial problematic. Fear of miscegenation – Rufus Sage's "mongrelization" -- was one of the great collective manias of the 19th century, affecting the image of Mexicans to a marked degree because the Mexican's identity was always confused, in Anglo eyes, with that of both the Indian and the African. One solution to the tangle of dread and desire with which the Yankee male regarded the senorita was to divide "the Mexican" racially into a coarse and fine element – the lascivious, backward mestizo and the proper "Castilian." The "Spaniard" could thus be made available for Anglo affections, while the specter of impermissible desire could be consigned to "the breed."

This splitting of perceived Mexican identity had a class as well as a racial element, and it functioned throughout the Southwest, particularly in California, to sustain what Carey McWilliams (1968) called the "fantasy heritage" of the "pure Spanish" past. In popular literature, the dread/desire entanglement was dramatized in endless tales of "pureblood Saxon heroes" who are "attracted by the very racial mixture which they are compelled to repudiate" and whose forbidden yearnings are

always unsuccessfully resolved by having the object of their affections pass for white. The dark ladies of conquest fiction, indices of "profound social and psychological contradiction," conventionally combine "halfbreed sexuality with fair color and European ancestry." They are presented as "dark in behavior, but never in skin tone" (Pettit 1980: 77).

The critical element in this confusion, of course, was race. It was the racial ambiguity of the Mexican people, as much as their religion or their alleged aversion to work, that undergirded borderlands stereotypes into this century, creating for them not just cultural but also legal problems (Menchaca 1983, Surace 1982). Those problems were exacerbated by a scientific ideology that defined race-mixing not merely as a sexual impropriety, but as an attack on biology, progress, and civilization. Thomas Jefferson Farnham might write confidently in 1844 that "the law of nature, which curses the mulatto here with a constitution less robust than that of either race from which he sprang, lays a similar penalty upon the mingling of the Indian and white races…They must fade away" (cited in Paredes 1977: 21). The reality – stark for the Anglo – was that they didn't. The theoretical inevitability of "fading" notwithstanding, the fear of race-mixing remained a factor in Anglo assessments of Mexicans well into this century because the "less robust" constitutions, far from vanishing, kept crossing the Rio Grande to outwork the industrious. Thus two distinct and logically contradictory attitudes toward race – one comfortably fatalistic, the other frightened – fused to make "the breed" a figure of guilty possibility and nervous fascination.

"In a Word, Civilized"

Stereotypes are cut from negative space. In the process by which a people forges an identity, its dominant classes and its creative elites routinely utilize the spur of the tantalizing Other to provide direction and coherence to emerging consensus. Thus the image of the nomadic Scythian (Hartog 1988) and the

libertine Centaur (Dubois 1982) served to idealize "balance" within the Greek polity. The late medieval fetishization of the Wild Man helped Europeans to characterize "normal" humanity (White 1976) even as the demonization of Jews and witches buttressed popular faith in ecclesiastical authority. In the New World no less than the Old, the concept of wildness served as a "culturally self-authenticating device" (White 1972: 4) by which a steady, enterprising, Protestant civilization established progressive dominion over the tempting untamed. Nature itself was routinely enlisted in this project, and so in predictable order were Nature's "children" – the red, the black, the yellow, and ultimately the brown.

In an exemplary account of this "Americanization" process, Fredrick Pike provides convincing evidence that Latin Americans, like Africans and Indians before them, became in the 19th century a public screen on which Anglo anxieties about labor and license were projected. Citing psychiatrists Erik Erikson (1974) and Sander Gilman (1985), he suggests that Anglo defenders of bourgeois restraint saw in the alleged impulsiveness of "darker" peoples a celebration of what they both feared and desired – "the unconscious not only as a frightening repository of psychic trash, but also as a treasure trove" of potential wholeness (Pike 1992: 30). The vehemence with which Anglo observers condemned Mexican barbarism, Mexican laziness, Mexican sensuality, then, suggests a cultural ideal always just out of reach, a paradise of eternally deferred gratification which was constantly being betrayed by the human, all too human – and the penalty for whose betrayal must be borne by the Other, since the Other was the physical embodiment of the fantasy unbound.

What, precisely, did the Mexican dark self threaten? What was it that people like Austin and Farnham and Kendall perceived as being under attack from the culture of the south? What, to use Weber's term, was the ideal type which these

Anglo entrepreneurs implicitly honored, and against which they constructed "Mexicanity" as a rebuke and a lure?

Taking the mosaic of Mexican stereotypes as negative ground, the positive Anglo ideal looks something like this: It is a cultural consensus governed by *disciplined labor* – that labor which simultaneously controls and improves, and which is applauded throughout northern Europe as a distinctively middle-class achievement (Frykman and Lofgran 1987). Whichever of the attributes of Mexicanity we observe – whether it is licentiousness, treachery, drunkenness, anger, or sloth – we see that they are unanimously incompatible with this industrious ideal, this entrepreneurial goal of steadiness and restraint. Similarly, when we view the archetypes of stage Mexicanity – whether it is the dark lady or the bandido or the buffoon – we see that they share a disinclination for productive labor, a fatally "southern" propensity for wasting time and money, generally in the pursuit of nonproductive pleasure.

The justice of the characterization is not at issue. Students of the indolence cliche have adduced ample evidence to demonstrate that the "manana habit" which Yankee travelers observed in California was hardly extreme given the relative "ease of living" there (Langum 1978: 196), while others have said that a people "whose work satisfies their needs" cannot be reasonably accused of inactivity (Weber 1979: 67). The industrious Yankee's critique of Mexican "sloth" reflects not innate capacity but social contingencies, among them the military domination of the frontier economy and the lack of incentive for laborers to provide surplus value in areas where the market for their crops was severely constrained (Weber 1979a: 302-3). In assessing a comparable myth of colonial indolence, Alatas suggests that, among the subaltern peoples of Southeast Asia, what was lacking was "not so much the will to work as the will to acquire greater and greater wealth in the Western capitalist sense. Thus "a lack of the aggressive and acquisitive spirit of modern

capitalism" was "mistakenly interpreted as indolence by many observers" (Alatas 1977: 213). The point is germane to Mexican "laziness" too.

The real villain here, in Anglo eyes, was lack of improvement, understood in both a spiritual and a material sense. The 16th century English observers who were "appalled" that Mexicans "had so little exploited their land" (R. Paredes 1978: 149) held the identical attitude toward good stewardship that their countrymen would bring to New England a century later. That attitude had dire consequences for the "nonindustrious." Land that was not being "used," was being left untended, could and should be appropriated by the enterprising Puritan so that the amelioration of the wild could proceed in good order (Cronon 1983: 77). Such appropriation happened from Mexico to Maine, often violently, frequently with legal justifications adduced after the fact, and almost always with a sense of high moral purpose.

If self-improvement was the underlying Anglo ideal, that ideal was attacked as much by license as by indolence. Fantasies of excessive sexual "spending," interracial attraction, and racial pollution cast a lurid aura around the edges of productive labor. Mexican lewdness was condemned not only because Eros was an improvident worker, but because, in luring Anglo males into what Max Weber had called "spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment," Mexico threatened to imperil that racial purity which, according to the emerging popular science of eugenics, was seen as essential to the progress of the Anglo-Saxon "race." Toward the end of the century and into the beginning of the new one, as the Protestant ethic and racialist fantasies converged, the ideal type that was thrown into relief by the stereotypes was a young white worker surrounded by a loving family which had somehow been magically conceived. For the overt, steamy, and Catholic impulsiveness of Mexico, the Anglo's public reaction must be contempt, even if his untutored reaction was a dreaded desire.

In this desire, of course, lies the stereotypes' real force – their ability to invest hispanophobia with a personalized anxiety. For the threat of the Other is actually the threat of the self – of the fragile compact with "civilization" being eroded from within. This is the meaning of projection, its crude inevitability as a mechanism for externalizing and thus disallowing one's own pleasure. What the dark Other steals from the bourgeois subject is his own enjoyment (Zizek 1993: 203). And the penalty for this theft, this crime of the North's imagination, is a demarcation by which the nervous bourgeois subject (re)constitutes itself:

> The bourgeois subject continuously defined and re-defined itself through the exclusion of what it marked out as "low" – as dirty, repulsive, noisy contaminating. Yet that very act of exclusion was constitutive of its identity. The low was internalized under the sign of negation and disgust.
>
> But disgust always bears the imprint of desire. These low domains, apparently expelled as "Other," return as the object of nostalgia, longing, and fascination (Stallybrass and White 1986: 191).

Among the low domains identified here are the forest, the slum, and the savage – categories which, transmuted into a Mexican idiom, will become the campo, the barrio, and the violent greaser. The trappings may change, but the logic of projection remains the same. The threat of the South, for centuries, is the threat of delight.

Proving the Stereotypes: Images of Revolution

If white America at the opening of the 20th century had any doubts about its southern neighbor's depravity, those doubts were quickly dispelled by the Mexican Revolution. True, a sizable contingent of American radicals saw in the revolt against Porfirio Diaz a new beginning, a southern counterpart to the dawn of

Russian Bolshevism that would sever the Gordion knot of Mexico's land question and establish a socialist millennium south of the border. But such visionaries, notwithstanding their posthumous lionization, were both scant in number and systematically marginalized (Raat 1981). Mainstream thought on the doings of Huerta and Obregon was that, however justified popular resentment at the Porfiriato may have been, the fighting itself only proved the Mexican's bent for instability, not to mention the savage ferocity of his methods. By their nature all middle classes are fearful of change; the changes wrought in Mexico after 1910 put the American middle classes on their guard, worrying them that the turmoil could spread north, and confirming the centuries-old belief that Mexicans lacked "control."

The imagery of this reaffirmed stereotype was dense and ubiquitous. In countless magazine illustrations, editorial cartoons, and silent films, the old border bandido underwent a topical transformation, emerging as the bandoliered soldier -- *rebelde* or *federale*, it scarcely mattered – whose mischief gutted the prospects for investment and improvement. With border strife a daily motif in the popular press, and with the "bandit chief" Pancho Villa a media curiosity, the stereotype of Mexico as a land of disorder – of a bumptious energy that was incompatible with industry -- became a dominant image for over a decade, until the bloodiest period of the revolution had passed and the reign of the so-called Northern Dynasty (1920-34) had begun.

The image was pervasive in American mass media. Consider, for example, a pair of Jimmy Hare photographs that illustrated a *Collier's* story on "Mexico's Army and Ours." The story appeared on May 30, 1914, when U.S. troops, summoned to protect American lives and oil interests, were occupying the Mexican port of Vera Cruz – the site of Cortes's landing five centuries before. While admiring the reckless pluck of the Mexican resistance, the story's author, Jack London, saw them as "witless, humble men" compared to the invaders. Docility,

stupidity, fatalism, a “dim, dumb” religiosity, a “raw savagery” – the old panoply of cliches about peon “Mexicanity” – is trotted out dutifully in this eyewitness account, while the contrast with American efficiency is vividly demonstrated by the juxtaposition of the two photographs on the same page. Readers hardly needed the captions to grasp the distinction, or to draw the conclusion that London spelled out at the end: Given the cruelty and the inefficiency of Mexico’s rulers, the country’s logical steward was its northern “big brother” (London 1914: 7).

A similar defense of the white man’s burden, a Chicago *Tribune* editorial, appeared in 1916, shortly after Woodrow Wilson had reacted to Pancho Villa’s raid on Columbus, New Mexico by authorizing a “punitive expedition” across the Rio Grande. It reflects both the “civilizing” intention of that mission and the evident frustrations of the abortive foray. Here the contrastive iconography is precise. To the left, scrubbed and neatly attired, an obedient quartet of former Spanish “children” is arrayed in pacified attention behind the seat of power. The older pair, Cuba and the Philippines, learned the lessons of civilization in the Spanish American War, and they have earned the right to kibbitz on their younger siblings’ worries. The younger pair, Nicaragua and Panama, wearing the short pants of recent edification, look with smug amusement at their rowdy brother’s troubles, cognizant no doubt of the father’s stern pronouncement that “sooner or later” all wayward urchins will be “pacified.” To the right, Uncle Sam struggles with obstreperous young Mexico, the one fractious holdout in the Hispanic family.

In affirming the dichotomy between a “mature” (that is, progressively democratic) United States and an infantilized, unruly Mexico, cartoonist John McCutcheon utilizes a number of visual tropes that had been established by the 19th century as iconic of “Mexicanity.” With potent unoriginality, the Mexican we see here is not only irrationally disobedient, but also violent (the dripping knife), dirty (the handprints), backward (the worn bootsole, the patched clothing), and hopelessly traditional (the sombrero). Even more significant, he is both racially and

chronologically “out of form.” Much darker than the pin-neat Filipino and garbed in the dress-up clothing of a would-be adult, Mexico is an uppity “darky” who has forgotten his place (behind the throne), an upstart child who does not know he is a child. In the Anglo sense of propriety that underlies this culminating stereotype, the archetypal Mexican’s true error is *willful* badness: He embodies the Satanic refusal of “his own good.” Again, the underlying problem is that lack of self-control which leads, inevitably to inappropriate and nonproductive behavior.

A final image, also from 1916, is a picture postcard view of a public execution. The victim, Francisco Rojas, and two of his friends had been found guilty by Carrancista forces of stealing supplies, and the summary sentence was carried out in the streets of Juarez. Since 1911, photographers had been doing a steady business providing postcards of the border carnage, and this one was the production of the most successful photographic entrepreneur, El Paso’s Walter Horne. With ghoulish ingenuity, Horne had bribed the officer in charge of the firing squad for a photographic exclusive, and he sold the first souvenirs to fellow El Pasoans who had crossed the river to witness the men’s execution. Those thrill-seekers were only the first of many who made Horne’s “triple execution” series the best selling of all his Mexican views. (Vanderwood and Samponaro 1988: 68)

The series’ popularity bespeaks more than ghoulishness. It testifies to the enduring attraction of those pictures from the field which conform most accurately to those we already have in our heads – that it, to the infinite marketability of established conventions. Why, of the thousands of views which Horne and his colleagues produced, should these scenes of summary justice have proved most popular? The answer is that they confirmed what was already “known” -- that Mexico in revolution was what she had always been, a backwater of regression and civic disorder. To a population which prided itself on progress and democracy, the titillating specter of an official lynching reframed unhappy Mexico as the

irredeemable Other, still mired in the "arbitrary violence of Latin America" (Oles 1993: 65).

If scenes like the triple execution had not existed, white America would have invented them, and it might be argued, indeed, that Horne did just that. In the long modern complicity between the camera and the gun, such shots of shootings are always both contingent and contrived. They speak to the viewer's potential as a maker, not just a finder, of the scene, and they tell us more, eventually, about what we are desperate to locate – the steady moment, the revealing apercu, the representative instant -- than about the vastly disorganized, haptically shifting wilderness through which our eyes must wander to uncover such moments. In selecting the scene to record, and deciding how to frame it, we are driven more by the past than by the present or the future. We see, in the here and now, what we have been taught to see. What Americans had been taught to see in Mexico was violent disorder. Horne's gruesome moment encapsulated centuries of "understanding."

In stressing the visual "expectedness" of these revolutionary views, I do not mean to argue for an unbroken continuity that stretches from the 16th into the 20th centuries. There are obvious differences, rhetorical as well as historic, between a Walter Horne postcard and a Theodore de Bry engraving, and it does not further the cause of cultural analysis to suggest that the "white world's" view of *mestizo* lives has been uncompromisingly or uniformly negative. Horne's images, for example, emerged from an epistemic field that also included "good greaser" movies, the enduring popularity of *Ramona*, and a *villista* cult with numerous American followers. By the 1920s, moreover, a more diffuse affection had created, in the arts and letters particularly, an "enormous vogue for things Mexican" (Delpar 1992. These allowances notwithstanding, it is fair to say that the dominant Mexican stereotype, from the earliest days of contact to the dawn of the Twenties, fused the cruelty of the Black Legend with the *californios'* indolence, creating a figure who,

on two counts, offended progress. Exceptions to that symbolic pattern only highlight its ubiquity.