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Key Words

From the Spanish Borderlands to the US-Mexico Borders

When Herbert Eugene Boltonⁱ conceived of the Spanish borderlandsⁱⁱ in the early 20th century, he did so as an appendix, footnote, and sequel to Frederick Jackson Turner's now infamous Frontier Thesis (1893). Turner's Thesisⁱⁱⁱ held that America was different from Europe *because* it was violently forged through encounters with the American wilderness and the Indigenous peoples always already conflated with it.^{iv} While Turner's Thesis has long since fallen out of fashion, Borderlands History, the field opened up by Bolton, has been conspicuously branded by its basic tenets: violence, American exceptionalism, civilization, and wilderness. In this paper I trace the development of Borderlands History as scholars struggled to free the field and the term "borderlands" (and occasionally the term "frontier" itself) from the ideological baggage of Turner's Thesis. Touching on key contributions from American Studies, Chicano Studies, New Western History, and others, I follow the field's changing purview from Bolton's Spanish Borderlands to the US-Mexico's material and racial borders.^v

As a Native American Studies scholar, who came to the Borderlands by way of my own research on the Indigenous peoples who claim them, I pay special attention to the field's changing tack on Indigeneity. Early intellectuals saw Indigenous peoples as mere conduits of American exceptionalism; later scholars claimed them as part of a syncretic *mestizaje*; and most recently, researchers have theorized them as the perpetrators of Western vacancy (and violence) themselves. In the final pages, finding purchase in Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) I theorize the field through the power and limitations of History. Ultimately, I suggest that my dissertation will interrogate the historical and contemporary intersections of settler-colonial logics, Indigeneity, and race in the borderlands while centering contemporary Native sovereignty. This interdisciplinary project requires a new *indigenous* take on the borderlands.

A student of Frederick Jackson Turner, Herbert Eugene Bolton conceived of "The Spanish Borderlands" as a supplement to Turner's Frontier Thesis. He hoped to show that America was forged by two European empires, not one. Bolton initially advanced the term in his 1921 book of the same name. The text opens,

This book is to tell of Spanish pathfinders and pioneers...the rule of Spain has passed; but her colonies have grown into independent nations. From Mexico to Chile, throughout half of America, the Spanish language and Spanish institutions are still dominant. Even in the old borderlands north of the Río Grande, the imprint of Spain's sway is still deep and clear (1). In his work, Bolton asserted that Spain, in parts of California, Louisiana, Florida, and the US Southwest, *kindly*^{vi} and bravely civilized the Indians, built buildings and roads, and, overall, graciously contributed to an early idyllic American West.^{vii} For both Turner and Bolton, the American West was unique; it was irreducible to, though forged in conversation with, European roots/institutions/histories; and it hinged upon the disappearance of Native peoples (by death or assimilation) in the wake of civilization.

While popular during their lifetimes, by the mid 20th century, with the “founding fathers of western history” buried, the Frontier Thesis and its Spanish Borderlands progeny looked more and more like shibboleths. Early critics focused on factual errors: the American West was not an original construction; it was not partially fashioned by Spain; and to assert as much was to overwrite the true imperialist and racial history of the borderlands.

Famously, in his 1955 essay, “Toward a Reorientation of Western History,” Pomeroy challenged the American exceptionalism—what he called “The legend of unqualified western radicalism” (586)—at the heart of The Frontier. Historians, Pomeroy argued, had neglected “the spread and continuity of ‘Eastern’ institutions and ideas” (579) in favor of a unique and rugged West. Implicating the environment, Pomeroy contended, was a futile attempt at maintaining this fictitious imagining. He wrote, “The environmental interpretation appealed to Americans in a nationalistic and ostensibly democratic era, even though the nation was visibly becoming more like Europe” (580). Not forgoing a jab at Bolton and his following, Pomeroy added, “Actually the native Spanish and Mexican element in many parts of the West—particularly California, where they are most revered today—were small and uninfluential...” (590).

The Borderlands also came under fire for its service to an insidious, racialized present. In 1949, public intellectual Carey McWilliams published, “The Fantasy Heritage.” In the essay McWilliams challenged the American infatuation with a Spanish past not in terms of accuracy, as did Pomeroy, but in terms of hypocrisy. He wrote,

None of this would really matter except that the churches in Los Angeles hold fiestas rather than bazaars and that Mexicans are still not accepted as a part of the community...

When one examines how deeply this fantasy heritage has permeated the social cultural life of the borderlands, the dichotomy begins to assume the proportions of a schizophrenic mania. (36)

If America treasured its Spanish (European) heritage then, in McWilliams's view, it despised the actual legacy of it: Mexican-Americans. Moreover, the "Fantasy Heritage" was not, McWilliams reasoned, accidental. He wrote, "Thus the dichotomy throughout the borderlands between what is 'Spanish' and what is 'Mexican' is a functional, not an ornamental, arrangement. Its function is to deprive the Mexicans of their heritage and to keep them in their place." (39)

Early interrogations of the Frontier and the Spanish Borderlands by McWilliams and Pomeroy became institutionalized and intertwined in Ethnic [Studies] History and New History of the West respectively. These sustained critiques enabled and produced scholarship that posited Indigenous peoples as interlocutors and lingering elements in and of the Borderlands.

By the 1960's Chicano scholars in particular began to flesh out the connection between a distant Spanish (and Indian) past and a Mexican-American present.^{viii} They reminded the field that the US-Southwest did not simply have a quaint Spanish colonial history, but up until 1848 the so-called US-Southwest *was* Mexico. The questions then became: how did the United States maneuver to racially, materially, and ideologically dispossess Mexican-Americans and relegate them to second class-citizens?^{ix} How were Mexican-Americans articulated as the perpetual new arrivals even as the US stole Mexican land (Johnson 2005, Montejano 1987, Tijerina 2008; Almaguer 1994)? How did Mexican-Americans become "foreigners in their own land" (Weber 1973)? Chicano scholars also reinserted a qualified Indigeneity into the field by way of mestizaje and syncretism. As Gloria Anzaldúa writes in her book, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), "This land was Mexican once,/ was Indian always/ and is./And will be again" (25, 113). Introductory texts such as Acuña's *Occupied* (1972) and James Diego Vigil's *From Indians to Chicanos* (1984) trace Mexican-American history from the Maya, Aztecs, and other indigenous groups to the Chicano movement.^x Indigenous people did not disappear, Chicano scholars held; they transformed, migrated, and lingered.

The Frontier, and the West it implicated, also came under heavy fire from another budding sub-discipline: New Western History. An extension of New Social History—which sought to illuminate the story of common folk rather than the story of Nations/politics^{xi}—New Western History challenged Frontier romanticism by focusing on the West as "as a place and not a

process” (Limerick 1987; 26). Focusing on individuals (poor-whites, communities of color, Native people etc), New Western historians demonstrated, as Patricia Limerick writes in *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (198)—one of the earliest New History texts—“the West is the place where everybody was supposed to escape failure, but it didn’t happen that way.” Rather than a monolithic and rugged white frontier and the disappearing Native/wilderness, New Western historians revealed that the West contained abysmal failure (Limerick 1987; White 1992) and diverse populations. The Frontier was never “closed,” and the so-called empty wilderness never existed (Crosby 1973, Cronon 1995).^{xii} Taking direct aim at the ideology of Turner’s Frontier, New Western Historians deemed the concept “nationalistic,” “ethnocentric,” and “racist”^{xiii} (Romero 1991; Limerick 1991; Forbes 1992) and in service of a fantasy that never existed.^{xiv}

In the late 20th century, Borderlands History broke away from Western History. Moving away from “the nation,” the field sought to illuminate the borderlands as a place without the predetermined, normative, and teleological nation all together (“The Borderlands” became “the borderlands”). With the tools of New Social History, historians focused of the borderlands engaged with the limited data available on the everyday level. They focused on how local people (Indigenous, settlers, and non-elites) met in what is today the US Southwest and the Mexican north. These scholars employed the term, “Spanish borderlands,” to signify the specific geopolitical edges of the Spanish empire, which then became the Mexican borderlands and the US-Mexico borderlands. For these scholars, “borderlands” no longer signified a meta-thesis about the pacification of the continent but a technical temporal-political geography.

One of the first works that engaged in New Social history of the borderlands (though it is still at least partially invested in the meta-history of The Borderlands), was Ramon Gutiérrez’s book, *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away* (1991). In the text, Gutiérrez set out to show the transition from 1500 and 1846, from matriarchial pueblo (indigenous) communities to patriarchial New Mexican society. To do this, Gutiérrez employed the cultural analytics of honor, sex, and conquest. While, his initial chapter problematically employed ethnographic data to assert that Native life ways “went away”—a claim that drew heavy fire from Native American Studies (Dunbar-Ortiz 1996)—at the center of his book, Gutiérrez thoroughly engaged with parish records that spoke to some of the most intimate moments of New Mexican local-life: marriage and gender. Examining litigation surrounding marriage, Gutiérrez illuminated the

power, practice and regulation of sexuality in the 18th century New Mexico settler communities.

A few years later Ana Maria Alonso, an anthropologist, published her text *Thread of Blood: Colonialism Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (1997). The book seemed to be a direct response to Gutiérrez (1991) and his insistence that the Natives *became* New-Mexicans. In her text, Alonso sidelined Native people as objects in and of themselves and instead interrogated the northern Mexican settlements built in the late 18th century to rebuff them. While she looked at the same population as Gutiérrez, and she too centered honor and conquest as cultural themes, Alonso embraced the limits of state archives. She zoomed in on the colonizers as such. Alonso's text was broken into two parts. It followed the mobilization of peasants by the Spanish and Mexican state as they were charged with defending the nation against the *indios barbarous*. It then examined the ways those same peasants and their cultures of honor, independence, and violence later became a hindrance to state progress in the early 20th century once the Indians were pacified.

Both Alonso and Gutiérrez sought to incorporate (one more literally than the other) Indigenous peoples into the history of the borderlands. Focusing on love and war they seem to demonstrate two opposing visions of the borderlands, and yet, they reveal a singular and fundamental struggle of the field: how to tell a history where Native peoples are central but where they also, by and large, remain unavailable in the archives.

Like *Thread of Blood*, Cynthia Radding's demographically driven book, *Wandering Peoples* was also published in 1997. In it, self-identifying as a "New Mission Historian," Radding used church records to reconstruct Indigenous familial constitution, agricultural productions, social stratification, and individual migrations in Sonora between 1700 and 1850. Moving away from commentaries on the present, Radding held that "culturally the demarcation between 'Indians' and 'non-indians' was not fixed or immutable, but changing and negotiated over time" (5). She argues, "social stratification occurred through the internal differentiation of the Indian and Hispanic segments of Sonoran society, processes in which the separate lines of class, ethnicity, and gender intersected" (6).

Taken together, Gutiérrez, Alonso, and Radding reveal the borderlands—the geographic space that is today the US Southwest and Mexican north during and after transition from Spanish to Mexican to US rule—as a space of cultural transition and hybridity, as a space where Indigenous people and Spanish/Mexican nationals met, mingled, and fought, with or without and

sometimes against nation-states. Gutiérrez and Alonso do not use the ‘b’ word, and Radding who does, tellingly does so only to signify the edges of a changing Spanish empire. By the time Radding entered the scene, “the borderlands” maintained its temporal-empirical ties to Spain, but it had lost its ideological pull. Borderlands historians of the late 20th century were less interested in national transition than in what data might reveal about the effects on the everyday lives of “borderlands” communities (which included Indigenous people).

If at the turn of the century the Frontier Thesis appeared slain at the hands of New Western History, and the “The Spanish Borderlands” was increasingly a very specific and ostensibly neutral term, then in 1999, Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron attempted to definitively strip both concepts for parts. In their now ubiquitous piece, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History,” Adelman and Aron sought to “disentangle frontiers from borderlands to rescue the virtue of each construct” (815). With the ideologies that the terms implied long since forgotten, Adelman and Aron called out scholars who overemphasized continuity and syncretism^{xv} where they saw true power differentials at play; the two attempted to re-foreground the imperial conflict that defined Indigenous-settler contact. According to Adelman and Aron a “frontier,” defined as “a meeting place of peoples in which geographic and cultural borders were not clearly defined” (816), was distinct from a “borderlands,” a space of competing colonial claims. After articulating the technical definitions of both constructs, Adelman and Aron went on to explore the transition from borderlands to borders in the Great Lakes, the lower Mississippi valley and the greater Rio Grande basin. By 1999, “borderlands” and “frontier” had been rendered into improper nouns.^{xvi}

While Adelman and Aron initiated a global “Borderlands” discipline, their quantification of the frontier and the borderlands was largely too late to be useful in the traditional/original Spanish-Mexican-US borderlands. Scholars like James Brooks and Juliana Barr continued to illuminate the communities of the borderlands, and in doing so insisted that Indigenous people were not *outside* of power struggles but part of them; they asked how, in Brook’s words, “peoples of markedly different cultural heritage found solutions to the crises of the colonial encounter” (31). Rather than the unqualified syncretism or conquest posited by early Borderlands scholars or the accommodation and common meaning that Adelman and Aron disparaged, these authors highlighted the uneven violence surrounding and permeating these forged colonial systems.^{xvii}

In his book, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (2002), one of the first texts to unabashedly use the “borderlands” term as both a space and a politics, James Brooks illustrated Indigenous agency and power in the borderlands while confronting the limits of the archive itself through his exploration of slavery. Engaging with anthropological and colonial archives, Brooks featured short and incomplete vignettes as they were presented in the archives, and in doing so, he exposed the ways scholarly attempts to denote separate empires overwrote what was in reality an intricate Indigenous economy of violence and exchange surrounding captives (who became kin and community). Likewise, Juliana Barr’s *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (2007) using colonial archives and contemporary interviews demonstrated the ways the Spanish and the Comanche forged their own systems of communication (a system that revolved around women) during conflict and peace. Barr revealed that power was not unilateral; Spain was forced to make concessions to Comanche forces and together they created new cultural codes and practices. Brooks and Barr asserted a “borderlands” that incorporated Indigenous agency and power.

By 2008, the field was uninterested in rehashing imperial relations, or writing about when frontiers became borderlands or when borderlands became bordered-lands. These designations, dictated by far-off national leaders, had little meaning for communities/economies on the ground. As Samuel Truett wrote,

The result is a patchwork of histories with considerable overlap and conspicuous divides. The most visible boundary splits the U.S. and Mexican history in two but a similar line divides colonial and national borderlands... This is largely a problem of scholarly perspective... To address these blind spots and develop the untapped potential of borderlands history, historians need to reclaim the center of the field. We need to start with the border itself and include both sides as our unit analysis. (2008; p.7)

And as Jacoby (2009) wrote one year later,

Much as the U.S.-Mexico border never completely separated the communities on either side of the boundary, the ‘Mexican’ and ‘American’ eras in the Southwest do not divide neatly at some moment in time, but rather bleed into one another, mutually constructing the borderlands of the nineteenth century—and beyond— (2009; p.98)

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, historians focused on the borderlands were

devoted to revealing a space that was claimed and constricted by national entities but primarily connected various communities.^{xviii}

Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands (2008) for example, echoing New Western History, explored “how the best-laid plans of states, entrepreneurs, and corporations repeatedly ran aground in fugitive landscapes of subaltern power” (9). Using records from US government offices, local periodicals, corporations, and individual collections, Truett got at the intentions, hopes, fears, and haunts of nations and individuals. Uncommitted to a complete or hermetic narrative (like Brooks), Truett illuminated a human entity largely transitory in the records: women, minorities, Chinese, Indigenous laborers, as they moved in, out, and across the border. Further, the book, true to its name, also featured landscapes. Truett wrote of fugitive landscapes “fugitive not only because it resisted efforts to fix and police territory, but also because in its unsettled condition it represented an ambiguous, shifting blank space on most mental maps of North America” (37).

Karl Jacoby’s text, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History*, explored the state as a key actor but rather than focusing on it, he demonstrates how it positioned various communities in alliance or in conflict. Pulling from atypical sources such as calendar sticks (O’odham) and oral histories by living Native peoples, as well as government documents, correspondences, and court records, Jacoby examined a singular event: the 1871 Camp Grant massacre. Each chapter, told from the perspective of either the O’odham (Pima), the Nnee (Apache), los vecinos, or the Americans illuminated how each of these communities came together in a singular moment of violence.

Focusing on the constraints of the time and the constraints of the archive, Jacoby and Truett sidestep a greater colonial context and opt instead for empirical complexity (the former contained in a singular event, and the later specific to a space). Truett and Jacoby demonstrated how Indigenous people were not simply disappeared, incorporated, or assimilated but implicated as separate pieces in a broader racial landscape. Vecinos, Mexicanos, Navajo, Yaqui, Apache, and O’odham people appear in these texts alongside each other as laborers, victims, and the perpetrators of violence themselves. On this final note, where Indigenous people participated in the violence of the borderlands, the field lingered.

Brian Delay’s *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U. S. -Mexican War* (2008), for example, examined the ways Indigenous raiding, violence, and war made way for American

expansion, by creating a desert of civilization out of Mexican land. Beginning with Article 11 of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Delay focuses upon state archives, the imaginings of power that Native people on the ground failed to adhere to, and the ubiquitous and catastrophic violence in the borderlands. Delay turns Bolton's formulation of the borderlands somewhat on its head. Delay argues that it was not the Spanish who pre-civilized the wilderness of the West—ultimately creating the landscape that enabled American expansion—but instead, it was the Indians who displaced Mexican civilization, rendering the landscape back into a wilderness (or as he says, a desert^{xix}) which enabled American expansion. Doubling down on Delay's formulation of Indigenous violence as an emptying force, Pekka Hämäläinen, in his 2009 book *Comanche Empire*, zoomed in on the Comanches. Using traditional archives along with “upstreaming” and “side streaming” (using ethnographic data from other tribes as a proxy for Comanche) Hämäläinen ventured to recapture Comanche people as an Empire that emptied Spain and Mexico of its resources, which ultimately enabled way for American expansion.^{xx}

In the original frontier thesis, Turner conflated Native people with the wilderness that produced American originality. While less supportive of American exceptionalism (instead positing American expansion as mere empirical fact), Brian Delay and Pekka Hämäläinen still posit Native peoples as the conduits of America. Only, for these two authors, Indians—and not settlers—enact the violence that made way for the US. While they note Indian power struggles in the Spanish Borderlands (and Indian agency here is certainly an amendment to Bolton's thesis), for them, Indians remain a part of the wilderness that the US was violently forged from. Indians in these texts remain intellectually valuable in terms of the US nation-state that they engendered.

Revealing organized Indigenous violence in the borderlands and arguing that it created ideal conditions for American expansion, as Delay and Hamalaninen do, is not necessarily bad. Neither is revealing the multi-racial violence of the borderlands as Truett and Jacoby do. To speak of violence and expansion is not necessarily a rehashing of the racist ideologies of the original Frontier Thesis. However, the structural similarities between the two, does beg the question: **Why, and to what ends, do we tell these histories?**

History is not neutral; it is produced and it is productive. In the words of Michele-Rolph Trouillot, “is it really inconsequential that the history of America is being written in the same world where few little boys want to be Indians?” (22). In his book, *Silencing the Past* (1995), Trouillot asks how and in service to what do we tell histories? What is the true value of mere

empiricity? “The meaning of history,” Trouillot writes, “is also its purpose. Empirical exactitude as defined and verified in specific context is necessary to historical production. But empirical exactitude alone is not enough. Historical representation... cannot be conceived only as vehicles for the transmission of knowledge. They must establish relation to the knowledge” (149). For Trouillot, drawing clear lines from past to present, from historical events and the telling of those events is a moral question. He writes “The focus on The Past often diverts us from the present injustices for which previous generations only set the foundations” (15).

While empirical exactitude may not be “enough” in a moral and ideological landscape of history-telling, for borderlands history mere empirical data has proven to be a major hurdle. Colonial institutions have produced the majority of available sources on the borderlands. Church records, anthropological accounts, state archive, settler-journals etc. fail to give a self-determined account of the populations they ostensibly document. While it is clear that Native people are and were in the borderlands, in terms of sources they are historically defined by colonial reactions to them. That is to say, scholars must struggle to illuminate this population that is only visible through colonial shadows. Gutierrez employed ethnographic accounts from the 1920s, and he projected the culture they ostensibly documented into the past as fact. Jacoby used O’odham calendar sticks also documented by ethnographers. Hämäläinen used ethnographic data from related tribes to fill in the information gaps on Comanche culture and politics. Jacoby focused on a singular well-documented event, and Truett leaned into the fragments of the archives. Each of these scholars has negotiated the sources available and the claims they are able to make, whether those claims are about nation-formation, violence, or rupture.

In the last decade, in the wake of a rising white-American-nationalism, beginning with 9/11 and culminating in the Trump presidency, the US-Mexico border has (re)emerged as metonym for national integrity. If the borderlands, and the Mexican-American war over them, seemed to served as the final chapter of US history—one where the Nation’s “destiny” to inhabit the continent, from sea to shining sea, was fulfilled—then today the same geopolitical space appears again, to symbolize the [racial] integrity of the US. In 2016, the Tohono O’odham Nation—a tribe bifurcated by the border in what is today Southern Arizona—announced that it would not allow a border wall to be built on TO land (a span of 75 miles). The borderlands, it seems, are still not yet settled.

In this paper, I have followed the field’s changing purview from Bolton’s Spanish

borderlands to the US-Mexico's material and racial border[land]s. I have traced indigenous peoples in borderlands scholarship as they served as conduits of American exceptionalism, were incorporated in a syncretic mestizaje, and, most recently, were proffered as the perpetrators of Western vacancy (and violence) themselves. Citing Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995), I then theorized the field through the power and limitations of History. Borderlands scholars have recently taken to discussing in their epilogue the contemporary politics of the borderlands (St John 2010; Meeks 2008). How then do we produce a new and *indigenous* take on the borderlands.

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ⁱ Bolton “opened up a new area of study in American history” (Bolton; 1974). He is considered to be one of the founders of Western History. The other is Frederick Jackson Turner.

ⁱⁱ Interestingly, Bolton does not define borderlands in his book. Implicitly, it seems to refer to the edges of the Spanish empire that would later become part of the United States. In the order that they appear in the book: Florida, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, California.

ⁱⁱⁱ Turner famously wrote, “the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development” (Turner 1938: 185). Turner originally presented his Thesis to the American Historical Association. His presentation sought to sound the alarm for the United States as the Frontier—which was for Turner the defining element of American exceptionalism—was closing.

^{iv} Manifest Destiny and the Doctrine of Discovery hinge upon two ostensibly contradictory tenets: 1) The land was empty and open to conquest as the residents were not Christian. 2) That the Indians who were there disappeared. Thus the “wilderness” signifies both an empty landscape and a landscape full of Indians, who would disappear. I signify this later in the paper as “Native/wilderness”

^v This essay takes the field, Borderlands History, to be the historical scholarship on what would *become* the US Southwest and the Mexican north; this paper does not directly address the expansive and international field of the same name that grew out of it.

^{vi} “The Bolton school” as Bolton and his students would come to be known primarily sought to recast Spain’s role in the new world in response to “La leyenda Negra,” the Black legend. “La Leyenda Negra” which Emilia Pardo Bazán termed and Julián Juderías canonized (both were Spanish historians in the early 1900’s) referred to the belief of historians that Spain generally and its colonization/empire were particular inhumane and violent. It was only after the US had used “La Leyenda Negra” to justify its seizure of a substantial portion of Spain’s former empire in the Mexican-American War that Bolton’s re-branded Spain was permissible/thinkable (see Weber 2009). Bolton’s defense of Spain also dovetailed with a cultural affect that manifested in mission revival architecture 1898-1915.

^{vii} If the two fathers of Western history, as Turner and Bolton came to be known, appeared to set out two opposing visions of the American West: Anglo-Saxon difference rendered by violence and the wilderness-as-catalyst versus Spanish kindness, Indian incorporation, and European infrastructure, they themselves did not imagine their theories incompatible. Bolton simply hoped to insert a *friendly* Spain into part of the history of America Bolton did not see the Spanish borderlands as antagonistic to Turner’s Frontier Thesis. In fact he often credited Turner’s Thesis in his own work. This, today at least, seems slightly paradoxical. As Albert Hurtado writes, “Bolton conceptualized a frontier where empires and cultures met, interacted, and influenced each other, fundamentally revising Turner’s conception of the frontier, which held that Anglo frontiersmen overcame and replaced Indians and others who did not have significant standing in Turner’s historical consciousness” (2013; p6). Taking a cue from the historians themselves, I take their works to be in concert. For more on the relationship between Turner and Bolton see Albert Hurtado’s “Bolton and Turner: The Borderlands and American Exceptionalism” *Western Historical Quarterly* 44(1) 1 February 2013 pp4-20. In the article, Hurtado interrogates the challenges Bolton’s work made to Turner’s frontier thesis, although in life Bolton didn’t see it that way. Bolton did however envision a larger conception of America see, “The epic of Greater America” *American historical review* 38(3) 1933.

^{viii} Like its contemporary, the Civil Rights movement, the Chicano Movement advocated for civic equality in the then present and in the face of US white supremacy, which maintained *racial*, economic, and cultural hierarchies. Part of articulating the Chicano present included an articulation of history and a critique of it (and by history I mean what happened and what is said to have happened). On the other hand, in 1962, Ed Spicer published his text *Cycles of Conquest*. In the text Spicer attempted to synthesize what was then a wealth of disparate historical information on “Native American cultures” in the Southwest and to show the ways Native peoples had responded to Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo onslaughts.

^{ix} *The Story of the Mexican American* (1969) by Rudolfo Acuña was certainly one of the earliest texts on Chicano history, though it is geared at children and never received as much attention as his now famous and follow-up text *Occupied America: a History of Chicanos* (1972).

^x At the extreme, in *Occupied America* (1972), Rodulfo Acuña proposed that Chicanos in the US could be better understood as an internal colony. He writes, “the conquest of the Southwest created a colonial situation in the traditional sense—with the Mexican land and population being controlled by an imperialistic United States” (3). While the internal colony has long since fallen out of favor—Acuña dropped the theory in later editions—the tension between Indigeneity and race continues (Almaguer 1987; Menchaca 2010; Gomez 2009; Blackwell et al. 2017)

^{xi} New social history is distinct from social history in terms of its objects. While social history took on a Marxist tone by focusing on the general non-elite/proletariat, New social history focused on increasingly specific groups: Race, gender, mountain farmers in Colorado etc.

^{xii} New Western historians also critiqued the wilderness ideology of the frontier. For example, after, Alfred Crosby, in *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1973) demonstrated how the so-called empty wilderness was made through ecological and microscopic invasion, William Cronon investigated the imaginaries of conservation. In his essay, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” (1995), speaking on National parks and the frontier nostalgia that propelled them, he writes, “The myth of the wilderness as ‘virgin’ uninhabited land has always been especially cruel when seen from the perspective of the Indians ... forced to move elsewhere with the result that tourists could safely enjoy the illusion that they were seeing their nation in its pristine, original state, in the new morning of God’s own creation” (23). New Western Historians confronted the “disappearing Indian” and the “pure wilderness” central to the frontier and they argued that as an ideology and historical project

^{xiii} Not all were as quick to proclaim the death of the frontier as Patricia Limerick. In the hands of New Western Historians it seemed that Frontier was the new ‘f’ word (Klein 1996). Generally New Western Historians agreed that the frontier at the very least must be reconstructed if it was to be rescued. Adelman and Aron suggest: see Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, "Comparative Frontier History," in Lamar and Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven, Conn., 1981), 3-13; William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, "Becoming West: Toward a New Meaning for Western History," in Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York, 1992), 3-27; Stephen Aron, "Lessons in Conquest: Towards a New Western History," *Pacific Historical Review* 63 (May 1994): 125-47; John Mack Faragher, "Afterword: The Significance of the Frontier in American Historiography," in Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: The Significance of the Frontier in American History and Other Essays* (New York, 1994), 237-41; Kerwin Lee Klein, "Reclaiming the 'F' Word, Or Being and Becoming Postwestern," *Pacific Historical Review* 65 (May 1996): 179-215.

^{xiv} New Western History in some ways made way for, was influenced by, and contributed to Native American History—who were undoubtedly the victims of and “on the other side” of the Frontier imaginary. See Slotkin (1973); Brown (1970); Jack Forbes (1992) and Jill Lepore (1999)

^{xv} Adelman and Aron, while critiquing contact narratives that emphasize melding, rail against the melding of anthropology and history. Anthropology, which focused on culture and its changes, versus history whose true purview was the unfolding of empires, were perhaps a little too close for the pair, and worse

still, the boundaries between them seemed to increasingly blur. Social history, amenable as it was to local and micro experience, had gone too far in their minds. Unfortunately, for them the damage was done. From contact zones (Louise Pratt 1991) onward, history and anthropology shared a vocabulary. In fact some of the foremost scholars sought to bridge the gap between the two (Trouillot 1995; Maria Alonso 1995). In a 2005 collection, *Untaming the Frontier in Anthropology, Archaeology and History*, editors Bradley Parker and Lars Rodseth meditated on the common ground of history and anthropology when it came to the study of frontiers. Citing Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996; Clifford 1997; Donnan and Wilson 1991; Eric Wolf 1998 and others, the two posit that “borders, diasporas, and contact zones—those ‘transnational fields’ in which peoples, commodities, and cultural ideas tend to mingle and recombine... must be understood as extensions of frontier processes that have developed over hundred or even thousands of years”(4). To support their thesis, Adelman and Aron sought refuge in European intellectual genealogies that saw a frontier as, “An imperial boundary... not so much an open wilderness fostering rugged individualism, as Turner and his followers might imagine, but a zone of contested political control that would have to be surveys, mapped, and perhaps invaded and occupied before the proper borders could be drawn.” (6)

^{xvi} European Scholars too were looking to expand “the Borderlands” in a way that would circle back to American scholarship around Truett (2006). Michiel Baud and WilenVan Schendel in their “Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands” give an account of Borders that very much resonates today: “National borders are political constructs, imagined projections of territorial power. Although they appear on maps in deceptively precise forms, they reflect, at least initially, merely the mental images of politicians, lawyers, and intellectuals. Their practical consequences are often quite different. No matter how clearly borders are drawn on official maps, how many customs officials are appointed, or how many watchtowers are built, people will ignore borders whenever it suits them. In doing so, they challenge the political status quo of which borders are the ultimate symbol. People also take advantage of borders in ways that are not intended or anticipated by their creators. Revolutionaries hide behind them, seeking the protection of another sovereignty; local inhabitants cross them whenever services or products are cheaper or more attractive on the other side; and traders are quick to take advantage of price and tax differentials. Because of such unintended and often subversive consequences, border regions have their own social dynamics and historical development” (211-212).

^{xvii} For more the uneven violence surrounding and permeating these forged colonial systems in a idifferent colonial context see Richard White (1991).

^{xviii} Prior to Truett’s text, US-Mexico borderlands, as a term was largely relegated to Anthropological studies on Mexican-Americans and cultures. For a useful overview of the field see: Alvarez (1995)

^{xix} The desert has long held an interesting place in the American imaginary. It is interestingly an unproductive, untamable wilderness. See Limerick 1985; Austin 1905; Povinelli 2016

^{xx} There is something about Hamalainen’s text that feels hostile, in a familiar Borderlands History way, to Native American Studies, which works hard against the exotic indigenes and Indigenous ends. Fighting against the Frontier specifically, but really the American Imaginary more broadly, which insists on the disappeared Native (see O’Brien 2010) Native American Studies first and foremost highlights the continuity of Indigenous people, something Hamalainen seems uninterested in. Delay on the other hand ends his epilogue and his book on an small but important note of Indigenous continuity: “The irony is that Comanches themselves had helped usher in their new, diminished reality... but Comanche’s has reason to see it different... On the bleak reservations many still lived who had come together to do things that few who had not witnessed them would have thought possible, reshaping the continent in the process. By the 1880’s, aging warriors told stories their children and grandchildren could hardly imagine...” (Delay 2008; 309-310)