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## The Spanish Borderlands Revisited: Engaging the Public in Relating the Place of Spain in U.S. History

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## **The Spanish Borderlands Revisited: Engaging the Public in Relating the Place of Spain in U.S. History<sup>1</sup>**

**Charles Nicholas Saenz**

Felipe Fernández-Armesto recounts a wonderful anecdote at the start of *Our America: A Hispanic History of the United States* (2014). Standing before a classroom at Tufts University, Fernández-Armesto asked his students to answer what was, by his own admission, a “rather a sneaky question.” “Where, in what is now US territory, was the first enduring European colony, still occupied today, established?” Initial responses proffered Jamestown, Virginia – a response fitting the presumptions of the reigning national narrative. Other students, perhaps acutely aware of Fernández-Armesto’s scholarly work, put forward Saint Augustine, Florida and Santa Fe, New Mexico. No student correctly identified Puerto Rico as the oldest continuously inhabited site of settlement in the United States built by Europeans, their colonial subjects, and shared descendants.<sup>2</sup>

This anecdote is far from exceptional, and observers should see it bearing significant social and historical baggage. In the summer of 2018, I witnessed the same question and answer scenario play out among a community of Latino leaders in Denver, Colorado. A room of self-identified Latinos struggled to name Puerto Rico as the oldest site of permanent European colonization in the modern United States. Fernández-Armesto’s experience and my own – and those shared by many others – point to the absence of Spanish history as it pertains to the history of United States. An expanding public consciousness of *latinidad* among U.S. nationals, propelled by a sizeable and growing Hispanic population expected roughly to double by 2050, has not developed a historical awareness to match.<sup>3</sup> In the

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank fellow members of the Borderlands of Southern Colorado Symposium and related initiatives: Alice Baumgartner, Minette Church, Paul Conrad, Derek R. Everett, Philip “Felipe” Gonzales, Beth LaDow, Patty Limerick, Mary E. Mendoza, Fawn-Amber Montoya, Andrés Reséndez, Rachel St. John, and Patricia Trujillo. A special thanks goes to Dawn DiPrince who conceived of the project and continues to give it life. Two anonymous reviewers provided valuable insights on an earlier draft.

<sup>2</sup> Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Our America: A Hispanic History of the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2014), 3-4. Fernández-Armesto’s book is one of several recent surveys of U.S. history told from a Latino perspective. Other works of this kind include Juan González, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (London: Penguin, 2011) and Zaragoza Vargas, *Crucible of Struggle: Mexican Americans from the Colonial Period to the Present Era*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> See U.S. Census Bureau forecasts. These statistics are updated frequently, and, despite a recent downturn, remain largely consistent. An assessment of the field appears in Adrian Shubert, “Modern Spanish History in North America,” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 45, no. 2 (2015): 303-310.

aftermath of Hurricane Maria, many who identify as Americans seem unaware that Puerto Rico is part of the territorial United States.<sup>4</sup> Distressingly few Americans properly situate Spanish imperialism alongside that of the United States, both in the past and present, producing tragic results. Contemporary discourse feels, at times, like Samuel P. Huntington's denial of the nation's Hispanic presence has found common ground in a concerning number of American minds.<sup>5</sup>

The historical profession bears some responsibility for the present circumstance. Scholars of U.S. history have been loath to situate the place of Spanish empire in framing the development of the United States. Part of the issue owes to what Richard L. Kagan dubbed "Prescott's Paradigm," which has juxtaposed narratives of Spanish decadence with the ideals of American progress. An adherent of the "Romantic school," like George Bancroft and Francis Parkman, William Hickling Prescott (1796-1859) sought to write books that would speak to popular audiences by offering comfortable affirmations of American identity; ideas that carried influence through the end of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> In this fashion, Spain emerged as something like the great tragedy of early American historical scholarship, not a national history worthy of celebration much less emulation. American scholarship on Spain became rooted in narratives of cultural contrast borne of the "black legend" and decline.<sup>7</sup> As Kate Ferris has explained, "understanding Spanish history through a 'paradigm of backwardness' formed part of a historiographical mapping of a kind of Spanish *sonderweg*, in which 'failures' and 'absences' of social democracy and republicanism in the twentieth century were traced back through the supposed failures and absences of bourgeois liberalism and republicanism in the nineteenth."<sup>8</sup> The trope persisted until, at the very least, the publication of David R. Ringrose's splendid account of Spanish

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Legislation designed to grow the Smithsonian Latino Center into the National Museum of the American Latino dates to 2003, but has languished in Congress.

<sup>4</sup> Kyle Dropp and Brendan Nyhan, "Nearly Half of Americans Don't Know Puerto Ricans Are Fellow Citizens," *The New York Times*, September 26, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Richard L. Kagan, "Prescott's Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (Apr. 1996): 423-446, 425.

<sup>7</sup> The phrase "black legend" alludes to a common Anglo-American narrative trope with origins in the era of the Protestant Reformation that portrayed Spain and Spaniards as particularly backward, cruel, and overly zealous in religious terms. Its use in historiographical discourse dates to the nineteenth century, but received widespread attention with the publication of Julián Juderías, *La leyenda negra y la verdad histórica. Contribución al estudio del concepto de España en Europa, de las causas de este concepto y de la tolerancia política y religiosa en los países civilizados* (Madrid: Tip. de la Revista de Archivos, 1914).

<sup>8</sup> Kate Ferris, *Imagining 'America' in Late Nineteenth Century Spain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3.

economic resiliency during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which he dubbed nothing short of a “miracle.”<sup>9</sup>

While American historical scholarship on Spain has moved, thankfully, beyond a fixation with Spanish savagery and imperial collapse, American historical scholarship on the United States has begun, only very recently, to reverse this trend as it relates to thinking about the nation’s colonial origins. Prescott’s commitment to an authoritative and anti-imperial history of Spain was damning in the extreme. Much as his words served to celebrate American exceptionalism, they also, simultaneously, relegated Spanish history and culture to a second rung of historical importance; thereby eliminating the need to mention Spain’s contributions to the emergence of the United States at all.

The result was a colonial history of the United States that omitted mention of Spanish empire almost entirely. In 1992, the late David J. Weber wrote:

In American popular culture, the American past has been understood as the story of the expansion of English America rather than as the stories of the diverse cultures that comprise our national heritage ... for many historians ‘colonial America’ remains synonymous with English colonial America. Mistaking regional history for national history, most historians have continued to see the nation’s “formative years” as a phenomenon of the eastern seaboard.<sup>10</sup>

The better part of three decades later, Weber’s critique remains nearly as relevant as ever, though significant progress has been made towards adding greater complexity to this picture. Well ahead of developments in other historical fields, historians of the U.S. West have led this charge using the borderlands as their framework, aided by productive and synergistic collaborations with historians of Latin America and, importantly, archivists in Mexico and Spain. Especially promising, the advent of transnational history has posed new conceptual and methodological frameworks in complement to borderland studies. The time has come for historians of Spain to broaden the study of the Spanish borderlands as they apply to the Iberian Peninsula, the Americas, and beyond with a special emphasis devoted to integrating the history of Spain into that of the United States.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> David R. Ringrose, *Spain, Europe, and the “Spanish Miracle,” 1700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Spanish historians have championed this cause with the publication of the “Relaciones entre España y America” series published on the occasion of the quincentenary by Editorial Mapfre. Although not structured with a focus on the borderlands, the recent international congresses on “Historical Links between Spain and America,” sponsored by the Instituto Franklin of the

The history of Spain's presence in North America remains a passing fancy to most Americans. This state of affairs exists despite the fact that American independence itself owes to Spanish contributions.<sup>12</sup> As Pedro Pablo Abarca de Bolea, Count of Aranda, wrote at the time of the American Revolution, the United States "needed the aid and strength of two powerful states like Spain and France to accomplish its independence. [But] the day will come when ... it will forget the benefits that it had received from the two powers and only think [of] its own aggrandizement."<sup>13</sup> Aranda's prophesy accurately foretold the emergence of U.S. narratives of exceptionalism. Meanwhile, as Helen Nader made clear, a "strong tradition of town democracy by a free people is generally believed to be a British trait, yet it shaped both the political and the economic life of most of Castile's people."<sup>14</sup> Americans and Spaniards were never so distant as Prescott liked to imagine. Spanish-speaking U.S. President Thomas Jefferson himself urged the study of Spanish language and culture for its "useful" merits.<sup>15</sup> In keeping with the goal of this special issue on Iberia in Entangled and Transnational Contexts to re-periodize and broaden Iberian history, I propose one route out of the present historical morass. The borderlands as an interdisciplinary body of theories and practices and subfield of the larger discipline of history holds tremendous potential for historians of Spain to capture a much wider audience and inform the development of a more authentic public understanding of U.S. history.

Scholarship alone cannot reverse the mass of misinformation about the Spanish-speaking world that has taken root in modern North America. While colonial historians, like Alan Taylor, have broadened the number and variety of voices prevalent in telling the early history of the United States, these works remain isolated within the scholarly community. For too long, public history has been shackled with the burden of being a narrow field within the larger discipline. Historians of Spain and Spanish empire working in the United States have a professional obligation to support projects and initiatives that share this information

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Universidad de Alcalá, the Instituto Cervantes of New York, and the Division of Interdisciplinary Studies of the City College of New York, has explored this topic as well.

<sup>12</sup> On this point, see Thomas E. Chávez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States: An Intrinsic Gift* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), Gonzalo M. Quintero Saravia, *Bernardo de Gálvez: Spanish Hero of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), and Gabriel Paquette and Gonzalo M. Quintero Saravia, eds, *Spain and the American Revolution: New Approaches and Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2016), 303-304.

<sup>14</sup> Helen Nader, *Liberty in Absolutist Spain: The Habsburg Sale of Towns, 1516-1700* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 8.

<sup>15</sup> In all likelihood, he thought knowledge of Spanish would aid in forthcoming diplomatic discussions related to securing Louisiana and other current or former Spanish colonies. Richard L. Kagan, "Introduction," in *Spain in America*, ed. Richard L. Kagan (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 5-6.

with the broader public. In doing so, they champion the cause of greater cultural understanding at the local level.

I should stress at the outset that my goal is not to overlook the important and overlooked role of Native peoples, Africans and African Americans, and other communities of color in contributing to the development of the United States. Their histories are likewise misunderstood and too often marginalized. A mere reorientation of the U.S. origin story to the south and west and a more intentional integration of Spanish-speaking peoples and the broader communities they represent in framing the development of U.S. history would fall short of a genuinely inclusive historical account. Such a narrative would be unabashedly triumphalist, more a hagiography of Spanish heroes and a celebration of Spanish “civilization” than anything resembling legitimate scholarship. A diverse mix of peoples were central to structuring the course of Spanish history in the Americas and what is today the United States. My intervention serves to recognize this fact more completely by offering one strategy to contextualize Spanish history as U.S. history through use of the borderlands framework.

### **The Borderlands as an Alternative Perspective**

Interest in the Spanish borderlands dates to a turn of the twentieth century American fascination with the Southwest. University of Kansas sociologist Frank W. Blackmar was among the first scholars to recuperate the legacy of Spain’s role in North America. His efforts enlisted the support of Woodbury Lowery (1853-1906), an avid collector of maps now housed at the Library of Congress, and Edward G. Bourne (1860-1908), author of *Spain in America, 1450-1580* (1904). The writings of Charles F. Lummis (1859-1928) stand as the most influential literary milestones of this genre in terms of popular success, especially *The Spanish Pioneers* (1983). Lummis was among the first writers on Spanish history in North America to capture public attention.<sup>16</sup>

Standard histories of the borderlands situate two figures at their core: Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) and, to a much greater extent, Herbert Eugene Bolton (1870-1953). The architect of the “Turner thesis” and frontier history, Turner framed frontier zones as the proving grounds of American individualism and democracy; places marked by a confrontation with savagery that yielded over time to the civilizing process.<sup>17</sup> In this regard, Turner’s

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<sup>16</sup> Richard L. Kagan, *The Spanish Craze: America’s Fascination with the Hispanic World, 1779-1939* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 123-28.

<sup>17</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” speech given at a special meeting of the American Historical Association, delivered in Chicago, July 12, 1893 and published in the *Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, December 14, 1893, and the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association* (1893): 197-227. It was also republished as chapter 1 of *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, 1920). On the

characterization of the frontier worked in parallel with Spanish and Spanish-speaking writers' description of frontier zones as places marked by barbarism.<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly, Turner's use of frontier is often rejected in contemporary scholarship, connotative of nationalistic, ethnocentric and racist historical narratives.<sup>19</sup> The borderlands represents a departure from this mold, and Bolton enjoys distinction as the architect of this alternative. Bolton's role is so significant that the borderlands have become synonymous with monikers like "the Bolton School" and "Boltonlands."<sup>20</sup>

Importantly, the borderlands originated with a focus on cultural encounters in the southwest United States. While an implicit encounter with the Spanish-speaking world was there from the beginning, an engagement with its scholarship was not. As Christopher Schmidt-Nowara commented in one famous exchange, "the intellectual foundations of this project seem to lie too squarely in the English-speaking world, from Turner and Bolton to the current western historians."<sup>21</sup> Schmidt-Nowara pointed to the vision of Cuban nationalist José Martí whose conception of "Our America" offered a hemispheric vision for thinking beyond "barricades of ideas," suggestive, in turn, of the fact "that English-speaking historians and intellectuals were not alone in theorizing the history of empire and cultural connections in the Americas."<sup>22</sup> Bolton later borrowed from Martí's vision of "Nuestra América" to construct his "Epic of Greater America," a foundational work of hemispheric history.<sup>23</sup>

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interrelatedness of Turner's vision and the borderlands, see David J. Weber, "Turner, the Boltonians, and the Borderlands," *American Historical Review* 91, no.1 (Feb., 1986): 66-81.

<sup>18</sup> The comparison applies to the reaches of Spanish empire in several places: western North America, Patagonia and the Southern Cone, and North Africa. Perhaps the best example of this rhetoric appears in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo o civilización y barbarie en las pampas argentinas* (Santiago: Imprenta del Progreso, 1845).

<sup>19</sup> Kerwin Lee Klein, "Reclaiming the F' Word, or Being and Becoming Postwestern," *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 2 (May, 1996): 179-215, 181.

<sup>20</sup> See David J. Weber, "The Spanish Borderlands, Historiography Redux," *The History Teacher* 39.1 (Nov. 2005): 43-56, and James A. Sandos, "From 'Boltonlands' to 'Weberlands': The Borderlands Enter American History," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (December 1994): 595-604. It's worth noting that the difference between "frontier" and "borderland" is not captured well in Spanish translations. Translators often use *frontera* to mean both "frontier" and "border" and *las tierras fronterizas* to indicate "borderlands."

<sup>21</sup> Christopher Ebert Schmidt-Nowara, "Borders and Borderlands of Interpretation," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (Oct. 1999): 1226-1228, 1228.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Ebert Schmidt-Nowara, "Borders and Borderlands," 1226.

<sup>23</sup> Herbert Eugene Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America," annual address of the president of the American Historical Association, delivered in Toronto, December 28, 1932 and published in the *American Historical Review* 38, no. 3 (Apr. 1933): 1448-474. Martí's explication of "Nuestra América" first appeared in *La Revista Ilustrada de Nueva York*, January 10, 1891. For further information on Bolton's ideas and the applicability of hemispheric history to other fields of historical inquiry, see Samuel Truett, "Epics of Greater America: Herbert Eugene Bolton's Quest

If not rooted in an examination of Spanish-speaking voices, the borderlands movement that started in the English-speaking halls of the U.S. academy was, all the same, oriented towards the Spanish-speaking south, which grew in popularity during the early twentieth century. The very origins of the borderlands as a scholarly field of study based in the United States originated with a kind of fascination in Spanish civilization propelled by the likes of writers, diplomats, and scholars such as Washington Irving, George Ticknor, Mordecai M. Noah, and Bernard Moses.<sup>24</sup> Following the Spanish-American War (1898), a certain curiosity for the horizons of American empire in the Western Hemisphere furthered political interest in the legacy of Spanish empire. These themes merged with an expansion of Spanish language instruction in the United States during the 1910s. Britain's declaration of war against Germany on August 5, 1914 coincided with the passage of the first cargo vessel through the Panama Canal – an event celebrated in California with much fanfare.<sup>25</sup> Spanish soon took root in U.S. secondary schools, colleges, and universities.<sup>26</sup> This moment coincided with what Richard L. Kagan recently has described as “a full-fledged bout of Hispanophilia,” or “Spanish craze” in the United States.<sup>27</sup> Jefferson's claim about the usefulness of Spanish passed from being a strictly diplomatic consideration to a claim bearing special economic significance as well. Still few Americans appreciated the extent to which Spanish influences had predated the arrival of U.S. rule in Florida and the southwest at a time when the United State was investing its colonial energies in former Spanish colonies like Cuba and Puerto Rico. While California owed the beginnings of its modern political history to the era of Spanish settlement, American narratives of conquest tendered John C. Frémont and other U.S. citizens at the helm of creating a regional government on the eve of statehood in 1850. Despite their acquisition during the middle part of the nineteenth century, Arizona and New Mexico retained a sense of foreignness until they gained statehood 1912, a delay that owed to the presence of numerous Spanish-speaking citizens of mixed indigenous ancestry.

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for a Transnational American History,” in *Interpreting Spanish Colonialism: Empires, Nations, and Legends*, eds. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara and John M. Nieto-Phillips (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 213-247, and Jack P. Greene, “Hemispheric History and Atlantic History,” in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, eds. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 299-316. For examples of hemispheric histories, see Anthony DePalma, *Here: A Biography of the New American Continent* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001) and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *The Americas: A Hemispheric History* (New York: Modern Library, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> An excellent overview appears in Richard L. Kagan, “From Noah to Moses: The Genesis of Historical Scholarship on Spain in the United States,” in *Spain in America*, 21-48.

<sup>25</sup> Javier Moreno Luzón, “Herederos de Balboa: España y la Construcción de Indentidades en California y Panamá a Comienza del Siglo XX,” *Anuario IEHS* 32, no. 1 (2017): 155-78.

<sup>26</sup> James D. Fernández, “‘Longfellow's Law’: The Place of Latin America and Spain in U.S. Hispanism, circa 1915,” in *Spain in America*, 122-141, 125-126.

<sup>27</sup> Kagan, *The Spanish Craze*, 8.



A student of Turner at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Bolton was educated with an understanding that a strict binary existed between savagery and civilization, which had served to ground United States' expansion under the banner of Manifest Destiny. As a faculty member moving westward from the Milwaukee State Normal School to the University of Texas and Stanford University before spending most of his professional life at the University of California, Berkeley, Bolton's ideas matured to suit his new, decidedly more western orientation. In 1921, Bolton published *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*, which, as the title makes clear, focused on those portions of the United States colonized by Spain. Bolton held no qualms about Spanish empire as a civilizing force in the region. Bolton's approach to the history of the United States envisioned an expanded role for Spanish empire that cast Spanish-speaking persons and their descendants as precursors of state-building projects at the periphery of an expanding United States. By writing a history of the Spanish borderlands, Bolton, abetted by his editors Allen Johnson and Constance Lindsay Skinner, sought to situate the history of New Spain's contributions to U.S. history on par with Parkman's placement of New France in the western epic of American expansionism.<sup>28</sup>

Bolton's writing displays a definite romanticism, but also points to a profound appreciation of Spanish influences. As Bolton remarked in an often-mentioned passage: "... in the old borderlands north of the Río Grande, the imprint of Spain's sway is still deep and clear."<sup>29</sup> Bolton insisted that these regions boasted a noble history worthy of integration within an expanding national narrative. The connection between Spain and the United States was something more than a distant or passing curiosity, but rather something substantial and enduring. In this manner, Bolton initiated a new way for thinking about the role of Spain in the history of the United States.

The agenda of borderlands scholarship since Bolton has broadened beyond a mere attempt to document Spanish presence where previously overlooked. The generations that followed Bolton lost enthusiasm for his cause. However, the rise of the sunbelt and the growth of the country's Latino population advanced a new urgency to write of the nation's Hispanic roots for a wider public. At least initially, that effort was championed by Chicano writers like Rodolfo F. Acuña, who departed significantly from Bolton's European focus and dismissal of indigenous voices.<sup>30</sup> In place of focusing on one cultural group, borderlands scholars took a

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<sup>28</sup> Albert L. Hurtado, "Parkmanizing the Spanish Borderlands: Bolton, Turner, and the Historians' World," *Western Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 149-167, 155, 160.

<sup>29</sup> Herbert Eugene Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1921), vii.

<sup>30</sup> First published in 1972, Acuña's book has seen several editions. For the most recent, see Rodolfo F. Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 8th ed. (London: Pearson, 2014).

more multicultural approach with special emphasis placed on points of intersection. Since Bolton, two academic surveys have sought to capture the narrative sweep of Spanish presence north of the Río Grande: John Francis Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821* (1970) and David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (1992). Occurring in the same year as the publication of Weber's survey, which itself signaled "the maturing of the field," the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas triggered a massive outpouring of public interest in the Spanish borderlands.<sup>31</sup> The near simultaneous ascent of the New Western History championed by Patricia Nelson Limerick and other U.S. historians fostered an environment of growth that has continued to the present.<sup>32</sup>

In the past quarter century, scholarship on the Spanish borderlands has grown to encompass a multitude of monographs, edited volumes, and journal articles. Taken together, these works have defined borderlands as highly unstable places prone to near-constant redefinition by the complexity of human experiences. "Anchored in spatial mobility, situational identity, local contingency, and the ambiguities of power," Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett have argued that borderlands "are ambitious and often-unstable realms where boundaries are also crossroads, peripheries are also central places, homelands are also passing-through places, and the end points of empire are also forks in the road ... places where stories take unpredictable turns and rarely end as expected."<sup>33</sup> Scholarship has served to broaden the use of the borderlands in numerous conceptual, theoretical, and methodological ways, so much so that Kelly Lytle Hernández has suggested that recent scholarship has broadened borderlands scholarship to include "zones defined by any consequential social, political, or cultural divide."<sup>34</sup> With a scope of study so general and seemingly all inclusive, the borderlands appears on path to envelop the discipline of history itself!

In place of describing the borderlands as a kind of existential threat to the discipline of history, a better portrayal would seek to present the borderlands as a kind of challenge to the supremacy of traditional categories of historical study, including that of European history. Too often, historians of Spain define Spanish history as part of or as an offshoot of European history. This approach has its merits, but can often prove confining and even delusional. Spain's Europeanness, to say nothing of "Western" Europeanness, has been in question by European historians

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<sup>31</sup> Weber, "The Spanish Borderlands," 44.

<sup>32</sup> The major work here is Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987). An overview of the larger movement appears in Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, eds., *Trails: Toward A New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

<sup>33</sup> Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (Sept. 2011): 338-361, 338.

<sup>34</sup> Kelly Lytle Hernández, "Borderlands and the Future History of the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (Autumn 2011): 325-330, 327.

for generations, since at least the time of Henri Pirenne (1862-1935) and Américo Castro (1885-1972).<sup>35</sup> When the historical idea of Europe was framed around Christian and feudal commonalities, Spain was often left out. So complete was the European historical disassociation of Spain, that few scholars questioned whether Spain even had an Enlightenment until rather recently. Spain's absence from both of the twentieth century's major European military conflagrations and its association with fascism long after 1945 placed it out of step with continental norms until at least the start of European integration. Whereas France and Great Britain followed standard routes to industrialization and modernity, the path for Spain was as "peculiar" as the German one.<sup>36</sup>

Spain's imperfect fit within Europe has been seen as a weakness by politicians and historians alike, and yet this same fact has posed exciting alternative perspectives to frame the place of Spain in the larger world. Several prominent scholars have made the case for including Spanish history within a Mediterranean fold.<sup>37</sup> Representing something more than a merely geographic reorientation, there exists good cause to think of this strategy as employing the same logic of the borderlands. A zone of frequent conflict defined by extremely consequential religious, ethnic, and political divides, for much of its history the Mediterranean was a site of shifting and unstable boundaries. Recent scholarship on the Mediterranean continues to study topics like captivity, of special interest to borderlands scholars more generally.<sup>38</sup> Strategies of this sort serve to uproot conventional scholarship from its rootedness in national histories.

Atlantic history has taken shape more recently as a historical construct offering yet another perspective on Spain's place in the world. Like the

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<sup>35</sup> The "Pirenne Thesis" is perhaps best described as the conviction that "Europe stops at the Pyrenees." Pirenne saw Spain's long era of rule by Muslims from North Africa as marking a stark contrast with the rest of the continent. This idea appeared in several places, but was made especially clear in the posthumous publication of Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris: Nouvelle Société, 1937). Castro renders a Spanish take on the significance of the Muslim conquest in *The Structure of Spanish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954).

<sup>36</sup> David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

<sup>37</sup> On the absurdity of demarcating Spain at its coastal shores, see Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 148. On Spain's place in the Mediterranean world, see Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols., 2nd rev. ed., translated 1972 and 1973 by Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1949). On the more recent efforts in this vein, see Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000) and "The Mediterranean and 'The New Thalassology'," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 722-740. See also David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Hershenzon, *The Captive Sea: Slavery, Communication, and Commerce in Early Modern Spain and the Mediterranean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

Mediterranean, the Atlantic world featured a diverse range of participants and a shifting landscape of power and cultural exchanges. Chronicles of slave revolts, indigenous resistance, and shifting creole loyalties have presented a more dynamic picture than existed previously. Meanwhile, histories of local places have been subsumed into sweeping explorations of the region as a whole, drawing borderland histories into much grander narratives.<sup>39</sup>

Despite repeated efforts to depose or supplant the place of national frameworks, such campaigns have resulted in only limited successes. The nation as historical construct has proven extremely difficult to shake. As Sarah Maza recently wrote, “The ‘where’ of history is, by default, the nation ... faculty members continue, in most cases, to be classified as ‘United States,’ ‘Chinese,’ or ‘German’ historians.”<sup>40</sup> In many cases, the names of historical professional associations reify such boundaries; the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies is a case in point. The structure of graduate training, the organization of research centers, and eligibility requirements for valuable sources of funding have contributed further to the durability of the nation-state in intellectual terms. At the same time, not all challenges to conventional histories undermine national histories in their entirety. There remains a good deal of borderlands scholarship that historians should rightly term multinational in place of antinational.<sup>41</sup>

It would certainly be inaccurate to describe all borderlands history as multinational in scope. While borderlands scholarship might be described better as multicultural in place of multinational, nations have always figured at the core of the field. Indeed, “Bolton’s anachronistic model of placing a frontier of an empire within the boundaries of a nation that did not then exist” points to an early investment in the teleology of nationhood.<sup>42</sup> Multinational history might consider events and processes acting in parallel with several nations without really offering

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<sup>39</sup> Literature on the Hispanic Atlantic is extensive and growing. The unstable and shifting nature of this world is particularly well described in Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). Excellent examples of Atlantic history that explore intercultural dynamics in a transnational vein appear in Scott Eastmann and Natalia Sobrevilla Perea, eds, *The Rise of Constitutional Government in the Iberian Atlantic World: The Impact of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015). The addition of North Africa and the Philippines broadens the concept of transnational connections further to encompass global history. Such an approach was explored in Akiko Tsuchiya and William G. Acree, Jr., eds. *Empire’s End: Transnational Connections in the Hispanic World* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016). Books which model an integration of borderlands and Atlantic history include David J Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of the Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) and John R. Chávez, *Beyond Nations: Evolving Homelands in the North Atlantic World, 1400-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>40</sup> Sarah Maza, *Thinking About History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 45.

<sup>41</sup> Sarah Maza, *Thinking About History*, 82.

<sup>42</sup> Weber, “The Spanish Borderlands,” 43-44.

a sense of interrelatedness. Many borderlands historians would describe themselves as working between national and imperial constructs on places and processes falling into a sort of “middle ground,” per the approach made famous by Richard White.<sup>43</sup> Use of the term “international” doesn’t suffice in such instances, as it has come to define interactions among nation-states, “compared and conceived of as coherent units.”<sup>44</sup> Transnational history has invited borderlands scholarship to theorize “across” national borders so as to explore the interrelatedness of peoples and places more intentionally and, in particular, “experiences and processes that overflow the boundaries of the nation-state.”<sup>45</sup> Scholarship of this kind poses a subversive and continuing challenge to national frameworks that historians of Spain ought to welcome as have scholars working on other parts of the world.

Historians of Spain should not treat the borderlands concept as a body of theoretical approaches and methodologies unique to the southwestern United States. The borderlands label has been applied to parts of the United States as diverse as the Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, and even that region spanning the U.S.-Canada border.<sup>46</sup> References to the borderlands now encompass a unique set of theories and methods used to explain the interrelatedness of communities throughout the world. Although not always invoking the borderlands framework in an explicit manner, the study of Europe’s borderlands has begun to gain traction in recent years with work focused on territory neighboring peninsular Spain.<sup>47</sup> Timothy Snyder’s look at the “bloodlands” of eastern Europe and Daniel Morieux’s examination of the English Channel represent recent and well received works.<sup>48</sup> The borderlands as concept has supplied a much-needed corrective to framing territorially complex regions like Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>49</sup> It has also

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<sup>43</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Elliot Young, “Transnationalizing Borderlands History,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 29.

<sup>45</sup> Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Elliot Young, “Transnationalizing Borderlands History,” 29.

<sup>46</sup> Examples include Stephen Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderlands to Border State* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); David Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire: The Struggle for Mastery in the Louisiana-Florida Borderlands, 1762-1803* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); and Beth LaDow, *The Medicine Line: Life and Death on a North American Borderland* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> E. Natalie Rothman, “Conversion and Convergence in the Venetian-Ottoman Borderlands,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 41, no. 3 (2011): 601-33.

<sup>48</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), and Renaud Morieux, *The Channel: England, France and the Construction of a Maritime Border in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>49</sup> Eric D. Weitz and Omer Bartov, eds., *Shatterzones of Empire: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,

transformed Russian and Soviet history and offered counterpoints to the Soviet Union/modernization paradigm.<sup>50</sup> Borderlands scholarship has even found its way to southwestern China and the Indian subcontinent.<sup>51</sup> It has thoroughly reimagined the complex, multiethnic history of southeast Asia.<sup>52</sup> The borderlands have become a world historical phenomenon.<sup>53</sup>

In place of thinking too broadly, it is worth focusing on some of the ways in which social, political, and cultural divides have figured at the core of scholarship on Spain for some time and how such circumstances might lend themselves to theorization in a borderlands vein. Perhaps no area of Spanish history is more replete with scholarship written in accordance with borderlands frameworks than that of the medieval period. Connections between the borderlands as framework and the interplay of the Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Al-Andulus, *taifa* states, and crusader kingdoms has not been lost on Spanish medievalists. On 5-7 June 2019, Texas State University hosted a symposium titled “The Multi-Cultural Borderlands of Medieval Toledo.” By some measure, it was precisely the formation of a unified Spain that brought the medieval period in Spanish history to a close, as

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2013) and Eagle Glassheim, *Cleansing the Czechoslovak Borderlands: Migration, Environment, and Health in the Former Sudetenland* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> This point was forcefully argued in Mark von Hagen, “Empires, Borderlands, and Diasporas: Eurasia as Anti-Paradigm for the Post-Soviet Era,” *American Historical Review* 109, no. 2 (2004): 445-468; G.M. Hamburg, “Imperial Entanglements: Two New Histories of Russia’s Western and Southern Borderlands,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 2 (2008): 407-431; and Dan Diner, “Topography of Interpretation: Reviewing Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands*,” *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 2 (2012): 125-131. See also Kate Brown, *No Place: From Ethnic Borderlands to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Brian J. Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); and Steven Seegel, *Mapping Europe’s Borderlands: Russian Cartography the Age of Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> Willem Van Schendel, *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia* (London: Anthem Press, 2004); C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China’s Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Sanghamitra Misra, *Becoming a Borderland: The Politics of Space and Identity in Northeastern India* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History or Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); and Bradley Camp Davis, *Imperial Bandits: Outlaws and Rebels in the China-Vietnam Borderlands* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

<sup>53</sup> Paul Readman, Cynthia Radding, and Chad Bryant, eds., *Borderlands in World History, 1700-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and John W. I. Lee and Michael North, eds., *Globalizing Borderlands Studies in Europe and North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

borderlands transformed into frontiers and became the building blocks of a unified, but still composite, Habsburg monarchy.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the emergence of a religiously homogenized, Castilian-dominated Spanish state in the late fifteenth century, the early modern period witnessed further contrasts in society and culture with Spanish expansion overseas. Writing on Spanish empire fifteen years ago, Henry Kamen remarked on the importance of framing the Spanish imperial project as a kind of shared endeavor: “The creators of the empire ... were not only the conquerors from Spain. They were also the selfsame conquered populations, the immigrants, the women, the deportees, the rejected. Nor were they only the Spaniards: they were also the Italians, the Belgians, the Germans and the Chinese.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, the spread of Spanish empire furthered a process of borderlands creation as Europeans ventured into new parts of the world, disrupting and forever altering the balance of regional power systems, social structures, and cultural norms. As Inga Clendinnen showed long ago, the Spanish Conquest in places like the Yucatán Peninsula was far from complete.<sup>56</sup> The power and agency displayed by “conquered” populations has eroded confidence in the notion of a singular, unified Spanish empire. Only in very specific settings was Spanish royal authority completely recognized and absolutely obeyed. The process of preserving the empire required constant vigilance and negotiation.

During the modern period, peninsular Spain and Spain’s surviving empire were not immune to internal and shared borderlands that nagged at the conception of a unified national history. The nineteenth century witnessed an eruption of nationalist movements that posed a still, as yet, unresolved challenge to the unity of the Spanish nation-state. Competing and conflicting linguistic communities, and feuds over regional control of police forces represent a culmination of tensions in this regard. Approaching the subject from an anthropological background, Sandra Ott has applied the borderlands framework to the French Basque Country.<sup>57</sup> The story of British investments in Basque soccer teams and mining operations and the *jerezano* sherry businesses at the turn of the twentieth century point to the unevenness of financial power held by Spaniards in their own backyard.

The projection of the Spanish state and admission of imperial subjecthood was also weak and uneven during this period. Hostilities in Cuba flared repeatedly

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<sup>54</sup> On the transformation of borderlands into frontiers, see Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the People in Between in North American History,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999): 814-841.

<sup>55</sup> Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492-1763* (New York: Perennial, 2004), xxiv.

<sup>56</sup> Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). A good synopsis of the current state of this argument appears in Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> Sandra Ott, *War, Judgement, and Memory in the Basque Borderlands, 1914-1945* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2008).

and Cuban nationals often bested their European rivals.<sup>58</sup> Facing a guerrilla insurgency that undermined its colonial legacy in the region, Spain resorted to a policy of *reconcentración* that served as a tragic precursor to containment strategies employed by the twentieth century's worst regimes and an acknowledgement of Spain's loss of control. Notably, this conflict eventually led to significant entanglements with the United States, not least of which was the outbreak of formal war in 1898 that brought the United States into the political equation as well. In Spanish North Africa, humiliation by Berber-speaking Rifians led to use of chemical warfare, as Spain struggled to hold its own in a sliver of land abutting French-held territory to the south.<sup>59</sup> Within a handful of years, the same region witnessed the expansion of German empire. In both instances, supposedly weaker non-European foes held the upper hand, if only temporarily, over their Spanish counterparts within a shifting landscape of conflict and accommodation. The borderlands framework offers an excellent means to theorize and examine these powerscapes in uneven flux, far better than colonial and imperial frameworks.

Colonial and imperial frameworks have long supported the writing of scholarship on Spain and, rightly so, Spanish empire. These frameworks have effectively pointed to the importance of power imbalances in structuring everything from legal customs to dietary practices. This scholarship has added greater complexity to a field that was once marked by stark contrasts. Ranajit Guha and James C. Scott, among others, have taught scholars to consider the place of resistance in problematizing binaries of colonizer vs. colonized and ruler vs. subject. This scholarship has added infinite nuance to colonial relationships and opened new avenues for thinking about the past. The borderlands invite the scholar to take this narrative one step further to conceptualize instances where more than two groups encountered one another on unequal terms and shifting power relationships were the norm. Cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa has further demonstrated the syncretic construction of new identities forged through processes of hybridization.<sup>60</sup> With its better attention to positional fluidity and intercultural dynamics, the borderlands serves as perhaps the very best framework by which to explore such complexity. More often than not, this work has been done at the margins of Spanish empire.

Adopting the borderlands framework is not without risk for historians of Spain and Spanish empire. In a now famous exchange in the *American Historical Review*, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra argued against turning too aggressively to the

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<sup>58</sup> John Lawrence Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba, 1895-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>59</sup> Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>60</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).



borderlands as a mode of historical inquiry because borderland histories “describe interactions at the margins, not the core.”<sup>61</sup> Following this logic, understanding events and encounters that unfolded at the periphery of empires and nation-states requires first appreciating the entangled history of ideas and other features of core areas that inform life at the margins; for Cañizares-Esguerra, borderland historians “only occasionally upset the normative narratives of the core.”<sup>62</sup> In fact, the borderlands have been a pivotal component of efforts to situate how life at the margins was also constitutive of change at the core of world systems. In response to Cañizares-Esguerra’s critique, Eliga H. Gould noted that “the metropolitan capacity for shaping events on the periphery was never as great as historians once believed, and that the exercise of power at the center was intertwined in deep and profound ways with the exercise of power at the margins.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, a complete appreciation of the drivers of historical change must include those places at the margins of states and nations, those peripheral zones of contact with other peoples where the bounds of the nation-state and empire begin to vanish. In some cases, such areas might be quite large.

Rafe Blaufarb has framed all of Spanish America as constituting a single borderland. In “The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence,” he claimed that the period 1815-1820 sparked “a revolution in Atlantic power relations” as France, Great Britain, Russia, and the United States jockeyed for power and influence in determining the future of Spain’s empire in the Americas.<sup>64</sup> The ensuing crisis weakened Spain *vis-à-vis* its imperial competitors. Spanish colonial administrators were placed in weakened positions relative to the very people they sought to rule, as they were forced to curry favor with insurgents and broker compromise in the interest of preserving the bonds of imperial union. Taken at this level, borderland spaces become central to understanding historical processes.

A fascination with borders and borderlands is not new to the history of Spain in the wider world. Now thirty years old, Peter Sahlins’s book, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (1990), examined the process of national self-definition that transformed the people of Cerdanya into French persons and Spaniards.<sup>65</sup> More recently, Tamar Herzog’s book, *Frontiers of Possession: Spain and Portugal in the Americas* (2015), presented the process

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<sup>61</sup> Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?” *American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 2007): 787.

<sup>62</sup> Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Entangled Histories,” 799.

<sup>63</sup> Eliga H. Gould, “Entangled Atlantic Histories: A Response from the Anglo-American Periphery,” *American Historical Review* 112, no. 5 (December 2007): 1415-1422, 1416.

<sup>64</sup> Rafe Blaufarb, “The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence,” *American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 2007): 742-763, 742.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

whereby territorial borders took shape in Europe and the Americas.<sup>66</sup> In each of these works, the study of local actors and seemingly minor events has shed valuable light on the role of borders in shaping identities and nation-states. Tellingly, David Nirenberg's study of violence in France and the Crown of Aragon, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Violence in the Middle Ages* (1996), provided central insight for Lance R. Blyth's book, *Chiricahua and Janos: Communities of Violence in the Southwestern Borderlands, 1680-1880* (2012).<sup>67</sup> Thus, insights garnered from the study of Spanish communities have started to inform historical practice with regard to the U.S. West.

The applicability of borderlands framework for understanding peninsular Spain's connection to the larger world was recently demonstrated by Sasha D. Pack. In *The Deepest Border: The Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland* (2019), Pack acknowledged the challenges of reconciling the region's situation amid imperial and religious conflict "with the countervailing image of a zone characterized by unbridled mobility, migration, and exchange" that was also "'a separate world' ... remote from the sinews of imperial power."<sup>68</sup> As he explains, the unique geographical and political situation of Gibraltar provided for "a special kind of borderland politics," which, in turn, produced "networks and individuals who made it their specialty to exploit geographical frictions in order to carve out their own independent spheres of power."<sup>69</sup>

The relevance of the borderlands as a tool for historical practice has grown significantly since the time of Bolton. Scholars have redefined the very concept of the borderlands in broad terms, making the borderlands ever more accessible to an extensive variety and range of scholarship. While a fascination with borders and borderlands is not new to the study of Spain and its larger imperial footprint, only more recently have historians of Spain started to adopt the framework in a more conscious fashion. More historians of Spanish-speaking peoples should endeavor to do so as well.

## **Spaniards in the Borderlands of North America**

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<sup>66</sup> Tamar Herzog, *Frontiers of Possession: Spain and Portugal in Europe and the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

<sup>67</sup> David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Violence in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) and Lance R. Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos: Communities of Violence in the Southwestern Borderlands, 1680-1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

<sup>68</sup> Sasha D. Pack, *The Deepest Border: The Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 3.

<sup>69</sup> Sasha D. Pack, *The Deepest Border*, 6.

Recent histories of Hispanic North America place the history of Spain in the modern U.S. within an “epic” narrative.<sup>70</sup> While such accounts outwardly seek to recapture a public interest in Spain’s presence in North America, they risk a return to celebrating the more violent episodes of Spanish conquest and subjugation of Native peoples. The borderlands offer a model for capturing public attention that avoids such narratives. Furthermore, the questions it raises about the past serve as a more useful framework for reflection on the diverse world of the present.

In the section that follows, I highlight some of the more recent scholarship of the past ten years that point to the exceptionality of the borderlands as a tool for framing unique and original histories of North America in which Spaniards and the Spanish government figure prominently. As I suggest above, the idea of Spanish history warrants problematization. Similarly, historians of Spain ought not to dismiss works involving Spaniards in what has become the southwestern United States and elsewhere as rigidly Latin American or North American. Identities, conventions of statecraft, legal institutions, and migration heeded no such boundaries. I devote special attention to three books written about places that currently fall within the United States. A fourth book points to the potential of the borderlands framework as a tool for exploring the subject of Spanish history as U.S. history far from the traditional borderlands of the southwest and Florida.

John L. Kessell is no stranger to the field of borderlands history, having published several works on the Indo-Hispanic interface with a special focus on the Pueblos of modern Arizona and New Mexico.<sup>71</sup> His most recent book, *Miera Y Pacheco: A Renaissance Spaniard in Eighteenth-Century New Mexico* (2013) examines the fascinating life of Bernardo de Miera y Pacheco, the soldier-cum-cartographer whose contributions to Spanish empire were considerable, having mapped much of the Southwest as central figure in scientific exploration, as a member of the Domínguez-Escalante Expedition of 1776, and veteran of several military campaigns, like that launched by New Mexico Governor Juan Bautista de Anza with Apache and Ute assistance against the Comanches in 1779. While residing far from high culture of the Iberian Peninsula and more developed outposts of Spanish empire in the Americas, Miera y Pacheco was also embedded in the cultural and social conventions of the Spanish world, as his contact with non-Spaniards made clear.

Miera y Pacheco’s identity was shaped by a life spent in the borderlands of New Mexico where he encountered a diverse array of peoples. Shortly before his

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<sup>70</sup> Carrie Gibson, *El Norte: The Epic and Forgotten History of Hispanic America* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2019), and Robert Goodwin, *América: The Epic Story of Spanish North America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

<sup>71</sup> John L. Kessell, *Spain in the Southwest: A Narrative History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002) and John L. Kessell, *Pueblos, Spaniards, and the Kingdom of New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 2008).

death in 1785, Miera y Pacheco expressed his will to die in the royal service of Carlos III.<sup>72</sup> Although not unusual by the standards of professional military service in the Spanish Empire of the *antiguo régimen*, Miera y Pacheco's statement pointed more to an appreciation of his contributions to cartography and ethnography than martial valor. A product of the Bourbon Reforms, in many ways Miera y Pacheco typified the more curious and accommodating dimension of Spanish empire in the Americas. Stories like his paint a more complex portrayal of the interactions between Spaniards and Native peoples.

Miera y Pacheco was not alone in thinking of himself as a Spaniard. Well into the twentieth century, the inhabitants of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado continued to identify as Spanish-Americans even while pointing to ancestors who resided in the region during the era of Mexican rule, from 1821 to the close of the U.S. war with Mexico and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.<sup>73</sup> These "Spaniards" avoided thinking of themselves as Mexican, despite being the product of centuries of *mestizaje*. This legacy offers insight into how identity morphed in response to multiple conquests that takes scholarship beyond the binary between Europeans and non-Europeans.

A second historian whose work ought to receive better attention among historians of Spain is Pekka Hämäläinen, a Finnish-born scholar who currently serves as Rhodes Professor of History at the University of Oxford. *The Comanche Empire* (2009), winner of the Bancroft Prize, deserves a place alongside the great imperial histories.<sup>74</sup> Hämäläinen situates "the Comanche power complex as part of an emerging transatlantic web that had not yet consolidated into an encompassing world economy."<sup>75</sup> Like others before him, Hämäläinen places the indigenous experience at the core of his narrative, reversing Vine Deloria's notion of "the 'cameo' theory of history" in which Native peoples make only brief appearances.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, he builds upon scholarship by other historians like David J. Weber, Juliana Barr, and Samuel Truett, which has asserted that Native peoples often had the upper hand in their dealings with the Spaniards.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> John L. Kessell, *Miera Y Pacheco: A Renaissance Spaniard in Eighteenth-Century New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 163.

<sup>73</sup> John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

<sup>74</sup> Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>75</sup> Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 7. See, for example, Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Cynthia Radding, *Wandering Peoples: Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northeast Mexico, 1700-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); and Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

<sup>77</sup> Weber, *Bárbaros*; Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); and Samuel Truett,

Hämäläinen's central argument doesn't fall far from the title of his book. In short, historians should conceive of the Comanche bands as a veritable empire at mid-continent between roughly 1750 and 1850. The Comanches simultaneously blocked Spanish expansion in New Mexico and Texas, forcing accommodation and the formalization of treaty arrangements. His account points to the fact that imperial strategists in Madrid and other capitals occupied significant time and energy devising strategies to manage the Comanche threat. Hämäläinen's narrative invites readers to rethink the place of Europeans in dictating the terms of empire in the Americas. Native resistance to European expansion on an imperial scale existed well before the Age of Revolutions.

Andrés Reséndez represents a third historian rooted in the borderlands tradition whose work often incorporates an extensive knowledge of Spanish history. His recent book, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (2016) won the Bancroft Prize and was a finalist for the National Book Award.<sup>78</sup> Reséndez previously wrote on the subject of identity in the New Mexico-Texas borderlands and the famous wanderings of Álvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca.<sup>79</sup> As was also the case with his book on Cabeza de Vaca, *The Other Slavery* has garnered impressive public attention. I would argue that Reséndez is perhaps the best-known historian of Spain among North Americans, though his fame is markedly less established among historians of Spain.

*The Other Slavery* recounts the story of Indian enslavement in a sweeping history that begins with the arrival of the Spanish in the Caribbean and extends forward in time to the mines of northern New Spain and eventually to nineteenth century United States. The title presents an obvious contrast with the story of African enslavement and a nod to Eric Van Young's history of the Mexican war of independence.<sup>80</sup> It builds upon an extensive body of literature pertaining to indigenous captivity already well documented by historians like James F. Brooks, Ned Blackhawk, and William S. Kiser.<sup>81</sup> Among his more significant arguments,

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*Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>78</sup> Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016).

<sup>79</sup> Andrés Reséndez, *Changing Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and *A Land So Strange: The Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).

<sup>80</sup> Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>81</sup> James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: The Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and the University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empire in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); and William S. Kiser, *Borderlands of Slavery: The Struggle over Captivity and Peonage in the American Southwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

Reséndez recasts slavery in place of religion at the heart of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt and points to the persistence of slavery in the southwest well after the end of the U.S. Civil War. As Reséndez writes: “So persistent and widespread was Indian slavery that ending it proved nearly impossible.”<sup>82</sup> These arguments work against stereotypical assumptions regarding Spanish associations with religion and frame the importance of understanding the Spanish origins of slavery alongside British ones in comprehending the rootedness of slavery as an institution in the history of the United States. Likewise, Reséndez writes of the importance of Indian slavery to peninsular Spain. Of the more than 2,500 Native slaves taken to the Iberian Peninsula during the first half of the sixteenth century, many remained in the service of their masters after the New Laws of 1542 provided that documentation existed to demonstrate legitimate ownership.<sup>83</sup> Thus, Reséndez invites historians of Spain to consider how Indian enslavement impacted the metropole itself.

My fourth selection encourages the reader to think broadly about the place of Spaniards in U.S. history and builds on the important legacy of migration and diaspora studies.<sup>84</sup> The migration of Spaniards to what became the modern United States did not end with Spain’s loss of its continental possessions in the early nineteenth century. Phylis Cancilla Martinelli and Ana Varela-Lago’s recent edited volume, *Hidden Out in the Open: Spanish Migration to the United States* (2018), offers an intriguing take on one of the lesser studied immigrant communities in the United States.<sup>85</sup> The chapters in their edited volume point to the variety of places Spaniards settled in significant numbers throughout the United States: Arizona, California, Hawaii, Florida, New York, West Virginia. While not predominant in numerical terms, Spaniards played an important part in peopling the United States from colonial times to the present. Their interactions with other immigrant groups and already resident peoples constitute a variation on the borderlands theme.

Migration history presents one of the more fascinating horizons of borderlands research. Upon my first reading of Sarah Deutsch’s book on the Colorado-New Mexico borderlands, I was struck by the multitude of persons from very diverse backgrounds who toiled in the coal mines of southern Colorado: thirty-two nationalities speaking twenty-seven languages.<sup>86</sup> Spaniards were far from being one of a small number of migrant communities that contributed to the making

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<sup>82</sup> Reséndez, *The Other Slavery*, 7.

<sup>83</sup> Reséndez, *The Other Slavery*, 49.

<sup>84</sup> Migration and diaspora studies were ahead of the transnational turn in many ways. One study on Spanish migration to the United States with notable public success was James D. Fernández and Luis Argeo, *Invisible Immigrants: Spaniards in the U.S. (1868-1945)* (New York: White Stone Ridge, 2014).

<sup>85</sup> Phylis Cancilla Martinelli and Ana Varela-Lago, eds., *Hidden Out in the Open: Spanish Migration to the United States (1875-1930)* (Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 2018).

<sup>86</sup> Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on the Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 34.

of the American identity. The interplay of national experiences, identity, and notions of belonging juxtaposed with the realities of labor and power in the United States make the immigrant experience a rewarding avenue of study, one deserving of closer scrutiny by historians. The Martinelli and Varela-Lago volume poses an exciting point of entry to explore how more recent Spanish immigration contributed to the world in which U.S.-based historians live and work.

The four works presented here offer a mere glimpse into some of the exciting ways in which the borderlands have already and may continue to broaden the study of Spain and Spanish empire to encompass North America, and the United States especially. While some historians might argue that these works fit best within the fold of U.S. history or more narrowly to that of the southwest, I counter with the argument that silos confine more than clarify. We now live in an age of transnational history. As Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Elliot Young have argued, “the intense processes of globalization that have gripped our planet over the last fifty years, though first unleashed in the fifteenth century, have in our own historical moment compressed time and space, erasing antique identified, nineteenth-century notions of belonging, and what once seemed like timeless, sacred, God-ordained demarcations of self, person, and nation.”<sup>87</sup> The neat boundaries that once defined the study of Spanish history are rapidly eroding to suit the needs of a more global world.

And yet globalism seems very much on the defensive today. With political leaders of variegated stripes talking of isolationism, disintegration, and virtual autarky, the forces of globalization might not seem as pressing now as in past years. The pressures of global climate change, a growing reliance on international trade, declining access to fresh water, among others, are likely here to stay. Historians of Spain should not shirk from confronting this reality. As I argue below, fulfillment of a more comprehensive and inclusive history requires taking scholarship to the public realm.

### **The Borderlands and Public History**

The borderlands approach provides an exciting strategy to engage new generations in the study of history. My familiarity with the borderlands came about as the product of a unique collaboration with History Colorado, the state historical society. In April 2017, Community Museums of History Colorado convened a special symposium at El Pueblo History Museum to initiate planning for an ambitious undertaking: the creation of new permanent exhibits at three museums in southern Colorado. The symposium was convened in partnership with the Center of the American West of the University of Colorado, Boulder, and its director, Patricia Nelson Limerick, then state historian. It brought together scholars from

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<sup>87</sup> Gutiérrez and Young, “Transnationalizing,” 28.

across the country representing disciplines that ranged from history and literature to anthropology and sociology. Areas of scholarly specialty included slavery and captivity, indigeneity, Spanish empire, the U.S. West, and the environment, among others. Over three days, participants presented public talks related to the borderlands, toured museum spaces, and brainstormed how to present the concept of the borderlands to a diverse audience. The result was the *Borderlands of Southern Colorado*, which opened at the El Pueblo History Museum in May 2018 and at the Trinidad History Museum in May 2019. A third display will open at the Fort Garland Museum and Cultural Center in 2020. Exhibit themes encompass topics as complex and socially fraught as indigenous slavery, land grants, and the legacy of conquest. Museum goers are invited to encounter the deep history of these subjects in a manner meant to provoke further thought and reflection.

My experience in working with a project of this kind is not unique. Attendees of the 2016 meeting of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies at the Maritime Museum of San Diego were given the unique opportunity to step foot aboard the *San Salvador*, a reconstruction of the ship under the command of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo that entered what is today San Diego Harbor on September 28, 1542. This project received extensive direction from professional historians Iris Engstrand, Carla Rahn Phillips, and David R. Ringrose.

Projects of this kind are something of a necessity despite some apprehension. As Lynn Hunt has noted, “Professional historians have long been critical or even disdainful of historical reenactment and virtual historical experiences because they give priority to the viewer’s empathetic identification with people in the past rather than to a deeper understanding of contexts and causes.”<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, this kind of scholarship resonates most effectively with the wider public, which rates it ahead of college history professors in terms of trustworthiness.<sup>89</sup> It serves to make history accessible to persons with little time or patience for lengthy scholarly works and captures the imaginations of school children and adults with equal effect. For this reason, publicly-engaged history projects have the potential to widen the exposure of the public to well established ideas present in scholarly discourse. The American Historical Association *Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects* (adopted 2001, updated 2017) states that:

Museum exhibits play an important role in the transmission of historical knowledge. They are viewed by citizens of diverse ages, interests, and backgrounds, often in family groups. They sometimes celebrate common events, occasionally memorialize tragedies or

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<sup>88</sup> Lynn Hunt, *History: Why it Matters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 27.

<sup>89</sup> Roy Rosenweig and David Thelan, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).



injustices, and contain an interpretive element, even if it is not readily apparent.

With textbooks today ever more constrained by political pressures and financial limitations, they also present creative means to subvert misleading historical content and encourage the public to confront sometimes difficult history.

Sadly, public history has emerged as a kind of special field of history rather than something done by all historians. The AHA has recognized the importance of publicly-engaged scholarship in its *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*, which notes that “it is one of the privileges of our profession to share historical insights and interpretations with a wider public, wherever the locus of our employment. We should welcome the chance to do so, and the institutions that employ historians should recognize the importance of this aspect of our work.” Understandably, scholars employed as faculty at colleges and universities sometimes face fears of limited professional advancement opportunities for engaging in museum work and other public history projects. Publicly-engaged history cannot easily fulfill rigid requirements for retention and tenure. This legitimate concern aside, the academy has diversified substantially in the past fifteen years, and traditional publications no longer constitute the singular form of scholarship done by professional historians.

Publicly-engaged scholarship can take many forms. There are many ways for historians of Spain to relate their findings to an interested public. First approved by the AHA in 2010 and updated in 2017, the report on *Tenure, Promotion, and the Publicly Engaged Academic Historian* acknowledges that:

Many historians are doing community-engaged work at some level, bringing their “disciplined learned practice” to interactions with various communities. That work might include curating exhibitions/installations and developing history-based public programming for museums or nonprofit organizations; preparing reports for government bodies, academic institutions, and nonprofits; forming extensive partnerships with middle school and secondary school teachers; and providing expertise, advice, and consultation for local historical or preservation societies, governmental and nongovernmental agencies, and community groups.

The task of bringing historical research to the public represents laudable work that ought to figure more prominently in the professional commitments of historians of Spain. Moreover, new technology and devices had made this task easier. As Hunt has remarked, “the emergence of new fields such as visual and digital history

reminds us that history cannot predict the future but can benefit from the changes it brings.”<sup>90</sup>

Historians of Spain working in the United States may struggle to make connections between their research and the local settings in which they teach and live. So often, Hispanic history might seem distant in time and place, occupying the southwestern and Floridian imagination of Bolton’s invention. However, Spanish history can be found throughout the United States. Spanish history resides: in Missouri, at the site of the Battle of Fort San Carlos (St. Louis), an episode in the American Revolutionary War; in New England, where Basque fishermen caught cod by the boatful off the Grand Banks; in Illinois, where the local Italian-American community raised a statue of Spanish-cum-Italian national hero Christopher Columbus in 1933; in New Jersey, where Spanish immigrants settled Newark in successive waves dating to the nineteenth century; in Nebraska, where the Villasur Expedition met its disastrous end; in South Carolina, home to the sixteenth century settlement of Santa Elena on Parris Island; in Kansas, the terminus of the Coronado Expedition; in Louisiana, home to the capital of Spanish Louisiana for the better part of forty years, (1763-1801) and a less well-known settlement site of Canary Islanders; and in Washington, DC itself, at Farragut Square, built to honor the son of a Minorcan-born Spanish naval officer. In each of these cases, the borderlands not as geography but as framework poses a fascinating route to contextualize the history of these places in a way that does justice to the present. The history embedded in these places provides a means for a diverse student population to see itself within the national narrative.

Significantly, the borderlands offers a framework for thinking of Spanish history in inclusive terms. As Phoebe S. Kropp has made clear, embracing aspects of Spain has sometimes meant embracing Europeanness and Whiteness to the exclusion of marginalized peoples.<sup>91</sup> Situating the experiences of Spaniards alongside those of other communities provides a space for better understanding the interrelatedness of peoples across time and space.

More than ever, the rapid growth of the nation’s Latino population asserts the need to make the rich stories of these places relevant to the modern United States. Herein resides both a challenge and an opportunity. Connecting the history of Spain to the United States through use of the borderlands as framework promotes both further investment in the study of Spain at U.S. colleges and universities and broader intercultural understanding.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>90</sup> Hunt, *History*, 114.

<sup>91</sup> Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

The divide between “America” and Latin America has become so stark as to render the virtual impossibility of formal inclusion for persons of Spanish-speaking ancestry in the cultural fabric of the modern United States. This situation should not exist. It defies the historical realities that were all too palpable to those persons who inhabited the turbulent world of the borderlands from the colonial period to the present. The borderlands advance a useful corrective to national myths built upon racial and ethnic purity and national exceptionalism by drawing attention to the inherent messiness of the processes that led to the emergence of the modern world. The United States was not exempt from such processes and the place of Spain, its empire, and the peoples who comprised both should be better realized.

The borderlands offer one means to appreciate the role of Spain in the history of the United States without reasserting national distinctions as inherently constitutive of the present world system. When historians of Spain embrace the Spanish presence in North America, they will undoubtedly alter scholarly discourses surrounding the United States’ national past. However, the task of bringing this information to the wider public should not reside solely with museum curators, website creators, and publicists with distance from the very primary sources that make such history possible. Wherever they reside, historians of Spain ought to contribute to publicly-engaged history to transcend the divides of the present world.